

Father Aleksandr Men and the Struggle to Recover Russia's Heritage

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Abstract: Aleksandr Men represents a significant line of thought within Russia's religious and cultural tradition. In contrast to the ultranationalists who emerged at the end of the Soviet Union, Men advocated openness, tolerance, and humility, interpreting these values and perspectives as central to the Russian Orthodox Church. He saw the long-standing schism between the church and society as one of the church's primary difficulties and looked for ways to heal it. In his view, reconciliation required reacquainting Russians with the foundations of Christian culture in Russia—the older voices that expressed compassion and spoke against violence in all its forms. These foundations, he believed, had been distorted not only by the ruling elite but also by church officials. The recovery of such foundations required imagination and a willingness to see the past anew, which Men viewed as part of the church's mission. His legacy offers a challenge to the autocratic, centralizing trends so prominent in Russia in both the past and the present.

Keywords: church fathers, distortion of spiritual mission, diversity of religious beliefs, freedom, ideals of Russian culture, imagination, openness, Orthodox Church, tradition and creativity

The Centre of Religious Literature and Russian Publications Abroad in the M. I. Rudomino All-Russian State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow presents a sharp contrast to the aggressive, inward-looking, and nationalistic groups that view the Orthodox Church as a key part of Russia's national recovery. Consecrated by Patriarch Aleksii II, the center includes a room honoring Father Aleksandr Men, one of Russia's leading priests and pastors, whose murder in September 1990 marked a turning point in Russian history. Men's death, unresolved to the present day, reminded his followers of the violence often inflicted on Russia's greatest prophetic minds. Yet the murder also stiffened the resolve of

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those who venerated Men's accomplishments and his teachings. The room in Men's honor communicates his persistent efforts to learn from other religions. The books and key texts of those other faiths, the green plants that bring the natural world inside, and the skilled and dedicated library staff (who seem to consider their service here an honored task) suggest Men's openness to the world.¹ The large number of students, scholars, and foreign visitors who come to this place to do research experience a part of Russia that reaches beyond the nation's boundaries to other cultures and religious traditions.

The Library for Foreign Literature was founded in 1921 by Margarita Ivanovna Rudomino, a twenty-year-old woman who preserved a collection of French, German, and English books, brought from her late mother's estate in Saratov, in a run-down apartment in the Arbat district of Moscow. Writer Kornei Chukovsky recalls that this modest library existed in "a small, cold, and dark room crammed full of books. The books were frozen stiff. An emaciated, shivering girl whose fingers were swollen with the cold watched over them."² During a time when Russia became increasingly isolated in the international community, Rudomino believed that it must not lose its cultural connections: its capacity to hear the humanitarian voices that reach beyond politics.³

Openness to foreign voices, however, led to constant tension with the Soviet state, which is reflected in the location of the library. "We are something of an anomaly," said Yekaterina Genieva, the library's distinguished director-general. In most countries, "foreign literature is integrated in other library collections. In the Soviet Union, it was set apart, housed in a different place."⁴ However, that separateness makes the library special. The library's unique role is evident everywhere: in the marble busts in the courtyard, the art exhibits on the walls of nearly every floor, the colorful displays of children's literature, the audio facilities of the BBC, and the American reading room. But most striking is the large room dedicated to Men on the fourth and top floor of the library, facing away from the Kremlin and testifying to the important connection between books and learning, memory, and wisdom. Men demonstrated this connection in his life, his pastoral work, and his writings.

Historians and writers on religion generally portray Men as a moral leader, a key figure in Russia's attempt to recover its moral bearings and identity after seventy years of Communist assault.⁵ Although these assessments contain a great deal of truth, Men's significance extends beyond moral and political circumstances. A major part of his significance lies in his emphasis on recovering Russia's heritage, especially the role of the Orthodox Church. He did not believe that faith could be imposed by any political or religious authority; rather, it had to come from within the individual, from the struggle within one's own mind and spirit. Such a conviction raises several seminal questions about his life and his thought: What influences led Men to think in such great contrast not only to state authorities, but also to most other leaders within the church? How did his ideas on the church's role in Russia's history challenge the views of Russian nationalists, who have gained increasing power during and after the Soviet Union's collapse? How might the Orthodox Church support the creative imagination? In this article, I argue that Men's importance transcends his own time and place and speaks to the more universal themes of religious liberty and freedom of conscience—themes within Orthodoxy that he aspired to recover and activate.

Early Life

Men was born in Moscow in 1935; his life spanned the major turning points in Russian history between 1940 and 1990. His father, a nonpracticing Jewish engineer, was arrested in

1941, when Men was six years old. His mother, Yelena Semenova, also ethnically Jewish, had converted to Orthodoxy at an early age. Following her husband's imprisonment, she found herself with two small children and no regular income. She was energetic, resourceful, and well educated; she was also deeply religious. She and her sister Vera Yakovlevna Vasilyevskaya, a child psychologist, had an enormous influence on the young Aleksandr. They raised him in a world of books and exposed him, while he was still a child, to discussions and meetings with religious intellectuals. Chance encounters with scientists and other adults who befriended him further opened up to him a much more colorful world than was typical of the gray realities of Soviet life.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet school system aimed at promoting widespread literacy and providing Soviet citizens with the skills to successfully function in an industrial society. The values and principles the Bolsheviks championed in creating the Soviet Union lay at the core of the new school system: rationalism, positivism, and empiricism. Seeking to develop Soviet citizens with the technical skills most needed in an industrial economy, the government rapidly expanded the school system and heavily employed certain teaching strategies—memorization, repetition, and use of a narrow range of texts. From the party's perspective, such strategies had the added advantage of encouraging the "cult of Stalin," honoring the leader of the assault on Russia's religious and cultural heritage and its perceived economic backwardness.

However, the periods of great purges and terror (and the narrow system of education) in which Soviet citizens operated did not prevent certain religiously committed individuals from creating their own alternative religious community. Their circle did not directly challenge the state—to do so would have been suicidal—but it did offer a parallel existence, a chance for individuals to think differently and engage in activities outside the educational network promoted by the state. This group developed apart from the state and its official structures; it flourished beyond the control of the security police, despite efforts to suppress independent activities and civil society. In the inner sanctuary of the family apartment, in the meetings among friends that took place outside school, in the religious activities in private settings, and in encounters with certain people, sometimes by accident, a different universe existed. Men's early life was shaped by experiences in such an environment. From the beginning, Men developed a way of thinking apart from the approaches and values fostered by the Soviet system.

Men showed a disposition toward a creative, imaginative view of the natural and physical world early in his life. His childhood drawings of Moscow streets, church buildings, and wild animals were unusually perceptive and innovative. According to Zoya Maslennikova, his aunt Vera "read him books, taught him to draw and to build, and nourished all aspects of his creativity," encouraging him to see beyond the physical surface of natural beings and imagine their inner life.⁶ As Men remembered, she wanted him to take nothing for granted and to perceive the material world as dynamic and constantly changing, not as something lifeless and fixed.⁷ This sensitivity to beauty in nature and in human beings carried over into Men's adulthood, shaping his perceptions of humanity.

