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IN THE AFTERGLOW OF THE RUSSIAN SILVER AGE: SERGII BULGAKOV'S "JUDAS ISCARIOT–APOSTLE–BETRAYER"

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Caught up in the cultural renaissance that swept through Russia in the waning years of the imperial regime, Sergii Nikolaevich Bulgakov (1871–1944) added his own voice to the chorus of those engaged in reconceiving Russian culture and society at the beginning of the twentieth century.[1] Bulgakov's contributions were of a decidedly philosophical nature, although he did write short critical essays on literature and art and continued to comment on political topics.[2] Reflection on the destiny of Russia is a recurrent theme throughout his lengthy writing career, and he often resorted to commentary on key facets of Russian culture and Christian tradition to express his hopes and fears for his homeland, something he continued to do after his expulsion from the newly formed Soviet Union in 1922. One figure that seized hold of his imagination was Judas Iscariot, an interest he shared with many of his contemporaries engaged in creative and scholarly work. This article will examine

I wish to express my thanks to the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto, where in a faculty seminar I first presented my thoughts on Bulgakov's and Andreev's treatment of Judas. I am very grateful to the two anonymous readers of the article, whose critical suggestions have improved the overall quality of the article.

1. "Silver Age" is a term widely used to circumscribe the creative period of Russian culture from roughly 1880 to 1930. See: Boris Gasparov, Robert Hughes, and Irina Paperno, eds., *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: from the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Judith E. Kalb and J. Alexander Ogden, ed., *Russian Writers of the Silver Age, 1890–1925* (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2004). The term is criticized in Omry Ronen, *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1997).

2. For example, *Filosofiia khoziaistva* (Moscow, 1912), *Svet neverchnyi*, (Moscow, 1917), "Chekhov kak myslitel'," (Kiev, 1905), "Trup krasoty: Po povodu kartin Pikasso," in *Tikhie dumy: Iz statei 1911–1915 gg.,* (Moscow, 1918). Still the most complete survey of Bulgakov's writings is Lev Zander, *Bog i mir* (Paris: YMCA, 1948).

Bulgakov's writings on Judas Iscariot, who interested him both as a historical person and as a symbolic figure for human and national fates.

Beginning with the four Gospel accounts themselves, various attempts have been undertaken to make sense of Judas's actions, and numerous Silver-Age writers took up the challenge. Liudmila Aleksandrovna Iezuitova has described the proliferation of literary works in which Judas was the center of attention. In addition to scholarly and popular studies by Russian theologians and some Russian translations of European authors, she mentions the following original Russian works dealing with Judas: P. P. Popov, *Iuda Iskariot*, 1890; V. V. Rozanov, *Sluchai v derevne*, 1900, and *Trepetnoe derevo*, 1901; N. N. Solovanov, *Iskariot*, 1905; S. S. Kondurushkin, *Siriiskie rasskazy*, 1906; A. S. Roslavleva, *Iuda*, 1907; A. V. Amfiteatrov, *Pritchi skeptika*, 1908; K. M. Fofanov, *Posle golgofy*, 1908; and D. M. Merezhkovskii, *Iisus neizvestnyi*, 1932.[3] She does not include Bulgakov's essay, although it certainly would rank as a "philosophical-artistic investigation," as she terms Merezhkovskii's two-volume composition.[4] Iezuitova devotes special attention to three other authors whose interest in Judas spanned nearly the whole of the Silver Age: Leonid Andreev, Maksimilian Voloshin, and Aleksei Remizov.[5] Voloshin harshly criticized Andreev's portrayal of Judas, yet shared with him the belief that profound but ultimately misguided love for Jesus was the motive force behind Judas's actions.[6] It is an idea that will reappear in Bulgakov's essay.

Bulgakov first turned his attention to Judas in a short piece he wrote about Aleksandr Pushkin's drama "Mozart and Salieri" after a performance at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1915.[7] Bulgakov interprets the drama as a symbolic tragedy about friendship. He makes much of Pushkin's original intention to call the short drama "Envy," commenting that envy stands in some sort of relationship with emulation and "is precisely a sickness of friendship just as Othello's jealousy is a sickness of love."[8] After

3. Liudmila Aleksandrovna Iezuitova, "Tri Iudy v russkoi literature serebrianogo veka: L. Andreev, M. Voloshin, A. Remizov," in *Leonid Andreev i literatura serebrianogo veka: Izbrannye Trudy* (St. Petersburg: Petropolis, 2010), 432. She notes that Judas appears in Aleksandr Blok's 1902 poem "byl vecher pozdnii i bagrovyi . . ."

4. Dmitrii Sergeevich Merezhkovskii, *Iisus neizvestnyi*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Izdatel'skaia komissiia, Palata Akademije Nauka, 1932). He treats Judas Iscariot in vol. 2, pt, 2 (pp. 105–24, 125–33, 177–78, 193). Although contained in a complete retelling of the Gospels, Merezhkovskii's treatment of Judas has much in common with Bulgakov's essay. Like Bulgakov, he draws on scholarly studies of the Gospels, as well as Jewish sources, to construct his account. He too provides an etymology for Judas Iscariot. He is puzzled by Judas's actions but rejects, as does Bulgakov, the simplistic explanation provided by the Gospel of John, and ultimately decides that the actions are inexplicable, and that Judas represents the struggle between good and evil as none other had before. Like Bulgakov, Merezhkovskii draws parallels between Judas and Saul/Paul and raises the possibility of forgiveness for Judas.

5. Iezuitova, "Tri Iudy," 434–47.

6. For a nuanced reading of their respective works, see Marie-Aude Albert, "Judas Iscariote ou les avatars littéraires du douzième apôtre (Leonid Andreev, Maksimilian Voloshin, Paul Claudel)," *Revue des études slaves* 71, no. 2: 359–75.

7. Sergei Bulgakov, "Motsart i Sal'eri," *Tikhie Dumy*, ed. V. V. Sapova (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Respublika, 1996), 48–49; first published in *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 5 (1915).

8. Ibid., 47. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

a brief discussion of the similarities and differences between love and friendship and the spiritual function of natural human friendship to represent the divine and human friendship that Bulgakov believed was made possible by Jesus Christ, he notes:

> Friendship, like love itself, has its perils and temptations and needs ascesis and heroic effort—no spiritual acquisition is given gratuitously. Friendship can naturally degenerate into hatred or enmity—a negative exclusivity, a fire without light. . . . In a similar manner envy arises as a sickness or perversion of friendship—the theme of Pushkin's tragedy.[9]

It is at this point that he turns to a consideration of Judas, whom he regards as the "dark and dread prototype of the treason of friendship."[10] It is interesting to observe that Bulgakov first identifies the treasonous friend only as the "black figure of 'the son of perdition,'" before actually naming him Judas, because in his later essay he is critical of the frequent application of that title to Judas.[11] Judas's behavior perplexes Bulgakov, causing him to wonder how a friend and one of the twelve apostles, having shared the Last Supper with Jesus, could commit such a treacherous act. The traditional explanation that boundless avarice moved Judas to betrayal does not satisfy Bulgakov, but he has no answer himself, being content to describe it as "the dreadful black mystery of a man for whom it were better had he not been born."[12] Roughly fifteen years later, Bulgakov would return to the mystery of Judas Iscariot in his essay.

