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5 “Episcopal Justice”: Nikolaj Leskov’s Life Experience and the Jewish Question

Mayya Kucherskaya

National Research University HSE, Moscow, Russia

10 **ABSTRACT**

The present article gives a detailed account of previously unknown documentary sources of Leskov’s short story “Episcopal Justice.” This story bears the subtitle “True story. From recent recollections,” which seems to suggest an autobiographical basis for the narrative. The ultimate aim of the study is to determine whether the story’s central incident – a Christian bishop comes to the rescue of a Jewish boy – may have been based on real events. My analysis of recently discovered archival materials, as well as of the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the tale, shows that “Episcopal Justice” may well have been based on real-life events. Moreover, we consider this story in the context of Leskov’s other writings addressing the “Jewish question” and trace the evolution of his position as it shifts, in his later years, toward one of equality of the Christian and Jewish faiths.

KEYWORDS Leskov; autobiography; documentary sources; fiction; the Jewish question

25 **1. Introduction**

Nikolaj Leskov (1831–1895) is one of a mere handful of Russian authors to buck the pervasive literary trends of the latter half of the nineteenth century – the age of realism, the heyday of documentary prose – by choosing consistently to involve the reader in intricate literary play based on a blurring of the lines between reality and invention. Among Leskov’s favourite techniques is to create an illusion of verisimilitude through references to a concrete setting, real historical circumstances and persons, including alleged direct quotations from such persons, thus emphasizing the documentary or autobiographical character of the described events. In reality, more often than not Leskov made use of literary rather than historical sources (Majorova 1994; Rančin 1998; Žolkovskij 2008). Thus, for example, his *Lady Macbeth of the Mcensk District*, styled as a journalistic “sketch,” allegedly describing true events that took place in the Mcensk District and peppered with numerous references to historical reality, is, in fact, wholly constructed and based on various journal publications of the early 1860s (Kucherskaya 2016).

CONTACT Mayya Kucherskaya  mayakuch@gmail.com

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Nikolaj Leskov's short story "Episcopal Justice" (*Vladyčnyj sud*), published 1877 in the journal *Strannik* (Pilgrim) (nos. 1, 2), is furnished with the subtitle "True story. From recent recollections." The overt declaration of the documentary and autobiographical nature of the text is further reinforced by a profession early on in the story that all its characters shall be called "by their actual names." Indeed, the characters named in the story, beginning with Andrej Ivanovič Drukart, an official in the Governor General's office, to the Governor I. I. Vasil'čikov himself and the Metropolitan Filaret (Amfiteatrov), are all historical figures, known to have resided in Kiev in the 1850s.

"Episcopal Justice" tells the story of a Jewish boy's rescue from military service in the Russian army, following a wrongful conscription. Here Leskov touches on one of the most sensitive aspects of military recruitment policy in the age of Nicholas I: the conscription of Jewish boys into the Russian army, a policy that went into effect in 1827, following the Tsar's edict extending compulsory military service to the Jewish population [Stanislavskij 2014, 31–53]. Previously, Jews were not required to serve in the military. The draft age for Jewish recruits was set at 12; meanwhile, up until the start of the Crimean War, the draft age for other social and ethnic group was set between 20 and 35 years of age. Jewish recruits under the age of 18 were sent to battalions of military cantonists and then to the "canton schools", where the boys were given training in Russian grammar, mathematics and warfare.

Years of stay in the cantonists were not counted in the military service (25 years) for both Jews and non-Jews. The quota for Jewish communities was ten recruits with one thousand men annually (for Christians – seven with one thousand a year later).

The narrator of Leskov's story, a young official in the Treasury Chamber, is directly involved in the affair, alongside the Governor General of Kiev Illarion Illarionovič Vasil'čikov. But it falls to the city's Metropolitan, Filaret Amfiteatrov, to play the decisive role in the boy's ultimate deliverance. Through his intercession, justice is restored and the boy's conscription is overturned. Such a turn of events appears unlikely at best: a metropolitan's official position as the head of clerical hierarchy obliged him to uphold the official policy of the Russian government toward Jews. Conscription of underage Jewish boys was part of the Russian colonial and clerical policy, its ultimate aim being the assimilation and Christianization of the Jewish population (Stanislavskij 2014).

