

**ORTHODOX POLITICAL THEOLOGIES:  
CLERGY, INTELLIGENTSIA AND SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY  
IN REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA**

Alexandra Medzibrodzky

A DISSERTATION

in

History

Presented to the Faculties of the Central European University  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Budapest, Hungary

2020

Dissertation Supervisor: Matthias Riedl

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## **Technical Notes**

Transliteration of Russian Cyrillic in the dissertation is according to the simplified Library of Congress transliteration system. Well-known names, however, are transliterated in their more familiar form, for instance, ‘Tolstoy’ instead of ‘Tolstoi’. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Dates before February 1918 are according to the Julian style calendar which is twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind in the twentieth century.

Reference to published primary sources is provided in the format of their first publication in order to highlight the publishing context of the original publication. If an article or articles were later republished as an independent brochure then page reference corresponds to the independent publication.

## ABSTRACT

The dissertation is the intellectual history of the Orthodox left during the revolutionary years of 1905-8 in Imperial Russia. The research reconstructs debates and dialogues between progressive clergy and radical religious intelligentsia following the massacre of Bloody Sunday on 9 January 1905. The dissertation interprets the visions that emerged in the network of the Orthodox left in the framework of ‘political theologies’. It focuses on three programs and their theo-political language: the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation; the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle; and the Union of Christian Politics. Members argued that the mutually dependent relationship between the tsar and the people, which served as a political bedrock for the Empire for centuries, was now beyond repair. The bloodshed was perceived as a fundamental break in Russian Orthodox political theory, and the horrible events inspired religious intelligentsia and progressive clergy to theorise about politics and social justice as Orthodox believers.

The dissertation identifies the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost*’ (sociality) as the focal point of all programs that emerged among advocates of the Orthodox left in the period. The concept had paligenetic power, it was meant to reinvigorate the Church and to re-Christianise the whole of *fin de siècle* Russian society. My research argues that the theo-political imagination and language of the Orthodox left was inspired both by Russian Orthodox tradition, in particular by Modern Russian Theology; and by non-Orthodox traditions of social Christianity, but it developed in opposition to the Marxist left. The analysed projects were short-lived due to internal conflicts and repressions by Church and state, but they represent a vibrant chapter in the history of Russian Orthodox social and political thought, reflecting on theo-political concepts that remain central to the Russian Orthodox world up until today.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nikolai Fedorov, an excentric Russian philosopher in the nineteenth century, believed that culture was the product of many generations, therefore, claiming copyright for one's work was unjustified and even selfish. He argued that creation is mostly borrowing from others, contemporaries and predecessors. Thus, one's original contribution always remains minute – we are all just contributing morsels to the collective knowledge of our ancestors and peers. I am obliged to put my name on this dissertation according to the CEU PhD guidelines, but it must be acknowledged that many others contributed to the writing of this dissertation.

I am eternally grateful to Matthias Riedl, for taking me on as supervisee when he did not have to, for all the last-minute recommendation letters, discussions, and detailed comments on my research. I always knew that I can count on you, and that was more important for writing this dissertation than anything else. There would be no dissertation without your guidance and support.

Throughout the years, I was lucky to be mentored by outstanding professors all over the world. Their guidance contributed to my research immensely both on a personal and professional level. During my stay in the USA, I could not have wished for a better faculty sponsor than Claudia Verhoeven, being as honest and approachable a person as she is. Many of the chapter drafts were written in Ithaca and presented at chapter seminars, her expertise on Russian radicalism and on writing intellectual history shaped my research greatly. I am also grateful to Manfred Sing, my mentor at the Institute in European History in Mainz, for his comments on my research and lively discussions on a wide range of topics, including Islamic liberation theologies. During my fieldwork year in Kazan', I say thank you to Elena Khabibullina at the Kazan' Federal University for being my supervisor and for giving me the freedom to work independently.

Professors at the History Department of CEU helped and influenced me during the years I spent there as an MA and a PhD student. I am greatly indebted

to Balázs Trencsényi for his paradigm-changing courses on political languages and for being one of the few people who believed in this project from the very beginning;

to Karl Hall for the inspiring courses which simply made me look at the world differently;

to Nadia Al-Bagdadi for her support of my studies and our work together on the Religion and Secularism course;

to Jan Hennings for comments on my research and for turning my attention to continuities and discontinuities in the radical intelligentsia tradition;

to Alfred Rieber, Alexei Miller, Constantin Iordachi for guidance that helped me to frame my research agenda;

to Marsha Siefert for a great mock comprehensive exam and for advising to start compiling a list for acknowledgements early. (It would be much harder to write this section if I did not follow her advice.)

My interaction with academics throughout the world heavily influenced the writing of this dissertation. I am grateful

to Simon Dixon for providing me with useful comments in the crucial initial phase of the project;

to Victoria Frede-Montemayor for our discussions in Budapest and for highlighting the importance of triggering events in the mobilisation of intellectuals;

to Page Herrlinger for her interest in my research and discussions at various conferences around the world;

to Frances Nethercott for discussions on Russian intellectual history in Budapest and in Chicago;

to Thomas Bremer for his comments on my research in Berlin.

I had the chance to discuss my research with various academics during my fieldwork year in Russia. I am particularly thankful to Alexander Semyonov for his warm welcome in St. Petersburg and his comments on my dissertation draft. I am also grateful for discussions with Yulia Balakshina, Dmitrii Golovushkin, Andrei Mikhailov and Svetlana Malysheva. My research methodology was shaped by discussions on conceptual history and intellectual history with Anton Jansson, Wiktor Marzec and Niklas Olsen.

Parts of my research were presented at various workshops throughout the years, I am particularly indebted to participants of the chapter seminar at CEU, the Religion and Russian Revolution workshop in Berlin, the research seminar at IEG Mainz and the graduate workshop on political thought at Cambridge University.

This dissertation would not be the same without the comments and support I have received from peers at CEU and elsewhere. I am thankful

To Imogen Bayley because I would not have survived this PhD without her;

To Agnes Kelemen for all the support throughout the years and for reading parts of this dissertation;

To Katalin Pataki for our discussions in Mainz;

To Nick Bujalski for comments on my draft chapters and for our discussions on Russian intellectual history in Ithaca;

To Harrison King for bringing me my stranded photocopies of archival materials from Moscow and for our discussions of Russian history;

To Anna Mazanik for our discussions on Russian history and academic life;

To Martin Pjecha, Réka Krizmanics, Ági Kende, Nirvana Siljnovic, Vilius Kubekas, Yulia Karpova, Mladen Medved, Dejan Lukic, Adela Hincu, Rikkamari Muhonen, Anastasia Papushina, Nikola Pantic, Cody Inglis, Una Blagojevic for sharing the CEU experience;

To members and staff of the Telluride House, in particular to Lama Shehadeh, Georgia Andreou, Sidarth Raghunathan, Nathaniel Sibinga, Albert Chu, Joquin Brito and Londell, the year I spent in the house was truly transformative;

To doctoral fellows at the Institute of European History during my stay, in particular, Pablo Hernández Sau, Iza Mrzygłód and Marco Omes.

Eternal thanks to the staff members at the CEU History Department Judit, Anikó, Ági, Móni, Zsuzsi and Esther for all their help and assistance during my studies.

Research has been conducted in various libraries and archives, I would like to thank the staff members who helped me access my sources and literature at the following institutions: CEU Library, the Nikolai Lobachevsky Scientific Library in Kazan', the Russian State Library in Moscow, the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, the Cornell University Library, the Library of the Institute of European History (IEG), the Library of the University of Cambridge, the Central State Historical Archive in St.



Petersburg (TsGIA SPb), State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow (GARF), The National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan in Kazan' (NA RT).

My research and PhD would not have been possible without the financial support of the Central European University, including my CEU Doctoral Fellowship, Summer School Grant, numerous conference travel grants and the Write-up Grant. My fieldwork year at Kazan' was sponsored by the Hungarian State and the Russian Federation. I am thankful to the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Moscow for hosting me during my research stay in the Russian capital. I am indebted to the Provost's International Research Internship Program at Cornell University and the Reese Miller International Exchange Scholarship of the Telluride Association for funding my study abroad year at the USA and for hosting me in the Telluride House in Ithaca. The last year of my doctoral studies was supported by the doctoral fellowship at the Institute of European History at Mainz. I am also grateful for Trinity Hall and William O'Reilly for hosting me at the University of Cambridge.

Finally, I say thank you to my family for their unconditional support throughout years of research and moving around, I knew I could always come home to Budapest.

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*The separation of the Church from life must at last be overcome, and all sides of the natural existence of men – certainly all except sin – are to be included in the grace-abounding life of the Church. This postulate of social Christianity or of Christian humanism is a new dogmatic generalization or a new explanation of the incarnation.*

...

*The developing of this postulate, I believe to be the chief out-reach of modern Russian theological thought. As a doctrine it is not yet sufficiently developed, it is rather a dogmatic postulate than a completed program of life, more prophecy than actuality. But it opens a new way for Christian life and for Christian history.*

(Sergei N. Bulgakov)<sup>1</sup>

*There was no important movement of social Christianity in modern Russia.*

(George Florovsky)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Social Teaching in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology. The Twentieth Hale Annual Memorial Sermon*, (Evanston, Illinois: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1934), 17.

<sup>2</sup> George Florovsky, "The Social Problem in the Eastern Orthodox Church", In *Collected Works of George Florovsky: Christianity and Culture*, Vol. 2., (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 136.

## INTRODUCTION

Following the violent Moscow uprisings in December 1905, the “Correspondence” section of the *Church Voice*, a progressive clerical journal, published the “Moscow letters” by a certain N. Moskovskii.<sup>3</sup> The letter in the first issue of 1906 discussed a common reproach toward clergy: their passivity (*bezdeiatelnost'*) during the uprisings, that no one went “to the barricades to return the madmen to their senses (*vrazumit' bezymtsev*)”. The author of the letter, however, argued that clergy could not have done much in this situation:

If a priest urged them to stop the uprising in the name of Christ, then they, of course, would have responded, as did even a priest from Voronezh at the peasant assembly, that Christ himself was the first socialist.<sup>4</sup>

This report from the ground hints to the conundrum of religion and socialism, present in revolutionary Russia and the long nineteenth century of European history. I first encountered this conundrum when I came across the manifesto of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle from 1905. The manifesto, at first sight, seemed to be a highly unusual text with unfamiliar terminology and concepts. The dissertation born out of the effort to understand *how* such a text could be written in 1905 Imperial Russia and *why* the authors thought it made sense writing it. My aim was to restore the historical intelligibility of these sources. The dissertation addresses the religion-socialism conundrum by reconstructing social Christian Orthodox political theologies in late

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<sup>3</sup> This name is listed as one of the pseudonyms for Nikolai Rozanov, a theologian and teacher. Nikolai Petrovich Rozanov (1857-1941) was a Russian theologian, teacher and writer. He was also the co-editor of the journal *Fight for soberness (V borb'e za trezvosti)*. Reference to his pseudonyms in *Vstrechi s proshlom. Sbornik materialov Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva literatury i isskustva*, [Meeting the past. Collection of materials from the Russian state archive of literature and art] (M.: ROSSPEN, 2004), 147.

<sup>4</sup> N. Moskovskii (Nikolai Rozanov), “Moskovskie pis'ma I. (27 dekabria),” [Moscow Letter I. (27 December) *Tserkovnii golos'* 1 (1906): 31.

Imperial Russia, with a focus on the 1905-8 revolutionary years. Special attention is paid to the language of these political theologies in order to identify conceptual innovations and contestations and to explain the characteristics of the theo-political language of the Orthodox left in late Imperial Russia.

### **(Christian) socialism(s) and (social) Christianities**

The terms ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’ served as reference points for a wide scope of social, political and economic ideas in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> One field has been, however, not particularly interested in socialism: its history has rarely been considered to be part of mainstream religious history. Even though many early socialists relied on progressive Christian ideas and used a Christian language. Lockley highlighted that “Christian eschatological ideas and outlooks were, in fact, ubiquitous in early socialism.” Furthermore, these early socialist visions were linked to “a coming millennial Kingdom on earth”, and to communal living without private property.<sup>6</sup>

French examples of early socialist thought built on the idea of progressive Christianity primarily works by Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Étienne Cabet (1788-1856). In Britain, the first ‘socialists’ were followers of Robert Owen and his “social system” based on communal living and shared property. Owen was openly hostile to Christianity, even though Owenites were influenced by radical Pietist traditions, including the American Shakers. An early

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<sup>5</sup> Gregory Claeys, “Non-Marxian Socialism 1815–1914.” In *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, edited by Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 524.

<sup>6</sup> Lockley refers to this as the consequence of “a distinctive legacy from radical Pietism – the American Shaker and Harmonist communities of common property”. Philip Lockley, “Capitalism and Socialism” In *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought* / Edited by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe and Johannes Zachhuber, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 271. Harmonists were originally a German pietist sect established at Württemberg by George Rapp who due to their persecution moved to the United States. Their community in Indiana, New Harmony was purchased by Robert Owen in 1825.

socialist in Germany, Wilhelm Weitling (1808-1871), based his ideas on a radical interpretation of the Gospel which he discussed in his work *The Poor Sinner's Gospel* (1845).<sup>7</sup> He formulated his ideas in his writings in a clear Christian political language.<sup>8</sup> As Clays commented, “[m]ost forms of nineteenth-century non-Marxian socialism saw themselves as supplanting or extending Christianity”.<sup>9</sup>

The Christian communism of Per Götrek (1798-1876) also underscored these tensions. Götrek was the Swedish publisher, maybe even translator of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). It is telling that the Swedish translation of the Manifesto replaced the slogan of “Workers of the world, unite!” with “The voice of the people is the voice of God” (Folkets röst, guds röst!).<sup>10</sup> As Jansson explained, Götrek advocated for the renunciation of private property on the basis of the Gospel passage on the rich and the Kingdom of God (Mt 19) and argued that the “rigorous and clear description of the social life of the first Christians” was to serve as a model for life. He also used the imagery of the kingdom of God on earth,<sup>11</sup> in a speech at a newly founded workers’ association in 1850 he summarised his interpretation of communism:

I am a communist. ... I am also baptised. – Yes, this is indeed true; for communism is a new name for an old thing: Christianity. I am further confirmed in communism through the Gospel, to whose confession I have been baptised. For the true doctrine of communism really exists in the gospel of Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In German *Das Evangelium der armen Sünder*, 1846. English translation: Wilhelm Weitling, *The Poor Sinner's Gospel*; Translated by Dinah Livingstone. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> See Anton Jansson, “The Pure Teachings of Jesus”: On the Christian Language of Wilhelm Weitling’s Communism”, In *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 2018 3 (29), 30-48.

<sup>9</sup> Claeys, “Non-Marxian Socialism, 545. Julian Strube also highlighted the essentially religious content of early socialism in his dissertation on the founder of occultism, Eliphas Lévi. See especially chapter 2 “Sozialismus und Religion” In Julian Strube, “Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus in Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Genealogie der Schriften von Eliphas Lévi”, Dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 2015, 41-96.

<sup>10</sup> See Anton Jansson, “Religion as ideology and critique: Per Götrek’s Christian Communism” In *LIR.journal* 2013 (3), 91-104.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 96. The quote is Anton Jansson’s translation. Footnote 32: Per Götrek: Tal, hållet vid Arbetare-föreningens allmänna sammankomst i Stockholm den 12 Maj 1850 (Stockholm, 1850). The quote is

There is clearly a tension in the history of early socialism and its relation to religion. One explanation for the origins of this conundrum was proposed by Gareth Stedman Jones, as part of his effort to put “socialism back into western Europe’s religious history”.<sup>13</sup> He argued that the emergence of socialism in Europe was closely connected to the question: “how to bring the French Revolution to an end?” The distinctive feature of socialist thought was its response to this question: formulating a new world order “based upon a new creed or ‘spiritual power’ (*pouvoir spirituel*)”, not on obsolete Catholic belief, but on “scientific truths about nature, human and cosmological.” In this interpretation, the real ambition of socialism was not to replace the state, but the church.<sup>14</sup>

A key group in the Nicholaevan era that was profoundly affected by early socialist literature was the Petrashevsky circle in the 1840s. It was organised by Mikhail Petrashevsky, a devout follower of Charles Fourier’s thought. The circle read various French social thinkers, including Lamennais’s *Words of a Believer* in Church Slavonic translation. The circle was committed to the idea of formulating a “New Christianity”. Petrashevsky himself was fully committed to Fourier, he even set up a model phalanstery for seven peasant families on his estate, but the peasants burned it down.<sup>15</sup> The most well-known member of the Petrashevsky circle was the young Fedor Dostoevsky. After the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, members were arrested and

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Anton Jansson’s translation: “Jag är communist. ... Jag är dertill döpt. – Ja, så är det i sanning; ty kommunismen är ett nytt namn på en gammal sak: Christendomen. Jag är ytterligare bekräftad uti kommunismen genom det Evangelium, till hvars bekännelse jag blifvt döpt. Ty kommunismens lära finnes verklig i Christi Evangelium.”

<sup>13</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, “Religion and the origins of socialism,” In *Religion and the Political Imagination*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>15</sup> Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 376-8.



sentenced to death. Sentences were eventually changed to incarceration, but a mock execution reconfirmed for members and the society that the Tsar is the arbiter of death and life in the Empire.

Stedman Jones did not discuss further implications of his interpretative paradigm for the churches and their members. He focused on explicating the religious content the early socialist triumvirate, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen.<sup>16</sup> The other side of this coin, however, is the history of Christian social traditions in Europe. While the line is not clearcut, I differentiate between early socialist and Christian social traditions in their perception of the church as a vehicle for reform and regeneration. Social Christian traditions imagined social regeneration without discarding the idea of the church. These are heterogeneous traditions that were manifested in various political settings and forms; therefore, only those will be highlighted which served as important reference points for the Russian Orthodox context.

The British Christian socialist movement emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the Chartist movement and to revolutionary Europe. Its main propagator, Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872)<sup>17</sup> developed an alternative theology of kingdom – not one that was about to come, but one which was already here. His thought will be discussed more in detail later in the dissertation. Maurice advocated for the Christianisation of society, but he did not desire radical social change as the existing social structure was already sanctified by the presence of

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<sup>16</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones investigated the same idea about early socialism in more detail in Gareth Stedman Jones, “European Socialism from the 1790s to the 1890s,” In Warren Breckman and Peter E. Gordon, eds. *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought: Volume 1, The Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 196-231.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872), Anglican theologian, one of the founders of British Christian Socialism in the nineteenth century. He was a prolific writer, he gained his reputation by the publication of *The Kingdom of Christ* in 1838. He believed that competition was unchristian and he organised cooperative associations among workers.

the Kingdom of God. Lockley interpreted the socialist content of British Christian Socialism as a synonym for cooperation which was opposed to anti-socialist competition.<sup>18</sup>

From the Catholic context, it is important to highlight the role of Félicité Lamennais (1782-1854), a forerunner of Catholic social thought. His main ideal in the 1820s was “the social regeneration of France, and indeed of Europe, through the renaissance of Catholicism.”<sup>19</sup> His work *Words of a Believer* (*Paroles d'un croyant*, 1834)<sup>20</sup> condemned the established social order and had a considerable influence on contemporary socialists.<sup>21</sup> Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856),<sup>22</sup> a Russian philosopher, was strongly influenced by Lamennais. Billington claimed that Lamennais’s reception in Russia connected interest in Catholicism and socialism.<sup>23</sup>

Social Christian movements in Germany emerged both in the Protestant and the Catholic context.<sup>24</sup> Russian sources reflect mostly on figures in the Protestant milieu,

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<sup>18</sup> Lockley, “Capitalism and Socialism”, 272.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Roper Vidler, *Prophecy and Papacy: A Study of Lamennais, the Church, and the Revolution* (London: SCM, 1954), 101.

<sup>20</sup> Lamennais’s work was inspired by Adam Mickiewicz’s *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* (Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego, 1832).

<sup>21</sup> On comparison and connections between Lamennais’s “neo-Catholic” thought and early socialists see Julian Strube, “Ein Neues Christentum: Frühsozialismus, Neo-Katholizismus und die Einheit von Religion und Wissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift Für Religions- Und Geistesgeschichte* 66, no. 2 (2014): 140–62.

<sup>22</sup> Petr Yakovlevich Chaadaev (1794-1856) was a Russian philosopher, who formulated fundamental themes that dominated the history of Russian thought ever since. In his *Philosophical Letters*, written between 1826-1831 in French, he argued that Russia has fallen out of history because of her conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy instead of Catholicism. He was declared legally insane for these ideas and put under house arrest. Later he reformulated his views, in his *Apology of a Madman* (1837), he had a more positive interpretation of Russia’s role in history.

<sup>23</sup> James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 321-2.

<sup>24</sup> For a brief summary of the German social Christian context see section 5. In part 1 - Christentum und Kommunismus angesichts der sozialen Herausforderungen des 19. Jahrhunderts. In Nadezhda Beljakova, Thomas Bremer, and Katharina Kunter, eds., *‘Es Gibt Keinen Gott!’: Kirchen und Kommunismus ; Eine Konfliktgeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 29-44. On Catholic social thought in Germany see Joseph Nestor Moody, ed., *Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movements, 1789-1950* (New York: Arts, Inc, 1953), 325-583.

Adolf Stoecker (1835-1909) and Friedrich Naumann (1860-1919). An important antecedent for both thinkers was the Inner Mission movement, founded by Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881), a Conservative Lutheran pastor. The movement aimed to realise the rebirth of Christianity, by relying on brotherly love, charity and Christian education. Adolf Stoecker was an influential church leader and Lutheran pastor, known for founding the right-wing Christian Social Workers' Party (Christlichsoziale Arbeiterpartei) which combined conservative and progressive ideas. Stoecker perceived Marxism as a threat to the church and the nation; therefore, he attempted to create an alternative theology for social change. The appeal of Marxism in his view was not its social ideal, but its social criticism of the consequences of unregulated capitalism. He proposed the reformation of the Church and immediate social reforms to prevent a social revolution by dehumanised workers.<sup>25</sup> There is a consensus that his ideas and public speeches had anti-Semitic rhetoric. He is regarded as a moderate, but influential anti-Semite in the literature.<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Naumann was a liberal politician, influenced both by Wichern and Stoecker. Naumann, son of a Lutheran pastor, studied theology and was impressed by the social work of the Inner Mission. Naumann's thought went through considerable changes, as he tried to reconcile liberalism with socialism and later with nationalism. Despite these turns and shifts, the cultural and social power of religion remained a constant pillar of his ideas throughout his life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ronald L. Massanari, 'True or False Socialism: Adolf Stoecker's Critique of Marxism from a Christian Socialist Perspective', *Church History* 41, no. 4 (1972): 487-496.

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Jeremy Telman argued that interpretations of Stoecker's moderate anti-Semitism downplay its racial rhetoric, and argued to regard him as one of the "more important early representatives of racial anti-Semitism". D. A. Jeremy Telman, 'Adolf Stoecker: Anti-Semite with a Christian Mission', *Jewish History* 9, no. 2 (1995): 93-112.

<sup>27</sup> Wolfhart Pentz, 'The Meaning of Religion in the Politics of Friedrich Naumann', *Zeitschrift Für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 9, no. 1 (28 May 2002): 70-97.

This short reflection on European religious/Christian social(ist) ideas demonstrates that there was a wide range of possible positions and projects behind these labels. The terminology is ambiguous, and this is true for the Russian Orthodox context as well. These questions were neglected during Soviet Russian times due to the reign of anti-religious socialism and militant atheism. Atheism was not only seen in the twentieth century as a part of Soviet Communism, it was considered to be “its very essence”.<sup>28</sup> The political and cultural life of the Russian Empire had been defined for centuries by Orthodox traditions and institutions. How did this country become a militantly atheist Soviet state in such a short period?

Comprehensive literature on Christian Socialism in Russia is relatively scarce, but there are some works which can serve as a point of departure for a more specific approach to investigate Orthodox political theologies and their language. One book that discusses Christian Socialism in Russia was published by Mikhail Sheinman at the end of the 1960s.<sup>29</sup> The work was permeated with Marxist-Leninist vocabulary; therefore, its claims need to be reviewed critically. Sheinman differentiated between two types of Christian socialisms: the first type was linked to the institution of the Church and supported capitalism; the second, the so-called ‘democratic’ Christian socialism, embraced the communist economic system but wished to “enrich” it with Christian principles.

Another comprehensive book on the topic was written by V. P. Sidorov, titled *Christian Socialism in Russian at the end of the nineteenth-beginning of the twentieth*

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<sup>28</sup> Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 6. Smolkin argued that Soviet Communism during its battle against religion transformed itself into its opposite: “a set of positive beliefs and practices with a coherent spiritual center.” 19.

<sup>29</sup> Mikhail M. Sheinman, *Khristianskii sotsializm: istoriia i ideologiia* [Christian Socialism: History and Ideology] (Izdat. “Nauka”, 1969).

century.<sup>30</sup> As it was published in 1995, it had a less ideologically biased language and analysed important archival materials on the issue. Thematically, it focused on progressive clerical actors, Grigorii Petrov, Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) and Georgii Gapon who are discussed in this dissertation too. Sidorov also situated the topic of Christian socialism into the context of the religious search of the intelligentsia, but he did not discuss, for instance, the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. Neither did he pay attention to the language of Christian socialist ideas, but the book is a useful source for an overview of the activity of progressive clergy.

A more recent book published in 2009 by S. S. Ivanov designated the “phenomenon of Christian Socialism” as its central theme. The book extensively covered Sergei Bulgakov’s ideas, but in an ahistorical and acontextual way, not paying attention to the development of Bulgakov’s ideas. Ivanov’s analysis often uses quotations out of context, and the meaning goes through distortion.<sup>31</sup>

The most relevant work on the topic for this dissertation was a two-part article by Jutta Scherrer from the 1970s, entitled *Intelligentsia, religion and revolution: The first manifestations of Christian Socialism in Russia, 1905-1907*.<sup>32</sup> She singled out three

<sup>30</sup> V. P. Sidorov, *Khristianskii sotsializm v Rossii v kontse XIX – nachale XX veka: Filosofsko-religiovedcheskii ocherk*, Cherepovets: Izd-vo ChGPI im. A. V. Lunacharskogo, 1995.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, on page 30 he claims that Ern’s work on Christian property, “which is quite similar to Tolstoyian ideas, is convincingly refuted by Bulgakov” and brings a quotation by Bulgakov where he mentions that the communism of the first centuries was based on love and was mostly about communal consumption. If we look at the original text, literally before the sentence quoted by Ivanov, Bulgakov says that “[c]ommunity of belongings (*obshchnost’ imushchestv*), communism, illuminates the best times of the first centuries of Christianity, and this order should be acknowledged as the norm for property relations.” And then Bulgakov added in a footnote a reference to Ern’s work on Christian property, so, he was not refuting it. Ivanov discussed at another place the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, as a purely propaganda organisation which supported terrorism and brought quotations from Svetsitskii’s work *Terror and Immortality* without taking into consideration Svetsitskii’s whole theory on violence. His reference to the text was mistaken, the quote he uses is referred in footnote 88 to be on page 76 in the original, but it is on page 26. See S.S. Ivanov, *Khristianskii sotsializm kak politicheskii fenomen: opyt Rossii i Evropy*, Saratov: Izdat. Tsentr SGSEU, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Jutta Scherrer, “Intelligentsia, Religion, Révolution: Premières Manifestations D’un Socialisme Chrétien En Russie. 1905-1907” In: *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 1976): 427–66. and the second part in *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* Vol. 18, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Jun.,

groups as the first Christian Socialist projects in late Imperial Russia: the *Union (or Brotherhood) of Zealots for Church Renovation*; *Christian Brotherhood of Struggle*; and the *Union of Christian Politics*. This list served as a starting point for me to investigate the conundrum of religion and socialism in late Imperial Russia, and to investigate Orthodox political theologies. Scherrer's article contains valuable insights and hints for further research, for instance, she mentioned the importance of interaction between the laity and "progressive" clergy and drew attention to the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost'*. She noted the problems of using the term "Christian Socialism" in the Russian context, and she recognised the pitfalls and unsystematic use of the term in the European context. The dissertation adopts this scepticism and refers to these projects more generally as Orthodox political theologies without specifying their social or socialist content upfront.

### The relevance of the research

If the Christian East has any established reputation, it consists in its purported detachment from historical realities, its concern with "mysticism", its one-sided dedication to liturgical contemplation of eternal truths, and its forgetfulness of the concrete needs of human society, as such.<sup>33</sup>

This reputation of other-worldliness contributed to the lack of attention to Orthodoxy in research on political theology which Hoppe-Kondrikova et al. called an "Orthodoxy amnesia".<sup>34</sup> This dissertation aims to recover memories of Social Christianity among Orthodox clergy and laity during the revolutionary last days of the

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1977): 2-32. Available in Russian: Scherrer, Jutta. "V poiskakh 'khristianskogo sotsializma' v Rossii" [In the Search of 'Christian Socialism' in Russia"] In: *Voprosy filosofii*. 2000, №12.

<sup>33</sup> John Meyendorff, "The Christian Gospel and Social Responsibility: The Eastern Orthodox Tradition in History", In *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, vol. 9., ed. Forrester Church and Timothy George, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 118.

<sup>34</sup> The article highlighted that Ernst Troeltsch's classic *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1912) focused on Catholicism and Protestantism, and only the Byzantine Orthodox tradition was discussed. Olga Hoppe-Kondrikova, Josephien Van Kessel, and Evert Van Der Zweerde, "Christian Social Doctrine East and West: The Russian Orthodox Social Concept and the Roman Catholic Compendium Compared", *Religion, State & Society* 41, no. 2 (June 2013): 202.

Russian Empire. Most churches in the world were forced to respond in some way to industrialisation and modernisation, and such responses were influenced both by the specific socio-political context and the theo-political features of religions.

While Orthodox Churches, and in particular the Russian Orthodox Church, developed a reputation of disregard for the social, there is now an available, officially approved social doctrine within the Russian Orthodox Church – the Sacred Bishops’ Council of the ROC welcomed the new millennia with the adoption of *The Basis of the Social Concept*. This became known as the first official articulation of a social doctrine by the ROC.<sup>35</sup> The document deals with “fundamental theological and ecclesio-social issues” and is often referred to in the literature as a watershed or turnabout in the history of Orthodox churches.<sup>36</sup> The document relied on essential concepts that play an important role in the Orthodox political theologies discussed in this dissertation. Hoppe-Kondrikova et al. identified *sobornost’*, *symphonia*, *bogochelovechestvo* and *pomestnost’* as key underlying principles in the social doctrine.<sup>37</sup> The first three concepts were part of turn-of-the-century debates, especially *bogochelovechestvo*. They are explained in the section on notes on concepts and terminology.

The doctrine refers mostly to the Bible and the Church Fathers as authorities in the question of the social, not so much to theologians, academic or lay. Literature, however, highlighted that religious thinkers Vladimir Solov’ev, Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov “were the first Russians with clear opinions on an Orthodox social

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<sup>35</sup> Available on the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church in six languages (Russian, English, Greek, French, Italian and Spanish), for quotation I use the official English version: <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/>

<sup>36</sup> Wil van den Bercken, ‘A Social Doctrine for the Russian Orthodox Church’, *Exchange* 31, no. 4 (October 2002): 373.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-5.

doctrine”.<sup>38</sup> The lack of references to these thinkers has been explained in the literature by the lack of or at least ambiguous authority of these thinkers to speak for the Church or Orthodoxy: “the opinion of Bulgakov is never more than ‘an opinion’.”<sup>39</sup> The dissertation argues that turn-of-the-century theo-political debates show a similar thematic interest and conceptual base as the social doctrine. There has been interest in the study of Nikolai Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov, but this dissertation expands the circle of religious thinkers that theorised about the social within an Orthodox framework. It also argues that a part of this theorising occurred in dialogue with progressive clergy. Themes like church-state relations, property, politics, war and capital punishment were crucial for social Christian Orthodox political theologies. Even though thinkers discussed in this dissertation lived under a different political regime and faced different challenges than the twenty-first century, the similarity in themes and concepts demonstrate that the underlying question was the same: the nature of the Church and its relationship to a world in transformation.

The recent centenary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution brought up the question of failure – was the Bolshevik revolution a failure? Since the system it created had fallen, it could be considered a failure. This dissertation reconstructs political theologies which are considered to have been failures as they were irreconcilable with the one path that became the historical reality of Russia for the better part of the twentieth century. One way to interpret these visions is that they failed as blueprints for reality, they could not bring to life that socio-political system which they envisioned for Russia. But then, the Bolshevik Marxist vision which eventually triumphed in October 1917 led to a system which does not exist anymore. It seems that the success of an ‘idea’ depends a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>39</sup> Hoppe-Kondrikova et al., “Christian Social Doctrine East and West”, 220.



lot on the historical moment when the question is asked. The success of revolutions depends on various factors: on complex socio-political structural transformations, on acts of individual actors, on struggles of groups organising themselves and often chance and contingencies play an important role which is particularly difficult to reconstruct. Therefore, the dissertation tries to approach its research material less from the perspective of failure, success and historical judgement.

It is an important part of the history of these Orthodox political theologies that they were never translated into a sweeping social movement. But failure can produce meaning. A good example for a meaningful failure in Russian history was the failed attempt by Dmitrii Karakozov to assassinate the Tsar, Alexander II, on 4 April 1866. While most of the literature treated it as an insignificant episode, Claudia Verhoeven argued that it was a key moment in the birth of revolutionary terrorism. Karakozov's failed shot, "was a paradigmatic way of becoming a modern political subject".<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, ideas can fulfil various functions once they have been born, especially if preserved. They contribute to conceptual contestations, thus, can modify semantics and discourse, hence my focus on the language of these political theologies. Ideas are also part of historical memory if recorded in some way. When historical context changes, ideas can find traction and can become relevant again. For instance, one can think about the recovery of Aristotle's work by its translation into Latin in the twelfth-thirteenth century, or the renewed interest in nineteenth-century Europe for Joachim of Fiore's *Eternal Evangel* and the three ages.<sup>41</sup> The socio-political and intellectual context in both cases found resonance and meaning in these texts which

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<sup>40</sup> Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov: Imperial Russia, Modernity, and the Birth of Terrorism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>41</sup> See chapters in Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

lead to the rise of their influence. In the Russian context, the rediscovery of the Third Rome doctrine in the nineteenth century demonstrates the power of ideas to be recalled and rediscovered if some of their aspects or as a whole they become relevant in a different historical period.<sup>42</sup>

A final note on evaluating the failure of these political theologies is to remember John Meyendorff's conclusion on the inherent and *inevitable failure* of social Christianity before the end of the world, the second coming – the *parousia* – of Jesus Christ: “a Christian solution of social issues is never either absolute or perfect as long as the *parousia* has not taken place, ... a Christian can live with that imperfection because he knows that the *parousia* will eventually come”.<sup>43</sup> In other words, Christian social projects by default are “failures” in this earthly life and can be fulfilled only on the day of the Apocalypse, but they are not meaningless because their power comes from the absolute faith of believers that the last day will come.

To conclude, the question whether these ideas led to a socio-political movement within Russia can be answered without further research – the answer is no. Therefore, the dissertation shifts the focus from what these ideas were *not* doing to what they were

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<sup>42</sup> Contrary to non-specialist belief, the idea that Russia became the Third Rome after the fall of Constantinople 1453 was not an important part of Muscovite self-image during the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. The idea can be found in a series of letters by Filofei, a Pskovian monk, written in the early sixteenth century. It was known among bookmen, but it did not find much traction, partly due to the dominance of another idea in the period, the understanding that Russia was the New Israel. The idea of the Third Rome was rediscovered and embraced by late Imperial historians in the nineteenth century when Filofei's writings were republished. See: Daniel B. Rowland, ‘Moscow-The Third Rome or the New Israel?’, *The Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (1996): 591-614, and Marshall Poe, ‘Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a “Pivotal Moment”’ *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49, no. 3 (2001): 412-429.

<sup>43</sup> John Meyendorff, “The Christian Gospel and Social Responsibility”, In George Huntston Williams, F. Forrester Church, and Timothy George, *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday / Edited by F. Forrester Church and Timothy George.*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought ; Vol.19 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 130.

doing – they were asking questions. Questions which remain relevant, for instance, social justice, secular authority and property relations.

### **Research question and methodology**

The main research aim of the dissertation is to restore historical intelligibility to various social Christian visions in late Imperial Russia. Correspondingly, the main research hypothesis is that these programs become intelligible if they are interpreted in the framework of political theologies and if the analysis reflects on their language and rhetoric. The main research question of the dissertation is whether there was a specific social Christian theo-political language that emerged among progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia during 1905-8 in Imperial Russia. The dissertation introduces the term “Orthodox left” to refer to actors who were committed to furthering social justice, and justified their position by advocating for a broadly understood social Christianity or social Gospel. The main research question has two sub-questions. Firstly, who were the main characters in the network of this Orthodox left? Secondly, if it is possible to identify a theo-political language of the Orthodox left, what were its main characteristics? What made it recognisable and distinguishable from other political languages of the period? Characteristics can include key concepts, a socio-political ideal, a way of argumentation, a specific understanding of the human.

The dissertation discusses this research question in five chapters. Chapter 1 will set the historical context for the emergence of Orthodox political theologies. It highlights that the experience of Bloody Sunday triggered a wide-scale disillusionment with autocratic power and contributed to the dissolution of a personalised idea of justice. The chapter also reconstructs the diachronic and synchronic theo-political context of the Orthodox political theologies. Chapter 2-3-4 constitute the research chapters and each present one case study: the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church

Renovation; the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle; and the Union of Christian Politics. Chapter 5 is a reflection and summary of the research findings and the role of the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost'* in the theo-political language of the Orthodox left.

To answer the main research question, the dissertation needs to be primarily a study in intellectual history and a history of political thought. It means that analysis focuses on texts and their contexts – social, political, cultural and theological. My approach has been shaped partly by Western traditions of the history of political thought: *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Cambridge school. These schools highlight different aspects of conceptual historical analysis. The German conceptual historical approach, usually referred to by the German term *Begriffsgeschichte*, is predominantly associated with the scholarly work of Reinhart Koselleck and the publication of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Fundamental historical concepts) with its seven bulky volume. *Begriffsgeschichte* is concerned mainly with the history of changing concepts, in particular in the so-called *Sattelzeit* of German history when, as the *Begriffsgeschichte* approach argues, the vocabulary of political modernity was formed. It paid special attention to the changing temporality of concepts and how this affects the political discourse. Thus, the approach aimed to connect conceptual history to social and political history. It recognised that concepts are not only indicators of conceptual change, but they are constitutive elements of these changes. As Richter noted, “the method assumes that concepts both registered and affected the transformations of governmental, social and economic structures.”<sup>44</sup> This approach introduced a more pronounced *semantic aspect* next to the demand of situating concepts in social and

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<sup>44</sup> Melvin Richter, “Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner, and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*” In: *History and Theory* 1990, 29 (1) February 1, 1990, 46.

political history. One legitimate criticism towards Begriffsgeschichte was its focus on “high literature” and elites.

The Cambridge school, predominantly associated with the works of J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner,<sup>45</sup> was based on the speech acts theory developed by J. L. Austin and on the Wittgensteinian idea that concepts are ‘tools’. The innovation of this contextual approach contested the ahistorical ways of writing and teaching political theory in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. The essence of the method is that “the meaning of every utterance, spoken or written, must be understood as an action performed in order to achieve the agent’s intentions.”<sup>46</sup> The Cambridge school put more emphasis on discourse and contextual analysis than on concepts as such. The contribution of the Cambridge school was its emphasis on the *performative aspect* in conceptual historical research. This approach, however, can often lead to the pitfall of underestimating the role of the available grammar for the speakers, i.e. that the articulation of statements is limited by the ‘language’ given to the historical agent.

Balázs Trencsényi correctly highlighted that these methodologies are “deeply rooted in the given cultural traditions”<sup>47</sup> and there is an on-going debate about their compatibility. Questions revolve around two basic sets of tensions: Firstly, the relationship between individual speech-acts and available discursive traditions. Secondly, the way individual concepts relate to modes of speech organised into more complex units of meaning and connotations.<sup>48</sup> In his discussion of adaptation of

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<sup>45</sup> Although Pocock and Skinner never referred to each other work as constituting a coherent methodological approach or school, subsequent interpretations of their work perceived significant similarities and refer to their ideas as the “Cambridge School”.

<sup>46</sup> Richter, “Reconstructing the History of Political Languages”, 59.

<sup>47</sup> “Conceptual History and Political Languages: On the Central-European Adaptation of the Contextualist-Conceptualist Methodologies of Intellectual History” In Petr Roubal and Václav Veber, eds., *Prague Perspectives. Studies in Central and Eastern Europe* (Prague: Klementinum, 2004), 142.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 154.

Western contextualist-conceptualist methodologies to the history of political thought in East-Central Europe, Trencsényi identified the “political languages” paradigm by John G. A. Pocock as the most suitable. Pocock integrated the individual “speech-act” theory into his research methodology, but he also qualified it by claiming that the speakers do not know entirely the meaning of words and concepts they use. He also avoided the determinism of available semantic grammar and structures, as he did not interpret these to be closed systems of language games. Instead, he saw them as “interrelated semantic-rhetorical frameworks mediated by certain keywords used by different communities of speakers”.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, ‘political languages’ per se do not have a history on their own, but they can be a crucial reference point in the narration of political acts.<sup>50</sup>

Following these methodologies, the dissertation pays special attention to concepts and contexts. Concepts are treated as semantic fields integrating in themselves both diachronic and synchronic meaning. Diachronic meaning is the history of the use of the concepts, the reconstruction of the sedimentation of semantic layers which can be actualised in a given historical moment.<sup>51</sup> Diachronic history of a concept is important to identify innovations and interventions – these cannot be detected unless

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 159. See more on Pocock’s methodology: J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> In recent years, there have been several books in Russian history which focused on the reconstruction of the history of concepts or discourses. None of these, however, offered or developed a distinct theoretical and methodological apparatus developed in the Russian context on Russian sources. See: Gary M. Hamburg, *Russia’s Path toward Enlightenment: Faith, Politics, and Reason, 1500-1801* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2017); Richard S. Wortman, *The Power of Language and Rhetoric in Russian Political History: Charismatic Words from the 18th to the 21st Centuries* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

<sup>51</sup> The metaphor of sedimentation resonates with the influential essay by Alfred J. Rieber although he used it for characterising social relations. His essay on the sedimentation of society in the Russian Empire, which argued that “throughout modern Russian history a successive series of social form accumulated, each constituting a layer that covered all or most of society without altering the older forms lying under the surface.” Alfred J. Rieber, “The Sedimentary Society,” In Edith W. Clowes et al., eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 362.

one has some understanding of the possible use of a certain concept in a given historical moment. Synchronic meaning plays a role in the way concepts can act as semantic fields of contestation, there will be plenty of such examples in this dissertation.

The contextual research in the dissertation focuses on three aspects. Firstly, it reconstructs and highlights the socio-political context of the concrete historical moment when the analysed political theologies emerged, i. e. Bloody Sunday and revolutionary Russia during 1905-8. Secondly, it presents a horizontal sketch of the intellectual landscape to underscore the meaning of certain arguments within the larger intellectual context. Finally, it identifies key intellectual influences and sources in order to detect diachronic continuities and ruptures.

This is the fundamental conceptual and intellectual historical approach that informed writing this dissertation. There is, however, one crucial problem if one follows *Begriffsgeschichte* and Cambridge school traditions in research on religious texts – none of them paid much attention to theological content. The *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* focused on social and political concepts, there were only a couple of entries which dealt with religious studies, for instance, “Christianity” or “Secularisation”. Apart from these exceptions, however, “concept history has remained surprisingly uninterested in religious discourse.”<sup>52</sup> A similar disinterest has characterised the Cambridge school. One of its most well-known founders and representatives, Quentin Skinner, neglected religious ideas and self-admittedly “always kept off religious themes” since 1978.<sup>53</sup> There is, however, nothing in the contextual

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<sup>52</sup> Evan F. Kuehn, ‘Concept History and Religious Discourse’, *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 16, no. 3 (3 July 2017): 90.

<sup>53</sup> John Coffey, “Quentin Skinner and the Religious Dimension of Early Modern Political Thought”, In Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Stephan Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 52.

approach that would conflict with its application to texts which have a clear religious content. This was the argument of the book *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion*, whose authors advocated for closer integration of religious studies and intellectual history: “[i]f historians of political thought, for example, can explore the biblical and theological dimensions of political argument, they will produce more rounded expositions of their key texts.”<sup>54</sup> The dissertation, therefore, adopts Pocock’s methodological framework of political languages, but given the central role of religion and theology in its source material, it adds to its analysis a theo-political dimension. In other words, the lack of attention to religion and theology in the discipline of the history of political thought makes it necessary to integrate the study of political theologies into the interpretative framework of the dissertation.

### **Orthodox political theologies**

Johann Baptist Metz argued that political theology as a “concept is ambiguous and therefore liable to misunderstanding. It is, furthermore historically burdened.”<sup>55</sup> The primary association of the term ‘political theology’ among political scientists and historians remains Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) and his anti-liberal and anti-democratic political theology which provided ideological legitimacy for dictatorship. The New Political Theology, developed in the 1950s and 1960s by Johann Baptist Metz, German Catholic theologian, formulated his political theology by “confronting and undermining the theological legitimation for Schmitt’s political theory.”<sup>56</sup> Metz rejected Schmitt’s subjugation of theology and religious tradition to legitimate a theory of the state. In a

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<sup>54</sup> John Coffey and Alister Chapman, “Introduction”, In Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Stephan Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>55</sup> Johann Baptist Metz, “Das Problem einer «Politischen Theologie»” in *Zum Begriff der neuen Politischen Theologie 1967-1997* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1997), 9.

<sup>56</sup> Derek Simon, “The New Political Theology of Metz: Confronting Schmitt’s Decisionist Political Theology of Exclusion,” *Horizons* 30, no. 2 (2003): 230.



nutshell, New Political Theology focuses on the theological analysis of politics and society with all its myriad issues and implications.<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann (1926- ), Protestant advocate of the New Political Theology, highlighted that the subject of old and new political theology is quite different: the first one dealt with “the political religion of power of the state or of revolutionary movement”, while the subject of the second is “the church and Christian communities in society.”<sup>58</sup>

While the dissertation recognises thematic similarities between the New Political Theology<sup>59</sup> and social Christian Orthodox political theologies, my research adopts the use of “political theologies” as an analytical term in a broader sense. The Blackwell Companion gave the following definition for political theology: “the analysis and criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways with

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<sup>57</sup> In the context of Catholic theology, Metz’s was a disciple of Karl Rahner (1904-1984), but also developed a critique of key aspects of Rahner’s transcendental theology. Martinez placed Metz into the context of post-Rahnerian Catholic thought. Martinez identified three follower theologies to Rahner, all of which relied on and reformulated Rahner’s transcendental theology at the same time: Metz political theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez’s Liberation Theology and David Tracy’s Public Theology. Martinez argued that these three types of theologies share certain similarities (partly due to their common Rahnerian legacy) in terms of theological method and content. It is interesting to mention these as they do echo some of the characteristics of Orthodox theo-political visions in this dissertation. Firstly, regarding their method, the role of praxis is crucial to all of them. Metz’s main striving was to create a theological framework for political and social praxis. Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies*, (New York; London: Continuum, 2001), 44.

<sup>58</sup> Moltmann, Jürgen. “European Political Theology.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, edited by Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Randall A. Poole argued that the title “Towards a Russian Political Theology” of an edited collection of works by Sergei Bulgakov, refers to new Metzian political theology. Poole further identified main concerns by Metz’s new political theology as central to the eternal Russian “vexed questions”: “[s]uffering in history, the theodicy problem, redemptive eschatology, and the meaning of progress in light of past suffering”. See Sergii Bulgakov, *Towards a Russian Political Theology*, ed. Rowan Williams. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), and Randall A. Poole, “Russian Political Theology in an Age of Revolution,” In Robin Aizlewood and Ruth Coates, eds., *Landmarks Revisited: The Vekhi Symposium One Hundred Years On* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 147.

the world.”<sup>60</sup> This is a useful basis for defining the concept, but it is too broad for my research; therefore, it needs to be further specified.

An edited volume on the Orthodox tradition, *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges - Divergent Positions*, linked the analysis of political theologies to research on modernity.<sup>61</sup> The starting point of the book was that “all theology was political and all politics were theological” in the premodern period. This condition of the premodern became subject to change in the process of modernisation and with the advent of the condition of the modern. Classical studies of modernisation prophesied the demise of religion and the brave new world of secularisation. The revision of the secularisation thesis highlighted that the relationship between religion and modernity has been more complicated.<sup>62</sup> The volume formulated a definition of political theology within this framework: “the response of a religious tradition, a church or an individual religious thinker, to the changing status of religion in modern society with regard to politics, that is, with regard to the question of how people live together and which laws govern the collectivity.”<sup>63</sup> Articles in the volume operate with “political theologies” as a plurality of responses has emerged and can emerge due to differences in religious tradition, historical epoch or individual thinkers. In this understanding, Carl Schmitt’s political theology is considered to be “one specific Christian response to political modernity” in the Weimar republic.

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Manley Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 1.

<sup>61</sup> Kristina Stoeckl, Ingeborg Gabriel, and Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges - Divergent Positions* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

<sup>62</sup> A good overview of the developments in the study of religion and secularism: Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (OUP USA, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Kristina Stoeckl, “Modernity and Political Theologies”, In Stoeckl, *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity*, 17.

The volume argued that political theologies share a structure of problematics as they try to respond to three challenges of modernity: rupture, liberty and mastery. The religious-cultural disconnect highlights the issues that emerge when religious and cultural belongings are no longer perceived and experienced as naturally related. Liberty refers to the problematics of religious freedom and conversion. Finally, anthropocentric morality is connected to the question of mastery over the natural and social world.<sup>64</sup> Vasilios N. Makrides in another chapter in the volume defined political theology as “a way to analyse the complex interface between Christian theology and politics”.<sup>65</sup>

On the basis of this literature and by taking into consideration the source material, the dissertation research works with the following definition for ‘political theology’: the term is used as an analytical concept to investigate how certain groups and thinkers conceptualised the relation between the divine and the political and formulated their political and ecclesiological programs. In other words, in examples of political theology, the Christian revelation is seen as essential for all questions regarding the order and development of society. Political and theological discourses are treated as inseparable, and theo-political arguments are applied to justify ideal socio-political orders. Politics is not recognised as an autonomous sphere of human activity,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 18-23.

<sup>65</sup> Makrides provided a sketch of Western and Eastern Orthodox developments regarding political theology, and listed certain features in Orthodoxy that contributed to the “underdevelopment” of political theologies in his view, for instance the Byzantine legacy of a symphonic church-state ideal; other-worldly theology; lack of full experience of modernity which Makrides characterised as essentially Western European. From the Russian context, he mentioned Slavophile political theology and the religious philosophy of Vladimir Solov’ev, and Sergei Bulgakov as main contributors to this underdeveloped tradition. See: Vasilios N. Makrides, “Political Theology in Orthodox Christian Contexts: Specificities and Particularities in Comparison with Western Latin Christianity”, In Stoeckl, *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity*, 26.

free from the influence of religion. This does not by default translate into an idealisation of theocratic church-state relations, as this research will demonstrate.

Furthermore, ‘political theology’ is expressed in a theo-political language which is distinct from other political discourses which lack or disregard theological questions. A central feature of a theo-political language is to include references to God, its agency in history and its relation to the individual and/or society. My research analyses political theologies in the Christian context; therefore, there are several specific Christian concepts that are used to constitute theo-political arguments, for instance, the church, Christ and revelation. The dissertation also highlights the particular Eastern Orthodox theo-political vocabulary and the role of Russian Orthodox concepts such as Godmanhood, *sobornost’* or *symphonia*. Christian political theologies rely on the Bible as an authoritative source, but clashes occur regarding the role of tradition and scripture in interpretative authority and methods.

### **Note on concepts and terminology**

Before reflecting on relevant historiographies, a note on concepts and terminology is provided in order to sketch a diachronic conceptual context. This is necessary to be able to recognise conceptual continuities and innovations of the discussed political theologies. The concept of *bogochelovechestvo*, *obshchestvennost’*, *lichnost’*, *sobornost’*, and *symphonia* were all relevant to political theologies by the Orthodox left.

***Bogochelovechestvo*.** The concept of Godmanhood<sup>66</sup> puts emphasis on the cooperation between God and man in redemption in the framework of history. The main

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<sup>66</sup> Bog – God and chelovechestvo – humanity or mankind. There are various available translations for bogochelovechestvo. Paul Valliere prefers the “humanity of God”, Oliver Smith used ‘theanthropy’ in his research. The dissertation applies Godmanhood as it semantically better fits later discussions of Christianity as a religion of Godmanhood and socialism as a religion of Mangodhood.

idea was that through Incarnation, through the birth of Christ, God entered humanity and humanity entered God. As Athanasius of Alexandria formulated in the fourth century: “He was incarnate that we might be made god”.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, redemption is possible only through the co-operation of God and man and through the creation of a perfect moral order by humanity. It has two key elements, “*kenosis* (the humanisation of God in the incarnation) and *theosis* (the deification of man).”<sup>68</sup> Godmanhood became central in the work of Vladimir Solov’ev, the Pushkin of Russian philosophy. His main contribution was to situate this idea in a historical framework, to connect it to the idea of the perfectibility of humanity in history in the image of the Godman. Solov’ev’s theology was central to Orthodox political theologies that emerged post-1905, and its content will be discussed in detail in chapter 1.

A final preliminary note on the concept of Godmanhood is to highlight that it was a Janus-faced concept, because it was also present in the history of the revolutionary intelligentsia, in particular in its “ethical populist” branch. The most well-known representative of this strand was Nikolai Chaikovskii (1850-1926) and the Chaikovskii circle of the 1870s. Members were opposed to the immorality and the conspiratorial methods of Sergey Nechaev (1847-1882).<sup>69</sup> They aimed to achieve a transformation of the social conscience that would lead to a new social order, although the characteristics of this system remained unclear. Stites argued that they rejected both revolution and Christianity, and that “[i]nner peace, harmony and brotherly love” were

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<sup>67</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation of the Word*. Popular Patristics Series. 44. Translated by Behr, John. Yonkers (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 167.

<sup>68</sup> Randall A. Poole, “Vladimir Solov’ev’s philosophical anthropology” In: *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). 134. See more on Godmanhood: Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*

<sup>69</sup> Sergei Gennadievich Nechaev (1847-1882), Russian nihilist revolutionary, author of the *Cathecism of a Revolutionary*. He murdered a young man, I. I. Ivanov who was a former member of his conspiratorial group. The character of Petr Verkhovenskiy was based on Nechaev in Fedor Dostoevsky’s novel, the *Demons*.

the core of Godmanhood”, a possible core for a religion of socialism.<sup>70</sup> Part of their efforts resulted in the famous “going to the people” (*khozhdenie v narod*) movement in 1874.<sup>71</sup> It was this moment when Chaikovskii met Alexander Malikov who believed to be the founder of a new religion called “Godmanhood”. Malikov encouraged Chaikovskii to “discover God in man”, and this pushed Chaikovskii from social revolution towards ideas of moral self-perfection and a type of religion of humanity.<sup>72</sup>

***Obshchestvennost'***. The dissertation argues that all of the discussed political theologies aimed to create a Christian *obshchestvennost'* or Christian public sphere or sociality. The history of *obshchestvennost'* is embedded in the larger context of the history of civil society – or the lack of it – in Imperial Russia. *Obshchestvennost'* is an indigenous Russian word which is often left untranslated and replaced with various English equivalents depending on the context: “public, public sphere, public opinion, social organisations, educated society, middle class and civil society.”<sup>73</sup> The richness of the semantic layers of *obshchestvennost'* contributed to the challenges of writing a meaningful history of the concept, although there have been attempts by scholars to construct such history. Vadim Volkov argued for the integration of the “lost concept”

<sup>70</sup> Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 102.

<sup>71</sup> Thousands of university students, sympathising with populist ideas, left the cities to live and work with the people – the peasants. They were received with suspicion and many of them were reported to the police who arrested them. See: Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Especially chapter 18 – The Chaikovskists and the Going to the People Movement, 469-506. Billington called it “the most fantastic and unprecedented social movements of the entire nineteenth century.” Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 394.

<sup>72</sup> Following the Bolshevik revolution, Chaikovskii joined anti-Bolshevik efforts. He remained convinced that terrorism, and in particular the tsaricide of 1881, pushed Russia towards reaction and enabled the victory of the Bolsheviks. Andrzej Walicki, *The Flow of Ideas: Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to the Religious-Philosophical Renaissance* (New York: Peter Lang Edition, 2015), 403-411.

