CHRISTIAN POWER IN THE AGE OF REASON
From the Fall of Constantinople to the French Revolution (1453-1789)

Vladimir Moss

© Vladimir Moss, 2010
FOREWORD ................................................................. 4
PART I. THE AGE OF PROTEST (1453-1689) ............................................................ 6
1. THE WEST: THE ASSAULT ON AUTHORITY ....................................................... 7
   Introduction: The Idea of Liberty ................................................................. 7
   Renaissance Humanism ............................................................................. 15
   Machiavelli’s Prince ............................................................................... 20
   Jewish Rationalism ............................................................................... 25
   Protestant Rationalism .......................................................................... 30
   Luther on Church and State .................................................................. 38
   Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More ....................................................... 43
   Calvin on Church and State .................................................................. 46
   The Counter-Reformation ..................................................................... 51
   The Church of England ......................................................................... 55
   Holland: the First Capitalist State ....................................................... 61
   The Old Testament in the New World ................................................. 67
   The Anglican Monarchy ....................................................................... 72
   The Rise of Parliament ......................................................................... 76
   The Divine Right of Kings .................................................................... 80
   English Radicalism ............................................................................... 85
   The Killing of the King ......................................................................... 88
   The Scientific Outlook ........................................................................... 93
2. THE EAST: MUSCOVITE RUSSIA ................................................................. 100
   Orthodoxy under the Turkish Yoke .................................................. 100
   The Struggle for Romania ................................................................... 104
   The Rise of the Muscovite Great Princes ........................................... 106
   The Church in Muscovy ....................................................................... 112
   The Heresy of the Judaizers ................................................................ 119
   Possessors and Non-Possessors .......................................................... 128
   St. Maximus the Greek ....................................................................... 133
   Ivan the Terrible: (1) The Orthodox Tsar .......................................... 135
   Ivan the Terrible: (2) The Bloodthirsty Tyrant .................................... 139
   Was Ivan Orthodox? ........................................................................... 149
   The Moscow Patriarchate ................................................................... 155
   Poles, Cossacks and Jews ................................................................... 160
   Orthodoxy and the Unia .................................................................... 163
   The Gregorian Calendar ..................................................................... 170
   The Russian Time of Troubles ............................................................ 172
   The Hereditary Principle .................................................................... 183
   Tsar, Patriarch and People .................................................................. 191
   The Schism of the Old Ritualists ....................................................... 195
   Patriarch Nicon of Moscow ................................................................ 204
   The False Council of 1666-1667 ......................................................... 208
   The Rebellion of the Streltsy ............................................................... 218
   The Antichrist in Turkey .................................................................... 223
   The Serbs under the Turkish Yoke ..................................................... 227
PART II. THE AGE OF ABSOLUTISM (1689-1789) ........................................... 233
3. THE WEST: DESCENTS AND PHILOSOPHERS ............................................. 234
   Hobbes’ Leviathan ............................................................................. 234
   Locke’s Theory of the Social Contract ............................................... 240
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Critique of Social Contract Theory</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Absolutism</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Idea of Religious Toleration</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism and the Jews</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jews in England</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Isaac Newton</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England: the Conservative Enlightenment</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France: The Radical Enlightenment</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlightened Despotism</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume: the Irrationalism of Rationalism</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kant and Schiller: the Reaffirmation of Will</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamann and Herder: The Denial of Universalism</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rousseau and the General Will</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikhomirov on the General Will</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Concepts of Freedom</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foundation of Freemasonry</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freemasonry and Ecumenism</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grand Orient</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freemasonry and the Jews</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Revolution</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Awakening</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America and Religious Toleration</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe versus the World</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Enlightenment Programme: A Critique</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. THE EAST: THE PETERSBURG EMPIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Holy Rus’ to Great Russia</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter and the West</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter’s Leviathan</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orthodox under the Austrian Yoke</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rise of the Phanariots</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsar Peter and the Orthodox East</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was Peter an Orthodox Tsar?</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The German Persecution of Orthodoxy</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsaritsa Elizabeth</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine II</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pugachev’s Rebellion</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland: Nation without a State</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine and the Jews</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine and the Masons</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

As free, and not using your liberty
As a cloak of maliciousness,
But as the servants of God.
I Peter 2.16.

This book is designed as a successor to my previous book, The Mystery of Christian Power, which studied the theory and practice of Christian Statehood in the ancient and medieval worlds until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. The present volume aims to take this story on into the early modern period, through the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, to the threshold of the French Revolution.

The Renaissance-Reformation represents the first major turning point in the history of the West since its falling away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in the eleventh century. It purported to free men from the fetters of medieval scholasticism, to bring the light of reason to bear on every aspect of human life, and even the revelations of religion, and to raise the common man to that potential that he would supposedly be capable of achieving if he were not enslaved to the tyranny of priests and kings. It was not, however, a revolutionary movement in the sense that it overthrew all traditional knowledge in principle. On the contrary, in order to correct what it saw as the distortions of the Middle Ages, it appealed to the authority of the still more ancient past, the past of pagan Greece and Rome and the early Church. And as late as the English revolution in the mid-seventeenth century both sides passionately and sincerely appealed to arguments drawn from Holy Scripture. In other words, it was a believing age, a Christian age, even if a heretical one; and in Muscovite Russia there still existed one of the great and right-believing Christian kingdoms.

However, the Enlightenment, the second major turning-point in post-Orthodox Western history, took a decisive step further. No authority, whether pagan, patristic, scholastic or scriptural, was held sacred or immune from the ravages of unfettered reason. And this rampant rationalism, with “liberty” as its slogan, begat the first truly “great” revolution, the French, which for the first time, openly and triumphantly, tried to écraser l’infâme of Christianity and replace it with a new, revolutionary religion.

As in my earlier book, I have found it useful to construct my narrative in pairs of chapters, with one chapter in each pair describing developments in the Orthodox East and the other - in the Catholic and Protestant West. The chapters on the East describe the unification of the Russian lands around Muscovy, the gradual ascendancy of the secular over the ecclesiastical power, and the abolition of the patriarchate and the symphony of powers under Peter the Great and his successors. The chapters on the West describe the impact of
the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment on ideas about Church-State relations, and the pulsating struggle for dominance between absolutist and democratic polities. I describe developments in the West first, because in this period, by comparison with the medieval period, the political, military and cultural – but not spiritual - pre-eminence passes from East to West, with the East striving to guard its Orthodox heritage from invasion from the West. Sadly, with the passing of time this heritage becomes more and more polluted with foreign elements, so that the distinction between the truly Christian civilization of the East and the pseudo-Christian one of the West becomes less and less clear-cut. But the essential difference between the two remains, and remains the main theme of my book.

Among the large number of sources and authors I have used, I should like to make particular mention of Protopriest Lev Lebedev, L.A. Tikhomirov, M.V. Zyzykin, C.S. Lewis and Sir Isaiah Berlin.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us! Amen.

April 8/21, 2010.
PART I. THE AGE OF PROTEST (1453-1689)
1. THE WEST: THE ASSAULT ON AUTHORITY

The chief gift of nature... is freedom.
Leonardo da Vinci.

He who becomes master of a city accustomed to freedom and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it, for in rebellion it has always the watchword of liberty...
Machiavelli, The Prince, chapter V.

It is lawful and hath been held so through all ages for anyone who has the power to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King, and after due conviction to depose and put him to death.

Introduction: The Idea of Liberty

With the fall of the New Rome of Constantinople in 1453, the last incarnation of the traditional concept of Romanity (Romanitas in Latin, Ρωμαϊκότητα in Greek), that is, the religio-political unity of the Christian commonwealth, disappeared from its ancient homeland, the Mediterranean basin. (Its revival in the north, in Russia, is the subject of the next chapter.) It was replaced by the absolutist empire of the Ottomans, one of a trio of absolutist Muslim empires – the others were Safavid Persia and Moghul India – that reached their peak in the coming century. In the West, meanwhile, the papist-feudal corruption of the traditional concept of Romanity was also breaking down. The so-called “symphony of powers” between the Roman papacy and the Holy Roman Empire of the Hohenzollerns had never been a reality; and now both the papacy was under attack and the empire was a shadow of its former self. Europe (we shall use this term from now on to designate only Western Europe) seemed on the verge of disintegration; and the future seemed to belong to the much more populous, united and by no means unsophisticated absolutist empires to the East – the three Muslim empires of Western and Southern Asia, and the Confucian empire of the Ming dynasty in Eastern Asia.

But the Europeans recovered. Not only did they hold their own against the Muslim onslaught, reconquering the whole of Spain and defeating the Ottomans outside Vienna: by the eighteenth century they were making great inroads into the older civilizations of the East – and this in spite of constant internece warfare in the European homeland. The causes of the emergence of this extraordinarily dynamic – but also extraordinarily destructive – European civilization is the subject of this chapter.

After the re-acquaintance of the West with the political ideas of antiquity during the Renaissance, the way was open for the development of a completely new theory of politics, a theory based, not on theology and the
order ordained by God, but on nature, specifically fallen human nature, with the aim of creating a new order that would satisfy the demands of that nature.

Of course, the Christian understanding of politics did not disappear overnight; and the new era was distinguished both by attempts, on the one hand, to justify monarchy, the so-called Divine Right of kings, and on the other, to justify revolutionary and democratic forms of government, on the basis of Holy Scripture. But the general tendency was to disconnect politics from religion – or, at any rate, from the Christian religion – with enormous consequences for the theory and practice of government.

Just as peace among men – secular peace, the Pax Romana – had been the key ideal of the Roman Empire, and peace with God – that is, right faith and the works of faith – the ideal of the Christian Roman Empire, so liberty has been the goal of European civilisation from the Renaissance to the present day. “Imagine,” writes Fernand Braudel, “that it might be possible to assemble the sum total of our knowledge of European history from the fifth century to the present, or perhaps to the eighteenth century, and to record it (if such a recording were conceivable) in an electronic memory. Imagine that the computer was then asked to indicate the one problem which recurred most frequently, in time and space, throughout this lengthy history. Without a doubt, that problem is liberty, or rather liberties. The word liberty is the operative word.

“The very fact that, in the twentieth-century conflict ideologies, the Western world has chosen to call itself ‘the free world’, however mixed its motives, is both fair and appropriate in view of Europe’s history during these many centuries.

“The word liberty has to be understood in all its connotations, including such pejorative senses as in ‘taking liberties’. All liberties, in fact, threaten each other: one limits another, and later succumbs to a further rival. This process has never been peaceful…”

Of course, freedom was an important concept in antiquity, too: the Greeks defeated the Persians in the name of freedom, and Brutus killed Caesar in the name of freedom. And the revival of its importance in the Renaissance owed much to the general revival of the ideas and values of pagan antiquity caused by the flight of classical scholars from Byzantium to the West after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. For it is a sad fact that what the West imbibed from Byzantium was not so much its eternally valid and valuable concepts of Orthodoxy and Romanity, as the pagan ideas of the civilization it replaced. However, there were several other important factors that made the idea of freedom of such importance at the beginning of the modern era.

1 Braudel, op. cit., pp. 315-316.
First there was the gradual increase in \textit{economic} freedom. Thus beginning already in the twelfth century we see the rise of free crafts, guilds and lodges (such as the stonemasons’ lodges, which developed into Freemasonry). These first chinks in the prison of feudal servitude appeared in the towns, which consequently began to acquire independent or semi-independent status, especially in North Italy, the Netherlands and Germany.

The liberty of the towns was by no means an unmixed blessing. “Egoistic, vigilant and ferocious, towns were ready to defend their liberties against the rest of the world, often with very great courage and sometimes without any concern for the liberties of the others. Bloodthirsty wars between cities were the forerunner of the national wars to come.”\textsuperscript{2}

Now the towns were built on \textit{commerce}, and commerce was built on the \textit{commercial contract}. Therefore it is not surprising that the dominant theory of politics developed by town-dwellers came to be the theory of the \textit{social contract}. Just as the basic form of relationship between men in the Middle Ages had been the feudal contract between lord and vassal, which was reflected in the medieval feudal theory of politics (i.e. the pope is the supreme lord, and the princes are his vassals), so the basic form of relationship between men in the early modern period became (although not immediately and by no means everywhere) the more egalitarian contract between buyer and seller, which was correspondingly reflected in the more egalitarian and exchange-based theories of the social contract: that is, the people have entered into a contract with their rulers whereby they buy security in exchange for obedience.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{2}Braudel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 322.

\textsuperscript{3}As McClelland writes, “it is certainly easy enough to find contract-sounding notions in the political thought of Europe before the Reformation. Socrates himself is supposed to have said that the reason why he did not use the opportunity to escape from the rigour of the Athenian justice which had condemned him was that he had always lived in the city and so had implicitly agreed to abide by its laws. The coronation rituals of medieval kings were shot through with contract notions. Kings received the blessing of Holy Church in return for promising to protect true religion and the Church as its earthly embodiment, received the homage of the barons in return for confirming them in their privileges, and were acclaimed by the people who expected kings to protect them from the wilder vagaries of men and nature. And all oaths of allegiance are to some extent contractual. In this sense feudalism was riddled with contract, but feudal contracts were not free in any real sense because sons always claimed the right to make contract with feudal superiors on the same terms as their fathers... Of course, there is no end to the business of finding contract notions in political thought before the Reformation, but the fact remains that before then contract was never given as the basis for political society (with the great exception of the Jews, of which more later).

“It might also be said that before the Reformation there was never a serious case to be made out for disobedience. This does not mean that everyone before then was always satisfied with the political authority which required their obedience, but it might mean that before the rise of social contract there was always a presumption in favour of obedience. The common law of Christendom was supposed to be binding on all men, rulers and ruled, and being God’s Law, there could never be a case for disobedience. Matters became slightly more complicated, but not much, at the level of political practice. Suppose that the laws which require my obedience imperfectly express God’s Law. How does that affect my duty to obey?
It was especially in England, and a little later in France and Spain, that the idea of political freedom emerged in the context of the king’s attempts to define his relationship with other centres of power within his kingdom, notably the Church and the barons. Important instruments of his power were his courts of justice, to which both churchmen and barons resorted to settle disputes, and the office of the exchequer, which imposed taxes on all estates of the land. But churchmen and barons sought to protect themselves from the ever-increasing demands of the exchequer, whence Magna Carta and the first rudimentary parliaments.

W.M. Spellman writes: “Ideally, the medieval monarch was expected to ‘live on his own’ or manage the affairs of the kingdom on the basis of revenues derived from his estates and from his traditional feudal prerogatives. In such a context, monarchs who attempted to wrest monies from their leading subjects without their consent, or for purposes at odds with the priorities of the landed elite, found themselves locked in stalemate and in some cases facing direct resistance. Developing out of the feudal compact where the vassal’s performance of specific services was exchanged for royal protection and the use of land, kings could not arbitrarily usurp the property rights of their leading subjects without serious consequences. Most often in the feudal setting the king called together his leading vassals in order to solicit their advice and support. These unpretentious meetings, alternatively called colloquia, concilia, conventus, curiae or tractatus, featured both fluid membership and varied agendas. And as financial, military, economic and

At first sight, it might appear that it affects my duty to obey a great deal. I might be tempted to say that human law which imperfectly embodies God’s Law is no law at all. That would be to say that I would obey no ruler except God Himself, and that would turn me into a millenarian, obedient to no-one on earth until Christ and His Saints return to rule for a thousand years. A refusal to obey any earthly law would effectively make me into an anarchist. Besides, what I would be forgetting is that earthly law is, by definition, an imperfect embodiment of God’s Law. No matter how well-intentioned earthly rulers are, no matter how mindful of the Church’s teaching, no matter how saintly the king, all law made or declared by earthly law-givers is going to be, sub specie aeternitatis, bad law. Some laws are better than others, and medieval thinkers had in fact disagreed about how good law which was not God’s Law could be, but none could be wholly good. In these circumstances, the purist would always be in the position of saying that at best he was almost, but not quite, bound by law, so he would be almost, but not quite, bound to obey. Either you obey or you don’t (you can’t almost, but not quite, obey), so you would either be always bound to obey, in which case political obligation would not be a problem, or you would never obey, in which case political obligation is not a problem either. Neither complete acceptance, nor complete rejection is really an attempt to deal with political obligation: either you would always obey or you would never obey, and that would be that.

