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The Historical Journal / Volume 51 / Issue 03 / September 2008, pp 689 - 718
DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X08006973, Published online: 04 September 2008

The Historical Journal, 51, 3 (2008), pp. 689–718
doi:10.1017/S0018246X08006973 Printed in the United Kingdom

ARCHIMANDRITE MIKHAIL (SEMENOV) AND RUSSIAN CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM*

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ABSTRACT. *Sex, populism, and the search for universal religious freedom were the overwhelming preoccupations of Russia's Silver Age, and no churchman did more to engage with them than Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov). Having spearheaded the Russian Orthodox church's mission to the intelligentsia in the years before 1905, he fell from grace when Russian social Christianity was irrevocably politicized by revolution. Sacked from his chair at the St Petersburg theological academy when he declared himself a Christian socialist, he was unfrocked for converting to the Old Belief, and imprisoned for fomenting sedition. Yet even as he lurched from the established church, via the schism, to a revolutionary form of Golgothan Christianity, obsessed with suffering, Mikhail never abandoned his burning desire to build the kingdom of heaven on earth. His career, which has so far escaped detailed historical investigation, encapsulates most of the ecclesiastical tensions of his time, and reveals in particularly acute form the difficulties experienced by the Russian church when it attempted to respond to modernist intellectuals and to popular spiritual need.*

I

Early in the morning of 19 October 1916, a badly beaten vagrant was admitted to St Catherine's infirmary in Moscow. Several of his ribs had been broken by assailants who took him for a thief when he disturbed a sleeping cab-driver in search of a bed for the night. His bloodstained clothing was in tatters, and his mind was so disturbed that he could no longer recall his own name.[1] In one sense, the case was not unusual. Long teeming with the transient unemployed, Moscow had been filled to the point of overflow by an influx of refugees displaced by the First World War. Violence was common, and the city itself was characterized

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* The British Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Caledonian Research Foundation supported research in St Petersburg and Helsinki. Steve Smith and Geoffrey Hosking generously commented on a draft.

[1] P. V-v, 'Kir Mikhail episkop kanadskii', *Staroobriadcheskaia Mysl'* (*SM*) (1916), nos. 9–10, p. 577; Fomichev, 'Episkop Mikhail', *Slovo Tserkvi*, no. 45 (1916), p. 900–1; unsigned obituary, *Rech'*, 28 Oct. 1916. Dates are Old Style on the Julian calendar, twelve days behind the Gregorian in the nineteenth century and thirteen in the twentieth.

by one newspaper as a 'giant hospital'.[2] But this patient was no ordinary victim of circumstances. On 26 October, he was taken to the almshouse at the Rogozhskoe cemetery, having finally identified himself as the Old Believer Bishop Mikhail (Semenov), one of the most original and controversial figures in the history of the Russian church.

The press coverage that followed Mikhail's death on 27 October ensured that by the time his corpse was returned from the autopsy on which the secular authorities insisted, the burial service on 30 October was packed.[3] The poet Zinaida Gippius helped to explain the size of the crowd by sketching in her diary the odyssey of 'a remarkable man':

> A Russian Jew. An Orthodox archimandrite. A professor of theology from Kazan'. An Old Believer bishop. A progressive journalist, convicted and persecuted. An intellectual, exiled and in hiding abroad. An ascetic in Beloostrov, prepared to give anyone his last kopeck. A religious preacher, prophet of the 'new' Christianity among workers. Impetuous, self-sacrificing, helpless as a child, puny, small, excitable, quick and disorderly in his movements, completely bald but with a thick, black beard. At forty-two, he was not at all old. He spoke remarkably rapidly, his hands trembled and he was always fingering something.[4]

Such an extraordinary individual could scarcely expect to pass unnoticed either by a wide range of contemporaries – Mikhail is one of only seven living clerics mentioned by name in Lenin's collected works[5] – or by historians. Scholars have signalled his participation in the St Petersburg religious-philosophical assemblies in 1902 and 1903;[6] his role in the church's urban mission before 1905;[7] his commitment to ecclesiastical reform in 1905 and 1906;[8] his radical views on divorce;[9]

[2] Peter Gatrell, *A whole empire walking: refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), p. 62.

[3] Anon., 'Poslednie chasy zhizni episkopa Mikhaila i ego pogrebenie', appeared in both *SM*, nos. 9–10 (1916), pp. 579–81, and *Slovo Tserkvi*, no. 14 (1916), pp. 901–2.

[4] Gippius, diary, 29 Oct. 1916, in Zinaida Gippius, *Dnevniki* (2 vols., Moscow, 1999), I, pp. 429–30.

[5] Lenin quoted extensively from Mikhail in *Pravda*, 1 Dec. 1912, during the election campaign for the fourth Duma: see 'Dukhovenstvo i politika', in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (5th edn, 55 vols., Moscow, 1960–9), XXII, pp. 80–1.

[6] Jutta Scherrer, 'Die Petersburger religiös-philosophischen Vereinigungen', *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 19 (Berlin, 1973), esp. p. 110 n. 87, which mistakenly states that Mikhail converted to the Old Belief in 1905. The most recent edition of the assemblies' proceedings wrongly claims that he graduated from the St Petersburg theological academy: S. M. Polovinkina, ed., *Zapiski Peterburgskikh Religiozno-Filosofskikh sobranii, 1901–1903* (Moscow, 2005), p. 517.

[7] Gregory L. Freeze, '"Going to the intelligentsia": the church and its urban mission in post-reform Russia', in Edith W. Clowes, Samuel Kassow, and James L. West, eds., *Between tsar and people: educated society and the quest for public identity in late imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), pp. 226, 228.

[8] John H. M. Geekie, 'The church and politics in Russia 1905–1917: a study of the political behaviour of the Russian Orthodox clergy in the reign of Nicholas II' (Ph.D. thesis, East Anglia, 1976), pp. 15, 107–8; S. L. Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh – 1918 gg.)* (St Petersburg, 2002), p. 325.

[9] William G. Wagner, *Marriage, property and the law in late imperial Russia* (Oxford, 1994), p. 178.

and his advocacy of an idiosyncratic form of Christian socialism in 1906–7.[10] In an unreliable biographical outline, S. L. Firsov has discussed Mikhail's unfrocking after his conversion to the Old Belief in October 1907. Firsov also touches on Mikhail's elevation to the Old Believer episcopate and his leadership of a group of 'Golgothan Christians', a subject more sensitively outlined by Aleksandr Etkind.[11] But since none of these topics has been investigated in any detail, and questions about the connections between them have scarcely been raised, Mikhail remains one of those deceptively familiar characters about whom we know little. Barely more than a rhetorical symbol for clerical radicalism, he has so far eluded posterity almost as successfully as he evaded those anxious to discipline him during his lifetime. There is room, therefore, for a study of his career that relates it to the intellectual, social, political, and ecclesiastical contexts from which it has long been divorced. That is the purpose of this article.[12]

II

How I became a People's Socialist (1907) is not only Mikhail's most notorious pamphlet, but also the only one to incorporate an explicit element of self-revelation. It is not, however, a conventional autobiography. 'The evolution, growth and decline of the "individual" soul – mine or anyone else's – interests no-one', Mikhail disingenuously declared: 'It is only possible to study the evolution of a priest as priest.' In that sense, he claimed, 'my path is not mine at all, but a priestly path in general – the one followed by any Russian priest educated by the Gospel, by Dostoevskii, and by life itself'.[13] Setting out the influences that had estranged him from the established church, Mikhail began with the reaction to his paper on marriage at the religious-philosophical meetings in 1902, the year of his twenty-eighth birthday. Apart from a memory of an unbearably noisy factory, whose workers seemed 'powerless before the machine', he said almost

[10] M. M. Sheinman, *Khristianskii sotsializm: istoriia i ideologiia* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 137–9; Gerhard Simon, *Church, state and opposition in the USSR* (London, 1974), p. 23; Geekie, 'Church and politics', pp. 65–7; James W. Cunningham, *A vanquished hope: the movement for church renewal in Russia, 1905–1906* (Crestwood, 1981), pp. 314–15. Cunningham was mistaken to claim that Mikhail converted to the Old Belief in 1909 and became an Old Believer bishop 'after the 1917 Revolution': ibid., p. 344 n. 38.

[11] S. L. Firsov, 'K voprosu o tserkovnom reformatorstve nachala veka: shtrikhi k portretu staroobriadcheskogo episkopa Mikhaila (Semenova)', in A. N. Tsamutali et al., eds., *Problemy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rossii XIX-XX vekov: sbornik statei pamiati V. S. D'iakina i Iu.B. Solov'eva* (St Petersburg, 1999), pp. 322–32; Aleksandr Etkind, *Khlyst: sekty, literatura i revoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 249–53.

[12] I make no pretence to comprehensiveness. Press coverage of Mikhail's conversion alone was reputed to extend to almost every newspaper from *Birzhevye vedomosti* to *Bessarabskaia zhizn'*.

[13] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, *Kak ia stal narodnym sotsialistom* (Moscow, 1907), pp. 4, 3, reissued in idem, *Khristos v vek mashin* (Moscow, 1907), here pp. 252, 251. The Russian National Library in St Petersburg also ascribes to Mikhail the anonymous memoir, *Ot bursy do sniatiia sana* (2nd edn, Simbirsk, 1913). However, this is the work of a priest rather than a monk, and its subject – the disputed legitimacy of re-marriage for widowed clergy – though taken up by fellow clerical reformists, was of no personal concern to him. Dr Katharine Aylett kindly procured a photocopy for me.

nothing about his childhood; on the intervening period, he was wholly silent.[14] And yet those early years were crucial to the formation of his mind. Since Mikhail insisted that an effective preacher must speak primarily (if anonymously) about his own soul,[15] his intellectual and spiritual development can be partly reconstructed through the medium of his own writings. But the need for speculation is spared by the survival of plentiful collateral evidence.

The man who adopted the monastic name Mikhail at the age of twenty-five was born in Simbirsk in July 1874 and christened Pavel Vasil'evich Semenov.[16] Though he was not, as he has often been described, 'a convert from Judaism'[17] – his father was a Jewish cantonist, converted to Orthodoxy in the army, and his mother was born into the Russian faith – Mikhail's Jewish descent proved predictably controversial. In a deliberately offensive obituary, the professor of moral theology at the St Petersburg theological academy insinuated that his former colleague's pathological restlessness derived from his (rootless) Semitic origins: Mikhail was too 'unbalanced' to settle on any particular subject, and 'he could never look anyone straight in the eye'.[18] Though sources sympathetic to Mikhail sought to deny it, hostility towards Judaism also lay behind the rejection of his conversion among prominent Old Believers in both capitals.[19] Mikhail was certainly an outspoken opponent of anti-Semitic oppression. Urging all Christians to disown violence in 1906, he argued that priests were partly responsible for the pogroms that followed the October Manifesto since they had failed to speak out for Christ's truth: 'Pastors! The blood of the dead is upon us.'[20] In the following year, his Russian Christian socialist programme enjoined clergy to 'insist … on the abolition of such soul-destroying restrictions as the pale of

[14] Mikhail, *Kak ia stal narodnym sotsialistom*, pp. 6–10.

[15] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'Pis'ma o propovedi: pis'mo 2-e', *Tserkovnyi vestnik* (*TsV*), no. 11 (1905), p. 333.

[16] See Mikhail's official service record (*formuliarnyi spisok*), St Petersburg, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), f. (fond) 796, op. (opis') 187, d. (delo) 674, ll. 73–50b.

[17] Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian religious renaissance of the twentieth century* (London, 1963), p. 99; Scherrer, 'Die Petersburger religiös-philosophischen Vereinigungen', p. 110 n. 87; Geekie, 'Church and politics', p. 65; Cunningham, *A vanquished hope*, p. 120; all probably relying on T. Manukhina, ed., *Put' moei zhizni: vospominaniia mitropolita Evlogiia* (Paris, 1947), p. 202, the memoir of a right-wing bishop, hostile to Mikhail.

[18] A. A. Bronzov, 'Tragicheskii konets', *TsV*, nos. 43–5 (1916), pp. 782–3.

[19] *Russkiia vedomosti*, 10 Nov. 1907, and *Rech'*, 11 Nov. 1907, denied reports to this effect in *Novoe vremia*, 9 Nov. 1907, but compare the defensive remarks by his principal Old Believer supporter in 'Episkop Innokentii ob arkh. Mikhaile', *Staroobriadtsy*, no. 1 (1908), p. 97: 'The reptilian press shrieks that he is "a yid". Although one could point to a mass of examples of Jews who became luminaries of the church … and although Jewish origins are therefore not in themselves unworthy of the Christian church, in which there are "neither Hellenes nor Hebrews", it is only just to point out that archimandrite Mikhail is a "native-born Orthodox Christian", to use the expression sometimes employed in official documents, because he was *born* into and raised in the established church.' Emphasis in the original.