The main objective of this study is to determine whether and to what extent the events described in the story might be historically accurate. Is it possible that a Jewish boy's rescue from forced conscription effected by an Orthodox bishop could, in fact, be a "true story" and a genuine "recollection"?

To answer these questions we have attempted to recreate the historical context of the story by marking out the field of its potential historical sources. The search for these led us to the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kiev. This archive houses the papers of the Treasury Chamber of Kiev, which employed Leskov from September 1849 through May 1857, i. e. the very same period in which our story is set.

2. Leskov as an official of the Conscription Bureau in Kiev

On September 7th, 1849 Leskov left his native Orel for Kiev at the invitation of his uncle Sergej Petrovič Alfer'jev, a medical doctor and professor at the University of Kiev (Leskov 1954, 89). On September 28th of the same year he applied for a position at the Treasury Chamber, and was hired on December 31st. On February 24th, 1850 he assumed the post of Deputy bureau chief of the Conscription Bureau, housed within the Department of the Census. On June 11th, 1853 Leskov was given the rank of collegiate registrar, the lowest of the civil service ranks, and shortly afterwards, on October 9th, 1853, promoted to bureau chief. On July 7th, 1856, after the prescribed term of three years, he was promoted to the rank of district secretary (Leskov 1954, 113). He remained in this position until May 1857, when he retired from civil service to join the English trading firm Scott & Wilkins. In all, his tenure at the Treasury lasted some seven and a half years.

Records gathered by Leskov's most conscientious biographer – his son Andrej Leskov – along with the author's own occasional autobiographical remarks, give us a partial glimpse of the writer's social sphere and activities during his years in Kiev (Leskov 1954, 93–98; Leskov 1956, XI, 17). At the same time, practically nothing has been known of Leskov's working life at the Treasury. Until recently, our only source of information on this subject was the story "Episcopal Justice" (1877).

There Leskov describes his time at the Treasury in the following terms:

Despite my tender years, A. K. Ključarev¹ put me in charge of the conscription. This business, requiring none of the so-called "higher-order reasoning," did nevertheless demand considerable effort. For days on end, sometimes from the early morning until it began to grow dark outside (recruits were only examined by daylight), I stayed chained to my desk, puzzling out the personal circumstances of one candidate after another, churning out replies to countless petitions, and hunting down the legal underpinning of this or that decision passed down from above. As soon as the bureau closed for the day there rose up a flurry of the most feverish clerical activity in preparation for the following day. One had to receive notices, cross-reference them against registers and rosters; remit uniform and provision allowances; issue receipts and review

1 A.K. Ključarev (1797–1867), director of the Department of the State Treasury of the Ministry of Finances, 1854–1862. At the time of his death in Kiev, Ključarev bore the rank of Privy councillor.

veritable mountains of the most convoluted complaints and most captious denunciations, arriving daily in tremendous numbers.

125 The office was staffed by clerks temporarily reassigned from various other agencies, whose concerns were limited to strictly mechanical tasks: their business was making records and issuing receipts. Everything demanding the slightest degree of understanding and familiarity with the law rested with a single individual: the bureau chief. For this reason, this agonizing, difficult and essential job was always given to persons well advanced in years and experience. But A. K. Ključarev, in his usual offhand fashion, chose to hand it to me, at the very start of my career and only twenty-one years of age. [...]

130 My torments began about a month and a half before the start of the draft cycle, and involved organizing the precincts, ordering the queues, etc. This lasted for the two months or so of the actual draft and ended with my composing a final report. In all that time I lived for work alone, with an hour or an hour and a half allotted for my dinner, and no more than four hours of sleep.

135 Anyone will readily understand that under such circumstances I had little time for “gladdening the heart, and weeping and praying for mankind.”