Men grew up in the catacomb church, and the people and experiences in it were another influence on his life and thought. This independent, underground church organization developed shortly after Metropolitan Sergii signed the controversial agreement pledging the Orthodox Church's cooperation and support of the Soviet government in 1927. Viewing the agreement as a betrayal of Christianity, the catacomb church formed in opposition.

It was an illegal, secretive, oppositional organization that committed itself to preserving Christian principles from a power committed to destroying religion. Men's mother and aunt were active members of the catacomb church, and they brought the young Aleksandr to its services and to meetings with its priests.

Clandestinely meeting in a house in Moscow and later in Sergiev Posad, the catacomb church aimed to protect the "pure spirit of Orthodox Christianity" from violence and from compromises with the government.⁸ Members of the underground church witnessed the ubiquitous arrests of churchmen, murders of church leaders, assaults on church buildings, and official pronouncements portraying religious belief as superstitious and backward. Continuing to hold to one's beliefs and one's view of the world required the courage to stand outside a system committed to destroying religious values and perspectives. The meetings Men attended as a child took place in the Sergiev Posad house. In one of the rooms stood an altar, and behind it hung the Iversky Mother of God icon. Ten to fifteen people worshiped there each week. At these meetings, Men was exposed to the liturgy, to the Gospels, to church tradition, and to priests passionately committed to the teachings of the church fathers.

Father Seraphim (Sergey Mikhailovich Batyukov, 1880–1942) was one of the priests with whom Men had contact. As organizer of the catacomb church in Sergiev Posad, he impressed Men's mother and aunt, who developed a deep trust in him. He told Vasilyevskaya that the catacomb church existed not for political reasons or a desire to oppose evil, but as a commitment to "preserve the purity of Orthodoxy."⁹ This need, he believed, went beyond the coming of the Bolsheviks to power in Russia; it related to an earlier time in Russian history when the Orthodox Church, in his view, had lost touch with the people, had failed to speak clearly and effectively to Russia's spiritual and social problems, and had forfeited its independent spiritual voice. In the first year of World War II, even with the rapid approach of the German army, Men's mother, who had very little protection, moved her young family to Sergiev Posad on Father Seraphim's advice. Seraphim was extremely well educated, was deeply read in the writings of the church fathers, and believed wholeheartedly in the church's preeminent spiritual power. He assured Semenova of her family's safety, despite the physical proximity of the fighting.¹⁰

Father Seraphim believed that the Orthodox Church had a social mission, a need to care for the poor and the suffering in society. He was significantly influenced by the elders of the famous Optina Pustyn monastery and had studied under them. His emphasis on the church's social mission partly derived from the Optina elders' teachings that the church must not turn inward, becoming isolated from the world around it. His view that the person must look inside oneself to one's own inner being, to the spiritual essence lying at the core of one's personhood, also mirrored one of the main teachings of the Optina elders.¹¹

Another catacomb church leader in Sergiev Posad played an even larger role in Men's early development. Mother Mariya (1879–1961) celebrated the liturgy in the church shortly after Seraphim's death and the arrest of his immediate successor. She became a mentor who, as Men later recalled, "in many ways defined my life's course and spiritual framework."¹² Men remembered her as "a person of unusual spiritual gifts, well-educated, and extremely humble in demeanor . . . entirely devoid of hypocrisy, conservatism, and narrowness—qualities often found in people of her rank." She taught him how to read the scriptures. She handed him the Bible when he was seven years old and told him, even after he asked her for guidance, that she would give him no directions. He had only the

instructions to open the book, begin on the first page, and “simply read,” letting the words speak directly to him.¹³ In this process, she spoke to him about mystery and wonder and their importance in reading the text.

In all her teachings, Mother Mariya never employed force or attempted to be authoritative. Instead, she encouraged Men to open his mind and his eyes, to try always to see things as if for the first time. Like his mother and aunt, Mother Mariya nourished in him certain capacities of the imagination. Her manner would for many years loom large before him; he described her as a small, delicate woman who had “borne many heavy burdens in her life” but preserved “in full a clear mind, a total absence of sanctimonious behavior . . . a lively sense of humor, and—what is especially important—a strong belief in the importance of freedom (*svoboda*).”¹⁴ Mother Mariya, Men recalled, “possessed the quality that connected her to the Optina elders and put me on the same road: openness to people, their problems, their struggles, their openness to the world.”¹⁵

“Men offered a view of reconciliation that contrasted to that of the ultranationalists, who also wanted to unify the people and saw such unity as a key element in rebuilding Russia’s strength.”

In addition to its leadership and the qualities it fostered, the catacomb church provided members with another important advantage. The small, tightly knit group offered a supportive community of believers. Nurturing and giving moral and psychological succor to its members, this community operated even in the most dangerous circumstances, existing outside official Soviet structures and supporting different ways of thinking. The organization of this small community and the mutual support of its members would leave a lasting impression on Men. In the late 1970s and 1980s, when he built his parish at Novaya Derevnya, he used the example of the catacomb church as his model.¹⁶

In school, Men was a precocious child, often bored, able to read and comprehend on a level far beyond nearly all of his classmates, easily distracted, and unchallenged by the rote learning. His school on Serpukhov Street was in a rough neighborhood, a dingy, gray, crowded place, where street fights often occurred and the struggle for existence could be seen everywhere. In the last years of World War II, his classmates nearly always came to school hungry. They were not ready to learn, and the teachers, who had only meager training, were unprepared to teach.¹⁷ In Men’s case, the most important learning experiences took place outside the classroom, beyond the official educational structures, in much more informal, unprescribed settings. Such settings continued to open up for him connections to ways of thinking much different from those endorsed by the state.

The unofficial channels through which Men found intellectual sustenance formed around certain individuals who, even during Stalin’s rule, continued to keep alive a contrary vision of the world. When he was eleven years of age, Men went after school to a children’s sanitarium operated by an acquaintance of his Aunt Vera. This woman, Tatyana Ivanovna Kaprianova, taught philosophy at Moscow University. A religious person and the widow of a well-known theologian, she regularly held a religion seminar in her apartment, where she taught young people the symbols and doctrines of the Russian Orthodox

faith. She invited Men to attend these sessions, and, although he was much younger than the other participants, they accepted him as a peer. The sessions sometimes veered into religious-philosophical discussions and into lively arguments over various points of view. Such sessions were extremely engaging to Men, opening his mind to a wide and rich intellectual universe at a key juncture in his young life. Kaprianova's seminar operated secretly and existed as a closed circle, a "world within another world," like "the shellfish inside the shell. . . . In the horrible Stalinist time, this solitary woman fearlessly gave many years to her seminar, when a single word from any one of the participants in the group would have brought an end to her career."¹⁸

Men also encountered important people elsewhere. They included Boris Aleksandrovich Vasilev, a family friend who served on the ethnography faculty at Moscow University. As a teenager, Men often went to visit with him. Vasilev talked to Men about the ancient East, Vasilev's specialty, and its connections to the Bible. Vasilev also related to him another subject in which Vasilev had a large interest: the development of the great Russian philosophical-theological writers at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Vladimir Solovov, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Sergey Bulgakov—whom Lenin and the Bolsheviks had excoriated (they ordered Berdyaev and Bulgakov into exile in 1922). Vasilev gave Men a firsthand introduction to these philosophers' ideas, and Men would shortly thereafter read and deeply absorb their works.

