Sergii Bulgakov, the Fellowship of
St Alban and St Sergius, Intercommunion
and Sofiology

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Sergii Bulgakov and Georgii (Georges) Florovskii – arguably the two most influential Russian theologians of the twentieth century – cut their theological teeth during their work in the 1920s and 1930s for the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. A history of the Fellowship suggests the degree to which twentieth-century Russian theology was informed and defined by its interaction with Anglican theology and demonstrates the seriousness (and difficulty) with which Russian Orthodox émigrés in Western Europe approached the question of Orthodoxy’s relationship to other confessions. Bulgakov’s 1933 proposal for intercommunion brought to a head questions about Russian Orthodoxy’s attitude towards theological development that had long consumed Russian Orthodox émigrés, and widened political and theological divisions among intellectuals in the West and their more conservative émigré colleagues in the Balkans. Moreover, an examination of Bulgakov’s proposal sheds new light on his ‘Sofiology’ – a commitment that informed much of his life and work, and an ideal which his critics found overly romantic and influenced by ‘Westernising’ tendencies that called into question Russian Orthodoxy’s unique commitment to ‘the Truth’.

On 11 January 1927, about 60 people huddled against the cold on the platform of a small train station in St Albans, a town on the north-western outskirts of London, awaiting 12 exiled Russian Orthodox priests and students who now resided in Paris and London. When the train arrived and the students and priests disembarked, they seemed to some a ‘motley’ (пестрый) crew. Sergii Bulgakov, a former Marxist and member of the Russian Duma, and now arguably Russia’s leading theologian, led the delegation. Clad in a heavy cassock and adorned with his long hair and grey beard, he seemed rather ‘exotic’ to his English hosts. Moving about town, the delegation attracted the curious and perhaps startled attention of residents more accustomed, said one delegate, ‘to the sedate and uniform tenor of English life’.
The meeting in St Albans occurred during the same year as the great pan-Christian ecumenical conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, and during a decade filled with high ecumenical hopes, particularly among elements of the Anglican Church and Russian Orthodox intellectuals residing in Western Europe. Idealistic members of the British and Russian Student Christian Movements first proposed assembling in St Albans while conversing at the 1926 Assembly of the World Student Christian Federation in Nyborg, Denmark. The proposal was a bold one for the Russians, made the same year that the Karlovatskii Synod (the self-proclaimed authority for the Russian Orthodox in exile and a bastion of conservative, religious monarchism now based in Serbia) had condemned the Russian Student Christian Movement (RSCM) and its ecumenical proclivities. The students’ arrival constituted a statement, of sorts, that the Russian intelligentsia in Western Europe would proceed full ahead with ecumenical contacts, regardless of what more conservative elements of the Church in exile might prefer. Metropolitan Evlogii – a great admirer of English students, a committed ecumenist, a rival to the Karlovchane, the leader of the Russian Church in Western Europe, and head of the St Sergius Theological Institute in Paris – was happy to sponsor the delegation, and he asked his favorite priest, Fr Bulgakov, to lead it.

Simply making it to London was no small feat. Most of the Russian students – refugees of the Bolshevik revolution – lived on the edge of poverty. Their presence testified both to the generosity of their hosts and their own determination to make contact with that branch of Protestantism thought most friendly to Orthodoxy. They were excited to be in England, where life appeared awfully good. ‘It seemed to me,’ recalled Nikolai Zernov (a student who would soon enrol at Oxford and later become the Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies there), ‘that to live and study in this chosen place should be an extraordinary privilege …’. None of the English knew Russian. Most of the Russians spoke some English, but poorly. (Latin provided the medium for at least one dinner conversation.) But the participants were buoyed by the extraordinary hopes that permeated the inter-war ecumenical movement – hopes that far exceeded hopes in the nineteenth century – and many hoped that this conference might be a step along that path to Church reunion. An Anglican member enthused:

We cannot believe that the reunion of the Churches is ultimately impossible. Misunderstandings have to be removed, differences require explanation, apathy in many members of both churches
must be kindled into brotherly love: all this is true, but we have seen the vision and we bear it in our souls.\textsuperscript{13}

A reporter for \textit{Put'}, Nikolai Berdiaev’s journal of religious philosophy based in Paris, recalled of later discussions: ‘At the forefront of all remarks was the question: is it possible to unite Anglicanism with Orthodoxy; are there insurmountable hurdles on this path?’\textsuperscript{14}

Yet the week did not begin on a promising note. The Russian delegates, refugees from a self-proclaimed socialist state, were rather taken aback by the Leftist leanings of their Anglican hosts. ‘Most conservative [English] students expressed almost socialist views,’ gasped the correspondent for \textit{Put’}, who was amazed by the ‘political radicalism’ of the Anglican students and stunned to learn that a majority belonged to the Labour Party.\textsuperscript{15} Expecting theological discussions, the Russians instead found themselves in the midst of debates about social reform.

Such ‘radicalism’ blindsided S. Bezobrazov, a professor at the newly established Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris. Concluding a speech about Orthodox believers martyred by the Soviets, he opened the floor to questions and was bombarded with enthusiastic queries about the Living Church – a Church that the young Anglican socialists seemed to regard as a model for the evolution of their own. (The Living Church, we must remember, was an ecclesiastical body supported by the Soviet government in the hope of supplanting the Orthodox Church of which the Russian delegates were confessing members.)\textsuperscript{16} A few of the Anglicans even welcomed the Bolsheviks’ elimination of the Russian Patriarchate, suggesting to Bezobrazov that the Living Church was just ‘retribution for the indifference of the Orthodox Church’ to the material and social needs of its congregants.\textsuperscript{17} ‘It became clear,’ Zernov remarked icily, ‘how little the Anglicans know about it …’.\textsuperscript{18} Much later Zernov reminisced in his memoirs about the differences between his fellow Russians and their hosts:

The English abided in the pre-war liberalism of the nineteenth century. They believed that humanity was approaching the realisation of its aspirations, and that social justice and economic prosperity was guaranteed for all people, that the League of Nations had made impossible the repetition of destructive war, and that Christians, having finally understood their responsibility not only for spiritual but also for the material well-being of humanity, will turn to truth and to those who resist it.
‘We Russians,’ on the other hand, ‘having survived a coup of people against God … knew that shock rather than peace awaited us.’

Misconceptions and misunderstandings were in ample supply. The correspondent for the RSCM’s *Vestnik* (Messenger) complained, ‘The majority of the [English students] had only a somewhat confused conception’ of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy. The Russians, in turn, were astonished that the Church of England could encompass theological parties ranging from the evangelical to the catholic. As Put’ remarked: ‘the High Church and Low Church differ from each other so much that it seems strange to our Russian understanding that both reside in a single church organisation.’ The *Vestnik* was astonished that such differences seemed not to bother the Anglicans, who ‘repeatedly emphasised that large differences of opinion exist within the Anglican Church on questions of paramount dogmatic importance.’

The Anglicans, for their part, were bewildered and somewhat disturbed by practices such as prayers for the dead, and the veneration of icons, saints and the Mother of God. They listened with rapt attention when Bulgakov talked about the place of the Holy Fathers in the life of Orthodoxy, but despaired when he outlined his conception of the Church. He zealously advocated closer relations between Orthodoxy and other confessions, yet reported that the Orthodox recognised their own Church as the only true Church. All other churches, he insisted, deviate to a greater or lesser degree from dogmatic purity and truth. ‘At the time,’ reported Put’, Bulgakov’s talk seemed ‘almost a cruel definition of Anglicanism as heresy.’

The Orthodox were surprised by Anglican theology’s interest in science, while its interest in critical approaches to scripture caught them off guard. Bishop Gore, a leading intellectual in the catholic wing of the Church of England, told the Russians that the Book of Genesis could be best understood as a ‘symbol’, and then endorsed the Darwinian theory of evolution. When we approach the Book of Genesis, responded the correspondent for *Put’, we ‘acknowledge its historical reality’, but ‘the Anglicans cannot understand that’. ‘A historical understanding of the Bible,’ groused the *Vestnik*, ‘especially the first chapter of Genesis, is apparently unacceptable to the rationalistic, Anglican majority.’

Still, the students found a good deal of joy in each other’s company, and in what all described as deeply moving, joint worship services, conducted alternately according to the Orthodox and Anglican liturgies. The Anglicans were delighted to be in the presence of Russian students who (however strange and backward their theology might seem) nevertheless took liturgical worship as seriously as they did. And
the Orthodox were glad to be in the company of Western Christians who took them seriously at all. Zernov observed:

Until that time we Russians felt ourselves alone among Western Christians. Roman Catholics tried to convince us that all our misfortune was a result of our refusal to recognise the supremacy of the Pope. Protestants accused us of a loss of purity in biblical doctrine. The Anglicans were the first Christians in the West who did not try to convert us. They wanted to get to know us, understand our theology and listened attentively to our interpretation of Christianity.32

By the time the conference ended, little of substance had been accomplished, but both sides were determined to continue the meetings.

A year later (28 December 1927–2 January 1928) 70 people (including 25 Russians and 40 Anglicans) assembled in the fog and snow of St Albans for a second conference. The mood was expectant and tense. Anglicans joked rather pointedly with the Russians about the Russian Church’s excommunication of Lev Tolstoi. The Russians pressed the Anglicans for information on parliament’s rejection of the Church of England’s newly revised Prayer Book, concerned that its defeat indicated that the Church of England faced the same strictures that the Russian Church worked so hard to escape during the great Sobor (Church Council) of 1917. Anglican participants from the year before warned newcomers about the interminably long Russian services33 and speeches:

Once Russian speakers were fairly launched, nothing on earth, certainly not the dinner gong or the signal for morning office, would stop them. They would start with some fairly clear and obvious statements, and then delve steadily and deeper, uncovering one fundamental basis after another, with an ever increasing air of being in the sorest travail. Soon they had left their Anglican listeners far behind, and the chairman – not a coveted post – had to decide whether to stop the Russians in mid-course and seem rude, or whether to ignore the refreshment bell and let everyone’s lunch or coffee get cold.34

The second conference wasted little time on pleasantries. ‘There was less polite reserve, a more open approach to difficulties,’ recalled a Russian conferee.35 Metropolitan Evlogii reminded the conference, ‘love is not afraid of outspokenness – it calls for truth’.36 Questions
about Genesis surfaced again, but Professor Bezobrazov was ready this time, assuring the Anglicans that the Orthodox were ready to adopt a critical approach to scripture. A number of the Russian delegates, however, opposed the very idea of critical scriptural inquiry. Faced with such an attitude, one Russian delegate observed that the English ‘became deaf to our arguments, and affirmed that we were simply scientifically behind them and therefore not competent in these questions.’

