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VVEDENSKII'S RENOVATIONISM: BRIDGE BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

A case study of the ideological discourse used by Renovationist Church leader Aleksandr Vvedenskii to justify religious support for the atheist Socialist Soviet regime in the first decade after the October Revolution.

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[1] The photograph used for the front page was taken by Margaret Bourke-White in August 1941, and shows Aleksandr Vvedenskii – with his, for Orthodox clergy atypical, smoothly shaven face – in his home in Moscow, wearing his black cassock and *encolpion*, a bishop's medallion. The picture offers a number of interesting observations. First of all, the woman sitting next to him is his – significantly younger – second wife. While Orthodox priests are allowed to be married, bishops are not, let alone to be divorced and remarried. Furthermore, the extensive art collection that surrounds them hints at the decadent background of an academic member of the Russian intelligentsia. Lastly, what is striking for an Orthodox bishop, is the lack of icons in the room. However, what does catch the eye immediately is the life size portrait of Vvedenskii in secular attire hanging on the wall behind the couple, which is perhaps a fitting reflection of the colourful and extravagant academic, orator and writer Vvedenskii, who was never shy to draw attention to himself.

Introduction

In May 1922, a group of Russian Orthodox priests visited patriarch Tikhon – who was under 'house arrest' at the Donskoi Monastery in Moscow – and forced him to resign and hand over Church power to their newly established Higher Church Authority. Their aim was to reform the Church on political, ecclesiastical, and religious aspects, in order to make it more appealable to the new socialist regime and its supporters. The newly created 'Living Church' openly supported the socialist regime – and its communist ideology. One of the main leaders since the first hour, Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii (1889-1946) has written several works on the relation between Church and state, and the – in his eyes – commonalities between the ultimate goals of Christianity and communism. These works will form the core of this thesis.

The relation between religion and communism is always worth investigating. In theory, communist ideology condemns all forms of religion as counterrevolutionary and oppressing the lower strata – the proletariat which communism strives to illuminate and liberate. In practice, however, Communist authorities have encountered deeply embedded religiosity amongst the people they were hoping to attract, and therefore had to cope with this unwanted element in society. The most straight-forward way to do this has been persecution of religion, and especially in the case of the Soviet Union, this has been the response most extensively investigated and best known to the general public. However, history is never as straight-forward as it sometimes appears to be, and there have been several periods where the relationship between religion and the Soviet state have been much more complicated than outright persecution and oppression. The period under investigation here is especially interesting because it presents a transition from the monarchist religious pre-Revolutionary Russia to the 'democratic' militantly atheist Soviet Union. Thus, the topic of religion was not simply ignored or framed as unwanted, but openly and extensively discussed in all strata of society. Combined with the prehistory of reform movement in the Russian Orthodox Church, this resulted in what may be called the Renovationist paradox: the wish to renew the Church in order to find a religious foundation of support for a regime and social model that – in theory – were strongly antireligious.

Though counterintuitive as it may seem, the wish to combine Christianity and communism was not a Russian innovation. Approximately seven decades before the October Revolution ever took place, it was already attempted across the Atlantic Ocean, in the 'Oneida Community,' founded in 1848 by John Humphrey Noyes in Oneida, New York, USA. This Christian sect practiced communalism, holding firm to the belief that 'Pure Communism is Pure Christianity as applied to Work Life, and NOTHING ELSE IS.'[2] On the other hand, the current Chinese government has initiated an anti-religious campaign in 2018, which in the course of four years is supposed to cultivate

[2] 'Religion and socialism,' in *Oneida Circular (1871-1876)* No. 9, Vol. 46 (American Periodicals, 11 November, 1872) 364-366: 365.

'thought reform,' resulting eventually in 'translating and annotating the Bible, to find commonalities with socialism and establish a correct understanding of the text.[3] These two examples from both grassroots and government levels illustrate that the ideology of a socialist/communist form of Christianity has not only existed from the very early days of the existence of socialism as socio-economic theory, but in fact exists until this day in China. Thus, what took place a century ago in the Orthodox Church in Russia is in some way comparable with these two examples. However, whereas the American Oneida Community reached a maximum of 300 members, the Living Church at one point had two thirds of all Russian parishes under its control. The Chinese situation, on the other hand, may at first sight seem more comparable, but fails to reflect the fact that the Renovationist movement in the Russian Orthodox Church stemmed from a much larger debate that predates the October Revolution by several decades. The Living Church, therefore, was much more than a government-constructed socialist Church. As early as 1905, following the bloody Sunday revolts, the Russian Orthodox Church began debating the possibilities of reforming its social doctrines. For example, the idea was discussed to open up the possibilities of becoming bishop, so that no longer only monastic (black) clergy, but also the married (white) priests had the opportunity to obtain high positions in the Church hierarchy. This paper will clarify that the Renovationist movement and the foundation of the Living Church found a precedent in these reform debates of the years 1905-1917, and were not merely initiated by the regime to cause disorder in the patriarchal Church as part of a strategy of divide and conquer, but ought to be viewed in the context of the grassroots movement with a wish to renew the Russian Orthodox Church.

In an article written in 1995, Gregory Freeze states that the historiography (which, since then, has barely expanded on this specific topic) focuses mostly on the political aspects of Renovationism, i.e. the view of the Renovationist movement as an adaptation of the political orientation of the Orthodox Church in order to cope with the quickly changing political arena of the time. This was indeed a most urgent matter for the post-Revolutionary Orthodox Church, and it was solved by supporting the Bolshevik regime, for example with the words of Vvedenskii in 1923: 'Soviet power is alone, in the entire world, in all the time of mankind's existence, in actively fighting for the ideals of good.'[4] More recently, this political point of view was given renewed relevance by the crisis of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. From Moscow's point of view, the autocephaly which Constantinople unilaterally granted the Orthodox Church of Ukraine at the request of president Poroshenko can be compared to the situation of the Living Church: a close cooperation between state and religious leaders to create a new religious structure in order to destabilise the already existing one.[5] However,

[3] Lily Kuo, 'In China, they're closing Churches, jailing pastors – and even rewriting scripture,' in: *The Guardian* 13 January 2019, accessed on 24-1-2019.
[4] Gregory L. Freeze, 'Counter-reformation in Russian Orthodoxy: Popular response to religious innovation, 1922-1925,' in: *Slavic Review* vol. 54, no. 2 (Summer, 1995) 305-339: 311.
[5] Kirill Aleksandrov, 'Constantinople and new Ukrainian "Renovationism"' (25 June 2018); 'Slovo Sviateishego Patriarkha Kirilla na zasedanii Vysshego Tserkovnogo Soveta' (26 December 2018).

the focus of the Moscow Patriarchate's discourse is again on the political scheme of the Renovationist schism, rather than on the religious rhetoric that led up to it. While it is true that the Renovationist Churches enjoyed a – short – while of government support (and were even recognised and supported by the Constantinople Patriarchate) as part of a strategy of divide and conquer, Renovationism itself did not initiate in political circles, nor was it primarily political in nature. Instead, the movement originated within the Church and – as this thesis will argue – was an expression of sincere interest in renewing the Church on ecclesiastical, ideological, and theological grounds.

This example strengthens Freeze's point of view that emphasising the role of politics in the Church has resulted in overall neglect for the grassroots movement.[6] Whereas Freeze further focuses on the objections of the parish laity against the Renovationist initiatives, this thesis will pay attention to the 'grassroots' movement among the Orthodox clergy, and specifically on the writings of the priest Aleksandr Vvedenskii, as a case study of the discourse of Renovationist ideology as a grassroots movement of Orthodox priests that found its origin in pre-Revolutionary years and initiated as a way to introduce Church reform. As the Living Church arose under circumstances of extreme government influence, and the political situation was most urgent to deal with at that time, it is impossible to ignore the political side of the Renovationist debate. However, the emphasis of this paper will not be the political influence in the Church, nor the influence of the Church on society or the government – although its political implications are impossible and unwanted to completely avoid – but on the discourse that took place within the Renovationist movement, especially as developed and expressed in the works of Aleksandr Vvedenskii, a Western Russian priest and academic who became one of the central figures – if not THE leader – of the Renovationist movement after the 1917 Revolution.

The sources which will be discussed most extensively have all been written between 1918 and 1926, which is the time span from the beginning – or rather the continuation – of the Renovationist discussion after the Revolution until the moment the Soviet regime had abolished its support for the Renovationist movement and the Living Church was starting its decline. By 1927, the state had reached a status-quo with the 'mainstream' Orthodox Church and the Renovationist movement increasingly moved into oblivion. The importance of the period 1918-1926 is two-sided: on the one hand, Vvedenskii was able to speak for Renovationism as a successful movement, as it had already experienced successes. On the other, it was especially important to clearly and convincingly voice Renovationist thought, in order to oppose and counter the patriarchal Church. With regard to the context of the sources, apart from the time span, one also has to keep in mind that Vvedenskii had a thorough academic background and thus writes from the perspective of an academic. Likewise, his works are meant to address the Russian intelligentsia, both religious and atheist, and have had little appeal on the uneducated peasants and workers of the early twentieth century.

[6] Freeze, 'Counter-reformation in Russian Orthodoxy,' 307.

In chronological order of publishing, the sources which will be discussed are:

- *Anarkhizm i religiia* (Anarchism and religion) (Petrograd 1918)

An article devoted to showing the reader the destructive nature of anarchism. This point of view is to be seen in relation both to Christianity (why anarchism is inferior to religion) and to socialism (although this is not as broadly discussed). It provides a clear insight in Vvedenskii's thinking, not only in his rejection of anarchism, but moreover in his acceptation of socialism as a vital alternative.

- *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo (ocherk vzaimootnoshenii tserkvi i gosudarstva v Rossii 1918-1922)* (Church and state (an outline of the relationship of Church and state in Russia 1918-1922)) (Moscow 1923)

This book contains more than two hundred pages of historical report written by Vvedenskii on the relationship between Church and state in the years 1918-1922. As the events described took place before the Renovationist schism in the Church, it focuses in large part on the relationship of the patriarchal Church with the state, and furthermore gives extensive descriptions of the discussions at the Church councils and the turmoil surrounding them. Whereas the other primary sources are purely meant to convey Vvedenskii's opinion, the bulk of this work is descriptive in nature and does not give away much more of his personal perspective than the other sources combined. Still, there are some interesting remarks that deserve to be discussed.

- *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona* (The Church of Patriarch Tikhon) (Moscow 1923)

An article devoted to incriminating Patriarch Tikhon. In this article, Vvedenskii explains why he thinks the charges pressed by the Soviet regime against Tikhon are justified and why he should not be considered a martyr, but an enemy, not only of the Revolution, but of Christ himself.

- *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm. Disput s Mitropolitom A. Vvedenskim* (Christianity or communism. Dispute with Metropolitan A. Vvedenskii) (Leningrad 1926)

This is a literal transcript of a debate between Lunacharskii and Vvedenskii, which took place on 20 and 21 September 1925, and was organised by the Leningrad Institute for Political Education (Politsvet), in cooperation with Lunacharskii. Hence, this is not a work written or published by Vvedenskii, but by (accomplices of) Lunacharskii. However, it is a written report of his thinking, as it provides the written text of Vvedenskii's appearance in this debate. It must be noted that at this time, the Renovationists no longer enjoyed the government's special favour and this is reflected in the debate, which shows Vvedenskii being forced to take a defensive stance, which he does quite successfully.

All of these sources are accessible online on the website http://www.odinblago.ru/, which is a website of the *Odintsov blagochinie* – a smaller administrative group of parishes within the Moscow diocese

of the Russian Orthodox Church. The electronic library of this website contains an extensive list of literary works from various authors and time periods. It appears as if there is no specific underlying reason for the collection of sources on this website, other than all the sources having religion as overarching theme. The sources are freely available online and are presented autonomously, without introductory texts. In the case of Vvedenskii's works, the only suggestion that the publishing website does not endorse his words, are his titles 'archpriest,' and 'Metropolitan,' which are placed between quotation marks, reflecting the fact that the Moscow Patriarchate took away his priesthood and never recognised Vvedenskii as bishop at all. Apart from this, the reader is free to objectively read his works without any accompanying remarks.

In order to thoroughly investigate the works of Vvedenskii, it is necessary to find a structure which can be followed throughout the literary research. Vvedenskii himself hands down a solid foundation for such a structure in his findings of a survey held in 1911. In his view, the Russian intelligentsia were leaving the Church, because it preached dogmas that contradicted modern scientific insight, and furthermore its clergy were too reactionary in political nature. These two points can be followed as a red thread throughout the rest of Vvedenskii's life: to the outside world, he became an apologist for Christianity, trying to convince the non-believing intelligentsia of the religious truths. Within the Church, he tried to initiate reforms that would diminish the 'reactionary' influence and make the Church more revolutionary and socialist. However, the sources will not be discussed independently according to these two characteristics only, as doing so would not do right to their context. Although they have been written in different time frames and with different objects in mind, they should not be regarded separately from each other, but as integral parts of a coherent development of thought. Vvedenskii's thinking – as far as can be reconstructed from the sources – can be broken down into several main themes: firstly, his criticism of the patriarchal Church; secondly, his vision on the Church-state relationship; and thirdly, his vision on 'true religion' or more specifically, 'true Christianity.'

In order to fully comprehend the context of these works, it is first of all necessary to give a thorough overview of the Living Church and the movement of Renovationism as a whole, drawing on several primary and secondary sources. This includes the conception of Renovationist thought prior to the Revolution of 1917 and the development of the movement that longed for Church reform. Furthermore, insofar as this paper deals with the works and ideology of Aleksandr Vvedenskii, it is obviously necessary to shed light on him as a person as well. As the most extensive biographical information about Vvedenskii was written down by one of his close friends later in life, Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin, the latter ought to be properly introduced in order to contextualise the information available about the life of Aleksandr Vvedenskii. Krasnov-Levitin, who lived from 1915 until 1991, was a Russian writer and human rights advocate, who had been influential since the 1950s in

spreading the Orthodox faith among youngsters in the Soviet Union.[7] Since childhood, he had had a lively interest in both Christianity and Marxism, so it is not completely surprising that he joined the Living Church and was ordained deacon under influence of Aleksandr Vvedenskii. After Vvedenskii's death, he joined the patriarchal Church as a layman, and from this position started to publish for the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*. However, fed up with the censorship in this position (both from the side of the state and the Church itself), he became one of the pioneers of the *Samizdat*-movement in the late 1950s.[8] He was known for his ecumenical persuasion, defending Orthodox, Old Believers and the Ukrainian Greek Catholics (Roman Catholics which celebrate according to the Orthodox rite) alike and seeking support from the Vatican in order to improve the position of dissidents in the Soviet Union.[9] From all of this information, it can be deducted that Levitin was a sincere believer, who on the one hand had an interest in the social teachings of Marxism, but on the other hand was unwilling to compromise his religious convictions in order to please the socialist regime. Therefore, his view of Vvedenskii's sincerity in religious belief should be taken very seriously. After all, had Vvedenskii only led the Living Church out of a desire to please the Soviet government, Levitin – being zealously activist in his religiosity and never willing to compromise with the government in his struggle for human rights – would surely have spoken up about this. On the contrary, the picture of Vvedenskii that Levitin hands down is a very positive one: 'He was like champagne. Like a recently uncorked bottle of champagne. In all his movement, in his speeches – and in his ardent prayers, but at times also in his bitter mourning, when he openly, to all the people, repented of his sins. And at the same time sharp-minded, quick, amusing, cheerful.'[10]

This vivid image created by Levitin of the charismatic Aleksandr Vvedenskii shall be discussed later on, but first of all, it is necessary to rewind and pay attention to the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church before the 1917 revolutions ever took place.