[20] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, *Khristos i Varfolomeevskie nochi* (*Evreiskie pogromy*) (St Petersburg, 1906), extracted in *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i evrei: XIX–XX vv. Sbornik materialov k teologii: mezhkonfessional'nogo dialoga* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 28–9.

settlement'.[21] Mikhail's 'Confession of faith for Golgothan Christians' re-emphasized in 1910 that the 'so-called' pale, 'locking a people into an accursed loop of destitution and sin, [represented] the greatest crime against Christ: blasphemy'.[22] Yet although his Jewish ancestry was plainly a formative influence, Mikhail's subsequent focus on the sanctity of female domesticity suggests that his Orthodox mother played an equally important part in his upbringing.[23] His Jewish roots did not prevent him from developing an obsession with the crucifixion. Neither did they deter him from engaging with Vasilii Rozanov, who was banned from the religious-philosophical society for making anti-Semitic remarks during the Beilis case,[24] and Archbishop Antonii (Khrapovitskii), whose antipathy to the Jews found expression after 1905 in his support for the rabble-rousing Union of Russian People (URP) in the diocese of Volhynia.[25]

Mikhail first encountered Antonii, eleven years his senior, when he graduated from Simbirsk seminary to the Moscow theological academy in 1895. As a descendant of Catherine II's state-secretary, A. V. Khrapovitskii, the academy's young rector ranked among the 1·8 per cent of bishops of noble origin within the ranks of an episcopate drawn overwhelmingly from the clerical estate.[26] His ideas were even more distinctive than his lineage. Whereas K. P. Pobedonostsev, chief procurator of the holy synod between 1880 and 1905, sponsored a revival of learned monasticism as means of fostering a phalanx of zealous scholar-administrators capable of disciplining the clergy and purifying society, Antonii saw it as a way of restoring the patriarchate and giving the Orthodox church a new spiritual engagement with secular thought and social concerns.[27] It was to

[21] 'Programma russkikh khristianskikh sotsialistov', in Mikhail, *Khristos v vek mashin*, p. 47.

[22] 'Novoe ispovedanie golgofskikh khristian', first published in *Novaia zemlia*, no. 5 (1910). I refer to the version reprinted by Mikhail's Old Believer critics, Father G. M. Karabinovich and Ieromonakh Iov (Nemtsev), in order to expose his 'dangerous, heretical and socialist opinions'. See *Sobranie statei po delu episkopa Mikhaila Kanadskago* (Moscow, 1914), pp. 90–113, here quoted at p. 99.

[23] See 'Budushchee zhenshchiny', in Ieromonakh Mikhail, *Tserkov', literatura i zhizn'* (Moscow, 1905), pp. 201–17, reworked as 'Zhenshchine nakanune eia osvobozhdeniia', in Mikhail, *Khristos v vek mashin*, pp. 193–226, and Episkop Mikhail, 'Sviatyia imena: mat', zhena, doch'', *Tserkov'*, no. 18 (1910), pp. 457–60; no. 24 (1910), pp. 501–3.

[24] For Rozanov's contradictory views on Judaism, see Efim Kurganov and Genrietta Mondri [Henrietta Mondry], *Vasilii Rozanov i evrei* (St Petersburg, 2000), and Laura Engelstein, *The keys to happiness: sex and the search for modernity in fin-de-siècle Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), ch. 8. Unlike the religious-philosophical assemblies, which were sponsored by the Orthodox church as a way of reaching out to the secular intelligentsia in 1902–3, the religious-philosophical society was a group of intellectuals, including Mikhail but few other churchmen, founded under the presidency of Sergei Bulgakov in 1905 and meeting regularly from 1906 to 1918: for its membership, see T. F. Prokopov, ed., *Moskovskii Parnas: kruzhki, salony, zhurfiksy Serebrianogo veka 1890–1922* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 673–4.

[25] Arkhiepiskop Antonii, *Evreiskii vopros i Sviataia Bibliia* (Pochaev, 1907).

[26] Jan Plamper, 'The Russian Orthodox episcopate, 1721–1917: a prosopography', *Journal of Social History*, 34 (2000), pp. 22–3, Appendix 2.1.

[27] S.S.B., 'O monashestve uchenom', *TsV*, nos. 29–30 (1889), pp. 505–7, 521–3; reprinted in Episkop Antonii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (3 vols., Kazan', 1900), I, pp. 416–27. On Pobedonostsev and the bishops, see Gregory L. Freeze, *The parish clergy in nineteenth-century Russia: crisis, reform, counter-reform* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), pp. 440–4.

him that Mikhail owed not only his fascination with Dostoevskii – 'the evil genius of Christianity'[28] – but also his lasting conviction that 'Christian asceticism constituted active service towards the moral renaissance of human society and the establishment on earth of the kingdom of heaven.'[29] However, as Mikhail's fellow radical, Father Grigorii Petrov, later recalled, Antonii's ultimate appeal lay neither in his doctrine, nor in his 'indistinct' and 'occasionally obscure' way of speaking: 'What mattered was the call. The direction. On the threshold of our lives, that monk was our signpost in the desert.'[30] So, when Antonii left Moscow in 1897, having clashed with Metropolitan Sergii (Liapidevskii) and several leading professors,[31] Mikhail duly followed him to the theological academy at Kazan', where he graduated fourth in a class of eighty-one in the summer of 1899 and was tonsured by his mentor on 26 November.[32]

Not long after converting to the Old Belief in 1907, Mikhail traced the roots of his new allegiance to his student days in Kazan', where all the rector's favourite pupils allegedly 'wore the Old Believer habit' and 'dreamed … of the time when the "orthodox" church would resemble the Old Believer church'.[33] Despite an obvious element of special pleading – Mikhail was careful not to mention that he had once compared Avakkum, a founding father of the Old Belief, to another 'false teacher', the prominent evangelical sectarian, Colonel V. A. Pashkov[34] – the argument for continuity is worth considering. Best known as a germinating centre of the Orthodox mission to the Muslim Tatars, the Kazan' academy also advanced what Pobedonostsev called 'that great work, the *edinoverie*' – the 'unified faith' pioneered in the 1780s as means of permitting Old Believers to maintain their own ritual provided that they acknowledged the authority of the Orthodox church.[35] By 1890, the chief procurator had largely overcome episcopal opposition to his strategy of strengthening the *edinoverie* as a means of undermining the schism.[36] However, leading *edinovertsy* saw their church not as an ecumenical bridge, but rather as an autonomous repository of authentic Orthodoxy capable of exposing the inadequacies of the prevailing synodal regime. That was how the *edinoverie* was portrayed by M. P. Chel'tsov and Simeon

[28] Mikhail, *Kak ia stal narodnym sotsialistom*, p. 11.

[29] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'Aktivno ili passivno khristianstvo?', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1 (1903), p. 438.

[30] G. S. Petrov, *U pustogo kolodtsa: sbornik statei* (3rd edn, Moscow, 1913), p. 235.

[31] Episkop Nikon (Rklitskii), *Zhizneopisanie blazhenneishago Antoniia, mitropolita kievskago i galitskago* (17 vols., New York, NY, 1956–69), I, pp. 168–70.

[32] *Otchet o sostoianii Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1898–1899 uchebnyi god* (Kazan', 1899), p. 50.

[33] *Tserkov'*, no. 17 (1908), p. 614.

[34] Mikhail, *Tserkov', literatura i zhizn'*, p. 27.

[35] K. P. Pobedonostsev to Palladii (Raev), archbishop of Kazan', 27 Dec. 1883, RGIA, f. 684, op. 1, d. 34, l. 110b. On the mission to the Muslims, see Robert Geraci, *Window on the east: national and imperial identities in late imperial Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 2001). On the origins of the *edinoverie*, see Pia Pera, 'Despotismo illuminato e dissenso religioso: i vecchi credenti nell'eta di Caterina II', *Rivista Istorica Italiana*, 97 (1985), pp. 501–617.

[36] S. I. Alekseeva, *Sviateishii Sinod v sisteme vysshikh i tsentral'nykh gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii poreformennoi Rossii, 1856–1904 gg.* (St Petersburg, 2003), pp. 183–6.

Shleev, both of whom, like Mikhail, gravitated from Kazan' to St Petersburg, where they joined him in the ranks of outspoken radical clergy.[37]

Only three places behind Mikhail in the class of 1899, Father Simeon was appointed priest at the capital's *edinoverie* church on Nikolaevskaia ulitsa on 7 February 1905.[38] It cannot be confirmed that he joined the self-selecting circle of 'approximately twenty Petersburg priests, most of them young, and the majority linked by close friendship' who met two days later to advocate church reform.[39] But it seems likely that he did, since both Mikhail and Chel'tsov, who had been appointed the first anti-schismatic missionary in the diocese of St Petersburg four years after graduating in 1894,[40] were among the celebrated 'group of thirty-two' which emerged later in that month,[41] and by October 1906 all three men were members of the successor group, the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renewal.[42] Between March and June 1906, Shleev and Antonii (Khrapovitskii) collaborated at the pre-conciliar commission on church reform, where the archbishop advocated increased autonomy for the *edinovertsy* on the basis of Mikhail's ideas about the canonical compatibility of Orthodoxy and the Old Belief.[43] However, by the time Antonii presided over the *edinoverie*'s first congress, convened by Shleev in St Petersburg in January 1912,[44] both men were irrevocably committed to reaction, and Mikhail had long since abandoned hope that the 'unified faith' represented a plausible means of returning Russian Orthodoxy to its authentic, Patristic origins. 'I waited', he declared in 1908: '*Vladyka* Antonii promised. Now I can wait no longer.'[45]

[37] M. P. Chel'tsov, *Edinoverie za vremia stoletnego sushchestvovaniia v russkoi tserkvi* (St Petersburg, 1900); S. Shleev, *K voprosu: kakoi episkop nuzhen edinoveriiu* (St Petersburg, 1905), esp. pp. 10, 15–16, 17–18; idem, *Edinoverie v svoem vnutrennem razvitiiu* (St Petersburg, 1910).

[38] Shleev's *formuliarnyi spisok*, St Petersburg, Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv gorod S.-Peterburga (TsGA SPb), f. 19, op. 113, d. 4107, ll. 70b–9; *Otchet o sostoianii Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1898–1899 uchebnyi god*, p. 50. Tonsured in 1918, Shleev was assassinated as bishop of Ufa on 12 Sept. 1921: see Metropolit Manuil, *Die russischen Orthodoxen Bischöfe von 1893 bis 1965: Bio-Bibliogaphie* (6 vols., Erlangen, 1979–89), VI, p. 223.

[39] Gruppa Peterburgskikh sviashchennikov, *K tserkovnomu soboru: sbornik* (St Petersburg, 1906), p. ii.

[40] Chel'tsov's *formuliarnyi spisok*, TsGA SPb, f. 19, op. 113, d. 4133, ll. 108ob–11. For his subsequent career, see Prot. M. P. Chel'tsov, 'V chem prichina tserkovnoi razrukhi v 1920–1930 gg.', ed. V. Antonov, *Minuvshee*, 17 (St Petersburg, 1995), pp. 411–73.

[41] The group, whose membership has never been fully established, gathered initially at the apartment of Father Nikolai Rudinskii, where more than fifty were attending meetings by the end of March: Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov'*, pp. 323–30, makes no mention of Shleev.

[42] See the list of forty-seven clerical members at RGIA, f. 834, op. 4, d. 565, ll. 3–4, 'Spisok lits sviashchennago sana, sostoiashchikh chlenami "Bratstva revnitelei tserkovnago obnovleniia"', 26 Oct. 1906. Two months later, Shleev was falsely denounced, with a fourth 'renovationist', Father Petr Aksenov, for failing to pray for the tsar: St Petersburg city governor to synodal over procurator, 30 Dec. 1906, RGIA, f. 797, op. 77, 3 otdel, 5 stol, d. 3, l. 1.

[43] Cunningham, *A vanquished hope*, pp. 300–2; Nikon, *Zhizneopisanie*, III, pp. 160–75.

[44] 'Pervyi vserossiiskii edinovercheskii s"ezd v Peterburge', *Golos tserkvi* (1912), April, pp. 91–105; May–June, pp. 145–63, published a transcript of the proceedings in response to mixed coverage in *Rech'* and *Novoe vremia*, beginning on 23 Jan. 1912.

[45] *Tserkov'*, no. 17 (1908), p. 614.