"Judas Iscariot—Apostle-Betrayer" was written and published initially in two installments in the journal *Put'* in 1930 and 1931. Some ten years later, Bulgakov wrote "Excursus: Son of Perdition," which was not published until 2001, and "Afterword: The Chosen Two: John and Judas, the Beloved and the Son of Perdition," which appeared in print in 1977.[13] Anna Reznichenko, the editor of the three parts of Bulgakov's studies on Judas, considers them a single work; Bulgakov's first biographer Lev Zander, treated "Excursus" and "Afterword" as simple continuations of the original essay, which is self-standing.[14] Since Bulgakov left both supplementary texts unfinished at his death, this article will focus primarily on the published essay.[15]

9. Ibid., 48.

10. Ibid. .

11. Sergii Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," *Trudy o troichnosti*, ed. Anna Reznichenko (Moscow: OGI, 2001), 208. All references are to this edition.

12. Bulgakov, "Motsart i Sal'eri," 49.

13. Sergii Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—apostol-predatel': Chast' pervaia (istoricheskaia)," *Put'*, no. 26 (1930): 3–60; Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—apostol-predatel': Chast' vtoraia (dogmaticheskaia)," *Put'*, no. 27 (1931): 3–42; "Dva izbrannika: Ioann i Iuda, *vozliublennyi* i *syn pogibeli*," *Vestnik Russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniia*, no. 123 (1977, no. 4): 11–31. The entire work is published in *Trudy o troichnosti*, ed. Anna Reznichenko (Moscow: OGI, 2001), 181–320.

14. Zander, *Bog i Mir*, 1:134. A complete summary and discussion, 128–35.

15. Bulgakov's essay has attracted some scholarly attention. It merited brief consideration in Katherina Breckner, "Sergej N. Bulgakov, Trudy o Troichnosti," *Studies in East European Thought* 55, no. 3

The essay is divided into two parts. The first, "Historical Part," offers a detailed discussion of the biblical evidence relating to Judas in which Bulgakov rectifies what he considers the distorted picture of Judas that dominates liturgical and ecclesiastical texts, not to mention popular imagination. Bulgakov dismisses the notion that Judas betrayed Christ simply for the sake of money and emphasizes that Judas remained an apostle right up until his death. The second, "Dogmatic Part," seeks to come to terms with the phenomenon of betrayal from a Sophiological perspective and treats related themes of predestination, freedom, and love. It concludes with an application of the phenomenon of the apostle-betrayer to the Russian people and contemporary events in the Soviet Union. Toward the end of the essay, Bulgakov explains why he wrote about Judas:

> This very dark and dreadful point in human fate irresistibly rivets to itself one's spiritual gaze, this funnel leading into the depths of the inferno—the fate of Judas. "Don't look," says the voice of the sober reason of Job's friends. "Don't look," says the voice of ascetic humility, which saves itself before temptation by lowering its eyes before the convulsions of life. "Don't look," says, finally, the feeling of self-preservation that fences itself off from such a tragedy of the soul, about which Christ himself "was troubled in spirit" (*etarachthe toi pneumati*; John 13:21). And we need not look, while it is possible not to look. But it is too late to turn aside when this dreadful gaping abyss itself looks into us, when the darkness enters our soul and fills up our heart, when it rivets our eyes to itself as a rattle snake bewitches a poor little bird. The tragedy of the apostle-betrayer, his dreadful fate, has stood unyieldingly before us, because it has become our own fate, not personal but national.[16]

The "historical" part of the essay owes much to a scholarly study of Judas penned by the dogmatic theologian Mitrofan Dmitrievich Muretov, published in 1906 and

(2003): 254–57, and Michel Niqueux, "La mitigation des peines de l'enfer dans les légendes de Judas," *Revue des études slaves* 77, no. 4 (2006): 551–52. See also: Nikita Struve, "Judas dans la pensée du père Sergij Bulgakov," *Revue des études slaves* 77, no. 4 (2006): 643–47; Rainer Goldt, "Der Judas-Stoff in der russischen Literatur und Philosophie," in *Das Böse in der russischen Kultur*, ed. Bodo Zelinsky and Jessica Kravets, (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 263–78; I. V. Kalmykova and P. P. Martinkus, "Sud'ba Iudy: Optimisticheskaia tragediia lichnosti i naroda v interpretatsii S. N. Bulgakova," *Prepodovatel' XXI veka* 2 (2015): 247–60 (cyberleninka.ru/article/n/sudba-iudy-optimisticheskaya-tragediya-lichnosti-i-naroda-v-interpretatsii-s-n-bulgakova). I thank an anonymous reviewer for these last two references. A partial translation of the essay into English by Bernard Pares appeared as "Judas or Saul? Thoughts on the Russian People," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 9, no. 27 (March 1931): 525–35, followed shortly by a German translation in Sergius Bulgakov, "Judas Ischarioth, der Verräter-Apostel," *Orient und Occident* 11 (1932): 8–24. More recently, a complete translation has appeared in French: Serge Boulgakov, *Judas Iscarioth, l'apôtre felon*, trans. Michel Niqueux, (Geneva: Éditions des Syrtes, 2015). I have completed an English translation of the essay.

16. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 253–54.

1907.[17] In addition to making repeated reference to Muretov and offering a brief etymological study of Judas's name, Bulgakov peppers this part with copious quotations from the four Gospels, whose differing accounts assist him in undermining the traditional depiction of Judas as an avaricious liar doomed to betray Jesus for a few coins. Although the Gospel accounts compel him to retain Judas's money-loving character, he refuses to believe that avarice was the root cause of the betrayal and focuses instead on Judas's vocation as an apostle intentionally chosen by Jesus, like the other eleven, to share in the work of proclaiming the kingdom of God. Bulgakov intersperses his scholarly discussion with elements one would expect to find in literary works, in this case a historical tale. He treats Judas as a tragic figure and provides a moving psychological portrait. Indeed, an interesting feature of the first part of the essay is its literary quality.

