

Transfigurations of Tolstoy's Final Journey: The Church and the Media in 1910

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And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

(Revelations 20:12)

On the evening of November 4, 1910, in a state of delirium as his condition worsened, Tolstoy began to make motions on his blanket with his hands. Though he was only semi-conscious at the time, those at his bedside interpreted the movements as an attempt to write—the “great writer of the Russian land” was reflexively repeating the motions that had filled so much of his life, setting forth the meditations that issued from his approaching death. This moment epitomizes the narrative dynamic of Tolstoy's last days, when his every movement was recorded and vigorously interpreted in the Russian media. When he left his home in the middle of the night and set out on his final journey, it was assumed that he was composing a conclusion to his life, and that he had something decisive to communicate to his audience. When he fell ill and could no longer complete the text, his readers adopted Tolstoyan subjectivity and gave their own, sometimes quite contradictory, directions to his movements. The reactionary Orthodox newspaper *Kolokol*, for instance, had another interpretation of Tolstoy's gesture on his covers: his hand, they agreed, spoke of what was going on in his heart, but was making the sign of the cross rather than the pen.¹ The dying Tolstoy was repenting and remembering his faith, for at this deepest, unconscious level, he was not a writer, but an Orthodox Christian.

Perhaps no one watched Tolstoy's last movements with greater anticipation than the two groups described above—one building the cult of the writer, the other defending the cult of Christ. During his last

thirty years Tolstoy had repeatedly challenged the moral authority of the Orthodox faith, and had himself grown into the role of a secular patriarch to the Russian people. He had essentially defined his own confessional space, and his followers seized upon the events of his last days to persuade the public of its integrity; custodians of the Orthodox Church, on the other hand, would argue that the Tolstoyan faith had not sustained him in his last “desperate” moments and had ultimately been abandoned. The intensive coverage of the event by the media heightened the stakes, as did the sympathy of the public toward what was widely identified as Tolstoy's “pilgrimage.” Church officials were prepared to endorse this interpretation when Tolstoy made initial stops at Optina and Shamordino monasteries, but ultimately did their utmost to subvert the perception of the journey as a religious event.

If this pilgrimage was not Orthodox, however, it proved to be deeply Russian. Tolstoy's farewell note explaining that he was doing what was “usually” done by men of his age, who “[leave] worldly life to live their last days in peace and solitude,” situated his departure in the ancient traditions of Russian folk Christianity. He was following in the footsteps of Alexander Nevsky and Alexander I, who, according to popular legend, had abandoned the Russian throne to take monastic vows.² Such a descent appealed to the Russian popular imagination, and the public was quick to identify with an aristocrat rejecting his wealth and comfort to live among the people. But it was also a proto-Christian gesture—an imitation of Christ retreating to the desert before his own death.³ When it was performed by someone who had been ex-communicated from the Church, the Orthodox hierarchy was confronted with a defining moment of heterodoxy. If Tolstoy's pilgrim-

age would lead him to peasant huts rather than holy shrines, and if he wished to pray in the forests of St. Sergius to a God that had been known to Buddha as well as Christ, then how could the custodians of the “true faith” condone it? The Church’s hopes for the return of a “prodigal son” were frustrated, and they found themselves describing as a “spiritual tragedy” that which the public was inclined to view as a moral victory (“О подвиге”).

The hope of Archbishop Arsenii of Novgorod that Tolstoy would “reject his faith in humanity and return to that pure Christian faith, according to which millions of Russians live,” quantified the significance that was assigned to Tolstoy’s example (“Архиепископ Арсений”). Arsenii’s belief in the reversibility of Tolstoy’s views, and in the potential for the Church to suddenly reap benefit from its greatest contemporary enemy, explains many of the Church’s actions in Tolstoy’s last days. They argued that Tolstoy had abandoned his former views and wished to return to the Church, and that he had ended his life as a spiritual fugitive, rather than a seeker, in flight *from* his own spiritual demons, rather than in journey *toward* his own Jerusalem. They countered the popular teleology of Tolstoyan triumph with their own view of the author’s theology as a dead end. The Church understood that this tale of apostasy would not be as appealing as one of apotheosis, and did all that it could to bring about the story it really wanted to tell—of a repentant Tolstoy affirming the authority of the national Church. They sent emissaries to his bedside in the hope of attaining a last-minute repentance, exploiting every opportunity to make this possible.

When these efforts failed, the Church intended to show that it was the best interpreter of a narrative of which the Orthodox God, and not Tolstoy, had been the provident author. In this, too, they failed, as Astapovo was fashioned in the popular press into a modern Assumption. Church officials then watched as Tolstoy was given a national funeral without their participation or sanction. Their sacred burial rites were incorporated into these ceremonies, which became public demonstrations of rebellion against Church authority.⁴ Tolstoy’s death proved a defining moment not only for him, but for Russian society as well; as the Russian people argued over what had happened at Astapovo and how their beloved writer should be buried, his

body was made profoundly politic. The pages that follow describe the failure of the Church to pass final judgment on Tolstoy: the public instead made its own judgment, referring to a “Book of Life” written in part by Tolstoy himself, but given final shape by the newspapers that set it into print in November of 1910.

I. Tolstoy’s Challenge to Orthodoxy

Tolstoy’s confrontation with the Orthodox Church began in the period following his “spiritual crisis” in the late 1870s, after the completion of *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy began a study of Christian spirituality, became convinced that Orthodox theology had distorted Christ’s principles, and took it upon himself to correct this problem in a series of critical studies and polemical works. He studied the original Greek texts of the Gospels, as well as the work of historians, in an effort to restore the original meaning of the texts. The result of these labors, which Tolstoy would later call his most difficult and rewarding, was a series of retellings of the Gospels: *Union and Translation of the Gospels*, *A Short Summary of the Gospels*, *The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*, and *The Teaching of Christ, Summarized for Children*.⁵ These works portrayed Christ as a man rather than a divinity, and systematically stripped away the healings, resurrections, and other miracles that, Tolstoy argued, had been written into the text by the builders of the Christian cult. For Tolstoy the Gospels were the foundation not for a mystery religion, but for a system of practical ethics; they described a life that was not preternatural or inimitable, but was instead an illustration of the moral potential of every individual to live according to the precepts that had guided Christ. Tolstoy viewed this argument not as blasphemy, but as a return to the first principles of Christianity.⁶

In his later literary works, spiritual rebirth was often predicated upon rejection of the most sacred rituals of Orthodoxy. “Father Sergius” describes a revered Orthodox monk whose spiritual strength diminishes as his tremendous cult following grows; though Sergius leads an ascetic life and is ascribed the ability to heal, he is motivated by vanity and only begins to lead a Tolstoyan moral life when divested of his fame. Sergius abandons his monastic cave to pursue a true Tolstoyan *askesis* by tending a garden and teaching peasant children in an obscure Siberian

village. In “Two Old Men,” one pilgrim travels to Jerusalem on a highly ritualized tour of the shrines, only to understand upon his return the moral superiority of his fellow traveler, who had stayed behind to help a destitute village recover from a failed harvest. For Tolstoy “the greatest story ever told” was one of humility and service; ritual and superstition only interfered with ethical practice. The same held true for Christ himself, who in Tolstoy’s view held greater meaning as a human moral example than as a divine moral authority.

The Church had little tolerance for the notion that Christ himself might have been a common man. Konstantin Pobedonostsev’s oft-quoted complaint to Tolstoy described this essential difference: “After reading your letter, I saw that your faith is one thing, and that mine and that of the Church is another, and that our Christ is not your Christ. Mine I know as a man of strength, healing the weak; but in yours I thought I detected the features of one who is feeble and himself needs to be cured” (PSS 63: 59). Pobedonostsev’s grim view of Tolstoy’s Christ underscores a key element in Tolstoy’s debate with the Church; for all his belief in God Tolstoy nonetheless joined in the modernist deconstruction of Christian metaphysics. When he argued that *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* he described a Protestant sense of personal ethical responsibility, but also a different relationship to God. He had resolved an existential crisis by finding faith in a mortal Christ who offered redemption to humanity not by dying on the cross, but by living a moral life.

Tolstoy’s critique of the Church was widely considered the most significant challenge that the Russian Orthodox faith faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷ The Church found itself redefining Christ for the masses because Tolstoy had redefined him.⁸ They watched grimly as Tolstoy became a national conscience, an ethical thorn in the side of the Russian Church and State. He held the government accountable to the tenets of the faith it espoused and challenged the principles of Orthodoxy when they were used to legitimate abuses of human rights.⁹ Non-violence, vegetarianism, and celibacy were brought into the mainstream of ethical discourse by his passionate arguments in their defense and were practiced by schools of his followers across Russia. Tolstoyan

communes were organized in Russia and abroad, while his religious writings were printed in inexpensive editions and distributed by his followers with missionary zeal.