<sup>73</sup> Yasuhiro Matsui, ed., *Obshchestvennost' and Civic Agency in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 1.

of *obshchestvennost*’ into the writing of the history of ‘civil society’ in the Russian and Soviet context, in contrast to focusing on the mirror translation of ‘civil society,’ i.e. *grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*. He emphasised two aspects as the core of *obshchestvennost*’: social solidarity and active social agency.<sup>74</sup>

Research on civil society and *obshchestvennost*’ downplayed an important dimension of imperial Russia: the role of religion. Bradley’s book on voluntary associations focused on one type of civil society organisations, learned societies; thus, religious groups were not part of its scope.<sup>75</sup> Pate’s article on workers and *obshchestvennost*’ expanded the term to all members of the society, including workers and their self-organising efforts. The defining criteria for Pate to apply the term *obshchestvennost*’ was participation or call for social or political reforms. Pate’s discussion, however, did not reflect at all on the role of the Orthodox Church or religion, not even in the context of temperance movements.<sup>76</sup> Susanne Hohler’s article on the radical right and civil society offered a fresh approach by abandoning normative definitions and proposing to focus on the outcome of civil society on members, i.e. social integration. Her Kiev case study, however, did not include analysis of the role of Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>77</sup>

An important reference for understanding *obshchestvennost*’ is the edited volume *Between Tsar and People* which focused on the emerging “middling” groups in late Imperial Russian society, and highlighted the connection of *obshchestvennost*’

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<sup>74</sup> Vadim Volkov, “Obshchestvennost”: Russia’s lost concept of civil society”. In: N. Götz and J. Hackmann (eds.) *Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region* (Aldershot: Ashgate): 63-72.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Alice K. Pate, ‘Workers and *Obshchestvennost*’: St Petersburg, 1906–14’, *Revolutionary Russia* 15, no. 2 (1 December 2002): 53–71.

<sup>77</sup> Susanne Hohler, “Radical Right Civil Society,” In Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal, ed. *The Russian Revolution of 1905 in Transcultural Perspective: Identities, Peripheries, and the Flow of Ideas*. Allan K. Wildman Group Historical Series 6. (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica Publishers, 2013): 93-104.

to understandings of civil society. It included two chapters on Russian Orthodoxy (although only two out of twenty-two) which were devoted to the topic of Russian Orthodox work ethic and the urban mission of the Church.<sup>78</sup> Freeze's article on the Church "going to the intelligentsia" is particularly relevant as he recognised the emergence of the concept of a Christian *obshchestvennost'* in post-reform Russia.

***Lichnost'***. The term in pre-revolutionary Russia could mean "person, personhood, or individual".<sup>79</sup> *Lichnost'* was not a widely used word until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Wortman argued that the term acquired a charismatic force the 1830-40s, in search of the Russian intelligentsia for a higher role for the individual. The concept became central to the main currents of the Russian intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was integral to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's anthropological materialism and Dmitrii Pisarev's radical individualism in the 1860s,<sup>80</sup> as well as in the later populism of Petr Lavrov and Nikolai Mikhailovsky.<sup>81</sup> Steinberg also identified *lichnost'* as a key term in early proletarian literature, using the definition

<sup>78</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "The Search for a Russian Orthodox Work Ethic" In *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith Clowes, Samuel Kassow, and James West (Princeton, N.J., 1991), 57-74; and Gregory L. Freeze, "Going to the intelligentsia": The Church and Its Urban Mission in Post-Reform Russia", In *Between Tsar and People*, 215-232.

<sup>79</sup> Richard S. Wortman, *The Power of Language and Rhetoric in Russian Political History: Charismatic Words from the 18th to the 21st Centuries* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 49.

<sup>80</sup> For an overview of the ideas of the nihilist radical intelligentsia see Victoria Frede, "Materialism and the radical intelligentsia: the 1860s," Gary M. Hamburg and Randall Allen Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 69-89; and, Richard Peace, "Nihilism," In William J. Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 116-140.

<sup>81</sup> For an overview of the ideas of Russian populism and its connection to the idealist movement see Thomas Nemeth, "Russian ethical humanism: from populism to neo-idealism," In Gary M. Hamburg and Randall Allen Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 90-107.



of “a person’s inward nature and personality, the self, that which made individuals naturally deserving of respect and freedom”, and dignity.<sup>82</sup>

There are two necessary notes on *lichnost’* and Orthodox discourse in the period. Firstly, in debates about the social or individual nature of Christianity, it was often highlighted that it was Christianity who introduced the concept of the *person* to the world which was built on slavery. Marxism and its iron law of history were seen as a denial of *lichnost’* by default – a person is nothing more than a cog in the machine. Secondly, Jesus Christ, taken as the perfect person and ideal, was an integral part of many debates and dialogues. The entry on *lichnost’* in the Brokgauz-Efron encyclopaedia, written by Vladimir Solov’ev, highlighted that the term had its positive confirmation in Christianity as “the revelation of the perfect Person (*litso*) – the Godman Christ – and the promise of the perfect society – the Kingdom of God.” The emergence of “universal recognition of the *lichnost’*” was connected to supranational organisations as the universal monarchy or the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. All these attempts were far from the

ideal of a truly personal/individual-public/social (*lichno-obshchestvennyi*) universalism, that is the unconditional internal and external solidarity of everything with everything else and everyone with everyone else; the realisation of this ideal can coincide only with the end of history.<sup>83</sup>

A recent volume on humanist tradition underscored the semantic complexity of *lichnost’* and its crucial role in Russian philosophy. The book argued that the importance of human dignity was an obsession of nineteenth-century Russian thought, the idea that “human beings are absolute in value” and should not be treated as means.

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<sup>82</sup> Mark Steinberg, “The Injured and Insurgent Self: The Moral Imagination of Russia’s Lower-Class Writers,” In *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections*, ed. Reginald E. Zelnik (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 312.

<sup>83</sup> *Lichnost’* In *Entsiklopedicheskoi slovar’*, Vol. 34. (St. Petersburg: Izd. Brokgauza i Efrona, 1896), 868-9.

Personhood (*lichnost'*) and human dignity were closely connected concepts in the Russian humanist tradition.<sup>84</sup>

**Sobornost'.** The translation of *sobornost'* is particularly challenging. Evan van der Zweerde collected several possibilities from the literature: “organic community”; togetherness; community; conciliar spirit; conciliarity; catholicity; and Catherine Evtuhov’s solution “the organic synthesis of multiplicity and unity”.<sup>85</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal’s creative solution to convey the meaning of *sobornost'* was to translate it as “chorus”, “a unified entity in which individuality is retained”, although it downplays the conciliar element.<sup>86</sup> The concept of *sobornost'* is one of those concepts which has been used in past and present as an essential concept of Russian Orthodoxy, known from times immemorial, even though it emerged relatively late and not even entirely clear how. Georges Florovsky used it for instance in this way: “The Church is a unity not only in the sense that it is one and unique; it is a unity, first of all, because its very being consists in reuniting separated and divided mankind. It is this unity which is the “sobornost” or catholicity of the Church.”<sup>87</sup> Irina Papkova correctly questioned contemporary academic works which apply the terms *sobornost'*, (and *symphonia*, which is explained below), acritically and ahistorically as “somehow inalienable from that country’s tradition of church”. She, however, underestimated or overlooked the

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<sup>84</sup> *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Evert van der Zweerde, “Sobornost’ als Gesellschaftsideal bei Vladimir Solov’ev und Pavel Florenskij”, in Norbert Franz, Michael Hagemeister, and Frank Haney (eds.), *Pravel Florenskij – Tradition und Moderne. Beiträge zum internationalen Symposium an der Universität Potsdam, 5. Bis 9. April 2000* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 225-6.

<sup>86</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, “Russian Orthodox Work Ethic,” In Edith W. Clowes et al., eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 69.

<sup>87</sup> Georges Florovsky, “The Catholicity of the Church” In *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. I: Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View (Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz, Europa, 1987), 39. Original publication: “Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church” in E. Mascall, ed., *The Church of God*, (London: S. P. C. K., 1934).

Orthodox theological-ecclesiological content of *sobornost'* when she argued that Khomiakov possibly “fell victim to a linguistic confusion stemming from the apparent similarity between Cyril and Methodius’s translation of the Greek term *katholikos* (“universal”) as *sobornaia* and the Russian word for “council” (*sobor*).<sup>88</sup>

If it is acknowledged that the concept is an invention, then it is usually attributed to Aleksei Khomiakov (1804-1860), prominent early Slavophile thinker and lay theologian. The problem with this genealogy is that as researchers repeatedly pointed out, there is no direct evidence that Khomiakov ever used the abstract noun *sobornost'*.<sup>89</sup> One simple reason for this is that he wrote most of his polemical works in French due to censorship concerns. The Holy Synod lifted the ban on Khomiakov’s theological works only twenty years after his death.<sup>90</sup> Nicholas Riasanovsky claimed that Khomiakov’s work contained “only one explicit definition and discussion” of *sobornost'*, but that is also debatable as he refers to the Russian translation of the French text.<sup>91</sup> Pain and Sisák argued that the term must have been introduced during translation by the translator N. P. Giliarov-Platonov or the editor, fellow Slavophile thinker, Iurii Samarin.<sup>92</sup> Pain convincingly argued that the same term “le dogme de l’universalité ecclésiastique” which was translated to “dogmata tserkovnoi sobornosti” was a self-quote by Khomiakov, and was translated earlier in another work to Russian as “dogmat o tserkovnoi vselenkosti” – without using the term ‘sobornost’.

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<sup>88</sup> Irina Papkova, review of *The Orthodox Church and Civil Society in Russian, and Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism*; and *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov'*: *Sovremennoe sostoianie i aktual'nye problemy*. In *Kritika*, Vol. 9. (2) Spring 2008, 490.

<sup>89</sup> J. H. Pain, “Sobornost: A Study in Modern Russian Orthodox Theology,” Dissertation. Oxford University, 1967, iv.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>91</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, “Khomiakov on Sobornost’,” In Ernest Joseph Simmons, ed., *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought* (New York, Russell & Russell, 1967): 183.

<sup>92</sup> Sisák Gábor, *Az 1840-50-es évek oroszországi szlavofilizmusa. Eszmetörténeti elemzés*. Dissertation. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest, 2008, 75-6. Sisák highlighted the problem of Riasanovsky’s reference to Khomiakov’s use of the term, see on page 75 footnote 216.

Khomiakov came closest to the use of the term in a polemic with Father Jean Xavier Gagarin of Paris, a Russian Jesuit. Gagarin published a book in 1856 which claimed that Russian Orthodoxy was not catholic as it lacked the essential characteristics of the universal Church, for instance, the universality of the Papal jurisdiction or the universal language of the Church. J. H. Pain showed that Khomiakov in his debate with Gagarin used ideas that “form a pattern which has come to be associated with the concept of sobornost; yet he does not use the term”.<sup>93</sup> For Gagarin, universality was the main mark of catholicity, but Khomiakov challenged this idea. Gagarin in particular attacked the use of “sobornyi” in the Church Slavonic translation of the Creed which was a “vague and obscure term utterly incapable of rendering the idea of the universality”. Khomiakov, however, argued that Cyril and Methodius used on purpose “sobornyi”, also defending Church Slavonic against Gagarin’s claim that it was somehow an inferior language. The term *sobornyi* meant to express not only the “visible union of the many in some place, but in a more general sense the perpetual possibility of such union, in other words: it expresses the idea of union in multiplicity.”<sup>94</sup> If their understanding of *katholikos* was geographical, they could have used *vsemirnoi* (world-wide) or if it was about oecumenicity then *vselenskoi* (universal).

The catholicity of the Church, the concord of those who gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ was something different: “The Church catholic (*kafolicheskaia*) is the Church “according to all”, or “according to the unity of all”, the Church of free

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<sup>93</sup> Pain, *Sobornost*, 93.

<sup>94</sup> Khomiakov, *Pis'mo k redaktoru "L'Union Chrétienne" o znachenii slov: "kafolicheskii" i "sobornii"*, po povodu rechi Ieuzita ottsa Gagarina [Letter to the Editor of L'Union Chrétienne on the meaning of the words: 'catholic' and 'sobornii', concerning the speech of the Jesuit Father Gagarin], 1860. Translation from French. In *Polnoe sobranie sochinennii Alekseia Stepanovicha Khomiakova*, vol. 2. (Moscow, 1907), 312.

unanimity (*edinodushie*), perfect unanimity, the Church in which there are no more nationalities (*narodnostei*), no longer Greeks or barbarians”. The Church of the ninth century (before the schism) was not as the Protestants imagine a *kath’ekaston* (according to the individuals (*kazhdomu*), nor as Latinisers imagine *kata ton episkopon tes Romes* (according to the Bishop of Rome), but *kath’olon* (according to the unity of all (*vsemu*))”.<sup>95</sup>

The history of how *sobornost’* developed into an essential concept of Russian Orthodoxy is not necessary to understand its basic conceptual intervention. The term was already in use in various contexts around 1905-6 as the discussion will demonstrate. Sidorov claimed that the term *sobornost’* was missing from the conceptual apparatus of Christian Socialists, but that the *sobornii* principle played an important role in their activities.<sup>96</sup> It is not entirely true that the concept was entirely missing, but as the history of its emergence demonstrates, *sobornost’* is one of those concepts that can be present in a text without the use of the actual term.

**Symphonia.** (συμφωνία “accord or harmony”) Political theologies by the Orthodox left formulated a clear demand for separation of Church and State as part of their visions. This meant a serious intervention into the *symphonia* tradition, a Byzantine heritage of ideal Church-state relations in a Christian Empire.

The development of the Byzantine understanding of ideal church-state relations was greatly influenced by the works of Eusebius of Caesarea. He was the court theologian of Constantine the Great and developed the key concept of the *Imperium Christianum*, the Christian Empire which had “a Messianic mission to institute the kingdom of God on earth”. Constantine’s conversion fulfilled the “convergence of

<sup>95</sup> Khomiakov, *L’Eglise Latine et la Protestantisme*, 399. Translation by Pain, *Sobornost*, 108.

<sup>96</sup> Sidorov, *Khristianskii sotsializm v Rossii*, 120.

divine monarchy with earthly monarchy”, a process that started with Christ’s Incarnation which coincided with the rule of the first Roman Emperor, Augustus.<sup>97</sup> In Eusebius’s understanding, the Christian Emperor was the vicar of God on earth and protector of the Church.

It is important that the Emperor is Christian, thus, spiritually limited by following Christian principles. All source of authority, both religious and secular, was God and Christ was the supreme priest and king. This understanding was highlighted in the Christ Pantocrator, the “All-Powerful” icon in Eastern Orthodoxy. Once he left his world, this power was divided into spiritual and civil spheres. Consequently, the church and state, i.e. the Patriarch and the Emperor, were supposed to complement each other, exhibiting mutual respect. A quote, ascribed by Leo Diaconus to the emperor, John Tzimisces from the tenth century explains this relationship:

I know the one Principle (archē), the highest and the first, which has brought the structure of the Universe, both visible and invisible, from a state of Not-being to a state of Being; and in the life and circuit of things here on earth I know two things, the power of the priesthood and that of the kingship, the one entrusted by the Creator with the cure of souls and the other with the government of bodies, to the end that neither part may be lame or halt, but [both] may be preserved sound and whole.<sup>98</sup>

The ideal relationship of the *imperium* and *sacerdotium* was a symphonic duet of the two institutions with the aim to preserve accord and harmony in society. An important aspect of this ideal was the balance of parallel authorities, and the lack of

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<sup>97</sup> Paul Magdalino, “*Basileia*: The Idea of Monarchy in Byzantium, 600-1200,” In Anthony Kaldellis, and Niketas Siniossoglou, eds. *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*. (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 580.

<sup>98</sup> “Passages from the Epanagoge (circa 880)” In Ernest, Barker ed. *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus: Passages from Byzantine Writers and Documents* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 92. Epanagoge was a Byzantine law book completed under Leo, VI the Wise (866-912).

subordination of one to the other, an aspect which was often “violated” in historical reality.<sup>99</sup>

The ideal of *symphonia* in the Orthodox Russian context came to the fore during the revolutionary years as a contrast to the subordination of the Church to the State. The rhetoric from the Church typically located the origin of this subordination in the reforms of Peter the Great which ended the Patriarchy and introduced the Synodal system. The leading ideologist of Petrine absolutism was Feofan Prokopovich (1681–1736), the Ukrainian-born theologian. He was invited to the capital by Peter the Great in 1716. His sermon, “On Autocratic Authority and Honour” (1718), already contained the seed of his political theory: there was no justification to resistance towards the Tsar.<sup>100</sup> He considered resistance to government and secular power a sin against God: “Does not conscience (*sovest’*) leads you: to resist [secular] power (*vlast’*) is to resist God himself?”.<sup>101</sup> Prokopovich formulated his political theory in various documents,<sup>102</sup> but his most radical contribution was his assistance in drafting the *Spiritual Regulation* (*Dukhovnyi reglament*) in 1721. The document created the Holy Synod, a collegium of Churchmen appointed by the tsar and increased state control over Church administration. The ecclesiastical governance introduced by the Spiritual Regulation was a radical break with Muscovite Church administration and with the ideal of

<sup>99</sup> Quoted by Deno J. Geanakoplos, “Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: The Reconstruction of the Problem of Caesaropapism”, *Church History*, Vol. 34, No. 4: 382.

<sup>100</sup> See Gary M. Hamburg, “Church, State and Society under Peter,” In Gary M. Hamburg, *Russia’s Path toward Enlightenment: Faith, Politics, and Reason, 1500-1801* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 229-294.

<sup>101</sup> “Ne navedet li sovest’: ubo vlastem protivitisia, est’ protivitisia bogu samomu?” Feofan Prokopovich, “Slovo o vlasti i chesti tsarskoi,” [On Autocratic Authority and Honour] In Feofan Prokopovich, *Sochineniia*, edited by I. P. Eremin (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1961), 83.

<sup>102</sup> Hamburg identified these three as the most important ones: *Orthodox Primer* [Pervoe uchenie otrokam] (1720); *Justice of the Monarch’s Will* [Pravda voli monarshei] (1722); and the *History of the Emperor Peter the Great* (1773). His *Justice of the Monarch’s Will* repeated the main tenets of the sermon: absolute secular power and absolute obedience by the imperial subjects. The document was incorporated into the Russian Code of Laws, and became a standard legal reference point. Hamburg, *Russia’s Path toward Enlightenment*, 248-52.

symphonia, although the extent and nature of subordination to the state remains controversial.<sup>103</sup>

The section on the concepts ends with two notes on research terminology: the use of ‘Church’ and ‘progressive clergy’. Firstly, the analysis aims to avoid using ‘the Church’ on its own, and, if it is possible, as the Church was a complex institution of various positions.<sup>104</sup> The contentious use of ‘Church’ was a primary concern for Orthodox political theologies during the revolutionary years. It is symptomatic that the term ‘Church’ was often used with some qualifying adjective. Progressive clergy often referred to “the official church” (*offitsial’naia tserkov’*) which practically meant the Ober-Prokurator and the Holy Synod and their authority over clergy. This was often put in contrast to the “Church of Christ” (*tserkov’ Khristovaia*) or the universal Church (*tserkov’ vselenskaia*).

Secondly, left-leaning clergy who advocated for church and/or political reform is labelled as progressive. Literature and contemporary use also used the term “liberal clergy”. I prefer progressive for two reasons. One of the reasons is that in the case of clergy, it is not clear whether the adjective liberal was meant politically or theologically. There were many cases when the two did not coincide. Metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitsky), for instance, was politically Conservative but not theologically.

The other reason for preferring ‘progressive’ is because liberal and clergy together invoke ‘liberal theology’, especially its nineteenth-century German branch. Although it is not articulated fully in this dissertation, the Orthodox left had an ambiguous relationship to liberal theology and thinkers like Adolf von Harnack. They

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<sup>103</sup> Classic work on the subject: James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1971).

<sup>104</sup> See Vera Shevzov, “Letting the People into Church: Reflections on Orthodoxy and Community in Late Imperial Russia,” In Valerie Kivelson and Robert Greene (eds.), *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003): 59-77.



engaged German liberal theology, but mostly through criticism, therefore, it is another reason for me to prefer the use of progressive clergy in this particular research.

### **Scope and challenges**

Finally, notes on the scope of the dissertation and its limitations. The dissertation research focuses on a brief period of revolutionary Russia from 1905 to 1908 which was the peak moment for Christian social political theologies. The contextual analysis makes references to earlier and later periods, including the history of social Christianity and Russian Orthodox thought in the long nineteenth century, but the research focuses on the hectic intellectual landscape of 1905-8 and reconstructs a horizontal cut. Geographically, the dissertation focuses on four cities where progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia were active: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Kazan'. All these cities had an Ecclesiastical Academy and three of them (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev) hosted a Religious-Philosophical Society during the pre-revolutionary period.

Several themes are closely related to the research subject of this dissertation but represent larger research questions that go beyond the scope of the dissertation. One of them is the issue of religious renovation and church reform, a sensitive and to a certain extent even taboo topic up until today. The topic will be discussed in relation to political theologies, but the scope of the dissertation does not allow a thorough discussion of the issue in the larger history of the Russian Orthodox Church. For instance, the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-18, the culmination of the reform movement<sup>105</sup> falls outside of the timeframe of the research, so does the schism and the Living Church in

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<sup>105</sup> Main literature on the issue: James W. Cunningham, *The Gates of Hell: The Great Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-1918* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota, 2002) and Hyacinthe Destivelle, *The Moscow Council (1917-1918): The Creation of the Conciliar Institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church*, eds. Mikhael Plekon and Vitaly Permiakov, trans. Jerry Ryan (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

Soviet Russia.<sup>106</sup> My analysis does not argue for continuity and discontinuity between various episodes of church reform movements. There is no doubt, however, that the Renovatianist schism remains one of the most controversial episodes in the history of Russian Orthodoxy, and many of the issues of church reform are unresolved up until today.<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, the dissertation analyses Orthodox theo-political visions in the comparative framework of European and American social Christianity, but it does offer any systematic comparison of these enormous topics.<sup>108</sup> The focus will be on particular actors who exerted an explicit influence on the development of Orthodox political theologies in Russia.

Challenges in the dissertation research also put some limitation on the scope. While some of the main characters in this dissertation are lesser-known, they have interacted directly or indirectly with some of the most formidable thinkers of late Imperial Russia: Vladimir Solov'ev, Lev Tolstoy, Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Fedor Dostoevsky. The oeuvre of these intellectual giants is discussed selectively, only those aspects and elements were included which have direct relevance to the better understanding of social Christian political theologies. There is a vast literature available

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<sup>106</sup> See Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovatianism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, "Russian Reformation? The Program for Religious Renovation in the Orthodox Church, 1922-1925," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16/17 (2000-2001): 89.

<sup>108</sup> Comprehensive books on the Catholic context: Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad Pub Co, 1991); Joseph Nestor Moody, ed. *Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movements, 1789-1950* (New York: Arts, Inc, 1953). From a labour history point of view: Lex Heerma van Voss, Patrick Pasture, and Jan de Maeyer. eds. *Between Cross and Class: Comparative Histories of Christian Labour in Europe 1840-2000* (Peter Lang, 2005). It contains one chapter on Eastern Europe: Irina Novichenko, "A Christian Labour Movement in Eastern Europe?", 305-332.

on these thinkers; therefore, the dissertation allocated more space to themes which are underresearched, for instance, the works and thought of radical right clergy.

## HISTORIOGRAPHIES

The second part of the introduction discusses the relevant historiographies by following key terms in the title of the dissertation: clergy, intelligentsia and social Christianity. Advocates of Orthodox political theologies in late Imperial Russia belonged to the network of progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia. The historiography on clergy focuses on the history of left-leaning progressive clergy, but it also draws attention to the issue of workers' religiosity in late Imperial Russia. The literature on intelligentsia focuses on the entangled and difficult relationship of the intelligentsia to belief and disbelief. The topic of social Christianity is discussed in the framework of Russian Orthodox thought and modernity.

### **A) Clergy: the history of progressive clergy and the Social question**

Recent scholarship has shown that the role and life of the Russian Orthodox Church in late Imperial Russia were more nuanced and more complicated than the old "handmaiden of the state" metaphor implied, a term often used in Soviet and Cold war historiography. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church could not turn a blind eye any more to its growing alienation from its members, and, consequently, to its gradually weakening position in society.

Research for instance by Gregory Freeze on the radicalisation of clergy<sup>109</sup> and by Simon Dixon on the social role of the Church<sup>110</sup> present a more heterogeneous and

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<sup>109</sup> Freeze, Gregory L. "Church and Politics in Late Imperial Russia: Crisis and Radicalisation of the Clergy." In: Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1897-1917* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 269-297.

<sup>110</sup> Dixon, Simon. "The Church's Social Role in St. Petersburg, 1880-1914" In: Hosking, Geoffrey, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (London, 1991) 166-193.

more active picture of Russia's religious landscape in late Imperial times than the static and passive picture that was propagated by Soviet scholarship for decades.<sup>111</sup> Works by the aforementioned scholars and this dissertation aim to understand better how the Russian Orthodox Church responded to the challenges of modernity and industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The challenge of the changing world was certainly recognised by the Church, and there were rudimentary initiatives “to outreach to the people” to address these issues. For instance, charity organisations of the Society for the Spread of Religious and Moral Enlightenment in the Spirit of the Orthodox Church (ORRP)<sup>112</sup> and the Alexander Nevskii Temperance Society in St. Petersburg were part of a larger plan to reconnect with urban communities.<sup>113</sup> The success and the scope of these outreach activities should not be overestimated, but their history supports the paradigm shift that advocates for approaching the Orthodox Church in late Imperial Russia as a heterogeneous institution with various interests by its members.

Two books are particularly relevant to the issue of progressive clergy and church reform, Page Herrlinger's study of workers' religiosity and Jennifer Hedda's research on clerical social activism. Both books went beyond the simple understanding of the Church as a “reactionary” force in late Imperial Russia and to demonstrate its heterogeneity and active participation in the social question. Herrlinger focused on the

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<sup>111</sup> See also on late Imperial Russia Sergei L. Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov' nakanune peremen, konets 1890-kh—1918 gg.* [The Russian Church on the eve of change, end of 1890s-1918] (St Petersburg, 2002), and Sergei L. Firsov, “Rabochie i Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v Rossii v nachale XX v.” [Workers and the Orthodox Church in Russian in the beginning of the twentieth c.] In *Rabochie i intelligentsia v epokhu reform i revoliutsii 1861-fevral' 1917 g.* [Workers and intelligentsia in the era of reform and revolution between 1861- February 1917], ed. S. I. Potolov et al. (St. Petersburg, 1997), 327-339.

<sup>112</sup> Obshchestvo rasprostraneniia religiozno-nravstvennago prosveshcheniia v dukhe pravoslavnoi tserkvi. Literature often refers to it in a shorter form, Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment, or by the abbreviation ORRP. The dissertation adopts this practice.

<sup>113</sup> Gregory Freeze, “‘Going to the Intelligentsia’: The Church and Its Urban Mission in Post-Reform Russia,” in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith Clowes, Samuel Kassow, and James West (Princeton, N.J., 1991) 215-232.

transformation of workers' religiosity by the experience of urban factory life. While it is hard to calculate concrete numbers, she estimated that about four out of five workers continued "to view their lives and the society around them through the prism of religious belief."<sup>114</sup> The question of religious observance in late Imperial Russia is further complicated by the different role of religious worship in Orthodoxy. As Dixon highlighted, Orthodoxy in the period "did not depend on regularity of worship".<sup>115</sup> Herrlinger's research was particularly challenging due to lack of sources, but she convincingly argued that workers' religiosity remained high. While the 1905 revolution alienated many from the Church, by 1908 there were signs of a return to the faith by those who got tired of failed politics and human efforts to create a better world.<sup>116</sup> It is important, however, that their religiosity became diverse and fluid, and while many turned away from official Orthodoxy, it did not mean that they became by default radical atheists. Some of them did, but it was just one of the many options available for workers at the time to pursue their salvation. This diversity was already highlighted by Reginald Zelnik who argued that "no essential pattern or characterisation" can describe the nature of the "early experience of religious, antireligious, and irreligious teaching" among workers of the capital. The main features remain "variety and diversity".<sup>117</sup> Mark Steinberg's work on proletarian literature and the language of the lower classes during the revolutionary period is also relevant to imagine workers' religiosity.

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<sup>114</sup> Page Herrlinger, *Working Souls: Russian Orthodoxy and Factory Labor in St. Petersburg, 1881-1917*, The Allan K. Wildman Group Historical Series 2 (Bloomington, Ind: Slavica, 2007), 4.

<sup>115</sup> Confession was traditionally an annual observance, especially because it was a legal obligation. Simon Dixon, "The Orthodox Church and the Workers of St. Petersburg, 1880-1914." In *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930*. McLeod, Hugh, ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 120-1.

<sup>116</sup> Page Herrlinger, 'The Religious Landscape of Revolutionary St. Petersburg, 1905-1918', *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 6 (1 November 2011): 849.

<sup>117</sup> Reginald E. Zelnik, "To the Unaccustomed Eye: Religion and Irreligion in the Experience of St. Petersburg Workers in the 1870s," In *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs. Russian Culture in Modern Times Vol. II*, eds. Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 72.

Steinberg focused on creative writing by writers with meagre formal education and identified Christian terminology and imagery as fundamental in their language. He also highlighted, however, that these religious idioms “were typically divorced from theistic belief” and that the language was not specifically Christian, but rather “religious in a broader sense”.<sup>118</sup>

Herrlinger’s research also investigated how Orthodox clergy responded to the workers’ question and their spiritual struggles. She discussed several organisations which united clergy in these efforts, including the two most important ones which were already mentioned: the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment (ORRP) and the Aleksander Nevskii Temperance Society. Despite the relative success of these two organisations, Herrlinger pointed out that one of the main hindering factors behind social clerical activism in the period was the refusal by clergy to acknowledge the workers as a new group within society with specific spiritual needs. Workers did not lose faith magically by migrating to the capital and crossing the threshold of a factory. Becoming a worker did confront many with a new spatial and temporal regime which strongly affected their religiosity, but it did not cut them off their Orthodox belief and customs from one day to another. Paradoxically, Herrlinger’s research showed that the new urban life and alienating industrial working conditions made them even more conscious of their spiritual and religious needs.

Progressive clergy did recognise that the workers did not lose religion from one day to another, but their conceptualisation limited their influence. Herrlinger showed that clergy continued to look at workers as corrupted peasantry since many of them

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<sup>118</sup> Mark D. Steinberg, ‘Workers on the Cross: Religious Imagination in the Writings of Russian Workers, 1910-1924’, *The Russian Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 214. See also: Mark D. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Especially, chapter 6 (Feelings of Sacred) and 7 (Sacred Vision in the Revolution).

were indeed originally seasonal workers from the countryside. In the eyes of the clergy, workers were peasants infected by the disease of the urban factory that could and should be remedied. By the 1890s, however, there was a generation of workers who were born and raised in the city with a weaker connection to traditional peasant life. Due to their predisposition, however, the majority of Orthodox priests remained blind to the special needs and the changing religiosity of the emerging working-class population in the capital. Workers were asking questions about religion and Orthodoxy that would not occur to those living a peasant life in countryside Russia.

Jennifer Hedda's book is a rich source of information on clerical social activism and church outreach programs in pre-revolutionary Russia.<sup>119</sup> She reconstructed the development and transformation of clerical ideas regarding the mission of the church from the Great Reforms of the 1860s to the Bolshevik revolution. Her work contextualised Father Gapon, the leader of the suppressed religious procession, which came to be known as Bloody Sunday. She argued that Gapon was not a unique phenomenon, but part of a larger and longer history of clerical activism among the people – and in the late Imperial context, among workers. She also paid special attention to the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation and ideas by Grigorii Petrov which will be discussed in detail in chapter 2. My dissertation reflects on some of the critiques that the book received, and complements Hedda's ground-breaking research. As Gregory Freeze highlighted in his review, the book “tends to emphasise an ‘internalist’ explanation for the clergy's adherence to a ‘social gospel’ but the close ties to the laity (as demonstrated here) suggests an ‘interactionist’ model, with the close nexus between clergy and laity providing a key stimulus for a more activist pastoral

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<sup>119</sup> Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

role.”<sup>120</sup> This was highlighted by Christopher Stroop too, who suggested that “the future study of the politics of Russian Orthodoxy in late imperial Russia should take into consideration the many ways in which priests with liberal to radical social sympathies worked with lay intellectuals.”<sup>121</sup> Hedda often referred to some unidentified mass of laity, but their intentions, their reasons for involvement and their leading figures remained blurry. John D. Basil formulated some doubts about the extent to which radical priests such as Grigorii Petrov or Mikhail Semenov can be ideologically tied “to the overall social outreach movement encouraged by the church”.<sup>122</sup> He highlighted that these priests called for the complete separation of church and state, but when the church council did convene in 1917, this radical idea was never on the agenda. Basil was right to point out this discrepancy, but it does not immediately mean that Petrov and Mikhail (Semenov) should be removed or isolated from the history of official church outreach movement. The dissertation argues that radical clergy grew out of the social activist clerical milieu in its interaction with the religious intelligentsia. The missing link in this discrepancy is the loose connection of these priests to radical religious intelligentsia which influenced their intellectual development. This aspect can offer hints to the missing “ideological” element in their radicalisation towards the propagation of complete separation of church and state. Another aspect that should not be forgotten is that these priests were subject to systematic persecution which always leads to further radicalisation. Therefore, the dissertation argues that the social outreach programs of the church constitute an important context for the activities and ideas of radical clergy,

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<sup>120</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, review of *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia*, by Jennifer Hedda, *Slavonica*, Vol. 15 No. 2, November, 2009, 162.

<sup>121</sup> Christopher Alan Stroop, *Providential Empire Russia's Religious Intelligentsia and the First World War*, Dissertation, Stanford University, 2012, 53. footnote 90.

<sup>122</sup> John D. Basil, review of *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia*, by Jennifer Hedda, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Bd. 58, H. 4 (2010), 627



they did belong to that pastoral tradition that Hedda reconstructed, but it cannot explain on its own their radicalisation and theo-political thought.

This dissertation argues that the idea and the task of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost'* served as a meeting point for progressive clergy and members of the religious intelligentsia, and gave space to debates about the relationship of Church, state and the Russian people. Interaction was possible between progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia due to the emergence of common discursive strategies and a shared vocabulary which the analysis identifies as the theo-political language of the Orthodox left. Dialogues and debates were possible due to a shared concern about the Social Question and the role of the Church in a modernising world. Real interaction, however, was made impossible due to repressive mechanisms implemented by Church and state authorities, and by internal disputes.

## **B) Intelligentsia: the history of religious intelligentsia**

Defining intelligentsia in the Russian context is a difficult endeavour. It is unavoidable to address the issue, but it can hardly be solved for good and will remain a moving target. The term was introduced by a novelist, Petr Boborykin (1836-1921) in the 1860s as a synonym for 'culture' or 'intelligence'.<sup>123</sup> The origin of the intelligentsia, however, goes back to the 1830s and 1840s, to the times of the spread of German philosophical idealism in Russia.<sup>124</sup> Martin Malia's article focused on the analysis of intelligentsia as a social category, the role of education and Western influences which view dominated the literature for a long time. From the literature on

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<sup>123</sup> G. M. Hamburg, "Russian intelligentsias," In William J. Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 44.

<sup>124</sup> Martin Malia, "What is the Intelligentsia?" In Richard Pipes, *The Russian Intelligentsia* (Columbia University Press, 1961), 1-18.

Russian intelligentsia, the section singles out those which put the issue of (ir)religion and intelligentsia into the focus of their research.

It is difficult to define the Russian intelligentsia because it does not conform to classic sociological categories of group denomination. It was not a class, it was socio-economically heterogeneous, having both aristocrats and *raznochintsy* among its members. It was also not a political party, intelligentsia held and fought for various political views. One interpretative paradigm became particularly popular in illuminating the character of Russian intelligentsia: that it was a religious order. Fedor Stepun, sociologist and historian, was one of the advocates for this interpretation. “Order” means “a community of persons who have submitted themselves to a way of life founded on a world-view, for whom the world-view has absolute value and the way of life an emblematic character.” Stepun also identified the essence of the paradoxical relationship of the intelligentsia to religion: “It represented no expressly religious world-view but heightened every world-view represented by it into a religion.”<sup>125</sup> The order had its creed, discipline and traditions, but it did not have a hierarchy or proper organisation.<sup>126</sup> The lack of “religious world-view” was further complicated by the Russian religious renaissance and the emergence of the religious intelligentsia.

Victoria Frede’s book on doubt and atheism in the nineteenth century identified the intelligentsia with a “set of expectations ... that to be an educated person brought with it certain obligations toward the nation and toward humanity.”<sup>127</sup> Frede’s main argument was that “Russian atheism of the nineteenth century was not secular.” This

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<sup>125</sup> Fedor Stepun, *The Russian Soul and Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 47.

<sup>126</sup> Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), 1-35.

<sup>127</sup> Victoria Frede, *Doubt, Atheism, and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 14.

claim was part of her larger argument that religious, social and political spheres were not separate in Imperial Russia. Her discussion reconstructed the instrumental role of Ludwig Feuerbach's work, in particular his concept of *Selbstätigkeit* (independent and self-motivated action), in the intellectual development of Chernyshevsky, and in general in the radical intelligentsia's struggle with faith in the period. Michelson also highlighted that Chernyshevsky's programmatic novel, *What Is to Be Done?*, was not only key to intelligentsia identity, but it was also an intervention to asceticism discourse in the period, in particular in the character of the "revolutionary ascetic", Rakhmetov. Michelson argued that Chernyshevsky contributed to the secularisation of the asceticism discourse meaning that he separated it from God or religion and presented it as an "act of human will against tyranny, a constructed mode of being that behaviourally expressed one's repudiation of the structures of political, socioeconomic, and cultural oppression."<sup>128</sup>

Frede focused on a group of intellectuals who recorded their loss of faith and arrived through doubt to disbelief and atheism. This struggle with a loss of faith was complicated, and it was closely connected to the problem of Russia and progress – rejecting autocracy was linked to rejecting God. This dissertation will show that *gaining* faith at the turn of the century was as much a struggle for intelligentsia as losing it, and was similarly linked to burning socio-political issues of the time. As a socially sensitive Christian believer, how to reconcile Orthodox faith and rejection of the autocracy in an Orthodox Empire? One solution to this conundrum was to turn the tables and reject autocracy *in the name of* Orthodox faith and conscience as the discussion of Orthodox political theologies will show.

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<sup>128</sup> Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 100-1.

Christopher Read's work on the Russian intelligentsia also focused on the role of (ir)religion and intelligentsia. Read suggested three conditions for being an *intelligent* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Russian Empire: "deep concern for the social question", "critical and, to some extent, hostile attitude towards the government", and "self-consciousness or articulation of the feeling of hostility".<sup>129</sup> By the turn of the century, clear differences emerged regarding the best strategy to achieve social justice, there were several possible positions from violent revolutionary to non-revolutionary. Read, in his effort to reconstruct "Russia's intellectual framework" at the beginning of the twentieth century, singled out 'revolution' and 'religion' as the two most important themes of contemporary debates as "they were both complete systems giving meaning to life and defining goals and actions for the individual."<sup>130</sup> He also identified two philosophical axes that dominated the intellectual sphere: collectivism-individualism; idealism-materialism. Due to the revolutionary upheavals and socio-political tensions, all kinds of combinations of these categories existed. They were also complemented with the political axes of advocacy for reform or revolution and attitude to the intelligentsia tradition. Read discussed in this framework Sergei Bulgakov's Christian socialism, but he could not include much on religious or church history. He highlighted that he needed to exclude important areas such as "Orthodox seminaries", i.e. Orthodox thought by clergy and lay theologians. The dissertation aims to link several issues of the intelligentsia question exactly to this Orthodox milieu and tradition.

Thinkers in this dissertation have been often referred to as "religious philosophers" in the literature, especially in historical research; for instance, Nikolai

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<sup>129</sup> Christopher Read, *Religion, Revolution, and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1900-1912: The Vekhi Debate and Its Intellectual Background* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 1-2.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov or Vladimir Ern. Christopher Stroop, in his research on Christian Providential thought, argued that the term “religious philosopher” downplays the public engagement of these actors and it is reflected in the analysis of their oeuvre as well.<sup>131</sup> Jutta Scherrer was one of the very few historians who applied analytically the term religious intelligentsia in her analysis for a long time. My research applies this group category to highlight the public engagement of intellectuals in social and political life.

The emergence of the religious intelligentsia was closely linked to the turn to idealism among a group of Marxists, as hallmarked by the publication of *Problems of Idealism* in 1902, a real “philosophical watershed in the Russian Silver Age”.<sup>132</sup> The project was the idea of Petr Struve,<sup>133</sup> and it originally focused on the issue of freedom of conscience. In one of his letters to Pavel Novgorodtsev,<sup>134</sup> Struve proposed the idea

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<sup>131</sup> For instance, Stroop highlighted that Donald A. Lowrie’s biography on Berdiaev includes only two pages of commentary on the 133 articles that Berdiaev wrote on World War I, while Evtuhov only listed Sergei Bulgakov’s articles on the Great War in the appendices without any commentary. Christopher Alan Stroop, *Providential Empire Russia’s Religious Intelligentsia and the First World War*. Stanford University, 2012, 18-19. See also Donald A. Lowrie, *Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolai Berdyaev* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960).

<sup>132</sup> Randall Allen Poole, “Introduction” to the English translation *Problems of Idealism: Essays in Russian Social Philosophy* (Yale University Press, 2003), 1. The origin of the term “Silver Age” in the context of Russian literary and cultural studies is unclear. It refers to the final decade of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the dissertation uses fin de siècle Russia for the same time period. The term “Silver Age” is contrasted with the Golden Age of Russian literature which started with Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837). See Ruth Coates, “Religious Renaissance in the Silver Age” In William J. Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 169-193.

<sup>133</sup> Petr Berngardovich Struve (1870-1944) was a political economist, philosopher and politician. In the beginning of his career, he was a Marxist then became an advocate for liberalism. He was the founder of the magazine *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation) which was published in Stuttgart and was smuggled into Russia before the weakening of censorship in 1905. He was the co-founder of the Constitutional Democratic party and represented its interest in the State Duma. After the Bolshevik revolution he was associated with the White movement. Classic work on Struve is the two-volume biography by Richard Pipes. Richard Pipes, *Struve, Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905*, Russian Research Center Studies 64 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970), and, Richard Pipes, *Struve, Liberal on the Right, 1905-1944*, Russian Research Center Studies 80 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>134</sup> Pavel Ivanovich Novgorodtsev (1886-1924) was a lawyer, legal philosopher and representative for the Constitutional Democratic party in the State Duma. Vanessa Rampton argued to interpret Novgorodtsev’s thought as an example of a religious liberal attempt to create a “non-dogmatic defense

of a collection “specially devoted to the question of freedom of conscience”. He also provided a sketch of the articles he wanted to collect for the volume. Article number 7 was titled “Freedom of conscience as a demand of Orthodox faith” by Father Grigorii Petrov from St. Petersburg.<sup>135</sup> That collection never came to existence, the plans of a volume on freedom of conscience became a project on the defence of idealism.

Sergei Bulgakov highlighted that the turn to idealism among Marxist intelligentsia remained fluid and contained contradictory elements from a wide spectrum, from Neo-Kantianism to the “metaphysical mysticism of Vladimir Solov’ev”, from religious agnosticism to positive Christian worldview.<sup>136</sup> These “differences of principle between their conceptions of idealism” probably contributed to the failure of effective cooperation between the contributors of the volume. While they shared a fear of the spread of entrenched positivism, they were deeply divided on the relationship of idealism to Christian thought.<sup>137</sup>

The collection proclaimed that the motivation for the articles was a “deep need for moral consciousness” which moves forward the problem of “the moral ideal”. The introduction also criticised the positivist school “which does not want to know anything apart from experience (*opytnoe nachalo*)”. Authors in the collection were searching “for absolute commandments and principles” which is the essence of “moral

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of the idea of individual dignity. Vanessa Rampton, “Religious Thought and Russian Liberal Institutions,” In Patrick Lally Michelson and Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, eds., *Thinking Orthodox in Modern Russia: Culture, History, Context* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014): 235-252.

<sup>135</sup> Modest Kolerov, *Ne Mir, No Mech: Russkaia Religiozno-Filosofskaia Pechat’ “Problem Idealizma” Do “Vekh”, 1902-1909* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatelstvo “Aleteiia,” 1996), 15-6.

<sup>136</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Bez plana: Idealizm i obshchestvennyia programmy” [Without a plan: idealism and social programs] *Novyi put’* 10 1904, 260-77. See also Flikke, *Democracy or Theocracy*, 40-41.

<sup>137</sup> Putnam, *Russian Alternatives to Marxism*, 27.

searches”.<sup>138</sup> Novgorodtsev argued that the uniqueness of the collection was not only that it is an “expression of some eternal need of the soul”, but also that “it emerges in connection to the deep process[es] of life, to the joint striving for moral rejuvenation.”<sup>139</sup>

There is evidence that the collection has reached progressive clerical circles. Father Konstantin Aggeev, who later became a member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, wrote an extensive review of the collection. The review was first published in excerpts in the *Faith and Reason* journal in 1904, and it was originally read out at public lectures in 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1904 in St. Petersburg. The whole title of the review book is “Awakening Idealism in the Worldview of the Russian Educated Society (For the publication of *Problems of Idealism* by the Moscow Psychological Society in 1902).<sup>140</sup> Aggeev started the review by noting that there is now a clear interest in religion among secular thinkers. He claimed that his “humble task” is to “popularise” the idealist branch and to reconstruct its development as it happened in Russia. Aggeev’s work reflected on a wide variety of sources and thinkers, many of whom are discussed in the reviewed volume, for instance, Nikolai Mikhailovskii, Karl Marx, Vladimir Solov’ev, Anton Chekhov, Friedrich Nietzsche, Vasili Rozanov, August Comte or Ludwig Feuerbach. He discussed at length the paradox in Marxism between the iron law of history and freedom of will, and Bulgakov’s critique of the theory of positivist progress as a “religion of humanity”. Aggeev sympathised with efforts of the idealists to link ethics to metaphysics; the

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<sup>138</sup> Pavel I. Novgorodtsev, “Introduction” In *Problemy Idealizma* [Problems of idealism], (M.: Izd. Mosk. Psikh. o-va, 1902), VIII.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., IX.

<sup>140</sup> Father Konstantin Aggeev, *Vozrozhdaishchisia idealizm v mirosozertsanii russkago obrazovannogo obshchestva* [Awakening Idealism in the Worldview of Russian Educated Society], (Kharkov: Tip. Gubernskogo Pravlenia, 1904).

understanding that answers to the question “what is to be done?” can be found only in *faith*. He was also fascinated by the evolution of intellectuals, singling out Nikolai Berdiaev “who in his first book, published in 1891, was still an undecided idealist, but in the 1902 volume of *Problems of Idealism*, he does not only acknowledge the subjective significance of the idea of religion”, he even called “Vladimir Solov’ev for his epistemology (*gnoseologia*) a world philosopher”.<sup>141</sup> The review ended with a complaint about using religion as a tool for a particular purpose, for morality or the state. Aggeev advocated for taking religion for its inherent value – religion *pour* religion. That was the task of contemporary society in his understanding, to realise the “eternal and unconditional significance of religion”. He concluded that the articles in the *Problems of Idealism* could help the society in this “great task”.<sup>142</sup>

A final group of literature that needs to be mentioned deals with interpretations of Marxism-Leninism as some form of secular/political/pseudo-religion.<sup>143</sup> One of the most-well known thinker to highlight such features was Nikolai Berdiaev who in 1906 published an article “Socialism as religion”.<sup>144</sup> This literature is relevant to the dissertation insofar as actors in the discussion often voice similar claims and/or confusion regarding the “religious” nature of Marxism. Understandably, this claim can make any sense only by first applying a clear definition of religion. As parts of this dissertation will show the definition of religion was one of the semantic fields of contestation between various thinkers in the intellectual landscape, therefore, the focus

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>143</sup> The most recent of such interpretations is Yuri Slezkine’s *The House of Government* which interprets Bolshevism as a millenarian sect. Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>144</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, “Socialism as Religion” [Sotsializm kak religiia], *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 5 no. 85 (1906): 508-45.



is on the synchronic reconstruction of these conceptual contestations, not an analytical investigation of the “religious” nature of Marxism-Leninism.

### **C) Social Christianity and Russian Orthodox Thought**

The third historiographical branch is the issue of Social Christianity in Russian Orthodox thought. This is embedded in the larger topic of Russian Orthodoxy and modernity, but this section focuses only on two interrelated issues in this large historiography: Russian religious philosophy and Modern Russian Theology.

Firstly, there has been a tendency in historiography to isolate lay religious thought from Orthodox ecclesiastical thought. The “religious turn” in historiography after the fall of the USSR failed to incorporate the study of Russian Orthodox theology and its impact on social and intellectual history. The editors of the volume *Thinking Orthodox in Modern Russia* identified this as a historiographical disconnect which originated in a difference in methodology. The common method to analyse Russian religious thought “privileged text over context” and treated “temporal sources as “atemporal resources”. This method is clearly in conflict with historical contextualisation. The volume aimed to remedy this disconnect by understanding “context as a central factor in any attempt to understand and explicate the content of Russian religious thought”, while still look at Russian history through the lenses of “thought”. The volume also expanded the definition of religious thought with “ecclesiastical Orthodox thought” and applied the term Church intelligentsia in its analysis.<sup>145</sup> This dissertation follows a similar methodological approach; it situates the

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<sup>145</sup> Patrick Lally Michelson and Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, “Introduction”, In Michelson, Patrick Lally, and Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, eds., *Thinking Orthodox in Modern Russia: Culture, History, Context* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 3-39.

study of political theologies within the framework of studying Russian Orthodox thought as defined above.

The historiographical issue of Modern Russian theology is to a certain extent the other side of the coin of the same issue. While the study of Russian religious thought or philosophy ignored ecclesiastical Orthodox thought, studies on Orthodox theology would often not treat Russian philosophy as part of Orthodox theology. For instance, *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* explicitly stated that “‘Orthodox theology’ is not synonymous with ‘Eastern Christian thought’” and considered Russian religious philosophy to be outside of its “proper scope”.<sup>146</sup> Theology in this dissertation does not refer only to institutionally sanctioned or academic theology. The dissertation approaches Russian Orthodox thought by recognising on-going competition over interpretative authority. I follow in this approach, Patrick Lally Michelson whose research framework on asceticism acknowledged “varieties of Orthodox thinking” in and outside the Russian Orthodox Church, “each struggling for dominion over the others in a historically mediated contest that likely has no end in the immanent frame.”<sup>147</sup> An example for such contestation was the *Imiaslavie*, the Name-Glorifiers dispute between the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian monks on Mount Athos at the beginning of the twentieth century. The theological dispute centred around the issue of religious authority, i.e. who can speak on behalf of the Church.<sup>148</sup> The post-Soviet history of the controversy shows

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<sup>146</sup> Mary Cunningham, and Elizabeth Theokritoff, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*. Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xvi.

<sup>147</sup> Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 6.

<sup>148</sup> In 1907, a former Athonite monk, Ilarion published a book entitled *In the Caucasus Mountains* which claimed that “the name of the God is God himself.” The book on contemplative prayer, specifically the practice of Jesus Prayer divided the communities on Mount Athos. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church condemned the Name-Glorifiers, and after the failed mission of Archbishop Nikon

that the theological debate is still open and that lines of religious authority remain unclear in Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>149</sup>

The historiographical problem of Modern Russian Theology is to a certain extent can be distilled into the issue of two dominant schools that characterised the twentieth century of Russian Orthodoxy: the so-called Neo-Patristic school and the modern Russian school. The dissertation identifies parts of Modern Russian theology or the modern Russian school as the main theological material underlying Orthodox political theologies that emerged post-1905 on the Orthodox left. Therefore, the content of Modern Russian Theology is discussed in chapter 1 as it constituted the most important diachronic context for the research in this dissertation. This section only highlights the historiographical-theological problems that are articulated within the differentiation of the Neo-Patristic school and the modern Russian school.

A simplified explanation for the difference between the two schools is that one of them does not wish to “go beyond the fathers”, (meaning the writings of Church Fathers), while the other sees this move necessary for the future of Orthodox theology. Paul Valliere highlighted that this phrase needs further explanation to make sense. He proposed to differentiate between “formalist” and “substantive” ways of “going beyond the fathers”, depending on whether the revision of the fathers affects its outward form or its actual message. The idea that the message can develop over time is not widely accepted; therefore, the Russian school has been the target of criticism for the last half

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(Rozhdestvenskii) to restore peace, the Russian Navy was ordered to remove from Mount Athos 800 Russian monks. See Scott M. Kenworthy, “Archibishop Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii) and Pavel Florenskii on Spiritual Experience, Theology, and the Name-Glorifiers Dispute,” In Patrick Lally Michelson and Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, eds., *Thinking Orthodox in Modern Russia: Culture, History, Context* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 85-107.

<sup>149</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, “Debating the Theology of the Name in Post-Soviet Russia: Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev and Sergei Khoruzhii,” In Katya Tolstaya, ed., *Orthodox Paradoxes: Heterogeneities and Complexities in Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 250-264.

of the century. The most well-known criticism is Georges Florovsky's *The Paths of Russian Theology* which interpreted pre-revolutionary Russian theology and thought as an "alienation of the Orthodox mind from its own sources", meaning the Church Fathers. Advocates of modern Russian religious thought recognised the criticism directed towards them, Nikolai Berdiaev suggested in his review that Florovsky's book should have been titled *The Pathlessness of Russian Theology*.<sup>150</sup>

The legacy of the Russian school is embedded in the larger issue of religion and modernity, that is the problem of religion and secularism.<sup>151</sup> The need to "going beyond the fathers" was justified by the need to be able to talk about the relationship of Russian Orthodoxy to the modern world. Paul Gavrilyuk interpreted the Russian religious renaissance as "a formidable collective effort of the Russian intellectuals to engage modernity religiously in a comprehensive manner."<sup>152</sup> This is the mission of this branch of theology, to develop a "theology of engagement with and involvement in the secular world."<sup>153</sup> As part of the secular, the Social Question posed challenges to Orthodox theology that could be addressed within the framework of Modern Russian Theology. Orthodox political theologies by the Orthodox left proposed the idea of Christian public sphere or sociality to theorise about the involvement in the secular world and social action. Late imperial Orthodox political theologies are relevant for the larger history of

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<sup>150</sup> Paul Valliere, "Russian Religious Thought and the Future of Orthodox Theology", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 45:3 (2001), 231. Paul L. Gavrilyuk complicated this paradigm by arguing that Georges Florovsky's rejection of the Russian renaissance thought in the 1920s was a development within the movement. See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance. Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>151</sup> A good survey on the developments in secularism studies in the last decades: Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen. *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>153</sup> Valliere, "Russian Religious Thought and the Future of Orthodox Theology", 229-32.

Russian Orthodoxy because they rely on a branch of Orthodox thought that focuses on *embracing* the world, not on rejecting it.

On the one hand, the question of Russian Orthodox moral action is more complicated as the dichotomy of negating or embracing the world. Scott M. Kenworthy identified three dominant modes of moral action: communal, liturgical worship; serving the world by cooperating with a secular power to create a Christian society, and personal transformation through repentance.<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, lay and academic theologians across the spectrum often utilised this simplified “contemplation versus social action” paradigm to conceptualise themselves, challenge others and to create intellectual camps. The underlying question became crucial in the late Imperial Russian setting: what should be the relationship of Orthodoxy to the world – including the suffering of workers? What should be – if any – the role of the Church in the world? Conscious and unconscious responses to these questions influenced the actions (and lack of actions) of lay and clerical members of the Orthodox Church. Those who believed that Christianity should embrace the world were confronted with a myriad of consequent questions on the relationship between Christianity and the social, including politics and economics. This dissertation investigates and conceptualises some of these myriad questions and illuminates the wide spectrum of possible responses to them in a particular historical moment – in revolutionary Russia after 1905.

