

The Protestant Ethic in the Russian Context: Peter Struve and Sergey Bulgakov Read Max Weber (1907–1909)*

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The paper focuses on two Russian interpretations of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the first written by Peter Struve, whose reaction on Weber's research was among the first in Russia, and the second by Sergey Bulgakov, who attempted a reinterpretation of Weber's concepts with their subsequent application to the conditions of Imperial Russia. It is widely known that Max Weber had a number of well-educated readers in Russia. The first was Bogdan Kistiakowsky who was directly connected with Weber's academic circle through his teacher, the prominent German jurist Georg Jellinek. Yet, this paper addresses the reflections of other intellectuals who belonged to the generation born in 1870s, including Peter Struve and Sergei Bulgakov and their younger fellows such as Semyon Frank who joined this intellectual circle through his older friend and supporter, Peter Struve. Despite the fact that Weber's *The Protestant Ethic* did not cause intense intellectual debates in Russia during 1906–1910, Struve and Bulgakov were those who responded to the main arguments, providing two views on this classic book. Peter Struve proceeds from the premise of the loss by modern Christianity (both Western and Eastern) of an effective, real faith in the Resurrection, and the consequent impossibility of true religious community. As a result, Christianity turns out to be an asceticism exercised outside this world. Bulgakov's analysis interprets the Weberian concept as a general model of the "deep idealistic enthusiasm" influence on economic life, and translates this reasoning into a pragmatic plane, that is, into the possibility of economic "pedagogics" and the rise of a "spirit" of a new economy as an alternative to capitalism.

Keywords: Max Weber, the New Middle Ages, sociology of religion, secularization, ethics of economy

Compared with other outstanding figures of the German academy, Max Weber attracted relatively little attention from the Russian public at the beginning of the 20th century. Neither of the two articles by Weber that were published in the German version of jour-

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Исследование выполнено в рамках гранта РФФ (№ 18-18-00442) «Механизмы смыслообразования и текстуализации в социальных нарративных и перформативных дискурсах и практиках» и поддержано из средств субсидии, выделенной на реализацию Программы повышения конкурентоспособности БФУ им. И. Канта.

nal *Logos* appeared in its Russian edition.¹ On one hand, this situation can easily be explained by the circumstances of that era, especially the forthcoming World War. However, Weber's name was seldomly mentioned in Russian discussions during the previous years as well since the most important figures of German social science for the Russian public at that time were Sombart, Simmel, Brentano, and Gumpłowicz. Their texts were not just discussed, but actively translated, as was the case with the Russian edition of Sombart's *Modern Capitalism* which was twice translated and published with detailed prefaces. In part, Weber's poor representation in Russian publications could be explained by the deep immersion of his texts in the dense context of German theoretical debates since this circumstance made their reading and translation a difficult task. The huge interest in Weber would arise after his death as a reflection of the German interest in Weber's works, and following a series of Russian translations of his works in the 1920s.² Weber was known in late 1800s Russia to only a limited circle of intellectuals who were directly or quite closely associated with German intellectual life.

The immediate reaction to *The Protestant Ethic* (1904) within the Russian context was connected with the details of the domestic intellectual situation of the day and the issues that were then at the center of discussion. It has already been mentioned that we are talking about a rather small group of intellectuals, namely Peter Struve and Sergei Bulgakov, in whose texts both hidden and obvious responses to the Max Weber text in the first years after its publication can be found.

Both Struve and Bulgakov were among the most prominent and influential Russian intellectuals of the 1900s and the 1910s, especially Peter Struve (1870–1944). In the 1890s, Struve was among the founding fathers of Russian social democracy. He played a decisive role in the formation of a broad liberal political consensus in the early 1900s, and he sought to form a national-liberal policy in Russia in the second half of the 1900s. At the same time his importance, as well as that of Bulgakov who had been Struve's colleague in much of his undertakings, was not so much in the role of a political leader (here both Struve and Bulgakov were unsuccessful in real terms) as in the formation of an intellectual agenda, including the introduction of new subjects and ideas from Western European debates due to his active journalistic and publishing activities. It should be mentioned that for many years, from 1906 to 1918, Struve was the editor-in-chief for one of the most influential “thick” literary journals called *Russian Thought* (*Russkaya mysl'*). He also organized the publication of a number of prominent collections of intellectual essays, from *Problems of Idealism* (*Problemy Idealizma*, 1902) to *Out of the Depths* (*Iz glubiny*, 1918). Each of these collections became an outstanding “landmark” in Russian intellectual history, and significantly modified its public agenda.

