ings always to blame everything on external forces and thus justify their own failings. The intelligentsia too is guilty; its atheism is the fault of its will, for it freely chose the path of worshipping man and thereby crippled its soul and deadened within itself the instinct for truth. We must realize that our will, which is influenced by our reason, is guilty; only this realization can lead us to a new life. We will be freed from external oppression only when we are freed from internal bondage, i.e., when we accept responsibility and cease blaming everything on external forces. Then the new soul of the intelligentsia will be born.

HEROISM AND ASCETICISM

Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Russian Intelligentsia

Sergei Bulgakov

I

Russia has experienced a revolution, and it did not bring the expected results. Many people feel that so far the achievements of the liberation movement are problematical, to say the least. Russian society, exhausted by its recent strain and failures, is in a state of torpor, apathy, spiritual malaise, and despondency. Our state life still shows no signs of the renewal and consolidation it needs so much, and, as though in a dream world, every part of it has come to a standstill once again, overcome by an irresistible drowsiness. Civic life, clouded by many executions, an extraordinary increase in crime, and a general coarsening of manners, has positively regressed. Literature has been engulfed by a muddy wave of pornography and sensationalism. There is good cause for despair and for grave doubt as to the future of Russia. In any case, now, after all we have been through, neither the naive, rather starry-eyed Slavophile faith nor the pretty utopias of the old Westernism are still tenable. The revolution has brought into question the very viability of Russian state and civic life. Unless we take into account this historical experience, the historical lessons of the revolution, we can make no positive statement about Russia; nor can we fall back on the clichés of either the Slavophiles or the Westernizers.

The political crisis was followed by a spiritual crisis which demands deep, concentrated reflection, introspection, self-examination, and self-criticism. If Russian society really is still living and viable, if it contains seeds of the future, this must be manifested first and foremost in a readiness and ability to learn from history. For history is not mere chronology, relating the sequence of events; it is life experience, the experience of good and evil which makes spiritual growth possible. Nothing is so dangerous as a deathly immobility of minds and hearts, an inert conservatism in which we content ourselves with repeating clichés or simply brushing aside the lessons of the past, in the secret hope of a new “emotional upsurge,” spontaneous, accidental, and irrational.

Reflecting upon our experiences of recent years, we cannot regard it all as an historical accident or simply the play of spontaneous forces. History pronounced a verdict here; the various players in the historical drama were judged, and the balance sheet was drawn up for an entire historical period. The “liberation movement” did not produce the results it should have; it did not bring reconciliation and renewal, and it has not yet brought improvement in the
system of government (although it left a green shoot for the future, the State Duma), nor an upsurge in the economy. This is not simply because it proved too weak for the struggle with the dark forces of history. No, the liberation movement could not prevail because it was not equal to its task and was itself weakened by internal contradictions. The Russian revolution developed enormous destructive energy, like a gigantic earthquake, but its creative forces proved far weaker than the destructive ones. For many, the net result of their experiences was this bitter realization in their hearts. Should it be silenced? Isn’t it better to give voice to it, in order to ask, “Why is this so?”

I have already publicly expressed the view that the Russian revolution was an intelligentsia revolution. It was our intelligentsia, with its world-view, habits, tastes, and social mores, that provided the revolution’s spiritual leadership. The intelligentsy do not admit it, of course, thereby showing that they are indeed intelligentsy, and, each according to his own catechism, they name one or another social class as the sole motive force of the revolution. We do not dispute the fact that it took a whole complex of historical circumstances (with the unfortunate war, of course, foremost among them) and very serious vital interests to arouse the various social classes and groups and throw them into a state of unrest. Nonetheless, we insist that the intelligentsia gave the revolution all its ideological baggage and its whole spiritual arsenal, along with its front-line fighters, skirmishers, agitators, and propagandists. It gave spiritual expression to the instinctive desires of the masses and fired them with its own enthusiasm—in short, it was the nerves and brain of the gigantic body of the revolution. In this sense the revolution is the intelligentsia’s spiritual offspring, and, consequently, the history of the revolution is history’s verdict on the intelligentsia.

