

SERGII BULGAKOV

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SERGII BULGAKOV WAS BORN IN 1871 IN LIVNY IN A HEREDITARY PRIESTLY FAMILY. «THERE IS A REVELATION OF SOPHIA PREDETERMINED FOR EVERYONE IN HIS BIRTH AND HIS HOMETLAND», HE WROTE AT THE END OF HIS LIFE.



LIKE MANY OTHER PRIESTS' SONS OF HIS TIME, YOUNG SERGII REFUSED THE ECCLESIASTIC CAREER AND BECAME A MARXIST. HE MARRIED A YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY, ELENA TOKMAKOVA, WHOSE FAMILY PUBLISHED LENIN.

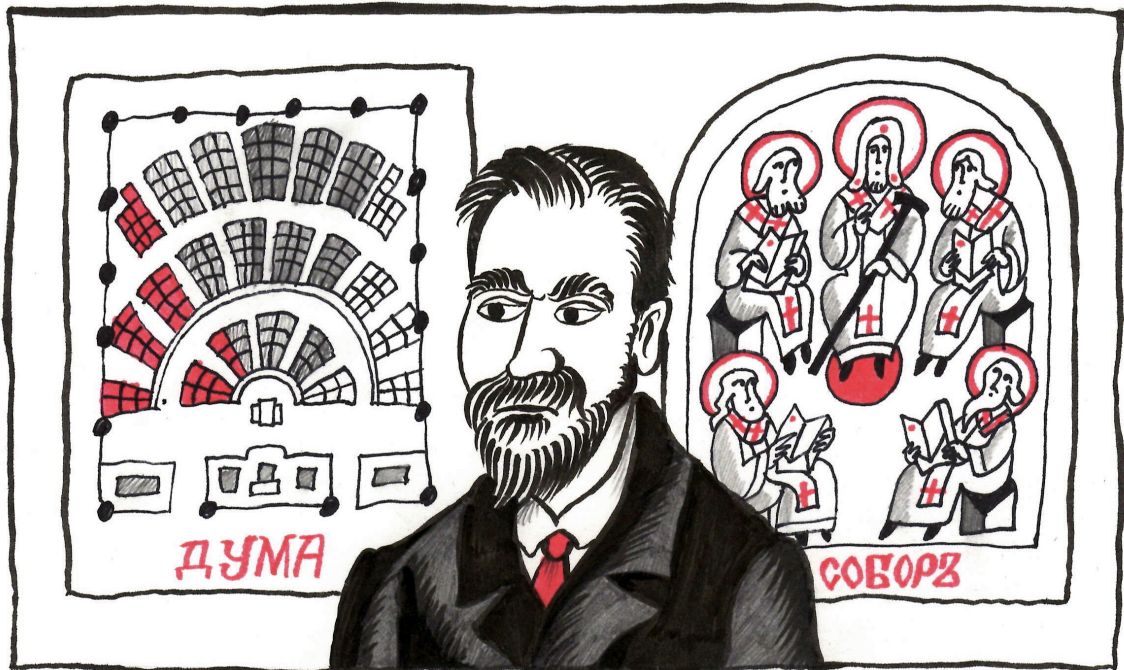


AS AN INTELLECTUAL, BULGAKOV PASSED FROM MARXISM TO PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM, BUT THE RADICAL CHANGE IN HIS AND HIS WIFE'S SPIRITUAL LIFE WAS CAUSED BY THE DEATH OF THEIR FOUR-YEAR-OLD SON IVASHEK. BULGAKOV EXPERIENCED «A LIVING CONNECTION WITH THE WORLD BEYOND—BECAUSE YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD ARE ALREADY THERE».

