Patriarch Tikhon Bellavin and the Orthodoxy in America and Revolutionary Russia, 1865-1925, **chapter 2.**

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Dear all: This is a chapter from a biography I am writing on Tikhon (Bellavin), who became patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in November 1917. The book will begin with an introduction to Tikhon's importance, as well as give necessary background about Orthodoxy in Imperial Russia. Chapter 1 discusses his family background and birth (in the small village of Klin in the Pskov province) in the family of a Russian Orthodox priest. This chapter focuses on his education. There is very little direct evidence for the period before his study at the Academy, so I try to make up for the lack by discussing in detail the curriculum of the seminary. The whole of it is put in the context of a broader history of theological education in Russia (perhaps in too much detail). I'm hoping this book will reach a broader audience, so I recount elementary points of Russian history.

Chapter 2: Youth and Education

Very little direct information about Vasilii Bellavin's early life before entering the seminary at the age of nineteen survives, except the dates of his birth and baptism in January 1865, the family move from Klin to Toropets in 1869, and the beginning and end of his elementary school in Toropets, where he studied from 1874 to 1878. He followed the path that was common to sons of parish clergy by studying in the school system set up precisely for them, a system which began with an elementary school for children of the clerical estate and was followed study in the seminary.

One legend that was passed down in émigré circles and written in early accounts of his life is a prophetic dream which Vasilii's father ostensibly had predicting his own fate and those of his sons. The version of the story that is most commonly repeated is that of the émigré priest Fr. Michael Polsky, who recounts it thus: one night Fr. Ioann Bellavin was sleeping in the hayloft

with his three sons, when suddenly he wakes up and awakens them. He tells them that he had a dream of his deceased mother who foretold his own immanent death and pointing to the three sons added that one would be "miserable" (*goriun*) his whole life, one would die young, and the third—Vasilii—would be "great."[1] This dream is repeated by virtually all subsequent biographers and—in one of those moments where biography crosses into hagiography—they always conclude the story by stating that the dream was "fulfilled precisely," though without any attempt to reconcile it to the Bellavin family history.[2] By the time Fr. Ioann Bellavin was approaching his death, however, he was in his seventies, and his two oldest sons had already died (the eldest over a decade before), while Vasilii was an Archimandrite and dean of the Kholm Theological Seminary—in other words, hardly a scenario for a father to be spending the night with his sons in the hayloft.

A different version of the dream has survived. This one was recorded in 1918 by the superior of the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, Archimandrite Kronid (Liubimov), though this version remained in the archives and only came to light in 2000. Kronid's version indicates that the story originates with the Patriarch himself—he presents it as a story that the Patriarch told in circles of those close to him—and that it was passed down orally, though the more familiar version was corrupted with the passage of time. According to Kronid's version, the patriarch stated that he was "still a very young boy" at the time, and there is no mention of the father's impending death. The focus of the dream is entirely different: according to the patriarch, at

[1] Pol'skii, Novye mucheniki, 84.

[2] Vostryshev, 9; Swan 6; Georgii (Danilov), 15; Markova, 9; Polskii is the earliest printed mention of the dream that I have found so far, which is the one that subsequent versions evidently draw upon. Tikhon (Zatekin) is the only contemporary biographer who leaves the dream out; Novikov also concludes that the dream cannot be squared with the details of the Bellavin family (Kolybel, 49-55), including the awkward supposition that Fr. Ioann would tell his children that one was going to die and another would be a loser.

that stage in his life his father was given to periodic drinking bouts, an occupational hazard common to many provincial clergymen in nineteenth-century Russia. After one such drinking binge, he took "all three of us sons" to sleep in the hayloft, and in the dream his deceased mother reprimands him for his drinking as unbecoming for someone with such a sacred calling. Almost as an afterthought, the mother in the dream points to the three boys and states that one will not live long, the middle son will be "pitiful" (*zhalkon'kii*), and the third will be great. The point of the story when Tikhon told it was that the father "gave up his vice" for the rest of his life, while Kronid's main point was to emphasize the complete humility with which the patriarch recounted the story. Kronid's version is more plausible in the context of the Bellavin family history, though here too there are serious problems, as a parenthetical explanation about the middle brother explains that "this brother did not graduate from anywhere and died in America with me"—though Mikhail, who died in America, was the youngest brother and graduated seminary in Kholm when Tikhon was dean there—mistakes it is hard to imagine Tikhon himself making.[3] The incorrect explanatory note, though expressed in the first person, was likely added by Kronid, and the story refers to the three older boys, perhaps even before Mikhail was born, for the oldest, Pavel, indeed died quite young, though we know very little about the middle brother other than that he remained in (or returned to) Toropets. Perhaps the most interesting part of the dream is the way in which it enters into the myth-making about Tikhon the saint, for it figures among hagiographers as a sign that God had destined him to lead the Russian Church from his birth.

[3] OR RGB f. 766, k. 2, d. 5, l. 3; BogSb No. 6, p. 90; *Sovremenniki* 2: 470.

Vasilii Bellavin would have just turned four years old when the family moved to Toropets, so likely he retained few memories of life in the village. Life for the family certainly would have been quite different in Toropets, for most of the inhabitants of the town were urban dwellers rather than peasants. At the same time, Vasilii no doubt frequently interacted with peasants from surrounding villages who constituted part of his father's parish, and the Bellavin family still had small plots of land that they cultivated. Presumably the boys frequently took boats out on the lake for fishing, and we can imagine boys playing in the beautiful natural environment that was just a few minutes' walk from the Bellavin house, such as the remains of the medieval earthen ramparts that tower above the lake below, which to this day remains pristine and picturesque. As sons of a priest, all of the boys would no doubt have spent much time in church, helping out their father at the altar and reading or singing.

At age nine, in 1874, Vasilii Bellavin entered the Toropets school for clergy sons. One of the primary aims by which Peter the Great's reforms sought to establish a modern Church for a modern state was through the formation of well-trained professional clergy, and the primary means for the latter was through education. The process of establishing formal education for the clergy proceeded slowly during the eighteenth century, though by the end of the century most dioceses in the Russian empire had established a seminary and most candidates for the priesthood had at least some seminary education. Church leaders saw the seminary as a way to create a clerical elite, so the model of education was based on the classical grammar school that was the norm in Central Europe at the time, centered primarily on Latin (including instruction of higher subjects such as philosophy and theology in Latin). By the early nineteenth century, a seminary education became the primary determining factor in a clergyman's career,

as bishops sought to place only seminary-educated candidates into parishes.[4] Indeed, though the Russian intelligentsia perpetuated the stereotype of ignorant priests (which even many contemporary historians continue to repeat), by 1880, 97 percent of Russian Orthodox priests had a seminary degree, at which point the seminary degree was fully equivalent to a classical gymnasium education.[5]

The Church's educational system was subject to a major overhaul between 1808 and 1814 that aimed to separate lower, middle, and higher levels of education. The result was the creation of a four-tiered system primarily for the sons of clergy (who were required to send their sons into the schools) with the intent to educate future clergy: township schools (prikhodskie uchilishcha), district schools (uezdnye uchilishcha), seminaries, and academies. This system sought to create elementary schools to prepare pupils for the seminary (which could then be at a higher level), and also create separate academies that would be centers for the development of theological scholarship. The township schools had a two-year course that provided basic literacy and other subjects; the district school was four years and contained a wide array of primary school subjects as well as basic religious ones; the seminary education lasted for six years and the academy for four. Eventually the Church merged township schools with the district schools (with a six year program) in order to pool resources for the higher levels. Four academies were eventually created by the 1840s: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Kazan. There was to be one seminary in every diocese, and a proliferation of township and district schools according to need. The empire was divided into four educational circuits, in

[4] Freeze, Russian Levites, 78-106.
[5] Freeze, "Russian Orthodoxy," Cambridge History, 295.

which each academy was to oversee the seminaries in its circuit and each seminary oversee the schools in its diocese.

