

Revolution and the Russian Orthodox Church: Cheliabinsk in 1917

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The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
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## ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Department of History

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In 1917 the Cheliabinsk vicariate, similar to the larger Russian Orthodox Church, supported and was financially bound to a regime inclined to act in its own interest, ignoring those of the Church. Hence, the Church and the clergy welcomed the February Revolution as an opportunity to dissociate from the regime, to form a bond with the Provisional Government, and to enact a plethora of long deferred reforms, the most important of which was involving the laity in Church governance. The Cheliabinsk assembly adopted a radical social and administrative program, supporting peasant and worker demands, calling for the reorganization and decentralization of Church administration, and affording the laity greater authority in the parish. Despite the assembly's popular program, its position on the increasingly unpopular war, strategically

placed caveats deferring social reform until the war's conclusion, and its inability to address parish finances proved detrimental to the Church.

The social, economic, and military crises of 1917 underscored these points of the Church program and accentuated the chasm between the Church and its parishioners. Over the spring and summer of 1917 the Church and clergy became conservative and reactionary, using all available means to support the war effort, to protect their assets and future interests, and to promote the reinstatement of authority and order. These positions were unpopular and alienated impatient, war-weary parishioners, who wanted radical reform now, not a return to order. Revolution also seeped into the Church, especially at the parish level, as parishioners, working within the confines of parish administrative reforms, refused to fund Church initiatives, expelled unpopular priests, elected priests subservient to lay authority, and established their own independent parishes free from diocesan authority. The episcopate, weakened by the events of 1917, provided little resistance to lay assertiveness. Thus by early fall, the disestablishment of diocesan authority was largely complete. The revolution had led to democratization, laicization, and decentralization of Church administrative power, as well as a proliferation of lay agendas as popular religion dominated the post-revolutionary countryside much to the dismay of Bolsheviks, who thought religion would wither away.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction:	1
Historiography	4
Sources	7
Imperial Cheliabinsk: A Trans-Siberian Chicago	8
Orthodoxy under the <i>Ancien Regime</i>	12
Parish Issues	20
Politics	23
The Great War	24
Conclusion	26
2. Cheliabinsk: February and April:	27
The “Cheliabinsk Variant”	27
The February Revolution in <i>Vedomosti</i>	28
From <i>Vedomosti</i> to <i>Vestnik</i>	31
Conclusion	33
3. The Cheliabinsk Council:	35
Preparations for the First Assembly of Clergy and Laity	36
Composition	37
Political and Social Questions	39
Church-State Relations	44
Parish Reform	49
Educational Reform	53
Ecclesiastical Schools	57
Parish and Economic Reform	57
Conclusion	60
4. Cheliabinsk: April to Revolution:	62
Revolution in Cheliabinsk and the Church	63
Relationship with the <i>Ancien Regime</i> and the Provisional Government	64

<i>Vestnik</i> and the War	68
<i>Vestnik</i> and Political Issues	73
Political Events in <i>Vestnik</i>	77
Parish Reforms and its Consequences	80
Parish Vacancies in the Cheliabinsk <i>Uezd</i>	84
Disintegration of Order in the Parish	88
Clergy's Response	90
Cheliabinsk-Orenburg Disputes	92
Education	96
Conclusion	96
5. Cheliabinsk after October	98
Solidifying the Revolution	98
The Cheliabinsk Church and the Revolution	99
Conclusion	102
6. Conclusion	103
7. Bibliography	106

## Lists of Tables

Table 1: Cheliabinsk Population 1795-1917	10
Table 2: New Clergy vacancies in the Cheliabinsk <i>Uezd</i> per Month	84
Table 3: Total Vacancies in Cheliabinsk between Revolutions	87

## List of Abbreviations, Transliterated Terms, and Translation Equivalents

<i>fortochkami</i>	a criminal group which took advantage of open windows to pilfer goods
<i>fortochka</i>	small hinged window used to cool houses in summer
<i>Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF)</i>	State Archives of the Russian Federation, Moscow
<i>grekh bogoborchestva</i>	rebellion of sin
<i>iuridicheskoe litso</i>	juridical face
<i>Kornilovshchina</i>	Kornilov Affair
<i>kafedra episkopov</i>	office of bishops
<i>oblast</i>	district
<i>Orenburgskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti (OEV)</i>	“Orenburg Diocesan Gazette”
<i>Orenburgskii tserkovno-obshchestvennyi vestnik (OTs-OV)</i>	“Orenburg Church-Societal Messenger”
<i>pereselencheskii punkt</i>	resettlement point
<i>sobornost'</i>	conciliarism
<i>Soiuznaia mysl'</i>	“Union Thought”
<i>uezd</i>	district
<i>ustroenie Tserkvi</i>	Church building
<i>zakon bozhii</i>	divine law
<i>zemstvo</i>	local self government

## Revolution and the Russian Orthodox Church: Cheliabinsk in 1917

### 1. Introduction

The Cheliabinsk vicariate,<sup>1</sup> similar to the larger Russian Orthodox Church, entered 1917<sup>2</sup> financially tied to a regime disposed to act in its own interests and not those of the Church.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the Church and clergy welcomed the February Revolution and viewed it as a great opportunity to enact a number of necessary and long-deferred reforms. The Church, now free of state tutelage, took steps to dissociate the Church from the regime, to form a relationship with the new Provisional Government, and to enact radical reform in the parish by returning to conciliarism (*sobornost'*) and by involving the

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<sup>1</sup> The Cheliabinsk vicariate was a subunit of the Orenburg diocese; it reflected the Church's attempt to improve diocesan administration, first and foremost, by creating vicariates and thereby enabling closer, more effective diocesan administration.

<sup>2</sup> The dating in this essay is according to the pre-revolutionary Julian Calendar, which in 1917 lagged 13 days behind the Gregorian Calendar used in the West.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Gregory L. Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution: A Documentary Social History of Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 129-40, 228-238; Gregory L. Freeze, "All Power to the Parish? The Problems and Politics of Church Reform in Late Imperial Russia," in *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia*, ed. Madhavan K. Palat (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 174-208; Gregory L. Freeze, "Subversive Piety: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 68: 2 (June 1996): 308-12; Gregory L. Freeze, "Church and Politics in Late Imperial Russia: Crisis and Radicalization of the Clergy," in *Russia Under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion 1894-1917*, ed. Anna Geifman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 271-95; John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State 1917-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 3-20; Dmitrii Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982 vo.1* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 11-19; M. A. Babkin, "Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' v nachale xx veka i ee otnoshenie k sverzheniiu monarkhii v Rossii" (avtoreferat, Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni M. V. Lomonosova, 2007), 3-20; V. S. Bozhe, "Materialy k istorii tserkovno religioznoi zhizni Cheliabinskka 1917-1937," in *Cheliabinsk neizvestnyi 2* (Cheliabinsk: Tsentr istoriko-kul'turnogo nasledia goroda Cheliabinska, 1996), 107-9.

laity in Church governance.<sup>4</sup> Despite the Church's stance on various popular issues, its positions regarding the war, the agrarian question, and parish finances proved unpopular and detrimental to the Church.<sup>5</sup>

As the spring and summer of 1917 progressed, the political chasm between the local church and parishioners became more striking. The Church's support for the war put it in direct conflict with the majority of its war-weary parishioners, who rejected Church pleas to increase war-time production. In addition, Church attempts to curb desertion and promote army discipline had little effect. Furthermore, the Church's support of a deferral of agrarian reform until authorized by the Provisional Government frustrated impatient peasants, who wanted land immediately. Clerical exhortations did little to spur on war production, curtail desertion, or dissuade peasants from seizing landowner, monastery, and Church property. The Church's alignment with the foundering Provisional Government was also quite damaging. The Miliukov Affair, the July Days, the July offensive, and the *Kornilovshchina*, as well as the Provisional

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<sup>4</sup> P. G. Rogoznyi, "Tserkovnaia revoliutsiia i vybory arkhieriev v 1917 godu," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 7 (2004): 275-322; M. A. Babkin, "Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi na sverzhenie monarkhii v Rossii," *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Serii VII, Istorii*, no. 1 (2006): 70-90; M. A. Babkin, "Ierarkhi Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* no. 3 (2005): 109-24; M. A. Babkin, "Dukhovenstvo vostorzhenno privetstvuet v litse vashem svobodnuiu Rossiiu," in *Istoricheskii arkhiv* no. 4 (Moscow: Izd-vo, 2005): 115-21; M. A. Babkin, "Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva v kontekste obshchetserkovnoi politiki. Mart 1917 g.," in *Ural'skie Viriukovskie chteniia: sbornik nauchnykh statei* vol. 1 pt. 2 (2003): 210-19; M. A. Babkin, "Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo Rossiiskoi Pravoslavnoi tserkvi i sverzhenie monarkhii v 1917 godu," *Voprosy istorii*, no.6 (2003): 59-65; Babkin, "Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' v nachale xx veka," 3-44; M. G. Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale v period velikikh potriasenii, 1917-1922 g.* (Perm: Permskii gos. Pedagog. Universitet, 2004), 2-33; Gregory L. Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917: Revolution in the Church," (paper presented at the National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), Washington D.C., November 16, 2006), 5-11; The AAASS is now the Association for Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES).

<sup>5</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 41; Babkin, "Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo Rossiiskoi Pravoslavnoi tserkvi," 65-70; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 30-2.

Government's policies all set the parishioners against the government and its clerical allies in the Church.<sup>6</sup>

Even the Church's parish reform policies proved problematic. The program of parish reforms had little financial support. The Church preferred that the program have funding, but the Provisional Government—engaged in an expensive war—was hardly in a position to assume the task.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the Provisional Government, urged on by popular radicalism, began to contest Church interests and declined to defend the Church's property and assets.<sup>8</sup> This meant that parishioners would be responsible for funding Church reform. The clergy assumed that parishioners would agree to fund these ventures since they were participatory members in the process of administration, but this did not prove to be the case.<sup>9</sup>

Funding was not the only problem with the parish reforms, they also had a number of unintended consequences. Involving parishioners in administration divided the Church and weakened the episcopate: the upper levels of administration were rendered powerless, unable to control the parish, while the laity usurped power at the parish level. Above all, the laity were eager to choose priests and determine their material support—a dependency that impelled priests to acquiesce to popular Orthodoxy, regardless of the requests of the official Church.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, some parishes in the Orenburg diocese completely defected from the diocese and established their own independent entities free

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<sup>6</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 41; Babkin, "Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo Rossiiskoi Pravoslavnoi tserkvi," 65-70; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 107-50; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 30-2; Bozhe, "Materialy," 118-121.

<sup>7</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 35; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 35; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 31-3.

<sup>9</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 35; Babkin, "Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo," 66; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 107-50.

<sup>10</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan assemblies in 1917," 34, 36-40; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 107-50; Babkin, "Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo," 66-69.

from diocesan authority.<sup>11</sup> In short, the parish reform resulted in an assertive peasantry, who emasculated and imposed their will on the impotent episcopate.<sup>12</sup>

### Historiography

Although much western scholarship exists on the Church in Imperial Russia and the Soviet era, far less scholarship addresses the Church during the Great War and revolutionary period because historians have instead focused on the “great men” and the popular classes during the war and revolutions. Historians of the Orthodox clergy have addressed the revolutionary Church briefly, but mainly in the introduction of their works, which typically deal primarily with the Soviet period in a broader sense.<sup>13</sup> Historians, who have examined 1917, have tended to study the All-Russian Church Council, which convened on 15 August, by which time for all intents and purposes the Church had lost control of the parish, rendering many of the council’s decisions less relevant. These centric studies have largely ignored the “extraordinary” local assemblies that convened across the empire and defined Church policy, administration, and governance from February onwards. George Kosar’s study on the All-Russian Council is intriguing because he details the preparations for the council. Yet, Kosar’s research examines these

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<sup>11</sup> “Otkrytie prikhodov,” *Orenburg tserkovno-obshchestvennye vestnik* [hereafter *OTs-OV*], No. 37: 4. (*OTs-OV* was formerly published as *Orenburgskie eparkhial’nye vedomosti*. All references are to the “neofitsial’naia chast” unless otherwise indicated as of. ch. [ofitsial’naia chast]); “Otkrytiye prikhodov,” *OTs-OV*, No. 38: 4; “Otkrytiye prikhodov,” *OTs-OV*, No. 43: 4; “Otkrytiye prikhodov,” *OTs-OV*, No. 45: 4; “Komandirovanie v prikhod,” *OTs-OV*, No. 46: 4; “Komandirovanie v prikhod,” *OTs-OV*, No. 47: 4; “Otkrytiye prikhodov,” *OTs-OV*, No. 48: 4; “Komandirovanie v prikhod,” *OTs-OV*, No. 50: 4.

<sup>12</sup> Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 39-41.

<sup>13</sup> For examples see Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution 1905-1946* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 1-38; Young *Power and the Sacred*, 11-49. These studies provide a social background of the church before and during 1917. Pospelovskii, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 11-19; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 3-26. John S. Curtiss and Dmitri Pospelovskii, two prominent church historians, only briefly mention the assemblies, but indicate many issues confronting the Church and portray the period of the diocesan assemblies as one of radical liberal reform in the Church.

preparations from the Synod's perspective, making it more difficult to discern the popular euphoric practices that sieged the parish.<sup>14</sup> Gregory L. Freeze details the events of 1917 at the parish level. He focuses on the euphoric, democratic, and revolutionary nature of the revolution in the Church and on the decentralization of Church authority. Freeze extends his analysis into the Civil War period, and contends that when the Bolsheviks issued their decree proclaiming separation of church and state in 1918, the Synod and episcopates had already fallen from power. Parish power had been usurped by local parishes, and in particular the parishioners.<sup>15</sup>

Recent Russian scholarship has finally begun to recognize the importance of the Church in the revolutionary period.<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Babkin has been particularly productive: he has analyzed local assemblies (terming them a “revolution in the Church.”)<sup>17</sup> and demonstrated how most bishops ceased to support the tsarist regime, and in fact welcomed the revolution as an opportunity to make much needed reforms.<sup>18</sup> P. Ia. Leont'ev's work is of particular importance because he provides a social consideration of the members at the local assemblies through an analysis of the competing agendas of liberals, conservatives, priests, lower clergy, and laity.<sup>19</sup> M. G. Nechaev and V. S. Bozhe

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<sup>14</sup> George Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy in Crisis and Revolution: The Church Council of 1917-1918,” (Ph.D. diss. Brandeis University, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917.”

<sup>16</sup> This trend obviously stems from the fact that the anti-religious scholarship of the Soviet period ignored the Church or portrayed it as a counter-revolutionary bastion. Even when these restrictions were lifted researchers often continued to disregard the Church, either because of deeply ingrained anti-religious sentiment or because they lacked the expertise to engage this once-taboo subject.

<sup>17</sup> Babkin, “Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 61.

<sup>18</sup> Babkin, “Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 61; Babkin, “Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 70-90; Babkin, “Ierarkhi Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 109-24; Babkin, “dukhovenstvo vostorzhenno privetstvet,” 115-121; Babkin, “Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva,” 210-19; Babkin, “Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 59-65; Babkin, “Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' v nachale xx veka,” 3-49; Babkin has also compiled a collection of sources in M.A. Babkin *Rossiiskoe dukhovenstvo i sverzhenie monarkhii v 1917 godu: Materialy i arkhivnye dokumenty po istorii Russkoi pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* (Indrik, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> P. Ia. Leont'ev, “Revoliutsiia v tserkvi.”

have focused more specifically on the Church in the southern Urals, with Bozhe concentrating specifically on Cheliabinsk. Bozhe, more of a Church historian, has detailed the decentralization of the Cheliabinsk Church during the revolutionary period, particularly examining Serafim's attempt to establish a separate Cheliabinsk diocese.<sup>20</sup> Nechaev—who began his research in the Soviet 1980s—has examined counter-revolutionary activities in the Church, but also provides a detailed description of revolutionary “Church building” in the Urals.<sup>21</sup> Both scholars provide pioneering insight into the revolutionary period, but much research remains to be done, especially at the diocese and parish level: religious politics and practices were particularistic and varied enormously from one locale to the next.

This study examines one such locale—the Church in Cheliabinsk and its response to the 1917 revolutions. This study also seeks to offer a fresh perspective, going beyond the usual focus on reform to examine how both the parish clergy and laity sought to gain a new role in Church administration, to have political input, and to ensure financial support. Previous studies have been limited to the Church's decisions; this study will critically assess reforms to discern their potential problems, impact, and feasibility in the rapidly changing social and political climate. The result is a new interpretation of the Church in 1917 showing at once the radical thrust of its reforms and their limitations and negative reception among parishioners.

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<sup>20</sup> Bozhe, “Materialy,” 107-98; V. S. Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie, vikarii Orenburgskoi eparkhii (1908-1918)* (Cheliabinsk: Tsentr istoriko-kul'turnogo nasledia goroda Cheliabinska, 2003); Cheliabinsk did become an independent diocese in September 1918, but by then Serafim was no longer a bishop.

<sup>21</sup> Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*.

## Sources

This paper makes extensive use of the “Orenburg Diocesan Gazette” (*Orenburgskie eparkhial’nye vedomosti*),<sup>22</sup> retitled in 1917 as “Orenburg Church-Societal Messenger” (*Orenburgskii tserkovno-obshchestvennyi vestnik*)<sup>23</sup> and the archival transcript of the Cheliabinsk Assembly of Clergy and Laity. *Vedomosti* and *Vestnik* will provide the main narrative for the study. Of course there are some limitations to this source. First, it is difficult to know who read the paper, but it is likely that the majority of its readership consisted of clergymen. That no doubt explains why the articles were aimed primarily at clergymen and mainly express their concerns. Second, the paper exercised editorial control and censorship at the very least by excluding pieces dramatically opposed to Church policy. In addition, most authors were archpriests and hence the paper can at best only indirectly reflect the opinions of village priests. Nevertheless, the diocesan press is an important source. Under the pressure of parish subscribers, it made a concerted effort to address the needs and aspirations of its readers. These papers also track Church policy, the opinions of the clergy, changes in clerical rhetoric, and the clerical perspective on the events of 1917. Diocesan journals also gave local priests guidance on what they should say to their parishioners, and therefore provide information on what parishioners should have heard—whether the clergy adhered to the paper’s requests or whether parishioners decoded the information the way the Church intended is harder to discern. That said, lay response is apparent both from clerical concerns and published data on such matters as clerical vacancies. The Assembly of Clergy and Laity of the Cheliabinsk vicariate, which was attended by the bishop,

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<sup>22</sup> This paper incorporates issues 1-12 for 1917 and, for data on clerical vacancies issues (1-52) for 1913 and (1-52) for 1916.

<sup>23</sup> This study uses the available issues for 1917 (2,3-6, 9, 10, 12-28, 31-34, 36-41, 43-51).

archpriests, priests, deacons, sacristans, and laity, corroborates views articulated in *Vedomosti* and *Vestnik*. This confirms that the two papers broadly reflect the prevailing views of parish priests, not just the archpriests at the lofty position.

### **Imperial Cheliabinsk: A Trans-Siberian Chicago**

The city of Cheliabinsk was founded in 1736, along the Miass River and Ob River basins on the site of the Bashkir settlement of Seliaba (Cheliaba). The city remained small, rural, and agrarian until the 1890s when construction on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and a railway to Ekaterinburg began to transform the region.<sup>24</sup> After the construction of the railroad, the city quickly became a burgeoning transport, trading, and communication hub from which grain from western Siberia was disseminated to western Russia. At the turn of the century Cheliabinsk was the largest agricultural center in the region. It had also expanded industrial production due to its proximity to mineral deposits in the Urals and the Trans-Siberian Railroad (which reduced transportation costs).<sup>25</sup> By the early twentieth century Cheliabinsk had several metallurgical plants, 15 tanneries, and 3 railroad depots. The city was also home to 1,500 workers, whose number grew exponentially as Russian industrialization increased in the twentieth century and as the Cheliabinsk population tripled between 1900 and 1914.<sup>26</sup> Urbanization and

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<sup>24</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia izdatel'stva, 1926-47), s.v.

“Cheliabinsk”; *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauz-Efrona*. (St. Petersburg: Semenovskaia Tipolitografia, 1890-1907) s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>25</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>26</sup> V. M. Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia moego goroda* (Cheliabinsk: Izd-vo Cheliabinskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1999), 133.

industrialization occurred so quickly in Cheliabinsk that one ethnographer described it as a “Trans-Siberian Chicago.”<sup>27</sup>

Goods were not the only items transported on the railroad: people also travelled along the railroad to reach the virgin lands of western Siberia. Rapid migration led to the construction of a resettlement point (*pereselencheskii punkt*) in Cheliabinsk, where numerous people (up to 30,000 people at one time) stayed on their journey to Siberia. Between the years of 1894 and 1910 more than 4 million people travelled through the resettlement point.<sup>28</sup> This exposed Cheliabinsk to an assortment of people, some of whom chose to stay in the region. During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and World War I (1914-1918) Cheliabinsk also served as a key junction for mobilizing or demobilizing troops.<sup>29</sup> With the troops came a number of new attitudes and ideas, including liberal and radical views. The resettlement point also transformed Cheliabinsk into a religious hub for the Orthodox Church, which viewed the resettlement point as a prime opportunity to missionize among believers and non-believers.<sup>30</sup>

Growth in the trade, communication, metallurgical, agricultural, and transport industries in Cheliabinsk naturally facilitated rapid urbanization: the city’s population increased from 19,998 (1897)<sup>31</sup> to 67,304 (1916),<sup>32</sup> but then dropped to 46,900 in 1917

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<sup>27</sup> Aleksandr Stanislavovich Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek* (Cheliabinsk: Krokus, 2006), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Lennart Samuelson, *Tankograd. The Formation of a Soviet Company Town: Cheliabinsk 1900s-1950s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 110; Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinska*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 110.

<sup>30</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 10-1.

<sup>31</sup> Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 133; This figure is listed as 18,891 in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauz-Efrona*. The figure is rounded to 20,000 in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*.

<sup>32</sup> Tarsov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 110.

(see Table 1).<sup>33</sup> The rapid growth of Cheliabinsk led to a number of institutional changes and improvements; by the turn of the century, for example, the city had acquired many basic services essential to urban centers, including paved streets, electricity, and running water.<sup>34</sup> The first decade of the twentieth century was a “golden age” in Cheliabinsk, which even emerged as a provincial capital for the arts.<sup>35</sup> By 1911 Cheliabinsk also had three hospitals, a theatre, a cinema, a city and state bank, 1,500 shops, and four schools (three state schools and one parish school). These developments corresponded to the rise of a new middle stratum of merchants and bourgeois professionals.<sup>36</sup> But the same cultural flowering made class differences more visible, as high-fashioned bourgeois

**Table 1: Cheliabinsk Population, 1795-1917**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>
1795	2,564
1861	5,115
1891	13,572
1897	19,998
1900	26,657
1908	60,156
1916	67,304
1917	46,900

<sup>33</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk”; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 110; Population decline was fairly common in Russia during 1917 due to a number of workers leaving decimated and chaotic cities and returning to the countryside to farm.