For all his ecumenical interests, it was not so much an affinity for the Old Belief that helped to incubate Mikhail's critique of Orthodoxy as a reaction against the synodal regime. Several fellow renovationists developed their distaste for the ecclesiastical bureaucracy by witnessing its machinations from within. On graduating from the St Petersburg academy in 1890, Father Ioann Slobodskoi worked for two years in the chancelleries of the synod and its lay chief procurator, where Father Pavel Dokuchaev joined him in 1891; Father Andrei Murin followed them a decade later.[46] Mikhail, by contrast, learned to question the status quo by comparing it with recent developments in the patriarchate of Constantinople, where he spent six months conducting research for his master's thesis charting the subjection of the church to the Byzantine emperors.[47] Exploring the triangular relationship between the patriarch ('the highest spiritual leader of both church and people'), the synod, and the popular council (the patriarchate's '"governing" institution'), his first scholarly publication in 1900 emphasized both the elective foundations of the council and the fact that the synod's small lay secretariat had 'no right to vote' and took 'no part in the business' unless invited to speak on a point of information.[48] Warming to the theme two years later, Mikhail explored the impact of 'an intensified attack on the old order' within the Eastern Church since the 1850s, fuelled by a popular 'rebellion against "episcopal extortion"'.[49]

In retrospect, it is clear that these youthful writings already incorporated in embryo the renovationist critique of Russia's synodal regime that emerged in 1905, when the synod, dominated by lay bureaucrats since Peter I's abolition of the patriarchate in 1721, was condemned for emasculating the influence of priests and parishioners in a church already disfigured by episcopal despotism. Pobedonostsev, however, failed to detect any critical overtones in Mikhail's early work. Impressed instead by the liveliness of his 'Letters from Constantinople',[50] and by his mission among the destitute children of Kazan',[51] the chief procurator saw in this fervent young monk precisely the sort of spiritual inspiration that he believed Russian society required. So he rescued Mikhail from provincial

[46] Service records for Slobodskoi, TsGA SPb, f. 19, op. 113, d. 4108, ll. 1450b–470b; Dokuchaev, ibid., d. 4133, ll. 770b–79; and Murin, ibid., d. 4108, ll. 1360b–370b. All three belonged to the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renewal in October 1906 (see above, n. 42).

[47] Ieromonakh Mikhail, *Zakonodatel'stvo rimsko-vizantiiskikh imperatorov o vneshnikh pravakh i preimushchestvakh tserkvi ot 313 do 565 goda* (Kazan', 1901).

[48] Idem, 'Ustroistvo tserkovnago upravleniia v konstantinopol'skom patriarkhate', *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 2 (1900), pp. 137–57, esp. pp. 142–3.

[49] Idem, 'Ocherk preobrazovaniia stroia tserkovnago upravleniia v Konstantinopol'skom patriarkhate v 1858–1900 gg.', *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1 (1902), appendix, pp. 1–56, esp. pp. 12, 15–17.

[50] Idem, 'Pis'ma iz Konstantinopolia', *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1 (1900), pp. 610–18, 753–9; 2 (1900), pp. 290–5.

[51] Children were to remain a focus of interest: Ieromonakh Mikhail, *Lishniia, broshennyia, neschastnyia deti: Publichnyia lektsii* (Moscow, 1904). For the national context, see Catriona Kelly, *Children's world: growing up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven, CT, 2007), ch. 5.

obscurity by engineering his transfer from the staff of the seminary at Voronezh to that of the St Petersburg theological academy on 1 September 1902.

III

Mikhail's inaugural lecture in the capital immediately established his commitment to social activism. Conscious that human frailty was bound to prevent the ultimate realization of the kingdom of heaven on earth, Mikhail nevertheless insisted on striving towards the ideal. Canon lawyers, in particular, must descend from their ivory towers in order to show that their subject was not some 'casuistical combination of disciplinary regulations', but rather a normative guide to the authentic Christian life.[52] Mikhail set an example by lecturing on the contemporary history of the Russian church courts, concentrating on the vexed question of divorce.[53] However, he had not been brought to the capital merely to teach theology students. A more influential public was to be reached at the religious-philosophical assemblies, where churchmen had been debating since 1901 with Decadent intellectuals who believed that Russian social life could be transformed by the fusion of spirit and flesh.

Mikhail made his debut at the twelfth session of the assemblies in November 1902 with a paper on sex and marriage, a subject widely discussed by writers and medics since Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* first circulated in manuscript in 1889.[54] Proclaiming marriage as a holy 'school of love' – a 'domestic church' promoting 'the growth of the ideal of Christ on earth' – Mikhail argued, against Tolstoy, that the sexual act was equally sacrosanct. 'Notwithstanding all our disagreement with Rozanov and his strange, heathen theory of marriage, on this occasion let us confirm with him that to regard *the physical side of marriage as sinful is to deny the sacrament.*' To bless procreation must be to bless the act of conception. Only if pleasure became the sole motive for marriage did passion become corrupt: the joy of sexual union should be '*the ecstasy of love for a future child*'.[55] As if these were not sufficiently unusual words to hear from the lips of a young celibate, uproar ensued in the next session when Mikhail, having again claimed common cause with the absent Rozanov, went on to imply that Dimitrii Merezhkovskii supported sodomy.[56] 'Rozanov is a mystic and Father Mikhail a positivist', Merezhkovskii objected, suggesting that Mikhail's reduction of marriage to a question of procreation amounted to no more than 'conventional theological nominalism'. By comparison, Rozanov's association of sexual passion with

[52] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'O zadachakh tserkovnago prava', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 2 (1902), pp. 753–73, quoted at p. 757.

[53] *Otchet o sostoianii S-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1904 g.* (St Petersburg, 1905), p. 27.

[54] Peter Ulf Møller, *Postlude to 'The Kreutzer Sonata': Tolstoj and the debate on sexual morality in Russian literature in the 1890s*, trans. John Kendal (Leiden, 1988); Engelstein, *Keys to happiness*, pp. 218–25.

[55] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'O brake (psikhologiia tainstva)', in 'Zapiski Religiozno-Filosofskikh Sobranii', supplement to *Novyi put'*, no. 6 (1903), pp. 248–56, passim.

[56] Briusov, diary, 16 Nov. 1902, V. Briusov, *Dnevniki, 1891–1910* (Moscow, 1927), p. 124.

personal vitality and national energy was both 'anti-Christian and anti-ecclesiastical'. Yet because it was 'genuinely religious', Merezhkovskii felt paradoxically impelled to defend it 'because I am always against positivism'.[57] Already Mikhail had begun to carve out an uncomfortable position between churchmen who regarded his ideas with suspicion and writers who regarded them as insufficiently creative. Despite their condescension, however, the Decadents were prepared to acknowledge a mind that distinguished Mikhail from Petrov, later dismissed by Rozanov as an 'utter windbag, the most run-of-the mill liberal priest, utterly unable to feel or comprehend either Christian mysticism or "metaphysics"' and 'fit only to be a ladies' preacher of "diluted" sixty percent Christianity'.[58]

Mikhail proved no less effective a communicator than Petrov in lectures at the Pedagogical Museum at Solianoi Gorodok where he reached out to the expanding ranks of literate proletarians and petit-bourgeois searching for a credible source of moral authority in a rapidly changing world.[59] Unlike most Orthodox preachers, he kept scriptural references to a minimum, rightly counting on the wider appeal of secular vocabulary. Ibsen inspired his thoughts on the family; Darwin and Haeckel provided a route into science.[60] His main source on the 'women's question' was Lily Braun, who had progressed, like Sylvia Pankhurst, from bourgeois feminism to social democracy.[61] By paraphrasing such modish foreign writers and a variety of contemporary Russian *belles lettres*, Mikhail managed not only to maintain a prodigious output, but also to attract a following that remained beyond the reach of more conventional churchmen. Unlike them, he spoke and wrote allusively, rejecting the 'uniform ideological approach (*monoideinost'*)' he identified with 'prophetic' emotional preaching, and instead allowing listeners to decide for themselves how best to respond to the spiritual challenges he placed before them.[62] To an audience of autodidacts yearning to be treated with dignity both in and beyond the workplace, this unusually respectful attitude on the part of a preacher was in itself a

[57] 'Zapiski Religiozno-Filosofskikh Sobranii', supplement to *Novyi put'*, no. 8 (1903), p. 307.

[58] S. P. Kablukov, diary, 16 June 1909, in V. V. Rozanov, *Pro et contra: Lichnost' i tvorchestvo Vasiliia Rozanova v otsenke russkikh myslitelei i issledovatelei* (2 vols., St Petersburg, 1995), I, p. 205. Compare, however, the generous review of Petrov's lectures in 1903 in V. V. Rozanov, *Okolo tserkovnykh sten* (2 vols., St Petersburg, 1906), II, pp. 131–40, and the dismissal of Mikhail in idem, *Mimoletnoe*, ed. A. N. Nikoliukin (Moscow, 1994), p. 291.

[59] The Russian *meshchanstvo* still awaits its historian; on the workers, see Page Herrlinger, 'Orthodoxy and the experience of factory life in St Petersburg, 1881–1905', in Michael Melancon and Alice K. Pate, eds., *New labor history: worker identity and experience in Russia, 1840–1918* (Bloomington, IN, 2002), pp. 35–63.

[60] For example, A[rkhimandrit] Mikhail (in collaboration with G[rigorii] P[etrov]), *Bezsmertna-li dusha? Reshenie voprosa s tochki zreniiia evoliutsii* (St Petersburg, 1906).

[61] On Braun, see Richard J. Evans, *The feminist movement in Germany, 1894–1933* (London, 1976).

[62] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, 'Tipy oratorstva: Rech' v Obshchestve liubitelei oratorskago iskusstva', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 2 (1905), pp. 456–77, 625–34, at pp. 458, 463, 476–7.

notable advance, and it was crucial to Mikhail's attempts to rescue the intelligentsia for the church.[63]

His mission represented a confessionalized version of the quest for civic nationhood undertaken in Russian society from the era of the Great Reforms.[64] Convinced that confessional boundaries were more important than social ones, Mikhail insisted that Orthodoxy could be 'distinguished from Catholicism or Protestantism by the fact that it regards every believer as a founder and creator of the life of the church'.[65] Though few laymen thought that the synodal regime reflected this ideal, it was an aspiration shared by many, and Mikhail enhanced his promise of greater popular involvement in ecclesiastical affairs by setting it in the context of an appeal to broader social inclusiveness. His central concept was sobriety. As a leading light in the Alexander Nevsky Temperance Society, and a contributor to its journal, *Christian Leisure Time* (*Otdykh khristianina*), Mikhail joined the burgeoning movement to condemn strong drink as a menace to both public health and personal morality.[66] However, as he stressed during a pilgrimage to the Valaam monastery in 1904, he conceived temperance 'not only in the sense of abstinence from alcohol, but also in the sense of leading a sober life in general'.[67] It was only on a platform of mutual self-restraint that social reconciliation could be achieved.

There was nothing inherently subversive about such ideas, many of which were adopted by the Right after 1905. Like them, Mikhail was critical of the soup-kitchens which proliferated across the capital, and especially of fund-raising charitable balls at which donors remained isolated from their beneficiaries: what Russia needed was 'factories of happiness' based on mutual Christian love, and modelled on the parish confraternity established by Father Aleksandr Gumilevskii in St Petersburg in the 1860s.[68] Such arguments reflect Mikhail's commitment to the Society for the Propagation of Religious and Moral Enlightenment in the Spirit of the Orthodox church, founded in 1888 by clergy inspired by Gumilevskii to compensate for inadequate parochial provision in the struggle against evangelical sectarianism.[69] It was under their auspices in 1903 that he published a biography of John of Kronstadt, the charismatic priest patronized by a church

[63] See, in particular, S. A. Smith, 'Workers and supervisors: St Petersburg, 1905–1917 and Shanghai 1895–1927', *Past and Present*, 139 (1993), pp. 38–55.

[64] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: people and empire, 1552–1917* (London, 1997), part 4.

[65] Mikhail, *Tserkov', literatura i zhizn'*, p. 19, countering Rozanov's claim that the common people were mere 'dust' in a church dominated by clerical 'scribes'. Published in 1905, this pamphlet passed the censorship in Sept. 1904.

[66] Patricia Herlihy, *The alcoholic empire: vodka and politics in late imperial Russia* (New York, NY, 2002), ch. 5.

[67] Quoted in Mikhail Gorev, *Kak trezvenniki ezdili na Valaam* (2nd edn, St Petersburg, 1909), pp. 9–10.

[68] Ieromonakh Mikhail, *O schast'e i meshchanstve* (St Petersburg, 1904), pp. 26–36. On Gumilevskii, see Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is not a vice: charity, society and the state in imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), pp. 129–36.

