

Finding a place for Muslimness in the Russian and English religious imagination: a preliminary inquiry

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1. Introduction.

In this article, I attempt to explore how non-Christian religions and their adherents can find a place in Christian or “Christian-heritage” religious thought. I develop the idea of a *convergence* between a Christian cultural imagination and the Muslim cultural imagination of minorities living in predominantly Christian cultures, a convergence that can lead to integration and collaboration both in Christian societies and Christian-heritage societies, i.e. societies where Christianity is no longer a state religion but still influences the culture. Mostly, I focus on Russia, but in the last section I examine one case from modern Britain. Convergence, as will become clear, is both a conscious moral *process* of seeking out similarities in a target culture, as well as the similarities and *results* themselves.

I proceed as follows. Firstly, I examine how different Russian religious philosophers before 1917 conceived of the East. For them, the East included both Jews and Judaism, as well as Islam and Muslims. I summarize some of my earlier work (Rubin 2010) on how Russian thought perceived Jews and compare it to their treatment of Muslims, mainly using Vladimir Soloviev as a demonstrative example. Then I compare how Russian perceptions of Jews and Muslims were received by the objects of this thought. I show that in some cases these perceptions were internalized and became part of Jewish self-perception. There is thus a two-way dialectic, whereby Judaism influenced Russian self-perception and Russianness (the specific style of Russian Orthodox Christianity and the culture arising from it) influenced the self-identity of Russian Jews. I repeat the same exercise in lesser detail for Russian Muslims. This process of interactive identity-building, it might be said, contradicts some tenets of the theory of Orientalism put forth originally by Edward Said, which holds that Western (or here Russian) interpretations of the Orient are necessarily patronizing, wrong and alien. The vision offered here is that there can be an intertwining interpretative process that can be useful, formative, and challenging to both parties in the initially distinct “East-West” encounter, which eventually leads to synthetic identities.

The conclusion of this analysis is that the efforts of certain Russian thinkers to create a truly universal religious philosophy had consequences that they perhaps could not have foreseen or intended: though aiming to be Christian universalists, they opened up Christian-inflected Russianness to outsiders, to non-Christians, i.e. Jews and then Muslims, so that non-Christians seeking to integrate into Russianness without assimilating, or losing their religious difference entirely, could do so. Sometimes, non-Christians responded to this universalism immediately, and we have direct dialogues between, say, the Slavophile Katkov and the jadid Gasprinsky, or between the Russian Vasily Rozanov and the Russian-Jewish Mikhail Gershenzon. However, sometimes the potential dialoguers belong to communities that are at different stages of development: views that are potentially interesting for a Muslim or Jew in the work of a Russian thinker do not enter the Muslim or Jewish consciousness until much later. We can dub this

process *asynchrony*: different rates of development lead to non-synchronic dialogues separated by time.

I also examine the discourse whereby Russian writers might display an attraction to the religion and culture of non-Christians, i.e. to the phenomenon of self-identifying “Muslimness” or “Jewishness” in a Russian cultural figure: the most famous case is Soloviev’s declaration that “I am a Jew”, and Tolstoy’s that “I am a good Mahometan”. This does not refer to converts, by the way, but rather those who were seeking alternative ways to deepen their cultural and spiritual identity, often in opposition to more orthodox definitions of identity. In so doing, they also opened up canonical Russianness to a non-Christian reading.

In the next section, I then look at a contemporary Russian Muslim thinker, Damir Muhetdinov, and consider his thought from the perspective of this analysis. I take him to be a thinker who is seeking a convergence between what he calls Russian Muslim culture and the wider Russian culture. In some ways, he is an example of “asynchronic convergence”: his reclaiming of aspects of Russian thought for Muslim use comes a century or more after the original texts were written. Still, I show that in some ways he repeats the synchronic path trodden by Jewish thinkers before 1917: in seeking to “Muslimize” canonical Russian cultural figures like Leontiev, Berdyaev and Il’in, he is following the logic of universalism developed by these thinkers – but inevitably not all the convergences he tries to construct will be good fits.

I also examine his use of pre-1917 Russian reformist Muslim thinkers, the *jadids*, like Gasprinsky, who was himself trying to affect a convergence between canonical Russian thought and emerging Muslim reformism. Muhetdinov’s appeal to Gasprinsky is also, I believe, an attempt at convergence between today’s Russian Muslim situation and the situation of Muslims in the Russian Christian empire. I spend some time on a seemingly small but in fact important linguistic point, namely whether Gasprinsky’s or Muhetdinov’s Russian term for the Muslim collective living in Russia is a better descriptive and prescriptive label: Gasprinsky coined the term *russkoe musulmanstvo*, while Muhetdinov argues for the term *rossiskoe musulmanstvo*. These two adjectives, the first deriving from *Rus* – and being more cultural and linguistic in reference, and the second deriving from *Rossia*, the name for the modern imperial state that emerged after Peter the Great, point to two different models of Muslim-Russian convergence, and so continue the above discussion.

In the final part, I examine a British Muslim thinker’s attempt to argue that Muslims should not be seen as alien to British culture, but rather as fitting into the spectrum of British Christian diversity that has existed since the post-Civil War Anglican settlement. The thinker in question, Tim Winter, or Abdul Hakim Murad, is one of the most prominent and impressive Muslim intellectuals now writing and speaking in Britain. His own theory of convergence, when set beside the history of “convergence-seeking” among Russian Muslims (and Jews) points to the idea that perhaps convergence could be a way for growing Muslim communities to find their “home” in Europe – not just socially, but intellectually and theologically. Of course, the thoughts presented here are still quite crude in shape and the ground covered is quite narrow, but they are offered as preliminary work that might provoke discussion.

2. RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND THE "BASURMANS"

1. Prelude: the canonical status of Russian literature and the emergence of Russianness.

Modern Russian language, literature and thought emerged rather suddenly at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before then, the forms and linguistic expressiveness of Russian were limited and archaic. Russian writers like Pushkin (the poet and novelist) and Karamzin (the historian) forged a literary language as well as a distinct Russian cultural consciousness in a remarkably short time. Pushkin's era is considered the Golden Age of Russian literature, while the cluster of writers from the time of Nicolas II's reign (1896-1917) on are known as Silver Age writers. Russian national self-consciousness was deeply indebted to Russian literature, and while it is characteristic of the modern age that literature has taken on some of the functions of religion, in Russia this is particularly true: Russian novelists and poets have sometimes take on the role of bards or soothsayers. Silver Age Russian thinkers often interpreted the texts of Dostoevsky and Pushkin, for example, as guides to their own identity, much as medieval commentators would interpret the Bible or Aristotle. In other words, Russian writers were very quickly pressed into a canon of ideas and linguistic norms that played a great role in defining Russianness. This continued in Soviet times, and continues to some extent even today through the schooling system, where schoolchildren still memorize classic poetry.

All this is very important in considering what Golden and Silver Age Russian writers and thinkers say about Jews and Muslims, the subject of this article. Their views, I would argue, approach the status of canonical judgments about the meaning of Christianity and Russian culture, as well as the meaning of non-Christians in that culture. Of course, their texts are not sacred atemporal pronouncements descending from on high: they are reactions to the historical events of their day. In addition, they contain numerous disagreements; but the arguments about Russianness have special power in that they come at such a formative time for modern Russian self-consciousness. Several strands of classic Russian identity eventually became dominant in the Soviet period (the positivist, socialist, Populist, and Cosmist strands). In the post-Soviet period, the classical formative period of literature and thought has once again become dominant and powerful for post-Soviet Russians seeking how to conceive of themselves in the modern world (witness the resurgence of the Russian Idea and Eurasianism). Russian literature's role as sacred Logos reasserted itself, especially in the 1990s, as people looked for an ideology to fill the gap of communism.

Of course, people also looked to European ideas in the new conditions of freedom. However, the point we wish to make briefly here is that in considering the place of non-Christians in Russian culture one cannot bypass the "Russian canon". Nor can one ignore the fact that in many ways self-aware Russian culture is relatively recent in origin and arose very quickly. (For comparison, England's Elizabethan Golden Age of literature predates Russia's by 250 years). And very early on in that brief history, notions of Christians, the East, Jewry and Muslims began to play an important role -- for the simple reason that Christian Russia of course

had a vast and diverse non-Christian population living within its borders. When Russian modernity was formed through the medium of literary Russian, pre-existing non-Russians began to emerge as "characters" within its canonical texts, and in some cases, as contributing characters (cf. the Jewish Pasternak, Mandelstam *etc*).

One of the canonical disputes within Russian thought in the Golden Age period was whether Russia itself belonged to East or West. We will start at this point. Oddly enough, before the "canonical" period, Russia had fairly unambiguously considered itself to be Western and Christian, or at least wished to be so. It was in fact Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) who first threw into Russian consciousness the fateful terms "East" and "West" in his famous *Philosophical Letters* (1826-1831), where he argued that Russia belonged neither to the East nor the West, but was stuck between them, incapable of achieving anything. Later, he revised his pessimistic view, stating that this intermediate position meant that, if she would only rise to it, Russia had the potential to chart a new route in human activity that would mediate between East and West. Here we have for the first time the idea of Russia as a possible synthesizer of East and West. In later thought, Russia's Eastern destiny would often be interpreted in strictly Christian terms, i.e. as a deepening of its Eastern Christian Byzantine heritage. The non-Christian East, such as its own Muslim or Buddhist populations or its Ottoman sparring-partner, would be considered beyond the realm of synthesis.

However, Chaadaev himself actually mentions Judaism and Islam as two Eastern cultures that contain worthy elements for imitation: he praises the energy of Moses and Muhammad in spreading monotheism, remarking that this sublime idea could not have been imbued in weak humanity without their relentless activity, which was worth far more than all the speculative impractical time-wasting of many Christian saints. At the same time, he uses similar language to refer to the organizational energy of the Catholic church, where his ultimate sympathies lie -- so earning him the posthumous title of Russia's first "Westernizer". What this epithet ignores, though, is that Islam and Judaism are more "Western" according to this rubric of energy and practicality than Eastern Christianity.

Chaadaev's terms may not be very "scientific", and they are of course polemical. From the historian's point of view, his generalizations are crude and flimsy. But from the point of view of the historian of ideas, these errors are insignificant: Chaadaev's terms enter into Russian consciousness at the formative time and thus have a force they would not have had they been stated after the "closing of the canon". As one wit put it: The mistakes of today are the grammar of tomorrow. Chaadaev makes his notions of East and West the determinative ones in future Russian discussion. To preempt a bit, Chaadaev's controversial works were definitively edited in 1908 by Mikhail Gershenzon, a Yiddish-speaking Russian Jew who forged a place for himself in Russian letters through his interpretation of these early canonical greats, by applying to himself and reinterpreting Easternness and Westernness as first stated precisely by these early 19th century thinkers. It is true that Russian notions of Easternness and Westernness, Muslimness and Jewishness, are often solipsistic: that is, they are symbols that are used mostly to arrive at self-definition and may bear only an indirect link to real Jews and Muslims. Nonetheless, the point of the coming discussions is to show that Gershenzon was not unique: for *inorodtsy* ("other nations", "non-Christians") in modern Russian culture these canonical definitions could affect

their own self-consciousness. This will be important when we come to discuss convergence, the attempts by socially integrating *inorodtsy* to locate a place for themselves in Russian culture.

Given the vastness of the literature, in this next section we will examine this phenomenon of Russian thought, the East and its interpretation by "Easterners" through the prism of one thinker, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900). I choose Soloviev because he himself passed through all the different phases of Russian thought, before arriving at his own synthesis. He was also the godfather, one could say, of the Russian Idea, which became so influential in the run-up to the 1917 Revolution and then was rediscovered by post-Soviet intellectuals in the 1990s. A whole host of modernist Orthodox thinkers owe their intellectual orientation to Soloviev more than to any other thinker.

2. Soloviev, Jews and Muslims

In one paper, as Smirnov (2010)¹ points out, Soloviev conveniently (for my purposes) fuses the two classic representatives of the East in the Russian imagination, namely Jews and Muslims. This provides the perfect entry into our discussion of convergence.

"From the very beginning," writes Soloviev in his *Third Speech in Memory of Dostoevsky* (1883), "Providence placed Russia between the non-Christian East and the Western form of Christianity, between the Basurman world and the Latin world." The somewhat pejorative word "basurman" (originally a distortion of *musulman*), meaning "infidel, non-Christian, pagan, person of the East", is used in the printed version of the speech. But in the actual speech, points out Smirnov, Soloviev had used the word *yevreistvo*, or Jewry. Thus at this stage, Jewry, "Mosselmans", and "the East" seem to fuse interchangeably for Soloviev into one *non-Christian* mass.

The speech in memory of Dostoevsky takes up the idea that the Russian person is distinguished by a unique capacity for *universalism*, by an ability to absorb and empathetically appropriate other cultures. This seems to be a literary-imaginative descendant of Hegel's idea of *aufhebung* (absorption and preservation): the process whereby the World Spirit synthesizes opposite elements into a new whole, so that nothing is lost, only transformed. It does not seem like a good start that Soloviev lumps together Muslims and Jews under a single casual term. Still, of all the Christian or quasi-Christian Russian universalists, Soloviev went furthest in trying to turn this term from stereotypical Other, into something more deeply understood and personal -- by interacting with Jews and Muslims personally and so enlivening the process of *aufhebung*. Soloviev's attitudes to Jews and Muslims would develop in parallel after this speech, becoming more sophisticated, focused and "tolerant", which is to say, less solipsistic. And this discourse (as taken up by his intellectual heirs) also provided an opportunity for the "Basurmans" to "talk back" -- as hinted at above. Still, while becoming more nuanced, Soloviev never entirely retreated from his "fused" conception of Jews and Muslims -- and this is thus a fact of the canonical culture to which "minorities" must necessarily respond in constructing their own identities. Let us look at the evolution of Soloviev's thought.

¹ In this section I draw at several points on Smirnov's examination of Russian thinkers' writings on Islam and Muslims.

Soloviev went through four stages in his general philosophical development: firstly, as an undergraduate he was captivated by the positivist, materialist ideas of the "men of the 1860s". Secondly, he rediscovered his religious faith. This is a process that would be repeated by his immediate intellectual heirs (the *Signposts* "neo-Christian" thinkers like Bulgakov and Berdyaev etc) and his distant heirs (late- and post-Soviet religious revivalists like Alexander Men, Georgy Chistiakov etc). In Soloviev's case, this meant absorbing the influence of the Slavophiles (1870s). Next, in the 1880s he entered his "theocratic" phrase of "integral philosophy", where he tried to find a modern, universalist expression for his Christian faith, rejecting his earlier more Russo-centric bias. Finally, in the 1890s, he seems to abandon grand schemas for a less schematic and an increasingly realistic or even pessimistic vision of the role of religion.

It was during his third theocratic phase during the 1880s that Judaism and Jewry played the major role in reimagining Christianity in more "concrete" form, as the Judaic matrix obviously lies at the root of the original Christian message. The solidarity and practical devotion to the Law of the Jewish nation become a model for how Russian Christianity can rediscover its relevance. The healing of the original Judeo-Christian rift is seen as a necessary step that will herald the healing of the split between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Russia is no longer the chosen Orthodox nation (Third Rome, Messiah nation) posed between benighted Eastern *basurman* and Western Latin, *already* containing salvation for the world. Rather, Orthodoxy has become degenerate and must open out to the West and the East; only *together* can the Roman Pope and Russian emperor make Christianity whole again -- and for this, Russian Orthodoxy needs Jews and Jewishness.

In keeping with our idea above about the asynchrony of thought systems, it should be observed that most Jews who might have responded to Soloviev's call to engage in his project had not got past his initial phase. It was precisely social-critical and agnostic or atheist writers of Soloviev's spurned 1860s, men like Chernyshevsky, Pisarev and Pisemsky and then the Narodniki (Populists) that were the inspiration for Jewish intellectuals in the Pale in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Jewish intellectuals devoured the works of these positivists and materialists, even learning their works "by finger". This telling phrase highlights the clash of asynchrony between Soloviev's discovery of Jews and Jews' real contemporary interests. To learn "by finger" was the process whereby a young Talmud student would memorize the Talmud so thoroughly that a colleague could take a volume and insert his finger into its pages. The other scholar would then name the word that the finger was pointing to: in other words, he proved that he had photographically memorized the entire Talmud. Jewish youths in a Semyon Ansky novel boast that they have learned Pisarev "by finger". In other words, they have applied Soloviev's romanticized Jewish traditional learning to a fierce enthusiasm for Russian positivist writers!² Soloviev eventually did find a Jewish audience, but again convergence was not complete as we will see.

Soloviev's attitudes to Islam, while not playing as central a role as Judaic "basurmanity", also evolved according to his three main phases. In 1877 (*Three powers*), he is crudely anti-Islamic, repeating Ernst Renan's stereotypes about a despotic Allah and the lack of personality in

² Horowitz 2015, 130.

the religion. Smirnov points out that the Frenchman Renan (whose country was busy colonizing North Africa) may have been an influence, but the Russo-Turkish wars which fueled the anti-Islamic fervor of the second-wave Slavophiles (Aksakov, Samarin) was the home incubus in which these sentiments developed. Also closely connected to this was Danilevsky, one of the propagators of the doctrine of Pan-Slavism; he too saw Islam as dead at birth, having arrived on the world-scene after the perfection of Christian truth at the ecumenical councils (in this he repeated Hegel, always an underlying presence in Russian thought). For Danilevsky, Islam is a political movement without any religious content at all.