The growth of the Church's educational system in the nineteenth century was phenomenal, though it was saddled with contradictions that were never reconciled. Primary among those contradictions was the curriculum, which simultaneously sought to live up to a classical gymnasium that formed elites while at the same time educate clergy to serve primarily in rural and provincial parishes. Another set of reforms in the 1840s, driven by the Chief Procurator Protasov, finally shifted seminary instruction from Latin to Russian. Protasov sought to make the education more "practical" for the rural clergy, so he curtailed philosophical disciplines and introduced medicine and agronomy so that clergy could serve as model farmers for the peasants. Protasov also created a body to administer the Church's educational system that was directly subordinate to the chief procurator. Ioann Bellavin, Vasilii's father, finished the Pskov seminary in 1845, after the reforms introduced by Protasov.

The school system was also beset by other problems: there was a phenomenal growth in the number of schools and seminaries, so that the number of students doubled between 1819 and 1838 (from 31,820 to 61,798). However, financial resources could not keep up with the fast growth, resulting in constant underfunding to attract and retain qualified teachers as well as to provide adequate living conditions for students. There was an acute shortage of dormitory space, which meant that many pupils were forced to rent rooms in town, where they lived without supervision, often in degraded circumstances where formative influences were far from spiritual. Because all clergy were required to send their sons to these schools, by mid-

century the seminaries graduated far more candidates than the Church needed or was able to place, and there were few viable alternatives for these graduates because of various legal restrictions barring them from entering the university or secular careers. Finally, the schools were characterized by rote learning and rigid discipline; all of these shortcomings were exposed in scathing portrayals in Pomyalovsky's Seminary Sketches (1862-1863) and Belliustin's *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia* (1858).[6]

Exposing the problems brought attention to the Church's educational system and made it a focus during the Great Reforms in the 1860s, which meant that Vasilii Bellavin's education was substantially different than that of his father. In 1867 a new statute was issued for the elementary schools and the seminaries, with a new statute for the academies following in 1869. In the reform, the administration of the Church's educational system was placed under the Holy Synod rather than the chief procurator, which also replaced the educational circuits and oversight of academies over seminaries and seminaries over schools. The administration of the seminaries and academies became collegial, so that the faculty elected their administrators and selected new faculty members, granting these institutions substantial autonomy. A major thrust of the reforms of the Church in the 1860s was to dismantle the closed caste-like nature of the clergy; therefore sons of clergy were given more rights and opportunities to move into the secular sphere, and candidates from outside the clerical estate could enter into the ecclesiastical school system.[7]

[6] For general overviews, see PE RPTs, 407-26; Sushko "Religious Seminaries"; Smolitsch.
[7] Freeze, Parish Clergy, 189-347.

In the 1867 statute, the six-year program of the elementary school was replaced with a four-year program, supplemented by a preparatory program for those who did not receive basic literacy in the home. Graduates from these schools could become Psalmists (*psalomshik*, a new title for lower clergy introduced at this time to replace the despised sacristans) or enter the seminary. The seminary curriculum was also transformed, and the subjects introduced by Protasov (agronomy and medicine) were removed. The first four years of the seminary curriculum followed the gymnasium model (Chief Procurator D. A. Tolstoi was simultaneously the minister of education from 1866 to 1880), founded on classical languages, mathematics, and general humanities subjects. Being equivalent to the gymnasium, those who finished the first four years of the seminary could freely enter the university or other secular institutions if they chose. Those who wished to stay in Church service (or, in principle, those who came from other backgrounds and finished the gymnasium) continued to the final two years of the seminary, which focused on theological subjects. Finally, the academies eliminated general educational subjects and focused exclusively on theological scholarship, and also provided students with the possibility in their last two years to choose a focus of their interest (theology, church history, or liturgy and homiletics) that they would specialize in; as a result, Russian theological scholarship was given a major boost and the quality of teachers and scholars at all levels was substantially raised.[8]

Chief Procurator Tolstoi pushed through his version of reform over that of the Church hierarchy, but in the process also secured an additional 1.5 million rubles for the Church's educational system. That money was used to improve everything from dilapidated buildings to

[8] Smolitsch, 452-62; Sushko, Dukhovnye seminarii.

teachers' salaries and student scholarships. Moreover, the schools and seminaries were to provide full scholarships only to the number of students that the Church needed. Clergy whose sons did not receive scholarships still wanted to send their sons to the schools for study (to provide them with more opportunities later on), however; they could do so but at their own expense. Because the Great Reforms failed to resolve the most pressing problem of the clergy—financial support—the attempt to dismantle the clerical estate backfired, as there was a mass exodus of clergy sons into the universities and secular professions but few from outside the clerical estate who wished to enter. Moreover, despite significant improvements to both the education and the living conditions of students, Metropolitan Evlogy's memoirs reveal that the atmosphere of schools and seminaries was very dependent upon the personalities of administrators and teachers, many of whom still taught by rote learning and administered with strict militaristic discipline. More important still, a great number of students still could not find lodging in dormitories and were forced to live in town, still subject to same harmful influences as before, and even the school dormitories were hardly ideal living conditions for boys of nine or ten.[9]

School and Seminary

Vasilii Bellavin studied at the Toropets ecclesiastical school for four years from 1874 to 1878. He was no doubt very fortunate that, unlike Evlogy, he was able to study at a clerical elementary school that was located in his home town and therefore he was able to live at home

[9] Evlogy (also section when he becomes teacher)

in the supportive atmosphere of his family until he finished the school at the age of thirteen. All of the Bellavin boys studied at the Toropets ecclesiastical school, which was located in a one-story wooden building and had between 110 and 130 students.[10] Upon entering, pupils would be tested to ensure that they could already read and write Russian, read Church Slavonic, do basic mathematics (addition, subtraction, and multiplication tables), and knew basic elements of the faith such as the Creed, the Commandments, and daily prayers; students who had not mastered these subjects at home had to take preparatory classes (the equivalent of the former township schools).[11] Vasilii had clearly received this elementary education at home (presumably from his father, since, according to archival records, his mother was illiterate) and went straight into the regular program of courses, finishing in four years.

The curriculum in the school consisted of "Salvation history of the Old and New Testaments," the longer catechism, an explanation of the Divine Liturgy together with the typikon,[12] Russian and Church Slavonic, Latin and Greek, calligraphy (chistopisanie), geography, arithmetic, music notation and liturgical singing. Pupils had three to four classes a day (six days a week), each lasting an hour and fifteen minutes. According to the regulations for clerical schools, the curriculum was to consist of three classes per week of Old Testament in the first year of study, three classes of New Testament in the second year, three classes of catechism in

[10] The Toropets ecclesiastical school (*Toropets dukhovnoe uchilishche*) was created in 1854 out of the merger of the township school (*prikhodskoe dukhovnoe uchilishche*), founded in 1809 and located in the town's Trinity Monastery, and the district school (*uezdnoe dukhovnoe uchilishche*), founded in 1832 and located in the home of a local priest. In 1859 the school relocated to a one-story wooden building (with 12 rooms) acquired from the noblewoman Skvortsova. That building no longer survives; at the end of the nineteenth century, a new stone building was constructed (Tikhon and his brother Mikhail both sent donations for the new building from America), which was transformed into a hospital in the Soviet period. See Popov, 35-38; Shchukin, *Istoricheskii ocherk Toropetskogo dukhovnogo uchilishcha.*

[11] See Grigorevskii, *Otchet o revizii*, 27; Shchukin, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 43; *Ustav dukhovnykh uchilishch*, 71.