“Political obligation, then, only becomes a problem – something worth thinking seriously about – when there is a serious case for disobedience in the minds of men who are prepared to obey law, even though law is imperfect, but not that law, or not that law made by him. Law becomes in some sense a matter for negotiation between rulers and subjects; in short, a matter of agreement or contract...” (A History of Western Political Thought, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 172, 173)
administrative problems became more complex, larger and more structured assemblies were called by the monarch.

“Formal representative assemblies emerged in most European countries – Spain, Sicily, Hungary, England, France, the Scandinavian countries, various German principalities – during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for a number of related reasons, but the key involved the need for monarchs to access sources of wealth not under their direct control as feudal lords. Increasingly after 1000 the cost of pursuing wider military objectives grew substantially across Europe. This was particularly true in the case of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century wars between England and France, where monarchs on both sides were pressed repeatedly to find additional sources of income.

“The word parlamentum was first coined in the thirteenth century, and by that time it was being applied to meetings of the unelected feudal council. Both the economic and social structures of European kingdoms were quite unique in comparison to the other major world civilizations, where nothing like Western parliaments ever emerged. Comparatively speaking, only in Europe were power and wealth distributed in a fairly diffuse fashion. The basic structure of medieval parliaments, including as they did representatives of clergy, nobles and commoners from towns and cities, was reflective of this important distribution of income and land. It was in this context that the English king’s royal council, for example, normally composed of important churchmen and aristocrats, expanded during the course of the thirteenth century to include new urban elites for the purpose of gaining consent to special taxation.”

This development was the result, first, of the Magna Carta of 1215, and then of the temporarily successful rebellion of Simon de Montfort against King Henry III in 1264. Simon brought not only bishops and barons, but also important burghers, into the king’s council. And he introduced the idea – later abrogated – that if the king broke his contract with the leading men of the kingdom, they could take up arms against him.

Of course, the idea that politics was based on a contract between rulers and ruled did not immediately bring real political freedom in its train. On the contrary, at the beginning of our period the trend was in the opposite direction, towards absolutism, the idea that the ruler is under no obligations to his people or to any human institution. As the Wars of the Roses came to an end in England and France, and the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand united Castile and Aragon in Spain, these countries developed powerful monarchies that were little beholden to their fledgling national parliaments. The boundaries between states, which had been somewhat blurred by the feudal order, became sharper and more concentrated territorially. This led to

the growth of nationalism around the person of the monarch, although this feeling was still covered with a cloak of religiosity, as Erasmus complained: “For in France they say God is on the French side and they can never be overcome that have God for their protector; in England and Spain the cry is, the war is not the King’s but God’s.”

In the case of the Latin monarchies, this religiosity, and the specific obligations still felt towards the papacy, kept the growth of absolutism somewhat in check. But even among the Protestant monarchies absolutism could never be as absolute as it was in the non-Christian East. For, as we have seen, the idea of contract, of rights and obligations, and therefore of being absolved (absolutus) or not absolved from certain obligations, was implanted in European man from his feudal past. For centuries European history had been riven by conflicts over rights: the rights of popes as opposed to the rights of emperors, the rights of lords as opposed to the rights of vassals, the rights of kings as opposed to the rights of barons and burgthers. And the rapid development of law, both ecclesiastical and royal, in the medieval period had accentuated the concept of individual or human rights generally. Moreover, Protestant kings, though absolved, unlike their Catholic colleagues, from obligation to a trans-national religious institution, still felt obliged, as believers in a believing society, to defend the faith of their subjects. But this meant that the idea of religious freedom, and of the closely related ideas of freedom of the mind and conscience, was slower in developing than those of political or economic freedom, with the result that the early modern period was a period of great religious intolerance.

However, the seeds of the idea of religious freedom, too, had already been sown - in the scholastic and conciliar movements of the later Middle Ages, and in heretical movements such as the French Albigensians, the English Lollards and the Czech Hussites. It was given a further important impulse in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as a result of the spirit of inquiry let loose by the Renaissance. And when religious passions began to cool in the late seventeenth century, the idea of religious freedom came into its own, with rulers changing their role from prosecutors of the national religious idea to preservers of the religious peace among their multi-confessional subjects. In fact, we can already see the beginnings of this transition in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England, who chose the via media of Anglicanism in order to keep the religious peace among her subjects...

The period under discussion (1453-1689) was an epoch of greatly increasing complexity and variety in European culture. The dominant ideas of medieval Europe had been basically two: Catholicism and Feudalism, as in the earlier period there had been two: Orthodoxy and Autocracy. But any list of the dominant ideas of early modern Europe must include, in addition to these, the various ideas of economic, social, political and religious freedom.

---

mentioned above, together with perhaps the most revolutionary idea of all – the all-sufficiency of scientific method for the finding of truth. This extreme cultural richness and diversity explains in part why Europe, under the influence of these new libertarian ideas, did not move immediately to more democratic forms of government, but even evolved despotic governments more powerful than any seen in medieval times, such as the England of Elizabeth I, the Spain of Philip II or the France of Louis XIV. The point is, as K.N. Leontiev has explained, that cultural diversity and richness require a strong autocratic power to hold them together and give them form, as it were. “As long as there are estates, as long as provinces are not similar, as long as education is different in various levels of society, as long as claims are not identical, as long as tribes and religions are not levelled in a general indifferentism, a more or less centralized power is a necessity.”

Archbishop Averky of Syracuse has emphasized the dual character of the modern quest for freedom – both Christian protest and antichristian rebellion. He considered the epoch of the “Renaissance” to be “a reaction to the perverted Christianity of the West” since the fall of the papacy in the eleventh century. But at the same time it “was in essence a denial of Christianity and a return to the ideals of paganism.”

The Renaissance proclaimed the cult of a strong, healthy, beautiful human flesh, and to the spirit of Christian humility it opposed the spirit of self-opinion, self-reliance, and the deification of human ‘reason’.

"As a protest against perverted Christianity, on the soil of the same humanistic ideal that recognised ‘reason’ as the highest criterion of life, there appeared in the West a religious movement which received the name of ‘Protestantism’. Protestantism with its countless branches of all kinds of sects not only radically distorted the whole teaching of true Christianity, but also rejected the very dogma of the Church, placing man himself as his own highest authority, and even going so far as to deny faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Church.

"Puffed-up human pride finally falls completely away from God, and begins boldly to deny even the very existence of God, and man proclaims himself to be as it were a god. Seized with pride, self-opinion and reliance on his own limitless powers, possibilities and capacities, man brought up on the ideals of the ‘Renaissance’ no longer sees any obligation for himself to strive for the spiritual perfection enjoined by the Gospel, and by a natural progression descends deeper and deeper into the abyss of spiritual fall and moral corruption. Into the foreground there steps the service of the flesh, as a consequence of which spiritual demands are more and more stifled, suppressed and, finally, so as once and for all to finish with the unpleasant

---

voice of conscience which lives in the spirit of man, the spirit itself is declared
to be non-existent.

"In this way, there appears 'materialism' - a natural child of 'humanism', a
natural and logical development of its idea. The ideal of the full stomach,
covered by the raucous 'doctrine' going by the name of 'the ideal of social
justice', 'social righteousness', became the highest ideal of humanity which
had denied Christ. And this is understandable! The so-called 'social question'
could not have taken hold if people had remained faithful to true Christianity
incarnate in life.

"On the soil of materialism, in its turn, there naturally grew, as a strictly
logical consequence, the doctrines of 'Socialism' and 'Marxism-Communism'.
Humanism and materialism, having denied the spiritual principle in man,
proclaimed man himself to be a 'god' and legitimised human pride and
animal egoism as self-sacrificing, and came to the conclusion that savage
struggle should be made the law of human life, on the soil of the constant
conflict of interests of egoistical human beings. As a result of this so-called
'struggle for existence', stronger, cleverer, craftier people would naturally
begin to constrain and oppress the less strong, less clever and less crafty. The
law of Christ, which commands us to bear one another's burdens (Galatians
6.2), and not to please ourselves (Acts 15.29), but to love one's neighbour as
oneself (Matthew 22.39), was expelled from life. And so so-called 'social evil'
and 'social injustices' began to increase and multiply, together with the 'social
ulcers' of society. And since life was made more and more intolerable, as a
consequence of the ever-increasing egoism and violence of people towards
each other, there was naturally some reason to think about establishing for all
a single tolerable and acceptable order of life. Hence 'Socialism', and then its
extreme expression, 'Communism', became fashionable doctrines, which
promised people deliverance from all 'social injustices' and the establishment
on earth of a peaceful and serenely paradisial life, in which everyone would
be happy and content. But these teachings determined to cure the ulcers of
human society by unsuitable means. They did not see that the evil of
contemporary life is rooted in the depths of the human soul which has fallen
away from the uniquely salvific Gospel teaching, and naively thought that it
would be enough to change the imperfect, in their opinion, structure of
political and social life for there to be immediately born on earth prosperity
for all, and life would become paradise. For this inevitable, as they affirmed,
and beneficial change, the more extreme Socialists, as, for example, the
Communists, even proposed violent measures, going so far as the shedding of
blood and the physical annihilation of people who did not agree with them.
In other words: they thought to conquer evil by evil, this evil being still more
bitter and unjust because of their cruelty and mercilessness.

"'The Great French Revolution', which shed whole rivers of human blood,
was the first of their attempts. It clearly demonstrated that men are powerless
to build their life on earth without God, and to what terrible consequences man is drawn by his apostasy from Christ and His saving teaching.\textsuperscript{7}

\textit{Renaissance Humanism}

The first stage in the rise of Europe was Renaissance humanism. Let us look at the meaning of the words, “humanism” and “Renaissance” respectively.

“Humanism,” writes Perez Zagorin, “first originated in Italy in the fourteenth century as an educational and cultural program aiming at a revival and deeper knowledge of the languages, literature, and civilization of classical antiquity. The subjects it pursued, from which its name is derived, were the humanities, or studia humanitatis, including grammar and rhetoric, or the arts of language, philology, history, moral philosophy, and poetry. The humanists, those who cultivated these studies, were an intellectual elite made up of teachers, scholars, churchmen, civic officials, secretaries to kings and prelates, diplomats, and men of letters who were devoted to the works of Greek and Roman writes, in which they found a model for literary imitation and the inspiration for a fresh ideal of culture and of living."\textsuperscript{8}

However, “the Renaissance,” writes Norman Davies, “did not merely refer to the burgeoning interest in classical art and learning, for such a revival had been gathering pace ever since the twelfth century. Nor did it involve either a total rejection of medieval values or a sudden return to the world view of Greece and Rome. Least of all did it involve the conscious abandonment of Christian belief. The term renatio or ‘rebirth’ was a Latin calque for a Greek theological term, palingenesis, used in the sense of ‘spiritual rebirth’ or ‘resurrection from the dead’. The essence of the Renaissance lay not in any sudden rediscovery of classical civilisation but rather in the use which was made of classical models to test the authority underlying conventional taste and wisdom. It is incomprehensible without reference to the depths of disrepute into which the medieval Church, the previous fount of all authority, had fallen. In this the Renaissance was part and parcel of the same movement which resulted in religious reforms. In the longer term, it was the first stage in the evolution which led via the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution to the Enlightenment. It was the spiritual force which cracked the mould of medieval civilisation, setting in motion the long process of disintegration which gradually gave birth to ‘modern Europe’.

\textsuperscript{7}Archbishop Averky (Taushev), "O Polozhenii Pravoslavnogo Khristianina v Sovremennom Mire" (On the Situation of the Orthodox Christian in the Contemporary World), Istinnoe Pravoslavie i Sovremennij Mir (True Orthodoxy in the Contemporary World), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1971, pp. 19-21 (in Russian).

“In that process, the Christian religion was not abandoned. But the power of the Church was gradually corralled within the religious sphere: the influence of religion increasingly limited to the realm of private conscience. As a result the speculations of theologians, scientists, and philosophers, the work of artists and writers, and the policies of princes were freed from the control of a Church with monopoly powers and ‘totalitarian’ pretensions. The prime quality of the Renaissance has been defined as ‘independence of mind’. Its ideal was a person who, by mastering all branches of art and thought, need depend on no outside authority for the formation of knowledge, tastes, and beliefs. Such a person was l’uomo universale, the ‘complete man’.

“The principal product of the new thinking lay in a growing conviction that humanity was capable of mastering the world in which it lived. The great Renaissance figures were filled with self-confidence. They felt that God-given ingenuity could, and should, be used to unravel the secrets of God’s universe; and that, by extension, man’s fate on earth could be controlled and improved...

“Humanism is a label given to the wider intellectual movement of which the New Learning was both precursor and catalyst. It was marked by a fundamental shift from the theocratic or God-centred world-view of the Middles Ages to the anthropocentric or man-centred view of the Renaissance. Its manifesto may be seen to have been written by Pico’s treatise On the Dignity of Man; and, in time, it diffused all branches of knowledge and art. It is credited with the concept of human personality, created by a new emphasis on the uniqueness and worth of individuals. It is credited with the birth of history, as the study of the processes of change, and hence of the notion of progress; and it is connected with the stirrings of science – that is, the principle that nothing should be taken as true unless it can be tried and demonstrated. In religious thought, it was a necessary precondition for Protestant emphasis on the individual conscience. In art, it was accompanied by a renewed interest in the human body and in the uniqueness of human faces. In politics it gave emphasis to the idea of the sovereign state as opposed to the community of Christendom, and hence to the beginnings of modern nationality. The sovereign nation-state is the collective counterpart of the autonomous human person.

“Both in its fondness for pagan antiquity and in its insistence on the exercise of man’s critical faculties, Renaissance humanism contradicted the prevailing modes and assumptions of Christian practice. Notwithstanding its intentions, traditionalists believed that it was destructive of religion, and

---

9 Pico’s man-centred world-view is evident in the following: “O sublime generosity of God the Father! O highest and most wonderful felicity of Man! To him it was granted to be what he wills. The Father endowed him with all kinds of seeds and with the germs of every way of life. Whatever seeds each man cultivates will grow and bear fruit in him” (On the Dignity of Man). (V.M.)
ought to have been restrained. Five hundred years later, when the disintegration of Christendom was far more advanced, it has been seen by many Christian theologians as the source of all the rot…”

Thus Étienne Gilson defined Renaissance humanism as the Middle Ages “not plus humanity but minus God”. This definition needs to be heavily qualified. On the one hand, as the Reformers were to point out with vehemence, medieval Christianity in the West was often far from fervent or profound, being corrupt both in doctrine and in works. And on the other hand, the Renaissance led naturally into the era of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which was full of religious passion, moral earnestness and doctrinal enquiry. Nevertheless, in essence one must agree with Braudel’s verdict that humanism’s “acute awareness of humanity’s vast and varied potential prepared the way, in the fullness of time, for all the revolutions of modern times, including atheism”.