‘I heard one Russian say,’ recalled an Anglican student, ‘that the Bible stands on a different plane from anything else either historical or scientific, and therefore cannot be criticised and examined as we examine and criticise other books; I think that this is to us fundamentally wrong.’

Paul Anderson (representing the international YMCA at the conference) felt sorry for the Orthodox, who were, he felt, ‘little familiar with contemporary scientific research in Anglican and German Biblical criticism and could not participate in the discussions on equal terms with the Anglicans, the majority of whom were theology students.’

Anglican students again criticised the Russian Church for failing to address social issues, and the Russians, again in a defensive position, tried to convince them that ‘our Church is not indifferent to the well-being of our people’. The issue of Christian socialism bogged down many conversations: ‘Someone said with justice that we started with the formula “Orthodoxy equals Mysticism; Anglicanism equals Social Reform”, and seemed unable to move away from it.’

But despite these persistent differences, emotional connections continued to strengthen. Zernov observed, ‘we found unity not in the conference hall but in the chapel during the hours of prayer’ and ‘during the breaking of the bread’. By mutual agreement, Anglicans and Orthodox took turns administering the Eucharist: members of each confession declined to receive the elements when priests from the other presided over the ceremony, but all participants remained present throughout the entire service. ‘The Eucharist turned out to be the primary, decisive factor in our spiritual encounter with the Anglicans,’ said Iurii Koletin, but it made them wistful as well.

[T]here often arose a feeling of great joy, which yet had a great sadness in it – a yearning that our unity which we had experienced in the spirit of worship might become fulfilled both spiritually and bodily, that we might be granted to partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord together from the same cup, when the times would be fulfilled.
Such a desire would continue to dog the meetings – becoming, almost, a third rail that many wished to touch but were too afraid – until the issue came to a head in 1933.

Fr Bulgakov quickly became a favourite of the Anglican students, who relished his kind demeanour and ready wit. The Russians, in turn, loved Bishop Gore, whom Put’ portrayed as practically Orthodox. Gore told the Russians that he was in complete agreement with them on the Sacraments, and he convinced Zernov that he held a ‘genuinely Orthodox conception of the Church.’ Bishop Frere, a devoted sponsor of Anglican monasticism, likewise got along famously with the Russian students. By the end of the conference a student remarked, ‘It seems as if we’ve met old friends after a long absence.’

Though delighted by the goodwill generated at the first two conferences, Bishop Gore worried that the Orthodox delegation was not representative of Orthodoxy as a whole. Metropolitan Evlogii’s flock, based in Paris, was viewed by other sections of the Russian Orthodox émigré community as suspiciously cosmopolitan, imbued with romantic and idealistic notions, and unduly swayed by Western theology and philosophy. Gore believed that future meetings would be meaningful only if they also included representatives from more traditional schools of Orthodoxy. In 1929 he proposed Georges Florovskii, another professor at St Sergius, as just such a representative.

Florovskii jumped right in, undeterred by his poorly spoken English. (Eric Mascall, who would co-edit the Fellowship’s journal with Florovskii in the late 1930s, recalled the reaction of Anglican students to one of Florovskii’s lectures: ‘they were quite devastated by his opening sentence, which appeared to be about an Orthodox lemon being confronted with Anglican zoology. When in fact [what] he had said was: ‘The Orthodox layman, when he first meets Anglican theology, thinks it is crypto-Nestorian …’) ‘His gaunt figure, his special competence in patristics, where Anglicans and Orthodox find common ground, and his ready wit made him a favourite with English students and theologians.’ Like Bulgakov, Florovskii was a theologian and philosopher of the highest calibre. His interest in the ecumenical movement had blossomed during his participation in Nikolai Berdiaev’s Paris colloquia in the late 1920s. (Florovskii and Berdiaev had a falling out when, in 1932, Florovskii decided to become an ordained priest.) It is significant that Florovskii joined the Russian Student Christian Movement (becoming one of its priests) only after the RSCM’s break from the Karlovchane: he thus largely missed the divisive debates about ecumenism during the late 1920s. Florovskii, unlike Bulgakov,
became active in the ecumenical movement only after making a strong commitment to the Orthodox Church. He came to ecumenism through Orthodoxy, whereas Bulgakov came to Orthodoxy after wide-ranging engagements with other Christian confessions. These differences would inform much of the Fellowship’s debate on the question of reunion during the 1930s.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s it remained unclear as to what, exactly, the Fellowship conferences were meant to accomplish. The Orthodox attended the first two meetings with a genuine desire to learn more about the Anglican Church, and they found much to admire. But a number of them also arrived with something of a missionary mindset. ‘Anglicans wait for an Orthodox answer to their quest,’ declared the correspondent for Put’ at the 1931 conference. ‘We realised,’ wrote one Russian, ‘how much is given to us within our Orthodox Church – our Liturgy, our attitude to sin, to confession, our veneration of the Mother of God and of the saints – all this was a great and fundamental help to the Anglicans in their spiritual life.’

Zernov and Bezobrazov viewed the early meetings as a chance to win Anglicans to Orthodoxy. And they were convinced for a time that they were succeeding. They saw the ‘truth and beauty’ of Orthodoxy, wrote Zernov. Their penchant for us,’ wrote Bezobrazov, ‘is a penchant for the Church – for full, genuine, churchliness (tserkovnost’).’ They profess faith in their Church, in the canonicity of their position, in the reality of their leadership. But they incline towards Orthodoxy as a source of living water.’ (Bezobrazov’s desire to win over the Anglicans stemmed in part from a desire to get them before Rome did.)

But active proselytising never materialised within the Fellowship. Rather, the Fellowship evolved into a mutual education society, with instructive articles filling the pages of the Journal of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, first banged out on a typewriter (with corrections pencilled into the final copy) in June 1928. Run on a shoestring budget with aid from the international Student Christian Movement, it teetered on the edge of solvency during its first years. Its early content was a mishmash of topics, from Anglican and Russian Church music to the Hermitage of Optino. Russian contributors saw the Journal as a way to keep the persecution of their Church in Russia to the fore of the English mind. The Anglican socialists ensured that the journal provided accounts of Anglican missions to the London poor. Numerous articles appeared on the Eucharist; and thematic issues offered complimentary and competing views on the Virgin Mary,
penance, confession, marriage and sin. Asceticism proved a favourite topic of the idealistic students.

But the Journal published virtually no serious discussions of reunion in those early years. The thematic issues allowed each side to stake out and explain its positions to the other – to describe foreign faiths and beliefs to those who understood them poorly. The articles were almost uniformly cordial, but also largely instructive. Serious, original theology was wholly absent. Contributions by Bulgakov, Florovskii and Fedotov – all great scholars – were catechismal in nature rather than scholarly or ecumenical. Indeed, Bulgakov and Florovskii were unyielding in their insistence that the Orthodox Church was the only true Church. ‘Orthodoxy’, argued Bulgakov at the Fellowship conference of 1930, ‘possesses the full and pure life of the Church, therefore the reunion of the Church can only be achieved in Orthodoxy.’ A year later he wrote in the Journal: ‘All the divisions of the Church, from the Orthodox point of view, are different degrees of a falling away from the truth of Orthodoxy.’ Meanwhile, Florovskii reminded his audiences that ‘the West separated itself from the East, and … the guilt of the West is greater’. Though always careful and usually generous to a fault, these were not attempts to negotiate common ground.

From the beginning, the Fellowship’s Anglican membership consisted almost entirely of Anglo-Catholics. And, as the years progressed, the Fellowship increasingly identified itself with this faction of the Anglican Church. This orientation became clear in the Journal, which published articles highly critical of the Protestant Reformation and Protestantism in general. Essayists complained about the dissolution of English monasteries. They reminded their fellow Anglicans that Henry VIII never contemplated ‘a Reformed Church without the traditional essentials of episcopacy and a sacramental system’, and argued that ‘it is impossible to approve of the spirit in which the Reformation under Edward VI’s Council was carried out’. Anglican members wrote articles on the importance of the intercession of saints, and the tragedy that was the loss of Apostolic succession.

This orientation did not please all the Fellowship’s members. An editorial in 1931 fretted, ‘In many of our discussions on the subject of Reunion we are apt to neglect the evangelical Anglican point of view.’ An evangelical correspondent complained that the Anglican services at the 1931 conference ‘would hardly have been recognised as representative by the average Anglican,’ and concluded that the conferences needed ‘a trained and senior Evangelical to correct or supplement’
discussions at the conference. But they were fighting a losing battle. The Fellowship’s executive body settled the matter in 1933, when it adopted an official statement of principles, articulating what had been implicit for quite some time:

The centre of the work of the Fellowship is liturgical worship, and it has been by entering into the riches of the catholic tradition … that both the individual life of members have been enriched and a spiritual unity discovered …

Those who ‘dissent from some forms of catholic worship and practice … are welcomed into the Fellowship provided only that they desire to understand the Catholic tradition, on which the work is based’. This statement – a de jure recognition of a de facto orientation – may have been prompted by another consideration as well. Anglican groups dealing with Russian émigrés during these years worried about potential fallout in the Russian émigré community should prominent Russian Orthodox be seen to be communing too closely with Protestants or those of a protestant persuasion. In any event, the statement appeared on the front of each subsequent issue of the Journal, and the Fellowship’s membership application offered full membership only to those who would swear to participate in either Anglican or Orthodox worship. All others had to be satisfied with ‘associate’ membership.

By the early 1930s, the early and tentative hopes about reunion had given way to projects of friendly propaganda and education. The Fellowship seemed stuck in (or, at least, comfortably settled into) low expectations. The contentious debates of the late 1920s had given way to thoughtful, placid and rather disengaged speeches and essays: ones that raised interesting questions, but gave little thought to (and no definite proposals about) the question of reunion.

And then, at the June 1933 meeting of the Fellowship, Fr Sergii Bulgakov dropped a bombshell. Movement towards reunion, he said, had stalled. It was unsound and even dangerous to continue merely discussing differences: if the two sides did not take a decisive, concrete step, he added, the Fellowship’s members would all be dead before they would see reunion. God was calling them to action there and then, he opined, and yet they were stymied. In fact, he said, Orthodox canons forbade them from consorting with the non-Orthodox, and some of their more conservative brethren took these canons quite literally, while dogmatic differences within the Anglican Church prevented it from proffering a unified negotiating position. So, he asked, how could the Fellowship move forward? How could it obtain full intercommunion?
The Orthodox principle of ‘economy’ – that is, setting aside the canons in individual and unusual circumstances – was not a viable option: it was intended only for exceptional cases, and thus it tended to affirm rather than overcome differences. The only option, he suggested, was a bold move – one without clear canonical precedence: since the Anglicans and Orthodox of the Fellowship were already in a state of ‘spiritual intercommunion’ (a vague term that would drive Bulgakov’s critics to distraction in the ensuing debates), they should commune jointly in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Communion, in other words, might be possible among parts of each Church.

