



Barbara Hallensleben,
Regula M. Zwahlen,
Aristotle Papanikolaou,
Pantelis Kalaitzidis (eds.)

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

Sergii Bulgakov and Contemporary Theology:
New Approaches and Interpretations

 **Aschendorff**
Verlag

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Abstract

Sergii Bulgakov (1871–1944) is one of the preeminent theologians of the 20th century whose work is still being discovered and explored in and for the 21st century. The famous rival of Lenin in the field of economics, was, according to Wassily Kandinsky, “one of the deepest experts on religious life” in early twentieth-century Russian art and culture. As economist, publicist, politician, and later Orthodox theologian and priest, he became a significant “global player” in both the Orthodox diaspora and the Ecumenical movement in the interwar period.

This anthology gathers the papers delivered at the international conference on the occasion of Bulgakov’s 150th birthday at the University of Fribourg in September 2021. The chapters, written by established Bulgakov specialists, including Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury (2002–2012), as well as young researchers from different theological disciplines and ecclesial traditions, explore Bulgakov’s way of meeting the challenges in the modern world and of building bridges between East and West. The authors bring forth a wide range of new creative ways to constructively engage with Bulgakov’s theological worldview and cover topics such as personhood, ecology, political theology and Trinitarian ontology.



EPIPHANIA

Herausgegeben von
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in Zusammenarbeit mit
dem Zentrum für das Studium der Ostkirchen
der Universität Freiburg Schweiz

Band 19

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Münster
2024

Publiziert mit Unterstützung
des Schweizerischen Nationalfonds
zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung

Publiziert von
Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG
Soester Straße 13
D-48155 Münster
www.aschendorff-buchverlag.de

Cover:
Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG

Text:
© Barbara Hallensleben, Regula M. Zwahlen, Aristotle Papanikolaou, Pantelis Kalaitzidis

ISBN 978-3-402-12060-6 (Print)
ISBN 978-3-402-12061-3 (E-Book PDF)
DOI <https://doi.org/10.17438/978-3-402-12062-0>



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Seven Days of *Narod*: Sergei Bulgakov's Christian Socialist Newspaper

Catherine Evtuhov and Regula M. Zwahlen

What does it mean for a religious worldview to lie at the foundation of politics? Sergei Bulgakov's politics were as intense, thorough, and passionate as everything else he did; the period of his real political engagement coincides with the Russian Revolution of 1904–7. As we know, he was a founding member of the Union of Liberation, which held its first meeting at Schaffhausen in Switzerland in 1903; he worked together, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in discord, with key figures in the Kadet (Constitutional Democratic) party, then more usually referred to as the Party of Popular Freedom; he was a delegate to the short-lived but important Second Duma before Prime Minister Stolypin shut it down on 3 June 1907 and altered its mandate and composition. In all of these roles, Bulgakov had some very highly developed and clearly defined positions on the burning issues of the day (and to be sure there were many).

Rowan Williams has recently highlighted Bulgakov's continuing engagement with the idea of socialism as late as the early 1930s; here, we return to take another look at his literal "Christian Socialist" period, defined by Williams as "the first dozen years of the twentieth century."¹ It is an overtly political moment, when Bulgakov not only wrote about ideas, but sought explicitly to translate them into practice. In this essay, we turn our attention to a short-lived but astonishingly rich political endeavor: the newspaper, *Narod* ("The People"), published in Kiev in the spring of 1906.² In the programmatic article,

1 Rowan Williams, *Sergii Bulgakov, Socialism, and the Church* (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2023), 17.

2 Kolerov's and Lokteva's important article on *Narod* focuses on the circumstances of the newspaper's publication rather than on its content. M. A. Kolerov, O. K. Lokteva, "S. N. Bulgakov i religiozno-filosofskaia pechat' (1906–1907)," in *Litsa. Biograficheskii al'manakh*, ed. A. V. Lavrov (Moscow: Feniks, Atheneum, 1994), 401–24.

“An Urgent Task,” written in autumn 1905 on the eve of the “actual realization of popular government,”³ Bulgakov proposed to create a *Union of Christian Politics*—not a party—with “five basic aims: to cultivate Christian society, to unite all Christians regardless of denomination, to work for the political and economic liberation of the individual, to oppose Black Hundredism, and to establish a propaganda campaign,”⁴ including the creation of a special press organ. In his words, “we should strive to create a daily Christian press, in which life in society would be presented from a strictly Christian perspective.”⁵ And so he became a main editor of the Kiev newspaper *Narod* published by Vladimir Lashniukov. The paper lasted only seven days—Easter Week of 1906, with the first issue appearing on Easter Sunday. Bulgakov put a lot of energy into the project and was deeply disappointed when he found out about the serious lack of funding only a few days after the first issue.⁶

How could such a short-lived little paper be of any significance? It is worth noting that we are dealing with texts that have hitherto been difficult to access, have never been reprinted, and were only digitized by helpful librarians in 2020. Excited about this newly accessible source with regard to Bulgakov, we found that the paper was so ambitious and full of ideas and projects that it provides a brilliant peephole through which to catch a glimpse not only of the Christian socialist program, but of society both locally in the Kiev region and throughout the Russian Empire. Quite a few of the articles were written by Bulgakov himself and provide productive insight into his perspective as he made critical transitions from radical to practical politics, and from a general defense of religion to a fervent call for Orthodox Church reform.

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- 3 Original publication: “Neotlozhnaia zadacha,” *Voprosy zhizni* 9 (1905), 332–60. In this paper we cite the more easily available separate brochure: S. Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha (O soiuzhe khristianskoi politiki)* (Moscow, 1906), 1; English translation by Marian Schwartz: Sergei Bulgakov, “An Urgent Task,” in: *A Revolution of the Spirit. Crisis of Value in Russia 1890–1924*, ed. B. Glatzer Rosenthal and M. Bohachevsky-Chomiak (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 137–59.
 - 4 Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy, 1890–1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 101.
 - 5 Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha*, 34.
 - 6 Vasilii Zen’kovskii, “Iz vospominanii,” *Vestnik russkogo khrist’ianskogo dvizheniia* 139, no. 2 (1983), 119.

1. Bulgakov in Kiev. The Newspaper

After the defense of his Master's thesis on *Capitalism and Agriculture* on 1 April 1901 in Moscow, Bulgakov did not get a job there, because he was already considered a "renegade" by his mainly Marxist colleagues.⁷ In his thesis he questioned Marxist historical materialism, since "every age introduces new facts and new forces."⁸ However, Bulgakov was invited to teach political economy and statistics at the brand new Polytechnic institute and at St. Vladimir's University in Kiev. In a public lecture in November 1901, Bulgakov revealed himself to be an idealist and his fervent appeal to personal responsibility proved to be a huge public success.⁹ Bulgakov's elective seminars on the social sciences, in particular, were attended by 100, sometimes up to 400 people, including students, workers, and women.¹⁰ One of his students from 1901 to 1903 was Nikolai Valentinov, who shared Bulgakov's critique of Marxism, but not his interest in religion. When Valentinov told Lenin about Bulgakov's approach—"Truth is attained through the honest, free, and loyal confrontation of ideas"—Lenin answered:

Isn't it perchance Bulgakov's influence that accounts for your inclination to correct the philosophy of Marx? That's a slippery path. The Social Democratic Party is not a seminar where various ideas are confronted. It is a militant class organization of the revolutionary proletariat.¹¹

Neither did the police like Bulgakov's fame. An article titled "Happy New Year" in January 1904 provoked a scandal and the closure of the journal *Iugozapadnaia nedelia* [Southwest Weekly], co-edited by Lashniukov, that promoted "the freedom of the person in the social dimension." Bulgakov had written about the resurrection of Russian life, which the police (correctly) interpreted as synonymous with "down with autocracy." After that, Bulgakov was under strong police surveillance, but he was still allowed to teach. In fact, most professors

7 Vladimir Akulinin, "Vekhi zhizni i tvorchestva," in *Khristianskii sotsializm* (S. N. Bulgakov), ed. V. Akulinin (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1991), 9.