[69] Simon Dixon, 'The church's social role in St Petersburg, 1880–1914', in Geoffrey Hosking, ed., *Church, state and nation in Russia and Ukraine* (London, 1990), pp. 173–4.

anxious to challenge the popular appeal of the recently excommunicated Tolstoy.[70] Mikhail also contributed to the more direct attempts to undermine Tolstoy published in the uncompromising *Missionary Review* (*Missionerskoe obozrenie*).[71] Yet his following stretched far beyond the readership of such hard-line church journals. Recognizing his distinctive voice, even the populist terrorists imprisoned at Schlüsselberg took an interest in his pamphlets, distributed in the fortress by princess Mariia Dondukova-Korsakova (1827–1909) – nicknamed 'sancta simplicitas' by M. F. Novorusskii, himself a renegade graduate of St Petersburg theological academy – on visits arranged by Metropolitan Antonii (Vadkovskii) during the summer of 1904.[72]

Widespread enthusiasm for his ideas helped to boost Mikhail's conviction that their time had come. 'There is no doubt that the spiritual sphere is broadening day by day,' he proclaimed in *Into the promised land* in 1903: 'we are, so to speak, approaching a spiritual period'.[73] The Russians, he believed, crossed the frontier into this 'new, radiant era' by going to war against Japan in the following year. Evoking Vladimir Solov'ev's poem 'Panmongolism', which had raised the spectre of an Asiatic invasion of Russia in the wake of the unexpected Japanese victory over China in 1895, Mikhail portrayed the enemy as degenerate descendants of the Mongol hordes.[74] Whereas the Mongols had been 'honest heathens', unwittingly ignorant of the true faith, the Japanese had wilfully rejected the Russian mission to which so many of Antonii (Khrapovitskii)'s pupils had contributed.[75] Now the treacherous Asiatics could be brought to justice in a conflict whose transformative power extended to Russia itself. Just as thunder clears the air, so war had 'opened the door to new moods and new relationships, to a communal life, united by the lack of enmity between social estates'. The year 1904, Mikhail predicted, would be 'a year of dual victory: over the enemy and over our spiritual stagnation and disunity'.[76]

[70] Ieromonakh Mikhail, *Otets Ioann Kronstadtskii: Polnaia biografiia* (St Petersburg, 1903; 2nd edn, 1904). Historians still regard the book as a plausible secondary source: see, e.g., Nadieszda Kizenko, *A prodigal saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian people* (University Park, PA, 2000), p. 291 n. 20, and passim.

[71] Ierom. Mikhail, *Znachenie obshchestvennogo bogosluzheniia* (*Po povodu otveta L.N. Tolstogo Sv. Sinodu*) (St Petersburg, 1902); idem, *Liubov' ili nenavist', khristianstvo ili buddizm propoveduet Tolstoi?* (*Publichnyia Lektsiia*) (St Petersburg, 1902, reprinted from *Missionerskoe obozrenie*); 'Novaia knizhka grafa L. N. Tolstogo "Obrashchenie k dukhoventsvu"', *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 1 (1903), pp. 1243–52, 1508–28; 2 (1903), pp. 113–32.

[72] Princess's diary, 9 Aug. 1904, in Nadezhda Kornevaia, ed., '"Mne dano byl uteshenie": dnevnik kniazhny M. M. Dondukova-Korsakovoi', *Istochnik*, no. 3 (1995), p. 7; Novorusskii to Figner, Aug. 1905, in V. N. Figner, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (6 vols., Moscow, 1929), IV, p. 200.

[73] Ieromonakh Mikhail, *V pravednuiu zemliu* (St Petersburg, 1903), p. 5.

[74] Idem, *Pis'ma o voine* (Moscow, 1904), p. 23. On Solov'ev and the 'yellow peril', see David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the rising sun: Russian ideologies of empire and the path to war with Japan* (DeKalb, IL, 2001), pp. 82–6.

[75] For an evocative account, see Arkhimandrit Sergii, *Na dal'nem vostoke* (2nd edn, Sergiev Posad, 1903). Pessimistic bulletins from Japan reached Russia via *Pravoslavnyi blagovestnik*, the journal of the Orthodox Missionary Society.

[76] Mikhail, *Pis'ma o voine*, pp. 24, 26–7.

IV

Of course, it did not turn out that way. Port Arthur fell to the Japanese in December 1904, and Russian society was fatally splintered when troops attacked a peaceful but proscribed demonstration to the Winter Palace on what came almost immediately to be known as Bloody Sunday, 9 January 1905.[77] Within a church polarized by Father Georgii Gapon's abortive leadership of the Assembly of Russian Workers, most clerics followed Mikhail's erstwhile mentor, Antonii (Khrapovitskii), in a lurch to the right while a minority of urban priests determined, against the odds, to intensify rather than abandon the social content of the church's urban mission.[78] As 'a genuine admirer of the common people (*narodoliubets*)',[79] Mikhail instinctively knew which side to take, advancing his case in spring 1905 in a string of articles published primarily in the reform-minded *Church Herald* (*Tserkovnyi vestnik*), the weekly journal of the St Petersburg theological academy. Claiming Patristic authority for Proudhon's slogan, 'property is theft', he warned that priests risked oblivion by ignoring their parishioners' material needs.[80] And since the kind of pastoral commitment he urged seemed inconceivable in a church that had become 'more bureaucratic than the state',[81] he linked social with ecclesiastical reform, placing himself at the forefront of those who advocated the abolition of the holy synod and the restoration of the patriarchate. Bishops must also have their powers restricted. Under a truly conciliar regime, only membership of the initial 'legislative and reforming' body could legitimately be confined to the episcopate: subsequent local (*pomestnye*) councils must embrace precisely those laymen who currently felt 'banished from the life of the church'.[82] If such changes implied the need for doctrinal development, so be it: it was not the church that had been made for the canons but the other way around.[83]

Radical as these ideas were, they offered no immediate threat to Mikhail's career. In January, he was passed over for a supernumerary chair at the academy only because he was too junior: the job went to the longest serving candidate,

[77] See Walter Sablinsky, *The road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton, NJ, 1976), and Gerald D. Surh, *1905 in St. Petersburg: labor, society and revolution* (Stanford, CA, 1989), chs. 3 and 4.

[78] Antonii, 'O strashnom sude', *Moskovskiia vedomosti*, 2 Mar. 1905; Gregory L. Freeze, 'Church and politics in late imperial Russia: crisis and radicalisation of the clergy', in Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia under the last tsar: opposition and subversion 1894–1917* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 273–4; Page Herrlinger, 'Raising Lazarus: Orthodoxy and the factory *narod* in St Petersburg, 1905–14', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 52 (2004), pp. 341–54.

[79] D. Filosofov, 'Episkop Mikhail', *Rech'*, 29 Oct. 1916.

[80] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'Pochemu nam ne veriat?', *TsV*, no. 5 (1905), pp. 138–41.

[81] I. V. Preobrazhenskii, *Tserkovnaia reforma: sbornik statei dukhovnoi i svetskoi periodicheskoi pechati po voprosu o reforme* (St Petersburg, 1905), p. 51, reprinting an article by Mikhail published in *Vestnik iuga* and *Zapadnyi golos*, 24 Mar. 1905.

[82] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, 'Iz kogo dolzhen sostoiat' tserkovnyi sobor?', *TsV*, no. 15 (1905), pp. 462–7.

[83] Idem, '"Pervosviatitel'" ili "pervoprisutstvuiushchii"?', *TsV*, no. 19 (1905), pp. 587–90.

P. I. Leporskii.[84] Neither did alarm bells ring on 15 March, when the group of thirty-two presented Metropolitan Antonii with its first memorandum, 'On the urgency of restoring the canonical liberty of the Orthodox church in Russia.'[85] Indeed, it was on that same day that Antonii successfully petitioned the synod to promote Mikhail to the office of archimandrite as a reward for his 'earnest and useful service to theological scholarship'.[86] At this point, though critical of the reformers' 'tactless' public statements, Antonii privately supported a pressure group that could hardly have survived without his informal guidance and protection.[87] Less exposed than the metropolitan, who was already reeling from the pressures that would lead him to a breakdown in June, his suffragan, Sergii (Stragorodskii), used Mikhail's installation on 20 March as an opportunity to publicize their shared commitment to change. Rejoicing at the church's impending emancipation from 'external constraints', Sergii prayed for 'liberty for the whole church [and] for the restoration of its correct and legitimate voice' in Russian public affairs.[88]

Only after Mikhail was finally promoted to a supernumerary chair on 5 September did cracks in the alliance begin to appear.[89] From 1906, he developed his conciliarist ideas in a new weekly journal, edited jointly with A. V. Kartashev, which became the official organ of the Brotherhood of Zealots for Church Renewal. Launched to support 'reforms striving for the internal [re]construction of the Russian church on the basis of ecumenical Christianity', *The Age* (*Vek*) advocated the church's release from subordination to the state, improved status and income for the parish clergy, independence for the ecclesiastical courts, and the unification of all members of the church.[90] However, in an atmosphere soured by the tsar's refusal to call a church council, it proved increasingly difficult to hold together the various renovationist interest groups. To intellectuals such as Dimitrü Filosofov, the Brotherhood's 'superficial' programme privileged tawdry clerical obsessions at the expense of mystical Christianity.[91] To Mikhail's fellow clergy, divided by Russia's exposure to legalized party politics in the wake of the October Manifesto, his ideas seemed increasingly alien.[92]

[84] *Zhurnaly soveta S-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1904–1905 gg.* (St Petersburg, 1906), pp. 193–4, 16 Jan. 1905.

[85] *K tserkovnomu soboru*, p. iii.

[86] Synod resolution no. 1374, RGIA, f. 796, op. 209, d. 2241, l. 19.

[87] See Chel'tsov, 'V chem prichina', pp. 419–20.

[88] Episkop Sergii, 'Svoboda – dlia Tserkvi, no ne dlia nas: Rech' pri vruchenii zhezla novopostavlennomu arkhimandritu Mikhailu, dotsentu akademii, 20 marta 1905 g.', *TsV*, no. 12 (1905), pp. 354–5.

[89] *Otchet o sostoianii S-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1905 g.* (St Petersburg, 1906), p. 7.

[90] *Vek, ot redaktsii* (St Petersburg, n.d.), pp. 1–2; Scherrer, 'Die Petersburger religiös-philosophischen Vereinigungen', pp. 139–44.

[91] D. V. Filosofov, *Zagadki russkoi kul'tury* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 172–6, reprinting 'Tserkov' i revoliutsiia' from *Vek*, no. 18 (1907). Sergei Bulgakov contrasted the exclusive, confessional interests of 'clericalism' with the universal ambitions of 'Christian politics' in 'Neotlozhnaia zadacha', *Voprosy zhizni*, no. 9 (1905), p. 348.

[92] Chel'tsov, 'V chem prichina', p. 420.

Like Petrov, who was prevented from taking his seat in the second Duma only by imprisonment in a monastery, many renovationist priests followed Chel'tsov into the Constitutional Democratic Party. By contrast, Valentin Sventsitskii, reflecting a widespread rejection of bourgeois values among the secular God-seekers, declared that he 'would rather do business with the devil than with a kadet'.[93] Mikhail, who could see both sides of the argument,[94] remained faithful to liberal individualism even as his new series of pamphlets, 'Freedom and Christianity' (*Svoboda i khristianstvo*), marked a growing commitment to social reform, made explicit on 1 October 1906 by the publication of cheaper leaflets under the rubric 'Diary of a Christian socialist'.[95] The tension was wholly characteristic of European Christian socialism.[96] By one account, the Anglican version amounted to little more than Liberalism 'with Gladstonian economic ideas hacked out'; certainly most of its proponents had little grasp of socialist doctrine.[97] By contrast, Sergei Bulgakov, who attempted to form a Russian Christian Social Union in 1905, was a former Marxist with a sophisticated command of economics. Yet since this ill-fated group had its origins in the liberation movement, he saw no contradiction in equating 'the political and economic liberation of the individual' with 'acceptance of the anarchical communism of early Christianity as well as of the radically democratic and collectivist program of the existing democratic and socialist parties'.[98]

Not so Mikhail, who condemned the Marxist Social-Democratic Party as 'impractical, un-Christian, and unpatriotic' and launched his rival Christian Social Workers' Party 'on a basis of Christian faith and love for tsar and fatherland'.[99] In *Christianity and Social Democracy* (1907), he relied on Bulgakov to show that 'strictly speaking, the concept of the individual is completely absent from the system of socialism'. Far from celebrating collectivism, Mikhail quoted from Marx, Engels, and Kautsky only in order to expose the limitations of economic determinism. Christ's own example was proof that inspirational 'great men' could not be dismissed as spume on the wave of historical social forces. However, if the main point of the pamphlet was to remind the Social Democrats and

[93] Etkind, *Khlyst*, p. 245, quoting *Vek*, 1 July 1907.

[94] [Arkhimandrit Mikhail], *Byvshaia duma: vypusk pervyi – Po sledam Ka-De* (*Do Gel'singforsa*)*: Rech' obvinitel'no-zashchitel'naia* (Simbirsk, 1906).