[12] The typikon is the instructions for the order of the Byzantine rite.

the third year, and three classes to complete the catechism and study the liturgy and the typikon in the fourth year. Russian and Church Slavonic began with four classes a week in the first year, down to three classes in the second and third years, and one class in the final year. Greek and Latin constituted nearly half the curriculum (40 out of a total of 88 classes): in the first year there were eight classes of Latin per week, reduced to five the subsequent years and four in the last, while Greek was begun in the second year and increased from four classes that year to five the third and nine the final year. The students studied arithmetic three classes per week during the first three years and two hours the final year; geography three classes a week in the last two years; calligraphy and church singing two classes per week in the first two years.[13]

After finishing the Toropets school, like his father and brothers before him, Vasilii Bellavin moved to the provincial city of Pskov and entered the Pskov seminary in 1878, where he would spend the next six years.[14] Pskov was one of the oldest of Russian cities. First mentioned in the chronicles in the year 903, in the middle ages it played a key role as old Russia's westernmost city, both as a bridge and as a defense. Unlike most of old Rus', Pskov, together with Novgorod, was not conquered either by the Mongols, Poles, or Lithuanians, which allowed it to flourish from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, when the rest of Rus' was under foreign domination. It was part of the Hanseatic League and frequently interacted with Central and Western Europe, though it was also a heavily fortified city with a massive

[13] See the *Ustav dukhovnykh uchilishch*, 72 and 81-82; for the curriculum of the Toropets school in the 1850s and 1860s, see Shchukin, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 45-47; for what was taught at the Pskov clerical school in 1873, see Grigorevskii, *Otchet o revizii*, 26-30.

[14] A list of pupils who finished the ecclesiastical schools in the Pskov diocese in 1878 is found in GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 27. Vasilii Bellavin is listed on l. 3.

Kremlin and other walls circling the city because it frequently came under attack from Teutonic Knights, Poland, and Lithuania. It was subordinated to Moscow in the early sixteenth century, but remained a vitally important city until the expansion of the Russian Empire westward under Peter the Great two centuries later. Pskov developed its own distinctive schools of iconography and church architecture; the latter are characterized by their white stone, with a single cupola and characteristic bell-towers. The city is still dotted throughout with many exceptional churches built especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the monumental seventeenth-century Trinity Cathedral in the center of the Kremlin. The city declined significantly in importance during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, though it was the seat of the provincial administration. The population doubled between 1857 and 1897 (from 15,000 to 30,000), as a consequence of greater mobility of peasants after the abolition of serfdom; the establishment of the railroad connecting Pskov to Warsaw and St. Petersburg (in the 1860s); the development of trade and industry in the region; and a number of educational institutions.[15] Thus the city in which Vasilii Bellavin spent his youth was not large, "serene, [and] green," where "life flowed evenly and tranquilly, enlivened in the days of fares and bazaars, promenades, religious processions, secular and religious holidays. The Church played a particularly important role in the life of city inhabitants."[16]

The seminary in Pskov was founded in 1725, one of the first seminaries established in Russia after Peter the Great's reforms. A spacious two-story stone building was constructed for the seminary in the 1840s with large, bright classrooms and a chapel in the central part of the

[15] N. M. Medvedeva, "Soslovnaia struktura naseleniia gorodov Pskovskoi gubernii vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.," Pskov No. 25 (2006): 163.
[16] E. P. Ivanov (ed?), Pskovskii krai v istorii Rossii (Pskov, 1996), chap 11.6.

building. It was also one of the first seminaries to be reformed according to the seminary statute of 1867. In addition to the curricular changes, the reform led to bettering the lives of the students by establishing a hospital with a permanent doctor, and a medical assistant looked after the ill.

While Vasilii was a student, Pskov seminary was administered by two deans—neither of whom were Russian. Archimandrite Gerasim (Iared, 1840-1899) was dean of the Pskov seminary from 1876 to 1881. He was an Orthodox Arab Christian from Syria who came to Russia in 1865 for theological education, where he completed the Moscow theological seminary and the St. Petersburg Theological Academy (in 1869). In 1885 he became secretary to Patriarch Nikodim of Jerusalem and went with him to Palestine. Eventually he would become a metropolitan in the Patriarchate of Antioch and be one of the candidates for the patriarchate itself in 1899 shortly before his death.[17] In 1881, Archimandrite Gerasim exchanged positions with the dean of the seminary in Riga, Protopriest Mikhail Drexler (1838-1885), the son of a Latvian peasant who graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy and joined the seminary in Riga in 1862, becoming its dean in 1870. A leading figure in the development of Orthodoxy in the Baltics, he translated liturgical texts into Latvian, taught and preached in Latvian as well as Russian. He was a well-known and respected figure among Latvians and Orthodox in Riga.[18] These early influences would have demonstrated to the young Bellavin that Orthodoxy was more than Russian, no doubt sensitizing him to differences in language and customs among various Orthodox, elements that would become so critical in his later career,

[17] PE vol. 11: 184-85; SEE Hopwood Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine pp. 164-71.
[18] Got from internet

especially in America. Moreover, Tikhon's connections with both Syrian Orthodox and the Baltics would continue later in life: in America one of his closest co-workers would be Raphael Hawaweeny, an Arab Christian from Syria with a similar background to Archimandrite Gerasim, and later he would serve in the Baltics when he was appointed Archbishop of Vilna.[19]

Upon entrance in the seminary, Vasilii, together with other entering students, would have taken an exam to test the knowledge they gained in the school.[20] Among other things, this determined who would receive full scholarships, including room and board, which was available for only half of the students in the seminary; fortunately for Vasilii and his family, his academic performance ensured him a full scholarship.[21] There were over 180 students in the seminary the year that Vasilii started, and the incoming class rose year after year as more families wanted to have their children receive the education it offered so that, in the early 1880s, there were over two hundred students in the seminary.[22] Unlike many seminaries, which lacked sufficient dormitory space for students and, as a consequence, many were subject to the lack of supervision and detrimental influences from renting rooms in town, the vast majority of

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[20] Pobedash, "Obrazovanie sviatitelia Tikhona."

[21] One document lists the financial support for students in 1887, explaining that 107 received scholarships from the state (for a total of 9,630 rubles), support for 48 pansionery (2,880 rubles) and 12 full pansionery (1,080 rubles); pansionery were students who lived in the seminary dormitory and paid at least part of the costs themselves. There was also 399 rubles available for the support of poor students: GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 30, l. 37. Deans were also supposed to raise money from the parishes in their deanery for supporting the seminary; thus in 1887, Fr. Ioann Bellavin submitted a report to the seminary administration (19.12.1887) presenting them with 44 rubles that he had raised for the seminary: ibid., d. 30, l. 517.

[22] Alphabetical list of students in the seminary for the 1879-1880 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 1-6ob; Vasilii Bellavin is listed on l. 1. There were, in fact, two Vasilii Bellavins at Pskov seminary that year: the future Patriarch in the second class and another Vasilii Bellavin in the first class. There was also an Ivan Bellavin in the fifth class, though we have no way of knowing whether this was Vasilii's older brother, since the Bellavin name was relatively common (there were five altogether at Pskov seminary that year).

students in the Pskov seminary lived in the dormitory (196 out of 206 during the 1882-1883 academic year).[23]

The education that Vasilii received at the seminary was broad, with much of the content being the same as a classical gymnasium education. Students studied Scripture every year of the six, working through the entire Bible (four years for the Old Testament and two for the New Testament). In the first year they read the Pentateuch, in the second year the historical books, in the third year the Psalms and Wisdom literature, in the fourth year the Prophets; in the fifth year students studied the Gospels and in the final year the Epistles. According to the report on the seminary for Vasilii's fifth year (1882-1883), the class studied the four Gospels but not the Acts of the Apostles because the instructor's chronic illness resulted in many cancelled classes. Seminary students read the Old Testament in Church Slavonic and the New Testament in Greek, though in either case if there were unclear passages they could consult the Russian translation. In some cases they would work read through the books of the Bible in consecutive order during class time, with students taking turns reading and the instructor adding explanations when necessary; at other times, such as when reading the historical books, the students were assigned to read five or more chapters per class as homework, reserving class time for the instructor's explanations. Though most of the biblical books were read through consecutively, the class that read the Gospels read them not only consecutively, but also synoptically, comparing the same pericope in the different Gospel writers to bring out the distinctive features of each Gospel. The instruction focused on explicating Biblical forms of expression, the geographic and historical background, as well as theological or moral significance of particular