Again, Braudel writes: “The intellectual ferment of the Renaissance, and that of the Reformation in so far as it raised the principle of individual interpretation of revealed truth, laid the bases for freedom of conscience. Renaissance humanism preached respect for the greatness of the human being as an individual: it stressed personal intelligence and ability. Virtù, in fifteenth-century Italy, meant not virtue but glory, effectiveness, and power. Intellectually, the ideal was l’uomo universale as described by Leon Battista Alberti – an all-rounder himself. In the seventeenth century, with Descartes,

---

12 Alberti’s biography hardly mentions him as an artist, and says nothing at all about his great significance in the history of architecture. Jacob Burkhart writes of him: “Of his various gymnastic feats and exercises we read with astonishment how, with his feet together, he could spring over a man’s head; how, in the cathedral, he threw a coin in the air till it was heard to ring against the distant roof; how the wildest horses trembled under him. In three things he desired to appear faultless to others, in walking, in riding, and in speaking. He learned music without a master, and yet his compositions were admired by professional judges. Under the pressure of poverty, he studied both civil and canonical law for many years, till exhaustion brought on a severe illness. In his twenty-fourth year, finding his memory for words weakened, but his sense of facts unimpaired, he set to work at physics and mathematics. And all the while he acquired every sort of accomplishment and dexterity, cross-examining artists, scholars and artisans of all descriptions, down to the cobblers, about the secrets and peculiarities of their craft. Painting and modelling he performed by the way, and especially excelled in admirable likenesses from memory. Great admiration was excited by his mysterious camera obscura, in which he showed at one time the stars and the moon rising over rocky hills, at another wide landscapes without mountains and gulfs receding into dim perspective, and with fleets advancing on the waters in shade or sunshine. And that which others created he welcomed joyfully, and held every human achievement which followed the laws of beauty for something almost divine. To all this must be added his literary works, first of all those on art, which are landmarks and authorities of the first order for the Renaissance of form, especially in architecture; then his Latin prose writings – novels and other works – of which some have been taken for productions of antiquity; his elegies, eclogues and humorous dinner-speeches. He also wrote an Italian treatise on domestic life in four books; and even a funeral oration on his dog. His serious and witty sayings were
a whole philosophical system stemmed from *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I exist) - *individual* thought. The philosophical importance thus attached to the individual coincided with the abandonment of traditional values...”13

Renaissance humanism represents a revival of paganism in a Christian guise. We see this especially in the arts sponsored by the Renaissance popes, and in their own style of life.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: “In modern times the pagan life appeared first of all in the bosom of papism; the pagan feelings and taste of the papists were expressed with particular vividness in the application of the arts to the subjects of religion, in painted and sculpted representations of the saints, in their Church singing and music, in their religious poetry. All their schools bear upon themselves the mark of sinful passions, especially the love of pleasure; they have neither the feeling of simplicity, nor the feelings of purity and spirituality. Such are their Church music and singing. Their poets, in depicting the liberation of Jerusalem and the Lord’s Sepulchre, did not flinch from evoking the muse; he sang of Sion in one breath with Halicon, from the muse he passed on to the Archangel Gabriel. The infallible popes, these new idols of Rome, present in themselves images of debauchery, tyranny, atheism and blasphemy against all that is holy. The pagan life with its comedy and tragedy, its dancing, its rejection of shame and decency, its fornication and adultery and other idol-worshipping practices, was resurrected first of all in Rome under the shadow of its gods, the popes, and thence poured out over the whole of Europe.”14

Thus Pope Alexander VI, writes Lev Tikhomirov, “had a string of lovers. In vain did Savanorola thunder against him. Neither the Pope, nor his ‘beautiful Julia’ paid any attention to him. At every Church feast Julia appeared as the thought worth collecting, and specimens of them, many columns long, are quoted in his biography. And all that he had and knew he imparted, as rich natures always do, without the least reserve, giving away his chief discoveries for nothing. But the deepest spring of his nature has yet to be spoken of - the sympathetic intensity with which he entered into the whole life around him. At the sight of noble trees and waving cornfields he shed tears; handsome and dignified old men he honoured as ‘a delight of nature’, and could never look at them enough. Perfectly formed animals won his goodwill as being specially favoured by nature; and more than once, when he was ill, the sight of a beautiful landscape cured him. No wonder that those who saw him in this close and mysterious communion with the world ascribed to him the gift of prophecy. He was said to have foretold a blood catastrophe in the family of Este, the fate of Florence, and the death of the popes years before they happened, and to be able to read into the countenances and hearts of men. It need not be added that an iron will pervaded and sustained his whole personality; like all the great men of the Renaissance, he said, ‘Men can do all things if they will’” (The Civilization of Renaissance Italy, London: Penguin, 1990, pp. 102-103). (V.M.)

13 Braudel, op. cit., p. 326.
lawful wife of the Pope, and when a son was born to her, the Pope immediately recognized him, as he also recognized his other children. His son, Cesare Borgia, was well-known for fratricide. The daughter of the Pope, Lucretia, quarreled with her husband because of her amorous relationships with her own brothers. Of course, Alexander Borgias are not common in the human race, but unbelief, debauchery and the exploitation of religion for filling one’s pockets shamed the Roman Catholic hierarchy too often. Protestantism itself arose because of the most shameless use of indulgences, which upset whole masses of people who had any religious education.

“Of course, sincere Christians were offended by such phenomena and protested. An example is Savanorola, whom Alexander Borgia finally killed through torture and burning as a supposed heretic. However, among people protesting and striving for a true Christian life there often gradually developed heretical thought, which is natural when one has broken from the Church... Other Christians, without entering upon a useless open battle, departed into secret societies, hoping to live in a pure environment and gradually prepare the reform of Christian practice. However, departure from the Church, albeit not open, did not fail to affect them, too. These societies could easily be joined both by heretics and by enemies of Christianity who hid this enmity on the grounds of a criticism of truly shocking behaviour. All these protesting elements were willingly joined by the Jews, who found it easy gradually to pervert the originally Christian feelings of the participants...”

“These modern men,” writes Burckhardt, “the representatives of the culture of Italy, were born with the same religious instincts as other medieval Europeans. But their powerful individuality made them in religion, as in other matters, altogether subjective, and the intense charm which the discovery of the inner and outer universe exercised upon them rendered them markedly worldly. In the rest of Europe religion remained, till a much later period, something given from without, and in practical life egotism and sensuality alternated with devotion and repentance. The latter had no spiritual competitors, as in Italy, or only to a far smaller extent.

“Further, the close and frequent relations of Italy with Byzantium and the Mohammedan peoples had produced a dispassionate tolerance which weakened the ethnographical conception of a privileged Christendom. And when classical antiquity with its men and institutions became an ideal of life, as well as the greatest of historical memories, ancient speculation and skepticism obtained in many cases a complete mastery over the minds of Italians.

“Since, again, the Italians were the first modern people of Europe who gave themselves boldly to speculations on freedom and necessity, and since they did so under violent and lawless political circumstances, to which evil seemed often to win a splendid and lasting victory, their belief in God began to waver, and their view of the government of the world became fatalistic. And when their passionate natures refused to rest in the sense of uncertainty, they made a shift to help themselves out with ancient, oriental or medieval superstition. They took to astrology and magic.

“Finally, these intellectual giants, these representatives of the Renaissance, show, in respect of religion, a quality which is common in youthful natures. Distinguishing keenly between good and evil, they yet are conscious of no sin. Every disturbance of their inward harmony they feel themselves able to make good out of the plastic resources of their own nature, and therefore they feel no repentance. The need of salvation thus becomes felt more and more dimly, while the ambitions and the intellectual activity of the present either shut out altogether every thought of a world to come, or else caused it to assume a poetic instead of a dogmatic form…”

*Machiavelli’s Prince*

It fell to Italy for the first time to break the mould of the Christian, dynastic and feudal politics of the Middle Ages. Already in the thirteenth century we see in Emperor Frederick II of Sicily “the first ruler of the modern type who sat upon a throne… Frederick’s measures (especially after the year 1231) are aimed at the complete destruction of the feudal state, at the transformation of the people into a multitude destitute of will and of the means of resistance, but profitable in the utmost degree to the exchequer…”

He and his son-in-law Ezzelino da Romano set the pattern for the completely immoral tyrants of the Renaissance period, such as the Borgias. In reaction to this, it was one of Frederick’s subjects, Thomas Aquinas, who first developed the theory of constitutional monarchy, “in which the prince was to be supported by an upper house named by himself, and a representative body elected by the people.”

Nicolo Machiavelli admired the Borgias, if not, perhaps, for their private lives, at any rate as politicians. He witnessed the death of Savanarola, from which he drew the conclusion: “All armed prophets have conquered and unarmed ones failed.” His political philosophy is expounded in *The Prince*

---

16 Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.
18 Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
19 Savonarola tried to reform the morals of the people of Florence and attacked the corrupt papacy of Alexander VI. He was burned at the stake on May 23, 1498.
The Discourses. In the first of these he advised a despot, Lorenzo Scupoli, and in the second he praised republics. The philosophy remained the same...

In the Discourses, Machiavelli anticipated a very important doctrine of later philosophical liberalism – the doctrine of checks and balances. Since men are selfish and self-interested by nature, the only way to achieve a minimum of order, enabling as many men as possible to fulfil as many of their interests as possible, is to set them in reciprocal balance against each other. Thus princes, nobles and people should all have a part in the Constitution; “then these three powers will keep each other reciprocally in check.”

“The Prince, writes Bertrand Russell, “is concerned to discover, from history and from contemporary events, how principalities are won, how they are held, and how they are lost. Fifteenth-century Italy afforded a multitude of examples, both great and small. Few rulers were legitimate; even the popes, in many cases, secured election by corrupt means. The rules for achieving success were not quite the same as they became when times grew more settled, for no one was shocked by cruelties and treacheries which would have disqualified a man in the eighteenth century or the nineteenth century. Perhaps our age, again, can better appreciate Machiavelli, for some of the most notable successes of our time have been achieved by methods as base as any employed in Renaissance Italy. He would have applauded, as an artistic connoisseur in statecraft, Hitler’s Reichstag fire, his purge of the party in 1934, and his breach of faith after Munich.

“Caesar Borgia, son of Alexander VI, comes in for high praise. His problem was a difficult one: first, by the death of his brother, to become the sole beneficiary of his father’s dynastic ambition; second, conquer by force of arms, in the name of the Pope, territories which should, after Alexander’s death, belong to himself and not to the Papal States; third, to manipulate the College of Cardinals so that the next Pope should be his friend. He pursued this difficult end with great skill; from his practice, Machiavelli says, a new prince should derive precepts. Caesar failed, it is true, but only ‘by the extraordinary malignity of fortune’. It happened that, when his father died, he also was dangerously ill; by the time he recovered, his enemies had organized their forces, and his bitterest opponent had been elected Pope. On the day of this election, Caesar told Machiavelli that he had provided for everything, ‘except that he had never thought that at his father’s death he would be dying himself’.

“Machiavelli, who was intimately acquainted with his villainies, sums up thus: ‘Reviewing thus all the actions of the duke [Caesar], I find nothing to blame, on the contrary, I feel bound, as I have done, to hold him as an example to be imitated by all who by fortune and with the arms of others have risen to power.’…
“The Prince is very explicit in repudiating received morality where the conduct of rulers is concerned. A ruler will perish if he is always good; he must be as cunning as a fox and as fierce as a lion. There is a chapter (XVIII) entitled: ‘In What Way Princes Must Keep Faith’. We learn that they should keep faith when it pays to do so, but not otherwise. A prince must on occasion be faithless.

“...But it is necessary to be able to disguise this character well, and to be a great feigner and dissembler; and men are so simple and so read to obey present necessities, that one who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived. I will mention only one modern instance. Alexander VI did nothing else but deceive men, he thought of nothing else, and found the occasion for it; no man was ever more able to give assurances, or affirmed things with stronger oaths, and no man observed them less; however, he always succeeded in his deceptions, as he knew well this aspect of things. It is not necessary therefore for a prince to have all the above-named qualities [the conventional virtues], but it is very necessary to seem to have them.’ He goes on to say that, above all, a prince should *seem* to be religious...

In view of this, it is not surprising to learn that Machiavelli is one of the first writers who dispenses completely with Christian morality and theology. Machiavelli’s was the first handbook of what has been called Realpolitik, that is, politics conducted without any guiding principle except the pursuit and maintenance of power. “A prince who desires to maintain his position,” he wrote, “must learn to be good or not as needs may require.” “War should be the only study of a prince. He should look upon peace as a breathing space which... gives him the means to execute military plans.”

For Machiavelli, writes Sir Isaiah Berlin, “religion... is not much more than a socially indispensable instrument, so much utilitarian cement: the criterion of the worth of a religion is its role as a promoter of solidarity and cohesion – he anticipates Saint-Simon and Durkheim in stressing its crucial social importance. The great founders of religions are among the men he most greatly admires. Some varieties of religion (for example, Roman paganism) are good for societies, since they make them strong or spirited; others on the contrary (for example, Christian meekness and unworldliness) cause decay or disintegration. The weakening of religious ties is a part of general decadence and corruption: there is no need for a religion to rest on truth, provided that it is socially effective (Discourses I, 12). Hence his veneration of those who set their societies on sound spiritual foundations – Moses, Numa, Lycurgus.

“...There is no serious assumption of the existence of God and divine law; whatever our author’s private convictions, an atheist can read Machiavelli

21 Russell, op. cit., p. 520.
with perfect intellectual comfort. Nor is there piety towards authority, or prescription – nor any interest in the role of the individual conscience, or in any other metaphysical or theological issue. The only freedom he recognizes is political freedom, freedom from arbitrary despotic rule, that is, republicanism, and the freedom of one State from control by other States.”

A good society “is a society that enjoys stability, internal harmony, security, justice, a sense of power and of splendour, like Athens in its best days, like Sparta, like the kingdoms of David and Solomon, like Venice as it used to be, but, above all, like the Roman Republic. ‘Truly it is a marvelous thing to consider to what greatness Athens came in the space of a hundred years after she freed herself from the tyranny of Pisistratus. But above all, it is very marvelous to observe what greatness Rome came to after she freed herself from her kings’ (Discourses, ii, 2).

“The reason for this is that there were men in these societies who knew how to make cities great. How did they do it? By developing certain faculties in men, of inner moral strength, magnanimity, vigour, vitality, generosity, loyalty, above all public spirit, civic sense, dedication to the security, power, glory, expansion of the patria. The ancients developed these qualities by all kinds of means, among which were dazzling shows and bloodstained sacrifices that excited men’s senses and aroused their martial prowess, and especially by the kind of legislation and education that promoted the pagan virtues. Power, magnificence, pride, austerity, pursuit of glory, vigour, discipline, antiqua virtus – this is what makes States great.”

A purely pagan ideal. And if it is to be attained and preserved, purely pagan means will have to be applied. Christian virtues are no use here. For the Christian faith has made men “weak”, easy prey to “wicked men”, since “they think more about enduring their injuries than about avenging them” (Discourses, ii, 2). “He does not explicitly condemn Christian morality: he merely points out that it is, at least in rulers (but to some degree in subjects too), incompatible with those social ends which he thinks it is natural and wise for men to seek. One can save one’s soul, or one can found or maintain or serve a great and glorious State; but not always both at once.”

“In other words you can opt out of the public world, but in that case he has nothing to say to you, for it is to the public world and to the men in it that he addresses himself. This is expressed most clearly in his notorious advice to the victor who has to hold down a conquered province. He advises a clean sweep: new governors, new titles, new powers and new men; he should

‘make the rich poor, the poor rich, as David did when he became king: ‘the poor he filled with good things and the rich he sent empty away’. Besides this, he should build new cities, overthrow those already built, change the inhabitants from one place to another; and in short he should leave nothing in that province untouched, and make sure that no rank or position or office or wealth is held by anyone who does not acknowledge it as from you’ (*Discourses*, I, 26). He should take Philip of Macedon as his model, who ‘grew in these ways until he became lord of Greece’.

“Now Philip’s historian informs us – Machiavelli goes on to say – that he transferred the inhabitants from one province to another ‘as herdsmen transfer their herds’ from one place to another. Doubtless, Machiavelli continued, ‘these methods are very cruel, and enemies to all government not merely Christian but human, and any man ought to avoid them and prefer to live a private life rather than to be a king who brings such ruin on men. Notwithstanding, a ruler who does not wish to take that first good way of lawful government, if he wishes to maintain himself, must enter upon this evil one. But men take certain middle ways that are very injurious; indeed, they are unable to be altogether good or altogether bad’ (*Discourses*, I, 26).