Bulgakov used the term ‘partial intercommunion’ to describe his proposal. Its implications were enormous, for it questioned a fundamental assumption that underpinned all theological discussions between official Orthodox and Anglican delegations in the inter-war years. According to Bulgakov’s proposal, intercommunion could serve as the first step towards reunion, rather than the crowning achievement of reunion achieved through doctrinal negotiation. He hoped that partial intercommunion would provide the psychological or spiritual breakthrough that intellectual discourse and theological discussion had failed to achieve. Reunion would come not ‘through tournaments between the theologians of the East and of the West, but through a reunion before the Altar’.

While acknowledging the chutzpah inherent in such a proposal, Bulgakov was not willing to proceed without some sort of sanction from the Churches’ hierarchs. Thus, he added a final point: the Fellowship should find ordained Orthodox and Anglican bishops who would administer a ‘sacramental blessing’ (a term that confused many and would generate endless debate) on the endeavour. This blessing would serve both as a form of penance (that is, an acknowledgement of the sins of disunion) as well as formal permission for such an unusual experiment.

It should have surprised nobody familiar with Bulgakov’s theology that, in looking for a way out of the stalemate, he would choose the Eucharist. He had a profound regard for the mystical, unifying power of communio in sacris. Everything in Christian life, he argued, ought to orient itself directly or indirectly towards this Sacrament. It is only the Eucharist, he would argue, that brings us directly to God, unites us with God, and unites us with each other. ’The meta of metabole (the trans of transubstantiation) signifies not a transformation of one state of matter into another within the limits of the physical world but a union of two separate worlds, two separate domains of being.’ The Eucharistic
blood from Christ’s spear-wound actually created the New Testament Church, and the Eucharist can bring the whole of humanity – the entire body of Christ – back into communion with Him. In an article written for the Journal of the Fellowship just before his proposal, Bulgakov observed that in Communion we are:

uniting with Christ into one Body, into a deified humanity. One could put it that God is born in everyone of those who partake at the Liturgy, and everyone of them is born in God, enters his divine sonship.

Hence, if ‘competing groups unite before the altar and are filled with the spirit of Christian love, we find that their actual competition is mitigated and is removed from hatred and suspicion …’. Members of the Fellowship had long expressed regret that they could not participate in the Eucharist together. But until Bulgakov’s proposal, nearly everyone assumed that these obstacles were insurmountable without official action by the entire Churches concerned. Three years earlier, the Lambeth conference of Anglican bishops had affirmed:

We hold as a general principle that Intercommunion should be the goal of, rather than a means to, the restoration of union … [M]embers of the Anglican Churches should receive Holy Communion only from ministers of their own Church or Churches in full communion with it.

And only a few months before Bulgakov’s proposal, the Fellowship hammered out a statement of principles, which noted, ‘Entrance into one another’s central acts of worship is limited by the facts of disunity.’

Thus, the proposal caught almost everyone by surprise. Some were excited. ‘It now seems,’ observed an editorial in the Journal, ‘that after six years of discussion and getting to know one another the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius is being called to a more realistic consideration of the problem of Re-union.’ Zernov was delighted, and Michael Bruce, an Anglican member, hailed Bulgakov as a prophet for boldly proposing specific action.

But some found the proposal suspiciously Protestant. Intercommunion between bodies that did not recognise all points of dogma was exactly what Protestant Anglicans advocated. Bishop Frere responded warily, and Fr Chitty contested the proposal adamantly. Florovskii (who would later write a couple of articles against intercommunion) passionately opposed the proposal, and
was peeved with Bulgakov for even raising the issue. The whole
discussion, Florovskii implied, was fruitless: the East and the West
were separated by vast psychological and spiritual differences.
Dogmatic agreement must precede unity, and the achievement of that
was far distant.102 The Eucharist ‘is one and undivided and can only be
celebrated within the mystical limits of the Catholic Church,’103 he
said, adding that there was still disagreement on what constituted the
Catholic Church. He sniffed at Bulgakov’s idea of a ‘sacramental
blessing’ as inadequate.104

But opposition had never stopped Bulgakov in his political or theo-
logical career, and it did not stop him now. During the next two years
he fleshed out his proposal, which, he admitted in a vast understate-
ment, ‘is certainly novel from a dogmatic point of view’.105 Full agree-
ment in dogma was not possible, these later writings argued. It did not
even exist within the Roman Catholic Church.106 Besides, it was in the

living power of the dogma that we should proceed in our defini-
tion of the required dogmatic minimum at the beginning of
Reunion. The life of Grace which flows in the Church in its
Sacraments, pre-eminently in Baptism and the Divine Eucharist,
represents the universal and basic fact that fulfils and sums up the
dogmatic teaching of the Church.107

In other words, in the Eucharist was to be found the ‘dogmatic
minimum’, not in carefully negotiated theological formulae. Reunion
was impossible if the process were to begin in the sphere of theologi-
cal negotiation, or with a central, hierarchical body that could rule
on doctrine.108 Breaking through the stalemate would require ‘proph-
esy’, or ‘creativeness winged with daring and fired with inspira-
tion’.109 Disunion, he said, was the ‘first cause of our suffering’ and
suffering ‘calls us to prophesy the union of all’.110 ‘Prophecy’ (that is,
creativity unencumbered by strict adherence to tradition) alone
might provide a way out of this realm. The Eucharist would become
the practical, sacramental means of expressing and implementing
‘prophecy’.111

Bulgakov was careful not to imply that his proposal obviated the
need for official and full ecclesiastical reunion. (He sold his proposal as
an untraditional – ‘prophetic’ – step along the road to full dogmatic
agreement.)112 Still, the proposal constituted a direct challenge to those
Orthodox who looked to the Church Fathers and the Ecumenical Coun-
cils as the sole guide to relations with other Christians.113
As Bulgakov developed these arguments between 1933 and 1935, debates about the proposal tore through the Fellowship. Should the Eucharist be employed as a means to unite the Anglican and Orthodox Churches? The Fellowship’s members quickly set up camp on both sides of this question. Zernov, who would later publish his own treatise on the subject, became the proposal’s primary cheerleader. The Eucharist would demonstrate, argued Zernov, that ‘Anglicans and Orthodox recognise their brotherhood in Christ, which was not destroyed despite centuries of separate existence’. Anton Kartashev, one of Bulgakov’s colleagues at the Theological Institute in Paris, initially refused to take a stance but the proposal gradually drew him in. But other members of the Fellowship were not so sure. Bishop Frere waffled badly. He told the convener of the Fellowship’s executive body that questions of reunion were not within the purview of the Fellowship, which he described as ‘a praying, not a negotiating body’. The Fellowship must remain ‘within the limits of its own proper sphere’. But then Frere suggested that the Fellowship sponsor a series of five or six conferences on the question, causing Bulgakov to despair: ‘I myself (as well as the Bishop of Truro, I imagine) cannot be at all sure that we shall both be in this world for five or six conferences’. Others took an unyielding stance. ‘Not Intercommunion but abstinence from Intercommunion is the truly constructive attitude’, wrote one. In an article for The Church Quarterly Review, Florovskii argued that ‘schismatics’ (for which read ‘Anglicans’) must acknowledge their responsibility for disunion, observe the Sacrament of Penance, and then be received into the true, Orthodox Church before participating in its rites. He was deeply troubled by the assertion that members of one Church could act without the sanction or agreement of their entire Church, and told the executive’s convener that Bulgakov’s proposal could damage the ‘communal catholicity’ of the Church. Florovskii failed to understand how any member of the Orthodox Church could commune with some Anglicans but not with others:

I regard as uncatholic, particularist and even sectarian an attempt to achieve intercommunion within the limits of an individual and arbitrary group, such as the Fellowship, regardless of its size and the conditions of intercommunion … I consider it precisely as uncatholic to let the image of the Fellowship overshadow the reality of our Churches – Anglican and Orthodox.
‘Psychologically,’ he added, ‘I well understand Fr. Sergius’s wish to make some kind of real step forward. I am completely convinced, however, that any such step now would be a false one. It is given to us to bear the cross of patience and we must “endure to the end”.’ Moreover, he said, ‘It is not sufficient to be in love and charity with all men … it is more difficult to be united in truth, and we are not yet united in truth.’

Bulgakov’s contention that members of the Fellowship already agreed to a ‘doctrinal minimum’ vexed some members of the executive. What constitutes ‘sufficient doctrinal agreement’, asked Bernard Clarke? What standard should be used? Who decides? Anglicans who longed for reunion with the entire Orthodox Church feared the proposal would only further alienate those Orthodox who distrusted Bulgakov and the Orthodox intelligentsia loyal to Evlogii, and thus undermine attempts to find common cause with an already fractious Russian Church.

Indeed, the proposal split Russian members of the Fellowship badly, as evidenced by a meeting in Paris on 2 February 1934, consisting largely of faculty at the St Sergius Theological Institute. Opponents expressed serious doubts about the canonical validity of the proposal and about communing with a Church full of ‘evangelicals’. Florovskii argued vehemently that the Orthodox could pray but never commune with Anglicans. Zenkovskii supported him. Karteshev, A.F. Karpov, G.P. Fedotov and L.A. Zander argued in favour of the proposal. N.N. Afanas’ev seemed not to know what to think, while F.G. Spasskii simply lamented that the proposal was generating arguments and divisions within the Orthodox community.

The Fellowship’s executive realised the magnitude and complexity of the questions it faced, and decided to devote the entire 1934 Fellowship Conference to the proposal. In late June Bulgakov stood before the Fellowship and delivered a heartfelt plea for action:

Out of the experience of the tragedy of the Russian Church and personal banishment from Russia a conviction was born in me that we Orthodox could not overcome AntiChrist alone and therefore God was calling me to work for Reunion …

He argued in even stronger terms than before that hierarchical resistance should impose no impediment. The Orthodox Church, after all, he said, lacks a central authority; it could never legislate one way or another on the question facing the Fellowship. The Churches ‘cannot act without their people’, and thus it was up to the people to take the initiative. This was to be the Fellowship’s role: to ‘demand new steps in
the way of Reunion’. There was no other choice, he claimed. The matter
was in the lap of the Fellowship. ‘Surely the time has come to formulate
this question in terms of partial reunion.’