140 On one of those days – it might even have been one of the most tiresome of such days – I was sitting in the evening at my office desk, reading one after the other the grievances piled up before me. There were many, as usual, and most of them nearly identical in content. All of them contained the very same complaints, and were copied from a single template, rather mournful and perfectly vulgar in character (Leskov 1956, VI, 93–94).

145 This passage is patently autobiographical. The narrator is tasked with overseeing the conscription process, as it was conducted in the 1840s and through the first half of the 1850s (Gorelov 2012; Rediger 1994). He receives notices of arrivals from “agents,” cross-references them against existing rolls, and finally issues a receipt for every recruit delivered, thus closing the individual file. At the same time, he must respond to complaints received by his office of abuses and improprieties associated with the conscription process. A recruitment bureau of this kind must have churned out veritable mountains of documents, and many of these must surely have been drafted by the bureau chief N. S. Leskov. It was, therefore, reasonable to expect that some of these documents have survived in some archive. Our expectations were not disappointed.

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3. “Bureau chief, collegiate registrar Nikolaj Leskov” in documents of Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine

160 In the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine we located a collection comprising the files of the Office of the Governor General of Kiev, Podol and Volyn’ Provinces (1832–1914). Among these I found nine separate dossiers drawn up by and bearing the signature of the young official N. S. Leskov. These materials

165 have not previously been brought to the attention of scholars.² They contain nothing that is out of the ordinary or of particular interest. At the same time, they provide a perfectly accurate reflection of the day-to-day operations of the conscription bureau, and may prove highly useful to future biographers of Leskov, as well as to interpreters of the story “Episcopal Justice.”

170 What follows is a complete list of pertinent dossiers, in chronological order, each furnished with a brief commentary. (A comprehensive annotation would require a detailed description of the draft process with explanations of its various phases and aspects – regrettably, this is a task that lies beyond the modest scope of my study.)

1) Regarding the Order of the Governing Senate on the organization of the 11th regional draft in the Empire’s western provinces. Feb. 8th–Aug. 13th, 1854 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 83, 36–42ob.

175 This file includes elaborate instructions, drawn up by the conscription executive bureau of the Census department of the Kiev Treasury, pertaining to the Proclamation of the 11th regional draft and the Guidelines for the regional draft. The document was drafted and signed by “Bureau chief, collegiate registrar Nikolaj Leskov.”

180 2) Regarding the Order on the 11th regional draft. May 31st–February 13th, 1854 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 257, 26–3ob.

185 The document contains a detailed account of the conscription procedures for 9 recruits for every 1,000 residents or 10 for every 1,000 among the Jews. Signed by “Bureau chief Leskov.”

3) Regarding the Order for the organization of the 12th regional regular draft. Sept. 24th, 1854. // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 443, 45–47ob.

190 The title is self-explanatory. A new draft cycle has been announced, and the document lays out the main steps to be undertaken by the Conscription bureau in this regard. The document mentions Leskov by name, and is also signed by “Bureau chief Leskov.”

4) Regarding the validation of recruit receipts. Nov. 10th, 1854 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 443, 82–85ob., 88–89ob.

195 The document concerns recruit receipts issued *after* the date of the proclamation of the next draft cycle. It is proposed that such receipts be counted with those issued *before* the proclamation in an effort to sidestep a bureaucratic pitfall resulting in draft deficiencies. Signature: “Secretary Nikolaj Leskov.”

200

 2 I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to Elena V. Polozova of the State Archive of Ukraine, who assisted me in my research with the care and diligence that went far beyond her official duties.

5) Regarding the abuses of the Jewish Society of Belaja Cerkov'. Dec. 3rd, 1854 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 443, 109–111ob.

205 The document describes the efforts by the Jewish Society of Belaja Cerkov'erkov Cernt describes the efforts by the Jewish Society of Belaja Cer3ting in draftLeskov."