[95] See the advertisement in idem, *Dni tvoreniia* (St Petersburg, 1906).

[96] See, in particular, John Boyer, *Political radicalism in late imperial Vienna: origins of the Christian Social movement, 1848–1897* (Chicago, IL, 1981), and idem, *Culture and political crisis in Vienna: Christian socialism in power, 1897–1918* (Chicago, IL, 1995). Mikhail made no mention of the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, confining his interest to the Germans, Naumann and Stecker, and to Charles Kingsley, notably in *Sviashchennik-sotsialist i ego sotsial'nyi roman* (St Petersburg, 1906).

[97] E. R. Norman, *Church and society in England, 1770–1970: a historical study* (Oxford, 1976), p. 177. For subtler possibilities, see S. J. D. Green, 'E. S. Talbot: the making of a Christian socialist; the development of his mind in Leeds, 1889–1895', *Northern History*, 37 (2000), pp. 261–74.

[98] See Catherine Evtuhov, *The cross and the sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the fate of Russian religious philosophy* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), pp. 101–14, quoted at p. 112.

[99] 'Programma khristiansko-sotsial'noi rabochei partii v eia okonchatel'noi formulirovke', in Mikhail, *Khristos v vek mashin*, p. 38.

Socialist Revolutionaries to whom it was addressed that socialism without Christian individualism was an empty shell, Mikhail nevertheless declared socialism 'correct' in its humanitarian impulse, urging acceptance of its 'people-loving (*narodoliubcheskaia*) programme' in its 'struggle against destitution, the enslavement of labour to capital, against stupefying work, against criminal labour by pregnant women and ten-year old children, against the manufacture of white lead … and so on and so on'.[100]

Although Mikhail never joined the People's Socialist Party (*Narodno-sotsialisticheskaia partiia*), formed in the summer of 1906 by A. V. Peshekhonov and a group of populist intellectuals associated with the journal *Russian Wealth* (*Russkoe bogatstvo*), his Russian Christian socialist programme effectively transposed 'enesy'[101] aims into a spiritual key, adding a number of urban prescriptions to their predominantly rural concerns.[102] Declaring the church's indifference to questions of constitutional form, Mikhail echoed Peshekhonov by urging followers to vote, in the short term, 'for the form of government capable of reconciling everyone: a constitutional parliamentary monarchy'. As a supporter of legalized trades unions, he advocated an end to 'criminal' child labour, better insurance for retired workers, and an eight-hour working day to guarantee the leisure time necessary for their spiritual development. Like the 'enesy', he rejected the use of violence by peasants to reclaim land that was rightfully theirs: '"*Land splattered in blood*" *will not produce grain*: the Lord curses new crops on land acquired through hatred.' But he made no attempt to conceal his revolutionary doctrine: 'The Christian denies property, considering the principle of "mine" and "yours" to be a lie and a blasphemy. Mammon must be destroyed.'[103]

V

Though the electoral impact of this muddled programme was predictably minimal – no Russian Christian Socialist Party emerged and only nine People's Socialists were elected to the second Duma in February 1907[104] – its effect on the church was electric. In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, Metropolitan Antonii had condemned 'agitation on the part of a clergyman' as 'criminal',[105] and he

[100] A[rkhimandrit] M[ikhail], *Khristianstvo i sotsial-demokratiia* (St Petersburg, 1907), pp. 14–27, 27–31 (great men), quoted at pp. 27 (Bulgakov), 39 (socialist programme).

[101] Like the 'kadets', the party was known by its initials.

[102] See Maureen Perrie, *The agrarian policy of the Russian socialist-revolutionary party* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 160–7; Terence Emmons, *The formation of political parties and the first national elections in Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 81–8; and N. D. Erofeev, *Narodnye sotsialisty v revoliutsii 1905–1907 gg.* (Moscow, 1979). On the party's intellectual origins and ultimate fate, see V. P. Baluev, *Liberal'noe narodnichestvo na rubezhe XIX-XX vekov* (Moscow, 1995), and A. V. Sypchenko, *Narodno-sotsialisticheskaia partiia v 1907–1917 gg.* (Moscow, 1999).

[103] 'Programma russkikh khristianskikh sotsialistov', in Mikhail, *Khristos v vek mashin*, pp. 46–8, emphasis in the original. This programme had been largely anticipated in Arkhimandrit Mikhail, *Prokliatyia voprosy i khristianstvo* (St Petersburg, 1906).

[104] Emmons, *Formation*, p. 87.

[105] Antonii to Pobedonostsev, 4 Apr. 1905, RGIA, f. 1579, op. 1, d. 36, l. 20b.

continued to believe that priests should remain 'above and beyond any party'[106] even when pressure from the Right forced the synod into increasingly unambiguous support for the URP.[107] Though Mikhail was concerned as much to Christianize labour as to collectivize Christianity, the distinction was lost in a revolutionary epoch when even moderate churchmen thought that 'the difference between Christianity and socialism is total'.[108] Antonii grasped the opportunity to silence him as early as 28 November 1906, when Mikhail, disillusioned by the stalling campaign for autonomy in the theological academies,[109] complained that life 'in the conditions of a city such as Petersburg' precluded 'any possibility of peaceful and fruitful work' and petitioned for a move to Rome, Berlin, Constantinople, or Athens – or indeed any city capable of offering appropriate 'institutions of higher education and scholarship'.[110] Acting with unwonted alacrity on the following day, the synod instead committed Mikhail to the Bogoroditskii monastery at Zadonsk.[111] Here, in what amounted to internal exile, he would fall under the authority of Anastasii (Dobradin), the seventy-nine-year-old bishop of Voronezh who, in a message to his clergy earlier that year, had compared revolutionary socialists – 'so-called fighters for freedom' – to pagans performing the work of the devil.[112] Often accused of vacillation, Metropolitan Antonii had on this occasion displayed firm resolve. So he reacted tartly to an open letter of 5 December in which the URP leader, Dr A. I. Dubrovin, accused him of protecting his 'revolutionary' professor. 'Mikhail', Antonii reminded the chief procurator two days later, 'was appointed to a chair at the Petersburg academy as a promising young scholar. As soon as his political views became known, he was swiftly removed from service, not by intervention on the part of the holy synod, but on my recommendation to the synod.'[113]

[106] Antonii to Vladimir, bishop of Kishinev, 21 Jan. 1906, RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 775, l. 3.

[107] See synod resolutions permitting clerical participation in URP meetings in Ufa, 10 Jan. 1907, ibid., l. 20; to bless clerical participation in the Ekaterinoslav URP, 19 Dec. 1907, ibid. l. 32; to allow all clergy to join the URP, 15 Mar. 1908, ibid., l. 38.

[108] D. Bogoliubov, 'Khristianstvo i sotsial-demokratiia', *Tserkovnyi golos*, no. 5 (1906), p. 145.

[109] Like their contemporaries in the universities, students at the St Petersburg academy demanded representation on its governing body (see RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 681) and professors demanded the freedom to fashion their own curriculum. A strike in October 1905 heralded the prospect of reform in the spring, but hopes were frustrated by a rearguard action led by Antonii (Khrapovitskii). See V. A. Tarasova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 324–73.

[110] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, ll. 2–3.

[111] Ibid., l. 4. The academy council received the synodal resolution on 11 Dec. (*Zhurnaly sobraniia Soveta Akademii za 1906–1907 gg.* (St Petersburg, 1908), pp. 93–4), subsequently reporting it without comment: *Otchet o sostoianii S-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii za 1906 g.* (St Petersburg, 1907), p. 7. P. N. Zyrianov, *Russkie monastyri i monashestvo v XIX i nachale XX veka* (Moscow, 2002), p. 224, confuses this verdict with Mikhail's subsequent banishment to the Valaam monastery.

[112] Chris J. Chulos, 'Peasant religion in post-emancipation Russia: Voronezh province, 1880–1917' (Ph.D. thesis, Chicago, IL, 1994), p. 125. On Anastasii (d. 1 May 1913), see *Voronezhskaia starina*, 13 (1914), pp. 1–109.

[113] Antonii to Izvol'skii, 7 Dec. 1906, 'Po povodu pis'ma Dubrovina', in S. L. Firsov, ed., 'Pravoslavnaia Rossiiskaia Tserkov' v gody pervoi russkoi revoliutsii', *Russkoe proshloe*, 5 (St Petersburg,

Mikhail, however, had no intention of travelling to Voronezh. Instead, he fled to his father in Simbirsk, from where he objected on 13 December to a transfer he regarded as 'a judicial punishment for a crime I have not committed' and declared himself unable to submit to the synod's verdict pending an appeal to the forthcoming all-Russian council.[114] In a classic instance of the pettifogging attacked by the renovationists, the synod resolved to ignore this petition on the grounds that only the bishop of Voronezh was now formally entitled to hear it.[115] Stalemate ensued as Mikhail fired off further appeals, accompanied by medical certificates testifying that the climate in Voronezh would ruin his health, while the synod, informed that Mikhail had failed to arrive in Zadonsk, continued to insist that he communicate through his diocesan bishop.[116] Having finally lost patience with its own game of charades, the synod decreed on 27 February 1907 that he would be unfrocked if he failed to proceed directly to the Bogoroditskii monastery.[117]

While his socialist views came under public attack,[118] Mikhail fell silent to consider his position. In April, he made his first direct approach to the secular power, complaining to the chief procurator, P. P. Izvol'skii, that the synod had hitherto ignored him.[119] But still he showed no sign of leaving for Zadonsk. When Anastasii again reported Mikhail's non-arrival on 7 June, the synod was prompted into a flurry of telegrams designed to ensure that he had grasped the consequences of further delay. Evidently, he had. But when, on 28 July, Mikhail finally announced his intention of travelling to Zadonsk, his decision implied no willingness to submit to synodal discipline.[120] On the contrary, a letter sent en route to Izvol'skii shows that he was already reluctantly reconciled to abandoning the Orthodox church:

> I am on my way to Zadonsk, and will be there when you receive this letter. But for now, having no hope of justice from the synod whose attitude towards me I find incomprehensible, I turn to you as the representative of a non-ecclesiastical power. I cannot live in Zadonsk and will be obliged to leave … My departure will evidently be punished by unfrocking. And since I shall not remove my cassock, then I am, in effect, being forcibly consigned to the schism.[121]

By this stage, Mikhail had already made contact with the Old Believer bishop of Nizhnii Novgorod, Innokentii (Usov), an exact contemporary, and an old

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1994), p. 27. Mikhail Agursky, 'Caught in a cross fire: the Russian church between holy synod and radical right (1905–1908)', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 50 (1984), pp. 173–7, speculates that Dubrovin's letter was the work of a trinity of influential right-wingers: A. A. Shirinskii-Shikhmatov, A. P. Rogovich, and the Moscow missionary, Father Ioann Vostorgov.

[114] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 9. [115] Synod resolution, 17 Jan. 1907, ibid., l. 10.

[116] Ibid., ll. 11, 17, 23 (Mikhail's petitions); 14–15 (Voronezh consistory to synod); 12 (synod resolution, 7 Feb. 1907). By the end of January, Mikhail was in Moscow with Briusov and others: see M. Kuzmin, *Dnevnik, 1905–1907*, ed. N. A. Bogomolov and N.A. Shumikhin (St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 509–10. [117] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 20.

[118] S. Makovetskii, *K voprosu o pravoslavii arkhimandrita Mikhaila* (St Petersburg, 1907).

[119] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, ll. 27–8. [120] Ibid., l. 39.

[121] Quoted by Firsov, 'K voprosu', p. 326. The original is at RGIA, f. 1569, op. 1, d. 93, l. 1.

acquaintance from the St Petersburg religious-philosophical assemblies. Mikhail first wrote to him in May, seeking a meeting in the following month, and promised to convert when they eventually met in August.[122] On 22 August, he finally arrived at Zadonsk, where events transpired much as he had predicted. Abbot Nafaniil, in a gesture which unwittingly revealed much about prevailing monastic mores, gave him one of the best-furnished cells 'despite his obvious poverty'. Within a month, Mikhail was reported to have received unauthorized visitors and slept outside the monastery without permission (a woman's name was insinuated as a characteristic means of defamation).[123] Though he successfully petitioned for leave to return home on the death of his father, he was never reconciled to his new circumstances.[124] On 23 September, he sent a final petition to the synod, showing obvious signs of mental strain. Six days later, Mikhail left the monastery 'of his own accord'.[125]

Already on 25 September, a new provocation had appeared in the form of an article denouncing 'episcopal dictatorship' in the church schools.[126] The editor of *Comrade* (*Tovarishch*), a newspaper associated with the People's Socialists, was promptly fined 500 roubles.[127] But Mikhail was less easily muzzled. Although a special sitting of the synod on 13 October banned him from further literary and political activity and committed him to the Valaam monastery under the personal supervision of the archbishop of Finland, this development was evidently engineered by the archbishop himself.[128] Like Mikhail a favoured pupil of Antonii (Khrapovitskii), Sergii (Stragorodskii) had presided over both the religious-philosophical assemblies and the St Petersburg academy before being translated to Vyborg in 1905,[129] and he continued to hold Mikhail in high regard. It was he who advised Mikhail to inform the synod that he was unable to abandon his journalism because further articles had already been commissioned by editors whom he could not afford to repay.