But opposition persisted. The Karlovchane (who had no members in
the Fellowship) came out against the proposal in a fury. John Douglas,
a chief organiser of meetings among official representatives of the
Anglican and Orthodox Churches between the wars (particularly
among the Church of England and the Greek and other Balkan
churches), had long been suspicious of the unorthodox reputations of
Bulgakov and other members of the Russian religious intelligentsia,
and thus urged extreme caution. At the 1934 meeting Florovskii again
urged the Fellowship not to let good intentions lead to canonically
invalid action. Communio in sacris, he maintained, could never be a
private action, outside the Church. Bulgakov responded to this by
launching into a speech that must have made Florovskii’s blood curdle:

It is said that only Churches as a whole can reunite – but what are
churches? All who belong to the same confessional group; all the
people in such groups. But is this historically true? If we look at
the 3rd, 4th or 5th centuries, the connection between the various
churches lies in agreement in faith and sacraments, but this is not
equally realised in all places and at all times ... Catholicity and
unity may be realised differently in different places. The doctrine
of reunion only on the basis of whole churches is Roman.

Bulgakov did not take this argument far, but the implications were
chilling: he was proposing a redefinition of the Church that would
encompass all members of the Fellowship and many other non-Ortho-
dox Christians. This was a notion that Florovskii could never abide.

And here the debate began to wind down. Members were growing
nervous. Passions were high, and some feared disaster if the debates
continued. ‘You must be careful,’ warned one conferee, ‘because many
evils surround us, and careful about what steps you take because we
have no complete idea of Church discipline …’. We must avoid, he said,
‘any new schism, or trouble, or disappointment’. Subsequent speak-
ers thanked Bulgakov for his proposal, but showed no stomach for
continuing the debates.

The conference adjourned for closing worship in the Chapel. The
executive produced some specific recommendations on proceeding, but
the wind was gone from the sails, and nobody had the will even to vote
on the recommendations. The Fellowship had reached an impasse.
Supporters grew discouraged, as opponents continued to make their
case. Metropolitan Antonii of the Karlovatskii Synod was on record as insisting that ‘complete dogmatic union’ was the ‘only possible form of union among the Churches.’ Partial communion, concluded Goudge, would not draw the Churches closer together; it would, in fact, drive them apart. By 1935, the proposal was on its last legs. Even Evlogii, Bulgakov’s great champion, dismissed his proposal. It was, he said, ‘completely incorrect’, since no group could decide questions of faith or Church life without the approval of the general Church hierarchy. Bulgakov reluctantly conceded defeat, but not without some final jibes. Opposition, he lamented, stemmed ‘not so much from the voice of a loving heart, as from the arguments of “sober” reason’. You will not be able to forget this question,’ he concluded, ‘because God has made you face it.’

The 1935 conference passed a resolution which, while praising the discussions, asserted, ‘We recognise that the time has not yet come for us to promote any scheme of Intercommunion.’ ‘It may be,’ Zernov wrote several years later, ‘that our generation will pass away without having achieved intercommunion’.

Beneath the surface of these debates lay another, largely unspoken concern, but one that nevertheless permeated the thinking of those who knew the émigré Russian Orthodox community well. Was Bulgakov a reliable spokesperson for Orthodoxy? Did his theology have the support of his own Church? Could his proposals be trusted? (Who, in fact, spoke for the Orthodox?) These questions had simmered for years, but they boiled over on 7 September 1935, when Metropolitan Sergii of Moscow and Metropolitan Antonii – in a joint action almost unimaginable to those who knew their disdain for each other – roundly condemned Bulgakov’s theology. (The condemnation from the Karlovchane was less surprising: they had attacked Bulgakov for some time.)

The denunciations centred on Bulgakov’s voluminous theological writings about ‘Sofia’, or the ‘Divine Wisdom’. Brave theologians have come to grief trying to make sense of Bulgakov’s Sofianic corpus; for our purpose it is sufficient to define Bulgakov’s Sofiology as an attempt to create from his mystical visions of Sofia (as well as from his admiration for Vladimir Solov’ev’s Idealistic understandings of Sofia) a theology that would explain, on the one hand, God’s transcendence over and superiority to His creation, and, on the other hand, God’s full participation with and investment of Himself within that creation. Bulgakov believed that Sofia was a ‘hypostasicity’ of God: that is to say, a ‘substance’ of God. (Similarities with the Logos in the Gospel of John are
important here.) Sofia is, in a sense, the conduit for God’s creative energy or ousia; matter can be conceived as an outpouring of Sofia. Thus, Sofia provides a bridge that overcomes the ontological gulf between God and the world. Sofia is neither God nor creation, but rather a ‘border’ that allows Creator to transform creation.

Metropolitan Sergii and the Karlovchane were not the first to be troubled by such theology. A number of theologians believed that Sofiology smacked of pantheism or gnosticism. Others recognised the influence of Romanticism and German Idealism (an influence Florovskii could not abide) particularly in the notion of divine energy within creation. But the attacks by Metropolitan Sergii and the Karlovchane were the first to express such misgivings so forcefully. Even more important (at least for the Fellowship), Metropolitan Sergii stridently attacked Bulgakov’s understanding of the Church, a concern implicit in the criticisms of those who attacked Bulgakov’s proposal on intercommunion. Whatever the motivation behind the attacks (which was in all likelihood political), Bulgakov’s proposal on intercommunion was now the proposal of a theologian whose theological writings had been deemed heretical.

Members of the Karlovatskii Synod, including Metropolitan Antonii, continued to rail against Bulgakov even after the initial condemnation. Antonii complained in a letter to Evlogii that Bulgakov’s work was ‘unorthodox’ and ‘harmful’, that it would tempt young theologians to operate outside the limits of the Church – limits that nobody should transgress. How, Antonii asked Evlogii, can you, the head of the only Russian theological school outside Russia, support such a man?

Though upset over the charges and angry that anyone would question Bulgakov’s theological freedom, Metropolitan Evlogii, under whose jurisdiction Bulgakov placed himself, felt compelled to investigate, and appointed a commission to examine Bulgakov’s works. Seeking all views, Evlogii asked Georges Florovskii to sit on the commission, knowing that Florovskii disagreed with Bulgakov’s Sofianic theology – not to mention Bulgakov’s inadequately patristic (at least to Florovskii’s mind) and romantic approach to theology. In fact, Florovskii had already condemned Pavel Florenskii’s study of Sofia (which, like Bulgakov’s early work, also noted the existence of a ‘fourth hypostasis’) in a scathing review for Put. Florovskii, whose entire theology was solidly Christological, worried that Bulgakov’s Sofiology removed the focus of Christian life from Christ. Christ was God’s link to humanity: He needed no other hypostasis. Yet when Evlogii approached
Florovskii about serving on the commission, Florovskii replied that he wanted no part in the matter. He and Bulgakov were on good terms (they had corresponded frankly but cordially on the matter of Sofia in the mid-1920s) and he did not want to jeopardise their relationship. But Evlogii insisted, and Florovskii reluctantly agreed to serve.

Evlogii’s commission split: the majority cleared Bulgakov of heresy, but Florovskii and Fr Chetverikov (also a member of the Fellowship) dissented. Word spread quickly that Florovskii and Chetverikov had refrained from absolving Bulgakov, wounding Bulgakov’s credibility both within the Russian Orthodox émigré community and within the Fellowship. (Evlogii, unhappy with a split decision, reconvened the commission, but Florovskii stayed as aloof as possible.) Bulgakov and Florovskii remained on friendly terms, but Florovskii stood firm in his disapproval and Bulgakov refused to retract his views.

Vladimir Losskii, who supplied Metropolitan Sergii with excerpts from Bulgakov’s works, published his own critique of Bulgakov in 1936, accusing him of a cavalier attitude towards ecclesiastical discipline and canonical procedure. Losskii’s critique constituted an extended apologia for hierarchical discipline in Church life. The Vestnik of the Russian Christian Student Movement rushed to Bulgakov’s defence, as did Nikolai Berdiaev, attacking Losskii and Chetverikov for shackling theological thought. ‘Is Orthodoxy the religion of a free spirit,’ Berdiaev demanded, ‘or an inquisitorial torture-chamber?’ ‘I remain in the Church of Christ, based on love and freedom.’ But Losskii and Chetverikov held firm, insisting that the Church hierarchy had a duty to condemn those who strayed from Church teaching. Such criticisms, alleging a lack of respect for hierarchical discipline, lay at the root of criticisms levelled by members of the Fellowship who opposed Bulgakov’s novel approach to intercommunion without full hierarchical sanction.

Sofia was central to Bulgakov’s life and work: thus, in condemning Bulgakov’s Sofiology, Metropolitan Sergii and Metropolitan Antonii were, in a sense, dismissing Bulgakov himself. Bulgakov credited his vision of Sofia at his son’s funeral with his return to the Church, and his ecstatic vision of Sofia in Constantinople with profoundly altering the course of his life. While living in fear of his life in Yalta (where he moved to escape Soviet persecution), he wrote humbly in his diary: ‘God chooses servants not by worth but by grace, and he chose me, weak and unworthy, to be the servant of Holy Sofia and her revelation.’ Thus, he talked incessantly about Sofia in his work for the Fellowship. For
him, Sofia was the means of achieving unity, both between God and creation and within creation: Sofia united God and creation, transforming creation in the process. But if, as Bulgakov contended in Svet nevechernii (The Unfading Light), ‘Sofiurgy’, or the transformation of the world, can occur only within the bosom of the Church,\textsuperscript{169} then it is impossible to imagine how Sofia can transform the world if the Church – her transformational medium – is divided.