8 Sergei Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy: the World as Household*, trans. Catherine Evtuhov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 323, n. 9.

9 Evtuhov, *Cross and Sickle*, 57. The famous lecture was entitled "Ivan Karamazov as a philosophical type."

10 Ol'ga Lokteva, "Neizvestnaia stat'ia S. N. Bulgakova (1904)," in *Rossia i reformy*. Vyp. 2, ed. Modest Kolerov (St. Petersburg: Medved', 1993), 67.

11 Nikolai Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 178.

of the Polytechnic institute were members of the Union of Liberation and later of the local section of the Kadet Party.¹²

Bulgakov's Union of Christian Politics fused with Lashniukov's project to join social-political radicalism with faithfulness to the Orthodox Church, and culminated in *Narod*. Bulgakov was quite successful in attracting authors and poets from St. Petersburg and Moscow for this collaboration, including, first of all, his co-editor Volzhskii (Aleksandr Glinka), Valentin Svetsitskii, and Vasilii Zen'kovskii.¹³ This point about it having to be a *daily* paper is interesting: Christian politics (*khristianskaia obshchestvennost'*) had to be part of everyday life. In terms of genre, *Narod* might be compared to the *Gubernskie vedomosti* and at the same time to the mainstream St. Petersburg or Moscow papers—*Rech'* or *Novoe vremia*, perhaps with an admixture of the *Eparkhial'nye vedomosti*. It was a local paper but aimed to be national at the same time. It was anything but narrowly clerical in its focus. The title referred back to the "God and people" ("Dio e popolo") slogan, borrowed from Giuseppe Mazzini, with which Bulgakov concluded "An Urgent Task."¹⁴ But the word "narod" had acquired new layers of meaning by 1906—a moment of reckoning when the intelligentsia had a sudden revelation of the people's "true nature" through the violence of revolution.¹⁵ The editors were at once frightened and inspired, as perfectly expressed in Bulgakov's formulation in the first issue:

We still share Dostoevsky's and Soloviev's faith that our narod, that beast-like pogrom hooligan (*pogromnyi khuligan zverinogo obraza*), drowning in stinking (*smradnyi*) sin, is nonetheless a narod—God-bearer (*narod-bogonosets*), and has its own important and well-defined task in world history with respect to the salvation of the world.¹⁶

12 Lokteva, "Neizvestnaia stat'ia," 68–70.

13 Kolerov, Lokteva, "Bulgakov i pechat' (1906–1907)," 406. In fact, the list of collaborators, though it remained largely aspirational, reads like a "Who's Who" of Silver Age writers and philosophers.

14 Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha*, 36.

15 On the problematic nature of the term "narod" see Evert van der Zweerde, "The Rise of the People and the Political Philosophy of the Vekhi Authors," in *Landmarks Revisited: the Vekhi Symposium One Hundred Years On*, ed. Robin Aizlewood, Ruth Coates (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 104–27.

16 Sergei Bulgakov, "Paskhal'nye dumy," *Narod* 1 (1906), 1; on Bulgakov and Russian messianism, see Sergii Bulgakov, "Easter Thoughts (1906). With Commentary by Regula Zwahlen," *Public Orthodoxy*, April 2022; <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/04/25/sergii-bulgakov-easter-thoughts/> (access 2024/01/26).

What do we actually find in the newspaper? A brief survey reveals the following key themes: Duma elections, national revival, and tasks that lie ahead; an articulation of Christian politics and its relation to other intellectual currents, including Marxism; the Jewish question (especially the Kishinev pogrom); a summary of the press, and telegrams from *Narod's* correspondents; a chronicle of events compiled from the local, regional, imperial, and international press; church reform and Christianity for modern times; social consciousness: aid to famine victims, the demand for the release of political prisoners and the abolition of capital punishment; workers' movements and unions; and letters "from below," including from provincial clergy and responses to "An Urgent Task." We also find mundane but useful things like train schedules and advertisements (e. g., charity concerts for female students). The first issue contains a classic Silver Age appendix of art and poetry, focusing mostly on Vrubel' in Kiev. Bulgakov's articles primarily deal with Christian politics and are virulently anti-regime.

Not long after the paper ceased publication, Bulgakov confessed that *Narod* had been "a huge temptation and a project of endless impertinence," but at least made him aware of the obligation to "participate religiously in society" himself. Therefore, he decided to engage in politics and moved to Moscow in the autumn of 1906.¹⁷ Bulgakov's wife Elena was not very happy about that.¹⁸ A sister of Maria Vodovozova, Lenin's and Bulgakov's first publisher, in Kiev she participated in the "Union for Women's Equality" and published a couple of articles.¹⁹ In her contributions to *Narod* she criticized the tendency to use historical material about the French Revolution not for enlightenment, but to stir a militant atmosphere.²⁰ She seemed to share Bulgakov's later impression that in the Russian revolution of 1905, the "creative forces proved far weaker than the destructive ones."²¹

17 Vladimir Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchie grada. Khronika russkikh [...] dvizhenii v chastnykh pis'makh i dnevnikakh ikh uchastnikov, 1829–1923 gg. Antologiya. Kniga III 1905–1906*, ed. Modest Kolerov, *Issledovaniia po istorii russkoi mysli* (Moscow: Modest Kolerov, 2020), 729, 828–30.

18 Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchie grada*, 791.

19 Zen'kovskii, "Iz vospominanii," 117. Modest Kolerov, *Ne mir, no mech: russkaia religiozno-filosofskaia pechat' ot 'Vekh' 1902–1909* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 1996), 347.

20 Elena Bulgakova, "Frantsuzskaia revoliutsiia v narodnoi literature," *Narod* 7 (1906), 2.

21 Sergei Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism. Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia," in *Vekhi: Landmarks*, ed. Marshall S. Shatz and Judith E. Zimmermann (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 18.

2. *Narod* as an Organ of Christian Politics

In his introductory “Easter thoughts,” in the first issue, Bulgakov sincerely hoped for nothing less than the resurrection of Christ in the Russian people.²² Following in the footsteps of Vladimir Soloviev, Bulgakov believed that *Narod* would fuse progressive, democratic political thought with Christian faith and accused his political liberal allies in the Kadet party of neglecting religion as the most important feature of the Russian people’s social life.²³ Therefore, Bulgakov at first cooperated with Valentin Svetsitskii, who, together with Vladimir Ern and Pavel Florenskii had just founded the *Brotherhood of Christian Struggle* and called for a complete religious transformation of society.²⁴ They did not want to fight for the improvement of life on a personal level; rather, they sought to provide a spirit of social struggle in Christ’s name.²⁵ Likewise, in *Narod*’s stated goals the “revelation of the untruth of capitalist exploitation of today’s agrarian relationships” came second after “the people’s freedom” and before “the struggle against national hatred.” The task of “the all-national religious-social sermon” of *Narod* should be fulfilled in the spirit of “universal (*vselenskoe*) Christianity” (with reference to Vl. Soloviev).²⁶ In Bulgakov’s view, the

general mission—the emancipation of the person—is provided for by religion [...] [and] the democratic movement strives to embody the purely Christian commandments of love, freedom, and equality in social relations.²⁷

The flirtation between Bulgakov and Svetsitskii was however rather short, since Bulgakov soon criticized the Brotherhood’s “sectarian dogmatism” as well as their economic agrarian communism advocating the abolition of private property to give it to the Church.²⁸

22 Bulgakov, “Paskhal’nye dumy,” 1.

23 See Evtuhov, *Cross and Sickle*, 95 ff.

24 Evtuhov, *Cross and Sickle*, 102. *Narod* presented several advertisements for the Brotherhood’s brochures from the “Religious-social Library” between 1906 and 1911; see Modest Kolerov, “Izdaniia ‘Khristianskogo Bratstva Bor’by’ (1906–1908),” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 5 (1993), 299.