In the early 1880s, Soloviev has broken with Danilevsky and the poison, as he sees it, of pan-Slavism and more rightwing Slavophilism. Consequently, in *The Great Argument* (1883), his new vision is of a Russia that -- as for Chaadaev and the Slavophiles -- lies between East and West, but not now in order to spread ready-made Byzantine traditionalism and resist the decadent capitalist West (Konstantin Leontiev's view), but in order to embark upon the project of re-fusing Eastern and Western *Christianity*. In other words, the mission is one of spiritual universalism. Consequently, in this more generous vision Islam receives an upgrade: whereas before it was a mere heretical offshoot of Christianity with no religious content of its own (which repeats the Eastern Orthodox schema for Islam first stated by John of Damascus in the 7th century and often repeated thereafter in Russian Orthodoxy), now Islam is seen as a religion of its own.

Indeed, Islam is the quintessential religion of the East, expressing the latter's genius for sensing the transcendence of God, just as the West emphasized the immanence of the divine. Soloviev gives his famous definition of true Christianity as the doctrine of divine-humanity (*bogochelovechestvo*), where transcendence (East: Judaism, Islam) and immanence (West: Catholic/Renaissance humanism) are united in Christ, the god-man. In other words, while Islam needs to be corrected, this is partly true even of imbalanced Christianity; no special stigma attaches to it. Indeed, in his 1885-7 essays collected in *History and the future of theocracy*, he points to the Biblically-recognized religious mission of Ishmael and Hagar, which is being realized by their Islamic descendants. And he remarks that "Muslims have the advantage over us in that their life agrees with their faith, and they live by the law of their religion, so that while their faith is not true, their life is not false..." He contrasts this with Leontiev's beloved Byzantium which, he carps, had more theologians than Christians in its walls, and is thus for the ex-Slavophile Soloviev a symbol of abstract, dead Christianity (this echoes Chaadaev). His remarks about "life agreeing with faith" can be found almost word for word in contemporary essays about Jews and Judaism -- again, showing that "basurmanity" has not become completely disentangled for the philosopher, and that it is really a tool for internal self-criticism.

Again, there is a certain asynchrony at work among Muslim thought here -- just as with the Jews. If we take the earliest Muslims who began to engage with the Russian intelligentsia, we are looking at H.Faizkhanov (1823-1866) and S.Marjani (1818-1889). Faizkhanov certainly examined metaphysical questions: in one work he looks at the question of how the divine names relate to the divine essence. He defends the traditional Asharite-Mutaridite solution that the

names are indivisible from and yet unmerged with the essence³. In fact, a very similar metaphysical question was to take centre place in Russian Orthodox religious thought in the 1900s: it concerned the Palamite doctrine of Name-worship, with different interpreters arguing over whether the name of Jesus conveyed the divine essence and thus brought true unity with God. These Asharite and Palamite disputes show the common ground that Islamic and Christian metaphysics could share: both treat the question of the knowability of God and the reality of His presence in the world through the action of His name or names. But the principle of asynchrony kicks in: the Russian Muslim and Russian Christian communities were evolving at different rates, and were faced by different socio-economic challenges: a meeting on the ground of subtle metaphysics was excluded.

Instead, Faizkhanov's major interest on getting access to Russian society was in taking advantage of European-Russian academic scholarship to illumine Tatar history. He was also interested in writing grammars of Turkic languages and making the teaching and grammar of Russian and Tatar scientific and pedagogically sound in order to open up the backward scholastic world of the Central Asian Muslim medrese tradition to the rationalist discoveries of the European enlightenment. In so doing, he shared a common interest with his near 'proto-jadid' contemporary, Qayyum Nasiri (1825-1902), who also shared Faizkhanov's love of encyclopedias and science -- both classically Enlightenment interests -- and actually wrote the first grammar of modern Tatar. Faizkhanov's and Nasiri's interest in Russian language and science thus undoubtedly laid the ground for modern Tatar nationalism. Soloviev, however, was in a sense already criticizing the Enlightenment. His successors, too, like Bulgakov and Florovsky, similarly tried to revive the patristic, i.e. medieval heritage -- unlike with Tatar proto-jadids, the need for revival indicates a *rupture*. Their society, it should also be remembered, had already vastly benefited from the Enlightenment (Peter and Catherine, and so on) -- and so naturally, their priorities were different. A final important difference, of course, is that Soloviev was promoting universalism: Faizkhanov and Nasiri, being representatives of a minority people, had to fight for their right to particularity before they could indulge in a universalist critique of particularity. All this puts Soloviev's neo-medieval or post-Kantian religiosity slightly out of their orbit.

The other Muslim figure who we need to juxtapose to Soloviev in his third phase (1880s) is Ismail Gasprinsky (1851-1914). Here there appears to be a much closer convergence with this surprising figure -- but differences and asynchrony still dominate. Very close to the time that Soloviev was writing his theocratic and universalist essays, Gasprinsky penned his famous essay *Russian Muslims: thoughts, notes, observations* (1881). Here this Crimean Tatar aristocrat (and perhaps it is his aristocratic lineage which brings him closer to Soloviev and the Russian thinkers) uses terms that Russian thought of the time is using: East, West, Europe, Asia. This is no accident: Gasprinsky had formed a friendship with Katkov, one of the leaders of the Slavophile movement, and -- like our Jewish finger-learners -- was an avid reader of the progressivist 'men of the 60s', Chernishevsky and Pisarev. The above terms, of course, are the

³ the very language echoes Christological doctrines, whereby the human and divine natures of Christ are said to be indivisible yet unmerged. Again, rational articulation of mystical experience exhibits interesting continuities despite major doctrinal disagreement.

very poles of discourse introduced in the 1820s by Chaadaev. Later on, Tatars would reshape these terms to propose that Tatars in many ways occupied the role Russians had imagined for themselves, namely as unifiers of East and West, of Asia and Europe. But that is not what Gasprinsky says, and one must read his essay on *Russian Muslims* carefully to see what it is he actually does say.

He writes: "Fate has put...under Russia's protection a mass of Muslims with rich lands, and has made Russia a natural mediator between Europe and Asia, science and ignorance, movement and stagnation..." Later he says: "when speaking of Tatar dominance, one must think that perhaps it protected Rus' from more powerful alien forces and by its unique character enabled the development of the idea of Rus's⁴ unity, which was realized for the first time on the battlefield of Kulikovo..." Elsewhere, he makes it clear that Russia is the active partner and leader in all spheres. He calls Russia "older brother", "the ruling and more educated tribe", while "we Muslims are still children" to whom the "Russian givers of light" must be "wise pedagogues." There are several things to note here.

Firstly, Russia, in Gasprinsky's thought, retains her role of mediator between East and West. There is no thought of Muslims taking a dominant or even equal role in this: he sees Muslims almost as the Slavophiles see them, i.e. as backward. (Unlike them, of course, he feels the inner potential of Islam -- wherein perhaps lies a future clash). Secondly, he accepts at face value the equivalence of the Tatar-Mongol yoke and present day Tatar Muslim populations -- again, in accordance with the dominant Russian view of the matter. This puts him in a strange position. He claims continuity with Russia's enemies, but then argues that this enmity was good for Russia's development: it is thus only in a backhand way that this Tatar-Mongol can lay claim to greatness, to Russian greatness. It should be noted that the Mongolian origins of at least the Kazan Tatars had first been disputed by Faizkhanov, who put great effort into trying to demonstrate through translation and interpretation of Bulgar inscriptions, that Kazan Tatars were of mixed Finno-Turkic stock, predating the Mongol invaders. Thus in some respects, Gasprinsky is more "servile" and accommodating than his "proto-jadid" predecessors.

Finally, Gasprinsky -- again like the Slavophiles, but unlike the later Soloviev -- assigns to the East a completely negative value: in the above quote it is equivalent to "ignorance...and stagnation". In another essay, he explains that what he means by the East is the Mongolian-Chinese world. And in *Russian Muslims*, he offers up as the best role-model in the Russian Muslim world the Lithuanian Tatars who have adopted Lithuanian as their language, European clothes as their dress, and European science as their educational path. In other words, Gasprinsky's proposed Muslimness piggybacks on Russian 'anti-Easterness', and looks towards a special kind of 'Russian Westernness' as its goal. But even this goal is felt to be distant and impossible to attain without Russian guidance.

All this makes Gasprinsky a difficult match for Russian thought and especially Soloviev. Gasprinsky's thesis contain so many potential contradictions. He praises Islam as an enduring consolidator of identity, but decries the lamentable state of Muslims today. He predicts a great

⁴ It is interesting that Gasprinsky's uses the term Rus', not Russia. This is important, cf. discussion below about russkoe vs. rossisskoe.

role for Russian Muslims as the torchbearers for progress in the Muslim world, and yet accepts that only a tiny minority of Russian Muslims can speak Russian, benefit from Russian schools or have the least interest in Russian culture or history. He praises Muslims, but calls them "children" and second-rate beings who must listen in all details to what their Russian elder brother teaches them. One begins to get the feeling that Russian Muslim greatness is a very distant possibility. And yet, perhaps due to these contradictions, he was seen as a pan-Turkist by some Ottoman Young Turks, and to this day, some Turks are surprised to learn that he was a supporter of Russian imperialism! The Russian government, in turn, accused him of pan-Islamism, although his writings strictly speaking allow no such interpretation! The Russian government's policy towards minorities (*inorodtsy*) was often notoriously clumsy and ignorant, but one might speculate that the censors were reading between the lines or trying to extrapolate from the rich contradictions in Gasprinsky's above-stated theses.

After all, they might have pondered, what will happen when the sleeping Muslim masses finally awaken as Gasprinsky was encouraging them to do? What is one to make of a Muslim referring to himself as a second-rate entity and yet working so creatively towards educating these masses? What indeed will the day look like when Russian Muslims do lead the world in science, education and so on? Given Gasprinsky's own thesis that the Tatars are descendants of the Mongol hordes might that not be a disturbing throw-back to pre-Kulikovian times? And furthermore, odd as it may, seem -- probably the "Eastern" Gasprinsky was too Western for government conservatives: the talk of rights and Europeanization was a liberal step too far for them. Qadimists, in that sense, were a much safer bet: their traditional Islam did not threaten to break out of the Pale and claim a hyphenated Russian-Muslim status for the sleeping masses.

In short, to return to our guiding figure of Soloviev in this exploration of Russian Christian-Muslim philosophic interaction, we see that Gasprinsky was faced with very different challenges than the Russian philosopher. Soloviev was on the inside; he could criticize the Slavophiles and display a forgiving interest in "basurmanity" from a (fairly) safe height (not entirely safe: he too had to watch the censors, as when he asked Alexander III to forgive his father's assassins and promptly lost his teaching job). But Gasprinsky's task was far harder: he was one of the first Muslims to seek and find a conceptual space for himself in Russian thought, but one feels that the parameters of that thought did not provide anything like real convergence. Soloviev manages to state a critical universalism, but in the end it is still a fiercely Christian and imperial universalism. Gasprinsky's adoption of this universalism -- not even from Soloviev but the fiercer Slavophiles -- his rebranding of it as a Christian-Islamic Russian universalism still leaves the "Islamic" term in the equation woefully underspecified and contradictory. And if one specifically imagines Soloviev's reaction to Gasprinsky, one sees that their agreement also conceals much disagreement: truth lies in turning away from the East without giving into the West. Russia is the great mediator. So far, so good. But we remember that for Soloviev Islam *is* the East! Moreover, it is the falsely transcendental East, which itself needs to be modified through Christianization. This, of course, is another lurking contradiction...

These comments are not intended as a decisive critique of Gasprinsky's approach. Again, we see that other-perception -- the Slavophile conception of "basurmanity" and the East -- has infiltrated into self-perception -- Russian Muslimness. This is an initial interaction, a

fertilization; a process has been set in motion. The contradictions are fruitful and await resolution, and in the next section we will see how a contemporary Muslim thinker tries to tackle them.

We are on firmer ground in imagining Jewish reactions to Soloviev. This is because many Russian Jews not only reacted to Soloviev's Jewish writings but were profoundly influenced by them -- both absorbing them and rejecting them. I will summarize some of these cases of Jewish-Christian Russian convergence; more detail can be found in my book *Holy Russia, Sacred Israel* as well as in the work of the contemporary Israeli scholar, Hamutal Bar-Yosef.

To begin on the positive side, the man who became Israel's national poet, Haim Nachman Bialik, recounted that his own interest in the Talmud was rekindled by reading Soloviev; before then he had seen it as benighted and medieval. Again, this is a classic case of other-interpretation become self-interpretation, due probably to the prestige-value of praise from a member of the dominant culture. Likewise, perhaps the most famous religious thinker in the existence of the Zionist project was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: his own Kabbalistic nationalism bears resemblances to Soloviev's thought, but the main point here is that he used Soloviev's writings to encourage self-respect and confidence among Zionist pioneers. Then there is rabbi Shmuel Alexandrov, a mystic and Talmudist, who developed the doctrine that at the end time the Divine Wisdom will replace the Jewish Torah, which will be opened up to all the nations. He explicitly acknowledged the influence of Soloviev's doctrine of the divine Sophia. Of course, Soloviev himself derived some of his sophianic doctrine from Jewish sources, but this merely proves the complex mutual interaction of thought as it passes from person to person, and nation to nation.

The negative reactions to Soloviev are equally interesting. Ahad Ha'am was a renowned thinker who was a proponent of cultural Zionism⁵ in the late 19th century. He took exception to Soloviev's characterization of the Jewish spirit as "individualistic and materialistic" and argued that it was Christianity that was individualistic, in that it strove only for the redemption of the individual not the nation. The national aspect of redemption had to be imported from Judaism. Moreover, a Christian obeys God not for its own sake but to save himself -- which is a type of inverted egotism. Shmaryahu Levin, another thinker, pointed out that Soloviev's torturous search for a more benign form of Russian national identity than the aggressively Slavophile model was a fault of any big-nation nationalism, of "the nationality that seeks to swallow everything..." as opposed to the inherently more pacifist nationalism of those small nations that "do not wish to be swallowed up". This point echoes what we saw with Faizkhanov and Gasprinsky above: their aspirations to universalism were necessarily tempered with concern to protect and indeed invent their own Tatar nationality in the face of the pressures of tsarist Russification policy. The Hebrew poet Avram Shlonsky, meanwhile, mocked Soloviev's "panicky retreat into mysticism" - - not an option for Jews in a situation of crisis -- and the unhealthy celibate romanticism of the cult of the beautiful Sophia. Soloviev had tried to make Christianity more this-worldly by incorporating the healthy practicality of Judaism, but had not fully succeeded.

⁵ A form of Zionism which believed that the Land of Israel should not be home to all Jews but merely a cultural centre for the continuing Diaspora.

One might see parallels here with Muslims: Soloviev tried to reform Christianity by deepening its mystical philosophy and using it to throw light on the modern philosophical enterprise. One might have thought that Muslims could do the same, and today there are such efforts among Russian Muslims, turning to the work of Suhrawardi and Ibn Arabi. But given the social and economic threats to Muslim development in Russia at the time, a turn to mystical philosophy was perhaps a luxury that Gasprinsky and others could not afford. Asynchronic development meant that such a metaphysical convergence would have to be explored much later.

Still, we do not want to fall into the trap of Soloviev and impute full identity to the "basurman" development of Russian Jews and Muslims viz-a-viz the "Christian norm". In fact, the Russian Muslim "reformist project" evades easy assimilation either to the Christian or the Jewish model. If we compare Faizkhanov, for example, to Russian Christian and Russian Jewish figures, we notice something rather extraordinary about this proto-jadid. Faizkhanov was a strong advocate for the teaching of European mathematics and science, as well as for the use of precise European methods in history and linguistics. In the Jewish world, the discovery of science and the Russian language usually went hand in hand with positivism, socialism and even atheism -- an abandonment of the world of *halakha* or Hasidic devotionism (as we saw with learning Pisarev "by finger"). It is a surprise then to read that Faizkhanov wrote a treatise on a point of shariah, where he drew on traditional *fiqh* (jurisprudence) sources to argue against the traditional habit in the Volga region of missing the fifth night prayer, due to the white nights in northern lands (the prayer must be preceded by sunset). Faizkhanov insists that the fifth prayer must be recited.

Sometimes the impression is given that the jadids were secular in orientation or lax about religious observance, in contrast to the qadimists. This is true of some later jadids. However, Faizkhanov combines a devotion to traditional shariah methods and a *greater* punctiliousness about religious ritual observance with an advocacy of new educational methods and science. He seems to combine, as it were, "Halakhic tradition" with cultural integration, which were two opposite options in the Jewish world -- and indeed had to wait the Modern Orthodox movement in the 20th century (Joseph Soloveitchik, David Hartman, among others). Even for Soloviev, Faizkhanov is quite surprising: Soloviev and some other aristocratic Christian philosophers were quite lax about their ritual observance (church fasts and so on), seeing such strictures as aimed at the peasant masses, a sign of "folk Orthodoxy". Finally, if we recall the proto-nationalism of Faizkhanov and Nasiri, we can make a partial parallel with Russian Jews: they too were interested in autonomy and national identity. But again, the nascent Zionist movement (Ha'am, Pinsky) generally offered national identity as a replacement for religious identity; the combination of renewed religious identity *and* national identity, which Faizkhanov and Marjani are proposing, was an option that would only emerge more than a century later in the Jewish context under quite different circumstances (I have in mind post-1967 religious Zionism).