Sofia represented a mystical quest for reunion. Writing about Bulgakov’s revelation of Sofia in Constantinople, Zernov observed, ‘On the threshold of his new life in exile [Bulgakov] saw in this desecrated Church of the Divine Wisdom a pledge of reunited Christendom.’ Bulgakov himself recalled in his autobiography that this revelation prompted him to recognise the Hagia Sofia as an ‘ecumenical Church’ for ‘all people’, that would again make Christendom whole.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, when Metropolitan Sergii, the Karlovchane and Florovskii, dismissed Bulgakov’s Sofiology, they dismissed what drove Bulgakov to his ecumenical work. His intercommunion proposal was, in the larger scheme of things, a means of accommodating the work of Sofia in creation. The Eucharist, as Bulgakov made clear in ‘Evkharisticheskii dogma’ (‘Eucharistic Dogma’), was itself Sofia:

\textbf{[T]he body and the blood of Christ offered by Him in Divine Communion have the power of Divine sophianicity, which unites the heavenly body and earthly matter. In ascending to heaven and departing from the world the Lord does not annul His connection with the world, but affirms it, raising it to supermundane, eternal being. His corporeality, dwelling in Heaven, penetrates all of creation (‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’ [Matthew 28:18]) and is inseparable from it. Therefore, matter of this world, the bread and wine, can also be raised by the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord’s commandment, into a state of corporeal sophianicity; that is they can become the body and blood of the Lord.}

In light of these connections, the transmutation of the eucharistic elements can be understood as the complete sophianisation of matter of the world, the bread and wine, through their unification with the Lord’s glorified, spiritual body. Since they belong to this world, the bread and wine ontologically participate in Jesus’ earthly body, which He had when He was in this world, and this participation serves as the basis of the ontological possibility of their transmutation. But the fact of their participation in Jesus’
body also attest to their primordial sophianicity, which is the basis of the creation of the world.\textsuperscript{171}

For good measure, he repeated these assertions verbatim in another article, ‘Sofiologicheskoie istolkovanie evkharisticheskago dogmata’ (‘A Sofiological Interpretation of Eucharistic Dogma’),\textsuperscript{172} arguing that the transformation of creation, or the realisation of creation’s Sofianicity, is accomplished in the Eucharist. Intercommunion could be the realisation of Sofianic unity. Intercommunion is Sofia’s work. Thus, again, attacks on Bulgakov’s Sofianic theology were not merely attacks on his credibility as a theologian (a fact that did unnerve some in the Fellowship), but also, indirectly but crucially, an attack on his very motivation.

Most members of the Fellowship and other Anglicans who desired unity with the Orthodox knew something about Bulgakov’s problems. The Christian East, the primary journal documenting Anglican–Orthodox negotiations between the wars, published the text of Metropolitan Sergii’s condemnation, plus Evlogii’s and Bulgakov’s responses.\textsuperscript{173} Bulgakov himself raised the issue obliquely in a passionate address at the 1936 Fellowship Conference about freedom of thought in the Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{174} Paul Anderson, head of the International YMCA, prepared a memorandum on the controversy for select members of the Fellowship.\textsuperscript{175} Bulgakov did as well, although it is not clear who saw his version.\textsuperscript{176} The Fellowship’s journal, apparently anxious to stay free of the controversy, remained silent until September 1936, when Lev Zander (one of Bulgakov’s colleagues at St Sergius, who described himself as ‘a follower and disciple’) mounted a spirited defence of Sofiology and argued for its ‘affinity’ with ‘the spirit of Orthodoxy’.\textsuperscript{177} But Zander (and later Dobbie-Bateman) remained lonely voices in Sobornost (the new name of the Journal of the Fellowship as of 1935). Sobornost did announce the forthcoming publication of Bulgakov’s Sofianic treatise for English audiences in 1937,\textsuperscript{178} but it declined to endorse its conclusions.\textsuperscript{179}

Although few members of the Fellowship really understood Bulgakov’s theology,\textsuperscript{180} they expressed concerns about the controversy’s implications for the Fellowship’s future in particular, and for reunion in general. A leading member of the Fellowship confided in Florovskii, ‘I feel that the existence of the Fellowship is very much bound up with the affair’. Unless the affair could be settled ‘quietly’, he added, the entire work of reunion might be in serious jeopardy.\textsuperscript{181} Paul Anderson of the YMCA (who provided significant financial support to the Orthodox émigré community) urged Bulgakov to disavow his theology if
necessary. A.F. Dobbie-Bateman showed more sympathy: he accepted Bulgakov’s avowal of fidelity to the Church’s tradition and believed that Bulgakov had ‘shown a firmer grasp of the tradition than have some of his opponents.’ Still, Dobbie-Bateman told Georges Florovskii privately that he found Bulgakov’s Sofiology ‘an unnecessary hypothesis’, and feared an ‘intrigue’ against Bulgakov by the Greek Orthodox, with whom Anglican ecumenists strove mightily to maintain good relations. Florovskii claimed that Dobbie-Bateman even tried to prevent the publication of Bulgakov’s summary of Sofiology in English, worried that it would give a distorted view of Russian theology.

The whole affair made John Douglas (a great friend of the Greeks and a wishful friend of the Karlovchane) extremely nervous. Douglas feared, according to John Young (who shared his fears), ‘a serious reaction’ that would jeopardise his many years of work on reunion. Douglas took a copy of Metropolitan Sergii’s ukaz to a friend who taught theology at Oxford. After reading it, the don informed Douglas that, indeed, Bulgakov’s teaching was heretical. Although Douglas did not endorse Metropolitan Sergii’s or the Karlovatskii Synod’s condemnations, neither did he refute them, and he urged his fellow members of the Russian Clergy and Church Aid Fund (a charitable movement supporting Russians in exile) to stay clear of the controversy. He fretted, ‘Russians who do not adhere to the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Evlogie and Greek, Bulgarian, Serb, Rumanian and other Orthodox will hold R.C.A.F. as responsible for Father Bulgakov’s teaching and activities.’ Indeed, the Fund did receive protests (including one from the Duchess of York). Letters asked why it supported the Theological Institute in Paris (Bulgakov’s professional home) and why it allowed Zernov (‘known to be a disciple of Bulgakov’) to serve as an official of the Fund.

The debate on intercommunion and the controversy over Sofia both raised questions about the limits of theological exploration within Orthodoxy. Bulgakov had long argued that theological development was impossible without the freedom to explore new dogma. Unlike Rome, he argued, Orthodoxy has no external organ of infallibility: free theological expression alone can determine what is true. But, he wrote in a jab at the Karlovchane,

Many of us, and particularly many representatives of the hierarchy in our Church, have been sadly influenced by Romanising tendencies, so that they actually regard themselves as so many Popes, or as a sort of collective Pope. This is a sin in Orthodoxy.
and constitutes a real temptation to many … Our Orthodox Church – and this is especially true of the Russian Orthodox Church – has never been sufficiently educated for freedom …

This is not to say that Bulgakov ever argued that Orthodox theologians should develop theology contrary to the essentials of Orthodox teaching. He staunchly defended what he considered core dogma and roundly criticised the Church of England for not doing the same. He told Evlogii:

I solemnly declare that as an Orthodox priest I profess all the true dogmas of Orthodoxy. My Sophiology has nothing to do with the actual content of those dogmas, but merely with their theological interpretation. It is my personal theological belief to which I have never ascribed the significance of a generally binding Church dogma.

Still, Bulgakov believed that theology could develop in ways that might call some traditional verities into question. ‘It would be one of the worst of errors to think that the dogmatic life of the Church ended with the Seventh Oecumneical Council’. ‘Even an Oecumenical Council is not an external organ for proclaiming the truth of the Church.’ Freedom of thought, he claimed, is essential; and it is, Bulgakov argued, an admirable trait of ‘comprehensiveness’:

Of course I should not like to appropriate this principle in its Anglican form, and should not care to see within the Orthodox Church theologians who deny the Holy Trinity, or the Holy Eucharist and so on. But the principle in itself is good so far as it represents a measure of toleration of different tendencies of dogmatic thought.

Toleration, Bulgakov insisted, is essential for theological development. And if theology, as he also argued, is something to be lived rather than merely debated, then intercommunion offered a means of theological development. Just as Bulgakov used Sofia to develop the Chalcedonian doctrine on the relation of the Divine to the human, so he wished to develop reunion through Sofianic intercommunion. But development requires freedom:

Those who want to reduce Christianity to obedience, i.e. only to an external rule deserve from the Apostle [Paul] the angry rebuke of ‘false brothers’ … They pervert Christianity, which recognises commandments, but does not recognise rules over itself – it is
freedom, and, consequently, creative work. ‘Stand in freedom, which Christ gave you’ (Galatians 5:1), for ‘brothers, you were called to freedom’ (5:13)\textsuperscript{198}

Florovskii could abide a modicum of such talk, but not in the measure dished out by Bulgakov. At the 1931 Fellowship Conference Florovskii insisted that there can be no ‘external authority’ in questions of faith. ‘Force cannot judge true spiritual experience’, he said.\textsuperscript{199} But then he added a qualification: ‘In the Church … there can be no private opinions.’\textsuperscript{200}

NOTES

My thanks to Bruce Marshall, who read the manuscript and taught me much about Bulgakov; to Alexis Klimoff, who shared his own research with me; to Father Stephen Platt, who graciously provided me with full access to the Fellowship’s files; to Robert Nichols for many conversations about Florovskii and Orthodoxy; and to the astute and helpful comments from the anonymous referee of this article.

3. The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius never limited its membership to confessing Anglicans or Orthodox, but it would eventually require its members to attend Anglican or Orthodox liturgical worship services. It included a few Orthodox Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians, Armenians and Arabs, as well as several Roman Catholics, Lutherans and other Protestants.
4. It was in Nyborg that the so-called ‘Nyborg Resolution’ was passed – the first statement officially endorsing the existence of non-Protestant bodies within the SCM.
5. The Russian Orthodox Church in exile splintered badly during the inter-war years over questions of allegiance to the Soviet state, relations with other confessions, theology and political commitments. The Karlovatskii Synod (whose members were sometimes referenced as the ‘Karlovchane’) established its base amongst like-minded Orthodox in Serbia and spoke for politically and theologically conservative elements of the Russian Church. The Synod advocated the restoration of the Romanov dynasty and sharply condemned those (both within and outside of Russia) who suggested that the Russian Church could maintain some sort of accord with the Soviet authorities. Metropolitan Antonii, the titular head of the Karlovatskii Synod, strove unsuccessfully in the early and mid-1920s to maintain some semblance of unity among the Russian Orthodox in exile, but relations between himself and Metropolitan Evlogii were strained from the outset and a formal schism erupted in the late 1920s.
6. See Bryn Geffert, ‘Anglicans and Orthodox Between the Wars’, University of Minnesota PhD thesis, 2003, ch.6. Bulgakov and other delegates at the first meeting of the Fellowship were quite aware that Orthodox critics of such ecumenical gatherings had no trouble producing evidence to support their condemnations. But Bulgakov in particular was willing to argue with the fathers in such matters. See Sergii Bulgakov, ‘Outlines of the Teaching about the Church’, American Church Monthly, Vol.30, No.6 (1931), pp.411–23.
7. During the inter-war years, Metropolitan Evlogii served as head of the St Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, the intellectual centre of Russian Orthodoxy in exile and the faith’s primary theological school. Resented by the Karlovchane for remaining loyal to Metropolitan Sergii (the Metropolitan of Moscow who swore allegiance to the Soviet state), Evlogii, too, eventually broke with Moscow and placed himself and his diocese under the supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople – a move that only further infuriated the Karlovchane.