Early in the essay, Bulgakov mentions an old legend that claimed that Judas, like Oedipus, had murdered his father and married his mother.[18] One version of the legend that circulated widely in the early eighteenth century combined the stories of the childhoods of Moses and Oedipus and ended with Judas heading to Jerusalem to find Jesus and seek release from his sin.[19] Remizov, a symbolist writer, made use of this legend for his original play "The Tragedy of Judas, Prince of Iscariot," written in 1908.[20] But Bulgakov was not interested in the legend (or Remizov's play) except as an example of how Christian imagination filled in the empty pages of Judas's early history "with various unattractive details, . . . depictions of Judas in the form of a monster [that] have no religious significance because in fact they blasphemously contradict the fundamental Gospel fact—his election as an apostle."[21] A more promising literary comparison for the essay is Andreev's 1907 short story "Judas Iscariot," with which Bulgakov's text shares some features, including a psychological-theological interest in Judas.[22] Bulgakov and Andreev were both born in Oriol province in 1871, but they attended different schools. They both entered a law faculty for higher education, though again in different places, Moscow and St. Petersburg. Bulgakov contributed an essay, "Zion," to *Shchit: Literaturnyi sbornik*, published by Andreev, Maksim Gorky, and Fyodor Sologub, and may have had personal contact with

17. M. D. Muretov, *Iuda Predatel'*, , vols. 6–7 of *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* (Sergiev Posad, RU: Moskovskaia bogoslovskaia akademiia, 1906–1907). Muretov presented Judas as a tragic figure, a view that Bulgakov will develop in his essay.

18. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 185.

19. "Skazanie ob Iude Predatele," in P. Bezsonov, *Kaleki perekhozhie. Sbornik stikhov i izsledovanie*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1861–1864), 2: 210–14.

20. See Edward Manouelian, "Remizov's Judas: Apocryphal Legend into Symbolist Drama," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 27, no. 1 (1993): 44–66. He offers further bibliographic information about the legend.

21. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 185.

22. "La résolution de l'énigme de la trahison devient ainsi le sujet de ce 'polar' psychologico-théologique dans lequel Andreev nous plonge par un art consommé de suspense" (Albert, "Judas Iscariote," 363).

Andreev.[23] Although he does not refer to Andreev by name, Bulgakov seems to have been familiar with his works. For example, in a passage in *The Comforter* (1936) dealing with the fall of Adam and Eve, Bulgakov draws on an image from Andreev's "The Serpent's Story," written in 1907. Bulgakov comments on the serpent's role: "Without a doubt he charmed the woman by the fatal beauty of his green eyes."[24] It is an unusual artistic detail to find in a complex work on Pneumatology and suggests at least some measure of admiration for Andreev.[25] Bulgakov often cited Russian literature in his philosophical and later theological works without identifying the authors. For example, in his 1917 *Unfading Light*, he quotes from poems by F. I Tiutchev, A. A. Fet, and Pushkin when talking about transcendence and artistic creativity.[26] Before turning to a comparison of the two authors, however, I will examine some of the literary features of "Judas Iscariot—Apostle-Betrayer."

In harmony with the subject matter of his many essays, treatises and books, Bulgakov's prose is frequently ponderous and difficult—although, where appropriate, he will shift stylistic registers in order to convey a lighter, more lyrical impression.[27] This attention to the power of words to elicit different kinds of responses from readers is no mere commonplace of rhetoric, but follows from his serious intellectual engagement with the nature of words themselves. Bulgakov became involved in a theological controversy surrounding *imiaslavie*, or "name-glorifying."[28] The doctrine owes its origins to the starets Ilarion, a former Mount Athos monk who in 1907 published a book outlining his experiences with the Jesus Prayer, *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, and sent copies to Mount Athos. Through his rigorous practice of the hesychast prayer of the heart and focusing on the name Jesus, Ilarion believed that he came

23. I thank an anonymous reader for this information.

24. Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 206. Here is the relevant passage from Andreev's story: "*Look into my eyes.* Isn't it true, how splendid, how majestic their gaze? And firm. And straight. And fixed like steel set against the heart. . . . I look and sway, I look and charm, gather your dread in my green eyes, your loving, weary, submissive anguish" ("Rasskaz zmei o tom, kak u nee poiavilis' iadovitye zuby."http://andreev.org.ru/biblio/Rasskazi/Rasskaz%20zmei.html. Accessed October 24, 2019.). In the story, the serpent attempts to seduce its prey by repeating the phrases "look into my eyes" and "I love you."

25. Another reference brought to my attention occurs in the second dialogue of "Na piru bogov," where Bulgakov refers to "someone in gray," a character from Andreev's 1907 play *Zhizn' cheloveka* (Bulgakov, "Na piru bogov: Pro et contra," in *Intelligentsia i religiia*, (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Olega Abyshko, Izdatel'stvo "Satis," 2010), 253.

26. Bulgakov, *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations*, trans. and ed. Thomas Allan Smith with introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 21 (quoting Tiutchev), 382 and 383 (quoting Fet), and 385 (quoting Pushkin).

27. For example, his reminiscences about mystical experiences of God and Divine Sophia in *Unfading Light*.

28. A thorough examination of the imiaslavie controversy, including Bulgakov's contributions, is provided by Dimitrii Leskin, *Spor ob imeni bozhiem: filosofiia imeni v Rossii v kontekste afonskikh sobitii 1910–kh gg.* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2004). See also Nel Grillaert, "What's in God's Name: Literary Forerunners and Philosophical Allies of the *Imjaslavie* Debate," *Studies in East European Thought* 64 (2012): 163–81.

into direct contact with God. In other words, the divine presence was contained in the name itself. When the local council of the Russian Orthodox Church opened in 1917, name-glorifying was on the agenda for a final resolution. Bulgakov spoke in favor of the doctrine. He later provided an original scholarly answer to the nature of words in his *Philosophy of Name*.[29] In addition, earlier contact with symbolist poets, novelists, and musicians contributed to his conceptualization of words as symbols with noumenal content and his subsequent ordination and immersion in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church kept his interest in the symbolic and religious power of words alive. The opening paragraph of the essay serves to illustrate this point:

> On each day of Holy Week our eye is troubled by a single thread in the gold brocade of the week's heavenly cover, a tormenting dissonance is cut into its celestial harmonies—the image of the apostle-betrayer. It is as if we are taken ill with him in the days of His passion. The church too does not spare our impressionability; it allots so much space and attention to Judas that he seems to be one of the most central figures in the passion mystery, as if overshadowing the other apostles in his opposition to Christ. Judas, "the slave and flatterer," as portrayed in the church's poetry is simply a money-lover, who *sold* his Teacher for money.[30]

What at first glance seems a rather pedestrian attempt at creating a literary image upon closer inspection yields just that multilayered texture of meaning and allusion so dear to the symbolist era. The phrase "troubled by a single thread in the gold brocade of the week's heavenly cover" is at once both a matter-of-fact, concrete image and an ephemeral, diaphanous vision that contextualizes Bulgakov's reflections on Judas and the mystery of human destinies. Bulgakov may have drawn inspiration for the image from a poem by Feodor Tiutchev, "Day and Night," which contains the line "the gold-brocaded cover is cast by the lofty will of the gods."[31] The noun *zlatotkannost'*, translated here as "gold-brocade," is suggestive of a heavy, solid, rich cloth typical of liturgical vestments; at the same time, however, by virtue of being an abstract noun, the word undermines the physicality of the cloth, such that the meaning of the image lies beyond the word itself. Similarly, *pokrov*, which has the simple meaning of "cover" or "shroud," calls to mind the quintessential Russian liturgical solemnity of the Protection of the Mother of God. In other words, what should be a beautiful, comforting religious experience of divine protection and glory becomes disconcerting and threatening through the presence of one tiny feature, the "single thread" that breaks the magic spell of the glittering gold. Bulgakov then shifts imaginative registers from sight to sound to create an image of discord and disharmony: a

29. Bulgakov, *Filosofiia imeni* (Paris: YMCA, 1953; repr. 1997 by KaIR).

30. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 181.