<sup>34</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>35</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauz-Efrona*. s.v. “Cheliabinsk”; Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 34.

shared streets and sidewalks with workers, peasants, and artisans. Social differences became especially acute when famine struck Cheliabinsk in 1911.

All this accelerated development inevitably fostered the growth of liberal, secular, anti-autocratic, and socialist ideas. The first labor organization, the Ural Labor Union Organization, appeared in 1896, and seven years later Marxists established a branch of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). The 1905 Revolution unleashed an unprecedented wave of political activism, including strikes of railroad, electric, telegraph, and water plant workers (March to December, 1905).<sup>37</sup> The city-wide strike on 11 October was the largest and most political: workers rushed into the streets with red flags shouting “Down with the War,” “Down with Autocracy,” and “Greetings to the revolution.” They demanded an eight-hour work day, a Constituent Assembly, and abolition of the death penalty by military tribunals.<sup>38</sup> Repression of the revolution in 1906-7 did not completely eradicate political dissent; strikes and politically-motivated disorders persisted, if at a lower level of frequency. In 1907 and 1908 the city reported several more strikes,<sup>39</sup> probably triggered by soldiers unhappy with the protracted demobilization from the Russo-Japanese War that continued to drag on.<sup>40</sup>

The outbreak of World War I elicited popular support in Cheliabinsk, as in most other parts of the Russian Empire, but by early 1915 that “union with the tsar” gave way to rising discontent in society. Cheliabinsk was a wartime center for training recruits and convalescing soldiers; the latter in particular, made townspeople acutely aware of the

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<sup>37</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>38</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk”; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 146.

<sup>39</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>40</sup> Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917)* vol.1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton university Press, 1979), 60-64.

catastrophic defeats and casualties of the war.<sup>41</sup> As elsewhere, the people of Cheliabinsk welcomed the February Revolution and supported the Provisional Government, but that support quickly faded. By the late summer of 1917, indeed, over two-thirds of soviets opposed the Provisional Government.<sup>42</sup> Cheliabinsk soon felt the full impact of rising class discontent and radicalism.

The social composition of the Cheliabinsk district (*uezd*) was quite different from that of the city. Although the city had a large number of workers, merchants, and professionals,<sup>43</sup> the surrounding district consisted almost exclusively of peasants, who engaged in agriculture and produced grain for shipment on the railway.<sup>44</sup> In 1897 the district had a population of 413,072 people in 427 villages.<sup>45</sup> The vast majority were Russian and Orthodox, but the district also had a sizable Bashkir Muslim population (approximately 10 percent of the total population).<sup>46</sup> Yet, while predominantly composed of peasants, the Cheliabinsk district and vicariate were closely connected to urbanization, modernization, secularization, and liberal and socialist ideas because of the railway.

### **Orthodoxy under the *Ancien regime***

From the city's founding in 1736 Cheliabinsk was primarily Orthodox. In the last half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century Cheliabinsk built an

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<sup>41</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. "Cheliabinsk"; Lennart Samuelson, *Tankograd*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. "Cheliabinsk."

<sup>43</sup> Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 135.

<sup>44</sup> *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauz-Efrona*. s.v. "Cheliabinsk uezd."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

ecclesiastical school (1779), a seminary (1836), and a female diocesan school.<sup>47</sup> Due to Cheliabinsk's vast ecclesiastical infrastructure, Antonii, the bishop of Orenburg and Ufa, went to the Holy Synod in 1858 and proposed that vicariates be established in Cheliabinsk and Orenburg. The Holy Synod rejected the proposal, and instead created two independent dioceses in Orenburg and Ufa. The radical decision made the question of establishing a vicariate in the region seem impossible for the next half century.<sup>48</sup>

Half a century later the scenario was much different. The Trans-Siberian Railroad, which passed through Cheliabinsk, and the establishment of the resettlement point transformed Cheliabinsk into a burgeoning city that had many missionizing and confessional responsibilities.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, the number of churches in the area increased quickly to missionize to the growing population and the settlers: from 1872, the Orthodox population of the Cheliabinsk district increased from 300,000 with 225 churches and a priest to parishioner ratio of 1 to 1,333.3 to 1,300,000 with over 800 churches and a priest to parishioner ratio of 1 to 1625 in 1908.<sup>50</sup> Although the Orthodox population grew exponentially, Church growth kept up for the most part. Of course, population growth was not equally distributed; the city, and in particular the resettlement point, undoubtedly had higher priest parishioner ratios. Communication problems accompanied this rapid growth: as Cheliabinsk became an important religious and missionizing hub, dependable communication and management were of utmost importance, yet proved difficult, since Cheliabinsk was large and 885 versts (588.4 miles) from Orenburg, the diocesan seat.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, on 10 September 1908 Cheliabinsk became the first vicariate of the Orenburg

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<sup>47</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

diocese, and on the 14 September 1908 Dionisii (Sosnovskii) became the first bishop of the Cheliabinsk vicariate.

Prior to the February Revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Cheliabinsk Church faced a host of problems:

- Church-state relations;
- Parish (organization, power, finances);
- Seminary (finances, curriculum);
- Monasticism (property, role);
- Parish clergy (economic support, status, role);
- Missions (especially concerned with Old Belief and Sectarians)<sup>52</sup>

Of all them, two seemed of particular importance: Church-state relations and the parish.

The Church's relationship to the state was a long festering issue, but grew especially acute from the mid nineteenth century. Traditionally, the Church corroborated the authority of the tsar through prayers and sermons and in return expected to receive special privileges and preferential laws.<sup>53</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century, however, as the state sought to make accommodations to other religious groups in this multi-national state, the Church found that the government was more disposed to act in the interests of *raison d'état* than to protect the special rights of Orthodoxy. While the government was still disposed to exploit Orthodox sensibilities (most dramatically, in the wave of canonizations under Nicholas II),<sup>54</sup> the regime showed an increasing tendency to recognize the rights of the non-Orthodox—a policy that culminated in the Manifesto of

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<sup>52</sup> Kosar, "Russian Orthodoxy," 52.

<sup>53</sup> For an overview of the Church prior to the revolution see John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 3-26; Dmitrii Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982* vol.1 (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 11-19; Freeze, *The Parish Clergy*; Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve*;

<sup>54</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, "Subversive Piety: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (June 1996): 308-350.

17 April 1905, which granted freedom of religious conscience.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the Duma Monarchy did not exhibit any particular fondness for the Church—continuing to make concessions to sectarians and Old Believers, resisting increases in budgetary allocations, subjecting parish schools to sharp criticism, and hinting at the need for the state to absorb such schools into the Ministry of Education.<sup>56</sup> Although still officially the first confession, the government restricted the Church’s political support.

The Church had no realistic solution to the tenuous and one-sided relationship between the Church and the state. While even the episcopate desired to diminish the authority that the state had over the Church, the Church was financially dependent on the state. Still the Church proposed some solutions to this matter. Most posited that this issue could be resolved by convening an All-Russian Church Council, which would debate a number of issues, including the issue of Church-state relations. However, this was unlikely to garner any results: the state had no reason to cede any authority to the Church, and the Church was not in a position of power to dictate this. Radical priests in St. Petersburg suggested alternate forms of Government. This would undoubtedly alter the relationship between Church and state, but this would not necessarily lead to a better relationship between the Church and the state. It may have freed the Church from the tutelage of the state, but as the Constituent Assembly had illustrated, it too was ill-disposed to the desires of the Church. In the end, the Church was financially tied to the state and was therefore not in any position to alter its relationship toward the state.

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<sup>55</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 6-7; Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy,” 8.

<sup>56</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 15.

A second critical issue was parish reform.<sup>57</sup> In pre-Petrine times the parish had almost unrestricted authority in selecting priests and in parish economic issues, with diocesan authority being relatively weak. However, over the course of the eighteenth century the Church expanded its administrative infrastructure; increasingly, it was the bishop—not the parish—that determined appointments and regulated the religious life of the laity.<sup>58</sup> By the early nineteenth century the bishop appointed priests and extracted a sizeable share of parish revenues to finance diocesan needs (above all, ecclesiastical schools). As a result, the Church seemed haughty and bureaucratic, alienated and marginalized parishioners; yet made the latter almost entirely responsible for the material support of the clergy and local church.<sup>59</sup> In addition, anticlericalism intensified, especially in the post-reform era as parish expectations about their rights and role significantly increased, reinforcing the social gap between themselves and the parish clergy. Social tensions were not limited to priests and parishioners; no less important were long-standing conflicts between bishops (monastic elite) and the rank-and-file white clergy, and conflicts within the white clergy (given the huge educational and economic separating priests from the deacons and sacristans). Stagnant state financial allocations, which did not adjust to inflation, also frustrated the clergy, who saw themselves as closer to the gentry and professional classes than to the peasantry. During the war the clergy's material position was particularly arduous, as they found it difficult to extract funds from parishioners, making what had already been a troublesome and intermittent source of

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<sup>57</sup> For information on the parish prior to the February Revolution see Freeze, *The Parish*; Gregory L. Freeze, "All Power to the Parish?," 174-208; Freeze, "Church and Politics in Late Imperial Russia," 271-295; Young, *Power and Sacred in Revolutionary Russia*, 11-49.

<sup>58</sup> Kosar, "Russian Orthodoxy," 5-6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

income scarcer.<sup>60</sup> As a result, staffing clerical positions with qualified persons proved problematic and left the parish with many uninterested and uneducated clergy.<sup>61</sup>

Incursions by unknowledgeable and disinterested state officials over the previous three centuries crippled the parish administratively, economically, and socially. Whether these results were intentional or unintentional, they had created cleavages between the clergy and their parishioners, and had left the parish in a disorganized and fragmented state on the eve of the revolution.<sup>62</sup>

These problems, and specifically economic problems, were particularly acute in Cheliabinsk. Cheliabinsk, and in fact the diocese, as a whole, was in a desperate situation due to poor diocesan governance and the extensive concentration of diocesan power and financial resources in Orenburg.<sup>63</sup> This was on display at the XVI All Diocesan Council of Clergy (1911), when the council denied the Cheliabinsk delegation the funds to construct a second women's school, the delegation posited that since 1896 Orenburg allocated 336,378 rubles to support its schools, while Cheliabinsk schools only received 4,501 rubles. Cheliabinsk was not allowed to construct the school,<sup>64</sup> but afterward diocesan allocations were leveled to some extent (in 1917 Orenburg schools received 192,722 rubles and Cheliabinsk schools received 74,210 rubles);<sup>65</sup> however, it proved difficult for Cheliabinsk to overcome years of mismanagement. These events and hostilities between Orenburg and Cheliabinsk began fostering arguments that Cheliabinsk should become an independent diocese, particularly because of its important role as a

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<sup>60</sup> Freeze, *The Parish Clergy*.

<sup>61</sup> Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> Kosar, "Russian Orthodoxy," 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*; Orenburg provided for Cheliabinsk as if it were the small town it was in 1872, not the provincial capital that it had become by the twentieth century.

<sup>64</sup> Kosar, "Russian Orthodoxy," 2.

<sup>65</sup> "Radost' dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, No. 18: 4.

missionizing and confessional center for the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the Cheliabinsk Church and the clergy approached February disconnected from Orenburg and the diocese. Frustrations were not limited to the Church: in 1916, the Orenburg Consistory's decision to raise the salary of bishops to 3,000 rubles, closer to that of teachers and the mayor,<sup>67</sup> infuriated parishioners because the raise took funds away from schools, to the indignation of parishioners, which was all the more dubious during the war period, when many had to sacrifice.

The Church proposed several solutions to parish problems. It discussed reorganizing on the basis of the conciliar principle to allow greater lay involvement and more efficient decentralized leadership. In addition, the Church proposed that priests needed to become more active in the parish to improve priest-parishioner relations, to ensure proper Orthodoxy was followed, and to modernize the Church, the parish, and the clerical ranks, involving them in secular matters. The Church also set out to unify the stratified clergy, forming one

In order to revitalize local church life, increase control over the clergy, and manage educational organs Cheliabinsk established a locally based “office of bishops” (*kafedra episkopov*). Attempts to enliven the parish were unsuccessful because many roadblocks made reform unrealizable before and during the war.<sup>68</sup> First and foremost, most regular clergy opposed changing the organization of the parish, especially the idea

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<sup>66</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; The clergy had traditionally thought that they were closer in social class to the gentry. Yet, the nineteenth century brought a deterioration in clerical status. Clergy's salaries remained stagnant, not adjusting to inflation, and thus, the clergy was democratized. Yet, many clergymen still expected to live at or above the level of the emergent professional class.

<sup>68</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 16.

of giving the laity control over clerical appointments and finances.<sup>69</sup> Another roadblock to systematic reform was the high turnover among bishops after Dionosii: Sylvester served for three and a half months, and in turn Gabriel held the position for just six months.<sup>70</sup> Economics also placed limitations on reform, particularly during the war. Nevertheless, expectations rose when Serafim (Alexandrov) became the bishop of Cheliabinsk on 6 April 1916. Serafim was a missionary who had lived and worked in Cheliabinsk, and hence many thought he would be better attuned to the needs of the vicariate than previous bishops—many of whom had stronger connections to Orenburg than to Cheliabinsk.<sup>71</sup> Serafim was also a dynamic and eloquent speaker, a radical thinker, and was determined to reform the Church and the parish.<sup>72</sup> Even before the revolution, many Cheliabinsk elites within the Church were looking to invigorate parish life, throw off the close guardianship of the state, and make changes in the management of the Church.<sup>73</sup> Yet even if reform was achieved at the vicariate or diocesan level, it would have lacked state or Church support unless the reforms and their financial support were agreed upon at an all-Church council. The state would not permit and had not permitted the Church to convene such a council since the seventeenth century, and thus discussions of parish reform were relegated to debates between clergymen and articles in the diocesan press; systematic reforms would be deferred until the Church was permitted to convene a council or until the political system changed.

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<sup>69</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 16..

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 114.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 129-30.

## Parish Issues

Although parish reform was not the dominant issue of the Orenburg diocesan journal, parish issues received ample coverage. In addition, the journal advocated that clergymen purchase subscriptions for journals dealing solely with parish reform. One of the most important themes was that there needed to be better management of the rural clergy, who acted heterogeneously and were difficult to regulate and normalize because of their distance from administrative centers. The episcopate worried that their lack of control of the rural clergy led to numerous criticisms of unruly clergy that appeared in the secular press.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, the clergy sought to incorporate and standardize popular practices within the sphere of the church. The clergy realized popular practice was not going to cease and that its best attempt to maintain and monitor parishioner practice was to incorporate popular heterodox practices into Orthodoxy. Parish priests began to advocate popular practices that the clergy had once defined as heresy. In some circumstances, as is the case in the Orenburg diocese, the Church decided to provide financial support for the maintenance of local shrines.<sup>75</sup> The local church also discussed promoting the singing of hymns in Churches in order to increase lay involvement in services.<sup>76</sup> These appeals to popular practice were initiated to control and appease the lay masses.

The local church also attempted to deal with some of its most dire economic needs, particularly those of the parish clergy, whose material condition deteriorated over

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<sup>74</sup> "Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastyrei," *Orenburgskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* [Hereafter *OEV*], no. 1-2: 38.

<sup>75</sup> "Prikhodskaia zhizn'," *OEV*, no. 1-2: 36.

<sup>76</sup> "Sviashch. V. vl. Lebedev. Obshchee tserkovnoe penie. Narodno pevcheskie khory," *OEV*, no. 7-8: 130-4.

the nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup> To alleviate these woes dioceses, vicariates, and parishes pursued alternative methods of capital accumulation. Diocesan candle factories, which produced votive candles, proved the most popular. The Orenburg diocese had constructed its own candle factory in 1897.<sup>78</sup> In January 1917 the diocesan authorities built an apiary to alleviate financial burdens.<sup>79</sup> These alternative methods would hardly provide the clergy with enough capital to overcome its financial hardships, and unfortunately for the Church, the parish reforms it would propose only furthered its financial burden.

Another issue that was directly on the diocese's agenda was how to cope with the problem of parish schools. Traditionally, the Church received funds for Church schools and seminaries from the government; however, recently, the government had become less sympathetic to Church schools; the Duma even considered abolishing state funding for Church schools altogether.<sup>80</sup> The clergy insisted that it was the state's duty to finance the Church and its schools. Articles also entreated that Orthodoxy ("divine law" *zakon bozhii*) be taught in Russian schools since Russia was predominantly Orthodox.<sup>81</sup> This was an extremely important issue for the local clergy, who saw the school as the venue through which they could educate new generations of Orthodox Russians. In fact, Cheliabinsk subscribed to a bound journal focused solely on Church schools and their future.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Freeze, *The Parish Clergy*.

<sup>78</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskii*, 10; Also mentioned in "Pervyi svobodnyi s'ezd' dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii. Sedmoi den'," *OTs-OV*, no. 19:1.

<sup>79</sup> "Kak my zaveli paseku," *OEV*, no. 3-4: 47.

<sup>80</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 41; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 19-25.

<sup>81</sup> "Sredstvo k odnoveniiu prikhoda," *OEV*, no. 7-8: 120-130.

<sup>82</sup> Otkryta podpiska na 1917 g. na zhurnal' 'Khristianskoe chtenie,'" *OEV*, no. 3-4: 77-8; This same add was repeated in *Vedomosti* no. 5-6.

*Vedomosti* also included advertisements for *Voice of the Church* and *Parish Life*, two journals designed to direct clerical opinions regarding parish issues. The publication of these two journals was part of a pre-revolutionary expansion of secular and ecclesiastical print culture. Thus, *Vedomosti* was full of advertisements for these new journals, the majority of which directly discussed parish reform.<sup>83</sup> The advertisement for *Voice of the Church* claimed that the journal addressed a variety of topics: (1) modernity in the church; (2) pastoral management; (3) pastoral training; (4) the future of Church schools; (5) inter-clerical conflicts; (6) socialism; (7) sectarianism; (8) spiritualism; (9) atheism; (10) missionizing; (11) the Church and the family; (12) the Church and personal identity; (13) and the issue of modern science and literature.<sup>84</sup> The advertisement for *Parish Life* was much more in-depth on specific issues and conveyed the periodicals general opinions on those issues. The paper pronounced that it would focus on eight issues: (1) modern parish preaching; (2) questions of morality; (3) parish mission work; (4) schools and religious instruction; (5) parish charity; (6) fiction about parish life; (7) modern literature; (8) and sobriety.<sup>85</sup> Although the Church had not yet embarked on large-scale parish reforms, the issue already figured prominently in the diocesan press even before February.

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<sup>83</sup> “Prinimaetsia podpiska na ezhemesiachnyi tserkovno-obshchestvennyi, literaturnyi i nravstvenno-nazidatel’nyi zhurnal’. ‘Prihodskaia zhizn’,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 36-8; “Otkryta podpiska na 1917 god na ezhemesiachnyi tserkovno-obshchestvennyi zhurnal’. ‘Golos’ tserkvi,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 42-3; The add for “Prihodskaia zhizn” (“Parish Life”) was repeated in *Vedomosti* no.3-4.

<sup>84</sup> “Otkryta podpiska na 1917 god na ezhemesiachnyi tserkovno-obshchestvennyi zhurnal’. ‘Golos’ tserkvi,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 42-3.

<sup>85</sup> “Prinimaetsia podpiska na ezhemesiachnyi tserkovno-obshchestvennyi, literaturnyi i nravstvenno-nazidatel’nyi zhurnal’. ‘Prihodskaia zhizn’,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 36-8.

## Politics

The clergy were also involved politically and attempted to define their relationship to socialist parties. The pre-February journal excoriated socialism as a bastardization of Orthodoxy's own role "as the basis of social welfare for humanity."<sup>86</sup> Clergymen rejected the socialists' claim that the root of all society's problems rested in the existing structures of human societies. They argued that socialists advocated the use of violence to destroy autocracy, and hence the socialist theory of social welfare was invalid because at its very core it was destructive. The true path to social welfare was through religion and a devout faith in God and autocracy.<sup>87</sup>

Before February the clergy publically supported the tsar, even though his image was increasingly sullied by his connection with the war, Rasputin, and Alexandra, who many considered to be a German agent. Various scandalous papers published pornographic articles about the royal family, further besmirching the regime and the tsar. Yet, the clergy offered the tsar their complete support because of their connection to and financial dependence on the regime. The 1916 pastoral Christmas song, which should have been widely read at services across the diocese, praised the tsar and linked him to God:

Glory to God Almighty,  
Glory!  
Glory to Christ save us,  
Glory!  
Glory to the tsar, we are you faithful servants,

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<sup>86</sup> "Religiia, kak osnova obshchestvennogo blagosostoianiiia chelovechestva," *OEV*, no. 7-8: 111.

<sup>87</sup> *Bozhe, Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 111-9.

Glory!  
Glory to him, who has shown us the light!<sup>88</sup>

## The Great War

The issue most discussed by the diocesan press before February was the war. The church assumed a patriotic role, attempting to consecrate the war and the tsar in the minds of parishioners through public prayers.<sup>89</sup> This was a futile attempt to mobilize public opinion toward an unpopular war, with which the Church, clergy, and regime were closely identified. The ill-advised prayers only further bound the Church to the increasingly unpopular court and war. The diocesan journal disseminated prayers by Mefodii, the bishop of Orenburg, to be read at services, to stimulate support of the local clergy, and to convince parishioners of the sacredness of the war.<sup>90</sup> The prayers in December 1916 and early January 1917 celebrated the Russian soldier and the Russian population;<sup>91</sup> but by February, in response to the growing unrest in the army and on the

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<sup>88</sup> “Pastyrskaiia svirel’ na Rozhdestvo Khristovo,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 34.