The soul of the intelligentsia, this creation of Peter the Great, is the key to the future destiny of Russia’s state and society. For good or ill, the fate of Petrine Russia is in the hands of the intelligentsia, however oppressed and persecuted, however weak and even impotent it may seem at the moment. It is the window that Peter cut open to Europe, and through it we receive Western air, at once life-giving and poisonous. This handful of people holds the Russian monopoly on European education and enlightenment, and they are the chief agents for its transmission to a nation of a hundred million people. If Russia cannot do without this enlightenment on pain of political and national death, then how exalted and important the intelligentsia’s mission becomes, how awesome its historical responsibility for our country’s immediate as well as distant future! That is why a patriot who loves his nation and grieves over the needs of the Russian state can find no more compelling subject for reflection than the nature of the Russian intelligentsia. Nor can he have any more agonizing and anxious concern than whether it will rise to its task and give Russia the educated class she needs so badly, one with a Russian soul, enlightened reason, and a firm will. For otherwise the intelligentsia, in league with the Tatars’ barbarism still so prevalent in our state and society, will destroy Russia.

After witnessing the revolution, many people were keenly disappointed in the intelligentsia and questioned its fitness for its historical role; in the revolution’s singular failures they saw the bankruptcy of the intelligentsia as well. The revolution exposed, underscored, and intensified certain of the intelligentsia’s spiritual features that only a few individuals (Dostoevskii especially) had previously divined in all their real significance. It was like a spiritual mirror for all of Russia, and for her intelligentsia in particular. To be silent about these traits now would be not merely improper but downright criminal. For now our one hope is that the years of social collapse will also be years of salutary repentance, in which spiritual forces will revive and new people, new toilers in the Russian vineyard, will be trained. But Russia cannot be renovated without first renovating her intelligentsia (along with much else). And it is the duty of conviction and patriotism to speak of this loudly and openly. A critical attitude toward some of the intelligentsia’s spiritual features is not necessarily the product of any one world-view that is especially alien to the intelligentsia. People of varied and widely divergent views can agree in this attitude, and that is the best sign that the time really has come for self-criticism, and that it answers a vital need of at least a part of the intelligentsia itself.

The Russian intelligentsia’s character was shaped by two basic factors, one external and the other internal, to speak in general terms. The first was the merciless and unremitting pressure applied by the police, which could have crushed and completely destroyed a group with a weaker spirit. The fact that the intelligentsia remained alive and vigorous even under this pressure bears witness at least to its extraordinary courage and viability. The intelligentsia’s isolation from real life, imposed upon it by the whole atmosphere of the old regime, intensified that “underground” mentality which was part of its innate character in any case. Isolation numbed its spirit, supporting and to a certain extent justifying its political obsession (the “Hannibal’s vow” of struggle against autocracy), and hampering normal spiritual development. Only now are the objective conditions for that development becoming more favorable, and here, at least, we can see an undeniable spiritual achievement of the liberation movement.

The second, subjective factor that determined the character of our intelligentsia is its special world-view and the spiritual outlook that accompanies it. This essay will be wholly devoted to a characterization and critique of that world-view.

I cannot help seeing the intelligentsia’s attitude toward religion as its most
fundamental characteristic. Nor can we understand the fundamental characteris- 
tics of the Russian revolution unless we focus our attention on this atti-
tude. Furthermore, Russia’s historical future, too, is involved in the question of 
what position the intelligentsia will adopt in regard to religion: will it re-
main in the same moribund condition, or does an upheaval await us in this 
sphere, too, a real evolution of minds and hearts?

II

Following Dostoevskii, it has frequently been noted that the Russian in-
telligentsia’s spiritual make-up contains elements of religiosity which sometimes 
even approximate Christianity. The intelligentsia’s historical predicament was 
primarily responsible for fostering these traits: on the one hand, government 
persecution gave it a feeling of martyrdom and confessiorship, while forcible 
isolation from life, on the other, produced dreaminess, occasional starry-eyed 
idealism, utopianism, and, in general, an inadequate sense of reality.