We can conclude this examination of Soloviev with a cursory glance at Islam in his last phase. The philosopher wrote one more lengthy work on Islam, his 1896 *Life of Mahomet: his life and religious teaching*. Here he built on his 1885-7 defense of Islam, drawing on the latest German scholarship on Islam and Western translation of the Qur'an, and even meeting with the imam of St Petersburg, A. Bayazitov, as well as the Russian Arabist, I. Rozen. He points out, for

example, against Muhammad's detractors, that Constantine and Charlemagne, the former a canonized saint, the latter the hero of Western chivalric tradition, killed far more people than ever Muhammad did. He argues that there is nothing false in Muhammad's teaching, that it is an improvement on Arab paganism and that it conveys the spirit of Old Testament monotheism. As in his writings on Judaism, he argues that the disagreement between Islam and Christianity is not ethical but metaphysical: the Islamic law is right and practical; only the philosophical synthesis of immanence and transcendence is lacking. In other words, he goes about as far as a believing Christian can go in positively evaluating Islam, and in this predates thinkers like Louis Massignon or Montgomery Watt, who also recognized the prophethood of Muhammad and his contribution to world religious development. Nonetheless, Islam just like Judaism occupies a securely inferior position to Christianity: practical, charming, but essentially incapable of facing up to world-historical metaphysical tasks.

This is because Soloviev remains firmly within the bounds of Christian theology, even if his orthodoxy might be questionable at times. If we want to go further in examining the panoply of possible Russian Christian-Muslim-Jewish interactions, we need to leave Soloviev behind and look at two other figures: Vasily Rozanov and Lev Tolstoy. Here things become more interesting from a Judeo-Islamic point of view, because these thinkers begin to question the Christianity that they have inherited as a canonical gift from Russian culture. In different ways, they modify Christianity and even reject it, and they do so by looking directly to the East. This is the case in different ways for Rozanov and Tolstoy. Rozanov, like Soloviev, was fascinated by Judaism as a form of religiosity that might inform his Russianness. Tolstoy was interested in Eastern cultures in a way that is almost unmatched for other Russian writers -- and for him the East included not only Islam but Buddhism and Hinduism. While Rozanov did not write on Islam at length, I will argue that his Jewish writings also show us something interesting about "basurmanity" in general and have interesting repercussions for our consideration of Muslimness in the Russian imagination. Tolstoy's relationship with Islam is more direct.

I will start by looking at Rozanov and then consider Tolstoy.

3. Rozanov, Tolstoy and the Islamo-Judaic alterantive

A. ROZANOV'S JUDAISM -- AND ISLAM?

Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919) wrote a large number of articles about Judaism that were eventually gathered and printed in the volume *Judaism* (1916). The articles display wildly contradictory attitudes to Jews and Judaism, ranging from flattering and positive to viciously anti-Semitic. Interpreting Rozanov's attitudes to Jews and his motivations is a complex business, which I cannot go into fully here (I refer the reader to *Holy Russia, Sacred Israel*, ch.4). But for present purposes, we can say that Rozanov at different times identified as an Orthodox pantheist, or an Orthodox positivist: that is, he loved the ritualism of his native church, especially its connection with Russian history and nature. However, he was also severely critical of the ascetical aspects of Christianity, such as monasticism, and he did not have much patience with Christ, conceived as a celibate god-man. Nor was he interested in Christianity's abstract

metaphysical theology. Rather, what interested him were concrete flesh-and-blood communities and down-to-earth ritual which sacralized the everyday. He was one of the key contributors to the idea of "sacred materialism" which, often covertly, influenced leading mainstream Russian Orthodox theologians of the 20th century like Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944) and Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958). In this sense, like Soloviev, he was engaged in a profound historical critique of Christianity and a certain form of Russian statehood and religiosity that had emerged from it. His was a "radical" critique, a getting back to roots, to Judaic roots. Unlike Soloviev, though, he had contempt for Hegelian triadic syntheses, whereby Judaic concreteness can be reintegrated back into a lofty Christian metaphysics. As we will see, this puts him oddly in line with a certain Islamic logic: after all, the Qur'an at its very heart engages in a dialogic critique of Judaism and Christianity, with results that are more "convergent", we will argue, with Rozanov than Soloviev.

Rozanov's interest in Judaism thus manifests itself in a fascination with Judaic ritual -- rather than Soloviev's slightly patronizing emphasis on the ethical. Strangely enough, though, Rozanov owed his ability to explore Jewish ritual indirectly to Soloviev. This is because he availed himself of the first translation into Russian of extended parts of the Talmud by the Russian Jew, N. Pereferkovich (1871-1940). Pereferkovich, for his part, had been inspired to return to Talmudic inspiration by Soloviev's defense of the Talmud in the 1880s. That is, like Bialik, Kook and Alexandrov, Soloviev had been instrumental in turning modernist Jewish attention and identity back towards the Talmud, as opposed to the prophetic parts of the Bible and Spanish-Jewish poetry, the usual sources especially for Hebrew revivalists and Zionists. Translated into Russian, Pereferkovich's Talmud provided further material for both Russified Jews and "Judaizing" Russians to expand the horizons of their spiritual identity.

Rozanov responded to the challenge, providing a Russian commentary on Pereferkovitch's translation which was richly interpretive. And Rozanov's commentaries did not just provide Judaic meditations for Russian gentiles; as with Jewish readers of Soloviev, Rozanov had a strong influence on assimilated Russian Jews for whom the original language and idiom of the Talmud was now alien and incomprehensible. Thus the gentile Rozanov's readings of the Jewish Pereferkovich's translations, inspired by the gentile Soloviev (who, however, often declared "I am a Jew"!), in turn inspired Russian Jews who themselves could not read the Talmud in the original -- for whom Jewish love of literacy and book-learning had already become incarnated not in Hebrew, Yiddish or German, but precisely in the language of Pushkin and Lermontov. Thus is "identity" formed, not as a fixed equation, but as an evolving series of equations!

In *Judaism*, Rozanov creates a picture of Judaism that (at its philo-semitic best) is romantically "primitivist", holistic, ritualistic and communitarian -- and this is an image that his Russian and also Russian-Jewish audience clearly needs. As we remarked above, Rozanov, like Soloviev, is turning to Judaism to fill some evident lacunae in contemporary Russian Christianity, only for him they are slightly different lacunae. In fact, as will see, our argument here is that to some extent these lacunae could well have been filled by a romantic picture of Islam, and it is perhaps only an accident of asynchronicity that Rozanov assuaged his Russian

needs in Judaism and not "Mohammadanism". This will become clear if we look at the heart of his analysis.

Rozanov chooses three aspects of Judaism that exert a fascination for him: Shabbat, circumcision, and *mikveh* (ritual ablutions). Shabbat is a holiday where the sexual aspect in particular draws Rozanov's attention: he finds a tradition according to which husband and wife should celebrate the sacred day by engaging in sexual intercourse, which mirrors the Jew's intimacy with God. Circumcision, likewise, has a sexual component in Rozanov's imagination. But it is also compelling for the fact that it engraves into the body, into materiality, the closeness to God. This constant bodily reminder of God's covenant is a reproach to Christianity: the blood of circumcision is thicker than the water of baptism; the body of the Jew is more compelling than the ethereal and disconnected spirituality of the church. Finally, the weekly ablutions in the ritual bath (*mikveh*) that male and female Jews must take seems to Rozanov to represent a more intense baptism into intimate tribalism than anything in Christianity. All Jews in a particular locale are commanded to gather en masse in one *mikveh*. Further, he mentions an overheard rumor that Jews even sip the water of the *mikveh*, which is dense with the suspended particles of other bathers' bodies. Thus all Jews gather and interpenetrate in a ritual that finally adds literal meaning to the spiritual and ethereal Orthodox ideal of *sobornost* and communion: the Jewish *mikveh* is how Khomiakovian *sobornost*⁶ and Eucharistic communion should really be done!

This picture of Judaism is highly mythologized and not all of it, of course, is accurate -- from a Jewish or Christian point of view. But this is not the point here. Rozanov is in quest of "concrete religion" and "sacred materialism". Other Silver Age thinkers, some "neo-Christian" like Bulgakov, others post-Christian like Merezhkovsky, all of them vaguely related to Soloviev, were hungry for a revitalized Christianity that could meet the challenges of the new 20th century. Another interesting younger thinker who followed a similar quest was Fr. Valentin Sventsisky (1881-1931). For a while he popularized the term "monasticism in the world" -- by which he meant that Christianity should get out of the cloister, that its ideal practitioner should not flee the world but engage with it and practice Christian ideals within the world. This was in 1905; Rozanov wrote a famous book in 1915 called *Moonlight People*. From his less orthodox perspective, he attacked the exaggerated asceticism of the Church fathers, arguing vehemently that their fear of sexuality was a distortion of humanity's true religious impulse. Sventsitsky, Rozanov, Bulgakov, Merezhkovsky: one could multiply names to show that the Russian Christian intelligentsia in the years leading up to 1917 wanted to see a less ascetical Christianity, a more socially engaged Christianity, a more *physical* Christianity that valued sexuality, family, and the social-political community.

For someone who knows Islam well, these needs seem to be pointing in one direction: Islam! Take Rozanov's sacred Judaic triad: circumcision is present in Islam. The *mikveh* is even more present: Muslims purify themselves ritually several times a day, moreover ritual ablution facilities are attached to the mosque. As for Shabbat: the element of *sobornost'* that Rozanov so

⁶ Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860) was one of the first and most important Slavophile thinkers who developed the notion of *sobornost*, or conciliarity, "gatheredness-in-love", as the defining feature of Eastern Orthodoxy. He contrasted this with Catholicism's demarcation of the Truth not through councils, but through papal edict.

admired is encapsulated in the name of the juma'a (Arabic *jama'a* = Russian *sobirat'* = *to gather*) mosque: every locale must have a building where all the community must physically gather once a week. *Sobornost'* is made physically present. As for sexuality, one of the remarkable facets of the Prophet's spirituality was his seamless combination of piousness and sexual love: hadiths transmitted by his wife Aisha tell how he would devote the night to long prayer, fasting often, and also engage in intercourse with her. There is no contradiction between regular sexual activity and ascetic habits that would be characteristic of a highly devout monk.

Another story relating to Abu Hanbal records that he had a hair of the Prophet which he used to put in water and then drink. The Prophet himself gave water he had rinsed his mouth with to his followers to drink. The Prophet said of those who separate themselves from the world and do not marry, i.e. monks: "They are not of my community." The emphasis on descent, descendants of the Prophet maintaining their status as *sayyids* for centuries, also shows the importance of the embodiedness of religiosity, the transmission of sacredness through sexuality. The Muslim *ummah* is a Rozanovianly concrete community, where spirit and blood are bound tightly; the word, of course, is cognate with the Hebrew *'am*, of *'am yisrael*, the people of Israel. In the Christian world, in contrast, the idea of Christ's blood descent is a semi-occult heresy found only among groups like the Templars. Rozanov was angry that his five children were not recognized by the Church due to his first wife not granting him a divorce. He saw a contradiction in the idea of marriage being consecrated and controlled by an institute that celebrated celibacy. He admired the Jews' more pragmatic approach to marriage and sexuality: in Judaism marriage is more like a civil contract. Exactly the same is true in Islam. Finally, to complete this "imaginary convergence", Rozanov once said to the Jewish historian, M. Gershenzon: "Both Jews and Russians share a feeling for the nothingness of life; we are like dust blown in the wind..." This "desert sensibility", the nothingness of man before God, is at the heart of Islam, too.

One could go on, but the point has been made: quite a few of the characteristics that Rozanov and other Russian thinkers found in Jews linger below the surface of the "Muslim character". In some cases, this connection between the Judaic and Muslim elements has risen to the surface. A famous instance would be Pushkin's poem, *The Prophet*. Critics have, for obvious reasons, long detected Old Testament Judaic elements in the figure of the Prophet; however, as P.V. Alexeev, among others discusses, the Old Testament references to figures like Isaiah are inadequate to cover all the imagery in the poem. Alexeev shows that there are clearly references to the Qur'an, the hadith and Muhammad. This is not arbitrary, of course, given Pushkin's interest in Islam, displayed in his *Qur'anic Imitations*.⁷ Interestingly, in 1899 Soloviev himself wrote a commentary on this poem, trying to prove decisively that any Qur'anic references were impossible and tendentious. Having gained a reputation as an expert on Islam with his 1896 essay on Muhammad, his contemporaries were inclined to believe him. Alexeev adroitly overturns this judgment; evidently, for Soloviev the Judaic here excluded the Islamic -- especially where it concerned such a sacrosanct figure as Pushkin. It would take a Jewish critic like Gershenzon to uncover Pushkin's "Arab" potential (as we will discuss below).

⁷ e.g. Alexeev P.V. Stikhotvorenie A.S. Pushkina 'Prorok' v koranicheskom kontekste. http://ec-dejavu.ru/p-2/Pushkin_Prophet.html

Another "potentially Muslim" element in this Silver Age quest is the refrain of the quest for a "Third Testament" that would succeed the second New Testament as the New Testament had replaced the Old. This testament would be fitting for the new age of the Holy Spirit, an idea that went back to Joachim of Fiore, a 12th century Italian thinker. From the beginning, this separation of the persons of the Trinity, one for a different age, was suspicious from an orthodox Christian point of view, and Merezhkovsky and Rozanov used it in a frankly pagan-gnostic way. However, Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Karsavin tried to give orthodox content to the idea of a more concrete Christianity, where a theology of the Holy Spirit would finally come into its own without distorting the earlier achievements of Christian theology. An Islamic apologist, of course, -- if we can for the moment carry on and imagine such a reader willing to see neo-Christian strivings as "potentially Islamic" in the same way as Russian Christians saw Islam as "potentially Orthodox" -- would be likely to seize on this idea of a Third Testament as corresponding nicely to the self-identity of Islam. Just as Soloviev saw Christianity as being an ideal synthesis between Judeo-Islamic transcendentalism and Western immanentism, a common Islamic interpretation (applied in interpretations of the last two verses of al-Fatiha) sees Islam as steering a middle way (*al-sirat al-mustaqin*) between Judaic ritualistic Law without Spirit and Christian hyper-spirituality without Law. Islam is an ideal synthesis of Law (shariah) and Spirit (Sufism and so on). It is, in other words, a Third Testament revealed by the Holy Spirit (Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, one can imagine an Islamic response to Soloviev's criticism of Islam as being ethically sound but *metaphysically* erroneous in the Prophet Muhammad's pleas to "protect me from useless knowledge": what use is an updated Trinitarian metaphysics that is not reflected in ethics, in the behavior of this world? The true middle way is meant to balance metaphysics (spirit) and ethics (law).

Of course, this slightly whimsical Russian-Islamic "sacred materialism" was never realized at the time. Once again, an asynchrony intervenes in such a Rozanovian Russian-Muslim convergence. No doubt the same reasons we discussed above when considering Soloviev and Gasprinsky apply here too. But we can posit another related explanation for this asynchrony: Rozanov is here romanticizing traditional Orthodox, indeed Hasidic, Judaism. In fact, this romantic picture has an anti-Semitic underbelly: for Rozanov ideal Jews are "ghetto Jews" who should wear traditional garb, live in their traditional locations and speak their traditional language. Russified Jews posed a threat to him; this intermixing of two ethnic identities, or bodies, triggered in him fears of his own loss of Russian identity -- especially given that his intense evaluation of Jewishness often comes at the cost of devaluating Russianness (a tendency we see going all the way back to Chaadaev's pessimistic almost self-hating evaluation of Russianness). One might imagine that were Rozanov to similarly romanticize Muslims, he would take a stance against the liberal, integrationist *jadids* in favor of the *qadimists*. But the irony would be that *qadimists*, shut off from Russian life, would not be able to appropriate such discourse, and nor would they want or need to. Only Muslims who had lost their traditional identity, or suffered a rupture in continuity, would be attracted to such a romanticized picture of their own culture -- as was often the case with Jews who read Rozanov. As we will see in the next section, today there are Muslims who find a convergence with Rozanovian-style thinkers, and it is precisely the rupture of the Soviet period that has elicited such synchronicity.

However, there is another way of looking at Islamo-Christian convergences in Russian "sacred materialist" thought, which does not depend on imaginary reconstructions. This convergence is in fact not just typological, but genetic. It concerns the influence of Nicolas of Cusa on Russian Silver Age thought, and Cusa's own Islamic inspiration.

B. THE COVERT ISLAMIC INFLUENCE OF CUSANISM ON RUSSIAN THOUGHT

Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464) developed a theology of all-unity that was highly influential on key Russian thinkers like Nicolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), Semyon Frank (1877-1950) and Lev Karsavin (1882-1952). The latter two thinkers, especially, cannot be understood without Cusanus, who is their major inspiration. Karsavin played an important role in the classical Eurasian movement. His own philosophy was also infused with the influence of Rozanov, especially the latter's polemic against destructive celibacy and Christian otherworldliness. Karsavin, too, wrote on the Jewish question from a Eurasian point of view: he believed the Eurasian Russian state should give autonomy and rights for Jews to develop their culture in their own terms, even though like Soloviev he ultimately envisaged their ultimate conversion. But what is the relation of all this to Islam? The fact is that through Nicolas of Cusa who provided the theoretical framework for their theological and to some extent political metaphysics, Karsavin and Frank had stronger Islamic roots than probably either of them realized.