After the conceptual introduction and historiographical overview, the first chapter moves on to capture the specific historical moment when political theologies of

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<sup>154</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, “The Save the World or to Renounce It: Modes of Moral Action in Russian Orthodoxy” In: Mark D. Steinberg, Catherine Wanner, and Irina Papkova, eds., *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies* (Washington, D.C. : Bloomington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Indiana University Press, 2008), 23.

the Orthodox left emerged in Imperial Russia. This historical moment was Bloody Sunday and the 1905 revolution.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Historical Moment and the Theo-political Landscape

*We, working men of St. Petersburg, our wives and children, and our parents, helpless, aged men and women, have come to you, O Tsar (gosudar'), in quest of justice (pravda) and protection.*

*We have been beggared, oppressed, overburdened with excessive toil, treated with contumely. We are not recognized as normal human beings but are dealt with as slaves who have to bear their bitter lot in silence. [...]*

*For us, there are but two roads [put'], one leading to liberty and happiness, the other to the tomb.*

(The St. Petersburg Workmen's Petition to the Tsar, on 22 (9) January 1905)<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1 The historical moment: revolutionary Russia

Following the introductory remarks, the first chapter focuses on two areas: firstly, it highlights the specific historical moment in which the Orthodox left and their political theologies emerged, underscoring conceptions of justice and radicalisation of clergy in revolutionary Russia. Secondly, the chapter reconstructs the theo-political context – both diachronic and synchronic – of the political theologies. The diachronic context helps to highlight the conceptual and rhetorical continuities and discontinuities, while the synchronic context explains the position of the Orthodox left in the larger intellectual landscape and contextualises their arguments. As it was already highlighted, the main source of theo-political inspiration was Vladimir Solov'ev and more broadly Modern Russian theology. Therefore, the first section of the second part focuses on the ideas of Aleksander Bukharev and Vladimir Solov'ev with a brief reflection on Fedor Dostoevsky's role. The synchronic context includes

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to Georgii Gapon, *The Story of My Life* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906), 257-261.

the discussion of various intellectual and religious groups that were active in the period: Godseekers, the Godbuilders, non-conformist religious groups and the radical right clergy.

### 1.1.1 Socio-political sphere: the crisis of the concept of justice

On 9 January 1905 a mass religious procession of thousands of people, led by Father Georgii Gapon, took place on the streets of St. Petersburg. Armed government forces were ordered to suppress the procession by force and live ammunition. The event came to be known as Bloody Sunday and became one of the triggers of the 1905 revolution. It is worth revisiting the original goal of the protesters at this religious procession. Workers and their families wanted to bring to the Tsar a petition which was composed by the Assembly of Russian Workers lead by Father Georgii Gapon.<sup>2</sup> The language of the petition highlighted that the protesters wanted ‘justice’ to their miserable living conditions.<sup>3</sup> They mentioned “arbitrariness”, but it was not the Tsar who represented despotism, it was the bureaucracy. At this point, the Tsar was still perceived by the workers as a legitimate source of justice and just authority. Bloody Sunday was a watershed in this respect. The petition never reached Nicholas II, the workers received only bullets, no justice. The violent suppression of the religious procession horrified many across the society – priests, intellectuals and workers. Several workers’ memoirs from 1920 identified Bloody Sunday as a moment when they lost faith in Orthodoxy and autocracy. These memoirs need to be read critically, as products of Soviet times, but it would be hard to deny the central role that Bloody Sunday played in the exacerbating relationship between the people, the Tsar and the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> As the most well-known radical priest, the life and role of Father Gapon has been discussed in the literature, see Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: The Role of Father Gapon and the Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, especially chapter 7: From Religion to Politics – Father Gapon and the Assembly of Russian Workers, 126-153.

<sup>3</sup> Zelnik connected the language of justice in Gapon’s idioms to the program of the first purely workers’ organization, the Northern Union of Russian Workers (1878-9) which “called upon to be the apostles of a new, but in essence only a misunderstood and forgotten teaching of Christ.” See Zelnik, “To the Unaccustomed Eye”, 73.



### 1.1.2 Capital punishment and social justice

The concept of justice and just authority became unstable and contested during the revolutionary years. Research on the perception of capital punishment in the Russian Empire during this period supports this claim. Research showed that the social unrest of 1905-6 triggered an unprecedented number of capital punishments. A temporary decree established military-field courts which contributed to the rise in death sentences. Jonathan Daly estimated that the number of people killed by government forces exceeded 5,000 and might have reached 8,000 between 1906-8.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the West, capital punishment in the Russian Empire was mostly reserved for the serious crime of treason. It was not commonly used as a punishment of robbery or theft as in Great Britain. In 1905-6, however, there was a clear spike in capital punishments, justified by the government with the revolutionary situation.

A well-known example was the case of Lieutenant Piotr Petrovich Schmidt (1867-1906), one of the leaders of the Sevastopol uprising during the 1905 revolution. He was arrested, sentenced to death and executed on 6 March 1906 for his revolutionary activity. The case became highly publicised, and it generated a public outrage because the verdict was considered unjust and arbitrary. The text of the sailors' protest to the verdict showed a clear erosion of the perception of the just ruler and just authority. They called the verdict a "vigilante justice" and questioned the right of the Tsar to decide about life and death.<sup>5</sup> The execution of Schmidt triggered widespread outrage and even one of the most unpolitical members of the Orthodox leftist milieu, Pavel Florenskii, staged a "rebellion". He delivered a passionate sermon as a student at the Moscow Seminary at Sergiev Posad in front of an icon, accusing the state that their repressive actions against the suffering population are the same as shooting at

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Daly, *Crime and Punishment in Russia: A Comparative History from Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 72.

<sup>5</sup> "Moriaki torgovago flota" [Sailors of the trade fleet] In: *Protiv smertnoi kazni* [Against Capital Punishment], eds. M. N. Gernet, O. B. Gol'dovskii, I. N. Sakharov, (Tip. T-va I. D. Satyna, Moscow, 1906), 237.

Christ's body.<sup>6</sup> Ern mentioned in a letter that the sermon was received with enthusiasm by fellow seminary students and it was decided to publish its uncensored text. As a consequence, Florenskii was arrested and sent to Moscow, to the Taganskii prison. Ern added that this was so "unexpected" because "Pavlusha F. was really predisposed against any type of public activity and he always said that one could influence only separate individuals (*lichnosti*)."<sup>7</sup> Reflecting on the case of Lieutenant Schmidt and some other examples, Anna Lenkewitz concluded that by the turn of the century, the concept of justice became more detached from the person of the Tsar and there was a clear erosion of the ruler's monopoly over justice and truth.<sup>8</sup>

It was not only the sphere of politics and economics that was characterised by crises. Gregory Freeze highlighted that the sphere of religion was similarly burdened by crises, and, contrary to Soviet historiographical dogma, it was not irreligion, but *religion* which was "the subversive factor in the revolutionary process leading to 1917."<sup>9</sup> Freeze identified several interrelated, but distinguishable religious crises in the period: Church-state relations were characterised by mutual alienation, there was a crisis of religious pluralism, and a crisis within the church itself which was a result of the combined effect of administrative paralysis above and laicisation from below.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the history of Orthodox theo-political visions was embedded in this the larger socio-political and religious context: permanent crises and

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Bird, "Imagination and Ideology in the New Religious Consciousness", In Gary M. Hamburg and Randall Allen Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 275.

<sup>7</sup> Letter 206. V. F. Ern – E. D. Ern 26.03.1906, Moscow – Tsarskie Kolodtsy, *Nashedshie Grad*, 230-1.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Lenkewitz, "'The State as a Murderer': The Death Penalty and Just Authority in the Late Tsarist Empire," *Collegium* 19 (October 2015): 155-178.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory Freeze, "Critical Dynamic of the Russian Revolution", In Daniel Schönpflug and Martin Schulze Wessel, eds., *Redefining the Sacred: Religion in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 52. Freeze also showed through the example of canonisation in late Imperial Russia that both institutional and popular religion contributed to the subversion of the dominant political culture, see Gregory L. Freeze, 'Subversive Piety: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia', *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1 June 1996): 308-50.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-3.

permanent reflection on crises. What was Orthodox clergy doing in the midst of this crisis and how did they feel about Bloody Sunday?

### 1.1.3 Radicalisation of clergy

Tackling the crisis in late Imperial Russia resembled fighting a horrid hydra – cut one of its head, and two new ones will grow in its place. As the tsar Nicholas II was struggling to keep the reins in his hands, a continuous crisis discourse and a heightened awareness of time dominated intellectual and progressive clergy circles: issues were pressing, tasks were urgent, action was imperative. In this context, Bloody Sunday, the massacre of civilians by the regime in 1905, was a moral catalyst for many to engage in public affairs: for intellectuals to descend from their ivory towers, and for clergy to turn their gaze from the other-world to problems of *this* world. Bloody Sunday, was, in the eyes of progressive clergy and intelligentsia, a test of loyalty for the Russian Orthodox Church towards autocracy. The first official response to the events by the Church appeared on 12 January. As Hedda highlighted, this decree reminded clergy of their obligation to include in the daily liturgy a prayer for the safety of the tsar, for the eradication of sedition, and victory in the war.<sup>11</sup> The decree already signalled the position of the official Church. Two days later, the Holy Synod issued a public statement in which they condemned the procession. The official viewpoint was that the procession was organised by foreign agitators, and Father Gapon's actions were interpreted as the exploitation of his influence among the people – he led them astray. Furthermore, the statement reiterated that the clergy was not allowed to hold public funeral services for those who were killed in the massacre.<sup>12</sup> Monastic press also reacted negatively to the unfolding unrest, and they reaffirmed that it was a Christian's duty to obey the tsar as God's elect.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 150.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 151.

<sup>13</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism, and Society after 1825*. (Washington, D.C., New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Oxford University Press, 2010), 257-8.

The position of the hierarchy forced lower clergy to raise difficult questions about Church and politics: is it possible to be a socially engaged Church, show solidarity with the people, and at the same time retain close ties with the autocratic power? Moreover, if non-interference was not an option, what should be the ideal attitude of the clergy towards mass politics? What is Christian politics in an Orthodox Empire? The ultimate vexed question: What is to be done?

There was no answer from the Church to these questions, only silence – often highlighted in the clerical press, – as it maintained its non-interference policy in social and political matters. When the 1905 revolution started, it became clear that clergy was pushed to make decisions on an individual basis. The revolution itself was triggered by such an individual choice – the mass procession of thousands of people which escalated into Bloody Sunday was organised by a priest. Father Gapon was a strong promoter of clerical social activism and outreach to society throughout his life. He also undoubtedly, became the most well-known representative of “radical clergy” in the period.<sup>14</sup> Gregory Freeze, in his analysis of the radicalisation of the clergy in late Imperial Russia, concluded that it is difficult to talk about a uniform reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church to the 1905 revolution.<sup>15</sup> As the body of the Church was heterogeneous, so were the responses of its members. Despite the official position that reaffirmed its support for autocracy, parish clergy did participate in revolutionary activities, but it is hard to estimate the numbers. The lack of adequate guiding by the Church generated feelings of confusion and frustration. Clerical press reflected these feelings as it tried to keep up with the events and report on the situation in various parts of the country – often only sharing gossips due to lack of reliable information.

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<sup>14</sup> Father Gapon remains a controversial figure in historiography due to his cooperation with secret police and eventual murder – most likely – by the Socialist Revolutionaries, but on the order of a member of the secret police.

<sup>15</sup> Freeze, “Church and Politics in Late Imperial Russia”, 279.

Another one of the “Moscow letters” in the *Church Voice* progressive journal reported that priests reacted in various ways to the revolutionary events.<sup>16</sup> The second letter from 2 January 1906, after the Moscow uprisings in December 1905, described discussions among Moscow clergy regarding the revolutionary situation and shared some gossips “about the attitude of some pastors toward the uprising which has just been suppressed (*usmirenniy*)”<sup>17</sup> by the government. It turned out that, on the one hand, some priests begged the revolutionaries “to go away from the churches” and managed to stay out of the uprisings. The article, on the other hand, also mentioned a case when people ran into the churches, trying to avoid being killed by soldiers, and “the priest went out to the military and very nervously reproached the soldiers for what they were doing, and they had to remove him by force from the field of fire.”<sup>18</sup> Argyrios K. Pisiotis, in his dissertation on clerical dissent, identified several hundred names in archival materials who demonstrated some form of clerical dissent during 1905-6.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, most of these priests had an impeccable clerical record. Their parishes loved them, and when they were arrested, people often signed petitions to free their priests.

#### 1.1.4 Religious-Philosophical Assemblies and Societies

It is important to bring in the literature on the Religious Philosophical Assemblies and Societies which constitute an integral part of the history of religious intelligentsia before 1917. During the nineteenth century, the Church lost much of its influence among the educated classes, especially in the cities. At the end of the century, however, as Freeze showed, the Church made conscious efforts to reach out to the intelligentsia. Two factors motivated the

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<sup>16</sup> It was established in the previous chapter that this name is one of the pseudonyms used by Nikolai Rozanov, a theologian and teacher.

<sup>17</sup> N. Moskovskii (Nikolai Rozanov), “Moskovskie pis'ma I. (8 ianvaria),” [Moscow Letter II. (8 January) *Tserkovnii golos* ' 2 (1906): 62.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Argyrios K. Pisiotis, *Orthodoxy Versus Autocracy: The Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905-1914* (Georgetown University, 2000) and Argyrios K. Pisiotis, “Unknown Dissent: The Prosopography of Clerical Anti-Tsarist Activism in late Imperial Russia” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 18/19 (2002-2003): 63-94.

“going to the intelligentsia” mission: the development of a “this-worldly” theology which emerged in the 1860s;<sup>20</sup> and the reorientation of a part of the intelligentsia toward religion and Church.<sup>21</sup> The first direct attempt at rapprochement was the emergence of the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies which convened in 1901-3 in St. Petersburg, established by Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius. The first theme of the Assemblies was devoted to the relationship between Church and intelligentsia. V. A. Ternavtsev read out a paper titled “The Huge Task before the Russian Church”, and the task was exactly building collaboration with the intelligentsia. Although the Assemblies are often referred to as a failure, we should not underestimate the influence of these meetings and the effect of direct interaction between intelligentsia and clergy.<sup>22</sup> Rosenthal also highlighted that although the Assemblies did not achieve their goal of religious reform or reconciliation between clergy and intelligentsia, they did provide a “platform for the new views” by the religious intelligentsia and the opportunity to challenge clerical views publicly.<sup>23</sup> This is supported by Grigorii Petrov’s reflection on the Assemblies<sup>24</sup> who highlighted that

[i]t raised a series of serious religious questions, it stirred the dormant mind of our sworn theologians, and, most importantly, it enabled to a great extent the mutual coming together (*sblizhenie*) of intelligentsia and clergy, it helped them to get to know each other, it made clear which were the weak and the strong sides, and, thus, it mapped out the path (*put'*) towards further mutual work in the higher spheres of life, in the sphere of religious spirit.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Gregory Freeze, “‘Going to the Intelligentsia’”, 221-2.

<sup>22</sup> See the published minutes of the meetings: *Zapiski peterburgskikh religiozno-filosofskikh sobranii* [Minutes of the Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Assemblies] 1901-1903, M.: Izdatel'stvo “Respublika”, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age*, 142.

<sup>24</sup> Petrov used the word ‘obshchestvo’ (society), but the work was published before any of the Societies was established, so, it is correct to assume that he talked about the Assemblies.

<sup>25</sup> Grigorii Petrov, “Intelligentsia i dukhovenstvo” [Intelligentsia and clergy] In *Tserkov' i obshchestvo* [Church and society], (Tip. P.F. Voshchinskoi: St. Petersburg, 1906), 19.

There is considerable confusion in the English language literature regarding the relationship between the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies in St. Petersburg (1901-3)<sup>26</sup> and the Religious-Philosophical Societies in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev which were post-1905 developments. Hedda, Freeze and Cunningham all refer to the Societies as a continuation of the Assemblies, a statement which can be accepted only with qualifications.<sup>27</sup> The Assemblies took place with the approval of the Ober-Prokurator, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, and they were closed when he became dissatisfied with this format of clergy-intelligentsia interaction, while the Societies gathered without any official Church approval.

It is often assumed that the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society was the direct revival of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Assemblies, and then subsequent Societies were established in Moscow and Kiev, following the Saint Petersburg blueprint.<sup>28</sup> The history of these organisations, however, looked differently chronologically and logistically. The first Religious-Philosophical Society in the name of Vladimir Solov'ev was established in Moscow. Ermichev claimed that religious-philosophical discussions started already in May 1905, and the Society was officially registered in October 1906.<sup>29</sup> The idea came from members of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, discussed in chapter 4, and also from participants of the "Student historical-philological Society", founded by Sergei Trubetskoy. The earlier Assemblies in St. Petersburg were an important antecedent for the later

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<sup>26</sup> See Gregory Freeze, "'Going to the Intelligentsia': The Church and Its Urban Mission in Post-Reform Russia," in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith Clowes, Samuel Kassow, and James West (Princeton, N.J., 1991), 223. and, James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 58, 87, 123.

<sup>27</sup> The most comprehensive literature on the Saint Petersburg Assemblies and the Society is still Jutta Scherrer's book: *Die Petersburger Religiös-Philosophischen Vereinigungen*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973.

<sup>28</sup> See Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age*, 10. "The Merezhkovskys founded a journal *Novyi Put'* and a debating society, the Religious Philosophical Society, to promulgate their ideas. The meetings of the society were considered major events in the cultural life of Petersburg and attracted huge audiences; branches were later opened in Moscow and Kiev."

<sup>29</sup> A.A. Ermichev, *Religiozno-filosofskoe obshchestvo v Peterburge (1907-1917): Khronika zasedanii*, (SPb: Izd-vo S.-Peterb. Un-ta., 2007), 216.

St. Petersburg Society, but it should be acknowledged that it had a direct connection to the Moscow Society. Valentin Svetsitskii, a member of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, recalled that “[l]ast winter, the founders of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society came up with the idea to establish a similar society in Saint Petersburg. The idea was greeted with sympathy in St. Petersburg.”<sup>30</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev was also involved, he travelled to the capital from Moscow and pitched the idea to the St. Petersburg milieu.<sup>31</sup> Putnam also claimed that the Moscow Society helped to organise the St. Petersburg one in 1906-7.<sup>32</sup>

Regardless of the logistical details, the Societies, especially the Moscow one, had a different atmosphere and attitude to the Russian Orthodox Church and its traditions than the Assemblies before the 1905 revolution. This might seem insignificant, but it is important to note as members of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle followed the more conciliatory spirit of the Moscow Society, and were not that hostile towards the historical church. They were critical and reform-minded, but not hostile.

Merezhkovsky and the God-seeker group, as it will be discussed more in detail in the last part of this chapter, saw themselves as operating within Orthodox tradition, but outside of the Church. This also put its stamp on the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies which had a very combative atmosphere with attacks on the clergy by lay intellectuals and vice versa during the meetings. In contrast to this, the Religious-Philosophical Society was not established with the aim to create a platform specifically for clergy-intelligentsia debate. There were clerical members in the Societies, for instance, Father Konstantin Aggeev, member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation was an active member in the Society in St. Petersburg. Burchardi also highlighted that the situation was different with the Conservative Ober-

<sup>30</sup> S.V. “Religiozno-filosofskoe obshchestvo v Peterburge”, In *Zhivaia Zhizn’* 1907 (1) 27 November, 57.

<sup>31</sup> See Ermichev, 3.

<sup>32</sup> George F. Putnam, *Russian Alternatives to Marxism: Christian Socialism and Idealistic Liberalism in Twentieth-Century Russia*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 60. and 69. Putnam also claimed that there was subsequent branch in Tiflis. Putnam, *Russian Alternatives to Marxism*, 71.



Prokurator, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, gone and the arrival of his successor, Prince Obolenskii who was a personal friend of Solov'ev and follower of his ideas. In sum, the discussions at the Religious-Philosophical Society in Moscow were organised not in the spirit of a break with church tradition. Unlike Merezhkovsky and Gippius, “Bulgakov, Florensky, Ern and Trubetskoy criticised contemporary theology from an inner church position”<sup>33</sup> which is a significant difference. Putnam correctly highlighted that core members, Ern, Svetsitskii and Bulgakov, “rejected the idea of new revelations and the possibility of “a new religious consciousness”.<sup>34</sup>

All these ambiguities were echoed in A. V. Kartashev's speech at the first meeting of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society (3 October 1907) in the 1907/8 season. The aim of his speech was to deflect two misunderstandings about the Society: firstly, he wanted to downplay high hopes by the public that the Society would come up with “absolute solutions” to current issues. Secondly, he rejected the reproaches of “church circles, official spheres” that the Society is a group (*obshchina*) of heretics who can jeopardise church life. To address the first misunderstanding, he highlighted that the Society dealt with theoretical questions, not practical ones. He was also clear about the root of this confusion:

It seems to us that one of the reasons for these misunderstandings is that everyone is hooked on the idea that there is a historical connection between the former Religious-Philosophical Assemblies and the present Society. In reality, they are connected by a very thin thread. The present Society emerged on the basis of a completely different plan and different motives. It emerged in Moscow mainly by the wish of the members of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society, its charter was written there, and it wants to operate approximately the same [way] as that society.

<sup>33</sup> Burchardi, *Die Moskauer “Religiös-Philosophische Vladimir-Solov'ev-Gesellschaft*, 128.

<sup>34</sup> Putnam, *Russian Alternatives to Marxism*, 59.

Regarding, confrontation with the Church and clergy, Kartashev argued that the times had changed, debate with church members was not on the agenda of the society, partly due to disappointment – members had no expectations from the church anymore.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.2. Modern Russian Theology

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a socially sensitive branch of Orthodoxy emerged which was the origin of progressive and also of radical clergy. This branch of Orthodoxy was later labelled as the Russian school or Modern Russian Theology. An article titled *Two Truths (Pravda)* published in 1906 in by “a priest” talked about the struggle between the old truth of the official church and the emerging new truth of the progressive – dissenting priests. The author argued that the new truth had deep religious roots and the socio-political movements only gave it momentum. This new truth, however, was not that new, and it connected the progressive church movement to Modern Russian theology: “It is not that new as they think. It has its martyrs (*mucheniki*) in our past – Archimandrite Fedor Bukharev. There are also prophets – F. M. Dostoevsky. And there are theoreticians – Vl. S. Solov’ev.”<sup>36</sup> The author declared two of the prominent figures of Modern Russia Theology as the source of this new truth. The article was published in the journal *The Age*, which was one of the most significant publication platforms of the Orthodox left and will be discussed in chapter 5. Before constructing the contemporary theo-political landscape, this section summarises the central tenets of Modern Russian Theology in order to underscore its connection to post-1905 Orthodox political theologies.

<sup>35</sup> A. V. Kartashev, “Vstupitel’naia Rech’” [Welcome speech], In *Religiozno-filosofskoe obshchestvo v Sankt-Peterburge (Petrograde) Istoriia v materialakh i dokumentakh T. 1. 1907-1909*, (Moskva: Russkii Put’, 2009), 34-5.

<sup>36</sup> Sviashchennik [Priest], “Dva Pravda” [Two truths], *Vek* 1 (12 November 1906): 15.

### 1.2.1 Aleksandr Bukharev (Archimandrite Fedor)

The first representative of the Russian school, Aleksandr Bukharev (Archimandrite Fedor) is practically unknown today, but as the article shows, his work was a reference point for progressive clergy in revolutionary Russia. It is not a coincidence that his book, *On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World*, was republished in 1906 by the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment as an attachment to its journal, the *Church Voice*.<sup>37</sup> Aleksandr Matveevich Bukharev (1822/4-1871) was born into a village deacon's family, he attended the Tver Seminary and then the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy. At the end of his studies, in 1846, he took monastic vows and the name Fedor. In the 1860s, he published several of his writings. His work, *Studies on the Apocalypse*, was criticised by ecclesiastical authorities, and its publication was prohibited. Bukharev considered this his magnum opus, and its censorship caused conflict in him. In 1862, he requested his laicisation because from a moral point of view "it was impossible to stay in relations of unquestioning obedience to ecclesiastic authority (due to monastic vow) which were against conscience."<sup>38</sup> His request was approved by the Holy Synod in 1863.

Bukharev's theology was complex, my brief reflection focuses on two aspects: Godmanhood and history. Bukharev had a keen interest in the secular world, including secular philosophy. In his book *On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World*, he defined the modern world (*sovremennost'*) as "the ruling spiritual efforts, needs and dangers in our times."<sup>39</sup> He justified embracing the world, i.e. the secular by referring to the salvation power of Jesus

<sup>37</sup> Aleksandr Matveevich Bukharev (Archimandrite Fedor), *O pravoslavii v otnoshenii k sovremennosti* [On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World], St. Petersburg, 1906.

<sup>38</sup> Petr V. Znamenskii, "Vmesto vvedenia. O zhizni i trudakh Aleksandra Matveevicha (arkhimandrita Feodora) Bukhareva [Instead of an introduction. On the life and works of Aleksandr Matveevich (Archimandrite Fedor) Bukharev] In Arkhimandrit Feodor (A. M. Bukharev), *O pravoslavii v otnoshenii k sovremennosti* [On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World] (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografia, 1906), xx.

<sup>39</sup> Archimandrite Fedor (Bukharev), *O pravoslavii v otnoshenii k sovremennosti* [On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World] (St. Petersburg: Strannik, 1860), 2.

Christ, the Godman: “He became man for everyone, he took away the sins of all man and the whole world”.<sup>40</sup> One can read Fichte and Hegel because Jesus Christ took away the sin of secular intellectual thought too. This argument served as a basis to build a dynamic relationship between Orthodoxy and the modern world. The other important feature of Bukharev’s theology was an emphasis on the historical dimension of Godmanhood based on the Revelation of John. As Valliere highlighted, by incarnation Jesus Christ “took on human history”.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from republishing Bukharev’s writings, there were also critical responses to his ideas at the turn of the century. Petr Znamenskii published a book which discussed the polemic of the 1860s.<sup>42</sup> The book was reviewed in the progressive journal, *The Age*.<sup>43</sup> The reviewer underscored that the question of the 1860s, the relationship of the Orthodox church to politics, civil society (*obshchestvennost’*) and culture, again became relevant. The short article agreed with the reviewed book that even though his opponents externally triumphed, Bukharev’s ideas represent “the future in the process of the development of Christian society and the development of theology (*bogoslovskaiia nauka*) itself.”

### 1.2.2 Vladimir Solov’ev

Vladimir Solov’ev (1853-1900) and his ideas were critical to the emergence of political theologies by the Orthodox left. Solov’ev was the son of the famous historian, Sergei Mikhailovich Solov’ev, author of the acclaimed *History of Russia from Ancient Time (Istoriia Rossii s drevnikh vremen)*. Solov’ev received secular education, although his paternal grandfather was an Orthodox priest. He studied science, but then he graduated in history and philology from Moscow University in 1873 and spent the next year at the Moscow

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000), 83.

<sup>42</sup> Petr V. Znamenskii, *Pravoslavie i sovremennaia zhizn’*. Polemika 60-kh godov ob otnoshenii pravoslaviia k soremennoi zhizni (A. M. Bukharev) [Orthodoxy and the modern life. Debates in the 60s on the relationship of Orthodoxy to the modern life] (Moscow: Izd. Svobodnaia Sovest’, 1906).

<sup>43</sup> In *Vek* No. 13. (1906).

Ecclesiastical Academy. During 1877-80, Solov'ev delivered his famous *Lectures on Godmanhood* (*Chteniia o bogochelovechestve*) which inspired a whole generation of religious thinkers. Attendees included Fedor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy and even Konstantin Pobedonostsev, who was the tutor of the tsarevich at that time and later became Ober-Prokurator.<sup>44</sup> He had mystical experiences throughout his life, three visions of the divine Sophia, which defined his philosophical work too. There is no easy definition of Sophia, the divine Wisdom. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt proposed that it is the divine body of God for humanity and the ideal humanity for God, it is both divine and human, spirit and matter. It is “a relationship, the principle or energy or potential that can conjoin.”<sup>45</sup> My discussion will focus on Solov'ev's concept of Christian politics as the most relevant aspect of this philosophy for political theologies, but it is necessary to discuss the fundamentals of Solov'evian philosophy first.

One of the driving forces behind Solov'ev's philosophy was his firm conviction that the world is imperfect, but that it can be perfected. In his early period, he focused on metaphysical problems, in particular, the (in)commensurability of spirit and matter; he was looking for a place of mediation between the two. Solov'ev's philosophy had two central terms: Godmanhood (*bogochelovechestvo*) and All-Unity (*vseedinstvo*).<sup>46</sup> Oliver Smith's groundbreaking study of Solov'ev identified “the spiritualized matter of the body of the risen Christ” as the paradigmatic model of his ideal.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, Godmanhood is the union of the divine

<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Judit Deutsch Kornblatt, “Who is Solovyov and what is Sophia?” In Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov, *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 93-4.

<sup>46</sup> Richard F. Gustafson, “Soloviev's Doctrine of Salvation,” In Judith Deutsch Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson, *Russian Religious Thought* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 31.

<sup>47</sup> Oliver Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Spiritualization of Matter* (Academic Studies Press, 2018), 13.

and the human natures in an individual, All-Unity is the union of the heavenly and earthly at a universal level.

History played a central role in his philosophy, as the human potential for absolute content becomes a grand historical project involving humanity and the whole created world. This is connected to an essentially projective way of thinking which shifts the focus from ‘what is’ to ‘becoming’. Nikolai Fedorov, Russian philosopher had a similar approach to philosophy and the world.<sup>48</sup> Smith argued that in the case of Solov’ev the task of “becoming of the fullness of being” is less clear, but it is connected to the goal of the realisation of the Kingdom of God. This realisation is accomplished by the dynamic interplay of the inner and external Kingdom:

There is the Kingdom of God *inside* us, but there is also one outside us – and the agreement of the two [Kingdoms], the total dissolution of the inner Kingdom of God with the external one is the goal of our efforts.<sup>49</sup>

After the Incarnation, Christ’s body became the new subject of history. Smith highlighted that Solov’ev was influenced by Pauline concepts, Christ’s body was “the sacramental life of the church and the growing body of collective humanity”.<sup>50</sup> Death can be overcome in this body, resurrection is the reconciliation of matter and spirit.

This transformation demands an active humanity who participates in its salvation history – humanity cannot be saved by force. The seed of the transformation, enabled by the gift of Incarnation, is in the sacramental life of the church, and humanity can and should expand this spiritualised matter, the body of Christ to the whole of the created order.<sup>51</sup> This is the

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<sup>48</sup> See Hagemeister, *Nikolaj Fedorov*

<sup>49</sup> Vladimir S. Solov’ev, “Istoriia i budushnost’ teokratiia” [History and the future of theocracy] In *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov’eva* [Collected volume by V.S. Solov’ev], Vol. 4., (“Prosveshchenie”: St. Petersburg, 1914), 591.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Vladimir Soloviev*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

essence of Solov'ev thought which underlie his ideas about Christian politics and the drive to Christianise the created order.

Greg Gaut called Solov'ev ideas on Christian morality and politics a “social gospel theology”, and he argued that it was a key element in the last twenty years of Soloviev's publications, the so-called opinion pieces, the *publitsistika*. He also noted that the lack of attention to this issue in Soloviev's oeuvre might be due to the general lack of research on “the social Christian trend within Russian Orthodoxy”.<sup>52</sup> Soloviev's Christian politics was linked to the idea of the Kingdom of God, that it should “prepare the coming of the Kingdom of God for humanity as a whole”.<sup>53</sup>

His concept of Christian politics was embedded in his theology of Godmanhood. The consequence of the Fall, i. e. the separation of man and God, could be overcome in the unfolding of the historical world-process, which is the realisation of the Kingdom of God. This can be achieved by a new humanity which “spiritually grows out of the God-man”.<sup>54</sup> Solov'ev had different proposals of how this task could or should be fulfilled. Gaut argued that there was a general shift from the 1880s to the 1890s in the emphasis on how to accomplish the Kingdom of God. Firstly, Solov'ev's work centred on the idea of theocracy and interrelated ecumenical projects, but later he abandoned this idea. He became particularly convinced that the churches “degenerated into formalistic schemes for personal salvation”, instead of calling for and actively organising the transformation of social and political relations in the spirit of Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Gaut, “Christian Politics”, 654.

<sup>53</sup> Vladimir S. Solov'ev, “Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika” [The great debate and Christian politics] In *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva* [Collected volume by V.S. Solov'ev], Vol. 4., (“Prosveshchenie”: St. Petersburg, 1914), 3.

<sup>54</sup> Vladimir S. Solov'ev, “Opravdanie dobra” [The justification of good] In: *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva* [Collected volume by V.S. Solov'ev], Vol. 8., (“Prosveshchenie”: St. Petersburg, 1914), 224.

<sup>55</sup> Gaut, “Christian Politics...”, 660.

### 1.2.3 Fedor Dostoevsky

The third prominent thinker who inspired political theologies on the Orthodox left was Feodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and his literary oeuvre. This section discusses only one crucial theme from his works that was particularly influential among Russian religious intelligentsia, the *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*.

The *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* is a myth, a *poema*, told by Ivan in *The Brothers of Karamazov* by Fedor Dostoevsky. It is part of Dostoevsky's last novel, but it can be regarded as a separate work, and it has been indeed published often independently, as an excerpt from the book. The fact that the *Legend* itself has received extensive attention in the literature shows its comprehensive nature and the possibility to discuss it without providing a detailed analysis of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The *Legend* is presented in Book Five: Pro and Contra in Chapter 5, The Grand Inquisitor. The preceding chapter gives the setting for the *Legend*: the two Karamazov brothers, Ivan and Alesha are engaged in deep conversation about the so-called 'vexed questions', the ultimate questions about life, the world and the individual. The loss of religious faith and its consequences are the most commonly identified main themes of *The Brothers Karamazov* and the *Legend* too.

The plot is very simple. Christ comes back to our world in the time of the most brutal Inquisition, in the city of Seville in the sixteenth century. The people immediately recognise him, he performs miracles – he heals and resurrects a girl. For these actions, he is imprisoned in a dungeon by the Inquisition and the Grand Inquisitor himself visits him. The visitor first wanted to know if it was “really him”, meaning Christ himself, but then he acknowledges that it does not matter and delivers a long monologue about the state of the world as he sees it. He makes it clear that the world does not need and never needed Christ, and that the Roman Catholic Church has corrected Christ's mistake: he should not have resisted the three



temptations in the wilderness. He argues that they taught to mankind that “it is not the free choice of the heart that matters, and not love”, but:

*miracle, mystery, and authority.* And mankind rejoiced that they were once more led like sheep, and that at last such a terrible gift, which had brought them so much suffering, had been taken from their hearts.<sup>56</sup>

The Inquisitor also reveals the reality behind their actions – the Church does not serve God, it serves him, the Satan, it is the period of the Anti-Christ. They have accepted the temptations, and in this way, they will bring eternal happiness to mankind: “Then we shall give them quiet, humble happiness, the happiness of feeble creatures, such as they were created...”<sup>57</sup> In the end, he promises to the holy prisoner that he will be burnt the next day. Christ does not say a single word during the whole scene, and “[h]is silence weighed on” the Inquisitor. Finally, he “approaches the old man in silence and gently kisses him on his bloodless, ninety-year-old lips.” The Inquisitor opens the door, and the prisoner disappears in the “dark squares of the city.”<sup>58</sup> That is the end of the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, told by Ivan Karamazov.

The ambiguity of the Legend was the source of the power of the story, and it indeed had various interpretations after its publication. Ellis Sandoz, a disciple of Erich Voegelin, interpreted it as a political apocalypse in his book *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (1971). He explained that apocalyptic writings are often written in times of stress; divide history into sequences of periods and delegate to history the role of being a battleground in the cosmic fight of good and evil. These type of writings having both prophetic and apocalyptic content.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, he claimed that “it is evident that the

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<sup>56</sup> Fedor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 257.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-9

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 262

<sup>59</sup> Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 97.

question of human freedom in collision with power was central to the Legend”<sup>60</sup> and that it was “one of the literature’s most telling critiques and condemnation of authoritarianism”.<sup>61</sup> Another important feature was the “radical immanentisation of existence” – God might have created the world, but man is more competent in deciding about the order of existence.<sup>62</sup> This rebellion against God is a clear reference to the first and foremost rebellion of man, the cosmic drama of the Fall, of creature vs. Creator; and the first act of genuine human freedom – the eating of the apple. These themes resonated with the *fin de siècle* Russian milieu and served as a reference point for progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia. The discussion turns now to the reconstruction of a part of this highly complex theo-political landscape of 1905-8.

### 1.3. The Theo-political Landscape

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life...”* (John 14:6)

Imperial Russia entered the twentieth century under the ‘Last Tsar’ in turmoil and unrest. The period was characterised both by *fin de siècle* decadence, a sense of disintegration; and by Silver Age vitality in search of new beginnings and of re-enchantment with the world. The 1905 revolution, triggered by a humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and by the massacre of Bloody Sunday, led to transformations which were limited in scope but had a significant impact. For the first time in Russian history, Nicholas II’s ‘October Manifesto’ pledged to introduce the institution of a parliament, the Imperial Duma; to legalise trade unions and strikes, and to give greater press freedom. These changes led to the expansion of the public sphere and gave space to an unprecedented number of actors to express their ideas concerning the past, present and future of Russia. The dissertation singles out three key terms as revealing of the theo-political Zeitgeist of the period: the way, the truth and the life.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 98

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 147

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 175

The way (*put'*). Journals and magazines in late Imperial Russia were full of opinion pieces on the possible, preferable or unacceptable way lying ahead of Russia. Journal titles themselves often evoked this term in their titles: the journal *New Path* (*Novyi Put'*) was established by Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius to create a publishing space for positive lay religious content. The journal was taken over by Sergei Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev when the Merezhkovskys went abroad.

The term highlights the dominant mood among intellectuals and members of the clergy: the empire and its inhabitants arrived at a crossroads. Ideas were perceived and judged by the kind of future they promised to realise. Similarly, actions were justified by being presented as contributing to or preventing the emergence of certain paths laying ahead. Writing about revolutionary Russia without teleological narration is quite difficult due to the haunting reality of 1917. Still, to understand some of the arguments of this dissertation, it is important to keep in mind that the post-1905 years were not only about the revolutionary intelligentsia re-organising itself, there was also despair in the usefulness of the revolutionary method. Russia witnessed widespread violence and unrest in 1905, but the bloodshed did not lead to a fundamentally new social and political system. The most devoted radicals were not discouraged by the failure of 1905, but many were disappointed in violence as a potential method to achieve radical change. As Herrlinger highlighted, faced with the limits of secular action, religion and spirituality were again appealing for workers around 1908.<sup>63</sup>

Due to its silence during the revolutionary years, criticism and discontent towards the official Russian Orthodox Church were growing in the period. Alternative forms of spirituality became popular in the period, including Tolstoyans, Baptists,<sup>64</sup> and *pashkovtsy*, a form of

<sup>63</sup> Page Herrlinger, *Working Souls: Russian Orthodoxy and Factory Labor in St. Petersburg, 1881-1917*, The Allan K. Wildman Group Historical Series 2 (Bloomington, Ind: Slavica, 2007), 222-3

<sup>64</sup> See Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Bloomington, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

evangelical Christianity.<sup>65</sup> These alternative traditions offered a new way, a new method to achieve change – change inside would bring change outside. Authors of journals and newspapers of the time show a strong sense of agency and belief that their words and actions could and would change the course of history. We can brush aside these feelings from our position of century-old historical knowledge, but our dismissal does not make these contemporary attitudes less real for those who experienced them. The usefulness of ‘what if’ scenarios is contestable in history writing, but we need to recognise the presence of this way of thinking in the decision-making of historical actors. What if the Russian Orthodox Church is not capable of reforming itself? What if Marxist intelligentsia becomes the leader of the people? What if the Orthodox clergy sides with the radical right? The way, the path was a common trope in the period not because people believed there were many paths ahead of Russia, but because they believed that the various imagined futures for Russia were irreconcilable with each other, and there would inevitably remain only one path.

Truth and justice (*istina, pravda*). The issue of truth and justice is naturally related to the issue of the way lying ahead – one should side with those who possess truth and justice, *istina* and *pravda*. But when everyone claims to do so, how does one decide? Among clergy and religious intelligentsia, this question unavoidably invoked the question of Christ and Anti-Christ, how does one differentiate truth from falsity? Justice was manifested in the person of the Orthodox tsar for centuries in the eyes of imperial subjects, but this unified and personalised understanding of justice was disintegrating in the last decades of the Empire.<sup>66</sup> Once justice stops being unified, a different type of question starts to make sense – who has *more* justice and truth? Parties and unions focused on gaining influence over people’s worldview, and,

<sup>65</sup> On pashkovism among the aristocracy see: Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900. Radstockism and Pashkovism*. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971).

<sup>66</sup> See Anna Lenkewitz, “‘The State as a Murderer’: The Death Penalty and Just Authority in the Late Tsarist Empire,” *Collegium* 19 (October 2015): 155-178.

consequently, on securing their votes. The establishment of the Duma and the emergence of new party politics in Russia turned these abstract questions into pragmatic issues of everyday life and politics.

Finally, life (*zhizn'*). The term life and its related adjectives and verbs – vivid and vital, reinvigorate and resurrect – can be found in many of the sources of the period. It often appeared together with the other pole of the equation – death, decay and decline. This characterised the intellectual scene across the board, and the *fin de siècle* paradigm appropriately highlights this double nature of decay and rejuvenation. In Rosenthal's phrasing "premonitions of doom stimulated hopes of phoenix-like rebirth".<sup>67</sup> Clerical Orthodox discourse, both on the right and the left, was obsessed with the idea that the Church has been for centuries in passivity – paralysis was the word used by Dostoevsky –, but the time for resurrection had come. Marxists and later Bolsheviks were similarly devoted to solving the issue of life and death, the ultimate enemy.<sup>68</sup> Alexander Bogdanov, Lenin's major rival, was busy with unlocking the secret of eternal youth as he experimented with blood transfusions, which probably led to his death.<sup>69</sup> Bogdanov approached human blood holistically, it was essential life energy for him and, thus, capable of lengthening people's life span or even preventing the decay of cells.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 230.

<sup>68</sup> Nikolai Kremmentsov highlighted that there was a flood of books and brochures on immortality and death in the early 1920s of Soviet Russia, for example: "Immortality as a subject of natural science," "Life and death," "What is death?," "Aging and death," "The problems of death and immortality," "Death and revival," "Death from the viewpoint of modern science," and "The enigma of death." Nikolai Kremmentsov, *Revolutionary Experiments: The Quest for Immortality in Bolshevik Science and Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32.

<sup>69</sup> Bogdanov died after he tried to experimentally prove his idea of "physiological collectivism" by exchanging blood with a student who had tuberculosis. Kremmentsov argued that although Bogdanov had different vocations and interests, the key "organizational principle" of his activities was the "concept of proletarian science". See Nikolai Kremmentsov, *A Martian Stranded on Earth: Alexander Bogdanov, Blood Transfusions, and Proletarian Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>70</sup> For a comprehensive summary of Russian thought on 'death' in this period see 2.1 Zwischen Fortschrittsglauben und Endzeiterwartung – Das Problem des Todes im russischen Denken um die Jahrhundertwende. In Michael Hagemeister, *Nikolaj Fedorov: Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Sagner, 1989), 155-187.

The issue of life was connected to the question of way and truth – only those ideas could have a future, be true and bring justice which had real, authentic vitality. Those visions which did not possess this power could not offer a legitimate way forward for Russia. In Orthodox discourse this was a prevalent trope concerning Marxism – it cannot and will not conquer the heart and mind of the people as it does not have a firm root – it does not recognise the sanctity of human dignity and human personality (*lichnost'*), especially not freedom of will. Thus, the conclusion was that the tree of Marxism would not be able to develop strong roots in Russian soil and grow firm branches. Its tree will eventually die out – sooner or later.

The historical context highlighted the social and political background of the discussed Orthodox theo-political visions. It is also necessary, however, to sketch the intellectual landscape of *fin de siècle* Russia to highlight the theo-political space that the discussed visions aimed to occupy and to understand better some of the positions that they endorsed or challenged. There were various thinkers and groups whose positions are relevant to Orthodox social Christian visions, but only those aspects will be discussed which are relevant for further discussion. The focus is primarily on the position of certain groups regarding the ideal relationship between Christianity/church/religion and politics/socialism in Russia. The Godseekers, the Godbuilders and non-conformist religious groups are discussed briefly, before a longer analysis of the anti-socialist writings of Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov and radical right clergy.

### **1.3.1 Dmitry Merezhkovsky and the Godseekers**

Putnam listed “Godseeking” as one of the three major forms of Russian alternatives to Marxism at the turn of the century – next to Christian socialist thought and idealistic liberalism

(based on Kantian and neo-Kantian ethics).<sup>71</sup> Most important “Godseekers” were Dmitry Merezhkovsky and his wife Zinaida Gippius who came up with the idea to establish the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Assemblies (1901-3) as discussed earlier. This section points out some of the characteristics of Merezhkovsky’s changing theo-political visions to highlight how the discussed political theologies differ from the Godseeker position, especially regarding the Church.

Merezhkovsky’s theo-political ideas went through substantial changes between the 1880s and his death in emigration in 1941. Rosenthal identified three important stages in his intellectual development: the aesthetic, the religious search and the theocratic. The third theocratic stage started during the revolution of 1905, and focused on the creation of “an organic society, based on the principles of the New Christianity.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite the significant changes in Merezhkovsky’s ideas, two aspects remained relatively constant: a rejection of the official, historical church and belief in a new revelation. Merezhkovsky criticised historical Christianity for “overemphasising death and suffering” and for perpetuating an ascetic and passive Christian worldview while Christ has never “advocated forsaking the world.”<sup>73</sup> In general, he argued that the historical church was beyond repair and could not serve as a vehicle for a movement to rejuvenate Russia. His rejection of the church

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<sup>71</sup> Putnam, *Russian Alternatives to Marxism*, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 11

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

was also due to his belief that Divine Revelation was not finished. Merezhkovsky believed that the First Revelation corresponded to the first humanity and the Old Testament. It revealed the power and authority of the Father and the world of flesh. The Second Revelation created second humanity by the New Testament; the Son of God brought the world of the spirit and the heavens. Finally, there would be a third revelation by the Holy Spirit and with humanity reaching Godmanhood through spiritual evolution. As one can read in the final part of this Christ and Anti-Christ trilogy, Alexei and Peter: There was the ancient Church of Peter, the standing rock, and there will be the new Church of Johann, the flying thunder. And the thunder strikes the stone and the water of life pours out of it. The first testament, the old – the Kingdom of the Father, the second testament, the new – the Kingdom of the Son, and the third final testament – the Kingdom of the Spirit. One in three and three in one.” These two aspects differentiate his philosophy from Christian social visions by progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia who firmly believed that the Church can be reformed and did not contest the finality of divine revelation, only interpretation.

In his theocratic phase, Merezhkovsky developed ideas about a religious revolution which had strong Christian anarchistic undertones, quite similar to Lev Tolstoy’s anti-statist ideas. He identified the state and specifically autocracy with the Anti-Christ and called for a break between Orthodoxy and autocracy. Some of his criticism on the church-state alliance resembles arguments made by church reform circles and other Orthodox political theologies:



Orthodoxy became “the religion of the state”, the clergy became *chinovniki* (bureaucrats), and clergy must engage in social activism.<sup>74</sup>

### 1.3.2 Anatoly Lunacharsky and the Godbuilders

Lenin claimed in a letter to Maksim Gorky on Capri that “[g]od-seeking differs from god-building ... no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil”,<sup>75</sup> but that statement was rather part of his conscious effort to challenge his rival Alexander Bogdanov than the result of careful philosophical analysis.<sup>76</sup> God-building was an effort among Russian Marxist thinkers to reconcile religion and socialism. Propagators included Maksim Gorky and Anatoly Lunacharsky, who later became first Commissar for Enlightenment in the Soviet government.<sup>77</sup> His two-volume work titled *Religion and Socialism* has been extensively discussed in the literature on the God-building movement. In Kline’s interpretation, God-building (*bogostroitelstvo*) was a “secular, pseudo-religion” that had three historical roots: “(1) nineteenth-century Russian radicalism, (2) Ludwig Feuerbach’s<sup>78</sup> left-Hegelian conversion of theology into philosophical anthropology, and (3) the Nietzschean doctrine of the

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<sup>74</sup> See Rosenthal’s discussion of Revolutionary Christianity: Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky*, 180-185.

<sup>75</sup> Letter №55 from V. Ulyanov to M. Gorky, November 13 or 14, 1913. In *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 35. (February 1912-December 1922), 121.

<sup>76</sup> See also on this topic: Jutta Scherrer, „Ein gelber und ein blauer Teufel”. Zur Entstehung der Begriffe „bogostroitel’stvo” und „bogoiskatel’stvo” In *Forschungen zu Osteuropäischen Geschichte*, Band 25. Werner Philipp zum 70 Geburtstag. (Berlin, 1978). 319-329.

<sup>77</sup> Anatoly Vasilevich Lunacharsky (1875-1933) became a Marxist at an early age and participated in revolutionary activities. He was involved in the organisation of party schools on Capri and in Bologna (1909-11) together with Maxim Gorky and Alexander Bogdanov, one of the most influential rivals of Lenin at that time. He wrote hundreds of articles about art, literature and education. See Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*

<sup>78</sup> Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804-1872) was a German philosopher. His ideas were important for the development of historical materialism, often identified as a link between G. W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx.

‘overman’.”<sup>79</sup> Lunacharsky’s work was essentially an evolutionary history of religion, declaring Marxist socialism as the highest form of religion. His primary motivation behind the study of the history of religion was the need to write the “whole history of religion from a materialistic point of view, including European metaphysics, utopian socialism and, finally, scientific materialism.”

In the first chapter of volume one, *What is religion*, Lunacharsky surveyed prevalent Marxist approaches to religion. He criticised Plekhanov’s understanding of religion, which he called “rationalistic”, and he expressed strong sympathy towards Ludwig Feuerbach and Joseph Dietzgen.<sup>80</sup> Lunacharsky also provided his own definition: “...religion is such thinking about the world and such world-feeling, which psychologically destroys the contrast between the laws of life and the laws of nature.”<sup>81</sup> Socialism, in his understanding, was the “organised struggle of humanity with nature” and the hope that humanity can conquer nature. It is not a historical necessity, it is a new religion, the “religion of humanity, the religion of labour”.<sup>82</sup> Lunacharsky’s definition highlights the conceptual contestation of the term “religion”; and how a crisis of concepts created space for conceptual innovations and intellectual experiments. More often than not for failed experiments, Lunacharsky’s *Religion and Socialism* was declared “heretic” by Lenin and was never republished.

His ideas on socialism as a religion still managed to reach a wider audience. Thus we can consider it as an intellectual context that influenced progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia in their formulation of Christian social visions. Lunacharsky presented his God-

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<sup>79</sup> Kline, “The “God-builders”, 103. See also Read, “Religious revolutionaries” and Gleixner, “*Menschheitsreligionen*”

<sup>80</sup> Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918) was one of the founders of the Social-democratic movement in Russia and a Marxist theoretician.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 49.

building ideas at a public lecture series in 1906, as we can learn from a letter by Father Konstantin Aggeev, an active clerical member of the *Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation*.<sup>83</sup> Aggeev was a professor of religion at the Saint Petersburg Aleksandrovskii Institute when he was asked by one of his students to serve as an “opponent to Lunacharsky” who was giving a series of public lectures at the Politechnical Institute on the following topics: “The concept of religion. Religion and Socialism. 2. The origin of religion. 3. Religious metaphysics. 5. Religious Social-Democracy.” During the lecture, Aggeev “raised objections” and proved that Lunacharsky “just repeats ... letter by letter Feuerbach’s expressions.”<sup>84</sup>

There is another reference to Lunacharsky’s God-building ideas in the period by another member of the *Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation*, by Father Mikhail Chel’tsov.<sup>85</sup> He devoted a whole section to the “religion of socialism” in his published lecture notes for students at the Institute of Civil Engineers in St. Petersburg where he worked as a theology professor between 1903-1918.<sup>86</sup> In his discussion of socialism as a religion, he included the same quote by Dietzgen that is quoted in Lunacharsky’s text – that social-democratic ideas create a new religion. Chel’tsov identified Lunacharsky and Gorky as the main “apostles” of this new religion in Russia, and he quoted from Lunacharsky’s *Religion and Socialism*. In summary, he claimed that the religion of socialism is the belief in “an empty space”, in the abstract idea of future humanity; and that the deification of humanity “annihilates individuality (*lichnost*) as a living reality” and it leads to the creation of an “earthly God, the overman” (*sverkhchelovek*).<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Father Konstantin Aggeev (1868-1921) and his work is discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>84</sup> Balakshina, *Bratstvo revnitatei tserkovnogo obnovenia*, 393-4.

<sup>85</sup> Mikhail Chel’tsov (1870-1931) was a professor of theology, a graduate of the Kazan’ Ecclesiastical Academy. He became an archpriest in 1914. He was arrested and executed in 1931, and he was canonized in 2005 as one of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>86</sup> Chel’tsov, *O vere i neverii*

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 77.

### 1.3.3 Lev Tolstoy and Christian anarchism

Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910) is mostly known for his fiction, although he spent the last three decades of his life with writing religious-philosophical non-fictional works. Lev Tolstoy and his position regarding religion and politics are important as in contemporary debates he represented the extreme of Christian radicalism in the eyes of many, both on the right and the left. Several priests and intellectuals discussed in this dissertation were criticised by Conservative hierarchy and the official Church, but more sympathetic comments highlighted that they were still not as “bad” as Tolstoy. The difference is reflected in the severity of the reaction of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church to Tolstoy’s works. While some progressive priests were defrocked, Tolstoy was excommunicated in 1901 for denying eleven Christian dogmas, including the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Tolstoy’s life and work undoubtedly shared the “seeking the truth” character of his time and a sense of continuous crises. One of these many crises culminated around 1877-8 during the time he was finishing *Anna Karenina*, and resulted in his conversion to a personal Christian faith. Medzhibovskaya argued in a recent study that his conversion was a “gigantic philosophical and religious project”, not a “crisis-begotten tragic moment”, but I think the two do not exclude each other by default.<sup>88</sup> She interpreted Tolstoy’s conversion in the framework of Kantian modernity – morality was an essential foundation for both thinkers.<sup>89</sup> In her

<sup>88</sup> Inessa Medzhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: A Biography of a Long Conversion, 1845-1887* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2008), xv.

<sup>89</sup> Tolstoy identified Kant as his “soul mate”. Medzhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, 213.

interpretation, this process was the self-discovery of reason in consciousness. One important term to mention is *razumenie* which Tolstoy used to explain his understanding of divine reason or logos. *Razum* means divine reason, and the ending suggests the appropriation of said divine reason by humans, the recognition or internalization of divine reason. Medzhibovskaya suggested to translate it as “awareness”.<sup>90</sup> Tolstoy argued that *razumenie* “was not only reason (*razum*), but also the activity of reason, leading to something”.<sup>91</sup>

This had a direct implication on Tolstoy’s understanding of Christ. Christ was not born divine reason, but he achieved *razumenie*. Tolstoy argued that

[r]azumenie was in all people. ... all people are alive only because they were born with *razumenie*. The people, however, did not acknowledge *razumenie* as their father – and they did not live by it, the source of their life was outside of it. But all people, who understand this source of life, *razumenie* gives the ability to become by faith the son of God – *razumenie*, as the [source] of life of all people are not in the blood of women and in the flesh of men, but in God-razumenie. Full *razumenie* manifested itself in Jesus Christ.<sup>92</sup>

By achieving Godmanhood, Jesus Christ became a self-made son of God, and established a model that could be followed by humanity. Pål Kolstø argued that Christ was for Tolstoy “simply an extremely enlightened human who understood God’s will better than anyone before

<sup>90</sup> Medzhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, 206.

<sup>91</sup> Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* [Complete Works], Vol. 24 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia Izd. Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1957), 26.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 37.

or after him.”<sup>93</sup> Following this logic, the Kingdom of God is the full realisation of *razumenie*, and it is “within you,” i.e. it is solely an issue of individual moral self-perfection.

Apart from this summary of Tolstoy’s tenets, there are three aspects which were in stark contrast to the Orthodox theo-political visions discussed in this dissertation: the privatisation of religion, attitude to the church, and the issue of violence. Firstly, Tolstoy’s emphasis on individual self-perfection and salvation signals that he was not interested in the communal or public functions of religion or faith. This made him quite unpopular among adherents of Orthodox social Christian projects and often served as a negative reference point as we will see. Secondly, Tolstoy’s attitude to the Church as a religious institution was quite hostile. Given his emphasis on individual salvation, the church as an institution could have been seen by him as simply irrelevant or superfluous. He believed, however, that any church as an institution would always be alien to Christ’s teaching. He argued that Christ “could not establish a church as we understand this term, because there was no such concept of the church as we understand now with mysteries, hierarchy, and most importantly, its claim for infallibility did not exist in the words of Christ or in the concepts of the people of those times.”<sup>94</sup> He criticised ecclesiastical dogmatism and argued that churches kept their authority and power by labelling critics as heretics. Tolstoy argued that the church, especially the Russian Orthodox Church with its close relations to autocratic power, gave in to all the temptations from the tale of the Grand Inquisitor

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<sup>93</sup> Pål Kolstø, “Leo Tolstoy, a Church Critic Influenced by Orthodox Thought” In Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 158.