<sup>89</sup> “Pastyrskaiia svirel’ na Rozhdestvo Khristovo,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 34; “Pis’mo Sostoiashchogo pod Vysochaiwim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Pokrovitel’otvom Vserossiiskogo Obshchestva pamiati voinov Russkoi armii pavshikh tekuiuuu voinu, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 3-4, of. ch.: 11-3; “Ot sostoiashchogo pod Vysochaishim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva pokrovitel’stvom Romanovskogo Komiteta,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 21-3; “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 97-100; “Kopiiia s Vyashchaishogo Eia Imperatorskogo Vysochestva, Velikoi Kniagini lizavety Feodorovny Avgusteishei Predsedatel’nktsy ratskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva, ot 25-go ianvaria 1917 goda za № 27, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva, Preosviashchenneishogo Mefodii, Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 7-8, of. ch.: 37-8.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> “Pastyrskaiia svirel’ na Rozhdestvo Khristovo,” *OEV*, no. 1-2: 34; “Pis’mo Sostoiashchogo pod vysochaiwim ego imperatorskogo velichestva Pokrovitel’otvom Vserossiiskogo Obshchestva pamiati voinov Russkoi armii pavshikh tekuiuuu voinu, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 3-4, of. ch.: 11-3.

home front, prayers became more imploratory, entreating the masses to support the war.<sup>92</sup> This shift is evident in prayers by Bishop Mefodii, himself. In December 1916 he issued a prayer remarking, “All of Russian society remembers the soldiers of the Russian army, who have not only found ready support in the hearts of many Russian citizens, but also the gracious approval of HIS IMPERIAL MAGESTY THE EMPEROR.”<sup>93</sup> By February Mefodii had changed his rhetoric from congratulatory to imploratory: “The motherland is calling you to her defense. Go and protect her.”<sup>94</sup> A few months later the papers completely abandoned any laudatory tone and instead criticized parishioners and even the soldiers.<sup>95</sup>

Prayers in support of the war also emphasized that it was natural to defend one’s country and that this was the Russian people’s duty. Mefodii repeatedly declared that to defend one’s homeland was as natural as defending oneself.<sup>96</sup> He also stressed that defending Russia was one’s patriotic duty, asserting “If you are sympathetic toward the Russian people, come to their aid with a deep sense of duty; make life easier for the

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<sup>92</sup> “Ot sostoiashchogo pod vysochaishim ego imperatorskogo velichestva pokrovitel’stvom Romanovskogo Komiteta,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 21-3; “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6 of. ch.: 97-100; “Kopiia s Vyiaschchaishogo Eia Imperatorskogo Vysochestva, Velikoi Kniagini lizavety Feodorovny Avgusteishei Predsedatel’nktsy ratorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva, ot 25-go ianvaria 1917 goda za № 27, na imia Ego Preosviashchenstva, Preosviashchenneishogo Mefodii, Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 7-8, of. ch.: 37-8.

<sup>93</sup> “Pis’mo Sostoiashchogo pod vysochaiwim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Pokrovitel’otvom Vserossiiskogo Obshchestva pamiati voinov Russkoi armii pavshikh tekuiuuuu voinu, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 3-4, of. ch.: 11.

<sup>94</sup> “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 97.

<sup>95</sup> “Na kraiu gibeli” *OTS-ov*, no. 28: 1; For an overview of the war front conditions see Wildman, *The End of the Imperial Army* vol. 1-2.

<sup>96</sup> “Pis’mo Sostoiashchogo pod vysochaiwim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Pokrovitel’otvom Vserossiiskogo Obshchestva pamiati voinov Russkoi armii pavshikh tekuiuuuu voinu, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 3-4, of. ch.: 11-3; “Ot sostoiashchogo pod vysochaishim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva pokrovitel’stvom Romanovskogo Komiteta,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 21-3; “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 97.

future generations of Russia.”<sup>97</sup> The Church also noted the sacred, humane, and just nature of the empire’s cause. In Mefodii’s words: “We along with other great nations are fighting for total ‘freedom’ and security of peoples, who are struggling and who shed blood so that justice and humanity can prevail over the enemy.”<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, the clergy asserted that even before February, Russians were fighting for freedom and justice against the evil and corrupt Germans. The sacredness of the Russian war effort did not mean that this fight for justice would be easy; for righteousness to prevail, the Church proclaimed that Russia would have to endure unprecedented hardships, which would fall predominantly on the shoulders of the Russian people. When praying about the war, Mefodii made a concerted effort to stress the righteousness of the war on the battlefield and the home front, that the war was natural, a personal and societal duty, sacred, and above all that God and the tsar supported the war effort.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusion

The pre-revolutionary Church’s support for the tsar and the war proved to be detrimental. Of course, privately, many clergy were ill-disposed toward Nicholas, who had undermined many of the Church’s privileges and who bore responsibility for a

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<sup>97</sup> “Ot sostoiashchogo pod vysochaishim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva pokrovitel’stvom Romanovskogo Komiteta,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 21.

<sup>98</sup> “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 99.

<sup>99</sup> “Pis’mo Sostoiashchogo pod vysochaiwim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Pokrovitel’otvom Vserossiiskogo Obshchestva pamiati voinov Russkoi armii pavshikh tekuiuuu voinu, na imia Ego Preosviashchensyva Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo,” *OEV*, no. 3-4, of. ch.: 11-3; “Ot sostoiashchogo pod vysochaishim Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Pokrovitel’stvom Romanovskogo Komiteta,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 21-3; “Preosviashchennogo Mefodii Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo, skazannoe pered molebnom pri vypuske shkoly praporshchikov 16 ianv. Iunoshi voiny!,” *OEV*, no. 5-6, of. ch.: 100.

bungled war effort. Thus, while the Church prayed for the tsar and drew financial support from the state,<sup>100</sup> support for autocracy had drastically fallen among the clergy and even the episcopate. But the Church's support for the war remained true, all the more since the conflict promised to deliver age old objectives.<sup>101</sup> Both these positions, the perceived support of the tsar and the support of the war effort, alienated the Church from parishioners, who were growing increasingly frustrated with the regime and the futile and protracted war effort.

## **2. From February to April in Cheliabinsk**

### **The "Cheliabinsk Variant"**

The February Revolution was met with great enthusiasm by most classes in Cheliabinsk, which blamed the tsar and a corrupt, witless bureaucracy for the impediments to Russian success. On 2 March Cheliabinsk residents met to elect representatives to the Committee of Public Safety, which was to serve as the city's governing body.<sup>102</sup> The meeting was quickly interrupted when five soldiers burst in and exclaimed; "Comrade workers! There is no point in listening to empty talk. In the regiment they still sing that God is supporting the tsar. Arrest Brigadier Kareeva and Colonel Sheidemana. Separate the war from the monarchy."<sup>103</sup> When the committee refused to arrest the officers, the workers' faction walked out choosing to unite with the

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<sup>100</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskije* 15.

<sup>101</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 7; Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskije*, 13. Bozhe, "Materialy," 118-21; Babkin, "prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo," 62-65.

<sup>102</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 45.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

soldiers. On 3 March the Committee of Public Safety (composed of professionals and elites) was formed and following on 8 March the Cheliabinsk Soviet of Soldiers and Workers Deputies met—this established the “Cheliabinsk variant” of dual power.<sup>104</sup>

### **The February Revolution in *Vedomosti***

The February Revolution and the fall of autocracy came as a surprise to the clergy, but immediately elicited a favorable response and support for the Provisional Government. With few exceptions, most clergy viewed the revolution as an opportunity to free the Church from the oppressive state tutelage, reform Church institutions, and improve the status of the clergy.<sup>105</sup>

Despite the shock of Nicholas’ abdication *Vedomosti* quickly confirmed the authority of the Provisional Government, reprinting Nicholas’ and Mikhail’s abdication proclamations. The announcement stressed that the tsar abdicated because of the war and the dangers that internal popular disturbances posed to the future of the country. The Church stressed that Nicolas believed it was his duty to renounce his throne in order to unify the nation and ensure that it see the war to a victorious conclusion. Nicholas abdicated for his son and appointed his brother Mikhail as regent.<sup>106</sup> *Vedomosti* then

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<sup>104</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 46; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 146.

<sup>105</sup> Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 59-63; Babkin, “Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 70-90; Babkin, “Ierarkhi Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 109-24; Babkin, “dukhovenstvo vostorzhenno privetstvet,” 115-121; Babkin, “Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva,” 210-19; Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 59-65; Babkin, “Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov’ v nachale xx veka,” 3-49; Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 3-6; Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 16.

<sup>106</sup> “Otrechenie ot prestola. Manifest Nikolaia II.,” *OEVI*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 49-50.

announced that Mikhail had abdicated as well and left it to the Constituent Assembly to determine the new order.<sup>107</sup>

The gazette also included documents from the Church and the diocese, which confirmed that the Church had shifted from supporting the tsar to embracing the revolution and the Provisional Government. This prompt announcement intended to ensure that all the diocesan clergy adhere to this position.<sup>108</sup> A telegram from Metropolitan Vladimir, a spokesman from the Holy Synod, declared that the Church would no longer commemorate the royal house, but rather offer prayers to God's Russia and to the power of the Provisional Government.<sup>109</sup> The consistory disseminated this decree to all priests in the Orenburg diocese to preclude accusations of supporting the tsar. In the unofficial section of *Vedomosti*, the clergy embraced the overthrow of the monarch and the authority of the Provisional Government. Mefodii stressed that Nicholas himself viewed it as his duty to abdicate and Mikhail did likewise so that the government could be based on representative elected bodies.<sup>110</sup> Mefodii also approved the Synod's decision to support the Provisional Government because that would most likely lead to a successful conclusion of the war. He stressed that Russia had entered into a new state of life and implored the Russian people to trust in the new government, be obedient to it, and facilitate its work, which would lead to a great free society.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> "Otrechenie Veliakogo Kniazia Mikhaila Aleksandrovicha ot prestola," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 50-1.

<sup>108</sup> "Ob"iavlenie," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 51.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> "Vozzvanie k pravoslavnomu naseleniiu g. Orenburga i Orenburgskie-Turgaiskoi eparkhii Mefodii, Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo," *OEV*, no. 9-10: 139-140.

<sup>111</sup> "Bozhieiu milostiiu sviateishii pravitel'stvuiushchii sinod vernym chadam Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi," *OEV*, no. 11-12, of. ch.: 57-61.

As the above suggests, the clergy showed greatest concern about the war. Military commanders, the Synod, and the Orenburg clergy all justified the tsar's abdication by arguing that more could be achieved in the war effort without the tsar. When discussing the war, the clergy continued to stress the atrocities of the enemy, to call the conflict the "second great fatherland war" (*vtoraia velikaia otechestvennaia voina*), and to invoke the concept of duty.<sup>112</sup> But, the clergy did change its rhetoric to link the ideals of February to the war effort, explaining that the war must be fought for

millions to have a better life, for the countless money already spent to defend the motherland, for the victims, for the conquest of civil liberty, and for the sake of your own families. Therefore, for the success of the motherland in this time of strife and discord, it is necessary to unite in fraternity for the good of Russia, trust the Provisional Government, and collectively and individually make every effort in labor, prayer, and obedience to facilitate the Provisional Government's honorable, work.<sup>113</sup>

The clergy made numerous appeals connecting the war effort to the new government and emphasized that, for freedom to prevail, a person had to fulfill their duty to the war effort, whether that meant fighting at the front, working in the factory, or helping supply bread to the cities and the front.<sup>114</sup>

The dissolution of autocracy created various problems for the Church, one of which was that the Church had to redefine its societal role. It no longer connected the tsar's rule to the Lord, but now had to try to reaffirm its own social roles, and by contrast

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<sup>112</sup> "Na voine i okolo voiny," *OEV*, no. 9-10: 161-3; "Bozhieiu milostiiu sviateishii pravitel'stvuiushchii sinod vernym chadam Rossiiskoi Tserkvi," *OEV*, no. 11-12, of. ch.: 57-61; "Vozzvanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy," *OEV*, no. 11-12: 171-2.

<sup>113</sup> "Bozhieiu milostiiu sviateishii pravitel'stvuiushchii sinod vernym chadam Rossiiskoi Tserkvi," *OEV*, no. 11-12, of. ch.: 57-8.

<sup>114</sup> For best example see "Vozzvanie Gosudarstvennoi Dumy," *OEV*, no. 11-12: 171-2.

rebuke the claims of socialists.<sup>115</sup> The Church would also promote the family as the natural unit of social life, direct man toward proper religious practice, and ensure that Russia had a morally and socially reputable population that supported the Provisional Government.<sup>116</sup>

### **From *Vedomosti* to *Vestnik***

In early April the diocesan gazette made a significant change in name, purpose, readership, and content: the main diocesan paper, the *Orenburg Diocesan Gazette* (*Orenburgskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*) was renamed *Orenburg Church-Societal Messenger* (*Orenburgskii tserkovno-obshchestvennyi vestnik*).<sup>117</sup> As the name change implies, the Church now sought to engage in society's affairs and engage society in its affairs. This did not just mean that the Church thought that its readership should be expanded outside the Church; rather, it meant that the Church would also try to resolve problems in the parish and to involve parishioners in decision-making.

*Vestnik* appeared more often than *Vedomosti*—biweekly instead of bimonthly. One reason for the greater frequency was to cope with the quickly changing political and social situations: to many, the Church's response to the fall of the tsar had been too slow.<sup>118</sup> A second reason was the need to respond to popular socialist newspapers, which

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<sup>115</sup> "Religiia, kak osnova obshchestvennogo blagosostoianiiia chelovechestva," *OEV*, no. 9-10: 140-50; "Religiia, kak osnova obshchestvennogo blagosostoianiiia chelovechestva," *OEV*, no. 11-12: 184-92. (This is a continuation of the previously cited article published in the subsequent edition of *Vedomosti*).

<sup>116</sup> "Religiia, kak osnova obshchestvennogo blagosostoianiiia chelovechestva," *OEV*, no. 9-10: 140-50; "Religiia, kak osnova obshchestvennogo blagosostoianiiia chelovechestva," *OEV*, no. 11-12: 184-92.

<sup>117</sup> "Ot Dukh. Konsistorii," *OEV*, no. 11-12, of. ch.: 64; For information on the change of journal titles see Rogoznyi, "Tserkovnaia revoliutsiia," 278-80.

<sup>118</sup> For example see "Pravda li?" *OTs-OV*, no. 2: 4.

challenged that were challenging the Church's and the clergy's authority; by publishing more often the clergy hoped to rebut these attacks more promptly and effectively. This was particularly important for the Cheliabinsk clergy, who found themselves under attack from the socialist paper *Soiuznaia mysl'* (Union thought). Therefore, *Vestnik* attacked *Soiuznaia mysl'* for bias and falsehoods; it sought to provide the masses with its own opinions on political and social events and in particular the roles and actions of the clergy.<sup>119</sup>

The format and content of the paper also changed a great deal. The paper was no longer in the form of a magazine or a journal, but rather became a four-columned newspaper similar to the popular periodicals that emerged and prospered at the time. In addition, the paper was no longer mainly composed of laws from the synod, but emphasized political events, problems in the parish, and local issues, which would seemingly appeal more to common parishioners than erudite debates about doctrine. This represented a turn within the Church to emphasize the role of the laity, who they hoped would become more active in Church affairs. A number of clergy complained about the journal's content change. Priest Shovskii, from Cheliabinsk, a staunch critic of the paper, castigated *Vestnik* for omitting sections that were in *Vedomosti*.<sup>120</sup>

There were also other important questions concerning the paper. One radical clergyman remarked that the paper should not be split between official and unofficial news because the clergy had entered a period where all news was in its purview, and should therefore be designated as official. He asserted clerical matters "must not be

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<sup>119</sup> "Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk," *OTs-OV*, No.6: 3.

<sup>120</sup> "Iz sela," *OTs-OV*, No. 4: 1; "Nashemu kritiku," *OTs-OV*, No. 4: 1-3.

divided into something official and unofficial. We, as servants of the Church, as preachers of peace, love, and fraternity must be official not only when standing before the throne of God, but when we fix our gaze at all of our believers.”<sup>121</sup> He asserted that the common clergy dealt with all issues secular and ecclesiastical, and that therefore, the paper should not be split between official and unofficial news as it had been in the past.<sup>122</sup> This illustrates the changing opinions of many clergymen, who no longer only viewed themselves as preachers and liturgists, but who now asserted that clergy severed secular roles and should become active in leading the laity and the parish in political, social, economic, and moral matters.<sup>123</sup> The majority of the editorial staff opposed this, and held that the distinction between official and unofficial should remain. They asserted that this made matters easy for lay leaders, who wanted to read about secular matters and not issues of Church doctrine.<sup>124</sup>

## Conclusion

The turn from supporting the tsar to commemorating the revolution was not difficult for the Church: most clergy had become alienated from autocracy before the revolution.<sup>125</sup> But, perception was much harder to manipulate. The Church had, at least rhetorically, supported the tsar and the regime from the pulpit for years so it had to take

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<sup>121</sup> “Iz sela,” *OTs-OV*, no.4: 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> “Iz sela,” *OTs-OV*, no. 4: 1.”Zadachi momenta dlia dukhovenstva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 1-2. See Rogoznyi, “Tserkovnaia revoliutsiia,” 278-80.

<sup>124</sup> “Nashemu kritiku,” *OTs-OV*, No. 4: 3.

<sup>125</sup> Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 61; Babkin, “Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 70-90; Babkin, “Ierarkhi Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi,” 109-24; Babkin, “dukhovenstvo vostorzhenno privetstvet,” 115-121; Babkin, “Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva,” 210-19; Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 59-65; Babkin, “Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov’ v nachale xx veka,” 3-49; V. S. Bozhe, “Materialy,” 107-9; Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 128-30.

steps to distance itself and its clergy from the old regime. It initially achieved this through prayers, newspaper articles, and liturgies, which approved of the tsar's decision to abdicate and lauded the revolution, the Provisional Government, and the new freedom.<sup>126</sup> Of course some vestiges of the Church's past remained; one was that the clergy enthusiastically supported the war.<sup>127</sup> The clergy's ardent support for the war was initially well received by patriotic Russians; however, as peace was deferred, this policy became more unpopular.

In addition, the Church realized that the disintegration of autocracy provided it with a great opportunity to enact a number of long deferred reforms to rejuvenate the parish, to improve the status of the clergy, and above all to involve laity in Church administration.<sup>128</sup> The Cheliabinsk Church debated these reforms for years, but the regime declined to convene a Church council to enact reforms. The change from *Vedomosti* to *Vestnik* illustrates Church desires to involve the laity in Church affairs. This was further embodied in the numerous diocesan, vicariate, and parish assemblies that convened across the diocese in the spring and the summer. Although little to no

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<sup>126</sup> "Otrechenie ot prestola. Manifest Nikolaia II.," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 49-50; "Otrechenie Veliakogo Kniazia Mikhaila Aleksandrovicha ot prestola," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 50-1; "Ob"iavlenie," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 51; "Vozzvanie k pravoslavnomu naseleniiu g. Orenburga i Orenburgskie-Turgaiskoi eparkhii Mefodii, Episkopa Orenburgskogo i Turgaiskogo," *OEV*, no. 9-10: 139-140; "Bozhieiu milostiiu sviateishii pravitel'stviuushchii sinod vernym chadam Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi," *OEV*, no. 11-12, of. ch.: 57-61.

<sup>127</sup> "Osvobozhdeniye ot sbora s dokhodov ot denezhnykh kapitalov zaem svobody 1917 goda, vypuskaemyi na osnovanii postanovleniia vremennogo pravitel'stva srokom na 55 let," *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 1; "Ot vremennogo pravitel'stva," *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 1; "Na politicheskiei temy. Osnovy i printsipy pravovogo gosudarstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 3; Also see Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 41; Babkin, "Prikladskoe dukhovenstvo," 65-70; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 30-2.

<sup>128</sup> Rogoznyi, "Tserkovnaia revoliutsiia," 275-322; Babkin, "Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi," 70-90; Babkin, "Ierarkhi Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi," 109-24; Babkin, "dukhovenstvo vostorzhennno privetstvuet," 115-121; Babkin, "Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva," 210-19; Babkin, "Prikladskoe dukhovenstvo," 59-65; Babkin, "Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov'," 3-44; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 2-33; Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 5-11.

systematic reforms were adopted from February to 27 April, the Cheliabinsk assembly would begin the process of enacting reforms in Cheliabinsk and in the diocese as a whole.

### 3. The Cheliabinsk Council

From 27 April to 3 May 1917, the Assembly of Clergy and Laity of the Cheliabinsk Vicariate convened to deliberate reform. In the wake of the revolution numerous diocesan assemblies convened across Russia; although normally triennial, “extraordinary” assemblies met in 1917 to deal with problems in the Church and the revolution more broadly.<sup>129</sup> The formal purpose of the Cheliabinsk assembly was to prepare for the long-deferred All-Russian Church Council that finally assembled on 15 August 1917; until then, however, diocesan assemblies provided the authoritative voice on church policy. Representatives at the assemblies—not only clergy (as under the old regime), but also laity—discussed pressing issues, considered reform, asserted parish, priest, and lay authority, and elected delegates to the All-Russian Church Council.<sup>130</sup> These “extraordinary” assemblies debated myriad issues concerning the Church’s relationship to the Provisional Government, social reform, and a host of ecclesiastical reforms, with transformation of the parish being in the forefront.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 19.

<sup>130</sup> Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy,” 50. See also M.A. Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 59-61; and P. Ia. Leont’ev, “Revoliutsiia v tserkvi: s’ezdy dukhovenstva i mirian v 1917 godu,” in *Tserkov’ v istorii Rossii*, 2 (Moscow, 1998), 217.

<sup>131</sup> “S’ezd dukhovenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), fond 3431, opis’ 1, d. 554, ll. 30-75; See also Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy,” 55-56; and Leont’ev, “Revoliutsiia v tserkvi.”

## Preparations for the First Assembly of Clergy and Laity

The diocese of course had its own instructions for Cheliabinsk assembly since it would set the foundation for Church reform in the diocese. The diocese instructed the assembly to support the new government, eliminate antiquated traditions of parish life, protect the interests of the lower clergy, organize a modern system of church administration, and discuss the economics of the parish.<sup>132</sup> In addition, the Church hoped to revive conciliarism, a topic much discussed in the last decades of the *ancien regime*, but one that became the center of attention in the Church after February.<sup>133</sup> *Vestnik* stressed that the Church had to turn to the laity for its governance in order to survive in these turbulent times. The diocese was trying to involve the laity in Church affairs to improve priest-parishioner relations, to enliven the parish, to garner more financial support from parishioners, and to unite the people with the Church against the Church's many assailants.

The Cheliabinsk Church had its own unique tasks and responsibilities in order to prepare for the first assembly of clergy and laity. The first preliminary meeting of note convened on 21 March in Cheliabinsk. *Vestnik* hailed the meeting as the first free assembly of clergy in the diocese. The meeting was composed of 50 clergymen from the Cheliabinsk, Troitsk, and Upper Ural regions.<sup>134</sup> The most prominent decisions of the meeting were setting the date (27 April) for the Cheliabinsk Assembly of Clergy and Laity, considering a preliminary agenda of topics for the meeting, and establishing a form of provisional rule until the assembly convened. The clergy decided to defer formulating

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<sup>132</sup> "Polozhenie ob Iсполnitel'nom Komitete Grado-Orenburgskogo dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 2.