Pobedonostsev, as Procurator of the Holy Synod, joined a host of Church leaders seeking to circumscribe Tolstoy’s moral influence.¹⁰ The activities of Tolstoy and his followers were closely monitored by the Church and were often curtailed by criminal proceedings and imprisonment.¹¹ Threats of eternal damnation were also used, particularly where the impression could be most effective. When Tolstoyans began distributing literature to participants in the Kursk–Korenyy Procession of the Cross, a church along the route displayed an icon of the Last Judgment that depicted Tolstoy burning prominently in Satan’s inferno (Солнышко 78-79).¹² Peasants were warned that he was a demonic incarnation who would lead them into the fires of hell. In 1891-1892, when Tolstoy organized a widespread famine relief program in the Ryazan region, local clergy countered Tolstoy’s philanthropy by telling peasants that he was the anti-Christ, and that the bread he was giving away was of the devil. Stories circulated that Tolstoy was branding peasants on the forehead with the sign of the devil or buying their souls for eight rubles apiece.¹³

Local parishes throughout the country joined this campaign, and a number of prominent clergymen used the Orthodox cathedral as a bully pulpit for attacks on Tolstoy. The leading Orthodox charismatic of the day, Ioann of Kronshtadt, made the struggle with Tolstoy a personal obsession, publishing sermons and pages from his diary in books and pamphlets that described Tolstoy as the most dangerous of heretics, a companion to Judas, and a pagan “lion/Leo” feasting on Christians (Иоанн). Archbishop Nikanor of Kherson and Odessa was another leading opponent, whose collection of sermons against Tolstoy’s teachings went through a number of editions. Though more philosophical than Ioann, he was not immune to infernal flourishes, concluding one oration with a passage from Matthew suggesting that “every tree that does not bring forth good fruit” should be cut down and thrown into the fire (Никнор 60).¹⁴ References to such “cutting down” or “cutting off” are abundant in the Church’s anti-Tolstoyan literature, invoking both

divine retribution and the need to cut off, or excommunicate, Tolstoy from the Orthodox Church.¹⁵

Rumors of such an act had begun circulating in the late 1880s and reached a peak in 1892 during the famine relief campaign in Ryazan. The relief program disturbed the Church on several counts, not only drawing widespread attention to Tolstoy's charity, but also offering a public workshop on his ideas. Peasants were served vegetarian meals by enthusiastic Tolstoyans, who outpaced the Church in exercising the most practical of ethics. Church officials were deeply disturbed by the popular appeal Tolstoy gained through the campaign and began searching for a pretext for decisive action against him.¹⁶ A scandal surrounding the publication of an article in the London *Daily Telegraph* about the famine (in which Tolstoy assigned responsibility for the peasants' hunger to the Russian aristocracy) seemed to provide the necessary justification, and in fact a recommendation was made at the time to sequester Tolstoy in the infamous Spaso-Efim'evskii Monastery in Suzdal, which had served as a "Church prison" for over 150 years.¹⁷ This measure was not taken at the time due to Alexander III's determination not to make a martyr of Tolstoy. With Alexander's death, however, the campaign for excommunication was revived—in 1896 Konstantin Pobedonostsev wrote to S.A. Rachinskii, concluding a diatribe against Tolstoy with a prediction that the question of his excommunication would be taken up after the coronation of Nicholas II (Позойский 82).

It was not, however, until 1899, when *Resurrection* began appearing in the journal *Niva*, that the campaign achieved decisive momentum. The work that ultimately provoked the Church to act was not a political or religious tract, but instead Tolstoy's last novel. Popular history has maintained that it was in fact Tolstoy's caricature of Pobedonostsev in the novel that galvanized the Church's resolve. Whether or not this was in fact the case, Pobedonostsev was hardly the sole instigator.¹⁸ Archbishop Amvrosii of Kharkov, scheming with the Kiev Metropolitan Ioannikii, sent a letter to the Synod urging excommunication and authored a protocol of the official pronouncement (Гормон 129). Tolstoy became seriously ill later that year, and in 1900 Ioannikii circulated on behalf of the Synod a secret letter instructing local Church officials that, in the event of Tolstoy's death, no offices should

be performed unless Tolstoy had repented beforehand ("Секретный"). In effect, this was a preliminary excommunication, and its language clarifies the extent to which the act was intended to defend both creed and crown: the turn of the century was a time of popular unrest in Russia, and the letter warned that services for Tolstoy, an outspoken critic of both Church and State, might serve as opportunities for political demonstrations. In 1901, as this spirit of dissent spread throughout the country, Amvrosii again proposed excommunication, and this time the Synod agreed.

V.M. Skvortsov, the publisher of Миссионерское обозрение, an influential ally of the Synod, and a vocal anti-Tolstoyan, was given an urgent commission on February 5, 1901, to outline the principles of Tolstoy's beliefs for the use of the Synod. This evidence was needed for a decree that was being prepared by the Synod to protect the Orthodox faithful from Tolstoy's influence by clarifying how he had betrayed his faith (Позойский 78). The *Послание* they eventually issued was, in fact, not a formal "excommunication" in that it did not conclude with the traditional litany of anathemas. Accounts of the preparation of the document indicate that the Synod worked to soften its language, to construe the gesture as a benevolent effort to point out the error of Tolstoy's ways, and to leave open the possibility that he might return to the Church. Metropolitan Antonii stated this intention in a note to Pobedonostsev regarding the semantic strategy for the edict: "not a judgment on the dead, as they say of the secret protocol, and not an indictment without a hearing, but a 'warning to the living'" (Позойский 79). As powerful as its antipathy to Tolstoy might be, the Church found it expedient to take a position that was clearly mediated by Tolstoy's popularity.

Despite their efforts, however, Tolstoy and the public perceived the proclamation as an excommunication. Intended to stigmatize Tolstoy and dissipate his moral authority, the act of the Holy Synod instead magnified his support and drew attention to his heretical beliefs. Indeed, Tolstoy's popularity and authority only grew as a result of the excommunication. Demand for his writings increased, particularly for those that had stimulated the Church's act (many of which had been published only outside of Russia). Tolstoy received a flood of letters of support and found

crowds of supporters gathering at the entrance to his Moscow home. If the Church believed that it could topple Tolstoy from his lofty pedestal in the eyes of the public, it found instead that the writer's support was often more stable than its own. The *Послание* missed its mark, and its backfire only added insult to the injury of Tolstoy's "heresy."¹⁹

When the sympathies aroused by the excommunication rose to yet another peak during Tolstoy's illness in 1901-1902, the prospect of striking the heretic without injuring national pride over his many accomplishments became still more dubious. As Tolstoy's struggles with malaria, typhoid fever, and lung, liver, and heart ailments brought him close to death, the public warmly reiterated the affection and support they had shown at the time of the excommunication. Yasnaya Polyana was flooded with letters from well-wishers, and when it was decided that Tolstoy needed the warmer climate of the south, his train was met with large demonstrations at stations along his route. A crowd of three thousand gathered at the station in Kharkov, sending him off with shouts of support and best wishes for his recovery.²⁰

The Church sought a position less antagonistic to these sentiments, which only heightened as Tolstoy's illness progressed. When his condition finally became critical, the Church issued a secret circular (as it would in 1910) forbidding performance of Church services. But it also undertook a more desperate scheme, instructing a local priest to enter the house if Tolstoy was dying and to emerge immediately after his death and proclaim that Tolstoy had renounced his heretical beliefs. This plan was discovered, leading Tolstoy's family and friends to devise a plan to cover up his death until accurate accounts of his passing had been dispatched to reliable sources. Tolstoy finally recovered, but the incident set the stage for his eventual death in 1910, when access to his quarters would be strictly controlled.²¹

The national celebration of Tolstoy's eightieth birthday in 1908 was another difficult time for the Church. Tolstoy confessed his own embarrassment over the fanfare, which included such tributes as the following hymn, found in a handbook on celebrating the event in schools:

Hymn to Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy²²

(in three children's or women's parts)

Our wise and gentle teacher
Turn to us your sensitive ear
The Almighty extended
Over you a mighty spirit.

With wise and humble word
You prevail over the universe
Under God's protection
From those heights of peace and quiet.

Draw us little ones to you
Let us look upon your face
In the light of scarlet mountain dawns
Show us the bright path!

We gather grasses from the hills
We gather flowers too
Singing out in hymns of praise
We make wreathes in your honor

Cover our grasses and flowers
with your pure gaze
Give a greeting answer
To our boisterous songs

We will nimbly weave all the rays
of your eyes into wreathes
We will collect the grain
of your blessed speech in baskets

From those rays the light of love
The light of love, holy and imperishable
Will catch fire in the universe
Call us unto you!