[23] Report on the Pskov seminary for the 1882-1883 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, l. 26.

passages. In order to deepen the students understanding, the instructor posed various questions to students about the passages they were considering.[24]

Aside from Scripture, theological subjects were primarily taken in the final two years of study. As in the school, Greek and Latin consumed a large portion of the curriculum and was studied in all six years. In Greek, they worked from Xenophon's *Anabasis* in the first year to selections from Herodotus and the Odyssey in the second, the Iliad and Demosthenes' speeches in the third, Plato's Apology and other short dialogues in the fourth, Justin Martyr's *Apology* in the fifth, and finally Cyril of Jerusalem and Macarius of Egypt in the final year. Similarly in Latin the students progressed from Livy to Sallust to Virgil's *Aeneid* to Cicero to Jerome, in the final year reading the first book of Augustine's City of God. In addition to Greek and Latin, which all students were required to take for six years, each student was required to take one modern language and could choose from either French or German, which they studied during the first three years.[25] Bellavin studied French; the French teacher at Pskov seminary in 1882-1883 was Alfred Anspach from Switzerland, who spent decades teaching in various schools in Pskov and eventually wrote an important book on the Russian economy.[26]

In addition to classical and modern languages, the seminary taught mathematics and physics, philosophy and psychology, literature and history. Students took mathematics in their first three years, studying Geometry and Trigonometry as well as Astronomy (called *kosmografiia*) and Paschalia (the science of determining the date of Easter), and Physics in the

[24] Report on the Pskov seminary for the 1882-1883 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, l. 3ob-4.
[25] Report on the Pskov seminary for the 1882-1883 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 10-11.
[26] *La Russie economique et l'ouvre de M. de Witte* (Paris, 1904), reviewed in the *Journal of Political Economy* [details].

fourth year. In both math and physics, students were taught to move from the concrete example to general rules or laws. They studied Philology in the first year (*slovestnost'*), which involved the study of literary forms and genres particularly through great works of literature such as Homer, Shakespeare, and Pushkin, much of which they were assigned to read for homework. In the second year they studied the history of Russian Literature, in which, according to the program, students studied up through Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, and ended with "literature after Gogol." During the first three years, students studied history, covering ancient and medieval history, modern European history, and Russian history. In the third year the students took a class in Logic, and in the fourth year an overview of Philosophy and another class on Psychology. The report explained that the instructor of Logic taught not only abstract rules but made them accessible by using examples, and encouraged students to assimilate what they learned through constructing their own arguments. The Philosophy instructor dwelled particularly on materialist philosophy and its understanding of the origins of the world and of life (and how to refute it), and in Psychology to theories of consciousness.[27]

In the final two years, seminary students concentrated on religious subjects, which included pedagogy, homiletics, and liturgics. They studied universal church history in the fifth class and Russian Church history in the sixth class. Fourth-year students took a course on Apologetic Theology (*Osnovnoe bogoslovie*); in 1882-83, Vasilii Bellavin was in his fifth year when the class was taught by the dean, Protopriest Drexler. The course explored such contemporary issues as the relationship of natural sciences to the Bible, immortality, and the existence of God, and used, in addition to the standard Russian textbook, books by German and

[27] Report on the Pskov seminary for the 1882-1883 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 6-10.

French authors (in Russian translation), exploring such subjects as "Natural Religion" and readings about world religions by Max Müller. The course was intended to show how, on the one hand, one could confirm Christian truth by means of a historical and philosophical path, but on the other hand to make a critical analysis of those views and teachings which contradicted Christianity. In the single mention of concrete student work in the context of discussing the entire seminary curriculum, the report (presumably written by dean Drexler) singled out Vasilii Bellavin and two other students for having written the best papers in Apologetic Theology, suggesting that Bellavin indeed developed a close relationship with Fr. Drexler.[28]

In the final year of seminary, students took moral theology, dogmatic theology, and pastoral theology (*prakticheskoe rukovodstvo dlia pastyrei*), and a second year of homiletics. As with Logic, instruction in moral theology attempted to give life to the "dry, abstract" propositions of the textbook with examples from real life. The course also focused on a comparison of different Christian confessions in their approach to moral issues. The practical guidance for pastors instructed students in church regulations. In homiletics, students in Vasilii Bellavin's class (the fifth) read great sermons especially from early Church Fathers Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom. In reading model sermons, students were not only to understand what made a sermon great, but also how it was to be understood in its historical context, presumably to teach students that they cannot simply imitate fourth-century sermons. Finally, students also put into practice what they learned about composing good sermons by composing their own for the class.[29] The Dogmatic Theology class focused on the

[28] Report on the Pskov seminary for the 1882-1883 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, l. 5ob.
[29] GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 5-6.

classic text by Metropolitan Makarii (Bulgakov). In class, the instructor would give the historical background to the development of the doctrines under question. Orthodox doctrine was compared to that of other Christian confessions. "Orthodox dogmatic truth was demonstrated with Scripture, Holy Tradition and the considerations of reason, during which attention was paid so that the dogmas are presented as conclusions from the witness of Holy Scripture and Tradition, and not simple propositions to which, in an external [artificial] manner, are attached texts and places from patristic writings."[30]

Nineteenth-century Russian seminary education was notorious for rote learning. However, the reforms of 1867 apparently brought in a new spirit of education. A decade before Bellavin studied in the seminary, in 1873, the external review of the Pskov seminary found that students in the Apologetic theology class learned primarily by memorizing the propositions of the textbook, so that their answers to the inspector's questions had a "strictly bookish character." But this tendency to rote learning did not hold for all classes even in 1873: in the Scripture class, the students read well the biblical text in Church Slavonic and had no problems in translating it, and their answers to the text were also satisfactory. The inspector's only criticism here was that students reading the Greek New Testament used a Greek-Slavonic parallel edition, as a consequence of which too many tended to rely upon the Slavonic text, which "weakened their attention to the Greek text." Students in the Dogmatic Theology class were also able to answer the questions posed to them quite well, "with sufficient detail" and the ability to explain the necessary historical and philosophical information. They "spoke

[30] GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 29, l. 4ob.

freely," rather than the bookish answers of the other class.[31] It is evident that dean Drexler continued to develop the seminary in these directions, and valued his students' ability to assimilate and make their own the subjects they were studying rather than merely learn by rote, and he encouraged the instructors under him not simply to lecture but to raise questions among the students to facilitate their ability to articulate their own understanding of the material.