25 Moskvich [V. P. Svetsitskii], “‘Khristianskoe Bratstvo Bor’by,’” *Narod* 3 (1906), 4.

26 Sergei Bulgakov, Aleksandr Volzhskii, “Ot redaktsii,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 1.

27 Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha*, 16, 25; “An Urgent Task,” 145, 151.

28 Bulgakov had argued in favour of private property for farmers—which Lenin did not like either. Vladimir Lenin, “Agrarnyi vopros i ‘kritiki Marksa,’” in S. N. Bulgakov: *pro*

From Universal Christianity to Orthodox Reform. Yet the emphasis on “universal Christianity” did not really correspond to the “Russian people’s faith.” Zen’kovskii remembers that in 1906 Bulgakov was not yet openly Orthodox, hidden behind a “religious worldview—‘in general,’” and that he seemed to be ashamed, in front of his numerous students, of his return to Orthodoxy.²⁹ In the “Urgent Task” he called on “people of various denominations and various religious philosophical nuances” to come together and defend “the human person’s natural and sacred rights to freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of association among people [...]. These rights must be an axiom of Christian politics.”³⁰ Bulgakov even tried to attract the Polish Catholic scholar Marian Zdziechowski as a contributor. Zdziechowski was one of the promoters of Russian thought and Catholic Modernism in Poland.³¹ In his letters to him, Bulgakov claimed that “universal Christianity must win, and universality (*vselenskost’*) is the highest point towards which we are striving,” and praised him for his “striving to constantly acquaint the West with our world and thereby contribute to tearing down the walls erected by history.”³² However, Bulgakov changed priorities rather quickly: “The cause of Christian politics must be an interdenominational cause and, in concept, all-national, *although for the time being we are setting purely national, Russian goals* [italics added],” because the task of the “emancipation of the Church by its separation from the state” and the “rebirth of communal church life” must be accomplished *before* it could “approach the realization of the ideas of Christian politics.”³³ He did not shy away from harsh condemnations of the current Church institution in passages like these:

And, it’s strange, Russian people attribute to themselves the defense of religion, they turn to the defense of Orthodoxy, they want to act in the name of God. But how do they really treat religious thought, how do they really treat the Orthodox Church? They treat it as a means to a political end, as some kind of patent of trustworthi-

et contra, ed. I. I. Evlampiev (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2003), n. 6.

29 Zen’kovskii, “Iz vospominanii,” 117.

30 Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha*, 23, 14; “An Urgent Task,” 149, 144.

31 Irina Vorontsova, “Sta’ia ‘neokatolika’ M. E. Zdzekhovskogo ‘Modernistkoe dvizhenie v R.-K. Tserkvi’ kak istochnik po rimo-katolicheskomu modernizmu: opyt kriticheskogo analiza,” *Voprosy filosofii* 2 (2017).

32 Al’vidasa Iokubaitisa, “Pis’ma S. N. Bulgakova M. E. Zdzekhovskomu,” *Vil’nius. Litva literaturnaia* 4 (1990), 158.

33 Bulgakov, *Neotlozhnaia zadacha*, 24; “An Urgent Task,” 150–51.

ness, they thereby pervert the very idea of the Church, blaspheming it, blaspheming God. The guardians, in clear violation of the commandments of Christ, have long maintained in us an atmosphere of religious warfare and inquisition [...]—this is how the supposed supporters of Orthodoxy have defended it—by completely abandoning it to the whim of the autocracy, thus repeating the sad example of Iscariot.³⁴

Hence, Bulgakov's shift from "universal Christianity" to "Orthodox Church reform" was not a change of attitude with regard to his ecumenical vision of universal Christianity. Rather, he wished to begin its practical implementation by preparing the ground for it in Russia.

In keeping with the spirit of universal Christianity, *Narod* reported on a brochure of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) founded in 1895. It claimed to unite 11 national unions with 105,000 members (students and professors) by 1905. The author remained sceptical: "Isn't this one of many clerical organizations [...] without any future?"³⁵ Which is somewhat ironic, since in 1908, Baron Pavel Nicolay, the founder of the (protestant) Russian Student Christian Movement (RSKhD) in St. Petersburg, in a letter to John Mott, the general secretary of the WSCF and leader of the YMCA, suspected Bulgakov of the same: "Professor Bulgakoff,—formerly [...] an extreme atheist, [...] has been drawn to Christianity, [and] is going towards the opposite extreme—clericalism."³⁶ However, Nicolay praised Bulgakov's striking lecture on "The Intelligentsia and Religion" before 500 students, and the latter was equally impressed by the RSKhD.³⁷

In the *Narod* entry, Mott is probably mentioned for the first time in Bulgakov's environment: he would become a major figure in Bulgakov's life, especially in exile. The Orthodox RSKhD, founded in Psherov in 1923, the St. Serge Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris in 1924, and other Russian exilic institutions were established with the American YMCA's financial support.³⁸ The new emphasis on the Orthodox confession of the RSKhD in exile in the 1920s reflected the wish to preserve the Orthodox tradition given its persecution in the USSR, but the goals of "establishing a community with the Christians of all

34 Sergei Bulgakov, "O zadachakh narodnogo predstavitel'stva v Rossii," *Narod* 3 (1906), 1.

35 "Vsemirnyi khristianskii studencheskii soiuz," *Narod* 6 (1906), 4.

36 Robert Bird, "YMCA i sud'by russkoi religioznoi mysli (1906–1947)," *Issledovaniia po istorii russkoi mysli: Ezhegodnik za 2000g.* (Moscow: OGI, 2000), 83.

37 Bird, "YMCA," 184.

38 Matthew Miller, *The American YMCA and Russian Culture. The Preservation and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity, 1900–1940* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 159, 201.

confessions in the West"³⁹ mark a clear continuity with the incipient ecumenical conversations of 1906.

Christian Politics, Individuality, and Activity. One of the most fascinating aspects of *Narod* is that it created a forum for readers' responses to the Christian Socialist project—a genuine exchange of views. "Christian politics (*obshchestvennost'*)," became the journal's only real interchange with readers,⁴⁰ with a special column dedicated to the topic. The first entry of this section published a letter by Bulgakov "To my correspondents" related to his earlier article on an "Urgent Task." He mentioned letters "from men and women, priests and students, seminarists and 'kursistki' (female students), doctors and jurists, etc." They revealed the "religious yearning and suffering of spiritual loneliness" of the modern soul, a thirst for "new forms of religious life and social creativity," because they found satisfaction neither in political parties nor in the "impoverished forms of existent Church community." *Narod* would print their letters in order to connect these people.⁴¹

One of the letter writers was Ivan Vetrov,⁴² who called himself an "anarchist-communist" and a "religious metaphysician." In essence, Vetrov wanted to know if the Union of Christian Politics shared his convictions about religious individualism, the abolition of the Church as an institution, and anarchism, because "a religious person can only be an individualist and each form and hierarchy externally forced on him harms the holy of holies of his soul."⁴³ The *Narod* editors made clear that they did not, since they were committed to Christian politics, church reform, and constitutional-democratic reform. Still, Svetsitskii's and Bulgakov's answers to Vetrov were slightly different. Svetsitskii strongly condemned Vetrov's "antichristian religious individualism" and what he described as an "inward religious 'monastery' common to the majority of believers today." Clerics should be chosen by the church members, and hierarchy need not be about power, but rather a "special form of service." Also, a Christian should not abandon the apostolic teaching about power: "For a Christian the best political structure is one that reflects the notion of the state

39 Nikolai Berdiaev et al., "Dukhovnye zadachi russkoi emigratsii," *Put'* 1 (1925), 6.

40 Kolerov and Lokteva, "S. N. Bulgakov i religiozno-filosofskaiia pechat," 409.

41 Sergei Bulgakov, "Moim korrespondentam," *Narod* 1 (1906), 4–5.

42 Vetrov was a pseudonym of the publicist Izrail' S. Blank. See V. P. Svetsitskii—I. S. Blanku (8.4.1906, in: Keidan, *Vzyskukiuushchie grada*, 670.