If the intellectual evolution of both Struve and Bulgakov could be defined as a progress from Marxism to Idealism (and, later on, to the church; see the title of the work by

1. “Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology” (1913, no 3), and “The Meaning of ‘Ethical Neutrality’ in Sociology and Economics” (1917–1918, no 7).

2. See the works by mediaevalists Evgeny Kosminsky and Alexander Neusykhin, especially Neusykhin's translation of Weber's *The City*).

Kolerov, 2017), then their original interest of the problem of capitalism's formation and the role of religion in this process seems self-evident in this respect. It should be noted though, that their own progress in the above-mentioned direction was not a unified process; moreover, oppositions inherent in it were lined up not in accordance with the logic of the contradictions drawn later by historians of this line of thought.

There were several key texts that could be regarded as landmarks and, at the same time, as individual variants of this progress in the eyes of its participants as well as their contemporaries. First of all, it is a Preface written by Struve to Nikolay Berdyaev's book *Subjectivism and Individualism in Social Philosophy* (*Sub'ektivizm i individualizm v obshchestvennoj filosofii*), first published in 1901. Berdyaev's own book is deeply immersed in previous disputes with the popular ideology of "narodniks," and is a kind of continuation of Struve's *Critical Notes on the Economic Development of Russia* (1894), which ends with a scandalous call "to recognize our low level of civilization and go to the training for capitalism" (Struve, 1894: 288). In a comprehensive preface, which could easily have been published as an independent brochure, Struve formulates the general outline of his own philosophy of "idealism" which, he thinks, forms a more solid and thus better foundation for social ideals and the social movement more effectively than Marxism (1999a).

It is this striving that will find its form in the next two prominent publications. The first, in the collection called *Problems of Idealism* ("Problemy idealizma," 1902), will bring two groups of authors, the representatives of the academic community seeking opportunities and foundations for a new social movement, and recently-Marxist young intellectuals seeking to find a new theoretical base for their public commitments together (see Kolerov, 1996; Kolerov, 2002). The second landmark publication was a collection of essays by Sergey Bulgakov which was published in 1903 and titled *From Marxism to Idealism* ("Ot Marxizma k idealizmu"). It was designed not only to express the views that the author himself regarded as correct at the time of publication, but also to show the logic of the progress from Marxist positions to "Idealism," from attempts to protect Marxist theory from criticism through modifying it, and to the affirmation of the desire to reveal a truly solid foundation for the ideal of social change in these new views, which was expressed by Marxism, but could not find its own solid philosophical basis in Marxism (Bulgakov, 1997: 4).

At the same time, the political paths taken by Struve and Bulgakov differed significantly. If the former was progressing towards national-liberalism,³ the latter preserved the socialist character of his views which were initially justified by idealistic reasons, then by the considerations of "general Christianity," and then receiving an Orthodox foundation in the proper sense of the term after 1909.⁴ In the period before the Revolution, though, Bulgakov consistently attempted at the same time to distance himself from liberalism (both political and economic). These attempts differed only by a degree of their

3. On Struve's views from 1905 to 1908, see Kolerov, 2017a. On the concepts of "nation" and "nationalism" in the texts of Struve in the 1890s — 1910s, see Teslya, 2018b.

4. On Bulgakov's understanding of nationalism (in relation to Struve's views of 1908–1909), see Teslya, 2018a.

radicalism. One of the key differences relating to how the two intellectuals read Weber's writings concerned the idea of personality. For Struve, it is "a formal basis and a fundamental condition of morals developed slowly but steadily in humankind" (1999: 23) and therefore it gives freedom and autonomy; according to Bulgakov, the individualistic aspect of personality should be overcome.