It is, of course, well-known that Nicholas of Cusa visited Constantinople before its capture by the Ottomans and that he developed a theory of a common religion in different rites when trying to work out a Christian approach to Islam and to Eastern Christianity. But recent research has shown (Valkenberg 2008⁸) that Cusanus' key phrase "*una religio in rituum varietate*" (one religion, various rites) can itself be traced back to the Qur'an. Cusanus visited Constantinople sixteen years before its fall. He began to read Latin translations of Islamic treatises as well as the Qur'an. One manuscript he read was a translation of a *kitab al-masa'il*, or "book of questions", a genre in which a non-Muslim questions the Prophet about the meaning of Islam in relation to Judaism and Christianity. The one Cusanus read was probably the *Doctrina Mahumet* in the translation of Herman of Dalmatia (11th century). The Prophet's answer as to the relationship between Islam and other religions is: "The law or faith of the prophets is one but the rites of the different religions were of course different." (*Lex...sive fides omnium una,....sed rites...diversorum...diversi.*) Cusanus also drew attention to Qur'an 5:48 in his *Cribratio Alkorani*, or Sifting of the Quran, a work he wrote to help the Pope engage in theological debate with Sultan Mehmet, the verse which states: "If God had so willed He could have made you one community, but He has given each of you a Law and a Way, and He will judge about the differences on the Day of Resurrection." In other words, the phrase which is the lynchpin of Cusanus's doctrine of inter-religious coexistence is taken directly from the Qur'an and Islamic apologetics. Thus it is no surprise to find that Cusa's phrase has an exact equivalent in Qur'an 5:48: *din wahid, shara'i mukhtalifa*.

⁸ W. Valkenburg, "Una religio in rituum varietate: Religious Pluralism, the Qur'an, and Nicolas of Cusa." In *Nicholas of Cusa and Islam: Polemic and Dialogue in the Late Middle Ages*. Brill 2008.

Cusanus visited Constantinople and began to read and take notes on the Qur'an in 1437; perhaps his most famous book *On Learned Ignorance* -- at least as far as the Russians are concerned, as it permeates the thought of Frank and Karsavin -- was written three years later in 1440. This much more general work insists on the unknowability of God (Frank's main work is called *The Unknowable*). This spirit of theological apophaticism ties in well with the notion of *una religio in rituum varietate*, or *din wahid, shara'i mukhtalifa*. For underlying this Qur'anically derived idea is the notion, also found in Quran 5 (Sura al-Ma'ida), that differences between believers can ultimately only be understood and judged by God alone (cf. the recurrent Islamic phrase: "And only Allah knows" -- *Allah 'aalim*.) Some commentators saw Frank, who had converted to Orthodoxy from Judaism, as still infused with a Judaic spirit. But, as with Pushkin, one equally could interpret these Judaic moments as Islamic. Cusanus thus gives an "Islamic scent" to Frank and Karsavin. In other words, there is grounds to believe that a "matching" of Russian Christian "all-unity" and its related interest in "sacred materialism" with Islamic thought might be successful - because "genetically" compatible.

Of course, an interesting question remains: why do Rozanov, Frank and Karsavin ignore Islam given this potential compatibility? What is the reason for their asynchronic indifference to Islam? One could speculate about this at length but here I offer two thoughts: firstly, unlike Cusa after the conquest of Constantinople, Russian Christians were politically secure and could afford to ignore or patronize Islam. But secondly, there is an interesting case where Frank specifically looks at Islam but does not *see* it. Frank introduced his main work with an epitaph from al-Hallaj, and he wrote in a letter to a friend that "al-Hallaj was the greatest mystic since Christ." But this still does not jolt him into becoming acquainted with other Islamic thinkers. The reason, I suggest, is because he encountered Hallaj through the work of Louis Massignon, who undoubtedly Christianized and even "Catholicized" Islam⁹. In this sense, Hallaj's Muslimness had been dissolved in Christian universalism, which presented him as a potential Christian. We will return to the question of Massignon in a later section.

C. TOLSTOY THE "GOOD MAHOMETAN" AND GERSHENZON

This brings us to the subject of Tolstoy and Islam -- that is, of a Russian thinker who *saw* Muslims and *was seen* by them. This subject has been written on widely already. Enthusiastic but naive Muslims on the Internet have, of course, hailed Tolstoy as a convert to Islam, using selective quotes from his correspondence. So he once advised an aristocratic lady friend thinking of marrying a Caucasian Muslim man: "...although coming from my lips the words may sound blasphemous, to say that Islam is higher than Orthodoxy is something I cannot forbid myself from doing. If a free choice existed between those religions, I think that many people, instead of Orthodoxy, with its incomprehensible tritheism, and its sacrament of bowing before the painted pictures of saints, would choose a faith in which there is only one God -- Allah." At another time, complaining that everyone around him -- Orthodox, government functionaries, revolutionaries, and conservatives -- misunderstood him and saw in him an enemy of their views, he wrote: "It is painful for me...and so, please, just look at me as a good Mahometan, and then everything will be fine." It is true that Tolstoy had a broad acquaintance with and interest in

⁹ cf. below for Tim Winter's view on this.

Islam: his father was governor of Kazan, he studied Arabic and Turkish with Mirza Kazimbek at Kazan University before switching to law, and he lived for extended periods in the Crimea and Caucasus. However, as Sergei Marcus¹⁰ points out, this is to ignore the fact that he was also deeply interested in other non-Christian thinkers, such as Confucius and Buddha and that he corresponded enthusiastically with the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi.

The key to all this, I believe, is to compare Tolstoy's "look upon me as a good Mahometan" with Soloviev's "I am a Jew". That is to say, Soloviev was a "Jew" in the same way that Tolstoy was a "Muslim": in both cases these gently ironic terms of self-identification are labels that embody a bundle of attitudes and views that are opposed to mainstream "official" Russian Christian society. We have seen what Soloviev's "Judaic" opposition to Slavophile Russia consisted in: the rejection of an abstract Christianity, of a nationalist Christianity, in favor a concrete deeds-based Christianity that would reach beyond Russianness. Rozanov's "Judaism" was slightly different: it was more pagan, traditionalist, ritualistic. In what then did Tolstoy's "Islam" consist? To preempt: Tolstoy's "Islam" embraced values that Tolstoy thought lacking in modern Russian life, especially among his native aristocracy: these included simplicity, the primitive life, closeness to the earth, rejection of history, rejection of complex rationality, valuing the inner life, a rejection of ritualism, and an a-rational romanticism. In that sense, as Marcus points out, while Tolstoy more than any other Russian writer of his age had genuine and lasting contacts with the full diversity of Russian Muslims, including Kazan and Crimean Tatars, the Muslims that he felt closest to were those of the Caucasus, and the Muslim leader he cited most was Kunta-Hajji Kishiev with his Sufi message of peace and tolerance. For Tolstoy Caucasian Muslims embodied freedom, simplicity, innocent courage, and they lived beyond the borders of degenerate European "civilization" as imposed by Russia.

Tolstoy's "Islam" should not and cannot, of course, be simplistically equated with historical Islam (itself of course manifold). Furthermore, we have seen that there were several Russian-gentile "Judaisms" (Soloviev, Rozanov), which real Russian Jews reacted to in different ways: some Jews absorbed this gentile Judaism into their self-identity, some rejected it. In the case of Tolstoy, Russian Muslims generally had a positive reaction to Tolstoy's "Islam" and continue to do so: it has become a conduit into a possible type of Russianness for them. But one might wonder how deep such a convergence goes. Are there in fact genuine correlates to Tolstoy in Islamic thought: one might imagine that Tolstoy would be intolerant of, say, Gasprinsky's modernizing type of Muslimness, or indeed of the bourgeois-driven Tatar jadid enterprise as a whole. Tolstoy's rejection of rationality and civilization in favor of peasant communes makes him alien to the jadid spirit and closer to the qadimists.

However, in the terms of Russian culture as it was defining itself through leading writers and thinkers up to the 1917 Revolution, one can point to certain convergences between Tolstoy and the evolving consciousness of Russia's "Eastern" or Judeo-Muslim "basurman" peoples. Such convergences provide an alternative prism to that of Soloviev and Rozanov. One might say that Tolstoy opened a space for non-Christians in Russian thought, so that they could later fill it with their own content. I would like to illustrate this by showing how one Jewish thinker found a

¹⁰ Джаннат Сергей Маркус: [Лев Толстой и Ислам](#) — *Islam-Info.ru*, проверено 2 июля 2013

home within Russian canonical culture by entering through the Tolstoyan Trojan horse. Looking at this case will again raise the question of whether a similar Tolstoyan Russian Muslim convergence is imaginable.

The thinker in question is Mikhail Gershenzon, whom I mentioned in the introduction as the editor of Chaadaev's works. He was born in 1882 into a Yiddish-speaking family in Odessa in the Pale of Settlement. He later became a historian of Russian culture, and even earned the reputation of being a Jewish Slavophile. The epithet was not without contradictions and even pain, and in some senses it reminds us of Gasprinsky's fate as an *inorodets* not altogether successfully appropriating Russian symbols for Muslim use. Gershenzon's simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Russian culture is highlighted sharply in the famous correspondence he engaged in with the poet Vyacheslav Ivanov in 1920 -- which was later made public. In effect, these two cultural giants of the time had an intellectual argument about the correct way to interpret the Russian Revolution, emerging Soviet culture and the future of Russian culture. Ivanov had written an essay in 1912 called "Tolstoy and Culture" in which he criticized the Tolstoyan worldview for being simplistic, rationalistic and morally utilitarian. It was hostile to the creative spirit of Dionysius, better represented by Dostoevsky and Soloviev. True culture involved death to self, and resurrection through Christ. He now accused Gershenzon of similar simplicity, coupled with a naive rejection of Christian European history. Gershenzon, says Ivanov, has chosen the path of Tolstoy; what is needed is the path of Dostoevsky, who understood that "the path to simplicity lies through complexity."

Gershenzon, though, stubbornly maintains his so-called Tolstoyan position (and he was indeed a deep admirer of Tolstoy) and appeals to a sort of cultural nihilism that has turned its back on the sickly European past; instead of high culture, he involved himself with proletarian literacy. Though he was somewhat skeptical of the new Soviet values, in 1917 he had welcomed the Bolsheviks, in an earlier letter written to Berdyaev, as the "party of the heart" who had put love for the downtrodden people above "abstract values...like statehood, holism and the might of Russia." All this was rather strange, as in 1909, at a time when he was friends with Rozanov, he had developed an extraordinary version of Slavophilism: as well as reading deeply in Tolstoy and admiring his ideals, he had also made us of the earliest Slavophile thinker, Ivan Kireevsky -- but he had added his own peculiar interpretation of the venerable thinker. Using Kireevsky as his spring-board, he had argued that man contains a supra-conscious emotional core which is directly open to the ground of being, or the cosmos, and that if a person can access this core and overcome the division between reason and emotion, he will achieve natural or holistic being. This type of holism is best found in the common people. It was not hard to marry this Kireevskian philosophy with the Tolstoyan worldview, and the result was that wags in the 1900s were jokingly calling the Jewish philosopher (who still had a Yiddish accent) "Gersh the Slavophile".

It is not too difficult to see how this neo-Slavophilism then morphed into a support for Bolshevism -- but only if one pays attention to the key fact here: Gershenzon had totally removed all references to Christ and Christianity. This was quite deliberate: he had written that Kireevsky's references to Christianity as an essential engine of Russian history and thought were arbitrary and dispensable. Recall that Kireevsky had pioneered the study of the Church fathers;

his three-tiered personality was copied from patristic Platonism. Further, Kireevsky had strongly insisted that the human personality can only be made whole if it is in communion with the body of the Orthodox church. But Gershenzon argues that this is secondary to the essence of Russian philosophy and "natural being"; he replaces the Church as salvific instrument with the "cosmos". Petr Struve and Nicolai Berdyaev savagely critiqued Gershenzon for this de-Christianization of Russian thought; while Gershenzon's Jewishness was not explicitly mentioned, it was implicitly understood, and in 1917 Berdyaev broke off his friendship with Gershenzon, now overtly citing the writer's Jewishness as the reason for his heretical support of Bolshevism. Ivanov, too, does not openly mention Gershenzon's Jewishness, but he was a Christian poet who linked true culture and creativity to historical Christianity (later he converted to Roman Catholicism and emigrated to Italy). Gershenzon's Tolstoyan proletarian cosmism was distinctly un-Christian, it seemed.

In light of our examination of "basurmanity", though, might we not also see Gershenzon as converging on a Tolstoyan "Muslimness"? Tolstoy decried the Orthodox bowing before painted images; he saw in the church a licensed paganism that went against the simple religion of the original Christ -- a religion where Christ was a mere man pointing towards the simple and available divinity that was immanent in the world. Such divinity was "naturally" available, rather than being blocked by "original sin" -- a doctrine developed by Christianity, but not present in Judaism or Islam; it was a divinity that thus did not need to be channeled through the Church. Tolstoy also rejected much of aristocratic European history, whose power was justified by the rituals of the church. All this was highly sympathetic to Gershenzon, which is why he was such an avid reader of Tolstoy: as a "Judaic basurman", he had clear reason to be dissatisfied with the old European status quo: as a Jew, he felt a clear religious skepticism towards historical Christianity. But the skepticism also had an ethnic dimension: Jews as a people, including his family in Kishinev, had been at the receiving end of Russian anti-Semitism in recent pogroms.

Continuing this alternative analysis, we can also look at the other potentially or covertly "Muslim" hero of Russian classical culture that Gershenzon turned to: Pushkin. Gershenzon wrote three long essays about him. In *Holy Russia*, I pointed out how Gershenzon clearly reworked the poet in his own image -- just as people down the ages have seen in Shakespeare their own reflection. Most strikingly, he saw Pushkin as a non-Christian pantheist, a preacher of the eternal ancient Word that is incarnate universally down the ages, an eternal poet who "in creating becomes transfigured: in his well-known European face step forth the dusty creases of Ahasuerus." Ahasuerus, of course, is the trope -- often found in Russian literature of the time -- of the wandering Jew. However, a point I overlooked in my previous analysis is where Gershenzon also refers to Pushkin's "Arab ancestry" and "Eastern spirit" of thought. He thus displayed a rare earlier sensitivity to Islamic elements in Pushkin, which even Soloviev preferred to overlook. We are encountering here, then, a complex and tangled genealogy.

Gershenzon's "Muslimness" is further below the surface than Tolstoy's, we might say. But he has absorbed Russian philosophy's notion of an "Eastern heritage"; he has absorbed its description of himself as "Eastern"; he knows himself to be non-Christian -- in the official establishment sense -- in some sense even non-European. He is attracted to other literary figures as he tries to forge an identity for himself, a Jew rejected from university due to the quota system, in the capital of old Russia. But why is he attracted particularly, most enduringly to

Pushkin and to Tolstoy? Because they emit an "Eastern" scent -- and unlike with Soloviev or Rozanov, it is not a Jewish Eastern scent. It is not the attraction of concreteness, ritual, history, Bible, Hebrew, chosenness...which Rozanov and Soloviev, though different in other respects, share, and which Ivanov also admires. No: Gershenzon has had enough of that, like Mandelstam and Pasternak, who want to escape the provincialism, as they see it, of Judaism. Gershenzon even writes a rather scandalous essay denouncing the early Zionist movement and interpreting Jewish history as having reached its peak now in the necessary ultimate assimilation and disappearance of the Jews.

Instead, Gershenzon is attracted to something more universal, more desert-like, more encompassing, and uprooted from history -- recent history at least, his history. Franz Rosenzweig, with whom Russian philosophers came into contact in the 1920s, disliked Islam: he saw it as ahistorical, feeling contempt for its doctrine of the *mujaddid*, or renewer of the faith, that the Prophet predicted would be sent by God every hundred years to renew the Truth of Islam. But isn't that the insight of Tolstoy and his disciple Gershenzon? Islam does not claim to be new. It was always one and the same word (albeit *din wahid, shara'i mukhtalifa*). This is precisely the point: there is no narrowing of history down to one people; the Word appears everywhere. Rosenzweig detected a relentless undifferentiated tedium in this.

But for Tolstoy and Gershenzon this recurrent Word is the ever-present ground of nomadic being underlying the hypocrisy of settled culture. The Word of Allah was given to Adam, and to thousands of prophets among thousands of nations. Jesus, especially for Gershenzon, is merely one of these prophets; he does not reject Jesus and indeed wrote an article on the *Sermon on the Mount* portraying Jesus as the preacher of the eternal ahistorical Word. However, as with Kireevsky he strips Jesus of institutional Christian accretions, laying bare -- as he sees it -- the original. Oddly enough, Gershenzon's books -- like Tolstoy's -- are sold in some church bookshops today -- a fact Sergei Marcus sees as dishonest. And perhaps he is right: do Tolstoy and Gershenzon more rightly belong in mosque bookshops? Perhaps we really should look upon Gershenzon, too, "as a good Mahometan". Perhaps his critics -- Berdyaev, Struve, Ivanov, and Bulgakov too -- were wrong in suspecting him to be a non-conformist Jew. Is he an odd analogy to a Jew born just over the border of the Russian empire in Austro-Hungarian Galicia, Leopold Weiss? Weiss, of course, also rejected Zionism while in Palestine and then became world-famous as Muhammad Asad after he had converted to Islam. He too, as his autobiographical recollections show, was sick of Europe, of its tired Christian empires...he sought Eastern escape, Eastern renewal, in a far more literal way. But Gersheznon chose internal emigration, a plunge into his own soul and down the ages...