43 Ivan Vetrov, "K voprosu o 'Soiuze khristianskoi politiki,'" *Narod* 4 (1906), 4.

as the Church in process of becoming.”⁴⁴ The latter point was not shared by Bulgakov, who advocated for a clear separation of church and state.

Bulgakov’s answer to Vetrov, entitled “Individualism or sobornost’?,” mainly discussed the “eternal antithesis between the person and society,” and, in contrast to Svetsitskii’s, reflects an unwillingness to condemn “individualism” altogether. Later that year, Bulgakov would prominently criticize Karl Marx’s lack of attention to the “the problem of individuality” of each human person,⁴⁵ who, in Bulgakov’s view, was dignified in the Christian teaching on the image of God.⁴⁶ At the same time, he tried to avoid both secular and ecclesial individualism (see below). Bulgakov’s rather confusing struggle for a suitable conception of personal individuality is expressed in his contribution: in the process of growing up, he suggests, a human becomes more individualist, yet by acknowledging the new potentials and boundless strivings of his spiritual “I,” the “threads that bind individuals to humanity become ever more complex, subtle and strong.” Bulgakov reminds his reader of the lonely sufferings of Lord Byron’s self-exiled heroes (Child Harold, Manfred) who listen to the sermon of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. Nevertheless, “individualism and sobornost’ are correlating notions” in modern human consciousness that should not fight each other. The fact that “the person awakened and became conscious of its own self,” that the child left home and its mother’s comfort, cannot and should not be undone. However, the healing of individual suffering by external bonds or even a “Social Democratic Church” will not work, because only “common love, a common religion, i. e., the Church” can overcome individualism, by not annihilating, but confirming the spiritual “I.” In this sense, Bulgakov argued that “a religious person by definition cannot be an individualist, he partakes of sobornost’, he is in the Church.” Religion provides an objective meaning to personal religious experiences, and religious individualism is a “typical misunderstanding of our time,” caused by the “anti-ecclesial characteristics of the

44 Valentin Svetsitskii, “Otvét g. Vetrovu na písmo ego k S. N. Bulgakovu,” *Narod* 5 (1906), 2; on the transformation of the state into the Church see Dostoevsky’s novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book 2, chapter 5.

45 Original publication: “Karl Marks kak religioznyi tip,” *Moskovskii ezhenedel’nik* 22, 23, 24, 25 (1906). In this paper we cite the separate brochure. Sergei Bulgakov: *Karl Marks kak religioznyi tip* (Moscow, 1907), 12. English translation by Luba Barna: Sergei Bulgakov, *Karl Marx as a Religious Type* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publ., 1979), 51.

46 Even from the perspective of the dean of the Moscow Theological Academy, individuality was “one of the most characteristic traits of our time, [...] previously strongly suppressed.” Cited by Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13.

historical Church” with its rituals and formalism.⁴⁷ With regard to Tolstoy’s harsh critique of the institutional Church, and since Tolstoy’s excommunication in 1901 had been a major event, Vetrov wanted to hear about Bulgakov’s position on Tolstoy, and Bulgakov promised to write about him later. He did not in *Narod*, but actually wrote no fewer than nine articles about Tolstoy between 1904 and 1912. In a nutshell, Bulgakov condemned Tolstoy’s religion of self-redemption and “moralization of religion,” but highly praised his contributions to the “spiritual birth of personality.”⁴⁸

Like Bulgakov, Zen’kovskii placed strong emphasis on a free religious individuality. He argued that Marx’s call for “unification of workers” had “something liberating and appealing,”⁴⁹ but objected that Marx only thought of economic liberation and unification by means of state measures, while liberalism wanted to free individuals from state oppression. Socialism risks becoming oppressive, because “the truth of individualism is more primordial, closer and deeper than the truth of any restrictions of individuals whatsoever”; the tension between both can be resolved only on religious grounds by “religious politics.”⁵⁰ Yet in this context, both Bulgakov and Zen’kovskii criticized the historical Orthodox Church’s “cultivation of individualism.”⁵¹ In “The Social Obligations of the Church,” Bulgakov admits that the Church has “deeply known and highlighted the task of personal salvation, personal holiness, [but] should equally deeply know and highlight the task of Christian politics” based on “the pathos of love and holy wrath” against social injustice. It should cultivate social conscience that, in contrast to interests that divide, unites people.⁵² This is reminiscent of Bulgakov’s groundbreaking article on the moral task of progress from 1902: “It is conscience, the moral law, [...] [that] in application to historical development, commands us to want the good in history, [...] to want *progress*.”⁵³ Now, in 1906, Bulgakov claimed that only the Church, which

47 Sergei Bulgakov, “Individualizm ili sobornost’?,” *Narod* 6 (1906), 3–4.

48 Regula M. Zwahlen, “Russische Religionsphilosophie,” in *Tolstoj als theologischer Denker und Kirchenkritiker*, ed. Martin George et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 6, 8; Christian Münch, “‘Englischer Tolstoismus,’” in *Sergij Bulgakovs Zwei Städte im interdisziplinären Gespräch*, ed. Barbara Hallensleben and Regula Zwahlen (Münster: Aschendorff, 2021), 45, 48.

49 Vasilii Zen’kovskii, “Predchuvstviiia marksizma,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 2.

50 Zen’kovskii, “Liberalizm i sotsializm,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 2–3.

51 Zen’kovskii, “Ob odnom somnenii,” *Narod* 7 (1906), 2.

52 Sergei Bulgakov, “Sotsial’nye obiazannosti tserkvi,” *Narod* 5 (1906), 1–2.

53 Bulgakov, “Basic Problems of the Theory of Progress,” in *The Problems of Idealism. Essays in Russian Social Philosophy*, ed. Randall A. Poole (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003), 111.

must want the good “for all humanity, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither free men nor slaves, neither capitalists nor workers, neither leader nor subordinate, but Christ” (Gal. 3:28), could cultivate such conscience: “the Church is a divine-human institution and demands active human activity, the work of conscience, [...], it demands the fullness of gifts, productive usage of given talents, and not to bury them in the ground.”⁵⁴ Individual social activity seems to have been Bulgakov’s contemporary solution for overcoming the “eternal antithesis between person and society.” In a letter to Volzhskii in July 1906 Bulgakov wrote: “Religious politics [*obshchestvennost*] is a problem, the ‘Kingdom of God’ is neither here nor there, but within us, and how to find it—in ‘isolation’ or among people—is hard to say. But religious participation in politics is an obligation before life.”⁵⁵

The question of “Christian activity” (*aktivnost*) received further expression in *Narod*. In his part of “Easter Thoughts,” Volzhskii highlighted what Christian activity should strive for: first, a synthesis of religion, philosophy, and science reminiscent of Vladimir Soloviev’s,⁵⁶ and second, in the words of Dostoevsky’s Zosima, an “overcoming of the personal isolation in a human common wholeness that truly cares for the person,”⁵⁷ by *active* Christian politics. Zen’kovskii objected to the Marxist claim that religion was intrinsically passive, because “the religion of Christ is a religion of the unwavering value of the person, [...] of religious freedom which is incompatible with ‘mental captivity’ and decline of creativity.” Religious activity engenders cooperation: spiritual life is the source of enormous social energy, which means not that “we appreciate religion on the grounds of its ‘social value,’ but that we illuminate the social process religiously.”⁵⁸ Alexander Presniakov, professor of Russian history in St. Petersburg, likewise argued that the Christian ideal of “full inner freedom” of man made in the image of God was the “only way to the realization of the unconditional good of human nature,” and therefore it was an ethical ideal as a call for “active love.”⁵⁹

54 Bulgakov, “Sotsial’nye obiazannosti tserkvi,” 2.

55 Keidan, *Vzyskuiushchie grada*, 828.

56 This topic was addressed by Bulgakov’s article “Voskresenie Khrista i sovremennoe soznanie,” about the compatibility of the theory of evolution and the theology of resurrection: Sergei Bulgakov, *Narod* 1 (1906), 2–3; German translation by Katharina Breckner and Regula Zwahlen, “Die Auferstehung Christi und das moderne Bewusstsein,” in Sergii Bulgakov, *Zwei Städte* (Münster 2020), 434–42.