31. "Na mir tainstvennyi dukhov/ nad ètoi bezdnoi bezymiannoi/ pokrov nabroshen zlatotkanyi/ vysokoi voleiu bogov" (F. I. Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pis'ma v shesti tomakh* [Moscow: Izdatel'skii Tsentr Klassika, 2002], 185). In Tiutchev's poem, the image is associated with the daytime.

"tormenting dissonance is cut into its celestial harmonies," into the heavenly harmonies of Holy Week, again bringing us to the liturgical context. The verb *vrezaetsia* can also mean "crashes into," which is an even more graphic representation of the impression that Bulgakov has experienced. Only now do we learn what that mismatched thread and tormenting dissonance are: "the image of the apostle-betrayer." Note that it is not directly Judas, but only his image or form, yet Bulgakov will attempt to correct that image as the essay proceeds.

Another important word is *protivostoianie*. While the word has a commonplace meaning, it is also used in a technical sense in astronomy to describe the relation of a celestial body as observed from earth—in opposition. Thus, in the phrase "as if overshadowing the other apostles in his opposition to Christ," it is not Judas as an antagonistic opponent of Jesus that will interest Bulgakov, but rather Judas as a contrast. Indeed, in Bulgakov's account, Judas does not oppose Jesus at all, not in the way that Peter would. A little later in the essay, the reason for this word choice becomes clear:

> In heaven a crimson star flared up: at one time it blazes up with a tormenting flame, at another it as if goes out dark, sad, ominous, and uneasy. It stood opposite the star of Bethlehem. This strange and sad star begins to burn simultaneously with the star of the King of the Jews, in one constellation with the other eleven stars. Simultaneously with Christ, Judas is born on earth.[32]

The association of a crimson star with Judas may be Bulgakov's own, but the fact the Bulgakov will identify Judas with the Bolsheviks a little later on in his essay makes the image appropriate: the red star of socialism that rose over the newly born Soviet Union no doubt looms in Bulgakov's mind here.

Finally, azure, from the color palette of Sophiology, makes an appearance in the essay. Bulgakov describes the eleven apostles, in contrast to Judas, as those "who carry in their souls the azure of the Sea of Galilee, the beauty of Galilean flowers and the sparkle of the starry sky."[33] Of John the apostle he writes, "the young soul of John in which shines the azure of the waters and skies of Galilee."[34] There are also some lyrical passages in his essay that further point to Bulgakov's sensitivity for literary qualities, and in a certain sense, this is to be expected, because part of the rationale for the essay is to correct what are, to his mind, literary distortions of Judas's life.

In their respective stories about Judas, Andreev and Bulgakov lead the reader inside the heart and mind of Judas as he struggles to understand his relationship with Jesus, his mission as an apostle. Bulgakov and Andreev blame the betrayal of Christ on Judas's fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus's words about the kingdom of God and on Judas's intense jealous love for him.

32. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 185.
33. Ibid., 187.
34. Ibid., 198–99.

Bulgakov's narrative follows the accounts of the four Gospels very closely, such that a retelling of his version of Judas's movement toward the betrayal is unnecessary. Bulgakov harmonizes the narratives found in John's Gospel with those of the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He observes that the Synoptic Gospels generally avoid theological speculation and content themselves with the facts, while John supplements their accounts with theology. John's Gospel differs significantly from the Synoptics in his manner of describing Judas as one who has always been a betrayer destined to hand Jesus over to death for a price. This unconcealed bias against Judas clearly disturbs Bulgakov, who even notes that, in John's Gospel, "there is not a single unreproachful word about Judas."[35] Bulgakov presents Judas as a revolutionary obsessed with the idea of liberation for his people and the establishment of an earthly Kingdom of God in Israel, which he mistakenly thought—as did the other apostles—Jesus had come to establish. He is driven by a love for Jesus that is fired by jealousy, and it is ultimately out of that jealous love that Judas takes events into his own hands, delivering Jesus over to death in order to force him finally to act. When Judas realizes his mistake, he repents and then hangs himself.

Part 1 of "Judas Iscariot—Apostle-Betrayer" ends with a haunting passage and a question that will find an answer at the end of part 2. Bulgakov makes a great deal of the remorse that Judas demonstrated once he realized that he had handed over an innocent man to a terrible death.[36] The throwing of the thirty silver pieces back into the temple is for Bulgakov the proof of the sincerity of Judas' repentance. But its nonacceptance by the religious authorities drives Judas to desperate measures, and his inner torment only intensifies. Bulgakov writes that Judas condemns himself to death, and continues:

> Let them who did not betray the Teacher remain alive without Him, Judas will not part with Him, although it be in death. And if in the morning the Teacher mounts onto the cross and at the waning of the day breathes out his spirit, then he, Judas, will descend into Sheol even before Him. There he will wait for a meeting with Him and for the final judgment upon himself,[37] the apostle-betrayer, not having come to know Him with his love, but having brought it through the gates of Hell. And he cast the silver coins into the temple, went out and hanged himself. . . . The crimson star, standing opposite the star of Bethlehem, having grown dark, went out. Did Judas meet the Teacher in Sheol? Did his beclouded soul light up with the light of Resurrection?[38]

35. Ibid., 199.

36. See Struve, "Judas dans la pensée de Bulgakov," 645.

37. See Origen's comment: "He intended to go ahead of his doomed Master in death and to meet him with his bared soul, so that by confessing and praying he might deserve mercy" (*Der Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Matthäus*, ed. trans. Hermann J. Vogt, Dritter Teil [Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1993], 313).

38. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 231–32. Compare this with Merezhkovskii's assessment of Judas: "He began well, he ended poorly; but at the end as at the beginning he was all the

It is a question that Andreev also wrestled with in his short story, ultimately offering a more conventional answer. Andreev's narrative follows the Gospel accounts more loosely.[39] Where Bulgakov drew heavily on the scholarly work of Muretov and his own religious speculations, Andreev cast his net further out and found inspiration not only in academic studies but also in popular theological works. As Iezuitova has shown, Andreev made use of a catechetical work by Father Gr. Lavrent'ev.[40] He accepts the popular view that Judas was by nature a dishonest and untrustworthy man, consumed by avarice and jealousy. Even his physical appearance is repulsive, reflecting his unsavory inner makeup. Andreev is particularly careful to describe Judas' head:[41]

> His short red hair did not hide the strange and unusual form of his skull: as if split from the back of the head by a double blow of a sword and then reassembled, it was clearly divided into four parts and inspired mistrust, even alarm: behind such a skull there cannot be peace and harmony; behind such a skull is always heard the noise of bloody and pitiless battles. So too was Judas' face doubled: one side of it, with a black, keenly observing eye, was alive, active, readily gathered together into numerous crooked wrinkles. On the other side, there were no wrinkles, and it was dead-smooth, flat and stiff; and although in size it was equal to the first, it seemed enormous because of the wide open blind eye.[42]

The face split in two physically represents Judas's split psyche and is just one of the doublets that Andreev employs to characterize the central figure of the story.[43] Judas seems to be the negative double of Jesus throughout the story. In Andreev's account, Judas joined Jesus and the other apostles by his own choice. Against the

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same one of the twelve. He came to Jesus, he departed from him, and he came back; he loved Him, hated him, and loved him again. And at the dreadful end of Judas there all the same is the indelible sign of apostolic glory shining with a dark lustre" (*Iisus neizvestnyi* 2:123).

39. All references are to Leonid Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," in *Povesti i rasskazy v dvukh tomakh: Tom vtoroi 1907–1919 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo «Khudozhestvennaia literatura», 1971), 3–61. Andreev's short story has attracted some interest. In addition to Iezuitova's work, see: Serge Rolet, "Qui est le Judas de Leonid Andreev?," *Revue des etudes slaves* 77, no. 4 (2006): 599–610; Stephen C. Hutchings, "Semantic Contagion, Internalisation and Collapse of Difference in the Short Stories of Leonid Andreyev," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, January 1992, 75–99; Stephen Hutchings, "Mythic Consciousness, Cultural Shifts, and the Prose of Leonid Andreev," *The Modern Language Review* 85, no. 1 (1990): 107–23.

40. Gr. Lavrent'ev, *Novyi Zavet v kartinkakh, fotolitografirovannykh s risunkov Iu. Shnora* (St. Petersburg, 1862). Iezuitova points out that Andreev was inspired by four illustrations in particular: the Foot-Washing (no. 46), the Last Supper (no. 47), the Betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas (no. 49), and the death of Judas (no. 54); see Iezuitova, "Tri Iudy," 440–47.

41. He also painted Judas. See *Photographs by a Russian Writer Leonid Andreyev*, ed. Richard Davies (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), pl. 4.

42. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 5.

43. Another interesting doublet is explored in Natalia Chuikina, "Kamen' i os'minog: dvoistvennaia kharakteristika Iudy Iskariota u Leonida Andreeva (priem sravneniia)," *Acta humanitarica universitatis Saulensis* 6 (2008): 261–69.

objections of the eleven, Jesus accepted him and even brought him into his inner circle, entrusting him with the group's money and other practical details. Their objections rested on Judas's reputation as an inveterate liar, evidence of which will occur throughout the story. At the same time, Judas is more intelligent and worldly wise than the rest, a characteristic that Bulgakov also adopts, noting the bucolic innocence of the eleven in contrast to Judas's urban sophistication. For Andreev, Judas is a loner; he had been married but abandoned his wife, and had no friends. He gradually warmed to the apostle Thomas, but cannot help berating Thomas's obtuseness. John, whom Andreev characterizes as a pure loving soul, takes an immediate and strong dislike to Judas. As the story unfolds, Judas attempts to win Jesus's affection, and he enjoys a small measure of success, but there is a dramatic turn of events about a third of the way through the narrative, after which Jesus no longer will have anything to do with him. This causes Judas considerable anguish as he tries to understand why Jesus does not love him. At one point, Judas thinks that the parable of the barren fig tree was directed at him and he predicts Jesus's and his own death; he then steals some money from the common purse and visits the high priests to negotiate a price for Jesus's life.[44] A curious feature of the story is that Jesus is a physically weak individual, always tired; Judas too is unhealthy, complaining of chest pains and vertigo.[45] Throughout the story, Andreev presents Judas as a man torn between polar opposites of love and hatred. His psychological instability reaches a boiling point at the Last Supper when he raves madly; he begs Jesus to prevent him from carrying out his plan, but to no avail. After confessing his love for him, he then departs.[46] The actual scene of the betrayal is masterfully drawn:

> "Rejoice, rabbi!" he said loudly, cloaking the strange and threatening meaning in words of customary greeting. But Jesus was silent, and the disciples looked at the betrayer with horror, not understanding how the soul of a man could find room for so much evil in itself. . . . Stretched into a hundred loudly ringing and sobbing strings, he quickly rushed toward Jesus and tenderly kissed his cold cheek. So quietly, so tenderly, with such tormenting love and anguish that, if Jesus had been a blossom on a thin little stem, he would not have shaken him with this kiss and he would not have let the pearly dew fall from its pure petals. "Judas," said Jesus, and with the lightning-flash of his look he lit up that monstrous heap of shadows standing on guard that was the soul of Iscariot—but he could not penetrate into its bottomless depth—"Judas! Are you betraying the son of man with a kiss?" And he saw how that whole monstrous chaos shuddered and started to move. Judas of Kerioth stood unspeaking and severe as death in his proud grandeur, but inside him everything groaned, thundered, howled with a thousand turbulent and fiery

44. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 21. On the fig tree, see L. A. Iezuitova, "Apostol Iuda Iskariot Leonida Andreeva i evangel'skaia besplodnaia smokovnitsa," in *Leonid Andreev*, 399–430.

45. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 5.

46. Ibid., 39–40.

> voices: "Yes! We betray you with a kiss. With the kiss of love we betray you to insult, torture and death! With the voice of love we call together the executioners out of their dark burrows and set up the cross—and high above the darkness of the earth we lovingly raise crucified love on the cross.[47]

Bulgakov too places considerable emphasis on the kiss as a sign of a love gone wrong:

> With a treacherous kiss for the sake of thirty silver coins, he hands the Teacher over to enemies. Mothers will tell this to their children, and the children's heart will grow cold before this dread name—Judas the betrayer. Every betrayal and base treachery will be branded with his name. But let them see not only Judas's deed; let them understand his love that loved more than his own self. Only it gives strength to exceed oneself, having trampled everything that was dear and holy, and to disgrace oneself in the name of love and the Beloved.[48]

Bulgakov notes that, whereas the other disciples will seek and receive forgiveness because their betrayals were the product of human weakness, Judas betrayed love itself, and thus can only pass judgment on himself.[49]

The next scene in Andreev's story depicts how Judas watches Jesus's arrest and torture by the Roman soldiers and abuse by the crowds. The reader watches Judas kiss Pilate's freshly washed hands after he sentenced Jesus to crucifixion.[50] Judas follows Jesus carrying the cross and runs up to him to say: "I'll be with you. I'll be with you. There. Do you understand? There."[51] Judas then rushes to Annas and Caiaphas to tell them that they have condemned an innocent man to death, but they are uninterested. Unlike the similar scene in Bulgakov's account,[52] Andreev does not present this as an act of remorse; rather, it is a sick moment of triumph for Judas who proudly declares that he has tricked them all, that he finally has his revenge.[53]

A final dramatic scene follows when Judas enters the upper room where the apostles are hiding after Jesus's death. Judas berates them for their cowardice and

47. Ibid., 42–43.

48. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 219–20. Bulgakov examines the betrayal scene and the significance of the kiss in detail on 219–28.