Some of this re-reading of Tolstoy and Gershenzon as implicitly Muslim may be a little fanciful. And, of course, Gershenzon would need a little bit of reworking if his books were to make it into the mosque bookshop - as would his Muslim readers! But his case is suggestive, and can lead us think more deeply about the nature of cultural forms of Muslimness, which exist outside of a strict relation to the Qur'an (the canonical definition of Muslimness), but are related to Qur'anic Muslimness in more distant, tangential ways in a variety of different national environments. We see Gershenzon de-Christianizing canonical Russian texts, opening them up for the *inorodets*, the "basurman". He too is creating a Third Testament out of the friction

between Judaism and Christianity -- and it *is* friction, which is a lesson that constantly recurs in all the Jewish-Christian encounters I examined in *Holy Russia*.

In the current sometimes over-cozy atmosphere of interfaith dialogue, it is sometimes forgotten that there are real conflicts in such encounters, or attempted convergences. Often Jews who re-imagined Russian culture were subject to venomous attack; they triggered fears of Russian and Christian disintegration and loss. Jews themselves, like Gershenzon, were sometime shocked by the hostile reception they triggered. For them, their de-Christianized interpretations were the merest common sense. Another case in point is Aaron Steinberg, who reads Dostoevsky as a quintessentially Judaic writer and appropriates Christian symbols of incarnation, Virgin Birth and crucifixion as universal metaphorical tropes representing philosophical inspiration, openness to the transcendent and so on. In effect, he is rather like a philosophical Chagall, using Christian imagery to convey Jewish truths. One gets a similar feeling reading Gasprinsky: his easy proposal of a Russian-Muslim symbiosis, hewed out of Slavophile sources, meets with hostility and misunderstanding, even though his tinkering with Russia's canonical self-understanding is far more conformist. Convergence, then, is a complex, creative and sometimes painful process -- but an obviously necessary, rich and beneficial one.

In the next section, we will look at a modern Russian Muslim attempt to find a convergence with canonical Russian thought. An examination of how *jadid*, Jewish and Orthodox thought were transformed in the intervening Soviet period, while extremely important, will have to await another time.

PART 4: Contemporary Russian Islam: D. Muhetdinov, the Russian Idea, and *russkoe vs. rossisskoe musulmanstvo*

Damir Muhetdinov (b. 1977) is the first assistant mufti of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation. He is part of a generation of young Russian Muslims, born in the mid-1970s and afterwards, whose higher education and early careers were formed in the post-Soviet period. By training he is an Arabist and Islamic Studies graduate, who wrote his doctorate on Hussain Faizkhanov, the early Tatar *jadid*. In a number of recent works he has tried to give an analysis and to lay out a vision of Russian Muslim identity, i.e. to describe the present and prescribe a future for Muslims in Russia. The names of pre-1917 *jadids* crop up regularly in his work, especially Ismail Gasprinsky, Musa Bigiev, Shihab Marjani, and Hussein Faizkhanov.

Muhetdinov, like several intellectuals working for the Moscow-based muftiat, is himself from Nizhny Novgorod, the same area where Faizkhanov was born in the village of Safaja. As R.Landa¹¹ points out, this area of the Volga region was part of the so-called "Russian Volga". The mufti of Kazan, Umar Idrisov, speaking about Novgorodian Muslims in 2006 said: "Living as a close-knit Muslim community, the Safajites like the other Tatars of the Nizhny Novgorod region, considered themselves to be Russian Muslims, Russian subjects, obedient subjects of the Russian state. All the woes and joys of the Russian community were their woes and joys." The

¹¹ Landa 2015, p.180.

village of Safaja was founded in 1451 and its Muslims were attacked by the Nogai horde just as the Christians were. In other words, Muhetdinov's Novgorod roots perhaps make him a natural candidate for a contemporary Russian Muslim seeking to formulate a vision of a specifically pan-Russian Islam, rather than a local Kazan, Ufa or Caucasian Islam. Furthermore, several of his colleagues have much older Moscow roots, their families having already lived for up to five generations in the Russian capital. Muhetdinov is thus representative of a Russian Muslim community that has intimate ties with Moscow, the political and cultural heart of the Russian state.

In this respect, then, it is perhaps not surprising to find that his writings are peppered with references not just to the jadids, but to Berdyaev, Dostoevsky, Danilevsky, Leontiev, Karsavin, Trubetskoy and Ivan Il'in -- all figures who contributed to the formulation of the Russian Idea before 1917. Muhetdinov on several occasions also attempts to give Muslim content to the theory of Eurasianism, or neo-Eurasianism. In other words, he is seeking the sort of convergence between Muslimness and Russianness that we have been discussing in this article. In what follows, we will look at some of the convergences Muhetdinov seeks to make.

First of all, we can say that the very fact that Muhetdinov refers to the proponents of the Russian Idea differentiates him from pre-1917 Russian Muslims. For them, with the exception of Gasprinsky, Slavophile and Eurasian thinking was not attractive: it was too conservative, and too Christian, and too close to a government whose policy of Russification was threatening to Russia's Muslims. As we discussed in our examination of Rozanov, the potential convergences between Russian and Muslim conservatives was blocked by the exigencies of the time. Now, however, that convergence has become unblocked, and Muhetdinov is seeking to create a conservative, national-religious Russian philosophy, by drawing on both Muslim and Russian tradition, seeking his point of convergence between the two in "sacred materialism".

Muhetdinov's main ideas can be found in a book-length essay called *Russian Muslim culture* (Rus. rossisskoe musulmanstvo): *the traditions of the Ummah within the sphere of Eurasian civilization*. We will remark in more detail on the term *rossisskoe musulmanstvo* below, but for now we will summarize and comment on some of its main ideas.

Muhetdinov admits at the start of this work that "in the few passages where Russian philosophers mention Islam, it appears as an exotic or obviously marginal form of religiosity, and in the best instance as a sort of 'potential Orthodoxy'. But there is no deep philosophical or cultural analysis". We looked at this above and to a great extent it is true. But, given that Muhetdinov wants to construct a conservative philosophy this apparent impediment could in fact be an enabling quality. As we pointed out, this lacuna regarding pre-1917 Russian views on Islam is probably deliberate, at least as far as Eurasianism is concerned. This was the philosophy that more than any other imbued the term East with a genuinely universal rather than merely Christian(i.e. Byzantine) meaning, but it was probably launched as an ideological Slavic alternative to the Turan of the pan-Turkists. However, Muhetdinov holds the Eurasianists to their own logic, and proceeds to fill in the Islamic lacuna -- which they themselves have cleared space for -- with his own content.

As part of this endeavor, he takes up the Eurasians' "implicit recognition that the historically unique feature of our country is its status as a 'civilizational state' which is characterized by cultural and religious pluralism and a special vector of development." He then proposes that K.N. Leontiev's term "flourishing complexity" "is probably the best way to describe this global formation." Combining Leontiev and a revised Eurasianism, or neo-Eurasianism, Muhetdinov thus proposes that Russia embrace a "traditional multiculturalism", whereby all the four traditional religions - Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism - live in "the peaceful coexistence of Eurasian spiritual traditions and the cultures formed under their influence, without prioritizing any one culture." Thus Muhetdinov argues that the preeminence of Orthodoxy, as envisioned by the first Eurasianists like Trubetskoy and Karsavin, is no longer appropriate for a country where there is no longer an Orthodox monarch and Orthodoxy has become disestablished from the state.

Muhetdinov's tailoring of conservative Russian-national philosophy to meet Muslim needs reminds us of Gershenzon's adaptation of Kireevsky. Above, I argued that Gershenzon's de-Christianized quasi-Slavophile philosophy with its Tolstoyan overtones was not a bad fit for Muslimness. However, I also pointed out that Gershenzon's appropriation of Slavophile philosophy met with a very negative reaction from Orthodox conservatives or liberal-conservatives, like P. Struve and Berdyaev. In a sense, though, Gershenzon's anonymous Russian cosmism historically received the support of history: a pantheistic mysticism permeated the arts and culture of the first phase of Soviet history in the 1920s, and Christianity was thoroughly demoted from its historical preeminence as a political ideology. Thus, part of Muhetdinov's work in de-Christianizing Eurasianism and Slavophilism has been done by the Soviet period. Although the Soviet period was hostile to religion, it had the effect of removing religion from the state sphere, and so perhaps leveling the playing field for Islam and a Muslim Eurasianism.

In other words, the potential convergence between Islam or Muslimness, and Russian national philosophy, or the Russian Idea, that we pointed to above is certainly plausible. Still, when we examine the new post-Soviet context in which this convergence must now occur we see that certain other possible conflicts have arisen.

Firstly, Orthodox Christians in the 1990s have also turned to Russian religious thought to find an ideology that will replace Soviet communism. Thus the "Gershenzon" problem will arise in new form again: the argument can be made by Orthodox Christians that "religion" or "Russian consciousness" cannot exist in undetermined form: it must go through Christ and Orthodoxy. The Russian Idea will again seem incompatible with a non-Christian reading. To some extent this is the case today: many Russian Orthodox Christians are skeptical about Islam, hardly distinguishing between Islamic radicalism and the moderate mainstream religion, and even if they do, having little knowledge of actual Islamic religiosity.

Furthermore, while Orthodox hierarchs may use a quasi-Eurasianist discourse to talk about Russia's native inter-religious harmony (the state-sponsored doctrine of the "four traditional religions"), often this is only for political use and external consumption. For inward use, Islam is seen as a rival in the battle for souls, and Eurasianist rhetoric overlays a traditional unreformed belief in the universal truth of Christianity and the falseness of Islam -- which we

find even in the most forgiving proponents of the Russian Idea, such as Soloviev, albeit in muted form. It should be remembered that Trubetzkoy, Karsavin and Florovsky – the major figures in formulating classical Eurasianism – all left the movement, and in Florovsky's case this was because he saw a direct clash between Orthodox dogma and Eurasianism's more inclusive doctrine. Incidentally, even modern neo-Eurasians like Dugin, while they look at Islamic philosophy in a way inconceivable for the founder generation, also do not assign Islam a significant place at the ideological table. But all this is merely to say that any attempt at convergence has to deal with similarity and difference, acceptance and resistance. This is natural and should not count as a disqualification.

There are other possible challenges, too. Muhetdinov's new Russian Muslim project, drawing both on Russian philosophy and Islamic thought, often refers to Gasprinsky -- and here we have another paradox of convergence. Gasprinsky called for a Turkic-Slavic, Christian-Muslim Russian alliance, and in some sense Muhetdinov uses this model of convergence as his own starting-point. However, this may not sit so well with the changed post-Soviet circumstances that Muhetdinov is also appealing to: namely a situation in which Orthodoxy and religion in general has been removed -- at least officially and juridically -- from the public sphere the Constitution, and the structure of government.

In Gasprinsky's time Orthodoxy was the state religion, the religion of the tsar. As we saw, Gasprinsky was happy in his writings to play second fiddle, and to look up to the Russian "big brother" for guidance. So Muhetdinov simultaneously insists that, in the new era, no one culture or religion should be prioritized -- while appealing to a thinker who is happy to accept that Russia and Orthodoxy are dominant. In other words, Gasprinsky's Turkic-Slavic union is underpinned by an Orthodox-Muslim union. In order to recreate this, Orthodox preeminence must be recreated. But that might lead to the re-Christianization of Eurasianism and the Russian Idea, and so threaten the "equal access" of Islam to shape Russia. The alternative is to appeal to a neo-Soviet form of Eurasianism. In some ways, this is what Dugin does and it has a natural appeal for some in contemporary Russia. But of course that is hardly a route that can be taken by believing Muslims. Again, this is another possible wrinkle in a modern Muslim-Russian convergence.

These tensions can be seen in the subtle linguistic adaptation Muhetdinov has made to Gasprinsky, which I would like to dwell on in some detail. While Gasprinsky wrote of a *russkoe musulmanstvo*, Muhetdinov is proposing a *rossiskoe musulmanstvo*. One might interpret this as a move away from intimacy with Russianness. Muhetdinov has not commented on this difference with Gasprinsky, but he has written that the term *russkoe* in conjunction with *musulmanstvo* might be taken as too ethnic, and inapplicable to non-ethnic Russians. There is a lot of sense in this distinction. However, why did this not trouble Gasprinsky?

This is a difficult question and I can only offer speculative thoughts. Firstly, in the quote I used above, Gasprinsky refers to "Rus" and the "unity of Rus" even after Kulikovo -- that is, he equates the modern Russia with which he seeks convergence with this somewhat archaic entity. Secondly, does Gasprinsky perhaps see in the term *russky* not so much ethnicity, but a reference to the Russian culture and especially *language* (*russky jazyk*) as one of the key components in

this future form of Muslim identity? For him, this was still a major goal, especially when 95% of the empire's Muslims did not speak Russian and so were without access to texts, scientific and cultural, which this language contained. It must be said that the Russian language seemed to play a great role in Gaspinsky's hopes for the integration and progress of Russia's Muslims, and indeed the learning, analysis and translation of Russian language and literature often preceded and enabled the development of a modern Kazan Tatar language, as we saw for Faizkhan and Qayuum Nasiri. One could also add the name of Gabdullah Tukay (1886-1913), who immersed himself in Russian literature as a means of enriching Tatar. Perhaps Muhetdinov takes this Russian linguistic aspect of emerging modern Muslim identity in Russia for granted -- as anyone would after the Soviet period, which saw practically universal Russian-language literacy for Tatars.

Still, one might ask whether something valuable has not been lost by this substitution. The term *rossisskoe* now places the emphasis on Russianness in connection with the state, and indeed with the state in its imperial incarnation since Peter the Great, which is when the term Russia as opposed to Rus began to be used. Again, this is not the place to comment on Muhetdinov's thought in detail: only those aspects of convergence interest me here. However, this move away from Gasprinsky's choice of adjective is meaningful, especially given the attempt among Russian Orthodox and the government elite to develop the concept of *russky mir*. Is the implication that a larger framework is needed to incorporate both Christians and Muslims? Will Muslims not fit in the *russky mir*? Has Muhetdinov recognized the possible dangers of Orthodox competition inherent in the term *russky mir*? One gets the sense that there is a tacit recognition that Russian Muslims should now dream bigger than Gasprinsky, for whom the non-Russian-speaking isolated Muslim masses were obviously inferior to Russia's Christian elite. Does the use of the term *rossisskoe* imply a notion of a government-sponsored religious neutrality that might keep Orthodoxy in its place? Is there a lurking nostalgia for the Soviet era that separates Gasprinsky and Muhetdinov, where all the religions were finally equal -- albeit due to equal maltreatment?

It is not my place to answer these questions in detail, but I will suggest that -- despite the changes that have occurred since Gasprinsky's day -- if *russkost'* is associated primarily with language and culture, it might imply more suitable qualities for convergence than *rossisskost'*. The following thoughts can be taken as an exercise in imagining what meaning Gasprinsky's term *russkoe musulmanstvo* might have today. Again, one might imagine it as replacing the conception of *rossisskoe musulmanstvo*, but more likely as complementing it, having taken onto itself some of the explanatory burden away from the latter term.

To begin with, it is true that *russkost'* can be used exclusively -- but the point of convergence is to adapt a term and expand it, as Steinberg and Gershenson did with Jewishness and Russian identity. *Rossisskost'*, it is true, is already broader -- but it is also practically devoid of content, and stops at the borders of the state. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, or indeed Rasul Gamzatov in Russian translation, however, know no boundaries. Even in translation they are purveyors of a certain *russky* sensibility. Of course, *russkost'* might be associated with forced Russification in the tsarist and Soviet period (though Gasprinsky talks about that and still uses *russky*), but still the *russkost'* of Muslims in Russia is a positive fact, while their *rossisskost'* is a

sort of neutral fact. For example, when a Tatar writer like Ildar Abuzyarov can be published in the "Our Best Writers" series alongside Prilepin, writing about clearly Muslim themes, we can say that a positive creative and challenging Muslim Russian convergence has occurred. It is hard to say the same of *rossiskost'*: any Dagestani or Tatar Muslim is indeed *rossiskiy*, -- unless they give up their passport -- but in no sense that requires effort or thought.

Only when Russian Muslims start to express a specifically Muslim creativity in Russian - - rather than Tatar, Avar or Chechen -- will one be able to talk of a new cultural Muslim phenomenon. Imagine a *mawlid* in Russian, poems to the Prophet in Russian, and so on. The fact that such *russskoe musulmanstvo* does not fully exist yet -- mawlid exists in Tatar and Avar but not Russian -- at least gives an indication of where reality and dream part company. *Rossiskoe musulmanstvo*, however, already exists: but whether it has any more than a bureaucratic content is not clear at all. *Russkoe musulmanstvo* poses a challenge: does one want to sing mawlid in Russian? Perhaps not. But *rossiskoe musulmanstvo* need ask nothing: the status quo of incomplete linguistic or cultural contact between Muslim ethnoses in Russia could continue and still merit the label.