<sup>94</sup> Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, “Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas” [The Kingdom of God is within you] In *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* [Complete Works], Vol. 28 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia Izd. Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1957), 45.

by Dostoevsky: bread, miracle and power. Social Christian visions were also quite critical of the historical church, but their political theologies were imagined within the framework of the church. The imagined a reformed church, a less hierarchical or a church separated from the state, – but the institution as such was never cast away as in Tolstoy's works.

Finally, the formulation of non-violent resistance to evil is the most well-known feature of Tolstoy's mature religious thought, probably due to its influence on Mahatma Gandhi. Tolstoy's total rejection of any form of violence is connected to his faith in the power of internal improvement and change of the individual. These thoughts originate in Tolstoy's reading of Matthew 5:38-39 of not resisting evil: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." His full formulation of the tenet included the rejection of violent, armed resistance and promotion of pacifist solutions for conflict situations. He also extended it to the question of coercion and state power and condemned the use of any violence to maintain the existence of the state. Thus, Tolstoy is also often discussed in the framework of Christian anarchism. Interestingly, some of the Christian social visions also had anarchistic features, but they had a different origin than the rejection of violence. One of the key issues was exactly the question of the possibility of active resistance to an unjust ruler in an Orthodox empire, including the justification of strikes by Orthodox believers.

#### **1.3.4 Heterodox Christian groups**

Other heterodox religious traditions, perceived as sects by the Russian Orthodox Church, also played a role in the intellectual and church history of the period. It is also important to note this as some of the main figures in Christian social projects got engaged in the so-called Golgotha Christian groups in the 1910s. Without going into details of the Khlysty (flagellants), Skoptsy (castrates), Dukhobory, Molokane, Stundisty, Baptists or Pashkovtsy

traditions, two aspects need to be mentioned: their impact on contemporary high culture and their presence in working-class religiosity.

Firstly, Russian literary high culture and including radical intelligentsia was fascinated by the heterogenous sectarian traditions in the Empire. Tolstoy advocated for stopping the persecution of Dukhobors who rejected the 1887 universal military conscription. He even contributed with his funds to the emigration of several thousands of Dukhobory to Cyprus and Canada after the Russian government agreed to let the group leave (if they never return).<sup>95</sup> Gippius and Merezhkovskii visited lake Svetloiar in 1902 in order to meet sectarian groups as preparation to write *Peter and Aleksei*, the third book in Merezhkovskii's trilogy of Christ and Anti-Christ. Vasilii Rozanov went to a Khlyst community around St. Petersburg in 1904.<sup>96</sup> Skvortsov, an Orthodox missionary, referred to the harmful influence of "sectophile intelligentsia" among the people.

Pashkovism, a peculiar form of heterodox religiosity, was also very popular in the period. It is interesting as it was present both in high and working-class culture. Pashkovism first emerged among the aristocratic higher classes and was triggered by the visit of an Englishman, Lord Radstock in 1874. His evangelical ideas and emphasis on the reading of the Bible led to his ban from Russia after 1878. The leadership in the movement was taken over by Colonel Pashkov, and its followers were labelled as *pashkovtsy* later on. Already from 1876, Pashkovism started to spread among the masses, especially after the establishment of the "Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Ethical Reading" which aimed to provide the

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<sup>95</sup> And English translation is available of Tolstoy's correspondence with sectarian leaders: Andrew Donskov, *Leo Tolstoy in Conversation with Four Peasant Sectarian Writers: The Complete Correspondence* (University of Ottawa Press, 2019).

<sup>96</sup> Aleksander Etkind, *Khlyst: Sekty, literature i revoliutsiia*. [Khlyst: Sects, literature and revolution], (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998), 184, 191. Lake Svetloiar is associated with the legend of the sunken city, Kitezh.



Russian people with a Gospel at a low price.<sup>97</sup> Both Heier and Herrlinger highlighted that the expansion of the movement caused unforeseen consequences. While followers of Pashkovism among the high classes combined these new ideas with their official Orthodox faith, the less educated classes internalised these ideas differently. Many embraced a free form of Bible Christianity and considered the rituals of Orthodoxy as not relevant any more to their faith and salvation.<sup>98</sup> All they needed was their Bible in their pockets. Volunteers of the society also visited the countryside and contributed to the spread of *pashkovist* ideas; these were compared to the “going to the people” movements of the 1860s and 1870s.

### 1.3.5 Radical right clergy

Radical right clergy who held sympathies or were in active support of right-wing organisations was an important reference point for left-wing progressive clergy.<sup>99</sup> The history of radical clergy is embedded in the larger history of monarchist and right-wing groups which is a complex story of various actors, institutions and geographical differences. George Gilbert’s book on the radical right underscored this complexity and the burdened relationship between the government, the Tsar and the monarchist groups.<sup>100</sup> Gilbert convincingly argued that these groups could and should be interpreted in the framework of modern right-wing movements rather than as sub-types of Conservative movements. According to Gilbert, the core spirit of

<sup>97</sup> Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900. Radstockism and Pashkovism*. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), 55.

<sup>98</sup> Herrlinger, *Working Souls*, 43. and Page Herrlinger, “Raising Lazarus: Orthodoxy and the Factory Narod in St. Petersburg, 1905-1914”, *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Bd. 52 H. 3. (2004): 351. Herrlinger also identified the layman Ivan Churikov and his temperance movement as an important presence in the religious sphere of the capital, in particular among the lower classes.

<sup>99</sup> Parts of this section is to be published in the volume *Religion and Russian Revolution*. It was published in Russian translation: “Mozhet-li khristianin stat’ sotsialistom? (Ne)primirnost’ khristianstva i sotsializma v revoliutsionnoi Rossii.” [Can a Christian be a socialist? The (ir)reconcilability of Christianity and socialism in revolutionary Russia] *Gosudarstvo, religii, tserkov’ v Rossii i za rubezhom*. 1-2 (2019): 516-540.

<sup>100</sup> George Gilbert, *The Radical Right in Late Imperial Russia: Dreams of a True Fatherland?*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).

Blackhundreds organisations was permeated by “counter-revolutionary struggle, not a vision of social conservatism.”<sup>101</sup> Indeed, these organisations had many features that seem, even from today’s point of view, quite modern. For instance, radical right supporter Bishop Seraphim complained about what we could call “liberal fake news”. He complained that the liberal press created a bad image of the Union of Russian People (URP) which resulted in the alienation of clergy who followed the news and received the “image of the URP from liberal and untruthful newspapers”.<sup>102</sup> Gilbert, however, paid much less attention to the burdened relationship between Orthodox institutions or actors and right-wing, monarchist groups. There is some research available on prominent supporters and sympathisers, like Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov or John of Kronstadt,<sup>103</sup> or the ‘Mad Monk’ Illiodor,<sup>104</sup> but there is no comprehensive study which would systematically deconstruct these difficult relations.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Gilbert, *The Radical Right in Late Imperial Russia*, 6.

<sup>102</sup> Mikhail Agursky, “Caught in a Cross Fire: the Russian Church Between Holy Synod and Radical Right (1905-1908), *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 50 (1984), 174.

<sup>103</sup> Kizenko discussed John of Kronstadt’s relationship to politics in chapter ‘The Politics of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and the Revolutionary Movement’ (233-260) and concluded that it is surprising that John of Kronstadt was consistently labelled ‘Black Hundredist’ by Soviet historiography, even though his political activity was “relatively insignificant”, Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, The Penn State Series in Lived Religious Experience (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 252.

<sup>104</sup> Simon Dixon, ‘The “Mad Monk” Illiodor in Tsaritsyn’, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 1/2 (2010): 377–415.

<sup>105</sup> Agursky’s article described vividly the unfolding power struggle post-1905 between the government, the URP and the Holy Synod, but not specifically the ideas by radical right priests. The article focused on Metropolitan Antonii, an important character in progressive and liberal circles, who became enemy number one for Alexander Dubrovin (1855-1921?), head of URP, and was attacked in an open letter. The letter polarised both supporters and opponents of monarchist groups, and it contributed to the subsequent fragmentation and splintering of the URP. Agursky identified several possible reasons for the reluctance of Orthodox clergy for participation in monarchist organisations, especially the Union of Russian People. The primary reasons were “the anti-clerical and anti-Christian tone of the URP press”, and their involvement in violent political terror. See Agursky, “Caught in a Cross Fire”, 186.

The scope of this dissertation does not allow a detailed discussion of Orthodox clergy and the radical right, but one aspect is of crucial importance to the religion-socialism conundrum: anti-socialist propaganda by Orthodox clergy which was mostly written by radical right clergy. One of the most prominent and most well-known figures who had a clear anti-socialist agenda was Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov (1864-1918). More research is needed to evaluate Vostorgov's life and work in its entirety, as Aileen Friesen put it: he "was not an ordinary Orthodox archpriest; he was a complicated and controversial man with a strong presence in late Imperial Russia".<sup>106</sup> Undoubtedly, Vostorgov was in close affiliation with the radical right; he was a fervent devotee of the autocracy, member of the Russian Monarchist Party and the Union of the Russian People.<sup>107</sup> He was also engaged in missionary activity, and he embarked on missionary travels to Siberia and the Far East.<sup>108</sup> Other priests also argued for the irreconcilability of Christianity and socialism in the period, and references will be made to their works too. Ivan Aivazov (1872-1964) was a close associate of Archpriest Vostorgov and had some level of involvement in right-wing groups.<sup>109</sup> Another relevant author, Archpriest Evgenii Akvilonov (1861-1911) was a professor of theology in Saint Petersburg.<sup>110</sup> At more than one occasion, he spoke at meetings of the Union of Russian People. Finally, Father Petr Al'bitskii (1862-1922) is the least known among the priests under discussion. He was active in

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<sup>106</sup> Friesen, "Building an Orthodox Empire", 58.

<sup>107</sup> For a detailed account of Vostorgov's involvement in right-wing movements see: "Vostorgov, Father Ioann Ioannovich" In Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia*, 117-123.

<sup>108</sup> After the revolution he was persecuted and executed by the Bolshevik regime. He was canonized in 2000 as one of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Orthodox Church. Friesen, "Building an Orthodox Empire", 69.

<sup>109</sup> Ivan Georgievich Aivazov (1872-1964) was a missionary and theologian, a graduate of the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy and anti-sectarian missionary in various Russian eparchies. He was arrested in 1927 and spent three years in exile. Aivazov was a member of the Russian Assembly and he participated in the Fourth All-Russia Conference of Russians, a meeting of Russian monarchist organisations in spring of 1907. See Stepanov, *Chernaia sotnia*, 119.

<sup>110</sup> Archpriest Evgenii Petrovich Akvilonov (1861-1911) was a theologian and professor. He was a graduate and later professor of theology at the Saint Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy.

the Nizhnii Novgorod region which shows that the issue was relevant to countryside clergy.<sup>111</sup> There is some reference that Father Al'bitskii participated in a local right-wing monarchic organisation. All the priests under discussion had a certain level of affiliation with right-wing or monarchic groups; therefore, there is a correlation between production and propagation of agitative anti-socialist literature and sympathy for the radical right. It is also a common feature that many of these priests were well educated and participated in missionary activities. Simon Dixon highlighted that for leading churchmen in the period, socialism and “the socialist revolution was only the most recent (and, until recently, the least significant) in a series of heretical challenges.”<sup>112</sup>

The debate on socialism was not only an academic or theological debate for these priests, it was not simply about winning arguments. They believed that the future itself was at stake: these texts were meant to expose the “lies” of socialism and counter-act its spread among the people before it was too late. Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov was the most productive and most well-known propagator of anti-socialist ideas; therefore, this section closely analyses several of his works, including shorter and longer articles, for instance, shorter articles titled “Beware of Deceitful Speeches”, “Christianity and Socialism”, “Can a Christian be a Socialist?”, “Christian Socialism”, “Anti-Socialist Catechism” and a long historical account of socialist thinking through the ages, entitled “Socialism, in Connection to Political-economic History and Religious-moral Teachings of the Old and New World”. These works were published in his collections of works in 1913.<sup>113</sup> Vostorgov's texts and other anti-socialist publications by Aivazov, Akvilonov and Al'bitskii aimed for reaching a wide audience either

<sup>111</sup> Petr Alexandrovich Al'bitskii (1862-1922) was a graduate of the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy. There is reference that Father Al'bitskii participated in a local right-wing monarchic organisation, called the “White Flag”, active in Nizhnii Novgorod around 1905-6. See Smirnov, “Pastyr, kraeved, patriot”

<sup>112</sup> Dixon, “Church, State and Society in Late Imperial Russia”, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Vostorgov, *Sotsializm pri svete Khristianstva. Teoria, Praktika i Istoriia Sotsializma; Kritika Ego Nachal'*. [Socialism in the light of Christianity: theory, practice and the history of socialism, criticism of its principle. In *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1-2. (Moscow: Russkaia Pechatnia, 1913.)

by delivering them as speeches at public meetings or by publishing them as cheap brochures.<sup>114</sup> Vostorgov's lengthy study, "Socialism, in Connection to Political-economic History and Religious-moral Teachings of the Old and New World", was originally prepared for courses at the Clerical and Missionary Courses in Moscow in 1911. Archpriest Akvilonov's work titled "Christianity and Social-Democracy in Relation to Current Events" was an abridged version of a speech that he originally delivered at a meeting of the Union of Russian People on November 21, 1905. All these works were supposed to be weapons in "spiritual warfare" against socialism. But how did these priests conceptualize socialism and why was it considered a threat?

### **Socialism, building heaven on earth**

The main thesis of clerical anti-socialist works was that Christianity and socialism were by default irreconcilable. All works under discussion identified 'socialism' with Marxist socialism and economic or scientific materialism, especially with the aim to abolish private property. Aivazov concluded that "materialist and Christian worldview will be in fight forever".<sup>115</sup> Vostorgov repeatedly stated that "[s]ocialism is in its essence absolutely in contradiction to Christianity" and "it is simply impossible to be a socialist and a Christian at the same time."<sup>116,117</sup> Vostorgov's account of the "history of socialism", from ancient time to contemporary, was preceded with a chapter on the meaning of socialism in which he highlighted the ambiguity of the concept and explained its broad and narrow use. He meant, under socialism in a broad sense, "the aspiration to delegate the organisation of industrial life of the country to social (*obshchestvennii*) institutions, be it a state, a municipality, an

<sup>114</sup> The article "Christianity and Socialism" was read out at a public lecture in the Historical Museum in Moscow in 1906, and it was also published as part of a brochure series. Other brochures in the series included his articles "Beware of Deceitful Speeches" and "Can a Christian be a Socialist?". See Al'bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 100.

<sup>115</sup> Aivazov, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 20-21.

<sup>116</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 75.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 139.

*obshchina...*”.<sup>118</sup> The meaning of the word in a narrow sense was the effort to destroy class structure and private property and demands “to transfer all tools and means of production into the hands of the society, which should organise immediately all production of material goods on the basis of equality.” A crucial difference between socialism in the broad and the narrow sense was that the latter was revolutionary, “i.e. it principally acknowledges a violent form of activity for the realisation (*dostizhenia*) of a socialist regime.”<sup>119</sup> Although Vostorgov differentiated between different types of socialisms, he referred to Marxist economic materialism when he used the term “socialism” on its own. Vostorgov in his work on the history of European Christian Socialism questioned either the ‘Christian’ or the ‘socialist’ content of past Christian socialist visions in France, Germany and England. He was sympathetic to English Christian Socialism and concluded that “there is nothing socialist in it”.<sup>120</sup>

The main differences that were recurrently and consistently highlighted in these anti-socialist works between Christianity and socialism can be distilled into basic binaries, the categories of earthly/this-worldly/material/economic/external/violent characterising socialism versus heavenly/other-worldly/moral/religious/internal/non-violent characterising Christianity. Al’bitskii, for instance, highlighted that “[t]he goals of Marxism are exclusively in this life, on this earth and especially in material satisfaction”.<sup>121</sup> In Akvilonov’s understanding, Social-democrats believe that “the so-called Kingdom of God, or, more simply, human happiness should be built only here, on earth, only with earthly tools without any religion (which outlived its years).”<sup>122</sup> Vostorgov consistently argued that Christianity differed from socialism as it was always revolutionary and used violence (*nasilie*), while Christianity

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<sup>118</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 2, 13.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>121</sup> Al’bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> Akvilonov, *Khristianstvo i sotsial-demokratiia*, 10.

was non-violent.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, socialism was not only irreconcilable with Christianity, it was “diabolic” in two ways: firstly, it deceived people by being a pseudo-religion, by stealing and using Christian language; and, secondly, it falsely claimed that socialism was not hostile to religion and one can be both a Christian and a socialist.

### **Socialism, the deceitful impostor**

Vostorgov repeated many times in his works that he believes the real aim of socialism is to replace Christianity. He started his lecture notes to the missionary students in 1911 by referring to Saint-Simon’s “new religion” and claimed that socialism “tries to acquire all the characteristics of religion so that it could totally (*tselikom*) take over its place.”<sup>124</sup> A couple of pages later he repeated this claim and quoted from the brochure “Religion and Social-Democracy” by the German Marxist philosopher, Joseph Dietzgen: “Dear co-citizens! In the ideas of Social-Democracy, there is a *new religion*, which in contrast to the existing ones, strives to be accepted not only by the heart but also by the mind.”<sup>125</sup> Then, Vostorgov formulated the task of investigating “the origins of this “religion” in order to decide whether it could “substitute religion”.<sup>126</sup> The task, however, proved to be harder than it seemed in the first place. Although Vostorgov would consistently assert that socialism wants to take Christianity’s place, he found himself in constant contradiction regarding the religious or anti-religious nature of socialism:

...we can say that socialism is a form of religion, which aspires to take the place of the religion of the tradition, or it is better to say that it is an anti-religion, the principle and fundamentals of its teaching are in opposition to the essence of religious consciousness.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Vostorgov, “Khristianstvo i Sotsializm”, 105.

<sup>124</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 2, 8.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 307.

In his essay, “Christianity and Socialism”, Vostorgov presented an explanation of socialism being a false or pseudo-religion, which would remain a “stuffed bird” without Christianity, the similarities were false and accidental. He concluded that “socialism wants to push aside (*ustraniaet*) Christianity and wants to take its place.”<sup>128</sup> Vostorgov further highlighted the appropriation of Christian language, socialism hijacked Christian terminology and “silently” transformed the meaning of Christian concepts to its own socialist content.<sup>129</sup> Al’bitskii claimed in his brochure as well that “rejecting religion, socialism itself wants to take its place.” He highlighted that socialism becomes a religion especially among “the masses of unfortunate, of those who have no property, who lack worldly goods”.<sup>130</sup> There is also reference to the use of Gospel citations in socialists literature by which, Al’bitskii claimed, they try to “give a Christian character to their teachings” in order to “attract to themselves” the masses, especially “the unsophisticated (*prostodushnyi*) and inexperienced people”.<sup>131</sup>

### **Socialism, a wolf in sheepskin**

An interrelated theme in clerical anti-socialist material was that socialism falsely declares that it is *not* hostile to religion and claims Christian heritage to be in agreement with socialism. Vostorgov experienced personally the socialist “misleading” of people regarding religion and socialism. He reported about his experience of travelling together on a train with socialist representatives of the Second Duma at the beginning of 1907. Vostorgov described how “peasants were not only listening, they were “drinking” the words of the socialists.” One of the peasants asked whether it is true that one must reject faith (*vera*), and another inquired whether one can have a prayer before an electoral meeting. According to Vostorgov’s account, the socialist representatives responded that the Duma would not be around for long, but one

<sup>128</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 75.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 92-5

<sup>130</sup> Al’bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 44.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 54.



should not make scandals until a people's movement is organised and an armed uprising is prepared. Thus, "prayer is *now allowed* by our party", and they added that they "have nothing against Christianity, there is a lot of good in it". Furthermore, socialists highlighted that there are even priests "who speak out for socialists", and they mentioned the names of "Petrov, Mikhail, Ognev, Brikhnichev".<sup>132</sup> Vostorgov's account of the encounter concluded that it was an example of the hypocritical deception of Orthodox people by socialists.

In Vostorgov's works, this personal experience was juxtaposed to quotes from Marxist brochures that socialists were openly hostile towards religion. For instance, he quoted from the brochure "Christianity and Socialism" by August Bebel<sup>133</sup> that religion is nothing more than "superstition" and that Bebel is "against all religion".<sup>134</sup> Aivazov included the same quote from Bebel, and he explained that socialists have a whole "anti-religious program". Since socialists know that the Russian people are still deeply religious "in their heart", they have a sophisticated tactic to implement their plan. Firstly, they try to convince the masses that all Christian churches are on the side of their enemy – the capitalists. Secondly, they claim that religion is a private matter and that they are neutral towards religion and the Church. Finally, they say that "they "respect all religious beliefs" and even acknowledge "the agreement (*sovpadenie*) of Christian teaching with Social-democratic goals".<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Reference to Father Grigorii Petrov, Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov), Father Nikolai Ognev, Father Ivan Brikhnichev. All of them were progressive, left-leaning priests who were persecuted by state authorities and the Church.

<sup>133</sup> Ferdinand August Bebel (1840-1913) was a German socialist politician, one of the leading figures of the German Social Democratic movement.

<sup>134</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 59-61.

<sup>135</sup> Aivazov, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 16.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation and Radical Clergy**

Believing in the Church, as an eternal institution which has eternal and unconditional goals, not temporary and conditional; the Brotherhood aims to liberate the concept of the Church itself from those alien and state concepts and ideas (Luk. 22, 25-26) that mingled into it; and [to liberate] the life-activity of the church from subordination to the state or any other ephemeral human institutions (Mt 22, 21) by establishing church-state relations which would correspond to her independence and truthful freely-instructive nature.

(from the Program of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation)

Subsequent chapters focus on the analysis of various Orthodox political theologies that emerged during 1905-8. Overwhelmed and confused by the unfolding events, some thinkers, both clergy and laity, turned to the Gospel and searched the text of the Bible to find “a foundation for life”, wishing to shape social and political order in the spirit of the Gospel – to formulate a political theology. By failing to condemn the massacre, some argued that the Russian Orthodox Church confirmed its loyalty to autocracy and denied its solidarity from the people. Dissatisfied intellectuals and clergy formed several groups after the 1905 revolution which aimed to end the “paralysis” of the Church and its silence on worldly matters. Such groups were the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle; and the Union of Christian Politics.

Members argued that the mutually dependent relationship between the tsar and the people, which served as a political bedrock for the Empire for centuries, was now beyond repair. The bloodshed was perceived as a fundamental break in Russian Orthodox political theory, and the horrible events inspired religious intelligentsia and progressive clergy to

theorise about politics and social justice in an Orthodox conceptual framework. Members agreed that there was a need for the reconfiguration of Church-state relations in Russia, liberating the Church from strict state control in order to regain its autonomy and prestige. The proclaimed non-interference policy of the Church was interpreted as a betrayal of the people who constitute the body of the Church. In fact, it hindered projects to increase Church outreach in society and to counteract the influence of Marxist, atheist propaganda among the God-bearing Russian people, the *narod*.

The research material is organised on the basis of groups as theo-political programs were published under the name of groups. This chapter looks at the history of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation and the Christian socialism by one of its members, Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov). After a short historiographical overview, the chapter discusses the evolution of the group from a *kruzhok* to the Group of 32 Priests, then to a Union and finally to a Brotherhood during the hectic years of 1903-7. The focus is on analysing the program and articles that were published under the name of the group, and on reconstructing a debate on clergy-intelligentsia relations. The second part of the chapter discusses the political theology of Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) who developed a more radical program. His emphasis on the abolition of private property was a shared concern with the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, in particular with ideas propagated by Vladimir Ern.

## **2.1 Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation**

The Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation is often discussed in the context of church reform initiatives and clerical social activism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Olga Ostanina analysed various reform initiatives in her dissertation written in 1991 on *Renovation and Reformation in the Russian Orthodox Church at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>*

*Century*.<sup>1</sup> She differentiated between four directions within Church reform initiatives: Conservative-traditionalist, liberal-hierarchical, liberal-renovationist, left-radical also known as Christian socialist.<sup>2</sup> She categorised the Group of 32 Priests as liberal-renovationist; and claimed that these clerical figures tried to “give a political colouring” to the renovationist movement. Ostanina also identified the relationship of Christianity and politics as one of “the most important problems” because in the understanding of the priests “there can be a free Church, only if the people are free.”<sup>3</sup> There were also references to the Group of 32 Priests in the book on Church renewal by James W. Cunningham, but he did not pay attention to the evolution of the group or its role in clergy-intelligentsia relations.<sup>4</sup>

The most recent and most comprehensive work on the Brotherhood is Yulia Balakshina’s monograph, devoted solely to the activities of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation.<sup>5</sup> Apart from presenting the results of her meticulous archival research and analysis of the clerical press, Balakshina also published in her book a fascinating correspondence between a prominent member of the group, Father Konstantin Aggeev and his friend, a professor at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, Petr Pavlovich Kudriavtsev.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1.1 The evolution of the Group of 32 Priests: from *kruzhok* to brotherhood

Balakshina reconstructed the evolution of the Group of 32 Priests into a Union and then into a Brotherhood. She rejected two theses that were present in earlier literature: that the Group

<sup>1</sup> Olga Viktorovna Ostanina, “Obnovlenchestvo i reformatorstvo v russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi v nachale XX veka.” [Renovation and Reformation in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century]. Dissertation, Leningrad State University, Leningrad, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>4</sup> James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981). For instance, 123. and 207.

<sup>5</sup> Yulia V. Balakshina, *Bratstvo revnitatei tserkovnogo obnovenia (gruppa „32-kh” peterburgskikh sviashchennikov, 1903-1907. Dokumental’naia istoriia i kul’turnii kontekst*, [Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation (Group of 32 St. Petersburg clergy. Documentary history and cultural context)] (Moskva: Sviato-Filaretovskii pravoslavno-khristianskii institute, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The unique collection of letters was brought illegally to Paris in the end of the 1960s or beginning of 1970s, and were kept in a typewritten format in the archive of the “YMCA-Press”. Ibid., 217.

of 32 Priests was in direct connection with the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies and that the group started as a reaction to revolutionary activities in 1905. Balakshina argued that “only” four clerical members were active in the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies (Ioann Egorov, Vladimir Kolachev, Petr Kremlevskii and Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov)); therefore, there is no direct correlation. It can be argued that the Assemblies did not exert large-scale influence on the whole of progressive clergy, but it is telling that Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) would become one of the radical priests and developed his own Christian Socialist project. Balakshina dated the birth of the group earlier than 1905, and already identified traces of it in 1903.

### **The Group of 32 Priests**

While Balakshina did not deny the influence of revolutionary actions on renovationist clergy, she argued that the external circumstances brought to the surface an already on-going, internal process within the Church – discussion about the need for Church reform. There are indeed several documents which prove that already before 1905, young clergy in the capital was gathering in *kruzhoks* to discuss Church matters.<sup>7</sup> Hedda and Balakshina both identified the origins of the Group of 32 in church *kruzhok* culture. Konstantin Aggeev, a member of the Brotherhood, mentioned that after he moved from Kiev to St. Petersburg, he made acquaintance with Father Ioann Egorov who invited him to participate in a *kruzhok* led by N. P. Aksakov, “a personal friend of Vl[adimir] Solov’ev”.<sup>8</sup> Balakshina identified this as one of the beginnings of the later church renovationist movement. Hedda referred to a memoir by Alexander

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<sup>7</sup> *Kruzhok* culture was thriving from the later eighteenth century up until Soviet times in Russia: “small groups dedicated to the pursuit of intellectual and educational development and high culture.”<sup>7</sup> As Walker noted, it is not easy to “pin down” what these circles really were or how they functioned. Members were often tight together by personal ties, and “yet there were some significant common themes among them, certain anxieties, yearnings, patterns of thought and behaviour”, *kruzhok* was fixed and fluid at the same time. Barbara Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, Letter from 4 November 1903 in Balakshina, *Bratstvo revnitatei tserkovnogo obnovenia*, 222.

Vvedenskii who mentioned the “organisation of the *kruzhok* of 32”, a gathering of “pioneers of the church-revolutionary movement” by the initiative of Petr Kremlevskii.<sup>9</sup>

A publication from 1906 explained the main motivation for the organisation of the Group of 32 Priests. In their collection of articles, entitled “Towards a Church Council”, they highlighted the “difficult situation of our Orthodox Church, in connection with the external oppression of the state” and “the internal jaws of ecclesiastical-administrative tyranny (*proizvol*)”.<sup>10</sup> The foreword mentioned a widespread grievance among clergy in the period: while non-Orthodox people of the Empire received freedom to practice their faith, the Orthodox Church “it seems, stays under the same conditions” which hinder it to develop its influence on personal or social life.<sup>11</sup> This supports Balakshina’s argument that the formation of the group was not triggered by Bloody Sunday or revolutionary events. The significance of January 9, however, should not be underestimated. The foreword emphasised that after the massacre of civilians, the *kruzhok* decided to request a hearing with Metropolitan Antonii to discuss the “situation of the Church”. After a fruitful meeting, the young priests also compiled a set of notes, titled “On the urgency of restoring the canonical liberty of the Orthodox Church in Russia.”<sup>12</sup> The main message was to advocate for calling together an All-Russia Council to discuss church matters – a Council which had not happened for the last two hundred years.<sup>13</sup> The notes were later published in *Church Herald*, journal of the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy, and the Group of 32 or Group of Petersburg Clergy gained much publicity. The idea of church *kruzhoks* had a role in how these priests imagined their future practical tasks too:

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<sup>9</sup> A. I. Vvedenski, *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo (Ocherk vzaimootnoshenii tserkvi i gosudarstva v Rossii 1918-1922)* [Church and state. Draft of the relationship between Church and state in Russia in 1918-1922], (M.: Mospoligraf, 1923), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Gruppa Peterburgskikh Sviashchennikov, *K tserkovnomu soboru* [Group of Petersburg Priests: Towards Church Council], 1906, I.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., III.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., IV.

they hoped for the establishment of “church *kruzhoks* or unions of clergy and laity, at least, in every city” in Russia.<sup>14</sup>

The final part of the foreword reflected on the further development of the group – its renaming to Union of Church Renovation and its focus on “working out” Christian sociality or *obshchestvennost*’:

Particular attention will be devoted to issues raised by modern life regarding the ways and methods of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost*’ – in connection to the problem which has been barely dealt with, the relationship of Christianity to earthly human life, its cultural-historical work (*tvorchestva*), the participation of the Church in state processes, in social and economic development.<sup>15</sup>

The foreword also gave a hint to the reasons for renaming the group – the expansion of the group “by the joining of new members, clerical and secular”.<sup>16</sup> The period October–November 1905 was a transitional period for the Group of 32 Priests, transforming itself into a Union. A short article in *Church Herald* in №46 from November 17 disseminated information about how to learn more about the activity of the Union. The text was “From the Union of Church Renovation (the so-called group of “32” Petersburg priests)”, informing the public about the renaming of the group to a union.

### **Program and key concepts**

Revolutionary events of 1905 and the October Manifesto influenced all spheres of life, including the Church and clergy. Nicholas II’s ‘October Manifesto’, the establishment of the Imperial Duma; and greater press freedom led to the rapid expansion of the public sphere, and, consequently, gave space to an unprecedented number of actors to contest ideas concerning the past, present and future of Russia. The Duma also presented a set of problems for the Church and its members, and the question of how to situate themselves in the Church-state-Duma

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., VIII.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Gruppa Peterburgskikh Sviashchennikov, *K tserkovnomu soboru*, VII.

triangle. As Cunningham put it: “The Tsar was Orthodox. The Duma definitely was not.”<sup>17</sup> Hedda refers to the transition into a Union as reforming the group into a “political party”.<sup>18</sup> These issues are discussed in detail in chapter 4 on the Union of Christian Politics.

Given the social and political upheaval during 1905-6, it is not surprising that Balakshina called these years the “most political” in the life of the pre-revolutionary church renovation movement. This was also the time when the Union published its program, firstly, in the Kazan’ based *Church-public Life* journal. This fact demonstrates that the group did manage to acquire a presence, albeit limited, outside of the capital. The program was republished in *Church Herald* in St. Petersburg in February.<sup>19</sup> The second publication had the name of the “Union of Zealots for Church Renovation”, which anticipated the transformation into a Brotherhood. The foreword to the program in both versions confirmed the origins of the Union as growing out of the Group of 32 Priests. The program consisted of 12 points. The general aim of the Union was

to serve the case of renovating Church life, understanding this renewal as the awakening and establishment of creative church powers (*tserkovnoe tvorchestvo*) which are free, faithful to universal (*vselenskii*) Orthodoxy, comprehensive and based on the all-encompassing truth of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

Many points concerned church government issues or the reform of ecclesiastical education, but three points are of particular interest. Point 2 focused on the ideas of the group regarding Church-state relations. It aimed to “liberate the idea of the Church from the idea of the state which blended into it” and to liberate “Church life from subordination to the state and other temporal, human institutions”.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the second version of the program in *Church*

<sup>17</sup> Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope*, 267.

<sup>18</sup> Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, 164.

<sup>19</sup> “Soiuz Revnitatei Tserkovnago Obnovlenie,” *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 6 (9 February 1906): 186-188. Different foreword to the program, reference to the Kazan’ publication.

<sup>20</sup> “‘Soiuz Tserkovnogo Obnovlenie’ v Peterburge,” *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia Zhizn’* 5 (20 January 1906): 185-186.

<sup>21</sup> “‘Soiuz Tserkovnogo Obnovlenie’ v Peterburge”, 185.



*Herald* also included two Bible references to justify these claims.<sup>22</sup> One of them points to the part about asking Christ whether to pay tribute to Caesar, to which he answers: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.”<sup>23</sup> As for the ideal relationship between Church and State, the program remained vague, they only demanded that it should “correspond to the true nature (essence) of both.”<sup>24</sup>

Point 4-7 focused on church government issues, and it applied the concept of *sobornost'*, explained in the introductory chapter. The Union believed that the unity of the church is rooted in the idea of *sobornost'*. The concept was also used in this period to advocate for the inclusion of clergy and laity in future Church councils, as point 5 demanded.<sup>25</sup>

Point 10 in the program repeated the idea of Christian *obshchestvennost'*, “welcoming all efforts that target clarifying Christian teachings, invigorating Church service and the active creation of Christian *obshchestvennost'*” by perfecting brotherhood relations among Christians, both in a social and in a material sense. Point 11 went further and envisioned the re-Christianization of science (*nauka*) and art, as culture is taken not only as an important tool in renewal, but it is identified as “belonging to the elements of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup>

In March, the Union published a long article in the *Church Herald*, titled “On the relationship of Church and clergy to contemporary social-political life”, which reflected on many of the typical problems that clergy encountered in the period, therefore, it is worth looking at it closely.<sup>27</sup> The article started by claiming that people felt the pressure of the historical moment and the responsibility to transform the whole “state organism”. The question

<sup>22</sup> “Soiuz Revnitatei Tserkovnago Obnovlenie”, 187.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 22:21 (King James Version)

<sup>24</sup> “Soiuz Tserkovnago Obnovlenie' v Peterburge”, 185.

<sup>25</sup> For more discussion of these debates in the press see Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope*

<sup>26</sup> “Soiuz Tserkovnago Obnovlenie' v Peterburge”, 186.

<sup>27</sup> “Ob otnoshenii Tserkvi i sviashchenstva k sovremennoi obshchestvenno-politicheskoi zhizni,” [On the relationship of Church and clergy to contemporary social-political life] *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 11 (16 March 1906): 321-331.

was, how should the Church and its representatives react to this phenomenon? The official Church policy was “non-interference in worldly matters”, but the authors ironically noted that this has been applied “in a very unique way” in Russia: “Church servants became seen by the state power (*vlast'*) as state agents or as *chinovniki*” (bureaucrats).<sup>28</sup> The Union believed that there were two severe consequences to this process. Firstly, clergy became indifferent to creating Christian *obshchestvennost'* and became devoted apologetics of the state; and secondly, people who were concerned and raised their voice for the protection of fundamental principles of justice and law – i. e. the intelligentsia – became alienated from the Church as they realised that it would never become their ally.<sup>29</sup> This indifference later turned into hostility, and the struggle for liberation was dominated by adherents of atheistic humanism and materialism. The underlying question, regarding the issue of participation in social and political life, was whether Christianity is a religion for the individual or it has implications for social life too. So even if we agree that it is the duty of the clergy to participate in social life, the article noted, we must ask the question – to what extent is contemporary clergy prepared to do so? The authors believed that “honestly admitting the unpreparedness and past mistakes” can already be helpful for clergy, and the next concrete step should be to stop “turning a blind eye to the events happening around” us.<sup>30</sup>

The article also made some self-critical claims regarding the Gospel and its understanding by clergy. If the Church can only relate negatively to the liberation movement and is incapable of forming an opinion about such matters, then “we have to revisit (*proverit'*) and critically investigate our understanding of the Gospel”. If there were new ideas emerging in the world, and we cannot immediately respond to them “from the point of view of the Gospel,

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<sup>28</sup> “Ob otnoshenii Tserkvi i sviashchenstva”, 322.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 325.

then we need to deepen and expand our understanding of Christianity.”<sup>31</sup> These ideas communicated and formulated a dynamic understanding of the church, one that responds to historical change.

The Union also advocated for participation in the Duma and political life. The article refuted the claim of the danger of “partisanship” (*partiynost*) concerning political activity. They argued that if it is a real danger, then all Christians should be banned from politics. The Union envisioned a certain advisory role for clergy in matters of party politics, although the criteria for identifying the “good” parties remained quite vague: it should be based “on the norms of inter-personal relations, originating from the spirit of the Gospel.”<sup>32</sup>

The final part of the article embraced the labour movement, even if it originated in “positivist humanism” and not “Christian idealism”. There was no doubt, according to the authors, that “it has always been the task of the Church of Christ to defend the have-nots and the miserable workers.” The basis for doing so was that every worker “has the right for a dignified human existence.”<sup>33</sup> The article concluded by acknowledging that it was the task of social sciences and jurisdiction to provide a solution to these issues and that the Church should actively support these developments. The Union warned that charity is only a palliative, it would not be enough to fulfil Christ’s law of clothing the poor and feeding the hungry – there was a need for more complex structures, for labour organisations and cooperatives.

### **Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation**

Chapter 1 described the difficult situation that clergy was put into during the 1905 revolution. Non-interference, expected by the Church, alienated them from the people, and participation in the events had serious consequences for many. Repressions already started at

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 330.

the end of 1905 and intensified in 1906. The persecution of Grigorii Petrov and Archimandrite Mikhail Semenov, two prominent members of left-leaning progressive clergy, dominated the news sections in ecclesiastical journals, due to their popularity, but many ordinary priests fell victim to the Synodal resolution No. 6605.<sup>34</sup> The resolution condemned the “improper behaviour of some priests during the popular uprisings”.<sup>35</sup> This probably served as a motivation to rename the Union to a Brotherhood and to seek official approval for the group from the Holy Synod. Father Vladimir Kolachev submitted his request to Metropolitan Antonii (Vadkovskii) on April 24, asking to approve the charter and “to inform the secular powers about the Brotherhood”.<sup>36</sup> The history of Brotherhoods originates in the second half of the sixteenth century. These were groups of lay and clerical members who aimed to counteract the Catholic and Uniate influence in the Western borderlands.

We have confirmed information regarding the clerical members of the Brotherhood, Father Georgii Orekhanov published a document of clerical members, dated to 26 October 1906. He noted that it was an attachment to the charter of the Brotherhood, confirmed by the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastic Consistory on 31 March 1906. The document alphabetically listed 47 priests as members with addresses, Father Konstantin Aggeev, who had close contacts to the religious intelligentsia, is listed as first. The names of Archimandrite Mikhail and Father Grigorii Petrov were also on the list.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See “Opredelenia Sviatishago Sinoda. Ot 20-go dekabria 1905 goda za No. 6605, po svedeniiam o predosudinel’nom povedenii nekotorykh sviashchennikov vo vremia narodnykh volnenii” [Decree of the Holy Synod. From 20th December 1905 under No. 6605, regarding reports on the improper behavior of some priests during the popular uprising], *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, no. 1., 6.

<sup>35</sup> Mikhail Chel’tsov, *Tiazheloe polozhenie sviashchennika* [The difficult situation of the priest], *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 7 (16 February 1906): 210.

<sup>36</sup> TsGIA, SpB, F.19. Op. 98. D. 20. L. 52.

<sup>37</sup> Deacon Georgii Orekhanov, “K rannei istorii obnovlenchestva: Spisok lits sviashchennogo sana sostoiashchikh chlenami “Bratstva revnitelei tserkovnogo obnovleniia” (oktiabr 1906 g.) [To the early history of renovation: List of priests who were members of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation]” *Bogoslovskii sbornik* 3 (1999): 222-224.

The Brotherhood also published its founding charter in the *Church Herald* in September 1906, and it was republished in the first issue of *Church Reformation* (Tserkovnoe Obnovlenie), an attachment to the journal *The Age* (Vek), in November.<sup>38</sup> The foreword to the charter in the *Church Herald* mentioned that on 12 September, the first meeting of the Brotherhood took place which was also the 31st meeting of the Group of 32 Priests.<sup>39</sup> The note proves that despite the name changes, the group, the union and then the brotherhood was perceived as part of a larger continuous vision. The article also highlighted their plan to expand membership “especially to the secular intelligentsia, and, thus, organise public meetings, similar to the past “religious-philosophical” ones.”<sup>40</sup> The program resembled the program of the Union, but it also included many points on its relation to the official Church and organisational matters. Point G) reinforced the idea of Christianisation of the world:

The Brotherhood proposes that science, art, sociality (*obshchestvennost'*), in general culture, while preserving their freedom which they absolutely need, should also be permeated with the light of Christianity and should be freely transformed by it, becoming powerful tools and elements in the Kingdom of God.

Point IV emphasised that “both clerical and secular persons” can become members.<sup>41</sup>

The striking feature of the programs both by the Union and Brotherhood is the demand for the separation of church and state in connection to church reform initiatives. This demand was more radical than a proposal to restore the Patriarchate or reconfigure church-state relations, and introduce a new format of ecclesiastic governance that would be less subordinated to the state. These programs were not referring to the ideal of *symphonia*, to gain

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<sup>38</sup> Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnovenia [Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation], *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 38 (21 September 1906): 1241-1243. and Ustav Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnovenia v S.-Peterburge [Charter of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation in St. Petersburg] *Tserkovnoe Obnovlenie*, 1 (12 November 1906): 13-16.

<sup>39</sup> The article wrote 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, but another article in Church Herald included a correction that it should have been 31<sup>st</sup>. See “Izvestiia i zametki”, *Tserkovnyi Vestnik*, 1338.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1241.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 1242.

more freedom for the Church, this was a proposal to get rid of the ideal of *symphonia* in its whole. In a sense, Christian *obshchestvennost'* and its underlying metaphysical social base, *sobornost'* was in conflict with the *symphonia* tradition as loyalty to the state did not allow real solidarity with the people as members of the Church.

### 2.1.2 Influences

There were many factors behind the church reform movement that was given extra momentum by the 1905 revolution. This section focuses only on intellectual – theo-political – influences, and it highlights a domestic and a foreign source. Firstly, it discusses briefly the kingdom theology of a prominent member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, Father Grigorii Petrov. Secondly, the analysis highlights the interest of the group in British Christian Socialists ideas.

#### Grigorii Spiridonovich Petrov and The Gospel as the Foundation of Life

Father Grigorii Petrov<sup>42</sup> was an active member of progressive clergy in the capital, but this section focuses on his work before 1905. In 1894, he joined the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment (ORRP) as a student to lead discussions, so-called, *besedy*, in factories.<sup>43</sup> Petrov formulated his theology of kingdom already in his first book, *The Gospel as the Foundation of Life*, published in 1898. In the very beginning, Petrov explained his understanding of the Kingdom of God as a central striving in Christianity:

The “Kingdom of God” is the accomplished (*sovershennaia*) life on earth – a life which is not based on the mastery of violence (*nasilie*) and rude egoism, but on the principles

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<sup>42</sup> Grigorii Petrov was born in 1867 in Iamburg in St. Petersburg province. Unlike most Orthodox clergy, he was not born into a clerical family and chose to devote his life to the Church out of a feeling of calling. He attended the St. Petersburg seminary, and then the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy. We also know for sure that he was a member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, as his name is in the document listing the clerical members of the group.<sup>42</sup> He was most likely an active member of the group from its beginnings, engaged in the group of 32 priests and the Union of Zealots for Church Renovation. He started to publish brochures and articles in the end of the 1890s, and soon became the target of Conservative Orthodox hierarchy. Aleksandr Uspenskii, “Lishenie sana sv. G. Petrov,” [The Defrocking of Father G. Petrov] *Krasnyi zvon* (January 1908), 17-33. and Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, 107-108.

<sup>43</sup> See more on these discussions Herrlinger, *Working Souls*, 44-62.

of universal love, total justice (*spravedlivost'*), the acknowledgement of all legal rights of personality (*lichnost'*).

Petrov argued that the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth is possible only by a “moral rebirth of the person”, therefore, “humanity has a long, stubborn self-development ahead itself”.<sup>44</sup> The first part of Petrov’s book focused on the relationship of religion, science and morality. He provocatively asked whether the “Encyclopedia would take the place of the Gospel?”<sup>45</sup> He called for scepticism against science as a motor of progress, as it had not been able to improve morals despite its scientific achievements to improve everyday life. Western civilisation and its “progress based on economic materialism” can only bring comfort to humanity, but no salvation.

In Petrov’s vision, the possibility to improve one’s character through education (*vospitanie*), acquired primary importance, as individual self-perfection would lead to the regeneration of the community, and, consequently, to the realisation of the Kingdom of God. He categorically refuted Arthur Schopenhauer, “the prophet of pessimism” and the German philosopher’s claim that it was impossible to change one’s character as “it is impossible to turn gold into a diamond.”<sup>46</sup> In contrary to this, Petrov explained that “character” was the result of the balance of both nature, “what is given to us from nature”, and nurture, “what family, school, society and most importantly ourselves are making out of that given material from nature”.<sup>47</sup> In this process of “moral perfection of the personality”, people have to find for themselves ideals which push them towards perfection, and, “the Gospel gives us the most accomplished ideal of life”.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Petrov, *Evangeliiia kak osnova zhizni*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 32.

This was the reason for Petrov promoting the reading of the Gospel by common believers, you cannot be ignorant of the Gospel if you strive for Christian moral perfection. As Hedda highlighted, this was a highly strange idea and alien in the context of Russian Orthodox religious practice in late Imperial Russia. This suggestion indirectly challenged the authority of the Church to read, interpret and pass on the meaning of the Bible to believers. It is not without reason that the official Russian vernacular translation of the Bible was published only between 1863-1874.<sup>49</sup>

In the last part of the work, *The Gospel as the Foundation of Life*, Petrov reflected on past experiments with social order. He listed Plato, Thomas More and Campanella as important contributors to this intellectual tradition. He also highlighted several failed communal projects on American soil, Cabet in Texas and Illinois and Owen in Indiana. He quoted from Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895), whose thought in Petrov's understanding downplayed the role of institutions and law in the forming of the character and mind of the people, and underscored the significance of "spiritual constitution". In Petrov's interpretation, the source and motivation behind our acts is our heart, and the defining factor in the life of the people is their "moral nature". Thus, a social ideal can come only from morally perfect people. To find such social ideal, Petrov argued that we only have to open the Gospel and read the description of the early Christian community, the Jerusalem Church. He quoted the passage on the property and social relations of the commune:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:31-35)

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<sup>49</sup> Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, 111.



Petrov melancholically wondered: “Oh, how far away we are from this first Christian commune...” Petrov’s reference to the Jerusalem church anticipates the central role that this imagery played in Orthodox political theologies. Kingdom theology was in the centre of British Christian socialist thought which explains the Russian Orthodox interest in them.

### British Christian Socialists

There are no minutes for the meetings of the Union or Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, but the *Church Herald* did include updates on the group from time to time. The thirty-second meeting of the Brotherhood (on 29 September 1906) was particularly interesting as it was devoted to a presentation by literary critic E. V. Anichkov on “Contemporary Anglicanism and questions of sociality (*obshchestvennost’*)”. The paper was based on personal talks with members of the Anglican Church he had during the summer in Oxford. Anichkov observed a strong interest for public (*obshchestvennii*) life among high churchmen. Reverend Carter (Rev. J. Carter of Pusey House, Oxford), for instance, was the secretary of the “united societies of Christian Socialism”. According to the presenter, Anglicans follow the rule “less theology, more practice”, and this was also the principle that underpinned Christian Socialism among high churchmen. In England, they acknowledge “the non-religious origins of socialism and approach it practically”. For instance, by asking the question “what is more beneficial for the task of internal self-perfection of the Christian person (*lichnost’*) – socialist [competition], for instance, co-operations; or free competition which is the basis of contemporary capitalism.” They have accepted the inevitability of social transformation, and try to make it “painless”.

The presentation was followed by a discussion of the paper. It was pointed out that the presenter exaggerated the principle of “less theology, more practice”. For instance, Maurice<sup>50</sup> arrived at socialism from “the demands of Christian dogma (*verouchenie*)”. The “American

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<sup>50</sup> Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872), Anglican theologian, one of the founders of British Christian Socialism.

Social Christian Union”, for instance, also publishes many brochures on Christian socialism. The discussion then turned to the question of the task of “creating a Christian *obshchestvennost*” in Russian life. They concluded that in order to avoid simplifying Christian dogma to practical tasks “it is necessary to do an expansive revision of Christian dogma from the perspective of its calls to provide not only individual (*lichnii*), but also social (*obshchestvennii*) salvation”. Moreover, it would be useful to look at the experience of Christian Socialists in England in fulfilling the task of “creating the theory and practice of Christian *obshchestvennost*”.

The article noted that one could learn more about their works by reading Lujo Brentano’s brochure titled *The Christian-social Movement in England* with a foreword by professor Sergei Bulgakov.<sup>51</sup> The translation was published as number 6 in series 1 of the Religious-public Library brochure series. Bulgakov highlighted in the foreword that “they” were inspired by the English Christian Socialist thinkers, such as F. D. Maurice. Bulgakov identified clear similarities (and differences as well) in the situation of the British Christian Socialists and “them”, probably meaning Russian religious intelligentsia, as both of them had to fight “on two fronts”. He perceived the same kind of menace in Chartism and in materialistic socialism and he considered the official Church in both contexts “petrified” and to be a supporter of the state. Bulgakov’s evaluation of Maurice and Kingsley was positive, he wrote that “they brought their deed to the end.” Interestingly, he saw Christian Socialist ideas which are intermingled with anti-Semitism in the Austrian and German context to be a false direction, and he associated these versions in Russia with the Black Hundreds and other Russian radical right organisations. As a summary, Bulgakov claimed that “[i]n the case of English actors we can observe “Christian Socialism” in its total immaculacy. They were true Christians, and as

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<sup>51</sup> “Izvestiia i zametki, Bratstvo Renitelei Tserkovnogo Obnovlenia”, *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 41 (12 October 1906), 1338-40. See Ludwig Joseph Brentano (1844 –1931) was a German economist and social reformer. Lujo Brentano, *Die Christlich-Soziale Bewegung In England*. 2., verb. / Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883.

“what a righteous man does, it will follow him” – their example now inspires us.” Bulgakov also wrote articles on British writers Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.1.3 Debate about the true intelligentsia

The idea of Christian *obshchestvennost'* aimed to be a bridge between clergy and intelligentsia. There were, however, deep tensions and alienation between them that first needed to be overcome. A series of articles by Archimandrite Sil'vestr,<sup>53</sup> rector of the Kutaisii Ecclesiastical Seminary vividly demonstrated the depth of the divide. His series of articles, titled “Where is the true intelligentsia?”, was published in three parts in the *Church Herald* at the end of 1904.<sup>54</sup> The articles defended clergy against the common reproaches of being silent and not giving answers to the questions of the times, for instance, divorce or freedom of conscience. Archimandrite Sil'vestr responded by sharing his concern about demands for freedom of conscience which he argued would lead to chaos as different religions aim to establish different social orders on earth – not just practice their religions in churches.<sup>55</sup> The second part of the article investigated the question: who “have more rights for the title of the true intelligentsia in the present times: contemporary clergy or “so-called intelligentsia”?<sup>56</sup> Not surprisingly, Archimandrite Sil'vestr claimed that the secular intelligentsia had no right to call themselves “intelligent” as they knew nothing about the Church or the Holy Scripture, and they think that the Kingdom of God can be established on earth. Furthermore, a comparison of the education level of the clergy and the secular intelligentsia shows that “one can put an equation

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<sup>52</sup> See Sergei Bulgakov, “Karleil i Tolstoy,” *Voprosy Zhizni*, 1905 no. 1 (January), 16-38.; and Sergei Bulgakov, “Sotsial'noe mirovozzrenie Dzhona Reskina,” *Voprosy zhizni i psikhologii*, 1909, no. 100, 395-436. On the influence of Thomas Carlyle on Bulgakov see also Regula M. Zwahlen “Thomas Carlyle, source d'inspiration pour l'oeuvre de Serge Boulgakov”, *Le Messager Orthodoxe* 158, 1 (2015), 55-67.

<sup>53</sup> Archbishop Sil'vestr (Aleksandr Alekseevich Bratanovskii) (1871-1932). Rector of the Kutaissi Ecclesiastical Seminary from 1902-1904.

<sup>54</sup> Archimandrite Sil'vestr, “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? I.” *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 19 (6 May 1904): 586-590; “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? II.” *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 20 (13 May 1904): 621-623; “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? III.”; *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 21 (20 May 1904): 653-655.

<sup>55</sup> Archimandrite Sil'vestr, “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? I.”, 587.

<sup>56</sup> Archimandrite Sil'vestr, “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? II.”, 620.

mark” between the two. In the third part of the article, Archimandrite slightly modified his charge against the intelligentsia and criticised their hermeneutics. It is not that they do not know the Gospel, but that they “take parts in isolation and quotes out of the Holy Scripture, without linking it to the whole, and they put them together into arbitrary and false systems according to their taste”.<sup>57</sup> A real intellectual must unite knowledge about the “Word of God and Church life” in themselves, thus, Orthodox clergy meets this criterion, while secular intelligentsia does not.<sup>58</sup> The intelligentsia was more in need of the Church than the other way around, and they should stop calling the clergy backwards. The verdict is clear: “until the Church does not become “pillar and the ground of the truth” for our intelligentsia <sup>59</sup> ... common work for the good of humanity together with Church and intelligentsia is not possible, nor the unification of religion and “culture”.<sup>60</sup> The archimandrite concluded the article with an ironic note: he was convinced that the workers who participate in the systematic courses of theology and Church history in Moscow would become “sooner much more “intelligent” than most of our “existing” intelligentsia.”<sup>61</sup>

Konstantin Aggeev, an active member of progressive clergy, was among the readers of this series of articles. He highlighted in his letter from 6 October 1904 to Petr Kudriavtsev that he read the articles and “[i]t made him angry for the first reading” and then “even more.” He also wrote a critical reaction, titled “Fatal Misunderstandings”, and sent it to the *Church Herald* for publication.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Archimandrite Sil’vestr, “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? III.”, 653.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 654.

<sup>59</sup> Reference to 1 Timothy 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (King James version).

<sup>60</sup> Archimandrite Sil’vestr, “Gde istinnaia intelligentsia? III.”, 655.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, “Rokovye nedorazumenia” [Fatal misunderstandings] *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 7 (17 February 1905): 195-200.