If this was a strategy designed to protect a wayward protégé, then it was wrecked the very next day by the publication of an article on 'legal marriage'. Anticipating the modern view that when 'a marriage has entirely ceased to be a reality, the Orthodox church does not insist on the preservation of a legal fiction',[130] Mikhail's early writings argued that Christ had never intended the word 'adultery' to signify purely physical infidelity. Mikhail instead preferred

[122] 'Episkop Innokentii ob arkh. Mikhaile', pp. 96–7; A., 'V mire staroobriadtsev: k delu episkopov Innokentiia i Mikhaila', *Russkiia vedomosti*, 6 Feb. 1909.

[123] Archimandrite Nafaniil to synod, 22 Sept. 1907, RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 51.

[124] Anastasii to synod, 3 and 4 Oct. 1907, ibid., ll. 45–7.

[125] Mikhail to synod, 23 Sept. 1907, ibid., ll. 49–50; Anastasii to synod, 6 Oct. 1907, ibid., l. 52.

[126] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, 'Sinodskie mery k ozdorovleniiu dukhovnoi shkoly', *Tovarishch*, 25 Sept. 1907.

[127] Chief procurator's chancellery to synod, 12 Oct. 1907, secret, RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 53.

[128] Ibid., l. 56; *Novoe vremia*, 15 Oct. 1907.

[129] See Simon Dixon, 'Sergii (Stragorodskii) in the Russian Orthodox diocese of Finland: apostasy and mixed marriages, 1905–1917', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 82 (2004), pp. 52–4.

[130] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox church* (revised edn, Harmondsworth, 1980), pp. 301–2.

to think in terms of 'the destruction of marital affection' – a definition intended to allow a less rigid interpretation of Russia's divorce law, which effectively forced couples to sin before they could separate.[131] Because spiritual communion with the mentally ill was out of the question, marriage to an insane partner was 'a crime against the idea of marriage'.[132] Since 'Christianity requires chastity even in marriage', Mikhail had explained in 1902, 'cohabitation between people who have lost the sacrament of love, and of moral [sexual] relations', was equally 'impossible'.[133] In this latest article, which reflected a widespread obsession with moral degeneration after 1905,[134] the tone was more sensational as Mikhail, referring to the prevailing 'cult of the bed', concentrated on predatory male instincts. Arguing that most men married only to procure a woman 'on the cheap', he declared that it would be better for them to pay for their desire at a brothel, like the lecherous protagonist of Artsybashev's notorious novel, *Sanin*.[135]

The editor of *Stolichnoe utro* was promptly fined on charges of blasphemy and pornography.[136] Postponing judgement on Mikhail, the synod sent his article to the octogenarian protopresviter I. L. Ianyshev, who had left the rectorship of the St Petersburg theological academy in 1882 to become the tsar's confessor. Renowned for his hostility to learned monasticism, Ianyshev reported in a shaky hand on 27 October that, to his 'amazement', he had found in Mikhail's article 'not only nothing church-like or Christian, but nothing religious at all'. Objecting to the article's detailed discussion of sexual pleasure, Ianyshev commented that had it not been signed by an Orthodox archimandrite, and a former professor of theology to boot, he would have assumed its author to be 'obviously malevolent toward the Christian church and the Russian Orthodox people'.[137] Mikhail could expect no more support from moderate churchmen. Even the *Church Herald*, sharing a widespread revulsion for sexually explicit literature, condemned 'pornography' and sexual emancipation as the intelligentsia's equivalent to the alcoholic stupor in which the lower classes (*nizy*) sought refuge from the evils of contemporary society.[138] On 28 October, the main censorship office informed Izvol'skii that Mikhail himself was to be prosecuted on charges of pornography.[139]

[131] [Arkhimandrit Mikhail], 'O razdel'nom zhitel'stve suprugov', *TsV*, no. 22 (1905), pp. 673–5.

[132] Idem, *Sumashestvie kak povod k razvodu* (St Petersburg, 1906), p. 4, quoted by Wagner, *Marriage, property and the law*, p. 178.

[133] 'Zapiski Religiozno-Filosofskikh Sobranii', supplement to *Novyi put'*, no. 6 (1903), p. 255.

[134] See Engelstein, *Keys to happiness*, part 2, esp. pp. 216–8.

[135] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, '*Zakonnyi*' *brak* (*problemy braka, materinstva, shkoly*): *sbornik statei* (St Petersburg, n.d.), pp. 10, 15–17, reprinted from *Stolichnoe utro*, 14 Oct. 1907. For an earlier engagement with Artsybashev, see Ieromonakh Mikhail, *Ottsam i detiam: publichnye lektsii, besedy, pis'ma* (Moscow, 1904), pp. 66–89. For a fresh examination of male motives, see Stephen Lovell, 'Finding a mate in late tsarist Russia: the evidence of marriage advertisements', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (2007), pp. 51–72.

[136] *Novoe vremia*, 24 Oct. 1907.

[137] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, ll. 66–7. On Ianyshev's hostility to learned monasticism, A. Bogdanovich, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhtsa* (Moscow, 1990 edn), p. 430, 29 May 1907; Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov'*, p. 407.

[138] *TsV*, no. 33 (1907), pp. 1058–9; Engelstein, *Keys to happiness*, pp. 379–80.

[139] RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 70.

Worse was still to come. Alerted to reports that Mikhail had carried out his threat to convert to the Old Belief in Nizhnii Novgorod,[140] Sergii telegraphed Bishop Nazarii on 3 November to determine their veracity. Prompted into emergency action by the bishop, the provincial governor contacted Innokentii (Usov) at 10 p.m. At 7 a.m. on the following morning, the governor's messenger returned to collect Innokentii's written testimony that he had accepted Mikhail into the Old Belief on 23 October.[141] Immediately on receipt of the news, the synod unfrocked Mikhail on 5 November 1907.[142]

VI

By no means all the Old Believers welcomed Mikhail with open arms. To the Moscow industrial elite with links to respectable Octobrism, the arrival in their midst of a self-declared socialist and alleged pornographer was at best a mixed blessing.[143] Yet for those determined to present their church as a nest of vigorous spiritual and ecclesiastical development, his conversion was a coup. Once the synod had been preserved from root-and-branch reform by the tsar's refusal to call a church council, it was no longer the Old Believers who could be accused of 'stagnation' but Orthodox themselves.[144] Widely publicized debates at the pre-conciliar commission had exposed divisions on a series of fundamental questions without providing any institutional mechanism for their resolution. No one was better placed to exploit the confusion than Fedor Mel'nikov (1874–1960), Mikhail's most important Old Believer sponsor after Bishop Innokentii.[145]

Regarded even by Orthodox rivals as a 'gentleman' among schismatics, Mel'nikov stood out by virtue of both his personality and his eloquence as an orator in the contemporary, secular style.[146] Raised together as specialists in Biblical exegesis (*nachetchiki*), he and Innokentii had been instrumental in the campaign to release the Old Believers from their status as outlaws: Innokentii as the founder of an underground typography in Nizhnii Novgorod, and Mel'nikov as 'a kind of all-Russian schismatic missionary',[147] travelling from his base in the capital under cover of his work as an insurance agent. Drawing on these experiences, both men established flourishing journals in the wake of the toleration

[140] *Rech'*, 1 Nov. 1907.

[141] 'Episkop Innokentii ob arkh. Mikhaile', pp. 96–7. Firsov, 'K voprosu', p. 328, mistakenly gives 20 Oct. as the date of Mikhail's conversion and is misled by an erratic obituary in his account of the unfrocking.

[142] Synod resolution, 5 Nov. 1907, RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d, 674, l. 71.

[143] 'Staroobriadtsy i arkhim. Mikhail', *Russkiia vedomosti*, 10 Nov. 1907.

[144] 'O staroobriadchestve', *TsV*, no. 10 (1908), pp. 289–93, represents an Orthodox attempt to rebut this charge.

[145] F. E. Mel'nikov, *Bluzhdaiushchee bogoslovie: obzor verouchenïia gospodstvuiushchei tserkv*i (Moscow, 1911), made use of the critical writings of Chel'tsov and Shleev: see pp. 23–8 and passim.

[146] D. Diakovskii, 'K kharakteristike staroobriadchestva', *TsV*, no. 20 (1909), p. 618.

[147] The phrase appears in metropolitan Antonii's diocesan report to synod, 1902, RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 1966, ll. 59–590b.

legislation of 17 April 1905.[148] Whereas the Moscow publication, *Old Believer Thought* (*Staroobriadcheskaia Mysl'*), could muster only 200 subscribers in 1909 (a figure that multiplied five-fold by the following year), the rival *Old Believers* (*Staroobriadtsy*), published in Nizhnii Novgorod by Innokentii, Mel'nikov, and N. D. Zenin, already boasted a list of 2,000 in 1908–9, and *The Church* (*Tserkov'*), in which Mel'nikov was also involved, became the most successful journal of all, attracting 3,304 subscriptions in 1912.[149]

Relieved to have found a new source of income, Mikhail contributed extensively to all three (and also to *The Word of the Church* (*Slovo Tserkvi*), which replaced *The Church* in 1914), usually under his own name, but perhaps also under the pseudonyms 'Omega', 'Friend' (*Drug*) and 'Old Friend' (*Staryi drug*).[150] Publishing indiscriminately on subjects ranging from history to cosmography, Mikhail, as Mel'nikov subsequently remarked, was capable of writing 'anywhere and everywhere: alone at home, in company, at meetings, on the train, on the tram'. Yet only an ardent admirer could agree that 'each and every one' of his works was equally inspired.[151] Critics detected incoherence in his 'empty-headed' method of arguing on the basis of quotations culled, in a single essay, from dozens of writers ranging from the Buddha to Maksim Gor'kii.[152] Aesthetic problems also emerged. It may not have been blasphemous, Merezhkovskii mused, to set extracts from the Bible alongside quotations from lyric poets who shared Mikhail's preoccupation with the conflict between pain and ideal beauty, but it was 'certainly in poor taste'.[153]

Such concerns were initially silenced by the urgency of Mikhail's critique of the soulless synodal regime. The press gleefully reported that Moscow's governor-general had fined *Nash ponedel'nik* 3,000 roubles for printing his 'confession' in December 1907.[154] In July 1908, the fourth all-Russian missionary congress at Kiev presented him with an opportunity to renew the attack. Although the renovationist delegates agreed that Orthodoxy's strength lay 'solely in its internal, spiritually beneficial institutions, and not at all in the co-operation of missionaries

[148] On the synod's rearguard action to limit schismatic advances, see Peter Waldron, 'Religious reform after 1905: Old Believers and the Orthodox church', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, 20 (1987), 110–39.

[149] O. A. Komarova, 'Staroobriadcheskaia periodicheskaia pechat' 1907–1917 gg.', *Staroobriadchestvo: istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost'*, 6 (Moscow, 1998), pp. 10–16, esp. p. 12; F. E. Mel'nikov, *Kratkaia istoriia drevlepravoslavnoi* (*staroobriadcheskoi*) *tserkvi* (Barnaul, 1999), pp. 486–8, 502–6. The latter work was probably written between the late 1930s and late 1940s, see ibid., pp. 10–11.

[150] Komarova, 'Staroobriadcheskaia periodicheskaia pechat'', p. 14. However, 'Omega' also contributed an article to *Slovo Tserkvi*, no. 9 (1917), pp. 161–3, after Mikhail's death.

[151] Mel'nikov, *Kratkaia istoriia*, p. 501.

[152] *Sovremennik*, no. 2 (1911), pp. 376–7, reviewing *Samoubiistvo: sbornik statei episkopa Mikhaila, prof. N. I. Kareeva, Iu. I. Aikhenval'da, N. Ia. Abramovicha, A. Ia. Lunacharskago, V. V. Rozanova, Ivanova-Razumnika* (Moscow, 1911).

[153] Dimitrii Merezhkovskii, *Bylo i budet: dnevnik, 1910–1914: nevoennyi dnevnik, 1914–1916* (Moscow, 2001 edn), p. 141.