[7] Philip Walters, 'Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov 1915-1991,' in *Religion in Communist Lands* 19:3-4 (1991), 264-270.
[8] Walters, 'Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov,' 266.
[9] Ibidem, 267.
[10] Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin, *Trudy i dni: Obnovlenčeskii Mitropolit Aleksandr Vvedenskii* (Works and days: the Renovationist Metropolitan Aleksandr Vvedenskii) (1990) 7.

I. The Old Covenant: the Russian Orthodox Church pre-1917

The Old Covenant: Church-state relations in imperial Russia

The relationship between the Church and the state in Russia was 'inherited' from Byzantium. That is, inasmuch as Russia was christened after the example of Byzantine Orthodoxy, it also received the Byzantine political philosophy of *symphonia*, an harmonic cooperation between the spiritual and world powers; the priesthood and the emperor.[11] It wasn't until the fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans in 1453 that this theory was put to practice in Russia, but since then, the lives of the Church and the state became closely intertwined. This interconnection is most iconically reflected in the image of the two-headed eagle, symbol of the Russian monarchy and directly copied from the Byzantine emperors, its two heads symbolising the cooperation of the two powers – ecclesial and worldly – as one. For the Russian situation, the successors of the Byzantine emperors, the tsars, were regarded as 'Orthodox sovereigns,' who autocratically governed the country – including the Church. The tsar's power was only confined by his duty to protect the Church, and internally, the national synod (led by its elected metropolitan, and later patriarch) was still autonomously ruling over ecclesiastical matter.[12]

However, when Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate, he practically turned the Church into a state institution, with the clergy as his civil servants, who were tasked with spiritual education and the supervision of moral conduct – including all kinds of administrative responsibilities.[13] The position of Patriarch as the head of the Church was replaced by the Holy Synod (the gathering of most important bishops), which was in turn headed by the civil *Chief Procurator*, who thus exercised state power over the Church. According to one of the most (in)famous *Chief Procurators*, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the highest form of authority was constituent in the autocratic rule of the emperor, a view that was long shared by many of the high Church leaders.[14]

However, when Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in 1917, this was cheerfully met by the Holy Synod as 'the hour of general freedom for Russia,' which subsequently refused to support the autocracy, but instead called on the Constituent Assembly to decide on a suitable political system for Russia.[15] This position was affirmed by the All-Russian Council in 1917-18, which proclaimed a position of neutrality in the political struggles of the country – which will be further discussed in the next chapter. This chapter will help to explain how it was possible for the Church to move from a position of

[11]John Meyendorff, 'Russian bishops and Church reform in 1905,' in: Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou eds., *Russian Orthodoxy under the old regime* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. 1978) 170-182: 170.
[12] Marc Szeftel, 'Church and State in Imperial Russia,' in: Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou eds., *Russian Orthodoxy under the old regime* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1978) 127-141: 128.
[13] Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests. Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and revolution 1905-1946* (Indiana University Press, 2002) 3.
[14] Michal A. Meerson, 'The political philosophy of the Russian Orthodox episcopate in the Soviet period,' in: G.A. Hosking ed., *Church, nation and state in Russia and Ukraine* (Baskingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991) 210-227: 214.
[15] Ibidem, 215; Walter G. Moss, *A history of Russia. Volume I: To 1917* (London 2005) 554-555.

political pre-eminence and close cooperation with the monarchy to its rejection of the autocracy and the welcoming of the Revolution.

Reformation of society

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Russia experienced the time of 'Great Reforms' under Tsar Alexander II, which is best known for the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, but included multiple other reforms as well. In this spirit of time, an impulse for Church reforms also slowly began to take shape. In 1853, this impulse was concisely summarised in the words of the Slavophile writer and philosopher Aleksei Khomiakov, who stated that, in contradiction to the Western Church, the Orthodox Church held the belief that 'the infallibility lies solely in the universality of the Church, which is united by mutual love, and the immutability of dogma, such as the purity of rite, is not entrusted to the protection of any hierarchy, but to the entire people of the Church, which is the body of Christ.'[16] In this concept of *sobornost'*[17] lies the foundation of a 'lay theology'; Khomyakov – a layman – asserts that the oneness of the Church is kept through mutual love by the entire 'people of the Church' and not just by the hierarchy. Thus, when it comes to matters of theological dispute, the final responsibility is not given to the monastic hierarchy, but to the Church as a whole, which also includes married parish clergy and laity. From here on out, the role of these latter groups in the Church steadily grew. Gregory Freeze argues that the public interest was attracted by provincial priest Ioann Stepanovich Belliustin. Due to his negative experiences with the monastic hierarchy – notably a traumatic collision with a bishop who rejected his attempt to reconcile faith and science as 'empty philosophising' – he portrayed a profound aversion for monks, which he called 'an evil greater than any other, Pharisees and hypocrites […who] trample justice and law […,] reward those who can pay […but] persecute and destroy the poor.'[18] As a result of what he perceived as injustice and cruelty among the Church hierarchy, he wrote and published – anonymously – a manuscript titled *Description of the rural clergy*, which exposed the Church's problems and created broad awareness among intellectuals for the necessity of Church reforms.[19] When the Church leaders found out about this work, the Holy Synod had him tried and exiled to the Solovki monastery, in the Russian Northern

[16] Peter Hauptman and Gerd Stricker eds., *Die Orthodoxe Kirche in Russland: Dokumente ihrer Geschichte (860-1980)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1988) 516.
[17] The English term for *sobornost'* is catholicity or conciliarity, but this deserves some additional explanation. Literally translated, 'taken together-ness,' it includes the word *sobor*, which stems from the word *sobrat'* – to take together. *Sobor* is also used to refer to a cathedral, or a gathering of faithful or saints. Thus, in this specific context, *sobornost'* refers to the whole community of believers, including both clergy and laity, which together act as the 'keeper of the faith.' Paul Valliere also notes that the term *sobornost'* has a significant historic link to the seven ecumenical councils, 'whose dogmatic and canonical norms a national *sobor* or council could not violate.' Cf. Paul R. Valliere, 'The idea of a council in Russian Orthodoxy in 1905,' in: Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou eds., *Russian Orthodoxy under the old regime* (Minnesota, 1978) 183-201: 186.
[18] Gregory L. Freeze, 'Revolt from below: a priest's manifesto on the crisis in Russian Orthodoxy (1858-59),' in: Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou, *Russian Orthodoxy under the old regime* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1978) 90-124: 95.
[19] Ibidem, 91.

wilderness. However, the imperial family in Saint-Petersburg had also read the manuscript and recognised it as truth, wherefore the tsar himself interceded and forbade the Synod from punishing him.[20] This incident exemplifies a number of important notions, the first and foremost being that as early as the 1850s, this priest agitated against the black clergy and accused them of serving the rich while oppressing the poor. Secondly, and surprisingly, the work of critique not only reached the intelligentsia in Saint-Petersburg, but was also approved of, notably by the tsar himself.

Reformation of the Church

By the 1860s, the white parish clergy came to play an important role in education, charity, scientific investigation, and politics. Thus, the focal point of the Church shifted from the central authorities, towardss the decentralised parishes, which resulted in the creation of diocesan congresses as local participatory organs.[21] This important shift of power (although relative, as the official and final authority of the Church was still concentrated in the monastic hierarchy, and not in some sort of democratic supervisory organ) would come to play an important role some five decades later, in revolutionary times.

But years before the October days of 1917, the turn of the century saw an increasing demand for Church reforms. In 1904, the imperial government signed into effect an Edict of Toleration, granting religious liberty to groups outside traditional orthodoxy, which was perceived by the Russian Orthodox Church as a severe rift in Church-state relations. After all, the Church now found itself at the disadvantage that it was the only religious body in Russia which was not entirely free in its action towards the state, still being bound by the centuries-old structure of the government-led Holy Synod. In order to cope with this disadvantaged position, the Church had to reconsider its role in Russian society, and the possibility to change and adapt to the new situation. To this end, the Synod – led by the Chief Procurator – held an inquiry among the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in 1905 in order to find out whether they considered reforms necessary and if so, in what aspects of Church life. The results were surprising. Although the Chief Procurator had expected the bishops to hold conservative views, the hierarchy nearly unanimously expressed a favourable position towards ecclesiastical reforms. These episcopal replies to the inquiry completely overturned the image of the Orthodox clergy as a 'corrupt and drunken clerical caste, […] a monastic hierarchy motivated by sheer self-interest, and a Holy Synod that was never anything more than a subservient ministry of the autocracy.'[22] On the contrary, in the words of John Meyendorff, the bishop's ideas of reforms disclosed their 'educational and intellectual background, their spiritual genealogy in the preceding decades and even centuries, and

[20] Freeze, 'Revolt from below,' 107.
[21] Catherine Evtuhov, 'The Church's revolutionary moment: diocesan congresses and grassroots politics in 1917,' in: Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G Marks, and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-1922,* Vol. 1, Book 1: *popular culture, the arts, and institutions* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2014) 377-402: 383.
[22] Evtuhov, 'The Church's revolutionary moment,' 381.

their remarkable willingness to recognise and grapple with the theological and canonical issues of the day, including the problems of the lower clergy and laity.'[23] Clearly, the centuries of subjugation to the civil administration installed by Peter I had not completely turned the Church into a submissive organism occupied with pleasing the state and performing hollow rituals. Instead, the Russian Orthodox Church of the early twentieth century was still dynamic at its core, willing to adapt to the changes of the time. Willing, but unable, because of the rigid state structure in which she had been constrained since Peter I. Therefore, the discussion of reforms included the strong wish to liberate the Church from government control. To this end, in the spirit of the earlier discussed *sobornost'*, almost all of the bishops expressed the need for a Church council, in which bishops, parish priests and laity together could decide on numerous ecclesiastical issues, without the interference of the state. However, under pressure of Chief Procurator Pobedonostsev, Tsar Nicolas II kept postponing the decision to allow the Council to be convened, and it wasn't until this obstacle was removed in February 1917 that the Council could actually take place – which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Debate within the Church

Despite the unanimity of the Orthodox majority on the necessity of a council, the conception of its nature – and who should be attending it – varied among several groups. Paul Valliere distinguishes three points of view: the minimalist, moderate, and maximalist conceptions of the idea of a council. According to him, the first, minimalist point of view was exemplified by the Russian Orthodox missionary Skvortsov, who merely wished for the council to be a gathering of the Russian bishops in order to elect a patriarch. Participation by lower clergy – let alone laity – was viewed with suspicion, because in this view the orthodoxy of the Church was safeguarded by the bishops.[24] The moderate view endowed the bishops with more than mere episcopal authority and ascribed to the episcopacy the embodiment of *sobornost'*, as guardians of the unity and consensus of the Orthodox community. But in order to be this archetype and representation of the Orthodox faithful, the bishops had to have a close and dynamic bond with the religious community. To this end, the 'Memorandum of a group of thirty-two priests of the capital on the necessity for changes in Russian Church governance' was published in 1905, which Valliere describes as summation of the moderate standpoint. Besides the election of a patriarch, the memorandum saw the council's goal in the restoration of the canonical freedom of the Orthodox Church, which, for them, meant autonomous governance of the Church through conciliar action in a spirit of *sobornost'*.[25] Following this line of reasoning, *sobornost'* was rooted in the independent development of parish life, and crowned by periodic councils, presided over by the capital's archbishop, bearing the title of All-Russian Patriarch. In practice, the memorandum called for the equalising of all bishops, and a significant increase in the number of episcopal dioceses,

[23] Meyendorff, 'Russian bishops and Church reform in 1905,' 171.
[24] Valliere, 'The idea of a council in Russian Orthodoxy in 1905,' 187.
[25] Ibidem, 188.

in order to assure a closer bond between bishops and their flocks. Thus, their proposed reforms shifted the centre of gravity from the episcopal authority to the grassroots parish level, of which the bishops were only meant to be the final expression and representation.

According to Valliere, the maximalist idea of a council could be called theological populism, and was propounded by symbolist writers and thinkers such as Dmitrii Merezhkovskii with his wife Zinaida Gippius, Vasilii Rozanov, and Valentin Ternavtsev, who in 1901 founded the 'Religious-Philosophical Meetings.' Together, these laymen and -women discussed the most pressing religious problems, and came up with a concept for a new Church, as opposed to the old Orthodox doctrine, which they considered to be imperfect and prone to stagnation. At the heart of their philosophising lay what they perceived as the persistent dualism in traditional Christianity: the reconciliation of Christ and the world, Church and society, God and man. In order to overcome the traditional Christian demand of overcoming man and the world, they sought to heal the schism dividing God and man by creating a 'cultural synthesis' uniting God's and humanity's justice.[26] From their point of view, the first step to this end was the reconciliation of the intelligentsia with the Church, creating a social unity from the party of humanity and the party of divinity. Their description of *sobornost'* was that of mass consciousness, which they termed *narodnost'* – which roughly translates as the 'consciousness of being a nation' – which was to result in concrete social action. In contrast to the minimalists and moderates, they did not pay any attention to the institutional structuring of the Church, not caring for historic Orthodoxy, instead promoting a new, completely decentralised Church, with the ultimate goal of perfecting human nature.