The differences between Struve and Bulgakov's approaches will also lead to fundamentally different readings and applications of Weber's work to the Russian context. In Struve's views, the attention to religious issues since 1901 has been explicitly linked to the formation of modern nationalism, liberalism, and the logic of political rights and liberties. As early as Struve's first public political statement in the leaflet of 1892, he focuses on "freedom of the press, speech and assembly" as a "guarantee of civic independence" (2000: 26). In his article "What is the true nationalism?" Struve asserts, firstly, close links "between internal freedom, freedom of belief and external freedom, freedom of action" (1999: 23) and, secondly, the connection of "the idea of inalienable human rights" "with the great religious and cultural movement of the 16th and 17th centuries" (Ibid.: 24).

Relying on this perspective, Struve addressed *The Protestant Ethic*, after having waged a polemic on the lecture entitled "On the sweetest Jesus and the bitter fruits of this world" ("O sladchajshem Iisuse i gor'kih plodah mira") delivered by Vasilij Rozanov at the meeting of the Religious-Philosophical Society on November 21, 1907, in Saint Petersburg. The central topic of the lecture was the relationship between Christianity and the secular world. In arguing with Dmitry Merezhkovsky and his doctrine of "religious community," Rozanov contests the latter's assertion "that the Gospel is compatible with sweet devotion to the muses, that it is possible both to listen to Father Matthew's sermons and to read Gogol's *The Government Inspector* or *Dead Souls*. . . . The message of Dmitry . . . consisted in the idea that the Gospel was compatible with everything that humans had loved so much in their culture for thousands of years" (Kolerov, 2009: 139). Rozanov, as is commonly known, metaphysically interprets "Christianity" as something radically opposed to the "secular world," incompatible with it (Ibid.: 149), and reconcilable only either through inconsistency or through the reduction of Christianity to a moral teaching (Ibid.: 147).

In making his case, contrary to the previous speakers, Struve joined Rozanov's understanding of Christianity. Having contrasted two types of asceticism, the one "practiced inside this world along with its recognition, and the one — practiced outside this world" (Ibid.), Struve went on in writing that "Calvinism has become the basis of the capitalist system. It happened so precisely because it began to exercise asceticism within this world. Through the natural psychological development of all the consequences of asceticism, practiced in such a way, it finally came to the well-known cult of economic activity and possessive individualism" (Ibid.: 163).

Here Struve, in spite of the previous remarks made by the Rev. Constantine Aggeev and the philosopher Sergei Askoldov, supporting Rozanov in claiming that Christian asceticism is a practice, "which was exercised outside this world, which turned its eyes away from this world" (Ibid.), continues by saying: "But the resurrection of the dead did

not happen, and mankind ceased to believe it. This is terrible, but it is a fact and a very important fact. The historical feat of Protestantism as a worldview is that it summed it up. He approved the fact that mankind ceased to believe in the resurrection of the dead" (Ibid.: 163–164).

In 1907–1909 Struve's political views had changed. The theme of "Great Russia" as a mighty foreign-policy power, feasible only if based on national unity and the highest development of its economic potential, attains the greatest significance for him. Therefore, one of the constant topics of his 1908–1909 articles later included in the collection entitled "Patriotica" (1997), becomes the problem of individual economic behavior. In the article entitled "Intelligentsia and National Economy" (first published in Saint-Petersburg's newspaper "Slovo" ("The Word"), No 622, November 16, 1908), Struve, for example, writes that "any economic progress is based on the replacement of less productive social and economic systems with more productive ones" (1999: 81). He goes on to insist that "this truth" "should not be understood "in a materialist way," as does scholarly Marxism. A more productive system is not something dead, devoid of spiritual dimension. Greater *economic performance* is always based on higher personal *suitability*. Whereas personal suitability is a set of certain spiritual properties: self-possession, self-control, prudence. A progressive society can be built only on the idea of personal suitability as the basis and measure of all social relations. If within the idea of freedom and individuality resides an eternal idealistic moment of liberalism, in the idea of personal suitability we have an eternal realistic moment of liberal worldview" (Ibid.).