From Vasilii Bellavin's seminary days come the earliest reminiscences by someone who knew him. Protopriest Aleksandr Rozhdestvenskii (1864-1930) entered the Pskov seminary during Vasilii's second year, in 1879, after finishing the Pskov ecclesiastical school.[32] Not only would he study five years together with Vasilii in the seminary, but he would also be two years at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy with Vasilii, and, like the latter, returned to teach at the Pskov Seminary after completing the Academy (in 1891). He would eventually become a professor at the St Petersburg Theological Academy and doctor of theology, teach catechism to the Tsar's daughters (1904-1910), and be a member of the Church Council of 1917-1918. After the Revolution he emigrated abroad, and taught at the Orthodox seminary in Sophia, where he published this short but important memoir in 1922.[33]

Father Rozhdestvenskii characterized Toropets as a town with "churches at every step, all ancient and quite beautiful." Life there had largely been untouched by modernity, where the "old ways of Russian life (*byt*)" were still preserved. The influence of this environment, together

[31] Grigorevskii, *Otchet o revizii*, 1-3.
[32] Alphabetical list of students in the seminary for the 1879-1880 academic year, GAPO f. 291, op. 1, d. 28, l. 5, lists Rozhdestvenskii as a student in the first class.
[33] Sovremenniki 1: 447-48.

with that of his family, "expressed itself in the youth" of the "modest" seminarian, who "distinguished himself by [his] religiosity, [and his] affectionate and attractive character." He was tall and fair. The students loved him, "but always united to this love a feeling of respect, explained by his steadfast—though not at all affected—religiosity, his brilliant academic success and his perpetual readiness to help his comrades." His fellow students, according to Rozhdestvenskii, regularly turned to Bellavin for help in understanding their lessons and with their written assignments. Bellavin "found some sort of pleasure and fun" in this, and though he put on a serious face, helped with "continual jokes, whole hours busying himself with his comrades," one-on-one or in groups, who came to him for help. "It is remarkable that his comrades in the seminary jokingly called him the 'hierarch.'"[34]

On finishing the full course at the seminary, those who wished to continue in the service of the Church typically found work in parishes or teaching while they waited for their bishop to ordain them to the priesthood and assign them to an open position in a parish. During that time they would also seek to marry, as Orthodox priests are permitted to be married (or choose to remain celibate) before ordination. A select few of the best students, however, would be admitted to one of the elite Theological Academies, which were the Church's equivalent to the university. Vasilii Bellavin, upon graduating from the Pskov seminary in 1884, was one of those outstanding students who was sent on to the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

St. Petersburg Theological Academy (1884-1888)

[34] Sovremenniki, 1: 128, translation mine. An English translation was published: A. Roshestvensky, *His Holiness Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and of All the Russians: A Memoir*, translated by H. P. (London: SPCK, 1922???).

While Vasilii Bellavin was a seminary student, a fateful event shook Russia: the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the "tsar liberator," by revolutionary terrorists in 1881. Tsar Alexander III, who succeeded to the throne in his place, decidedly took a very different approach to ruling Russia. He, together with his former tutor, Konstantin Pobedonovtsev, believed that the introduction of democratic ideals—if even at lower levels of society—amounted to an import of Western ideals alien to Russia that in fact threatened Russia's stability. Rather, Russia's stability was to be ensured by returning to the principles enshrined by Nicholas I (1825-1855): the tsar's unlimited autocracy, Russian nationality, and Orthodox Christianity. Pobedonovtsev became chief procurator of the Holy Synod in 1880, and sought to implement his ideas and policies directly through the Church. Alexander III and Pobedonovtsev believed that the way to stabilize Russia politically was to homogenize it through policies of Russification and promoting Orthodoxy at the expense of other confessions. Although the Orthodox Church had been subject to consideration and reform under Alexander II, many of his chief bureaucrats had a rather secular orientation and did not allow the Church to assume a leading role in society. A particular case in point was the preference for the development of secular rather than Church schools for the populace; the teachers who ended up in those schools were quite frequently of liberal or even revolutionary orientation. Pobedonovtsev, by contrast, believed that the only way to ensure Russia's stability was to give a very central role to the Orthodox Church. He undid some of the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s, for example those which sought to curtail the number of clergy and parishes, because he believed (with good reason) that such efforts would undercut rather than strengthen the influence of the Church. A major focus of his efforts was to develop primary education run by the Church rather

than the state. The government passed laws intended to strengthen the Church in public life, such as prohibiting theater performances during Great Lent (1881) or prohibiting the construction of taverns near churches and monasteries. While many clergy initially welcomed this new prominence of the Church's role in society, in the long run Pobedonovtsev did not trust the hierarchy of the Church, and instead sought to exercise state control over the Church—and ultimately more for political aims than religious ones; all of that eventually created friction and resentment between the hierarchy and Pobedonovtsev, ultimately having a detrimental effect on church-state relations as well as inter-confessional relations and the relationship between the Church and society.[35]

Among the changes that Pobedonovtsev sought to enact was yet another reform (or "counter-reform") of the Church's educational system. The collegial administration and large degree of autonomy exercised by the seminaries and theological academies were precisely those types of alien Western ideas that Pobedonovtsev found dangerous. Moreover, the 1867 reforms, by making the seminary equivalent to the gymnasium education and making it very easy for seminary students to enter university and other secular institutions, ultimately resulted in a mass exodus of seminary graduates from Church service into secular careers, having a severely detrimental effect on the Church's efforts to raise up educated professional clergy. Therefore Pobedonovstev established a committee to review theological education at all levels, which resulted in a new Statute for Seminaries and Academies in 1884. The new statutes greatly strengthened the power of the bishops over the schools. Administrators of the schools were appointed rather than elected (this also applied to instructors in the seminaries).

[35] Polunov, "Church, Regime, and Society."

Moreover, the power of the rector was strengthened, and rectors were chosen from the monastic rather than married clergy.

Under Pobedonovtsev, seminary students were barred from entry to the universities. The seminary curriculum was changed so that it was no longer the equivalent of the classical gymnasium; general subjects were curtailed, and theological subjects were distributed through all the years with more hours—including a new subject on how to combat "the schism" (a reference to Old Believers). Modern languages became elective, and classical languages were drastically cut back. The program of the Theological Academies was also significantly transformed. According to the 1869 Academy Statute, although some subjects which were mandatory for all, the larger part of the curriculum was devoted to specialization in the field that the student chose from among three departments: dogmatic theology, church history, or pastoral theology (homiletics and liturgy). The fourth year was entirely devoted to research for their *kandidat* thesis. At the higher levels of magister and doctor, dissertations were subject to public defenses. This system was devoted to raising the level of theological scholarship in Russia, and most agreed that it achieved that aim. As a consequence, the academies and seminaries were often staffed with scholarly, lay, oftentimes "liberal" professors, who were products of the more open times.[36]

The Academy Statute of 1884, which was introduced in the 1884-1885 academic year when Vasilii Bellavin entered the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, brought about a significant transformation of the educational program. The new Statute abolished the three

[36] Smolitsch, 1: 465-473; Polunov, "Church, Regime, and Society," 44-46; Kozlov, PE RPTs; Chistovich, *S.-Peterburgskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia za poslednie 30 let*; Sukhova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola*.

departments and replaced the specializations with a much broader curriculum of mandatory classes. The goal was to "deliver a higher education in all spheres of theology and to impart a full and complete theological education to its charges/wards [students]."[37] Therefore all theological subjects, as well as philosophy as necessary for theology, were required, while other subjects were deemed of secondary importance and divided into two departments, one of which the student chose by elective. The courses students were required to take were: an introduction to theological disciplines; Holy Scripture and biblical history; dogmatic theology; moral theology; homiletics and the history of preaching; pastoral theology and pedagogy; canon law; the history of the Church (the universal Church until 1054, the Eastern Church, and the Russian Church); patristics; church archeology and liturgics; and philosophy (logic, psychology, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy). The secondary subjects were divided into two groups or departments: the first concentrated on language and literature, including philology and the history of foreign literature, Russian and Church Slavonic, the history of Russian literature, and Hebrew. The second group focused on history: the history of Western confessions, the history of the Russian schism, and both general and Russian secular history. Students of both tracks had to do one ancient and one modern language.[38] In the first three years, students were required to take between twenty and twenty-four hours, and in their last year between twelve and sixteen.[39]

The fourth year of the course was no longer devoted primarily to thesis research, but rather contained a substantial number of classes, with less than half the time freed for thesis