Although most of Men's encounters with such remarkable people grew out of his family circle and its network of friends, not all did. Accidental meetings also played a role in Men's development. Significant among them was a chance encounter with Vasily Alekseevich Vatagin, an artist and scholar, at the zoological museum on Herzen Street, operated by Moscow University. Vatagin is recognized as Russia's greatest animal artist of the twentieth century. At the time, Men was fifteen years old, and his long-standing interest in drawing and animals often led him to the zoological museum, where he looked at the models of wild animals, birds, and reptiles. One day, while drawing, he attracted Vatagin's attention. The artist approached Men, began a conversation with him, and invited him into the room where he drew and constructed the models of the wild creatures. Thus began a friendship that lasted for many years.¹⁹

This man, "with a sparse beard and a rattling voice," possessed an inner "elemental power that he transferred to his creations."²⁰ He encouraged Men to look beyond the external appearances of phenomena, to seek the inner life, the deeper reality, the soul, that lay within. Vatagin later confessed to Men that he was a theosophist, "although he was not a fanatic"; as far as Men was concerned, Vatagin saw the connections and the beauty in all of nature, and the two of them spent a great deal of time discussing India, whose mysticism and other ways of thinking Vatagin greatly admired.²¹ At their meetings, which took place every Friday afternoon, Vatagin took long walks with his young protégé, instructing Men in his own artistic philosophy and telling stories about the natural world. Vatagin "was extremely open and expressed his thoughts freely," even during the final years of the Stalin era, a time when fear and distrust pervaded nearly everything.²²

Experiences and contacts like this exposed Men to ideas much different than those promulgated by the Stalinist establishment. Most important, they connected him to different ways of thinking and different approaches to the world than were available in the highly specialized, materialistic, and technical world that the Stalinist establishment sought to create. In addition, such experiences brought him into contact with parts of Russia's cultural and religious

heritage that had come under massive assault by the Bolshevik government. Like many of the people he encountered, Men lived in two different worlds, managing to function within the state's structures while nourishing his own private existence—one that incorporated wonder and mystery. In creating and maintaining a religious seminar in her home, Kaprianova led a similar life. Vasilev served as a priest in the catacomb church, a role that he kept secret from nearly everyone, including his university colleagues.²³ As an artist, Vatagin poured his inner sensitivities and private beliefs into his creative works, confiding his beliefs only to his closest and most trusted friends. Men wrote that listening to his adult friends discuss their experiences and private passions “gave me more than books could teach.”²⁴

Books also played a major part in Men's parallel existence and deepened his connection to alternative ways of thinking, particularly Russia's philosophical and religious heritage. During a time when the state violently assaulted the churches, books kept alive older traditions and perspectives. Despite the state's fervent efforts to destroy religious activity, it never totally succeeded. Literature served as one of the primary vehicles for its transmission, and Men read books that insulated him from the cult of Stalin. Reading philosophy and poetry informed his passions, taking him back to a time when words were less abstract and less ideological, further connecting him to prerevolutionary Russian traditions and weaving a richer tapestry of ideas than those around him. Men recounted these pleasures and their importance at length:

Precisely in the Stalin era, among the nails and guinea pigs at a market, I found the old books of Vladimir Solovov and Sergey Bulgakov, and I read them . . . with trembling hands. During a time when there was neither samizdat [self-publishing of unofficial publications in the former Soviet Union] nor “tamizdat” [illicit publishing of works by Soviet writers in the West], when in the sphere of philosophy only nonsense was published that was impossible even to hold in one's hands, I entered into the world of great thinkers. . . . In our youth, we searched for books. I worked during my schoolboy years, traveling to the Crimean national park reserve, in order to earn enough money to buy books. I began to collect a library, when I was still in the fifth class. At this time, when almost all the cathedrals were closed and the [Holy Trinity] Lavra was also closed (except for two churches), I derived my vision of an internal church from literature and from poetry, from what the artist [Mikhail] Nesterov created, from everything surrounding them. . . . This vision was not based on external reality. Imagine Nesterov, [Pavel] Florinsky, [Sergey] Bulgakov, Zagorsk [Sergiev Posad] . . . a legendary picture, a sort of Kitezh [legendary Russian town], a kind of ideal kingdom. It is a beautiful picture, and it, of course, reflects some kind of ideal in the life of the Church. But this picture did not correspond to concrete reality. When I saw reality up close, I understood that the ideal exists somewhere in the hearts of people, and it cannot be found on earth.²⁵

In secondary school, Men became deeply interested in biology and aspired to study it after graduation. Denied admittance to Moscow University because of his Jewish origins, he enrolled in the Institute of Fur in Moscow, and he continued his studies, formally and informally, in biology and theology. In 1955, the institute moved to Irkutsk, Siberia, and Men lived and studied there for the next three years. In Irkutsk, he roomed with a fellow student, Gleb Yakunin, who would himself later become a well-known priest and political dissident. Men would confide his innermost thoughts to Yakunin, and the two of them often visited a local priest, whom they both came to admire.²⁶ In 1958, just before he was scheduled to take his final examinations, Men was denied permission to take the tests and graduate because of his frequent participation in religious activities in the cathedral in which he served.²⁷

Men had decided earlier to enter the priesthood but had not yet acted on that choice, partly because of the political difficulties such a course entailed. But his dismissal from the institute encouraged him to take that step. When he returned to Moscow in May 1958, he was taken by a friend to see Anatoly Vasilevich Vedernikov, the editorial secretary of *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhy* (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*), whom Men had met years earlier, when he was still a schoolboy.²⁸ Learning of Men's dismissal from the institute and his desire to become a priest, Vedernikov went to see Metropolitan Nikolai Yarushevich of Kratitsky and Kolomensky; Vedernikov told Yarushevich that Men already had excellent preparation for the priesthood, having served for many years in the

“Men’s ultimate goal was freedom—freedom of the spirit, freedom to explore the world in new ways, freedom to reach deeply into one’s inner being and uncover the icon of holiness.”

church and having acquired an impressive theological education through his extensive readings. The metropolitan accepted Vedernikov's recommendation and, waiving a formal examination, took Men into the service of the church, with additional support from Bishop Makariev.²⁹ Men was ordained as a deacon on June 1, 1958, in the Troitse Lavra. He received an appointment in a small village parish southwest of Moscow while completing his course of formal study.³⁰

This was around the time when Khrushchev's violent antireligion campaign began. These were extremely dangerous years, when the Orthodox Church struggled to survive and many churches closed their doors. They also were extremely challenging times for the young Men, who had to support his family on a meager salary and begin his pastoral work when the state tried to restrict religious activities nationally.³¹ His parish continued to operate, and Men gained a reputation among his parishioners as an accessible and extremely talented deacon.³²

During the next decade, he served in several other parishes, mostly in small churches in the countryside around Moscow, where he had diverse experiences and often worked in difficult circumstances. Throughout this period, he continued to study and write, publishing articles under a pseudonym in *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhy* and, in 1968, publishing his manuscript *Syn chelovechesky* (*Son of Man*), a narrative of the life of Christ using contemporary language, abroad.³³ He continued his scholarly work on pre-Christian philosophy and religion and spent a great deal of time serving his parishioners and responding to their needs. In 1970, he was transferred to the parish at Novaya Derevnnya, near Moscow, where he spent the remainder of his life. There, he rapidly achieved recognition for his teaching and his attempts to develop among his parishioners an uncompromising spiritual independence from the Soviet state.