The reasoning thus focuses on the combination of the economic order and the corresponding types of personal behavior. Struve asserts the interrelation of politics, the economy, and culture, strongly refusing to consider the latter as a byproduct of economic development while at the same time referring to some religious experience hidden under rather broad notions of "idealistic" and "spiritual." Developing this idea, Struve, who already has the forthcoming publication of *Landmarks* ("Vekhi") in mind, insists that intellectuals

must understand that the productive process is not some "predatory" activity, but the process of creation of the very basics of human civilization.

At the same time, the pragmatic, economically responsible actors of this process, those who occupy a "dominant" position within it, cannot think of themselves simply as representatives of group or class interests. *The interest is justified and its defense might be a cause of civilization only insofar as in its basis lies the idea of serving for the sake of public good*, understood as the realization of a well-known function which has a creative significance for the whole of society. (Ibid.: 84–85; italics are mine)

In his article "Religion and socialism" ("Religiya i socializm"), published in the eighth volume of "Russian Thought" ("Russkaya mysl") in 1909, Struve addresses his understanding of the social role of religion and its prospects, noting that "ethics is essentially close to religion and serves as the intermediary link between the latter and politics" (Ibid.: 94). He continues to explain his credo when he writes that

I think that current religious crisis is being replaced by a new truly religious worldview, in which old incentives of religious, Christian-born liberalism will rise again: ideas of personal heroism and responsibility complicated by a new motive, the motive of personal freedom understood as *creative* autonomy. It is no coincidence that within this old religious liberalism the ideas of divine predestination and divine grace were so strong. This liberalism has concentrated in God all the power of creative will. Contemporary religious consciousness cannot be reconciled with this understanding of God, man and their relationship.

Man as a cosmic bearer of personal creative heroism is the central idea that will peacefully or stormily, slowly or quickly capture the imagination of mankind, capture it in religious terms, and pour new powers into mortified private and public life.

That is my faith. (Ibid: 97; italics are mine)

The problem that arises within Struve's logic and which he tries to bypass is the conjuncture of "national economy" and "personality," since the ethics of economy, on the one hand, is based on religion, and, on the other hand, religion itself, not only in times contemporary to Struve, but also in the long run, is understood by him as a "private affair." So, for example, at the end 1909, he writes: "*Human is of course the main actor and decisive force in economic life.* The capital gains its power only if it is connected with the human. But if the Russian man had already developed the economic properties that the rich West is so strong with, the very question of increased attraction of capital investments to our national economy from outside would not be raised at all. The question of Russia's economic revival is, first of all, the question as how to create *a new economic man*" (Ibid.: 96; italics are mine).⁵ He reacted to the publication of Russian novelist Alexander Ertel's personal correspondence twice, finding important material highlighting the links between religious consciousness and economy within the Russian modernity in these letters. Struve would write: "The main positive idea to be put against the 'ideology' of intelligentsia is the idea of a religion as life-constructing and life-consecrating element" (Ibid.: 245).

At the same time, during the debate on the above-mentioned Rozanov report, he stated that "mankind ceased believing" in the resurrection of the dead "and the entire Western world undoubtedly does not believe it. Maybe a part of the Orthodox world still remains with this faith. But another part of the Orthodox world has definitely lost it. Christianity has fallen away from this material faith in the victory over death, and attempts to revive it are attempts to revive something inanimate" (Kolerov, 2009: 164). He was admitting the possibility of such a revival, "but at the moment it is absent as a living potentiality within human life" (Ibid.). Hence his statement of impossibility of the "religious community," most directly formulated in 1914 in the article entitled "Religion and community," and his deep conviction that "pure religious consciousness should insist that

5. "Economic Programs and 'Unnatural Regime'" from the Moscow Weekly, No 50, December 19, 1909 (the article was included in the collection entitled "Patriotica"). Struve uses the phrase "new economic man" which is connected with the concept of "new men," which has been the key concept for the Russian intelligentsia since the 1860s, and was put in the subtitle of *What is to be Done?* by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. The problem of a "new man" formation included labor issues as well (see Paperno, 1996; Vdovin, 2017: 168–174, 240–245).

all social and public affairs in their significant part are indifferent with regard to religion” (Rozanov, 1999: 120), and that “the early Christians felt themselves as if they were living through the end of times. *This feeling cannot be normal in contemporary Christianity. For contemporary Christians and, I will say, for the whole of modern religious consciousness, religious aversion to the world is a turn inside oneself*” (Ibid.: 121; italics are mine).