57 Volzhskij, “Paskhal’nye dumy,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 1.

58 Zen’kovskii, “Ob odnom somnenii,” 2.

59 Alexander Presniakov, “Nash tserkovnyi vopros,” *Narod* 5 (1906), 2–3.

Joining the discussion, another letter responding to Bulgakov's "Urgent Task" objected that a rationalist "Union of Christian Politics" was useless, since God could only be found by mystical experience. Bulgakov acknowledged the point, but argued that the union was a first step to gather like-minded people in order to debate what Christian politics really is.⁶⁰ This process was necessary, because the official Church was only a state "chancellery of spiritual matters" or an "office of Orthodox confession" which sought to rescue the collapsing autocracy by organizing spectacles like the canonization of Serafim of Sarov (in 1903).⁶¹ In Bulgakov's view, the

Russo-Japanese war [was] the fruit of a series of criminal mistakes by our government, and the "office" [i. e., the Church], instead of exposing and talking sense into the government, organized prayers to "smash the enemies down," and to hand over icons to [...] generals and admirals.⁶²

The Church kept silent in response to Bloody Sunday in January 1905 and the October pogroms in Kiev—a great sin in Bulgakov's view: "All have understood and seen that the Church was enslaved by the state and it did not even recognize the level of its own enslavement."⁶³ Hence, Russia needed a church reform and Orthodox Christians should strive for it. Bulgakov's comments evoke a series of vital questions vis-à-vis the political role of the Church, though he does not pose them himself. Should the Church merely call for peace? How should it interact with the government? Should it pray for the soldiers? Or demarcate a specific stance vis-à-vis particular political and military issues?

Church Reform and the Clergy. "If I were an artist, I would paint a picture of this scene and name it: 'Episode from the resurrection of the Church.'" Bulgakov's scene depicts a girl in prison, tormented by a guard. A priest stands up for her and is admonished by the guard: "And as a priest, you're not ashamed?!"⁶⁴ Priests of such strong convictions were invited to write for *Narod*,⁶⁵ which re-

60 M. L., "Pis'mo intelligenta," and Sergei Bulgakov, "Post-scriptum," *Narod* 7 (1906), 2.

61 See John Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia. The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism before the Revolution* (New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013), 30–32.

62 Bulgakov, "Sotsial'nye obiazannosti tserkvi," 1–2.

63 Bulgakov, "Sotsial'nye obiazannosti tserkvi," 1–2.

64 Sergei Bulgakov, "O zadachakh narodnogo predstavitel'stva v Rossii (Iz rechi, skazannoi pered izbirateliami v Kieve)," *Narod* 2 (1906), 1.

65 Every *Narod* issue contained an advertisement for the journal "Notes from Rural Pastors" (*Otkliki Sel'skikh Pastyrei*), a monthly journal edited by a priest called K. Kmit in Kiev.

ported on the Preconciliar Commission between March and December 1906. The controversies over Russian church reform extend back to 1861; the debate embraced all levels of ecclesial life and ran “the gamut from peasant to patriarch,” intellectuals, and churchmen. The Preconciliar Commission exposed strong tensions between an autonomous community-based understanding of the parish and the definition of the parish “as an institution under the direction of the bishop,” and the Commission eventually opted for the latter.⁶⁶ In *Narod* Svetsitskii and Vladimir Ern appealed to the Commission members first and foremost to abolish spiritual censorship concerning debate groups with regard to the Church Council,⁶⁷ but these hopes were soon deceived.⁶⁸

In “Three Letters by a Rural Priest (a modern epos),” a priest told his story about his reading groups for intelligent rural parishioners, their belief that the Tsar’s October Manifesto from 1905 brought the kingdom of God to Russia, his efforts to prevent radicalism among workers’ unions, and his attempt to find a solution in a conflict between farmers and their landowner. Nevertheless, the priest was arrested, released, and again investigated—“There is nowhere to find the truth, and God only knows where to look for defense.” In the end, he received permission to serve, but according to the *Narod* editors this was a rare happy ending in such affairs.⁶⁹

Furthermore, *Narod* published two essays about the situation of Russia’s clergy, both of which deplored the suffering of the parish clergy under the knout of archbishops and monks and the Holy Synod, identified as a secular power. These hierarchs both tried to “prevent the significance of the parish as an autonomous, living cell of the great Church body” and built a wall between pastors and their parish by countless prescriptions and instructions. A pastor was expected to be a “clerk of the office of Orthodox confession,” with the task of preventing “a development of a conscious relation to the needs of the life around them,” because the secular power knew very well that “this would not be favorable for its own views in the end.”⁷⁰ A similar critique was articulated by Presniakov, who argued that the Eastern Church perverted the ideal of the Church as a guiding principle for society by the bureaucratization of the clergy, and criticized its close union with the political structures.⁷¹

66 Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy*, 4–5, 13–14.

67 Valentin Svetsitskii, Vladimir Ern, “Tserkovnaia reforma,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 4.

68 “Pravda-li?” [Seriously?], *Narod* 2 (1906), 3.

69 Sviashchennik N. L., “Tri pis’ma sel’skogo sviashchennika (sovremennaia epopeia),” *Narod* 2 (1906), 2.

70 Iver’, “Dukhovenstvo v Rossii i na zapade,” *Narod* 3 (1906), 2–3.

71 Presniakov, “Nash tserkovnyi vopros,” 2–3.

3. *Narod* as a Prism for Revolutionary Politics

While as noted above, Bulgakov had not fully made the transition to the Church in 1906, this moment does mark the apex of his political engagement. Christian Socialism was not an abstract theoretical construct. The very act of founding this ambitious daily newspaper with his voice arguably the most prominent testifies to an acute desire to translate ideas into practice. *Narod* had a genuine political and social program, and therefore helps us understand what Christian socialism meant in its application to the issues of the day. *Narod*, as an historical document, can also function for us as a glimpse into the political configurations of the city and the country at an extraordinarily tense moment in the unfolding of the Russian Revolution. Indeed, this is how *Narod*'s participants conceived the time they were living in: this was the great Russian Revolution, right now in 1906.⁷²

The Political Moment: Elections and Revolution. The spring of 1906 was the moment when the "umbrella" political organizations, no longer illegal, transformed themselves into actual parties capable of canvassing and collecting votes.⁷³ Without doubt, the single most pressing issue on the minds of *Narod*'s contributors was the elections to the First Duma, held through February and March; the opening session of the Duma loomed just weeks ahead, on 27 April (OS). Bulgakov opened the second issue of *Narod* with an expansive programmatic article, detailing the tasks he envisioned for the newly-elected delegates. He began with an impassioned general description of the overall sociopolitical situation, and appealed to Soloviev's earlier judgment:

It was expressed about 30 years ago by V. S. Soloviev, who wrote: "One thing we know for sure: if Russia does not fulfill its moral duty, if it does not renounce national egoism, if it does not renounce the law of power and does not believe in the power of law, if it does not sincerely desire spiritual freedom and truth, it can never have lasting success in any of its affairs, either external or internal."⁷⁴

72 See esp. M. Plebeiskii, "Blizitsia vremia ... [Pis'mo v redaktsiiu], *Narod* 3 (1906), 2.

73 This is the subject of Emmons' classic study. Terence Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

74 Bulgakov, "O zadachakh," *Narod* 3:1.

The article is suffused with the sense of the world-historical significance of the new Duma institution. Unlike Germans or Englishmen calmly proceeding to their established Reichstag or Parliament, Russians would be making their way to an “arena of struggle” where they could potentially be greeted by bayonets and cannon muzzles from one side or hostile mistrust from the other. Nothing less than Russia’s salvation was on the line: “And now, those representatives of the people whom we are electing [...] must save Russia, endow it with law and right, and restore the truth that has been desecrated.”⁷⁵ At the same time, Bulgakov had an extremely ambitious but also very concrete agenda for the Duma. The first task was the proper organization of the organ itself, including the abolition of the curial system of elections. Next was the reform of the State Council, and the rectification of past errors: assigning responsibility for the recent pogroms, proclaiming full amnesty for political prisoners and exiles,⁷⁶ and abolishing the death penalty. Once these mistakes of the past had been resolved, the Duma could move on to a positive program: establishing the rule of law and the inviolability of the person, “freeing” the church from the state by abolishing state religion, affirming freedom of conscience and speech, and resolving the national question by legalizing Poland’s autonomy. Then one could proceed to more pedestrian matters such as the agrarian question, which Bulgakov saw as increasing the land allocated to the peasants; and then the “workers’ question” as well.⁷⁷ One can only imagine his disappointment with the actual Duma given these expectations: there was no progress on Bulgakov’s agenda, although Prince Urusov did make a scandalous speech accusing the authorities of complicity in the Jewish pogroms.⁷⁸

Narod also addressed the practical issues of party politics. Without any doubt, *Narod*’s participants identified with the center-left Kadet party, which they saw as precariously situated between the stubbornly entrenched autocracy (the “sphinx of bureaucratic love of power”) and the equally mysterious peasantry (“also a sort of sphinx”).⁷⁹ What did “the people” really think and want? Would the workers trust the Kadets? Evidence indicated that they did not, at least at first. Representatives of the Kadet Party were handing out leaflets to

75 Bulgakov, “O zadachakh.” On Bulgakov’s apocalyptic vision of the Duma see Evtuhov, *Cross and Sickle*, 118–22.

76 The release of political prisoners, a crucial aspect of revolution and post-revolution tumult, appears repeatedly on the pages of *Narod* and is clearly a major concern.

77 Bulgakov, “O zadachakh.”

78 Sarah Warren, *Mikhail Larionov and the Cultural Politics of Late Imperial Russia* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 64.

79 Bulgakov, “Narodnye predstaviteli i gosudarstvennaia дума,” *Narod* 4 (1906), 1.

workers gathered in front of the municipal дума in Kiev, only to receive the response: "Let's go talk about this, we need to elect our own people and not Jews and professors."⁸⁰

Another incident clearly produced a strong impression, because the newspaper reports it several times: On 4 April at a pre-election meeting for Kiev workers, twenty-seven of forty-one eligible voters showed up, and voted 20–7 to boycott the elections, which they considered unrepresentative of workers' interests. Defying the boycott, five of them appeared the next day and chose two electors anyway. So, whom did they represent? The author speculated that they were most likely on the right of the political spectrum. A similar boycott had also failed in St. Petersburg. The workers, the author insists, should have sided with the Kadet Party. In the fight for political freedom, everyone temporarily needed to ignore factors like class antagonism and the prevalence of bourgeois politics.⁸¹ The centrality of the Duma elections in *Narod's* authors' consciousness is confirmed by a plethora of short reports, in every issue, detailing local elections in Kiev and across Russia.

In keeping with the importance of reader "feedback" through published letters, an interesting exchange, in the final two issues, takes on the question of autocratic power. A sort of conversation takes place among Lashniukov, an anonymous "Subscriber," and by implication Sventsiskii, Vetrov⁸²—and Bulgakov as the shadow presence who initiated the exchange.⁸³ Lashniukov vehemently argues that the tsar must take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution,⁸⁴ only to be chided by the Subscriber that a Christian's (i. e., the tsar's) word cannot be subordinated to a political document. Lashniukov then refers the subscriber back to Sventsiskii's "Answer to Vetrov,"⁸⁵ for the proper distinction between autocracy and the tsar's power. "The 'best Christian,' whoever he may be, cannot be an unlimited autocrat,"⁸⁶ or as Sventsiskii had put it, the only form of government directly opposed to Christianity is an autocratic one. "Acceptance of Autocracy is already a renunciation of Christ."⁸⁷

80 S. [Bulgakov], "K vyboram po kievskomu uezdu. Kartinki s natury," *Narod* 5 (1906), 4.

81 Bulgakov, "Rabochie i gosudarstvennaia дума," *Narod* 6 (1906), 1. The problem appears to have been less pronounced outside of the big cities. In the district elections, 76 out of 79 eligible electors attended the meeting, and the question of a boycott did not arise.

82 On Vetrov see n. 40.

83 These letters form a sort of coda to the dialogue described in this essay, 9–10 (n. 41).

84 Lashniukov, "O prisiage konstitutsii," *Narod* 6 (1906), 2.

85 Sventsiskii, "Otvét Vetrovu."

86 Lashniukov, "Otvét podpischiku," *Narod* 7 (1906), 2.

87 Sventsiskii, "Otvét Vetrovu."

Pogroms & the Jewish Question. It is perhaps a peculiarity of the Kiev setting that the “Jewish question” loomed especially large. As Scott Ury has shown, the Revolution of 1905 proved transformative for Warsaw’s Jewish population.⁸⁸ A similar point might be made for Kiev, the second-largest city on the territory of the Pale of Settlement.⁸⁹ Memory of the Kishinev pogrom just three years earlier remained sharply painful; indeed, Archimandrite Mikhail (Semënov) noted, on the second page of the first issue of *Narod*, that the pogrom had, like the new newspaper, begun on Easter Day in 1903.⁹⁰ For Mikhail, the link was more than coincidental: he perceived the Kishinev events as a “second crucifixion” in which Christ’s disciples trampled the scrolls of Divine Law with their own feet, evidently failing to understand that they were crushing not only the word of God the Father, but also the Gospel of the Son.⁹¹ Jews were mentioned in each but the last of the seven issues, with Lashniukov, in № 6, lamenting the exile of Jewish electors from Kiev as a symptom of the continued evil of the Pale, and the power of the Black Hundreds.⁹² Jewish politics was subsumed in liberal politics, with the presumption that the victory of the Kadet party would bring Jewish liberation, and corresponding disappointment when it did not. To return to Mikhail: Easter Day in 1906 was a dual Easter, because “Apart from the festival of the Resurrected God, we celebrate the Easter of the people in the process of resurrection,” the moment when “we as a people could cleanse ourselves of the shame of the sinful, Bartholomean days in Kishinev.”⁹³

There was also, however, a philosophical dimension to the conversation about Jewishness, which marks it as an integral part of the Christian Socialist vision. It was articulated by Anna Inozemtseva⁹⁴ under the fairly banal title

88 Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

89 On the Kievan *fin de siècle* see Irena R. Makaryk and Virlana Tkacz, *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation* (Toronto, 2010), and Michael Hamm, *Kiev: A Portrait, 1800–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), ch.7.