We will spread the seed
Of your words in a benevolent ring
And love for everyone, a great wonder,
Will flower anew in the fields

You are a teacher, wise in life
A friend to the meek and a father
Pride and glory of all the fatherland

You are a wondrous crown of the world.
(Гриневская)

Admirers of Tolstoy throughout the world were in fact being urged to join this chorus to sing his praises. A Los Angeles monthly entitled *Fellowship*, devoted to "religion without superstition," compared Tolstoy to St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, and Buddha, and cited his anniversary as the first time in human history that the world would unite in celebrating the birthday of one man. "The celebration of Tolstoy's eightieth birthday, by artists and literary men, by reformers and statesmen, and by men of the world, has a greater significance, and holds a greater promise for the future progress of humanity, than the sailing of any fleet, the outcome of any local election, or the triumph or decline of any church, because it is the race's tribute to a man of principle; and men of principle are the world's ultimate redeemers."²³

The Church again tried to limit these attentions, instructing clergy to discourage their parishioners from participating in the anniversary celebrations and issuing a statement urging Orthodox believers to boycott the event. Again articles and pamphlets were produced to counter the widespread publicity in favor of Tolstoy.²⁴ Anxiety over Tolstoy's influence was so high that a local censor seized an issue of the conservative Kharkov weekly *Друг народа* because it reprinted a *Колокол* attack on Tolstoy in which his beliefs were elaborated too extensively (Гомон 133-134).²⁵ In another misstep, a scandal arose over reports that Ioann of Kronshtadt (evidently feeling that eighty birthdays were enough for Tolstoy) had composed a prayer asking the Heavenly Father to rid the earth of the Yasnaya Polyana heretic and his followers (Ковалев 348).

The Church also made benevolent gestures of "paternal" concern for Tolstoy throughout the period of their estrangement; emissaries were often sent to the Moscow and Yasnaya Polyana homes of the "wayward son" with undisguised agendas. Dmitrii Troitskii, a priest in the Tula prison, visited Yasnaya Polyana in 1897 and thereafter took it upon himself, with the blessing of the Tula Bishop Pitirim, to serve as Tolstoy's spiritual advisor. These missionary efforts continued to the end of Tolstoy's life, but two sets of letters between Troitskii and Tolstoy from October of

1910 show little evidence of progress. Tolstoy's second answer to Troitskii, written just five days before he left home, included a passionate resistance to these overtures.²⁶ The previous year, after a visit by the above-mentioned Parfenii, Tolstoy indicated in his diary a particular sensitivity to at least one of the purposes of these visits:

It is especially unpleasant that he asked to be informed when I was dying. If only they don't think up something along the lines of persuading people that I 'repented' before dying. And for this reason I pronounce, and, it seems, I am repeating, that *to return to the Church, to receive communion before dying I cannot do, just the same as I cannot before dying speak obscene words or look at obscene pictures, and thus everything that will be said about my deathbed repentance and confession is a lie.*

I say this because there are people for whom, according to their religious understanding, confession is some sort of religious act, i.e., a striving toward God; for me any such outward activity, like confession, would be a renunciation of the spirit, of goodness, of the teaching of Christ, and of God.²⁷

Tolstoy had clarified these feelings before. He had said in 1901 that there could be no discussion of his "reconciliation" with the Church, the very legitimacy of which he did not recognize.²⁸ Sergei L'vovich recalls his father suggesting that they ask him in his last moments whether he considered his faith to be true; if he could no longer answer with words, he would nod his head (С. Л. Толстой 211). This disposition is corroborated by Ivan Nazhivin, who writes that a month before his death Tolstoy told him: "I would sooner give the bodies of my children and loved ones to be ravaged by hungry dogs than to summon some sort of special people to perform a religious ritual over their bodies" (Наживин 78).

II. The Events of 1910

In spite of such statements, when Tolstoy left his home and appeared at the monasteries of Optina and Shamordino in fall of 1910, the Church found renewed hope for reconciliation. When Tolstoy's stay at the two monasteries ended abruptly after less than three days, the Church endeavored to prove that he had wanted to

stay longer, but had been hurried away by enemies of the faith. Reports from the monasteries offered some support for this effort: Archimandrite Ksenofont of Optina reported that upon his arrival Tolstoy had asked if it wasn't unpleasant to the caretaker of the monastery's lodgings to admit one who had been excommunicated from the Church and later had inquired about the elders, asking if the elder Iosif was receiving visitors. The next day a mysterious young man had arrived and had spent a long time with Tolstoy writing something in his cell. (This latter figure was P. A. Sergeenko, whose appearance at this juncture would prove a key piece of evidence in the Church's version of events—he would be portrayed as an agent of Chertkov, sent to roust Tolstoy from the enemy camp.) The Abbess Ekaterina of Shamordino reported on Tolstoy's interest in renting a nearby hut and on his sudden departure, apparently under the influence of letters brought by his daughter Aleksandra L'vovna.²⁹

These reports were forwarded to the Synod in Petersburg, which used them to organize its subsequent maneuvers around Tolstoy's deathbed. Metropolitan Antonii instructed Bishop Veniamin to send father Iosif to Astapovo "to offer the Count a spiritual meeting and religious consolation with the goal of his reconciliation with the Church..." (*Дело* 405). When Iosif, about whom Tolstoy had inquired at Optina (and with whom he had previously discussed spiritual matters), was unable to make the journey, another monk, Varsonofii, was sent in his place.³⁰ Varsonofii was given instructions to exploit every possibility to meet with Tolstoy and bring about his reconciliation with the Church. This plot was abetted by the Ministry of Interior, as Petr Stolypin sent a special agent with orders to work to facilitate this process, telling him that the Tsar himself very much wanted Tolstoy to die at peace with the Church.³¹

Varsonofii arrived at the station with another monk, Panteleimon, only to find that Tolstoy's quarters were off limits to them. Aleksandra L'vovna refused to inform her father of their arrival or to meet with Varsonofii herself.³² He appealed to one of the doctors, Nikitin, who told him that the physicians had decided unanimously that no outsiders should be allowed into Tolstoy's quarters, as any disturbance might critically worsen his condition. The best Var-

sonofii could do was to elicit a promise from Andrei L'vovich, the best ally of the Church among the Tolstoy children, to help him receive an audience. As Varsonofii explained in his report, he remained at the station, "twenty steps" from Tolstoy's quarters, ready to come to him at any moment.

He was never granted this opportunity however, nor was Bishop Kiril of Tambov, who was given a special train to Astapovo and arrived on November 5, nor Bishop Parfenii of Tula, who like Varsonofii was commissioned by Antonii and Lukianov, but arrived only on the November 7, several hours after Tolstoy's death. When Varsonofii was refused access, the Synod pinned its hopes on Parfenii, who was himself a member of the Synod, and who had reported two years earlier that Tolstoy appeared to be undergoing a spiritual transition that was bringing him closer to the Church. When he learned that he had arrived too late, Parfenii fulfilled his other commission—to determine if there were any indications of repentance that might allow the Church to give Tolstoy a Christian burial. He met with Andrei L'vovich, who had introduced himself to Parfenii two years earlier as the only Orthodox believer in the family, and who was seen as the most likely to provide the sort of information the Synod wanted.³³ Andrei reported, however, that there were no signs that his father had wanted to reconcile with the Church, and that the family had decided against an Orthodox funeral.³⁴ (The latter came as a surprise to Parfenii, who had information suggesting that Sofia Andreevna and the Tolstoy sons were sympathetic to the Church's designs. In his long report to the Synod he related how Sofia Andreevna had recently asked the local priest, Tikhon Kudriavtsev, to bless the house and sprinkle it with holy water to rid it of the spirit of Tolstoy's disciple, Chertkov.) Before leaving Astapovo, Parfenii declined to perform services for Tolstoy at the local Church—the first enactment of what would be a ritual refusal across Russia.