Later Life

As a priest in the village parish at Novaya Derevnnya, Men served in the church during a period when the state and its security organizations severely oppressed the Orthodox Church.³⁴ Men endured constant KGB harassment, house searches, and personal inquiries, all of which placed significant pressure on him and his parish. During these difficult years,

despite the intense political pressures he endured, he devoted himself to his parishioners and his scholarship. He was able to present the Gospels both to village parishioners and to urban intellectuals, many of whom came on Sundays from Moscow to Novaya Derevnya.³⁵ He developed an eloquent literary style that gave his writings appeal to a range of people. As David Remnick notes, Men provided a link to early twentieth-century philosophers, such as Solovev and Berdyaev, who, for urban intellectuals “stood apart from this tragic tradition of subservience and obscurantism.”³⁶ Such attempts to refresh Russia’s historical memory and the key sources of its religious heritage would become increasingly important during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

After Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the discussion of Russia’s historical sources intensified. Gorbachev’s emphasis on recovering Russia’s heritage and his desire to strengthen the country’s ethical and moral standards brought into the open many subjects that had earlier received little attention. His reforms opened a debate, in political and intellectual circles, about the Orthodox Church’s role in Russian history and its contributions to the country’s development. Especially after Gorbachev’s historic meeting with Patriarch Pimen and five members of the Holy Synod (the supreme governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church, headed by the patriarch) in the Moscow Kremlin on April 20, 1988, the public—particularly nationalist groups—became more interested in discussing the church’s role. To these groups (which included many Communist Party members), Orthodoxy offered a means of rebuilding Russia’s national identity. During the millennium celebrations commemorating Russia’s acceptance of Orthodox Christianity, the bells in Russia’s churches once more began to ring. To the nationalist groups, the peal of the church bells did not hold an ecumenical message but instead signified Holy Russia, national unity, and authoritarian conceptions of power.

The ultranationalists exhibited a range of views on current problems, but they generally displayed hostility toward national minorities and Jews, viewed ecumenism as betrayal, railed against freedom of conscience, and identified Orthodoxy as synonymous with Russia. Metropolitan Ioann of St. Petersburg and Lake Ladoga served as the recognized leader of the ultranationalists until his death in 1995, and he wrote many well-publicized articles proclaiming Orthodoxy as the core of Russia’s national identity.³⁷ Other spokesmen, many within the church, also saw the church as a major bulwark for protecting Russia against the harmful Western influences of democracy, pluralism, and ecumenism. This attitude is demonstrated in a 1990 article by Father Vladimir, titled “Not by Bread Alone”: “Russian people must not be assembled under such alien banners, which undermine for us eternal words: Orthodoxy, Motherland, and national resurrection. We are obliged to build a Holy Russia, an eternal ideal of our historical life on whose wise and practical foundations the history of Russia has proceeded. . . . We are Russian to the degree that we are Orthodox.”³⁸

Such assertions were part of the nationalistic revival that precipitated and accompanied the collapse of Communism. The extreme nationalists called for people to disregard their own immediate faith experiences and focus their religious energies at the state level. They tapped into the desire to recover national pride and honor, when the Russian population was under increasing pressure, internally and externally, because of the collapse of the Soviet state. They were part of a broad desire to reexamine Russian history and reclaim vital parts of its heritage that had been heavily assaulted by the Bolsheviks. This reexamination and debate, which began in the late 1980s and has yet to subside, centrally involved the Orthodox Church.³⁹

Men engaged in this discussion in both his parish and the larger Russian public square. He had long been interested in history; he had read and studied its sources for most of his life. His talks and writings contained constant references to history and literature, whose themes he tried to relate to the present. He presented many of his ideas in informal discussions with members of his parish. The participants in these meetings mostly took rough notes, and only scant records of the proceedings have been preserved. But Men's son, Mikhail, made a fairly complete copy of one discussion, held in 1988. There is also a record of a public lecture Men gave in 1988, at a large public gathering in Moscow. In both sources, Men attempts to connect present circumstances with Russia's past, to tie earlier situations and personalities to present ones. "Philosophical and political ideas formulated earlier are related to what we observe in Russia today," he maintained, and the church had to come to terms with them.⁴⁰ Those earlier experiences, in his mind, belonged not only to the past but also to contemporary affairs, humanistically, morally, and religiously—particularly as Russia struggled to redefine itself.

Several main themes in Men's public statements and writings stand out in his attempt to recover this tradition. First, in his view, Russian culture had deep roots in Christianity from its beginnings. In the introduction to his lecture on *Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi* ("The Christian Culture of Russia"), Men cited Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev, the preeminent twentieth-century historian of early Russia: "the appearance of the Russian Church marked the beginning of the history of Russian culture."⁴¹ Drawing from Likhachev's works, those of the nineteenth-century historian V. O. Kliuchevsky, and other sources, Men described a religion that, coming to the medieval state of Kievan Rus, did not fall on barren soil but, as elsewhere, mixed with local customs and beliefs to create a rich literature, art, and spiritual culture. By accepting Christianity, Russia also entered the family of European nations, becoming part of a larger, more complex, and more interdependent framework than it had previously known. The resulting exchange of cultural and spiritual ideas greatly stimulated Russia's growth.