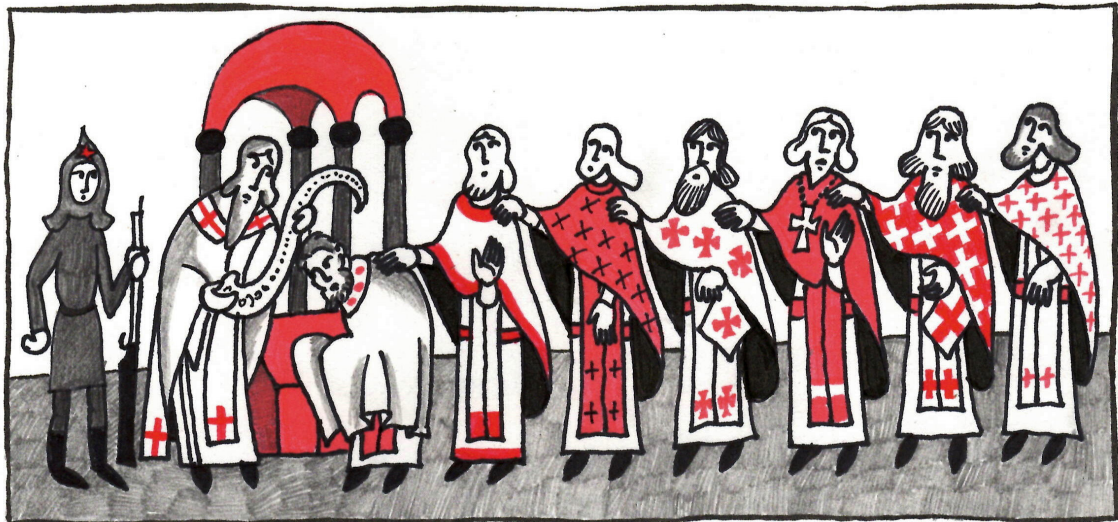
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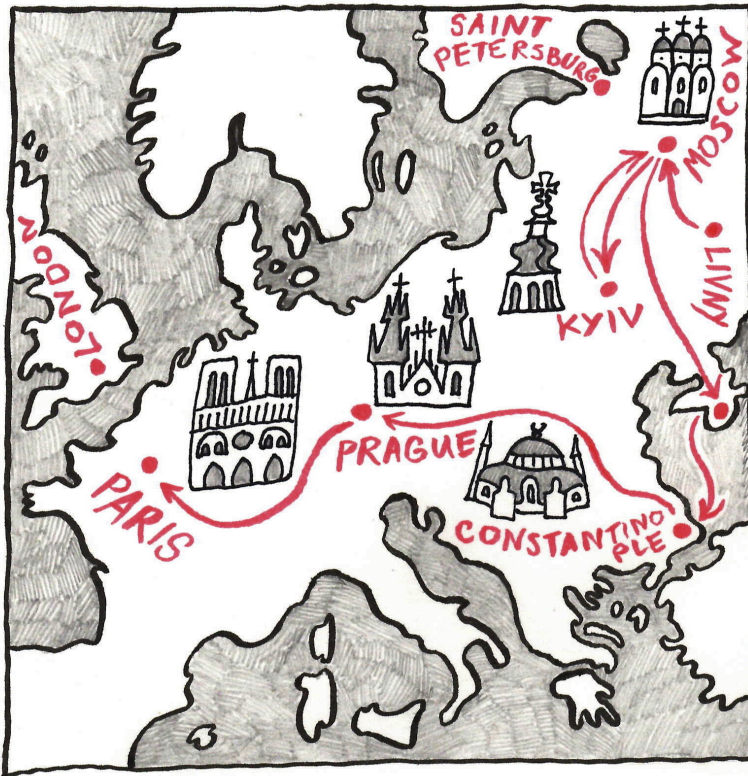
BULGAKOV REDISCOVERED CHRISTIANITY AND ORTHODOXY. HE WAS PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED BY HIS ENCOUNTER WITH PAVEL FLORENSKY. TOGETHER WITH HIS FRIEND NIKOLAI BERDYAEV, HE WARNED ABOUT "REVOLUTIONARY NIHILISM" IN THE COLLECTION OF WRITINGS "SIGNPOSTS" IN 1909.