<sup>133</sup> George Kosar, "Russian Orthodoxy in Crisis and Revolution: The Church Council of 1917-1918" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2004), 48.

<sup>134</sup> "Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk," *OTs-OV*, no. 4: 4.

the full agenda until the next month. They decided the dominant issues were the Church's political position and social role in relation to the new Provisional Government and parish reform. In the meantime, before the assembly convened they decided that a temporary assembly should be established to rule over the vicariate. The ruling body was composed solely of clergymen: Father Prokopev, Lukin, the notorious Demidov, the deacon P. Upgvitska and the Sacristan Al'bokrinova.<sup>135</sup> Another step that was necessary for the preparation of the Cheliabinsk assembly was the election of delegates. On 9 and 16 April democratic elections took place across the vicariate to elect members from the laity and the clergy to send to the assembly.<sup>136</sup> In the end, the 370 parishes in the Cheliabinsk vicariate, which stretched across three regions, elected 413 representatives.<sup>137</sup>

### Composition

The archival record does not indicate the exact social composition of the assembly, but from similar assemblies it seems likely that more than half were laity.<sup>138</sup> From the transcript of the assembly it is clear that the bishops, priests, sacristans, deacons, and laity attended the conference.<sup>139</sup> Bishop Serafim was the highest ranking clerical attendee at the assembly. There were also an assortment of vocal archpriests, priests, and deacons. The social composition of the laity is more uncertain because speaking lay members were rarely addressed by their occupational title. Of course, if the

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<sup>135</sup> "Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk," *OTs-OV*, no. 4: 4.

<sup>136</sup> "Iz g. Cheliabinska. Tserkovnaia zhizn'," *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 2.

<sup>137</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 30 ob.

<sup>138</sup> P. Ia. Leont'ev, "Revoliutsiia v tserkvi," 220.

<sup>139</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 30-75.

composition of the lay members in attendance resembled the composition of the populace of the Cheliabinsk vicariate, the majority in attendance would have been peasants, with only a few nobles, merchants, and workers. Yet, it seems probable that the assembly was disproportionately attended by professionals because the assembly took place at the rail station and at a school in the center of Cheliabinsk.<sup>140</sup> Although the Church chose to house the representatives at the diocesan school to make it easier for lay delegates and rural clergy to attend, it seems unlikely that rural peasants would have been able or willing to spend the time (during spring) to attend the assembly in the city.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, it seems probable that professionals<sup>142</sup> were represented disproportionately. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that in the pre-revolutionary period and the Soviet period peasants tended to elect professionals to administrative organizations (*zemstvo* and *soviets*). This assumption is also substantiated by the fact that the majority of laymen who identified their occupation, when addressing the assembly were school teachers.<sup>143</sup>

Although the majority of representatives at the assembly were likely laity, members of the clergy addressed the assembly more frequently than members of the laity. The highest-ranking clergyman in attendance, Bishop Serafim, addressed the assembly most often and issued the deciding opinion on many issues. The next most prevalent addressees were Archpriest Prokopev and Priest Demidov, who engaged the assembly on

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<sup>140</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 30, 31.

<sup>141</sup> “Iz g. Cheliabinska. Tserkovnaia zhizn’,” *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 2

<sup>142</sup> Members from the middle class (doctors, school teachers, bankers, and lawyers) most likely had more free time than merchants or workers and were therefore more likely to attend the assembly. In addition, in the pre-revolutionary period and the Soviet period peasants tended to elect professionals to administrative organizations (*zemstvo* and *soviets*).

<sup>143</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 30-75.

nearly every issue.<sup>144</sup> The most prevalent lay spokesperson was Laymen Shiskin, a teacher at a local school.<sup>145</sup>

The marginal level of lay participation in the sessions may be due to a variety of factors. For example, the secretary was a member of the clergy<sup>146</sup> and may have been less inclined to record statements by lay members. It is possible that members of the committee chose not to cede the floor to lay members. The laity may have also been reticent; attending a Church assembly for the first time, they may have preferred to have the more confident and articulate priests express the opinions of the group. It is also possible that when the assembly split into groups on the first night to discuss the agenda, the laity elected the more articulate clergy as their spokesmen.<sup>147</sup> This desire for more articulate spokesmen could also explain why the majority of the lay speakers at the conference were parish school teachers. In addition, lay delegates could have been more conservative than lay delegates at other assemblies. Of course, it is possible that members of the laity had nothing to say regarding political and parish issues; that, however, seems unlikely considering the fact that the lay population would most likely have exercised their new-found privilege.

### **Political and Social Questions**

The first topic to be discussed and considered was whether the Church should recognize the Provisional Government. Although some priests still supported the tsarist

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<sup>144</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 30-75.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., l. 30.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. In addition, the position of president was occupied by a cleric, Archpriest Prokopev. The president also had two assistants, one of whom was selected from the clergy and the other from the laity. Thus, one assistant was the assistant superintendent of a local ecclesiastical school, I.A. Speranskii, and the other a deacon, A.A. Birukov.

<sup>147</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 30 ob.

regime, the Cheliabinsk assembly unanimously declared that it “recognizes the new Provisional Government, is entirely subordinate to it, and is prepared to unite and assist it to strengthen the new order and bring the tedious war to a victorious conclusion.”<sup>148</sup> This proclamation aligned the assembly with the Provisional Government and the latter’s decision to see the war to a victorious conclusion. This was a rational decision by the assembly, which needed government support to buttress the reforms it would propose, but the decision also tied the assembly to a government and a war that were becoming more unpopular by the day.

While the assembly supported the Provisional Government, it only favored a select handful of political parties. The assembly proclaimed its support of political parties “that intend to build a bright future in Russia based on Christian brotherhood and free from those representatives who often have a hostile attitude toward religion and the Church.”<sup>149</sup> The assembly primarily supported the Kadets. The Church voiced opposition to other parties, such as the Bolsheviks, who were openly hostile to religion, and castigated those parties for placing untimely demands on the Provisional Government in Russia’s first days of freedom. Representatives asserted that these parties fostered an agitated disposition among the population, which undermined sympathy and confidence in the Provisional Government and in turn hurt the war effort.<sup>150</sup> The delegates also supported Mensheviks and other socialist parties that patriotically supported the war.<sup>151</sup> This decision alienated the clergy from many parishioners by aligning the clergy with the parties of the Provisional Government. This was particularly dangerous in late April and

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<sup>148</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 31 ob.-32.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., l. 31 ob.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., l. 32-32 ob.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., l. 32 ob.

early May, the time the assembly convened, when the Provisional Government faced harsh criticism for P.N. Miliukov's unpopular note to the British and French, which vowed that Russia would see the war to its end.<sup>152</sup>

The Cheliabinsk clergy undoubtedly favored conservative political parties, which supported the Provisional Government and the Church, over socialist parties, but claimed that they would not interfere in the affairs of political parties. The assembly avowed that it would not discuss the platforms of political parties from the pulpit because political subjects were unworthy of religious discourse.<sup>153</sup> Yet, the assembly proclaimed that priests and parishioners should privately discuss the roles and platforms of political parties.<sup>154</sup> The assembly averred that part of the Church's role was to provide cultural leadership, and that the Church "could not become involved in party disputes, but needed to stand by the evangelical principle, illuminating all life issues."<sup>155</sup> The assembly decided that although the clergy was not to become publically involved in political affairs, priests did have a duty to guide their flocks concerning political issues in private.

The Cheliabinsk assembly also considered pertinent social issues, often parroting the views of the Provisional Government and the parties that supported it. The first issue was the question of the eight-hour working day. The assembly recognized that the eight-hour working day for the working class was justified in times of peace, but not in times of war, "when all the strong peoples must be directed toward a specific goal, victory over our enemy,"<sup>156</sup> or during harvest season. The assembly identified several reasons why the

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<sup>152</sup> Marc Ferro, *The Russian Revolution of February 1917* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 213-220.

<sup>153</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 31 ob.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., ll. 31 ob.-32.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., l. 32.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

working class must defer the eight-hour workday in wartime. First, a reduction in hours was unfair given that peasants had to work 16-18 hours a day during harvest time.<sup>157</sup> Second, the conscription of young workers meant that the decrepit, senile, under-age and female had to perform the duties of fathers and sons at war.<sup>158</sup> Third, the clergy emphasized that during wartime they had to perform more extensive duties, which extended their working day from 8 to 12-15 hours.<sup>159</sup> Thus, the assembly concluded if the clergy and the peasants were working more than eight hours a day; it was unfair to authorize an eight-hour workday for workers. The clergy recognized the moral debt of the workers, but asserted that this was not a time for demands, but was rather a time to unite with the rest of the nation in service to the motherland.<sup>160</sup> This policy was extremely unpopular among the politically-active workers of Cheliabinsk, who not only demanded an eight-hour day, but other concessions as well.<sup>161</sup>

The principle social concern of the clergy was the agrarian question, since peasant land demands posed a direct threat to the Church's own landholding. The assembly assumed a progressive position regarding the agrarian question, but it was far too moderate for the circumstances in 1917, when peasants demanded total land expropriation—from the nobility, state, and church itself.<sup>162</sup> The assembly recognized that monastery, Church, clergy, landlord, and peasant land had to be redistributed in an unbiased manner, but voiced concerns that the parish clergy would be left without

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<sup>157</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 32.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.; The clergy distributed rations to families who lost breadwinners in the war, collected gifts for the army, and commissioned readings at hospitals in addition to their traditional work of tilling their fields, preparing sermons, and leading prayers.

<sup>160</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 32 ob.

<sup>161</sup> *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. "Cheliabinsk."

<sup>162</sup> Orlando Figes, "The Peasantry," in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, ed. Edward Acton et al (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 543-550.

sufficient land for their support.<sup>163</sup> Delegates proposed that “it is necessary to give the clergy land, and that they not be denied the opportunity to share in the rights of all citizens.”<sup>164</sup> The clergy was adamant that it would not be denied the right to attain its share of land from the state societal fund.

The critical limitation to the assembly’s treatment of the agrarian question was its condemnation of spontaneous land seizures by peasants. Priest Florinsk held that “Land transfer must not occur now, but can only occur after the resolution of a legislative order on the agrarian question”<sup>165</sup> by the Provisional Government. That view corresponded to the general outlook of liberals, like the Kadets, but was rejected by impatient peasants. The clergy deemed unauthorized land seizures chaotic, and undoubtedly feared that they would lose their own land. Thus the clergy urged the peasants to await an orderly land distribution authorized by the Provisional Government—a view firmly rejected peasants. The land question thus generated tension between land-hungry peasants and clergy seeking to retain church property needed for their support.

The increase in military desertions after February was another cause of concern for the assembly. The desertions had multiple causes, but the most important was the desire of peasant soldiers to return home and obtain their share of the confiscated land.<sup>166</sup> To curtail desertion, the assembly voiced its willingness to fight desertion with all means available.<sup>167</sup> They viewed desertion from the front as a “cowardly evasion of soldiers’ duty and a shameful betrayal and crime against the motherland, and demanded a swift

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<sup>163</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 32 ob.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> See Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army* vol. 1.

<sup>167</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 32 ob.

return to the front.”<sup>168</sup> The Church’s support of the war was increasingly unpopular among a war-weary population demanding peace. Cheliabinsk’s location along the railroad and the presence of a military base and hospital in the city exacerbated negative public opinion toward the war by directly connecting the populace to the horrors of conflict.<sup>169</sup>

The assembly identified with the platforms of the Provisional Government for many reasons. One was its belief that the new government might enable it to address many of the problems facing the Church. That was a reasonable assumption, since the Provisional Government endorsed many views of the priests, and because the Church had to rely on funding from government authorities to finance its reforms. It therefore made sense for the assembly to support the political and social platforms of the Provisional Government, even if they threatened to alienate the clergy from their parishioners. Moreover, the Church—like the government—was determined to restore order to Russia, which would enable the Church to protect their privileges and address the plethora of seething problems in the Church and the parish.

### **Church-State Relations**

Although the Cheliabinsk assembly endorsed the new Provisional Government and its political and social platforms, its views on Church-state relations were more complex.<sup>170</sup> The Church adopted a relatively progressive opinion on religious tolerance and even advocated eventual separation of church and state. However, many assembly resolutions included strategically placed caveats, aimed at preserving Orthodoxy’s

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<sup>168</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 32 ob.

<sup>169</sup> *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. s.v. “Cheliabinsk.”

<sup>170</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 33-36 ob.

superior and privileged status with respect to other confessions. Delegates also argued that economic and moral impediments made separation of church and state undesirable and reckless.

One issue debated at the Cheliabinsk assembly was whether the nation should be “confession-blind” or recognize Orthodoxy as the predominant faith. On the one hand, the delegates supported religious tolerance and claimed that the dominance of a single religion would be “unchristian.”<sup>171</sup> That was a very liberal position, since only 12 years earlier the Church had categorically opposed the 17 April 1905 Manifesto on freedom of conscience.<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, the Cheliabinsk assembly warned that freedom of conscience was not equivalent to declaring all confessions equal. The delegates shrewdly observed that the Russian Orthodox Church had 114,000,000 members, making it the largest religion in Russia.<sup>173</sup> They also emphasized the Church’s critical role in Russian history, declaring that Orthodoxy “was adopted at the dawn of our political life and in all ages Orthodoxy has been the primary spiritual strength for the Russian people.”<sup>174</sup> The assembly decreed that “The future basic laws of the Russian state should recognize the Orthodox Church as the first among equals.”<sup>175</sup> To compound upon this contradiction, the assembly also insisted on making “a provision that a constitutional monarch or president must confess to Orthodoxy.”<sup>176</sup> The assembly justified this proposal with nationalist rhetoric, arguing that the leader of a nation based on Russian Orthodoxy must belong to that faith. Thus, even though the assembly rejected religious hegemony as “unchristian,”

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<sup>171</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 33.

<sup>172</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 6; Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 22.

<sup>173</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 34 ob.-35.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 35.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

it was unwilling to renounce the advantages that came with being the official state religion.

The representatives also discussed whether Orthodox organizations should be free of state intrusion. The assembly complained that, although Orthodoxy was the most practiced religion in Russia, other confessions—in contrast to Orthodoxy—operated without state incursion.<sup>177</sup> This was a long-standing grievance, exacerbated by the concessions granted to other faiths since 1905. Since then, the Church increasingly insisted that Russian Orthodoxy should be exempt from state intervention. The Cheliabinsk assembly reiterated that the Russian Orthodox Church “must be on par with other religions in Russia. Its internal self-operation with respect to management, teaching, and life should be free from any form of government [intervention].”<sup>178</sup>

The majority of the members at the Cheliabinsk assembly contended that the state should not intervene in religious affairs, yet demanded that Orthodoxy and other religions should continue to receive state benefits. The assembly insisted that, regardless of the form of government which materialized in Russia, the state must support all churches, denominations, and sects.<sup>179</sup> The majority, led by the priest Prokopev, asserted that the state must provide material stability to all religions in a manner “consistent with the historical and cultural authority”<sup>180</sup> of that faith. This proposal became associated with the supporters of a conditional separation of church and state. The majority demanded that the state not meddle in church affairs, that it provide confessions with financial support, and that the support be allocated at levels corresponding to the historical and

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<sup>177</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 34 ob.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., l. 35.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

cultural impact that faith had on Russian development. That of course meant granting the lion's share of state support to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The clergy and laity at the Cheliabinsk assembly did not unanimously support the proposal for conditional separation. Some argued that the Church should focus on purely spiritual matters, and hence should not receive state subsidies. Very few delegates supported this view; it received only brief and anonymous mention.<sup>181</sup> However, lay delegate (Shishkin) voiced concern about the popular perception of a Church, which claimed to support separation of church and state, but which also received financial support from the government. He inquired, "If such a thing happens, will the Orthodox Church be brought to the theatres?"<sup>182</sup> Shishkin worried that the "dark masses"<sup>183</sup> would spread malicious rumors about the Church if it claimed to be separate from the government, but insisted on receiving state support. A close state-Church link raised serious concerns, given the devastating impact of Rasputin, his ties to the state, and impact on the Church.<sup>184</sup> Shishkin's observation perturbed many members of the assembly, who agreed that, if the Church decided on a conditional separation from the state, it must prepare to overcome criticism and skepticism among the popular masses. Church authorities would have to declare the absurdity of the rumors, and parish priests would need to work to quell rumors held by the general population.<sup>185</sup> The assembly contended that proposing separation of Church and state, while still receiving state funds, would appear hypocritical, but could be overcome through measures to subdue malicious rumors.

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<sup>181</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 35 ob.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., l. 36.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 7-13.

<sup>185</sup> "S"ezda dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 36.

While a few delegates proposed complete separation of Church and state, the vast majority of the Cheliabinsk delegates voiced concern about moral and economic consequences.<sup>186</sup> Both lay and clerical members feared that separation of Church and state might degenerate into the ungodly and immoral situations found in Germany and France. As the priest Chelsov warned: “Complete separation of the Church from the state in France led to the exclusion of religious instruction in school, and facilitated a decline in moral values and an increase in crime rates among the younger generation.”<sup>187</sup> Many pious Russians were concerned about the loss of religious consciousness in France and Germany, and in particular the intense moral breakdown that accompanied the war.

Other delegates, lay and clerical, favored an eventual separation of Church and state, and denied that separation necessarily led to a moral degeneration, but underscored the extraordinary conditions of the current war. For example, the priests Prokopev and Amanatskii asserted that “Complete separation of Church and state does not lead to a decline in religion and morality, but we fear that separation of Church and state in a time of war could lead to a moral decline similar to the one in France.”<sup>188</sup> Bishop Serafim agreed, arguing that moral decline often manifested in periods of war and thus would make a complete separation of church and state dangerous in 1917.<sup>189</sup> While the assembly was worried about moral decline following a separation of the Church from the state apparatus, the larger and more pervasive concern was the Church’s dependence on state financial support. Thus, a full separation of church and state might well produce a Church incapable of financing itself.

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<sup>186</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 35 ob.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., l. 36.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., l. 35 ob.

Bishop Serafim directly addressed the financial issue and declared that the Church could not be totally free from state influence if it received government support. Citing the onerous conditions of spring 1917, Serafim argued that the Church simply could not function without state subsidies.<sup>190</sup> Complete separation of Church and state, he warned, would deprive clergymen of Church property and state benefits. Serafim also contended that it was the state's duty to support poor parishes because most citizens were Orthodox.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, the assembly accepted a conditional separation from the state.

### **Parish Reform**

After considering the Church's relationship to the Provisional Government, the assembly turned to its most imminent issue, parish reform.<sup>192</sup> A fundamental issue was parish life, and in particular improving relations between priests and their flocks.<sup>193</sup> Representatives declared that these relations could be improved by enhancing lay participation in Church administration. The assembly hoped to democratize and decentralize the Church and thereby ensure that it would represent the wishes of parishioners. To accomplish this, the assembly recommended organizational and administrative reforms to permit and encourage greater lay participation. The lowest level of organization was the parish soviet, comprised of clergy (one-third) and laity (two-

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<sup>190</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., l. 36 ob.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., ll. 37-61; As mentioned previously, from the Petrine period on, the parish's role in church administration gradually diminished, while the role of the episcopate increased. The loss of parish administrative and political authority led to a degeneration of the parishes, as unknowledgeable and disinterested state officials and bishops began to meddle in parish affairs. By 1917, a multitude of problems had emerged in the parish, which needed to be corrected. Many of these problems were deeply entrenched and institutionalized in the parish due to centuries of mismanagement. Thus, in the wake of the February Revolution, parishes convened local assemblies to reform parish administration, finances, and education.

<sup>193</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 36 ob.

thirds), elected by all male and female members of the parish eighteen years or older.<sup>194</sup>

The parish soviet would meet once a month to discuss parish issues. The higher levels of administration would reflect similar laicization: the parish soviet would elect delegates to a district (*oblast*) soviet (with the same clergy-lay proportions), and the latter would choose delegates for the diocesan soviet (with half laymen and half clergy).<sup>195</sup>

The Cheliabinsk assembly offered several arguments on behalf of this new, laicized administrative order. First, it was essential to restore parish conciliarism, which was prevalent before the Petrine reforms.<sup>196</sup> Second, these new soviets could engage and consider the views of the laity and ensure that Church administration served the interests of the parish as a whole, not just the clergy. Third, the assembly believed that lay participation in Church governance would improve priest-parishioner relations.<sup>197</sup> Fourth, the delegates recognized the growing power, social cohesion, and assertiveness of the laity; the Church could no longer dominate the laity without the risk of violent retribution. This became quite clear in the months following the revolution, as disgruntled parishioners kicked out oppressive priests under the allegation that they were tsarist priests. And finally, the new order would enable greater lay participation in ecclesiastical administration and decision-making. In addition, the Cheliabinsk assembly argued that, if the laity had a voice in the Church, they would be more willing to increase material support for priestly salaries, Church schools, and church maintenance.<sup>198</sup>

This proposal for laicization was, however, fraught with problems. Although such calculations had been invoked in the past (in the *popechitel'stvo* reform of 1864), the

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<sup>194</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 43, 46.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., l. 46-46 ob.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., l. 30 ob.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., l. 36 ob.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., l. 54 ob.

assumption that participation automatically meant greater financial support did not prove to be the case.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, while the laity had a greater voice at the parish level, that was not true at the *oblast* and diocesan levels, where deputies were elected indirectly.<sup>200</sup> Nor did the Church, especially amidst the economic dislocation and inflation of 1917, have the wherewithal to support this system, and it was unlikely that parishioners would be willing to raise the necessary funding.<sup>201</sup> They had vehemently resisted assessments for diocesan seminaries in the past, demanding that scarce parish resources should serve local, not diocesan needs; there was little reason to think that this localist priority would change.

Class conflict was not limited to priests and their parishioners: the clergy itself suffered from deep tensions—between priests and their subordinates (deacons and sacristans) and between parish clergy and bishops. To overcome these tensions, the Cheliabinsk assembly proposed to take special measures—for example, establish courts to protect the lower clerical ranks.<sup>202</sup> All this required fundamental changes in the legal status of the Church. First, it was essential that the state grant official recognition of the parish as a “juridical entity” (*iuridicheskoe litso*), with full legal rights, including the power to buy and sell property and to act as a legal entity in state courts.<sup>203</sup> The delegates pointed out that the *ancien regime* gave this status to other denominations and denied them only to the “dominant” Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore the assembly urged “the government or the Constituent Assembly to provide the rights of legal entities to

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<sup>199</sup> Young, *Power and the Sacred*, 44-45; Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 70.

<sup>200</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 46-46 ob.

<sup>201</sup> Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 35.