[154] *Tserkov'*, no. 1 (1908), p. 29. See also, *Novoe vremia*, 21 Dec. 1907. For an Orthodox denunciation of the confession, see *Kolokol*, 3 Jan. 1908.

with police repression',[155] the alarmist tone of the majority allowed Mikhail to mock an increasingly defensive church, dependent on 'external' means of support, reduced to 'primitive' missionary work, and convinced that it faced a 'crisis' in which it would be 'vanquished' by its denominational rivals.[156] Had he remembered Metropolitan Antonii's advice to avoid the sort of 'bookish contests and logomachy' that 'give birth to arguments',[157] he might rapidly have cornered the moral high ground. Instead, intoxicated by his own notoriety, he unwisely agreed to a public dispute (*beseda*) with the veteran synodal missionary, Father Ksenofont Kriuchkov.[158] Since Mikhail, as he subsequently admitted, was no expert in such matters,[159] the outcome was doubly humiliating: nervousness and a string of doctrinal errors not only exposed him to mockery from former colleagues,[160] but also served to fuel the suspicions of those Old Believers who doubted his motives for converting.

Mikhail's representation of his adopted church as 'a living organism, uniting the *narod* with the priesthood in a single Divine people, searching for salvation together' would have carried more weight had he been willing to settle within an established Old Believer community.[161] He had every incentive to do so. At the heart of the Old Belief lay precisely the sort of communitarian ideal which seemed increasingly beyond the reach of the established church. While priests lamented that 'the church as a religious community and as a living parish really no longer exists',[162] Metropolitan Antonii acknowledged the schism's superior achievements:

> Every schismatic considers himself a master in his own society. His vote and his opinion count for something. Without his direct participation, not one ecclesiastical issue is decided. When he goes to his prayer-house, he feels at home: he reads, he signs, and if he does not like something, he expresses his displeasure straightaway.[163]

As Roy Robson has emphasized, partly on the basis of Mikhail's own testimony, the liturgy itself provided Old Believers with a regular means of communitarian

[155] D. I. Bogoliubov, *Religiozno-obschestvennyia techeniia v sovremennoi russkoi zhizni i nasha pravoslavno-khristianskaia missiia* (St Petersburg, 1909), p. 3.

[156] Arkhim. Mikhail, 'Na s"ezde', *Tserkov'*, no. 29 (1908), pp. 1010–1; idem, 'Moi vpechatleniia: s kievskago missionerskago s"ezda', ibid., no. 30 (1908), pp. 1038–42; no. 34 (1908), p. 1161; Heather J. Coleman, 'Defining heresy: the fourth missionary congress and the problem of cultural power after 1905 in Russia', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 52 (2004), pp. 70–92, places the congress in context.

[157] Antonii (Vadkovskii), *Rechi, slova i poucheniia* (3rd edn, St Petersburg, 1912), pp. 110–11.

[158] 'Publichnoe sobesedovanie arkhimandrita Mikhaila s sinodal'nym missionerom o. K. Kriuchkovym v Kieve 20-go iiulia 1908 goda', *Tserkov'*, no. 40 (1908), pp. 1358–60; no. 42 (1908), pp. 1420–2.

[159] Episkop Mikhail, 'Zametki', *SM*, no. 7 (1914), pp. 630–1: 'I am not a specialist in *besednichestvo* and know little about it … The business of active polemics with the synodal confession requires extreme caution.'

[160] Manukhina, ed., *Put' moei zhizni*, p. 203; Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov'*, pp. 400–1.

[161] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, 'V zashchitu staroobriadtsva', *Tserkov'*, no. 1 (1908), p. 11.

[162] Father Ioann Al'bov in 'Zapiski Religiozno-Filosofskikh Sobranii', supplement to *Novyi Put'*, no. 2 (1903), p. 84, session III.

[163] Antonii, diocesan report to synod, 1908, RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 2290, pp. 207–8.

re-affirmation.[164] In such an atmosphere, Mikhail's refusal to join a settled monastic brotherhood merely fuelled claims that his conversion had been driven solely by personal ambition. Stories that he was to be offered a vacant see appeared in the press immediately after his conversion. Though Mikhail denied them, it was barely more than a year before the rumours were vindicated.[165] In Nizhnii Novgorod on 22 November 1908,[166] Innokentii consecrated him as bishop of Canada (a new title) in the presence of but a single priest and deacon and without informing any other member of the hierarchy.[167]

At the council called to investigate this blatantly irregular procedure in Moscow in February 1909, Innokentii was forced to acknowledge that he had exceeded his authority. Although he claimed to have acted purely in the cause of proselytism in America, his actions smacked more of an attempt to evade official obstruction and to forestall criticism from Old Believers hostile to Mikhail.[168] As it transpired, their reaction was both virulent and persistent. In the short term, not even Mel'nikov's smooth tongue could spare Innokentii from attacks led by Bishop Meletii of Saratov and the Moscow layman, M. I. Brilliantov.[169] A closed episcopal conclave on 5 February banned both Innokentii and Mikhail from all priestly activity pending a further council, planned for 25 August.[170] Mikhail was unable to defend himself, having allegedly set out for his new diocese. The press reported that he had reached Le Havre, where he later claimed to have spent a month before poverty forced him to retreat to a doss-house and thence to Russia.[171] Whatever the truth of these claims, the bishops called Innokentii's bluff in August by insisting that Mikhail depart for Canada following a period of preparation supervised by Archbishop Ioann of Moscow. Commentators who wondered at Mikhail's naivety in failing to predict such a reaction noted that it might have been worse had those who hoped to have him declared a heretic not been thwarted by the strength of opinion among younger Old Believers and intellectuals. Mikhail, however, having initially threatened to abandon the Old

[164] Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in modern Russia* (DeKalb, IL, 1995), ch. 3. Robson twice quotes Mikhail, without appearing to realize who he was: see pp. 41, 49 n. 41.

[165] See, for example, *Rech'*, 2 Nov. and 9 Nov. 1907, reporting Mikhail's interview with *Russkoe slovo*.

[166] Firsov, 'K voprosu', p. 328, mistakenly gives 22 Oct.

[167] The potential for mission among discontented Orthodox in America had been discussed at the Old Believers' congress of August 1908, which ruled it 'premature' to send greetings to Mikhail. *Trudy deviatago vserossiiskago s"ezda staroobriadtsev … v Nizhnem-Novgorode, 2–4 Avguste 1908 goda* (Moscow, 1909), pp. 43, 47–8, 52.

[168] 'Proshenie ep. Innokentiia', *Staroobriadtsy*, nos. 1–2 (1909), pp. 115–16; Petr Bellavin to chief procurator's chancellery, 24 Feb. 1909, RGIA, f. 797, op. 79, 2 otdel, 3 stol, d. 46, ll. 13–15. Few participants realized why they had been called to Moscow, though news of the forthcoming council was leaked by *Novoe vremia* on 24 Jan. 1909.

[169] 'Osviashchennyi Sobor po delu ep. Innokentiia', *Tserkov'*, no. 6 (1909), p. 214.

[170] The Feb. council's resolutions were published in full in ibid., no. 7 (1909), pp. 246–7.

[171] *Rech'*, 6 Feb. 1909, following an interview with Bishop Innokentii in *Russkoe slovo*; Episkop Mikhail, 'Otvet o. Karabinovichu', *SM*, no. 4 (1915), p. 350.

Belief, insisted that he would only accept the authority of a popular (*vsenarodyni*) council and remained forbidden from saying the liturgy.[172]

The standoff generated a simmering dispute which boiled over into the national press at the time of the annual August councils, even in years when Mikhail's case was not officially discussed.[173] While his critics were never persuaded that the creation of the Canadian diocese was anything other than a ruse to promote him,[174] supporters' attempts to appoint him to the sees of Kazan'-Viatka and Perm-Tobol'sk in 1913 foundered on suspicions that he was temperamentally unsuited to diocesan management.[175] Mikhail was inclined to agree. 'I have no wish for a see of my own', he admitted two years later, 'lest through inexperience I offend some of the faithful. I am oppressed only by the impossibility of serving the liturgy for my own soul.'[176]

By that stage, however, even moderate supporters had lost patience, urging him to prove his allegiance by entering one of their monasteries, while Mikhail himself, having long since abandoned hope that the Old Believer church could prove 'not only "conservative" (*okhraniaiushchaia*), but also formative and creative',[177] had founded a sect of his own.

VII

Banned from residing in either capital as a consequence of his unfrocking,[178] Mikhail flitted between Beloostrov, on the Finnish border, and his native Simbirsk, where he was reported to have assumed the leadership of a community of 'Free Christians' as early as summer 1908.[179] In response to critics who regarded this as his sole motive for conversion to the Old Belief, Mikhail, without denying his episcopal ambitions, insisted that his original intention had been

[172] Press coverage of the August council was reviewed in *Krasnyi zvon* (1909), Sept., pp. 193–8; Oct., pp. 214–19.

[173] Compare *Otkrytoe pis'mo Ivanu Ivanovichu Novikovu* (Moscow, 1911), with the response, *Otvet na 'otkrytoe pis'mo' chlena soveta staroobriacheskikh vserossiiskikh s''ezdov Fedota Ignat'evicha Maslenikova* (n.p., n.d.), free supplement to *SM*, no. 9 (1911). Press coverage included 'Okolo dela ep. Mikhaila', *Utro Rossii*, 25 Aug. 1911, and subsequent reports on 26–8 Aug.

[174] 'Kak poiavilas' kanadskaia staroobriadcheskaia eparkhiia?', in *Sobranie statei po delu episkopa Mikhaila Kanadskago*, pp. 11–19.

[175] *Izvestiia po Kazanskoi Eparkhii*, no. 29 (1913), p. 876; 'K voprosu o predstavleniia kafedry episkopu Mikhailu', *SM*, no. 3 (1914), pp. 317–18; no. 7 (1914), pp. 641–4.

[176] 'Pis'mo episkopa Mikhaila', *SM*, no. 10 (1915), pp. 903–4.

[177] N. Zenin, 'Na pis'mo ep. Mikhaila', ibid., p. 908; Episkop Mikhail, 'Proshloe i sovremennyi zadachi staroobriadchestva', ibid., no. 5 (1911), p. 354.

[178] It was the example of 'hypocrites such as Gapon and Mikhail Semenov' that prompted Bishop Nikon (Rozhdestvenskii) to protest in the State Council against a proposal to repeal the civil penalties for unfrocked priests in 1910: see *Stenograficheskii otchet Gosudarstvennago Soveta*, Session VI, Sittings 12 (15 Dec. 1910), 13 (17 Dec.), and 14 (18 Dec.), cols. 515–64, 576–674, 639–76 (at col. 530). Despite objections from chief procurator Sabler, the proposals were eventually carried by 58 to 54. For a moderate clerical voice in favour of reform, see K. P., 'Ogranicheniia lits, lishaemykh sviashchennago sana', *TsV*, no. 19 (1910), pp. 561–3.

[179] *Volzhskii listok*'s denial was reprinted in *Staroobriadtsy*, nos. 4–6 (1908), p. 519.

to unite the Old Believers with '"Orthodox" who wanted to move from the synodal church to the free church (free from the state and the synod)'. 'Nothing came of that plan', he claimed in 1915, 'and no steps were taken to fulfil it. Perhaps the plan itself was mistaken: I allow that. But it is evident that there is nothing here that resembles an episcopate for free Christians.'[180] In 1908, however, he was careful not to rule out organizing such a community in the future. And despite his reassurances that it could be linked 'only to that Church which I consider Orthodox, that is, to the Old Believer church',[181] the groups of Golgothan Christians who emerged among the workers of the two capitals and the Volga towns by early 1910 were inspired entirely by Mikhail and Valentin Sventsitskii. From the moment that Mikhail published their 'confession of faith' in Sventsitskii's Moscow weekly, *New Land* (*Novaia zemlia*), his loyalty to the Old Belief was strictly qualified. 'My flock now', he announced, 'are all those who have lost their faith and the power of Christianity. To them I shall show the authentic Christ, and perhaps Christ will once again become the leader of a humanity wishing for "the promised land".'[182]

Although Mikhail's Golgothan 'confession' rehearsed the renovationist critique of the established church as a prisoner of the secular power and its own lifeless dogma, he gave this familiar litany his own distinctive colouring by portraying the world as a 'leprous pit' in which 'counterfeit' Christianity had sanctioned slavery, destitution, and capital punishment, and transformed marriage into prostitution. Calling on his followers to 'spurn the blind or suborned leaders' who had been 'deflecting' them from the work and faith of Christ for a millennium, Mikhail urged them to join him in beginning 'the redemption of the world'. 'The world is not yet saved', he declared. The only route to redemption was to relive Christ's suffering at Golgotha.[183]

The 'confession' marked the culmination of a significant strand in Mikhail's writings, beginning with his discussion of Gogol's 'self-crucifixion' in 1902.[184] Bulgakov, in his Easter message for 1906, offered a relatively optimistic interpretation of the events at Golgotha, envisaging Russia on the eve of a 'national resurrection' in which the people would finally 'triumph over their real "inner" enemy' and 'waken the whole hypnotized, sleeping kingdom' to realize 'age-old hopes of love for freedom and for humanity'.[185] Before 1905, Mikhail had likewise seen 'another vision' behind the crucifixion, 'not in the crimson colour of blood, but in the clear sunlight: there is Christ Risen – through Golgotha to the

[180] Mikhail, 'Otvet o. Karabinovichu', *SM*, no. 4 (1915), p. 349. See also 'Ob"iasnenie episkopa Mikhaila', *Tserkov'* (1910), no. 12, pp. 322–3.