In contrast to the ultranationalists, who saw Russia's relationship with Europe quite differently, Men viewed the connection with European countries as extremely positive: "Culture cannot develop in isolation." To advance it requires what he called a "constant going in and going out," an exchange of ideas with diverse people and beliefs.⁴² According to Men, such interactions promoted the flourishing of spiritual culture and ideas, as they had during the time of Prince Vladimir in the tenth through twelfth centuries. Cultural stagnation occurs when a country looks inward, becoming isolated from others and cutting itself off from the stimulation that cultural encounters provide, even when they seem threatening. Russia had suffered from such isolation. The Mongol invasion at the beginning of the thirteenth century had isolated Russia and had undermined the social ideals and the shared notions of political power that Kievan Rus had developed.⁴³

A second theme in Men's work is his criticism of the church-state alliance that emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and later became more entrenched. Together with Russia's cultural isolation, this church-state alliance created a deep divide between the church hierarchy and the Russian people. "The church leadership, having lost its capacity and the possibility to act and speak to the people . . . seemed to hurl itself backward, to cut itself off from the culture of educated society" and the rest of the population, Men argued.⁴⁴ He described the church schism of the seventeenth century, Peter the Great's hastily prepared reforms, including his 1721 Ecclesiastical Regulation, the dominating power of the

imperial bureaucratic system, and the cultural gap that resulted from separating educated society from the majority of the Russian people as all having unfortunate consequences. He pointed out that their cumulative effect made it extremely difficult for the church to relate to the people effectively.⁴⁵

Third, throughout his writings and teachings, Men talked about a “deep, constant demand,” a persistent thirst, for “spiritual values” that could be found among all ranks of society. In his exploration of Russian history, he sought to explain why the church had responded poorly to this need. The cultural gap between educated society and large parts of the population was exacerbated, in his mind, because the church had looked inward, rather than outward; it spoke an antiquated language far removed from the life and needs of the people. The church failed to fulfill its mission: it did not preach, act as a witness, or educate, nor was it an active presence in the world—all purposes to be accomplished “not by bearing witness to some kind of ideology, but by bearing witness to the divine presence in all of us.”⁴⁶ Although the church had the capacity to be the instrument of Christ in the world, it had drawn away from this mission. It had little interest in spreading the faith, but this failure was not because Russia lacked theological education:

In the eighteenth century the Moscow Spiritual Academy had come into existence, albeit under a different name; there were already those people who studied Eastern languages and ancient philosophy. The instruction in the academy was in Latin; people knew Greek, but they could not genuinely bear witness in Russia about faith. If one examines teaching in the academies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one will find that this teaching was conducted in foreign languages, and not even in the conversational French spoken in the salons, but in antiquated Latin. And when the best prepared preachers of that time turned their attention to the Russian people from the pulpits of the church, they spoke in a heavy, poorly understood language that required someone to provide a translation. One of our theologians, a Church historian, emphasized that, in the Nikolaevian epoch (1825–55), the language of theological literature became antiquated, as soon as it was published. Such theology was already dead at its birth.⁴⁷

As an example of this antiquated thinking, Men cited the highly respected Metropolitan Filaret Drozdov, the church leader whose life in the nineteenth century spanned the reigns of three tsars—Alexander I, Nicholas I, and Alexander II. Among the best-educated churchmen of the century, Drozdov was “an extremely capable man of deep thought and impressive intellect.”⁴⁸ But he spoke in the stodgy, little-understood language of antiquity. During his long life, he published many volumes of theology, but few people read these volumes, because “neither the people, nor the church leadership, nor even the theologians considered them relevant to much of anything. His sermons seemed to those who heard them like rocks ‘overgrown with moss.’”⁴⁹ During the nineteenth century, the church resurrected the tradition of preaching. But this preaching had an extremely restricted scope, and elsewhere, Men said, “in this vast land clergymen were silent.” Consequently, the large majority of the Russian people, most of whom were illiterate, had little exposure to the word of God.⁵⁰

In Men’s view, one of the primary problems facing the church consisted of healing the schism between the church and society. Men offered a view of reconciliation that contrasted to that of the ultranationalists, who also wanted to unify the people and saw such unity as a key element in rebuilding Russia’s strength. To Men, reconciliation meant recognizing and overcoming the distorted features of the church’s history, especially its

inability to address spiritual needs. It meant reacquainting Russians with the foundations of Christian culture in Russia and the older voices who expressed love for all people and spoke out against violence in all its forms. It meant recovering the voices of the Russian philosophers and theologians who wrote at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, understood Russia's cultural ideals, and tried to build on them.

Men believed these philosophers and theologians offered an accessible bridge to the largely forgotten ideals of Russian culture. Such writers included Solovev, whom Men once called his mentor and whose works Men had discovered as a youth. Solovev viewed Christianity as a life-giving force, not as an "abstract ideal," and saw its denial as giving birth to destructive forces that threatened all of life.⁵¹ Human beings desired the good life, and because the highest form of good comes from God, faith was a rational, not an irrational, choice. Solovev's foundational argument offered hope, giving free play to the imagination to make the world a better and more spiritually hospitable place.⁵² In the late 1980s, in his public talks, Men bemoaned the loss of this earlier voice over the generations; he argued that Solovev had much relevance to the present and urged listeners to become acquainted with his writings.⁵³

In addition, Men emphasized the importance of a 1909 collection of essays published in *Vekhi* (meaning "landmarks"). Men argued that the essays, written by Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Semen Frank, and others, all of whom would later become famous philosophers and theologians, offered perspectives relevant to Russia's present moral situation. Although they differed on many points, the *Vekhi* authors shared a common view of the importance of spiritual life: they believed that "the individual's inner life is the sole creative force in human existence, and that this inner life, and not the self-sufficient principles of the political realm, constitutes the only solid basis on which a society can be built."⁵⁴

Men "talked to us constantly about these writers," one of his parishioners said; "he thought that we had to get acquainted with them, because they offered a key to rebuilding Russia's spiritual culture."⁵⁵ Men believed that Russia's Christian ideals had not only been suppressed, but had also been distorted by the ruling elite and church officials. "In this treasure house" of ancient ideals, he thought, like the *Vekhi* authors, "we would discover . . . the sources for creativity, social thought, and life, which could not be found on the roads of positivism, mechanization, and the other modern theories" on which the Bolshevik policies were based.⁵⁶

Whereas Men had discussed these ideas many times with his parishioners in earlier years, the late 1980s offered him a chance to speak to a much larger audience. He was constantly in demand for public lectures, television programs, and newspaper interviews. By the end of 1988, he was giving thirty lectures a month and maintaining his parish work and commitments, never refusing a request from anyone, and eager, after many years of limited activity, to take full advantage of the new political climate.⁵⁷ "I feel like an arrow, which [had] been . . . kept on a strained bow string," he said.⁵⁸ He addressed the rediscovery of Russia's religious heritage in his lectures, asserting the need to recover historical memory. He sought to stake a claim to the earlier traditions, which the Bolsheviks had tried to obliterate. In the process, he offered interpretations that conflicted with other interpretations, including that of the Moscow Patriarchate, which aimed to interpret the past in its own way. In this effort, Men is often labeled, especially by church officials, as a liberal. Yet Men's significance and the importance

of his thought, particularly on tradition and the role of creativity, go much beyond the political circumstances of the Soviet period.