Back in Petersburg, officials had been poised to accept any sign whatsoever of contrition as sufficient to reinstate Tolstoy in the national Church. *Russkie vedomosti* reported on November 6 that Stolypin was pushing for retraction of the excommunication and that the Synod was doing everything it could to make this possible. But though they had fashioned a collection of evidence that Tolstoy was changing his orienta-

tion toward Orthodoxy, none of it proved substantial enough for their purposes. They met for three hours on the evening of November 7, and although some members were in favor of re-communication, as were the Council of Ministers and Lukianov, they stood in the minority (*Последние* 95-99).³⁵ Though they wished to make some gesture of reconciliation, the Synod found no basis for this in the actions of the deceased or the will of the family, and finally decided to prohibit all services for Tolstoy.³⁶

The Church thus relinquished its authority over Tolstoy's burial rites in what was to be a highly symbolic national funeral. They were able to exercise only a negative authority—in the prohibition of services, censorship of public pronouncements, and isolation of the deceased heretic from the public. On these counts the government again offered its services: Tolstoy's body was transported in a freight car on a heavily guarded train, and transportation to the funeral, held at Yasnaya Polyana just two days after his death, was limited to a few trains coming from Moscow. Other public commemorations of the event were strictly prohibited, not only by the Church, but by the state police as well. The Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered that announcements of religious services in papers should receive police clearance to ensure that they were not used as a ruse for “anti-government demonstrations.”³⁷

The Church, meanwhile, continued to fashion its own story of Tolstoy's last days based on detailed accounts of his visit to Optina and Shamordino and the report of Bishop Parfenii from Astapovo.³⁸ While the full extent of these efforts was only revealed during the Soviet era, the Church intentionally revealed some its efforts to the public at the time. The newspapers were informed of the deliberations of the Council of Ministers and Holy Synod, and reported on telegrams sent to Astapovo from the Bishop of Ryazan and Princess Kurakin urging Tolstoy to repent (“Vecherniaia”). The newspapers likewise carried Metropolitan Antonii's dramatic appeal to Tolstoy at Astapovo:

From the very first moment of your break with the Church I have prayed and do pray unceasingly that the Lord will return you to the Church. It may

be that He will soon call you to His judgment, and I beseech you now [as you are sick] to make your peace with the Church and with the Orthodox Russian people. May the Lord bless and keep you.—Metropolitan Antonii.³⁹

They also reported that Metropolitan Antonii cried when he learned of Tolstoy's passing.

While these stories may have been leaked to the press to soften the image of the Church, they fit into a larger pattern of ambivalence. Newspaper interviews with Orthodox clergy reveal a great deal of confusion and uncertainty. Some had hastened to welcome a repenting Tolstoy, whose return could bring, as Archbishop Arsenii of Novogorod admitted in an interview with a Moscow reporter, tremendous benefit to the Church (“Архиепископ Арсений”). Most took more cautious positions. One priest commented that if Tolstoy was indeed returning to the Church, then it was a joy for Orthodox faithful to see this “great, wondrous work” performed by a merciful God; if, however, Tolstoy was simply fleeing his family situation, then these circumstances proved that the famous writer had lost his reason, which would explain his “abnormal, rash outbursts toward everything sacred” (“О графе”).

It happened that the Church's vision of a “great, wondrous work” was not being carried out. The mourning of Tolstoy became another un-Orthodox spectacle, as the traditional rites of the Church were appropriated and given new meaning. First was the viewing of the body in the home of Ozolin, who, as a Lutheran, had no traditional Orthodox icons or candles (Максаков 353). Orations were performed not by priests, but by young students, who led crowds all over Russia in singing “Eternal Memory,” a song from the Orthodox funeral ceremony that was strictly prohibited for non-believers. “Civil *panikhidi*” were held in theaters and movie-houses, where crowds stood in demonstration of their respect for the deceased and demanded cancellation of performances. When the Church refused to perform services for its great enemy, the public simply improvised their own, demonstrating that their claim on these sacred rites transcended their faith in Orthodoxy.

In the process of these transformations, the Church was recast not as an agent of God's mercy upon the dead, but instead as a vengeful, earthly body, administering sacred rites according to its own political will. Thus in many of the Tolstoy ceremonies the Synod's decision to obstruct the process of mourning became a focal point for anti-Church sentiment. At a Petersburg University gathering on November 8, one speaker referred to the "holy fathers" who had excommunicated Tolstoy with "blood-stained hands" (*Литературное* 338). The next day, defiant students packed the Armenian Church, which had agreed to perform services for Tolstoy, and later that day demonstrators gathered in the Alexander Garden, across from the offices of the Synod.

The public insistently assigned to Tolstoy sacred space that the Church had denied him and thus, in essence, had itself abandoned. After the funeral, this process continued as the small mound in the woods of Yasnaya Polyana became a national shrine. The papers reported on daily gatherings at the grave, which were punctuated by practices traditional to Christian relic veneration. University students gathered at the grave singing "Eternal Memory" and reading from Tolstoy's *Circle of Reading* (a spiritual anthology that here stood in the place of traditional Orthodox prayer books). A Greek pilgrim gathered some soil and asked the estate steward to give him a stamp verifying that the earth was from Tolstoy's grave ("К кончине") Newspapers also reported rumors that the grave was harboring supernatural forces: a tall bearded man had appeared suddenly from the dark and fallen to his knees at the grave, weeping and praying for a long time; on another night a small, wrinkled old woman flew down, and when a watchman shot at her, she just laughed and flew away.

The convergence of witch and pilgrim upon the grave in the woods of Yasnaya Polyana suggests the blend of Christian and folk belief that played upon the popular imagination surrounding Tolstoy's death. The grave itself, a simple mound at the end of a wooded alley with no cross or other marker, stimulated this imagination. It is situated where, Tolstoy's brother had told him as a child, a magical green stick was buried; if found, the stick would bring human happiness. Even as his burial eschewed Christian practice, the folkloric utopia that inspired it betokened a vision of human

redemption to which the Church still wished to lay claim. The lone grave is suggestive of the enigma that is buried there—a writer estranged from his national Church, but close to his people and his native land.

The Church itself demonstrated a degree of "dual-faith" regarding Tolstoy. On the day of Tolstoy's funeral, the newspaper *Rech'* carried a series of articles showing that Christian sympathies were in fact divided. One interview with a high-ranking informant

ЛЕГЕНДЫ О МОГИЛЬ ТОЛСТОГО.

Въ окрестностяхъ Ясной Поляны все настояще и настойчиве начинаютъ шире распространять слухи о необычайныхъ явленіяхъ, происходящихъ будто бы на могилѣ Льва Николаевича. Такъ, рассказываютъ, что однажды ночью неожиданно изъ тьмы явился на могилу высокій старецъ съ большой бородой. Стражникъ интуитъ отступилъ востыль на мѣстѣ. Старецъ упалъ на могилу на колѣни и долго рыдая молился. Потомъ онъ всталъ, и, обратившись къ стражнику со словами: «не бойся, я ничего худого не сделаю», исчезъ.

Въ другой разъ на могилу ночью сверху прилетѣла маленькая сморщенная старушка и сѣла на могилу. Стражникъ выстрѣлилъ изъ ружья. Старушка тихо засмѣялась и улетѣла. Среди крестьянъ все упорнѣе и упорнѣе распространяется легенда, что Левъ Николаевичъ живъ и что вмѣсто него похороненъ другой старецъ.

(Одесские новости, 19 December 1910.)

revealed that some in the Church felt that it was a mistake to excommunicate Tolstoy, who was rightly called the conscience of the world. Church leaders had dealt too formally with Tolstoy, who deserved the same sort of liberal understanding that had been accorded St. Francis of Assisi in his time (G—t') An Orthodox priest wrote a letter to the editors urging the Church to forgive Tolstoy, just as Christ had been forgiving toward his tormentors.⁴⁰ A longer article also appeared by the Old-Believer Bishop Mikhail, who presented an exalted description of Tolstoy's struggle to renew the Christian faith, and argued that Tolstoy was guilty of nothing except, perhaps, being blinded by love. The Church, Mikhail argued, needed dissent in order to grow and develop, and Tolstoy had re-legitimized the faith for people who could not believe in the traditional manner (Михайл). Even in Kharkov, whose Archbishop Amvrosii had been a primary

instigator in the excommunication, a priest argued in a local newspaper that Tolstoy was not expelled from the Church (because he was not anathematized), but had instead left of his own volition; refusal to pray for him was the result of a political agenda and revealed a lack of true understanding of the relation of the Church to “the fallen” (СВЯЩЕННИК И. Л.).⁴¹

If Church officials were liberal on any count, it was in their generous attention to the matter of Tolstoy's visits to Optina and Shamordino, which they viewed as an attempt to return to “the bosom of Orthodoxy.” The Tolstoyans were adamant that Tolstoy had gone to the monasteries only to visit his sister, and that if he did intend to spend time there it was not so that he could take monastic vows. Even the anarchist Petr Kropotkin, far away in England, could discern this, and wrote a letter to the London *Times* to clarify reports that Tolstoy had considered renting a hut near Optina; he explained the Russian tradition of secular communities surrounding monasteries and offered his opinion that it was impossible that Tolstoy would so suddenly and radically renounce beliefs he had held for thirty years.⁴² The renunciation that was so improbable for Kropotkin nonetheless figured repeatedly in the narratives of the Church, which are equal in variety and interpretive energy to those of the Tolstoyans.

