

# Religious Activists Involved in Spat With Navalny's Progress Party

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Arkady Chaplygin, head of the St. Petersburg branch of the Progress Party.

A group of Orthodox Christian activists have become embroiled in a spat with Alexei Navalny's political party after the head of the party's St. Petersburg branch said in his blog that the Bible should be classified as "extremist literature."

The Progress Party's Arkady Chaplygin asked numerous prosecutors in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region to ban the Bible or at least prevent it from being disseminated to minors.

Chaplygin also said that he admires the ethical teachings of Christ and the selfless deeds of the great Orthodox saints, but that the Orthodox Church has become "a cross between the ideological department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's central committee and the State Security Services."

His comments have prompted an angry response from the God's Will movement, who want

the party's financing to be examined, Interfax reported Thursday.

Dmitry Enteo, head of God's Will, said his movement also requested that investigators check Chaplygin's comments for possible violations of the law on combating extremism and the law on protecting religious feelings.

Enteo said that Chaplygin's proposal is comparable to Navalny's defense of LGBT rights, and that same-sex relationships are viewed as a sin in the Bible. Furthermore, Enteo compared the Progress Party to the U.S. Democratic Party.

"These forces are implanting liberal values worldwide, advocating the destruction of the traditional family and Christian morality," Enteo said. "It is not surprising that in Russia the ideological branch of such an influential organization was promoting homosexuality, abortion, and conflict with the Orthodox Church. We hope that law enforcement agencies will look into the activities of this group of individuals who have once again decided to spit on the soul of our people."

This is not the first time that the God's Will has been in the spotlight. In November, Enteo and a female accomplice disrupted a performance of Oscar Wilde's "The Ideal Husband" at the Chekhov Moscow Art Theater, admonishing the audience for tolerating blasphemy.

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