6) Regarding the 12th regional regular draft among Jewish townspeople in the western provinces. Announcement of the draft's suspension. Dec. 31st, 1854 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 605, 17–19ob.

210 The document concerns the forthcoming draft cycle. Leskov is mentioned by name: he is tasked with furnishing blank forms and stationery to be used in compiling paperwork associated with the draft procedures. Signed: "Bureau chief Nikolaj Leskov."

215 7) Regarding the petition of the Jewish Society of Belaja Cerkov'erkov Cerkg the petition of the Jewish Society of Belath, 1855 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 605, 29–30ob.

220 As indicated in our entry no. 5, the Jewish Society of Belaja Cerkov' had tried to make up the prescribed number of recruits by furnishing other candidates out of their turn. According to representatives of the Society, it simply could not muster the necessary number. The Treasury responded with an adamant refusal, also contained in the file. Signed: "Bureau chief Leskov."

225 8) Regarding the suspension of military conscription among the Jews of the western provinces. Feb 3rd, 1855 // coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 605, 17–19ob.

230 By order of the Emperor conscription among the "Jewish townspeople of the western provinces" is suspended (see our entry no. 6). The news did not reach several of the communities in time, and 15 Jews had already been conscripted. These were to be assigned to the previous draft cycle, while the 100 rubles in silver, allocated to Bureau chief Leskov for draft expenses, were to be left "undisbursed" (28). Leskov is named directly in the documents. Signed: "Bureau chief Nikolaj Leskov."

235 9) Regarding the Order of the Governing Senate on the nationwide general draft. Oct. 31st, 1855 // coll. 442, ser. 86, f. no. 353, 57–58ob.

A standard document elaborating the procedures of the latest routine draft cycle. Signed: "Bureau chief Leskov."

240 Three of the documents listed above mention Leskov by name, and always in a similar context: he is tasked with supplying writing paper, the demand for which rose sharply during the recruitment phase. In a document dated Dec. 31st, 1854 we find "100 rubles in silver are to be appropriated for the procurement of blank forms and writing paper for conscription needs, with receipt of funds to be acknowledged by bureau chief Leskov, who, upon completion of

the conscription period, is instructed to submit before the Chamber a detailed report of expenses.³ In a document dated September 24th, 1854 we find a provision of “350 rubles in silver to be disbursed for the procurement of blank forms and stationery to be used by conscription officers, the funds to be signed for by bureau chief Leskov, who shall be required to submit a detailed account of expenses to the Treasury.”⁴ A file dated February 3rd, 1855, contains the order no. 234, dated January 17th of the same year, allocating to bureau chief Leskov “100 rubles in silver for the provision of blank forms, writing paper and other stationery supplies for the forthcoming draft.”⁵

As we have seen, when signing official documents, Leskov sometimes styled himself by rank (collegiate registrar), and more often by title: “bureau chief,” though once he refers to himself as “secretary.” By the time this particular document came into existence (December 3rd, 1854), Leskov had long been made bureau chief. Evidently these two titles – bureau chief and secretary (here in the sense of “registrar”) are used interchangeably.

To be sure, in the course of his tenure at the Treasury Leskov must have composed and signed dozens, if not hundreds of similar documents. So far we have been able to locate only a handful of these, all dating, notably, to the period of the Crimean War, when the demand for recruits rose sharply, with conscription quotas jumping to some 50-70 recruits for every 1,000 residents (Djakonov 2009).

4. The conscription of Jewish boys in “Episcopal Justice” and real life of Russia

In the opening chapters of “Episcopal Justice” Leskov gives a fairly detailed account of the conscription process, as it transpired in his day:

The conscription of Jewish boys truly was a dreadful operation [...]

Taking advantage of this provision, Jewish agents wrenched the little Jew-babes from their mothers’ arms, dragging them directly from their warm beds into the cold Krakow carts and down to the registry. [...]