Beliefs

The idea of tradition in Orthodox Christianity, according to Father Georges Florovsky, “is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration. Tradition is not a principle striving to restore the past, using the past as a criterion for the present. Tradition is *authority to teach, potestas magisterii, authority to bear witness to the truth.*”⁵⁹ Tradition is thus a guiding principle; it lives within the Orthodox Church, and “it was only in the Church, within the community of right faith, that Scripture could be adequately understood and correctly interpreted.”⁶⁰ As a guiding principle, however, tradition is not rigid, static, frozen in time. Tradition needs constant fresh interpretation and elaboration. “The Church,” Florovsky writes, “bears witness to the truth not by reminiscence or from the words of others, but from its own living, unceasing experience, from its catholic fullness.”⁶¹

Tradition did not call for the church to turn away from the earth, focusing entirely on the spirit and otherworldly concerns. Part of Men’s significance lay in the importance he gave to creativity, which he saw as fundamental to Orthodox Christianity. In his lecture “Christianity and Creativity,” Men interpreted the Incarnation as a calling to this creative act, a concrete expression of God’s love for all the people of the earth, an invitation not to deny or reject the material world but to reach out and embrace it. Some within the church viewed creativity as a form of sin, an aspect of man’s fallen state. Men, however, saw it differently: Creativity expressed a “spontaneous movement within the person . . . some kind of ringing in the soul, a desire for transformation coming from the depths of one’s being.”⁶²

Such an impulse is what gave rise to art. Men spoke of many within the church who maintained that the individual, having embraced Orthodoxy, should turn away from secular activities. Those who believed this claimed that one should renounce interests that belonged to a fallen world; they also asserted that creativity—whether expressed in painting, literature, music, or architecture—represented aspects of this fallen state. One often heard this argument in the Orthodox Church, Men pointed out, particularly from believers who had recently converted to the faith.⁶³ This belief, he said, led to a kind of slavishness, a dependency on church officials to assert truth, otherworldliness, and a rejection of elements that nurtured creativity and Christianity, which he tied together.

Men hoped to counteract this rejection of creativity, which he claimed came from certain church officials who misinterpreted Orthodox theology. He maintained that the impulse that produced many of the greatest works of art originated from the same impulse that gave birth to the world’s great religions: the subconscious quest for the absolute. On earth, the absolute did not exist in its entirety but parts of it were embodied in the act of creativity. Men asked his listeners to look again at the past artistic achievements familiar to them: the mammoth designs on the walls of the Altai Mountains, the Parthenon on the Acropolis, the intricate patterns of Indian pagodas, the mosaics of Byzantium, and the stained glass of medieval churches. “They are a reflection of this human embodiment, the incarnation of spiritual life.”⁶⁴ They contained the seeds of a religious sensibility and of how people see themselves in relation to something larger and eternal. Each epoch of history expresses this impulse and this spirit, and Men cited the twentieth-century Russian philosopher Pavel Florensky’s statement that even in everyday objects “one can discover the essence of civilization,” and, consequently, the “faith of an epoch.”⁶⁵

However, it was Christianity, according to Men, that crowned the quest for the absolute. When the Word, *Logos*, became flesh, he said, it blessed all of creation. In response to the questions, “Is creativity necessary? Are literature, poetry, and the other arts needed?” the Christian fathers responded with a resounding “Yes!”⁶⁶ In such acts, according to the church fathers, one will find the spirit of Christianity.⁶⁷ The church fathers themselves, Men pointed out, had been outstanding writers, poets, and social activists, and they offered models of creativity and imagination in their own thinking.⁶⁸ They showed us, Men said, that Christianity must be open to the world; it should not consider any question outside its interests or alien to its concerns. Made in God’s image, human beings must display a similar creative spirit, a desire to cultivate the imagination. “Christ said that each person carries within himself his own treasure,” Men said.⁶⁹ Such a treasure, he told his followers, is not to be seen as a function of the body, but as a sacred aspect of being that requires one to reach out to other people, to find joy through relationships, and to express love through them.

Men’s ultimate goal was freedom—freedom of the spirit, freedom to explore the world in new ways, freedom to reach deeply into one’s inner being and uncover the icon of holiness. Such freedom, Men told his audience, did not come easily; it required reconnecting the self to the teachings of the church and hearing anew the voices of the church fathers. His words echoed the ideas of Berdyaev, who had expressed a similar view eighty years earlier: “The idea of freedom is one of the central ideas of Christianity. . . . Without it the creation of the world, the Fall, and Redemption are incomprehensible, and the phenomenon of faith remains inexplicable.”⁷⁰ Men told his listeners that the “spirit of freedom pervades the Gospels.”⁷¹ The Gospels taught radical notions of love, tolerance, and openness to the world that expressed the opposite of what the ultranationalists proclaimed. Such notions could only be nourished by freedom and the desire, within church tradition, to constantly see the world anew.

Conclusion

Men’s views had several implications for the church and the direction he thought it needed to take. The church needed to sever its connection to the government, because such an alliance had hindered the church’s independence, stifled its creative religious-philosophical thought, and undermined its social role. Most important, the alliance with the government had associated the church with violence, which had resulted in a monstrous distortion of its spiritual mission and had fostered actions opposed to its essential purposes. The violent persecution of the Old Believers that began in the seventeenth century served as a prime example of such perverted thinking. It was essential, Men believed, for the church to separate itself from the government if the church was to fulfill its spiritual purpose.

While the Patriarchate, in the mid-1990s, sharply criticized certain reformers in the church, particularly Father Georgy Kochetkov, for their supposed rejection of Orthodox tradition, the criticism indirectly (yet inappropriately) applied to Men. Aleksii II charged the reformers with “undermining the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church” and “creating an alien theology.”⁷² Men’s enemies often leveled such accusations at him, both during his life and especially after his death, asserting that he stood on the fringes of the church, far from its central teachings and traditions.⁷³ However, Men represented an important line of thought and belief within Orthodoxy that extended back to the church fathers, who sought to connect the church to society, viewed compassion and humility as essential aspects of Orthodoxy, and taught openness to the world.⁷⁴ Several of Men’s followers moved further

away from church doctrine than he was prepared to go. The patriarch understood the distinction, but many others in the church hierarchy viewed all the reformers as heretics.

Men seldom addressed the political world with its clashes of competing interests and dogged pursuits of power and influence. But his teachings had major immediate implications for Russia's evolving political order. Men's emphasis on personalism would foster a political environment that required religious liberty, welcomed diverse religious beliefs, and saw freedom of conscience as an essential aspect of humanity. He had a passionate love for people, seeing in their triumphs and their faults, their similarities and their diversity, evidence of God's creation. He also loved discovering the components of the world, finding their connections, and observing their beauty. The imagination this required could not be forced into a narrow political or religious framework. The Orthodox tradition, as Men interpreted it, encouraged, rather than restricted, this quality of imagination. Men's teachers and his own experiences emphasized the importance of looking twice at the world and penetrating beneath its outer, physical appearance to the hidden structure lying underneath. In the surrounding environment that placed such emphasis on material existence, the imagination enabled one to discover another reality. Imagination went beyond the material and the purely rational; it stressed the importance of mystery and the need to see things in a new light, as the philosopher Kaprianova, the artist Vatagin, and Men's other childhood teachers had impressed on him. Cultivating the imagination, Men claimed, was among the primary responsibilities of the church.