The same set of questions but from another angle was treated by Sergey Bulgakov. He followed Struve⁶ in his interest of Weber and addressed *The Protestant Ethic* no later than 1909, that is, more than a year after his colleague (Bulgakov, 1991, 2008a; Davydov, 1997, 1998: 121–149; Plotnikov, Kolerov, 1999: 103–107). Bulgakov immediately devoted his paper called “The national economy and the religious personality” to the problems raised in Weber’s famous book. This paper originally existed as a lecture which he delivered on March 8, 1909, to the Vladimir Solovyov Religious-Philosophical Society in Moscow. Later in the same year it was published as an article in “The Moscow Weekly” (*Moskovskiy ezhenedel’nik*, 1909, no 23–24), a magazine edited by Prince Evgeniy Troubetzkoy and sponsored by the famous Russian philanthropist Margarita Morozova. The paper was structured in four parts:

In the first part, Bulgakov offers a critical consideration of a political economy’s methods and epistemology. First of all, he scrutinizes the concept of “economic man” who scratches out “the living psychological personality” and converts society “into a sack of atoms” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 177; 2008b: 158). Following Struve, he puts forth as his initial thesis that “human personality is an independent economic factor . . . In a word, the *economy of the household is led by its housekeeper*” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 177; 2008b: 161; translation is modified).

The second part deals with the influence of religion on economy “because it is a factor in the formation of human personality” and should be “introduced in the realm of economic life study” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 177). Hence the subject matter of the research is asceticism (the work is understood to be its special case), since in “its practical meaning asceticism is an attitude toward the world, related to recognition of supreme, above-the-world, transcendental values . . . However, exactly as if due to its abnegation of the world, asceticism may — and with certain tension it inevitably does — win upon the world, as it is the case, by the way, with every profound idealistic aspiration” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 178–179; 2008b: 162). Note that Bulgakov in this last reservation removes the specificity

6. So, for example, in his paper which is of key significance for our analysis, “The national economy and the religious personality,” included in the author’s collection of *Two Cities* with the subtitle of “An inquiry into the nature of social ideals,” Bulgakov wrote “Benthamism (the original one, and its later variety, *Marxism*)” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 194; 2008b: 177). Such a judgment can surprise the reader all the more that in the first two articles, opening the book and having a principal significance — “Ludwig Feuerbach’s religion of godmanhood” and “Karl Marx as a religious type” — Bulgakov asserts that Marxism does not have its own philosophy, and is entirely based on Feuerbach’s “religion of godmanhood.” In the said paper, “The national economy and the religious personality,” this genealogy is not only forgotten, but a new one dating back to “Benthamism” is introduced without any explanation. The explanation can be found in the program article “The meaning of life,” written by Struve in 1908 and devoted to Leo Tolstoy’s 80th anniversary (*Russian Thought*, 1908, Book VIII). Here he interprets Bentham as “a true philosophical father of socialism” and gives detailed arguments in favor of this position (Bulgakov, 1999: 111–112).

of the religious “factor,” regarding it to be the special case of every “profound idealistic aspiration” while the provision of “as if due to its abnegation of the world” is directed against Rozanov and his interpretation of Christianity.⁷

After a series of historical cases of Christian attitude to economics given in the second part, the third one focuses on “modern capitalism.” After referring to Sombart’s definition of “a key feature of this capitalist spirit” as “economic rationalism, methodical adjustment of means to ends” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 182; 2008b: 166), it turns to Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic* with the story about “the intrinsic, historically established, link between Calvinism and capitalism” (Ibid.: 167).

The fourth and final part outlines the current state of affairs both in Russia and in the rest of the world asking about their future prospects.

Actually, this last part is of special interest for us since it allows us to see Bulgakov’s logic in handling some of Weber’s concepts. First of all, “the dominance of utilitarianism and the decline of personality” are interpreted as threatening “to cut back economic development” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 193; 2008b: 176). Particularly threatening this situation is seen for Russia, whose immediate task is an economic education of its people: “Benthamism . . . becomes, in pure economic sense, a factor of decomposition and harm, as long as it has an impact on the attitude of a person toward personal duties, as long as it destroys the moral discipline that constitutes a foundation for every professional labor; mere awareness of interests is insufficient ground for individual discipline” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 194; 2008b: 177).