This was particularly true of the reactionary wing of the Church, who told dramatic tales featuring Tolstoy as a spiritual fugitive who fails in his “escape” and attempted return to the Church. On November 4, *Kolokol* carried a story entitled “Thou Hast Conquered, Galilean!” describing Tolstoy as a god-forsaken apostate unable to find refuge for his troubled soul. According to their account, he was spooked from Yasnaya Polyana by a dream and fled to Optina, seeking comfort under the wing of the Church that he had so vainly profaned. Tolstoy was not prepared, however, for the ascetic life, as his much-publicized ascetic tendencies in his later years had been empty affectations (“simply the amusements of a rich landowner”). Thus after traveling just a short distance in the rain he had already fallen mortally ill and would end like Julian the Apostate, vanquished by Christ (“Ты победил”). Another *Kolokol* piece (“From Whom Was He Running?”), its author claiming to “see through” the current publicity, described Tolstoy in

“flight” from the “demonic influence” and “spiritual captivity” of the Tolstoyans, who wished to prevent his return to the Church (“От коро”).⁴³ A similar story in the Black Hundreds newspaper *Ruskaia Zemlia* entitled “What Was He Running From?” claimed that reports of Tolstoy's calm death were not true, as an eyewitness from Astapovo had informed them that many who visited Tolstoy's body as it lay in state at Astapovo had been troubled by the look of horror and suffering in his face. Decrying the lack of Christian rituals that might have assuaged this suffering, the author tendentiously concluded, “God preserve anyone from dying like that,” a plea that offered less sympathy than judgment (Петр).⁴⁴

One can detect a certain pleasure in these accounts of Tolstoy's “cruel end,” for they confirm the authority of Christianity over the Tolstoyan life narrative. I.K. Sur'skii describes how Ioann of Kronshtadt predicted such a demise for Tolstoy, and offers a fantastic version of the manner in which this vision had proven prophetic. Writing from outside the country and thereby relying on second-hand information, Sur'skii (perhaps unintentionally) muddles the facts a great deal, while adding his own spurious details: hounded by visions of demons, a contrite Tolstoy comes to Optina monastery, intending to spend his last days there, only to be “caught” by his daughter and the family doctor, who succeed in drugging him and whisking him away by night. Worse still, the dose of tranquilizer is too strong for the declining Tolstoy and induces his fatal illness. Around this time a monk on Valaam Island reports seeing a vision of Tolstoy running toward one of the churches there, being chased by a pack of devils who hound him into a chasm in the surrounding cliffs (Сурский 170).

Surskii's remarkable tale, though perhaps not typical of the Church's Tolstoy lore, expresses in a rather naked metaphor what many Orthodox clerics worked to do in the wake of Tolstoy's death. They wished to show that death as a downfall, a horrid spectacle from which Christians would avert their eyes. Works such as the 1911 anthology *The True Face of Lev Tolstoy* suggested an unmasking that would reveal the horror beneath what, by popular account, was a story of triumph (Ледовский). Contributors to the collection blamed the “pagan-anarchist” Tolstoy for the suffering of his followers, who had been imprisoned, lashed with

knouts, hanged, and exiled. An Ioann of Kronshtadt piece warned: "This is a roaring Leo [lion], looking for someone to devour." The concluding piece, "The True Representation of the Death of Tolstoy," drew explicit attention to the "horror" of Astapovo, which some of Tolstoy's admirers had dared call his Calvary. The author was willing to allow the "treacherous" Jews to place Tolstoy on Golgotha, but not upon the central cross:

Look, you insane Jews, at our contemporary rational world Golgotha and the human disgrace that surrounds it and, as much as you are able, look more honestly: maybe you will see that your idol the Judas Tolstoy endured a great deal of suffering and torment in his last week and died as it turns out on the left side of Christ the Savior and His Holy Church.⁴⁵

This "world Golgotha," such arguments suggested, was simply a repercussion of the spiritual violence that Tolstoy visited upon his readers.⁴⁶ A 1911 tract published by Skvortsov and *Kolokol* depicted Tolstoy as a prideful, inveterate man who dropped out of school to lead a dissolute life of gambling and carousing, then got married and came to his senses a bit, only to turn in his later years against everything sacred in the Christian and social order. The outcome of this spiritual anarchy was predictable: in his last days, overcome with hatred for his family and surroundings, Tolstoy ran from his home "as if he wanted to repent, but God gave him over into the hands of the very people he had corrupted, and they didn't allow him to repent, and the 'impudent profaner' died a refugee under a stranger's roof, like the hateful Cain, after the murder of Abel, having run from his own land and people..." (Варжанский). That Tolstoy's ideas were inherently alien to the Russian people was illustrated by his own estrangement from his home and heritage.⁴⁷

The propaganda issued by leading institutions of the Church was often no less strident and took up the same themes of flight and alienation. The revered Trinity Monastery of Sergiev-Posad issued a book on Tolstoy's death by Bishop Nikon, who had drawn notice for his venomous contributions to *Kolokol* and *Russkaia znamia* (Никон). Nikon directed colorful invectives toward various enemies in the Tolstoy camp, from Prince Mescherskii (who was sharply

critical of Nikon's treatment of Tolstoy) to the smokers at Tolstoy's funeral: "A cinematographer immortalized the smoke of the people smoking cigarettes at the grave of the deceased—how wonderful is prayer, the singing of 'Eternal Memory,' with cigarettes in your lips!" It was good, Nikon continued, that the Church had closed its doors to the likes of these... (Никон 25). A pamphlet published and "blessed" by the Kiev-Caves Monastery entitled "Who Was Lev Tolstoy?" offered scarcely more Christian charity, concluding that Tolstoy was "the most evil enemy of the Church of Christ, a shameless blasphemer, an enemy of Christ our Savior and a lying infidel" («Кто такой 4).

As they defined where Tolstoy "was really going," who he "really was," and what was "really the truth," the shrill voice of the Church often stood in stark contrast to that of the secular press, which answered with such benign publications as the Moscow collection *Who Was Tolstoy (According to the Best Opinions in the Russian Press)* (Kem).⁴⁸ At times the Church itself found a more moderate tone. A Riazan pamphlet entitled *Where Is the Truth? (On the Current Question of L.N. Tolstoy)* set forth the basic reconciliation story but produced more substantial evidence and offered a more forgiving conclusion. Lamenting that Russia's great genius was isolated from his Church, the authors suggested that Tolstoy was something of a victim of the troubled times that he had helped to create ("Где"). In a November 22 lecture on Tolstoy, Metropolitan Antonii adopted a similar strategy. Antonii viewed Tolstoy as a "Russian national philosophical writer" whose "theoretical cosmopolitanism contradicted the national spirit of his philosophical sensibility."⁴⁹ Antonii argued that the very foundations of Tolstoy's thinking were essentially alien to the Russian people. Though he had attracted a following in his native land, Tolstoy was in essence a false prophet, and the national crisis provoked by his death was the result of the contradictory nature of his legacy. Plagued by spiritual pride, Tolstoy could not resolve these contradictions; this was why he lacked moral tranquility and spiritual calmness, and why he could lead his literary heroes (such as Levin and Nekhliudov) *toward*, but not *to*, moral rebirth. Nor could Tolstoy achieve that goal: "Tolstoy himself, standing at death's door, stood only at the doors of the teachers of the repentance of the holy Bible, but could not go in and died without

making peace with God" (АНТОНИЙ 267). This unresolved spiritual crisis explained too the scenes following his death—the funeral demonstrations that confused mourning with militancy and were based on misunderstanding of Tolstoy's teachings. Quoting Tolstoy himself, who said that only two of every hundred readers of his novels had read his philosophical works, Antonii argued that Tolstoy's last narrative was being read by people ill-equipped to interpret it (АНТОНИЙ 268).