Of course, these three categories of thought on *sobornost'* given by Valliere are hardly exhaustive, and there will no doubt have been overlap between the different points of view and their adherents. However, they fruitfully serve to create an overview of the early twentieth-century debate on the structure of the Church and its social role. Especially interesting is the overlap of the different points of view with socialist thinking on themes like the importance of grassroots governance, as reflected in the importance of the parish councils as types of ecclesiastical soviets. Another point of interest is the 'neo-Christianity' promoted by Merezhkovskii and his associates, clearly reflecting socialist ideas of building towards a better future and a 'new human' and projecting these ideas on the Church. Taking this into account, the discussion of *sobornost'* can be regarded as the concrete conception of Renovationist thought, which was to be developed in the decades to come. However, the tsar's postponing of the possibility for a council did not allow for concrete actions to be taken. Furthermore, the Duma was not willing to cooperate with the Church's plans to reform, and Pobedonostsev's successor Sabler, Chief Procurator since 1911, heralded a new era of reactionary politics, surrounding himself with the most conservative of hierarchs, robbing parishes of their autonomic rights, and replacing all the power to the hands of the monastic (and mainly monarchist)

[26] Valliere, 'The idea of a council in Russian Orthodoxy in 1905,' 192.

bishops.[27] Naturally, this put the Church's search for reforms on hold, and it wasn't revived for years to come.

On the eve of Revolution

The period between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 saw the rippling effects of the nineteenth century's Great Reforms. After the Edict of Toleration, the Church, seeing all other religious groups gaining recognised independence, now found itself in a unique situation of disadvantage vis-à-vis its religious competition. Until then, the Church had accepted its subjection to the state since Peter I as long as it maintained its monopoly position of pre-eminence as the only officially recognised religious institution. The new situation forced the Church to adopt a different political role in society, and the way to do so was by adapting its hierarchical structures, at the bottom by increasing the power of the parishes, and at the top by attempting to gain independence through the abolition of the government control over the Holy Synod and its replacement with a Patriarch. However, the authorities refused to allow the Church room to act on these wishes to reform, and as long as the government was able to perform its duty as financial caretaker of the Church, the status quo remained intact. However, with the worsening economic situation, the secular authorities increasingly struggled to appease the Church's financial needs to provide for the clergy, especially in the final years leading up to the 1917 Revolution. This struggle escalated during the First World War, when it was no exception for low-ranking parish clergy to starve to death. Thus, among the lower clergy, distrust in the monarchy increased and the majority of clergy even welcomed the Revolution as 'Red Easter.'[28] In conclusion, the era of Great Reforms lighted a spark for Church reforms. The debate enlivened in the early twentieth century, but was nipped in the bud by the reactionary authorities, and was unable to bloom until the spring of Revolution.

[27] Matthew Spinka, *The Church and the Russian Revolution.* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1927) 57.
[28] Pavel Rogoznyj, 'The Russian Orthodox Church during the First World War and revolutionary turmoil,' in: Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G. Marks, and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-1922,* Vol. 1, book 1: *Popular culture, the arts, and institutions* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2014) 349-375: 352.

II. The New Covenant: the Russian Orthodox Church post-1917

The role of religion in Revolutionary times

In the context of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, it is not entirely surprising that biblical ideas were often regarded as inspiration and examples to live by, also for those who considered themselves socialists. This can be seen, for example, in the words of Alexander Mikhailov, member of *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will: an extreme-left organisation founded on revolutionary democratic and socialist ideas) who likened convicted revolutionaries in 1877 to Christian martyrs, as 'teachers of love, equality, and fraternity, the fundamental principles of the Christian commune.'[29] These same ideas can be found in the last words before the execution of his colleague Andrei Zheliabov, one of the chief organisers of the assassination of Alexander II, and whom Lenin considered equal to great revolutionaries as Robespierre and Garibaldi: 'I deny Orthodoxy, although I affirm the essence of the teachings of Jesus Christ. The essence of his teaching was my primary moral incentive. […] All true Christians must fight for truth, for the rights of the humiliated and the weak, and if necessary, even suffer for them.'[30] Already four decades prior to the Revolution, these socialist activists did not support the official Orthodox Church, but they did find inspiration – or at least justification – for their thoughts and deeds in the personality and acts of Jesus Christ.

However, the earlier mentioned term 'Red Easter,' which was used by revolutionaries after February 1917, referred to more than only the inspirational words and deeds of Jesus. More spiritually, it referred to the Christian feast of the Resurrection of Christ, and was used as a symbol to portray the 'socialist resurrection' of the Russian people. That the socialists used a religious term to symbolise their revolution was no coincidence. While socialism aimed to improve the socio-economic circumstances of the proletariat, the ultimate goal was to transfigure humanity itself, once the material conditions for this had been optimised. From this point of view, many in the socialist movement viewed the person of Jesus as a worthy antecedent of their cause, not only for his earthly ministry and care for the outcasts, but also by his resurrection and divinity. He was portrayed as a proto-proletarian, prefiguring in his resurrection the transformation of human nature into the Soviet Man. Thus, both Lenin and Jesus were seen as revolutionary martyrs, sacrificing themselves for the toiling masses. While the revolutionaries of the late nineteenth century may still be considered Christians (although non-Orthodox), this symbolism also spilled over into the thinking of socialist atheists, such as Maxim Gor'kii, as is evident in his following outcry: 'Let thousands of us die to resurrect millions of people all over the earth! That's what! Dying's easy for the sake of the resurrection! If only the people rise!'[31]

[29] Jay Bergman, 'The image of Jesus in the Russian revolutionary movement: the case of Russian Marxism,' in: *International Review of Social History* Vol. 35, No. 2 (1990) 220-248: 223.
[30] Ibidem, 223-224.
[31] Ibidem, 238.

The Bolshevik discussion of religion

This 'revolutionary religiosity' took place in the multifaceted context of the Revolutionary chaos which existed in 1917. The official Marxist vision on religion, however, was essentially incompatible with religion. Marx's ideal was revolutionary atheism, as religion was not only a means to oppress the working classes, but furthermore distracted the working classes from their revolutionary struggle. Contrary to the above mentioned examples, which glorified Christianity's social principles, while despising its authoritarian leadership and support of the state, Marx's anger was primarily aimed at these social principles, which in his eyes justified slavery in antiquity and serfdom in the Middle Ages, preached the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and transferred the settlement of injustice to heaven, thus allowing it to be continued on earth. Russian philosopher Nikolas Berdyaev found a philosophical background for this hatred in the idea that Marxism was the social development of the ideology of Feuerbach, who viewed religion from an anthropological point of view; God created in man's image, instead of the other way around: 'Religion is but the expression of man's highest nature, withdrawn from man, become alienated from him and transferred to the transcendental region of another world.'[32] As God is the highest expression of mankind – its perfect opposite – Feuerbach maintained that the poor man is in need of a rich God, and the other way around: the rich, strong and free man had no need of God, as he had already obtained the highest ideal. Marx turned this around and arrived at the conclusion that believe in an almighty God kept the proletariat enslaved and poor. In his opinion, it should therefore be destroyed, but not through imprisonment and persecution, but through revolutionising thought, in order to create the rich, strong and free man that has no need of God. In the same line of thought, Lenin was firm in his belief that religion humbled man and diminished his demand for a humane life. Therefore, he was strongly opposed not only to religion as phenomenon in itself, but also to any attempt to combine socialism with Christianity, even preferring atheist bourgeoisie over Christian communism.[33] In his eyes 'a Roman Catholic priest, who seduces a girl is much less dangerous than a "priest without cassock," a priest without the crudities of religion, an intelligent and democratic priest who preaches the making of some little god or other, for you can expose the first priest, condemn him and get rid of him, but you cannot get rid of the second so easily, and to expose him is a thousand times more difficult.'[34] Thus, the Marxist-Leninist view of religion was not only aimed against the political ideology of the Russian Orthodox Church. Although its support of the bourgeoisie government was considered problematic, the problem was not in the support per se, but much more in the underlying theology of keeping the proletariat poor and humble in the sight of an almighty power from above. To free the proletariat, meant to destroy their image of God, thus providing the opportunity for the people to become their own ideal instead of ascribing it to a deity.

[32] Nikolas Berdyaev, *The origin of Russian Communism* (London, 1937) 192.
[33] Ibidem, 202-203.
[34] Ibidem, 195.

Therefore, Lenin took severe measures to limit the functionality of religious organisations, especially the Russian Orthodox Church, such as banning religious teaching and publishing from school and public life, taking away the civil rights of the clergy, and confiscating Church property.[35] It was especially this confiscation of Church riches that caused clashes in society, and in order to demoralise any resistance, Lenin ordered the Church to be struck as fast and hard as possible, executing as many clergy as possible in the process. However, the one in charge of the confiscation campaign, Leonid Trotskii, saw another opportunity for demoralising the Church from within, by supporting a 'fifth column' of pro-Soviet clergy and setting them up against the more conservative ones, under the assumption that 'there is no more frenzied accuser than a priest from the opposite camp,' although he also agreed with Lenin that the pro-Soviet clergy were to be considered the most dangerous enemies of tomorrow, which would have to be dealt with later.[36] The resistance which this opposition from within provoked among the conservative clergy, could be used for the better in public trials which condemned the Orthodox Church and its 'counter-revolutionary' activities.[37]

Despite this harsh political reaction against religion, the earlier appreciation for certain aspects of religion remained, also among those that were not affiliated with the Church, and there were still those who thought that the government should try to cooperate with religion. In the higher echelons of the Bolshevik hierarchy, this approach to religion was expounded by Anatolii Vasil'evich Lunacharskii (1875-1933), who became the first Soviet Minister of Enlightenment in 1917. In his opinion, the traditional socio-economic approach to Marxism, was too 'cold,' overemphasising 'dry' economic theory. In contrast to this, Lunacharskii opted for a more emotional approach, focusing on the sensitive, ethical and enthusiastic side of Marxism, which he saw expressed in religion. His idea of religion must not be understood as believe in a divine being or supernatural powers, but as the ultimate expression of the more human elements of emotionality, collectiveness, and utopianism.[38] In this manner, Lunacharskii viewed religion as the necessary prism through which the entire material world was to be understood, and even went so far as to call for the creation of a new religion under Bolshevism, in which the god would be mankind itself; all of future humanity. This 'scientific socialism,' as he expressed, was 'the most religious of all religions, and the true Social Democrat is the most deeply religious of all human beings.'[39] This philosophy he termed *bogostroitel'stvo* – God-building, and it serves as the main proponent of the religious discussion within party lines: on the one hand Lenin, stating that God and religion should be entirely abolished, on the other – Lunacharskii,

[35] A.A. Bogolepov, *Tserkov' pod vlast'ju kommunizma* (München, 1958) 10.
[36] Rogoznyj, 'The Russian Orthodox Church,' 374.
[37] Heather J. Coleman, 'Atheism versus secularization? Religion in Soviet Russia. 1917-1961,' in: *Kritika, explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* Vol. 1, No. 3, (summer 2000) 547-558: 550.
[38] Roland Boer, 'Religion and Socialism: A. V. Lunacharskii and the God-builders' in: *Political Theology*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (March 2014) 188-209: 194.
[39] Nina Tumarkin, 'Religion, Bolshevism, and the origins of the Lenin cult,' in: *The Russian Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (January 1981) 35-46: 42-43.

who saw Bolshevism as a religion in itself and wanted not to abolish God, but to create an entirely new religion of humanity.[40] Lunacharskii's religiosity, however, did not mean any condoning of modern institutional Christianity, although he did affirm the revolutionary nature of original Christianity, as early as in 1904: 'In its negation of the cultural world of the time – radical, merciless negation – and in its posing in its place a completely new way of life, it was revolutionary.'[41]

But the situation after the 1917 Revolutions forced the proponents of God-building to take a more pragmatic stance towards Christianity if they were to counterbalance the Leninist movement of complete destruction of religion. This pragmatism is evident in the following anecdote. Editor of the atheist satirical journal *Bezbozhnik* (The Godless) and leader of the 'League of Militant Atheists' Emel'ian Iaroslavskii mentioned that one of his visitors – who referred to himself as an average citizen and a participant in the Revolution – had suggested that an Executive Committee of Clergy should be established to develop Church worship in its artistic form. According to him, Orthodoxy preached a form of communism, and so the old outward traditions should be kept and be regarded as cultural expressions. In this manner, Churches were to be viewed as buildings of artistic substance, much like theatres. The Church services were thus to be regarded as theatrical performances, 'a mystery play in which, symbolically, and figuratively, to the sound of mysterious centuries-old motifs and canticles, the same drama is performed, magnificent in its humanity: the tale of how the idealist Jesus Christ, a Jew and an amateur preacher, a communist, was crucified together with robbers, killed by representatives of power and capital.'[42] It is evident, that this visitor not only has no problem with religion itself, but instead suggests that the state should organise a committee of clergy in order to institutionalise and secularise religious worship. He does not attach any meaning to the inner ideology of Church traditions, but does regard their symbolic meaning as beneficial for the Revolution, once put into the right context. This same pragmatic approach was adopted by Lunacharskii, as is witnessed by his letter to Lenin on the occurrence of the new movement within the Orthodox Church, written in 1921: 'Of course, this renovated Orthodoxy with a Christian-socialist lining is not at all desired and, in the end, we undoubtedly will not need it. It will be eliminated and disappear. But it actively opposes the reactionary patriarch and his supporters and struggles directly with the official priesthood. As such, it can play its role since it is calculated mainly on the peasant masses, the backward merchant class, on the more backward part of the proletariat, for whom such a temporary centre of clergy unity is a great shift to the left of the one that they still find in the reactionary Orthodox Church…. It is obvious to everyone that we cannot, of course, support the activity of Soviet Orthodoxy. It might be, however, completely advantageous to render it aid secretly, so to speak, and to create here in the religious sphere

[40] Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'A. V. Lunacharsky: recent Soviet interpretations and republications,' in: *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (January 1967) 267-289: 268.
[41] Bergman, 'The image of Jesus in the Russian revolutionary movement,' 231.
[42] Vladimir P. Buldakov, 'Mass culture and the culture of the masses in Russia, 1914-22' in: Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G Marks, and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Russian culture in war and revolution, 1914-1922*, Vol. 1, Book 1: *Popular culture, the arts, and institutions* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2014) 25-52: 46-47.

several transitional stages for the peasant masses, who generally have to make compromises.'[43] It is clear that Lunacharskii does not wish to support the Church for ideological reasons, but neither is his only incentive – like Trotskii's – to destroy the Church from within – at least not immediately. In Lunacharskii's eyes, the religiosity that is so deeply embedded in Russian society (and especially in the peasant class) can and should not be destroyed completely, but should be reformed and directed towards socialism. In this manner, Lunacharskii considers the Renovationist movement a transitional stage which can serve to put Marx's ideology into practice of 'revolutionising thought' of the faithful peasants who 'have to make compromises.'