Konstantin Aggeev, based on available sources, was one of the important links to religious intelligentsia. He was born in 1868 in the village Lutovo in the Tula gubernia in a peasant family. Due to his talent, he got into the Tula Ecclesiastical Seminary with the help of the local priest and continued his studies in the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy. In 1892 he got married to Maria Ivanovna Chernakovskaia, a daughter of a priest. He became friends at the Academy with Petr Kudriavtsev, and they remained in contact in correspondence. He served as a priest in various countryside parishes, then returned to Kiev in 1900 and moved to St. Petersburg in 1903. He became involved in many *kruzhoks* and meetings, held public speeches, and participated in Church outreach programs to workers. In 1907, he was among the founding members of the St. Petersburg Religious-Philosophical Society and he remained active in it until its closure in 1917. In 1915, he became an archpriest. He took part in the All-Russia Council of 1917-18. The final trace of Father Aggeev can be found on an execution list from 1921 after the Bolsheviks occupied Yalta on the Crimea. Fifty people on the list were sentenced to death. The first two people on the list are Father Aggeev, and his son, Ivan Aggaev. Both of them were executed by the Bolsheviks on 6 January 1921.<sup>63</sup>

Aggeev's article argued that the best partner for parish clergy in work is the secular intelligentsia. He acknowledged, however, that the "old, but difficult question of the mutual relationship of representatives of the Church and the educated classes" was still unresolved. He approached the question differently in comparison to Archimandrite Sil'vestr. He claimed that the Church should not put all the blame on the intelligentsia for the abyss between the two groups. Clergy should stop ignoring the positive work that the intelligentsia have done in the past, and should stop labelling them as enemies of the Church and the people.<sup>64</sup> He specifically referred to Archimandrite Sil'vestr's article series, as a typical representative of such opinion

<sup>63</sup> Biographical data is from Balakshina, *Bratstvo revnitelei tserkovnogo obnovenia*, 130-143.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 196.

and quoted from it in his response piece. He identified two “fatal misunderstandings” that has caused alienation between clergy and intelligentsia. One of them was the belief that religion has no inherent value (*samotsennost’*) and was necessary only for the state: “the merging of religious and statist point of views – that is our first sin and the first fatal misunderstanding.”<sup>65</sup>

The mingling of the “state principle” into the religious sphere pushed away the educated classes from the Church. Aggeev explained his position in another article too, titled “Church and State”,<sup>66</sup> which was published in Petr Struve’s journal, the *Polar Star*. He sympathised with the position of those who “categorically demarcate the spheres of religion and state”.<sup>67</sup> Aggeev argued that there was a fundamental difference between these spheres: religion is about the absolute, about “the moral side of human nature”; the state is a “temporary union of people” which can take “various forms”.<sup>68</sup> He ironically wondered whether Orthodoxy is different in Greece, in Bulgaria or other Slavic countries, because “they live under a different political regime than we do?” Or if a Frenchman converts to Orthodoxy, should he first acknowledge autocracy?<sup>69</sup>

The second misunderstanding was related to a question on the nature of Christianity: Is Christianity only about preaching an after-life ideal or is there value in it for this life too? Aggeev identified two main branches of Russian Orthodox thought regarding this important question. On the one hand, there is “asceticism, the total rejection of earthly life”,<sup>70</sup> with Konstantin Leont’ev<sup>71</sup> as one of the main representatives of this position. On the other hand,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>66</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, “Tserkov’ i gosudarstvo,” [Church and state] *Poliarnaia Zvezda* 6 (19 January 1906): 433-437

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 435

<sup>70</sup> See more on asceticism in Russian Orthodox thought in Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Aggeev was very interested in Leont’ev’s thought, and published a monograph on the topic: Konstantin Aggeev, *Khristianstvo i ego otnoshenie k blagoustroeniu zemnoi zhizni. Opyt kriticheskogo izucheniia i bogoslovskaiia otsenka raskrytogo K. N. Leont’evym ponimania khristianstva*, [Christianity and its relationship to the comforts

there are those for whom “earthly and the otherworldly (*zagrobniaia*) life is the same path of religious-moral development of the person, the eternal life starts here on earth.”<sup>72</sup> He delegated, for instance, Archpriest Pavel Svetlov, professor at Kiev, to the latter type of thought, and mentioned that the first “school” rejected the second one – which Aggeev believed was the true one. The second misunderstanding was rooted in the difference between these two approaches. The Church was accusing the intelligentsia with “abolishing the otherworldly life, and, consequently, Christianity.” While the intelligentsia “is blaming us – not without grounds – for annihilating earthly life because we relate to all of its phenomena negatively.”<sup>73</sup>

Aggeev advocated for bridging the “misunderstanding” in many fronts, not only in his publications but at public meetings and lectures too. For instance, he mentioned in his letter from 9 March 1904 to Kudriavtsev that he was invited by Afanasii Vasil’evich Vasil’ev to the “Russian Meetings” which held evenings devoted to the issue of Church and intelligentsia. In his presentation, he advocated for being less judgmental towards the intelligentsia as they “put down some things on the table”, but his audience was not very sympathetic to his arguments.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Aggeev was ready to engage religious intelligentsia, he was even open to debate with Marxist intellectuals as it was mentioned in the section on A. V. Lunacharskii and the Godbuilders.

Interaction with the intelligentsia, a bridging of the religious and secular spheres, was a key aspect of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost’*. Therefore, the Brotherhood had close connections with the religious intelligentsia, in particular, with members of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. There were at least two times when religious intelligentsia from

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of earthly life. Attempt of critical study and theological evaluation of the understanding of Christianity by Konstantin Leont’ev] Kiev, 1909.

<sup>72</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, “Rokovye nedorazumenie”, 198.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, letter from 9 March 1904 in Balakshina, *Bratstvo revnitatei tserkovnogo obnovenia*, 272-3.

Moscow participated and presented at their meetings. In January 1907, Vladimir Ern reported in a letter that they travelled together with Valentin Svetsitskii to St. Petersburg to participate at the meeting of the “union of “Church reformation”. Svetsitskii gave a presentation titled “Terror and Immortality” at the meeting on 22 January 1907. The *Church Voice* reported the event and called Svetsitskii “a passionate and determined populariser of Vladimir Solov’ev’s sociological ideas”, which was “positively necessary” for these times.<sup>75</sup> Under the influence of Solov’ev, church members can understand that they need to lead believers “in the task (*delo*) of building on earth a Christian *obshchestvennost*”.

In March, it was Vladimir Ern’s turn to give a paper at the meeting of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation which was later published in the second volume of the *Questions of Religion*. The journal *Church Renewal* (*Tserkovnoe Obnovlenie*), an attachment to the journal *The Age*, featured a report on the event written by a certain “E”. According to the article, “[t]hrough a wide-range of sophisticated arguments, the presenter proved that only in the true Church can one find themselves, the wholeness and fullness of their soul, together with the wholeness and the fullness of their worldviews.” The author believed that the first part of the paper was interesting for people who are still “alien to positive Christian teachings”. The discussion session focused on specialist questions where “for a long time, they talked a lot about the essence of the true Church, ... whether there was a true Church after the apostles, whether it is true that there is no *sobornost*’ in the present Church and so on.”<sup>76</sup>

The programs of the Brotherhood and its various formats show a preoccupation with church reforms, the idea of a Christian *obshchestvennost*’ and clergy-intelligentsia interaction. Their political theology was also committed to the idea of a free Church and Christian politics without partisanship. There was not much emphasis and focus on economics which became a

<sup>75</sup> Ob odnom iz prizrakov v nashei zhizni. [On one of the spectres of our life]. *Tserkovnyi Golos*, 1907 (8): 227.

<sup>76</sup> “V bratstve Revnitelei Tserkovnogo Obnovlenia” [In the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation], *Tserkovnoe Obnovlenie* 1907 (10), 78-9.



key issue for one of the members of the Brotherhood, Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) and his more radical social Christianity, although the group embraced the idea to go beyond personal charity efforts and introduce systematic welfare measures. The rest of the chapter discusses a more radical project by one of the members of the Brotherhood, the Christian socialism of Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov).

## 2.2 Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) and the ideal of common property

Archimandrite Mikhail was born in Simbirsk in 1874 as Pavel Vasil'evich Semenov. He studied at the Simbirsk seminary and then later at the Moscow and Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy, at the age of twenty-five took the monastic name, Mikhail.<sup>77</sup> 1902 was an important year in his church career, as he was sent to St. Petersburg to join the Religious-Philosophical Assemblies and defend the truth of the Church against a group of “decadent” intellectuals including Dmitry Merezhkovskii and Zinaida Gippius. While the Assembly was soon closed down by Ober-Procurator, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the meetings and discussions had a strong influence on Mikhail. His engagement in debates with combative religious intelligentsia in the capital undoubtedly contributed to his later radicalisation. Mikhail was also involved in clerical social activism, such as the struggle against alcoholism in the Alexander Nevsky Temperance Society and he was committed to the work of the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment (ORRP).

For instance, he contributed to a cheap brochure published by the Society titled the “First Christians”.<sup>78</sup> The brochure started with the biblical quote on the Jerusalem Church, the same one Petrov used in his work. The brochure echoed the idea that early Christian communes

<sup>77</sup> Biographical data from Simon Dixon, “Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) and Russian Christian Socialism,” *The Historical Journal*, 2008, 692. See also Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Golovushkin, *Apostol XX veka. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo o. Mikhaila (Semenova)* [The apostle of the twentieth century. The life and oeuvre of Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov)] (St. Petersburg: “Politekhniko-servis”, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> *Pervye Khristiane*, St. Petersburg, 1906. At the end the brochure claims that “The basis consists of readings by Archim. Mikhail to the people (four).”

can serve as an example for contemporary Christians: “The first Christians – they are the necessary example for us of true (*podlinnoe*) Christianity of those ancient times when the apostles of Christ and their disciples still lived on this earth.”<sup>79</sup> The Archimandrite was also active in the Group of 32 Priests and Church reform initiatives. He edited and authored a brochure titled “Why do they not believe us? To the issue of Church reform. On Church-social issues of the day”,<sup>80</sup> which was published in 1906 and which included some of his earlier articles which appeared in the *Church Herald* during the hectic year of 1905. As Dixon highlighted, Mikhail “linked social with ecclesiastical reform”<sup>81</sup> in these works, and he advocated for social engagement by the Church. He drew attention to the relevance of the dichotomy of spiritual and corporal regarding Russian Orthodoxy and society. This was often discussed in the context of arguments for social engagement: “Orthodoxy, in its essence, always prioritised spiritual interest above corporal, and it did not only believe that a person does not live only by bread, but, unfortunately, underestimated the importance of bread.”<sup>82</sup> Many of these publications and activities drew attention to Mikhail, but still mostly in a positive sense; he was a popular priest and famous for delivering engaging sermons. His commitment towards social reform and his frustration with the “silence” of the Church kept growing, and sometime around the autumn of 1906, he formulated more radical, explicitly anti-capitalist, thoughts and demands from the Church.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>80</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Pochemu nam ne veriat? K tserkovnoi reforme. O tserkovno-obshchestvennykh zlobakh dnia* [Why do they not believe us? To the issue of Church reform. On Church-social issues of the day], (St. Petersburg, 1906).

<sup>81</sup> Dixon, “Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov), 701.

<sup>82</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Pochemu nam ne veriat?* [Why they do not believe us?], 21.

### 2.2.1 Program for Russian Christian Socialists

His turn towards people's (*narodnii*) socialism was documented in his brochure *How I Became a People's Socialist*,<sup>83</sup> published in 1907. According to his memoir, he developed his ideas on socialism in a polemic with Dostoevsky and German Christian Socialists, like Adolf Stoecker. He harshly criticised Dostoevsky, the "prophet of compassion", who propagated that "Christ exists to give the rich the happiness of "charity" and hinder rebellion; thus, suffering becomes "great luck"."<sup>84</sup> The brochure also quoted from Friedrich Naumann and his interpretation of Jesus Christ's attitude to property: "Christ is not a Communist, he did not have any intention to get rid of the Galileian fishermen of their boats and houses. He only condemns the excess of property."

Mikhail was very sceptical of technological progress, which was welcomed by German Christian Socialists as "God's gift to humanity". He also highlighted that technology, which was "supposed to liberate humanity of the cruel rule of physical laws ... in the hand of Mammon turned into a horrible weapon of torture."<sup>85</sup> Following this logic, Mikhail explicitly identified the essence of the problem with contemporary social relations: "In order for Mammon to fall, one has to reject, as a lie and as usury, the principle of private property. I had to become a socialist."<sup>86</sup> Mikhail also described the gruesome scenes he has witnessed in the industrialising capital, including child labour and exploitation of workers.

In the last part of the brochure, he explained why he had chosen to become a People's Socialist, not some other type of socialist, for instance, a Social Democrat. It is an interesting short reflection on his understanding of the inextricable link between personality (*lichnost'*) and sociality (*obshchestvennost'*). He argued that every soul "carries the whole world" in itself,

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<sup>83</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Kak ia stal narodnym sotsialistom* [How I became a people's socialist], (Moscow, 1907).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 25.

that is the essence of Christ's sociality and a power that can destroy slavery and poverty. Thus, this type of sociality relies heavily on a "cult of personality": "If you want, in the name of sociality and common good, I returned to the idea of personal perfection." As Marxist Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries denied the value and role of personality (*lichnost'*) in the iron laws of history, collaboration with those groups was out of question for Mikhail. He concluded that just because he became a People's socialist, he did not stop being a Christian and a Christian Socialist – "just not in the spirit of Stoecker and Naumann".<sup>87</sup>

Archimandrite Mikhail had an intensive publication period during 1906-7 before he had to face repressions for his sympathy towards socialist tenets. He even created his own idiosyncratic version of socialism which shared features with other political theologies in the period. He published his most explicit formulation of his Christian Socialism in a volume which was a collection of several brochures, published in his cheap brochure series "Christianity and Freedom" (*Khristianstvo i Svoboda*). The volume was titled "Christ in the Age of the Machine",<sup>88</sup> and it started with a 30-page long translation of an excerpt of Naumann's work, whose message was then rejected by Mikhail as lacking a "living God".<sup>89</sup> Mikhail was also critical of Naumann and Stoecker for separating religious and economic factors from one another.

After renouncing German Christian Socialists, he presented his own "Program for Russian Christian Socialists". The program started by stating that "[l]ife is built in Christ and on Christ." The "basis" for Christians-citizens even in the conditions of "civic communities (*obshchezhitia*)" was the Crucified Christ and the Gospel. It claimed that the goal of Christians had a strong social element:

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>88</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Khristos v veke mashin* (Voprosy religii i obshchestvennoi zhizni) [Christ in the Age of the Machine. Questions of Religion and social life], Svoboda i Khristianstvo, Vol. 1., Saint-Petersburg, 1907.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 41.

“Realising the law of the Lord [Jesus] Christ, Who has founded his church for establishing the Kingdom of God in souls, organisations, social/public relations and etc. for the propagation and true-life realisation of the principles of justice (*pravda*) and brotherhood, Christians work for the creation of truly-Christian church-social (*tserkovno-obshchestvennye*) forms and organisations...”

The program argued that from the point of view of the church, the form of government was “indifferent”. It advocated, however, for the form of “constitutional parliamentary monarchy” as the form which could reconcile everyone.

The most radical element of the program was the rejection of private property which was not only a personal principle for Mikhail (Semenov) but the ideal relationship of Christians towards property: “A Christian rejects property, believing, that the principle of “mine” and “thine” is a lie and blasphemy. Mammon must be destroyed.” The Social-Democrats realised this truth, but the Church has not: “what should be done by the church is done by the Social-Democrats.”<sup>90</sup> The rest of the program included other progressive demands as the condemnation of child labour and exploitation of women, provision of pension for workers, rejection of capital punishment and progressive income tax.

The program ended with a call in a footnote to direct expressions of “sympathy” for the program to Archimandrite Mikhail’s address. Mikhail’s program, however, did not gather many followers, though his series of cheap brochures was quite popular. The program did not use the term “Christian *obshchestvennost*”, but his formulation of the aim of establishing the Kingdom of God in social relation resembled the idea behind Christian *obshchestvennost*. His work also reflected the themes that were present in other Orthodox theo-political visions of the time: the Kingdom of God and a fascination with the Early Church commune. Mikhail was particularly radical in terms of demands for property relations; his condemnation of Mammon

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 46-7.

reflects ideas by Vladimir Ern on the ideal relation of Christians towards property. Vladimir Ern was one of the leaders of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle which is discussed in the next chapter. His work on property, however, is closely related to Archimandrite Mikhail's Christian Socialist program; therefore, it is discussed as the last section of this chapter to highlight the shared intellectual interest between radical clergy and religious intelligentsia.

### 2.2.2 Vladimir Ern: "Christian attitude to property."

Vladimir Ern's long discussion about Christianity and property was first published in the journal *Questions of Life*, and it was re-published as part of the Religious-social Library, in Series I. number 3.<sup>91</sup> The essay was devoted to the memory of Vladimir Solov'ev. Ern attempted to answer three main questions: "1) What should be the attitude of each individual believer to his or her private property? 2) What should be the attitude among believers, united in the church, towards the property of believers belonging to the Church? 3) What should be the attitude of believers to the property of non-believers (or believers of other faiths) not belonging (or not wanting to belong) to the Church?"<sup>92</sup> Ern addressed these questions, one by one, in three separate chapters.

He turned to the Gospel and referred to parts where two issues are emphasised: becoming Christian means becoming a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) and following Christ means rejecting everything (Matthew 16:24). By combining these citations, Ern claimed that Christians must liberate themselves from everything to live in Christ – including private property. The conclusion of the first chapter, however, was that individual morality is not enough to determine the ideal Christian relationship towards property. Individuals alone cannot overcome property – which "disturbs" Christians to live truly in Christ –, for developing a full

<sup>91</sup> Vladimir Frantsevich Ern, *Khristianskoe otnoshenie k sobstvennosti*, [Christian attitude to property] (M., 1906) Published originally in *Voprosy Zhizni*, no. 8. (1905): 246-272 and no. 9. (1905): 361-381. Footnotes in the dissertation refer to the pagination in the brochure.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

position Christians need “collective strength and the condition of life in a commune (*obshchina*)”.<sup>93</sup>

The second chapter focused on the second question about collective attitude to property. Ern did not treat the church as an institution, he perceived it as the body of Christ, a common metaphor which we can find in Christian ecclesiastical and political thought since early Christianity originating in Apostle Paul’s letters.<sup>94</sup> Ern defined the ideal collective – the early Church communes when members of the church had “one heart and one soul”. In Ern’s understanding, early Christians shared everything; therefore, they shared even their belongings (*imushchestvo*) in their common life in Christ.

Moreover, in Ern’s view, the Bible explicitly confirms that the Jerusalem church, described in detail in the Acts of the Apostles, was a place which practised “real community of belongings”.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, if one follows the spirit of the Gospel, the only conclusion was that private property and capitalism, the basis of economic relations in modern Europe, was un-Christian. The last part of the section referred to contemporary Russian Orthodox church life which lacked religious love and was in need of a revival (*obnovlenie*). This was connected to a certain type of salvation history and theology of history. He explained that

in the beginning, there was a fullness of Godmanhood-life (*bogochelovecheskii zhizn'*) in Christ, then a gradually extinguishing radiance of this in early Christian communes, and, finally, a long period, when the transformation of humanity into Godmanhood (*bogochelovechestvo*) became as invisible and hidden a process as it was in the pre-Christian world.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, salvation history must go backwards. This time it would happen not only on an individual but also on a collective – church – level.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>94</sup> See 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 and Ephesians 4:1–16.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 20–1.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 27.

The focus on the collective continued in the third chapter which reflected on the question of believers and non-believers concerning property. Ern rejected the “monastic-ascetic point of view”<sup>97</sup> which led “official representatives of the official church” to propagate non-interference into “social and political relations.”<sup>98</sup> Ern perceived a gradual emergence and dominance of a one-sided reading of the Gospel, the focus on the idea that the “Kingdom of God is within you”,<sup>99</sup> on the idea of the sacredness of the individual and individual salvation. In parallel, the ideal of the “sacredness of the body of humanity and the ideal of collective salvation”<sup>100</sup> was lost. The sociality of Christianity was rooted in the idea of progress as human-divine communion. Ern explained the significance of this for the whole of humanity and for Christian sociality in particular:

...if the universal-historical process is a process of humanity becoming (*stanovlenie*) true Godmanhood, i. e. Godmanhood in the image of the Godman Jesus Christ, in Whom both natures (*estestvo*), the Divine and the human, are united in a perfect image, i.e. without the suppression or destruction of one nature by the other, then for the coming of universal Godmanhood, it is not only necessary to have the will and love of God, but [we need] the free initiative of humanity, preparing in itself all negative conditions in which the will of God and the love of God can act in him and manifest itself.<sup>101</sup>

Ern also highlighted the Christian duty of social justice in solving the Social Question. He referred to statistics which proved that the lifespan of factory workers was shrinking, and claimed that “[t]heir premature death is our issue (*delo*) and our sin.”<sup>102</sup> For a Christian, there are no “separate people”, everyone belongs to the body of humanity – which is the Church becoming. This bounding social responsibility for fellow humans was reminiscent of Fedor

<sup>97</sup> See on ascetic discourse in Russian intellectual history: Patrick Lally Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: The Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814–1914* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2017).

<sup>98</sup> Ern, *Khristianskoe otnoshenie k sobstvennosti*, 34.

<sup>99</sup> A reference to the rejection of Tolstoyian ideas. See in the Introduction of this dissertation the section on Tolstoy and his ideas in Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, *Tsarstvo Bozhie vnutri vas, ili Khristianstvo ne kak misticheskoe uchenie, a kak novoe zhizneponimanie*, [The Kingdom of God is within you, or Christianity not as a mystical teaching, but as a new life-understanding] (London, 1898).

<sup>100</sup> Ern, *Khristianskoe otnoshenie k sobstvennosti*, 35.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 38.



Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Ivan Karamazov rejected the suffering of a single child for the higher good.

The practical implications of this Christian responsibility, however, remained unclear. What should Christians do to fight economic, social and political decay poisoning the body of humanity? As one possible answer, Ern posed a rhetorical question, ironically referring to Tolstoy and his followers, whether we should: “[c]lose our opening eyes, go to the corner to deceive ourselves into “self-perfection”. For Ern, that was not the path to be followed: “we must stop being Tolstoyans and Buddhists – we must become Christians.”<sup>103</sup> Christians could utilise “old forms” of “walk-outs, strikes, and the establishment of unions” if they permeated them with a new spirit, and transform them into Christian means.

Ern recognised that strikes, by definition, involved some level of violence, but this was not an impossible obstacle, as he did not believe that Christianity rejected all forms of violence. He recounted the Biblical passage of the cleansing of the temple in which Christ made a “scourge of small cords” and drove out all the traders from the church. Ern used this example to validate the use of strikes as it was “possible to make strikes [part of] Christian means of struggle (*borba*).<sup>104</sup> He differentiated between old and new forms of strikes. Old forms served the interest of “social hygiene” and focused on the physical well-being of the people. New, Christian strikes, would aim to realise “social asceticism”, facilitating the purifying effect of asceticism on the morality and spirituality of people. Ern argued that the need for strikes would soon disappear when socialism brought economic liberation to all. (It is not clear what kind of socialism Ern refers to.) As long as this is not realised, the conclusion was that it was the duty of every Christian to participate in the economic fight and “to create new, more suitable Christian methods for the fight, new forms of Christian *obshchestvennost*’.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 52.

### Konstantin Grigorevich Grigor'ev: To the question of Christian attitude to property

Ern's article generated a reaction from the side of an associate professor at the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy. This reaction highlights that there was a potential of rudimentary intellectual interaction between academic Orthodoxy and religious intelligentsia. Konstantin Grigorevich Grigor'ev<sup>106</sup>, associate professor at the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy, published his response to Ern's article in the first number of *Orthodox Interlocutor (Pravoslavnii Sobesednik)*, the official journal of the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy, in 1906. The response was titled "To the question of Christian attitude to property. Open response to Mr. Ern".<sup>107</sup> Grigor'ev was an erudite theology professor, who published essays about Adolf Harnack, and he was interested in socialist interpretations about the origins of Christianity. His article was a detailed analysis and refutation of Ern's arguments.

Grigor'ev read with "keen interest and full attention" Ern's article in *Questions of Life*. He emphasised that he appreciated Ern's ideas about the mystical-church order which made him different from Lev Tolstoy – even though the two of them "look similarly at Christian attitude to property."<sup>108</sup> Grigor'ev reflected on several themes, my discussion singles out only two of them and a recurring criticism which was directed towards Ern's method of interpretation. One of the counter-arguments raised by Grigor'ev was that the Gospel was full of references to private property, especially about Christian-independent individual orders on property (*khristianskoe-samostoiatel'noe lichnoe rasporiazhenie sobstvennost'*),<sup>109</sup> meaning

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<sup>106</sup> Konstantin Grigor'evich Grigor'ev (1875-?): associate professor (*dotsent*) at the Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy, at the department of "Introduction to the study of theology". He wrote his magister thesis on "Christianity and its relationship to state in the ideas of L.N. Tolstoy" (Kazan', 1904). He published articles in the weekly "Church-social Life" (*Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia Zhizn'*).

<sup>107</sup> Konstantin Grigor'evich Grigor'ev, "K voprosu o khristianskom otnoshenii k sobstvennosti. Otkrytoe pis'mo Gospodinu Ernu," [To the question of Christian attitude to property. Open response to Mr. Ern] *Pravoslavnii Sobesednik*, no. 1 (1906): 263-279.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 263

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 274

that if there was no private property, Christians would not be able to practice their Christian duties of charity.

The second theme discussed at length the Jerusalem Church and its ideal of social-political order. Firstly, Grigor'ev questioned whether there was a real community of belongings in the Jerusalem Church, and referred to two writers who wrote about the early Church, to Lutheran theologian Adolf Harnack and to Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky.<sup>110</sup> Grigor'ev reminded the reader that Harnack's research proved that the life of the Jerusalem church was ambiguous. He also quoted from Kautsky who highlighted that church members in early Christian communes might have shared consumption of goods, but "there was no communism in the sphere of work and production."<sup>111</sup> Bringing the argument one step further, Grigor'ev questioned the role of the Jerusalem church in Christian imagination: "Can we take the community of belongings at the Jerusalem church as a norm and ideal?"<sup>112</sup> His response was a firm no. Firstly, because there was no community of belongings in other early Christian communities, and, secondly, because the Jerusalem church soon disappeared.

Grigor'ev's third point criticised Ern's reading of the Gospel and reminded him of that "elementary rule of exegetics, according to which for the truthful understanding of a part in the Gospel, it is necessary to be familiar with all the biblical utterances that one way or another are relevant to the topic." Grigor'ev believed that Ern was misreading the Gospel because he used quotations out of context. He emphasised that "in the Gospel, there are no instructions in the communist spirit,"<sup>113</sup> and the disciples did not treat the community of belongings as a norm. Thus, calls for Christians to reject private property were not in the spirit of the Gospel; they

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<sup>110</sup> Karl Johann Kautsky (1854–1938) was a prominent Marxist theoretician and journalist. He was critical of the Bolshevik regime after the 1917 revolution.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 276

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 277

represent only a “private opinion”. The conclusion was that the “Gospel does not say anything about the socio-economic organisation”.<sup>114</sup>

It is hard to evaluate the resonance of this interaction, but it is telling that the issues and the debate are discussed in a student essay at the Kazan’ Ecclesiastical Academy written by Sergii Arkhangelsk in 1915.<sup>115</sup> The essay was a summary of the arguments and counter-arguments by Ern and Grigor’ev respectively from 1905-6 which means that the debate remained known at least within academic circles.

### Conclusions

The history of progressive clergy and the group of 32 priests in the capital was embedded in the context of the church reform movement in late Imperial Russia. The Brotherhood of Zealots in its various formats represented a radical project which was ready to cast away the established ideal of symphonic church-state relations in its efforts to create a Christian public sphere and sociality. Hedda correctly claimed that the development of a new type of understanding of priests as pastors in the second half of the nineteenth century provided the background to clerical social activism and Bloody Sunday. The reconstructed debate about true intelligentsia among clergy showed that this new ideal of priests as teachers and leaders of the people clashed with the claim of the intelligentsia to occupy such role. Left-leaning progressive priests, like Aggeev, accepted the historical narrative that the Russian intelligentsia became alienated from the Church and Orthodoxy as the Russian Orthodox Church did not stand up for the basic rights and dignity of the people. The intervention of the Brotherhood was to highlight that the turn of a part of intelligentsia towards idealism and religion made it possible to build a bridge across the abyss between the two groups.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 278

<sup>115</sup> NA RT, f. 10. o. 2. d. 828

The radicalism of Archimandrite Mikhail Semenov grew out of this milieu, but it also went beyond its framework. His radicalism was impatient and motivated by a certain politics of conscience. He justified his push for imminent change by arguing that the suffering of the workers has to come to an end. This went against the traditional response of Orthodox clergy to the suffering of the masses: preaching patience and other-worldly salvation and happiness. This approach was shared by less radical progressive clergy who participated in church outreach activities.

The critique of capitalism and its consequences for the people led the Archimandrite Mikhail to the more radical rejection of private property. As there was no social doctrine developed within the Russian Orthodox tradition, Mikhail (Semenov) turned to alternative sources: Christian social works in non-Orthodox traditions and the ideal of the Jerusalem Church. He polemicised with German Protestant thought and engaged French Catholic and British Christian social thought but created his idiosyncratic idea of Christian socialism. The controversial description of the Jerusalem church is also an alternative source of inspiration because it was based on a socio-economic reading of the Gospel which was alien to Orthodoxy. The problem of Christian economics was a shared concern with the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, but the abolishment of private property was only one part of that political theology which is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Christian Brotherhood of Struggle (1905-7)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

...

Question: Should one obey the tsars when they act against the will of God?

Answer: No – Christ Said you cannot serve [both] God and Mammon, the Russian people and the Russian army is suffering because they subjugate themselves to the tsars.

Q: What does Our Holy Law command to the Russian people and army to do?

A: Repent the long servility and rise (*opalchas'*) against tyranny and impiety (*nechestie*), and swear that there be only One Tsar for all in heaven and on earth Jesus Christ...

Q: What can hold back the fulfilment of this Holy act?

A: Nothing. ...

Q: In what way should those with a pure heart rise?

A: Take up arms and follow bravely those who speak in the name of the Lord. ...

Q: Is God against oath (*prisiaga*) to the Tsar?

A: Yes. God is against it...

(*Orthodox Catechism* by Decembrist Sergei Murav'ev-Apostol, 1825)<sup>1</sup>

The above catechism was kept secret for a long time after the failed Decembrist Revolt of 1825. It was drafted in French, then revised and translated to Russian by Sergei Murav'ev-Apostol, one of the leaders of the rebel Southern Society. The text was published for the first time only in 1906.<sup>2</sup> Mazour noted that after Murav'ev-Apostol finished the Catechism, he asked

<sup>1</sup> "Pravoslavnyi Katikhzis" [Orthodox Catechism], *Vosstanie Dekabristov (Materialy, Dokumenty po istorii vosstaniia Dekabristov)*, Vol. 4. (Moscow: 1927), 254-55.

<sup>2</sup> Anatole G. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution 1825. The Decembrist Movement: Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, (Stanford: Stranford University Press, 1937), 186.

a priest, Father Daniel Kaizer, to read it out to the soldiers, arguing that clergy had always been on the side of the people. After some hesitation, Father Kaizer agreed to reading out loud the seditious document and then performed the *Te Deum*. After the rebellion was suppressed both the Colonel and the Father were severely punished. While most Decembrists were exiled to Siberia, Murav'ev-Apostol was among those five who received the death penalty and were executed in 1826. Father Kaizer was defrocked in the same year and given to civil authorities to decide about his further punishment. He was disinherited (he was a noble) and sentenced to hard labour, he was eventually granted amnesty in 1858.<sup>3</sup> The history of this document shows that it was one thing to oppose autocracy in the Russian Empire, but to oppose it in the name of God was perceived as particularly subversive.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter investigates ideas by an ephemeral group, called the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, which was formed in 1905 by members of the religious intelligentsia, and already disappeared around 1907. The chapter argues that the main idea behind the group was to theorise about how to oppose autocracy as an Orthodox believer in the name of God. Thus, a close reading of the program and the pamphlets of this underground group will shed light on some of the larger issues concerning the relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church, autocracy and religious intelligentsia in the period. The chapter presents in detail the program of the group and highlights key theo-political concepts and arguments in their texts which are related to some form of idealised Christian sociality. The analysis focuses on the perception of the group as “radical” by historians and by contemporaries. The research highlights that the Brotherhood developed a “radical” reputation mainly due to their rejection of autocracy as a legitimate form of government for Christians, and due to their propagation of strikes. The

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>4</sup> Franklin A. Walker concluded that Christianity exerted “considerable influence on the Decembrist goal of a moral transformation of society” which effort grew out of Christian service ethic. Franklin A. Walker, “Christianity, the Service Ethic and Decembrist Thought,” In Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 90.

chapter shows that the ideal socio-political order propagated by the group was based on the ideal of early Christian communes – including the idealisation of community of belongings as a desirable economic regime for Christians as discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

There are no major academic works dedicated to the history of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle because it was active only for a couple of years after 1905. As the group was a transitional moment in the life of its main representatives, it has received perfunctory discussion in the literature – with two exceptions. Firstly, Jutta Scherrer analysed the group in two long articles in the 1970s which focused on the question of the “search for Christian Socialism” in Russia in 1905-7.<sup>5</sup> Scherrer identified the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle as one of the organisations related to Christian Socialist ideas in late Imperial Russia. Scherrer’s portrayal of the Brotherhood was nuanced and complex; many of the points raised by her are developed further in this chapter on the history of the group. For instance, she highlighted the importance of the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost’* in the program of the group, an aspect which is investigated in detail in this dissertation. Secondly, Kristiane Burchardi discussed the group in her research on the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Societies.<sup>6</sup> Burchardi analysed the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle in the context of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society. Valentin Svetsitskii, one of the founding members of the Society, gave a lecture about the group at a meeting on 21 November 1905.<sup>7</sup> Burchardi gave a balanced account of the program of the group and its intellectual context, but it was narrated mainly from the perspective of the Society. In Burchardi’s interpretation, the

<sup>5</sup> Jutta Scherrer, “V poiskakh “khristianskogo sotsializma” v Rossii,” [In Search of “Christian Socialism” in Russia] *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 12. (2000): 88-161. Translation from French original: Jutta Scherrer, “Intelligentsia, Religion, Révolution: Premières Manifestations D’un Socialisme Chrétien En Russie. 1905-1907,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 1976): 427–66. and *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 18, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1977): 5–32.

<sup>6</sup> Kristiane Burchardi, *Die Moskauer “Religiös-Philosophische Vladimir-Solov’ev-Gesellschaft” (1905-1918)* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Burchardi, *Die Moskauer “Religiös-Philosophische Vladimir-Solov’ev-Gesellschaft”*, 182.



formation of the Brotherhood signalled that the Society developed a stronger political stand in this period.

Apart from these two works, there are numerous references to the group in articles and books. A common denominator or a frequently used characteristic for describing the group is its *radicalism*. Stroop calls it “a tiny radical Christian left organisation”,<sup>8</sup> Flikke referred to its members as “more radical Christian elements”.<sup>9</sup> Similar labels can be found in the Russian literature, Vorontsova, for instance, claimed that the “more radical Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, cannot be called a religious movement, although its participants were very religious.”<sup>10</sup> Keidan referred to it as “radical Christian group” in the introduction of his edited volume of ego-documents from the period.<sup>11</sup> Ivanova characterised the Brotherhood as a “political organisation, coloured by religion, with the radical leftists (including the justification of terror)”.<sup>12</sup> The literature, however, is not always clear why or how the group developed this radical reputation.

### 3.1. The birth of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle

As described in chapter 1, on 9 January 1905 a mass procession of thousands of people, led by Father Georgii Gapon, took place on the streets of St. Petersburg. Bloody Sunday gave new momentum to the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, and it was also a crucial factor in the formation of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. Educated, religious-oriented

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Stroop, “Nationalist War Commentary as Russian Religious Thought: The Religious Intelligentsia’s Politics of Providentialism,” *Russian Review* 72, no. 1 (January 2013): 105.

<sup>9</sup> Geir Flikke, *Democracy or Theocracy: Frank, Struve, Berdjaev, Bulgakov, and the 1905 Russian Revolution* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Slavisk-baltisk avdeling, 1994), 62.

<sup>10</sup> Irina Vorontsova, *Russkaia religiozno-filosofskaia mysl' v nachale XX veka*, [Russian religious-philosophical thought in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century] (Moskva: Izd-vo PSTGU, 2008), 271.

<sup>11</sup> *Vzyskuiushchiie grada. Khronika chastnoi zhizni russkikh religioznykh filosofov v pismakh i dnevnikh*, [Seekers of the City. Chronicle of the private life of Russian religious philosophers in letters and diaries] ed. Vladimir Isidorovich Keidan (M.: Shkola “Iazyki russkoi kultury”, 1997), 11.

<sup>12</sup> E. V. Ivanova, “Florenskii i Khristianskoe Bratstvo Borby,” [Florensky and the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle] *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 6 (1993): 159.

laypeople reflected on revolutionary events and constructed political theologies about the ideal relationship between God, church, state and the people.

According to the program of the group, it was formed already in February of 1905. The program included a lengthy introduction about the motives for the formation of the group, and Bloody Sunday was identified as the triggering event: “The events of January 9 made further uncertainty impossible. ... For freedom or against it, but it is necessary to move from words to actions.”<sup>13</sup> Archival material is scarce concerning the Brotherhood, and it is hard to determine all members. Therefore, there are various lists compiled by different researchers. Burchardi identified the following members: apart from Valentin Svetsitskii<sup>14</sup> and Vladimir Ern, Aleksandr Elchaninov, Sergei Bulgakov, Aleksandr Volzhskii,<sup>15</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, Ioan Brikhnichev.<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether Pavel Florensky was a member or not, but he was undeniably in close contact with the group and published articles in journals connected to them.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt about the leading role of Valentin Svetsitskii and Vladimir Ern; therefore the chapter focuses on their contribution to the project. Sergei Bulgakov also played an important role, but he developed further his ideas in the framework of the Union of Christian Politics,<sup>18</sup> discussed in chapter 4.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>14</sup> See Sergei Chertkov, “Pisatel-Propovdnik,” [Writer-Prophet] in Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii. Vtoroe raspiatie Khrista. Antikhrisť. P’esy i rasskazy. (1901-1917)* [Complete Works. Second Crucifixion of Christ. Antichrist. Plays and short stories], vol. 1. (M.: Dar’, 2008) 632-661.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudonym for Aleksandr Sergeevich Glinka (1878—1940) See Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchiie grada*, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Ioan Panteleimovich Brikhnichev (1879-1968) studied in the Tiflis seminary together with I. V. Dzhughashvili (Stalin). He was defrocked in 1906 for his journalistic and political activity. During 1910-2, he was associated with the Golgotha Christian heterodox group and had close connections to Mikhail (Semenov). He welcomed the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and held posts mostly in education related institutions or committees in Soviet Russia. He was the secretary of the League of Militant Atheists between 1924-5. Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchiie grada*, 95-6.

<sup>17</sup> Kristiane Burchardi, apart from Svetsitskii and Ern, identified the following members, (although without citing any evidence for membership): Aleksandr Elchaninov, Sergei Bulgakov, Aleksandr Volzhskii, Nikolai Berdyaev, Ioann Brihnichev. It is controversial whether Pavel Florenskii was a member or not. See Kristiane Burchardi, *Die Moskauer “Religios-Philosophische Vladimir-Solov’ev-Gesellschaft”*, 182-183.

<sup>18</sup> See Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 91. “The Brotherhood, which counted Bulgakov among its members...” Bulgakov’s claim that he has liberated himself from the idea of Christian Politics or Brotherhood of

### 3.1.1 Vladimir Ern and Valentin Svetsitskii

Vladimir Frantsevich Ern was born in 1882 in Tiflis (today Tbilisi). His father was a half-Swede, half-German Lutheran, his mother a half-Pole, half-Russian Orthodox woman. He attended gymnasium in Tiflis with Pavel Florensky and Aleksandr Elchaninov. The three friends left Tiflis for Moscow together, dreaming about meeting Vladimir Solov'ev. Unfortunately, they were too late, news of the death of the great philosopher reached them on their way to the capital.<sup>19</sup> Ern met Svetsitskii in Moscow in 1900, during his studies at Moscow University between 1900-4. In the academic year 1903/4, Ern was quite active in the Historical-Philological Society at the university which was led by philosopher S. N. Trubetskoy, friend and follower of Vladimir Solov'ev. Ern and his friends, Pavel Florensky, Valentin Svetsitskii and Andrei Bely<sup>20</sup> were contributors to the "history and philosophy of religion" section within the Historical-Philological Society, under the supervision of Sergei Andreevich Kotliarevskii.<sup>21</sup> According to Bely, the presentations at the university attracted a large audience after a while.<sup>22</sup> In parallel to the section meetings at the university, students also organised a philosophy *kruzhok* devoted to Vladimir Solov'ev and his writings. Ern, Svetsitskii, Florensky, Bely, Sergei Solov'ev (nephew of Vladimir Solov'ev),<sup>23</sup> and others would meet at the apartment rented by Ern and Svetsitskii to discuss Solov'ev's philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Later on, Ern was involved in several religious-philosophical projects before the revolution. He was a founding member of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society in memory of

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Struggle must indicate that he had seen himself as part of these projects earlier. See "Letter 79" by S. N. Bulgakov to A. S. Glinka, (27.05.1907) in Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchiie grada*, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Ermichev, "Zhizn' i dela Vladimira Frantsevicha Erna," [Life and work of Vladimir Frantsevich Ern] in *V. F. Ern: Pro et contra*, ed., A. A. Ermichev, (SPb.: RKhGA, 2006), 11. Reference to E. V'iunik, "Vladimir Frantsevich Ern" *Literaturnaia ucheba*, no 2. (1991): 142.

<sup>20</sup> Pen name for Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev (1880-1934) Russian novelist, poet, and literary critic. Best known for his novel *Petersburg*. (1913)

<sup>21</sup> See Andrey Bely, *Nachala Veka: Berlinskaiia redaktsia* (1923), [The Beginning of an Epoch, Berlin Edition] (SPb., Nauka, 2014), 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Sergei Mikhailovich Solov'ev (1885-1942) Russian poet, grandson of historian Sergei Mikhailovich Solov'ev.

<sup>24</sup> Ermichev, "Zhizn' i dela Vladimira Frantsevicha Erna", 14.

Vladimir Solov'ev at the end of 1905.<sup>25</sup> From 1910, he contributed to the publishing house *The Way (Put')*,<sup>26</sup> established by Margarita Kirillova Morozova in support of the Religious-Philosophical Society. Ern is mostly known in Russian studies for his paper "From Kant to Krupp" in which he situated the roots of German militarism in German philosophy and culture.<sup>27</sup> In 1916-17, he was working on his doctoral dissertation on Vincenzo Gioberti, a nineteenth-century Italian philosopher. His defence was scheduled to 2 May 1917, but it never took place as he died of nephritis on April 29.

Valentin Svetsitskii is a less known figure than Vladimir Ern. Svetsitskii was born into a hereditary noble family in Kazan' in 1881. He was officially born out of wedlock as his father's divorce from his first wife was not recognised by the Catholic Church. The family moved to Moscow in 1895, and Svetsitskii entered Moscow University in 1903 where he met Ern. He joined the Historical-Philological Society and was active in the section of "history and philosophy of religion". After Bloody Sunday in 1905, he founded the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle together with Ern. During 1906-8, Svetsitskii published intensively on religion, philosophy and politics. He was a founding member of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society in memory of Vladimir Solov'ev and delivered at least twenty presentations during their regular meetings.<sup>28</sup> In 1907, Svetsitskii went through a spiritual crisis which probably led to his break with Ern. After he confirmed the truth of disturbing allegations, he had to leave the Moscow Religious Philosophical Society. (He had a daughter born out of wedlock, and he took money from the budget of the journal *The Age (Vek)*).

<sup>25</sup> See Burchardi, *Die Moskauer "Religiös-Philosophische Vladimir-Solov'ev-Gesellschaft"*

<sup>26</sup> Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal, 1925-1940* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> More on Ern's intellectual and public work during the war: Christopher Stroop, "Providential Empire Russia's Religious Intelligentsia and the First World War" (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2012). For an analysis of the article see: Jutta Scherrer, "Neoslavianofilstvo i germanofobia: Vladimir Frantsevich Ern" in V. F. Ern: *Pro et contra*, 743-761.

<sup>28</sup> "Comments" in Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, 633

During 1909-13, he was in close interaction with former archpriest Mikhail (Semenov), Ioann Brikhnichev and followers of Golgotha Christianity.<sup>29</sup> He became a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1917 and was persecuted by Soviet authorities, he never accepted Soviet rule. After a long disease, he died in 1931. According to contemporary accounts, he had a charismatic character with an impulsive personality. People were either very fond of him or disliked him with the same passion. He was immensely influenced by Vladimir Solov'ev and Fedor Dostoevsky.<sup>30</sup> The close friendship of Ern-Sventsitskii was a well-known fact among lay religious circles during 1905-7, Kartashev described the duumvirate vividly:

Ern and Sventsitskii, as two Ajaxes, were clearly different in their temperament. Ern – the son of a German, was full of erudition, reason, strict moralism. Tall, fair complexion and no beard, never smiling with his face, in a typical black frockcoat, he looked like a Protestant pastor of some moralising sect, exemplifying Protestant pathos in Orthodoxy. Sventsitskii, his comrade-in-arms, from his name, of Polish origin, not too tall, blond with greyish-blue eyes, looking at everything with a tense and demanding gaze, a Savonarola who can barely control himself, ready to burst out in denunciations, anathemas, leading the crowd to battle. The theocratic-fanatic type of Latin style.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2 The program of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle

As mentioned earlier, the group was probably already formed in February 1905. Scherrer mentioned one of the first references to the group in the Bolshevik *Forward* (Vpered). The journal was published in Geneva, under the leadership of Lenin, and had all in all 18 numbers. In one of the March numbers, the journal published news about a “new party”, the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. The editors only added a note to the short abstract of the program of the group asking whether the program is a deception of the people or a real new

<sup>29</sup> Golgotha Christianity (*golgofskie khristianstvo*) was a religious-revolutionary movement which was probably formed in 1905 among the workers of St. Petersburg. Valentin Sventsitskii and archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) were associated with the movement. See Hagemeister, *Nikolaj Fedorov*, 167-8.

<sup>30</sup> More about his life in Russian: See Chertkov, “Pisatel-Propovdnik”, 632-661.

<sup>31</sup> Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev, “Moi rannie vstrechi s o. Sergiem Bulgakovym” [My early meetings with Father Sergei Bulgakov], in *Pravoslavnaia mysl' Trudy Pravoslavnogo bogoslovskogo instituta v Parizhe*. Vyp. IX. (Paris, 1953): 47-55.

movement.<sup>32</sup> There was another reference to the group in a report from June 1905. The head of Department for the protection of social safety and order in Moscow, E. G. Klimovich, submitted a report on the emergence of a “criminal society”, the “Christian Brotherhood of Struggle”. The report entailed that the group disseminated the following pamphlets: “To the society”, “To the bishops of the Russian Church” and “On the tasks of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle”. The three pamphlets were attached to the report. Klimovich promised to continue the investigation regarding the members of the organisation.<sup>33</sup> In July, the text of the pamphlet “On the tasks of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle” was published in Petr Struve’s journal, *Liberation (Osvobozhdenie)*.<sup>34</sup> The group envisioned three main tasks: struggle with despotic autocracy, struggle with the passive role of the Russian Orthodox Church and struggle with social inequality in society.

### 3.2.1 Pamphlets

The police report files demonstrate that the group started disseminating their ideas in pamphlets. These pamphlets were printed illegally and distributed on the streets of Moscow, some of them are in the police archives. The text of some of the pamphlets was incorporated into the program of the Brotherhood, published in brochure format. One pamphlet focused on the response of the Church to the events of Bloody Sunday: it condemned the Church for forgetting where its alliance should be, that is with the people. The proclamation reprimanded the Church for telling the people to stay calm and not to riot – instead of reprimanding the oppressor state for its actions. It expressed disappointment that the voice of the Church was nowhere to be heard:

<sup>32</sup> Scherrer, “V poiskakh “khristianskogo sotsializma” v Rossii,” 100.

<sup>33</sup> GARF, f. 63, op. 25, d. 812.

<sup>34</sup> “O zadachakh Khristianskogo bratstva borby” [On the tasks of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle], *Osvobozhdenie*, no. 73 (1905): 386-388. See: “Comments” in Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii. Pis'ma k vsem: Obrashchenia k narodu 1905-1908*. [Complete Works. Letter to all: Addressing the People 1905-1908] vol. 2, (Moscow: Dar' 2010), 550.

In these moments, everyone expected that the Church would raise its voice against a mad power (*vlast*) which forgot that the Tsar of the tsars is – our Lord and that the power of the tsar is subordinated to the will of the Lord...<sup>35</sup>

Another proclamation argued that from the point of view of Orthodox Christianity, solidarity with the people was unquestionable, while loyalty to a power killing unarmed people was unacceptable. These ideas were developed further in another pamphlet addressed “To the army”. All in all, the group, according to its own estimates, managed to distribute 3500 copies of this pamphlet among soldiers in St. Petersburg, Vladimir and Kiev. The aim of the proclamation was to convince soldiers that they should not engage in a fight with rioters:

They say to you: they are rioters, it is their fault, so they force you to shoot at them and kill them. But is it really the fault of the hungry peasant, when they take away bread from the landlords who live in the town, [spending] thousands of rubels in a year; or is it the fault of the workers that when they have no rest and when they are tormented by work – they ask for a pay rise and for the decrease of their working hours?<sup>36</sup>

The text argued that the Lord is the supreme authority, not the tsar; there should be no such thing as unlimited loyalty to secular authorities. Obedience to the authorities was important, but only if it was “not against the will of God”. As killing is a “godless thing”, it is impossible to fulfil the order to shoot at rioters from the Christian point of view:

Who is higher – God or the tsar and his servants? We have only one Lord – our Tsar Jesus Christ. ... Imagine that Christ would suddenly appear on earth, and the authority would not like his teaching, and they would order you to shoot at Him. Who would you listen to? To the earthly tsar or to the heavenly Tsar? But Christ is already walking on earth in the image of the hungry and the injured. [But] you do not help them, you shoot at them – you shoot at Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The authors of the pamphlets argued that the Church cannot be the true Church as long as it was subordinated to the state, hence the need for separation of Church and state. In their eyes,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 14.

the Church cannot fulfil its obligation towards the people, it cannot demonstrate the solidarity it must demonstrate.

The Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was a short-lived group, but their political theology represents one of the first formulations of Social Gospel and Christian social ideas in the Eastern Orthodox context.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, these ideas were more than sporadic social teachings. Jutta Scherrer regarded the program of the Brotherhood to be one of the first attempts to form a coherent socio-political-economic program on Eastern Orthodox principles in Russia.<sup>39</sup> Religious oriented lay members of the Russian society, such as the members of the Brotherhood, could talk more “freely” and express more radical ideas, for instance, the separation of Church and State. Their pamphlets and the program highlighted the practical dilemma that members of the Russian Orthodox Church had to face in late Imperial Russia: how to reconcile loyalty to the state and solidarity with the people? Solidarity with the people was important both in terms of moral duty, but also as self-preservation as there were serious concerns about the decline of the influence of the Church in society, especially in urban areas. The practical dilemma of progressive church members originated in the tension between loyalty towards autocracy and solidarity towards the people: strengthening the position of the Church in the society, and loyalty towards the state were both seen as crucial for the survival of the Church.

### 3.2.2 Program and key concepts

In August 1905, the group published a more systematic and expanded program as the second number of the “Religious-social library” (*Religiozno-obshchestvennaia biblioteka*) series.<sup>40</sup> He also read it out at a meeting of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society on 21

<sup>38</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, “An Orthodox Social Gospel in Late-Imperial Russia,” In: *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 1 (May 2006): 1-29.

<sup>39</sup> Scherrer, “V poiskakh “khristianskogo sotsializma” v Rossii”, 92.

<sup>40</sup> Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, “*Khristianskoe bratstvo borby*” i ego programma, [Christian Brotherhood of Struggle and its Program] *Religiozno-obshchestvennaia biblioteka*. Seria 1. no. 2, (Moscow, 1906) Republished in Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, 40-64.



November 1905.<sup>41</sup> Their “short program” reflected an obsession with a particular Christian idea of progress which built on Vladimir Solov’ev’s idea of Godmanhood, on divine-human communion in history.

The program started by declaring that “every human relationship should be based on Christ’s love and Christ’s freedom”. Then it elaborated about differences between a secular and a Christian idea of progress, point 3 said:

3) Christians do not accept at all that quantitative idea of progress which dominates today’s worldview, according to which, once the goals are achieved, everyone can enjoy well-being and prosperity which is, for the time being, the privilege of the few, and, then, the Kingdom of universal well-being will come.<sup>42</sup>

Point 4 continued by juxtaposing a quantitative idea of progress to a qualitative Christian version:

4) Christians have their own idea of progress, which fundamentally differs from the secular one. This progress is – qualitative, goes [vertically] deep down and does not spread [horizontally]...<sup>43</sup>

The manifesto explicitly linked this Christian idea of progress to Godmanhood (*bogochelovechestvo*) in point 9 as formulated by Vladimir Solov’ev and described in the Introduction.<sup>44</sup>

9) Christian progress is the process of Godmanhood. Both God and man act. Man freely carries out the work of the Lord and the Lord gives him the necessary powers and shows him what to do and how. Therefore, Christian progress is the task of men as well. By its effort, by its free, filial work, humanity approaches its final goals.<sup>45</sup>

Another key concept in the introduction was “Christian *obshchestvennost*” – a Christian public sphere and sociality. The group believed that there was an on-going “awakening of religious life” among the clergy, the people and even the intelligentsia which would strive for the realisation of Christian *obshchestvennost*.<sup>46</sup> The enormous task before the group was to

<sup>41</sup> Svetsitskii, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Svetsitskii, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 21. (There are two “point 8”, it must be a typo.)

<sup>46</sup> Svetsitskii, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, 3.

provide a “religious-philosophical foundation to Christian *obshchestvennost*” and to move from theory to practice and to influence all layers of the society moving into this direction.<sup>47</sup>

The introduction was followed by a minimal program, with separate sections on practical measures to be introduced in the Church, in politics and economy.

In the general part, the group made it clear that for them the “ideal of all human relationships” was the Church, idealised as early Christian communes (*obshchina*) at the dawn of Christianity. There were strong “anarchist” tendencies in the theoretical underpinnings of the group which were motivated by theocratic aspirations. The uncanny resemblance to atheist revolutionary ideas was acknowledged in the program: “all the truth, which can be found in the ideas of anarchists about government power, or the ideas of socialists about the economy – should be manifested in the Church,”<sup>48</sup> i. e. “[t]he ideal of total anarchy (*bezvlastie*) should be realised in Christian communes.”<sup>49</sup> Internal love and the Holy Spirit should control all human relationship, and this would lead to the “destruction of all the dark consequences of state life”, such as courts and prisons.<sup>50</sup> In such communes, there would be a community of belongings, as private property is not a Christian ideal. This aspect was analysed in detail by the close reading of Vladimir Ern’s essay, “Christian attitude to property” in the previous chapter.

The most important point of the Church program was the demand of total separation of Church and State: “All ties with the state, which represent a kind of an external obligation or disturb the inner freedom of functioning, should be broken, and thus, the total separation of the Church from the state should be carried out.”<sup>51</sup> The close cooperation with the state made it impossible for the Church to be a free and true Church, hence the need to distance itself from secular power. The program advocated for reforming ecclesiastical education and for ending

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 26.

clerical censorship. It called for an All-Russian Church Council with the participation of clergy and laity, both groups sharing the decision-making power in the council. There were strong anti-hierarchical ideas in this part of the program, linked to the underlying idea of *sobornost'*, transcendental unity in diversity. The church program supported the electoral principle, instead of appointment of new bishops.

The political program called for a Constituent Assembly endowed with total sovereignty. Elections should be carried out with universal and equal voting rights. Minorities would be protected by proportional representation. The ideal political form for Russia, according to the group, was a democratic republic. This ideal was motivated by the “religious need to destroy in its roots in the people the pagan relationship to power (*vlast'*), to the Tsar, as the divine anointed.”<sup>52</sup> The program demanded amnesty for those who had been the victims of political or religious persecution, and an immediate stop to capital punishment. The economic program was the shortest and had one main point: the destruction of private property and the transfer to “common and lovesome control of lands, means, and goods of production”.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.3 Responses, debates and dialogues

The activity of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was mainly illegal, but the output of their underground printing activity was made public and was disseminated in several cities. As there are reactions and references to the group in various sources, it can be established that their message did reach various parts of the society, including clergy. This section surveys several critical reactions to the program of the Brotherhood: a report by Nikolai Bulgakov, anti-sectarian missionary; two articles by Ivan Georgievich Aivazov, an Orthodox missionary; and two articles by Archpriest Aleksandr Klitin, professor of theology at the Imperial Novorossiia University.