Another trait is connected with this apparent religiosity: the intelligentsia 
is psychologically alien, although perhaps only temporarily, to the solid bour-
edgeois tenor of life of Western Europe, with its everyday virtues and its economy 
based on hard work, but with its barrenness and limitations as well. In the 
works of Herzen we have the classic expression of the Russian intelligentsia’s 
spiritual collision with European “bourgeois philistinism.” 2 Similar reactions 
have appeared on a number of occasions in recent Russian literature, too. This 
constricted and spiritually earthbound way of life sickens the Russian inte-
ligent, though we all know how imperative it is for him to learn at least the 
technology of life and labor from Western man. In return, these vagabond men 
of Rus’, these émigré freebooters still feeding on the inspiration of Sten’ka 
Razin and Emel’ka Pugachev, though translated into contemporary revolu-
tionary jargon, are repulsive and incomprehensible to the Western bourgeoisie.
In recent years this spiritual antagonism seems to have reached a fever pitch.

If we attempt to analyze the “anti-bourgeoisness” of the Russian intelli-
gentsia, it turns out to be a mixtum compositum of highly diverse elements. 
There is some hereditary lordliness, the product of generations of freedom from 
the cares of earning a living and from the humdrum, “philistine” side of life 
in general. There is a considerable dose of plain slovenliness, of failure to de-
velop persistent, disciplined work habits and a measured pace of life. But 
doubtless there is also some smaller dose of an unconsciously religious aver-
sion to spiritual philistinism, to “the kingdom of this world,” with its placid 
self-satisfaction.

A certain otherworldliness, an eschatological dream of the City of God and 
the future reign of God (under various socialist pseudonyms), and a striving 
for the salvation of mankind—if not from sin, then from suffering—are, as we 
know, the immutable and distinctive peculiarities of the Russian intelligentsia. 
Anguish at the disarray of life and a yearning to overcome it distinguish 
the foremost intelligent writers (Gleb Uspenskii, Garshin). It may be that in 
this striving for the Future City, beside which earthly reality pales, the intel-
ligentsia has preserved in their most recognizable form some features of its 
lost life in the church. While I listened to the stormy speeches of the atheistic 
left bloc in the Second State Duma, 3 how often I heard—remarkably—echoes 
of the psychology of Orthodoxy, as the effects of the members’ spiritual in-
doctrination by it were suddenly revealed.

In general, the spiritual habits instilled by the church explain a number of 
the Russian intelligentsia’s best qualities, but it loses them the more it departs 
from the church. Among them are a certain puritanism, rigorous morals, a 
distinctive asceticism, and a general strictness of personal life. Such leaders of 
the Russian intelligentsia as Dobroliubov and Chernyshevskii (both semi-
narians, brought up in religious clerical families) preserve their earlier moral 
nature almost intact, but their historical children and grandchildren gradually 
lose it. In the spiritual make-up of the most outstanding figures of the Russian 
revolution we can discern Christian traits which they absorbed, sometimes 
without knowledge or desire, from their surroundings, from family and nurse, 
from a spiritual atmosphere steeped in church life. But since this merely ob-
scures the real opposition between the Christian temperament and that of the 
intelligent, it is important to point out that these traits are superficial, bor-
rrowed, and in a certain sense atavistic. They disappear with the weakening 
of former Christian habits, revealing the full-blown image of the intelligent. That 
image made its most forceful appearance during the revolution, when it sloughed off the very last vestiges of Christianity.

The Russian intelligentsia, especially in earlier generations, was also dis-
tinguished by a feeling of guilt toward the people, a kind of “social repen-
tance,” not before God, of course, but before the “people” or the “prole-
tariat.” Although there is a touch of lordliness in the historical origins of 
these sentiments of the “reptant nobleman” or the “classless intelligentsia,” 
they do leave a mark of special profundity and suffering on the intelligentsia’s 
countenance. Another apparently religious trait is the intelligentsia’s self-sacrifi-
cence, the constant readiness of its best representatives to make any sacrifices

2. On this point, see the essay “Herzen’s Spiritual Drama” [Dashivnaia drama Gert-
sena] in my From Marxm to Idealism: A Collection of Articles, 1896-1903 [Ot marks-
izma k idealizmu, Sobrannik statей, 1896-1903] (St. Petersburg: “Obshchestvennaiia pol’tsa,” 
1903). Also published separately (Kiev: S. I. Ivanov, 1905).