Although he underscored the importance of freedom and imagination, Men also saw another, darker, and more ominous side to the church. In interpreting its responsibilities, the church too often had exploited them and, paradoxically, had turned them into "occasions for arrogance."⁷⁵ It had fostered what Men called "false convictions," misreading the scriptures to provide support for intolerance, fanaticism, and hatred.⁷⁶ The Gospels' teachings about love required tolerance and openness in human relationships:

If in the name of the Gospels are sanctioned acts of punishment and intolerance, then such an interpretation is a lie, similar to the well-known lie in which in the name of equality they chopped off heads, in the name of freedom they sent people to the camps, and in the name of brotherhood they took away everything that distinguished human beings, in all their diversity, from one another.⁷⁷

Freedom, equality, and brotherhood are among our noblest of words. But, according to Men, they are also among the most easily perverted and can be used in ways opposite to their real meaning. When the artist sings of God, he or she sings of love, of openness to the world; that love, that creativity, will be multifaceted and will come from the soul.⁷⁸

Men's teachings were deeply threatening to many people in Russian society. His universalism challenged political extremists who interpreted Orthodoxy primarily as a vital part of Russia's national identity. Men's teachings on creativity also confronted Orthodox Church officials, who saw the country's primary need as restoring the church's power, rather than regenerating the spirit. Men never became a religious dissident; he refrained from signing letters and petitions expressing his opposition to the government. He envisioned himself as a pastor and a priest of a small village parish. But, as Igor Pochoshajew observes, he presented a more profound challenge to the political and religious establishment than the dissidents.⁷⁹ On the morning of Sunday, September 9, 1990, as he traveled to his parish church, Men was murdered with an ax; his courageous and penetrating mind was stilled.

However, his teachings continue to resound in his books, in his published lectures and sermons, in the special reading room named in his honor in the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, and in the lives of his followers in Russia and elsewhere. In one of his last public lectures, Men cited Christ's words, "I will be with you all the days until the end of time." Christ, Men emphasized, did not say, "I left with you some kind of text, which you can blindly follow." Rather, Men said that Christ "did not leave anything, only Himself."⁸⁰ To such a creative spiritual legacy, Men's own life bears powerful testimony.

Although many of Russia's current political trends have moved toward development of an autocratic, centralized framework, Men's life and teachings are powerful reminders that Russia's religious culture contains other voices and perspectives. In the hope they offer and their quest for a more open framework, they remain very much alive in the Russia that is taking shape. They may yet exert a more profound influence on the future than the authoritarian voices.

NOTES

1. In earlier days, the warm, dignified presence of Father Georges Chistakov, director of the reading room and a close friend of Men, endowed it with his own special touch.

2. Kornei Chukovsky, quoted in Vladimir Andreevich Skorodenko, *Margarita Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature* (Moscow: Rudomino, 2004), 6.

3. Vladimir Andreevich Skorodenko, *Vserossiiskaya gosudarstvennaya biblioteka inostrannoi literatury imeni M. I. Rudomino, 1922–1997* (Moscow: Rudomino, 1997), 28–29.

4. Yekaterina Iurevna Genieva, interview with author, Moscow, June 9, 2006.

5. For some superb studies that reveal many diverse aspects of Men's ministry, see Yves Hamant, *Alexander Men: A Witness for Contemporary Russia (A Man for our Times)*, trans. Steven Bigham (Torrance, CA: Oakwood, 1995); Andrei Alekseevich Yeremin, *Otets Aleksandr Men, Pastyr na rubezhe vekov*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Carte Blanche, 2001); Michael Plekon, "Alexander Men: A Modern Martyr, Free in the Faith, Open to the World," in *Living Icons: Persons of Faith in the Eastern Church*, ed. Michael Plekon, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); and Zoya Afanasevna Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya* (Moscow: Izd-vo Pristselya, 1995). See also Mikhail Aksenev-Meerson, "Zhizn svoyu za drugi svoya," in *Pamyati protoiereya Aleksandra Menya*, ed. T. V. Gromova, 116–20 (Moscow: Rudomino, 1991); Mikhail Aksenev-Meerson, "The Life and Work of Father Aleksandr Men," in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalden, 13–27 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993). Aksenev-Meerson's essays contain biographical materials and insightful views of Men's theology.

6. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 61.

7. Aleksandr Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 3. I wish to express my gratitude to Pavel Volfovich Men, Aleksandr's brother, who gave me access to these then-unpublished autobiographical materials. These autobiographical notes are preserved in the office of the Aleksandr Men Foundation in Moscow. Pavel Men is director of the Aleksandr Men Foundation (Fond imeni Aleksandra Menya), which is located on the second floor of the Church of Saints Kosma and Damian on Stoleshnikov Pereulok in Moscow. Aleksandr wrote the notes sporadically, over many years. They are incomplete, and his work on them was interrupted repeatedly because of his outside responsibilities and other pressures he faced. Written in the form of a diary, the notes offer much more detail in some years than in others. For example, entries for the 1950s include only a paragraph or two per year. These important autobiographical materials have recently been published, although I have not yet had access to the book. See Aleksandr Men, *O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma* (Moscow: Fond imeni Aleksandra Menya, 2007). Subsequent references below are to the unpublished materials.

8. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 44.

9. Vera Yakovlevna Vasilyevskaya, *Katakomby XX veka: Vospominaniya* (Moscow: Fond imeni Aleksandra Menya, 2001), 36.

10. Pavel Volfovich Men, interview with author, Moscow, June 2, 2006.

11. Vasilyevskaya, *Katakomby XX veka*, 73–74. Vera Yakovlevna's personal recollections of the catacomb church leaders and her struggles to develop her own path offer a firsthand account of underground religious life and the attempt to establish a private existence in the face of enormous public pressure to take the opposite direction. For information on the Optina elders, see Vadim M. Bakusev et al., eds., *Optina pustyn: Russkaya pravoslavnyaya dukhovnost* (Moscow: Kanon+, 1997).

12. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 4. Father Seraphim's immediate successor, following his death in 1942, was Father Petr Shipkov (1881–1959). Shortly before his arrest in October 1943, Father Petr planned the transfer of the church leadership to Mother Mariya, the director of a small, secret women's monastery in the Sergiev Posad region. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 51–52.

13. *Ibid.*, 4.

14. *Ibid.*, 4.

15. *Ibid.*, 4.

16. Father Georges Chistakov, interview with author, Moscow, May 30, 2006. See also Wallace L. Daniel, "Fr Aleksandr Men and the Conflict between Freedom and Power" (unpublished manuscript), 24–25.

17. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 7–8; Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 67–70.

18. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 77.

19. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 5–6.

20. *Ibid.*, 5.

21. *Ibid.*, 5–6. Theosophy is a synthesis of philosophy, science, and religion that signifies a "Divine Wisdom" and is derived from the Alexandrian philosophers of the third century. The theosophists sought to convince Jews, Christians, and pagans to put aside their disputes and strife, claiming that they were all descendents of the same truth and held this truth in common.

22. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 5.

23. *Ibid.*, 4; Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 77.

24. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 5.

25. *Ibid.*, 9.

26. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 144–47.

27. Elizabeth Roberts and Ann Shukman, eds., *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Prophetic Writings of Alexander Men* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 10.

28. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 28.

29. *Ibid.*, 13; Hamant, *Alexander Men*, 71–72.