[37] Chistovich, *S.-Peterburgskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia za poslednie 30 let*, 198.
[38] Ustav pravoslavnykh dukhovnykh akademii, 20.
[39] "Otchet o sostoianii SPbDA za 1887," Khristianskoe htenie No. 3-4 (1888): 515.

research. The aim was no longer to train specialists, but rather generalists who could serve as instructors in seminaries and be able to teach virtually any subject in the seminary curriculum. However, many complained that there were simply too many subjects, which prevented students from absorbing any in depth; one student also complained that it was too much a repetition of the seminary curriculum.[40] The magister thesis was defended in a colloquium that was open only to those invited, while there was no oral defense of doctoral dissertations at all—presumably because public defenses served as forums for an open exchange of ideas and highlighted different viewpoints among the Church's leading scholars, neither of which was welcome by Pobedonovtsev or the conservative bishops.[41]

The Holy Synod also concluded that the academies were producing too many graduates for the Church's needs (some graduates were having difficulties finding positions as teachers in the ecclesiastical school system), and decided to reduce (gradually) the number of scholarships from 180 to 120 as well as the total number of students in each of the academies. In 1884, when Vasilii Bellavin began his studies, there were 349 students, of which 190 received scholarships (including Bellavin), and 133 of the students who did not receive scholarships lived off campus. By 1889, there were 255 students, of which 150 received scholarships, and all but 20 students (who stayed at home) lived on campus.[42] In the end, the Church was providing a higher education to significantly fewer of its servitors than it had in previous years, precisely at a time when the clergy needed more than ever to engage educated society.[43] Student life was strictly regulated. The day began with prayer in Church followed by breakfast in the cafeteria,

[40] Smolitsch, 1: 473.
[41] On the Academy reform, see Sukhova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola*, 343-471.
[42] Chistovich, *S.-Peterburgskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia za poslednie 30 let,* 216.
[43] Freeze's article about "going to the intelligentsia"

then classes all morning until 2 pm lunch time. After lunch, from 2 to 4, they were given free time, for "rest and walks in the garden," when they were allowed to play chess but not cards. At 4 pm they had afternoon tea, and the evenings until 9:30 were devoted to homework. At 9:30 pm they had supper in the cafeteria followed by evening prayer in the Church, and by 11 pm they were to go to bed. The doors to the dormitories were locked at midnight. Students were generally not permitted to leave campus, aside from authorized trips to the Public Library for research, except for Sundays and holidays.[44]

In 1883, Bishop Arsenii (Briantsev) replaced Protoierei Ivan Ianyshev, a married priest and noted moral theologian who had been rector since 1866, as rector of the St. Petersburg Academy.[45] From the 1860s until the new Statute in 1884, the theological academies and seminaries were dominated by married clergy, and the academies virtually ceased producing students who took monastic vows—the main source of the Church's episcopal hierarchy. Indeed, no monastic students were tonsured at the St Petersburg Academy for some twenty years; according to one account, Ianyshev actively discouraged students from becoming monks.[46] Arsenii was a married priest who took monastic vows only after being widowed; nevertheless he became an active proponent of "learned monasticism" at the Academy, tonsuring nine students in his four years as rector of the Academy.[47] Moreover, those whom he tonsured became even more active leaders and propagators of learned monasticism, especially Mikhail Gribanovskii in 1884 and Antonii Khrapovitskii in 1885. Both remained at the academy

[44] Instruktsiia S.-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii dlia studentov, zhivushchik v zdanii Akademii. This text was published in 1894, so after Vasilii Bellavin graduated from the Academy, but presumably was consistent in basic outline with the regulations in force while he was there.
[45] Sukhova, *Vysshaia dukhovnaia shkola*, 380.
[46] "Patriarshii kurs," 61.
[47] PE 3: 397-98.

as instructors. In 1885, archimandrite Antonii Vadkovskii became dean of students (inspector= supervisor?); a graduate of the Kazan Academy, he became rector of the St. Petersburg Academy two years later (and elevated to the episcopate). Under Antonii Vadkovskii's rectorship, Mikhail Gribanovskii became dean of students and Antonii Khrapovitskii, who taught for one year in Kholm, returned as assistant dean of students. This influential constellation of figures was in charge of the Academy during Vasilii Bellavin's last year at the Academy, and they had a significant influence on encouraging the development of learned monasticism that formed the future leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church in the early twentieth century. This leadership including not only Antonii Vadkovskii, future Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, and Antonii Khrapovitskii, future Metropolitan of Kiev and head of the Russian Church Abroad, but also Sergii Stragorodskii, Tikhon's successor as Patriarch of the Russian Church, who became a student at the Academy in 1886 (while Bellavin was a third-year student) and took monastic vows four years later.[48]

These new leaders were young,[49] dynamic, and energetic, and had a vision for how to renew the Church's role in society, and they saw a special place for learned monks rising in the leadership and actively engaging in society. Mikhail Gribanovskii and Antonii Khrapovitskii already in these years began to discuss how to renew the Church by re-establishing it on ancient Orthodox canonical norms, including the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia, from which Peter the Great's reforms and the Synodal system departed. They also related to the students different than the older generation: they were more approachable, and gathered

[48] PE 2: 621-23, 646-52; "Patriarshii kurs," 90-91, 97.
[49] Ianyshev was born in 1826; Arsenii Briantsev in 1839, Antonii Vadkovskii in 1846, Mikhail Gribanovskii in 1856, and Antonii Khrapovitskii in 1863.

students around them for evening discussions of burning issues. In early 1887 they established "theological evenings" in which both professors and students presented material and participated, and their aim was to elucidate Orthodoxy for contemporary society.[50] Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii), a student at the Moscow Theological Academy a few years later when Antonii Khrapovitskii became rector there in 1891 (at age 27), described a similar atmosphere. Evlogii wrote in his memoirs that Khrapovitskii's "fiery monastic spirit infected, enticed, and inflamed hearts. Thanks to him our view of monasticism was raised to the ideal of a united brotherhood, an order, Christ's army, which was to save the Church from public prosecutors, returning it to its rightful place as an independent instructor and spiritual guide for the Russian people. A grandiose vision was unfolding before our eyes, which included the restoration of the patriarchate, [and the] introduction of new ecclesiastical principles…."[51] The dynamic Khrapovitskii inspired many students, and many wished—and were strongly encouraged—to take monastic vows.

There was, however, another side to the new emphasis on monasticism at the theological academies, one promoted by chief procurator Pobedonovtsev and his assistant Vladimir Sabler. Since the hierarchy of the Church—its bishops—had to be monastics, and candidates were not drawn from ordinary monasteries but rather were required to have a higher education, the "learned monks" who rose in the Church hierarchy were a special breed, neither like the parish clergy nor like the rank and file monks, for they typically had no actual experience of living in a monastery before taking their vows. Aside from notably exceptions, like

[50] See Sovremenniki 1: 154-70. Is there some recollection by Tikhon about this? Acc to Georgii Danilov, who cites Patr Tikhon I istoriia russkoi tserkovnoi smuty, p. 115.
[51] Evlogy, 49.

the aristocrat Antonii Khrapovitskii, the majority were still drawn from the sons of parish clergy who studied in the ecclesiastical schools and seminaries before entering the academies. Pobedonovstev and Sabler sought to raise up a new generation of these "learned monks." According to Petr Bulgakov, one of Vasilii Bellavin's classmates, their system "was simple": it was made clear to the students that those who became monks would be taken care of after finishing the Academy, they were promised a "brilliant career." "From the academy bench he would end up as a seminary dean of students with head-turning speed," and soon after he would be promoted to seminary rector. From such a position, these young monks would wield power over faculty who might well have higher degrees.[52] Such was the means by which the Pobedonovstev regime established strict control over the Church's educational system. After serving as seminary rectors, such learned monks would be consecrated an assistant bishop, then eventually receive their own less desirable diocese as bishop, then, if they pleased the Holy Synod and the chief procurator, be moved (on average, every five years) to better and better sees.[53]