9. ‘It seems to me,’ wrote Bezobrazov, ‘that nowhere have I seen such pure, such healthy children’s faces.’ S. Bezobrazov, ‘Vstrecha’, *Vestnik Russkago studencheskago khristsianskago dvizheniia*, Vol.3 (1927), p.15. During the first years of the Fellowship, Russians remarked repeatedly on the wealth they witnessed in England. ‘I was greatly impressed,’ wrote a Russian conferee in 1933 ‘by the excursion to Cadbury’s chocolate works. The splendid and healthy conditions of labour and the smiling faces of the women lead one to think that a capitalist’s undertaking can also be well organised, if the owner of the enterprise is a Christian.’ Boris Spasskii, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Journal of the Fellowship of St Alban & St Sergius* (hereafter *Journal of the Fellowship*), No.21 (1933), p.6. Russian participants at later conferences would rave about the posh accommodations in English dormitories, where each student occupied a separate room that was extremely ‘komfortabil’no’. Nikolai Arsen’ev, ‘Religioznye s”ezdy u N’iukastl i Kembridzh’, *Put’,* No.20 (1930), p.89. Arsen’ev was delighted to wander among the haunts of Erasmus, Marlow and Fletcher.


11. ‘During the first day, despite the good will and wish to understand one another, a common language had not been found and foreignness was felt.’ N.K., *S”ezd v St Albans: 11–15 ianvaria 1927 goda*, *Put’,* No.7 (1927), p.109.


17. Russian émigrés worked furiously to overturn such naïve notions. See, for example, G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Church since the Revolution* (London, 1928), p.52.

18. Zernov, *S”ezd v St Albans’e*, p.9. Bezobrazov and Bulgakov found themselves in the awkward position of denouncing the Living Church as nothing more than an example of communist ‘intrigues’ and arguing to their Anglican friends that Soviet ideology was ‘the enemy of all religion’. N.K., *S”ezd v St Albans*, p.109. The young Anglican socialists were not persuaded. A few suggested that the persecution of Orthodox believers might actually be to the Russian Church’s benefit, purging it of its superstitions and indifference to social problems; see Zernov, *Za Rubezhom*, p.221. Such naïvety was common among the English students. Paul Anderson, a
supporter of the Fellowship, noted in the 1930s: ‘There has been a tendency among liberal Christians in the West to criticise the Russian Church for its outspoken enmity to the Communist Government during the first years of the Revolution and to consider this hostility as evidence of obdurate autocratic sympathy with the Tsarist form of government.’ Paul Anderson, *Russia’s Religious Future: A Survey of the Situation with Documentary Evidence from Soviet Sources* (London, 1936), pp.10, 6.

21. ‘At the same time that the High Church teaches the reality of the Sacraments and confesses that believers receive the true Body and true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ through the bread and the wine, the Low Church considers communion to be [merely] a ritual in memory of the Last Supper … In its teachings about the Church, about the Sacraments, and about Dogma, the High Church is a Church in the Orthodox and catholic understanding of that word, while the Low Church inclines towards the Protestant Church …’. N.K., ‘S’ezd v St Albans’, p.107.

22. I.S., ‘Pis’ma iz Anglii’, p.17.
27. The Reverend O.F. Clarke, in his glowing report about the conference, never alluded to the speech, although he noted that the Orthodox ‘thirst for intercourse with outsiders … coexists with a strict and uncompromising devotion to the truth …’. Ibid., p.109.

28. Orthodox theology had just begun to struggle with such questions. The Greek theologian Chrestos Androutsos wrote in 1922, ‘The manner of the inspiration [of Holy Scripture] has not been exactly defined, whether it be a literal dictation of the sacred conceptions, or only the overseeing care of the Holy Spirit protecting (the writers) from error …’. See F. Gavin, ‘The Greek Orthodox Church and Biblical Criticism’, *Christian East*, Vol.3, No.4 (1922), p.164. Gavin nevertheless argued that ‘the absence of any theory of inspiration, and the protection afforded by the twofold basis for the dogmatic formulations of the Church together with the doctrine of the Church, leave open the way to utilise to the full the best results of modern Biblical scholarship.’ Ibid., p.171.
29. Charles Gore, Bishop of Oxford until 1919, was well known in the Church of England for his advocacy of higher criticism and scriptural inquiry. In retirement, he lectured at King’s College and the University of London. A popular preacher, he became one of the most eloquent and popular proponents of ‘Anglo-Catholicism’.

31. I.S., ‘Pis’ma iz Anglii’, p.16.
32. Zernov, *Za Rubezhom*, p.223. Some of Zernov’s friends worried that he had fallen under the influence of Protestantism.
36. Ibid., p.6.
37. Although he was willing to go only so far: ‘We cannot accept the theory of the composite origin of the Pentateuch from J, E, D, and P, because it would alter our whole idea of the manner of God’s revelation in the Old Testament.’ Ibid., p.26.
39. Ibid., p.26. Neither side proposed treating Genesis as literal history. But would the Orthodox, the Anglicans asked, be willing to define the account of creation as an ‘allegory’? No, the Orthodox replied, arguing that creation occurred ‘in a dimension with which science and history could not deal’. They preferred to refer to Genesis as ‘metaphysically true’ or as ‘meta-history’, but such terms only confused the Anglicans. Said one, ‘The word is not congenial to our scientific enquirers, who regard it as a way of avoiding the plain questions, “Did this happen or not?”’ Report of the Second Anglo-Russian Student Conference, p.24.
42. ‘She was and is a source of true knowledge, while she often raises the moral as well as the economic level of the surrounding population.’ Ibid., p.10.
43. Ibid., p.22.
44. Zernov, Za Rubezhom, p.222.
45. The Anglicans conducted the liturgy during the first two days of the Conference, the Orthodox during the second two days.
48. One Russian conferee described Gore as ‘sure of himself, yet filled with deep inner humility – which seems so distinct from the cold reserve which we often ascribe to the English character’. Ibid., p.15.
51. Walter Frere, Bishop of Truro, founded the monastic community at Mirfield, a fact that impressed the Russian Orthodox who, of course, held monasticism in high regard. Nikolai Zernov considered Frere to be ‘a catholic in the deepest and truest sense of the word’, and marvelled that such ‘a man of the West’ whose ‘family, tradition, his interests, his upbringing, his mentality’ and whose ‘very gifts were all rooted in the Western Tradition’ could be so taken with the Eastern Church. Nikolai Zernov, ‘Bishop Frere and the Russian Orthodox Church’, in C.S. Phillips (ed.), Walter Howard Frere (London, 1947), pp.186, 189.
53. Florovskii remarked to his biographer, ‘Why [Gore] did this I do not know. Someone seems to have told him about me. Who it was I do not know, but I suspect it was Professor Arseniev.’ Andrew Blane, Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman (Crestwood NY 1933), p.184, n.63.
61. Ibid.
62. For a study of Rome’s role in Anglican–Orthodox negotiations, see Geffert, ‘Anglicans and Orthodox’, ch.3.
63. An early issue contained a Russian political prisoner’s letter that had been smuggled out through a relative in Paris: *Journal of the Fellowship*, No.1 (1928), p.28.
64. A notable exception was the coverage given to the 1930 Lambeth Conference. The *Journal* reprinted an article by John Douglas, which portrayed the Conference as a definite step on the path towards reunion: J.A. Douglas, ‘The Orthodox Delegation to the Lambeth Conference’, *Journal of the Fellowship*, No.10 (1930), pp.5–11. The next issue of the journal reported on Florovskii’s warnings about what he viewed as too rapid a rapprochement between Anglicans and Orthodox at Lambeth: *Journal of the Fellowship*, No.14 (1931), p.6.
66. Although Bulgakov argued that these fallen-away churches still ‘preserve its inner seed’, adding that ‘All Christianity, as such remains more or less Orthodox in its faith and being, and the movement to Reunion may be nothing more than a restoration of the fullness of Orthodoxy and a removal of deterioration in it.’ Sergii Bulgakov, ‘One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’, *Journal of the Fellowship*, No.12 (1931), p.22.
68. By 1931 an observer noted that ‘most’ of the Fellowship’s members identified themselves as Anglo-Catholics: *Journal of the Fellowship*, No.14 (1931), p.10.
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77. By 1934 Zernov could remark on the odd fact that a Presbyterian still played a role in the Fellowship: Nikolai Zernov to R.C. Mackie (28 Feb. 1934), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

78. ‘Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Statement of Aims & Basis’, Journal of the Fellowship, No.19 (1933), p.35 (emphasis added).

79. Such concerns, for example, generated opposition to a proposal to enrol Russian émigrés in non-conformist colleges: Minutes of the General Committee of the Russian Clergy and Church Aid Fund (5 Dec. 1934), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

80. Form of Application for Membership (n.d.), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


82. See Geffert, ‘Anglicans and Orthodox Between the Wars’, passim.

83. Nikolai Zernov, ‘Some Explanations of Fr Bulgakov’s Scheme for Intercommunion’ (n.d.), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


85. A.F. Dobbie-Bateman later recalled that he and others found the ‘crudity’ of this original idea to be quite frightening. It took two years for Bulgakov to give it any degree of clarity: A.F. Dobbie-Bateman, ‘Footnotes (IX) – In quos fines saeculorum’, Sobornost, No.30 (1944), p.7; Nikolai Zernov, ‘Some Explanations of Fr Bulgakov’s Scheme for Intercommunion’ (n.d.), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives; and A.F. Dobbie-Bateman, ‘Summary of Position on Partial Intercommunion’ (27 Nov. 1933), pp. 2–3, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

86. Bulgakov had pondered such matters for a while. He argued in a paper at the Lausanne ecumenical conference of 1927: ‘The union of Christians cannot be brought about otherwise than by a sharing of the same Cup at the Holy Table and by the ministry of a priesthood which is an integral unity and indubitably charismatic’: Sergii Bulgakov, ‘The Church’s Ministry’, in Constantin Patelos (ed.), The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements, 1902–1975 (Geneva, 1978), p.170. But at one point in the next year, 1928, he asserted that Orthodox participation in the Sacraments with members of other confessions was, given current dogmatic differences, ‘a matter for the distant future’: Sergii Bulgakov, ‘K voprosu o Lozanskoi Konferentsii’, Put’, No.13 (1928), p.77. By the early 1930s, he was having second thoughts. Intercommunion, he wrote, could be a ‘step on the way’ towards unity: Bulgakov, ‘One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’, Journal of the Fellowship (1931), p.22.