<sup>52</sup> Svetsitskii, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

One of the official Church documents mentioning the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was a report prepared by anti-sectarian missionary Nikolai Bulgakov (not related to Sergei Bulgakov) to Metropolitan Antonii on 17 May 1905.<sup>54</sup> The report referred to a movement among clerical members in the capital to form a “Christian Brotherhood”, in order to “unite workers based on Orthodox teachings and to gradually liberate them from the harmful influence of revolutionary propaganda.”<sup>55</sup> Nikolai Bulgakov approved the initiative and mentioned that as far as he knew the project is already “under consideration” by Metropolitan Antonii. This must have been a reference to the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation which submitted its program for official approval. The rest of the report elaborated on another group which had been active in the capital under the name “Christian Brotherhood of Struggle”, and whose underground proclamations were “written in a diabolically skilful literary style and with texts from the Holy Scripture.” Bulgakov recounted the three main goals of the group: fight with Russian autocracy, with the passive condition of the Church and with social and property inequality, i.e. the realisation of the way the Apostolic Church lived. The report ended with revealing the “real” aim of the Brotherhood: discrediting the “noble initiative” of the clergy in the capital. As a possible solution, Nikolai Bulgakov proposed to prepare brochures which would use quotes from the Holy Scripture to show the falsehood of the three tasks of the Brotherhood. The short report suggests that the official Church did not recognise the Brotherhood as possible partners for cooperation or interaction in social outreach projects of the Church, they were perceived as rivals.

Another lengthy reference to the birth of the group from 1905 can be found in two articles<sup>56</sup> published in the *Missionary Review* (*Missionerskoe obozrenie*) by Ivan Georgievich

<sup>54</sup> TsGIA SPb. f. 19. o. 97. d. 53. On the emergence of the revolutionary union of “Christian Brotherhood of Struggle” and their disseminated proclamations. L. 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ivan Georgievich Aivazov, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby,” [Christian Brotherhood of Struggle] *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, no. 11 (1905): 321-333. and no. 13 (1905): 602-615.

Aivazov (1872-1964), an Orthodox missionary and publicist. Aivazov highlighted that apologists and pastors of the Orthodox Church cannot be only spectators of the events in the Rus' as the Church has a

universal task of leaving the imprint of Christianity on all parts and phenomena of life on earth, to permeate with the spirit of Christianity not only the individual, but also the social elements (*stikhii*) of humanity, to create a Godmanhood-connection not only on an individual, but on a collective level as well.<sup>57</sup>

Aivazov noted that there were certain groups which aim to take over this task of the Church, to plant the seed of the Kingdom of God on earth, outside of the Church and without its assistance.<sup>58</sup> He identified the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle as one such group and included a lengthy quote from its program. The quote explained that the main principle behind the program was that Christ is a Godman, that he became human and “took *flesh*”. The consequence of this fact was that “humanity while becoming Church” must “reanimate and permeate economic, social and political relations with the Spirit of Christ, this is how Christ embodies himself in them, and this is how God will become everything in everything.”<sup>59</sup>

Aivazov formulated two objections to the program of the Brotherhood in the first article. He pointed out that there were similar projects in the past. He also disagreed with the reprimands by the group towards the Church of not being “social” (*obshchestvennii*). The first objection claimed that the aims of the group were identical with the proposals of the so-called “followers of the new path” (*novoputeitsy*), the God-seekers around Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius, and their “New Universal Christianity”. Aivazov did not see any difference between the God-seekers and the Brotherhood. He believed that they tried to reinvent the wheel and that they had nothing new to say.

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<sup>57</sup> Aivazov, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, no. 11, 322.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 325.

This criticism is debatable, the program of the Brotherhood differed from ideas by God-seekers. A main point of contestation was their understanding and perception of the “historical Church”. Merezhkovsky and his circle were adamant that the historical Orthodox Church was too corrupt and beyond “repair”. They longed for a new beginning, a new Church. In contrast to this, the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle envisioned fight with the paralysis of the Church and the introduction of reforms, but never rejected it as such. Conceptually, the approach of the Brotherhood to the historical Russian Orthodox Church was less hostile than the attitude of God-seekers. This difference, however, was not recognised by Aivazov and probably by many others in the Church.

The other objection by Aivazov towards the Brotherhood was the claim of the group that the Church had forgotten or does not acknowledge its task and role in the world. He explained in detail that in the pre-Petrine period, the Church was a crucial social and political actor in Russia. Regarding the post-Petrine period, Aivazov quoted from Church historian, I. S. Berdnikov,<sup>60</sup> that the state indeed “liberated itself from the educating (*vospitatelnie*) influence of the Church”,<sup>61</sup> but Aivazov did not see this as the fault of the Church. In the rest of the article, he argued that the path of the Russian state back to the Orthodox Church was through the ideal of the ‘Christian state’, supporting his claim with quotes from Vladimir Solov’ev.

In his second article, Aivazov focused on the defence of autocracy. He believed that the criticism of the Brotherhood was similar to the propaganda of revolutionary socialists. He pointed out two ways the Brotherhood fought autocracy: firstly, by demonstrating the “religious untruth (*nepravda*) of autocracy”, and, secondly, by facilitating the establishment of

<sup>60</sup> Il’ia Stepanovich Bernikov (1839-1915) was a canon lawyer, he taught at the Kazan’ Ecclesiastical Academy.

<sup>61</sup> Aivazov, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby”, no. 11, 330.

a free constitutional regime in Russia.<sup>62</sup> In Aivazov's view, the group misunderstood the concept of autocracy:

...the Russian autocrat, even if a "monarch with unlimited power", [this is understood] not in the absolute sense of the word, but in a conditional sense, i.e. he is not limited by the subjects of the Russian Empire, but he is dependent on God in all his acts.<sup>63</sup>

Aivazov argued that a Russian monarch cannot order to worship idols because if he would do that – he ceased to be a Russian monarch in the eyes of the people. He quoted from Lev Tikhomirov,<sup>64</sup> a revolutionary-turned-monarchist political thinker: "The Monarch brings into his tsardom only service to God. The people are obedient to such power without limits... i.e. until the Monarch does not force his subjects to violate the will of God, and, consequently, stops himself being a servant of God."

Aivazov also warned about giving sovereign power to the people: it will lead to the destruction of "the view of the monarch as the "heavenly anointed", as receiving this power (*vlast'*) from God."<sup>65</sup> He pointed out that while the Brotherhood considered the possibility of the rise of the Anti-Christ only in autocratic power, they should recognise that parliamentarianism "rejects the divine sanction of power by principle" and can lead to anti-Christian inclinations."<sup>66</sup> As a final comment, Aivazov criticised the "sectarian way" of the use of biblical citations by the Brotherhood in support of their claims. He concluded his article by reaffirming that "Russian autocracy is totally agreeable with Christian conscience."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Aivazov, "Khristianskoe bratstvo borby", no. 13, 603.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 607.

<sup>64</sup> Lev Aleksandrovich Tikhomirov (1852-1923) was in his youth a revolutionary, a member of the Executive Committee of the terrorist organisation, the People's Will (*Narodnaia Volia*). He became disillusioned with the revolution, and continued his career as a devout monarchist and political theorist of Russian autocracy.

<sup>65</sup> Aivazov, "Khristianskoe bratstvo borby", no. 13, 610.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 611.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 614.

The third reaction discussed here was a two-part article on autocratic power from 1907 by Archpriest Aleksandr Klitin<sup>68</sup>. The articles were published in the Kiev journal *Church and the People*.<sup>69</sup> In its first number, the journal emphasised its monarchist political orientation: “our political principle – the will of the Monarch is steadfast”.<sup>70</sup> The first part of the article was titled, “History, Christianity and Autocracy”.<sup>71</sup> The article argued that “[a]utocracy exists in the life of the Russian people, and, as any form of government, it is the logical and natural (*estestvennii*) product of historical life.”<sup>72</sup> The Russian people were spiritualised by autocratic power: “Through water and fire for the Tsar – this is what the history of the great Russian nation is saying.”<sup>73</sup>

The second part of the article came to light in the following number, and was titled: “Christianity and Autocracy”.<sup>74</sup> The article mentioned that “some say” that autocracy is not “permissible from a Christian point of view”<sup>75</sup>, but then Klitin specifically referred to the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. He called them ironically one of “our liberators” – political revolutionaries. He quoted from Valentin Svetsitskii’s pamphlet, “To the Bishops of the Russian Church”: “Acknowledging by conscience (*po sovesti*) the Tsar as your unlimited ruler, means acknowledging that he can do with those who acknowledged him whatever he wants...”<sup>76</sup> Thus, even if the Tsar ordered you to worship an idol, for instance, you would have

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<sup>68</sup> Aleksandr Mikhailovich Klitin (1860-1919) was a religious writer, priest, professor of theology at the Novorossiyskii university.

<sup>69</sup> *Church and the People* was a “Journal of Church-social life, politics, scholarship (*nauka*) and literature”. It was published by bishop Platon, President of the Kiev Religious-Educational Society.

<sup>70</sup> “Gospodi blagoslovi!” [Bless the Lord!] *Tserkov’ i narod*, no. 1 (1906): 2.

<sup>71</sup> Aleksandr Mikhailovich Klitin, “Istoriia, khristianstvo i samoderzhavie,” [History, Christianity and Autocracy] *Tserkov’ i narod*, no. 6 (1907): 8-9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> Aleksandr Mikhailovich Klitin, “Khristianstvo i samoderzhavie,” [Christianity and Autocracy] *Tserkov’ i narod*, no. 7 (1907): 8-11.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



to obey. The group rejected the counter-argument that the Tsar was the divine anointed, therefore, “above sin” as it would make the Tsar a “mangod, god”.

Archpriest Klitin firmly rejected Svetsitskii’s interpretation of autocratic power, and he argued that it was the result of “short-sightedness and weak thinking”. In his opinion: “No one ever among the healthy thinking Russians would understand “the unlimited power” of the Tsar in the sense that he orders what he wants, even when it is against the law of reason (*zakon mysli*) and morality”.<sup>77</sup> Archpriest Klitin argued that the unlimited power of the Tsar should be understood in the context of his noble influence on his subjects. Furthermore, the Tsar had unlimited power as a Christian, God-fearing ruler and this concept did not include any level of arbitrariness (*proizvol*) or violation of the conscience (*nasilie na sovestiu*). The Tsar remained loyal to Christ, not because he was the divine anointed, but because he was a Christian: “You do not have to be a half-god or god, only a person of high and noble moral principles, in order to avoid any possibility of turning away from Christ.”<sup>78</sup> In a nutshell, archpriest Klitin believed that the Brotherhood understood neither autocracy nor Christianity. This belated polemic with the program of the Brotherhood in Kiev shows that their brochures were circulated outside of the Russian capitals.

Reactions to the program of the Brotherhood focused on the meaning of the concept of autocracy which shows that the concept was under contestation. These debates were clashes of the political theology of the Orthodox left which rejected autocratic power as un-Christian due to its demand for absolute obedience and the Petrine ideology of absolutism as formulated by Feofan Prokopovich on the impossibility of disobedience to autocratic power. The Brotherhood also instrumentalised pre-Petrine traditions of resistance to just authority based on Christian conscience which was unintelligible for the official state ideology from Peter the Great.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Paradoxically, both sides instrumentalised Christian conscience to further their agenda, but in different ways. The Christian conscience of the monarch was seen as a guarantee for good rule and made the idea of resistance to an ungodly tsar irrelevant and unimaginable. The political theology of the Brotherhood, however, did not recognise this role of the conscience of the Christian monarch and highlighted its role in the life of the individual in questions of obedience.

### **3.4 Christian attitude to power (*vlast'*) and violence (*nasilie*)**

The previous section showed that there were numerous critical engagements with the program of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. Essays and articles by Ern and Sventsitskii about issues of Christian social and political order also generated discussions about the Russian Church and its ideals among clergy and intelligentsia. These issues were related to their theological vision of reforming the Russian Church and society in the spirit of the early Christian communes. Ern's work on the ideal relationship to property was discussed at the end of the previous chapter. The second part of this chapter turns to Valentin Sventsitskii's ideas about Christianity, power and violence which contributed to a great extent to their reputation as "radical".

Valentin Sventsitskii's article, titled "Christian attitude to power and violence", focused on the intertwined questions of religion, power and violence. To have a better understanding of the reception and impact of Sventsitskii's article, the discussion includes responses to Sventsitskii's article by Konstantin Aggeev, member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, and, by Prince Evgenii Trubetskoi, well-known member of the religious intelligentsia.

The article was published as the first essay in the *Questions of Religion* collection.<sup>79</sup> In this essay, Svetsitskii attempted to give theological grounding to the necessity to fight an unchristian Russian autocracy and to resist an ungodly Tsar. He criticised what he labelled as “liberal Christianity” among progressive priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, and he argued that discussions about councils and reforms were not enough, given the revolutionary situation in Russia. He considered the relationship of Christianity to power and violence to be the most important contemporary religious question. For Svetsitskii and Ern, Bloody Sunday was not only a symbolical trigger for the birth of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. For them, it was a fundamental breaking point in Russian political theory. By firing into a mass of civilians, the Tsar had broken the sacred tie between him and the people, autocracy corrupted itself for good. Thus, there was a need for a new political order, guidance should be sought in the Gospel, and transformation should come by reforming the Church.

Another aspect for the need of political theory about power and violence was connected to the program of the Brotherhood aimed at creating better conditions for workers. In late Imperial Russia, there was technically no difference between an economic strike and a political strike. Before 1905 all strikes were illegal, and, thus, by definition, political. As Read highlighted, “any serious strike brought the risk of escalating rapidly into a direct confrontation with police”,<sup>80</sup> and, consequently, with the state. While there was some positive change after 1905, a real de-politicisation of industrial relations was never achieved. If a weapons factory went on strike in the middle of a war, then their actions were by default perceived as hindering war efforts. Svetsitskii’s ideas on just resistance to an ungodly Tsar resonate with this historical setting. It was not enough to propagate strikes based on economic hardships since it

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<sup>79</sup> Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, “Khristianskoe otnoshenie k vlasti i nasiliu,” [Christian attitude to power and violence] *Voprosy Religii*, Vol. 1. (M., 1906.): 5-37.

<sup>80</sup> Christopher Read, “Labour and Socialism in Tsarist Russia,” in Dick Geary, *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, ed. Dick Geary (Oxford, New York and Munich, Berg Publishers, 1989), 177.

would become sooner or later politicised. It needed to be addressed from a theo-political point of view as well. Ideas by the Brotherhood and Svetsitskii took into consideration workers' religiosity which was still high as Herrlinger's research showed. From this perspective, workers needed justification within an Orthodox frame of reference to oppose autocracy and fight for better working conditions.

In his essay, Svetsitskii acknowledged that Christians should submit to earthly political powers, but he also argued that only if it was not against Christ and Christian teachings. He did not question the divine origin of power, he supported this tenet with biblical citations.<sup>81</sup> It was necessary to establish by the Apostles that power is from God as "[t]he internal logic of Apostolic teaching about power is part of the revelation (*raskrytia*) of the great meaning of [power] in the process of Godmanhood."<sup>82</sup> He, however, identified two distortions that happened since the emergence of Christianity: the misbelief that you have to submit *unconditionally* to power; and, the false understanding that divine origin implies divine content. Svetsitskii believed that Russian Orthodoxy has fallen into both pitfalls. The proof for the first pitfall was "the Church teaching about oath which demands the fulfilment of any order, even the killing of someone's own father". The second was demonstrated by the fact that the Church had been pushed into submission after it was turned into a "ministry department" by the reforms initiated by Peter the Great.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, Svetsitskii unequivocally rejected the idea of a "Christian state": "We cannot think of any Christian state. If a state becomes Christian, it becomes a Church."<sup>84</sup> He launched harsh criticism against autocracy because it was a form of government which was opposed to Christianity in its very principles: it demanded absolute obedience from its subjects.

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<sup>81</sup> See Roman 13: Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

<sup>82</sup> Svetsitskii, "Khristianskoe otnoshenie k vlasti i nasiliu", 13.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 17.

Absolute obedience by Christians, however, can be given only to the one and only ruler, Jesus Christ, the Pantokrator, the ruler of the world.

All in all, the acknowledgement of such absolute power in one's life was not reconcilable with Christian conscience by default. This logic of disobedience was not without precedent in Russian theo-political thought. For instance, Archpriest Avvakum (1620–1682) and the Old Believers, propagated passive resistance to religious and political authority by relying on Christian conscience for justifying disobedience. There are also rare and radical cases of propagation of active resistance against 'tormentor' tsars, as Andrei Kurbskii (1528–1583) did in his petitions against Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584). The complexity of the issue of an 'ungodly tsar' in Russian political theory was summarised by Hamburg.

[t]he theory of symphony between Church and state assumed that the Church's leaders would speak with one voice when admonishing an errant prince; and that the prince, once reminded of his moral duties, would return to the true path. The theory did not posit the superiority of the Church over the state, but it did assume the primacy of conscience in political affairs. By doing so, it opened up the prospect for passive resistance to an ungodly magistrate, and yet, because it also insisted on obedience to constituted political authority, it left ambiguous the propriety of actual disobedience.<sup>85</sup>

In the second part of the essay, Svetsitskii focused on the question of violence which was closely related to the question of power. He reiterated an axiom often voiced by Church members in the period that "Christianity unconditionally condemns (*osuzhdaet*) violence (*nasilie*)."<sup>86</sup> Svetsitskii, however, argued that the Russian Orthodox Church acted biased in respect of condemning violence. It condemned "red terror", while accepted and supported "white terror" of the state. Svetsitskii tried to come up with a theory of violence to create a platform for justified active resistance to the Tsar.

<sup>85</sup> Gary M. Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment: Faith, Politics, and Reason, 1500-1801* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 190.

<sup>86</sup> Svetsitskii, "Khristianskoe otnoshenie k vlasti i nasiliu", 21.

Sventsitskii's main argument was that the difference between murder and violence is not quantitative. Murder is different in its nature from violence. Murder – even if you try to save someone by killing another man – is under all circumstances unacceptable from a Christian point of view. Violence, however, was different for Sventsitskii. He analysed a thought experience about stopping a suicide attempt with force. He differentiated between moral and immoral violence and acceptable and unacceptable forms:

...any kind of violence in which human liberty is limited – is unacceptable violence.  
 ... Violence itself does not designate anything and it has no moral principle, it is an empty form, which receives its content depending on what or which it is directed to.<sup>87</sup>

The aim of violence can be “the weakening of evil by force, but not the increasing of good by force.” This led him to the conclusion that Christians are allowed to use violence against non-Christians. In theory, the aim was to decrease evil inclinations (*pokhot'*) and not to “guide” people by force towards Christ.<sup>88</sup>

A practical, intended consequence of this theory of just resistance was that strikes were reconceptualised. Strikes, both in Ern's and in Sventsitskii's essay were presented as a means to weaken the evils of capitalism, a necessary part of the struggle. Christians must fight economic poverty, and the Church must join the struggle against capitalism. The Church cannot keep focusing on the afterlife and deny that people have bodies, that they are hungry, that they are cold, that they are suffering. Strikes in the period were not alien to religious rituals, Herrlinger found archival evidence for Nevskii factory workers requesting a special prayer service at the end of a strike, and that Putilov workers held prayers for their patron saint after they managed to avert a strike.<sup>89</sup> This differed from the position of the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment (ORRP) who denounced strikes in its brochure entitled “The

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>89</sup> Herrlinger, “The Religious Landscape of Revolutionary St. Petersburg”, 846.

Workers' Question'. The brochure argued that workers do not help themselves if they go against the employers whom they depend on for wages.<sup>90</sup>

### **Responses by Konstantin Aggeev and Evgenii Trubetskoy**

Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been different ideas and theological justifications for defining the relationship of Christianity to violence. Depending on historical settings, hermeneutical traditions and motivations, arguments were put forward for pacifism and non-violence, but also for just war and holy war. Valentin Svetsitskii's article about power and violence was motivated by a need to rethink the role of strikes in Christian imagination, given the everyday reality of revolutionary Russia. This was important for the religious intelligentsia and progressive clergy alike, who witnessed revolutionary violence and were at a loss regarding their role as priests and pastors as it was highlighted in the introductory chapter.

Progressive clergy could not turn a blind eye to the issue of violence concerning Christianity. Father Konstantin Aggeev, a core member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, published a reaction to Svetsitskii's article in Evgenii Trubetskoy's journal *Moscow Weekly (Moskovskii Ezhenedel'nik)*, with the same title: "Christian attitude towards power and violence".<sup>91</sup> Aggeev mentions in a letter that Svetsitskii himself asked him to respond to the article. Father Aggeev agreed with Svetsitskii's ideas about power and the distortion of original Christian teaching about obedience to secular power. He did not support, however, the understanding of 'autocracy' as presented by Svetsitskii through quotations from one of the pamphlets of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. For Aggeev, there was no direct link between religion and politics, there was no ideal political form corresponding to a certain religion. Religious life and autocracy were theoretically "reconcilable", but it was also possible to break or reformulate the links between Russian Orthodoxy and the autocratic state. Aggeev

<sup>90</sup> Page Herrlinger, "Raising Lazarus: Orthodoxy and the Factory Narod in St. Petersburg, 1905-1914", *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Bd. 52 H. 3. (2004): 345.

<sup>91</sup> Konstantin Markovich Aggeev, "Khristianskoe otnoshenie k vlasti i nasiliu," [Christian attitude towards power and violence] *Moskovskii Ezhenedel'nik*, no. 24-25 (1907): 16-27.

also criticised Svetsitskii for his theory of resistance and justification of violence. He proposed to imagine that Christ decides to go on strike – this was an unimaginable scene for him. While he acknowledged that Svetsitskii differentiated between murder and violence, Aggeev also pointed out that every strike carries within it the possibility of murder. All in all, he concluded that Svetsitskii raised important issues, but the topic still “waits for a review and a new solution”.<sup>92</sup>

Prince Evgenii Nikolaevich Trubetskoy also addressed specifically Svetsitskii’s essay in his article on “On the question of permissible and non-permissible violence”<sup>93</sup> in September 1907. As a member of the religious intelligentsia, he criticised Svetsitskii’s ideas on violence from a different point of view. He also highlighted that the “unlimited power” of the monarch means that his power was not limited by other *human* powers, but it was still limited by divine powers. Trubetskoy argued that the question of violence was a more fundamental issue and should not be narrowed down to the confrontation of Christianity and autocracy. After all, these issues are present in countries with other forms of governments, “for instance, in republican France, where the persecutors of the church are the representatives of *popular* autocracy (*narodnoe samoderzhavie*)?”<sup>94</sup> Trubetskoy found Svetsitskii’s “middle position” regarding violence the most illogical in comparison to Lev Tolstoy’s total rejection of violence and Vladimir Solov’ev’s justification of war. In the last part of the article, Trubetskoy responds to the issue of a united Christian party which will be the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>92</sup> Aggeev, “Khristianskoe otnoshenie k vlasti i nasiliu”, 27

<sup>93</sup> Evgenii Nikolaevich Trubetskoy, “K voprosu o dozvolennom i nedozvolennom nasilii. Po povodu stat’i Svetsitskogo,” [On the question of permissible and non-permissible violence] *Moskovskii Ezhenedel’nik*, no. 35 (1907): 20–26.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



Sventsitskii responded to both articles in one article, “On the same shore”,<sup>95</sup> emphasising that he did not see this as a “polemic”, but as “joint work”. His main counter-argument to criticism of his concept of ‘autocracy’ was that the target audience of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle understands exactly the way the Brotherhood understands autocratic power – the people, the bishops, the soldiers. Sventsitskii identified this as the “spirit of the union of the Russian people”.<sup>96</sup>

### Conclusions

The radicalism of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was manifested predominantly in theo-political theorising. Religious intelligentsia after Bloody Sunday was confronted with the inevitable problem of loyalty to the autocratic state who ordered the killing of its subjects. While advocates of the official church-state ideology argued that a Christian monarch could never do un-Christian acts, the Brotherhood considered Bloody Sunday exactly such an un-Christian act. In order to justify resistance to an unjust monarch, the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle instrumentalised earlier historical precedence of disobedience to secular power based on Christian conscience. In connection to this, he reinterpreted traditional Orthodox imperial power hierarchy and argued that the Tsar violates this hierarchy by demanding absolute obedience, represented by the oath to him to carry out his orders. Absolute obedience is due only to the Tsar of the tsars, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the Brotherhood’s understanding of the church as a body of Christ, corresponding to collective humanity realising the Kingdom of God provided a collective character to the conscience of the individual. The connection of *sobornost’* demanded solidarity to fellow church members over state duties.

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<sup>95</sup> Valentin Pavlovich Sventsitskii, “Na obshchem beregu. Otvet sviashch. K. M. Aggevu and kn. E. N. Trubetskoyu,” [On the same shore. Response to f. K. M. Aggeev and prince E. N. Trubetskoy] *Moskovskii Ezhenedel’nik*, no. 35 (8 September 1907): 8-19.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 8.

Another main focus of the group was the problem of violence and power. The issue of the relationship of Christians to violence was pushed to the fore during the revolutionary years of 1905-6. Radical right clergy, for instance, Archpriest Vostorgov, argued that Christianity rejects violence under all circumstances and in all historical periods. This was problematic for two reasons. Firstly, violence and pogroms were a core part of radical right monarchist organisations; therefore, their support by right-wing priests who preached non-violence was deemed hypocritical by left-leaning progressives. Secondly, given the global history of Christianity, especially its overseas missionary activities and support for colonialism and slavery show that the question was more complicated. The revolutionary situation also exacerbated the social and labour question. Strikes were never really depoliticised in the Imperial Russian context, and hindering production during war efforts was perceived not only unpatriotic but also criminal. The theory of just resistance was supposed to have practical application in this context by enabling workers to protect their interests while keeping their Orthodox faith.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Union of Christian Politics

As Christian morality aims at the realisation of the Kingdom of God inside separate individuals, Christian politics should prepare the coming of the Kingdom of God for humanity as a whole, consisting of larger parts – people (*narod*), tribes and states.<sup>1</sup> (Vladimir S. Solov'ev)

#### 4.1 Sergei Bulgakov and the Union of Christian Politics

The final Orthodox political theology to be discussed that emerged during the 1905-7 years is the Union of Christian Politics by Sergei Bulgakov. This political theology has been typically discussed in the framework of the history of Russian liberalism, liberal idealism and the Union of Liberation. Evtuhov wrote that “it began as a splinter group from the liberation movement”.<sup>2</sup> Flikke devoted a section to the Union in his work on the Russian liberation movement and the Kadet Party.<sup>3</sup> In Read's work on religion and intelligentsia, Bulgakov's project is discussed in parallel to Nikolai Berdiaev's Christian anarchism, mostly focusing on the Marxist and God-seeking intellectual milieu. These contexts are indeed important to understand the formulation of the Union of Christian Politics, but it is not enough to explain all aspects of it. This chapter argues that the context of church reform and progressive clergy was similarly important in the creation of the program of the Union. In this light, the first part focuses on presenting key concepts and the rhetoric of Bulgakov's vision of the Union. The analysis in the framework of Orthodox political theologies demonstrates that the program of

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir S. Solov'ev, “Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika” [The great debate and Christian politics] In *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva* [Collected volume by V.S. Solov'ev], Vol. 4., (Prosveshchenie: St. Petersburg, 1914), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle*, 101.

<sup>3</sup> Flikke, *Democracy or Theocracy*, 84-98.

the Union shared key concepts of previously discussed political theologies: Godmanhood as an idea of progress, the aim of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost'* and the socio-political ideal of the early Church. The second part highlights that contemporary debates about Christian politics and the role of clergy in emerging mass politics and State Duma elections can also explain the ambiguous nature of the Union towards party politics. The chapter focuses not so much on the political history of clerical participation, it reconstructs debates and opinions by various members of the Church to point out the difficult theo-political issues of clerical participation in the new political institutions.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.1.1 From Marxism to Idealism

Bulgakov is probably the most well-known historical figure discussed in this dissertation as he became famous in Western exile after he was expelled from Russia in 1922 by the Bolsheviks. Bulgakov was born to a clerical family in countryside Livny (Orel province) in 1870.<sup>5</sup> He attended the Orel Seminary, but during his studies, he lost his faith and quit. He enrolled in the Moscow University in 1890 where he studied political economy and law. He travelled to Europe to study economic processes. In the 1890s, Marxism became one of the dominant ideologies of the Russian intelligentsia, and Bulgakov became a follower of Marxist ideas. For thinkers like Struve, Berdiaev and Bulgakov, the appeal of Marxism was the scientific rigour of Marxist political economy in contrast to the subjective sociology of Russian

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<sup>4</sup> There is no fully comprehensive published work discussing the role and contribution of Orthodox clergy in the State Duma. For a brief summary see: Franz Jockwig, "Kirche und Staatsduma. Zur politischen Aktivität der Russisch-Orthodoxen Kirche am Vorabend der Revolution." In *Wegzeichen. Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Prof. Dr. Hermenegild M. Biedermann*. her. Ernst Chr. Suttner und Coelestin Patock. (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1971), 437-450. See also the dissertation by John H. M. Geerck, "The Church and Politics in Russia, 1905-1917. A Study of the Political Behavior of the Russian Orthodox Clergy in the Reign of Nicholas II.", PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> See detailed biography in Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle*. Also see autobiographical works by Bulgakov: *S. N. Bulgakov: pro et contra*. Tom 1. ed. Igor Evampliev. (Russkii put'. Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo humanitarnogo instituta, 2003), 63-158.

Populism.<sup>6</sup> His philosophical development and transformation were carefully reconstructed in Catherine Evtuhov's monograph on Bulgakov, the most important shift happened soon after the turn of the century. Bulgakov became disillusioned with the Marxist philosophical framework as it was not capable to answer the "vexed questions" of life. At the turn of the century, he went through an intellectual process which he called "from Marxism to idealism" and which characterised other intellectuals referred to as "Legal Marxists" in the literature, including Petr Struve or Nikolai Berdiaev. Together with other disillusioned Marxist thinkers, he moved towards idealism, as demonstrated in the programmatic volume, the so-called "idealist credo" of the period: *Problems of Idealism* (1902) which was discussed in the introductory chapter.

Bulgakov devoted an essay in the volume to the issue of progress titled "Fundamental Problems of the Theory of Progress".<sup>7</sup> His criticism of the positivist theory of progress, including Comtian and Marxist versions, was an important step in his intellectual transformation.<sup>8</sup> He called his times the age of the mechanical worldview, with its main principle – the principle of causality (*prichinnost'*).

In a nutshell, Bulgakov looked at three commonly emphasised goals of the positivist theory of progress and pointed out their defects from his point of view: the growing happiness of humanity; the strive for the perfection of humanity; and, the creation of conditions for the free development of the person (*lichnost'*). Bulgakov identified as one of the possible goals of progress "the highest possible increase of happiness among the highest possible number of

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Coates, "Religious Renaissance in the Silver Age" In William J. Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord, eds., *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 189.

<sup>7</sup> Original publication: Sergei Bulgakov, "Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa" [Fundamental problems of the theory of progress], In *Problemy idealizma*, (Saint-Petersburg, 1902), 1-47.

<sup>8</sup> Parts of my analysis of Bulgakov's writings on the idea of progress was published in a collection of conference papers: Medzibrodsky, Alexandra. "Ideas of Progress at Turn-of-the-century Russia: S. N. Bulgakov" In *Alternatives, Turning Points and Regime Changes in Russian History and Culture*, edited by Gyula Szvák, (Budapest: Russica Pannonica, 2015), 231-240.

people”. However, if we talk about the growth of happiness, we have to be able to measure it somehow and this is not possible: “it is not possible to find a unit to measure joy and sorrow”, happiness is too individual.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Bulgakov connected the issue of happiness as a goal to an even deeper and more comprehensive ethical problem: the justification of suffering in the present by referring to the happiness of future generations:

The suffering of one generation is presented as a bridge to the happiness of others; one generation should suffer for some reason so that the other can be happy, they have to “manure the soil of the future harmony” by their sufferings, as Ivan Karamazov uttered it. But why does Ivan have to sacrifice himself for Peter’s future happiness and does not Ivan as a human individual, from that point of view, have also the right for happiness as future Peter?<sup>10</sup>

To put it even more bluntly, Bulgakov added that: “[o]ur descendants are vampires, drinking our own blood”.

All in all, Bulgakov argued that the goals of progress cannot be interpreted within the narrow positivist framework. All of them are “knocking on the door of metaphysics”. He continued his discussion with the issue of the meaning of history and progress. Bulgakov claimed that the “first and foremost task” of the theory of progress is to show that “history has a meaning” that it is “not only evolution, but it is also progress” and, thus, history becomes the “development of a higher reason which is transcendent and immanent to history at the same time.”<sup>11</sup> He believed that it is right to posit this task, and it is unavoidable for the philosophising mind which “does not agree to see history as only a dead causal relationship.”<sup>12</sup> However, the

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<sup>9</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Osnovnye problemy teorii progressa” [Fundamental problems with the theory of progress] In: S. N. Bulgakov. *Ot marksizma k idealizmu: sbornik statei, 1896-1903*. [From Marxism to idealism: collections of articles, 1896-1904] (Obshchestvennaia pol’za, 1904.), 132-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 142.

“philosophy of history” should be called the “metaphysics of history” as it can be tackled only within a metaphysical framework.

He gave a concise summary of the meaning of the theory of progress, and it is worth quoting it in its entirety:

...the basic tenets of the theory of progress are the following: the moral freedom of the human person (*chelovecheskaia lichnost'*) (freedom of will) as a condition for autonomous moral life; the absolute value of the person and ideal nature of the human soul capable of endless development and strive for perfection; absolute reason (*razum*), guiding the world and history; moral world order, or the realm of moral ends; good seen not only as a subjective idea, but also as an objective and powerful principle.<sup>13</sup>

Bulgakov's conclusion was that these tenets were also a constitutive part of *Christian* theism and “the teaching about progress is a specifically Christian doctrine”. Bulgakov did not reject the idea of progress as such; he reformulated it by pointing out its relation to Christian doctrine. As Valliere highlighted, he “rejected faith in progress only to embrace a progressive Christian faith.”<sup>14</sup> Bulgakov and other religious intelligentsia, under the influence of Vladimir Solov'ev, identified and embraced Godmanhood, as a potential basis for a progressive Christian faith.

#### 4.1.2 Ludwig Feuerbach's religion of humanity

Bulgakov also reflected on the philosophy and religion of contemporary democratic ideas. He claimed that the underlying philosophy of these ideas was humanistic atheism and its religion was the “deification of man”, i.e. mangodhood in the spirit of Ludwig Feuerbach, a German philosopher who has been often interpreted as a bridge between Hegel and Marx. Bulgakov juxtaposed Feuerbach's religion of humanity to Comte's theory of progress and his glorification of man. The difference, according to him, was that Feuerbach wanted to deify the human genus as a whole. The imperfections of the individual were counterbalanced by the inherent goodness of the genus, humankind was perfection. Bulgakov's main criticism was that

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 147-8

<sup>14</sup> Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology*, 237.

Feuerbach tried to transform the religion of Godmanhood, i.e. Christianity, to the religion of mangodhood, i.e. humanity. In his essay “The religion of mangodhood of L. Feuerbach”<sup>15</sup> he highlighted that “Feuerbach’s atheistic humanism constitutes the soul of Marxist socialism”.<sup>16</sup> This interpretation of socialism by Bulgakov was known both by intelligentsia and clergy in the period. An article in 1909 in the *Ekaterinoslav Eparchial Herald* about the seminary course on the denunciation of socialism highlighted the need to show the “primitivity and naivety of the religious socialist ideal” which “has a genetic and historical link to Feuerbachianism”. The author included a reference to Bulgakov’s article.<sup>17</sup>

After this philosophical transformation, both Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdiaev grew closer to the God-seeking circle of Dmitry Merezhkovskii and Zinaida Gippius due to shared views and interests in metaphysics and religion. Several Marxists-turned-idealists were also active in the liberation movement and the Union of Liberation.<sup>18</sup> Evtuhov highlighted that Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Petr Struve and Semen Frank were core, founding members and the “union’s program became the political expression of the idealists’ concerns.”<sup>19</sup> The Union and the journal *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation) which was closely related to it, were ready to accommodate – to a certain extent – the religious language and content brought in by Bulgakov. In a letter, he compared his relationship to the journal, to Solov’ev’s relationship to the Herald of Europe (*Vestnik Evropy*). Both journals were

religiously neutral and tolerant. It is not, of course, virtue from a religious point of view, but it also does not have hatred towards religion, which has always characterised

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<sup>15</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, “Religiia chelovekabozhestva u L. Feuerbacha I-VI.” *Voprosy Zhizni* 1905 10/11 (October-November), 236-279. and Sergei Bulgakov, “Religiia chelovekabozhestva u L. Feuerbacha VII-IX.” *Voprosy Zhizni* 1905 (12 December), 74-102. It was republished in the first volume of Bulgakov’s collection of articles: Sergei Bulgakov, “Religiia chelovekabozhestva u L. Feuerbacha”, In *Dva Grada, issledovanie o prirode obshchestvennykh idealov* [Two cities, research on the nature of social ideals] Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1911), 1-68.

<sup>16</sup> Bulgakov, “Religiia chelovekabozhestva”, 241-2.

<sup>17</sup> D. F. Cherniavskii, “K voprosu o kurse oblichenia sotsializma v pravoslavnykh dukhovnykh seminariakh” *Ekaterinoslavskaiia Eparkhialnye Vedomosti*, 1909 no. 25 (1 September), 640.

<sup>18</sup> See on the history of the Liberation Movement: Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia, 1900-1905*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>19</sup> Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle*, 88.



and still characterises religious parties (although that is combined there with a specific type of religiosity).<sup>20</sup>

The journal *Liberation* did demonstrate tolerance towards religious topics, it even published three pamphlets by the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle in July 1905 under the title “Believers against Autocracy”. The following pamphlets were included: “On the Tasks of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle”; “To the Bishops of the Russian Church”; and “Call to the Soldiers”.<sup>21</sup>

Both Evtuhov and Flikke highlighted one particularly striking feature of the vision of the Union of Christian Politics: the propagation of the anarchistic communism of early Christianity as an ideal for social and political organisation. In the framework of liberal idealism, this was a quite confusing idea. The literature on Bulgakov mostly highlighted that this ideal brought a tension to the priority of the individual and the idealisation of collectivism, but its origin in Bulgakov’s project is not clarified. The role of the milieu of progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia in the emergence of the idealisation of the early church commune makes it more understandable. Previous chapters showed the central role of this “golden age” in Orthodox political theologies by radical clergy and religious intelligentsia. Bulgakov’s close connection to progressive clerical circles and the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle explains the origins of this socio-political ideal in his Union of Christian Politics.

#### 4.1.3 An Urgent Task

Bulgakov first proposed the idea of a Union of Christian Politics in an article in *Questions of Life* in September 1905.<sup>22</sup> The text was later republished as a separate brochure in the Religious-public Library, the first number in the series “for the intelligentsia”.<sup>23</sup> The

<sup>20</sup> Letter 159. S. N. Bulgakov – A. S. Glinka. 07.10.1905. Kiev-Simbirsk. In *Nashedshie Grad*, 191.

<sup>21</sup> “Veruiushchiie protiv samoderzhavii” [Believers against autocracy], *Osvobozhdenie*, 1905 no. 73, 386-391.

<sup>22</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Neotlozhnaia Zadacha” [Urgent task], *Voprosy Zhizni*, 1905, no. 9, 332-60.

<sup>23</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia Zadacha* [Urgent task], Religiozna-Obshchestvennaia Biblioteka 1. N.1. 31. M.: 1906.

formulation of the program was the work of Sergei Bulgakov. Flikke argued that the Union took form in the collaboration of Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Volzhskii, Askol'dov (authors of the journal *Questions of Life*) and the priest Konstantin Aggeev, who had regular meetings with V. Ern and V. Svetsitskii.

Bulgakov described at the beginning of the article his understanding of mass politics. He expected that political parties would soon start recruiting supporters by spreading their views in the forms of “books, brochures, leaflets, newspapers, speech.” Political parties would not only disseminate social and political programs but also propagate their worldviews corresponding to those programs. Bulgakov claimed that political parties in Russia, especially the socialist ones, were resembling religious sects and advocated for whole religious-philosophical-political worldviews.

The text surveyed the possible positions in contemporary Russia for Christians regarding social and political issues: deadly indifference or the way of the radical right, the Blackhundreds. Throughout the text, the position of indifference, i.e. rejection of the relevance of Christianity for social and political life, was identified with Tolstoyian ideas and with the monastic tradition. Furthermore, it was highlighted that atheistic socialists have a monopoly over the representation of workers' rights and; thus, the public sphere or civil society (*obshchestvennost'*) was dominated by paganism.

Bulgakov argued that indifferentism to politics and sociality is impossible to maintain as it is anti-Christian. Christian teaching propagates that “history is the process of Godmanhood, in which humanity, “the body of Christ” is gathered and organised into a unity.”<sup>24</sup> For the realisation of this, however, focus on individual salvation and perfection is not enough, Christianity needs to exert influence on social forms, there is a need for “social

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 11.

morality, i.e. for politics.” Regarding the best form of government from the Christian point of view, Bulgakov highlighted that the only possible Christian ideal is the “free union of people, united in love in the church – i.e. anarchy (*bezvlastiia*)”. Before the whole of humanity became Christian, the state had a right to exist and manage human communities, but Christians need to work “to submit the state Leviathan to Christian tasks”.<sup>25</sup> The Christian ideal of the freedom of the individual cannot be furthered without political, legal liberation. Forms of governments are not absolute and are only “historical means”, but if we look for a “Christian form of government” then we can find it in the form of a federative democratic republic, but not in despotic imperialism. Still, regardless of the actual form, a Christian regime should protect the “sacred right of the human individual (*lichnost*)”, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, ... freedom of assembly and association.”<sup>26</sup> These rights should be the axioms of Christian politics.

Regarding the economic sphere, Christian politics should include the demand for the destruction of capitalism as it is based on human exploitation. The communism, i.e. the community of belongings of the early Christian communes can serve as a “norm for property relations”. Bulgakov here included a reference to Ern’s article on Christian property relations discussed in chapter 2. Christian politics was different from clericalism which was bound by confession. Christian politics was universal – as it can unite the Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Old Believers, sectarians, lay and clergy due to their shared belief that “in the earthly life of humanity, in the historical process of Godmanhood, they perceive the organisation (*ustroenie*) of the body of Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 23.

Bulgakov also reflected on the philosophy of humanistic atheism which resembled his thoughts in the earlier cited works on progress and Feuerbach. As it was discussed, for Bulgakov, the underlying philosophy of democratic ideas was humanistic atheism and its religion was the “deification of man”, i.e. mangodhood in the spirit of Feuerbach. This religion of mangodhood had been in constant struggle with the religion of Godmanhood, i.e. Christianity. But the link between socialism and atheism was not the only default option – “we know that Christian socialism – socialism not in the name of mangodhood, but in the name of Godmanhood does, can and should exist.” The difference was that for Christian socialism, politics is a religious issue, while atheistic socialism strives for the elimination of religion. Its “kingdom” is totally this-worldly, immanent. There is a deep religious abyss between Christianity or Christian socialism and atheistic socialism. This divide, however, does not lie in socialist ideas, but in the philosophical-religious (i.e. atheistic humanist) foundations – that was the real enemy for Bulgakov.<sup>28</sup>

What were the practical consequences of all these ideas? Bulgakov argued that every Christian, in this critical historical moment, “should make all efforts to establish at least the rudiments of Christian sociality (*obshchestvennost'*)” to counteract atheistic humanist, indifference and anti-Christian trends.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, there was a need for more organised activities, for a union which would influence social relations, i.e. for the Union of Christian Politics. A similar organisation was the underground Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, but it was necessary to bring these issues to the fore. The main goals of the union were to cultivate Christian sociality (*obshchestvennost'*), to unite Christians of different confessions, to advocate for political and economic liberation on the basis of anarchic communism of early Church communes, to oppose the extreme right Blackhundreds movement, and, most importantly, to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 26-30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 31.

create efficient propaganda – literature, journals and newspapers, brochures – that would disseminate the idea of Christian sociality (*obshchestvennost*).<sup>30</sup>

Apart from these directions and goal, the Union did not formulate a detailed maximum program, it identified certain principles and aims that it would propagate, a certain minimum program. In politics, the “natural, inalienable rights of the human personality (*lichnost*)” should be guaranteed, total separation of church and state, free elections including voting rights for women, free judiciary system and a ban on capital punishment. In finance, the state should abandon alcohol monopoly, introduce progressive taxation and reduce the military budget. Regarding the solution to the workers’ question, the main task was to transform the capitalist exploitation system into a socialist regime. This would happen by way of social reform, for instance, by introducing legislation protecting labourers, especially children and women. Also, it was necessary to introduce the reduction of working hours, insurance for pension and illness, self-help, trade unions and syndicates. Strikes, as peaceful means of struggle, were also supported. The agrarian question remained the most difficult to solve, but lands eventually should be given to those who cultivate it. Finally, universal, free education should be introduced without mandatory religious education.

The rhetoric and conceptual basis of Bulgakov’s articles and the minimum program for the Union shared the fundamental characteristics of the theo-political language of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation and the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. Its understanding of history and progress was the idea of Godmanhood. Similarly, the aim of the Union was identified as the creation of Christian *obshchestvennost*, a Christian sociality or public sphere. The program clearly referred to the ideal of the early Church communes as its socio-political ideal, including the propagation of community of belongings as an ideal

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 35-6.

Christian attitude to property relations. While this socio-political ideal seems alien if one approaches Bulgakov's Union from the context of the Union of Liberation, it is a clear link to other progressive Christian discourses in the period which focused on the difficult issues of church reform. Finally, as an essential part of the efforts to create a Christian *obshchestvennost'*, Christian politics was put into the centre of the project.

#### 4.1.4 Religion and Politics

In the spring of 1906, about half a year after he published the call for the Union of Christian Politics, Bulgakov published an article in Petr Struve's journal, the *Polar Star* on his further thoughts regarding the interrelation of religion and politics. It also focused on the question of forming political parties.<sup>31</sup> Bulgakov argued that parties could be united in two ways: they can be more like "religious sects" with a total unity of the political, ideological and religious; or they can be tolerant towards "various religious beliefs" if they can still produce unanimity in practice.<sup>32</sup> In the Russian context, the two socialist parties were examples for the first type, while the Constitutional-Democratic Party for the second type. The rest of the article focused on how to build a mass party which can engage the people. For Bulgakov, the *narod* was deeply religious; therefore, it needed a sermon. A sermon,

in which the feeling of *sobornost'*, "catholicity", lost by the individualistic and seclusive intelligentsia, is still alive, [a sermon which] must be religious if it expects to grasp the soul of the masses... This is why we believe, that the sermon of Christian socialism, or more broadly, Christian *obshchestvennost'* can become widely successful among the people.

Bulgakov also identified "militant atheism" as the basis of the Social Democratic party, and added that even though the practical programs of atheistic and Christian socialism are close to

<sup>31</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, "Religiia i politika: K voprosu ob obrazovanii politicheskikh partii, [Religion and politics: On the question of forming political parties," *Poliarnaia Zvezda*, 1906, no. 13 (March), 118-127.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

each other, there is between them “the sharpest contrast and an irreconcilable opposition”.<sup>33</sup> The Constitutional-Democratic party was lacking this religiosity, and this is also shown by its lack of attention to religious and church questions in its program as one of the priests complained to Bulgakov.<sup>34</sup>

Bulgakov identified the Blackhundreds movement and right-wing monarchism with false Christianity, therefore, he concluded that “sooner or later a Christian party must emerge”, the seeds of which one can find in the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle and the Union of Christian Politics. In this light, the main obstacle for the Constitutional-Democratic party in becoming a mass (*vsenarodnaia*) party, as “Struve dreams about it”, was exactly its a-religiosity or lack of religiosity (*vnereligioznost'*).<sup>35</sup> In the earlier program of the Union of Christian Politics, Bulgakov highlighted that the union did not aim to become a political party, its main task was the “spiritual unification and propaganda of its ideas”.<sup>36</sup> In this article, he admitted that the Union should lead to some type of a Christian party. The issue of party politics and Christian politics, however, was a quite complicated one with the emergence of Duma politics as it will be shown in the second part of this chapter.

### ***The People***

The people and mass politics remained in the focus of Bulgakov during the spring of 1906. The culmination of this enthusiasm was the daily titled *The People* (Narod) which was published in April 1906 in Kiev. It had all in all seven issues under the editorship of Bulgakov

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 122-3.

<sup>34</sup> Pisiotis argued that the lack of attention to church reform pushed clergy towards the radical right, for instance towards the Union of Russian People which included in his program proposals for church matters: the introduction of the elective principle in the selection of Church officers, the restoration of the Patriarchate and keeping the exclusive right of the Orthodox Church for missionary activity. In contrast to this, when the lack of attention to the Church was pointed out to Pavel Miliukov, leader of the Kadets, he admitted that they “have completely forgotten about the Church”. Pisiotis, *Orthodoxy versus Autocracy*, 521.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 124-6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 47.

and Volzhskii, pseudonym for A. S. Glinka. The daily formulated its task exactly as creating that “sermon” which Bulgakov described in his article “Religion and Politics”:

The PEOPLE puts forward as its task to give a nation-wide religious-social sermon, originating in the ideals of universal Christianity, and, together with Vladimir Solov’ev, proposes that Christian truth (*pravda*) should not only permeate personal life, but also the public sphere.

The editorial also made it clear that the daily considered the creation of a Christian *obshchestvennost’* as the task of the times, and would strive to its “creative realisation in life.”<sup>37</sup> *The People* shared an extensive list of its contributors, including progressive priests, professors, and members of religious intelligentsia.<sup>38</sup> The most interesting part of the daily for the purposes of this dissertation was the section titled “Christian *obshchestvennost’*” which reported news about Christian sociality. Number 3 gave an overview of the activities of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, the content of their program and pamphlets.<sup>39</sup>

The following number published a letter by the anarchist Ivan Vetrov (1878-1965) and his opinion on the Union of Christian Politics.<sup>40</sup> As “anarchist-communist and at the same time a religious-metaphysician”, Vetrov, in general, agreed with the vision of the “Urgent Task”, but he highlighted two issues that needs to be clarified. Firstly, professional clergy was for him, by default, the ultimate contradiction of Christianity, and he wanted to know if Bulgakov agreed. He also believed that religion was a matter of individuals. Secondly, Vetrov was eager

<sup>37</sup> “Ot redaktsii” [From the editors], *Narod*, no. 1 (15 April 1906), 1.

<sup>38</sup> A selection of the contributors: progressive priests (Father K. Aggeev, Father I. Egorov, Father Kolachev, archimandrite Mikhail, Father M. Chel’tsov), professors (Prof. A. Kartashev, Prof. P. Kudriavtsev), and members of religious intelligentsia (V. Ern, V. Svetsitskii, N. Berdiaev, A. Yelchaninov, D. Merezhkovskii, P. Florenskii). There was also a separate list of contributors to the literary section, including A. Blok, V. Brusov, V. Ivanov, A. Remizov and F. Sologub to mention the most famous writers and poets.

<sup>39</sup> Moskvich, “Khristianskoe bratstvo borby” [Christian Brotherhood of Struggle], *Narod*, no. 3, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ivan Knizhnik-Vetrov (1878-1965), anarchist-philosopher and historian. Author of *Anarkhizm: ego teoriia i praktika* [Anarchism – its theory and practice] (SPb: Izd. Obnovlenie, 1906). See Mikhail Agursky, “The ordeal of a Jewish Catholic Bolshevik: Ivan Knizhnik-Vetrov (1878-1965)”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 1990, 56 (2), 431-467.



that the Union clarified its relationship to Tolstoy whom he called a “religious metaphysician”. He also added that if Tolstoy’s works were not prohibited by censorship, he would become popular among the people. He believed that members of the Union would have to be on the side of Tolstoy and in general of anarchists, joining them in rejecting the contemporary socio-political system.<sup>41</sup>

The first response to Vetrov came from Valentin Svetsitskii, member of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle, who rejected Vetrov’s position which was “the point of view of Christianity without Christ”. He also gave a summary of his theory of power (*vlast’*) which was discussed in the previous chapter in detail. He argued that for a Christian, the best form of political regime is “the one which serves best the idea of a state becoming Church. And he concluded that there is only one form which “by principle contradicts the Gospel” – autocracy. Svetsitskii was also very doubtful that people would follow Tolstoy’s teachings.<sup>42</sup>

Bulgakov’s response was published in number 6, under the title “Individualism or *sobornost’*?” He focused on Vetrov’s claim that a “religious person can only be an individualist”. He argued that modern (*sovremennii*) individualism tries to create “forms of external association of people”, economic and political associations like unions and political parties. Bulgakov wondered if this is how – by partisanship (*partiinnost’*) – the man of our times attempts to “satisfy his thirst for *sobornost’*”, that specific Orthodox understanding of metaphysical unity in diversity. Humanity wants to trade the church for political parties which come to represent spiritual *sobornost’*. In this sense, it is not ironic to talk about the “Social-Democratic church” which aims to give people “spiritual *sobornost’*, a triumph over individualism”. Individualism, however, cannot be beaten by material forces, only by spiritual,

<sup>41</sup> Ivan Vetrov, “K voprosu o Soiuzhe khristianskoi politiki” [On the question of the Union of Christian Politics], *Narod*, no. 4, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Valentin Svetsitskii, “Otvét g. Vetrovu na pis’mo ego k S. N. Bulgakovu” [Response to Mr. Vetrov on his letter to S. N. Bulgakov], *Narod*, no. 5, 2.

and from the inside – with the force of religion. Only a shared religion, that is, the church can save and unite humanity. One can found only in the church the “synthesis of the personal (*lichnii*) and *sobornii* principles which is sought by history.”<sup>43</sup>

## 4.2 Christian Politics in late Imperial Russia

Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) mentioned in his memoir that: “[d]uring one of the meetings at Father Grigorii Petrov, S. N. Bulgakov defended his paper on “Christian politics”, in which he proposed to organise a “Union of Christian Politics” in the name of Christianity, to fight the social structure which was harmful to freedom”.<sup>44</sup> The Archimandrite was not particularly impressed by the idea, because he believed Bulgakov wanted to build the party as an emulation of “Western Christian Socialist” parties.

The relationship of the Union of Christian Politics to party politics, however, is more ambiguous and reflects the general problem with party politics and clergy in late Imperial Russia. Sidorov mentioned in a footnote that Bulgakov tried to recruit members of the Group of 32 Priests “into his Union” and supported his claim with a quote from A. V. Kartashev’s memoirs in which Bulgakov invited progressive priests to join a party.<sup>45</sup> It is, however, a distortion of the quote, because Bulgakov did not invite the priests to the Union of Christian Politics at that occasion. Kartashev wrote that Bulgakov arrived at the meeting of the Group of 32 Priests held at Konstantin Aggeev’s quarters from the organisational meeting of *the Constitutional-Democratic party*, and he “directly invited clergy to join that party as the one which is the best for them.” As his proposal was met with silence from the priests, Bulgakov later “thought through the question” and published his article on the Union of Christian Politics which addressed not only clergy but every Christian citizen. In Kartashev’s interpretation, the

<sup>43</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Individualism ili sobornost’?” [Individualism or sobornost’?], *Narod*, No. 6, 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> Archimandrite Mikhail, *Kak ia stal narodnym sotsialistom*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Sidorov, *Khristsianskii sotsializm v Rossii*, 53. Footnote 2.

Union juxtaposed itself to “the democratic and socialist parties which were either areligious or anti-religious”, but “members of the Union were recommended to join exactly those parties for practical politics, to work together with them and within their [framework], while following Christian and churchly grounds.”<sup>46</sup> The rest of the chapter contextualises the Union and clerical participation in politics in contemporary debates to understand better why Bulgakov believed his project might offer a useful platform in terms of general political organisation of Orthodox Christians.

#### 4.2.1 Orthodox Clergy and Participation in Public Institutions

The issue of Orthodox political organisation and participation of clergy in Duma party politics was embedded into the larger question of clerical participation in public/social institutions (*obshchestvennye uchrezhdenia*). A unique source of information on the position of the official church on these matters can be found in a collection of responses by bishops on church reforms. This source demonstrates the tensions that are relevant to the issue of Christian politics and clerical participation in party politics; therefore, a longer analysis is given here to create an adequate context for the strivings of the Union of Christian Politics.

Following the hectic days of Bloody Sunday, Metropolitan Antonii was requested to submit a memorandum on church reform to the Council of Ministers.<sup>47</sup> The Metropolitan’s proposal was to give more freedom to the church to reform itself. Hedda highlighted that such an idea was opposed both by Prime Minister, Sergei Witte and by Ober-Prokurator Konstantin Pobedonostsev. Witte advocated for a state-controlled church reform process led by the Council of Ministers, while the Ober-Prokurator did not believe there was a need at all for church reform. In case such a need did arise, then it would be within the power of the Holy Synod to initiate it – not the Council of Ministers. Pobedonostsev hoped to strengthen his

<sup>46</sup> A. V. Kartashev, “Moi rannie vstrechi s o. Sergiem [My early encounters with Father Sergei],” *Pravoslavnaia mysl’*, 1951, Vyp. VIII., 51.