According to many who lived through these years, this system of actively recruiting academy students for monasticism and higher Church careers had many detrimental consequences. To begin with, it meant tonsuring many young men who were still in their early twenties and had not time to test their vocation. In monasteries, by contrast, novices were not permitted to take monastic vows before the age of thirty. It also thrust these young and inexperienced men into positions of great authority and responsibility, with negative

[52] "Patriarshii kurs," 61.
[53] Polunov, 48-49.

consequences for both themselves and those under them. Moreover, the monastic path tended to attract conservatives, so it served as a way for Pobedonovtsev and the Holy Synod to undercut the liberal tendencies that had emerged in the Church in the 1860s and 1870s (especially in educational institutions, but elsewhere in Church administration as well). According to Petr Bulgakov and Metropolitan Evlogy, this "system" appealed to "careerists," individuals who were ambitious but frequently not the best moral exemplars of the Church. Beholden to Pobedonovtsev for their careers, they were often passive before the chief procurator's authority. Finally, the system brought in and promoted some who simply were unfit either for monasticism or for such positions of leadership and brought scandal upon the Church.[54]

Bellavin's classmate Petr Bulgakov left an account of their student years at the Academy, written in 1925 after the patriarch's death. Petr Bulgakov (1859-1931), the uncle of the famous writer Mikhail Bulgakov, served as priest for the embassy in Tokyo, and he remained in Japan until the earthquake of 1923, after which he moved to California, where he spent the rest of his life. Although he sent his memoir to a few publishers, evidently it was not published until recently, when researchers discovered copies in Russian archives.[55] Bulgakov describes how he met Vasilii Bellavin for the first time on the day of the history entrance exams, when they were sitting next to each other in the first row (since their last names both began with "B"). The first students to be examined were nervous, but when Bellavin was called up, the tall blonde young man approached the examining professor confidently, "in full awareness of his academic

[54] Evlogy, 50; "Patriarshii kurs," 61-62.
[55] "Patriarshii kurs," 39-42. After his death, Bulgakov's papers were given to the Prague archive of the Russian emigration, which was taken to Moscow after World War II.

strengths and powers." He gave thorough answers and returned to his seat. When it was his turn, Bulgakov got confused in his answers between Frederick of Prussia and Frederick the Great, and though in the end he gave detailed answers, he returned to his seat "like a wet chicken" because of his mistake. Bellavin turned to him and whispered, "don't worry, they gave you high marks." Bulgakov saw this first encounter as encapsulating much of Bellavin's personality and affect on those around him, and that this "don't worry" became the motto of their turbulent years at the academy.

The mid-1880s in St. Petersburg were tense ones. Reactionary forces in Church and state were ready to pounce on any sign of sedition, while students in all educational institutions—including the Theological Academy—were like a simmering pot ready to boil over. Students at the Academy lived in a semi-monastic environment somewhat isolated from the center of the city, but according to Bulgakov their "calm" was like the "all quiet on the Shipka pass," that is the calm before the storm. Academy students were caught up in the intellectual ferment of the age. In the early 1880s, Russia's greatest living writer, Leo Tolstoy, had undergone a religious conversion that led him to a fervent belief, but one which explicitly rejected the Orthodox Church. He expressed the process in his *Confession* and his new religious-philosophical ideas in a variety of writings that were radical by the standards of the age: his main emphasis was on the moral "law of love," which Tolstoy placed above all else. The Church's doctrines and rituals Tolstoy rejected as mystification and obfuscation that only obscured Christ's true teachings that he summed up in this "law of love." Tolstoy embraced vegetarianism, rejected marriage and sexual relations as hopelessly egotistical, and advocated complete pacifism. His understanding of the "law of love" permitted no usage of violence whatsoever, and since government by

definition requires coercion, Tolstoy rejected the legitimacy of government. Though in effect he became an anarchist and was highly critical of the Russian government, he equally rejected the revolutionary movement because of its reliance on violence.[56]

Tolstoy's *Confession*, which was blocked by censors in Russia, was published in Geneva in 1884, and lithographed copies were quickly in circulation among students at the Petersburg Academy, some of whom became ardent Tolstoians. At the same time, the 1880s was the time when Russian radicals began turning to Marx's ideas in earnest, and academy students were also ardently reading *Das Kapital*, and some became Marxists. At the same time, the "monastic propaganda" was producing an ultra-Orthodox current among other academy students at the same time. The "collision of Tolstoianism and Marxism with monastic propaganda," according to Bulgakov, can be seen by the fact that the upper classes produced Antonii Khrapovitskii (who graduated in 1885), on the one hand, and M. V. Novorusskii (who graduated in 1886), on the other.[57] Novorusskii, though one of the brightest students in his class, joined the revolutionary party "The Peoples' Will" and was involved, together with Lenin's brother Aleksandr Ul'ianov, in a plot to assassinate Alexander III on March 1, 1887.

According to Bulgakov, Vasilii Bellavin found a course that was solidly Orthodox that did not go to either the extremes of the radicals (the Tolstoians and the Marxists) or of the ultra-Orthodox. Bellavin won the affection and respect of his fellow students, who nicknamed him "the patriarch" as an expression of this regard, though, unlike the seminary, nicknames were

[56] Medzhibovskaya
[57] "Patriarshii kurs," 52.

not common in the academy.[58] On his election to the patriarchate in 1917, Archbishop Antonii Khrapovitskii said that his classmates were "unconsciously prophetic" in their nickname: "your own Academy classmates nicknamed you Patriarch, when you were still a layman and when neither they, nor you yourself could even dream about the actual realization of such a title, given to you by the friends of your youth for your steady, imperturbably solid disposition and godly/devout frame of mind."[59] Not only was Bellavin the "patriarch," but his classmates made up the "patriarch's entourage." This found expression in moments of daily life in the dormitories when students would return after the evening tea (or on Sundays, a day on the town) to find Bellavin and his roommate Iakov Bekarevich already in their room reading or studying; Bellavin rarely went out on the town for secular amusements, usually going into the city center only to visit the Public Library for research.[60] His usual pose was sitting in the corner on a leather couch. As the other students gathered in the room, they would chat, exchanging their impressions of the day. If the conversation degenerated into sarcasm, Bekarevich would remind them that they would have to give an account for "every idle word" on Judgment Day (Matt. 12: 36). Bellavin would then usually pick up the Gospel and start reading, prefaced by someone assuming the role of Protodeacon[61] calling all to attention with a liturgical "Let us attend" ("*vonmem*"). The reading would then be followed by petitions, and the students would

[58] Bulgakov insists that this nickname was not a humorous one, for Bellavin's roomates, Nikon Sofiiskii (1861-1908) and Filipp Bekarevich (1862-1902) were not the joking types, though they only ever referred to him by this nickname. Both took monastic vows in 1887 and both would eventually become bishops; Nikon became exarch of Georgia, where he was killed by Georgian nationalists in 1908. "Patriarshii kurs," 49-50, 92-93; also Rozhdestvenskii in Sovremenniki 1: 128.
[59] According to Rudnev, in Sovremenniki 1: 448, 2: 109.
[60] A similar characterization is given in the short biographical sketch in Vestnik Vilenskogo Sv.-Dukhovskogo bratstva No. 3 (year?): 20.
[61] A protodeacon is a rank of deacon who serves with a bishop (or patriarch), usually distinguished by deep and booming voices.

gather from neighboring rooms and perform an impromptu liturgical service. On other occasions the "protodeacon" would intone the "eis polla eti despota" ("many years to you, master"), a phrase chanted (always in Greek) when a bishop serves, and Bellavin would continue the service in the role of the bishop, though without any sacramental blessings (often they would perform evening Vespers or memorial services), and other students would assume other roles. Evidently not all the academy's students—the ultra-Orthodox ones—approved of these activities, which they regarded as somewhat blasphemous. But half the academy choir was in Bellavin's class for all four years, so singing was clearly important to most of his classmates. These improvised concerts would sometimes last for hours. Russian Orthodox liturgical music can be extraordinarily beautiful, and it is clear that for many churchmen, liturgical singing was a form of creative and artistic expression.[62] Bulgakov affirms that these improvised concerts were an "artistic pleasure," but also they also helped train their classmates in singing and performance of the services.[63]

Bellavin came to this moderate but firmly Orthodox position, according to Bulgakov, with the help of the academy professors, many of whom were the leading theologians and scholars of the Russian Church in that age. The professors, who "lovingly guided the students," gave them the "full possibility to work out the Orthodox truths independently." For example, the students of their class were assigned to write compositions on the "latest writings" of Tolstoy. Although the ultra-Orthodox currents reproached the professors, Bulgakov asserts that it was precisely the freedom of academic inquiry that allowed for this solidly but moderate

[62] Toviia in Heart of Russia.
[63] "Patriarshii kurs," 57-58.