88. For Bulgakov, it proves that God ‘can, if he wishes, raise the matter of this world to unification with Himself, so that the faithful could thereby be united with Him.’ He
quotes St Irenaeus: ‘only in communion is union with Christ given to us …’; Sergii Bulgakov, ‘The Eucharistic Dogma’, in Boris Jakim (ed.), *The Holy Grail and the Eucharist* (Hudson NY, 1997), p.120.

89. Ibid., p.66.
90. The conclusion to Bulgakov’s ‘Sviatyi Graal’, which was published in 1932, could be read, in retrospect, as a plea for unity through the Eucharist: ‘They shall look – and recognise themselves in Him, and Him in themselves, in their life, in their work, in the hidden knowledge of the Holy Grail and in the service of the Holy Grail. And they shall worship Him, who will be inseparably with them.’ Sergii Bulgakov, ‘The Holy Grail’, in ibid., p.33.
92. Ibid., p.21.
93. Karpov, ‘Piataia Anglo-Russkaia Konferentsiia’, p.66. Nikolai Arsen’ev argued in a 1932 issue of *Put’* that unity might be found in the Sacraments (although he believed that a number of obstacles must be resolved before such action would be permissible): Nikolai Arsen’ev, ‘Ob obshchenii s Anglikanskoi Tserkov’iu’, *Put’*, No.33 (1932), pp.44–51.
94. The report noted that certain exceptions might be possible (for example, in instances where the ministrations of one’s own Church may not be available for long periods of time), but such exceptions were not at all what Bulgakov had in mind. ‘Report on Relations to and Reunion with Episcopal Churches’, in *The Lambeth Conferences, 1867–1948: The Reports of the 1920, 1930 and 1948 Conferences, with Selected Resolutions from the Conferences of 1867, 1878, 1888, 1897 and 1903* (London, 1948), pp.220–1.
95. ‘Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Statement of Aims & Basis’, p.35.
98. Ibid.
101. There can be no communion, Florovskii wrote in 1950, if there is no common belief. Communion ‘presupposes “one mind” no less than “one heart”’: Georges Florovskii, ‘Open Communion and Intercommunion’, in Haugh (ed.), *Ecumenism I*, pp.149–50.
105. Sergii Bulgakov, ‘Spiritual Intercommunion’ [an open letter to Fr Gillett], *Sobornost*, No.4 (1935), p.4. That December he wrote an article for the *Journal* that made explicit his opposition to Florovskii’s and Frere’s call for reunion through dogmatic agreement: Bulgakov, ‘By Jacob’s Well’, p.10.
107. Earlier, Bulgakov had strongly endorsed this notion of dogma as living action, rather than as written legalism at the 1930 conference of the Fellowship: ‘The
Church does not know dogma as contained in formularies’, he said, but instead recognises ‘the dogma of life’. Karpov concurred: religion ‘begins not with theology, but with bogozhit’e (godly living)’; see Karpov, ‘Anglo-Russkaia Konferentsiia’, p.90.

108. Granted, Bulgakov allowed that authoritative, ecclesiastical sanction would be required for the ‘complete reunion of entire Church bodies’: Bulgakov, ‘Ways to Church Reunion’, p.27.


110. Sergii Bulgakov, ‘The Church Universal’, Journal of the Fellowship, No.25 (1934), p.20. Problems ‘will remain insurmountable as long as the main postulates of the whole problem are not radically reconsidered in an attempt to liberate them from a mistaken hierarchical and dogmatic maximalism, which so frequently dominates this whole realm.’

111. A number of supporters were willing to accept Bulgakov’s presentation of the proposal as a prophecy or a new revelation: ‘Transcript of Discussion on Fr Bulgakov’s Proposal for Intercommunion’ (n.d.), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


113. It was typical of Bulgakov to look beyond the Fathers and Councils to develop theology that would address contemporary predicaments. The place of the Councils in Orthodoxy ‘does not give us the right to define the substance of Orthodoxy by the decrees of the seven Councils,’ he said, ‘for, on the one hand, Orthodoxy existed before them and, on the other, they are far from exhausting the content of Orthodoxy’: Sergii Bulgakov, ‘Does Orthodoxy Possess on Outward Authority of Dogmatic Infallibility?’, Christian East, Vol.7, No.1 (1926), p.19.


116. He described the problem as ‘paradoxical on every side, theoretically, morally, practically’: A.V. Kartashev to the Executive Committee (15 Oct. 1933), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


118. A.F. Dobbie-Bateman, ‘Memorandum of a Conversation with the Bishop of Truro at Truro on 17th August, 1933, 18 August 1933’, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


122. Georges Florovskii to the Executive Committee (16 Oct. 1933), Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives. Like Bulgakov, Florovskii was willing to accept Anglican orders as valid, but he denied that such recognition was adequate for intercommunion. For him, the Anglican Church as a whole had fallen from communion with Orthodoxy, and Anglicans had to decide as a whole where their allegiances lay: with Keble or with Newman. A.F. Dobbie-Bateman, ‘Confidential Note for the Executive’ (21 Oct. 1933), p.2, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.


124. ‘Transcript of Discussion on Fr Bulgakov’s Proposal for Intercommunion’.

125. Negotiations on the recognition of Anglican orders were underway with the Romanian Orthodox Church and, as Lloyd has noted, some hoped that the Serbian
Orthodox Church might also recognise Anglican orders. A.F. Dobbie-Bateman, however, scoffed at those who trod lightly around inter-Orthodox squabbles, urging that the Fellowship simply get on with its business and let the Russians worry about whether or not the proposal would inflame their internal disagreements: ibid.


127. ‘Report of the Fellowship Conference at High Leigh, 26–28 June 1934’, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

128. Iu. Grabbe, a regular polemicist for the Karlovchene, fumed: it is ‘very characteristic of Bulgakov’ to propose something ‘completely new, having no basis in Orthodox teaching ...’: Iu. Grabbe, ‘Nepravoslavnaia molitva nashikh “ekumenistov”’, Tserkovnaiia zhizn’, No.3 (1936), pp.41–2.

129. Douglas, said Zernov, viewed them as newcomers to the Church, full of ideas contrary to the Orthodox tradition and thus suspect in the Eastern circles in which Douglas circulated: Zernov, Za Rubezhom, p.250.

130. ‘We are called to bear the Cross of patience’, he said. Intercommunion, as outlined by Bulgakov, was ‘a blind area from which there is no escape’: ‘Report of the Fellowship Conference at High Leigh, 26–28 June 1934’.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.


138. Ibid., p.20.


140. Political motivations are apparent if we recall that Metropolitan Antonii had reported favourably on Pavel Florenskii’s elucidation of Sofiology – which had many similarities with Bulgakov’s – back in 1915: George Williams, ‘Georges Vasilievich Florovsky: His American Career (1948–1965)’, Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Vol.11, No.1 (1965), p.28 n.36.


142. Bulgakov confused his critics by using both the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘hypostascity’. In Svet nevechernyi (The Unfading Light), he referred to Sofia as a ‘fourth hypostasis’, indicating to some that he viewed Sofia as a fourth member of the Trinity: Sergii Bulgakov, Svet nevechernii: sozertsania i umozreniia (Mocow, 1917), p.212. But he would later argue, in ‘Ipostas’ i ipostasnost’, that ‘there is no fourth hypostasis at all equally honourable and consubstantial with the most Holy Trinity; there is not and there cannot be; the threesome is self-enclosed and allows no addition at all’;

143. In 1912–13 Bulgakov sided with the ‘imia-bortsy’ or ‘name-worshipers’ (that is, Logos worshipers) on Mount Athos when they were accused of heresy. Bulgakov argued, much as he did when defending his Sofiology, that such personal speculation did not depart from Orthodox dogma and that every Orthodox believer had the right to participate in the formulation of dogma. See Catherine Evtuhov, The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy (Ithaca, 1997), pp.210–13.

144. Evgenii Trubetskoii accused Bulgakov of a ‘Gnostic inclination’ and of perverting the doctrine of the Trinity by positing a fourth hypostasis: Evgenii Trubetskoii, Smysl zhizni (Berlin, 1922), p.129.

145. Even Paul Valliere’s recent study terms Bulgakov’s Sofiology ‘moderate pantheism’: Paul Valliere, Modern Russian Theology, Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key (Grand Rapids, 2000), p.349.

146. Florovskii noted Solov’ev’s influence on Bulgakov’s Sofiology, as well as the influence of German Idealism: Georges Florovskii, Ways of Russian Theology, trans. Robert Nichols (Belmont, 1972), Vol.2, p.276.


148. Metropolitan Sergii (who did not have direct access to Bulgakov’s works) ruled that Bulgakov’s sofianic theology was ‘eccentric and arbitrary’ (svoeobraznyi i proizvolnyi), that it perverted the dogmas of the Orthodox faith and that, in some instances, it directly duplicated ‘false teachings already universally condemned by the Church’. Priests who followed Bulgakov’s teaching should ‘reform of their error’ and return to sound doctrine, he said. See ‘MEMORANDUM on UKAZ concerning the Rev. SERGIUS BULGAKOV, 7 September 1935’, Georges Florovsky Papers, Princeton University; see also the Appendix in Winston Crum, ‘The Doctrine of Sophia according to Sergius N. Bulgakov’, Harvard University PhD thesis, 1965.


150. The Karlovatskii attack on Bulgakov was clearly part of a larger attempt to discredit Evlogii and his flock. An epistle of March 1927 is typical of the escalating campaign against Evlogii, who was said to patronise ‘modernism both in the sphere of Christian dogma and also in the sphere of Church life … We have become compelled, finally, to come out decisively against [Evlogii and his followers] when we have become convinced that they threaten the purity of the Orthodox faith and the unshakability of the canonical order of the Orthodox Church’: ‘Poslanie Arkhiepiskopa russkoi pravoslavnoi Tserkvi za granitsei ot 18 (31) marta 1927 goda’, Issledovaniia po istorii russkoi mysli (1997), p.117.

151. Antonii addressed a personal letter to Evlogii, outlining the Synod’s objections to Bulgakov’s theology: Evlogii, Put’ moei zhizni, p.580.