The Church's response

From the other side of the playing field, the Russian Orthodox Church had to deal with the new circumstances in its own way. Following the February Revolution of 1917 – which, for the Church, meant the abolition of the state's control over the Holy Synod – the diocesan congresses had been tasked with appointing delegates (both clergy and laity) to the upcoming All-Russian Council. However, the congresses became much more than instruments to elect delegates, and developed into platforms for the expression and discussion of several religious and political currents. On the grassroots level, the parishes provided space for genuine revolutionary activity and became integral parts of the revolutionary movement as a whole. [44] After the events of October 1917, and the Bolsheviks' rise to power, discussion arose within these congresses on how to respond to the new circumstances. Arising from this discussion, Russian professor A.A. Bogolepov distinguished four structural approaches in response to the new government.[45]

The first of these approaches is straightforward opposition against the hostile powers. This approach was especially prevalent in the more conservative (black) clergy shortly after the October Revolution. This was evident at the Russian Church Council on 1 February 1918 (19 January Old Style), when the newly elected Patriarch Tikhon excommunicated and anathematised the persecutors of the Orthodox Church, taking a clear stance against the regime: 'The enemies of the Church are usurping authority over Her and Her possession by the use of death-inflicting weapons; but you confront them with the strength of your faith. And if it should be necessary even to suffer for the Cause of Christ, we call you, beloved children of the Church, to bear these sufferings with us[…]'[46] By these strong wordings, the patriarchal Church forbade her faithful to support the government in any way, preferring even a martyr's death, if necessary. At the same time, although strongly condemning

[43] Roslof, *Red Priests*, 34.
[44] Evtuhov, 'The Church's revolutionary moment,' 383.
[45] Bogolepov, *Tserkov' pod vlast'ju kommunizma*, 22-23.
[46] 'Message of the Patriarch Tikhon, anathematizing the Soviet regime, of February 1, 1918,' as published in: Boleslaw Szczesniak ed., *The Russian Revolution and religion: a collection of documents concerning the suppression of religion by the Communists, 1917-1925* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959) 36-37: 36.

the regime's actions, the same Tikhon declared the Church's neutrality with regards to political ideology in 1919: 'The Church does not bind itself to any political system, since the latter has only relative historical significance.'[47] Thus, in the same patriarchal Church was evident also the second strategy mentioned by Bogolepov: the will to maintain an apolitical Church as an independent organisation. However, when the Church's independence proved impossible over the years, the patriarchal Church's strategy developed into what Bogolepov discerns as the fourth strategy: patriotic support of communist power as a national government and accepting their control over Church government, while still upholding doctrinal integrity and Church traditions. This final – and lasting – strategy was made apparent when Patriarch Tikhon was released from prison on the precondition of declaring himself no longer opposed to the Soviet state, and was ultimately expressed by the Russian Orthodox Church under Tikhon's predecessor, metropolitan Sergii after his release in 1927, with the words: '[we recognise] the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose misfortunes are our misfortunes.'[48]

However, apart from the developments of those that maintained their support for the patriarch, a different group came to the fore from within the ranks of the Church. At the very beginning of the clash between state and Church it was especially the opposition against the regime which found itself in conflict with another large part of the Church, aiming to follow another strategy (the attentive reader will have noticed that in the above mention of Bogolepov's description of strategies, the third was missing. This is it): that of acknowledging the common principles shared by the atheist state and the Church in public life, and putting the Church in service of the state. Months before the October Revolution, in April 1917, for example, the Nizhnii Novgorod KODM (Committee of United Clergy and Laymen) had proposed – among others – the following reforms to be voted on at the upcoming council: the establishment of a conciliar form of governance in which laity and clergy have an equal say, the election of bishops from the white clergy and at regional councils, and the necessary participation of Church representatives in all government and social institutions.[49] The first two proposed reforms were clearly an attempt at inner Church reforms; to do away with the ruling hierarchy of monastic clergy and establish a more democratic form of governance in the Church. But in relation to the state, especially the expressed need for Church representatives to participate in all government institutions reflects the wish to have political influence. It was clear that a part of the Orthodox clergy was not planning to take an apolitical stance, but instead decided to cooperate with the regime.

This strategy of obedient support for the state, can for instance be found in the person of Mikhail Galkin, an Orthodox priest (who later left the priesthood to become an active member of the

[47] Meerson, 'Political philosophy,' 216.
[48] Nathaniel Davis, *A long walk to church: a contemporary history of Russian Orthodoxy* (Westview Press, San Francisco, 1995) 4.
[49] Evtuhov, 'The Church's revolutionary moment,' 401-402.

League of Militant Atheists), who in January 1918 collaborated with Lenin to draft and publish the 'Decree on freedom of conscience and on ecclesiastical and religious communities,' better known as the 'Decree on separation of Church and state.'[50] This instant is exemplary for the willingness of a part of the Russian Orthodox clergy to cooperate with the state, even if the subject was not necessarily beneficial for the Church. It also shows the change of political ideology in (part of) the Church, as separation of Church and state is directly opposed to the centuries-old Byzantine idea of *symphonia* between the heads of the Church and the state, in which the latter leads and protects the Church through his autocratic rule. On the other hand, in the same year, when the priest A.I. Tikhomirov was denied permission to remarry by his bishop Veniamin, on account of the Church canons, Tikhomirov did not leave it at that and directly applied to Lenin with the same request, affirming his support for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' and asking for redemption from the 'black usurpers,' the monastic clergy. He also noted in his letter that he considered Patriarch Tikhon a protégé of 'a small group of landowners, counts, monks, and other reactionaries,' and concluded his letter with wishing 'many happy years' to the proletarian dictatorship – a wish which is normally extended to the highest ecclesiastical hierarchs at the end of Church services.[51] Again, this letter shows that there were orthodox priests who esteemed the opinion of the Revolutionary leaders higher than that of their own hierarchs or Church canons. On the other hand, it also suggests that the old idea of the autocratic ruler is ironically transferred to Lenin, who – in the eyes of Tikhomirov – has replaced the priest's bishop in terms of authority, as is clearly reflected in the letter's ending. But to fully understand these two examples and their implications on the relationship between Church and state, it is necessary to return to February 1917, when the Church's main obstacle for holding a council was removed with the abdication of the tsar.

The All-Russian Council of 1917-1918

With the tsar removed, the Church quickly seized its chance and immediately set up preparatory commissions, which succeeded in convening three sessions of the Council between 15 August 1917 and 7 September 1918. Two hundred and twenty-seven representatives of the hierarchy and lower clergy, and two hundred and ninety-nine laymen had been invited to participate in the meetings, with the primary goal of discussing the restoration of the patriarchate, which was considered a necessity for a revived, strong Church leadership in the existing times of turmoil and unexpected changes. However, the question of patriarchal leadership can only be regarded as the culmination of the reform debates that had been taking place for at least a decade. In October 1917, the decision was taken to resurrect the patriarchate with 141 in favour and 112 against – the other delegates refused to vote or simply did not show up at all. Subsequently, the candidates were elected. After three rounds of voting,

[50] Rogoznyj, 'The Russian Orthodox Church,' 359-360.
[51] Ibidem, 364.

three candidates were selected: Archbishop of Novgorod Arsenius, Metropolitan of Moscow Tikhon (Bellavin), and Metropolitan of Kharkov Antonii (Khrapovitskii). The latter, as leader of the patriarchal party of the Sobor and former leader of the reactionary Black Hundreds, was considered the most likely candidate to be chosen, but the method used did not take likeliness into account. On 5 November, a *starets* of the hermit-monks, Father Alexius, blindly drew from an urn in front of the famous icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir the name of Metropolitan Tikhon, who was thereby elected as the new – and first in two hundred years – Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Although the reinstatement of the patriarchate was supported by the majority of participants, Bishop Efrem of Selengina noticed a fragmentation of the Church along the lines of two differing world models – a theocratic and a democratic one. The theocratic model upheld ecclesiastical authority as dogmatic principle equal to orthodoxy in faith and sacraments, as confirmed in the Creed's acknowledgement of 'One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,' referring to the apostolic authority passed on through the ages from bishop to bishop. The source of this apostolicity was from above, and therefore to be considered superior to the authority of the community of faithful. Lay participation in matters of faith was thus only possible by allowance of a bishop. The democratic model, on the other hand, considered the authority from below, the 'will of the people,' to be greater. In the eyes of Bishop Efrem, this longing for self-determination and the idea of 'all power to the people' contradicted the idea of theocratic governance and 'all power to God' and was therefore to be rejected as a Protestant novity under the guise of *sobornost'* and foreign to Orthodoxy.[52]

The adherents of this latter, democratic, model opposed the concentration of power in the hands of an individual, because they viewed this as the continuation of the Romanov tyranny and were afraid that the restoration of the patriarchate would inevitably mean the restoration of monastic dominance over the white clergy.[53] Apart from their contention over the office of Patriarch, this minority – among which prominently figured later Renovationist leader Aleksandr Vvedenskii – also accused the council of generating an increasingly hostile political atmosphere to the Revolution. Despite their minority, these oppositionists are not to be regarded as separate individuals with dissident opinions, but they found their precedent in the debates that had taken place around 1905 and were revived after the February Revolution of 1917.

Renovationist opposition

In March 1917, several members of the clergy with reformist ideas had united themselves in the 'All-Russian Union of Democratic Clergy and Laymen.' One of its leaders was Aleksandr Vvedenskii, and several of its other members had been part of the 'Group of thirty-two' in 1905. The members of the group were united in their antipathy to the monarchy and condemnation of capitalism as morally

[52] Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the eve of revolution* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2004) 51.
[53] Nicolas Zernov, 'The 1917 Council of the Russian Orthodox Church,' in: *Religion in Communist Lands* Vol. 6, No.1 (1978) 17-25: 18.

unjust. Much like their secular Revolutionary counterparts, they also demanded redistribution of land among the peasants and the handing over of factories to the workers.[54] Furthermore, they strongly advocated democratic Church reforms. Accusing the black clergy of holding a monopoly on Church power, they were the ones to instigate and support earlier mentioned proposals such as by the Nizhnii Novgorod Committee of United Clergy and Laity to open up higher Church offices to the married clergy and allow the faithful to elect their own bishops, contending that the early Christian Church had not recognised any special positions of authority.[55] Despite their call for a more democratic structure of state government, the hierarchy was not completely rejected. Vvedenskii stated that there ought still be bishops, but they should not behave as despotic rulers, but as 'mystical centres,' of the diocese, which should further work out its own form of existence as a community of believers.[56] To reflect on the distinction of models as proposed by Valliere, this disposition towards the hierarchy placed the Union of Democratic Clergy and Laymen in the moderate group of which the Group of Thirty-Two also had been part. The Union rejected the minimalist view of the faith being kept pure solely by the bishops, but did not go so far as for instance Merezhkovskii to contend that it was necessary to create an entirely new Church based on lay participation, but instead to renovate the Church on the basis of the historic situation of Christianity. For this, lay participation was wanted, but this was still to take place under guidance of a – democratically elected, preferably from the white clergy – bishop who was to be regarded as the religious archetype and representative of the group – but not the authoritarian ruler which they considered the patriarch to be. Thus, after the decision was taken to restore the patriarchate, many of these Renovationists – among them Vvedenskii – walked out of the council, refused to take part in the election process, and published a manifesto in which they condemned the actions of the Council and declared their firm determination to overthrow the patriarchate. However, despite being diametrically opposed to the patriarchal Church, the definite schism did not occur immediately, nor was it based on the opposing views of the Church's hierarchical structure.

The New Covenant: birth of the Living Church

The final breach came during the great famine of 1921, which cost millions of life. In order to relieve the starving, the government set up a campaign to gain the necessary means to feed the hungry. Initially, the Church offered and was allowed to help. In the Summer of 1921, Patriarch Tikhon was allowed to use Soviet radio and newspapers to appeal to the Russian people and to his fellow Orthodox patriarchs, the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of

[54]John Shelton Curtiss, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and the Provisional Government,' in: *American Slavic and East European Review* Vol. 7, No. 3 (October 1948) 237-250: 240.
[55] John .D. Basil, 'Revolutionary leadership and the Russian Orthodox Church in 1917,'in: *Church History* Vol. 48, No.2 (1979) 189-203: 198-199.
[56] Philip Walters, 'The Renovationist coup: personalities and programmes,' in: G.A. Hosking ed., *Church, nation and state in Russia and Ukraine* (Baskingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991) 250-270: 255-256.

America to bring in donations.[57] Furthermore, Tikhon allowed the Russian Orthodox clergy to hand in Church valuables that had no liturgical consecration. However, this 'cooperation' of the Church with the Soviet state was not to last long, as the regime soon realised it could use the catastrophe for its benefit, started accusing the Church of withholding gold and silver which could be used for famine relief, and ordered such riches to be confiscated by force. The confiscation of consecrated Church vessels was met with furious resistance from the Orthodox clergy and laity, and Tikhon condemned and threatened to excommunicate anyone who cooperated with the regime in the removal of sacred Church treasures. At this point, the Renovationist faction of the Church saw its chance and condemned the patriarch's stance. In a 'Letter of twelve priests' on 25 March 1922, they distanced themselves from the stance taken by the patriarch and accused those who refused to cooperate in the confiscation campaign of being loveless and heartless, and confusing the Church with politics: 'It is no secret for those acquainted with the situation that a certain element of the church belongs to it not with their heart and soul, but with their body only. The faith of Christ does not permeate their whole being, does not constrain them to act and live in accordance with itself.'[58] The Soviet press strengthened these words by setting up a campaign accusing Patriarch Tikhon of being a 'Russian Pope,' and his Synod the 'general staff of the counter-revolution,' while it also noted that the lower clergy were protesting against the 'princes of the Church.'[59] Subsequently, the patriarch was ordered to be put on trial and placed under house arrest in the Donskoi Monastery in Moscow.

It was here that he was visited on 12 May 1922 by a group of Renovationist priests. The GPU (the intelligence service, successor of the Cheka and predecessor of the NKVD) patrol guarding Tikhon was told beforehand to allow them passage, signifying the role of the state in the creation of the Renovationist schism. According to Levitin, such a move had been discussed as early as 1919, when Vvedenskii met Zinov'iev and got him to agree on the possibility of a concordat between his Church and the state, and support by the latter if the Renovationist group managed to get control over the Church.[60] During their visit, the priests convinced Tikhon that he was unable to lead the Church from his position under house arrest and should hand over his authority to their group, until his interim Metropolitan of Iaroslavl' Agafangel would arrive in Moscow and take charge of the Church. However, the GPU subsequently prohibited Agafangel from leaving Iaroslavl' and the Renovationist group publicly declared themselves the new Higher Church Administration (VTsU) by permission of the patriarch – concealing the preconditions set for them by Tikhon.[61]

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[57] Arto Luukkanen, *The party of unbelief: the religious policy of the Bolshevik Party, 1917-1929* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1994) 105.
[58] Spinka, *The Church and the Russian Revolution*, 192.
[59] Luukkanen, *The Party of Unbelief*, 115.
[60] Anatolii Emmanuilovich Krasnov-Levitin, & V. M. Shavrov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty (20-e – 30-e gg. XX v.): v 3-x chastyx* (outlines of the history of Russian Church troubles (30s and 20s of the XX century): in 3 parts) (1977) Part I, 54.
[61] Dimitry Pospielovsky, 'The Renovationist schism in the Russian Orthodox Church,' in: *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 9, pts. 2-3 (1982) 285-307: 291.