90 Mikhail’s biography (1873/74–1916) is astonishing, as Zinaïda Gippius noted: a Russian Jew, Orthodox archimandrite, professor at Kazan Theological Seminary, Old Believer bishop, progressive journalist, *intelligent*, hermit, and religious proselytizer of the “new” Christianity. He died at the age of 42 after being assaulted in the street. Zinaïda Gippius, *Siniaia kniga: peterburgskii dnevnik, 1914–1918* (Belgrade: Tipografia Radenkovicha, 1929), 193.

91 Arkhimandrit Mikhail, “U podnozhia raspitiia,” *Narod* 1 (1906), 2.

92 Lashniukov, “Vse-taki vysylaiut!,” *Narod* 6 (1906), 3.

93 Mikhail, “U podnozhiaia.”

94 Anna Andreevna Inozemtseva (née Zolotilova, 1864–1915 [?]) was a writer and journalist from Nizhnii Novgorod who published short stories in a variety of local and national

“Christianity and the Jewish Question.” And yet, the author took her argument from the far more interesting piece by Vladimir Soloviev, with the title inverted: “Judaism and the Christian Question.” Here he proposed (and was feebly echoed by Inozemtseva) that it was Christians who were lacking in a religious perspective, and that by reducing the Jews to a political problem they were betraying their own faith while the Hebrews had a more appropriate, religiously-infused view of Christians. “The Jews always took a Jewish stance towards us, while we Christians have still not learned to take a Christian stance towards the Jews.”⁹⁵ Soloviev launched a wide-ranging exploration of three questions which he saw as fundamental to this discrepancy. His points were that Christ himself came from the Jewish milieu because Judaism was particularly receptive to the notion of Godmanhood, that the majority of the Jews mistakenly failed to accept Christianity because they did not understand the truth of the Cross (i. e., suffering), and that the Slavic peoples, specifically Russia and Poland, were ideal for coexisting with the chosen people of Israel, because only together could all three unite to pursue the perfect theocracy fusing the Church, the tsar, and prophecy—each of which essential principles was embodied differently by Orthodox Russians, Catholic Poles, and Jews. The current inability to coexist should not be blamed on history. Rather, the problem lay with the secularized, jaded Christians. It was Christians who were not following the Word of their Book, not the Jews.⁹⁶ It should be noted that the ultimate end was the conversion of the Jews, because once the Christians had shown them “visible and *palpable* Christianity” they would recognize this superior truth.⁹⁷ Inozemtseva echoes Soloviev quite precisely and consciously. We should not apply Christ’s words on the cross, “they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34), to the wicked instigators of pogroms, but admit that they are insulting Christ and condemn them for that. Only then will our will be consonant with that of Christ, and “will lead all of humanity, by means of mercy and love, to acknowledge Christianity’s truth.”⁹⁸

journals, and a first volume of collected works (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1899). It is curious that she shared this interest in Soloviev with her fellow Nizhnii Novgorod journalist, Anna Shmidt, who imagined herself as Sophia.

95 Vladimir Soloviev, “Evreistvo i khristianskii vopros” (1884), in: Soloviev, *Stat’i o evreistve* (Jerusalem: “Maslina,” 1979), 7.

96 Soloviev, “Evreistvo,” 42–43.

97 Soloviev, “Evreistvo,” 56.

98 Anna Inozemtseva, “Khristianstvo i evreiskii vopros,” *Narod* 4 (1906), 1. On Bulgakov’s own “insistence on the ultimate Christological destiny of Israel” and his internalization

Capital Punishment. Possibly the most interesting issue of *Narod* is № 4, Friday 7/20 April—because here the editors published the transcript of Vladimir Soloviev’s speech from 13 March 1881, in which, while acknowledging the obvious guilt of the assassins of Alexander II, he urged the new tsar to pardon them and spare them the death penalty. It was a position that cost him his job at the university. The people, says Soloviev, can know only one truth—God’s or the tsar’s—and God’s is “Thou shalt not kill.” Capital punishment has a rich history in Russia. Recently, Elena Marasinova has argued that the *de facto* abolition of the death penalty under Empress Elizabeth in the eighteenth century was a reflection not of the Enlightenment (and hence “progress”), but of Elizabeth’s profound religiosity: Orthodox principles made capital punishment untenable.⁹⁹ As we know, it came back with a vengeance, most famously with the (botched) hanging of the Decembrist conspirators.

Capital punishment was one of Bulgakov’s main issues during the years of revolution—one on which he had a very specific practical position, and a considered moral argument to back it up. The practical cases are the following. On 19 March 1906 Lieutenant (Petr) Shmidt (whom many know only as the name of a Neva bridge, now Blagoveshchenskii) and three sailors were executed by firing squad for their leadership of the real Black Sea mutiny of 1905—the revolt on the cruiser *Ochakov* (not the battleship *Potemkin*), joined by a significant part of the Black Sea fleet. The execution was greeted by demonstrations and expressions of “religious horror before the sea of blood in which our poor homeland is drowning,” and a controversial memorial service for Shmidt at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.¹⁰⁰ The second was the case of the SR terrorist Maria Spiridonova (1884–1941), who carried out her mission to kill the Tambov provincial official and leader of the local Union of the Russian People Gavriil Luzhenovskii in January 1906. In an echo of the acquittal of Vera Zasulich three decades earlier, Bulgakov came to the impassioned defense of this “sweet Russian girl” who had killed out of “love and spiritual suffering” and suffered horrendous beatings if not rape (this was discussed at length) at the hands of her captors. The article, placed prominently on page 1 of the last

of the “‘Jewish question’ as a Christian one,” see Inga Leonova, “Christianity and the Jewish Question,” in *The Wheel* 26/27 (2021), 73–79.

99 See for example Elena Marasinova, “Pochemu imperatritsa Elizaveta Petrovna otmenila smertnuiu kazn’,” *Kommersant Nauka* 6 (2017), <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3396753> (access 2024/01/26).

100 Vasilii Uspenskii, “O smertnoi kazni.—Panikhida po leitenante Shmidt,” *Narod* 4 (1906), 2.

issue of *Narod*, exhorted readers not to pass judgment, for “our torpor, our indifference provoked this young girl to commit murder.”¹⁰¹ Spiridonova's death sentence was commuted to exile to a Siberian penal colony.

The theoretical mindset behind these very concrete and to many shocking views was outlined in an essay for a collected volume, *Against Capital Punishment*, published in 1906. Bulgakov's essay posits capital punishment as partaking of that evil which is inevitably embodied in an ill-conceived, godless law that forces individuals to participate in a cold, indifferent execution. In an ironic commentary on the collection itself, Bulgakov noted that any number of pamphlets or edited volumes could be published; this was not important. What was important was the moral position, not because it is “bad” to take another life, but because the actual responsibility for any given execution rests with the public or “narod” as a whole. In other words, it is you and I who are killing this person, not the state. By his own criterion, society as a whole is complicit in the fate of the executed, and also in that of the hordes of political prisoners filling Russian jails. His opposition was a matter of political substance, and his ethical stance is one that regards society and not merely the individual.