“This is plain enough. There are two worlds, that of personal morality and that of public organization. There are two ethical codes, both ultimate; not two ‘autonomous’ regions, one of ‘ethics’, another of ‘polities’, but two (for him) exhaustive alternatives between two conflicting systems of value. If a man chooses the ‘first good way’, he must, presumably, give up all hope of Athens and Rome, of a noble and glorious society in which human beings can thrive and grow strong, proud, wise and productive; indeed, they must abandon all hope of a tolerable life on earth: for men cannot live outside society; they will not survive collectively if they are led by men who... are influenced by the first, ‘private’ morality; they will not be able to realize their minimal goals as men; they will end in a state of moral, not merely political, degradation. But if a man chooses, as Machiavelli himself has done, the second course, then he must suppress his private qualms, if he has any, for it is certain that those who are too squeamish during the remaking of a society, or even during the pursuit and maintenance of its power and glory, will go to the wall. Whoever has chosen to make an omelette cannot do so without breaking eggs.”

If Machiavelli is right, then Christian political power that is both successful and truly Christian is an impossibility. He is wrong, because there have been many such rulers since Constantine the Great to Nicholas II, some of whom have even been acknowledged as saints. But of course the criteria of success in the two cases are different.

---

27 In modern times, the British politician and Christian Enoch Powell asserted the same.
For a truly Christian ruler success consists, not in power and glory, but in the salvation of his people in eternity. However, for a pagan ruler of the kind Machiavelli admires success is measured in exclusively secular terms. It is not to be wondered at that Machiavelli has had many admirers, both philosophers such as Nietzsche and politicians such as Lenin, in our modern, neo-pagan age…

**Jewish Rationalism**

The most important of the various kinds of freedom proclaimed at the Renaissance was the idea of the freedom and autonomy of the human mind, the belief that the human mind and human reason do not need to be checked against any higher authority. This belief is known as Rationalism, and came in at least three forms: Jewish, Catholic and Protestant. If the Middle Ages saw the flowering of Catholic rationalism, the early Modern Age saw the flowering of Jewish and Protestant rationalism and their gradual merging into one by the time of the French Revolution.

The origins of Jewish rationalism may be traced to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The origins of this, in turn can be traced to the Spanish re-conquest of Muslim Spain, which had brought in its train a large number of Jews who had occupied important posts under the Moors. The Spanish conquerors were much less tolerant of the Jews than the Moors had been. Thus in 1391, during a civil war in Castile, both sides had accused the Jews, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, were killed. During this period many Jews converted to Christianity to avoid persecution. Many of these conversos – or, as they were less politely known, marranos (“pigs”) - did well under their new rulers. One became Bishop of Burgos; another was King Ferdinand’s treasurer; the five top administrative posts in Aragon were occupied by them.

However, these converts were suspected by many of continuing to practise the Jewish faith in secret, which led to riots by the “old” Christians against the “new”. So in 1480 the Inquisition was called in to determine the truth of an individual’s convictions by means of torture.

28 Also, it came to be thought that a Jew by race could never really become a Christian. As Andrew Wheatcroft writes: “During the fifteenth century, the dominant Christian states in Spain began to develop a new theory of the infidel. In this view, Judaism and, by extension, Islam, carried a genetic taint and thus no convert of Jewish or Muslim stock could ever carry the True Faith purely, as could someone of ‘untainted’ Christian descent...

“This latent tendency within Hispanic society was elaborated into a body of law from the mid fifteenth century, but emerging from below rather than by royal decree. The first instance was in 1449, when Pero Sarmiento – the leader of a rebellion in Toledo against royal support for Jewish converts – issued a declaration that no one except an Old Christian of untainted blood could ever hold public office... Over the next forty years, more and more institutions adopted requirements that ‘purity of blood’ (limpieza de sangre) should be a prerequisite for membership of a guild or any similar body. The vocabulary that was used is particularly significant: the ‘Old Christians’ described themselves as the ‘pure’ (limpios); they were ‘fine
Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh write: “From the outset of its creation, the Spanish Inquisition had cast covetous eyes on Judaic wealth. It also regarded Jews themselves with implacable antipathy, simply because they lay outside its official legal jurisdiction. According to its original brief, the Inquisition was authorised to deal with heretics – that is, with Christians who had deviated from orthodox formulations of the faith. It had no powers, however, over adherents of altogether different religions, such as Jews and Muslims. Judaic and Islamic communities in Spain were large. In consequence, a considerable portion of the population remained exempt from the Inquisition’s control; and for an institution that sought to exercise total control, such a situation was deemed intolerable.

“The Inquisition’s first step was to act against so-called ‘Judaizers’. A converso who returned to Judaism after having embraced Christianity could conveniently be labelled a heretic. By extension, so could anyone who encouraged him in his heresy – and this transgression could be further extended to include, by implication, all Jews. But the Inquisition was still handicapped because it had to produce – or concoct – evidence for each case it sought to prosecute; and this was not always easy to do.

“The Inquisition enthusiastically endorsed the virulent anti-Semitism already being promulgated by a notorious preacher, Alonso de Espina, who hated both Jews and conversos alike. Mobilising popular support behind him, Alonso had advocated the complete extirpation of Judaism from Spain – either by expulsion or by extermination. Embracing Alonso’s programme, the Inquisition embarked on its own assiduous anti-Semitic propaganda... Citing the anti-Semitism it had thus contrived to provoke in the populace at large, the Inquisition petitioned the Crown to adopt ‘appropriate’ measures. The proposal to expel all Jews from Spain stemmed directly from the Inquisition...

“King Ferdinand recognised that persecution of Jews and conversos would inevitably have adverse economic repercussions for the country. Neither he nor Queen Isabella, however, could resist the combined pressure of the Inquisition and the popular sentiment it had invoked. In a letter to his most influential nobles and courtiers, the king wrote: ‘The Holy Office of the Inquisition, seeing how some Christians are endangered by contact and communication with the Jews, has provided that the Jews be expelled from all our realms and territories, and has persuaded us to give our support and agreement to this... we do so despite the great harm to ourselves, seeking and preferring the salvation of our souls above our own profit...’

“On 1 January 1483, the monarchs wrote to appease the Inquisition in Andalucia, announcing that all Jews living in the region were to be expelled.

Christians’, and the assumption was that the converts were impure and coarse.” (Infidels, London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 104-105).
On 12 May 1486, all Jews were driven from large tracts of Aragon. But wholesale expulsion had to be deferred for the moment because money and other forms of support from Jews and conversos were urgently needed for the ongoing campaign against the Muslims, pushed back into their ever-contracting Kingdom of Granada."\(^{29}\)

In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella, having united Aragon and Castile by their marriage, conquered Granada in the south to complete the reconquest of Spain for the Cross. "With deep emotion," writes Karen Armstrong, "the crowd watched the Christian banner raised ceremonially upon the city walls and, as the news broke, bells pealed triumphantly all over Europe, for Granada was the last Muslim stronghold in [Western] Christendom. The Crusades against Islam in the Middle East had failed, but at least the Muslims had been flushed out of Europe. In 1499, the Muslim inhabitants of Spain were given the option of conversion to Christianity or deportation, after which, for a few centuries, Europe would become Muslim-free." \(^{30}\)

Three months after the conquest of Granada the Edict of Expulsion of the Jews was issued. "Spanish Jewry was destroyed," writes Armstrong. "About 70,000 Jews converted to Christianity, and stayed on to be plagued by the Inquisition; the remaining 130,000... went into exile." \(^{31}\)

The Jews who were expelled – called the Sephardic Jews after their word for Spain, "Sepharad" – spread throughout the West, especially Portugal and Amsterdam. A substantial minority migrated to the Ottoman empire. They brought with them ideas and influences that were to be of enormous importance in the development of the West and in the eventual destruction of its Christian character. The influence of Greco-Latin paganism on the West has been well documented and recognized, largely because it came from above, with the official sanction of leaders in both Church and State. The influence of Jewish paganism in the form, especially, of the Kabbala, has been less recognized, largely because it came from below, from the underground, and entered in spite of the resistance of the powers that be. \(^{32}\)

---


\(^{31}\) Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 7. However the Jewish Professor Norman Cantor disputes this figure, giving the true figure as "only around forty thousand, about half the practicing Jews left the country in 1492" (*The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1996, pp. 189-190).

\(^{32}\) Thus through contact with Jewish bankers interested in art and literature, writes Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "the Florentine Christian philosopher Pico della Mirandola was able to engage in kabbalistic study, making use of the concept of the sefirot in his compositions. He and other Christian humanists believed that the Zohar [the Kabbala] contained doctrines which support the Christian faith. In this milieu Judah Abravanel composed a Neoplatonic work which had an important impact on Italian humanism." (*Atlas of Jewish History*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 112)
Many of the conversos who remained in Spain voluntarily accepted Catholicism – for example, Teresa of Avila. However, there were many who both lost touch with Judaism and could not adapt to Catholicism. “In consequence,” writes Armstrong, “they had no real allegiance to any faith. Long before secularism, atheism, and religious indifference became common in the rest of Europe, we find instances of these essentially modern attitudes among the Marrano Jews of the Iberian peninsula.” As Cantor writes, “a rationalist, scientific, antitraditional frame of mind, sceptical about the core of religious culture, arose among some Marrano families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The emergence of a post-Christian commonwealth secular mentality can be traced to a handful of Marrano families who found themselves caught between Judaism and Christianity, bouncing back and forth between the two faiths and cultures, until they became disoriented and disenchanted equally with priests and rabbis.

“We can see this secularisation with the Spanish New Christian Fernando de Rojas, the creator of the subversive picaresque novel (La Celestina) in the early sixteenth century, and the forerunner of Cervantes’s critique of decaying medieval culture. We can see it in the sceptical human of the French humanist Montaigne, who was also of Marrano lineage. We can see it in the writings of two Dutch Jews of Portuguese extraction in the third quarter of the seventeenth century – Uriel de Costa, who condemned rabbinical Judaism and was excommunicated by the Jewish community of Amsterdam, and Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, who turned away from the whole theistic tradition toward a new kind of scientific naturalism and universalism and was also excommunicated from the Jewish community.

“The Marrano descendants who were buffeted about in the sixteenth century from one religion to another became alienated from both, and turned first to money-making in international mercantilist capitalism and then secular, scientific rationalism. They were immensely successful in these endeavours.”

Spinoza was born of Jewish parents, but in 1655 he left the synagogue. Pointing to seeming contradictions in the text of Holy Scripture, and expressing doubts about its Divine origins, he denied the very possibility of revelation. For “God is in the world and the world is in God.” Nature “is a particular way in which God himself exists.” Human consciousness “is a particular way in which God himself thinks.” As for freewill, Spinoza denied it, redefining it as the knowledge of the fact that one is determined.

---

33 Indeed, “it is not an exaggeration,” writes Norman Cantor, “to see the role of scions of converted Jewish families as central to the Spanish Renaissance of the early sixteenth century, as were Jews in the modernist cultural revolution of the early twentieth century. In both cases complete access to general culture induced an explosion of intellectual creativity.” (op. cit., p. 189).

34 Armstrong, op. cit., p. 15.

“In his concentration on this world,” writes Armstrong, “and in his denial of the supernatural, Spinoza became one of the first secularists of Europe. Like many modern people, Spinoza regarded all formal religion with distaste... He dismissed the revealed faiths as a ‘compound of credulity and prejudices’, and ‘a tissue of meaningless mysteries’. He had found ecstasy in the untrammeled use of reason, not by immersing himself in the biblical text... Instead of experiencing it as a revelation of the divine, Spinoza insisted that the Bible be read like any other text. He was one of the first to study the Bible scientifically, examining the historical background, the literary genres, and the question of authorship. He also used the Bible to explore his political ideas. Spinoza was one of the first people in Europe to promote the ideal of a secular, democratic state which would become one of the hallmarks of Western modernity. He argued that once the priests had acquired more power than the kings of Israel, the laws of the state became punitive and restrictive. Originally, the kingdom of Israel had been theocratic but because, in Spinoza’s view, God and the people were one and the same, the voice of the people had been supreme. Once the priests seized control, the voice of God could no longer be heard. But Spinoza was no populist. Like most premodern philosophers, he was an elitist who believed the masses to be incapable of rational thought. They would need some form of religion to give them a modicum of enlightenment, but this religion must be reformed, based not on so-called revealed law but on the natural principles of justice, fraternity, and liberty.”

Spinoza denied he was an atheist, had a profound admiration for Christ, and may even have been a Mennonite. But he rejected the main dogmas of Christianity, emphasising His moral teaching. His “spiritual Christianity” anticipated modern ecumenism. Thus he wrote: “As regards the Turks and the other (non-Christian) peoples, I suppose that if they honour God by cultivating justice and love for one’s neighbour, then they have in themselves the spirit of Christ, and receive salvation, whatever convictions they may have out of ignorance regarding Mohammed and the oracles”. Spinoza’s rationalist creed was summed up as follows: “Let everyone believe what seems to him to be consonant with reason” – by which he meant a reason not in any way informed or guided by Divine revelation. This was revolutionary teaching by any standards, and it is not surprising that on July 27, 1656, the rabbis excommunicated him. Spinoza was lucky: a sentence of excommunication destroyed the lives of many who rebelled against the Jewish rabbinate, but Spinoza lived in liberal Holland...

**Protestant Rationalism**

The Protestant Reformation began in 1517 with the publication of Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses against the sale of indulgences. This practice was based on the belief that “as soon as the coin in the coffer rings,/The soul from purgatory springs”. It thus grew out of reasoned protest against undoubted abuses by the Roman Catholic Church.

Such protests had been frequent in earlier ages. The last great protestor before the Protestant Reformers themselves was the Dutchman Erasmus, who wrote: “If the sovereign pontiffs who are in Christ’s place tried to imitate him in His poverty, His works, His wisdom, His cross and His scorn for life; if they meditated on the name Pope, which means Father, and on the title Most Holy that they are given, would they not be the most wretched of men? Does not he who uses all his resources to purchase this dignity not then have to defend it by sword, poison and violence? How many advantages would be lost were wisdom one day to enter into them? And not even wisdom, but just one grain of the salt Christ talked about: so many riches, honours, trophies, offices, dispensations, taxes, indulgences; so many horses, mules, guards and so many pleasures... They would have to be replaced by vigils, fasts, tears, prayers, sermons, study and penance – a thousand tedious inconveniences. And do not let us forget this: what would become of so many writers, copyists, notaries, advocates, promoters, secretaries, muleteers, ostlers, innkeepers, go-betweens (I would use another word, but let us not damage our ears!)? This vast multitude would be reduced to starvation.”

As Jacques Barzun writes: “The priest, instead of being a teacher, was ignorant; the monk, instead of helping to save the world by his piety, was an idle profiteer; the bishop, instead of supervising the care of souls in his diocese was a politician and a businessman. One of them here or there might be pious and a scholar – he showed that goodness was not impossible. But too often the bishop was a boy of twelve, his influential family having provided early for his future happiness. The system was rotten...”

Erasmus traced the beginnings of this rot a long way back in history. As he wrote to Jean Carondelet, Archbishop of Palermo, in 1523: “At one time faith consisted more in life than in the profession of articles of faith. Little by little it became necessary to impose dogmas; but there were not many of them and they had a quite apostolic simplicity. Subsequently, because of the disloyalty of heretics, Scripture was submitted to a more rigorous examination. The Symbol of Faith began to be found more in writings than in hearts. Articles accumulated; sincerity decreased. The doctrine of Christ, which initially

---

40 Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, p. 11.
rejected all wars of words, sought protection from the schools of philosophers; that was the first step in the decline of the Church [scholasticism]. Then riches increased, and that led to violence. The instrument of imperial authority in Church affairs impaired the sincerity of faith. Religion became simply sophistic argument. And the Church was inundated with a myriad of articles. From there things moved on to terror and threats. By force and by fear we are trying to make people believe things that they do not believe, to make them love what they do not love, and to compel them to understand what they do not understand. Constraint cannot bring people together in sincerity; and Christ only accepts the voluntary gift of our souls.”