To the stringent demands of the law, lately—thanks be to God and the Emperor—abolished, there were joined, for the general oppression of the poor, the boundless cruelty of Jewish cunning and deceit, deployed in every fashion imaginable. Getting a recruit in his proper turn was practically unheard of. Instead, there were substitutions and alternates, and sometimes people were brought in entirely out of sequence. And since the draft cycles came in rapid succession, and were, moreover, conducted with remarkable stringency, there was no time for any kind of sorting out, and out-of-turn recruits were accepted “to

3 Coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 605, 18.

4 Coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 443, 46.

5 Coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 605, 27ob.

avoid shortages," on condition that they would be subsequently replaced by regulars, but this condition was nearly universally ignored. (Leskov 1956, VI, 90–91).

285 Leskov adds that many of the fresh conscripts were instantly baptized. Yet the "most grievous outrage" consisted in the falsification of documents, resulting in "children, aged no more than seven or eight, being drafted. Such cases were ubiquitous." (Leskov 1956, VI, 91).

290 The archival documents from the Treasury, filed away in the collection no. 442, offer historical commentary on this passage and give us a sense of the sort of "most convoluted complaints and most captious denunciations" that were regularly submitted to the recruitment bureau. The titles of some of the files from the period of 1849–1857, i. e., Leskov's tenure at the Treasury, offer a vivid illustration.

295 Conscription of children under the age of 12 was, in fact, a regular occurrence. This issue is the principal subject of one file, titled "Regarding the petition by the Jewish Society of Vladimir, numbering 68 persons, seeking to end the persecution of Jews not subject to compulsory draft on account of their young age" (July 20, 1849–June 7, 1854).⁶ Persons unfit for military duty were, nevertheless, pressed into service, as evidenced by such headings as
300 "Regarding the inquest in the case of conscript E. Singer, discovered to be unfit for service" (1851);⁷ "Conscription of A. Rojzman, subsequently discovered to be unfit for service,"⁸ "Conscription by the Kovel Recruitment Bureau of the Jew Jankelevič, unfit for military service" (June 4, 1849–June 23, 1861).⁹

305 Some tried to avoid the draft (cf. the "case of the arrested Jew G. Kotjar, subject to conscription"¹⁰). Others kidnapped children and sold them to families, whose children were slated for conscription: cf. "Regarding the case of Zwanger and Beirish of Dubno, accused of kidnapping the son of one Botchen, also of Dubno, and selling him to a Madame Nisel'bjajmova, to fulfil the latter's family's draft obligation." (Jan. 22, 1854–Oct. 26, 1861).¹¹ There were also attempts to register underaged recruits legally (cf. "Regarding the petition of the Jew A. Šurček, recruitment agent for the Jewish Society of Mogil'ev, for permission to enlist one G. Aksel'rud, aged 11, to make up the draft shortage" (1855).¹²

315 The authorities waged a battle to keep children under the age of 12 and the physically unfit out of the draft (cf. "Regarding the ban on the recruitment

6 coll. 442, ser. 160, f. no. 474.

7 coll. 442, ser. 84, f. no. 362.

8 coll. 442, ser. 84, f. no. 194.

9 coll. 442, ser. 82, f. no. 288.

10 coll. 442, ser. 84, f. no. 536.

11 coll. 442, ser. 1, f. no. 11650.

12 coll. 442, ser. 85, f. no. 325.

of the infirm and the immature.” From a memo circulated by the office of the Governor General of the Kiev, Podol’sk and Volyn’ Provinces, dated November 1st, 1853¹³), but not an overly fierce one: some time earlier, on January 30th, 1853, the Senate issued a decree permitting the recruitment of individuals with up to three fused toes, and naming the time and place for rounding up recruits from among the Teptjars¹⁴ and landless peasants.¹⁵

There were also instances of serious conflict, resulting in violence against recruitment agents: cf. “Regarding the assault perpetrated by the Jews of Belaja Cerkov’ against the homes of the representative of the Jewish Society Smoljanskij and draft monitor Sh. Dubenskij in retaliation for the draft.” (Feb 1st, 1855–May 4th, 1856)¹⁶ There were also curious incidents: the archive of the Governor’s office contains a file on a petition by the Kiev merchant S. Mel’nikov demanding “conscription into military service for amoral acts of his elder son Avraam in place of the younger Aleksej, currently slated for conscription” (1854).¹⁷ Evidently the father was determined to teach his “prodigal” son a real lesson.