[181] 'Pis'mo arkhim. Mikhaila', *Tserkov'*, no. 25 (1908), p. 879.

[182] Episkop Mikhail, 'Otkrytoe pis'mo episkopam, sobravshimsia v Moskve, i vsem staroobriadtsam', *SM*, no. 8 (1910), pp. 479–88, at p. 488.

[183] 'Ispovedanie golgofskikh khristian', pp. 90–113 passim.

[184] Ieromonakh Mikhail, 'Byl li Gogol' dushevnobol'nym?', *Moskovskiia vedomosti*, 1 Mar. 1902; idem, 'Gogol' i Zhukovskii po voprosu o stradaniiakh: (K iubileiiam 21 fevralia i 12 aprelia 1902 g.), *Vera i tserkov'*, 1 (1902), pp. 630–55.

[185] Quoted in Evtuhov, *The cross and the sickle*, p. 110.

promised land'.[186] Hope was still discernible in 1915, when he reminded the Old Believers that 'all great developments in the life of any nation' had been 'forged through suffering': just as Dostoevskii's 'greatest creative revelations' emerged from a Siberian labour camp, so a united Russia had been born 'out of the suffering of the Tatar yoke' and 'the humiliation of the Crimean War gave birth to Alexander II's reforms'.[187] Yet although Mikhail always insisted on the historical and psychological importance of the Resurrection,[188] most of his writings embodied the pessimism that Rozanov recognized as inherent in any theology focused on the crucifixion itself.[189] Debating the fate of Russia's outlawed sectarians in 1903, Mikhail declared that 'the suffering of the innocent in Christianity constitutes the essence of Christianity'.[190] Every Christian must undergo his own Golgotha, assuming responsibility not only for his own sins, but for the sins of the world. Without such suffering, Christianity would be merely a litany of moral commandments *à la* Tolstoy – a 'vegetarian abomination' indistinguishable from Buddhism.[191] As Mikhail revelled in the gloom – Christ 'never smiled' and the doctrine of Atonement was no more than 'a commercial transaction'[192] – an appalled Merezhkovskii objected that by demanding of every disciple 'a total repetition of Golgotha, eternal "self-crucifixion", incessant terror, [and] absolute, hopeless suffering', his 'new Christianity' differed from the old 'only in its unbridled extremism'. The world was '*already* saved', Merezhkovskii insisted: Mikhail's relentless concentration on Christ's suffering on the cross might even tempt one to suppose that he did not believe in the Resurrection at all.[193]

Proclaiming 'the crucified one' as their 'leader' and his cross as their 'banner of struggle and victory', the Golgothan 'confession' transposed Mikhail's obsession with the crucifixion into an overtly revolutionary key, heralding a popular movement which aspired to global change through a 'radical reconstruction of the moral and metaphysical interpretations of Christianity'.[194] How far such aspirations were shared by their followers is hard to say. Mark Steinberg, who has shown that suffering was a central theme of Russian workers' writing both before and after 1917, doubts that many of those who conceived of the redemptive power

[186] Mikhail, *V pravednuiu zemliu*, p. 26.

[187] Episkop Mikhail, 'O taine stradaniia', *SM*, no. 8 (1915), pp. 675–86, at pp. 682–3.

[188] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, '*Evangelie meshchan*' (*Renan i ego Iisus*) (St Petersburg, 1906), pp. 23–5; idem, 'Chudo Voskresenie', *Krasnyi zvon* (1908), Apr., pp. 247–57.

[189] Rozanov, *Okolo tserkovnykh sten*, I, pp. 16–21, esp. pp. 18–19.

[190] Polovinkina, ed., *Zapiski Peterburgskikh sobranii*, p. 486, session XXI.

[191] Episkop Mikhail, 'Sushchnost' religii voobshche i sushchnost' khristianstva', *Tserkov'*, no. 9 (1910), pp. 233–6; no. 11 (1910), pp. 281–3, at p. 283, developing the critique of Tolstoy in *Tserkov'*, *literatura i zhizn'*, p. 71.

[192] Arkhimandrit Mikhail, 'Dvenadsat'v pisem o svobode i khristianstve', *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn'*, no. 41 (1907), Letter 7, p. 1264; idem, 'O vere i neverii: Golgofa i Voskresenie', *Tserkov'*, no. 14 (1908), pp. 491–2.

[193] Merezhkovskii, *Bylo i budet*, pp. 141–5, emphasis in the original.

[194] 'Ispovedanie golgofskikh khristian', p. 104; 'Ep. Mikhail o sude nad nim', *Staroobriadcheskii pastyr'*, no. 10 (1913), p. 144, reprinting an interview with *Birzhevye vedomosti*; Etkind, *Khlyst*, pp. 250–2.

of the proletarian road to Golgotha intended their images of crucifixion to be taken literally.[195] Perhaps that was also true of most of Mikhail's disciples. Though references to doctrine were hardly to be expected from a Soviet writer, Marietta Shaginian's account of a Golgothan service is notable primarily for recreating an atmosphere of uncomplicated sincerity entirely of a piece with Mikhail's earlier appeal. Pompous and self-serving, Shaginian was no intellectual: 'Really you know nothing, Marietta', complained Gippius in 1909, advising her young friend 'to dance with schoolboys [rather] than discourse on the church and revolution'.[196] Yet even though her references to Mikhail are studded with flights of fancy, her experiences carry the ring of authenticity. 'About twenty people had gathered' to greet Mikhail, led in from the kitchen by their hostess, 'who had had her hair done and was dressed in her Sunday best'. 'Wearing episcopal robes and a cowl', he 'shook the hand of the one nearest to him; bowed to the rest on all sides and approached a table … covered with a red brocade tablecloth, on which stood some tall bronze candlesticks'. 'Someone by the window had thrown incense onto the smouldering coals and swung the censer so that they caught fire', but Mikhail, 'who seemed in a great hurry, cut short these activities that had turned our room into something approximating to an ordinary church' and made a speech that Shaginian remembered as 'amazingly simple, secular (in contrast to his clerical status) and persuasive'.[197]

Similar scenes were replicated among followers of other spiritual guides who attracted Orthodox disillusioned by the established church. Like the Golgothan Christians, both Ivan Churikov's popular temperance movement and the Ioannites, whose 'piquant' faith in the divinity of John of Kronstadt struck Mikhail as 'interesting and original', were compared with the flagellant *khlysty* by commentators across the political spectrum.[198] As all such groups came under pressure from the synod from 1910, Mikhail's position became increasingly exposed. As it transpired, however, he had more to fear from the secular authorities. Convicted on charges of fomenting terrorist sedition, he was fined 3,000 roubles and sentenced on 16 May 1911 to eighteen months' imprisonment for helping to publish a pamphlet by a populist, Vlasova, which glorified the assassins of Alexander II.[199] Protesting that he had been framed by the printer, who was also gaoled, he apparently served only a few months, and his incarceration barely stemmed the flow of his journalism. Nevertheless, hounded by his Old Believer

[195] Mark D. Steinberg, *Proletarian imagination: self, modernity and the sacred in Russia, 1910–1925* (Ithaca, NY, 2002), p. 262 and passim.

[196] Gippius to Shaginian, 8 Aug. 1909, in N. V. Koroleva, ed., 'Pis'ma Zinaidy Nikolaevny Gippius k Mariette Sergeevne Shaginian 1908–1910 godov', in *Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius: novye materialy, issledovaniia* (Moscow, 2002), p. 111; Catriona Kelly, *A history of Russian women's writing, 1820–1992* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 340–2.

[197] Marietta Shaginian, *Chelovek i vremia: istoriia chelovecheskogo stanovleniia* (Moscow, 1982), p. 335. See also pp. 317–19, 325, 329–31.

[198] TsGA SPb, f. 19, op. 97, d. 54; RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 2407, pp. 141–73; Mikhail, 'Moi vpechatleniia', *Tserkov'*, no. 31 (1908), p. 1062; Etkind, *Khlyst*, pp. 252, 464–5.

[199] *Russkiia vedomosti*, 17 May 1911.

critics and the secular courts, which were still pursuing him in 1913, his fragile nerves succumbed to the pressures of a fugitive existence.[200] Already by the summer of 1915 he declared himself 'completely ill'.[201] On 15 October 1916, en route from Simbirsk to consult a neurologist in St Petersburg, Mikhail abandoned his sister on a train at a suburban Moscow station and wandered into the night to meet his fate.[202]

VIII

In an irony not lost on his obituarists, Mikhail died at the hands of the very proletarians whose interests he had so selflessly championed. Although his ascetic lifestyle was universally acknowledged, to see only the artless exterior he presented to the world was to miss the inner resolve that sustained him in the face of mounting adversity. When they met in 1910, this 'twentieth-century monk' struck the writer Mikhail Prishvin as 'one of few people of conviction in Russia': 'Lost in his own thoughts, he shudders from an extraneous idea as if from physical contact.'[203] Remembered as a man of complete integrity,[204] Mikhail was frank with neither the synod nor the Old Believers. Indeed, in resisting both, he demonstrated a self-belief verging on arrogance that was characteristic of Russian learned monasticism across the political divide, finding its ultimate expression in the anti-Semitic fanaticism of the 'mad monk' Iliodor (Trufanov).

Mikhail's unwillingness to submit to discipline made him psychologically unsuited not only to membership of a political party, but even of conventional ecclesiastical institutions. In that sense, his life reads like a classic biography of Russia's restless Silver Age. He had something to say about all its obsessions: sex, populism, and the search for universal religious freedom. But whereas Bulgakov's spiritual quest took him from Marxism to idealism, from idealism to religious philosophy, and from religious philosophy to the church, in a journey punctuated by transcendental conversion experiences,[205] Mikhail's preoccupations remained remarkably consistent, even as he lurched from the established church to the Old Belief, and from there to Golgothan Christianity. His moments of crisis were all externally imposed: when the revolution of 1905 irrevocably politicized social Christianity in Russia and divorced him from his mentor, Antonii (Khrapovitskii); when Nicholas II refused to call a church council; when the synod's threat to unfrock him forced him unwillingly into the schism; when the Old Believer hierarchy rejected their new convert; when the state imprisoned him for fomenting sedition. Though each of these setbacks served to render his vocabulary more extreme, only death could finally extinguish the 'spirit' that

[200] Episkop Mikhail, 'V ob"iasnenie moego dela', *SM*, no. 6 (1911), pp. 430–3; St Petersburg circuit court to synod, 2 Nov. 1913, RGIA, f. 796, op. 187, d. 674, l. 78.
[201] 'Pis'mo episkopa Mikhaila', p. 904. [202] Fomichev, 'Episkop Mikhail', p. 900.
[203] Mikhail Prishvin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. V. V. Kozhinov and others (8 vols., Moscow, 1982–6), I, p. 748. [204] Filosofov, 'Episkop Mikhail'. [205] Evtuhov, *The cross and the sickle*, p. 45.

Merezhkovskii saw burning behind Mikhail's every word: 'a single thought, a single feeling, a single will: *Christ on Earth*'.[206]

Even had Russian social Christianity not been fatally discredited by its association with insurrection in 1905, it was doubtless Utopian for Mikhail to dream of realizing his ecumenical goal in a church driven deep into confessional inflexibility by its attempts to respond to the pastoral challenges of a multi-denominational empire.[207] It was an even greater triumph of hope over expectation to suppose that his aspirations could be satisfied by the Old Belief. 'That most orthodox of orthodox churches,' as Filosofov remarked, 'may improve the external forms of ecclesiastical life and raise the level of education, but it is hardly characteristic of it to develop, to move forward, to attract new religious forces, and so it has no need of people like bishop Mikhail. It cannot even cope with them or make use of them.'[208] Since neither institution could reconcile itself to his idiosyncratic form of Christian socialism, Mikhail was reduced to a furtive search for global Christian revolution in the secrecy of the Russo-Finnish border. There could be no more acute illustration of the difficulties the Russian church experienced in responding to modernist intellectuals and to popular spiritual need.

[206] Merezhkovskii, *Bylo i budet*, p. 145, emphasis in the original.

[207] See Simon Dixon, 'The Russian Orthodox church in imperial Russia, 1721–1917', in Michael Angold, ed., *The Cambridge history of Christianity*, v: *Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 325–47, esp. pp. 330–5.

[208] Filosofov, *Zagadki*, p. 306.