However, too many saw the solution of this malaise to lie simply in the throwing off of constraint. They forgot that freedom does not by itself generate the knowledge of the truth, but rather, in the Lord’s words: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 4.22). And so the Reformation became, as Jacob Burckhardt said, an escape from discipline…

This escape from discipline meant that the Reformation, to Erasmus’ profound sorrow, far from heralding a new age of peace and tolerance, greatly exceeded the previous age in its violence and intolerance, with Catholics and Protestants persecuting each other for centuries. The beginnings of this can be seen from a brief summary of its early history. “In a group of celebrated works written in 1520, [Luther] condemned the Catholic Mass and sacramental system, the distinction between priests and laity, the notion that celibacy and the monastic state were spiritually superior to marriage and life in the world, and other Catholic teachings and practices. Every true Christian believer was a priest, he held, the clergy were in no way more holy than the laity, and the only religious authority binding on Christians was the word of God in the Bible. Attacking the papacy, ecclesiastical corruption, and the church’s and clergy’s claim of independence of the secular power, he appealed directly to the German princes and nobility to carry out a thorough reformation of the church on their own initiative. His fundamental theological doctrine of justification by faith alone taught that the profound and pervasive sinfulness of human beings deprived them of free will to do anything by their own power that could satisfy God’s law or attain salvation; all their attempts to please God by their acts or the good works and ritual performances authorized by the church meant nothing. Only by acknowledging their worthlessness and helplessness, only through trusting exclusively in the righteousness of Christ as their redeemer, could they be justified and saved. One of the major consequences of the principle of justification by faith alone, which Luther had come to believe especially through his study of Saint Paul’s letters, was the elimination of the mediating, sin-absolving role of the Catholic Church and priesthood between God and the believer in the process of salvation; for according to this principle, human

41 Erasmus, in Comby, op. cit., p. 5.
42 Burckhardt, Judgements on History.
salvation depended completely on God’s grace as manifested in an immediate, direct relationship between the faith of the individual Christian and his savior Christ. The Lutheran conception of justification by faith alone, together with the belief in Scripture as the sole source of Christian truth, became the two central doctrines of sixteenth-century Protestantism.

“In 1520 the pope excommunicated Luther and condemned a large number of his tenets as heretical. In reply, Luther burned a copy of the papal bull of excommunication and the canon law. Summoned in 1521 before the diet (the representative assembly) of the Holy Roman Empire, where he was ordered in the presence of the emperor Charles V to recant his opinions, he refused in the name of conscience. For this defiance he was declared an outlaw and placed under the ban of the empire. He was now a notorious heretic who in ordinary circumstances would have been a doomed man and destined for the flames. He was protected, however, by his prince, the elector Frederick III of Saxony, who gave him refuge in one of his castles for nearly a year. There Luther wrote a number of pamphlets against the Catholic Church and, starting with the New Testament, began his enormously successful German translation of the Bible.

“In the following years the movement led by Luther gathered growing numbers of supporters from all classes in Germany. Among them were many clergy who began to preach against Catholic teaching and institute the new doctrines in their own congregations and communities. New sects appeared with principles more radical than Luther’s. Assisted by evangelical preachers, the Lutheran message also spread among the agrarian population and urban classes. In 1524-1526 a great peasant rebellion accompanied by revolts in a number of cities swept southern and western Germany, Austria, and parts of Switzerland, caused in some measure by the high hopes and expectations of social emancipation aroused by the Lutheran religious reformation. Luther published a violent denunciation of the insurrectionary peasants for daring to rise against their lords, whom he exhorted to put them down, and their rebellion was crushed with great bloodshed and loss of life by the armies of the German princes and nobility…”

Thus the Protestant escape from discipline manifested itself in three ways. First, in escape from the obligation to do good works – hence the doctrine of faith over works. Secondly, in escape from the obligation to follow the conciliar conscience of the Church – hence the Protestant doctrine of the infallibility of the individual conscience and the individual’s interpretation of Scripture. And thirdly, escape from the obligation to obey secular authorities, which we do not find in Luther himself, but in many more radical Protestants. Taken together, these amount to the fundamental essence of Protestantism: escape from the law, from the Church and from the State – in other words, from all authority.

---

43 Zagorin, op. cit. pp. 59-61/
Above all authority the Protestant places his mind, or reason. Now Protestant rationalism was born in the soil of Catholic rationalism, which consisted in placing the mind of one man above the Catholic consciousness of the Church, the Mind of Christ. Protestantism rejected Papism, but did not reject its underlying principle. For instead of placing the mind of one man above the Church, it placed the mind of every man, every believer, above it. As Luther himself declared: “In matters of faith each Christian is for himself Pope and Church, and nothing may be decreed or kept that could issue in a threat to faith.”

And so Protestantism, as New Hieromartyr Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky) put it, “placed a papal tiara on every German professor and, with its countless number of popes, completely destroyed the concept of the Church, substituting faith with the reason of each separate personality.”

The nineteenth-century Russian Slavophile I.V. Kireyevsky compared Catholic and Protestant rationalism and the Orthodox love of wisdom as follows: “The main trait distinguishing Orthodox Christianity from the Latin confession and the Protestant teaching of the faith in their influence on the intellectual and moral development of man consists in the fact that the Orthodox Church strictly adheres to the boundary between Divine Revelation and human reason, that it preserves without any change the dogmas of Revelation as they have existed from the first days of Christianity and have been confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils, not allowing the hand of man to touch their holiness or allowing human reason to modify their meaning and expression in accordance with its temporary systems. But at the same time the Orthodox Church does not restrict reason in its natural activity and in its free striving to search out the truths not communicated to it by Revelation; it does not give to any rational system or plausible view of science the status of infallible truth, ascribing to them an identical inviolability and holiness as that possessed by Divine Revelation.

“The Latin church, on the contrary, does not know any firm boundaries between human reason and Divine Revelation. It ascribes to its visible head or to a local council the right to introduce a new dogma into the number of those revealed and confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils; to some systems of human reason it ascribes the exceptional right of ascendency over others, and in this way if it does not directly destroy the revealed dogmas, it changes their meaning, while it restricts human reason in the freedom of its natural activity and limits its sacred right and duty to seek from a rapprochement between human truths and Divine truths, natural truths and revealed ones.

44 Martin Luther’s Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Weimar, 1885, 405, 35. Quoted by Deacon John Whiteford in ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU (Orthodox Christianity), September 6, 1999.
45 Archbishop Hilarion, Christianity or the Church?, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1971, p. 28.
“The Protestant teachings of the faith are based on the same annihilation of the boundary between human reason and Divine revelation, with this difference from the Latin teaching, however, that they do not raise any human point of view or systematic mental construction to the level of Divine Revelation, thereby restricting the activity of reason; but, on the contrary, they give the reason of man ascendancy over the Divine dogmas, changing them or annihilating them in accordance with the personal reasoning of man.

“From these three main differences between the relationships of Divine Revelation to human reason proceed the three main forms of activity of the intellectual powers of man, and at the same time the three main forms of development of its moral meaning.

“It is natural that the more one who sincerely believes in the teaching of the Orthodox Church develops his reason, the more he will make his understanding agree with the truths of Divine Revelation.

“It is also natural that the sincere supporter of the Latin church should have not only to submit his mind to Divine Revelation, but at the same time also to some human systems and abstract mental constructions that have been raised to the level of Divine inviolability. For that reason he will necessarily be forced to communicate a one-sided development to the movements of his mind and will be morally obliged to drown out the inner consciousness of the truth in obedience to blind authority.

“No less natural is it that the follower of the Protestant confession, recognizing reason to be the chief foundation of truth, should in accordance with the measure of his education more and more submit his faith itself to his personal reasoning, until the concepts of natural reason take the place for him of all the Traditions of Divine Revelation and the Holy Apostolic Church.

“Where only pure Divine Revelation is recognized to be higher than reason – Revelation which man cannot alter in accordance with his own reasonings, but with which he can only bring his reasoning into agreement, - there, naturally, the more educated a man or a people is, the more its concepts will be penetrated with the teaching of the faith, for the truth is one and the striving to find this oneness amidst the variety of the cognitive and productive actions of the mind is the constant law of all development. But in order to bring the truths of reason into agreement with the truth of Revelation that is above reason a dual activity of reason is necessary. It is not enough to arrange one’s rational concepts in accordance with the postulates of faith, to choose those that agree with them and exclude those that contradict them, and thereby purify them of all contradiction: it is also necessary to raise the very mode of rational activity to the level at which reason can sympathise with faith and where both spheres merge into one seamless contemplation of
the truth. Such is the aim determining the direction of the mental development of the Orthodox Christian, and the inner consciousness of this sought-after region of mental activity is constantly present in every movement of his reason, the breathing of his mental life..."\(^{46}\)

Protestant rationalism went further than the Catholic variety, and came close to the Jewish variety, in its *rejection of sacraments*, and in general in its iconoclastic rejection of the possibility that matter can be sanctified by the Spirit. Icons, relics, holy water and all the symbols and ceremonies of Catholic worship were rejected and destroyed. The sacrament of the Eucharist was not the Body and Blood of Christ, but only a service of remembrance, and there was no specially ordained priesthood. Even the Bible was cut down to size. Thus Luther reduced the number of canonical books, rejecting the so-called “apocryphal” books of the Old Testament and casting doubt on such New Testament books as the Epistle of James. Moreover, it was from the Protestants (and, as we have seen, the Jews such as Spinoza) that the terribly destructive so-called “Higher Criticism” of the Bible began. No thing was sacred for the Protestants, but only the disembodied mind of the individual believer.

But in order to understand Protestantism we must go beyond the intellectual pride that it inherited from its Papist and Renaissance humanist predecessors to the *emotional vacuum* that it sought to fill – and filled with some success, although the new wine it proposed to pour into the old bottles of Christendom turned out to be distinctly vinegary. For it was not their protests against the abuses of Papism that made Luther and Calvin such important figures: Wycliff and Hus, Machiavelli and Erasmus and many others had been exposing these abuses long before Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Worms. What distinguished Luther and Calvin was that they were able to offer hungry hearts that no longer believed in the certainties of Holy Tradition or the consolations of Mother Church another kind of certainty – that offered by *justification by faith* alone, and another kind of consolation – that offered by *predestination to salvation*. All that was necessary was to say: *I believe*, and the believer could be sure that he was saved!

Thus was Western thought directed along a path of ever-increasing individualism and subjectivism, which led finally to such as irrational philosophies as that of Nietzsche. The first truly modern philosopher Descartes’ axiom, “I think, therefore I am” was only a desiccated, secularised and intellectualised reduction of this primary axiom of Protestantism. The difference between Luther and Descartes was the difference between theological rationalism and philosophical rationalism: the Protestant deduced the certainty of salvation from his personal faith and certain passages of Scripture, while the philosopher derived the certainty of his existence from

his personal thought. The one deduction was momentous in its consequences and the other was trivial; the one had an emotional charge and the other had none (or very little); but in other respects they were very similar.

Even the apparent advantage of objectivity that citing Scripture brought to Luther’s syllogism was illusory; for it was a cardinal tenet of Protestantism that each individual believer could interpret the meaning of Scripture for himself, which removed the possibility of finding any objective criterion of true faith. And so philosophical rationalism was born in the soil of Protestant rationalism, and philosophical individualism – in the soil of Protestant individualism. Descartes would have been impossible without Calvin, and Kant – without Luther. Just as Luther allowed the individual believer to define for himself what true faith was, so Kant allowed the individual decision-maker to define for himself what right and wrong was – for the “categorical imperative” was entirely personal and subjective.

L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: “According to the Christian understanding, although man is by nature capable of a free existence and free self-determination, he does not have autonomy, nor does he presume to seize it (recognising that he is in the hands of God, and subject to Him), but carries out His commands and follows that mission which is indicated to him by God. To declare oneself autonomous would be equivalent to falling away from obedience to God, to breaking with Him. But if separated Christians were capable of that, it would be almost impossible to incite Christians as a whole to do this for a thousand reasons. Of these the most important is that, in submitting to God, the Christian feels that he is submitting, not to some foreign principle or other, but to that which he recognises to be the Source of his highest capabilities, his Father… The striving for knowledge, which is so powerful in man, is set on a firmer ground precisely when a boundary is clearly delineated between the Divine world, which cannot be known by reason, and the created world, which is accessible to experimental knowledge through the senses. In making this delineation the Christian faith served both exact science and the spiritual life to an identically powerful degree…

“It goes without saying that when the conviction emerged that the autonomy of man is real in some point of his existence, this naturally entrained with it the thought that autonomy is therefore possible and fruitful also in other respects, and this led to the search for new spheres of autonomy with a gradually increasing ‘liberation from God’.

“In this way the original point of ‘liberation from God’ is rationalism, a tendency based on the supposed capacity of reason (ratio) to acquired knowledge of the truth independently of Divine Revelation, by its own efforts. In fact this is a mistake, but it is engendered by the huge power of human reason and its capacity to submit everything to its criticism. And so it seems to man that he can reject everything that is false and find everything that is
real and true. The mistake in this self-confidence of reason consists in the fact that in fact it is not the source of the knowledge of facts, which are brought to the attention of man, not by his reason, but by his feelings – both physical and mystical. The real role of reason consists only in operations on the material provided by these perceptions and feelings. If they did not exist, reason would have no possibility of working, it would have not even a spark of knowledge of anything. But this controlling, discursive power is so great that it easily leads man to the illusion of thinking that the reason acquires knowledge independently. This inclination to exaggerate the power of reason has always lived and always will live in man, since the most difficult work of the reason is self-control, the evaluation of the reality of its own work. This self-control not only easily weakens in man, but is deliberately avoided by him, because it leads him to the burdensome consciousness of the limitations and relativity of those of his capacities which by their own character appear to be absolute.

“To the extent that reason’s self-control reveals to him the necessity of searching for the absolute Source of his relative capacities and in this way leads to the search for Divine Revelation, to the same extent the weakening of self-control leads to the false feeling of the human capacity for autonomy in the sphere of cognitive thought.

“It goes without saying that there always have been the seeds of this exaggeration of the powers of reason, that is, the seeds of rationalism, in the Christian world. But historically speaking, rationalism was promoted by Descartes. In principle his philosophy did not appear to contradict Christianity in any way. The rationalism of Descartes did not rise up against the truths of the faith, it did not preach any other faith. Descartes himself was personally very religious and even supposed that by his researches he was working for the confirmation of the truths of Christianity. In fact, of course, it was quite the other way round. Descartes’ philosophical system proceeded from the supposition that if man in seeking knowledge had no help from anywhere, - nor, that is, from God, - he would be able to find in himself such axiomatic bases of knowledge, on the assertion of which he could in a mathematical way logically attain to the knowledge of all truth.

“As... V.A. Kozhevnikov points out in his study of godmanhood, ‘the Cartesian: “I think, therefore I am” already gave a basis for godmanhood in the sense of human self-affirmation.’ In fact, in that all-encompassing doubt, which was permitted by Descartes before this affirmation, all knowledge that does not depend on the reasoning subject is rejected, and it is admitted that if

---

47 Descartes wrote in The Principles of Philosophy: “Above all else we must impress on our memory the overriding rule that whatever God has revealed to us must be accepted as more certain than anything else. And although the light of reason may, with the utmost clarity and evidence, appear to suggest something different, we must still put our entire faith in Divine authority rather than in our own judgement.”
a man had no help from anyone or anything, his mind would manage with its own resources to learn the truth. ‘The isolation and self-sufficiency of the thinking person is put as the head of the corner of the temple of philosophical wisdom.’ With such a terminus a quo, ‘the purely subjective attainment of the truth, remarks V. Kozhevnikov, ‘becomes the sole confirmation of existence itself. The existent is confirmed on the basis of the conceivable, the real – on the intellectual… The purely human, and the solely human, acquires its basis and justification in the purely human mind. The whole evolution of the new philosophical thinking from Descartes to Kant revolves unfolds under the conscious or unnoticed, but irresistible attraction in this direction.’”