152. The Synod awarded Serafim (who initiated action against Bulgakov in the Synod) a doctorate for his report: V.V. Zenkovskii, ‘Delo ob obvinenii o. Sergiiia Bulgakova v eresi’, Vestnik Russkago Khristianskago dvizheniia, No.49 (1987), pp.61–5. In 1938, Count Grabbe issued a scathing indictment to the Synod and accused Bulgakov, Kartashev, Florenskii and Berdiaev of participating in left-wing circles responsible for ‘the rebirth of the gnostic concept of holy Sophia’. ‘It is incomprehensible how

153. ‘Every new idea in theological science … every exegesis should emanate from the teaching of the centuries confessed by the Holy Church through the Holy Fathers and Teachers’, he wrote, adding that Bulgaakov instead ‘enters into a controversy with the Ecumenical Councils and Holy Fathers’: Episkop Nikon, Zhizneopisanie blazhennieishago Antoniia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago (New York, 1956–69), Vol.7, p.372.

154. Evlogii objected to the very idea of a condemnation by an ecclesiastical hierarch, arguing that the Orthodox Church took stands on issues through consensus rather than by degree: Mitropolit Evlogii, ‘Memorandum Presented by Fr Sergius Bulgaakov to the Metropolitan Eulogius’ [translated abridgment of part 2 of O Sofii, premudrosti bozhiei: Ukaz moskovskoi patriarkhii i dokladnaia zapiski prof. prot. S. Bulga- kova i Mitropolita Evlogia (Paris, 1935)], Christian East, Vol.16, Nos 1–2 (1936), p.53. Evlogii defended Bulgaakov’s work as remaining entirely within Church tradition and spoke of Bulgaakov’s ‘unswerving loyalty to the teaching of the Orthodox Church’: ibid., p.58. In fact, Evlogii held up Bulgaakov’s theological work as an example of the Apostle Paul’s injunction not to be a slave to the sorts of canonical laws to which the Karlovchane appealed in their ‘Pharasitical attitude’: Evlogii, Put’ moei zhizni, p.601.

155. Florovskii would later begin his own study of Sofia. It was never completed, but an early (undated) draft resides in his papers (at Princeton University), in which he sought to demonstrate that depictions of Sofia in Byzantium and ancient Rus’ – that is, the depictions that inspired Bulgaakov’s theology and his return to the Church – were merely allegorical depictions of Christ, the Logos, and not some other hypostasis. See Georges Florovskii, ‘Sophia: The Wisdom of God (An Essay in Church Archeology)’, Georges Florovsky Papers, Princeton University. Zernov disagreed, and argued that early depictions of Sofia were an attempt to find ‘a link between the Mother of the Incarnate Lord and Mother Earth’: Zernov, The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century, pp.285–6.

156. Florovskii argued that Florenskii was ‘foreign’ (‘chuzhoi’) to the Orthodox world: Georges Florovskii, ‘O knige o P. Florenskago: Stolp’ i utverzhdenie istiny’, Put’, No.20 (1930), pp.102–7. Any suggestion of a fourth hypostasis, Florovskii argued – even if distinguished from those of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – impinged upon the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, questions concerning Sofia were fundamental questions of dogma and not theologoumena, as Bulgaakov insisted: Bird, ‘In Memoriam: Georges Florovsky’, p.344.


158. Blane, Georges Florovsky, p.66.

159. While critical of particulars in Bulgaakov’s work, the majority defended his loyalty to the Church and the Fathers; ‘Report of the Commission Appointed to Consider the Works of the Archpriest S. Bulgaakov’, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives. Fr Florovskii (who, according to Zenkovskii, attended the first meeting but failed to attend any of the subsequent ones) and Sergii Chetverikov found his Sfoiology troubling; Georges Florovskii and S. Chetverikov, ‘Minority Report on the of the Commission Appointed to Consider the Works of the Archpriest S. Bulgaakov (n.d.)’, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

160. For a short account of the investigation, see Bryn Geffert, ‘The Charges of Heresy against Sergii Bulgaakov: The Majority and Minority Reports of Evlogii’s


163. An article by I. Lagovskii argued that the denunciation stemmed from two debatable premises: a) that there exists a single, unified dogmatic system in the Church; and b) that those who condemned Bulgakov were competent to issue a final defined ‘judgement’, or possessed some sort of ‘hierarchical infallibility’. The condemnation, Lagovskii argued, removed the ‘breadth and fullness’ of theological experience from the Church. The argument is summarised in Gennadii, Delo prot. Sergiia Bulgakova, p.20.


165. ‘The defence of freedom of thought in the Church cannot assume the form of the defence of the freedom of my thought from the Truth, given in fullness to the Church by the Holy Spirit’, was Losskii’s view: Vladimir Losskii, ‘Pis’mo V. Losskago N.A. Berdiaevu’, Put’, No.50 (1936), p.28. Chetverikov agreed: ‘The hierarchy has not only the right but also an obligation to guard the truth of Church teaching and to fight against its obstruction by false opinions’, he wrote: Sergii Chetverikov, ‘Otkrytoe pis’mo N.A. Berdiaevu’, Put’, No.50 (1936), p.33.

166. Evtuhov, The Cross and the Sickle, p.133. Standing in front of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Bulgakov said that his self disappeared. ‘My soul became the world: I am in the world and the world is in me.’ Quoted in ibid., p.232.


168. In the summer of 1936, Florovskii served on a delegation with Bulgakov, Kartashev, Zenkovskii and others that travelled around England giving speeches on topics of interest to Anglicans and Orthodox. Florovskii complained in letters to his wife that the delegation was very uncomfortable with Bulgakov’s speeches about Sofia and claimed that other delegates were trying to distance themselves from Bulgakov’s Sfholiogy. See Klimov, ‘G.V. Florovskii i S.N. Bulgakov’, p.98.


170. Sergii Bulgakov, Avtobiograficheskiiia zametki (Paris, 1946), p.101. In Sophia: The Wisdom of God, Bulgakov prophesied, ‘The whole world is coming to be the Church; therefore in the new city there will be no temple (Rev. 21. 22), for therein divine Wisdom [i.e. Sofia], the diunity of the Son and the Spirit, is manifest … Only in the light of sophiology can we grasp the full scope of that eschatological fulfillment of all things’: Sergii Bulgakov, Sophia: The Wisdom of God (Hudson NY, 1993), p.146.


172. Sergii Bulgakov, ‘Sofiologicheskoe istolkovanie evkharisticheskago dogmata’, Put’, No.21 (1930), p.32. This latter article focuses upon Sofia as a mediator between God and man, the ‘corporeality’ (telesnost’) of God, ‘existing in God and in the world’.


174. Bulgakov began by stating, ‘I do not wish to consider the actual question of my own particular case’: Sergii Bulgakov, ‘Freedom of Thought in the Orthodox Church’, Sobornost, No.6 (1936), p.33.

176. In this undated document, Bulgakov tried to reassure those who feared that his emphasis on Sophia overshadowed the importance of Christ, the Logos: ‘According to the Chalcedonian dogma, the hypostasis of the Word in the God-man Christ, unites in one life two natures: the divine and the human, which together possess two concordant wills and energies (Sixth Council) “inseparably and unconfusedly”. This union of the two natures should be understood in the same way as the di-unity of the Divine and the created Wisdom (in their identity as well as in their diversity)’, he wrote, adding that ‘Sophia, as God-manhood, is the Father’s revelation concerning the Son through the Holy Spirit.’ See Sergii Bulgakov, ‘A Summary of Sophiology (n.d.)’, pp.1–2, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.

177. Chiding the xenophobic Karlovchane, Zander accused them of an affinity with Western theology for not allowing the development of an alternate, uniquely Orthodox philosophy: without Sofiology we are ‘cast in the mold’ of ‘acentric philosophies foreign to Orthodoxy’, he said: ‘Taking Thomism and Barthianism as typical respectively of the Catholic and the Protestant world outlook, the Sophianic attitude, opposed to both alike, alone remains to express the habit of thought typical of Orthodoxy.’ L. Zander, ‘A Philosophical Discipleship’, Sobornost, No.7 (1936), pp.20–5.


180. Dobbie-Bateman asked whether Bulgakov would ‘please use language more intelligible to ordinary people?’ and asked for clarification as to what he meant by ‘God and man are united and separated by some essence which does not exist apart from them, which is possessed by both without being either, which is the same in both but combines in that sameness all the difference between the created and the uncreated.’ After Bulgakov’s death, Dobbie-Bateman became rather ashamed of himself and those who reacted with such confusion: ‘When he named the existential problem Sophia, we behaved like Greeks who thought that Anastasis was a goddess.’ See Dobbie-Bateman, ‘Footnotes (IX) – In quos fines saeculorum’, p.7.


182. ‘MEMORANDUM on UKAZ concerning the Rev. SERGIUS BULGAKOV’, p.4.


184. Dobbie-Bateman to Georges Florovskii (10 April 1937), Georges Florovsky Papers, Princeton University.

185. Dobbie-Bateman to Georges Florovskii (12 July 1937), Georges Florovsky Papers, Princeton University.


187. Young argued that the affair ‘would make things very difficult in the Russian Clergy and Church Aid Council’ and might threaten both the existence of the Fellowship and ‘the cause of reunion as a whole’. Letter from John Young quoted in an early draft of Klimov, ‘G.V. Florovskii i S.N. Bulgakov’.

188. This opinion only confirmed Douglas’s fears: ‘I have been alarmed by the books published from 1917 onwards by Father Bulgakov and have been anxious as to whether in the process of his evolving his teaching concerning Sophia he has not been in danger not only of departing from but also of conflicting (a) with the tradition of the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church, and (b) indeed with the general traditional dogmatic teaching of historic Christianity.’ J. A Douglas, ‘Most Strictly Private & Highly Confidential: Condemnation of the Teaching of the Archpriest Sergius N. Bulgakov by the Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow (n.d.)’, p.3, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.
189. Ibid., p.2.
190. ‘Memorandum on Conversation between Eric Mascall, Eric Fenn (Representing the Fellowship), Major Tudor Pole and George Mallet (Representing the R.C.A.F.), 25 March 1936’, Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives.
193. Bulgakov was incensed that the inter-war Anglican Doctrinal Commission appeared unconcerned by the fact that some Anglicans believed that the Incarnation ‘took place under the normal conditions of human generation’. The ‘simple assertion of the birth of the Word from Joseph and Mary is not only the absence of Christology but a complete denial of it’, he wrote: Sergii Bulgakov, ‘The Incarnation and the Virgin Birth’, Sobornost, No.14 (1938), pp.32–4.
196. ‘If Gregory of Palama had been obedient to the second Council he would have ended his days as a heretic.’ Ibid., p.35.
200. Ibid.