3. Bulgakov sat in the Second Duma (1907), where he was affiliated with the Kadets 
(liberals), although he described himself as a Christian Socialist, Êds.
The spiritual nourishment of our schools is foundational to their success. In the past, education focused on rote memorization and the transmission of facts. However, in today's rapidly changing world, we must prioritize the development of critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability. The traditional methods of teaching need to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st-century learner. This involves integrating technology, fostering collaboration, and encouraging students to take an active role in their learning. Only by doing so can we ensure that our schools prepare students for the challenges of the future.
The functional analysis of the structure's world-view and ideal is a key component of the functional view of the world.

The functional view of the world is the foundational perspective that guides the understanding of everyday experiences and life situations. It incorporates the principles of functionalism, which emphasize the importance of analyzing the functions and consequences of behaviors and social structures.

In the functional view, individuals and social groups are seen as adapting to their environment in order to maintain stability and survival. Life is viewed as a process of continuous adjustment, where individuals and societies work to meet their needs and achieve goals.

This perspective is particularly useful in understanding complex social phenomena, such as social change, cultural practices, and the dynamics of power and inequality. By examining the functions and outcomes of various social structures and behaviors, the functional view provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing and predicting social behavior.

In summary, the functional view of the world offers a powerful lens through which to understand the complex interplay of individual actions and social structures. It encourages a dynamic and adaptive approach to social analysis, highlighting the importance of considering the consequences and outcomes of social actions and decisions.
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Heroin and Actionism
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ocation of elementary knowledge or simply reading and writing. For the intellec-
tuals of Western Europe, which dissociate themselves the most from "bourgeois" 
society, in fact remain organic members of it and do not destroy the integrity 
of its culture. But our division into right and left is distinguished by the fact 
that it has as its source not just different political ideals but, in the overwhelm-
ing majority of cases, different world-views or faiths. A more exact parallel 
from the history of Western Europe would be the Reformation division be-
tween Catholics and Protestants with its consequent religious wars, rather than 
present-day political parties. We need only reduce the right and left blocs to 
their component spiritual elements to see this.

Russian enlightenment, which the Russian intelligentsia is called upon to 
serve, had to struggle with the age-old Tatar barbarism that had eaten deeply 
into various aspects of our life; with the arbitrariness of bureaucratic absolutism 
and its unfitness for government; in the past with serfdom and corporal pun-
ishment, and now with capital punishment andcrudeness of manners; in 
general, it had to struggle for better conditions of life. The ideals of the so-
called liberation movement can be reduced to these goals. The intelligentsia 
shouldered the burdens and difficulties of the movement, and in the struggle 
it won itself many a martyr's crown. But, unfortunately for Russian life, it 
bound the struggle inseparably to its own negative world-view. Therefore, 
those who cherished the treasure of the national faith and felt called upon to 
preserve it—primarily the men of the church—found it necessary to combat 
the intelligentsia's influence on the people for the sake of defending that faith. 
The rivalry of political and cultural ideals became entangled with religious 
strife, and our intelligentsia still does not fully appreciate how serious this 
conflict is, and how ominous for Russia's future.

The intelligentsia's almost unanimous departure from the church, and the 
cultural isolation in which the church found itself as a result, aggravated the 
historical situation still further. It goes without saying that for one who be-
lieves in the mystical life of the Church, its empirical shell at any given historical 
moment has no decisive importance; whatever that shell may be, it cannot 
and must not give rise to any doubt as to the ultimate triumph of the Church, 
when its light will be clear for all to see. But on an empirical plane, looking 
at the Russian national church as a factor of historical development, we can-
not deem it unimportant that the Russian educated class almost to a man 
espoused atheism. Naturally, such a bloodletting could not fail to be reflected 
in the cultural and intellectual level of the remaining churchmen. The intelli-
gentsia usually floats over the numerous evils of church life, which we have 
no desire either to minimize or to deny (although the intelligentsia neither 
knows nor understands any of the positive sides of church life). But does the 
intelligentsia really have the right to criticize when it remains indifferent to 
religion or rejects it on principle, seeing in religion only darkness and idiocy?