Bearing this in mind, let us look at some of the other components of Muhetdinov's proposed convergence and see how they fit into his conception of *rossiskoe musulmanstvo* -- and how they relate to the notion of convergence. A useful summary of the contents of Russian Muslim culture (*rossiskoe musulmanstvo*) is provided in these few lines from the above-quoted essay: "...I propose that the religious uniqueness of the Eurasian tradition consists in the combination of the following features: an intense and sincere God-seeking (*Bogoiskatelstvo*); immersion in the Truth and the arrangement of all areas of life according to a heart-based contemplativeness and love; a spiritual sobriety along with a rejection of sentimentality; attentiveness to the this-worldly, and a special yearning for pan-sacrality; flexibility, love of peace, and empathy..."

Throughout his discussion Muhetdinov links all these features in Russian Muslim culture to corresponding Russian features: he quotes a saying from a Russian philosopher and finds a hadith that echoes a similar thought. He juxtaposes a Russian proverb beside a quote from Musa Bigiev. Most strikingly, he brings together Sheikh Baha al-Din Naqshband and another leading Russian Idea philosopher, Ivan Il'in: Naqshband finds the spiritual centre of man in his heart, and Il'in writes: "The Russian idea is an idea of the heart. The idea of the meditative heart. A heart freely and concretely contemplating; and conveying its vision through the will into action, and through thought into awareness and the word. Herein lies the main source of Russian faith and Russian culture. Herein lies the main strength of Russia and of Russian uniqueness. Herein lies the way towards our rebirth and renewal." [Il'in 1993: 319]. In all of this, then, Muhetdinov is seeking to find a space in Russian culture that echoes the strivings of the Muslim spirit, to find a convergence between Muslimness and Russianness -- a process that is long overdue, I argued above.

At another point, he uses Trubetzkoy's phrase "everyday religiosity" (Rus. *bytovoe izpovednichestvo*) to describe the nature of Russian Muslim religiosity. All this strongly brings to mind Rozanov's "Orthodox positivism" which, as we saw, was infused with a Judaic

romanticism: "The intuition for the sacral permeates music, art, festivals, everyday life, and forms a unique type of 'everyday religiosity'. This intuition allows us to understand why there is a permanent effort to "Islamize" folk customs, and give them a new Islamic meaning. Russian Muslim culture [*rossisskoe musulmanstvo*] as it were wages a constant battle against the idea of self-sufficient existence, the independence of earthly life, with trivial and profane consciousness, which is permeated with duality and thus with *shirk*, or polytheism; it gravitates towards the sacralization of reality, towards the uncovering of the eternal essence within empirical being. In other words, it gravitates towards the immanent and living vision of God (which, obviously, should not be confused with pantheism)." Here, Muhetdinov defines a special role for Sufism and especially Turkic Sufism. Again, the convergence seems successful: the holistic spirituality of the Russian Idea finds its equivalent in "Eurasian" Turkic Sufism.

However, at this point we can ask some more questions about the success of this model of convergence, for a possible contradiction has emerged.

Firstly, we see that Muhetdinov has again departed from Gasprinsky, Bigiev and the other jadids: generally for them, Sufism was equated with backwardness and the past, and Gasprinsky at least was interested in a European model for Russian Muslims, albeit a Russian-European model. But Muhetdinov places a high value on Sufism and what he calls "traditional values". In itself, this re-infusion of modernist Islam with mystical content is, again, overdue. We argued that it was only the exigencies of Tatar national self-development that made reform and mysticism seem mutually exclusive. However, it seems odd of Muhetdinov to attribute the Turkic content of this spirituality to *rossisskoe musulmanstvo*: nowadays Central Asia is outside the boundaries of the Russian state. Yasawi's birthplace in present-day Kazakhstan is also outside of modern Russia. That is, the source of this Turkic Sufism is not *rossisskoe* – Muhetdinov has to resort again to Eurasian origins, but this begs the question of why Iran, China, Turkmenistan and Mongolia would be excluded from this definition. One wonders what the relationship between Eurasian and *rossisskoe* is in this theory.

All this might look like geographical quibbling: but there is a more serious problem, namely that the Sufi orders in the Volga region were smashed in the Soviet period and there is no living unbroken tradition of Sufism today in the Tatar regions to speak of. In the Caucasus, it is different: but there Turkic culture is in a minority (Avars and Chechens are the dominant nationalities), and the Qadiri order predominates at least in Chechnya. In point of fact, of course, the Soviet period left the Tatars deeply secularized: while Gasprinsky had to build his *russskoe musulmanstvo* on the *progressivist* hope that 95% of his fellow-believers would leave their old traditional linguistic and religious isolation, Muhetdinov has to build his *rossiskoe musulmanstvo* on the backward-looking hope that 95% of Russian Muslims will leave behind their *indifference* to religion and start to reconnect with their roots. In other words, the term *rossisskoe* has to engage in more than one convergence operation: it has to find links not just with Russian thought, but also with a Sufi-Turkic past that sometimes seems to be little more than an academic construct now, and which is not universal over the territory of the Russian Federation.

Oddly enough, it is perhaps here that Gasprinsky's original term *russskoe musulmanstvo* might be more helpful. One might make a parallel with the terms "German Judaism" or "Russian

Orthodoxy" (*russskoe pravoslavie*). German Jews rejoiced in the German language as a way to find their place in post-Enlightenment Europe: German-Jewish writers and philosophers (Kafka, Rosenzweig, Cohen etc) created a truly remarkable synthesis, in which both Germanness and Jewishness (both cultural and religious) were expanded and enriched. Turning to the adjective *russskoe* in *russskoe pravoslavie* (Russian Orthodoxy) we see that it is not as fearsome as might be expected at first blush. The adjective does not refer to ethnic Russianness: theologically, it can be paraphrased as "the expression of the universal Christian church in the Russian land". *Russskoe* here is a geographical-cultural delimitation, not an ethnic one. A Russian Orthodox service can be attended by Mordvin, Chuvash and Tatar Christians. Importantly, in fact, a Russian Orthodox service can be conducted in Tatar or Mordvin. Finally, as we saw at the beginning of this article, the adjective *russskoe* has associations with explosion of modern self-conscious Russianness that was fed by an almost sacred regard for literature and language. This rich sphere is ripe for mining convergences with Muslimness, as we briefly saw above.

If we look at *russskoe* in *russskoe musulmanstvo* in this way, we could mix these concepts, and say that it refers to the creative expression of Islam by Muslims in the Russian language and through canonical Russian culture on the Russian land and lands historically associated with Russianness and the Russian language. This might help to avoid anachronisms: for example, is it really right to refer to Yasawi and Naqshbandi Sufism in the Volga and Central Asia as *rossisskoe* in the 16th, 17th, 18th or even 19th centuries? The language of this religiosity was Turkic, Persian and Arabic; hardly any of its practitioners spoke Russian or interacted in a meaningful way with the Russian state. While there may have been similarities in folklore, and contact with Christian peasants, this would probably be an organic contact that occurred despite not because of the state. In many ways, these convergences would be the similarities shared by any pre-modern traditional culture. As Gasprinsky so well knew, however, a definite shift in Muslim culture occurred once large numbers of Volga and other Muslims actually began to *speak Russian*. A language is not just a syntactic system, but a semantic system, a worldview. At the point that large numbers of Muslims begin to communicate in Russian, as the qadimists feared, a new cultural configuration arises: it is not a formal *rossisskoe musulmanstvo*, but in fact a *russskoe musulmanstvo*. And -- less one think that this process threatened ancient ethnic allegiances, we see that the opposite was true: *voluntary* Russification, far from destroying Tatar identity, fed a process whereby Tatar "modernized itself" by ridding itself of Chagatai lexis and replacing them with vernacular Kazan equivalents: so *russskost'* fed modern Tatar identity. Both arose simultaneously as a "Russko-Tatar" symbiosis (cf. again Gabdulla Tukai).

Perhaps a consideration of Sufism would help here. Muhetdinov is not the only one to enthuse about Sufism. Many contemporary Russian scholars are engaged in the study of Arabic manuscripts with Sufi content and there are popular discussions about Sufism. However, I would suggest that many of these studies and discussions take place in Russian (not all, of course). Rumi and Hafiz are translated into Russian; foreign articles on Sufism are translated into Russian. In other words, Sufism is being conveyed to the modern person, Muslim and non-Muslim, via the medium of the Russian language. Most people cannot read the original Arabic manuscripts; not all Muslims can follow the Tatar discussions of Sufism. Sufism is thus becoming precisely *russskii*; the fact that it is also *rossisskii* is neither here nor there.

This reminds one of Buber and his Hasidic Tales. Progressive German Jews had contempt for Eastern European Hasidic mysticism. But when Buber translated these tales from Hebrew and Yiddish he created a new form of German-Jewish interest in mysticism. Is there not an analogy? Gasprinsky rejected Sufism. But nowadays, Sufism in Russian-language format is a good entry into Islamic spirituality for Muslims in Russia. Is it not *russkost'* rather than *rossisskost'* that plays the meaningful role here? And does not this "mystical modernism" owe its origins to modern Russian culture's interest in mysticism¹² -- rather as Soloviev's interest inspired Jewish modernists to return to the Talmud? Russko-Muslim symbiosis seems to be the order of the day.

Indeed, Muhetdinov's own interest and reinterpretation of Ilin, Berdyaev and Leontiev all go through the Russian language. Russian, it might be said, will also prove more enduring than any particular attempt to link Muslimness with a particular incarnation of the Russian government. Of course, undoubtedly *russkoe musulmanstvo* is a different sort of convergence than *rossisskoe musulmanstvo*: it starts later, one might say, from the time that Tatars, Avars, Uzbeks and so forth start to feel at home in Russian. And it would require a different set of operations to feed it and fertilize it.

But there is another point worth considering in this debate about the choice of adjectives. Muhetdinov appeals to a neo-Eurasian "proto-ideology", as he calls it in recognition of the fact that this ideology has not been consistently or fully formulated yet. But it is worth remembering that Trubetskoy and others saw "everyday religiosity" as having been destroyed by Peter the Great's Westernizing reforms. Eurasian, "Jinghizid" spirituality, including genuine Russian Orthodoxy, predates Peter and empire. Thus it seems odd to use the term *rossisskoe*, which is tied to Peter and his successors: the cold, bureaucratic state apparatus of *rossisskost'* and its hypocritical manipulation of religious rhetoric (according to Trubetskoy) is just what classical Eurasianism sets out to reject.

Another aspect that Muhetdinov wants to derive from *rossisskost'* is "traditional values" as mentioned earlier. Here, he attains convergence with the various proponents of the Russian Idea. The match with Leontiev is particularly good: Leontiev's Byzantinism saw the liberal West as the most threatening to tradition and religion -- which he conceived of in terms of hierarchy, stasis, obedience, and extreme conservatism. In fact, Leontiev saw the West as more of a threat than the Ottomans to the Balkan region. Thus Leontiev sets up a Muslim-Orthodox conservative natural alliance against a liberal-capitalist Western threat. In one sense, this feeds very well into Gasprinsky's vision, if one keeps in mind that Islam is still good only in the sense of being the lesser of two evils. Here, Muhetdinov is probably right to use the term *rossisskoe*: the reference is now to a strong centralized state that is practically theocratic in its nature, defending and promoting Orthodoxy and other compatible conservative religions. If so, this vision of *rossisskoe musulmanstvo* could be consistently developed.

However, in another sense, the match with Gasprinsky is not so good: Leontiev was in favor of blind transmission of Byzantine traditions and rites without any concession to

¹² An interesting role is also played by Soviet and post-Soviet academic Arabic and Islamic studies, but that would take us too far afield.

modernity. He was in other words an Orthodox *taqlidi*! This evidently clashes with Gasprinsky's progressivism. Looking at Muhetdinov, we notice another related paradox, namely that much of his theoretic defense of "traditional values" comes from the American paleo-conservative thinker, Pat Buchanan. One might consider this grounding of Russian statist traditional values in foreign thought ironical or contradictory, until one remembers that the Slavophiles, pan-Slavists, Eurasians and others with whom Muhetdinov is allying himself, generally never claimed that Russia was a bastion of Eastern or Eurasian values: rather, their vision was of a Russia that preserved and defended traditional pre-modern *European* (and indeed Christian) values. Here, too, the traditionalism of *rossisskoe musulmanstvo* turns out to be a type of extreme European or Euro-Atlantic conservatism, and not so Eurasian after all. Again, this is not a failure of convergence: it could be a fruitful avenue to explore, leading to links and convergences between Russian Muslims and European conservatives (although more respectable thinkers like Roger Scruton might be a better alliance here).

Nonetheless, to play devil's advocate, one is tempted to think that *russskoe musulmanstvo* might achieve this convergence more economically. In this conception, Russian Muslims do not depend on the state for their ideology or their values: their Russianness consists in their native use of a contemporary European language and their conceptualization and re-conceptualization in this medium of a many-layered past. One no longer has to claim that their conservative values come from their Russianness, or their ill-defined Eurasianness, still less from the state – which it would seem risky to take or look to as an ethical model at the best of times. Instead, their values come from their canonical religion: the Qur'an and sunna; perhaps aspects of their spiritual practice come from Turkic or Chechen Sufism. One can be bilingual and bicultural: *russskost'* does not exclude that -- and indeed we have seen that it often encourages and builds up Tatariness, encouraging hyphenated identities: Russko-Tatar, Russko-Avar etc. *Russskost'* displays this symbiotic openness in the Christian sphere too: consider the example of Mordvin or Chuvash or indeed American Russian Orthodox believers, for whom the Russian church tries to create a space by inculturating the Gospel in their language and practice.

In other words, to continue our hypothetical analysis, *russskoe musulmanstvo*, as joint full owners of *russskost'*, can also negotiate the canonical texts of Russianness, such as Leontiev, Rozanov, Tolstoy and so on. *Russskoe musulmanstvo*, as joint full owners of *russskost'*, can negotiate for themselves a convergence with Islam and *russskost'*: they need not claim that their traditional values are owed to the state or Russian geography or the Eurasian "spiritual atmosphere" – only that their Qur'anic values have correlates in Russian culture and shape their own selection of that culture which is now native to them. Indeed, in so doing the Islam of *russskoe musulmanstvo* can permeate, fertilize, transform and bring out the sacredness in *russskost'* – filling the language with Qur'anic terms and concepts.

In contrast, one might well ask: what sacredness is to be squeezed from *rossisskost'*? The term looks more like an arbitrary device that randomly holds together unrelated entities: Judaism and Buddhism, for example. Language has always been an autonomous flexible and powerful medium for self-definition; the state is far more clumsy. And using the term *russskoe* would relieve an ideologue of the need to find specific *rossisskii* characteristics for Judaism, Buddhism etc – when the best approach might just be to say that these two religions are defined by sources

far beyond Eurasia or the Russian state. It is only their modern Russian-language incarnations that bring them together. Finally, defining *musulmanstvo* as *russkoe* rather than *rossisskoe* might also relieve an ideologue of confining themselves to a comparison of the so-called “four traditional” religions: it is well-known that certain forms of Protestantism (especially the Baptists) have taken on a particularly Russian nature through emerging and evolving on Russian soil. One might avoid the tendency, deriving from state-sponsored religion, to see “non-traditional” religions as sectarian -- a tendency that can backfire when it is applied to non-Christian religions, like Islam. Oddly enough, the narrower term *russkoe* might then be more inclusive here as an approach to specifically Russian religiosity.

All this is speculative, of course. To rethink a new role for Gasprinsky’s original term would be challenging. One can imagine the objections – of those, for example, who might think such a term negates their Tatar or Avar identity and history. But, as we said, one can add hyphens to provide for such an avenue: *russko-tatarskoe musulmanstvo*, *russko-avarskoe musulmanstvo* and so on. But at least the first term would have some content, rather than being an empty hold-all to be filled with sometimes questionable content. In the first section of this article, I looked at possible convergences between *russkost’* and Muslimness in Russian thought. The practical conclusion of this and its connection with the present section is maybe to suggest that *russkost’* can be given broader content, spiritual, cultural and linguistic, while remaining thoroughly concrete and real, so that one need not resort to *rossisskost’*. I offer this as a suggestion for debate, of course. It arises from my own experience in interviewing dozens of Muslims across Russia: our medium of communication has, of course, been Russian. And so much of the experience of these Muslims comes from Russian film, literature and Russian television, i.e. Russian language media. Thus on an everyday level, people are constantly making convergences between Muslimness and *russkost’*.