But the state support for the schism did not stop here. Little later, a law was adopted to force registration of organisations 'not occupied with material gain,' meaning that all religious organisations had to register, and as the patriarchal Churches were denied this registration, their buildings were handed over to the Renovationists.[62] De facto, this meant government recognition and support for the Renovationist movement. This support was also evident in the fact that Renovationist clergy could get their travel expenses covered, and that they were granted the right to publish their own journals – the most important of which was called *Zhivaia Tserkov'* (The Living Church), which gave the movement its name.[63] Due to Tikhon's inability to effectively lead his Church, the faithful found themselves between a rock and a hard place: either support the Living Church, or accept chaos within the patriarchal one.

Strengthened by the government support, the Renovationists actively started their policy of reform. In August 1922, the First Renovationist Congress (S"ezd) took place to prepare the way for an upcoming council. Here, the decision was taken to expel the monastics from the congress, and there was talk about the redistribution of finances, by siphoning half the income of Churches (gained by candle sales and service fees, for example) off to the VTsU. It also reorganised the parishes: all clergy opposed to the Living Church were to be exposed and expelled, dissident Church councils were to be dissolved and replaced with new ones, and clergy of monastery churches were forced to accept the VTsU. Ironically, this centralisation of Church power by the VTsU was reminiscent of the *Chief Procurator*, who held the power over the Church hierarchy and made sure they followed state policy, effectively subjecting the Church to the state.

After the internal changes in structure, the Renovationists convened a council to decide on its reforms of social-economic nature. In April 1923, at the First Renovationist Council, the Living Church confirmed what had been discussed at the Congress of August 1922: 'The Soviet authority is the only one throughout the world which will realise, by governmental methods, the ideals of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, every faithful churchman must not only be an honourable citizen, but also fight with all his might, together with the Soviet authority, for the realisation of the Kingdom of God upon earth.'[64] Without any ambiguity, this was a clear political subjugation to the communist principles of the Soviet regime.

Schism within schism

Although the Renovationist Council outwardly pretended to represent the unity of the entire Church, out of 476 delegates, only 66 represented moderate supporters of the patriarchal Church, and they were not allowed speaking time. But even among those who rejected the patriarch, unity was only a

[62] Walters, 'The Renovationist coup,' 255.
[63] Bogolepov, *Tserkov' pod vlast'ju kommunizma*, 27.
[64] 'Message of the Living Church "Sobor" of August 6, 1922,' as published in: Szczesniak, *The Russian Revolution and religion*, 92.

superficial appearance. One of three major factions within the Renovationist movement was that of Bishop Antonin Granovskii. According to Walters, this latter movement held the 'purest and most idealistic aspirations in Renovationism.'[65] Granovskii wanted to bring moral improvement as a basis to reform society as a whole. Therefore, he welcomed the Revolution, but rejected its harsh methods. He was not an ardent supporter of the Soviet government, but instead focused on liturgical reforms, such as the use of vernacular Russian instead of Church Slavonic, and greater congregational participation in the liturgy, for example by removing the boundary of the iconostasis and moving the altar towards the lay faithful in the middle of the church. After his ousting from the Renovationist Congress for his positive views of monasticism, Granovskii announced the formation of his own Renovationist group: the 'Union of Church Revival,' after which he increasingly withdrew himself from the greater Renovationist movement and led a secluded life with his followers.[66]

On the other side of the spectrum was Vladimir Krasnitskii, who was an opportunist and, according to Levitin, a 'careerist – a man who would always bet on the horse that had the best chance of winning.'[67] After Vvedenskii had been hospitalised when a stone had been thrown at his head by a woman from a crowd of protestors, Krasnitskii pragmatically threatened: 'Let those who aimed the stone at the head of Fr Vvedenskii remember that this preacher of love who is so indulgent to his enemies will be replaced by men who will crush their counter-revolutionary plans with an iron rod: the stone thrown at Fr Aleksandr will rebound on the heads of those who directed the arm of this dark fanatical woman.'[68]

Despite this opportunist defence of Vvedenskii, and in spite of their cooperation in the Renovationist schism, the two can barely be considered colleagues. Vvedenskii did not like nor trust Krasnitskii. In 1922, he said at one of the meetings of his fellow Renovationist leaders: 'I'd like to know where this fellow has sprung from. He's never been a member of our group, none of us know him, but he suddenly appears at one of our meetings. Why? What for? He's clearly up to something.'[69] This shows that, at least in Vvedenskii's eyes, Krasnitskii did not fully belong to the Renovationists, as he apparently hadn't shared their ideas previously.

Indeed, Krasnitskii was a former monarchist and member of the 'Black Hundreds,' and had written articles like 'Socialism from the devil' prior to the 1917 Revolution, and had never been part of the Renovationist movement until the 'Letter of twelve priests' of March 1922. His initial aversion to socialism and his sudden appearance at the moment of the schism suggest that Krasnitskii was either trying to jump the bandwagon, or was even put in place from above, in order to infiltrate the movement as a state instrument. This latter suggestion is enhanced by the fact that opponents of Krasnitskii's Living Church began to be arrested and exiled, which led Vvedenskii to claim that

[65] Walters, 'The Renovationist coup,' 260.
[66] Ibidem, 262.
[67] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I, 66.
[68] Walters, 'The Renovationist coup,' 257.
[69] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I, 65.

'nobody compromises us like Krasnitskii.'[70] Philip Walters even goes so far to describe his Living Church as a clerical party which used revolutionary means to seize Church power, like the Bolsheviks had done with the state.[71] However, whereas Walters describes Krasnitskii as a willing instrument of the GPU, Arto Luukkanen rejects this view, and instead argues that he, as a member of the white clergy, was simply trying to diminish the influence of the higher Church leaders and discredit them in the eyes of the Soviet regime.[72] Michal Meerson offers yet another explanation, which goes beyond the above mentioned explanations of political pragmatism or pure careerism. According to Meerson, the philosophy of the Living Church was greatly shaped by former monarchists, for example members of the far-right nationalist 'Union of the Russian People,' like Krasnitskii. From the beginning, they aimed to restore the Church's position as a state institution, trying to create an organisation which could become a part of the state bureaucracy. Their ideal was to create an alliance between the Church and the Soviet regime, which in philosophy was very similar to their far-right counterpart of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (Karlovtsy Synod), which sought to reach the same manner of state-Church cooperation only through re-establishing an autocratic monarchy.[73] Thus, the irony here is that some of the Renovationist leaders where so preoccupied with the political implications of the movement, that their philosophy coincided with that of their nemeses on the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum. On the other hand, overemphasising Krasnitskii's political opportunism does not do right to his sincere Christianity, which is witnessed by the fact that he remained a priest after his movement collapsed (whereas many others left the Church and became atheists) and led a tough life serving at a small cemetery chapel rather than renounce his faith.

Nevertheless, Vvedenskii hated the political preoccupation of Krasnitskii's faction and its 'papal materialism,' and shortly after the Congress, in September 1922, split off from the Living Church to found his 'Union of Communities of the Ancient Apostolic Church.'[74] This movement represented a middle ground between Granovskii's Union of Church Revival and Krasnitskii's Living Church. It shared Granovskii's idealism of theological reform, although it never went as far in liturgical experiments – apart from translating the liturgy to vernacular Russian, which all Renovationist factions had in common. On the other hand, whereas Granovskii viewed monasticism as the ideal of Christian socialism, Vvedenskii sincerely hated monks, and was a firm advocate of married bishops. This he shared with Krasnitskii's Living Church, as well as the wish to reach a concordat of Church and state.[75] For this reason, a month after his split, Vvedenskii restored communion with the Living Church and remained a prominent leader in the Renovationist movement.

[70] Walters, 'The Renovationist coup,' 258.
[71] Ibidem, 259.
[72] Luukkanen, *The party of unbelief*, 84.
[73] Meerson, 'Political philosophy,' 219-220.
[74] Daniel H. Shubin, *Russian Christianity, Vol. IV. The Orthodox Church 1894 to 1990. Tsar Nicholas II to Gorbachev's Edict on the Freedom of Conscience* (New York, 2006) 93.
[75] Pospielovsky, 'The Renovationist schism,' 301.

The bottom line

When the dust clouds of the turbulent years of religious debate following the 1917 revolutions had settled down, the Church remained split into two main movements: the patriarchal Church on the one hand, and the Living Church on the other, which could count on government support in numerous ways. Once Patriarch Tikhon was released in 1923, the majority of Orthodox laity and clergy soon returned to the patriarchal Church, but the now marginalised Living Church remained true to the Soviet regime and was the only religious institution recognised by the government, until the eve of the Second World War. During all those years, the Renovationists had two main concerns: liturgical reform and spiritual revival in the social transformation to a just society, and the position of the white parish clergy and the legalisation of their rights. As has been described above, the Living Church in the early 1920s was comprised of three main factions, of which Krasnitskii's and Granovskii's movements overemphasised either one of the Renovationist concerns. Vvedenskii, however, followed a more moderate path and chose to balance out the other factions, which kept him at the literal centre of the Renovationist movement (as will be further expounded on in his biography below) until his death in 1946. For this reason, it is fitting to end this chapter quoting Walters' appreciation of this balance: 'Without indulging in psychological speculation, we should just note that the two elements in Renovationism, the idealistic and the self-interested, were here embodied in one individual and that it was this individual who remained at the head of the whole movement until its demise.'[76]

[76] Walters, 'The Renovationist coup,' 263.

III. Aleksandr Vvedenskii: Prophet of Renovationism

The man Vvedenskii

Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii was born on 30 August 1889 (12 September according to the new Calendar) in the – now Belarusian – city of Vitebsk. His date of birth coincided with the widely celebrated Russian holiday of the 'Holy right-believing Grand Prince Aleksandr Nevskii,' after whom the new-born was also named. His mother belonged to the provincial bourgeoisie, his father was teacher of ancient Greek and Latin, and later became the headmaster of the grammar school in Vitebsk. Being from a well-educated family, Aleksandr himself also attended grammar school, and already since his youth showed deeply religious tendencies by attending the morning service even before going to school and praying often and fervently at home as well. He read, and practiced the piano often, and 'at age eleven, he could play such complicated pieces, that many considered him a wonder child.'[77] These last words especially remind one more of reading a saints' life than a biography of a 20th-century reformist priest, but applying a more objective historic interpretation, glossing over the excessively beautiful words as 'poetic freedom', the core still stands: Aleksandr Vvedenskii was not only a well-educated and highly talented child, but also since childhood developed a deeply rooted devotion to religion. All of these characteristics were to be seen in his later life as well.

In 1905, still only a teenager, Vvedenskii took part in the preparatory work of the 'Memorandum of the group of thirty-two priests,' placing himself in the Renovationist tradition since the very beginning. Furthermore, in his adolescent years, Vvedenskii frequently visited the literary salon of Dmitrii Merezhovskii and Zinaida Gippius. As has been discussed earlier, at their 'Religious-Philosophical Meetings,' many societal problems were discussed pertaining to religion, such as the necessity of reconciling the intelligentsia with the Church. However, this maximalist party – according to Valliere's categorisation – sought to do this not through historic Orthodox tradition, but by creating an entirely new type of Church in order to form a 'cultural synthesis,' uniting God's and humanity's justice, on the basis of their understanding of *sobornost'* as the common consciousness of the laity, without interference of Church hierarchs. Clearly, Vvedenskii's ecclesiastics later followed the more moderate views of the 'Group of Thirty-Two,' as he himself became part of the hierarchical structure and was in fact very much interested in historic Christianity. Nevertheless, at the meetings at this literary salon, he did pick up on the idea to organise a survey, trying to identify the reasons for the spreading unbelief among the Russian intelligentsia. [78]

This survey was conducted in 1911 in 'Russkoe Slovo,' and received a surprisingly high turnout in Saint-Petersburg. Due to the opportune coincidence that one of Vvedenskii's – completely unrelated – namesakes was a famous sociologist and philosopher at St. Petersburg's University, the

[77] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I, 9.
[78] Roslof, *Red Priests*, 9.

questionnaire received thousands of responses from literary, intellectual, and political figures.[79]After this was held as an accusation against him, Vvedenskii replied with a printed message, in which he keen-wittedly stated that it was not his fault that others had his surname, name, and patronymic.[80] The results of the survey were subsequently published as an article under the title "The reasons for non-belief among the Russian intelligentsia" and boiled down to two main themes, namely the apparent incongruence between religious dogma and scientific progress, and the reactionary nature and corruption of Orthodox clergy.[81]

This survey can be regarded as exemplary for the rest of Vvedenskii's life, as it combined two of his most important characteristics. With his academic background, Vvedenskii always focused his efforts on the intelligentsia. According to Levitin, all of his works, speeches, and sermons were aimed at an intelligent public, and it was 'as if all other strata of society fell beyond the scope of his vision.'[82] However, even more so than the survey itself, its results can be regarded as the starting point and foundation of the further development of Vvedenskii's career. It is highly probable that the outcome of the survey spurred him to become a priest, in order to bridge the gap between the intelligentsia and the Church, on the one hand by becoming an apologist for Christianity in the field of science, on the other by intending to reform – renovate – the Church from the inside out. Levitin had heard Vvedenskii say multiple times: 'I went to Church with the strong intention to shatter the state Church, to blow it up from the inside.'[83] But it was not only his religious commitment or the God-searching zeitgeist that led him to this decision. According to Levitin, Vvedenskii's ambitious intentions to reform the Church also sprung forth from his longing for self-affirmation.