49. Ibid., 231–32.

50. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 50. Judas coils around Pilate's legs like a serpent.

51. Ibid., 51.

52. "He handed over to torture and death the Teacher whom he did not stop loving even in the betrayal itself. And now he sees Him among his tormentors and recognizes that it is he, Judas, who is guilty of this. He only now begins to remember all of Jesus's loving grief over him at the Mystical Supper, and all the words by which He gently appealed to his heart. . . . That mutinous self-will with which he wanted to correct the path of the Teacher . . . has now melted in him, has been exchanged for intolerable pangs of conscience, hell on earth. That burning zeal which clouded his love for Jesus and moved him to betrayal was felt as a black darkness in his soul. But in it there was no longer left either self-will or self-love. Judas *repented*." (Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 227–28).

53. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 56.

wonders what kind of love they actually had for their master.[54] Then, climbing the hill overlooking Jerusalem where he had earlier picked out the tree from which he would hang himself, and nearly out of breath, Judas mumbles:

> Are you listening, Jesus? Now do you understand me? I am coming to you. Welcome me affectionately, I am tired. I am so very tired. Then I will be together with you, and having embraced like brothers we will return to earth. Okay? . . . But, maybe there too you will get angry at Judas of Kerioth. Maybe you won't understand. Maybe you will send me to hell. Well, so what! I will go to hell! And in the fire of your hell I will forge iron and tear apart your heaven. Okay? Then will you believe me? Then will you come back to earth with me, Jesus?[55]

A few lines later, just before he leaps to trigger the noose, he says, "welcome me affectionately, Jesus, I am very tired."[56]

In very many ways, Andreev's psychological portrait of Judas is echoed in the later Bulgakov account, but there are two striking differences. The first is that, for Bulgakov, Judas is a tragic figure. His earlier reflections on the tragedy of a love betrayed in his short piece "Mozart and Salieri" are fully developed here; Judas has a certain nobility in Bulgakov's telling. There is nothing tragic or noble about Judas in Andreev's story. He does not fight against his fate; he seems to be a possessed man, invaded by a malevolent spirit against which he occasionally battles but generally simply accepts passively. The second concerns Judas's identity. For Andreev, Judas was not called to be an apostle, but was merely accepted into the group by Jesus, and only grudgingly by the other eleven.[57] He is simply and always the betrayer. Andreev makes this point forcefully at the end of his story:

> News of the Betrayer's death spread no more slowly or quietly than time itself, but just as there is no end to time, so there is no end to the stories about Judas's betrayal and his dreadful death. And everyone—good and evil—equally will hand over to damnation his disgraceful memory; and among all peoples which have ever been or are, he will remain alone in his cruel fate—Judas of Kerioth, Betrayer.[58]

"Betrayer" is the last word in the story. Bulgakov insists, on the contrary, that Judas is an apostle, called by Jesus to that destiny, which he accepted freely; but he is a failed apostle. The whole thrust of part 1 of the essay has been to demonstrate that fact and to overturn ancient and recent depictions of Judas that see him only as a

54. Ibid., 57–59. See Albert, "Judas Iscariote," 364–67, for a compelling commentary on the betrayal and Judas's berating the apostles.

55. Andreev, "Iuda Iskariot," 60–61.

56. Ibid., 61.

57. Ibid., 3–4.

58. Ibid., 61.

liar and thief powered by avarice, as does the church's liturgical tradition, or that reduce him to sheer wickedness, as do the various legends and works of literature, including Andreev's.

Part 2, the dogmatic section of Bulgakov's essay, begins with a consideration of predestination and divine providence. That this occupies Bulgakov's thoughts stems from the repeated remark in John's Gospel that Jesus knew from the very beginning who would betray him. After briefly reviewing the inadequacies of received teaching about providence, which he feels has been condensed into the single issue of predestination, Bulgakov turns to Sophiology as a way to understand how Judas could become so closely connected with Jesus and still commit the act for which he is remembered. He rehearses his views on the Sophianicity of the world, panentheism, the creation of human beings in the image of God, and their relative but real freedom, sketching an understanding of providence before moving on briefly to Schopenhauer and Fichte read through a Sophianic lens.[59] He continued to refine the answer that he proposed here by including in the "Excursus" and "Afterword" a consideration of the devil's role in salvation and the appropriateness of apocatastasis and universalism, themes that recur in the larger dogmatic works such as *The Lamb of God* and *The Bride of the Lamb*.[60]

Bulgakov's discussion of personhood, personal destiny, and providence in relation to Judas is conditioned by his decades-long consideration of Sophia, divine and creaturely. With respect to the human person, two features are of particular importance for Bulgakov: the fact of our being created in the image of God, the chief characteristic of which is freedom; and the Sophian quality of human existence, whose chief characteristic is the process or task of realizing creaturely givenness.[61] As creatures, humans have their being as both a given and a task; that is, they are Sophian. Though they enjoy true or real being and autonomy as creatures, they do not cause their own existence; but at the same time, they are involved in their coming to be. This idea appears already in Bulgakov's *Philosophy of Name*, where he states that human beings consciously will their own birth, even though it depends on the prior action of parents, and ultimately, of God:

59. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 239–46.

60. Bulgakov's understanding of providence requires a fuller exploration than can be undertaken in the present article.

61. "The human is created by God for God, for participation in Divine life, but he is created in himself and for himself. The freedom of creation in its self-being is indestructible for God. From this originates the world's and history's process—of the becoming of the world by itself, its full Sophianization. . . . For all its self-being and freedom, a general divine determinability is proper to the world as an inner law and ontological norm of its being, and this is the *Sophianicity of the world.* It is autochthonic but not autonomous, for it is the creation. . . . Creation and in it the human being *are given* to themselves, and of course are set as a task. . . . Creaturely and human freedom is not absolute, its actuality refers only to the form of the realization of the givenness, while the path and the limits are predetermined by this givenness, and this predeterminability of creation is determined by the 'God will be all in all.' . . . Freedom and creativity for him are determined by Sophianicity. He freely effectuates or does not effectuate his reality. Freedom is a *modus of givenness*, but not a self-creative act" (Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 242–43).

