In his short “Outline of My Inner Biography,” published posthumously in 1962, Vasilii Vasilevich Zenkovskii (1881–1962) describes his youth as a variation on the “from Marxism to idealism” scheme, in accordance with which so many prominent Russian thinkers after 1900 conceived of their intellectual development (cf. my previous chapter). As a child Zenkovskii had been deeply religious, but at the age of 15 he began to read the radical “man of the sixties,” Dmitrii Pisarev. His atheistic period and his enthusiasm for this “naturalism,” however, were relatively short. During the early years of his university studies in Kiev (1900–1909), he “returned to the church,” as he puts it himself, and from 1905 onwards actively participated in the religious-philosophical society that had been founded there in the 1890s.

Opposed to the radical intelligentsia, on the one hand, and the clergy of the Orthodox church on the other, the religious-philosophical societies of Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and other provincial cities had a formative influence, but also a polarising effect on the Russian intelligentsia of this period. The rivalry between clergy and lay theologians/religious philosophers, however, was less marked in Kiev than in other cities. In the short-lived Kievan journal *Christian Thought* (1916–17), which grew out of this society, it was possible to encounter such notions as “Church intelligentsia” and “Orthodox intelligentsia,” terms which in Russian intellectual history were unheard of before this time, and which previously, as suggested by Jutta Scherrer, would have been regarded as *contradictio in adjecto*. Until this time, the

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concept of intelligentsia had been mostly associated with the radical, materialist and atheist Russian intellectuals from Belinskii onwards. In contrast, this new Orthodox intelligentsia was to contribute first and foremost, Zenkovskii and others proclaimed on the pages of *Christian Thought*, to the creation of a new spiritual culture. At the same time, Zenkovskii’s intellectual maturation, to a far greater extent than that of Florovskii, took place in association with seminal figures of the Russian intelligentsia. In the early 1900s, he became closely acquainted with Sergei Bulgakov, who was living in Kiev at that time.

In Kiev, Zenkovskii studied philosophy and psychology under the influential neo-Kantian philosopher and psychologist Georgii Chelpanov (1862–1936) as well as natural sciences; the latter a corollary, he himself suggests, of his brief materialist period. Still, it was psychology and philosophy that remained his major scholarly interest. In 1915, he defended his doctoral thesis *The Problem of Psychical Causality*, in which he examined psychological problems within a Christian-metaphysical framework, and the year after, he became professor of philosophy in Kiev. His political engagement led him—reluctantly, he later claimed—to accepting the post of Minister of Faith in Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi’s short-lived government, the Hetmanate (April–November 1918). The reason for his later discontent with this activity was that he considered himself to be Russian and not Ukrainian.

Zenkovskii emigrated in January 1920, and he spent the first years of his exile in Belgrade. From 1923 to 1926 he lived in Prague, and from 1926 onwards in Paris. He took an active part in the establishment of the St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute and became dean of its department of philosophy. Until the mid-1930s, his publishing activity concentrated on psychological and pedagogical issues; the latter being a reflection of his engagement in the fate and conditions of Russian émigré youth. From 1923 to 1962, accordingly, he was president of the Russian Christian student movement. After the Second World War, most of which he spent in prison, he devoted himself more fully to Christian philosophy. His major works in this field are *Apologetics*

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3 He has given his own account of this period in V.V. Zen’kovskii, 1995, *Piat’ mestsirov v lasti*, Moscow.