<sup>202</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 46-46 ob., 49.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 43.

Orthodox parishes.”<sup>204</sup> Second, the assembly asserted that the Church must have the right to create and operate its own “courts of honor” to mediate disputes among the clergy and to remove members who violated canon law.<sup>205</sup> These parish-run courts would be completely exempt from state control. The need for these courts was emphasized by Serafim, who asserted “I understand the Church as an organism with a head, arms, and legs. The courts must open the eyes of the Church.”<sup>206</sup> Ecclesiastical courts, Serafim declared, would enable the Church to function in the modern world and to cope with the changing times. Unless the Church had its own courts, it would neither have autonomy over its internal affairs nor be able to enforce canon law. Third, the assembly also proposed to create fraternal honor courts, whose juries would be composed of clergy and laity, to mediate disputes between clergymen. Each district would have its own honor court to reconcile disputes among the clergy.<sup>207</sup> Such courts would protect the rights of lower clergy, who had often been mistreated by members of the upper-clergy. This was a very progressive proposal that reflected the egalitarian, anti-elitist, and anti-episcopal sentiments unleashed after the February Revolution. The decision to have lay members on the juries of ecclesiastical courts served not only to ensure lay participation in church life, but also to end the episcopal-dominated diocesan courts that often violated the interests and rights of rank-and-file parish clergy.

Internal conflict was not the only form of hostility between the clergy: the clergy were also split regionally within the diocese. The Orenburg and Cheliabinsk clergy had a turbulent history. This reached a peak at the assembly, when Serafim averred “every

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<sup>204</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 43.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., ll. 43 ob.-44.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., l. 45.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., l. 49.

provincial city should have a bishop, not just a vicar.”<sup>208</sup> Serafim held that Troitsk or the Upper Urals should join Cheliabinsk to form an independent diocese in Cheliabinsk, free from the Orenburg authorities. Serafim foresaw a Church that was more decentralized and thereby more responsive to local needs.<sup>209</sup> This would overcome communication issues and allow a more equitable distribution of state funds. Of course, cynics might conclude that Serafim simply wanted to be an autonomous bishop, not a mere vicar. In the end, his proposal did not garner a majority, largely because of protests from the members at the assembly from the Troitsk and Upper Ural regions.<sup>210</sup> Yet, this issue would not be tabled; it would resurface throughout 1917.

### **Educational Reform**

One of the most heated issues at the Cheliabinsk assembly was the future of parish schools under the new regime. Imperial Russia had known several types of schools: *zemstvo*, parish, and state schools. However, under the new regime the future of these schools was uncertain. Therefore, the delegates debated whether parish and clerical schools would exist under the new regime, whether they should be funded by the government, and whether state schools would be mandated to teach religion (*zakon bozhii*).<sup>211</sup> These issues had become increasingly important to the Church as it discerned “moral” and religious decline, especially among young school children who attended state schools.<sup>212</sup> The question of education had already been acute during the Duma

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<sup>208</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 49.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 41 ob.-42, 50 ob.-53; Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 18-19; M.V. Kail’ “Revoliutsia v tserkvi,” 2-4.

<sup>212</sup> Kail’ mentions that in a 1917 survey 62.5% of students did not want Orthodoxy instructed in schools.

Monarchy, with strong criticism of parish schools and religious instruction. Therefore, the Cheliabinsk assembly expressed concern that the Provisional Government recognize the deep angst among Orthodox about religious education of the youth.

The majority of the representatives at the assembly demanded that parish schools continue to exist. The most common argument was a nationalist argument. Father Prokopev, for example, argued that “The Church school is the oldest school in Russia. It is the people’s school, and is organically linked to the soul of the nation.”<sup>213</sup> Another common argument in support of parish schools was posed by a lay deputy (Kiselev): “Today I heard that the compulsory instruction of religion may be expelled from state schools. Therefore special attention must be paid to religious instruction in parish schools.”<sup>214</sup> He contended that if mandatory religious instruction was excluded from the curriculum of state schools, it was critical that parish schools continue to exist because they would be the only venue to provide instruction in the fundamentals of the Orthodox faith.

The majority of the assembly supported the continuation of parish schools, but they felt obliged to respond to several common critiques of them. One critique was that parish schools promoted political platforms and supported the old regime. One priest (Prokopev) categorically denied such assertions, declaring that “the Church school did not serve political purposes.”<sup>215</sup> He continued sarcastically: “perhaps children 8-11 years old, many of whom cannot speak, can reason about politics.”<sup>216</sup> Another widespread criticism of parish schools was their alleged mismanagement and low standards. In

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<sup>213</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 50 ob.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., l. 51.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., l. 50 ob.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

response, the assembly candidly admitted that it did not support Church schools in their present condition, but attributed this to the corrupt, Rasputinist tsarist regime. The solution, in the assembly's view, was a reformed Church school with proper government support and funding.<sup>217</sup>

State funding of parish schools was a crucial issue at the Cheliabinsk conference. Delegates asserted that the reason the previous Church schools had failed was not the fault of the Church, but the refusal of the imperial regime to provide schools with the necessary funds.<sup>218</sup> The assembly insisted that, to solve these problems, the Provisional Government must provide parish schools with sufficient funding. A lay delegate (Kieselev) insisted that, if the government declined to provide support for parish schools, it "needed to release substantial funds to enable families to seek education with an emphasis on religious instruction."<sup>219</sup>

The last comment reflected another issue before the Cheliabinsk assembly: what types of schools could a democratic government, in a multi-confessional state, support. Many members of the assembly recognized that in other democratic countries only one type of school received state funding.<sup>220</sup> If this was to be the case, delegates demanded that state schools provide and expand religious instruction. Not all agreed. One layman (Kuz'min), an old teacher at ministry and *zemstvo* schools, argued that the creation of multiple types of schools would be superfluous, and that the focus should not be on what type of school should exist, but rather on how to create good schools.<sup>221</sup> Kuz'min asserted, "Good schools might be ministry or *zemstvo* schools, and in fact Church

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<sup>217</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 50 ob.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., l. 51.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., l. 51 ob.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

schools could be as poor as any of them.”<sup>222</sup> Another lay delegate (also a teacher) declared: “It seems to me, that neither parish schools, nor ministry schools, nor *zemstvo* schools raise children better. The dignity of a school is not determined by the lamp but by the personal quality of the teachers.”<sup>223</sup> He argued that the assembly should be more interested in ensuring that schools have qualified teachers, than whether the laws of God should be instructed at schools. But these two laymen were a distinct minority. The majority of delegates held that Church schools were important, and that if they could not exist, the state schools must guarantee proper instruction in Orthodox fundamentals.

The assembly’s decision on Church schools and religious instruction was ultimately articulated by Bishop Serafim.<sup>224</sup> Serafim argued that all schools were deficient and that therefore; Russian schools needed radical reform, above all, to ensure that Orthodox citizens have

the right to require mandatory religious instruction in school. In a free state there should be a single school, but in the Russian state the majority are Orthodox. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly and the future legislative chamber need to make religious teaching compulsory in elementary schools for the children of the Orthodox population, at the expense of the state.<sup>225</sup>

Later in the conference Serafim suggested that religious instruction should be included not only in elementary but also in secondary schools. In short, while the Cheliabinsk assembly preferred to retain parish schools (with state funding), if that were impossible, then the state schools must be required to provide religious instruction at both the elementary and secondary levels.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 51 ob.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., ll. 30-61.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., l. 52.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

## **Ecclesiastical Schools**

Delegates also discussed the future of ecclesiastical schools—the elementary schools and seminaries that provided training for future clergy. The assembly decided to eliminate special schools to train deacons (to reduce church expenditures), but declared that the future of ecclesiastical schools was very important to both clergy and lay delegates at the assembly.<sup>227</sup> The main question was funding: who was to finance these clerical schools? A layman (Shishkin) recognized the value of clerical schools, and hence the need to provide support for these schools. However, he questioned whether the funds would come from the Church or the clergy themselves, essentially dismissing the possibility of lay support for clerical schools.<sup>228</sup> Another layman critiqued Shishkin’s omission of the lay population as a possible avenue for the support of clerical schools. He averred, “The clergy are the salt of the earth, and if without our support, they close schools, where will the pastors of the church study? How would we, without the salt of the earth, avoid fermenting the state?”<sup>229</sup> In the end, the assembly voted that the church, the clergy, and the laity must all contribute to the support of clerical schools.

## **Parish Economic Reform**

Parish economic reform was the last, and the most important, issue discussed at the conference<sup>230</sup> because most of the other reforms were contingent on sufficient funding. It was therefore essential to determine the sources of much-needed financial

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<sup>227</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 41 ob.

<sup>228</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 41 ob.; The parish had in fact provided the funding of ecclesiastical schools since 1808, through the diversion of parish revenues, much to the displeasure of the laity.

<sup>229</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 42.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., ll. 54-61.

support. Delegates discussed various ways that the parish church could tap new incomes to pay for parish programs, to pay clerical salaries, and to maintain the Church.<sup>231</sup> Yet, Church strategies fell far short of Church needs. The Church realized it would have to rely on the state and parishioners for support, but neither were in the position or inclined to provide support for diocesan, vicariate, and even parish programs.

The assembly suggested several sources of income. One was to collect regular obligatory payments from the parishioners themselves: they would not only give the traditional voluntary gratuities for religious rites (e.g., baptism, weddings, and funerals), but also pay a twelve-ruble tithe each year.<sup>232</sup> A second source of revenue would be a 60 ruble tuition fee for those enrolled in its girls' school.<sup>233</sup> A third proposal was that surplus monastery land could be used more efficiently to support the parish clergy (either as income from leasing or as additional land for the priest to cultivate himself). The assembly calculated that parishes could gain an additional 600-800 rubles a year from the use of "surplus" monastery land. This was of course hardly a new proposal (for decades parish clergy and laity had complained about the failure of monasteries to be socially useful), but it was hardly likely to evoke a favorable response from monastic clergy—who were not represented at the assembly.<sup>234</sup> A fourth proposal was to sell, more aggressively and at a higher price, the religious journal it currently published.<sup>235</sup> The final proposal was that Cheliabinsk would build a new candle factory and sell the candles for church services. According to the assembly's estimate, the new candle factory would

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<sup>231</sup> "S"ezd dukhvenstva i mirian' cheliabinskogo vikariatsva," GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 54 ob.-59.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., l. 54 ob.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., l. 59.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., l. 56.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., l. 50.

generate an additional 600 rubles a year.<sup>236</sup> However, if all these proposals were adopted, they still were insufficient and trivial; the Church would have to rely on additional support from the laity and the state itself.

The parish reforms suggested by the assembly added a multitude of new expenses. The church had to pay the salaries of its high-ranking members: Bishop Serafim earned 2,400 rubles a year, two members of the diocesan board each earned 1,200 rubles, the secretary of the board 900 rubles, and the clerk 300 rubles.<sup>237</sup> That amounted to 6,000 rubles in salaries and did not include the recommended salaries for parish clergy, school teachers, clerks, and chancellery workers. It was also necessary to allocate funds to maintain churches, monasteries, parish schools, ecclesiastical schools (the district school and diocesan seminary), as well as the physical plants at the vicariate and candle factories.<sup>238</sup> The new administrative organs (the parish, *oblast*, and diocesan soviets) would also require substantial funds. For example, Father Demidov estimated that the assembly's own week-long meeting cost 36,000 rubles.<sup>239</sup> All this came to an enormous sum that the state, Church, and parishioners were either unable or unwilling to provide.<sup>240</sup>

Many progressive and much needed reforms depended on far-reaching economic reforms. Historically, economics had been a critical weakness of the Church.<sup>241</sup> The Cheliabinsk assembly was keenly aware of the economic issue, but could not offer any

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<sup>236</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, l. 54-54 ob.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., ll. 54 ob.-61.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., l. 55 ob.

<sup>240</sup> Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 35.

<sup>241</sup> See Young, *Power and the Sacred*, 11-49; Gregory Freeze, *The Parish Clergy*. This was especially true after the secularization of church lands in 1764. Despite promises of adequate compensation, the state had provided only modest sums, which shrank in real value over time because of inflation. Parish priests, for example, had to rely on the notorious gratuities—niggardly in amount. From 1829 the state did grant small subsidies to the poorest parishes, but these sums were meant only to complement, not replace, gratuities, and did not apply to all parishes.

solution. The parish church had depended on financing from parishioners (through gratuities, the sale of votive candles, and a few other resources), and the best strategy it could suggest now was a combination of support from the state, Church, and parishioners.<sup>242</sup> The spring of 1917 was hardly a propitious time to expect any of these to produce significant new revenues. The Provisional Government was fighting a war and, given its composition of politicians ill-disposed to the Orthodox clergy, was hardly inclined to allocate its scarce resources to the Church. Given the economic chaos, runaway inflation, disruption of the war (including the conscription of millions of working-age men to the army), the parishioners—however pious—had little chance to increase their contributions. Hence the assembly’s assumption that the laity, if accorded a greater role and responsibility in the Church, would assume a greater burden proved to be false.<sup>243</sup> While the tithe would ameliorate the economic problems, the Church had neither the means nor the authority to collect a 12 ruble levy from parishioners. As the assembly’s deliberations make clear, the Church simply had no way to finance its most pressing needs—salaries for parish clergy and funding for the new lay-clerical network of soviets.

### Conclusion

The Assembly of Clergy and Laity of the Cheliabinsk Vicariate, held from 27 April 1917 to 3 May 1917, assumed a more progressive political position than had been possible under the *ancien regime*.<sup>244</sup> The Cheliabinsk assembly supported religious pluralism, democratic government, the eight-hour work day, and land redistribution.

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<sup>242</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 54-61.

<sup>243</sup> Babkin, “Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 70. Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 35.

<sup>244</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 30-75.

However, it hedged many of these liberal positions with major caveats that undermined their impact and failed to match the far more revolutionary expectations of parishioners.<sup>245</sup> The assembly, for example, supported land redistribution, but only after a decree by the Provisional Government, while peasants demanded land immediately.<sup>246</sup> The assembly also endorsed the eight-hour workday, but only after the war was seen to a victorious conclusion.<sup>247</sup> The war itself was another source of tension: parish clergy supported the war against Germany, but war-weary parishioners were increasingly anti-war and disposed to support a separate peace.<sup>248</sup> The assembly voiced support for the political platforms of the Provisional Government, perhaps from a misguided hope that it would support Church reform, but popular support from the “bourgeois ministers” (and from May, a series of “bourgeois” and socialist coalitions) was quickly waning.<sup>249</sup>

The assembly also developed an ambitious set of progressive and much-needed parish reforms. Delegates devised a system to substantially expand the role of the parish clergy and the laity (male and female) in church governance—first and foremost, through a new system of parish, *oblast*, and diocesan soviets. Delegates also sought ways to improve relations between priests and parishioners and within the clergy itself. It also developed proposals to reorganize schools and improve parish finances.<sup>250</sup> As laudable as these reforms were, there were insufficient resources to make them realizable. As the assembly’s own calculations made clear, the list of possible new revenues fell woefully short and in no way could it fund even the most pressing needs, let alone all the new

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<sup>245</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 31-36 ob.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., ll. 32 ob.-33.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., l. 32.

<sup>248</sup> See Orlando Figes, “The Peasantry” in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*.

<sup>249</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 25.

<sup>250</sup> “S”ezd dukhvenstva i mirian’ cheliabinskogo vikariatsva,” GARF, f. 3431, op. 1, d. 554, ll. 36 ob.-61.

reforms. Nor, realistically, could it expect the state, the central Church, or parishioners to provide the wherewithal to cover the vast deficit.

#### **4. Cheliabinsk: April to Revolution**

Matters only deteriorated over the months after the assembly met. On the one hand, the clergy moved rightward: the instability of the Provisional Government, its growing tendency to run roughshod over Church interests (e.g., the secularization of parish schools), the disastrous July offensive, collapse of the war effort, economic chaos, and the radicalization of workers and peasants—all left the clergy feeling vulnerable and powerless.<sup>251</sup> On the other hand, parishioners became more assertive. Working within the confines of the new progressive reforms, parishioners expelled unpopular priests, seized church and monastery land, and refused to fund Church initiatives. The Church's lauded parish reforms were accompanied by a number of unforeseen consequences that left the Synod, the episcopate, and priests, who did not have popular support, impotent. Neither the Synod nor the diocesan episcopate (itself subjected to the purge of hated "Rasputinite" bishops) could do anything to defend the parish clergy and restore order in the parish.<sup>252</sup> Parish authority was no longer in the hands of bishops or the clergy, but belonged to parishioners.

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<sup>251</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 25; Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 33-40.

<sup>252</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 40-41.

## Revolution in Cheliabinsk and the Church

The first major dispute between the Cheliabinsk Soviet and the Committee of Public Safety occurred in April, when the two sides decided whether to support the Provisional Government. As a result, the Soviet liquidated the Committee of Public Safety and formed instead the Committee of People's Power as an all-party organization, but it became increasingly Bolshevik throughout 1917.<sup>253</sup> The dissolution of the Committee of Public Safety and the creation of the Committee of People's Power signaled a polarization between the privileged and lower classes and inaugurated a general disintegration of order in the city and throughout the region.<sup>254</sup> By June no forces remained, who were willing or able to curb the chaos in Cheliabinsk. "The last vestige limiting 'pure freedom' was the Church, but it was in a state of crisis."<sup>255</sup> Despite near absolute power, revolutionaries were concerned by the threat of counter-revolution.<sup>256</sup> Thus, in August, responding to the *Kornilovshchina* and the specter of counter-revolution, the Soviet formed the Committee to Save the Revolution. Correspondingly, August also featured the Bolshevik's first democratic victory in the City Duma, receiving 56 of 85 spots.<sup>257</sup> As the fear of counter-revolution spread over the next two months, the Soviet began to organize a red guard—by October accumulating over 500 red guardists.<sup>258</sup> On 12 October the Kadet paper, *People's Freedom* bemoaned that the

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<sup>253</sup> Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 148.

<sup>254</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 46; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 148.

<sup>255</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 47.

<sup>256</sup> See Skripov, 47; Acton, ed., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, 74-6, 146-8, 206-9.

<sup>257</sup> Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 148.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

Kadets were completely without power and that only a miracle could save the revolution.<sup>259</sup>

The assembly did not solve many of the Church's problems. A number of financial, institutional, and social roadblocks to implementing these reforms remained.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, few of the Church's policies were realized, and the policies that were instituted often had undesired consequences. Yet, the Cheliabinsk assembly provided the population with a number of topics to debate. From April to October, the diocesan press extensively debated issues discussed at the assembly. The Church also took steps to deal with the changing times, defining its relationship toward socialist parties, the Provisional Government, and the tumultuous political events of 1917. Local issues also received attention as Cheliabinsk clergy addressed the revolution in the diocese, vicariate, and parish. In addition, the clergy tried to dissuade popular disturbances against authority, the Provisional Government, the Church, and the clergy. Of utmost concern was salvaging Church authority in the parishes, which parishioners were quickly usurping.<sup>261</sup>

### **Relationship with the *Ancien Regime* and the Provisional Government**

The clergy supported the Provisional Government and contrasted it with autocracy. They argued that the Provisional Government was a legal government based on enlightened law and the principles of true governance. Autocracy, by contrast, was

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<sup>259</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 47.

<sup>260</sup> Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 120-50; Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 22.

<sup>261</sup> Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 120-50; Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 22.

illegal, unorganized, antiquated, and doomed to “wither under the will of the people.”<sup>262</sup>

The clergy therefore vowed that it would do everything in its power to support the Provisional Government and the sacred values of the revolution.<sup>263</sup>

The glorious fall of the autocracy had unshackled the clergy. The Church, free to embark on a new path of life, immediately and without coercion supported the new Provisional Government and forbid the clergy from making prayers in support of the tsarist house. On 17 April *Vestnik* published a resolution contending that the Church would “take decisive measures against clergy continuing to remember the face of the tsar and exciting the people against the new authority.”<sup>264</sup> The Church, aware that some clergy continued to commemorate the tsar, set out to find the perpetrators. One victim of the witch-hunt was priest Demidov from Cheliabinsk, who allegedly remarked “The Russian people cannot be without a tsar; cursed are those who invented all these freedoms.”<sup>265</sup> Yet, this does not seem to be the case: in a subsequent issue of *Vestnik*, the accused priest defended himself by recounting all his liturgies since the tsar’s abdication.<sup>266</sup> He asserted that in his liturgies on 4 and 5 March he did not pray for the tsar, but only for Russia and the government, and that on 8 and 10 March he implored the people to support the Provisional Government and assist it to achieve its goals.<sup>267</sup> In addition, on 10 March Demidov gave a large public liturgy to commemorate the revolution, its victims, the Provisional Government, and the new-found Russian

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<sup>262</sup> “Na politicheskiia temy. Osnovy i printsipy pravovogo gosudarstva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 2.

<sup>263</sup> “Na politicheskiia temy. Osnovy i printsipy pravovogo gosudarstva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 2-4; “Opasnost’ khozhdeniia,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 1-2.

<sup>264</sup> “Opasnost’ khozhdeniia,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 2.

<sup>265</sup> “Pravda li?,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 4; “K zametke: Pravda li?,” *OTs-OV*, no. 10: 4.

<sup>266</sup> “K zametke: Pravda li?,” *OTs-OV*, no. 10: 4.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

freedom.<sup>268</sup> Demidov contended the people had looked to him as a scapegoat, but proclaimed they would find no fault in his sermons or liturgies.<sup>269</sup> Demidov's defense was successful and he became a predominant figure in the Cheliabinsk Church in 1917 and an influential priest in Cheliabinsk in the 1920s.<sup>270</sup>

The Church also separated itself from the *ancien regime* by canceling tsarist celebrations and by celebrating the revolution. Thus, following the fall of autocracy, the Church canceled the parade commemorating "Tsar's Day" on 3 March and participated in various celebrations in support of the February Revolution. Demidov, for example, actively participated in the 10 March celebration of the February Revolution. At this celebration clergy marched alongside workers (many of them Bolsheviks), waving red flags.<sup>271</sup> The clergy were not just detached practitioners in these events; they prayed for the revolution, read liturgies, and performed rites for those who lost their life in the sacred struggle for freedom.<sup>272</sup>

The Church also chose to distance itself from the old political system by denigrating the regime's past, contrasting it with the Church's revolutionary past.<sup>273</sup> The clergy asserted that the Church had lived through the "nightmarish" reigns of monarchs, who restricted their privileges and curbed Church authority.<sup>274</sup> The paper was particularly critical of Peter the Great and how he subordinated the Church to the state by

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<sup>268</sup> "K zametke: Pravda li?," *OTs-OV*, no. 10: 4.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> See Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 182-197.