<sup>47</sup> Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, 156.

position by gaining the support of the bishops to oppose church reforms. Therefore, in July 1905 on the order of the Ober-Prokurator, the Holy Synod sent out circular No. 3542 to bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church to solicit responses on a subset of questions on the church reforms. For instance, the circular raised questions about the opinions on the structure and members of a future Church Council; reforms of church courts; parish and church governance. Contrary to Pobedonostsev's expectation, the responses demonstrated prevalent support among the traditionally conservative episcopacy for church reforms.<sup>48</sup> Their responses are relevant to my discussion as bishops were specifically asked to address in their responses the question of "participation of churchmen in public institutions".

The page number of collected responses together reach more than two thousand; therefore, my analysis focused on this particular question of participation of churchmen in public institutions. All in all, the collection contains 79 responses, (some bishops submitted more than one). About 20 bishops devoted a separate section to the question of participation; therefore, the analysis focuses on these responses.<sup>49</sup> Responses did not only represent personal opinions of the bishop, but they often talked on behalf of the commission of the diocese.

Most responses reported back to the Holy Synod that they believed it was undoubtedly *desirable* for churchmen to participate in social institutions. Archbishop Anastasii, for instance, started his response to the question with this statement: "The prevalent majority have spoken in favour for direct participation of clergy in public institutions."<sup>50</sup> Several types of arguments were given to support this position by the bishops. Firstly, there was a recurring discussion of

<sup>48</sup> *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev po voprosu o tserkovnoi reforme* [Responses of eparchial bishops to the question of church reform], Part 1, (Moscow: Obshchestvo liubitelei tserkovnoi istorii. Izdatel'stvo Krutitskogo podvor'ia, 2004), 26.

<sup>49</sup> Bishop Evlogii submitted two responses, once as temporary head of the Warsaw eparchy.

<sup>50</sup> "Anastasii, arkhiepiskop Voronezhskii i Zadosnkii (1828-1913), No. 11", *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev, Part 1*, 85. See other supportive responses by bishops on page 191, 252, 371, 610, 886 and in Part 2 on page 40, 45, 224, 526.

canons which prohibit or limit the participation of churchmen in secular (*mirskii*) positions. In particular, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> of the Apostolic canons. The Apostolic Canons were a collection of 85 laws on the duties of clerics in the early Church. They were allegedly written by the Apostles, and form an appendix to the Apostolic Constitutions. The 6<sup>th</sup> canon says that “Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, undertake worldly business; otherwise let him be deposed.”; and 81<sup>st</sup> canon that “We have said that a bishop or presbyter must not give himself to the management of public affairs, but devote himself to ecclesiastical business. Let him then be persuaded to do so, or let him be deposed, for no man can serve two masters, according to the Lord's declaration.”<sup>51</sup> One of the counter-arguments in the responses was that these canons refer to the historical situation of Byzantine, and do not refer to the current situation. Bishop Makarii highlighted that

here it is about the combination of ecclesiastical office (*dukhovnii san*) with civic *administrative* duties; the rules could not anticipate our contemporary political and social systems; therefore, they do not say anything about the permissibility or impermissibility of ecclesiastical persons making use of the political and civic rights common for everyone.<sup>52</sup>

Another counter-argument was that those canons aim to prevent the churchmen undertaking “secular activities which are not reconcilable with the dignity of the spiritual office (*sviashchennii san*) or would hinder the fulfilling of primary duties”. In Bishop Makarii’s interpretation, these rules were also aimed to hinder the bishops occupying offices which would be related to profit-seeking and could lead to greed.<sup>53</sup> Bishop Evlogii also emphasised that these canons refer to “wrongdoings”, in general participation would be beneficial for the Church and society.<sup>54</sup> Thus, these activities are not banned by default, only in certain circumstances.

<sup>51</sup> The Apostolic Canons” In *The Catholic Encyclopedia* <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm>

<sup>52</sup> Makarii, episkop Iakutskii i Viliunskii (1876-?), No. 27”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 552.

<sup>53</sup> “Pitirim, episkop Kurskii i Belgorodskii (1858-1920), No. 15.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 254. He submitted several responses, see No. 15, 17, 19, 22, 37, 51, 67, 77.

<sup>54</sup> “Evlogii, episkop Kholmiskii i Liublinskii, (1868-1946) No. 45.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 2, 78.

Secondly, the justification for participation often came in the form of historical arguments. The historical precedence of participating in social institutions, both in the case of the ecclesiastical members of the Byzantine and the Russian Church, was often cited as a supporting argument. It was invoked that in the past, churchmen were involved in state matters. Bishop Mikhail, for instance, claimed that “since the time of Vladimir princes, the apostles (*prosvetiteli*) of the Rus – high churchmen (*ierarkhii*) were the first advisors of the prince.”<sup>55</sup> Bishop Georgii mentioned that “higher clergy sat in the princely councils (*duma*) and often fulfilled diplomatic tasks.”<sup>56</sup> The time of Peter the Great was often identified as the moment when the exclusion of ecclesiastical members from state institutions started; therefore, the current support for more participation by churchmen is a restoration of a previous right.

Finally, participation in public institutions was justified by reaffirming the belief (or myth) that clergy is the group in the society which is closest to the people, therefore, they should take care of not only the spiritual, but also of the material or secular needs of their flock which might require them to participate in public institutions. Bishop Ioakim stated that since “there is no obstacle” for experienced Russian bishops to become members of the State Council and the State Duma; “[w]ho else among secular state actors could, for instance, understand better and more faithfully the life of the people (*narod*) than representative of the Church – the bishops?”<sup>57</sup> It was often emphasised that the clergy needs to be aware and take care of not only the spiritual, but also the material needs of their flocks. Bishop Pitirim explicitly argued that churchmen

should not be alien to the secular (*mirskie*) needs of their flock (*pasomye*); consequently, they need to care about the satisfaction of not only the spiritual thirst of their flock but also their bodily hunger; therefore, clerical participation in those

<sup>55</sup> “Mikhail, episkop Minskii i Turovskii (1854-1912), No. 4.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 85.

<sup>56</sup> “Georgii, episkop Astrakhanskii i Enotavskii (1843-1912), No. 20.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 370. For other examples of historical justification see in Part 1 page 719, 769. and in Part 2 page 152, 323-4, 525.

<sup>57</sup> “Ioakim, episkop Orenburgskii i Ural’skii, (1853-1918), No. 33”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 769. The close relationship of clergy to the people is also mentioned in Part 1 on page 609 and in Part 2 on page 803.

gatherings in which economic, public and state affairs are discussed, is in accordance with the spirit of Christian love.<sup>58</sup>

In connection to this, Church Fathers, for instance, Great Basil and Saint Gregory the Great,<sup>59</sup> were often referred to as church authorities who approved and encouraged clerical attention to the material, bodily needs of the believers.<sup>60</sup>

In general, the image of Christianity that emerges from these responses is the symbol of the leaven (*zakvaska*) that permeates the dough: “Christian teaching – which was compared by our Saviour to the leaven, which should permeate the whole of the flour in the pot – should naturally permeate all sides of human life – private and social, and state too.”<sup>61</sup> The image of the Kingdom of God was also mentioned often in connection to the symbol of the leaven, especially that it is supposed to be established on earth. Archbishop Agafangel highlighted that Christianity should transform human life on the basis of new principles, in other words, “it should establish the Kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>62</sup> Christianity should put its stamp of “Christianhood” (*khristianstvennost’*) on all parts of life, including state, society and family. Christian law must be like leaven, and “one cannot keep the leaven in one pot and the dough in another”, as it would make the transformation impossible.

There were also dissenting voices in the responses, but they were in the minority in the sample of the analysis. For instance, Bishop Iakov underscored that it was crystal clear in the canons that it is irreconcilable with the duties of the churchmen to also hold secular positions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Pitirim, episkop”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 253.

<sup>59</sup> Known as Saint Gregory the Dialogist in the Orthodox tradition.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, Great Basil or Grigorii Dvoeslov, See Flavian, mitropolit Kievskii i Galitskii, (1840-1915), *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 719; and “Tikhon, episkop Penzenskii i Saranskii, (1855-1919)”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 2, 151.

<sup>61</sup> “Pitirim, episkop”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 251.

<sup>62</sup> “Agafangel, arkhiepiskop Rizhskii i Mitavskii, (1854-1928), No. 40.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 914.

<sup>63</sup> “Iakov, episkop Iaroslavskii i Rostovskii, (1844-1922), No. 79.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 994.

Bishop Anatasii, reported back that the majority in his eparchy support participation in public institutions, while a minority opposed “direct involvement in social and governmental control”, and approved only participation in the following activities: the building of churches, education and charity. He added that he belonged to the minority as “pastors should stand above the political struggle of parties and should illuminate the public life from the high ground of eternal Gospel truths.”<sup>64</sup>

It is important to highlight that the Responses make it clear that “participation in public institutions” can mean different activities, and participation in the State Duma and party politics was perceived as the most “radical” form of engagement in public life. Still, many bishops expressed their support for clerical Duma participation.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, one of the main arguments for participating in Duma elections was that a priest is a citizen, and, thus, has the right to participate by the right of census. Bishop Konstantin emphasised that clergy “will use their rights not as clerical persons, but as citizens, on the same level as other citizens, and will become representatives first and foremost of public (*obshchenarodnyi*) interests.”<sup>66</sup> In relation to this, it is important to highlight two terms: party-spirit (*partiynost'*) and public actor (*obshchestvennyi deiatel'*).

Semyonov in his discussion of liberal conceptualisation of public politics highlighted that liberals drew on the history of public activity or work (*obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost'* or *rabota*) which was the concept zemstvo activists used to legitimise their participation in self-government (zemstvos and city dumas). Semyonov also argued that in the post-1905 liberal context, a public actor acquired two new connotations: “open confrontation with the existing

<sup>64</sup> “Anastasii, episkop”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 191.

<sup>65</sup> See Part 1, 596, 769 and Part 2, 225, 481-2, 526, 716.

<sup>66</sup> “Konstantin, episkop Samarskii i Stavropol'skii, (1858-1930s), No. 23.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 552.



regime and an expressed desire to participate in government”.<sup>67</sup> Responses by bishops to the question of participation in public institutions often claimed that priests are public actors. While the confrontational aspect of this word is less highlighted, the desire to participate and share the responsibility of governance by way of Duma representation is quite clear. Bishop Aleksii commenced his response by claiming that “[a] pastor does not only belong to the Church, but also to that society and people (*narod*), among whom they live and serve. He is a public actor (*obshchestvennyi deiatel'*), and his life in all its relations should be a model.”<sup>68</sup> Bishop Flavian concluded his response by saying that it is desirable that students of ecclesiastical institutions after their graduation “would be able to become not only good pastors but also worthy public actors (*obshchestvennye deiateli*) in the spirit of Christian principles.”<sup>69</sup>

The term *partiynost'* was often invoked concerning clerical participation in the State Duma and in party politics, and in religious-public discourse, it had a pejorative connotation. While pastors were recognised as public actors and it was even supported that they become parliamentary representatives, partisanship was supposed to be avoided. Semyonov highlighted that zemstvo members associated the term *partiynost'* with leftist revolutionary practice and also in general with the rise of mass politics.<sup>70</sup> In the Responses *partiynost'* is in more general directly linked to party politics, and the keyword that is associated with it was ‘intrigue’.

Bishop Evlogii, who later became a Duma representative, acknowledged the danger that clergy “gets infected with the party-spirit”, but he argued that this should not hinder clergy in their public-state activities: “clerical participation in it can and should have a non-partisan (*vne-partiynii*), reconciling ... character.”<sup>71</sup> Bishop Tikhon also highlighted that while public

<sup>67</sup> Semyonov, “The Political Language of Russian Liberalism”, 43-44.

<sup>68</sup> “Aleksii, arkhiepiskop Tverskoi i Kashinskii, (1837-1914), No. 75”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 2, 224.

<sup>69</sup> “Flavian, episkop”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 721.

<sup>70</sup> Semyonov, “The Political Language of Russian Liberalism”, 173. and 176.

<sup>71</sup> “Evlogii, episkop, No. 39.”, *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 886.

participation is desirable, *partynost*', was a different matter. He defined it as "a specific disposition to a certain type of game in social/public relations, unified by self-interest and intrigues", but he added that priests were more than capable of staying above said intrigues.<sup>72</sup>

The responses analysed here were, of course, the responses that devoted attention to the question of public activity and clergy. It is not clear why the rest of the bishops paid less attention to this question, the explanation can be disinterest, lack of opinion or just lack of prioritization of this question as there were many issues to be discussed. If a bishop felt strongly about *opposing* clerical participation in public institutions, it could be expected that he would have used this opportunity to express said opposition. Those who did express their opinion were in general supportive of clerical participation.

The peculiarity of this survey is that the responders were not a group of progressive clergy from the capital. These bishops worked all over the Russian Empire and in high ecclesiastical positions which status was generally regarded to come with conservative sentiments. Arguments for public participation and the inoculation of the Christian principle into all spheres of life do resemble ideas by progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia. There are references to the Kingdom of God on earth and the image of Christianity as leaven. All in all, responses highlight the main underlying tension in the period. Progressive clergy, in particular, was interested in public participation, and this was not opposed by default in the higher ranks of churchmen. Even becoming a Duma representative was supported by some bishops, but rather as independent members. The history of repression of clerical Duma representatives also demonstrates that the main issue was not political representation, but political representation of leftist values and parties. A remedy could have been to this the emergence of a Christian party, but the question of party politics remained an ambiguous issue

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<sup>72</sup> "Tikhon, episkop", *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 2, 150.

and the idea of a Christian party itself which is shown in the following section focusing on the journal *Church Herald*.

#### 4.2.2 Clergy and Politics in the *Church Herald*

The responses of the bishops were sent to the Holy Synod and subsequently were published as appendices to the journal *Church Gazette* (Tserkovnye Vedomosti), the official organ of the Holy Synod, in 1906.<sup>73</sup> This section analyses whether we see similar tensions emerging among other members of the Church. A brief survey of the clerical press in 1905-6 with a focus on the *Church Herald*, demonstrates that there was a general interest and confusion regarding the question of Christian politics in the Russian Empire and the role of Orthodox clergy. The survey here focuses on the *Church Herald*, a weekly journal of the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy. Its editor from 1903 was Aleksander Rozhdestvenskii, an active member of the ORRP, the Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment. Father Aleksandr was also the founder of the Alexander Nevskii Temperance Society in 1898. Consequently, the journal had the imprint of progressive clerical spirit during 1905-6. The journal featured articles on the issue of politics, and it also had a dedicated “Opinion and comments” section where many could share their views publicly. These were often anonymous which might raise the question of authenticity, but given the presence of strong church censorship in the period, it also meant that clergy could express themselves more freely under pseudonyms or without indicating their identity at all. This supports their use as sources for historical analysis.

One such anonymous opinion piece summarised the two possible – contradictory – positions on the relationship of Church and politics at the beginning of the century. One position propagated that “the Church exists not for the earth, but for the heavens”, therefore, it needs to stay away from politics. This position referred to the often mentioned “non-

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<sup>73</sup> See the “Table of Contents to the articles, in the “Attachments to the Church News” in 1906”, *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, 1906 (I), 1-2.

interference” policy of the Church. Another position, however, was that the history of the Church was “inseparably (*nerazryvno*) linked to a specific state order”, consequently, it needed to “energetically stand up for its defence”. In other words, the history of the Russian Orthodox Church had been intertwined with autocracy (and with the empire in general); therefore, it was not a question where its allegiance should lie given the contemporary political situation. The author highlighted the contradictory nature of these two positions which were often held at the same time. It also welcomed the position of the Group of Saint Petersburg Clergy and their article in the journal *Slovo* (N. 276) which propagated for the participation of the Church in the political struggle. The Church was like a “world conscience” which should judge the different forms of governments in the light of Christ’s truth. The author concluded that the best way (*put’*) for the Church to act in the current situation is to advocate for those socio-political forms which correspond to its ideal, while not merging with “any state form or political party”.<sup>74</sup>

The meaning of this “ideal”, however, was one of the controversial points in such views. Another anonymous opinion piece identified “the lack of social (*obshchestvennyi*) ideals among clergy” as the root of the passivity and “politics of non-interference” of the Church. How to decide which political movements correspond to the “Christian spirit” and are worthy of clerical support? It did not condemn “personal ascetic morality”, but it argued that it needed to be complemented with “the ideal of religious sociality (*obshchestvennost’*) and Christian culture”. As Vladimir Solov’ev and other Christian thinkers proved, this need comes directly from the essence of Christianity.<sup>75</sup> Another piece from the second half of 1906 repeated the need for a Christian sociality. The author claimed that the Church needs to survey available

<sup>74</sup> Mneniia i otzyvy. “Tserkov’ i politicheskaiia zhizn’. [Opinions and comments. Church and political life]” *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 42 1905, 1318-9.

<sup>75</sup> Mneniia i otzyvy. “Ob odnom ob’iasnenii tserkovnoi politiki “nevmeshatelshtvo”. [Opinions and comments. On one of the explanations for the non-interference politics of the Church]” *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 29, 1906, 943-4.

“ideals of social order” and in case none of them meets the standard of Christian teachings, “it needs to publicise its own ideal of Christian sociality (*obshchestvennost*)”.<sup>76</sup>

Clerical assemblies could also not avoid discussing the question of clerical participation in public life. An article reported on a presentation held at the Saratov clerical assembly, titled “What should be the relationship of Orthodox clergy to the current waves and conditions of Russian social life?” by a certain Father S. I. Chetverikov. He identified the creation of a Christian *obshchestvennost*’ and the rapprochement of clergy and laity as their main task. He hoped that laity would join the assemblies in the future.

#### 4.2.3 Clergy and the State Duma

The establishment of the State Duma brought the potential of new politics to the Russian Empire. It also posed many questions to clergy and their role in the atmosphere of a nascent political awakening of the country as previous sections already demonstrated. The decree for the establishment of the State Duma was issued on 6 August 1905, and its first session convened on 27 April 1906. Clergy could become elected by right of census, but much uncertainty remained regarding their expected behaviour. Can clergy express their personal opinion about politics? Who is going to explain to the people the importance of participating in elections if not their priests? This section highlights that there was a whole spectrum of possible positions regarding the issue of clergy and Duma politics present in contemporary discussions. From a total rejection of any participation in political activities through informal engagement, but no involvement in party politics; to support representation in Duma and/or joining parties. The section reflects on various sources which are examples for some of these positions.

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<sup>76</sup> Mneniia i otzyvy. “O khristianskoi obshchestvennosti.” [Opinions and comments. On Christian sociality.]” *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 44 (2 November 1906), 1420-2.

The discussions in the clerical press show that the issue of Duma representation was highly polarised among clergy in 1906. It was a recurring argument for supporting clerical participation that priests were in the best position to use their influence and explain to the people “the importance of serious and incorruptible relation to the issue of the upcoming elections” as “no one is closer to the heart of the people than its pastor.”<sup>77</sup> Concerning clerical participation in Duma elections, an article in the “Opinion and comments” sections referred to a published note by the “Group of Saint Petersburg Priests” which called clergy to explain to the people the meaning of the State Duma for “the realisation of divine justice (*Bozhei pravda*) on earth”. The note only warned of three dangers or pitfalls: clergy should not seek gain for its own estate; they should not defend the old regime with all its injustices, and they should abandon the false belief that Christianity has nothing to do with earthly existence.<sup>78</sup>

A comment in *Church Herald* reported that some priests proposed to reject all participation in the Duma at the clerical assembly in Saratov, due to the “incompatibility of clerical service with political activity.” Reflecting on this, the author invoked the principles of the “Group of Saint Petersburg Priests” and argued that contrary to the proposal of the clerical assembly – clergy must participate in the State Duma. They must go to the Duma, however, without tied hands, freely. The author concluded that if priests remain “loyal servants of the bureaucracy” then it is indeed better if they do not get involved in parliamentary politics.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from these anonymous opinion pieces and comments, the second and third number of the *Church Herald* in 1906, also published a two-part article titled “Priest and

<sup>77</sup> “Novaia obiazannost’ pastyreĭ” [The new duties of the pastors] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 35, 1905, 1089-90.

<sup>78</sup> Mneniia i otzvyvy. “Gosudarstvennaia Duma i pastyr Tserkvi.” [Opinions and comments. State Duma and the pastors of the Church] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 41, 1285-6. The quoted article was published in *Slovo*, No. 276.

<sup>79</sup> Mneniia i otzvyvy. “K voprosu ob uchastii dukhovenstva v Gosudarstvennoi Dume.” [Opinions and comments. On the question of participation of clergy in the State Duma]. *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 42 1905, 1319-20

politics” by Petr Kudriavtsev, a graduate and lecturer at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy.<sup>80</sup> He was also a close friend of Father Konstantin Aggeev, member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation. Kudriavtsev was an active member of the Kiev Religious-Philosophical Society from 1908, and its president between 1910-12.<sup>81</sup> He highlighted that the upcoming Duma elections pose a practical problem for clergy: should they join an already existing party, or should they organise their own party? His position was that the foremost task of the clergy is to “facilitate the building of the Kingdom of God” which is the “unification of those rational-moral creatures” who serve God as the manifestation of the highest good. Clergy cannot be indifferent to earthly life because even though this goal is beyond “the borders of time and space”, it is also within these borders that it comes to life (*osushchestvliatsia*). Service to God does not mean rejecting earthly life, it means “permeating it with Christian spirit” as leaven put into the dough. Priests cannot be indifferent to economic and political relations as “not all legal and economic relations correspond to the same extent to the idea of the Kingdom of God”. Kudriavtsev concluded that it is indisputable that clergy should get involved in social and political life, but the real question was *how*, in what way, they should do it. Kudriavtsev also worried that a politically engaged priest would not be able to carry out his clerical duties among members of his parish who support or belong to another party. How could they trust their priest? Finally, the Church had been in chains and paralysis for centuries, but now there is an awakening and an opportunity to regain its freedom. If clergy started to join political parties that would go against the movement of liberation and renewal of the Church.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Petr Pavlovich Kudriavtsev (1868-1940) was a professor at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy between 1897-1918. He also taught philosophy at the Tavrida University between 1919-21, from 1919 he was member of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (VUAN). He was persecuted in the 1930s, arrested twice and sent to labour camp, before he died in 1940.

<sup>81</sup> See Nataliia G. Filippenko, *Kievskoe Religiozno-Filosofskoe Obshchestvo (1908-1918) Ocherk istorii* [Kiev Religious-Philosophical Society (1908-1918) Historical Outline], (Kiev: Izdatel' Kiev-Parapan, 2009).

<sup>82</sup> Petr P. Kudriavtsev, “Sviashchennik i politika” [Priest and politics] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik*, 1906 2, 35-9.

In the second part of the article, Kudriavtsev investigated whether the idea of a party under the Church banner was feasible. The problem was, in his opinion, that such a party would be either too political or not political enough. In the first case, it would be a so-called “clerical party”, and it would have to face all the dangers that one can see for instance in the case of Catholic clergy in France, referring to French anticlericalism at the turn of the century. In the second case, without a declared political program, the party would mainly deal with church matters. In this case, there was not much need to have a party framework for such public activities, this can be done under the aegis of the parishes. Staying outside of parties, clergy could still express their opinions about parties, as is the “free word of the free priest” not already a “public act, a public feat (*podvig*)?” Kudriavtsev also highlighted that there were organisations which stayed above party politics in their struggle with various social problems such as disease, poverty, hunger or prostitution, and clergy should devote prayer and active support to these groups.<sup>83</sup>

There were two reactions to Kudriavtsev’s article in the same journal, the *Church Herald*. One of them by Pavel Svetlov, professor of theology at the Kiev University, who wrote a book on the interpretation of the Kingdom of God in Russian Orthodoxy. The other was written by a certain Avenir D’iakov who was a psalm reader at the Saint Nicholas Church in Belgium as part of the Russian Imperial Mission to Brussels. In principle, both articles sympathised with the idea that clergy should not join political parties, but they did not see this irreconcilable with independent clerical participation in the Duma.

Svetlov’s article agreed that clergy “should stay above any kind of a party”, but he argued that “clerical participation in the Duma by influencing elections or by direct representation” was desirable. This was necessary for the Church for the successful

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<sup>83</sup> Petr P. Kudriavtsev, “Sviashchennik i politika” [Priest and politics] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik*, 1906 3, 68-70.



“plantation” of the Kingdom of God on earth. There cannot be, however, a narrow political platform that could correspond to the idea of the Kingdom of God.<sup>84</sup>

D’iakov approached the question from a different angle. He highlighted that concerns about an Orthodox clerical party in Russia, based on the contemporary events in France, are unfounded. The root of anticlericalism in France was not the existence of Catholic parties, but rather the extreme over-politicisation of the whole of French Catholicism. As for the State Duma, whatever shape it would take eventually, “the lack of Orthodox clergy in it, in the sense of electoral or elected, is a grave danger for the Church”. How would the condition of clergy change if it was not able to influence legislation? Moral authority would not be enough. It was not necessary to have a majority, but there should be enough number of representatives from the side of the Church “to defend the interest of the Church” and to exert influence on legislation which concerns the Church. If clergy stays “outside” and limits its activity, for instance to charity, then the French anticlerical scenario becomes more probable as it would give space to those elements who oppose the Church. One can find already “not in small numbers” those elements in Russian society. It was quite widespread for clergy to participate in politics, for instance in Belgium or the Netherlands. As a conclusion, D’iakov warned that as the state structure has changed, so did the relationship of the Church to the state. The Church must defend its own interests and rights independently “without expecting special support from the state”.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Vasilii Myshtsyn and the church-social questions

Similar issues were addressed in two collections of articles by Vasilii Nikanorovich Myshtsyn (1866-1936), a theologian and professor of church law. Myshtsyn was a graduate of

<sup>84</sup> Pavel P. Svetlov, “O “platforme” russkogo dukhovenstva i ego politike” [On the “platform” of Russian clergy and his politics] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 1906 8, 229-32.

<sup>85</sup> Av. D’iakov, “Pravoslavnoe dukhovenstvo i vybory v Gosudarstvennuuiu Dumu” [Orthodox clergy and elections in the State Duma] *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 1906 9, 261-3.

the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy where he also worked as a professor between 1894-1906. He embarked on a research trip and visited Palestine, Syria and Greece in 1900. He defended his doctoral dissertation titled “The building of the Church in the first two centuries” 1909. After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, he taught in various institutions in Yaroslav. Myshtsyn’s two-volume work, *On Church-social Questions*, gathered his articles on questions of church, society and politics, and which were earlier published in the *Theological Herald (Bogoslovskii Vestnik)*, a journal of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy. The articles discussed a wide array of themes, including the political role of clergy.

Myshtsyn claimed that it was the duty of the clergy to care about the material needs of the poor and the oppressed. And there were signs that the earlier “diplomatic non-interference” could be substituted with actual practical reforms in truly Christian spirit. The agenda of struggle with poverty and injustice mainly resembled the program of the Constitutional-Democratic party, but Myshtsyn highlighted that it was not necessary for clergy to formally join a party. Priests could exert moral influence without becoming party members, or they could organise their own Christian party. Such parties already existed in the West; the best example is the Belgian Catholic party, one of the strongest political parties in Belgium. Myshtsyn identified “the secret of the party” in its ability to represent and defend the interest of the masses by including in its program “social reforms in a democratic spirit”. Myshtsyn described in detail the development of the Catholic workers movement, the role of the Federation of Belgian Catholic Workers Societies which later reorganised itself based on the papal encyclical, the *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. He highlighted the active role of bishops in these organisations.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Vasilii N. Myshtsyn, “Politicheskaia rol’ dukhovenstva.” [The political role of the clergy] In: *Po tserkovno-obshchestvennym voprosam II*. [On church-social questions II.], (Sviato-Troiskaia Sergieva Lavra, 1906), 39-45.

Myshtsyn devoted a separate article to the Union of Christian Politics. He interpreted it as one of the first attempts to organise a political party with a Christian character. Myshtsyn argued that the project was “worthy of full attention” as the author was an erudite expert of social sciences and “a committed Christian”. After a concise summary of the program of the Union, he deemed the idea “completely valuable”, but he raised one – quite significant objection – the inclusion of socialist ideals. Bulgakov, in Myshtsyn’s interpretation, wanted to destroy private property in order to eliminate “one of the main causes of hatred” and create space for Christian love. This, however, could and should be done the other way around: communism, in the sense of community of belongings, can be only the *consequence* of Christian love and can happen only in parallel to moral regeneration. Also, the destruction of private property can be realised only by way of coercion, revolution and violence which is unacceptable for Christians. Christianity talks about the renouncement of property, but not about taking it away by force. For Myshtsyn, Bulgakov’s claim that the elimination of private property would lead to the destruction of one of the roots of moral decline sounded like the exaggeration of “the economic factor in the history of moral development of humanity”. In contrast to this, Myshtsyn argued that exploitation and antagonism originated not in “the mode of production”, but in human nature. He concluded that all in all, the program of the Union – apart from the socialist aspect – “from a Christian point of view is absolutely acceptable and is worthy of full sympathy.”<sup>87</sup>

#### 4.2.5 Ioann Vostorgov on the State Duma

The ambiguous approach to party politics was reflected in the directives of the Holy Synod to the Consistories. On 18 February 1906, the directive of the Synod encouraged the participation of priests in the elections. At the same time, the Synod advised against clergy

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<sup>87</sup> Vasilii N. Myshtsyn, “Soiuz Khristianskoi Politiki” [The Union of Christian Politics] In: *Po tserkovno-obshchestvennym voprosam II*. [On church-social questions II.], (Sviato-Troiskaia Sergieva Lavra, 1906), 46-50.

joining clerical parties: “[c]lergy cannot and should not tie himself to any union or party, as there is only one union for him – with Christ in the Church (*Tserkvi Bozhiei*)”.<sup>88</sup> During the Second Duma, a directive of the Holy Synod issued on 12 May 1907 explicitly banned priests from representing leftist parties. They were only allowed to belong to and speak in the spirit of the “monarchists, Octobrists or independent right”.<sup>89</sup> While these measures were disastrous for left-leaning clergy, they gave momentum to radical-right clergy. Therefore, the chapter concludes with reflecting on the radical-right and the State Duma. Progressive, left-leaning clergy considered radical-right clergy as much a power to oppose as Marxist socialism; therefore, it is an important context to reflect on their position regarding clergy and politics. Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, prominent right-wing priest, who has been introduced earlier, dedicated an article to the question after the Second Duma in 1907 under the title “Duma and Clergy”.<sup>90</sup> This is a later period to the earlier discussion in the chapter on clergy and politics, but it highlights that the opposition between the radical right and progressive left in the Church was present within the Duma context. Therefore, at this point, for Vostorgov, the question was not whether clergy should participate in parliamentary politics, but whom they should join. He, not surprisingly, argued that clergy could join only rightist-monarchist parties. He had a very bad opinion about the Kadets, members of the Constitutional-Democratic party, which he identified as a Jewish party, financed by the Jews, and also condemned their expressed views and actions towards religion in the first and second Duma. He listed some of the “memorable” moments of the Kadet party during past Duma sessions:

talking, laughing, and smoking during the prayer, calling the Orthodox Church “hooligan”, ... announcement of total equality of all religions, originating in their

<sup>88</sup> “Ot Sviatishhego Sinoda pastyriam pravoslavnoi rossiiskoi Tserkvi pred vyborami v Gosudarstvennuuiu Dumu.” [From the Holy Synod to the pastors of the Orthodox Russian Church before elections to the State Duma], *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 1906 no. 8 (23 February), 227-9.

<sup>89</sup> “Opredelenie Sviatishhego Sinoda i Zapros Gosudarstvennoi Dumy.” [Directive of the Holy Synod and demands of the State Duma], *Tserkovnye Vedomosti* 1907 no. 21 (26 May), 835.

<sup>90</sup> Ioann Vostorgov, “Duma i dukhovenstvo” [Duma and clergy] *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. IV, 389-407.

absolute indifference to religion, ... demand for the freedom of atheism, forced appropriation of church, monastic and parish lands from the Orthodox Church...

He believed that the sole task and aim of the party was “to destroy the words “Russian” and “Orthodox”. Vostorgov was obsessed with his belief that the Kadet party had a Jewish character and concluded that “the only thing that remains is to wait for legislation on all-national circumcision, and then we would see the true religious sympathy of the Kadets”.<sup>91</sup>

Vostorgov confirmed that the ideal would be if clergy could stay outside of party politics, but the Duma already showed that at this moment all depends on the parties: “[i]t is practically impossible to stay outside of parties, one has to have their “own” party”. He would have even supported the idea of a clerical party if there were more clerical representatives in the Duma, but with 40-50, it did not make sense to create their own party. He believed that there were two options (*put'*), “the Octobrist on the left and the monarchists on the right. Which is the truthful path (*istinnyi put'*)? Regarding the Octobrist party, he claimed that the difference between them and the Kadet party was that they did not make an alliance with terrorists. In general, Vostorgov was suspicious of the “constitutional element” and gave a slippery slope argument that the “constitutional principle” gives “equality of the people (*narodnosti*), beliefs, ... the destruction of religious and national principle, then pure parliamentary system, then republic, and, well, then socialism and then anarchy.” All in all, the church cannot expect anything from this party, and it was also telling for him that the Kadets were silent about Orthodoxy and the Church in their programs.<sup>92</sup>

Not surprisingly, monarchists organisations, on the other hand, are the “storehouses of the religiosity and patriotism of the Russian people”. Their methods were justified by the harshness of the revolutionary uprising. If they are categorised as a party, then they can be

<sup>91</sup> Vostorgov, “Duma i dukhovenstvo”, 393

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 396-8

considered to be an example of a “religious-Orthodox-patriotic party.” Vostorgov assured the reader that they can trust his judgement as he witnessed hundreds of monarchist unions.<sup>93</sup> He argued that the monarchist party was the only party which would “help them in the Duma” and would “pose questions and proposals about the needs of the Church” which resembled Bulgakov’s comments on the lack of attention to church matters by the Constitutional-Democratic party.<sup>94</sup>

Vostorgov also made his opinion clear about leftist, progressive clergy – turning to the left represented the main “mistake and danger for the clergy in the Duma.” He believed that Duma representatives archimandrite Mikhail, Father Petrov and Father Tikhvinskii “simply sold the interests of Orthodoxy and joined the lines of the revolution.”<sup>95</sup> They were, however, only used as “temporary weapons” by leftist revolutionaries, they would never be respected. Leftist mood among the people was only temporary, caused by the weakening of the state. The future for these leftist priests will be difficult – once society starts to recover, they will be abandoned: “treason and betrayal never brought any different fate.”<sup>96</sup> Vostorgov’s relationship to monarchist institutions later became tenser and he eventually contributed to the atomisation of the Union of Russian People, one of the main monarchist organisations in the period.<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusions

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 401.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>97</sup> The majority of Orthodox clergy could not find a truly “religious sentiment” in the URP and in its program. Clergy believed that URP wanted to use religion and the organisational base of the Church as an instrument to achieve their own goals. See Agursky, “Caught in a Crossfire”. Radical right clergy became dissatisfied with this instrumentalization of religion and probably with the perceived lack of power of the Church in these groups. They started to organise their own groups with more or less success. Vostorgov’s plan for an “Orthodox Union” were never realised, but Vladimir Purishkevich (1870-1920) managed to establish a new organisation in the beginning of 1908, the Union of the Archangel Michael. See Agursky, “Caught in a Crossfire”. <sup>97</sup> On the impact of the Union of Archangel Michael in interwar Romania: see Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the “Archangel Michael” in Inter-War Romania*, Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies, no. 15 (Trondheim: Program on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004).

The first part of the chapter showed that the Union of Christian Politics was supposed to inoculate political parties in the State Duma, the same way as Christianity was supposed to inoculate the world as leaven permeates the dough – to Christianise culture, economics and politics. It imagined history as a process of Godmanhood, and, thus, secular – especially the new political – institutions being part of this process. The idea of Christianising politics, however, brought to the surface and exacerbated already existing sharp political differences within the Church. As Agursky highlighted, “[i]ntra-church polemics increased and became more evident with the proliferation of political parties.”<sup>98</sup> There was a general aversion to the idea that Christians, and in particular clergy, would organise themselves into parties – a term which by default semantically denied the possibility of an organic whole. Therefore, the chapter argued that the Union of Christian Politics had an ambiguous relationship to party politics on purpose. Bulgakov’s failure to recruit progressive clergy to the Constitutional-Democratic Party must have signalled to him the general aversion towards *partiynost*’ and confusion of clergy towards party politics.

He was committed at this point, however, to the building of a Christian *obshchestvennost*’ and was looking for a platform to have space for a semi-political organisation of Orthodox Christians. In this context, the Union of Christian Politics can be interpreted as an effort to offer this broadly understood political platform which aimed to be non-partisan to avoid the charge of spreading partisanship. Bulgakov remained suspicious of the potential power of political parties to truly unite people. He juxtaposed to the party-spirit, the real spiritual unification of people that is possible only in *sobornost*’ which can be found only in the church. This signalled the path Bulgakov would take after the failure of the theological vision of the Union of Christian Politics and the daily *The People*.

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<sup>98</sup> Agursky, “Caught Between Crossfire”, 167.

The second part of the chapter put the Union of Christian Politics into the context of the debates about Christian politics in later Imperial Russia. The chapter analysed this context from three aspects: general clerical participation in public institutions, participation in Duma politics, and the issue of establishing a Christian party. The bishops' responses to the survey showed that in theory there was support among some parts of the hierarchy for clerical participation in public institutions, even including priests becoming Duma representatives. This complicates the narrative of progressive clergy that hierarchy was preaching non-interference in social and public matters for clergy. It rather highlights that the official Church represented by the Holy Synod and conservative bishops were against a certain type of political activity – the support of leftist socialist parties.

The press survey of the journals of the Ecclesiastical Academies in the capitals on Christian politics demonstrated the presence of a wide array of possible positions through the analysis of anonymous opinion pieces and articles by professors, Kudriavtsev and Myshtsyn. In relation to problems with party politics, the idea of a Christian party was inevitable to emerge. The lack of consensus and the lingering ambiguity regarding party politics will haunt the Russian Orthodox Church and its members during 1917 and its unfolding conflict with the Soviets. Kenworthy, for instance, highlighted that there were different interpretations of the Epistle of 30 September, issued by the Church Council before elections for the Constituent Assembly. The Epistle called for electing candidates “faithful to the nation and its traditions”, and the Council claimed it was acting in a ‘supra-party’ fashion, while the Soviets interpreted it as “explicit anti-socialist polemic”.<sup>99</sup>

The idea of a united Christian party remained ambiguous in the early days of the Duma, but it seems that it became more appealing later. The memoirs of Bishop Evlogii, who

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<sup>99</sup> Scott M. Kenworthy, ‘Rethinking the Russian Orthodox Church and the Bolshevik Revolution’, *Revolutionary Russia* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2018), 7.



participated in all the fourth session of the State Duma and had monarchist sentiments, shared an interesting memory concerning this issue. During the elections for the fourth Duma (September-October 1912), Ober-Prokurator Sabler approached Bishop Evlogii with the idea of establishing an Orthodox clerical party: “You have been in the Duma for many years, you are familiar with political work... if you would take on the task of organising such a group, so that clergy in the Duma would not go all directions (*vrazbrod*). We would have 50-60 votes. That’s strength!” Bishop Evlogii, however, rejected the idea which might seem good, but in its essence was a mistake in his opinion. He explained that clergy is inextricably linked to the people and the establishment of a clerical party would break this link, the *narod* would think that clergy is following the “interests of their pockets”: “Clergy need to work in all parties following their conscience.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Metropolitan Evlogii, *Put’ moei zhizni. Vospominaniia Mitropolita Evlogiia* [Path of my life. Memoirs of Metropolitan Evlogii], (Paris: YMCA Press, 1947), 231-2. Quoted in Jockwig, “Kirche und Staatsduma”, 448.

## CHAPTER 5

### In Search of Christian *obshchestvennost'*

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:31-35)

#### The theo-political language of the Orthodox left

Orthodox political theologies were fragile and fractured, but this chapter argues that the Orthodox left had its own theo-political language. There was one aim which served as a focal point in all the discussed political theologies: creating a Christian *obshchestvennost'*. The semantic complexity of *obshchestvennost'* was discussed in the introduction. Citations from programs and pamphlets demonstrated that the concept behind the term of Christian *obshchestvennost'* instrumentalised various semantic aspects. In this section, I reflect on the theo-political language of Christian *obshchestvennost'* in three ways. Firstly, I focus on Christian *obshchestvennost'* as the transformation of the world as imagined in the various political theologies, with three sub-themes: Church-state relations, economy and politics. Secondly, I focus on the conceptual apparatus of the theo-political language of the Orthodox left. This includes a discussion of the idea of the Kingdom of God, the trope of the Jerusalem Church, and the issue of Gospel interpretation. Finally, I highlight the significance of Christian *obshchestvennost'* as a public sphere and rudimentary clergy-intelligentsia interaction.

### 5.1. Christian *obshchestvennost'* as the transformation of the world

Common themes and concerns emerged in the chapters of the political theologies, this summarising section focuses on three spheres: church-state relations, economy, and politics. While the aim to create a Christian *obshchestvennost'* was present in all the political theologies, the actual content of how a world of Christian *obshchestvennost'* was imagined had differences in emphasis.

#### Church-state relations

Church-state relations represented a particularly difficult conundrum – both the church and the state were in a state of change in relation to each other and to society during 1905-6. The Manifesto of the Freedom of Conscience (17 April 1905) introduced the decriminalisation of apostasy and legalised conversion from Orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> Many members in church hierarchy experienced this as “a stab in the back” by the state, and they complained that while all the other religious minorities had received more freedom from the Tsar, the Russian Orthodox Church remained in chains. The convocation of an All-Russia Church Council in this context was regarded as an opportunity for liberation and reform. Pre-council preparations were approved by the Emperor and started in 1905-6 with the participation of the laity, but the Council was never called together by the last tsar. Nicholas II argued that calmer times were needed for such an outstanding event. The Church Council was eventually called together in August 1917 after the resignation of Nicholas II.

The state was also changing, the establishment of the State Duma confused adherents of autocracy. For centuries, the basis of the rule of the tsars was indivisible absolute power, and the introduction of representative parliamentary institutions brought a change to that political theory. Still, the main source of tension for advocates of social Christian theo-political

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Freeze, “Russian Orthodoxy: Church, People and Politics in Imperial Russia”, In Dominic Lieven et al., *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 2, Imperial Russia, 1689-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 303.

visions lied in a certain politics of conscience. Bloody Sunday came to represent the oppression of the people who were massacred while expecting to receive social justice from the Orthodox tsar. The historically close relationship to the autocratic power was challenged from a practical point of view by many, but the Orthodox left focused its criticism on the need for a break based on solidarity with the people.

All three groups discussed in the dissertation were sympathetic to the idea of a free Church, but this idea had various actual meanings. For progressive clergy, like Konstantin Aggeev it meant a Church which was liberated from state control, therefore, he advocated for a reconfiguration of church-state relation. The program of the Brotherhood of Zealots was also open to the idea of separation of church, and the same was true for programs by the religious intelligentsia. There remained, however, a spectrum of various positions for justifying this argument. The position of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle argued for disobedience to secular authority, the Tsar of the Russian Empire if it demands un-Christian acts. This was not without precedent and relied on earlier historical precedents of disobedience based on Christian conscience, for instance by Protopope Avvakum. This position, however, did not deny obedience by default to autocracy. Un-Christian acts triggered disobedience, and it was temporary in this theo-political framework. In the chaos of the 1905 revolution, this was a position appealing to left-leaning progressive clergy who wanted to show solidarity with the people. It offered a way to disobey autocratic power without rejecting Orthodoxy.

Sventsitskii's theory of just resistance to secular authority, however, went one step further. It relied on the idea of justified disobedience based on Christian conscience, but he combined it with a traditional Orthodox understanding of power hierarchy which had Jesus Christ on the top as the Tsar of tsars, the Pantokrator. This was a common trope in Imperial Russia, for instance, during Nicholas I's visit to the Kremlin in 1832, Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow linked the tsar into "a hierarchy that extended downward from God to Jesus and from

Jesus to the tsar”.<sup>2</sup> Svetsitskii used this hierarchy to argue that autocracy, by demanding absolute obedience, violates the power hierarchy. Absolute obedience can be given only to the Tsar of the tsars, not to the Tsar.

### **Christian economy**

Regarding economy and Christianity, two issues were particularly relevant for Orthodox political theologies: common property and charity. Common property was advocated both by Archimandrite Mikhail’s Christian socialism and by the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. Similarly to Svetsitskii, Ern was more interested in the theoretical justification of the ideal relationship of Christians to property than creating a practical plan for the abolition of property in the Russian Empire. This radical position originated in the socio-political ideal of the Jerusalem Church which is discussed in the second half of this chapter.

Secondly, the issue of charity posed a problem due to the particular Orthodox tradition of charity. Archimandrite Mikhail was quite sceptical about the potential of charity to alleviate the sufferings of the masses. The article by the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation (“On the relationship of Church and clergy to contemporary social-political life”) also argued for more systematic social programs as charity would not be enough to remedy workers’ sufferings in an industrial context. This was an important position, and went against the traditional Orthodox understanding of charity in which charity was regarded as an important part of salvation and a “personal spiritual duty”.<sup>3</sup> The emphasis was on the personal relation and active love between giver and receiver of the alms. It also meant that contrary to Western European traditions, beggars were an accepted part of Christian society. Advocating for a non-personal system of organised charity challenged this theology behind Orthodox charity.

### **Christian politics**

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<sup>2</sup> Frede, *Doubt, Atheism*, 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr, ‘The Ethos of Charity in Imperial Russia’, *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 4 (1990): 680.

The issue of Christian politics came to the fore with particular force due to the emergence of new public politics and establishment of the Duma. It was in the focus of the Union of Christian politics, but progressive clergy could also not avoid the question. Chapter 4 argued that the issue of clerical participation was embedded in the larger question of clerical participation in public institutions. The analysis of the bishops' responses highlighted that the charge by progressive clergy that higher hierarchy by default preached non-interference was not entirely true. Christian politics was contentious for several reasons, this section highlights two problems: general aversion to party politics; and clergy as supporters of leftist political parties.

Bishops who were supportive of clerical Duma participation reflected on the problem of the relationship between public actor and partisanship. A quote by Bishop Mikhail clearly conveys the logic, he argued that pastors should be elected (not appointed) members of city duma and *zemskii* meetings as they were

public actors (*obshchestvennye deiateli*), who can bring great benefits, [by working] for better and more sophisticated functioning of our city dumas and *zemskii* meetings. Clergy is more or less alien to any party-spirit (*partiynost'*). Duma elections are characterised by intrigue and the struggle of various parties; pastors of the Church could become reconciling elements in these noisy meetings of landlords during elections.<sup>4</sup>

The clear aversion to *partiynost'* in religious-social theo-political discourse originated in a deeper, more fundamental rejection of the existence of political and party differences in a healthy Christian society. Herrlinger highlighted that the ORRP, Society for Religious and Moral Enlightenment, opposed workers' political activism due to their alternative, "radically utopian" ideal of Russian society. The core of this vision was an ideal Christian society, "based

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<sup>4</sup> "Mikhail, episkop", *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 1, 86.

on the organic notion of the social body in which political divisions could not exist.”<sup>5</sup> Herrlinger referred to two articles from the period that demonstrated this vision. One of them was an article by Father I. Galakhov, titled “Socialism and Christianity” published in November 1906.<sup>6</sup> According to Father Galakhov, the fundamental problem of his time was that Christians were “split into political parties”; thus, society lacked the unity which is needed for a healthy social body.<sup>7</sup> Another example cited by Herrlinger<sup>8</sup> was a brochure by political economist Ozerov, titled “Religion and sociality (*obshchestvennost*)” published in 1906.<sup>9</sup> Ozerov, who was once involved in the Zubatov workers’ organisation experiment, argued in this brochure that the religiosity of the working class was still very strong and could be utilised. He was convinced, similarly to social reformers of the time, that miserable living conditions made moral growth impossible among workers.

Interestingly, Ozerov’s article was cited in one of the bishops’ responses to Pobedonostsev’s survey on reform. Archbishop Nikolai, exarch of Georgia, included a long quote by Ozerov which highlighted that Christianity emerged in an economic system very different from the contemporary one. And as Lassalle (!) “accurately noted “[i]n the current economic system everyone answers for that which he did not accomplish, and often he does not answer for that which he did accomplish”. In other words: “we are only cogs and wheels in the grandiose machine of the contemporary capitalist industry.” Under these conditions, “self-perfection”, as a means to achieve the Kingdom of God on earth, is not sufficient”, consequently, we need “wide-ranging collective and public activity (*obshchestvennaia*

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<sup>5</sup> Page Herrlinger, “Class, Piety, and Politics: Workers, Orthodoxy, and the Problem of Religious Identity in Russia, 1881-1914.” Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1996. 453-4. and Herrlinger, ‘The Religious Landscape of Revolutionary St. Petersburg’, 849.

<sup>6</sup> I. Galakhov, “Sotsializm i khristianstvo” [Socialism and Christianity], *Voskresnyi Blagovest*, no. 4, 1906: 12-14.

<sup>7</sup> Herrlinger, “Class, Piety, and Politics”, 453-5.

<sup>8</sup> Herrlinger, *Working Souls*, 195.

<sup>9</sup> I. Ozerov, *Religiia i obshchestvennost* [Religion and sociality], (Moscow: Tv. I. D. Sytina, 1906).

*deiatel'nost'*'), in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth". Bishop Nikolai commented that even though the author committed many dogmatic and ethical-practical mistakes in his arguments, his idea was right that "if we want to make religious creativity and religious mood accessible to large masses, then we should not shy away from our times and its burning tasks that move it forward."<sup>10</sup>

The fate of progressive clergy who ventured into Duma politics stands in sharp contrast to the initial support of bishops to approve and encourage clerical engagement in politics. The directives of the Holy Synod which first prohibited party politics, and then leftist party politics among clergy demonstrated that the attitude of the Holy Synod changed during 1905-6. The initial position could be called a relatively neutral position of aversion to divisive party politics, but general support for clerical participation. Once the Holy Synod realised that progressive priests, especially popular clergy like Archimandrite Mikhail and Father Grigorii Petrov, would join leftist parties in the Duma, their policy shifted towards tolerance to clerical participation in monarchist unions and parties and persecution of left-leaning clergy. It was recognised by the official Church that non-partisanship, after all, was not possible in that historical moment. Therefore, *partiynost'* was increasingly tolerated, but as left-leaning clergy pointed out only a particular type of right-wing *partiynost'*. Allowing priests to participate in radical-right organisations, led to other issues, and eventually, even participation in those was prohibited.

The next section reflects on two themes that were closely related to the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost'*: the Kingdom of God and the Jerusalem Church of early Christianity. The analysis reflects both on the significance of these themes in the domestic Russian intellectual context but also highlights how they connect Orthodox political theologies to larger European and American contexts.

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<sup>10</sup> "Nikolai, arkhiepiskop Kartalinskii i Kakhetinskii, ekzarkh Gruzii, (1852-1914), *Otzyvy eparkhialnykh arkhieriev*, Part 2, 709-10.



## 5.2 Christian obshchestvennost': concepts and tropes

### 5.2.1 The Kingdom of God

Quotes from political theologies often invoked the trope of the Kingdom of God. It was shown that there was a pre-1905 development of this idea in the Russian Orthodox context by Grigorii Petrov. He was not the only one interested in this idea. Chapter 2 referred to an article by the progressive priest Father Konstantin Aggeev in which he highlighted a branch of thought in Russian Orthodoxy which propagated that the “earthly and the otherworldly (*zagrobnaiia*) life is the same path of religious-moral development of the person, the eternal life starts here on earth.”<sup>11</sup> He considered, for instance, archpriest Pavel Svetlov, professor at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy as one of the representatives of this branch of thought. Pavel Svetlov published a lengthy book in 1905, titled *The Kingdom of God and its Meaning for the Christian Worldview*.<sup>12</sup> It was originally an article series in the *Theological Herald* (*Bogoslovskii Vestnik*), and it was a comprehensive analysis of the Kingdom of God in the framework of Christianity and Russian Orthodoxy. Jennifer Wasmuth in her discussion of Svetlov highlighted the influence of Albrecht Ritschl, (1822-1889), a nineteenth-century German Protestant theologian on Svetlov’s theological work.<sup>13</sup>

This already shows that the idea of the Kingdom of God was a key link to social Christian or Christian socialist political theologies in the larger global context of Christianity. The Kingdom of God as a spatial and temporal concept has been central to Christian social and political imagination from ancient times, the Gospel has many references to it. It expresses

<sup>11</sup> Konstantin M. Aggeev, “Rokovye nedorazumenia” [Fatal misunderstandings] *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 7 (17 February 1905): 198.

<sup>12</sup> Pavel Iakovlevich Svetlov, *Ideia tsarstva Bozhia v ee znachenii dlia khristianskogo mirosozertsania* [The Kingdom of God and its meaning for the Christian worldview], (Sergiev Posad, 1905).

<sup>13</sup> See more: Jennifer Wasmuth, *Der Protestantismus und die russische Theologie: zur Rezeption und Kritik des Protestantismus in den Zeitschriften der Geistlichen Akademien an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). Available online: [http://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00083540\\_00001.html](http://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00083540_00001.html)

symbolically the fundamental underlying tension within Christianity, the tension between the transcendental and immanent presence of the divine in this world, and the relation to the coming world. This key feature of Christian thought originates in Jewish apocalyptic thought, in Ezra's prophecy about the empires and the end of the world in the Book of Daniel. This underlying apocalyptic tension fed into Christian apocalyptic and millenarian thought from Medieval times up until today.<sup>14</sup> The Kingdom of God had a central role in the British Christian Socialist and in the American Social Gospel tradition.

Paul T. Phillips, in his book on Anglo-American Social Christianity,<sup>15</sup> identified F. D. Maurice as the first Christian Socialist to discuss at length the Kingdom of God and who put Incarnation theology, the significance that Jesus Christ was both divine and human, into the centre of Christian social thought. F. D. Maurice presented his theo-political vision in his book, *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838) which he wrote originally to engage in dialogue with Quakers. In his interpretation, the Kingdom of God is not an unattainable target, but the progress of Christianizing of communities in history. Maurice's emphasis on the theology of Incarnation had fundamental relevance to conceptualisations of poverty and social life in the Anglican context. As Walsh highlighted, the first half of the nineteenth century was characterised by the "theology of Atonement", characteristic of Anglican evangelical thought, which propagated that "salvation was a matter that lay between the individual soul and its creator."<sup>16</sup> Christian anthropology considered humans as bearers of the original sin of Adam; thus, the human condition is a "state of depravity". A Christian life consists of moral trials and sufferings, with eventual eternal happiness in the next life. Thus, in terms of economic life, this translated to non-interference into market relations, avoiding any systematic charity activities. This way of

<sup>14</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, (London: Pimlico, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (Penn State Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Cheryl Walsh, "The Incarnation and the Christian Socialist Conscience in the Victorian Church of England," *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 03 (July 1995): 351–374, 352.

thinking was strongly focused on the sinful individual and its suffering for it. Exploitation was not the result of certain social and economic relations, but rather the punishment of God. Thus, such a worldview was essentially not only compatible with competitive market capitalism, but it directly justified it. Walsh highlights that evangelicals were not in the majority in the Anglican Church, but their influence was disproportionately strong on Anglican social and political thought.

This was the social and theological context of Maurice's time. Maurice's theology was a sharp divergence from such evangelical way of thinking. The focus on Incarnation had several consequences for Maurice's vision. First of all, Jesus Christ's sacrifice redeemed humanity from the original sin, and his humanity sanctified our mortal world. Secondly, his resurrection, his First Coming signalled the coming of the Kingdom of God, as the Second Coming will bring the end of this world and the accomplishment of the Kingdom of God.<sup>17</sup> As with Petrov, and many other Christian social thinkers, it was of utmost importance that the Kingdom of God already exists on earth, it is immanent. Father Petrov highlighted: "The Kingdom of God is an already established principle (*nachalo*) on earth, but it is hidden for the majority of the people by a thick curtain of lies, violence and egoism."<sup>18</sup> By looking at the state of the world around them, however, none of these thinkers could claim that this Kingdom is already fulfilled, it is often stressed that it is a potential in our world. While Maurice's vision was radical in contrast to previous imaginings of the social, he himself was not an advocate of any radical social or political change. He believed that the foundations of the Kingdom are already in place, thus, any proposal which would radically change the world would go against an already sacred structure.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>18</sup> Petrov, *Evangeliiia kak osnova zhizni*, 98.