The Church, on the other hand, was quite prepared to take "proper" measure of Tolstoy on his day of reckoning. The January 1911 issue of *Missionerskoe obozrenie* took up this agenda explicitly in Nikolai Chepurin's "The Life and Deeds of Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy Judged According to His Teachings." Chepurin gave a long account of the contradictions in Tolstoy's teachings and practice and suggested that writers should not urge others to do things that they themselves could not, or did not, do (Чепурин).⁵⁰ From this perspective Tolstoyanism was spiritually *unviable*, and its legacy was a two-fold mortality: the excommunicated Tolstoy would be denied eternal salvation, and his teaching would prove equally perishable. *Missionerskoe obozrenie* continued to drive this message home in the months following Tolstoy's death. A report on sectarianism observed that Tolstoy's followers had not shown any special activity in the wake of his death, which was attributed to these same contradictions and to doubts raised by Tolstoy's flight to the monasteries and subsequent "tragic" death ("Сектанство"). Tolstoy's lack of faith in an afterlife, they argued, undermined his appeal, for belief in life beyond the grave was the most important article of faith for the people. In the April issue, a piece by an anonymous priest was entitled "Where Did He Arrive?" a question that was answered by a pathetic description of Tolstoy's homely, lonely grave (Православный 975-979).⁵¹ Tolstoy, the author argued, had finally understood the emptiness of his life and illegitimacy of his ideas, only to be denied refuge in Optina by his own followers.

Conclusion

As they equated Tolstoy's death with his ideas, Orthodox interpreters joined their secular counterparts in investing it with parabolic meaning. Even as they

worked to deconstruct the notion of Tolstoyan apotheosis, they effectively helped to shape the story of Tolstoy's death into a national narrative. For the Orthodox, Tolstoy found no salvation: his grave was a dead end, where he and his ideas would be forgotten. A vast outpouring of elegiac remembrance showed, however, that much of the public had no interest in such a renunciation of Tolstoy's talents. They saw more value in a narrative of triumph, and even if it was not clear what Tolstoy had taken with him as he left this life, they did not wish to divest that obscure legacy of some great meaning. For those sympathetic to Tolstoy's morality, his death itself could provide this meaning: it could be seen as a moment of apotheosis, toward which he walked with stoic and knowing grace. Astapovo was a destination reached, his death the closure that was sought as he left his home. For the Church, the last episode in Tolstoy's life could only be incorporated into less compelling narratives—of unreformed and damnable godlessness, or of a repentant sinner denied his chance to reconcile with God. While some indeed chose the former alternative, most found that the second was more compatible to public sympathies, and set about, with self-interested imagination enlivened by his enigmatic visits to its monasteries, to show that Tolstoy's final journey was a return to the Church. Tolstoy's pilgrimage became flight, and its terminus a sudden, irrevocable descent. In some cases it was imagined that this descent was mediated by prayers of repentance, but often it was set forth in all its imaginable horror. While Tolstoy supporters spoke of the universality of his ideas and referred to him as an "Everyman," the Church worked to singularize and isolate him, and to limit the scope of collective mourning. They rendered him as an orphan in death—not belonging to the family of the Church, not ritually joined to their number, but instead carried aloft at his funeral by a confused mass of political ne'er-do-wells and social misfits stimulated by his writing to view the event as a political opportunity.

An advantage to this story was that it placed Tolstoy in the role of victim, so that the Church could liminally join in the national mourning. Many who counted themselves among the Orthodox faithful were kindly disposed toward Tolstoy the man, regardless of what they thought of his religious ideas. A. Stolypin, writing in *Novoe vremia* two days after the funeral,

described the desire to resolve the tension between these two impulses: “I have witnessed how much people are seeking a way out, how unanimous they are in doing any little thing that might lead to a reconciliation of their conscience, which is torn between obedience to the Church and love for Tolstoy’s soul” (Столыпин).⁵² Sergei Bulgakov wrote of a spiritual enlightenment transcending the differences that Tolstoy had with the Church, with which he was united by “invisible, subterranean ties” (Булгаков 219). As public rituals marking Tolstoy’s death likewise transcended these differences, it was evident that the writer and his readers were connected by similar ties. What the Church construed as heterodoxy were in fact powerfully binding cultural paradigms, structuring ideas and symbols over which its authority was diminishing. Tolstoy’s death illustrated that spiritual narratives did not need to be Orthodox in order to resonate deeply with Russian society. The Church resisted this appropriation of its symbolic language but could do little to wrest it from the hands of its “enemies,” many of whom would some few years later adapt it to the needs of the Revolution. This explains why they wanted so desperately to be able to tell that story of Tolstoy’s return that would affirm their place in Russian society.

P.A. Sergeenko has argued that Tolstoy traveled to Optina and Shamordino neither to take up residence nearby nor to confide in his sister, but instead to gather material for literary projects. Four days before he left home he had written in his diary an idea for a story about a priest who was “converted” by someone whom he was trying to convert. The idea was inspired by Troitskii, the local priest who had been working so hard to bring Tolstoy back into the fold, and with whom Tolstoy was corresponding at the time. Two days later he had a dream about a romance between Dostoevsky’s Grushenka (from *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he was reading) and the critic Nikolai Strakhov; he wrote Chertkov the next day about his intention to develop the dream into a story, and on the first night after his departure, already at Optina, he again wrote of this project (P.S.S. 82: 216). P.A. Sergeenko appeared there the next morning to bring news of what had transpired at Yasnaya Polyana after Tolstoy’s departure. Sergeenko’s report upset Tolstoy greatly, and he went for a walk, from which he re-

turned still in a gloomy mood. When Sergeenko came to Tolstoy’s room a bit later, he found Tolstoy writing down notes on a piece of paper, which Sergeenko later read. On the paper was written a list of things to be brought from home and a list of four subjects for fictional works (А Сергеевко 256-257).

Included in the list were the Grushenka–Strakhov romance and the Troitskii story—“The Priest, Converted by the One Who Was to Be Converted.” Thus Tolstoy, as he wandered the environs of Optina, was as convinced of the changeability of his antagonists as the Church was of its great opponent. He also still believed in the power of narrative to perform this action by aesthetic, rather than polemical, means. So too did the last episode of his life carry on its work by aesthetic example; as zealous Orthodox interpreters tried to make the “un-converter” into the reconverted, they found that their story had less appeal than its Tolstoyan variant. The reverence with which Sergeenko recalls looking at the list of literary themes reveals the tremendous charisma of Tolstoy as narrative authority: what tremendous life force must still exist in Tolstoy, Sergeenko remembers thinking, if Tolstoy could be concerned with literary work in the midst of his spiritual and personal crisis. In the story of Tolstoy’s last days, that life force and the narratives that it engendered but did not finish, compelled others to join in the collective project of writing a story that celebrated not God, but man. Even as they thought themselves waging war over the Russian faith, the Tolstoyan and Orthodox faithful who told and retold the Tolstoyan story were themselves, perhaps not even unknowingly, undergoing this conversion.

Notes

1. “Isn’t it more accurate to suggest that the great sinner, before breathing his last, instinctively positioned his fingers so as to make the sign of the cross, but his weakened arm did not have the strength to rise from his blanket and could only move reflexively there. We will comfort ourselves with the thought that the last wish of the dying Tolstoy was to cross himself. We will think that Tolstoy, not managing to formally make peace with the Church, entered eternity having made peace in his soul with Christ” (“Газетный”).
2. Tolstoy was particularly interested in the example of Aleksander I, who according to legend had feigned his

death and lived his last days in Siberia as the monk Fyodor Kuzmich. Tolstoy actually wrote his own narrative of the story, "The Posthumous Notes of Fedor Kuzmich," which is relevant to the discussion here, but which I will cover at some length in a forthcoming work.

3. The newspapers drew particular attention to the "simple folk" making this connection ("Построй").

4. For more detail see Nickell and Kosto.

5. The first text, completed in 1881, was not published in Russia until 1908—and not completely until in the jubilee edition. Another version of the text, excluding the commentary and the parallel Russian and Greek texts upon which Tolstoy based his version, was published under the title *Kratkoe izlozhenie Evangelia*.

6. Tolstoy viewed this work as a moral duty. (See his preface to the *Brief Account of the Gospels*.) Years later he described this duty to a Japanese student: "Religion is the rational revelation and recognition of all life. Its essence is the same in all religions. The authority of true religion depends not on its miracles, but only on the inner justification of the conscience. To destroy all superstition and propound the one rational religion is the greatest and the main obligation of every person" (Тамура 342).

7. This challenge spread to the core of the Church: on August 25, 1910, for instance, the monk Gamaliil wrote to Tolstoy to complain of corruption in his monastery and to solicit Tolstoy's spiritual guidance. Several months later, a group of peasants wrote Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy that they were praying for their drunken priest, who had refused their request to perform funeral services for Tolstoy (С. Л. Толстой 270).

8. An article entitled "Who Was Jesus Christ? (Against the Tolstoyans)" takes up this task explicitly, admitting that Tolstoy had presented the most comprehensive challenge to the notion of the divinity of Christ (Введенский 243).

9. Tolstoy did not create this persona (he adapted it from numerous sources from antiquity to contemporary figures such as William Lloyd Garrison and Adin Ballou), but he was the first person in the modern age to develop it into a major socio-political force. Gandhi would later play a similar role in India after having read Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov likewise adopted this persona in Soviet Russia.