Consequently, “Benthamism,” which Bulgakov actually identifies with “economic rationalism” in Sombart’s interpretation, is conceived as destructive for both capitalism and socialism: “Socialism, if it aspires to become a genuine, superior form of economy without losing what has been already accomplished, and to be capable of furthering productive forces, should be even more in disagreement with Benthamism. On the contrary, this form requires such a level of personal responsibility and self-discipline that it cannot be attained in the name of just personal interests but presupposes superior ethical culture” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 195; 2008b: 178).

Thus, the problem of economic pedagogics is at the heart of the problem, the urgent need for it is motivated, in particular, by the ongoing “slow but firm and inevitable (if all remains unchanged) economic invasion of Russia by foreigners” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 196; 2008b: 178).

Bulgakov closes his article with the following statement: “while pushing the goal of Russia’s economic invigoration and renewal, one must not forget the spiritual prerequisites, namely, about the elaboration of economic psychology, which may emerge only through social self-education” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 197; 2008b: 179). It is rather telling that, although Bulgakov in his paper refers to the issue of “economic potentials of Orthodox

7. According to Rozanov’s logic, Christianity, unlike other religions, is an abnegation of the world (see: Teslya, 2018). Struve, in his speech devoted to Rozanov, said that asceticism is actually inherent in any religion, having divided asceticism into two types (see above); in this case Bulgakov dismisses this distinction of Struve, claiming that any asceticism exists “as if due to its abnegation of the world.”

Christianity,” he boils it down to a brief remark: “Being radically different from Puritanism and Protestantism in general, in the aspect of the discipline of docility and “walking under God” (as well as dogmatically the same *Starobriadnichestvo* [“Adherers-to-the-Old-rite”]) it poses powerful means of nurturing and educating a sense of personal responsibility and duty that is so essential to economic activity as well as for all other types of service to society” (Bulgakov, 2008a: 191; 2008b: 174).

The most remarkable in the final part is the pragmatic argumentation that *de facto* refers to the very logic of “Benthamism,” that is, “self-education” turns out to be necessary for utilitarian purposes as the goals of economic development justify the significance of the religious factor.

However, for Bulgakov himself, the contradiction may not have been as rigid as it appears in the eyes of an outside observer, due to the following sets of circumstances:

First, in these years and until his personal turn of 1922–1924, he will live in the perspective of a close, immediate, and yet-to-come already in the time of his own life radical religious renewal/revelation (Teslya, 2017), something that Bulgakov will later define in terms of the “New Middle Ages,” which should replace the “Modern Age” (Bulgakov, 1989: 402).

Second, relying on *The Protestant Ethic*, Bulgakov tries to outline the logic of the new economic system, an alternative to capitalism, which should be formed as a consequence of a different religious ethics, thus “re-enchanted” the world again. His own position, in contrast to the position of Weber and Struve, appears as the position of both an observer and a creator of this new reality.

Following this logic, Bulgakov, in his *Philosophy of Economy*, seeks to outline the framework of this new understanding, which he sees as an alternative to the “materialist” philosophy of economics that he identifies with Marxism understood as the most consistent expression of the political economy’s worldview (1990: Ch. IX). The second volume of this work should have been devoted to the outlining of this new “ethics of economy,” but it was not finished. Some elements of Bulgakov’s view of this topic were given in his *magnum opus* titled *Unfading Light* (1917), which pretends to be the general outline of the whole of his philosophical system. From Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 3 of the Third book that are devoted to the problems of the economy, it becomes quite clear why the issue of development of the independent “ethics of economy” is removed by Bulgakov from the list of his priorities. He says that “economy does not have in itself any eschatological tasks that go beyond the bounds of mortal life of this age” (Bulgakov, 2017: 586; 2012: 380), and “Economy is only permitted by it [the Gospel] — it is reconciled with it as the burden of life of this age but nothing more” (Bulgakov, 2017: 587; 2012: 381). However, one point in this text is of particular interest: “economism,” whose collapse Bulgakov sees in the Great War and declares to be “the magical kingdom from this world” (Bulgakov, 2017: 588; 2012: 382). This is the theoretical move which can be regarded as an attempt to turn over the famous Weber’s logic of “disenchantment of the world”: “Modern history has not succeeded, but precisely through this failure, through a deepened experience of good and evil, a general crisis of history and the universe is being prepared. And the failure of all

world history is also its greatest success, for its goal is not in but beyond its limits; there the historical element calls and compels” (Bulgakov, 2017: 588; 2012: 382).