<sup>271</sup> "Utverzhdenie zaionouchitelei. Utverzhdeny," *OTs-OV*, no. 2: 2; Also see Babkin, "Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva," 212.

<sup>272</sup> "K zametke: Pravda li?," *OTs-OV*, no. 10: 4; Also see Babkin, "Reaktsiia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi," 75-82.

<sup>273</sup> "Zadachi momenta dlia dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 1-2; "Na politicheskiiia temy. Osnovy i printsipy pravovogo gosudarstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 3.

<sup>274</sup> "K reorganizatsii prikhoda," *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 1.

forming the Synod. The Synod and the Church's connection to the government made the Church seem administrative, policing, and bureaucratic and reduced parishioner roles in Church administration.<sup>275</sup> In contrast, the Church recalled clerical revolutionaries like Solov'ev and acknowledged that of the 50,000 clergy in Russia few supported the *ancien regime*; the vast majority of them opposed the government and fought to better their parishioners' lives.<sup>276</sup> The Church contended that the clergy set the groundwork for February and implored parishioners to remember the clergy's debt and establish a country based on Christian law.<sup>277</sup>

The clergy also addressed popular claims that they were not revolutionaries, and thus not the forbearers of revolution. The popular classes posited that if the Church and the clergy were true revolutionaries, they would not have been shocked by the fall of the tsar because they would have been at the forefront of the movement. The Church combatted this claim asserting that it had expected the revolution since the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>278</sup> The clergy knew the revolution would occur because the grace of God predetermined it: God would not let Russia or its people suffer under the hand of a repressive tsar.<sup>279</sup>

Church justifications that the clergy supported the revolution and not the old regime reached new heights as anticlericalism surged in Cheliabinsk.<sup>280</sup> The Church proclaimed "The peasantry should not blame the clergy, who led their children to the revolution, they should blame the old government, which placed the clergy in trying

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<sup>275</sup> "K reorganizatsii prikhoda," *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 1.

<sup>276</sup> "Iz g. Cheliabinska. Tserkovnaia zhizn," *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 2-3.

<sup>277</sup> "K momentu," *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 2.

<sup>278</sup> "K reorganizatsii prikhoda," *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 1.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> "Nashe gore," *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 1-2.

positions under which pastoral ministry was not appealing to the people.”<sup>281</sup> Clergymen stressed that the regime inhibited the clergy’s preaching, clerical attempts to implement the socialist system in the world, and alienated the clergy from their parishioners. The Church vehemently asserted through prayers, articles, and processions that it welcomed and supported the fall of the despotic regime, the ideals of the revolution, and the rise of the new government, and averred that it was willing to assist the government in battles against counter-revolution and anarchy.<sup>282</sup>

Although the Church consistently asserted that it had never been connected to the tsarist regime, it had a difficult time convincing parishioners of this. Therefore, the Church continued to stress its unwavering support for the revolution and the Provisional Government. Yet, as 1917 progressed and the foundering Provisional Government became more unpopular, the Church’s continued attempts to align with the government proved detrimental. At a time when the Church was supporting the government and the preservation of the status quo, the popular classes were championing change and further revolution.<sup>283</sup>

### ***Vestnik and the War***

Along with supporting the Provisional Government came supporting the increasingly unpopular war. In the clergy’s view, the Provisional Government inherited the tsar’s war, but needed to fight it to a victorious conclusion. The clergy attributed all

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<sup>281</sup> “Pervyi svobodnyi dukhovenstva i mirian Orenb. Eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 18: 2.

<sup>282</sup> “Privetstviia s’ezda,” *OTs-OV*, no. 15: 2-3.

<sup>283</sup> “Nashe gore,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 1-2; See also Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 33-5; Nechaev, *Tserkov’ na Urale*, 144; Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 62-68.

the failures in the war to the tsar and proclaimed without the saboteur in charge, Russia would emerge victorious. The clergy imparted “The present has clearly revealed that tsarist power was against the society. The society wants victory, but the autocratic monarchy systematically used all means to ensure that Russian society was economically defeated and powerless.”<sup>284</sup> In short, the clergy asserted that the war effort failed because the tsar wanted to weaken the people to undermine future political and social demands.<sup>285</sup>

Therefore, the Church actively advocated for financial support of the war, opening several issues of *Vestnik* with a nearly full-page call for people to invest in the Liberty Loan. The Liberty Loan advertisement declared that Russians had an obligation to purchase the loans to save the country from the German hordes.<sup>286</sup> The Provisional Government qualified this contending “it is not obligatory for you to sacrifice your home, but it is your duty to lend money to the state; give to the loan to save our freedom from devastation.”<sup>287</sup> These policies proved to be very unpopular among a poor, hungry, and war weary populace, which proved ill-disposed to aid the unpopular war.<sup>288</sup>

The Church did not just support the financing of the war; it was also active in supporting individual soldiers and their families. The clergy collected food for and offered spiritual comfort to families, whose primary laborer was engaged in the war

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<sup>284</sup> “Na politicheskiiia temy. Osnovy i printsiipy pravovogo gosudarstva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 3.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>286</sup> “Osvobozhdennyi ot sbora s dokhodov ot denezhnykh kapitalov zaem svobody 1917 goda, vypuskaemyi na osnovanii postanovleniia vremennogo pravitel’stva srokom na 55 let,” *OTs-OV* no. 3: 1; For more on the clergy’s patriotic support of the war see Babkin, “Pozitsiia cheliabinskogo pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva,” 213. The Provisional Government began the Liberty Loan program on 27 March 1917. The loans were sold in graduated amounts from 50 to 25,000 rubles. The loans were supported by the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, but the Bolsheviks denounced the loans for their imperialistic aims. In the end, the loans did little to allieviate the financial burden of the war.

<sup>287</sup> “Ot vremennogo pravitel’stva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 3: 1.

<sup>288</sup> “Nashe gore,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 1-2; See also Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 33-5; Nechaev, *Tserkov’ na Urale*, 144; Babkin, “Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo,” 62-68.

effort. In addition, the clergy delivered sermons and brought Christmas and Easter presents to soldiers at the front.<sup>289</sup> Missions to the front were common in Russia because it was believed that the clergy could help soldiers cope with the traumatic experiences of war. The clergy were also concerned about “confessional fraternization” with other armies and within the multi-confessional Russian army and sought to provide spiritual reinforcement.<sup>290</sup> Moreover, missions to the front provided the clergy with an interesting peek at the state of the army.

Clerical trips to the front initially elicited positive reports; however, as the war progressed, the clergy observed increasing cases of desertion, fraternization, and insubordination. Initially, clergymen noted that the army met the revolution with great enthusiasm, gaining a new reason to defend their motherland.<sup>291</sup> But, from June on, clergy returning from the front were much less optimistic: reports slandered the horrors of desertion, betrayal, cowardice, and fraternization.<sup>292</sup> One manifestation of betrayal was observed by a clergyman when an insolent soldier snapped at Kerensky: “how is it my land if I die?”<sup>293</sup>

As a result, the clergy no longer glorified the soldier like they did before May; they characterized soldiers as enemies of the Church. In a rather poignant article, “On the

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<sup>289</sup> “S Podarkami na front,” *OTs-OV*, no. 19: 2; “Poezdka na front s Rozhdestvenskimi podarkami,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 3-4; “Poezdka na front s Rozhdestvenskimi podarkami,” *OTs-OV*, no. 25: 2-3; “Zasedanie Komiteta Krasnogo Kresta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 34: 3.

<sup>290</sup> “Nashe gore,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 1.

<sup>291</sup> “Zasedanie Tserkovno-politicheskoi sekti,” *OTs-OV*, no. 9: 1; “Zaem Svobody 1917 goda,” *OTs-OV*, no. 14: 1.

<sup>292</sup> “K momentu,” *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 2; “Russkie sotsialisty i voina,” *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2-3; “Poezdka na front s Rozhdestvenskim podarkami,” *OTs-OV*, no. 25: 2-3; “Na kraiu gibeli,” *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 1; “Slovo, skazannoe pri vypuske shkoly pratorshchikov pered molebnom v den’ godovshchiny shkoly 20 iulia. Iunoshi voiny,” *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 1; “K momentu,” *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 1; “Slovo po prochtenii poslaniia sv. Sinoda 30 iulia posle Bozhestvennoi liturgii pered molebnom. Bratie grazhdane,” *OTs-OV*, no. 34: 1; “K momentu,” *OTs-OV*, no. 39: 1.

<sup>293</sup> “Po povodu goneni na dukhovenstvo,” *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 1.

Edge of Death,” a returning priest described the proliferation of anarchy at the front. He bemoaned “Cowardice has crept into the soul of the soldier. It eats like a rotten force at the army, which is becoming easy prey to the enemy.”<sup>294</sup> The priest posited the clergy did not fear the enemy, they feared the lack of discipline and respect in the army and on the home front.<sup>295</sup> The clergy reprimanded all society for being too individualistic and for losing all understanding of “motherland,” “honor,” and “duty.”<sup>296</sup> The author attacked all social classes castigating grain hoarding peasants, lazy and greedy workers, avaricious capitalists, and cowardly soldiers, who, without societal support, abandoned their duty and deserted.<sup>297</sup> The clergy beseeched all members of society to unite in the defense of the motherland.

The paper proposed that Bolshevik agitators were the primary cause of military disorder. In “On the Edge of Death,” the author refers to the Bolsheviks as foreign “parasites” at the front, who would use any means to justify their despotic ends.<sup>298</sup> The clergy considered the Bolsheviks to be foreigners, who did not understand Russians or the concept “motherland;” internationalism, to the clergy, was a nasty pejorative, which could never exist in Russia, and would lead to the nation’s destruction.<sup>299</sup> The clergy warned that the Germans were optimistic that the political and social situation in Petrograd would enable them to sweep through Russia and enslave its people.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> “Na kraiu gibeli,” *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 1.

<sup>295</sup> “Na kraiu gibeli,” *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 1; “K momentu,” *OTs-OV*, no. 39: 1.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> “Na kraiu gibeli,” *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 1.

<sup>299</sup> “Otgoloski zhizni,” *OTs-OV*, no. 40: 3.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

In order to counteract Bolshevik propaganda at the front, the Church launched a series of political and religious missions to the front. During the latter half of 1917 one of the Church's primary concerns was financing their missionizing goals at the front. The Orenburg diocese was hoping to devote an extra 3,000 rubles to missionizing and baptizing activities among the soldiers.<sup>301</sup> Unfortunately for the clergy, Bolshevik propaganda affectively undercut Church missions; soldiers continued to desert, abuse their officers, and fraternize with the Germans. Moreover, the Church's politically motivated missionizing policies alienated portions of the Church, who did not think politics should be involved in missionizing ventures.<sup>302</sup>

The clergy did not only attack opponents of the war at the front, they also attacked them politically. Before the Coalition Government formed, the clergy ardently opposed the Soviet and Order Number 1 in particular and criticized Bolsheviks, SRs, and Mensheviks alike for their subversive roles in the war.<sup>303</sup> After Coalition Governments formed the clergy altered their stance on the Mensheviks, now considering them an ally, at least in regards to the war issue. The paper asserted that the Mensheviks were moderate socialists, who accepted that the war must continue; the "intelligent" and "cultured" Mensheviks understood that internationalism could never prosper.<sup>304</sup> The Bolsheviks—

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<sup>301</sup> "Chto nuzhno dlia missii," *OTs-OV*, no. 41: 1-2; "Pervyi svobodnyi S"ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii. Vos'moi den'," *OTs-OV*, no. 21: 1.

<sup>302</sup> See "K momentu," *OTs-OV*, no. 16: 2; "Russkie sotsialisty i voina," *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2-3; "Poezdka na front s Rozhdestvenskim podarkami," *OTs-OV*, no. 25: 2-3; "Na kraiu gibeli," *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 1; "Slovo, skazannoe pri vypuske shkoly pratsorshchikov pered molebnom v den' godovshchiny shkoly 20 iulia. Iunoshi voiny," *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 1; "K momentu," *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 1; "Slovo po prochtenii poslaniia sv. Sinoda 30 iulia posle Bozhestvennoi liturgii pered molebnom. Bratie grazhdane," *OTs-OV*, no. 34: 1; "K momentu," *OTs-OV*, no. 39: 1; See also Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army* vol. 1 and 2.

<sup>303</sup> "Iz mira pečhati. Revoliutsiia i evoliutsiia," *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 2.

<sup>304</sup> "Russkie sotsialisty i voina," *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2-3.

“narrow-minded and less cultured than the Mensheviks—could not grasp or understand Russian patriotism.”<sup>305</sup>

### ***Vestnik* and Political Issues**

Although theoretically removed from the political realm, the clergy nevertheless were engaged.<sup>306</sup> One of the predominant political issues on the Church’s mind was what type of government would exist in Russia after the war ended. The Cheliabinsk assembly broached this issue, but no conclusion was reached, and thus deliberations about different types of government systems raged in the diocesan journal after April. This interested the Church because it wanted to function politically in post-revolutionary society, and therefore had a direct interest in what form of government emerged and in that government’s potential relationship to Orthodoxy. The two most suggested governmental models were Britain’s Anglican monarchy and the United States’ multi-confessional republic.<sup>307</sup> Supporters of the Anglican model argued that, with a weak king, the Church could operate freely in the realm of “national development.”<sup>308</sup> They also cited that the Anglican Church had the capacity to deal with minority religions like the Irish Catholics.<sup>309</sup> Others opposed the Anglican model; seminary instructor S. M. Syrney argued that the British model would allow for despotism and oppression, citing Ireland as an example. He contended that the US model, with its autonomy and propensity to facilitate technological and cultural prosperity, would be preferable. Still others argued

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<sup>305</sup> “Russkie sotsialisty i voina,” *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2.

<sup>306</sup> Some clergy saw it as their duty to be politically active.

<sup>307</sup> “Zasedanie Tserkovno-politicheskoi sektsii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 9: 2.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

that American republican constitutionalism would not work in Russia because in America, nationalities were quickly assimilated into the state, in contrast, Russia remained a conglomeration of unassimilated nationalities, which would benefit more from a representative parliamentary system.<sup>310</sup> These were by no means the only models discussed,<sup>311</sup> but they received the most attention. In the end, the majority of clergy in Cheliabinsk and Orenburg favored a republic over a constitutional monarchy.<sup>312</sup>

Although the Cheliabinsk assembly briefly discussed issues of government formation, the Orenburg Diocesan assembly delved much deeper into this issue. The Orenburg delegates posited that elections had to be universal: some had argued that, for financial reasons, cities could vote and express the opinions of the peasantry, but the diocesan assembly rightly held that the residents of the city were completely disconnected from the Russian peasantry.<sup>313</sup> This also served the clergy's own interests because cities were perceived to be more secular and radical than the countryside. In addition, the assembly proposed that the future political system should be run by a president and a *duma* elected for no more than four years. All Citizens, regardless of class, gender, or nationality, should also have the freedom of religion, speech (including elections), mobility (passport), and the right to choose their own language and culture.

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<sup>310</sup> "Zasedanie Tserkovno-politicheskoi sekti," *OTs-OV*, no. 9: 2.

<sup>311</sup> Russian clergymen proved to be internationally aware discussing state and Church systems in Argentina, Austria, Australia, Bavaria, Brazil Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Pennsylvania, Prussia, Romania, Saxony, Serbia, Spain, and Switzerland. For brief discussions of the clergy's critiques of these political systems and their relationship to their respective religions. See "Polozhenie tserkvi v gosudarstvikh," *OTs-OV*, no. 21: 1-2.

<sup>312</sup> "Zasedanie Tserkovno-politicheskoi sekti," *OTs-OV*, no. 9: 2; "Chto takoe demokraticheskaia respublika?," *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 2.

<sup>313</sup> "Chto takoe demokraticheskaia respublika?," *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 1.

The only exception was that all correspondence within the Russian state, army, and navy had to remain in Russian.<sup>314</sup>

Although the Church claimed it would remain out of the political realm other than in discussions with parishioners, its opinions on the war effort reveal that this was not possible and would not be the case in the post-February Cheliabinsk Church. The Cheliabinsk clergy favored centrist organizations like the Party of People's Freedom (Kadet Party) and categorically opposed socialist parties. They stressed that February illustrated that Russia was ready for a republican form of government, but feared further revolutionary developments.<sup>315</sup> The clergy implored that it was important "to let the workers of the country know and remember that humanity can only come to this kingdom through evolution and not by revolution."<sup>316</sup> The clergy warned that power hungry socialists, who wanted to subject the people to despotic rule, would promote violent revolution camouflaged in deceitful political cover. On this basis, they posited that Soviet rule would be detrimental to the future of Russia.<sup>317</sup>

Despite the Church's distaste for socialist parties, popular support of socialist ideas (particularly in the summer of 1917) dictated that the Church favorably address socialism. This proved difficult since Marx and Engels were highly critical of religion, portraying it as a bulwark of hierarchical socio-economic relationships. The clergy acknowledged that in many nations this had been the case, but proposed that these were bastardizations of religion, manipulated by corrupt bishops and meddling governments; true religion was a private matter and one imbued with socialist ideals. The

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<sup>314</sup> "Osnovnaia prava grazhdan," *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 2-3.

<sup>315</sup> "Iz mira pečati. Revoliutsiia i evoliutsiia," *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 2.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

article contended that Marx and Engels, unaware of religious doctrine, had perceived corrupt, not true religion.<sup>318</sup> The clergy asserted that Jesus was a revolutionary socialist figure, who pursued equality and justice. In addition, religion could assume an important role in socialist societies, promoting political and social equality.<sup>319</sup> *Vestnik* also published an article refuting this position, which posited socialism was anti-religious by nature, preached violence and slavery, was impregnated with materialism and modernism, and was exclusive, seeking only to create welfare for the masses.<sup>320</sup>

While clergymen were still trying to determine their relationship toward socialism, they were certain that not all brands of socialism were equal; the clergy excoriated Bolshevik socialism for being a misinterpretation and a manipulation of true socialism.<sup>321</sup> The Bolsheviks were not socialists; they were “ambitious demagogues, against true Marxism.”<sup>322</sup> According to the clergy, Bolshevik revolutionary rhetoric ran contrary to Marxism because Russia did not possess the social, economic, or political prerequisites to support a socialist society. *Vestnik* posited that Marx wrote that a socialist society could not develop in a society, where peasants were the majority. The clergy also asserted that the Bolsheviks were completely overlooking the capitalist stage of political development, imparting that Russia was unprepared for a socialist revolution.<sup>323</sup> This represented a radical turn for the Church: the clergy, a social class many perceived to be very conservative, became politically involved even calling upon their knowledge of

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<sup>318</sup> “К вопросу об отношении социализма к религии,” *OTS-OV*, no. 25: 1.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> “Еще по вопросу об отношении социализма к религии,” *OTS-OV*, no. 28: 1-3.

<sup>321</sup> “Русские социалисты и война,” *OTS-OV*, no. 23: 2-3; “На краю гибели,” *OTS-OV*, no. 28: 1; “Печальное явление среди духовенства,” *OTS-OV*, no. 31: 3.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Marx to argue that Bolshevik socialism was a misreading of Marx by a cadre of power hungry demagogues.

### **Political Events in *Vestnik***

The clergy were particularly concerned about the “Miliukov Affair” of late April, where Miliukov’s promises to remain in the war provoked mass protests not only in Petrograd, but also in Cheliabinsk, and soon brought down the Provisional Government, leading to the formation of the First Coalition Government.<sup>324</sup> The clergy in Cheliabinsk described a terrible anxiety in the Russian people, who valued the honor of Russia and the soul of the Russian people. They asserted that the Soviet, led by Nikolai Chkheidze, demanded that the government make an early peace with Germany, but the clergy argued that Russia had to see the war to its victorious conclusion so Russia could acquire its war aims, promote patriotism, and reject uncultured internationalism.<sup>325</sup> *Vestnik* noted that Miliukov was an experienced statesman, who had the upmost support of the clergy in his actions. In addition, it claimed that the Russian people recognized the connection between the Germans and the treasonous socialist coalition and understood that they needed to support the Provisional Government.<sup>326</sup> The clergy held that Russians needed to reject the Soviet, which they compared to Judas, and fight the Germans, who they compared with Cain.<sup>327</sup> The clergy believed that the people needed to stop discussing

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<sup>324</sup> “Trevozhnyi moment,” *OTs-OV*, no. 6: 1.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

revolution and focus on building a government within the parameters established by the Provisional Government.

As the summer progressed, the clergy became increasingly concerned with the disintegration of the Provisional Government's authority and the disorganization of public life. The Church, disturbed by the June and July Days cautioned that the Bolsheviks were gaining popular support, at least in the cities. The Church condemned those who seized the government's demonstrations on 18 June, carrying signs adorned with anti-government Bolshevik slogans. They also slandered the events of July and trepidatiously admonished that the country was descending toward anarchy and class warfare.<sup>328</sup>

The paper also commended the government for its backlash against the perpetrators of the July Days, stressing that the events had irrefutably proved that the Bolsheviks were German agents.<sup>329</sup> The clergy emphatically supported the Provisional Government's decision to curtail social and political freedoms following the July events. The clergy published an article lauding the government's decisions to terminate any activities occurring under the banner of Bolshevism, to curtail the activities of anarchists, robbers, and rapists, and to ensure the protection private property and the personal safety of the population. In turn, the clergy also venerated government decisions to renew the war effort, to strengthen discipline in the army, and to revive capital punishment for military criminals and deserters.<sup>330</sup> These policies proved difficult to enforce as government power and influence waned. Nevertheless return to order appealed greatly to

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<sup>328</sup> "Russkie sotsialisty i voina," *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 3; "Pechal'noe iavlenie sredi dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 3.

<sup>329</sup> "Pechal'noe iavlenie sredi dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 3.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

the clergy, who were not just concerned with the country's situation, but who were also troubled by the deteriorating situation in Cheliabinsk.<sup>331</sup> The Church hoped that these strict measures would bring order to Russia, and above all to Cheliabinsk.

The aftermath of the Kornilov Affair disturbed the clergy even more. *Vestnik* strongly supported Kornilov and castigated those, who “groundlessly accused this great patriot and war hero of being counter-revolutionary and treasonous.”<sup>332</sup> The clergy worried that the Kornilov events may have dealt the death blow to the glorious revolution. They lamented,

Shameless despair has seized the soul. With every minute the country is approaching its inglorious and shameful defeat. From all sides it is grasped by devastating fire, which melts away her wealth. Productive strength is decreasing. She has been broken from the inside by her citizens: losing on the front and an ominous feeling at home, leaves the whole revolution fading to dust.<sup>333</sup>

The clergy recognized that the revolution had not led to a unified Russia; it had left the country disorganized and fractured. Despite appeals by the Provisional Government to utilize the revolution and deepen her conquests, the revolution was lost, transforming the once sacred word—“revolution”—into an odious pejorative.<sup>334</sup> The clergy bemoaned that the once great revolution had been usurped and defiled by self-loving political émigrés from London, who had manipulated the credulous Russian people. These revolutionaries, who desired to strip Russia of any culture, threw slogans at the people to mislead them, and as a result transformed the sacred February Revolution into an anarchist

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<sup>331</sup> See Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 148-9; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 45-7.