“The first step of the Reformation,” writes V.A. Zhukovsky, “decided the fate of the European world: instead of the historical abuses of ecclesiastical power, it destroyed the spiritual… power of the Church herself; it incited the democratic mind to rebel against her being above judgement; in allowing revelation to be checked, it shook the faith, and with the faith everything holy. This holiness was substituted by the pagan wisdom of the ancients; the spirit of contradiction was born; the revolt against all authority, Divine as well as human, began. This revolt went along two paths: on the first – the destruction of the authority of the Church produced rationalism (the rejection of the Divinity of Christ), whence came... atheism (the rejection of the existence of God); and on the other – the concept of autocratic power as proceeding from God gave way to the concept of the social contract. Thence came the concept of the autocracy of the people, whose first step is representative democracy, second step – democracy, and third step – socialism and communism. Perhaps there is also a fourth and final step: the destruction of the family, and in consequence of this the exaltation of humanity, liberated from every obligation that might in any way limit its personal independence, to the dignity of completely free cattle. And so two paths: on the one hand, the autocracy of the human mind and the annihilation of the Kingdom of God; on the other – the dominion of each and every one, and the annihilation of society.”

Luther on Church and State

Almost from the beginning, there were significant differences between the major Protestant Reformers – Luther, Calvin and Zwingli - in the degree and thoroughness of their rejection of the old ways. The most important differences were between the Lutherans and the Calvinists. With regard to the vital question of the sources of the faith, for example, both parties rejected Tradition and held to Sola Scriptura. But while the Lutherans taught that a custom was godly if it was not contrary to the Bible, the Calvinists went further and asserted that only that which was explicitly taught by the Bible was godly. A little later, the Anglicans, in the person of Richard Hooker, took

a slightly different, but ultimately no less rationalist line: that was godly which was in accordance with the Bible and natural law.

Closely related to the question of the sources of the faith was that of the Church. Since the Protestants rejected the authority of the papist church, and paid no attention to the claims of the Orthodox Church, they were logically committed to the thesis that the historical Church had perished, and that they were recreating it. Apostolic succession was not necessary – the people could take the place of the Apostles, since there were no true successors of the apostles left. “A Christian man is a perfectly free lord,” said Luther, “subject to none [of the princes of the Church]”…

In spite of that, the conservative Protestants – the Lutherans and the Anglicans – tried to hold on to the ideas of priesthood and apostolic succession. And yet, in the last analysis it was the democratic assembly of believers, not the bishop standing in an unbroken chain of succession from the apostles, who bestowed the priesthood upon the candidates. Thus Luther wrote: “The only thing left is either to let the Church of God perish without the Word or to allow the propriety of a church meeting to cast its votes and choose from its own resources one or as many as are necessary and suitable and commend and confirm these to the whole community by prayer and the laying-on of hands. These should then be recognised and honoured as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, in the assured faith that God Himself is the Author of what the common consent of the faithful has so performed – of those, that is, who accept and confess the Gospel…”

In his treatises, On the Liberty of the Christian (1520) and On Temporal Authority (1523), Luther makes a very sharp distinction between the spiritual and the temporal, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. If the Christian was free from authority in the Kingdom of God, he was by no means free in the kingdom of man: “A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all [of the princes of this world]”.

Dagron interprets Luther’s thought as follows: “The Christian, being at the same time part of the spiritual kingdom and of the temporal kingdom is at the same time absolutely free and absolutely enslaved. If God has instituted two kingdoms, it is because only a very small élite of true Christians participate in His Kingdom; the great mass needs the ‘temporal sword’ and must submit to in accordance with the teaching of Paul (Romans 13.1: ‘there is no authority that is not of God’) and of Peter (I Peter 2.13: ‘Submit yourselves to every human authority’). But if the temporal princes hold their power from God and they are often Christian, they cannot pretend to ‘govern in a Christian manner’ and in accordance with the Gospel. ‘It is impossible for a Christian kingdom to extend throughout the world, and even over a single country.’ No

---

accommodation is possible between a religion that is conceived as above all personal and a State defined as above all repressive; and Luther is ironic about the temporal sovereigns ‘who arrogate to themselves the right to sit on the throne of God, to rule the consciences and the faith and to... guide the Holy Spirit over the pews of the school’, as also about the popes or bishops ‘become temporal princes’ and pretending to be invested with a ‘power’ and not with a simple ‘function’. This radical distinction between the temporal and the spiritual did not, therefore, lead to the recognition of two powers, ‘since all the Christians truly belong to the ecclesiastical state’ and there is no reason to deny Christian princes the ‘titles of priest and bishop’.”

Luther did not attach an absolute authority to the Prince. As he wrote: “When a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him then too? I answer, No, for it is no one’s duty to do wrong; we ought to obey God who desires the right, rather than men.”

But this did not mean that he sanctioned rebellion against the powers that be.

Luther’s principles were tested in the 1520s, when Thomas Müntzer led a German Peasants’ War against all authorities. Müntzer, writes Charles George, “was a learned priest and mystic who had struggled for faith as Luther had – desperately – but found it not in the historic Jesus, not in the revelation of words, but in the blinding visions of immediate knowledge, and in association with an amazing group of militant prophets in the town of Zwickau. Zwickau is on the border of Bohemia, and there a weaver named Storch had made Tabor [the centre of early-fifteenth-century chiliastic revolution among the Czechs of Bohemia] live again. Müntzer began to preach in Zwickau a prophecy of millenial revolution – in his vision, a terrible final blood-bath in which the elect of God would rise up to destroy first the Turkish Antichrist, and then the masses of the unrighteous. Before long he and Storch led their evangelized weavers in a revolt which failed, and Müntzer fled to Bohemia where he searched for the embers of Taborite chiliasm, and ended up being driven from Bohemia.

“For two years he wandered in central Germany, his delusions now settled into doctrine” (‘The living God is sharpening his scythe in me, so that later I can cut down the red poppies and the blue cornflowers’). In 1523 he was invited to preach in Allstedt, and from there he created a revolutionary organization, the League of the Elect, made up of peasants and miners. His church became the most radical center of Christianity in Europe – for it he created the first liturgy in German, and to it came hundreds of miners from Mansfeld and peasants from the countryside as well as artisans from Allstedt.

---

51 Gilbert Dagron, Empereur et Prêtre (Emperor and Priest), Gallimard, 1996, pp 292-293 (in French).
52 Luther, “Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed”, in Englander, op. cit., p. 190.
“Müntzer’s revolution was not, like Luther’s, a proposed reformation of men and institutions. To him Luther was a Pharisee bound to books and Wittenberg was the center of ‘the unspiritual soft-living flesh’. He attacked the emasculated social imagination of the reformers, branded them tools of the rich and powerful, and when Luther wrote his Letter to the Princes of Saxony warning of the danger of this radical agitation, Müntzer reacted by openly declaring social revolution to be indispensably a part of faith in Christ: ‘The wretched flatterer is silent… about the origin of all theft… Look, the seed-grounds of usury and theft and robbery are our lords and princes, they take all creatures as their property… These robbers use the Law to forbid others to rob… They oppress all people, and shear and shave the poor plowman and everything that lives – yet if (the plowman) commits the slightest offense, he must hang.’ Like the magnificent Hebrew prophets from whom he took his texts, Müntzer denounced the princes to their faces (Duke John, the Elector’s brother, came to Allstedt to hear him, and he was summoned to Weimar to explain himself as a result of Luther’s complaint) and left them shaken. Müntzer, with red crucifix and sword, led another frustrated revolt in Mühlhausen, wandered to Nuremberg and the Swiss border, preaching revolution and distributing his pamphlets, and finally was called back to Mühlhausen as Saxony caught the fever that was agitating the rest of Germany….

‘… Frederick the Wise wrote to his brother the following: ‘Perhaps the peasants have been given just occasion for their uprising through the impeding the Word of God. In many ways the poor folk have been wronged by the rulers, and now God is visiting his wrath upon us. If it be his will, the common man will come to rule; and if it be not his will, the end will soon be otherwise.’ Duke John wrote: ‘As princes we are ruined.’ Luther was less passive before the will of God; although hooted out of countenance by the groups of peasants whom he tried to command into submission to their prince, he continued to fight the rude social rooting of the heresy he had spawned. Müntzer presented a graphic portrait of Luther’s confrontation with the peasants: ‘He claims the Word of God is sufficient. Doesn’t he realize that men whose every moment is consumed in the making of a living have no time to learn to read the Word of God? The princes bleed the people with usury and count as their own the fish in the stream, the bird of the air, and the grass of the field, and Dr. Liar says “Amen!” What courage has he, Dr. Pussyfoot, the new pope of Wittenberg, Dr. Easychair, the basking sycophant? He says there should be no rebellion because the sword has been committed by God to the ruler, but the power of the sword belongs to the whole community. In the good old days the people stood by when judgement was rendered lest the ruler pervert justice, and the rulers have perverted justice.’”

The only authority for Müntzer was the people. Matheson writes: “He addressed his lords and masters as ‘brothers’, if, that is, they were willing to

listen to him. They are part of his general audience, on the same level as everyone else... Everything has to come out into the open, to be witnessed by the common people. Worship has to be intelligible, not some ‘mumbo-jumbo’ that no one could understand. The holy Gospel has to be pulled out from under the bed where it has languished for four hundred years. Preaching and teaching and judgement can no longer be a hole-and-corner affair, for God has given power and judgement to the common people. In the Eucharist, for example, the consecration of the elements is to be ‘performed not just by one person but by the whole gathered congregation’. He encourages popular participation in the election of clergy. In the Peasants’ War a kind of crude popular justice was executed ‘in the ring’. ‘Nothing without the consent of the people’; their visible presence as audience is the guarantor of justice... The audience of the poor is not beholden to prince or priest. Liturgies are no longer subject to the approval of synods. A liberating Gospel, taking the lid off corruption and exploitation, is bound to be polemical, and doomed to meet persecution. ‘Hole-in-the-corner’ judgements by courts and universities have to be replaced by accountability to the elect throughout the world.”

Luther called on the lords to destroy the peasants: “Wherefore, my lords, free, save, help and pity the poor people. Stab, smite and slay, all ye that can. If you die in battle you could never have a more blessed end, for you die obedient to God’s Word in Romans 13, and in the service of love to free your neighbour from the bands of hell and the devil. I implore every one who can to avoid the peasants as he would the devil himself. I pray God will enlighten them and turn their hearts. But if they do not turn, I wish them no happiness for evermore... Let none think this is too hard who consider how intolerable is rebellion.”

This led to the massacre or exile of some 30,000 families. Such was the price Luther had to pay for keeping the support of the princes. If he had relied solely on the power of his word and the hands of the simple people, his Reformation would have been quickly crushed by the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who rejected his call to rise up against the pope on behalf of “the glorious Teutonic people”. It was the Protestant Princes of Germany that saved Luther. In any case, if there were no sacramental, hierarchical priesthood, and all the laity were in fact priests, the Prince as the senior layman was bound to take the leading role in the Church. For, as Luther’s favourite apostle in his favourite epistle says, the Prince “beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13.4).

55 Luther, Against the Thievish, Murderous Hordes of Peasants; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 357.
56 For the same reason Luther was compelled to condone “the bigamous marriage of Philip of Hesse by advising the new faith’s leading patron ‘to tell a good strong lie’” (Davis, op. cit., p. 492). Müntzer had a point in calling him “Dr. Liar”!
The problem was, however, that in relying on the power of “the godly prince” Lutheranism tended to give him excessive power in church life – a fatal characteristic of Lutheranism as of Anglicanism.

According to Luther, writes Tikhomirov, “ecclesiastical power belongs to the same society to which State power also belongs, so that if it entrusts this power to the Prince, it transfers to him episcopal rights, too. The Prince becomes the possessor both of political and of ecclesiastical power. ‘In the Protestant state,’ writes Professor Suvorov, ‘both ecclesiastical and state power must belong to the prince, the master of the territory (Landsherr) who is at the same time the master of religion – *Cuius est regio – ejus religio*.’”

The Protestant Princes were aided by a fortunate concatenation of events. On the one hand, the Emperor Charles was suddenly faced with a very powerful enemy without – the Turks at the peak of their power under Suleiman the Magnificent – as well as by rebellions from within, in Italy and the Netherlands. And on the other, the other major Catholic monarch, Francis I of France, decided to intrigue against him, making common cause with the German Protestant Princes and Suleiman himself. To make matters still worse for the Catholics, Charles was at war also with the Pope in Rome – and the manner in which his generals waged that war did his cause no good. For on May 6, 1527, his troops “entered Rome and wreaked such havoc within the city that the details were not forgotten for a hundred years. Old men were disembowelled and young men castrated, women raped and tortured, children tossed onto the points of swords before being butchered. The corpse of Pope Julius II was dragged from its ornate tomb and paraded through the streets.” Nearly half the population was killed...

**Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More**

But no “Catholic” monarch did more damage to Catholicism than the English King Henry VIII. By one of the great ironies of history, Henry had been awarded the title “Defender of the Faith” by Pope Leo X for writing a defence of the seven sacraments against Luther. Luther responded with a scathing, scatological attack on the king, at which point one of the most complex, gifted and, in the end, heroic figures of post-Orthodox western history, came on to the scene – Thomas More.

At the king’s command, More composed a reply to Luther that was to match Luther’s language to such an extent that one eighteenth-century divine called it “the greatest heap of nasty language that was ever put together”.  

---

However, More was no unprincipled courtier with a gift for diatribe, and his Catholicism was much deeper and sincerer than the king’s. As Lord Chancellor he invested great energy in protecting the realm from Lutherans, and even – contrary to the principle of religious toleration he had proclaimed in his youthful work, *Utopia* – burned a few of them at the stake. He also believed passionately in the king’s divine right to rule, and did everything in his power to prevent the revolutionary rhetoric that was causing such chaos in Germany from crossing the Channel.

For “Thomas More,” writes his biographer Peter Ackroyd, “was one who needed pillars and the security of an ordered world; he spoke and argued as a lawyer, but in the *Responsio* he also introduced the concept of law as the defence against disorder and chaos. ‘Una est ecclesia Christi’, he wrote, and that one church is guided by the workings of the Holy Spirit; it is the manifest, visible and historic faith of ‘the common knownen catholic church’ whose sacraments and beliefs are derived not only from scripture but also from the unwritten traditions transmitted by generation to generation.

“What is it that Luther wrote? ‘Hic sto. Hic maneo. Hic glorior. Hic triumpho.’ Here I stand, Here I remain. Here I glory. Here I triumph. It does not matter to me if a thousand Augustines or Cyprians stand against me. It is one of the great moments of Protestant affirmation and became a primary text for the ‘individualism’ and ‘subjectivism’ of post-Reformation culture, but to More it was ‘furor’ or simple madness. Only a lunatic, a drunkard, could express himself in such a fashion. More invoked, instead, the authority of the apostles and the church fathers, the historical identity and unity of the Catholic Church, as well as the powerful tradition of its teachings guided by the authority of Christ. Where Luther would characteristically write ‘I think thus’, or ‘I believe thus’, More would reply with ‘God has revealed thus’ or ‘The Holy Spirit has taught thus’. His was a church of order and ritual in which the precepts of historical authority were enshrined. All this Luther despised and rejected. He possessed the authentic voice of the free and separate conscience and somehow found the power to stand against the world he had inherited. He was attacking the king and the Pope, but more importantly he was dismissing the inherited customs and traditional beliefs of the Church itself, which he condemned as ‘scandala’. He was assaulting the whole medieval order of which More was a part…

“More moved easily within any institution or hierarchy to which he became attached; Luther was seized by violent fits of remorse and panic fear in any fixed or formal environment. It is hard to imagine More screaming out ‘Non possum!’ during the Mass. More obeyed and maintained all the precepts of the law; Luther wished to expel law altogether from the spiritual life. More believed in the communion of the faithful, living and dead, while Luther

---

affirmed the unique significance of the individual calling towards God. More believed in the traditional role of miracles; Luther saw visions...”