Thus, we can see two types of Russian interpretations of *The Protestant Ethics*. On one hand, in his texts, Peter Struve captured the major problems of Weber’s work, among them being the question of how is it possible to produce a sustainable economic ethics while at the same time remaining within the framework of modern religious consciousness complicated by an advancing secularization. For Struve, the answer lies in shifting the center of gravity to individual, personal models of economic behavior (and that is the reason of his interest in Alexander Ertel’s letters). On the other hand, with regard to the Russian situation, this changing religious consciousness turns out to be a tool for personal development, drawing on the inter-related trio of religion, ethics, and law.

On the contrary, Sergey Bulgakov will read Weber’s text in a more “expansive” mode, that is, not in terms of the emergence of the “spirit of capitalism” suited for Russian economic development, but rather as a general model of the birth of the “spirit” of a certain economic order arising out of religious ethics. Drawing upon his desire to build a “Christian socialism,” he will raise the question of the possibility and necessity of producing a new economic ethic, combining pragmatic arguments and prophetic aspirations that are so typical of him.

No less significant is the fact that Struve did not find any actual resources for the formulation of some general ethics for the new capitalist economy. It seems quite natural, therefore, that he skipped this issue and moved towards the task of individual work on himself, that is, to the development of an individual worldview. This fact was also captured by Sergey Bulgakov, although in a curious way; contrary to his own initial formulation of the issue, he motivates the task of building an economic ethic in purely pragmatic terms with actual economic needs. In other words, as theorists, both Struve and Bulgakov demonstrate the impossibility of “repeating” the model of economic ethic whose genesis has been explored by Weber. Out of the bare necessity for such a model, even if it is accompanied by the general (however correct) understanding of the necessity to form such an ethic, it does not follow the possibility of its simple reproduction through the historical sequence of stages.

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«Протестантская этика» в русском контексте: П. Б. Струве и С. Н. Булгаков читают М. Вебера (1907–1909)

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Известно, что в России у Вебера было некоторое число хорошо подготовленных читателей — в первую очередь Б. Кистяковский, непосредственно связанный с веберовским академическим кругом через своего учителя Г. Еллинека, но также и целый ряд других интеллектуалов поколения 1870-х гг. и их младших товарищей — таких как П. Струве, С. Булгаков, С. Франк (входящий в этот интеллектуальный круг через своего старшего друга и покровителя П. Струве). В дальнейшем они образуют основной состав редакции «Русской Мысли», в отличие от русского «Логоса», где будет собираться следующее поколение, ориентированное на другие группы немецкого академического мира. Вместе с тем непосредственных откликов на «Протестантскую этику...» в России практически не было, она не оказалась в явном центре интеллектуальных дебатов 1906–1910 гг. В данной статье внимание сосредоточено на двух развернутых реакциях и интерпретациях «Протестантской этики» — со стороны П. Струве, который первым в России достаточно развернуто отреагировал на концепцию Вебера, и С. Булгакова, предпринявшего опыт переинтерпретации веберовской концепции и приложения ее к российским условиям. Струве исходит из утраты современным христианством (как западным, так и восточным) реальной веры в воскресение — и невозможности религиозной общественности, в связи с чем христианство оказывается действующим как аскетизм вне мира. Оптика Булгакова проинтерпретирует веберовскую концепцию в общую модель влияния «глубокого идеалистического воодушевления» на хозяйственную жизнь — и переводит рассуждение в прагматическую плоскость, возможность хозяйственной «педагогики» и образования «духа» нового хозяйства, альтернативного по отношению к капитализму.

Ключевые слова: Макс Вебер, новое средневековье, социология религии, секуляризация, хозяйственная этика