Another important link within Christian social and political thought was the Social Gospel Movement in the United States and Canada, most prominent at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the movement was heterogeneous and had many branches, Christopher H. Evans offers a definition in his recent book on the history of the Social Gospel movement by stressing three elements: social idealism; belief that the main goal of religion was to advocate for systematic social changes, along progressive or radical lines; promotion of the United States of America as a religiously pluralistic society.<sup>19</sup> There was a similar emphasis on collective moral perfection as the realisation and understanding of the Kingdom of God in one of the key works in the Social Gospel movement, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* by Walter Rauschenbusch. He wrote that the Kingdom of God required “a growing perfection in the collective life of humanity, in our laws in the customs of society, in the institutions for education”,<sup>20</sup> and “the distinctive ethical principles of Jesus were the direct outgrowth of this conception of the Kingdom of God”.<sup>21</sup> There are not only analytically constructed similarities to the American Social Gospel tradition, Grigorii Petrov was aware of the overseas American tradition. Furthermore, he was not only aware, but probably also inspired by this tradition too, as he undertook the task of translating, with some changes and omissions, the famous novel by Charles Sheldon, titled *In his Steps: What would Jesus Do?* (1897).<sup>22</sup> The plot of the book focuses on a central theme of the Social Gospel tradition,<sup>23</sup> encouraging solidarity and help on the basis of carrying out truly Christian acts. It is not actually clear from the Russian edition that it is a translation of Sheldon’s book. It was published in two volumes under the same title, but it has only Petrov’s name on the cover and no indication that it is a translation.

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York: NYU Press, 2017), 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Evans quotes it, see Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion*, 81.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Rauschenbusch Reader*, ed. Benson Young Landis (New York, Harper, 1957), 112.

<sup>22</sup> Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps: “What Would Jesus Do?”* (Advance Publishing Company, 1897).

<sup>23</sup> See more John P Ferré, *A Social Gospel for Millions: The Religious Bestsellers of Charles Sheldon, Charles Gordon, and Harold Bell Wright* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1988).

### 5.2.2 The Jerusalem Church

The key aspiration of Orthodox political theologies, the creation of a Christian *obshchestvennost'*, was explicitly linked to the idea of the Jerusalem Church of Early Christianity. Not surprisingly, this connection had echoes in progressive clerical journals. Letters by a certain Vik. Alov.<sup>24</sup> discussed the issue of Christian *obshchestvennost'* in the context of the social question on the pages of the journal *The Age*. In his second letter he complained about the silence of the Churches; Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, in the face of workers' strikes, and in particular regarding "lockouts". As the author explains, a lockout is an English word for "pushing out", and it is essentially "a strike of the employers (*khozieava*) against the workers". While the Church "in corpore" is silent, the voice of individual Christians is not strong enough. He argued that "only Christian *obshchestvennost'*, only the Christian understanding of the task of political economy" can help and end the animosities.<sup>25</sup>

The third letter developed the topic further and linked the idea of Christian *obshchestvennost'* to the Jerusalem Church:

Does it need to be said that the foundation of Christian *obshchestvennost'* and economics need to be sought in early Christian times, in the text of the Acts and Letters of the Apostles...? Christian communes (*obshchinas*) of the Apostolic age – this is the seed, [a seed] not sprouted in contemporary Christianity".

The article added that most Church historians call the period of early Christianity "communist" (*kommunisticheskii*). The first theoretician of communism in Germany, Wilhelm Weitling, illuminated the "communist meaning of the whole of the New Testament". There were some, however, who denied "Christian communism", for instance, Professor Voigt in his "Social

<sup>24</sup> The identity of this contributor is not clear. It is probably a pseudonym, Gogol published under the pseudonym V. Alov.

<sup>25</sup> Vik. Alov., "Pis'ma II" [Letter II.], *Vek* 3 (21 January 1907): 41-2.

utopias” denied the communism of the early Christians.<sup>26</sup> It seems that our Orthodox believers must be reading his book because the term “communism” is a bogey for them, especially for members of the ecclesiastic sphere. Even Ernest Renan, who denied the divinity of Christ found “axioms of communism” in the Gospel, and recognised that the Apostolic Church and the description in the Acts of Apostles of the Jerusalem Church is an ideal and a prophetic revelation. The article concluded that “these strokes, in the context of the whole of the Gospel and all the facts of life in Christ, constitute the foundation for establishing Christian *obshchestvennost*’ and Christian economy.”<sup>27</sup>

The life of the early Christians was also a common and popular topic of the religious-moral lectures and discussions, the *besedy*, organised by the Society for the Religious and Moral Enlightenment in working-class districts of the capital. One of the participants of such discussions afterwards claimed that the evening helped him to forget that he lived in “the egoistic nineteenth century” and, during the talk, he felt he was “in that long ago epoch when Christ’s church was founded on earth, when the majority of believers had but one heart and one soul”.<sup>28</sup>

Chapters discussed in detail that the contentious description of the Jerusalem Church was an often used biblical citation and socio-political ideal in Orthodox political theologies. This contributed to the perception of some of these thinkers as not religious thinkers, but Marxist thinkers who use biblical citation to deceit Orthodox believers. The anti-socialist writings of Orthodox clergy accused socialists with appropriating Christian history. The most common motif for this was to interpret and present the early Christian communes, in particular,

<sup>26</sup> Andreas Voigt, *Die Sozialen Utopien* (Leipzig, 1906). Andreas Voigt (1860-1940) was a German mathematician and economist.

<sup>27</sup> Vik. Alov., “Pis’ma III” [Letter III.], *Vek* 6 (11 February 1907): 72-5.

<sup>28</sup> Herrlinger, “The Religious Landscape of Revolutionary St. Petersburg”, 845. Translation by Herrlinger of the quote from *Sankt-Peterburgskii dukhovnyi vestnik*, no. 48 (1898): 876.

the Jerusalem church, as ancient communism. Al'bitskii argued that the Jerusalem Church was used by socialists “as evidence of the truth (*istina*) of their teachings”.<sup>29</sup> Archpriest Vostorgov identified by name the “culprit” for disseminating such ideas: Karl Kautsky called both Christianity and socialism a “proletarian movement”.<sup>30</sup> According to Vostorgov, Kautsky argued that “proletarian efforts to destroy class difference is totally reconcilable with Christian teaching, with the Gospel.”<sup>31</sup> Kautsky argued that the early Christian community had a “proletarian character” and was “striving [to become] a communist organisation”.<sup>32</sup> In a public lecture in 1909, Sergei Bulgakov refuted Kautsky’s claim that early Christianity was a proletarian movement. He argued that it was a mass movement (*narodnyi*), but it was not a class proletarian movement.<sup>33</sup>

The most important “common feature” between the early Church communes and modern socialism, according to socialists, was the lack of private property. In order to deny this “shared heritage”, anti-socialist literature by Orthodox clergy made every effort to interpret in some way the “communism” of the Jerusalem Church as being different from the strivings of modern socialism. Akvilonov referred to the Jerusalem church as an ideal for “poor relief”, not as a radical socio-political system rejecting private property.<sup>34</sup> Vostorgov did not deny the existence of community of belongings in the Jerusalem church, but he made it clear that this was “a communism of *consumption*, not a communism of *production*”. He also highlighted that the phenomenon of community of belongings “was *temporary* and not mandatory for

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<sup>29</sup> Al'bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Reference to Karl Johann Kautsky (1854-1938). Kautsky was an influential Marxist, co-authored the Erfurt Program of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. He wrote extensively on the history of Christianity and its relation to socialism.

<sup>31</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Der Ursprung der Christentums. Eine Historische Untersuchung von Karl Kautsky*, (Stuttgart, 1908), 347.

<sup>33</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Pervokhristianstvo i noveishii sotsializm” [Early Christianity and modern socialism], In *Dva Grada. Issledovanie o prirode obshchestvennykh idealov* [Two cities. Research on the nature of social ideals] Vol. 2. (Moscow, 1911), 18-22.

<sup>34</sup> Akvilonov, *Khristianstvo i sotsial-demokratiia*, 28.

Christians,” voluntary community of belongings was still practised in monasteries.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, anti-socialist literature was very eager to confirm the sanctity of private property. Al’bitskii, for instance, reassured its readers that on the basis of the Bible, “right for our property comes from the Lord Himself” and that “in the eyes of Jesus Christ private property was an absolutely legal phenomenon.”<sup>36</sup> Akvilonov identified the starting point of Social-democracy as “the rejection of private property”, quoting from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the forefather of anarchism, that property is robbery. He confirmed, however, that “according to Christian teaching, the right to property is sacred”, even among early Christians.<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, Orthodox theo-political visions which argued for identifying common property as a Christian ideal were put into the same camp as Marxists from the perspective of radical right clergy. Members of the three discussed groups and their programs were not only criticised for what they were saying, but also for how they were saying it. Apart from the common aim of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost’*, there was another shared feature of all the social Christian Orthodox political theologies. A belief that the Gospel can be read as guidance for socio-political issues.

### 5.2.3 The Gospel and its socio-political meaning

The idea that the Gospel had a socio-political meaning was opposed by clergy who produced anti-socialist writings. There was a recurring argument in clerical anti-socialist literature that there is no economic or socio-political plan in Christianity. Al’bitskii posed the question: “Did Christ bring to the world a system of political and social economy? Oh, no!” He believed only those could claim so, who have never glanced into the Gospel.<sup>38</sup> Aivazov linked the idea of not having any relations to “socio-political legislation (*zakonoproekt*)” to the

<sup>35</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 74.

<sup>36</sup> Al’bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> Akvilonov, *Khristianstvo i sotsial-demokratiia*, 15-17.

<sup>38</sup> Al’bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 58.



ability of Christianity to become a truly global (*vsemirnaia*) religion.<sup>39</sup> Vostorgov also rejected the idea that the Gospel had a social and political message, or that Jesus Christ was a “social reformer”. He quoted from *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* (1900) by the American Unitarian minister, Francis Greenwood Peabody: “Jesus was, first and foremost, not a reformer, but a prophet; not an agitator with some kind of a plan, but an idealist with inspirational insights.”<sup>40</sup> Christianity was essentially a moral and religious teaching, and any transformation it caused in the economic or the political sphere – it was only a corollary, and it happened as a consequence of the slow process of striving for moral perfection by individuals:

...Jesus Christ could not naturally give a concrete plan for social transformation, because the ideal he put forward – the salvation of the soul and the realisation (*dostizhenie*) of the Kingdom of Heaven – is the matter of *internal spirit (nastroenie) and personal perfection*. It is true, in the end, it does lead to social transformation, it *necessarily* leads to [it] (as we have seen it in the case of slavery), but it is derivative (*proizvodnoe*).<sup>41</sup>

Akvilonov argued that it was only Christianity which managed to fully realise “social reform”, “a reformation, the rebirth of the whole world” – without actually striving to do so. Christianity only uses “spiritual weapons” and changes the world by changing people internally, i.e. morally. Al’bitskii also stated that “social reform” in the Christian belief must start and finish by way of “moral reform”.<sup>42</sup> The social meaning of Christianity was rooted in “personal self-perfection in the spirit of Christian love.”<sup>43</sup>

The Union of Zealots for Church Renovation directly reflected in their most radical article on this counter-argument to the social role of the Church that Christ “did not give people

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<sup>39</sup> Aivazov, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Francis Greenwood Peabody (1847–1936) was a Unitarian minister, and a professor of theology at Harvard University. His book called for social reforms instead of radical social reconfiguration. The quote in the original wording: “Jesus was, first of all, not a reformer but a revealer; he was not primarily an agitator with a plan, but an idealist with a vision.” 77-78. Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 205.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>42</sup> Al’bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 91.

legal, social or economic laws, in His teachings He did not talk about politics or law etc.” While the authors agreed that this was true, they also argued that it did not mean that representatives of the Church should stay silent about these issues. Jesus Christ planted the seeds of total transformation into the world and into us, but he left it to humanity to figure out

how to establish a social life on totally new principles, what kind of legal relations should exist between people, how to distribute material wealth in society, how to solve the question of private property, what should be the relationship of government (*vlast'*) to the people (*narod*), which forms of government are better.<sup>44</sup>

The juxtaposition of these quotes and approaches shows that political theologies of the Orthodox left were opposed by radical right priests who produced anti-socialist literature not only for political reasons but also because of their different views of the relationship between Christianity and the transformation of the world.

### 5.3. Christian *obshchestvennost'* as public sphere

A comment to the founding charter of the Brotherhood of Zealots shows that having a press organ was a strong desire among progressive clergy. After mentioning the idea to publish the minutes and the papers presented at the meetings of the Brotherhood in the journal *Bell* (*Zvonar'*), the comment concluded that “the idea of our own press organ was even more appealing”, the only obstacle was the lack of means. Modest Kolerov’s detailed reconstruction of the various press projects around the Orthodox left second the presence of this problem.<sup>45</sup> The problem of funding was persistent; furthermore, various actors were often lobbying for the money and support of the same people, for instance, the support of Ivan Dmitrievich Sytin (1851-1934), well-known entrepreneur and publisher. Konstantin Aggeev’s correspondence from 1906 shows that the Union of Zealots was hoping to launch a daily newspaper – the

<sup>44</sup> “Ob otnoshenii Tserkvi i sviashchenstva k sovremennoi obshchestvenno-politicheskoi zhizni,” [On the relationship of Church and clergy to contemporary social-political life] *Tserkovnii Vestnik* 11 (16 March 1906): 324.

<sup>45</sup> Kolerov, *Ne Mir, No Mech*

highest level of presence in the public sphere in their imagination –, but in the very last moment funding went only to one project, to Grigorii Petrov and his newspaper “God’s Truth”. Even though Petrov was a member of the Brotherhood, the daily *God’s Truth* was Petrov’s sole project. The planned daily by the Brotherhood was closely related to the activities of the Union. In a letter to Vladimir Ern, Aggeev mentioned that they were waiting for approval from Sytin for renting an apartment: “We have big plans. We would like to have at the editorial office a room for the meetings of the “Union of Church Renovation” (the former *kruzhok* of the “32”) and for gatherings to discuss religio-social questions.”<sup>46</sup> A further complication was the 1905 revolution which affected the financial situation of the publisher Sytin. Svetsitskii noted that Sytin was still willing to support them in parallel to Petrov’s daily if they brought in other financial support. They did manage to secure extra funding,<sup>47</sup> but then “the uprising has started, Sytin’s factory burnt down”,<sup>48</sup> and he went almost bankrupt. Eventually, there were two relatively stable types of organs that were able to contribute to the creation of a “Christian *obshchestvennost*”: two brochure series (the Religious-public Library by Svetsitskii and Ern; and Archimandrite Mikhail’s Freedom and Christianity), and the journal *The Age* (Vek).

### 5.3.1 Battle of brochures

As it was mentioned, the programs of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle and the Union of Christian Politics were published as part of a whole series of brochures, called the Religious-public Library series. The brochures demonstrate that the political theologies behind the two groups were sensitive to the emergence of new public politics and efforts to engage various strata in society. Brochures in the library reflected the ideals and key concepts of the groups: the ideal of the apostolic Church, social justice and social Christianity. Kolerov

<sup>46</sup> Letter 163. K. M. Aggeev to V. F. Ern. 12.10.1905. St. Petersburg – Moscow. *Nashedshie Grad*, 193.

<sup>47</sup> M. K. Morozova (1873-1958), well-known maecenas in late Imperial Russia, supported Ern and Svetsitskii with 20 000 rubel. See Letter 174. K. M. Aggeev – P. P. Kudriavtsev. 05.12.1905. St. Petersburg – Kiev. *Nashedshie Grad*, 203.

<sup>48</sup> Letter 180. V. P. Svetsitskii to A. C. Glinka. 04.01.1906. Moscow – Simbirsk. *Nashedshie Grad*, 210.

mentioned that the catalogue for the series was put together by Sergei Bulgakov, but the “practical” leaders of the series were Svetsitskii and Ern.<sup>49</sup> The brochures were published in three categories: series I targeted the intelligentsia, series II the people and series III focused on translations. The series was in constant change, mainly due to constant attacks by censorship, but a short survey of the titles of the series can convey the vision behind the “library”. Series I included “Urgent task” and “A short course on political economy” by Sergei N. Bulgakov; “Christian Brotherhood of Struggle and its program” by Valentin Svetsitskii; “Christian attitude to property” and “A new type of priest” by Vladimir Ern. Series II included “What does the peasant need?”, “Truth about the land” by Valentin Svetsitskii; “Eight-hour working day” and “Why do we need workers’ unions?” by Dmitrii Riabinin; “On self-governance” and “The Life of St. Francis of Assisi” by A. V. Elchaninov. Finally, as part of series III, the group published translations of “Christian-socialist movement in England” by Prof. Lujo Brentano<sup>50</sup> (introduction by Sergei Bulgakov); “Church structure in the first century of Christianity” by Prof. Rudolph Sohm<sup>51</sup> (translated by A. Petrovskii and P. Florenskii); “Catacombs” by Gaston Boissier<sup>52</sup> (introduction by Vladimir Ern); and “The essence of Christianity” by Adolf Harnack<sup>53</sup> (introduction by Vladimir Ern).

The idea of the library seems to be motivated by the need to create counter-propaganda, a response to the spread of cheap, Marxist “red brochures” which flooded Russia after the weakening of censorship. Archpriest Vostorgov claimed at the Fourth All-Russia Missionary

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<sup>49</sup> Modest Alekseevich Kolerov, *Ne mir, no mekh. Russkaia religiozno-filosofskaia pechat’ ot “Problemy idealizma” do “Vekh” 1902-1909*, [No peace, but sword. Russian religious-philosophical publications from “Problems of idealism” to “Milestones”] (St. Petersburg.: Aletea, 1996), 227.

<sup>50</sup> Ludwig Joseph Brentano (1844 –1931) was a German economist and social reformer. Original title: *Die christlich-soziale Bewegung in England* (1883).

<sup>51</sup> Gotthold Julius Rudolph Sohm (1841–1917) was a German theologian and Church historian. He published extensively on Roman and Canon law, and Church history. As the translators note, the brochure is the first part of *Kirchenrecht* (München & Leipzig, 1892).

<sup>52</sup> Marie-Louis-Antoine-Gaston Boissier (1823 – 1908) was a French scholar, and secretary of the Académie française. He studied ancient Rome, its society and characteristics.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Gustav Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) was a German theologian and church historian. He published extensively on the history of early Church. Original title: *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900)

Meeting in Kiev in 1908 that while until 1905-6 socialist literature was illegal and not so widespread, the situation had changed dramatically in the following years.<sup>54</sup> He also reflected on this phenomenon in his anti-socialist writings:

At large railway stations, during long stops which could take several hours or days, I encountered a strange phenomenon: hundreds of ... brochures appeared out-of-blue, as if some invisible hand was throwing them directly into the cars, here is a Lassalle, there is a Bebel, Engels, Lafargue, Guesde, Destrée, Schippel, Menger, Marx ... and so on... a whole, never-ending series of foreign authors. You can read about: socialism, social-democracy, Marxism, collectivism, communism, theory of values, economic theory, capitalism, ... and so on and so on...<sup>55</sup>

He also expressed his disappointment that there were no brochures from their side to counteract the effect of socialist writings on workers and peasants. Another right-wing priest, Al'bitskii, also highlighted in his anti-socialist works that “atheists” publish “hundreds or thousands of anti-Christian books and brochures, originals and translations”. There were so many of them that in order to orient the reader, there were even thematic compilations, so-called “catalogues”. He sadly noted that “if only” adherents to Russian Orthodoxy had “a portion of such energy then the future would not be so terrible...”<sup>56</sup> These feelings were echoed outside of the capitals, the fond of the Society for Moral-Religious Enlightenment has an excerpt from the Khersonskii Eparchial Vedomosti from 1907.<sup>57</sup> The excerpt is from a “News and comments” section under the title “On the Question of Socialism”. The comment claimed that so far not much attention had been given to socialism, available literature on the topic was not sufficient, and “[w]e are sleeping, closing our eyes in front of the coming, or [rather] in front of the already arrived disaster (*beda*). But the enemy is not sleeping, they are working with colossal energy and perseverance.” They are flooding the book market with “hundreds, thousands of anti-Christian

<sup>54</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. 5, Part 1, 315.

<sup>55</sup> Vostorgov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vol. V. Part 1., 49-50.

<sup>56</sup> Al'bitskii, *Khristianstvo i sotsializm*, 94.

<sup>57</sup> TsGIA SPb 2215:1:10 – Delo ob izdanii broshur i knig na tserkovno-obshchestvennye temy [Documents on publishing brochures and books on church-social topics]

books and brochures, in original and translation”. They even publish catalogues to orient the readers, for instance, the “What should a Social-Democrat read?” by Strumlina; or “The Library of a Social-Democrat” by Lebedev.”<sup>58</sup> In this context, the Religious-public library series of cheap brochures, prepared by Bulgakov, Ern and Svetsitskii, especially series II published “for the people”, was meant to fulfil this vacuum of lack of brochures directed at the masses.

Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) also focused on publishing his works in cheap brochure format. It was advertised in the pages of *The Age*, in the last issue from July 1907, Archimandrite Mikhail’s series had 28 brochures. Its program focused on illuminating social (*obshchestvennyi*) questions in a Christian spirit, and issues of Christianity and Socialism. Some of his discussed works were published as part of this series, for instance, “Christ in the Age of the Machine”. The series also published brochures on European social Christian thought, for instance, brochure no. 3 on Félicité Lamennais, no. 6. on Charles Kingsley, no. 11. on Adolf Stoecker. Most of the brochures were authored by Archimandrite Mikhail, but it also listed as no. 9. “Awakening idealism in the Worldview of Russian Educated Society” which was written by Father Konstantin Aggeev.<sup>59</sup>

Tracking the circulation of brochures is challenging, but there are various references to them in the sources. One of the most interesting notes is in a letter by Pavel Florenskii to

<sup>58</sup> “Izvestia i zametki. K voprosu o sotsializme” [To the question of socialism], *Khersonskie Eparkhialnye Vedomosti* no. 6 (16 March 1907): 202-3.

<sup>59</sup> No. 3 “Prorok khristianskoi svobody i svobodnogo khristianstva. Lamennais, ego zhizn’ i naibolee iarkie glavy iz “Slov veruiushchego” i “Sovremennogo rabstva” [Prophet of Christian freedom and free Christianity. Lamennais, his life and the most outstanding chapters of “Words of a Believer” and “Modern slavery”]; no. 6. Sviashchennik-sotsialist i ego sotsialnyi roman. Iz Kingsley. Vavilonskaia bashnia. (Dumy buntovshchika do vstrechi so Khristom.) Istinnyi demagog-Khristos. Zhizn’ sviashchennika-sotsialista.” [Priest-socialist and his social novel. From Kingsley. Tower of Babilon. (Thoughts of a rebel before meeting Christ) Truthful-demagogue Khrist. The Life of the priest]; no. 11. Sotsial-demokratiia, sotsializm i khristiansko-sotsialnoe mirovoztrenie. Rech’, skazannaia v Braunschweig Ad. Shtekkerom [Social-Democracy, socialism and social-Christian worldview. Speech by Adolf Stoecker delivered at Braunschweig].

Vladimir Ern, sent from Sergiev Posad, the town where Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius is located.<sup>60</sup> In his letter, Florensky asked Ern to tell Svetsitskii that he read out in the village his brochure, “Truth about earth” and it “caused a furore”, especially among Social-Democrats which made Florensky happy. Everyone was grateful for the brochure, and they really would like to have a couple of copies; therefore, Florensky asked Ern to send 5-10 copies as “it is very important to disseminate the booklet, especially now, before elections.” Florensky also asked Ern to send some of the translations published as part of the series, and a couple of the new publications which are meant to be read by the people, the *narod*.<sup>61</sup>

### 5.3.2 The journal – *The Age*

The other relatively successful publication endeavour was the journal *The Age*. It was published between 12 November 1906 and 9 July 1907. It was launched by progressive clergy, but later religious intelligentsia joined its editorial group. Its circulation was 1500 copies in 1906, it rose to 3000 at the beginning of 1907, and by the time of its closure, it was around 4200. The cover page of the first issue specified the contributors of the journal. The editor was V. A. Nikol'skii, “in close editorial participation of A. V. Kartashev, prof. Archimandrite Mikhail and constant collaboration of the members of the St. Petersburg Brotherhood of Zealots of Church Renovation. (Group of 32 Priests).”

In January 1907, V. A. Nikol'skii, editor of *The Age*, sent the rules of the “working group” of the journal to A. S. Glinka (pseudonym Volzhskii), hoping that he would join them. He mentioned that the following people, a mixture of clergy and laity, were part of the “working group”: “A. V. Elchaninov, Ern, Kartashev, Father Gr. Petrov, A. C. Sudakov (T. Asov in *The Age*), F. N. Beliaevskii, V. V. Akimov (V. Chembarskii), K. M. Aggeev, I. F. Egorov, K. K.

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<sup>60</sup> Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius is one of the largest and highly revered monasteries in Russia. It was founded in 1337 by one of the most venerated Russian Orthodox saints, Sergius of Radonezh. See: Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism, and Society after 1825*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Letter 291. P. A. Florenskii – V. F. Ern. 20. 01. 1907. Sergiev Posad – Moscow. 309-310.

Degtiarev” and himself. He also added that he hopes that Bulgakov and V. P. Svetsitskii “will not refuse to be with us”. At this point, the number of subscribers were over 3000 and “almost exclusively priests”.<sup>62</sup>

The role of Ern and Svetsitskii in the editorial board of the journal grew over time. In February, Ern mentioned to Florenskii that “he has decided to take part quite closely in [the work of] *The Age*”.<sup>63</sup> In a letter to Zinaida Gippius, A. V. Kartashev complained that “Svetsitskii and co. increasingly take *The Age* into their hands”.<sup>64</sup> Officially Ern and Svetsitskii joined the editorial working group in May 1907.<sup>65</sup> Based on archival materials, Chertkov reconstructed the shutting down of *The Age* at the beginning of July. A report to the Procurator of the St. Petersburg Court from 2 July 1907 confirms that the article “Church programs” in number 23 contained “signs of crimes, based on the article 1213, paragraph 5 of the Criminal code”.

The journal listed all its interests and aims in its first issue: the reconciliation of Christian views with contemporary culture, church reform and Christian rebirth with all the complex issues of Christian politics. It referred to Vladimir Solov’ev’s understanding of Christian Politics:

The final goal of Christian politics, its “utopia”, is the rule of evangelical ideals; not external – legal, governmental –, but internal – religious, church union, the establishment of the fullness of human life not only in individual but social and political [life] too”, as Vl. S. Solov’ev said.

The article listed the practical tasks of such Christian politics: civic equality, freedom of the individual (*lichnost*’), ... elected self-government of *obshchinas*, change of individual use of

<sup>62</sup> Letter 294. V. A. Nikol’skii – A. S. Glinka. 21. 01. 1907. St. Petersburg – Simbirsk. In *Nashedshie Grad. Istoriiia Khristianskogo bratstva bor’by v pis’makh i dokumentakh*, ed. S. V. Chertkov. (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole, Spasskoe selo, 2017), 311.

<sup>63</sup> Letter 300. V. F. Ern – P. A. Florenskii. 02.02.1907. Moscow – Sergievskii Posad. *Nashedshie Grad*, 322.

<sup>64</sup> Letter 320. A. V. Kartashev – Z. N. Gippius. 21-25. 03.1907. St. Petersburg – Paris. *Nashedshie Grad*, 332.

<sup>65</sup> See Letter 333. V. A. Nikol’skii – V. P. Svetsitskii. 05.05.1907. St. Petersburg – Moscow. *Nashedshie Grad*, 347.



property to shared (*obshchinnyi*) use and development of labour unions.” It also highlighted its relationship to party politics. Christian politics was “non-partisan”, it can have temporary cooperation with political parties, but it cannot organically merge with them.<sup>66</sup>

The publication projects were important parts of creating a Christian *obshchestvennost'* as a public sphere and advocating for clergy-intelligentsia interaction. These projects were often short-lived, but the perseverance to launch again and again another new journal or a collection of articles shows the strong drive to have an organ which could serve as a platform for theo-political ideas. Even in the face of persecution.

#### 5.4 Other conceptual interventions: symphonia, sobornost' and conscience

Christian *obshchestvennost'* had various emphases in the discussed case studies, but the idea of a free Church, liberated from state control was a shared feature. This meant a break with centuries of *symphonic* church-state relations. Even if the ideal was never realised, this feature was considered quite fundamental to Eastern Orthodoxy. Valliere highlighted that the underlying theological paradigm of symphonia was the Incarnation: “the person of Christ was the unique source of the two – the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies.” Valliere also noted that the main problem for the symphonic ideal is that it presupposes a Christian monarch, which was not a given condition for many Orthodox Christians throughout history. There was no Christian monarch for Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman Empire, as there was no Christian sovereign in the atheist Soviet states.<sup>67</sup>

The same underlying Incarnation paradigm in Solov'ev philosophy gave arguments for progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia to justify the liberation of the free Church. The state was not fulfilling its role in *symphonia*, and was not committed to the realisation of the

<sup>66</sup> V. A. Nikol'skii, “Khristianskaia politika” [Christian Politics], *Vek* 1 (12 November 1906): 2-3.

<sup>67</sup> Paul Valliere, “Introduction to the Modern Orthodox Tradition,” In John Witte Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, eds., *The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics and Human Nature*, vol. 1. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 512-16.

Kingdom of God as the experience of 1905 demonstrated. The synergic relationship between God and humanity needed to shift to the church understood as the body of Christ and the gradual gathering of the whole world into it in the historical process of salvation. The state power that was contributing to the creation of community was supposed to be replaced with the power of *Christian obshchestvennost'*.

Christian conscience had a central role in arguing for breaking the symphonic traditions as it was highlighted in the analysis. While this instrumentalisation of conscience was alien to Petrine church-state-society relations, it is now present in the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church. The document referred to the concept of *symphonia* in its formulation of ideal church-state relations for post-Soviet times. The ideal responded to the demands of a democratic society, but it also reflected the persecution of the Church during its history, in particular by the Soviet government. The text argued that the emergence of the state was due to the fall of man and its moral justification relies on its role in limiting the power of evil. While the document prescribed obedience to the state, it also warns against absolutising it and not recognising “the limits of its purely earthly, temporal and transient value”.<sup>68</sup> The Church recognises that states are secular in the contemporary world. Co-operation between Church and state is based on “mutual non-interference into each other’s affairs.”<sup>69</sup>

The text of the social concept specifically referred to *symphonia*. Church-state relations were more harmonious in the Muscovite period (“in Russian antiquity”), but the two centuries of Synodal period was “the evident distortion of the symphonic norm”. The discussion on loyalty to the state is of particular importance to the pre-revolutionary era. The document clearly set limits to loyalty to the state:

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<sup>68</sup> The Basis of the Social Concept, III. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., III. 3.

The Church remains loyal to the state, but God's commandment to fulfil the task of salvation in any situation and under any circumstances is above this loyalty. If the authority forces Orthodox believers to apostatise from Christ and His Church and to commit sinful and spiritually harmful actions, the Church should refuse to obey the state. The Christian, following the will of his conscience, can refuse to fulfil the commands of the state forcing him into a grave sin.<sup>70</sup>

This passage on “peaceful civil disobedience” is recognised by the literature as a new approach within church-state relations and echoes debates on loyalty to the Russian autocracy during the revolutionary period.

### 5.5 Persecution

Because speaking the language of the Orthodox left had consequences. Both progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia were targeted and persecuted for proposing theological innovations, reform ideas or for contesting hierarchy. Lay religious intelligentsia had more freedom to express their ideas on these topics, but they also had to face the consequences of their words and actions. Valentin Svetsitskii, for instance, had to face charges in court several times for his publications, many of which were confiscated and destroyed.<sup>71</sup> A brief reflection on the persecution of the Orthodox left shows that they justified their opposition to autocracy and the official Church by repeating theo-political ideas present in their works. Furthermore, Grigorii Petrov highlighted in his letter to Antonii that on the verge of defrocking, he is finally free to speak his mind, therefore, these moments of persecution offer moments of honesty about their theo-political positions.

In the eighth issue of *Polar Star* (*Poliarnaia Zvezda*) in 1906, Petr Struve published a short piece by Svetsitskii, titled “Open address of a believer to the Orthodox Church”.<sup>72</sup> The editors only added that “[n]ot having churchly (*tserkovnii*) beliefs, we give with pleasure space

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., III. 5.

<sup>71</sup> “Comments” in Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, 603-605.

<sup>72</sup> Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, “Otkrytoe obrashchenie veruiushchego k Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi,” [Open address of a believer to the Orthodox Church] *Poliarnaia Zvezda*, no. 8 (3 February 1906): 561-4.

on the pages of our journal to an honest voice of an Orthodox believer”.<sup>73</sup> The issue came out on February 3, three days later the St. Petersburg censorship committee started a court investigation against Svetsitskii, as author, and against Struve as publisher. Svetsitskii and Struve was charged with “impudent behaviour towards the government (*vlast*)” (Criminal Code, art. 128), and in the case of the publisher, they added the charge of “instigation for the toppling of the existing regime” (Criminal Code p. 6, art. 129).<sup>74</sup> The charges were not unexpected, as Svetsitskii mentioned in his defence speech that Konstantin Aggeev, member of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, tried to convince him not to publish the address.<sup>75</sup>

The “Open address” was a reaction to the bloody Moscow uprisings in December 1905 when soldiers were ordered to suppress the rebellion. In the address, Svetsitskii raised the issue of unconditional obedience by Christians to an autocrat, giving orders of killings. He highlighted that the attitude of the Church towards violence (*nasilie*) is not consistent. If they reject revolutionary violence of the “extreme parties” because Christianity rejects violence and murder – then they should also condemn soldiers who are killing freedom-fighters: “Why is there such certainty, such directness in their attitude towards extreme parties, but [why is there] such criminal silence towards the government (*vlast*)?”<sup>76</sup> Svetsitskii asked the Church to impose penitence on every Christian who participated in the killings, first and foremost, on Governor General Fedor Dubasov, who was in charge of punitive actions towards the rebels. If they do not repent, concluded Svetsitskii, they should be excommunicated from the Church.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Footnote to Svetsitskii, “Otkrytoe obrashchenie veruiushchego k Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi”, 561.

<sup>74</sup> Comments in Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, 595.

<sup>75</sup> Valentin Pavlovich Svetsitskii, “Rech V. P. Svetsitskogo. Proiznesennaia v zasedanii osobogo prisutstviia SPB. Sudebnoi Palaty” [Speech by V. P. Svetsitskii. Delivered at the meeting of a special committee of the Saint-Petersburg Court Chamber] *Vek*, no. 2 (14 January 1907), 20.

<sup>76</sup> Svetsitskii, “Otkrytoe obrashchenie veruiushchego k Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi”, 563.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 564

The court hearing took place on 4 November 1906, and Sventsitskii decided to represent himself in the case. His defence speech was published in *The Age* in January 1907, and its logic of defence corresponds to the theo-political vision of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle. We learn from his speech that the concrete charge against him was that he called for “insubordination to authority” (*nepovinoenie zakonnoi vlasti*). The main argument in his defence was that he addressed the Church in his article, not the military. We learn from the report that this was rejected by the prosecutor, claiming that if he “really wanted to address the Church” then he would not have published the piece in a journal with a circulation of 15.000, “where anyone can read it, but wrote a letter to the Metropolitan, the Ober-Procurator or the Holy Synod.”<sup>78</sup> In Sventsitskii’s opinion, the prosecutor “has not the faintest idea about what the Church is” if he thinks that by sending a letter to the Ober-Procurator you can address the Church. Then, he posed a question: “What is the Church?” To be able to answer it, Sventsitskii shared with the court and the audience a short theo-political monologue, presenting the core of his Christian world-view which resonated with his other publications:

Christianity has a particular view of world history as a process of Godmanhood. By joint efforts of God and man, by way of cruel struggle with Evil, the world prepares itself for the absolute incarnation (*voploshenie*) of the Divine Idea. The progress of life in this world is not the gradual coming of universal, earthly welfare (*blagopoluchenie*), but the differentiation, the absolute parting of Good and Evil, the separation which will be ended by the final struggle (*borba*) between Christ and Anti-Christ.<sup>79</sup>

Sventsitskii was very explicit about his reformulation of the idea of the “church”, it was the body of Christ, the centre of all the Good in the world. “Truth, Good or Beauty” could exist outside of Christ and the Church. Sventsitskii admitted that in this reconceptualisation, the borders of the Church become infinite and are narrowed down at the same time: “The Ober-

<sup>78</sup> Sventsitskii, “Rech V. P. Sventsitskogo”, 20.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Procurator cannot be a part of it, but Beethoven's work can find its place in it."<sup>80</sup> The world was a "Church becoming".

In the last part of his speech, Svetsitskii reflected on his own obedience to government and secular power (*vlast'*). He reiterated his ideas about the divine origin of power, its positive role in the process of divine and human communion, and that he accepts obedience to it until it does not clash with the laws of Christ. In Svetsitskii highlighted that he did not call soldiers to break their oath, he was begging the Church to release them from their oath. At the end of his monologue, he reiterated his innocence: "I do not plead guilty in front of this secular power (*gosudarstvennaia vlast'*). And I do not acknowledge the competency of this court in questions of religion." Paradoxically, Svetsitskii was cleared of charges, while Struve was declared guilty in publishing criminal content by negligence, and he was sentenced to pay a penalty of 100 rubles.<sup>81</sup>

Persecution was also the fate of Grigorii Petrov and Archimandrite Mikhail. Father Petrov was first attacked by lay Conservatives already in 1903 when he gave a series of lectures. He was criticised for his understanding of the Kingdom of God and his reading of the Gospel.<sup>82</sup> Petrov was charged later with the denial of the divinity of Christ, and his "political trustworthiness" was questioned. To decide about the second issue, the Consistory sent to Petrov a long list of questions. Instead of replying to them, he wrote and published an open letter<sup>83</sup> to Metropolitan Antonii (Vadkovskii) in 1906, in which he shared his "religious beliefs and the political beliefs pouring out of them". He explained that the "[s]ilence of the Church in these times is a grave crime" and "it is a treason of the truth of Christ". He complained that anyone who was against autocracy, was perceived to be against the Church, God and Christ,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Comments in Svetsitskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, 598.

<sup>82</sup> Hedda, *His Kingdom Come*, 117-8.

<sup>83</sup> Grigorii Spiridonovich Petrov, *Otkrytoe pis'mo sviashch. Grigoriia Petrova k Metropolitu Antoniiu* [Open Letter by Father Grigorii Petrov to Metropolitan Antonii], 1908.

but this was a serious “distortion of the essence of the Church”. He had similar views on the relationship between forms of government and Christianity as Father Konstantin Aggeev, meaning that there can be many combinations, some forms are better fits for Christianity, some worse. Petrov’s verdict was that “our obsolete, old regime is the most unfit (*negodnyi*) of all the existing regimes in the Christian world.”

As punishment, he was exiled to the Cheremetsky Monastery which also hindered him from occupying his place in the Second State Duma as representative of the Constitutional Democratic Party in February 1906. Petr Struve and another Kadet, M. P. Fedorov even paid a visit to Metropolitan Antonii and asked for allowing the return of Petrov. The Metropolitan said that he has no power to reverse the decision of the Holy Synod. Therefore, the Kadets also approached Ober-Prokurator P. P. Izvolskii, but he also rejected them.<sup>84</sup> Father Petrov was defrocked in 1908.

## Conclusions

The revolutionary period of 1905-6 and its socio-political and religious crises strongly impacted language and discourse. Fundamental concepts as justice, socialism, Christianity, autocracy all became contested and were used by various groups to propagate their own agenda. But the break-up of the conceptual apparatus also meant a window of opportunity for finding a language to oppose autocracy on the basis of Orthodox tenets and to be able to develop a theo-political language of the Orthodox left. Orthodox political theologies relied on other political languages too, but their shared concern for creating a Christian *obshchestvennost’* resonated in their programs. The trope of the Kingdom of God tapped into the religious philosophy of Vladimir Solov’ev, but also into the larger context of social Christianity, in particular in the British and American tradition. Svetsitskii’s justification of resistance to an unjust monarch borrowed the theo-political logic of disobedience based on Christian

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<sup>84</sup> Sidorov, *Khristianskaia Sotsializma*, 77.

conscience, present in earlier Russian intellectual history. The idea of Christian politics and its emphasis on the sanctity of the human individual and person (*lichnost'*) linked them to the political language of liberalism. There was one political language which does not feature in these political theologies: Marxism. Still, the persecution of clergy and intelligentsia on the Orthodox left demonstrated that speaking about opposing autocracy – whether in the name of atheism or the name of Christ – triggered mechanisms of repression both from Church and state.



## CONCLUSIONS

The Orthodox left in late Imperial Russia could not simply occupy their theo-political place on the Christian left, they needed to create new space to be able to articulate their aims and ideas. They needed a theo-political space which allowed struggle with the two “evils” that caused the suffering of the people in their eyes: autocracy and capitalism – while retaining Orthodox belief. This struggle was enabled by challenging contemporary understandings of both “Orthodoxy” and “left” and by engaging in a conceptual contestation, first of all, about religion/Christianity and socialism/communism.

An article that was mentioned in the Introduction, titled *Two Truths (Dva Pravda)* from 1906 talked about the struggle between the old truth of the official church and the new truth of the progressive – dissenting priests. Advocates of this “new truth” opposed to a certain extent the Conservatism within the official Church, but their arguments were targeted not only towards this old truth but to a parallel new truth, the truth of the radical right priests who engaged in anti-socialist propaganda. This was not only a contestation of content but went back to a deeper, more fundamental difference in their understanding of Christianity, the Gospel and the transformation of the world. Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov vehemently opposed the belief that there was a socio-political meaning in the Gospel which could serve as guidance in those hectic times. It does not mean that the radical-right was not engaged in social activism, but they did not justify these activities by a socio-economic reading of the Gospel. Further research is needed to reconstruct the whole picture and various positions within the radial right clergy regarding Christianity and the transformation of the world, this dissertation focused on

Archpriest Vostorgov and those clergy that actively produced anti-socialist propaganda. Left-leaning progressive clergy argued for the need of direct confrontation of Orthodoxy with modernity and for the need to search for socio-political guidance in the Bible. This aim was present in their embrace of the legacy of the Modern Russian school and its mission to engage the secular world:

It is said that it is not up to Christianity to deal with public/social, political, economic or cultural life – which means that it rejects to solve the most grievous, most important and most interesting issues of the contemporary world. We ask the question, do the following facts and phenomena correspond to the spirit of the Gospel or not: for instance, war, bloody violence, pornographic art, prostitution, the repression of the weak by the strong, the economic slavery of the proletariat. The answer is – all of this has no relationship to Christianity, evaluating these from the Christian point of view is not possible, like with electricity or the telephone.

But why it is not possible – this is our question.<sup>1</sup>

The Orthodox left also contested understandings of socialism and communism and tried to carve out theo-political space for a non-Marxist left which did not give up faith. As it was pointed out, some literature questions the religious content of the discussed theo-political ideas and considers them Marxist projects in religious masks, wolves in sheepskin. The language of these projects, however, does not show Marxist concepts or rhetoric. While Marxism was also a heterogeneous intellectual movement in this period, certain key concepts were shared and made Marxist discourse recognisable.

The Orthodox left was committed to challenging the Marxist monopoly of the semantics of “socialism” and “communism”. Sergei N. Bulgakov highlighted that in modern times “socialism practically became a mean for atheism, for “Mamonism”. But this misuse and religious distortion of the idea of socialism does not destroy that relative truth which is

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<sup>1</sup> Pavel Levitov, “Otnoshenie khristianstva k politiko-ekonomicheskoi storone zhizni”, [The relationship of Christianity to the political-economic side of life] *Tserkovny golos* ' 51-52 (1906): 1413.

undoubtedly in it.”<sup>2</sup> As Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov) argued, one who believed in the sanctity and dignity of the human individual could not compromise with Marxist understandings of the individual, i.e. a cog in the wheel, and its role in history. The Orthodox left with its particular focus on the people, the *narod*, echoed Dostoevsky’s understanding of the inherent socialism of the Russian people:

Their main error is that they refuse to recognise the church [element] in the people. I am not speaking of church buildings or the parables, I am now speaking about our Russian “socialism,” ... the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of a universal Church of all people (*vsenarodnaia i vselenskaia*) on earth in so far as the earth is capable of accommodating it. ... The socialism of the Russian people is not in communism, not in mechanical forms; they have faith that their salvation will come in the end as a universal (*vsvesvetnyi*) union in the name of Christ. That is our Russian socialism!<sup>3</sup>

Chapters of this dissertation can be distilled to key conceptual contestations. Chapter 1 highlighted that ‘justice’ became highly contentious by the outbreak of the 1905 revolution. The spike in capital punishments during the repression of the revolution triggered outrage in society. Programs by the Orthodox left all called for an immediate stop to the death penalty. The issue of ‘justice’ was closely related to the understandings of ‘social justice’ in the context of the social and labour question. In the conceptualisation of solidarity with the suffering masses, social justice was linked to ‘divine justice’ which was a key concept in Father Grigorii Petrov’s kingdom theology. The emergence of the State Duma was interpreted in this framework and was perceived as an institution that has the potential and the duty to disseminate divine justice.

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<sup>2</sup> Sergei N. Bulgakov, “Sotsial’nyi Vopros” [The social question], In *Voprosy Religii*, Vol 1. (Moscow, 1906), 307-8.

<sup>3</sup> Fedor Dostoevsky, “Dnevnik Pisatel’ia [Diary of a writer], January 1881, chapter 1, IV.” In *Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii. Dnevnik pisatel’ia za 1877-1881*, Vol. 21 (St. Petersburg: Prosveshchenie, 1911), 498.

The history of progressive clerical circles in chapter 2, in particular, the evolution of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renovation, revolved around the conceptual contestation of the “church” and its relations to the state. This contestation is not particular to Russian Orthodoxy or revolutionary Russia, but certain issues came to the fore with particular strength in this period. One of them was the difference between the Church as an institution and the Church as a community. Political theologies by the Orthodox left emphasised the communal aspects by referencing to *sobornost'*, an idealised understanding of Orthodox community. Within this framework, it was argued that if the autocratic state acted as a despot towards its subjects then it was beyond doubt that the Orthodox Church had to express its solidarity and stand with the people, as members of the Church. On the one hand, advocating a break with autocracy, i.e. an end to upholding at least the façade of a symphonic relationship between Church and State was a radical idea of the Orthodox left. The presence of the idea, on the other hand, that clergy was capable of imagining a Russian Orthodox Church without autocracy, supports the claims that the Church was deeply alienated and in conflict with the autocratic state in the last days of the Empire.

Recent literature on the Russian Orthodox Church has presented a more nuanced image of the Church in pre-revolutionary times. This dissertation followed this approach and argued that the Church was not only heterogeneous but also deeply divided on important theo-political questions. Alliances were not black-and-white but created a spectrum. Main figures of the radical left and right clergy were clearly committed to their worldviews, but many priests throughout the empire remained confused about their position. The persecution of the Orthodox left served as a strong deterrent and showed that it was not a level playing field. Supporting right-wing, monarchist organisations meant following the line of lesser resistance. As Pisiotis

highlighted, participation in radical right parties was more “trouble-free for clerics whose own ideological convictions were still in a state of flux.”<sup>4</sup>

The reconstruction of a debate about true intelligentsia reconfirmed an argument made by Pisiotis that the image of the clergy as predominantly passive and out-of-touch with society in the period is exaggerated in the literature. Sources demonstrate that clergy strived to present itself as an alternative leadership in society.<sup>5</sup> Father Aggeev’s intervention into this debate was that he did not only argue that priests should aim for the leadership of the people, but he also refuted the claim that they should do so in opposition to the intelligentsia. From the available sources, it seems that Aggeev was in close contact with the religious intelligentsia, he followed the work of thinkers in the “from Marxism to idealism” intellectual movement and recognised the potential for cooperation. In his imagination, the clergy was not supposed to hinder the efforts of the religious intelligentsia for leadership, but join them as partners.

Chapter 3 and the history of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was mainly a contestation of ‘autocracy’, and the relationship of Christianity to related attributes of the state, power and violence. For centuries, the essence of autocracy was undivided, supreme power. The establishment of the Duma contested this undivided power and triggered debates about autocracy. Not only ‘justice’ became more depersonalised and detached from the person of the Tsar, strangely, autocracy also started to live a life of its own. Monarchist groups, unhappy with the October Manifesto and the Duma, contested whether the Tsar had the right to introduce these changes to the form of government of the Empire. The centralised supreme power in the core of autocracy was untouchable in this interpretation – not even the Tsar could change it.

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<sup>4</sup> Pisiotis, “Orthodoxy vs. Autocracy”, 544.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

The main tenet of the Christian Brotherhood of Struggle was just resistance to an unjust monarch based on Christian conscience. It was highlighted that there was historical precedence to this, although the possibility of active resistance remained ambiguous within this theo-political framework. The question of autocracy was put into a larger question of Christianity and politics. Is there a form of government that “fits” Christianity? The Christian Brotherhood of Struggle argued that there is at least one which does not fit Christianity, autocracy and its claim for absolute obedience. Progressive clergy, Father Konstantin Aggeev among them, were sympathetic to the idea of liberation of the Church from the “state element”. He was, however, more reluctant to create a definitive chart of regime compatibility with Christianity. He argued for an approach which would instrumentalise religion neither for support nor for refutation of political systems. This difference put limits on potential collaboration, but it did not alienate clergy and intelligentsia by default.

The abstract justification of resistance, however, was not enough in a revolutionary situation, in the fervour of political liberation. On the one hand, the Orthodox left interpreted as ‘hypocrisy’ that the official Church maintained its support to a regime which uses violence against its own subjects, while preaches that Christianity has never ever had anything to do with coercion. On the other hand, the group recognised the problem of strikes among workers who wished to keep their religiosity. This led Svetsitskii to differentiate between violence and killing, and to argue for the use of violence to lessen evil. As contemporary responses pointed out, this was not a particularly strong argument, but it shows the practical orientation of the group. There was a long history of revolutionary violence and terrorism in nineteenth-century Russia, but it was connected mainly to the intelligentsia who has rejected or subverted Orthodox faith and could disregard all the theo-political complications that the Orthodox left had to face in justifying their struggle with an Orthodox tsar in an Orthodox empire.

Practice was also a core concern for advocates of Christian politics discussed in chapter 4. As the analysis highlighted, the term Christian politics has to be deconstructed in order to discuss it meaningfully in the late Imperial Russian context. There were several interrelated features that divided opinions on the matter. Firstly, whether engagement with Christian politics was asked about Orthodox believers or clerics. Secondly, whether the engagement was specifically about participation in the Duma or political activity more generally. Thirdly, if it was Duma representation, whether it was about independent representation or direct party politics. A related issue was the possibility of establishing a Christian party which was also seriously considered by various members of the Church. The dissertation analysed only one progressive clerical journal in detail apart from smaller independent works on the issue, but the spectrum of positions present in that one periodical was already many. The analysis of other periodicals, especially eparchial heralds, is needed to evaluate attitudes to Christian politics in the larger context of the Russian Empire.

The case studies were followed by chapter 5 which reflected on common themes and concerns of political theologies by the Orthodox left. It was acknowledged at the beginning of the dissertation that there was “no important movement of social Christianity” in late Imperial Russia. The dissertation argued, however, that there was an Orthodox theo-political language which was spoken both by progressive clergy and religious intelligentsia. The main focal point of this language was the concept of Christian *obshchestvennost*’. Freeze highlighted the complexity of the term and identified three interrelated meanings, all of which were integrated into Orthodox political theologies. Firstly, *obshchestvennost*’ was used as a synonym for public opinion and referred to the need of the Church to defend its interests as other groups in society were organising. The second meaning focused on the “sociability” aspect of the term and the striving for a union of Church and society, often used together with the idea of *sobornost*’. The

third “uncommon” usage referred to the restructuring of the world on Christian principles, and to Christian socio-economic relations.<sup>6</sup>

The actual political and economic programs struggled with burdened questions of the time, for instance, property relations. The conceptual base of this theo-political language was firmly rooted in understandings of the trope of the Kingdom of God and the historical myth of the Jerusalem Church. Biblical hermeneutics was also an important aspect of this language, a way of argumentation by using biblical citations. Opponents of the Orthodox left systematically criticised their “method” of reading the Bible, and, thus, argued for the falsity of their claims. It must be noted, however, that the religious or theological content of their language was not denied, only the way they produced said content and the authority to do so. It is symptomatic that when Archpriest Vostorgov encountered Marxist red brochures, he complained about their incomprehensible content and language:

I am reading these booklets, and I must admit, I do not understand a lot, and I understand a lot only with difficulty and effort: it is difficult to grasp this series of foreign words; and I feel even worse about various numerical calculations about the economy, the factory industry. ... But what do I see? In front of me, reserve Russian workers. They are reading too, only some of the illiterate ones listen to the reading out of those red brochures. I am astonished how they can understand all that wisdom described with those incomprehensible words. I am absolutely certain that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all the readers has completely zero understanding of what they are reading.<sup>7</sup>

Vostorgov did not express similar feelings of incomprehension about texts produced by the Orthodox left. He could understand the content and the method of argumentation, he just did not agree with it.

By proposing Orthodox visions of social ideas, the Orthodox left inevitably clashed not only with Marxism but also with alternative visions of Orthodoxy in the period. It is clear from

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<sup>6</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, “Going to the intelligentsia”: The Church and Its Urban Mission in Post-Reform Russia”, In *Between Tsar and People*, 215-232.

<sup>7</sup> Vostorgov, *Pol'noe sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 1, 51.



the sources that the vision of radical right clergy who produced anti-socialist propaganda was one of the main opponents of the Orthodox left, usually referred to as Blackhundreds Christianity, or ironically the “truthfully Orthodox people”, therefore, the position of the radical right heavily informed my analysis. The history of the Orthodox left cannot be understood without the history of the Orthodox right. Further analysis is needed to understand the whole spectrum of theo-political position prevalent among the radical right clergy. The dissertation aimed not to idolise nor demonise actors nor on the left or the right but tried to do justice to their historical reality, discursive strategies and theo-political logic.

In the wake of the emergence of the Bolshevik state, the image of early Christianity again returned. In February 1918, in the midst of the horrors of the civil war and as persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church gained momentum, Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov remembered the early Christians not as a socio-political ideal, but as a reminder that persecution was the midwife of Christianity: “we understand now Christian ancient [times], we understand the secret of the ancient catacombs.”<sup>8</sup>

While the years of 1905-6 were the peak for the Orthodox left, there are traces of this type of theo-political language in later periods, but more research is needed to establish continuities and differences. For instance, there are similar themes and issues in the works of Vasilii Ekzempliarskii (1875-1933), especially in his texts published in 1910-14, before the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. Ekzempliarskii was interested in the ideal of the early church and its economic relations (*The Teachings of the Ancient Church about Property and Charity*)<sup>9</sup> and the social Gospel (*The Gospel and Social Life (a couple of words*

<sup>8</sup> Ioann Vostorgov, “Stat’i i propovedi sviashchennomuchennika protoiereia Ioanna Vostrogova” [Articles and sermons by hieromartyr Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov] In *Pravoslavnaia Moskva v 1917-1921 godakh. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*. [Orthodox Moscow in 1917-1921. Collection of documents and materials] ed. Aleksandr N. Kazakevich, Aleksandr N. et al. (Moscow: Izd. Glavarkhiva Moskvyy, 2004), 249-250.

<sup>9</sup> Vasilii Il’ich Ekzempliarskii, *Ucheniie drevnei Tserkvi o sobstvennosti i milostyne* [The teachings of the ancient Church about property and charity] (Kiev, 1910).

*about the social aspects of the Gospel*)).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the interwar journal *New City* (Novyi Grad) discussed socio-political questions from a religious point of view. The journal was founded in Paris in 1931 by Georgy Fedotov, historian and religious philosopher who shared exile with Sergei Bulgakov in France. It proposed a vision opposing both fascism and communism, and reflected on some of the themes of the pre-revolutionary Orthodox left in the new socio-political setting of interwar Europe:

Christianity is infinitely higher than social justice (*pravda*); and even though Christianity managed to commit heavy sins against social justice in its tragic development in history, still the realisation of social justice is possible only in Christianity: as the social expression of the absolute truth and justice (*pravda*) of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Vasilii Il'ich Ekzempliarskii, *Evangelie i obshchestvennaia zhizn'* (*neskol'ko slov o sotsial'noi stornoe evangel'skoi propovedi*) [The Gospel and social life (a couple of words about the social aspects of the Gospel)] (Kiev, 1913).

<sup>11</sup> Ot redaktsii, [From the editors], *Novyi Grad* 1931, no. 1: 7.

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