However, More would feel called upon to defend the Church and the law not only against Luther, but also against his Catholic king when he tried to get his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled in spite of the Pope’s resistance. English Lutherans such as Tyndale and Fish wanted the king to take control over the Church, as the Lutheran princes were doing in Germany, in order to root out the corruption of the clergy. But More, while repeatedly emphasising the power and authority of the king, would not accept any attack on the priesthood. He believed that this attack “was a partially concealed attempt to introduce Lutheran heresies within the kingdom, so that the wreckage of the clergy would be followed by the destruction of the Mass and the sacraments. And what then would follow but the riot and warfare which had already afflicted Germany? The seizure of church lands would be succeeded by the theft of other property, and the assault upon the Church would encourage an attack upon all forms of authority...”

The struggle moved into a critical phase with the king’s dismissal, in 1529, of the Lord Chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, who famously said: “If I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs.” Having removed Wolsey, the king quickly moved to subdue parliament and the Church to his will. The Church under Archbishop Warham duly surrendered – that is, it accepted the king’s adulterous second marriage and, through the Act of Supremacy, accepted that the king was the supreme head of the English Church on earth. But Thomas More, who had already resigned his post, refused to sign the Act and was executed...

Thomas More’s defence of the Church’s independence against Henry VIII is reminiscent of Thomas Beckett’s similar defence of the Church against Henry II in the twelfth century. And the immediate upshot was the same: the execution of the Church’s champion by the king. In the long run, however, the result was different: whereas Thomas Beckett was vindicated, not only by his veneration as a martyr but also by the first article of Magna Carta, which asserted the independence of the Church from State power, Thomas More’s death has not been followed by any resurgence of the Church’s influence in the affairs of England...

---

62 Ackroyd, op. cit., p. 279.
63 It was Warham who in 1508 uncovered the fragrant relics of perhaps the greatest of the Orthodox archbishops of Canterbury, St. Dunstan. Dunstan had been distinguished by his fearless defence of the Church against secular encroachment, and had even imposed a penance upon King Edgar of not wearing his crown from his sixteenth to his thirtieth year (see V. Moss, The Saints of Anglo-Saxon England, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1993, p. 28). The uncovering of his relics was a hint to Warham that the time for confession against secular encroachment had come again; but sadly he paid no heed.
Though More was a faithful member of the papist church, he cannot be said to have died for papal infallibility. He was, after all, a friend of Erasmus, that scathing critic of the papacy, and the emphasis in his writings is less on papal authority than on “the general counsel of Christendom”\(^{64}\). His main argument was “that if a parliamentary statute offends against the law of God it is ‘insufficient’, and cannot be imposed upon any Christian subject”.\(^{65}\)

His last public request, uttered on the scaffold, was that the people should earnestly pray for the King, “that it might please God to give him good counsel, protesting that he died the King’s good servant but God’s first.”\(^{66}\)

Thus he died for what, in an Orthodox country, would have been called the symphony of powers, that the Church should be supreme in the spiritual sphere as the king was supreme in the political sphere. He believed that giving the king supremacy over the Church would lead not only to the suppression of the Church but its eventual replacement by a new religion altogether - and he was not far from the truth...

**Calvin on Church and State**

Calvin’s approach to Church-State relations was more consistently democratic than Luther’s; the people, according to Calvin, are the supreme power in both Church and State. Calvin aimed at a greater independence for the Church from the State than existed in the Lutheran States. “The Church,” he wrote, “does not assume what is proper to the magistrate: nor can the magistrate execute what is carried out by the Church.”\(^{67}\)

At the same time, it was not always easy to see where the Church ended and the State began in Calvin’s Geneva. Thus Owen Chadwick writes: “Where authority existed among the Protestant Churches, apart from the personal authority of individual men of stature, it rested with the prince or the city magistrate. Calvin believed that in organising the Church at Geneva he must organise it in imitation of the primitive Church, and thereby reassert the independence of the Church and the divine authority of its ministers... [However,] the boundaries between the jurisdiction of Church and State... were not easy to define in Geneva... The consistory [the Church authority] gave its opinions on the bank rate, on the level of interest for war loans, on exports and imports, on speeding the law courts, on the cost of living and the shortage of candles. On the other hand the council [the State authority], even during Calvin’s last years, may be found supervising the clergy and performing other functions which logic would have allotted to the consistory. The council was not backward in protesting against overlong sermons, or against pastors who neglected to visit the homes of the people; they examined

---

\(^{64}\) Ackroyd, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

\(^{65}\) Ackroyd, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

\(^{66}\) Ackroyd, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

\(^{67}\) Calvin, *Institutes* IV.xi.3.
the proclamations by the pastors even if the proclamations called the city to a
general fast, sanctioned the dates for days of public penitence, agreed or
refused to lend pastors to other churches, provided for the housing and
stipend of the pastors, licensed the printing of theological books."\(^{68}\)

“Petty rules,” writes Comby, “dictated the whole way of life of the citizens
of Geneva. Many [thousands] were condemned to death. Personal quarrels
were common. Rather more seriously, the doctrinal conflicts took a dramatic
turn when Michael Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553 for having
denied the Trinity.”\(^{69}\)

Calvin’s radically new ideas of Church administration, writes McClelland,
“could only have radical effects on men’s attitudes to the running of the state.
On a very simple level, it could be argued that what applied to Church
government should apply straightforwardly to the state’s government on the
principle of a fortiori (the greater should contain the lesser). If the government
of the community which means most to Christian people should be governed
according to the reflection and choice of its members, then why should the
government of the state, an inferior institution by comparison, not be
governed in the same way too?”\(^{70}\)

“Reformed political theory… still thought the law served good and godly
ends. The social peace, which only obedience to duly constituted authority
could provide, was always going to be pleasing in God’s sight. What was no
longer so clear was that God intended us to obey that prince and those laws.
How could God be saying anything very clear about political obligation when
Christendom was split into two warring halves, one Catholic and one
Protestant? In these circumstances it is no surprise that thoughtful men began
to wonder whether it really was true that the laws under which they lived
were instances of a universal law as it applies to particulars. That very general
unease was sharpened by the very particular problem of what was to be done
if you remained a Catholic when your prince became a Protestant, or if you
became a Protestant and your prince remained a Catholic. The implied
covenant of the coronation stated clearly that the prince agreed to preserve
ture religion, and, in an age when men felt obliged to believe that any religion
other than their own was false, the fact that your prince’s religion was not
your own showed prima facie that the original contract to preserve true
religion had been broken. It followed that a new contract could be made,
perhaps with a new prince, to preserve true religion, as in the case of John
Knox and the Scottish Covenant movement to oust the Catholic Mary
Queen of Scots in favour of a Protestant king.”\(^{71}\)

\(^{69}\) Comby, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
\(^{70}\) McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
\(^{71}\) McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
“In the Netherlands,” writes Bamber Gascoigne, “Calvinism became the rallying point for opposition to the oppressive rule of Catholic Spain. Calvinist ministers had been among the earliest leaders of a small group which we would describe today as guerillas or freedom fighters, from whom there developed a national party of the northern provinces. The princely leader of the fight for independence, William the Silent, joined the reformed church in 1573 and during the next decade a Dutch republic gradually emerged...

“In Scotland the Calvinists went one stage further, in a political programme which was even more radical in its implications. At precisely the same period as the Lutherans in Germany were establishing the principle of cuius regio eius religio, the Scots were asserting the very opposite – that the people had the right to choose their own religion, regardless of the will of the monarch. In 1560 the Scottish parliament abolished papal authority and decreed a form of Calvinism as the religion of the country. Scotland became something unique in the Europe of the day: a land of one religion with a monarch of another. Admittedly there were, as always, political as well as religious causes for this state of affairs. The monarch, Mary Queen of Scots, was an eighteen-year-old girl living abroad, and English troops were underwriting Scottish independence for fear that Mary might deliver Scotland into the hands of her husband, the king of France. But the notion that the people could assert themselves against their ruler was a triumph for the ideas of one man, John Knox. ‘God help us’, wrote the archbishop of Canterbury, ‘from such visitation as Knox has attempted in Scotland, the people to be the orderers of things.’”

Spellman writes: “Placing obedience to God’s law before conformity to the will of the prince, political theorists writing within a Calvinist theological perspective insisted that the king who violated divine ordinances was not to be obeyed. Anti-absolutist sentiment was decisively advanced by the emergence of these religiously motivated resistance theories. Works such as the anonymous Vindiciae contra tyrannos and George Buchanan’s De jure regni apud Scotos, both appearing in print in 1579, argued on behalf of religious minorities who found themselves persecuted by their monarchs. In the midst of the French wars of religion, the Protestant Philippe Duplessis Mornay insisted that ‘God’s jurisdiction is immeasurable, whilst that of kings is measured; that God’s sway is infinite, whilst that of kings is limited.’ Mornay’s Defense of Liberty against Tyrants was first published in Latin in 1579 but quickly translated into French and finally into English just one year before the execution of King Charles I in 1649 by his Calvinist opponents.

“Mornay employed metaphors drawn from the medieval feudal tradition in describing the proper relationship between subjects and their rulers. Since God created heaven and earth out of nothing, he alone ‘is truly the lord

---

[dominus] and proprietor [proprietarius] of heaven and earth’. Earthly monarchs, on the other hand, are ‘beneficiaries and vassals [beneficiarii & clientes] and are bound to receive and acknowledge investiture from Him’. Facing religious persecution at the hands of a Catholic monarch, this spokesman for the French Protestant minority took the bold step of denying kings any sacred or special distinction. Men do not attain royal status ‘because they differ from others in species, and because they ought to be in charge of these by a certain natural superiority, like shepherds with sheep’. Instead of lording over subjects, legitimate monarchs are those who protect the subjects in their care, both from the aggressions of individuals within the kingdom and from hostile neighbours. In language striking in its modernity, Mornay claimed that ‘royal dignity is not really an honour, but a burden; not an immunity, but a function; not a dispensation, but a vocation; not license, but public service’.”73

State power protected the Calvinists from the ferocity of the Papists in both the England of Elizabeth I, and the France of Henry IV, for example. And yet Calvinists had an alarming tendency to come out against the state, splintering off into ever more extreme movements of an apocalyptic nature that advocated political as well as religious revolution, and were accompanied by moral excesses directly contrary to the strait-laced image of traditional Protestantism.

The most famous example of this was the Anabaptist revolution in Münster. Chadwick writes: “At the end of 1533 the Anabaptist group at Münster in Westphalia, under the leadership of a former Lutheran minister Bernard Rothmann, gained control of the city council. Early in 1534 a Dutch prophet and ex-innkeeper named John of Leyden appeared in Münster, believing that he was called to make the city the new Jerusalem. By 9 February 1534 his party seized the city hall. On 2 March all who refused to be baptized were banished, and it was proclaimed a city of refuge for the oppressed. Though the Bishop of Münster collected an army and began the siege of his city, an attempted coup within the walls was brutally suppressed, and John of Leyden was proclaimed King of New Zion, wore vestments as his royal robes, and held his court and throne in the market-place. Laws were decreed to establish a community of goods, and the Old Testament was adduced to permit polygamy. Bernard Rothmann, once a man of sense, once the friend of Melanchthon, took nine wives.

“They now believed that they had been given the duty and the power of exterminating the ungodly. The world would perish, and only Münster would be saved. Rothmann issued a public incitement to world rebellion: ‘Dear brethren, arm yourselves for the battle, not only with the humble weapons of the apostles for suffering, but also with the glorious armour of David for vengeance… in God’s strength, and help to annihilate the ungodly.’

And ex-soldier named John of Feelen slipped out of the city, carrying copies of this proclamation into the Netherlands, and planned sudden coups in the Dutch cities. On a night in February 1535 a group of men and women ran naked and unarmed through the streets of Amsterdam shouting: ‘Woe! Woe! The wrath of God falls on this city.’ On 30 March 1535 John of Geelen with 300 Anabaptists, men and women, stormed an old monastery in Friesland, fortified it, made sallies to conquer the province, and were only winkled out after bombardment by heavy cannon. On the night of 10 May 1535 John of Geelen with a band of some thirty men attacked the city hall of Amsterdam during a municipal banquet, and the burgomaster and several citizens were killed. At last, on 25 June 1535, the gates of Münster were opened by sane men within the walls, and the bishop’s army entered the city…”

The Anabaptist revolution in Münster came exactly a century after the destruction of the Taborite revolution in Bohemia, which it closely imitated. The Taborites and Anabaptists were in effect communists, a fact which shows that there is a blood-red thread linking the revolutionary movements of late medieval Catholicism, early Protestantism and twentieth-century militant atheism.

The immediate effect of the revolution in Münster, coming so soon after the similar madness of Thomas Münzter and the Germans’ Peasant War, was to strengthen the argument for the intervention of the strong hand of the State to cool and control religious passions, if necessary by violent means. However, the longer-term lesson to be drawn from it was that the Protestant Reformation, by undermining the authority of the Church, had also, albeit unwittingly, undermined that of the State. For even if the more moderate Protestants accepted and exalted the authority of “the godly Prince”, the more extreme Protestants felt no obligation to obey any earthly authority, but rather created their own church-cum-state communities recognising no authority except Christ’s alone. Thus the Englishman Henry Barrow wrote: “The true planted and rightly established Church of Christ is a company of faithful people, separated from the unbelievers and heathen of the land, gathered in the name of Christ, Whom they truly worship and readily obey as their only King, Priest, and Prophet, and joined together as members of one body, ordered and governed by such offices and laws as Christ, in His last will and testament, hath thereunto ordained…”

The more extreme Protestants were usually persecuted by the authorities, as the Huguenots were in 16th century France. So they felt no obligation to obey them, and if they obeyed authorities of their own choosing, this was an entirely voluntary, non-binding commitment. Thus the founder of the Calvinist sect of the Congregationalists, Robert Browne, wrote in 1582: “The Lord’s people is of the willing sorte. It is conscience, not the power of man,

---

24 Chadwick, op. cit., pp. 190-191.
25 Quoted in Jay, op. cit., p. 178.
that will drive us to seek the Lord’s Kingdom. Therefore it belongeth not to
the magistrate to compel religion, to plant churches by power, and to force a
submission to ecclesiastical government by laws and penalties."76

Again he wrote: "True Christians unite into societies of believers which
submit, by means of a voluntary agreement with God, to the dominion of God
the Saviour, and keep the Divine law in sacred communion."

The Calvinists went under different names in different countries. In
England they were called Independents or Congregationalists or Puritans.
Each community was completely independent: in faith, in worship, in the
election of clergy. They were united by faith and friendship alone; since the
clergy had no sacramental functions and were elected by laymen, they had no
real authority over their congregations.

Thus Calvinism was already democratism as applied to spiritual matters;
and it is not surprising that the leading democratic countries – Holland,
England, Scotland, America – would be those in which Calvinism let down
the deepest roots…

The Counter-Reformation

Powerful though the new ideas of the Reformation were, the papacy was
not finished yet; and from the mid-sixteenth century, it undertook a thorough
reformation of its own that restored it to the front rank of the absolutist states.
With the powerful aid of the Spanish kings and the Spanish-led Jesuit order, it
expanded its power swiftly and ruthlessly eastwards and westwards –
estwards into Italy, Orthodox Eastern Europe, India and the Far East, and
westwards into the New World of the Americas. This successful coalition
between the Vatican and Spain then stimulated the development of similarly
absolutist or semi-absolutist States fighting under the banner of the
Reformation, such as England. The union between Spain and the Vatican was
symbolised above all by the notorious Inquisition, “the first institution of
united Spain”77, which, while officially an ecclesiastical institution against
heresy, served the desire of the Spanish state for uniformity within its
dominions so well that “henceforth treason and heresy were virtually
indistinguishable”78.

As we have seen, Columbus’ discovery of America opened a new world to
the Spanish conquerors who followed him. Their conquests brought them
vast wealth and power, making Spain, for a century or so, the most powerful

76 Quoted in Jay, op. cit., p. 179.
77 Davies, op. cit., p. 453. United, also, with the people; for “throughout the history of the
Inquisition, commentators agreed on the impressive support given to it by the people”
78 Davies, op. cit., p. 453.
state in the world. Central and South America now came under the dominion of a despotism hardly less cruel than the pagan despotisms that had preceded it.