10. Pobedonostsev felt that Tolstoy's teaching could have a debilitating effect not only on the Church, but also on the larger body politic. He remarked in the late 1890s that Tolstoy's influence had even weakened the moral fiber of the other sects in Russia.

11. Ioann of Kronshtadt warned Prince Dmitrii Khilkov, one of the Tolstoyans involved in the propagandizing at Korenni, that he and Tolstoy would suffer "retribution, the likes of which has never before been prepared for a sinner" (Сергеевко 259-260). Ioann later assisted Khilkov's mother in taking custody of her son's children and baptizing them in the Orthodox Church (Бирюков 345-348). Many other Tolstoyans were in fact imprisoned or exiled for their part in distributing his literature or propagating his ideas.

12. This ritual marked the transfer of the Kursk-Root icon of the "Mother of God of the Sign" between the local monastery and the city of Kursk; it is depicted in a well-known painting by Repin, *Крестный ход в Курской губернии*.

13. Despite such warnings, the famine relief program served thousands. One peasant said at the time that if the Lord was like his priests, and the Antichrist like Tolstoy, he would choose the latter, to whom he was sending his starving children for their own "bread of life" (Stadling & Reason 58-59).

14. Nikanor's book first appeared in 1887; by the third edition (1894) the text had been expanded to contain eight lengthy orations totaling over 200 pages.

15. Another influential ecclesiaste, T.I. Butkevich, echoed these sentiments in an 1891 sermon in Kharkov. He ended with an ominous warning: "But what awaits our fatherland if this evil is not cut off today, but spreads out like the sea across the broad expanses of Russia? How much harm will it bring? What havoc will it wreak? But let this not be! Our Blessed Lord is our hope that this evil will be cut down in good time." The sermon was dedicated to the 10-year anniversary of the ascension of Alexander III to the throne. (The Church's conflict with Tolstoy was always a political matter.) Butkevich also published a series of articles against Tolstoy in the Kharkov journal *Vera i razum*, which actively supported the Church's anti-Tolstoy campaign (Гомон 128).

16. Antonii Khrapovitskii, then rector of the Moscow Theological Seminary but subsequently the metropolitan who signed Tolstoy's excommunication in 1901, told

Tolstoy's wife that the metropolitan had wanted to expel Tolstoy from the Church at the time of the famine relief campaign. Already in 1888, however, Archbishop Nikanor had written N.Ia. Grot that the Synod was seriously considering anathematizing Tolstoy (Позойский 81).

17. *Moskovskie vedomosti* printed a scathing commentary, calling Tolstoy's ideas "unbridled socialism." The newspaper retranslated sections of the article back into Russian, recasting Tolstoy's words according to its own tendentious designs. The result was a significant scandal, and other newspapers were forbidden to reprint any text from the article.

18. Skvortsov later defended Pobedonostsev against charges that the excommunication was a personal vendetta, claiming that during Tolstoy's illness Pobedonostsev had expressed tolerance for the performance of Church services for Tolstoy in the case of his death. Moreover, he had written the first draft of the *Poslanie* but had not attended the two Synod sessions when it was edited by the bishops, who changed it considerably ("Печать").

19. V.I. Sreznevskii writes that police archives on public reaction to the excommunication show that most, even if they did not agree with Tolstoy's views, saw the act as something "untimely, unnecessary, stupid and harmful for the strength and fortitude of the Church." Nikolai Lebedev, a legal advisor to the Tsar's cabinet, viewed the move as an unfortunate expression of revenge by Pobedonostsev: "Maybe tens of thousands read Tolstoy's forbidden works in Russia, but now hundreds of thousands will read them. Before they didn't understand his [false doctrines], but the Synod underscored them. When he dies Tolstoy will be buried like a martyr, with particular pomp." A.A. Popov, the director of a Kiev preparatory school, concurred: "The excommunication of Count Tolstoy was like shooting at sparrows. The upper classes laugh, and the lower classes don't understand and don't take it into account. In answer to the excommunication Count Tolstoy wrote a will, in which he gives orders to be buried without any Church rites. This will be a pretext for pilgrimages." ("Отражение в русском..." 111-116).

The sheer volume of the Church's anti-Tolstoyan rhetoric attests to the seriousness with which it approached this crisis. Metropolitan Antonii himself contributed extensively (two hundred and fifty pages of his collected works are devoted to exegeses of Tolstoy), but was joined by many

others. A good survey of this literature can be found in *On the Matter of the Defection of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy from the Orthodox Church*, an elaborate compendium offered by *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* as a free supplement for its subscribers (Скворцов). The volume went through three editions, growing to 685 pages in the edition published at the time of Tolstoy's death.

20. The government attempted to forestall public manifestations of sympathy for Tolstoy, prohibiting publication of information regarding his journey, but news managed to spread by word of mouth (Буланже).

21. Perhaps another reason why Sofia Andreevna was denied access to her husband at Astapovo: a letter from the Bishop of Tauride to Pobedonostsev claimed that she herself intended to tell a priest after Tolstoy's death that he had asked for a final confession and communion so that he could receive a Christian burial. The Church was aware of her support and attempted to exploit whatever influence she might have (Позойский 111). The Church's espionage and intrigue continued until the time of Tolstoy's death. Pavel Znamenskii, a priest living near Yasnaya Polyana, made regular reports to the Tula eparchy on the heretic's activities. Another priest, Fedor Glagolev, reported that Tolstoy's brother Sergei had requested the administration of Church rites from his deathbed in 1904 after many years of antagonism toward the Church. Tolstoy had taken part in the Orthodox funeral for his brother, carrying the coffin to the Church—but had not entered the building itself. Sergei Tolstoy's deathbed repentance gave hope to the Church that his brother might also re-enter the church at the last moment...

22. The singing of such a hymn in schools would have troubled the Church a great deal. When a thousand schoolchildren visited Yasnaya Polyana for an afternoon in 1907, the local priest reported his concern that Tolstoy would have a "corrupting" effect on the guests, "undermining their Christian education" (Позойский 114).

23. *Fellowship*, Los Angeles, August, 1908.

24. A Saratov collection, *Concerning the Jubilee of Count Lev Tolstoy*, contained the Synod's instructions and anti-Tolstoyan propaganda, a satirical poem written responding to *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and diatribes against the left-wing and "Jewish" press. This same group published a similar collection in 1910. *Po povodu iubileia grafa L'va Tolstogo*.

(*Sbornik statei, perepechatannyx iz gazety Volga*) (Saratov, 1908).

25. Ioann of Kronshtadt also worried that he had done more harm than good in explaining the Tolstoyan heresy to a group of peasants.

26. Troitskii wrote upon learning of Tolstoy's fainting spell in September. According to Pitirim's successor Parfenii, Troitskii visited Yasnaya twice a year. After a 1908 visit, Tolstoy admitted he had spoken rudely to Troitsky and offended him (Гусев 55-57).

27. Tolstoy's diary entry is from January 21, 1909. The previous day Parfenii had arrived with two priests (and accompanied by police officers), spent the evening, and had a long one-on-one discussion with Tolstoy. News of the meeting spread, and Tolstoy gave an interview to a correspondent from *Russkoe slovo* regarding the content of their discussion. When the *Russkoe slovo* story appeared, Parfenii and Tolstoy exchanged letters regarding its inaccuracy, but agreed not to issue any further statements about it. While Tolstoy writes in his diary of being unhappy with the meeting, Gusev records that Tolstoy had encouraged Parfenii's visit, thanked him for his courage upon leaving, and was pleased by their encounter. (*Два года...*, 242-243).

28. Sophia Andreevna received a letter from Metropolitan Antonii asking her to help make peace between Tolstoy and the Church. Tolstoy's response: "There is no point in speaking of reconciliation. I am dying without animosity or spite. And what is the Church? How can one make peace with an indefinite entity?" (С. Л. Толстой 213).

29. These detailed hour-by-hour reports indicate a certain amount of spying, perhaps motivated by idle curiosity regarding a famous guest, but also suggesting that the importance of these visits was immediately obvious.

30. Iosif sent a telegram to Astapovo on the 4th asking if Tolstoy would still be in the station on the 5th, and if not, where he was going next (*Смерть* 93). Whether Iosif was actually considering coming, or if he sent the telegram on behalf of Varsinofii, is not clear. A telegram from Kolobov to Obolensky reports that Iosif had full power to decide if services could be performed for Tolstoy (*Смерть* 103). Iosif was less cooperative with the Synod than other clerics, and was said to be unwilling to make a report on any personal meeting he might have with Tolstoy (*Последние* 96).