After graduating from University in 1912, Vvedenskii got married – in order to avoid having to accept monastic tonsure before becoming a priest – and started his quest to be ordained as a priest. After initial difficulty to be accepted in the clerical circles – supposedly, due to his 'Jewish background and suspect intellectual roots'[84] – he obtained a degree from the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, but still could not find a Bishop willing to ordain him. Finally, he met the navy priest G. Shavelskii, who supported him in his quest for ordination to the priesthood. In July 1914, Vvedenskii was ordained by the Bishop of Grodno Mikhail, who appointed him on 27 August to serve at the Church of the reserve guard regiment in the Novgorod vicinity.[85] In the meantime, Vvedenskii had already made himself stand out, because during the first liturgy that he celebrated, he read aloud the prayers during the Cherubic hymn, and with an almost ecstatic display of emotion, such that the presiding Bishop

[79] Roslof, *Red Priests*, 10.
[80] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I, 11.
[81] Ibidem; Roslof, *Red Priests*, 10.
[82] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I, 11.
[83] Ibidem.
[84] Roslof, *Red Priests*, 10.
[85] 'Vvedenskii,' in: *Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopediia* (Orthodox Encyclopaedia) Part 7 (1 November 2009) 349-352.

Mikhail – after he had overcome his initial shock – immediately stopped him from serving the liturgy.[86]

However, Vvedenskii was not only a controversial clergyman. In order to appeal to his intellectual audience as much as possible, he put a lot of effort in educating himself in the most diverse of subjects. After finishing his study as a philologist, he studied at conservatory in 1913, became a professional musician and practiced the piano three to four hours a day. Besides this, he obtained diplomas in mathematics, physics, biology, and law during the Civil War.[87] According to Levitin, he could solve the most difficult mathematical problems from the top of his head and was so well-versed in the theories of Einstein that specialists in higher mathematics turned to him with their questions on the relativity theory.[88] Uniting his clerical function with his academic background, during the 1920s, Vvedenskii became a frequent participant in public debates about religion, lectured at the Renovationist Theological Academy of Moscow and the Theological Institute of Petrograd, and became the founder and leader of the Zachary-Elisabeth Brotherhood, teaching ecclesiastical-theological parish courses.[89] As has been discussed earlier, he was also part of the group of priests that visited Patriarch Tikhon in May 1922 and forced him to hand over Church leadership to the Higher Church Administration. Months later, he and Granovskii split off from Krasnitskii's Living Church during a schism within the Renovationist movement, but whereas Granovskii slowly withdrew from the Renovationist movement, Vvedenskii remained active in the gatherings and due to the absence of bishops in his factions, realised it was necessary to restore communion with the Living Church in October 1922, after which he gained a position of pre-eminence and became the vice-chairman of the VTsU in 1923. As another confirmation of his prominence in the Renovationist movement, Vvedenskii was elected by the 'Second local Council' – convened by the Renovationists – as 'Archbishop of Krutitsy, first vicar of the Moscow diocese.' His enthronement took place on 6 May 1923 in the Moscow cathedral of Christ the Saviour.[90] On a side note, it is worth mentioning that this very cathedral, the largest and most impressive in all of Russia, had been the stage of the election of Patriarch Tikhon five years prior. Thus, the fact that the Renovationist Vvedenskii was now enthroned as a married bishop from the Renovationist movement in this same cathedral signifies the favour the Renovationists had gained from the government, over the patriarchal Church.

In 1924, full of international ambitions, the Renovationists appointed Vvedenskii to lead the movement's foreign relations as 'Metropolitan of London and all Europe.' His goal was to establish at

[86] Krasnov-Levitin, *Ocherki po istorii*, Part I 12-13.
In the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, some prayers are meant to be said aloud, but others are written to be uttered in a very low voice by the priest at the altar, in order to retain the mystery. In this same manner, the Orthodox priest, serving a timeless liturgy by the grace of God, and not his own merit, is not allowed to show personal emotions while saying the prescribed prayers.
[87] 'Vvedenskii.'
[88] Krasnov-Levitin, *Trudy i dni*, 7.
[89] 'Vvedenskii.'
[90] Ibidem.

least one Renovationist Church abroad in order to gain international representation and recognition, but he did not succeed in this.[91] For the rest of his life, his ambitions were focused more inwardly, remaining at the centre of the Renovationist leadership, and serving in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow until its destruction in 1931 and after that in the much smaller parish church of Saint Pimen on the outskirts of Moscow.

Vvedenskii's wish for self-affirmation was ultimately fulfilled when he became the movement's sole and final leader in the latter days of Renovationism. According to Levitin, Vvedenskii had a 'propensity for completely unprincipled action,' as a result of the 'intoxicating effect which success had on him.'[92] This is attested by Vvedenskii's own – not so humble – words in his diary of 1939: 'If you take my inner life it is full of light, and the greatest expression of this is success, sometimes triumphant success.'[93] This lack of humility and hunger for success could not be more clearly illustrated than two years later, in 1941, when Vvedenskii replaced the 'first hierarch' of the Living Church Vitalii (also Vvedenskii by surname) and was enthroned on 10 October as 'Most-holy and most-blessed first hierarch of Moscow and all Orthodox Churches in the USSR.' Later that same month he declared himself 'Patriarch' and staged a patriarchal enthronement service, but due to a negative response from his own clergy he gave up this title no more than a month later.[94]

Although the Renovationist movement had enjoyed the active support of the government for only a very short period of time – since May 1922 until Patriarch Tikhon's release in 1923 – it remained the only officially recognised Church until the early 1940s – although their hierarchs had just as much to suffer from Stalin's purges as any other – when Stalin restored the patriarchal Russian Orthodox Church in order to boast morale for the Great Patriotic War, which was responded to by Vvedenskii with sayings like 'this is an escapade by the government,' and 'this whole comedy is being staged for the West.'[95] Many Renovationist hierarchs and priests had by then already returned to the patriarchal Church as they realised it had a much greater appeal on their parishioners. Vvedenskii inquired about this same option, but soon learned that the patriarchal Church would not recognise his episcopacy, and he would only be accepted as a lay person. Unable to defy his honour, he refused to give up his clerical robe and died unreconciled on 25 July 1946. With Vvedenskii, the Living Church also drew its last breath.

Vvedenskii's ideology

As has been discussed, Vvedenskii found two reasons for unbelief among the Russian intelligentsia, namely the incongruence between Orthodox dogma and modern science, and the reactionary tendencies of the clergy. To address these issues, he wrote several articles and took part in numerous

[91] 'Vvedenskii.'
[92] Walters, 'The Renovationist Coup,' 263.
[93] Ibidem.
[94] 'Vvedenskii.'
[95] Roslof, *Red Priests*, 197.

debates on the topics of religion and society. Throughout his works, he presents a theology that is both very philosophic and abstract, yet at the same time very pragmatic. He alludes to numerous contemporary philosophers – such as Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel, Hobbes, and Berdiaev – in order to appeal to his academic audience – and perhaps try to render himself among them. To his friend Iuritskii, Vvedenskii explained his version of ecclesiology: 'Decipher the contemporary economic term capitalism, and assign it an evangelical appellation. This signifies the opulent person who, according to Christ, will not inherit eternal life. Translate the word proletariat into the evangelical language and it will refer to the lower-level and avoided Lazarus, whom the Lord came to save. And the Church must now definitely place such avoided lesser brethren on the path of salvation. It must condemn the injustice of capitalism from the religious – and not economic – point of view. This is why our Renovationist movement accepts the religious-moral injustice of the October Socialist upheaval. We tell everybody openly: it is not necessary to go against the authority of the working people.'[96] This lengthy quote succinctly summarises Vvedenskii's ideology vis-á-vis religion and socialism, namely that he attempts to apply the socialist ideals to the Gospel and use biblical terms and images to preach these ideals. Essentially, it is socialism in religious terms. Furthermore, he explains here why the Renovationist movement condoned the October Revolution: because it was the expression of the poor, the working class. And just like the poor in the archetype of Lazarus received favour in the eyes of Christ, so should the revolution of the working class now be favoured by the Church. It is precisely this preoccupation with the working class and its revolution that serves as a prelude to the dispute with the Church of Tikhon.

Criticism of the Church of Tikhon

In his article (or rather a small booklet) 'The Church of Patriarch Tikhon,' written in 1923, Vvedenskii responds to the arrest of and upcoming legal process against Patriarch Tikhon. At the time, there was discourse of the martyrdom of the Church, which the Soviet government, of course, denied. In like manner, Vvedenskii opens his argument by stating that if Tikhon can be considered a martyr at all – which he doubts – he can certainly not be called a martyr of the Church of the Apostles as it was described in the Gospel.[97] He explains that, according to the Gospel, the Church is the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world. Therefore, the Church should not interfere with politics. It can be loyal to the state power, but it ought not dictate any forms of government, nor ever fight against it: 'Christianity is above this world (*nadmirno*) – the state is occupied with the world. Christianity teaches about eternal things – the state is occupied with temporal things.'[98] Thus, if both the Church and the state understand their tasks correctly, they should not interfere with each other, as they live and act on different levels. Vvedenskii thus defends the principle of separation of Church and state.

[96] Shubin, *Russian Christianity*, 67.
[97] Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona* (Moscow 1923) 4.
[98] Ibidem, 5.

Ironically, at the same time, it was especially the Living Church that was intertwined with the Soviet government, even as early as 1918, when Vvedenskii met with Zinov'iev to discuss a possible future power grab in the Church. Nevertheless, Vvedenskii considers it justified to severely criticise Tikhon and his Church, not only in its political adherence, but also in its sincerity of faith in Christ. It is tempting to think that Vvedenskii was merely writing down the propaganda which the Soviet regime wanted him to spew, but there is no concrete evidence for this assumption. Furthermore, his ideas on political adherence of the Church predate the Soviet government to the reform discussions which took place around the turn of the century. Thus, more likely than the regime pragmatically using Vvedenskii as a mouth piece, is Vvedenskii pragmatically using the opportunity provided by the regime to spread conclusions he had already drawn individually – at least without government interference.

From Vvedenskii's perspective, Tikhon's main sin is that his Church is mixing religious and political tasks, and on top of that, the former are dominated by the latter, 'counter-revolutionary' tasks.[99] Political allegations aside, Vvedenskii even sees reason to draw a black-and-white distinction for the true Christian: he is either with Christ, or with Tikhon. The two are diametrically opposed to each other: whereas true Christianity offers forgiveness to all, and – much like socialism – rejects classes and national differences, and condemns all sorts of exploitation and use of force, the Church of Tikhon has used its authority to support 'everything painful, abnormal and criminal.' Thus, Vvedenskii hopes, the Christian with genuine love for Christ will leave this 'misanthropic camp.'[100] This choice of words is hardly incidental. In Orthodox theology, God is time and again called *philanthropos*: lover of mankind (in Russian: *chelovekoliubets*). Vvedenskii here purposefully uses the exact opposite 'manhating' (*chelovekonenavistnicheskii*) to describe the Church of Tikhon, which he thereby opposes directly to God. In this manner, Vvedenskii accuses Tikhon not only of working against the revolution, which – in his opinion – is spreading Christian values, but of directly opposing God himself.

In this line of thinking, it makes sense to state that Tikhon has created his own false Church, which 'has nothing in common with the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.'[101] If one were to view Christianity in its cultural aspect, Tikhon may be considered a martyr and a hero of such a cultural Church. Here Vvedenskii quotes professor L. Karsavin, who said that 'the Church is a cultural unity, to which one may belong without believing.'[102] In support of this view, Vvedenskii tells an anecdote of one of his family members, who enlisted in a Moscow parish and received communion once a year, not because she believed in any Church, but because she supported Tikhon's struggle against the Bolsheviks. He considers this symptomatic for the state of the Church of Tikhon, which from his point

[99] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona*, 6-7.
[100] Ibidem, 7-8.
[101] Ibidem, 6.
[102] IbIbidem.

of view has become a 'political sanatorium, where one hopes to find redemption for the Russian organism, infected with the Bolshevik bacillus.'[103] However, such a cultural and political unity has no religious meaning whatsoever for Vvedenskii and he uses biblical imagery to explain to the reader that not everyone who views himself as a Christian is to be considered a true believer: 'Let's call the things by their names. Patriarch Tikhon is a hero and martyr of counter-revolution. And only those, who one way or another hide this psychology within themselves, only those can ascribe to him martyr's crowns.'[104] With Levitin's character description in mind, one can only assume that Vvedenskii was writing from a sincere religious perspective and that he is therefore not merely opposing Tikhon from a political point of view, but is also concerned about the true faithfulness of his readers. He suggests that those who are honest, who do not 'hide this psychology within themselves,' cannot truly believe in the Church of Tikhon, but can only be considered adherences of Christianity for cultural and political reasons.

According to Vvedenskii, the problem here is that in the Church of Tikhon, the love for Christ is overshadowed by the hatred of the Bolsheviks, which, he recalls, is also present in the diaspora of Russian Orthodox, including many priests, that fled the country and are now trying to fight the Bolsheviks from abroad, in the name of Christ, carrying icons and religious banners.[105] By calling to mind the hostile diaspora, Vvedenskii strongly makes the suggestion that the Church of Tikhon can be viewed as part of the White movement, even though it never officially declared its allegiance to any party in the civil war. This perception of anti-Bolshevism in Tikhon's Church was strengthened by the famine of 1921 in Povolzhye, Ukraine, and Crimea. Tikhon allowed for portions of Church riches to be donated, but he strongly prohibited the faithful and clergy from giving up anything of sacred value under threat of being anathematised. He stated that this prohibition was in line with Church canons, but Vvedenskii argues that several scholars had proven that it was not in contradiction with Church canons to put Church property – even sanctified vessels – to use in order to ease those suffering from hunger. Instead, he offers a different explanation. In his eyes, the patriarchal Church considered giving up Church property not so much a religious sin, but rather a political one. It was this latter objection that dominated, because the Church realised that the famine was breaking the Bolsheviks, so everything that even slightly relieved the famine would strengthen the position of the Bolshevik authorities.[106] In Vvedenskii's opinion, this was the real reason that Church riches were not allowed to be confiscated. He had made several efforts to convince the faithful and clergy that it was indeed necessary to give up Church riches for famine relief and again posed them with a choice: either break with Tikhon or break with Christ. Several of the clergy responded positively to this and 'started to

[103] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona*, 72.
[104] Ibidem, 6.
[105] Ibidem, 73.
[106] Ibidem, 75.

follow Christ in word and in deed,' using Church riches for the needs of the hungry, but Tikhon's threatening anathema seriously hindered them and frightened faithful and clergy alike.[107]

Vvedenskii alludes to Tikhon's response to the famine relief program as the reason which 'led us, having broken with the Church of Patriarch Tikhon and those that never belonged to it, (all of us, except Krasnitskii, were longstanding workers against the patriarchate, former members of the Union of Democratic Clergy and Laymen) to turn words into deed.'[108] It is important to note here that he specifically reminds the reader of the fact that most Renovationist priests had never supported the restored patriarchal Church, but had already been opposed to it for a longer period, except Krasnitskii, who used to be in favour of the establishment of the patriarchate, but only later turned against Tikhon. Vvedenskii then proceeds to explain how on 12 May a delegation including himself – note that he names himself first, which is symbolic for his lack of modesty as has been described above – Belkov, Kalinovskii, Krasnitskii, and Stadnik, visited Tikhon under house arrest and convinced him to step down and hand over Church power to the newly established Higher Church Administration.