> One can and must postulate that individuals are not born by chance in one or another situation with these or other features of a spiritual organization, the way a muffled feeling of causality, of responsibility for its character speaks about this. This self-determination and self-willing are found beyond the threshold of empirical being, are cognized only as anamnesis, as remembrance about what was when we were not, and what we were when we still were not.[62]

Humans are not passive bystanders in their creation, and this is because persons are relational: no human being possesses the fullness of her or his personhood in themselves, but only in relation with others, and in Bulgakov's view, especially in relation with God, who called them into being. So, once the essentially blank or unqualified creature is called into being by the creator God, that creature actively becomes human by freely responding to and accepting in its own way what God has given it as its foundation and as its task. He restates this more forcefully in the essay under consideration:

> We together with God pronounce "I" about ourselves at our creation and by this we say *yes* in response to His creative "let there be" (*fiat*). But this is not enough. The creature not only says its free *yes* to the creative call of God to being, but it speaks in response to concrete and definite individual recognition. God does not make unqualified I's that are only numerically differentiated among themselves, but definite personalities. And divine creation is accomplished in the standing of an I with its freedom before its own self in the divine prototype and in the acceptance by it of this latter. The form of this acceptance introduces a new qualification into the I, which is connected no longer only with the character of the prototype, but also with its reception, with its personal self-formation. Human beings as creaturely entities, originating from nothing, cannot become adequate to their idea already in their very origination (although they cannot be completely foreign to it). They can in different ways accept it and make it their own, and in this different acceptance new possibilities of differences in individual qualification, new modalities, arise.[63]

In *The Lamb of God*, Bulgakov returns to this idea: "Even though the creaturely I is posited by God, nevertheless in this creation it is co-posited by itself as well. Strictly speaking, the creative act creates only the *possibility* of self-positing, which is actualized by I itself, saying its 'yes.'"[64] Judas serves as an exemplary case for the self-positing creature who is given an ideal determination as an apostle that he freely accepts and then must realize in the world. Because humans, like all of creation, are created

62. Bulgakov, *Filosofiia imeni*, 203–4.

63. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 246–47.

64. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 143. Although *The Lamb of God* appeared in print in 1933, thus after "Judas Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," it expresses ideas Bulgakov was working through in the shorter essay.

out of nothing—*creatio ex nihilo*—they have the possibility of being seduced back into nothingness, away from their intended goal. The fall and original sin have now vitiated the divine foundation of human life, creaturely Sophia, such that the pull of nothingness is often irresistible (but not always, since there are in Bulgakov's view certain human beings who have overcome the tendency to sin through their own graced effort). In his essay, Bulgakov calls the actual postlapsarian human condition a sickness or disease. All human beings have the disease, but not all succumb mortally to its power. Sin in all its various manifestations is the evidence of the sickness that has infected humans. Peter's denial, the apostles' competition for first place in the kingdom, and their cowardly abandonment of Jesus after his arrest are manifestations of the disease that afflicted the apostleship of Jesus's chosen twelve, among whom is Judas.[65]

> God set alight in the spiritual heaven innumerable lights and constellations of spirits and souls, and among their number there also began to burn the star of Judas, which must complete its own path. And as God in His eternity gave being to the supreme archangel, who became the fallen daystar, and God did not abrogate this His creation, similarly in His eternity the Lord created the soul of Judas, in which He placed the powers and vocation of the apostleship. But in the manner of accepting its vocation, the soul of Judas was so determined in its self-positing that his tragic lot, the failure of apostleship, became unavoidable. However, God did not deprive Judas of his being or his vocation. Thus, his ministry and his place near Christ was not taken away from Judas, although for the same reason Judas is doomed to the sickness of his apostleship, which led him to the betrayal of Christ.[66]

In other words, Judas accepted his task of becoming an apostle and, thus, realized his unique individuality, but the way he accepted his task led him to betray Christ.

Bulgakov offers a comparison of Judas with Saul/Paul in an attempt to clarify his thought on Judas's failure. Bulgakov believes that Saul persecuted Christ and his church out of an "unrecognized" and "distorted" love:

> What is even more paradoxical here is that without Saul's fiery zeal there would have been no apostleship of Paul. But sickness in Paul preceded his convalescence; the persecutor became the apostle. The dreadful fate of Judas is that his sickness flowed in the reverse direction and made him into a betrayer from an apostle.[67]

Judas and Saul shared the same calling, to be apostles of Christ, but they also shared the common human sickness that complicates its realization. Saul managed to discover the truth about his fiery zeal and redirect it to its intended purpose in his

65. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 251.
66. Ibid., 250–51.
67. Ibid., 252.

conversion on the road to Damascus. Judas, who accepted his calling as an apostle, let his fiery zeal for Christ lead him in the opposite direction. He became an enemy of Christ in his desire to follow him in utter sincerity. Nevertheless, something good remained in Judas: though fallen, his apostleship remained his own, and based on its spiritual power—though again in a characteristically misdirected manner—he sought to prove how fully he would identify with Christ, hence his decision to kill himself after repenting. Bulgakov reproaches him severely for this act, interpreting it as the usurpation of divine judgment that only Christ can pronounce. However, he holds out hope for Judas:

> But if one sees here a tragedy of apostleship, a greater love for Christ, Christomachy in the name of Christ's truth, as it was understood by him in his blindness, then this ominous path is titanic—that is, simultaneously heroic and demonic. Is there, can there be theomachy as the way of religious development for certain natures? Can God love such theomachy and forgive such Christomachy? That is the question. And there can be only one answer to it: yes, He can.[68]

Here is where Bulgakov's understanding of providence becomes significant.[69] Bulgakov is convinced that the creaturely world, including human beings, will necessarily succeed in accomplishing its task of becoming Sophia, of attaining the fullness of being. It is predetermined to do so because it is Sophian. And yet, the creature is free in its response to its task.

> God in His providential government of the world responds with His salvific action to all the questions of the world's being, questions represented by every act of creaturely freedom. Creaturely freedom is as real as the world, for this freedom is the image of the world's becoming, it is established by God as the condition for the realization of the world's Sophianicity.[70]

Regarding Judas, Bulgakov has argued that God allowed him to accept his apostleship freely, to betray Christ out of intense love for him, and to be restored and

68. Ibid., 262.

69. "As the object of God's providence, the world is not only a thing or object in the hands of God—it has its own being, given to it by God at its creation, its own nature, its own life. . . . The world is in God, although it is not God, and the relationship of God to the world in God's providence is determined not as a one-sided operation of God on the world that lies outside Him and is foreign to Him, but as a mutual operation of the Creator with the creation" (Bulgakov "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 239). "In the appearance of Judas we detect first of all a certain preestablishment. It is foretold in the prophecies. According to the Gospel of John, when Christ summons him to be an apostle and knows His betrayer in him from the beginning, He also follows this preestablishment, bound by it, as it were. The appearance of Judas near Christ proves to be unavoidable for God Himself, who only turns this betrayal of Christ, which He allowed, into a means for the fulfillment of the divine concern for our salvation" (ibid., 250).

70. Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 161.

healed in a death freely chosen, realizing the task given to him at the moment of his entry into historical existence:

> The Providence of God, without destroying the ontological givenness of the human being, put him in such a place in which he too proved to be an instrument for the glorification of Christ, whom he would betray. In this is displayed the wise inerrancy of divine providence, which leads the world, created in freedom, nevertheless towards its true end.[71]

Holding out hope of forgiveness for Judas—a theologically risky stance—is partially motivated by Bulgakov's hope for his homeland. As mentioned earlier, Bulgakov applies Judas's betrayal of Christ to the recent historical developments in Russia that saw it transformed into an officially atheistic state in which religions were persecuted, particularly Orthodoxy. Bulgakov writes of Russia's apostolic stature as a Christian nation imbued with the Johannine version of Christianity, but one that has failed to realize its vocation. It has turned massively against God in its adoption of Leninism and Stalinism, and by persecuting the church, it is repeating the betrayal of Christ perpetrated by Judas. Bulgakov is not entirely surprised by this apostasy:

> If one were to speak the truth, what is being exposed is that intolerable state in which the nation found itself in the days of Great Russia. It proved to be completely uneducated in church ways and unenlightened in consciousness, in will, in day-to-day life. This is staggeringly clear if one compares the state of our nation with Western Christian nations, the measure of their average Christian education and their culture with Russian barbarity.[72]

Stinging words for the homeland he loved! The Bolsheviks, like Judas before them, are at least motivated by a sincere but misguided love of truth and a burning zeal to realize the Kingdom of God, which they have irrationally stripped of its religious, theological content. Thousands have been seduced by the Bolshevik equivalent of the thirty silver coins of Judas—ration cards, kolkhozes, and the promise of material sufficiency. But just as he refused to accept that Judas was only a betrayer and instead insisted on his enduring status as an apostle, so too Bulgakov holds tenaciously onto the apostolic vocation of his homeland. As Sophiology teaches him, the nation must make good on its givenness and achieve its task in its own created freedom. Russia will not perish, but its antireligious convulsions, like Judas's temptation, will lead, he hopes, to a moment of truth: "The hour of insight must arrive, the hour of repentance of the nation that fell into Judas's temptation, when it will

71. Bulgakov "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 252.
72. Ibid., 256–57.

return to Paul's path with new faith, with new love, with new knowledge of Christ whom it loved even when it crucified him, and for whom it thirsted even when it persecuted him."[73] At the end of part 1, Bulgakov expressed his belief that Judas's death was not the final word about his life. He entered death in order to await judgment. Part 2 ends in a similar way:

> What is happening now in Russia? The betrayal of Judas, the torture of Christ, his death on the cross. But Christ is alive in his humanity, for He trampled down death by death. And the deeper the death, the more pitch dark the night, the more hopeless the death, the brighter the light will light up in it. One must die the full power and depth of death, taste death, in order that by it, in it and from it the light of resurrection will shine. The betrayal of Judas made it so that Christ was sacrificed on the cross, as a new Passover on the paschal day. And the Christ-killing in hearts and souls in Russia hides the resurrection of Christ. It is now taking place, Christ is rising in Russia.[74]

This at least suggests that Judas too will rise with Christ, forgiven.[75]

In the posthumously published "Afterword," Bulgakov is more forthright in his hope for Judas. Returning once again to the betraying kiss, Bulgakov ponders its meaning and refers to it as "the kiss of the sacrificial offering of love, of the greatest and most complete sacrifice that could ever be offered by a human being."[76] In that same meditation, Bulgakov contrasts the fates of Mary and John with that of Judas. From the cross, Jesus identifies his mother and the beloved disciple as the epitome of the supreme sacrifice of love among the living; however, like the other disciples, they are left behind by Jesus as he enters the realm of death. Judas, whose traitorous kiss sacrificed love itself, precedes them all as the first to meet Jesus after death:

> After this everything was over for Judas in the world: Christ went to his passion and death on the cross, and this sacrificial betrayal "was accomplished" in the fullness of universal completions. . . . But on the other side of the grave Judas, the repenting "betrayer" who "went out and hanged himself," met Christ even before the repentant thief. Here we enter the realm of mystery, absolute for us. However, if it is a mystery, it is not so in its essence but only in the manner of its accomplishment. In essence, it is clear that it is not a matter of perdition and eternal rejection, but of the triumph of manifest love.[77]

73. Ibid., 265.

74. Ibid., 266.

75. On the possibility of "salvation" for Judas in the afterlife, see Michel Niqueux, "La mitigation des peines de l'enfer dans les légendes de Judas," *Revue des études slaves*, no. 4 (2006): 541–53, esp. 551–52 (on Bulgakov).

76. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 319.

77. Ibid.

It is indeed, as has been observed, the most daring assertion of hope for Judas's redemption imaginable for a Christian theologian.[78] Bulgakov was aware that Judas stands as a limit question for the human mind, and his theological reflections went as far as possible in answering it. His essay, however, on the formal level, suggests another approach, that of art. This article has drawn attention to some of the literary features of the essay that allowed Bulgakov to venture off the narrower academic path of traditional theology in unravelling the enigma of Judas. In the "Afterword," he explicitly states that "one can know about Judas only by the power of art, of great and lofty art to which the secrets of the spirit and the sacred language of symbols are accessible."[79] Bulgakov proposed the creation of a *misteriia* about Judas combining three forms of art: painting in triptych form, sculpture consisting of three groups, and music comprising three themes. The first would deal with his election as an apostle of Christ, the second, the Last Supper exchange between Judas and Jesus, and the third, the world beyond the grave.[80] He may be calling for the composition of a work analogous to a medieval Western liturgical drama or mystery play. In that his essay focuses on these very themes, Bulgakov here acknowledges the inadequacy of his words to penetrate the unsolvable mystery of Judas. At the same time, his essay provokes a reconsideration of the Judas moment, making the traditional simplistic dismissal of his action and person impossible. The complexity of Sophiology neatly matches the complexity of the human being.

As so often throughout his career, Bulgakov took a hard look at received opinion and Orthodox doctrine and rethought it through the lens of Sophiology. His study of Judas, the Apostle-Betrayer, asks its readers to look at Judas not as a despicable, vile miscreant, but as a warning for all humanity, because in his view, every human being has his or her own task to realize using the Sophianic foundation on which its very being rests. Human freedom is real, but its exercise can lead to tragic failure in this life. What happens after death is unknowable for us, but Bulgakov offers a reasoned hope that no human being will be ultimately lost, not even Judas, the Apostle-Betrayer.

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78. Niqueux, "Mitigations des peines," 551; Struve, "Judas dans la pensée de Bulgakov," 647.
79. Bulgakov, "Iuda Iskariot—Apostol-Predatel'," 298.
80. Ibid., 299–300.