One example sticks in my mind and I offer it here to make what I am saying more concrete. An observant Muslim artist in Kazan used Tarkovsky’s film about Andrei Rublev to explain to me his Sufi-based belief that the fires of Hell are merely a Purgatory that will precede the salvation of all, referring to the scene where Rublev decides on a brighter painting style than his gloomy master Dionysius to reflect his eschatological optimism. “The fire is only a means to purify sinners,” the artist told me. “You can see this in the message of Jesus. Jesus Christ is truly amazing: when he is on the cross, he does not condemn sinners. He says: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ He is talking about the thieves: because of course, for killing such a man, they will go straight into the boiling waters of Hell. But Christ’s doctrine is to forgive, while the warrior’s instinct is to strike back and kill. Really, there are so many things that we do not understand.” This same artist named Rublev’s Trinity as being his favorite work of art. He had admiration for the Kazan Mother of God icon. When I asked how he could admire this symbol of Muslim Kazan’s defeat, he told me in effect: the ways of God are mysterious. “God sent the Russians to us, and out of our defeat something fruitful was born.” He pointed out that our meeting would be impossible without the medium of Russian in which we were both communicating; after all, Russian is a world language, while Tatar is not. Indeed, I got into a playful conversation with another Tatar friend of this artist who surprised me by indulging in a

long paean to the wonders of the "great Russian language", praising its richness and multifaceted depth over his own more simple native Tatar. (His words not mine).

And then, at another time, the same artist told me of his literary preferences. Like every good Soviet and Russian school and university student he knew the classics well. And like everyone, he had his favorite authors: Chekhov and Tolstoy he liked, and Dostoevsky he found difficult to bear: "Dostoevsky dissects his characters and looks at them through a magnifying glass. He's a great writer, but he is not full of joy and spontaneity, like some of our great Soviet writers even, and like Baki Urmanche [a Tatar artist]. Dostoevsky didn't really believe in Christ. He was a doubter, a tortured soul. So I don't read him." I should add that we also visited the Raisky monastery together, near Zelenodolsk where a Tatar colleague of his sells his landscape paintings.

What do these exchanges mean in light of the present analyses? I like to think that like every Muslim whose native tongue and culture has become Russian, hopefully in addition to their native culture rather than replacing it, is engaged in a permanent negotiation, a permanent search for convergence. Here is a Muslim who admires Rublev's depiction of divine love, who admires Tarkovsky's depiction of the God-fearing icon-painter Dionysius, and for whom Dostoevsky is not Christo-centric enough! And who incidentally, seems to agree with my depiction of Tolstoy's "Muslimness"!

Here cultural-linguistic Russianness, *russtkost'*, has transmitted to a post-Soviet Tatar Muslim certain qualities of the Russian Idea: the ability to hold (seeming) opposites together -- reverence for Christian symbols and Islamic devotion. But it turns out that these need not be opposites at all. Canonical Islam too reveres Jesus Christ and Mary, albeit not in art. Even the Soviet period could not entirely suppress the spirituality that had been infused into Russian literature and art by the figures of the formative Golden and Silver Ages -- as Tarkovsky's film shows. Further, the Orthodoxy or Christianness of this cultural-linguistic Russianness, *russtkost'*, is not necessarily inimical to "basurmanity" or to Muslimness, as I showed through Gershenzon, Tolstoy, Rozanov and so on. It is a site where different influences can meet, interact, struggle. It is a vessel into which Muslimness can be poured, taking on a new color.

Of course there is always the danger that Muslimness, having taken on the color of the vessel, might dissolve entirely, losing its identity. Such was the fear of the qadimists. And perhaps, this is the anxiety that drives the selection of *rossiskost'*: to conceive of Muslim and Christian, Tatar and Russian, as two ever separate *cultural* entities in some neutral *state* entity of a different order. However, this anxiety of loss of identity is not as justifiable as one may think: after all the sources of Muslimness, as of Jewishness, are truly solid, and there is no doubt that *russtkost'* is *not* the source of Muslimness. Continuing Muslim identity and difference is fed constantly by the foundational, canonical language of Islam, Arabic -- beside which, of course, even Turkic (Tatar, included) and Persian are, strictly speaking, non-canonical and non-sacred, though sanctified by time. In that sense, one could worry that Muslimness might dissolve in Tatariness or Chechenness: that, too, incidentally is a worry -- that ethnicity might trump religiosity.

So, in fact, letting Muslimness free into the vessel of *russkost'*, rather than assigning it a place in one of the sealed quarters of Eurasianness or *rossisskost'* only emphasizes the foundational Arabness of Islam, and the Qur'anic sacral foundations of Muslimness. Perhaps rather radically, it might even imply that Muslimness can flourish perfectly well in Arabic and Russian -- and without "native" Tatar or Avar at all. Indeed, for some Tatars or Avars who speak only Russian but are Islamically observant this is already the case -- it is a sociological reality. However, of course, the conception of *russkoe musulmanstvo* need not endorse that dismaying situation at all: the universalism of *russkost'*, as conceived (or re-conceived) above, can and does make way for the private space of Tatar, Avar, Chechen, Kumyk, Tajik and so on. In that sense *russkost'* would be like linguistic Englishness: a language and culture of potentially global proportions.

However, I merely offer these thoughts on the meaning of *russkoe musulmanstvo* as the speculative proposals of an outsider looking in. Probably, to some they will seem provocative. But it is an interesting thought-experiment. Ultimately, jadidism segued into secular nationalism (G.Tukay) even before the 1917 Revolution -- so national languages and folk-cultures eclipsed the Islamic content of Russian Muslim cultures. Muhetdinov's question about what unites Muslims in the Russian Federation is thus relatively new. Proposing that Russian language and culture may be a source of unity and creativity for modern Russian Islam of course goes against late-jadid and Soviet experience. But the term is Gasprinsky's, and the pre-Soviet thought is a natural place to look for Islamic rather than folk-national inspiration.

Given that even during its formative period, Russian language and literature was permeated with "basurman" influences, *russkost'* may already contain enough of that "Eurasian" element that the neo-Eurasiens are seeking in more political guise -- especially if its prime bearers are bi-cultural and bilingual in Tatar, Avar, Chechen and so on. Thus the *russkost'* of *russkoe musulmanstvo* has many potential avenues in which to develop. In what language can one find works by Avar Sufis, Tatar jadids, and Arab philosophers that are widely comprehensible to post-Soviet Muslims today? Of course, only in Russian.

There is one final point I would like to make about Muhetdinov, concerning his connection with Faizkhanov. It is interesting that he has written two books on this figure, and actively organized the annual Nizhny Novgorod Faizkhanov memorial lectures. Above, I pointed out a highly interesting aspect of Faizkhanov: as one of the earliest jadids, he sought to *combine* rather than *replace* Islamic observance and tradition with the latest Russian-European knowledge. Evidently, Muhetdinov is trying to do something similar. This is very appealing, especially given recent debates about religion and modernity. Peter Berger, the American sociologist, underwent a serious change of opinion in the 1990s: before he held the standard Weberian view that religion and modernity are mutually exclusive¹³. The growth of the latter entails the diminishment of the former. He then came to revise this opinion, and started to explore instances of cultures that combine the two, most notably his own North American culture. Many have followed his lead.

¹³ See e.g. Berger 2008, Secularization falsified. <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/02/002-secularization-falsified>

Faizkhanov offers us an interesting alternative history that keys into this debate: while his successors chose the path of secularization (national identity, Tatariness etc), he himself (perhaps naively) was a combined model of aspiring modernity and religiosity. More than that, he managed to defend and preserve a traditional Muslim lifestyle and identity while teaching in the heart of modern Christian Russia. This is no mean feat: his colleagues included Kazim-bek Mirza and Daniel Chvolson, the former a Muslim convert and the latter a Jewish convert to Orthodoxy. Full academic status was impossible without conversion, but Faizkhanov managed to achieve scientific respectability while resisting the lure of conversion. This aspect of Faizkhanov's thought -- and behavior -- contains, I would argue, a lot of potential for "asynchronic convergence", i.e. trying to apply the best of this to the present, by reviving a model of Muslim modernity that allows for the mutual coexistence and interpenetration of traditional Islamic observance, modern academic integrity, and openness to science. Today, when religiosity is still a little suspect in the post-Soviet academy, and indeed sometimes in the Western academy, this provides food for thought.

In sum, to conclude this section, Muhetdinov is a thought-provoking figure in search of convergence. His project confirms some of my own contentions in the first part of this article, and challenges those with an interest in Russian Muslim culture (defined as *russskoe* or *rossisskoe*) – Muslims, non-Muslims, Russians and non-Russians – to engage with his proposals. There are other figures who are engaged in similar projects to conceive of the relationship between Islam, Muslimness and Russia, but we do not have space to examine them. Instead, in the concluding section, I would like to look at a British Muslim, who is asking very similar questions about the convergence of Muslimness in another European country. This suggests that convergence between Muslimness and European culture is occurring throughout Europe - although it is too early to make generalizations about this phenomenon.

PART 5 Abdul Hakim Murad: Islam as a native option for British religion

In the preceding sections, then, we looked at the Islamic spaces potentially lurking within canonical modernist Russian culture. We then saw an attempt by contemporary "post-modern" Muslim figures to "activate" these spaces. I would now like to look at a well-known contemporary British Muslim thinker who has spoken about the congruence of Islam and British religious history. In the terms being developed here, he too is activating the Islamic potential of another European Christian culture. The differences and similarities between the Russian and British context provide further stimulating material for the current thesis.

Tim Winter was born in 1960 and became Muslim when he was 17, taking the name Abdul Hakim Murad. In the last couple of decades he has attained a high profile among British Muslims, and is the founder of the Cambridge Muslim College. Students at this college are drawn from the best graduates of Dar al Uloom medreses in England; the program Winter has designed is aimed at combining the best of the Islamic educational heritage of the Indian subcontinent with the best in British culture and education in order to produce a capable, integrated British Muslim fluent in both cultures. The subject of cultural convergence is thus

highly pertinent to his worldview. Winter himself was educated at Westminster College, one of a handful of leading elite private schools in Britain, before going on to study at Cambridge University. I mention this to show that in many ways, Winter comes from the heart of the British establishment, where he absorbed "canonical" British culture (canonical for a certain period at least). He thus speaks as a British and Islamic insider and is well poised to offer a commentary on the possibility of cultural convergence of the type explored here. In the following section, I draw on a talk he gave called "The Paradox of British Islam".

Winter's argument in this talk is that British Muslims and their religion need not be seen as alien and peripheral in Britain, which they often are. The usual argument for their integration appeals to multiculturalism: Britain contains so many diverse groups, that Muslims can merge in with the diversity and thus find their place in British society. But Winter points out that this is quite hard for Muslims to accept: after all, multiculturalism is predicated on relativism, on the indifferent equality of all groups. Muslims, however, adhere to the view that their religion is based on an absolute revealed truth. Furthermore, in the atmosphere of modern multicultural Britain religion has become no more than an eccentric life-choice, a process which Winter argues probably dates only from the 1960s. In other words, the steep decline in religion started shortly after the first Muslim immigrants began to arrive in number in Britain. The decline in religion and traditional values, which then bled into multiculturalism, has in fact made it harder for later Muslim arrivals to integrate, and to "become British" while preserving an adherence to their religion, for the simple reason that in this very time British identity has lost its traditional heart and is fluctuating so wildly that there is scarcely any solid Britishness for a Muslim to assimilate into. And the choice of religiousness as a keynote of British identity is doomed to put anyone, Christian or Muslim, on the periphery of the new cultural formation. Overall, "there are no fixed essences in our postmodern world," he notes. And: "It is not clear that there is an unchanging British default."

For all these reasons, Winter rejects the idea that Muslims can find their place by appealing to a multicultural framework. Instead, Winter wants to peer beyond the 1960s postmodern and post-Christian watershed and ask what Muslims might look like set against the background of traditional Britishness. Contrary to the modern expectation, he maintains that if one adopts this perspective Muslims actually appear less alien rather than more alien. What does Winter mean by traditional Britishness? He has just admitted that identities have fluctuated so wildly recently that it is difficult to fix this term precisely -- but as the talk progresses, we see that he is referring to an England as defined by the Anglican Settlement of the late 17th century, namely the agreement whereby the Protestant and Catholic-leaning elements in the religious establishment would agree to live with each other. This settlement allowed for a variety of Christian groups to flourish and live in mutual tolerance from "high Anglicans" to "low church Anglicans", and further along the Protestant scale, the various non-Conformist groups. Occasionally, some groups at the far end of the spectrum would splinter off -- but as the 19th century progresses, these groups too remained within the law and contributed to the debate about the nature of British religious and national identity. An example on the "high church" end of the spectrum is the Tractarian movement started by Cardinal Newman, who returned to the Roman Catholic church.

Winter's argument is that the "Settlement spectrum" (my term) can be seen as accommodating Islam. Islam is, in a sense, simply an option at the far end of the low-church end of the spectrum. Winter specifically traces the Muslim congruence to the non-Conformist movement, pointing out that from as early as the 17th century radical reformers pointed to "Mohammedanism" as a model for a truly reformed Christianity. While this may offer more of a parallel to the self-identifying "outsider Muslimness" of a Tolstoy, a very real convergence occurred in the case of William Quilliam, later Abdullah Quilliam, a non-Conformist who took part in the Liverpool Temperance movement and then converted, with a group of his Temperance followers, to Islam. In that case, the outsider "Muslimness" of a low-end Protestant converged and crossed over directly into "insider Muslimness", or Muslimness *tout court*.

Winter, however, starts his talk (and his argument) with an example of another type of crossing-over, that of the G.K. Chesterton and Hillaire Belloc. These men are mirror images of William Quilliam. Quilliam broke out of the Settlement and into Islam because it was not adequately Reformist enough for his sensibilities; Chesterton broke out of the Settlement because the English Church was not Catholic enough. Winter does not make the point explicitly, but one could add here that Chesterton achieved an iconic status in British-English culture. His Father Brown character, the world-famous Catholic priest detective, brought a "non-Settlement figure" back into the heart of English identity. (And indeed, the Catholic Father Brown has even become an international symbol of Englishness -- Chesterton's books are hugely popular in Russia, for instance). Why then could not Quilliam with his Islamic choice also continue to be part of an enlarged Settlement Englishness? In fact, this is Winter's goal, it seems.

Winter himself was raised as a low-church Anglican. He became dissatisfied with Trinitarian theology in his teens, and in his first year at university visited a Unitarian church -- another Settlement option on the far low end of the scale. From there, it seems, a la Quilliam, it was a short step to Islamic monotheism. Thus one gets the impression that Winter's reconstructed "English history" of Islam is in part autobiographical -- which I take to be an endorsement of this account rather than a criticism. Winter himself is proof of the congruence he is arguing for¹⁴.

Winter begins his analysis with Chesterton and Belloc -- despite their hostility to Islam -- due to the writers' keen interest in the religion and their uncanny understanding of its nature and potential. Here we will look only at Chesterton's contribution, where the Catholic convert engages in a playful but acerbic critique of Islam in a short story. As Winter shows, the fierce critique of Islam is probably more of an attack on English non-Conformism, as I will explain shortly. But again, it is appropriate that Winter can battle it out with Chesterton quite within the terms of a traditional "Settlement dispute", i.e. on English soil -- while at the same time making a point about his own Islamic identity. Again, the convergence allows him to frame an Islamic debate in English terms -- something we have been looking at in Russian culture.

The story in question is called *The Flying Inn*. It is a futuristic fantasy in which England, due to an upsurge in Ottoman political fortunes, is succumbing to the lure of Islam. A Muslim

¹⁴ An interesting parallel to Winter is Timothy Ware, another establishment figure who converted to Greek Orthodoxy, and is now known as Bishop Kallistos. The two Timothies have thus stretched the Settlement definition in opposition directions, while remaining within the bounds of an "eccentric" (non-central) Englishness.

preacher tours the land, preaching from a soap-box and converting native Englishmen to the religion of Muhammad. He makes amusing arguments to the effect that England was originally Muslim: people talk of King's *Cross* as an example of England's Christianity identity, but ignore Mornington *Crescent*; pubs were originally established to sell not alcohol (an Arabic word) but Islamic drinks; the Bull pub was originally the Bulbul, and so on. The campaign ends with alcohol prohibition being introduced to England, and the death of traditional England merriness at the hands of Islamic austerity.

According to Winter, behind the flippancy, there is a good point. Chesterton has intuited the power and persuasiveness of Islam: as such he departs from the often complacent European attitude of the time towards Islam (exemplified by Hegel and, as we saw, Danilevsky), which saw Islam as an exhausted force. Chesterton's Islam is young, powerful and a serious contender (in a comical way) for English sympathies. At the same time, Chesterton is using "Islam" in the way the Russians used Judaism, as a trope for tendencies within his native culture: the Temperance movement seems to lurk in the background, and Chesterton is thus implicitly labeling non-Conformism as un-English. If Reformed Christianity continues on this route, well, we may as well all become Muslims. To have Reformed sympathies is to be un-English, to betray "merry England".

It is ironic, of course, that Chesterton's parable is intended to use Islam as a symbol of extreme un-English attitudes -- and that Winter derives from it a convergence of Englishness and Muslimness. That may seem a bit underhanded. But the underhandedness may lie with Chesterton: after all, Roman Catholicism was the faith that had been branded unpatriotic since Henry VIII, and Chesterton's complete revaluation of it to be synonymous with patriotism looks like attack as the best form of defense. So Winter's idea that temperance and non-Conformism are indeed English, and now *qua* Chesterton, "Islamic", could in fact be taken as the default position! As we saw in the Russian case: by invoking Islam, a European writer has opened up places at the table that are occupied, quite lawfully, by later generations -- alive to implicit nuances in an old position.