<sup>332</sup> “Iz mira pečati,” *OTs-OV*, no. 41: 2; In this article *Vedomosti* criticizes the socialist's press's (*Orenburgskaia zhizn'*, *Iuzhnyi Ural*, *Soiuza soiuzov*, *Soiuznaia mysl'*, and *Zarei*) portrayal of Kornilov.

<sup>333</sup> “Spasenie revoliutsii ili spasenie otchestva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 1.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

movement.<sup>335</sup> In the end, the author lamented “The revolution is already lost; we need to call for the salvation of the fatherland.”<sup>336</sup>

### Parish Reform and its Consequences

In the period after the assembly, the most important and most often discussed issue was how to involve the laity in an affective organized manner that did not undercut the authority of the Church. To ensure the proposed administration was successful, the laity and the clergy became readily involved in what they termed “Church building” (*ustroenie Tserkvi*). This was not the literal construction of cathedrals, but rather the construction of the newly proposed church administration.<sup>337</sup> The high authority was the All-Russian Church Council, but parish soviets dictated day to day management in the parish. The Cheliabinsk vicariate was composed of 370 parish soviets, plus individual soviets for the train station, the resettlement point, and various schools in the vicariate.<sup>338</sup> Soviet gatherings were designed to be convened at the initiative of the parish soviet and additional meetings would take place if ten parishioners thought an issue warranted the soviet’s consideration. Moreover, in order to convene a meeting two-thirds membership was expected.<sup>339</sup> In addition, the parish established other smaller assemblies, based on the conciliar principle, to deal with more specific issues (brotherhood, missions, and

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<sup>335</sup> “Spasenie revoliutsii ili spasenie otchestva,” *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 1-2.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>337</sup> “Ustroenie Tserkvi,” *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 2; “Otkrytikh S”ezda,” *OTs-OV*, no. 13: 1; “S Eparkhial’nogo S”ezda. Privetstvie Obshcheeparkhial’nomu S”ezdu dukhovenstva i mirian ot Redakatsii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 15: 2; “Obshchee polozhenie o prikhode. Vyrabotano na Orenburgskom Obshcheeparkhial’nom s”ezde dukhovenstva i mirian,” *OTs-OV*, no. 17: 4; “Vremennoe polozhenie ob ustroenii tserkovno-prikhodskoi zhizni,” *OTs-OV*, no. 18: 4; “Obrashchenie k prikhozhanam,” *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 1-2; “Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; See Nechaev, *Tserkov’ na Urale*, 101-24.

<sup>338</sup> “Ustroenie Tserkvi,” *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 2.

<sup>339</sup> “Vremennoe polozhenie ob ustroenii tserkovno-prikhodskoi zhizni,” *OTs-OV*, no. 18: 4.

education).<sup>340</sup> Unfortunately for the clergy, organized parish meetings rarely convened (either because they were not called or did not have two-thirds in attendance). That said, it seems that parishioners convened clandestine meetings to promote their own localist and popular agendas, ignoring episcopal programs.<sup>341</sup>

The clergy also wanted to involve the laity in the election of priests; and it does seem that lay participation in clerical elections was quite high.<sup>342</sup> First and foremost, the laity exercised their right to replace undesirable clergy. An assembly of clergy and laity then decided if the disposed clergymen would be punished for his misdeeds, but regardless of the decision, the suspect clergymen would be removed because he had lost popular mandate.<sup>343</sup> Several different steps were taken to fill the recently vacated positions: occasionally, bishops appointed clergy to fill the positions; however, increasingly, parishioners elected the majority of clergy, deacons, and sacristans. Bishop Mefodii embraced this position positing, “Therefore, you, the laity, elect your pastors.”<sup>344</sup> Yet, Mefodii was hesitant about this declaration and in the same breath cautioned, “But consider what is required in a priest. Do not pick clergy who are unfit for you.”<sup>345</sup> Mefodii urged parishioners to elect educated priests, even suggesting the implementation of education tests for perspective candidates.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> “Ustroenie Tserkvi,” *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 2.

<sup>341</sup> “O tserkovnom prikhode,” *OTs-OV*, no. 49: 1.

<sup>342</sup> “Raznye izvestia,” *OTs-OV*, no. 12: 4; “Obrashchenie k prikhozhanam,” *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2; “Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; “Vesti iz eparkhii. g. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; “Soedinennye Tserkovno-Eparkhial’nogo Sovet i Dukhovnoi Konsistorii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 2; “Psalomshchik-pastukh,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 3.

<sup>343</sup> “Soedinennye Tserkovno-Eparkhial’nogo Sovet i Dukhovnoi Konsistorii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 2.

<sup>344</sup> “Obrashchenie k prikhozhanam,” *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 2.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

The clergy seemed to think that the parishioners' choices had many of the defects of which Mefodii forewarned. By late August, the clergy repined "The dark masses have lost all respect for the clergy, and settle for cheap and happy shepherds, lacking in education, priestly knowledge, and the moral qualities relevant to his spiritual rank."<sup>347</sup> The author cites a recent hiring of a drunken, illiterate peasant to fill a vacant sacristan position. The parishioners showed that if left to their own devices, they would choose to elect priests, who could lead processions and popular festivals, not ones concerned with preaching, the catechism, or liturgies. Moreover, it was all the better if these figures would work for cheap and did not judge parishioners for their sometimes odious actions.<sup>348</sup>

The clergy were also concerned about priests acting like politicians, which in fact did occur as clergymen campaigned for vacant positions. This infuriated the upper clergy, many of whom thought clergy should be above politics. One example of this was the heated battle between fathers Medvedko and Vasilii for the vacant priest position at the Cheliabinsk resettlement point. Medvedko even chose to launch a smear campaign against priest Vasilli.<sup>349</sup> This was not the type of power transfer the clergy envisioned would come out of awarding parishioners the right to elect their own priests, and as a result, Medvedko was tried and defrocked on 22 July by the vicariate court. In addition, the Consistory chose to levy sanctions against the resettlement point, which left parishioners without a priest until the issue was resolved.<sup>350</sup> This was probably not a

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<sup>347</sup> "Psalomshchik-pastukh," *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 3.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>349</sup> "Soedinennye Tserkovno-Eparkhial'nogo Sovet i Dukhovnoi Konsistorii," *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 2.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

negative result for parishioners, who could put forth someone from their own ranks to deal with religious matters.

Another unexpected result of granting parishioners a voice in the affairs of the parish was that a number of parishioners wanted their parish to be independent from diocesan authorities. Several parishes petitioned for independence in May and June, but the Church asserted that such dissension was forbidden.<sup>351</sup> Of course, with the weakening power of the Church in the countryside, these parishes may have disregarded the Church's instruction and simply seceded anyway. Yet in the late summer and fall, the Church's position changed. The church, realizing it could no longer stop parishioners from creating independent parishes, condoned the practice, but held that independent parishes could not have a juridical face.<sup>352</sup> Orenburg also informed parishioners that independent parishes would not receive any financial support from the diocese. This did little to deter parishioners from forming independent parishes since diocesan funds had never been abundant outside Orenburg. In addition, parishioners seemed unconcerned about diocesan funds, since now they could select a priest, set his salary, and choose what they financed.<sup>353</sup> Thus, every issue of the diocesan journal was full of information concerning the establishment of new independent parishes. In the issues available to this study a total of eight independent parishes were established in Cheliabinsk.<sup>354</sup> It is also reasonable to assume that many parishes did not inform the diocesan paper that they

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<sup>351</sup> "Pervyi svobodnyi S"ezd sukhovenstva i mirian Orenb. Eparkhii," *OTs-OV*, no. 18: 3.

<sup>352</sup> "Otkrytikh prikhodov," *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4; "Komandirovanie v prikhod," *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 4.

<sup>353</sup> More independent parishes were created in Cheliabinsk, Troitsk, and Upper Ural than in Orenburg. This most likely stems from the fact that most diocesan resources remained in Orenburg. Therefore, Cheliabinsk, Troitsk, and Upper Ural had little to lose.

<sup>354</sup> "Otkrytikh prikhodov," *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4; "Komandirovanie v prikhod," *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 4; "Otkrytikh prikhodov," *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 4; "Komandirovanie v prikhod," *OTs-OV*, no. 46: 4; "Komandirovanie v prikhod," *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 4; "Otkrytikh samostoiatel'nogo prikhoda," *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 4; "Komandirovanie v prikhod," *OTs-OV*, no. 50: 4.

formed an independent diocese because of communication problems or fear of diocesan retribution.

### Parish Vacancies in the Cheliabinsk *Uezd*

Another result of the Church's parish program was the disintegration of episcopal influence and order in the parishes. The Church was in control of the parish before the

**Table 2: New Clergy Vacancies in the Cheliabinsk *Uezd***

Time Period	New Priest Vacancies	Priest Positions Filled	New Deacon Vacancies	Deacon Positions Filled	New Sacristan Vacancies	Sacristan Positions Filled
1913	15	14	0	0	19	17
Avg. per month 1913	1.25	1.167	0	0	1.583	1.4167
1916	14	10	3	1	38	32
Avg. per month 1916	1.167	0.833	0.25	0.083	3.167	2.67
Jan 1917	2	2	0	0	1	3
Feb 1917	1	1	0	0	1	1
Mar 1917	0	0	0	0	3	0
April 1917	0	1	1	1	11	1
May 1917	<b>No Data Available for May 1917 (not included in avg)</b>					
June 1917	6	0	0	0	8	3
July 1917	0	6	0	0	14	10
Aug 1917	1	0	0	0	7	5
Sept 1917	1	0	0	0	5	3
Oct 1917	0	0	0	0	4	0
1917 Avg. before the Revolution	1.5	1.5	0	0	1	2
1917 Avg. after the Revolution	1.14	1	0.25	0.25	7.43	3.14

war. Vacancies at all positions were relatively level, with the exception of the deacons, who historically had low vacancies (see Table 2). In addition, vacancies were filled for the most part: there were 15 priest vacancies in 1913, 14 of which were filled before the year ended. Yet, perhaps more indicative of stability is that 17 of the 19 sacristan vacancies were filled. This illustrates that the Church had great control of the parish clergy at all levels.<sup>355</sup> The Great War brought more chaos to the Cheliabinsk Church as vacancies increased, particularly among sacristans. In 1916 there were 38 sacristan vacancies (double the number of vacancies in 1913), 32 of which were filled. This is an admirable rate of filling positions, yet the increase in vacancies indicates that the war brought hardships to the parish.<sup>356</sup> That said, the Church still had control of the parish and proved capable of mobilizing resources to fill most of its vacancies.

The revolution affected clergy vacancies greatly. Throughout 1917 priest vacancies remained fairly low with the exception of June 1917, but those positions were immediately filled. What is of upmost interest is the post-revolutionary spike in sacristan vacancies.<sup>357</sup> At first glance this seems odd since sacristans were often regarded as being the closest to parishioners; but, there are several reasons for the high sacristan and low priest vacancies. In regards to the low priest vacancies: qualitative data confirms that priest vacancies were often not reported to the diocese; parishioners simply filled priest's positions of their own accord. It seems likely that these unreported vacancies were quickly filled with sacristans, thus creating more sacristan vacancies and underscoring the

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<sup>355</sup> "Prazdnye mesta," *OEV*, no. 1-52, 1913, of. ch.

<sup>356</sup> "Vakantnykh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel'skikh mest Orenburgskoi eparkhii," *OEV*, no. 1-52, 1916, of.ch..

<sup>357</sup> See "Vakantnykh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel'skikh mest Orenburgskoi eparkhii," *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 56; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 4; "Prazdnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 20:4; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 4; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 32: 4; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 40: 4; "Vakantnye mesta," *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4.

fact that priest vacancies often went unrecorded because they were filled quickly and from below.<sup>358</sup> One must also consider that the data for June 1917 may be more reflective of a general trend, albeit an unreported one, than an outlier.<sup>359</sup> Another reason for lower priest vacancies was that filling priest vacancies was much more important (than filling sacristan vacies) to the episcopate, which redoubled its efforts to fill these positions, and to parishioners, who needed priests to perform rites.<sup>360</sup> The most obvious reason for high sacristan vacancies is that the diocese was losing control of the parish; even though the diocese had expressed a desire to minimize sacristan vacancies, it did not have the means to accomplish this.<sup>361</sup> There are a number of other explanations for the high sacristan vacancies. First, parishioners often chose sacristans to replace disposed priests, leaving sacristan positions vacant.<sup>362</sup> Second, the Church may have dealt with more pressing issues before addressing sacristan vacancies—after all the position was essentially phased out after 1917. And third, sacristans, often identifying with peasant parishioners, may have absconded from their low-paying positions and sought to seize land, similar to their peasant brethren.<sup>363</sup>

While there are numerous explanations for the high number of sacristan and low number of priestly vacancies, it is certain that the revolution transformed the parish, bringing great social mobility and parish instability.<sup>364</sup> This is particularly noticeable if

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<sup>358</sup> See clergy complaining about this issue in “Psalomshchik-pastukh,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 3.

<sup>359</sup> “Psalomshchik-pastukh,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 3.

<sup>360</sup> “Pervyi svobodnyi S”ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 19: 2.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> “Psalomshchik-pastukh,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 3.

<sup>363</sup> “Vakantnykh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel’skikh mest Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 56; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 4; “Prazdnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 20:4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 32: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 40: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

we examine the high numbers of vacancies among sacristans. After the February Revolution an average of 7.43 positions came vacant monthly and only 3.14 of those positions were filled each month.<sup>365</sup> This is much higher than the 3.167 vacancies a month of which 2.67 were filled a month in 1916.<sup>366</sup> Therefore, in the seven months after the revolution for which we have data, 52 spots came vacant (14 more than in all of 1916) and only 22 of those spots were filled.<sup>367</sup> Perhaps, more important is the gap between these sets of numbers (4.29 after the February and 0.497 for 1916), which illustrates that more positions remained unfilled after the February Revolution. The fact that data for May is missing may be troublesome, but the fact is that 16 spots were vacant in April 1917 (this includes the new April vacancies as well as the unfilled vacancies from past months) and by June only three of those were filled with eight more spots becoming vacant, leading to a total of 21 sacristan vacancies in Cheliabinsk (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Total Vacancies in Cheliabinsk between the Revolutions**

Month and Year	Priest vacancies	Sacristan vacancies
March 1917	2	6
April 1917	2	16
May 1917	No Data Available	
June 1917	2	21
July 1917	8	25
August 1917	2	27
September 1917	2	29
October 1917	2	33

<sup>365</sup> “Vakantnykh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel’skikh mest Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 56; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 4; “Prazdnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 20:4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 32: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 40: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4.

<sup>366</sup> “Prazdnye mesta,” *OEV*, no. 1-52, of. ch..

<sup>367</sup> “Vakantnykh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel’skikh mest Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OEV*, no. 9-10, of. ch.: 56; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 4; “Prazdnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 20:4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 32: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 40: 4; “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 43: 4.

Certainly, some spots that became vacant between April and June were filled (and are therefore not depicted in this data), but regardless of that more spots became vacant than were filled during the time period.<sup>368</sup> Examining table three illustrates the steady rise in reported sacristan vacancies from March to October.

It should also be noted that the degree of priestly turnover presented in these tables is highly underestimated. Vacancy data went unreported if parishioners chose to elect their own replacement, if there were communication problems between the parish and the diocese (which would have increased during the turbulent revolutionary period), or if the parish chose to become an independent diocese. If these impediments to data collection did not exist, reported parish vacancies would have been higher, particularly during 1917, and would have underscored the fact that in 1917 parishioners had power: they could dismiss priests, demand a new priest until they got one they approved of, elect a new priest, and even create their own parish independent from Orenburg.

### **Disintegration of Order in the Parish**

Parish problems were accompanied by a general disintegration of order in Cheliabinsk and throughout the empire. Deserters, members of the guard, peasants, and workers terrorized the upper-classes and acted with a complete lack of decorum and respect. Soldiers and workers closed streets to launch parades that denigrated the Provisional Government and the bourgeoisie.<sup>369</sup> Making these events worse was the fact that the police had no authority. Demidov noted drunken soldiers, who set grain and

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<sup>368</sup> “Vakantnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 5: 4; “Prazdnye mesta,” *OTs-OV*, no. 20:4.

<sup>369</sup> “Vesti iz eparkhii, g. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 13: 4.

fodder ablaze, went unpunished because of the lack of authority among the emaciated Cheliabinsk police force. Demidov concluded a poignant article with a question on many clergy's minds: "Is it time to reestablish a little bit of order?"<sup>370</sup> For the clergy the revolution had gone too far; they wanted the popular revolution to end in February with the ascension of a democratic government that would respect their desires. However, the popular classes wanted the revolution to go beyond February, at least in the social sphere; they wanted land, factories, and independence.

The summer brought increased hostility. Demidov expressed that angered peasants were hostile to monks and seized monastery and Church land.<sup>371</sup> Theft was also quite prevalent:<sup>372</sup> on 12 June 1917 the chief of police issued a warning concerning an increase in theft in Cheliabinsk. He noted that these criminals usually stole from rich landowners, monasteries, and churches, mostly between the hours of four and six in the morning. The criminal gang, called the *fortochkami*, named for the small window used to cool homes in the summer, took advantage of open *fortochki* to steal from landowners, priests, and churches.<sup>373</sup> Burglars also broke into the women's monastery stealing everything from church valuables to women's clothes.<sup>374</sup>

*Vestnik* rarely mentioned crimes that occurred in Cheliabinsk; however, most other sources describing the city in the revolutionary period assert that crime was rampant.<sup>375</sup>

Cheliabinsk, like many other cities in revolutionary Russia, had an impotent police force.

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<sup>370</sup> "Vesti iz eparkhii, g. Cheliabinsk," *OTs-OV*, no. 13: 4.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> "Vesti iz eparkhii, g. Cheliabinsk," *OTs-OV*, no. 13: 4; "Ot nachal'nika militsii," *OTs-OV*, no. 21: 4; "Po povodu gonanii na dukhovenstvo," *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 1; "Prikhodskie 'del'tsy.' Korrespondentsiia iz p. poletaevskogo Cheliab. u.," *OTs-OV*, no. 27: 4; "S. Raznomoika," *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 4; "Krazha v monastyre," *OTs-OV*, no. 41: 4.

<sup>373</sup> "Ot nachal'nika militsii," *OTs-OV*, no. 21: 4.

<sup>374</sup> "Krazha v monastyre," *OTs-OV*, no. 41: 4.

<sup>375</sup> See Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 44-7; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 146-8.

In fact, most authors assert that priests were the last vestige of authority in Cheliabinsk; however, the common priest, who had to deal with a Church in revolution and the disintegration of parish authority, could hardly supplant police authority.<sup>376</sup>

### Clergy's Response

The Church's response to the deterioration of order took two forms: some clergy assumed a fatalistic attitude claiming that God's will would be done and others held that the clergy needed to actively address injustices in the parish. Many clergy lamented about their own persecution, asserting that the world was in a period of demise and that these were signs of the coming of the anti-Christ.<sup>377</sup> Not all clergy assumed this negative apocalyptic language; a type of God-chosen rhetoric pervaded many clerical statements. Many clergy proclaimed that God had chosen Orthodoxy to bear this burden and would deliver the Church from it.<sup>378</sup>

Although many clergymen became fatalistic, positing the inevitability of the apocalypse or that God would save Orthodoxy, others tried to reverse the tide of anticlericalism. Father Koniukin contended that if the socialist agitators were removed from society, the Church would once again have faithful parishioners. Koniukun suggested that the clergy needed to become more politically defensive in order to protect its position in society. He yearned to create a "Church political party," based on the Party of People's Freedom, which would unite the clergy and laity into one political unit in

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<sup>376</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 46-47.

<sup>377</sup> "Religioznaia revoliutsiia," *OTs-OV*, no. 51: 1.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

support of the Christian order.<sup>379</sup> In order to make this union possible, the clergy had to curb the influence of revolutionary parties from the pulpit and appeal to the laity, training patriotic, Christian, and anti-Bolshevik speakers and agitators.<sup>380</sup> Koniukun also imparted that in this trying time the Church needed to fill clerical vacancies quickly, positing that the Church could ill-afford to allow a spot to remain vacant.<sup>381</sup> He acknowledged that this may often result in unprepared clergy assuming high positions, but contended that it could be devastating for a flock to remain without a pastor—maintaining parish control was of the utmost importance.<sup>382</sup>

The clergy were also highly concerned with disorganization within their own ranks and held that solidifying their ranks would strengthen them against the socialist and parishioner tide. In order to remedy this, the church established brotherhood assemblies.<sup>383</sup> These assemblies were most likely attended more by well-to-do and urban priests due to their location in cities, since travel across the vast diocese or even the vicariate was difficult.<sup>384</sup> Therefore, they likely had little, if any success at uniting the clergy. This seems to have been the case: in May, the clergy repined that they did not have any of the organizational structures of the various professional or laboring classes, and that therefore, they were not in a position to dictate their life in the same manner as the other professions were.<sup>385</sup> This problem remained unresolved: on 6 August Chernavskii wrote, “Now we face an uphill struggle because we entered a new life

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<sup>379</sup> “O provedenii v zhizn’ tserkovno-politicheskoi programmy,” *OTs-OV*, no. 13: 2; “K gorodskim vyprosam,” *OTs-OV*, no. 19: 2.

<sup>380</sup> “Pervyi svobodnyi S’ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 19: 2.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> “Otkrytie Bratstva zakonuchitelei,” *OTs-OV*, no. 24: 1-2; “Vesti iz eparkhii. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 4.

<sup>384</sup> “Vesti iz eparkhii. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 37: 4.

<sup>385</sup> “Vopros o prikhode i eparkhial’nom Bratstve,” *OTs-OV*, no. 10: 1-2.

completely disorganized and befuddled.”<sup>386</sup> Thus, on the eve of the October Revolution, the clergy remained stratified because the *ancien regime* prohibited them from creating organizational institutions in the prerevolutionary period. The clergy took steps to remedy this after February, but they proved to be too little too late. The Cheliabinsk clergy would remain relatively stratified until 1929 when they banded together to curtail Stalin’s assault on religion.