In short, recently discovered archival materials, alongside the latest historical research on military conscription in the time of Nikolaj I (Stanislavskij 2014; Petrovskij-Štern 2003; Lokšin 2012; Safran, 1994), as well as the recollections of former cantonists bear out the impression that the grim reality of the draft was intimately familiar to Leskov. Not coincidentally, one of the author’s first journalistic publications addressed bribery among doctors, assigned to recruitment bureaus (Leskov 1996). In the same article Leskov also discusses the illegal conscription of Jewish boys under the age of 12 – a subject he would take up again some years later in the short story “Episcopal Justice.”

5. The possible documentary source of Leskov’s “Episcopal Justice”

There is, moreover, one file found in the archives that evinces clear parallels with the storyline of “Episcopal Justice.” This is a file titled “Regarding the petition of the Jew Jos Volodarskij to have his conscripted son Mošik replaced by another conscript” (dated Oct. 6th, 1851).¹⁸ The file includes Volodarskij’s petition, addressed to the police chief of the town of Vasil’kov in the Kiev District. Volodarskij begs to have his son promptly replaced by another recruit, on the grounds that the former was conscripted unlawfully.

13 Coll. 412, ser. 770, f. no. 74.

14 Teptjars were a people of non-Bashkir origins, who settled on Bashkir lands in the 18th through early 20th c. Another meaning of the word “teptjar” is someone too poor to pay poll tax.

15 Coll. 442, ser. 160, f. No. 42.

16 Coll. 442, ser. 32, f. No. 67.

17 Coll. 442, ser. 85, f. No. 38.

18 Coll. 442, ser. 84, f. no. 506.

Everything must be done in great haste, as the new conscripts will soon be sent to their places of services, at which point it would be nearly impossible to have the boy recalled.

365 In the end, the Governor General himself, Count Illarion Illarionovič Vasil'-
čikov, comes to Volodarskij's aid and grants his petition.¹⁹ The case must
have been far from routine: surely it was not usual for the governor to
become personally involved in such matters. Indeed, we could find no evi-
370 dence of any similar incident. A high-profile case like this would necessarily
have come to the attention of Leskov, who was working in the very same
office at this time. The hero of "Episcopal Justice" is also trying to have his
son replaced by another recruit, while the circumstances of the story are like-
wise similar to the historical incident involving Jos Volodarskij: there is a race
375 against the clock; the usual means of resolving the situation appear blocked;
appeals must be made to the highest authority; finally, the conflict is resolved
through the personal intercession of the governor. At the same time, we find
no mention of a metropolitan in the case of Jos Volodarskij, whereas in
Leskov's story Metropolitan Filaret plays a decisive role. To save the boy
from the army it is necessary to prevent the baptism of his would-be replace-
380 ment: this falls within the Metropolitan's jurisdiction. Filaret prevents the
baptism and saves the boy. In Leskov's tale he takes on the role of the prin-
cipal "magic helper."

6. Metropolitan Filaret (Amfiteatrov) and the Jewish question

385 But is it reasonable to suppose that the historical Metropolitan Filaret could
have come to the aid of a Jewish boy? To answer this question we need to
understand the metropolitan's attitude towards Jews. The comprehensive
three-volume biography of Filaret, compiled by Archimandrite Sergij (Vasilevs-
390 kij) (Sergij 1888) leaves us empty-handed. The same is true of all the other
sources known to us.

Archimandrite Sergij's biography recounts in some detail Filaret's efforts to
stem the mass defections of the newly baptized non-Christian minorities – the
Tatar, Čuvaš and Čeremis people – in the Kazan Province, and argues that his
sagacious policy as a missionary resulted in the conversion of some five thou-
395 sand pagans and Muslims in the Kazan Province during his years of service
(1828–1836).