Thus, he concludes his article with the following, and very telling words: 'The Church of Patriarch Tikhon died a natural death: she outlived herself. She lived not for Christ, and not by Christ. And, by the will of Christ, she gave up her place to that Church, which genuinely wants to live by Christ and for Christ.'[109] It is telling that Vvedenskii considers the forced power shift from the patriarch to the VTsU a 'natural death' of Tikhon's Church. This shows how, in the eyes of the Renovationists, it was not an ecclesial coup, but rather a natural and necessary transition of power in order to save the Church from administrative chaos. Furthermore, by his choice of words, Vvedenskii portrays his conviction that the Church of Tikhon died because it stopped following Christ, and implicitly makes the suggestion that the Church he supports, as opposed to the patriarchal Church, is still genuinely following Christ and hence not dead, but a 'Living Church.'

Church-state relationship

Vvedenskii's view of Church-state relations is a very complicated one, and the basis of it is to be understood rather philosophically-theologically. It can be found in an against written by Vvedenskii in 1918 against the negative aspects of anarchism, which at that time of revolutionary turmoil was obviously very relevant. But before this article is discussed, it makes sense to draw upon the previously discussed work to describe the situation – as perceived by Vvedenskii – prior to the abdication of the tsar in 1917.

In the eyes of Vvedenskii, the pre-Revolutionary Church was nothing but a state instrument. At the time of Peter I, the ecclesiastical hierarchs were entered into the table of ranks (*tablitsa rangov*)

[107] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona*, 76.
[108] Ibidem, 76.
[109] Ibidem, 77.

and equalised with respective military ranks – the archbishop was equal to the lieutenant-general, the bishop to the major general, and the archpriest to the colonel. In this manner, the Church hierarchy can be regarded as nothing more than a religious army, 'carrying with pride their medals and orders of gold and silver – on top of their cassocks.'[110] The episcopate was thus turned into a state apparatus, with the bishops at the head governing over their armies of white priests, 'without rights and humiliated.' The latter's role was like a civil servant, including the administrative responsibilities that came with it, such as taking account of those enlisted in military service. However diminished and humiliated their role, the priests were still financially taken care of by the state, which headed the entire hierarchy through the body of the Holy Synod, led by the Chief Procurator, who had the final say in every discussion. Vvedenskii illustrates this unequal situation with an anecdote: at the time of the Chief Procurator Vladimir Karlovich Sabler, the Synod discussed elevating a certain archimandrite to the episcopate.[111] The majority of bishops refused, but Sabler insisted, saying that 'they wanted it in Tsarkoye Selo (the summer residence of the tsar and his nobility),' to which the bishop Antonii Khrapovitskii replied: 'if they want it in Tsarskoye Selo, we would even allow a black hog to the episcopate.'[112] Whether true or not, this story shows Vvedenskii's disdain for the submissive compliance of the Church to the monarchist state. In his eyes, the pre-revolutionary Church was unfortunately reigned by the tsar, who imposed his will upon it through the government-controlled Holy Synod. Through this subjugation to the state, the Church became a 'stronghold for the monarchy,' but when the monarchy fell, the Church was left 'hanging in the air.'[113]

However, Vvedenskii considers the patriarchate no better alternative. He portrays the discussion of re-establishing it as very naive thinking on the part of the majority that expected the resurrection of the patriarchate to solve all of the Russian Church's problems. The cultured minority, he says, was against it, convinced that it was an old tsarist institution. Alas, the majority slavishly followed Antonii Khrapovitskii in favour of the patriarchate: 'Antonii reads a lecture about it, Antonii organises a party, Antonii dreams of the white patriarchal mitre (*klobuk*) for himself. This person throught about the patriarchate all his life.'[114] In this quote becomes evident not only Vvedenskii's rejection of the patriarchate as an 'old tsarist instrument,' but also his personal disdain for Antonii Khrapovitskii, whom he portrays as a submissive person to the tsarist state, but in the absence of this only wants to resurrect the patriarchate for his personal ambition. All the more interesting it is, that no more than a quarter century later, Vvedenskii himself briefly attempted to declare himself patriarch of the Living Church – which calls to mind Levitin's description of 'completely unprincipled action.' It is

[110] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona*, 11.
[111] *Archimandrite* is an honorary title for an Orthodox priest-monk who is either living solitary, or is at the head of a monastery or a group of monasteries.
[112] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona*, 14.
[113] Vvedenskii, A.I. *Cerkov' i gosudarstvo (očerk vzaimootnošenii cerkvi i gosudarstva v Rossii 1918-1922 g.)* (Moscow 1923) 3.
[114] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' Patriarkha Tikhona,* 30.

illustrative of the fact that the entire Church dispute, besides being a religious discussion, was also a battle of personalities. Perhaps, but this is pure speculation, if Vvedenskii himself, as a married priest, had been eligible to rise in the Church hierarchy to the position of patriarch, he would not have been so opposed to it from the beginning. However, this was not the case, and he couldn't hide his hatred for the monastic hierarchs, focusing all his anger especially on Khrapovitskii – whom he seems to have hated even more than he hated Tikhon, who is portrayed as a sad victim of the rigid system compared to the evil-minded manipulator that he considers Khrapovitskii to be.

In summation, Vvedenskii's view of the pre-revolutionary Church has two important implications. The first is that the system as it was under Peter the Great, with the Church being a semi-civil institution subjugated to secular power through political influence in its Holy Synod, is absolutely unwanted. However, Vvedenskii does not see the solution for this dependence in the restoration of the patriarchate. Unfortunately, he does not offer his preferred alternative to the patriarch, but in practice the Renovationist alternative turned out to be the Higher Church Administration, which functioned similar to the Holy Synod, only including priests as well as bishops. Eventually, however, the Living Church itself also had a 'first hierarch' as their head, only without the title of Patriarch. Although the discussed writings give no conclusive evidence for Vvedenskii's view of the ideal Church structure, they do provide commentary on the ideal political situation for Christianity to thrive in.

Answering the rhetorical question what will become of man without faith, Vvedenskii asserts that man himself will become a god, occupying himself with self-worship (*sebye-bogosluzhenie*).[115] Although he does not explicitly use the term, this assertion is very reminiscent of Lunacharskii's *bogostroitel'stvo*, the attempt to create a human-centred instead of a God-centred religion, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. He illuminates his point by stating that mankind's moral compass consists of three beings, which he calls 'guardians': God (the force in Heaven); conscience (god within man); and *arkhi*, the earthly power or 'god on earth'. According to Vvedenskii, the modern liberal man has freed himself from monotheism and his own conscience, though he does not note when or where exactly this happened. According to Vvedenskii, two of the three 'guardians' have been eliminated, and all that is left to battle is the last residing power: the *arhki.* This *arkhi* is represented in the government, to which Vvedenskii ascribes unrestricted, independent power – for what reason it is 'divinised' to become the earthly equivalent to the absolute power of the heavenly God.[116] This overthrowing of the 'earthly God,' the government, is the point in history at which humanity stands at the time of the Revolution.

Now, Vvedenskii writes, there are two possible outcomes if the absolute power is overthrown: the first is the path to socialism, the second – to anarchism. Thus, Vvedenskii considers it necessary to

[115] Aleksandr Ivanovich Vvedenskii, *Anarkhizm i religiia* (Petrograd 1918) 8.
[116] Ibidem, 11-12.

defend that alternative which he deems preferable over the other – socialism. To this end, he recalls Berdiaev, who stated that revolution is always a negative, destructing force. That is, it always represents a reaction against the old order rather than the creation of a new one.[117] However, though revolution itself may be destructive, socialism – as opposed to anarchism, which offers nothing but destruction – offers an alternative which is morally superior to the 'antichristian bourgeois' government in its assertion that every man has an 'inherent right to the means for a worthy existence.'[118] Why the previous government is antichristian, Vvedenskii does not explicitly state, but he does imply that the new, socialist government is more likeable to the Christian because it regards all men as equal – as opposed to the previous, monarchist system. And this is where socialism differs from anarchism, because the latter – although it also views man in its own right – focuses specifically on each individual person, which is deemed to be the 'centre of the world.'[119] Socialism, on the other hand, opposes this egocentrism by defining the value of the human person not per individual, but within the socialist whole, which is reflected in the term 'comrade.' Man is called not to serve his own personal interests, but to break down the individual and sacrifice himself to society, so all can have their equal share.[120] It is this call for self-sacrifice and the equality of all men in which Vvedenskii sees the overlap between socialism and Christianity.

From the discussed sources, two conclusions can be drawn on Vvedenskii's view of the relation between Church and state. The first is that he considers the pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church as nothing more than a state instrument, completely void of true faith, and only existing by the grace of the state which it serves in submission. While the bottom line of this – namely that the Church is too dependent on the state – is shared by the great majority of the Church, Vvedenskii does not agree with their alternative of reinstating the patriarchate. According to him, the patriarchate is not a break with the old order, but merely the continuation of the monarchist system with its domination of the monastic hierarchy.

On the part of the state, Vvedenskii offers a philosophical treatment of the state as a proponent of Gods unrestricted power on earth, which he calls *arkhi*. According to him, the *arkhi* is not necessarily bad, but it should strive to defend and spread Christian values, which the previous government has not done, which is why the revolt against it has to be condoned. The current, Socialist, government, however, serves the interests and principles of Christianity, for example in its regard for all men as equal. Therefore, it is to be supported and preferred over the previous monarchist system.

[117] Vvedenskii, *Anarkhizm i religia*, 12-13.
[118] Ibidem, 13.
[119] Ibidem, 32.
[120] Ibidem, 14.

True religion

As has previously been noted, Vvedenskii wanted to address the spreading unbelief in the Russian intelligentsia and did so by speaking publicly on multiple occasions. One of these occasions was the debate with Lunacharskii in September 1925. Here, Vvedenskii defends the notion that religion is not passé in contemporary society, nor in contradiction to modern science, but is affirmed by many scientists. He names several examples: Pasteur mentioned that he prayed while working in his laboratory, because the more his scientific experience increased, the more his faith grew also. The professor Modi, on his visit to Leningrad, publicly asked God's blessing for Leningrad and its Academy of Sciences. The scientist Plank, while visiting the Academy for its anniversary, noted in several of his works on physics, that the contemporary development of physics should not lead to a lesser spiritual understanding of the world, but instead strengthen it.[121] Thus, Vvedenskii argues, even in modern Soviet science, there is still space for religious feelings among the intelligentsia. According to him, the problem, however, lies in the correct understanding of religion. Those opposing religion hold a very superficial view of it, saying that it evolved through time and only presides in those areas which were not yet touched by the 'bright light of clear understanding of human existence.'[122] From Vvedenskii's point of view, religion originates much deeper than it seems to the atheist, and antireligious propagandists have thus far only created strawmen of religion, which they in turn destroyed. However, Vvedenskii illustrates, this is nothing more than what Cervantes described in his *Don Quichot*: a battle against wind mills of their own imagination of Christianity.[123] But their image of an old man, who views his religion as his spiritual bank with a savings account, for which he will receive interest in the next life, is short-sighted. Although such people exist, they only represent the lowest echelons of religion. To fully comprehend religion, one has to view it in its entirety, instead of focusing solely on its lowest expressions.

According to Vvedenskii, the religious feeling is best viewed as a feeling of all-suffering love for God, comparable to a musician who has such a deep feeling for his music, that he cannot live without it and is willing to give his life for it. Vvedenskii knows of many examples of compositors who died in harsh economic poverty, but their love for music always prevailed over their fear of economic difficulties.[124] His analogy with music doesn't end there, because if the sacrificial love of the musician for the beauty of his music is comparable to the love of the faithful for the beauty of religion, it is impossible to objectively state that this feeling of deep appreciation is wrong. 'Is it really possible to say that the perception of the beauty of the music of Beethoven […] or Stravinskii is wrong?'[125] According to Vvedenskii, it is impossible to apply the qualification of right and wrong to

[121] Anatolii Vasil'evich Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm. Disput s Mitropolitom A. Vvedenskim* (Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Leningrad, 1926) 55.
[122] Ibidem, 58.
[123] Ibidem.
[124] Ibidem, 59.
[125] Ibidem, 60.

emotions, and therefore the assumption that 'the atheist psychology is correct, while ours is wrong, is a dispute based on psychological misunderstanding.'[126]

Apart from this psychological, and rather esthetical understanding of religion, Vvedenskii offers another approach. He says he will not dispute the idea that man evolved from animals, but there is a difference between them. According to him, it is not the fact that mankind is intellectual. After all, animals also possess intellect. Of course, man's intellect is much higher, but this difference is only in quantity, not in quality. Neither do moral values set man apart from the animal kingdom, for men sometimes behave worse than animals ever would. Animals also have ethics, which is evident in their ability to sacrifice themselves for the greater good and build communes, such as the ants and the bees do. But, from Vvedenskii's point of view, the difference between animals and mankind lies in one thing – the latter has a religious sense, while the former does not.[127] To invigorate his point, Vvedenskii refers to the great sociologist Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevskii (1851-1916), who also affirmed that animals have no religious feeling, but that this is unique for humankind. Thus, it is this religious appreciation that forms the boundary between mankind and that which preceded mankind. The focus of animals is concentrated on separate 'physiological moments,' such as lust for food or procreation, and thus only recognises the material world in its direct surrounding. Mankind, on the other hand, understands the world in a much broader context of 'synthesis.' Thus, this is Vvedenskii's basic idea of religion: 'religion is above all synthesis, religion is the attempt to reach universal connection. Religion is the perception of being connected to the universe.'[128] In the human understanding, the world is not such a chaos as it is in the animal's understanding, but it is cosmos, beauty, harmony, connection, and an integral whole. It is this understanding of the world as a united whole that sets mankind apart from the animals. This unity is not merely theoretical or philosophical, but is internal, organic, vital.[129]

Further drawing on this unity, Vvedenskii continues to state that even atheism is a religion in itself. He reminds the listener that Lunacharskii has said himself that Marxism is a religion, even though he now calls this a youth sin.[130] But also Oscar Wild has written that 'once atheism, too, will have its own religion, when at the altar, where not one candle is burning, the priest, who has no peace in his heart, serves the liturgy with an empty chalice and a host which has not been consecrated.'[131] For Vvedenskii, this is for example expressed in the existence of a humanist Church in London, which serves such a liturgy from the point of view of human solidarity instead of belief in a divine being. 'Is

[126] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm*, 60.
[127] Ibidem, 61.
[128] Ibidem, 62.
[129] Ibidem.
[130] Ibidem, 63.
[131] Ibidem.

this is farce? This is a sigh of the soul to God.'[132] In the eyes of Vvedenskii, although these are atheists, their emotions and wants express religious feelings and ideas.