Thus Winter argues that just as the Settlement can be expanded to make room for English Catholics, who are in fact more numerous today than Anglicans, so it can be expanded to make room for an English "non-Conformist" Islam. One might ask all sort of questions of this analysis, but here I want to dwell on a point that Winter himself develops further, a point that brings Winter's analysis in direct contact with our Russian discourse. The core of his argument is that the natural English or indeed European convergence is between Islam and Reformed Protestantism, and not, say, with Catholicism. He deepens this point by citing a range of interesting references to the example of Mohammedanism in broader Protestant history, including Luther's attitudes to Islam. But then he asks a question which is already beginning to occur to a "Russian observer". Is it not rather the case that Islam is more congruent with Catholicism, given that both of them are "traditional" religions? Here he cites advocates of the Traditionalist school that emerged from Renee Guenon.

Traditionalism values historical religions and sees Protestantism as a decadent fundamentalism. This approach to Islam was particularly evident in the work of Louis

Massignon, for whom Islam was symbolized by saints, rosaries, mysticism, miracles, relics and scales of perfection (Winter's list). This short list excellently highlights the "Catholic" nature of Islam, and when some of Massignon's disciples converted to Islam they continued this vision from the inside (another case of outsider-insider switch). The first striking point here is the loud echoes one hears between Traditionalism and Russian Eurasianism. As far as I know the two movements are not directly related¹⁵, but obviously similar trends in European thought fed both sensibilities and the similarities deserve serious investigation.

In place of such a serious investigation, we can repeat the observations made earlier: one Russian philosopher Semyon Frank read Massignon seriously, and developed an admiration for al-Hallaj. However, we also pointed out that he ignored Hallaj's Muslimness. Frank's conception of the Russian Worldview (a term he used to dissociate himself from Berdyaev and others' Russian Idea) drew heavily on German Romanticism, and so evidently he found Massignon's Romanticized Catholicized Islam congenial and unthreatening. One answer might be found in Winter's argument: this is because such Catholicization in fact misses what is truly Islamic in Islam. The "Traditionalist" Frank was fed an ersatz version of Islam without its essence.

This is one possible answer. However, there seems to be an ambiguity in Winter's approach. On the one hand he argues that our world no longer contains "essences": Britishness has no essence, and neither has Muslimness in our post-modern world. Here he cites the anthropologist Clifford Geertz who sees Islam as "a historically conditioned kalaidoscope of practices and perceptions united in the Sunni doctrinal liturgical core variously interpreted by non-magisterial consensus, particularly in minority or marginal conditions." Muslimness is thus fluctuating, unstable, historically determined -- just like Britishness. But then there seems to be no reason to prefer Winter's vision of Settlement religiosity as a guiding vision for Britishness as well as British Muslimness. On the other hand, though, Winter seems to believe the argument he puts forth *will* be convincing: Muslimness is Sunni not Shi'ite; Muslimness is more convergent with Scripture-based Protestantism than with tradition-based Catholicism. Massignon's preference for Shi'ism is what gets him his list of saints, miracles and relics etc, and it is a distortion of -- *real* Islam, *essential* Islam. Thus goes Winter's argument.

Here I am not concerned to resolve this epistemological and ontological ambiguity. Some Muslim thinkers have seen a liberation in the phenomenon of post-modernism, and even refer to new Muslim thought as post-post-modern. Modernism and the Enlightenment project undoubtedly caused problems for non-Christians in Europe: I have in mind the Jews first of all, whose communal identity was undermined by the Napoleonic Settlement (in sum "everything to Jews as individuals, nothing as a people"). Likewise, the Enlightenment project was surprisingly blind when it came to colonialism. So for all its faults, post-modernism opened up space for non-European and non-Christian discourse. And Winter too seems to be using that space to think Islam anew. So instead of focusing on the big methodological questions about how to really ground these arguments, I merely wish to open up that space further.

¹⁵ There has been one attempt to show a link between Guenon and Dugin but I can't judge whether it is successful

Here we are immediately reminded of the old joke, familiar to British people perhaps: An IRA soldier stops a bus and orders off all the Protestants. One passenger says he is Jewish. "Ah," says the terrorist, "but are you a Protestant Jew or a Catholic Jew?" Again, it has been said that there is a Protestant and a Catholic atheist: the God-hole has a different shape depending on which faith has been abandoned. In other words, what Winter shows is that when Muslims in Western Europe look for convergences in the local (religious) culture, they automatically enter the terrain of Western Christianity with its Protestant-Catholic disputation. But Russia, of course, has a different Christian landscape: the Reformation and Counter-Reformation were not native phenomena. In that sense, Winter's arguments for a "Protestant" versus Catholic Islam will still need evaluating even if they turn out to be persuasive.

Here I will not try to definitively resolve this dispute. I will merely point out again that Russian Muslims need to find convergences between Islam and a different Christian landscape. Winter himself admits that, of course, he is only arguing that Protestantism is a *better* convergence for Islam than Catholicism -- not that it is a full convergence. There are elements where Protestantism differs, and the features he points too, might a first blush prove to be rather Catholic -- or perhaps Orthodox. For example, according to Winter, Reformed Christianity is known for its fissiparous tendencies, the generation of endless sects, while Sunni Islam generally operates by consent (*ijma*). Reformed Christianity emphasizes the individual above the community. Reformed Christianity privileges the encounter of the individual with Scripture, while Islam generally approaches the Qur'an through the *tafsirs*. The ummah has a strong sense of collective peoplehood that is marked by obedience to elders. Further, the "Ishmaelite ecumenical world" is defined by the purity laws, which make membership in the ummah strongly dependent on the state of the believer's body: the ummah is more "carnal" (my words) than the Reformed community.

Some of these features could be given an "Orthodox" interpretation. Winter's quote from Clifford Geertz's definition of historical Sunni Islam could get us started: the idea of a "doctrinal liturgical core variously interpreted by non-magisterial consensus" sounds rather Orthodox. In the Orthodox world, too, there is no magisterial authority, and no Pope. Ideally, doctrine and practice are worked out through councils. The idea of conciliarity (Rus. *sobornost*), in fact, was revived by Khomiakov (with a Hegelian twist), who argued that Orthodoxy avoided the fissiparous micro-papism of Protestantism and the macro-Papism of Catholicism. This self-understanding has been influential ever since in Russian religious thought. Orthodoxy, too, has a liturgical core that is unchanging from country to country and which gives a solidity to the international Orthodox communion. Taking the next points from Winter, we might comment that Russian Orthodoxy also has a tradition of elders (*starsy*), strongly involved in the ecclesial consensus, but rather like Sufi *shaykhs*, also free to exercise an individual approach to spirituality. Regarding the embodiedness of the Orthodox community, reference is made to Church as in-carn-ated reality (with some help from Judaism, as we saw with Rozanov). And so on.

This is all rather sketchy, of course, and we have been through most of it already. I am merely restating the Islamic-Russian Orthodox consensus in light of a British Islamic-Protestant alternative. However, the Russian reader at this point may be provoked by Winter's analysis to

ask a very particular question: why would Russian (russkoe or rossisskoe!) Muslims *need* to make the sort of convergence Winter is making on behalf of British Muslims? British Muslims are recent non-European immigrants to European Britain. Hence the need for Winter to find a place for their Muslimness. Tatars and Chechens are native to the region.

I do not want to minimize this important sense among Russian Muslims of being native to Russia. However, while Russian Muslims may not have had to move geographically to find a place in Russia, to "immigrate" to Russia -- our whole above discussion has been aimed at showing that "basurman" Jews and Muslims to some extent have engaged in a psychic immigration into a European-Russian culture. The very notion of a Tatarstan or a Bashkortistan with its own national language arises in symphony with emerging Russian self-identity. We saw the Tatar national identity and language is fed by the idea of Russianness, and later by Sovietness. We saw that the idea of a Russian Muslimness, as opposed to a narrower Tatar or Chechen Muslimness, is still very much disputed and under construction. We saw, I believe, that thinkers like Muhetdinov (and Gasprinsky) also feel the need to build convergences.

In other words, before dismissing an English Muslim's attempt to locate Muslimness in the local religious landscape as something Russian Muslim do not have to do, it might be better to say that Russian Muslims are doing something similar, only they have been doing it for much longer. Of course, Russian Christians are doing it too; indeed, forming and maintaining identity is a universal human necessity.

At this stage, I would like to further suggest that there is one point that is missing from both the Russian Christian and British Christian Islamic convergence narrative: a consideration of Judaism -- Judaism both as other and own. It is true, as Winter says, that Reformation Christianity referenced Islam in its self-definition (though personally I would be more cautious than Winter about seeing this as "inner Islam"; I would see it more as "solipsistic Islam", at least before it reaches Quilliam and Winter!). But Reformation Christianity also referenced Judaism, and the phenomenon of Reformation Hebraism is well-known. Likewise, as I showed above, Russian Christianity in the 19th and early 20th century also went through a strong period of "Hebraism", in order to fill perceived lacunae within itself: Winter's reference to the embodiedness of the believing community being realized in ritual purity was something that Rozanov, for example, had to look for wistfully to Judaism. Thus European Muslims -- Russian, British and others -- in search of convergence should probably, in my opinion, also look to European Judaism, -- and not just to the Christian narrative. In particular, the Jewish experience of being a longtime outsider-insider in Christian and then post-Christian culture could produce many suggestive congruities for Islam in its new European context. And, of course, this dialogue with Christianity and Judaism, is encoded in the Qur'an, a sacred book that questions not just pagan Arabs, but seeks to engage with Jews and Christians too. But whereas Islam sees the Qur'an as the uncreated Word of God, so that its engagement with the "people of the Book" is instructional and challenging, Muslims exist on the same immanent level as Christian and Jews: thus they can certainly "seek knowledge" (as the Prophet advised) in order to "know their own selves" (as the Qur'an encourages), "selves" now firmly situated in the European context.

Winter wants to expand the English Settlement to include Muslims: he refuses to believe that as a former low-church Unitarian who has embraced Islamic monotheism he is now outside Englishness. Perhaps in a sense he is even claiming or seeking a *canonical* place for Islam in the English religious landscape. He has called Chesterton's bluff. Chesterton looked to a time before Henry VIII for an era where truly indigenous Englishness existed in the form of Catholic Englishness, before the "stripping of the altars", in Eamonn Duffy's phrase. But in that case, says Winter, you might as well go back to pre-Christian Britain; an endless regress looms. Thus Winter, unlike Chesterton, still looks to the Settlement as a unifying force for British identity. He insists that his choice, Islam, is indigenous, that "integration is already present" for the Muslim community.

However, an ambiguity still remains in Winter. Integration is present; Islam is a genuine English choice. What makes it genuine is "authenticity" and what makes something authentic is an attachment to a still living tradition. It is undisputed, I would say, that Islam is an authentic living tradition. But is it an authentic *English* living tradition? Only, I imagine, if there is a link between Islam and, say, non-Conformism, the Anglican low church. And what allows that link to be articulated is the English Settlement, to which Winter still adheres. This seems to veer off somewhat into more "Traditionalist" territory. It is a rather English form of Protestantism (as applied to Islam): i.e. not each man with his scripture in glorious, individual isolation but a history of Scripture being read in a concrete community with concrete institutions, which have links going all the way to the Crown, the courts etc. As such, maybe Winter's "Protestant" Islam is more communitarian, more national, than seemed at first sight; maybe it is closer to Russia's "soborny Islam". Maybe there can be a Russian-English Islamic convergence!

A final question remains: can modern Britain understand, still less accept Winter's "Settlement Islam"? He himself admits that religion has fizzled away to little more than a pop on the horizon of the general British consciousness. The niceties of religious history are lost on most. One point comes to mind: a recent study showed that there is now less discrimination in Britain against Hindus and African Christians than against Muslims. In other words, Muslimness meets with more prejudice in the job market than skin color. In an interesting contrast, Wendy Donigan in her recent history of Hinduism writes that the English in India were more sympathetic to Islam than to Hinduism, seeing it as closer (more convergent, I would say) with Christianity, another monotheist religion of the Book. In other words, this judgment has been reversed in modern Britain. Now it is Muslims that are distant, alien and Hindus with their non-Judeo-Christian polytheism that are more "native", more trustworthy. Winter himself sets his argument for the nativization of Islam in the pre-1960s era, the era when Christianity was still an intimate part of the fabric of British life.

There seems to be a problem lurking there. How can a Christian convergence for British Islam work in post-Christian Britain? In a sense Muhetdinov's problem is similar: how can a Gasprinskian Orthodox-Muslim convergence work when the state has become secular, and religion is far more marginal than one hundred years ago -- despite often exaggerated rhetoric of a Russian religious revival?

Here is not the place to answer such a question. As Winter remarks, identity shifts so quickly in the post-modern space that it is hard to keep up. Nonetheless, it would seem that Russian and British Muslim thinkers need to seek convergences not just with the canonical cultures and Christianities, but also with their post-Christian and even atheist realities. However, that is an enormous topic, for quite another time.

6. Conclusion

This then concludes our investigation into attempts by 19th-21st century Muslims in Russia, and one 21st century British Muslim, to find a place for themselves in the European Christian *imaginarium*.

Throughout this article, I used the term "convergence", and it has perhaps become evident that this is not a purely academic, objective conception. That is, while it is possible to engage in the discipline of tracing the mutual influence of Christian and Muslim thought and culture in a particular environment, I believe that the fact/value divide is broached here: there might well be a moral duty for Muslims to seek convergences in the cultures where they are not the majority, and there is a moral aspect in seeking the best interpretation of the majority culture. The alternative is rejection, isolation and extremism. Both Gasprinsky, Muhetdinov and Abdul Hakim Murad seem to be driven by this moral motivation to seek Muslim integration. Perhaps, this can be supported by the Qur'anic injunction to speak kindly with the people of the Book, and by the Qur'anic idea that God created different nations to know one another (*qua* Cusa, and his unwitting followers Karsavin and Frank). Or one might look to the behavior of the first *muhajirs* in Abyssinia, who sought to demonstrate their religious convergence with the religion of the Negus.

Certainly, this quest for convergence and integration is going on throughout the world: in the U.S. Muslims seek convergence with the principles of the American Constitution, in France French Muslims are seeking Muslim expressions of Frenchness. My claim here has been that literature, history and even Christian theology or culture can be places where strong convergences can be found. It would be interesting at some point to compare the different approaches taken by Muslims to this problem: the brief and superficial comparison of Winter's "Protestant" Muslimness and Muhetdinov's Eurasian *soborny* Muslimness is suggestive of the route such comparisons could take, and the avenues of communication between different Muslim communities they might open up.

The labels "Protestant" and "soborny", of course need to be understood in the right way: they are labels aimed at a certain audience. They are certainly intended for external consumption -- to build bridges with non-Muslims in Britain and Russia -- but also for internal consumption -- to understand oneself and operate in one's new native conditions. But, of course, they are not really tailor-made for communication between different Muslim communities, i.e. British and Russian Muslim communities, where of course the most natural link is the shared canonical content of Islam: Arabic, the Qur'an, the Sunna, the madhabs and so forth. Those other labels would probably just lead to confusion and suspicion.

Nonetheless, this raises the question of Muslim inter-community convergence. I would contend that if two people, for example, a British Muslim and a Russian Muslim meet and communicate, full communication cannot take place if only canonical Islamic content is taken into consideration. The different layers of each person's differently inflected British or Russian, "Protestant" or "soborny", Muslimness, should be taken into account -- if there is to be true and deep mutual understanding.

The problem of asynchrony arises here again: Muhetdinov's appeal to Gasprinsky, Eurasianism and the Russian Idea with their strong overtones of pre-Revolutionary "traditional religion" is actually in tune with the mood of the Russian state today; Christian intellectuals are engaging in similar projects too. Winter's location of Muslimness on the spectrum of the "English religious settlement" is actually, I would argue, rather similar in approach to Muhetdinov: despite their different emphases on the "Protestant" or "Orthodox" convergence of Muslimness (and Protestantism also has its own mystical tradition to provide a convergence for Winter's own Sufi orientation, one might add), both are seeking to highlight the compatibility of Muslimness and "native" "traditional" religion. However, by his own admission, Winter's convergence is a marginal option in the post-modern multicultural landscape of Britain. In other words, what is mainstream in Russia might have to seek alliances with what is peripheral in Britain. I do not wish to give this particular example too much weight (this one small talk of Winter's does not do justice to the full range of his thinking, for one), only to point to the potential difficulties of Muslims finding likeminded thinkers across national boundaries.

To add one last more optimistic thought, I will propose another metaphor for the project of religious-cultural convergence I am proposing. Ibn Arabi refers to *barzakh* as "the widest of the presences and the Meeting Place of the Two Seas (Koran 18:60)...the Presence of Imagination -- which we have called the Meeting Place of the Two Seas -- embodies meanings and subtilizes the sensory thing. It transforms the entity of every object of knowledge in the viewer's eye..." (Chittick, *The Sufi Path to Knowledge*, p.123). Here we have the Two Seas of Muslim (Turkic-Islamic) and non-Muslim culture (Russian-Orthodox, British-Protestant): the Meeting Place is a convergence where new meanings are created by the religious imagination, so releasing growth, creativity and success...

The thoughts expressed in this article are only at the formative stage and certainly not free of their own contradictions and inadequacies. Perhaps they can be weeded out in future.