Two years later, as the newly-appointed Metropolitan of Kiev and Galicia,
Filaret would surely have to confront once more questions of conversion
for non-Christian minorities – the Jews, first among them. Both Kiev and
400 Galicia lay within the Pale of Settlement, and Jews made up a sizable
portion of their population. Documents unearthed by us in the Central

19 *Ibid.*, 10b–2.

Historical Archive of Kiev shed some light on the Metropolitan's attitude toward Jews.

405 The Archive contains Filaret's response to a report presented by Count Nikolaj Protasov titled "On the difficulties encountered by Jewish converts to Christianity, and the means proposed for the removal of such difficulties."²⁰ The report was read before the Holy Synod, which passed it on to the Metropolitan for review. In his report Protasov proposes allowing Jews to be baptized "after the Proclamation of conscription is made, thus freeing them from conscription on behalf of the Jewish Society."²¹ Moreover, in cases
410 where one of the Jewish parents has converted, the child "ought to be joined with the baptized parent, or, at the very least, any child of the same sex as the baptized parent out to be baptized with the parent."²² Both of these suggestions were rejected by Filaret, who pointed out that Jews slated for conscription and expressing their wish to be baptized after a proclamation of the draft "make it plain to see that their eagerness for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is not contingent on their inner conviction of the veracity of the Christian faith."²³ In cases of parental conversion, the Metropolitan proposes leaving the question of the children's baptism to the parents.

420 These two instances alone make manifest that Filaret did not wish to pressure Jewish children into baptism or bribe them with a change in the laws of conscription. It was perhaps his stubbornly loyal treatment of the Jews that prevented his biographers from addressing the matter in their accounts.

425 Returning to our story, it seems plausible that a metropolitan holding such views would, in fact, deem it inappropriate to baptize a Jew, whose motivation is strictly one of personal gain.

430 At the same time, Governor Illarion Vasil'čikov was also well known for his views on the Jewish question that would be considered extremely liberal for his time. He was constantly advocating for expanding the rights of Jews. In 1861 Vasil'čikov submitted a report to the government, arguing that "everywhere the curtailing of rights of any one ethnic group inevitably proves detrimental to the state as a whole," and insisting on the need to improve the living conditions of Jews, promote Jewish participation in municipal self-government, extend residency rights to graduates of state institutions, allow Jews with university diplomas to hold civil service positions, etc.²⁴ In this context,
435 the governor's intercession on behalf of a wrongfully conscripted Jew seems perfectly plausible.

440 20 Coll. 182 (Office of the Metropolitan of Kiev), ser. 1, f. no. 44 (1840), 1–3ob.

21 Coll. 182, ser. 1, f. no. 44, 3ob.

22 *Ibid.*, 4.

23 *Ibid.*, 6.

24 Orshansky, I.G. *Laws Concerning Jews. Essays and studies.* St. P., 1877, p. 45. Mysh, M.I. *Handbook of Russian Laws Concerning Jews.* St. P., 1989. p. 1. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, v. 15. St.P., pp. 147-8.

7. The Jewish question in Leskov's works

Leskov was one of a handful of Russian writers, who consistently spoke out against the discrimination of Jews. He regularly turned to the Jewish question in opinion pieces and minor journalistic writings of the 1860s, finally taking it up as the principal subject of a major essay titled "The Jew in Russia" (1884), which set out to discredit some of the main prejudices against the Jews. Throughout the 1880s Leskov published a series of articles devoted to Jewish rituals (Safran 2004, 109). A sympathetic reference to Jewish cadets at a "canton school" – reminiscent of the later "Episcopal Justice" – is to be found in Leskov's early story "The Musk-Ox" (1863).