Having established that man is a religious being, Vvedenskii proceeds to explain the dangers of contemporary atheism, by using yet another analogy. When one sits in the dark for a long time, the eyes will start to lose sight, the nerves will break down. According to Vvedenskii, what is going on in Soviet society is a huge experiment with humanity. The light of religion is taken away, and people stop experiencing God. Thus, the Komsomol-youths, for example, may seem true atheists, but in fact, they suffer from a disease affecting their religious sight. But it is only a sickness, and the nerves themselves are still intact.[133] By using a physical description of his metaphysical ideology, Vvedenskii is trying to convince his audience, and explain to them that the banning of religion by the government is going against mankind's religious nature, and is in fact imposing a spiritual disease. However, at the same time he argues that this disease only affects the people's perception of religion, but cannot completely erase the inner religiosity that sets man apart from animals.

However, Vvedenskii distinguishes two types of belief, just like there are two types of unbelief. There is belief which is based on what has been traditionally handed down to you by your parents and surrounding (which he considers the belief of the followers of Tikhon to be). This is not true belief, but merely respect for your parents. But there is also the belief of people like Dostoevskii, Pasteur, Modi, Plank – matured and hardened through martyrdom. This is honourable (*blagorodnyi*) belief. The same goes for unbelief. There is the type which Vvedenskii calls not-honourable (*neblagorodnyi*) belief. Such people declare themselves atheists because it is fashionable or favourable to their careers. But this is not real unbelief, but mere diligence towards the rulers. Of course there are also truly convinced atheists, but Vvedenskii sees very few of them outside of the political spectrum. This is what leads him to the interpretation that the contemporary unbelief is not a real breakdown of the nerves, but only a sickness of the religious perception.[134] To illustrate this, he tells an anecdote of two girls who came to him with a question. They had no parents and were raised in an orphanage, where their teacher had always convinced the entire class that God does not exist. But at night, the girls got up and prayed to God, after which they would feel warm and good. So they came to Vvedenskii – here he could not help but add: 'whom they regarded even smarter than their teacher' – with the question whether God exists or not. Vvedenskii's answer, as a bishop, is obvious. For him, the fact that these girls, although they had been raised in an atheist environment, in 'especially created religious darkness' still had this feeling, is proof that there remained within them a 'living, religious soul.'[135]

[132] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm, 63.*
[133] Ibidem, 64.
[134] Ibidem, 65.
[135] Ibidem, 66.

In conclusion of his speech, Vvedenskii states his expectation that he will be countered with the argument that however true his ideas of religion may be, it still remains opium., to which he wittingly responds that opium is still a medicine, including a quote of the doctor Sigenham: 'if it weren't for opium, I would not want to be a doctor.'[136] Opium cures many psychical illnesses, and in many cases, eases the pain in life. However, for the believer, his faith is not only opium for the easing of suffering, but also life itself. According to Vvedenskii, the opium of Christian faith does not keep the faithful from doing their true tasks. It is not lethargic, but 'true Christianity is active, willing to take up the whip and with the legions of angels fight against worldly evil, and for social truth of life, but with God, worldly truth, worldly beauty, the worldly sun of religion, which will not fade out.'[137]

True Christianity

As the previous quote already mentioned, Vvedenskii's vision of true religion was obviously not only bound to the general idea of religion, but was more specifically expressed and addressed in his vision of true Christianity. In his introduction of Vvedenskii, Lunacharskii had praised him as 'one of those Christians who did not protect their masters or rich people and who do not appeal to the fact that no social changes are necessary. He is a zealous advocate of justice on earth and […] in general, is always more or less close to what we are talking about.'[138] Especially this last sentence is a confirmation of Vvedenskii's position as a Renovationist, wanting to form a bridge between Christianity and Communism, thereby being 'more or less close' to the vision of Lunacharskii and his comrades. Furthermore, Lunacharskii characterises Vvedenskii's Christianity as advocating worldly justice instead of protecting the rich and powerful. Although these are laudable words, for which Vvedenskii is grateful, at the same time he argues that Christianity is much more than just its social-economic side. In fact, Vvedenskii regrets the fact that Christianity is almost never taken in its entirety, but is always divided up into several aspects, and only a limited number of these aspects is paid attention to. In that way, Christianity has been abused by a multitude of different groups, and has even been twisted to support capitalism. However, Vvedenskii states that when discussing Christianity, one should not be paying as much attention to what it has developed to be, but should see it in its most pure form, as he attempts to do.[139] As has been mentioned earlier, Vvedenskii considers the basis of Christianity to be the idea of the Church as the 'City of God,' a kingdom above the physical world (*nadmirnoe*), and not bound to any political system, based on Christ's categorical rejection of attempts to politicise his movement: 'I am a king, but my kingdom is not of this world.'[140]According to him, there was a time, even if it was only for a couple of decades, that early Christianity reflected this teaching of Christ 'as

[136] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm*, 66.
[137] Ibidem, 66-67.
[138] Ibidem, 21.
[139] Ibidem, 23.
[140] Vvedenskii, *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo*, 5.

in a straight mirror, instead of a false one.'[141] This search for true Christianity is best reflected in the split from Krasnitskii's Living Church in 1922, when Vvedenskii founded his 'Union of Communities of the Ancient Apostolic Church.' Its name clearly suggests that Vvedenskii believes the ancient Church of the Apostles to be the most pure expression of Christianity, thus this is what he seeks. This search for early Christianity is also reminiscent of the Protestant Reformation, which sought to change the Roman-Catholic Church to bring it more in line with what they believed was original Christianity. For this reason, and the anti-monasticism which flowed out from it – after all, monasticism didn't develop until a few centuries after Christ, and is in that sense not 'original Christianity' – the Orthodox theologian Fr. Georgii Florovskii has also termed the Renovationist movement 'Protestantism of the Eastern Rite,' although of course, the implications of the Western Reformation proved to be much greater and more durable than those of Renovationism.[142] But indeed, in its historical search of the original form of Christianity, Renovationism can be regarded as similar to Protestantism, which generally has these same pretensions.

However, despite what many consider original, historic Christianity to be, Vvedenskii argues that it is not necessarily the religion of the poor, despite the fact that Christ opposed the 'bourgeoisie of his time; the Pharisees, Sadducees, and publicans.'[143] According to him, the rich are not inherently evil and can still come to Christ, but they have to let go of their riches: 'Christ demanded of all of his followers that they completely rejected economic means.'[144] Hence, Renovationism strongly condemns capitalism, as it is based on the gathering of material means by some at the expense of other. The basis for this lies in the assumption that to Christianity, all are equal, all are brothers. And in this assumption lies also Vvedenskii's solution for the social problems of the time. For if all men are regarded as part of one family, the suffering of any one person of that family would not be acceptable to the others, because no one would let their family members starve. Vvedenskii stresses this utopian idea of a global family as the ideal of equality, which leaves no place for class distinctions or social-economic tragedies. And although utopian, he is convinced that this ideal is the only possible solution to all social problems, and finds its basis in the Gospel. It does not take much imagination to realise that Vvedenskii is doing his best to convey to his audience that the social principle of Christianity is very similar to that of communism, and that the communist system is the only political possibility to reach the Christian ideals of brotherhood and equality, but for those who still do not completely grasp it, Vvedenskii even finds the boldness to state that 'nowadays so-called "Marxism" is merely the Gospel, republished in atheist terminology.'[145]

[141] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm,* 24.
[142] Georgii Florovskii, *Puti Russkogo bogosloviia* (The ways of Russian theology) (YMCA Press Paris 1981) 339-340.
[143] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm,* 24.
[144] Ibidem, 24.
[145] Ibidem, 26-27.

Furthermore, he considers it undeniable that the whole society is filled throughout with fundamentally Christian ideas, even if they are not directly noticed. Although the terminology is not always the same, Marxist ideas such as brotherhood, classless existence, and the idea of a future utopia – a paradise on earth – are in essence filled with the ideas of Christ and his teaching of a brotherhood of all men.[146] Even more explicitly, Vvedenskii has seen several revolutionary posters in different cities with the text 'Those who do not work, shall not eat either,' which he has recognised as a literal quote from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians.[147]

However, Vvedenskii argues, this Christian potential has unfortunately been damaged by people like Tikhon, who denied Christ's revolutionary exhortations, and thereby strengthened the ideology of bourgeoisie and capitalism.[148] Christ himself, on the other hand, did put the Christian social ideals into practice. In sharply condemning the bourgeoisie of his time, he ought to be considered as much of an activist as Lenin, when he wrote his anti-bourgeois and revolutionary works. Furthermore, besides just calling for social change, Christ added weight to his words when he took up a whip and cleansed the temple from merchants, and as such, also became an activist in the physical sense of the word.[149] Obviously, Vvedenskii is using this last example to justify the revolution against those that oppress the poor. And as far as the necessity for physical battle is concerned, he reminds the audience that Christ has also fought his battle until death. Thus, again he asserts, Christianity offers the same ideal of self-sacrifice as communism does.[150]

The final verdict

Vvedenskii's ideological discourse vis-à-vis Christianity and communism is extensively and explicitly visible in the discussed sources. Throughout his life, he has tried – in word and deed – to solve the problems he found in his 1911 survey. With regards to one of these problems, the reactionary nature of the clergy, he fiercely attacks the patriarchal Church, and Tikhon in particular, for its anti-revolutionary and monarchist tendencies. The alternative that Renovationism offers, in Vvedenskii's eyes, is not condemnation, but support for the political system which pronounces socialist ideals, which he considers to be essentially Christian in nature, but atheist in terminology. His expression of ideology to his friend Iuritskii reflects the same idea, but the other way around: trying to explain social-economic terms in the evangelical language. By using the terminology of both communism and Christianity to explicate his ideology, Vvedenskii attempts to create overlap between the two, in order to make his audience understand that communism – with its moral values of equality of all and self-sacrifice for the greater good – is the only viable political option to create a Christian utopia on earth.

[146] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm*, 30.
[147] Ibidem.
[148] Ibidem, 27.
[149] Ibidem, 28-29.
[150] Ibidem, 30.

As for the other problem, that of incongruence between Orthodox dogma and modern science, Vvedenskii alludes to many philosophers, scholars, and others with an academic background in order to scientifically convince the audience of the possibility to combine religion with life in contemporary society. Thus, at least in his discourse, he succeeded in the creation of a bridge not only between Christianity and communism, but also between religion and science in general.

Conclusion

'Nowadays so-called "Marxism" is merely the Gospel, republished in atheist terminology.'[151] These words spoken by the Renovationist Church leader Aleksandr Vvedenskii during a debate with Lunacharskii in 1925 may at first glance seem very paradoxical. After all, those who have even basic knowledge of Marxism will know that it condemns all forms of religion as opium for the people.

Looking for an explanation for this paradox, this thesis has attempted to analyse the writings of Vvedenskii between 1918 and 1926 in order to understand what the ideological discourse was which he used to justify such an understanding of Christianity, and moreover, to justify his religious support for the atheist government. In order to contextualise his ideology, it is first of all necessary to understand that Vvedenskii was not merely a 'voice calling in the wilderness,' but was standing in a significant tradition of Renovationist thinkers, whose foundations are to be found as far back as the 1850s, when the priest Belliustin wrote a treatise on the necessity of change in the Church. Thus, when the Living Church in 1922 declared the Soviet authority to be 'the only one throughout the world which will realise, by governmental methods, the ideals of the Kingdom of God,' this was not merely motivated by an urge for power, as some have argued, but was also grounded in a genuine desire to adapt the Church to the changing social circumstances. This desire was especially prevalent since 1905, when the tsarist monarchy started to falter, and the theory of a symphony between the Church and an autocratic ruler started to be contradicted by the practical reality of a state which was unable to maintain order in the country, let alone take care of the Church financially, which led many of the lower parish clergy to disregard the monarchy and the monastic clergy which still supported them.

This reactionary nature of the hierarchical clergy was one of the reasons Vvedenskii found in 1911 for growing disbelief among the Russian intelligentsia. The other reason he found was the incongruence between Orthodox dogma and modern science. Being a sincere believer since childhood, he decided to become a priest in order to counteract the spreading disbelief in society. At the same time, he enjoyed a thorough academic background, which enabled him to bridge the gap between religion and science with intellectual arguments, as is evident in his ideology, which for the sake of this thesis has been divided into three main categories: the criticism of the Church of Tikhon, the relation between Church and state, and Vvedenskii's ideal of religion and Christianity in particular.

His works condemn the patriarchal Church for its rejection of communism and for its former support of the oppressive monarchy. But instead of only condemning the 'counter-revolutionaries,' Vvedenskii offers the alternative of a Church based on historical Christianity, without authoritarian hierarchy, but based on the brotherhood of men and the equality of all, in which the rich reject their material well-being and instead take care of the poor. He only supports the Soviet regime, because it is the only political system which shares these values and will build God's Kingdom on earth. Thus, whereas academics like Shubin for example stated that 'no can deny that the Living Church platform

[151] Lunacharskii, *Khristianstvo ili kommunizm*, 26-27.

contained traces of sincerity, but the ideas it promulgated were socialist and humanist, and not Christian doctrine,' this thesis has attempted to point out that there was much more than 'traces of sincerity' in Vvedenskii's ideology.[152] Indeed, it did represent an uncommon mixture between socialist and Christian ideas and rhetoric, but this was exactly the ultimate goal. After all, the Renovationists genuinely believed that traditional Orthodox Christian doctrine was flawed and captivated by the monastic and monarchist hierarchy, whereas their Church offered a much closer representation of original Gospel Christianity – a belief which originated as early as the 1850s.

The flamboyant Vvedenskii may have been self-interested or self-aggrandising in his ambition to reach the highest possible hierarchical position, if necessary with support from the government. However, at the same time, he was an idealist who sincerely believed that it was his religious duty to win over his audience – consisting mainly of intelligentsia – for his model of the Living Church on the basis of shared moral values such as self-sacrifice, equality, and the rejection of material means. Thus, his works, like his biography, witness to his genuine attempt to form a bridge between Christianity and communism.

[152] Shubin, *Russian Christianity*, 91.

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