Orthodox position of Bellavin and his cohort to emerge. Indeed, Bellavin continued to reflect on these issues even years later, and two of his first published articles in the 1890s engaged Tolstoy—the first was a defense of marriage against Tolstoy's rejection of it, and the second was a comparison of Orthodox fasting practices with vegetarianism.

Although there were such joyful moments in the lives of Bellavin and his classmates as the impromptu concerts, there were also many tense ones. When the announcement came that the Holy Synod issued a specific decree prohibiting students from attending a dissertation defense of one of the professors, the students were outraged.[64] The expressed their outrage during the annual academy celebration [?] on February 17, 1885, when representatives of the Holy Synod, the city's clergy, and other educational institutions all attended, by spontaneously walking out before the ceremony began. Bellavin was one of only a small handful of students who did not walk out. Afterward, some of the upperclassmen accused Bellavin of betraying the students' cause. His classmates who knew him better (this was their first year) defended him, asserting that with Bellavin there couldn't be even a "shadow of betrayal"; rather, he acted on principle, in this case that it was inappropriate to express their dissatisfaction by spoiling the Academy's annual celebration. Moreover, Bulgakov writes that this was only one of many instances in which Vasilii Bellavin would not compromise his principles, even if it meant that he alone went against the current, which Bulgakov saw as expressions both of his courage and his perspicacity. He was also able to defend himself against these student-protestors who saw

[64] Ivan Gavrilovich Troitskii (1858-1929), who was a specialist in Hebrew.

themselves as defenders of "freedom," claiming that they were contradicting themselves by trying to coerce him into following in their footsteps rather than allowing him to act freely.[65]

The students of St Petersburg Academy faced other challenges in those turbulent times. When the Slavophile Ivan Aksakov died in 1886, the students decided to express their sorrow by composing an open telegram. Though generally the Slavophiles were conservative, Aksakov was far from uncritical of the Russian government and bureaucratic system of his day, which was potentially subversive. Bellavin and his classmates worked out the first draft of the telegram, but it then it made its rounds to every other group of students. The final text of the telegram, which was published in the newspapers, made vague reference to Aksakov as a "champion" of medieval Russian political structures (which included a kind of parliament, the zemskii sobor). This was enough to earn the students a dressing-down from the academy rector. This evidently had little effect, however, for later that year the academy students were ready to participate in the "Dobroliubov demonstration." On November 17, 1886, all the students of St. Petersburg (and across Russia) decided to commemorate one of the leaders of the radical intelligentsia, Nikolai Dobroliubov (1836-1861) on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, with an Orthodox memorial service (*panikhida*) at his grave. Bulgakov credits Vasilii Bellavin with dissuading the Academy students from participating in the memorial service on the principle that it was wrong to turn a church service into a means of political protest. As they anticipated anyway, the police did not allow the memorial service even to take place (nor all the students from gathering). Rather, the authorities allowed representatives of various educational institutions to lay wreaths at Dobroliubov's grave, and the academy students—

[65] "Patriarshii kurs," 53-54.

including Bellavin's classmates—participated in this act. According to Bulgakov, this act was rector Arsenii Briantsev's swan song, and he was soon replaced by Antonii Vadkovsii.[66] More unpleasantness followed after the attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander III on March 1, 1887, when one of the plotters, Mikhail Novorusskii, turned out to be a recent academy graduate. There were even rumors that the academy would be closed, and one of Bellavin's classmates was expelled only because he was called as a witness to Novorusskii's trial, which was a cause of great anxiety among the students. Bulgakov credits Bellavin's calm and steady character, and his motto "don't worry," with helping his classmates prevent all the turbulence from totally disrupting their studies.[67]

Students at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy kept their own library, a common practice in theological schools.[68] The academy library had a massive collection, but primarily of books with a religious or theological concentration. The students also wanted to read contemporary literature and keep up with what was happening in society, so they kept their own library, built up by their own means, and traditionally the students elected the librarian. The 1884 Statute stipulated that the rector of the academy was to oversee and approve the acquisitions of the student library. But with the increased scrutiny on the academy after all these events, the student librarian was removed, and instead of allowing the students to appoint a new one, rector bishop Antonii Vadkovskii appointed the new student librarian. Yet bishop Antonii knew his students well and was sensitive to their mood, so he appointed Vasilii Bellavin as the new student librarian. Rozhdestvenskii wrote that "the popularity of Bellavin

[66] "Patriarshii kurs," 54-55.
[67] "Patriarshii kurs," 56-57.
[68] Evlogy

among the students was so great that no one protested against this violation of the students' rights."[69] Bulgakov states that there were, in fact, some who were dissatisfied with the choice among the students on the "right" and on the "left." The students on the "right," those of the ultra-Orthodox orientation, wanted to fill the student library with the writings of church fathers and ecclesiastical periodicals only, and the students on the "left" knew of Bellavin's solidly Orthodox approach—although, Bulgakov notes, the latter were less worried than the former. Bellavin's moderate yet firmly Orthodox position—which was firmly rooted in the Church but open to engaging secular literature and thought—clearly won the support of the majority of the students.[70]

At the Academy's annual celebration on February 17, 1889, the professor who read the report of the Academy's activities in the previous year declared that the class which graduated in 1888 was an "exceptional manifestation" according to the students' talent and hard work.[71] Vasilii Bellavin graduated from the Petersburg Theological Academy in 1888 fifth in his class (out of 56 students). He received the highest mark (5) on half the courses that he took, and the lowest grade he received was 4.25 (on a 5 point scale, with 5 being the highest). In addition to the 18 required courses, he took Greek as his classical language and French as his modern language, and for his electives chose the history tract, taking classes on the history of Western confessions, the Russian Church Schism, as well as general and Russian secular history.[72] He

[69] Sovremenniki 1: 129.
[70] "Patriarshii kurs," 56-57.
[71] "Patriarshii kurs," 32.
[72] List of students who graduated in 1888, RGIA f. 797, op. 58, otd. 1, st. 2, d. 36, ll. 25ob-26; see also "Fakty biografii," BogSb No. 6, 77-79 (a publication of RGIA f. 802, op. 9, d. 36, l. 34-35), although there is a mistake on the "average grade for semester papers" and "average grade for preaching," which should be 4.27 and 4.56 respectively; for a photograph of this document, see also Zatekhin, 32-33.

wrote a thesis on “Quesnel and his relationship to Jansenism.” Upon graduation, Bellavin received the degree of candidate in theology with the right to advance to the Masters without further oral exams.[73]

[73] List of students, RGIA f. 797, op. 58, otd. 1, st. 2, d. 36, ll. 25ob-26; “Fakty biografii,” BogSb No. 6, 79.