"Episcopal Justice" was the first of Leskov's fictional works centered entirely on the Jewish question. In the decade following its publication Leskov composed several other stories featuring Jewish protagonists: "The Melamed of Osterriech" (*Rakušanskij melamed*, 1878), "Yid Somersault" (*Židovskaja kuvyrkoligija*, 1882), "New Testament Jews" (*Novozavetnye evrei*, 1884), "Fish Soup Without Fish" (*Ucha bez ryby*, 1886), "The Tale of Theodore the Christian and His Friend Abraham the Hebrew" (*Skazanie o Fedore-christianine i o druge ego Abrame-židovine*, 1886). It is precisely by looking at the fictional works of Nikolaj Leskov that we get a particularly clear picture of the evolution of the writer's views on the Jewish question.

The essence of this evolution may be summed up as follows: Leskov moves from a feeling of sympathy toward Jews – evident in every one of his "Jewish" texts, but especially so in "Episcopal Justice" and "Yid Sommersault," the latter focused on the cruel treatment of Jews in the Russian Army – toward a full acceptance of Jewish faith and culture. Leskov's last major story to deal with the Jewish theme was the "The Tale of Theodore the Christian and His Friend Abraham the Hebrew," wherein he definitively equates Christianity and Judaism, arguing that in the eyes of God these two religions are equal.

"The Tale of Theodore the Christian" belongs to a cycle of tales, all based on the Old Russian "Prologue" (a collection that includes brief lives of saints, accounts of the major church holidays and instructive narratives for every day of the year). Leskov based his story on the "Tale of Theodor the Merchant, who Borrowed Money from a Jew" (October 31), but kept only the final portion of that text. At the same time, the meaning of the original is completely changed in the short story. (Deržavina 1978, 166; McLean 1977, 431).

The tale included in the "Prologue" sets out to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and in its finale the Jew, struck by the moral beauty of the Christian, undergoes a conversion, similarly to the boy's father in "Episcopal Justice." In Leskov's version of the tale the two protagonists keep to their own faith, and the tale ends with Theodor and Abram resolving to build together a great shelter for all poor children, regardless of their faith. Throughout the story Leskov repeatedly stresses the idea that

intolerance toward religious views is contrary to the law of Christian love, thus we find him a proponent of religious tolerance well ahead of his time. This is the final stage in the evolution of Leskov's position with regard to the Jewish question. It would not be a stretch to suppose that its logic and final outcome were determined by the author's personal circumstances: his early years of service in the Treasury Chamber, personal impressions and his continuous exposure to the discrimination of the Jewish population.

8. Conclusion

The materials kept in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine confirmed my suppositions that the conscription of Jewish boys, as well as the inner workings of the Treasury Chamber's conscription bureau, are described in the story "Episcopal Justice" with nearly documentary accuracy.

Moreover, one of the documents we came across (the petition of Jos Volodarskij) is strikingly reminiscent of certain key elements in Leskov's narrative: we may, therefore, conclude that this incident or another one like it played an important role in the conception of the story. Finally, materials from the office of the Kiev Metropolitan permit us to speculate that Filaret Amfiteatrov's indulgent treatment of the Jews – and consequently his personal involvement in the difficult task of rescuing a Jewish boy from wrongful conscription – may well have been historically accurate. At the same time, Governor I. Vasil'čikov's liberal attitude toward the Jewish minority may have contributed to the Metropolitan's decision to come to the boy's aid.

In sum, I suggest that the story's subtitle "True story. From recent recollections" is not one of Leskov's literary tricks and mystifications, but rather points to historical events that took place in Kiev at the end of the 1840s and beginning of the 1850s. At the same time, the principal concerns of the story lie beyond the boundaries of everyday reality, in the realm of biblical and literary associations. On the one hand, "Episcopal Justice" became the first in a series of stories by Leskov devoted entirely to the Jewish question. On the other, it continued the exploration of a theme particularly important to the author: that of Christianity as a religion of love, which knows "neither Greek nor Jew" (Colossians 3:11). In his gradual working out of this idea, Leskov moved from the fictional story based on true events toward such forms as the parable, the legend, the fable, which emphasized the universal character of the religious and humanist values he championed.

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