A church intelligentsia combining true Christianity with a clear and en-
lightened understanding of cultural and historical tasks (which contemporary
churchmen so often lack), were one to arise, would meet an urgent historical and national need. And even if it had to suffer in its turn the persecution and oppression which the intelligentsia endures for the sake of athletic ideals, this would have enormous historical and religio-moral significance and would find a very special response in the people’s soul.

But as long as the intelligentsia uses all the power of its education to undermine the people’s faith, the defense of the faith, with sad inevitability, more and more assumes the character of a struggle not only against the intelligentsia but against enlightenment as well. Once the intelligentsia in fact becomes the sole disseminator of enlightenment, obscurantism becomes a means of defending religion. This predicament, unnatural for both sides and grown more acute in recent years, makes our present state especially tormenting. And to make matters worse, self-seeking reactionaries, frauds, and those who like to fish in troubled waters use the defense of the people’s faith against the intelligentsia as a pretext. All of this gets intertwined into one historical and psychological knot: habitual patterns of thought and historical associations of ideas develop, and both their adherents and their opponents begin to see them as intrinsically binding and indissoluble. Opposite electrical charges build up steadily at both poles. People group themselves into camps according to this abnormal standard, and a corresponding psychological atmosphere forms, conservative and despotic. The nation splits in two, and its best forces are wasted in fruitless struggle.

This division is the product of our entire spiritual past, and the task of the time is to overcome and transcend it, once we have realized that it is based not on an inner, ideal necessity, but only on the force of historical fact. It is time to set about: untying the Gordian knot of our history.

VII

Like all of Russian life, the soul of the Russian intelligentsia is woven of contradictions, and it arouses contradictory feelings. One cannot help both loving it and being repelled by it. Alongside the intelligentsia’s negative features, which are symptoms of lack of culture and historical immaturity and must be overcome, elements of spiritual beauty shine from its tormented vioage, causing it to resemble some very special, dear and tender flower nurtured by our severe history. It is as though the intelligentsia itself were that “red flower” nourished by tears and blood which appeared to one of its noblest representatives, the great-hearted Garshin.33

Alongside the anti-Christ element in the intelligentsia one can sense higher religious potentials as well, a new historical flesh waiting to be spiritualized.

Its intense search for the City of God, its yearning that God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, is profoundly different from bourgeois culture’s desire for solid, earthly well-being. The intelligentsia’s abnormal maximalism with its practical uselessness is the result of a religious perversion, but it can be overcome by religious healing.

The nature of the Russian intelligentsia is religious. In The Devils, Dostoevskii compared Russia, and particularly her intelligentsia, to the possessed man of the Gospels, who was cured by Christ alone and could find health and restoration of his powers only at the feet of the Savior.34 This comparison still holds true. A legion of demons has invaded Russia’s enormous body and is convulsing, tormenting, and crippling it. Only a religious feat, invincible but mighty, can cure Russia and free her from this legion.

The intelligentsia rejected Christ; it turned away from His countenance and cast His image from its heart; it deprived itself of the inner light of life, and together with its country it is paying for this betrayal, this religious suicide. But strangely, it does not have the strength to forget this wound to its heart, to restore its spiritual equilibrium, to rest after the devastation it has wrought on itself. Although it has renounced Christ, it bears His seal on its heart and burns with an unconscious longing for Him, not knowing how to slake its spiritual thirst. And this bewildering anxiety, this unearthly dream of unearthly justice, leaves its special mark on the intelligentsia and makes it strange, frenzied and unbalanced, as though possessed. It is like the beautiful Shulamite who had lost her lover: on her bed at night, in the streets and broad ways, she sought him whom her soul loved; she asked the watchmen that go about the city if they had seen her beloved, but instead of answering they only smote and wounded her. (Song of Songs, 3:1-3, 5:7.) And meanwhile, the Beloved, the One for Whom its soul yearns, is near. He stands and knocks at that heart, that proud, recalcitrant intelligentsia heart. . . . Will His knock someday be heard? . . .