ALWAYS POLITICALLY ACTIVE, BULGAKOV GOT ELECTED AS AN INDEPENDENT "CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST" TO THE STATE DUMA. LATER HE TOOK PART IN THE 1917/18 MOSCOW COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH AS A LAY REPRESENTATIVE, AND BECAME SPEECHWRITER FOR THE NEWLY ELECTED PATRIARCH.



AFTER THE BOLSHEVIKS HAD ALREADY COME TO POWER AND BEGAN PERSECUTING THE CHURCH, BULGAKOV RECEIVED A BLESSING FROM PATRIARCH TIKHON TO BE ORDAINED TO THE PRIESTHOOD, AND IN THIS WAS REUNITED WITH SIX EARLIER GENERATIONS OF HIS "LEVITIC" FAMILY.



AFTER THE ORDINATION BULGAKOV LIVED IN CRIMEA, BUT IN 1922 HIS FAMILY WAS EXILED ON THE "PHILOSOPHERS' STEAMBOAT". AFTER CONSTANTINOPLE, WHERE HE WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY HAGIA SOPHIA, BULGAKOV MOVED TO PRAGUE, WHERE THE YOUNG CZECH GOVERNMENT WAS SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS BY THE RUSSIAN EMIGRANTS TO RESTORE THEIR INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

IN OCTOBER 1923 BULGAKOV WENT TO THE CONGRESS IN PSHEROV NEAR PRAGUE, A GATHERING OF YOUNG RUSSIAN EXILES FROM ALL OVER EUROPE. THAT CONGRESS WAS SUCH AN INSPIRATION THAT IT WAS CALLED "THE PSHEROV PENTECOST". THE RUSSIAN STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT WAS BORN, WITH THE VOCATION TO "ECCLESIFY THE WHOLE OF LIFE!"



BULGAKOV MOVED TO PARIS WHERE IN **1925** HE BECAME ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF SAINT SERGIUS ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE. THERE HE TAUGHT DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AND CREATED HIS MAJOR WORKS.



IN THE **1920S** BULGAKOV TOOK PART IN THE NASCENT ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT, AND WAS ESPECIALLY ACTIVE IN CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX AND THE ANGLICAN CHURCHES. HE WAS AMONG THE FOUNDERS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINT ALBAN AND SAINT SERGIUS IN **1928**.



AT THE HEART OF BULGAKOV'S THEOLOGICAL THINKING WAS HIS MEDITATION ON HOLY SOPHIA, THE WISDOM OF GOD. HE WROTE THAT «ONE SHOULD DRINK THEOLOGY FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE EUCHARISTIC CUP».



IN THE 1930S, AS POLITICAL AND ECCLESIAL TENSIONS GREW IN EUROPE AND THE RUSSIAN EMIGRATION, BULGAKOV'S SOPHIOLOGY BECAME A CONTROVERSY WHICH CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. WHILE SOME CONSIDER HIM A HERETIC, OTHERS BELIEVE FATHER SERGII TO BE ONE OF THE LEADING THEOLOGIAN OF THE XXTH CENTURY.



ALWAYS SEEKING THE PRACTICAL INCARNATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT, BULGAKOV STARTED COLLABORATING WITH MOTHER MARIA (SKOBTSOVA) IN HER SOCIAL INITIATIVE "ORTHODOX ACTION," AND TOGETHER WITH BERDYAEV GAVE LECTURES IN HER SHELTER AT RUE LOURMEL.



IN HIS LATER YEARS BULGAKOV SURVIVED THROAT CANCER, WHICH MADE HIM ALMOST COMPLETELY SILENT. DURING THE OCCUPATION OF PARIS, HE CELEBRATED LITURGIES AND WROTE A TREATISE AGAINST RACISM AND A BOOK ON THE APOCALYPSE. HE DIED IN 1944, AFTER 40 DAYS IN A COMA. AS FATHER SERGII WAS ON HIS DEATHBED, HIS DISCIPLES WITNESSED THE UNCREATED LIGHT RADIATING FROM HIS FACE.