But he goes further still. It is not just a matter of collective responsibility, but of passionately and totally putting oneself on the line: “The falsity [of publishing volumes against capital punishment] is that only he can speak with a strong and powerful voice who himself is prepared to be executed, and only when he has internally performed this execution upon himself, has denied his own being. [...] Therefore it is so awful and shameful only to *write* about the death penalty.”¹⁰²

Bulgakov's clear position found further expression in his practical activity as a delegate to the Second Duma. He extended his argument to the matter of Stolypin's courts martial, in which frequently innocent peasants or workers were arbitrarily hanged as a radical means of stopping the revolution. This, to Bulgakov, was a case of multiple capital punishments, or the application of the death penalty to hundreds of individuals. In his speech to the 12 March 1907 session, he once again brought a moral position, seeing the courts martial as

101 Bulgakov, “Iz zapisnoi knizhki,” *Narod* 7 (1906), 1.

102 Bulgakov, “O smertnoi kazni,” in *Protiv smertnoi kazni*, ed. M. N. Gernet et al. (Moscow: Tipografiia Sytina, 1906), 74; and in *Smertnaia kazn'. Za i protiv*, ed. O. F. Shishov, T. S. Parfenova (Moscow: Iuridicheskaia literatura, 1989), 56. The volume includes a list of 612 death sentences between 1826 and 1906 (some not executed, or converted to time in a penal camp).

symptomatic of Russia as an agitated sea, torn by civil war, “in no condition to tell the difference between good and evil,” inured to the value of human life.¹⁰³

Working Class & Labor Organization. Nearly every issue included a column, “From the Workers’ World,” on page four, detailing plans for a labor union or society of one sort or another, from printers to wallpaperers to various artisans.¹⁰⁴ Clearly, the *Narod* editors and authors were very serious both about practical political organization—this was not merely a debating club for theoretical issues—and about the popular (*narodnyi*) aspect of their program. There is no hint of anything specifically Christian in any of these rules and charters, though there was indeed always a provision for the “satisfaction of [members’] spiritual needs and development of their class consciousness.”¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that, while “a peasant voice” occasionally makes an appearance, and Bulgakov naturally insisted on the agrarian question as the key agenda item for the First Duma,¹⁰⁶ *Narod’s* regular focus was on workers far more than peasants—perhaps because it was, after all, an urban newspaper.

News from Kiev, Russia, and Across the World. The very first sentence of *Narod’s* programmatic agenda proclaimed that it was “an organ that is not only local (Kiev) and regional, but primarily all-Russian.” It was time, the editors proclaimed, to move the press outside the capital cities and to the regions.¹⁰⁷ *Narod* echoed its more famous national counterparts in the attention it dedicated to news items across Russia and in the larger world. Reports came in from Europe, Asia, and the United States. The negotiations of the Anglo-French Loan to Russia in Paris, signed on 16 April 1906, figure prominently.¹⁰⁸ On 10 March

103 Stenograficheskii otchet Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 12 March 1907, 397–98.

104 Specifically, the charters printed in *Narod’s* seven days were for printers (the largest union in Kiev, with more than 700 members), suppliers (explicitly, male and female), salespeople, carriage-makers, and wallpaper and drapery workers. These are all “in-between” workers, part artisan and part worker—not like assembly line workers in a factory, for example.

105 E. g., “Iz rabochego mira,” *Narod* 5 (1906), 4.

106 “Krest’ianskii golos,” *Narod* 1 (1906) 5; Bulgakov, “O zadachakh,” *Narod* 3 (1906), 2.

107 Bulgakov, Volzhskii, “Ot redaktsii,” 1. This echoes an argument made by Dmitrii Mordovtsev three decades earlier. D. L. Mordovtsev, “Pechat’ v provintsii,” *Delo* (Sept.–Oct. 1875).

108 See Olga Crisp, “The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 39, 93 (1961), 497–511: 497: “In Russia the political parties in opposition to the government of Nicholas II resented what they considered

(25 February OS) 1906, 1,099 miners perished at Courrières, in France, as the result of a coal dust explosion; the catastrophe was immediately followed by massive strikes protesting against safety conditions in the mines. These events were commented on in nearly every issue. The days of publication followed soon after the eruption of the Vesuvius in Italy on 5 April (23 March OS) and happened to coincide exactly with the major catastrophe of the San Francisco earthquake on 18 April (5 April OS), conveyed in apocalyptic terms. One report described dangerous “torn and ragged electric wires,” lack of water, fish “thrown from the bay onto the streets of the city” by the power of the earthquake, and extraordinary heat. “Three hundred head of cattle escaped from a slaughterhouse in flames and ran through the city’s streets, trampling everything in their path.”¹⁰⁹ Such events surely adumbrate the end of the world. Drawing on these, Bulgakov described the political atmosphere in Russia as “the calm before the storm”: “We stand before a yawning abyss, the Vesuvius of popular fury is only beginning to be active. The earthquake is nigh. Save yourselves before it is too late.”¹¹⁰

4. *Narod* in Bulgakov's Spiritual Evolution

As a hypothesis for further consideration, we can suggest that, while Bulgakov's spiritual development, with its multiple sharp shifts in conviction and worldview,¹¹¹ is the result of “events” internal to his consciousness and cannot necessarily be related to events in the material world, nonetheless his extended return (over two decades) to the Church as an organization and his willingness or need to work inside the Church do appear connected to politics. The shift to Orthodox Christianity, fully realized when he launched his new truly theological enterprise in the 1920s in Paris, was completed through politics. A crucial step along the way was the decision to devote his energies to concrete reforms in the Orthodox Church in Russia over the course of 1904–7, which, in his view, were the main precondition for realizing ideas of Christian politics in his

to be a hurried bargain with the autocratic government on the eve of the meeting of the newly elected national assembly. They branded the French government's decision to lend money to the Witte-Durnovo government as siding with the forces of reaction against the people.”

109 “Telegrammy (Ot S. P.B. Agentstva), *Narod* 6 (1906), 3.

110 “Na groznom rasput'i,” *Narod* 5 (1906), 1.

111 See Regula M. Zwahlen, “Sergei Bulgakov's Intellectual Journey, 1900–1922,” in *Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Caryl Emerson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 277–92.

country. The eventual ordination that followed Bulgakov's work in the Church Council, and the Bolshevik victory, in 1918, might be seen as the logical culmination of this evolution. One of the main obstacles to Bulgakov's becoming a priest earlier was definitely political too—the connection of Orthodoxy with autocracy: “I was unable to overcome this, neither did I want to, nor should I have. This obstacle abruptly vanished with the revolution in 1917: the Church was suddenly free—now persecuted and no longer official.”¹¹²

Who was Bulgakov as a politician? In his once-universally-read essay, Max Weber outlined an inspiring and demanding agenda for a vocation in politics.¹¹³ (The essay was written in 1919, and became ubiquitous in the post-WWII period.) “One can say,” Weber proposes, “that three pre-eminent qualities are decisive for the politician: passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion.”¹¹⁴ In the political projects we have examined, Bulgakov begins to look like Weber's ideal politician: the passion and sense of responsibility with which he approached land politics, the question of church reform, a Christian press, and the indiscriminate application of the death penalty are evident. Sense of proportion is a more difficult criterion: a contemporary reader is shocked by the almost casual ease with which he affirms the necessity of land redistribution. But by “proportion” Weber means not so much the content of a program as the ability to convert abstract ideals into practical measures; so it applies as well, in the sense that he was able to reconcile his goals with those of the Kadets, get elected to the Duma (and later the Church Council), and introduce a series of concrete proposals, some of them very significant. In each situation, Bulgakov's position was never instrumental or expedient, but always reflected a deeply-considered moral stance—which does not mean that he didn't make mistakes. Weber's famous formulation in which a “mature man” feels full responsibility for his conduct and “reaches the point where he says: ‘Here I stand; I can do no other,’” seems to fit Bulgakov very well, and is characteristic of each phase of his life, no matter how distinct the specific circumstances and projects.

112 Sergii Bulgakov, “Moe rukopolozhenie,” in *Avtobiograficheskie zametki*, ed. Lev Zander (Paris: YMCA Press 1946), 34–43: 38.

113 For Bulgakov's views on Max Weber, see “The National Economy and the Religious Personality,” *Journal of Markets and Morality* 11, 1 (2008), 157–79 (dedicated to Ivan F. Tokmakov, Bulgakov's father-in-law, a wine merchant, not the writer mentioned by the translator); on Bulgakov's correspondence with Weber see Sergii Bulgakov, *Die Philosophie der Wirtschaft* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2014), 295–97.

114 Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright (London: Routledge, 1948), 77–128: 115.