31. One of the Church's emissaries, Archbishop Parfenii of Tula, told the security chief at Astapovo that he had come in response to the personal wishes of the Emperor (Максаков 352). See also the official report of the head of the Railway Police to the Moscow Police Department in the same source (351). Kharlamov worked closely with agents of the railway police, who also knew of Varsonofii's secret mission.

32. Kharlamov's report (like Varsonofii's) describes these efforts in detail (Рябченко 32-37).

33. Andrei L'vovich was repeatedly approached as a potential accomplice for the Church. He had received a position working for Stolypin in Petersburg early that year and served as the inside contact for Stolypin's agent Kharlamov at Astapovo. In spite of his orders to operate in strict secrecy, Kharlamov revealed his identity to Andrei, a trusted ally (Рябченко 33).

34. According to one account, during his visit Tikhon had spoken with Tolstoy's sons (most likely Andrei and Lev, who was visiting from Paris), who were concerned about Chertkov's "almost hypnotic" influence upon their father. They had banished Chertkov from the house and now wished to exorcise his spirit. ("К последним." 293-295). At Astapovo, however, the family was making collective decisions; Andrei reported that his brothers were indifferent to Church services, his sisters were adamantly opposed, and his mother too did not wish to have the services performed against her husband's will.

35. *Rech'* reported that on the 4th Stolypin inquired as to what measures the Church would take in case of Tolstoy's death and what they had learned about his visit to Optina. The Synod met that day without Antonii; present were Lukianov, Flavian of Kiev, Vladimir of Moscow, Tikhon of Yaroslavl, Mikhail of Minsk, and the above-mentioned Parfenii of Tula, who would travel to Astapovo himself as the Synod's emissary. The Council of Ministers was unanimous, including Lukianov, in believing that the excommunication should be rescinded (several members felt that this was necessary for Tolstoy, but also for the good of the country). Only two members of Synod considered this possible, however, and the wishes of the Ministers did not prevail ("Толстой и синод").

36. Metropolitan Antonii told a crowd at a lecture in Zhitomir two weeks later that the Synod had considered allowing Tolstoy to be buried according to the *inovertsy*

ceremony (with the singing of “*Sviaty bozhe*”) even if he had not repented, but decided against it because there was little chance that those surrounding Tolstoy would allow it (Антоний 268). The *inovertsy* ceremony allowed soldiers of other Christian faiths to be buried in a modified service to the accompaniment of the singing of “*Sviatii Bozhe*.” This service for those who had defended the “righteous fatherland” had never been intended for someone like Tolstoy, however. The Church instead followed its own *ukaz* from 1900 prohibiting services for Tolstoy (“Секретный”).

37. The funeral of former Duma President S.A. Muromtsev just one month before showed that the public would perform funeral services without the Church’s sanction. The day that Tolstoy left his home an article in *Russkaia znamia* entitled “Outrage Against the Faith” described how funeral services for Tolstoy had been forbidden by the Church and pointed to the example of Muromtsev’s funeral as a case where a “godless” person was unjustly given Church ceremony. This article, appearing before Tolstoy had even taken ill, reveals the Church’s abiding concern over the handling of Tolstoy’s death (“Надругательство”).

38. The former contain detailed police-like accounts of Tolstoy’s actions and conversations at the monasteries, including reports on when he sent telegrams and who visited him (“К последним ...” 293-295). Parfenii also included copies of the above-mentioned correspondence between Troitskii and Tolstoy. Reports continued to be filed throughout Tolstoy’s last days and after. See also the correspondence of Parfenii and Evdokim with the Tula governor (Секретная).

39. A dispatch of N.E. Efros to his editors at *Rech’* in Petersburg suggests that the reporters in fact learned of the telegram before the family did: “Apparently Antonii’s telegram made a big impression on the family; the Countess, hearing the text from the correspondents, sighed deeply, sorrowfully shook her head, with tears in her eyes.” (Смерть Толстого 98) The decision not to give the telegram to Tolstoy gave the Church evidence to support its conspiracy theories about the group controlling access to Tolstoy’s quarters. Most dispatches of reporters at Astapovo place this decision in Chertkov’s hands (see telegrams 229, 230, 231, 234, and 238 Смерть Толстого); telegram 237, however, describes Chertkov conferring with Aleksandra L’vovna and Dr. Makovitskii about Antonii’s message.

40. Tolstoy was often described as a giant father figure, but here became a wayward son in need of the maternal indulgence of the Church: “Can it be that a mother cannot pray and weep for the loss of a native son, who has turned away from her and not succeeded in making his peace with her?...So let the Orthodox Church, following the testament of our Jesus Christ, forgive our brother, the deceased Lev, and call us to pray for the calming of his sinful soul and to call for the eternal memory and rest of our great brother and her own son” (Квитницкий).

41. Stolypin’s agent Kharlamov revealed that funeral services were in fact performed for Tolstoy in many cities because of confusion over the Church’s position. A number of papers reminded readers that other branches of the Christian faith and other religions were charitably disposed toward Tolstoy. On November 5, *Odesskie novosti* offered comments by Lutheran, Catholic, and Reformed Evangelical ministers, as well as by a rabbi and a mullah; a preface explains that they were unable to get an opinion “for print” of an Orthodox priest—perhaps an oblique reference to Church censorship (“Представители”).

42. Reported in *Rech’* on November 6, 1910.

43. Citing a report in *Rech’* that Chertkov was in control of Tolstoy’s bedside and had prevented transmission of Antonii’s telegram, *Kolokol* asked: “Doesn’t this mean that a certain revolutionary-anarchist clique is holding Tolstoy captive, and that his flight to a monastery was an attempt to free himself from it, but it soon captured its prey?” (“Ор коро”) *Kolokol* also published a letter from the monk Erast describing Tolstoy’s visits to Optina and Shamordino that was picked up by other right-wing papers and became a key document used to support the reconciliation theory. The letter describes Tolstoy’s ecstatic feelings for Optina and his regret that he did not visit the elders for fear that they would not receive him because of his excommunication. It is full of dramatic details of Tolstoy’s remorseful state, describing his various pained facial expressions and a long tearful embrace of his sister at Shamordino (“Граф”).

Erast’s account was undermined by the investigation of *Novoe vremia*’s Aleksei Ksiunin, who interviewed all of the principle witnesses to the visit and found that much of Erast’s account was inaccurate. He reprinted Erast’s report, and then followed it with an edited version based on the corrections of Tolstoy’s sister. Ksiunin’s report largely supported the Church’s version of events, however, and by

moderating the extremes of some accounts, he made the repatriation theory more plausible (Ксюнин). In her interview with Ksiunin, Maria Nikolaevna maintained that her brother was interested in living at Optina but had come there simply to rest and collect his thoughts. Makovitskii has Tolstoy saying "it's good in Shamordino" when they first talk of moving on (Маковитский 4: 408, 411).

44. The author identified another culprit in the un-Christian rituals at Astapovo: "And did you see any peasants? I asked. No, he didn't see any peasants, but he did notice a fair number of Jews at the station."

45. Tolstoy appears on the *levyi*/left side, which not only suggests his political left-handedness, but also resonates with his name, *Lev* in Russian.

46. This ugly piece likens Tolstoy's death to Vera Komisarzhenskaya's, who "also died a black death": she died of smallpox while on tour in Central Asia (Ледовский 45).

47. N. L. Lazarev depicted Tolstoy as an estranging nihilist: "...from the reading of Tolstoy's works a person feels abnormal and always strongly disturbed, and cannot receive calming and quieting of the spirit." In this Tolstoyan world nothing was as it was supposed to be: "According to him the state is not the state, the law is not the law, religion is not religion, Christian mystery is not mystery, Orthodox Church hierarchy is not clergy, marriage is not marriage, family is not family, soldier is not soldier, and many other absurd notions." Could a person find anything proper in Tolstoy's works upon which life could be built? (Лазарев 86-87).

48. Pictures of a grandfatherly Tolstoy with children figure prominently here.

49. Antonii viewed this contradiction as a native tendency seen in many Russian writers but felt that it ran deeper in Tolstoy than in Dostoevsky or Turgenev, who remained profoundly Russian in spirit. Tolstoy's call for "individual rebirth" [*vozhrozhdenie lichnosti*] naturally appealed to the Russian spirit (which rejected German nihilism), but came into conflict with his pantheistic tendencies (Антоний 251).

50. Chepurin was among the many decrying the glorification of Tolstoy by the "Jewish-journalistic clique."

51. Contrary to the Church's claims, the gravesite remains to this day an international place of pilgrimage, where

thousands of admirers of both the author and the moralist come to pay homage.

52. He cites the Tsar's reaction to Tolstoy's death as the true reaction of the people.

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