### **Cheliabinsk-Orenburg Disputes**

The clergy also suffered from regional stratifications. This was particularly common within dioceses since diocesan seats often monopolized state funds, seldom allocating them to the provinces. This had certainly been the case in the pre-revolutionary period when the Cheliabinsk schools only received a fraction of what the Orenburg schools received.<sup>387</sup> February did not do much to reverse this trend, as the Cheliabinsk clergy continued to think that Orenburg lorded over them. This was confirmed when the Orenburg Diocesan Assembly of Clergy and Laity invalidated the election of six of the Cheliabinsk delegates to the All-Russian Council. As a result of the decision, the Cheliabinsk elections were held again and returned the same result.<sup>388</sup>

In addition, Orenburg forbid Cheliabinsk’s 20,000 ruble proposal to build a candle factory, which was designed to offset a fraction of the costs of parish reforms.<sup>389</sup> Demidov and Shishkin, the only two Cheliabinsk representatives at the Orenburg

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<sup>386</sup> “K uchrezhdeniiu Soiuza dukhovenstva Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 1.

<sup>387</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 8.

<sup>388</sup> “Pervye svobodnyi S”ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 17: 2.

<sup>389</sup> “Pervye svobodnyi S”ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 19: 1.

assembly, vehemently protested this decision on the grounds that it was illegal. They asserted that Orenburg owed Cheliabinsk the money because of the 36,000 rubles the Cheliabinsk Church gave to Orenburg in 1896, which Shishkin quipped would now be 43,000 rubles because of interest.<sup>390</sup> The assembly averred that the money was used across the diocese, and that therefore Cheliabinsk benefitted from its use. The Cheliabinsk delegation scoffed at this remark, pointing out that the large majority of the was spent in Orenburg. The assembly retorted that building a candle factory in Cheliabinsk would be detrimental because it would detract from the Orenburg candle factory's profits and because the vicariate would be crippled by startup costs.<sup>391</sup> The Orenburg delegates asserted that Cheliabinsk would need 35,000 rubles, not the 20,000 they requested. This did not deter the fiery Shishkin, who asserted, "that is still less than we gave you in 1896."<sup>392</sup> A rather perturbed clergyman, Florinskii, retorted, "Why does the speaker not consider the benefits of the whole diocese, not just his region."<sup>393</sup> As a result, the candle factory, which was supposed to fund many of Cheliabinsk's new ventures, did not receive proper funding and was voted down 55 to 3; layman Shishkin and priest Demidov were only able to persuade one other representative to support their venture.<sup>394</sup> One reason for these infringements on the decisions of the Cheliabinsk assembly may have been that Orenburg was infuriated with Serafim's suggestion that Cheliabinsk become an independent diocese.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> "Pervye svobodnyi S"ezd dukhovenstva i mirian Orenburgskoi eparkhii," *OTs-OV*, no. 19:, 2.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> See Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 17.

The primary disagreement between the Cheliabinsk vicariate and the diocese was that Cheliabinsk desired to establish its own independent diocese, not a vicariate.<sup>396</sup> Serafim's proposal met great hostility from Mefodii and high-ranking clergymen from other regions. In fact, the Orenburg assembly prohibited the creation of an independent diocese in Cheliabinsk.<sup>397</sup> Multiple archpriests from the Upper Ural and Troitsk regions also opposed the Cheliabinsk proposal, asserting that their parishioners would not accept it; yet, the archpriests claimed that if the question was raised at a later date, they were likely to support the decision. The Cheliabinsk clergy and laity were extremely disappointed by the decision, but that did not deter them from raising the proposal at later dates.<sup>398</sup>

Cheliabinsk raised the issue again on 22 October. Serafim protested that it was hypocritical to prohibit Cheliabinsk from forming an independent diocese at a time when the Church was seeking to decentralize. Serafim claimed that he had received numerous letters from Upper Ural parishioners, which asserted that they wanted to be part of Cheliabinsk's future independent diocese.<sup>399</sup> Archpriests from the Upper Ural region immediately denied this, leading Serafim to suggest that authorities from Orenburg encouraged the leaders of the Troitsk and Upper Ural regions to lie. The diocesan authorities held that Serafim's arguments were unconvincing because not all clergymen desired decentralization.<sup>400</sup> In fact, by October the episcopate did supported centralization and a return to order. Moreover, they posited that the establishment of an independent

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<sup>396</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 169.

<sup>397</sup> "Pervyi svobodnyi S"ezd dukhovenstva i mirian," *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 2.

<sup>398</sup> "Pervyi svobodnyi S"ezd dukhovenstva i mirian," *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 2; "K otkrytiiu Cheliabinskoi eparkhii," *OTs-OV*, no. 44: 2.

<sup>399</sup> "K otkrytiiu Cheliabinskoi eparkhii," *OTs-OV*, no. 44: 2.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

diocese in Cheliabinsk would not resolve management problems, it would simply make Cheliabinsk into a central authority, and thus the Troitsk and Upper Ural regions would remain exploited.<sup>401</sup> In response, Serafim retorted that the statements by Orenburg were ludicrous and that Orenburg was in no position to judge how the future diocese would behave.<sup>402</sup>

Regional, social, and economic divisions within the clergy left the Orenburg and Cheliabinsk Church weakened and stratified at a crucial time, when organization was paramount.<sup>403</sup> Opportunist bishops, like Serafim, utilized revolutionary events to press their own agendas and regional agendas, ignoring the greater needs of the Church. That said, Serafim was justified in his request; the Orenburg diocese had run roughshod over Cheliabinsk in the past.<sup>404</sup> In addition, frustrated village priests, deacons, and sacristans also pressed their own agendas, hoping to receive more rights and higher salaries.<sup>405</sup> Moreover, parishioners elected priests, who were not obedient or subservient to the diocese. They were subservient to their parishioners, who determined their future. Serafim, lower clergy, and the laity, observing changes in other areas of society, held that if peasants and workers were improving their lot, why should they not improve their positions as well.

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<sup>401</sup> “K otkrytiiu Cheliabinskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 44: 2.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>403</sup> “K uchrezhdeniiu Soiuza dukhovenstva Orenburgskoi eparkhii,” *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 1.

<sup>404</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 17, 129-30, 169.

<sup>405</sup> “Obshchee polozhenie o prikhode. Vyrabotan na Orenburgskom Obshcheeparkhial’nom S”ezde dukhovenstva I mirian,” *OTs-OV*, no. 18: 2-3.

## Education

The final issue that was directly on the Church's mind was education. The Church wanted the laws of God to be taught in elementary and secondary school, but over the next few months, the Provisional Government, yielding to popular opinion rejected this proposal.<sup>406</sup> Clergymen defended the instruction of the laws of God in schools using similar arguments to the ones proposed at the Cheliabinsk assembly, averring "Christian blood flows in the veins of contemporary culture."<sup>407</sup> Yet, when it became clear that clerical arguments would not sway state opinion, the Cheliabinsk clergy seemed resigned to its fate, and began probing alternative methods for religious instruction. The Cheliabinsk clergy changed its stance again in September, when the future of the government seemed bleak. The Church asserted that the laws of God must be taught in schools regardless of the government's opinion because that was the only way religion could survive in Russia and in Cheliabinsk.<sup>408</sup> As Church authority over parishioners began to wane, education was proposed as the best way to create proper parishioners.<sup>409</sup>

## Conclusion

The period after the Cheliabinsk assembly highlighted tensions between the clergy and their parishioners. On the one hand, the Church and the clergy became more conservative and reactionary (in rhetoric and actions) utilizing all available means to

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<sup>406</sup> "Nuzhen li Zakon Bozhii v edinoi svobodnoi shkole?," *OTs-OV*, no. 17: 1-2; "Chto delat'?" *OTs-OV*, no. 28: 3-4; Also see Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 41.

<sup>407</sup> "Nuzhen li Zakon Bozhii v edinoi svobodnoi shkole?," *OTs-OV*, no. 17: 2.

<sup>408</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 19-25.

<sup>409</sup> "S. Raznomoika," *OTs-OV*, no. 33: 4.

preserve the status quo and protect their future interests. The instability of the Provisional Government, the collapse of the war effort, economic chaos, the disintegration of the last vestiges of order, and the radicalization of workers and peasants left the clergy exposed and powerless.<sup>410</sup> These realities were brought close to home as angered and impatient parishioners waged a war against the clergy for control of the parish, refusing to pay priestly salaries, disposing priests, and electing priests subservient to parishioner, not diocesan authority.<sup>411</sup> Thus, the Church and the clergy searching for reprieve supported anything that would possibly bring a return to order. The clergy continued to support the war and lauded the July offensive and the reinstatement of military capital punishment (something they had previously decried) with the hopes that order in the army and victories at the front would spur on patriotic sentiment and curb anarchy on the home front. Similarly, the clergy supported the Provisional Government's reactionary policies and incursions on freedoms, which followed the catastrophic July Days. The Church even supported the *Kornilovshchina*, applauding General Kornilov's failed putsch as an honorable attempt by a true Russian to save the nation from anarchy, Bolshevism, and the ensuing German tide.<sup>412</sup> On the other hand, the masses became increasingly impatient with the inept Provisional Government. The people saw their desires embodied more in Bolshevik slogans, than in the Provisional Government or the Church. Thus, the masses moved from petitioning for land, factories, independence, and control of the parish to taking what they thought belonged to them. The weakened Provisional Government,

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<sup>410</sup> Curtiss, *The Russian Church*, 25.

<sup>411</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 35-40; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 130-50.

<sup>412</sup> "Iz mira pečati," *OTs-OV*, no. 41: 2; "Russkie sotsialisty i voina," *OTs-OV*, no. 23: 3; "Pechal'noe iavlenie sredi dukhovenstva," *OTs-OV*, no. 31: 3; Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 35-40; Nechaev, *Tserkov' na Urale*, 130-50.

Church, and clergy proved no match to stop parishioners from taking what they believed was theirs.<sup>413</sup>

## 5. Cheliabinsk after October

### Solidifying the Revolution in Cheliabinsk

As 25 October dawned in Cheliabinsk the main Cheliabinsk Bolshevik, Solomon El'kin, was in Petrograd at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Despite the absence of their leader, the Soviet moved quickly to capture the post office, telegraph, bank, and other strategic buildings in the city.<sup>414</sup> The Bolsheviks seized power; however, they found themselves in a fight for their lives against counter-revolutionary Cossacks. The Cossacks, led by Aleksandr Dutov, quickly claimed power, but could not destroy all elements of Soviet authority. Despite being removed from power, the red guardists continued to fight and eventually reclaimed the arsenal and called Petrograd for assistance.<sup>415</sup> Aid arrived from Petrograd in the form of revolutionary forces from Ufa, Samar, and other cities. Vasilii Bliukher led the liberating forces, which transferred power to the Cheliabinsk Soviet on 20 November. The Soviet assumed power with the caveat that the newly formed War Revolutionary Committee, with Bliukher at its head, would seize power if the revolution was in jeopardy.<sup>416</sup> In reality Bliukher had total control over Cheliabinsk because he could determine what was deemed counter-

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<sup>413</sup> Freeze, "Diocesan Assemblies in 1917," 39-40.

<sup>414</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 48; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 146; Samuelson, *Tankograd*, 17-9.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 49; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 149.

revolutionary. Thus, when the SRs received more votes than the Bolsheviks in the city дума elections, Bliukher's War Revolutionary Committee assumed power.<sup>417</sup>

In 1918 Cheliabinsk was the first major Russian city in which Soviet power was overturned. 12,000 Czech troops, under tsarist general Sergei Voitsekhovskii, seized the city on 27 May 1918, easily defeating the small groups of red guards and Red Army soldiers in Cheliabinsk.<sup>418</sup> For a few months following the coup, Cheliabinsk had self-governance with popular elections, and thus anti-Bolshevik parties, religious associations, and the Cossacks were once again represented in the local consistent assembly.<sup>419</sup> The Cheliabinsk Bolsheviks responded swiftly to the Czech revolt and launched a class war against the city's bourgeoisie. In order to curb the terror, White forces placed Cheliabinsk under tight military control, abolished the new found freedoms, and initiated White terror against Bolshevik supporters.<sup>420</sup> The Bolsheviks were finally able to defeat the Whites and reassert Bolshevik power in Cheliabinsk in August 1919.<sup>421</sup>

### **The Cheliabinsk Church and the Revolution**

*Vestnik* did not detail the events of the October Revolution in Petrograd or Cheliabinsk, but immediately the paper became political actively refuting and counteracting Bolshevik policies and propaganda. The clergy in Cheliabinsk were in a particularly favorable position since Bolshevik power was weak immediately following

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<sup>417</sup> Skripov, *Cheliabinsk xx vek*, 49; Tarasov, *Cheliabinsk: istoriia*, 149.

<sup>418</sup> Samuelson, *Tankograd*, 20-1.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-6.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-30.

the revolution and in the period of White rule. Indeed, it appeared that a non-Bolshevik alternative might prevail. Therefore, while the clergy met the revolution with disappointment, there was a sliver of hope that the Whites would triumph in Cheliabinsk, and thus the clergy asserted that every effort must be made to assist whatever forces challenged Bolshevik authority.<sup>422</sup>

Following the revolution *Vestnik* was determined to condemn Bolshevik power and promote Kadet candidates for the December Constituent Assembly elections. The clergy stressed the contradictions in Bolshevik rule asserting that Bolsheviks stressed people's power; yet, at least in Cheliabinsk, they did not have popular support. In addition, the clergy scoffed at the Bolshevik slogan, "bread, land, and peace," positing "bread is not here, nor is land, nor is peace."<sup>423</sup> The Church also cautioned that Bolshevik dictatorship would lead to the collapse of the Russian state and the establishment of a German viceroyalty.<sup>424</sup> In order to combat the Bolsheviks the paper supported Kadet candidates, ran articles outlining the Kadet party platform, and implored clergymen to aggressively promote Kadet candidates from the pulpit.<sup>425</sup>

The Church also attacked the Bolshevik revolution against religion categorizing it as an old "rebellion of sin" (*grekh bogoborchestva*). The clergy stressed that "rebellions of sin" had been weathered before and that the Church would emerge victorious again.<sup>426</sup> Some clergymen asserted that it would be the last religious revolution, contending that

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<sup>422</sup> "Rezoliutsiia sluzhashchikh dukhovnoi konsistorii po povodu vystupleniia bol'shevikov," *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 4; "Komitet spaseniia rodiny i revoliutsii," *OTs-OV*, no. 48: 4; "Bolsheviki v Orenburge," *OTs-OV*, no. 48: 4.

<sup>423</sup> "Tri soblazna," *OTs-OV*, no. 49: 1.

<sup>424</sup> "Tri soblazna," *OTs-OV*, no. 49: 1; "Naprasnye mechty sotsializma," *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 1.

<sup>425</sup> "Tserkov' i Uchreditel'noe Sobranie," *OTs-OV*, no. 46: 1; "Kustanaiskii uezdnyi s"ezd dukhovenstva i mirian," *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 2; "Programma Partii Narodnoi Svobody," *OTs-OV*, no. 48: 3.

<sup>426</sup> "Religioznaia revoliutsiia," *OTs-OV*, no. 51: 1.

the revolution would bring the apocalypse and that those who remained faithful throughout the persecution would be saved and forever united with God.<sup>427</sup> The use of apocalyptic language illustrates how anomic and challenging the religious assault was for the clergy, who were not just witnessing an intellectual assault against religion from socialists, but also a parishioner assault against priests.

The Church asserted that the first responsibility of the Church, the clergy, and Russian citizens was to reestablish order throughout the countryside. Order in the parish was of immense importance to the clergy, who contended that stronger central control and command was essential.<sup>428</sup> The clergy posited that they had not abandoned the ideals of the spring, but that in this trying time it would better serve the people if order was reconstituted and control was re-centralized. *Vestnik* castigated parishes for becoming independent entities and stressed that parishes needed to take responsibility to the diocese and to the Church as a whole. The Church demanded that parishes remain under the authority of the diocese and stressed that division would condemn the Church.<sup>429</sup>

Although no records of parish vacancies appear in *Vestnik* for the period immediately following the revolution, information detailing the creation of independent parishes and clergy complaints about the disorganized nature of parishes reveal that centralization of authority was not realized. The Church complained that the peasants did not attend parish soviet meetings.<sup>430</sup> Moreover, they claimed that it was impossible to hold a parish meeting because they never had enough members (two-thirds) in attendance to convene a session of the parish soviet. Furthermore, the clergy asserted that peasants

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<sup>427</sup> “Religioznaia revoliutsiia,” *OTs-OV*, no. 51: 1.

<sup>428</sup> “Trevozhnye dni v Orenburge,” *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 4.

<sup>429</sup> “Komandirovanie v prikhody,” *OTs-OV*, no. 47: 4.

<sup>430</sup> “Vesti iz eparkhii. Cheliabinsk,” *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 4; “O tserkovnom prikhode,” *OTs-OV*, no. 49: 1.

showed little interest in the material matters of the Church and castigated peasants for holding their own parish meetings, where they organized various illegal popular masses and processions.<sup>431</sup> The Church complained that peasants had proved to be completely indifferent to any ecclesiastical institutions; all they were concerned with was popular religion. This reveals the different ways that the clergy and the parishioners viewed the Church: the clergy envisioned a Church that led masses and sermons, but parishioners held that the Church's role was to organize, lead, and promote popular practices. The latter view won out in post-revolutionary churches as parishioners took charge of Church affairs.<sup>432</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The revolution resulted in democratization, laicization, and decentralization. The democratization of Church administration, providing the laity with a greater role, led to laicization of the parish and in turn a decentralization of Church authority, which no longer rested in the hands of the episcopate, but in the hands of the laity. By October the laity had real control of the parish and they would only extend their dominance over the parish during the first years of Bolshevik rule.<sup>433</sup> The laity embraced their new role in the Church, making the Church fulfill the will of parishioners, not the will of the episcopate. In fact, with a weakened episcopate, popular religion flourished, much to the dismay of Bolsheviks, who expected religious superstition to wither away. By the mid 1920s religious sentiment was more pervasive than ever in the countryside as peasants became

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<sup>431</sup> "O tserkovnom prikhode," *OTs-OV*, no. 49: 1.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> Young, *Power and Sacred*.

more religious and developed stronger ties to their priests. Moreover, priests were highly revered in the provinces.<sup>434</sup> Decentralization was also common as episcopates found themselves unable to control parishioners. There is no better example of decentralization than in Cheliabinsk. In September 1918 Serafim's goal to form an independent diocese in Cheliabinsk was finally realized; however, by that time, Serafim was the Bishop of Polotsko-Vitebskuii.<sup>435</sup> Of course the perceived goal of forming the new diocese, decentralization, had already taken place on a much greater scale throughout the region as parishioners assumed authority in 1917.<sup>436</sup> In fact, decentralization was particularly stark in Cheliabinsk, at least until 1919; the diocese did not have an acting bishop. Cheliabinsk had been assigned two bishops—Paul and Gabriel—but the Civil War, which raged in the Southern Urals, prevented them from ever reaching Cheliabinsk. In the years immediately following the revolution, parishioners garnered all authority.

## 6. Conclusion

“Just over the endless Russian horizon, which for centuries has been shackled by the chains of slavery, came a first glimmer, a glow, a blush of freedom. Warm sunshine and joy filled the hearts and minds of young people. Not now, Russia is in a whirlpool of intoxicating evil fumes created by comrades of the Bolsheviks, Anarchists, syndicalists, and other maximalists; we have become the benefactors of a miserable homeland.”<sup>437</sup>

Archpriest Popova's rhetoric reveals the euphoria with which the clergy met the revolution and the anguish and hopelessness that had emerged by October 1917, as the revolution had led to anarchy and the destruction of the Church.

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<sup>434</sup> Young, *Power and Sacred*.

<sup>435</sup> Bozhe, *Episkopy Cheliabinskie*, 17, 130, 176.

<sup>436</sup> Freeze, “Diocesan Assemblies in 1917,” 33-41.

<sup>437</sup> “Dobroe nachinanie,” *OTs-OV*, no. 45: 4.

The clergy met the revolution with great optimism and jubilation. The Revolution freed the Church, which had for centuries been economically and socially bound to the state. It no longer had to praise a regime that most of the Church hierarchy and the regular clergy despised for its centuries of mismanaging the Church, parish, and clergy. The Church was finally free to address the numerous problems that had festered since the state last permitted it to convene an All-Church council. Thus, the Church welcomed February, proposing a number of liberal and democratic reforms, which afforded the clergy a greater role in societal life and most importantly that provided the laity with the dominant role in Church administration.

The Church's radical democratic program was admirable for the most part, yet, it was also rife with inconsistencies and caveats that alienated the Church from parishioners. For example, the Church asserted that peasants could have the land, but not until the Provisional Government issued a systematic land reform. In addition, the Church did not have the means to finance the reforms they proposed, and thus they became dependent on the Provisional Government and parishioners for support. The Church's reliance on the government forced the clergy and the Church hierarchy in particular, to support the foundering Provisional Government since it was the first and the preferred option to finance Church reforms. This bond with the government proved to be quite detrimental. Not only did it link the Church with a government that was growing more unpopular by the day, but the Provisional Government, engaged in a war, found it impossible to fund the Church's ventures. In fact, the Provisional Government, much like its predecessor, was inclined to exploit the Church, challenging its educational interests, and declining to defend its property and assets. The parishioners, despite being involved

in Church administration, also proved disinclined to fund clerical ventures, instead proposing to fund what was important to them—popular religion.

The Church's continued enthusiastic support of the war proved to be most detrimental. The clergy's insistence that the war was a just and sacred war disenchanted and incensed war-weary parishioners, who wanted peace. The Church's fervent support of the war inevitably linked it to the disparaged *ancien regime* and separated it from the people's revolution. As the spring and summer progressed the war also reified the bond between the unpopular Provisional Government and the Church. The Church would further weaken itself by supporting the actions of Kornilov, who many viewed as a counter-revolutionary. By the late summer the Church's political position had aligned it with reaction; its previous support of February would matter little.

Largely because of its connections of the old regime, its unpopular positions on the war, agrarian question, and the Provisional Government the Church found itself under assault from socialist parties, soldiers, workers, and parishioners. Opposition from unchristian soldiers, workers, and socialist parties, who saw religion as a superstition, was nothing new, but, the Church was also under assault from the laity, who, in the wake of the revolution, began to assert their authority over the local church. The laity, not only refused to pay clerical salaries and removed undesirable priests, but also utilized the institutions, created by the new Church reform, to elect priests they supported and direct the Church to fulfill their desires, not the desires of the episcopate. The crippled Church hierarchy proved incapable of stemming the tide of lay assertiveness, and just as the peasants had seized the land and workers had seized the factories, the laity had seized the parish.

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