30. This church, the Presentation of the Virgin, was in the village of Akulovo, about thirty-five minutes from Moscow by train. Men served there for two years before he was sent to the town of Alabino, about thirty miles from Moscow, also to the southwest.

31. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 28. At Alabino, Men's small parish did not face the brunt of the persecutions and the 1961 reforms, enacted by the government to exert tight party controls over church operations. Men had friendly relationships with the local authorities, and he often worked out agreements with them that benefited both parties. Hamant, *Alexander Men*, 72; and Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 190–92.

32. Maslenikova, *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 160–63.

33. Men had already published parts of *Syn chelovechesky* in *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhy* during Vedernikov's tenure as editor. Men, "O sebe: vospominaniya, intervyyu, besedy, pisma," 10, 25.

34. See Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, ed. and trans. Edward E. Roslof (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Mikhail Vitalevich Shkarovsky, *Russkaya Pravoslavnyaya Tserkov i sovetskoe gosudarstvo v 1943–1964 godakh: ot "peremiriya" k novoi voine* (St. Petersburg: DEAN+ADIA-M, 1995); Mikhail Vitalevich Shkarovsky, *Obnovlencheskoe dvizhenie v Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi XX veka* (St. Petersburg: Nestor, 1999); Mikhail Ivanovich Odintsev, *Gosudarstvo i tserkov v Rossii: XX vek* (Moscow: Luch, 1994); and V. A. Alekseev, *Ilyuzy i dogmy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991).

35. Men's connections to Moscow intellectuals began earlier, in the late 1960s, when he served in the Tarasovka parish; he led wide-ranging discussions of literature, theology, art, and politics. Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost & the Gospel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 88–89.

36. David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 363. See also Sergey Bychkov, introduction to Aleksandr Men "Rol tserkvi v sovremennom mire," *Segodnya*, September 10, 1994, 11.

37. Metropolitan Ioann, "The West Wants Chaos," in *Christianity after Communism: Social, Political, and Cultural Struggle in Russia*, ed. Niels C. Nielson Jr., 107–12 (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Ralph Della Cava, "Reviving Orthodoxy in Russia: An Overview of the Factions in the Russian Orthodox Church," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 38, no. 3 (1997): 387–414.

38. Father Vladimir, "Ne khlebom edinym," *Nash sovremennik*, 1990, no. 6: 55–56.

39. Sergey Borisovich Filatov, "Russkaya pravoslavnyaya tserkov i politicheskaya elita," in *Religiya i politika v postkommunisticheskoi Rossii*, ed. L. N. Mitrokhin, 99–118 (Moscow: Institut filosofii RAN, 1994); Wallace Daniel, "Religion and the Struggle for Russia's Future," *Religion, State and Society* 24, no. 4 (1996): 367–83; Andrei Borisovich Zubov, Mikhail Petrovich Mchedlov, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, Aleksandr Ilich Kurdriavtsev, Peter Berger, Christopher Marsh, and Wallace L. Daniel, "Orthodoxy, Civil Society, and Democracy" (round table discussion, Danilov Monastery, Moscow, July 9, 2003).

40. Men, "Rol tserkvi," 11.

41. Aleksandr Men, "Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi," in *Radostnaya vest (lektsy)*, ed. M. V. Sergeeva (Moscow: Vita-Tsentr, 1992), 249–50.

42. *Ibid.*, 250.

43. *Ibid.*; Men, "Rol tserkvi," 11.

44. Men, "Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi," 251.

45. Men, "Rol tserkvi," 11. Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century religious philosophical thinkers emphasized the need for an independent church, and Men sought guidance from them. Elsewhere, Men criticized the government's relationship with the church: "The government has always aspired that the Church would not develop independent thoughts, nor take an independent position whatsoever on any kind of concrete real-life problem." Aleksandr Men, "Mozhno li reformirovat pravoslavnyuyu tserkov: neizvestnoe intervyyu Aleksandra Menya," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 2, 1992, 6; Men's interview was also published as "Problemy tserkvi iznutri," in *Kultura i dukhovnoe voskhozhdenie*, ed. R. I. Albertkova and M. T. Rabotyaga (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1992), 440–45.

46. Men, "Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi," 251.

47. *Ibid.*, 251–52.

48. *Ibid.*, 252.

49. *Ibid.*, 252.

50. Men, "Rol tserkvi," 11. Men also pointed to the church's limited social role and how, in the provinces, the lifestyle of a large majority of the clergy was little distinguished from the poorest villagers. Given these circumstances, Men did not find it surprising that the church as an institution engendered little respect in the eyes of Russia's educated society. Nor did he find it difficult to understand why the church fell easily and quickly after the Bolsheviks came to power; it lacked the popular support, social respect, and deep-rooted creativity to withstand the Bolsheviks' ferocious attack.

51. Men, "Christianity: The Universal Vision," in Roberts and Shukman, 94 (see n27).

52. Lesley Chamberlain, *Motherland: A Philosophical History of Russia* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), 62.

53. Aleksandr Men, "Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ev," in *Mirovaya dukhovnaya kultura khristianstvo tserkov: Leksy i besedy*, ed. Anastasiya Andreeva et al., 2nd ed. (Moscow: Fond imeni Aleksandra Menya, 1997), 425–26.

54. Mikhail Gershenzon, "Preface to First Edition," in *Vekhi: Landmarks, A Collection of Articles about the Russian Intelligentsia*, trans. and ed. by Marshall S. Shatz and Judith E. Zimmerman (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), xxxvii. These metaphysical writers did not support the social order the Bolsheviks aspired to build, and Lenin forced them into exile. However, as Men asserted,

even in exile, such remarkable thinkers “never lost their connection to their homeland and to their native spiritual culture,” despite the difficulties of their fate. Men, “Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi,” 253. For the story of their exile and subsequent life, see Lesley Chamberlain, *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

55. Andrei Chernyak, interview with author, Moscow, May 25, 2007. See also Aleskandr Men, “Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdyaev,” in Andreeva et al., *Mirovaya dukhovnaya kultura khristianstvo tserkov*, 501–17; Aleskandr Men, “Otets Sergy Bulgakov,” in Andreeva et al., *Mirovaya dukhovnaya kultura khristianstvo tserkov*, 518–32; and Aleksandr Men “Semen Lyudvigovich Frank,” in Andreeva et al., *Mirovaya dukhovnaya kultura khristianstvo tserkov*, 551–61.

56. Men, “Khristianskaya kultura na Rusi,” 253.

57. Zoya Maslenikova, “Dnevnik i pisma,” in *Zhizn ottsa Aleksandra Menya*, 538–40; Aksenev-Meerson, “Life and Work of Father Aleksandr Men,” 23.

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72. “Patriarch Addresses Moscow Diocese Conference,” *Pravoslavie v Rossii*, December 1997, English translation at <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/9712a.html> (accessed February 9, 2009).

73. Father Andrei Ilia Osipov, interview with author, Sergiev Posad, June 11, 1994. Osipov is Professor of Theology, Kafedra of Theology, Spiritual Academy of the Moscow Patriarchate.

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