“The cruelty of the Spaniards [in the New World], writes Kamen, “was incontrovertible; it was pitiless, barbaric and never brought under control by the colonial regime”. Thus the South-American empire of the Incas, which before the Spanish conquest numbered some seven million people, within 50 years after the conquest had been reduced to two million. The decimation of the Mexican empire of the Aztecs was hardly less horrifying.

And if most of the victims fell to European diseases such as smallpox introduced by the conquerors rather than to war and execution, the cruelty of the Christians was nevertheless exceptional. Thus in 1546, when 15 colonists in the Yucatan were killed by the Mayas, the Spaniards responded by enslaving 2000 Maya men, hanging their women and burning six of their priests. “In Mexico..., a population estimated at 25 million in 1492 had been reduced to a mere one million by 1600.” This may have been historical justice for the child-sacrifice practiced over centuries by the pagan empires. But it also witnessed to the dehumanizing effect of centuries of papal propaganda justifying the extermination of heretics and in general all non-Catholics. Christianity had changed the morals of men by teaching them to see in every man the image of God and therefore an object of love and respect. The “Christianity” of Roman Catholicism turned the clock back by teaching Catholics to treat other classes of men as in effect subhuman.

16th-century Spain recalled the ancient despotisms not only in her cruelty and the absolutism of her institutions, but also in her enormous wealth and self-confidence. “We are His chosen people in the New Dispensation,” wrote Fray Juan de Salazar, “just as the Hebrews were in the time of the written law.” “The serenity and splendour of the Spanish throne,” wrote the Catholic author Hilaire Belloc, “the magnificence of its externals, expressed in ritual, in every detail of comportment, still more in architecture, profoundly affected the mind of Europe: and rightly so; they remain to-day to astonish us. I may be thought extravagant if I say that the Escorial, that huge block of dark granite unearthly proportioned, is a parallel to the Pyramids... At any rate there is nothing else in Europe which so presents the eternal and the simple combined... But the Escorial is not a mere symbol, still less a façade; it is the very soul of the imperial name. It could only have been raised and inhabited by kings who were believed by themselves to be, and were believed by others to be, the chief on earth.”

80 Spellman, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.
And yet the dominions of Spain, according to the papist theory, were merely leased to her, as it were, by the Pope, who was recognised by all the Catholic kings as their true lord and master. (Nor was this just theory. In 1494 the Pope arbitrated in a dispute between Spain and Portugal and gave Brazil to the Portuguese. And the Spanish accepted his decision.)

The theory was elaborated by the New World missionary (and Jewish converso) Bartolomé de las Casas, who wrote in 1552: “The Roman pontiff, vicar of Jesus Christ, whose divine authority extends over all the kingdoms of heaven and earth, could justly invest the kings of Castile and Leon with the supreme and sovereign empire and dominion over the entire realm of the Indies, making them emperors over many kings... If the vicar of Christ were to see that this was not advantageous for the spiritual well-being of Christianity, he could without doubt, by the same divine authority, annul or abolish the office of emperor of the Indies, or he could transfer it to another place, as one Pope did when he transferred the imperial crown from the Greeks to the Germans [at the coronation of Charlemagne in 800]. With the same authority, the Apostolic See could prohibit, under penalty of excommunication, all other Christian kings from going to the Indies without the permission and authorisation of the kings of Castile. If they do the contrary, they sin mortally and incur excommunication.

“The kings of Castile and León are true princes, sovereign and universal lords and emperors over many kings. The rights over all that great empire and the universal jurisdiction over all the Indies belong to them by the authority, concession and donation of the said Holy Apostolic See and thus by divine authority. This and no other is the juridical basis upon which all their title is founded and established...”

Thus the Counter-Reformation sought to re-establish the full power of the papacy over secular rulers that the Reformation had undermined. We see this in the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which, as Dagron writes, “tried to unite that which Luther had tried to separate. Both in the Council and around it attempts were made rather to bring the two powers into union with each other than to separate them. The politics of the concordats aimed to find a difficult compromise between religious universalism and the national

---

83 We may note that the Pope is supposedly king even of heaven! In view of these and similar statements, it is hard to deny that the Counter-Reformation papacy, no less than its medieval predecessor, usurped the power of God and became, in the strict definition of the word, idolatrous. (V.M.)

84 Las Casas, *Aqui se contienen treinta proposiciones muy jurídicas*, Propositions XVI, XVII, in Englander, *op. cit.*, p. 327. Las Casas is famous for his protection of the rights of the native Indians against the cruelties of the Spanish colonialists. In a debate at Valladolid in 1550 he pressed the case for the full humanity of the Indians against Sepulveda, who argued, following Aristotle, that they were so inferior as to be intended by God to be slaves.
churches. But the Jesuits supported the thesis of the pope’s “indirect authority” in political affairs.”

However, it was precisely at this time, the height of the Counter-Reformation, that the idea of natural law, which had been introduced into Catholic thought by Aquinas, became influential. Thus Las Casas writes: “Among the infidels who have distant kingdoms that have never heard the tidings of Christ or received the faith, there are true kings and princes. Their sovereignty, dignity, and royal pre-eminence derive from natural law and the law of nations... Therefore, with the coming of Jesus Christ to such domains, their honours, royal pre-eminence, and so on, do not disappear either in fact or in right. The opinion contrary to that of the preceding proposition is erroneous and most pernicious. He who persistently defends it will fall into formal heresy...”

In this context, it is significant that Sir Thomas More should have located his *Utopia* on an imaginary island modelled, in part, on the Spanish West Indies. In the first part of this work, More outlines the corruption of early sixteenth century England, whose fundamental cause, in his opinion, was the misuse of private property. In the second part he presents the opposite, an ideal (but distinctly communist) society in which “tyranny and luxury have been abolished, private property is unknown, and manual labour is looked upon as the sole occupation profitable to the state.”

But if natural law, in the interpretation of the Dominican Las Casas, decreed that the pagan kings of the Indies were true kings, in the interpretation of the Jesuit Juan de Mariana, it was the justification for rebellion against corrupt Christian kings. So for him the assassination of the French King Henry III was “an eternal honour to France”. However, such seditious thinking could not be tolerated; the Jesuits forced Mariana to remove this phrase from his book, and after the assassination of Henry IV in 1610, copies of it were publicly burned in Paris.

Mariana’s thoughts were indeed dangerous for absolute monarchs. Thus he wrote: “How will respect for princes (and what is government without this?) remain constant, if the people are persuaded that it is right for the subjects to punish the sins of the rulers? The tranquillity of the commonwealth will often be disturbed with pretended as well as real reasons. And when a revolt takes place every sort of calamity strikes, with one section of the populace armed against another part. If anyone does not think these evils must be avoided by every means, he would be heartless, wanting in the

---

universal common-sense of mankind. Thus they argue who protect the interests of the tyrant.

“The protectors of the people have no fewer and lesser arguments. Assuredly the republic, whence the regal power has its source, can call a king into court, when circumstances require and, if he persists in senseless conduct, it can strip him of his principate.

“For the commonwealth did not transfer the rights to rule into the hands of a prince to such a degree that it has not reserved a greater power to itself; for we see that in the matters of laying taxes and making permanent laws the state has made the reservation that except with its consent no change can be made. We do not here discuss how this agreement ought to be effected. But nevertheless, only with the desire of the people are new imposts ordered and new laws made; and, what is more, the rights to rule, though hereditary, are settled by the agreement of the people on a successor…”

De Mariana was not the only Catholic – or even Jesuit – to think such heretical thoughts. It is Suarez, according to Belloc, who “stands at the origin of that political theory which has coloured all modern times. He it was who, completing the work of his contemporary and fellow Jesuit, Bellarmine, restated in the most lucid and conclusive fashion the fundamental doctrine that Governments derive their authority, under God, from the community…”

But this was not simply Protestant contamination of pure Catholic doctrine. For Catholicism was the original rebellion, of which Protestantism was the logical successor…

**The Church of England**

The Anglican Church was conceived in adultery – King Henry VIII’s desire for a new wife, and born in murder – the people’s acquiescence in the old wife’s murder, even at the cost of separation from the pope. At the beginning, however, Anglicanism could hardly be called part of the Reformation. For Henry remained a Catholic in his personal beliefs and by no means wanted to allow the anti-authoritarian views of the Protestants, especially the Calvinist Protestants, into his kingdom. For, as the Scottish Calvinist John Knox was threateningly to say, “Jehu killed two Kings at God’s commandment…” Henry’s solution was a kind of Catholicism without the Pope (and one or two other things), but not a real Reformation in the continental sense insofar as, in the words of Ralf Dahrendorf, “a falling out with the Pope is not the same as a true Reformation”.

---

In its origin, therefore, the English Reformation was not a religious event at all, but a political manoeuvre to give the English king more freedom to satisfy his carnal lusts. Thus in 1531, Henry was accepted by the Church of England as her “supreme Protector, only and supreme Lord, and, as far as the law of Christ allows, even supreme Head”. Three years later, the Act of Supremacy accorded him the title “only supreme head in earth of the Church of England” and removed the saving qualification: “as far as the law of Christ allows”. It was the English equivalent of the Jewish cry: “We have no king but Caesar…”

The only palliative to this extreme caesaropapism lay in the fact that formally speaking Parliament had bestowed this right, so Parliament could in theory take it away. But Parliament was also, of course, a secular institution.

In addition to this political, secular character, Anglicanism later acquired a deeply individualist character, too. This was akin to the doctrine of another German Reformer, Kaspar Schwenkfeld, who asserted, in Barzun’s words, that “if each soul has a unique destiny, then each man and woman may frame his or her creed within the common Christian religion. They deserve to have faith custom-tailored to their needs.”

“At first glance,” writes Bernard, “Henry’s policies seem confused and uncertain; on closer examination they are better described as deliberately ambiguous. For Henry knew what he wanted well enough and was sufficient of a politician to know when and how and when to compromise. He grasped that among churchmen and, increasingly, among the educated laity, religious convictions were polarising. If he were to win acceptance for the break with Rome and the royal supremacy, the pope would have to be denounced, but if radical religious changes were to be enforced, or even if they were simply to be advocated from the pulpits, he risked provoking serious rebellions like the Pilgrimage of Grace. For all the extravagant claims of the Act of Six Articles that it would abolish diversity of opinions, Henry more realistically aimed at steering a path between the extremes.”

“Nor was the Elizabethan religious settlement [the Act of Uniformity in 1559 and the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1571] unequivocally protestant. Elizabeth would have preferred something closer to her father’s catholicism, without the pope and without egregious superstition… Henry VIII and Elizabeth saw the monarch as in control of the church, appointing bishops, determining doctrine and liturgy, and capable even of suspending an archbishop from exercising his power, a view perhaps symbolised by the placing of royal arms inside parish churches. At the heart of this monarchical view of the church lay a desire that was essentially political...; a desire for comprehensiveness, for a

91 Barzun, op. cit., p. 33.
church that would embrace all their subjects. Religious uniformity was natural in itself; religious dissensions wrecked social harmony and political peace. Continental experiences - from the peasants' war of 1525 through the French wars of religion to the Thirty Years' War - reinforced English rulers' fears of the disastrous consequences of religious divisions, and their success, until 1642, in sparing their realm from such horrors further strengthened their conviction of the efficacy of the policy…"  

"My argument is that Henry VIII, Elizabeth, James I and Charles I placed secular and political considerations of order above purely ecclesiastical and theological considerations..., and that from the start, from the 1530s, rulers faced limitations because some of their subjects were papists and some of their subjects wanted further reformation. Given the fact of religious difference, given that rulers knew that their subjects, especially the more educated, were divided, sometimes in response to theological debates European rather than just national in scope, a measure of compromise and ambiguity, particularly on points of doctrine or of local liturgical practice, was deliberately fostered."

"Larger cracks can be papered over than one might supposed. But in extraordinary circumstances, if contradictions with which men have long deliberately or unconsciously lived can no longer be accommodated or overlooked, if a monarchical church is faced by urgent demands for unambiguous, uncompromising decisions of divisive questions, then the ensuing collapse can be violent. When Englishmen ultimately turned to war in 1642, those differences of religion that the monarchical church had striven to contain but to which it was always vulnerable proved to be the most embittering determinant of men's allegiance."

By making the King, and later Parliament, the supreme arbiter of faith and morals, the Act of Supremacy infused the English Church and people with the habit of compromise, of perpetually seeking some middle way between opposing opinions. This habit is extremely harmful in questions of religious truth, where, as St. Mark of Ephesus pointed out, there can be no middle way between truth and falsehood. The via media was imposed upon the Church because it had been chosen by the King, who, for political and personal reasons, wanted a compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. It meant that henceforth the Anglican Church represented not one faith, but an uneasy compromise between two, with the king as the arbiter and supreme judge over both of them.

Now “if the State, as law and authority,” writes Tikhomirov, “departs from its connection with a definite confession, that is, comes out from under the

93 Bernard, op. cit., p. 187.
94 Bernard, op. cit., p. 188.
influence of the religious confession on religious politics, it becomes the
general judge of all confessions and submits religion to itself. All relations
between various confessions, and their rights, must evidently be decided by
the State that is outside them, being governed exclusively by its own ideas
about justice and the good of society and the State. In this connection it
obviously has the complete right and every opportunity to be repressive in all
cases in which, in its opinion, the interests of the confession contradict civil
and political interests. Thus the situation emerges in which the State can
influence the confessions, but cannot and must not be influenced by them.
Such a State is already unable to be governed in relation to the confessions by
any religious considerations, for not one of the confessions constitutes for it a
lawful authority, whereas the opinions of financiers, economists, medics,
administrators, colonels, etc. constitute its lawful consultants, so that in all
spheres of the construction of the people’s life the State will be governed by
considerations drawn precisely from these sources.

“In such an order there can be no religious freedom for anyone. Perhaps –
and this is doubtful – there can be equal rights for the confessions. But
freedom and equality of rights are not the same thing. Equality of rights can
also consist of a general lack of rights. The State can, [for example,] on the
basis of cultural and medical considerations, take measures against
circumcision and forbid fasting; to avoid disorders or on the basis of sanitary
considerations it can forbid pilgrimages to holy places or to venerated relics;
on the basis of military demands it can forbid all forms of monasticism among
Christians, Buddhists, Muslims. The services themselves can be found to be
harmful hypnotisations of the people not only in public, but also in private
prayer. In general, there are no bounds to the State’s prohibitory measures in
relation to religions if it is placed outside them, as their general judge…”

If Henry had confined himself to the Act of Supremacy, England might
have remained an essentially Catholic country. But in 1536 came the
Dissolution of the Monasteries. This destroyed the economic power of the
Church, vastly increased the wealth of the landowners who took over most of
the monastic lands, and undermined the sacredness of property and therefore
law and order in general.

As Professor Christopher Hill writes: “The long-term outcome of the
[English] Reformation was the opposite of that intended by the
Machiavellians who introduced it. Charles I’s Secretary of State, the near-
papist Windebanke, pointed out to the representative of the Pope in England
the historical irony of the situation. ’Henry VIII committed such sacrilege by
profaning so many ecclesiastical benefices in order to give their goods to
those who, being so rewarded, might stand firmly for the king in the lower
house; and now the king’s greatest enemies are those who are enriched by
these benefices... O the great judgements of God!’ The overthrow of papal
authority by Henry VIII thus looks forward to the civil war and the execution of Charles I. The royal supremacy yielded place to the sovereignty of Parliament and then to demands for the sovereignty of the people. The plunder of the Church by the landed ruling class stimulated the development of capitalism in England. The attack on Church property by the rich led to a questioning of property rights in general…"\(^97\)

Thus “men learnt that church property was not sacrosanct, that traditional ecclesiastical institutions could disappear without the world coming to an end; that laymen could remodel not only the economic and political structures of the Church but also its doctrine – if they possessed political power. Protestant theology undermined the uniquely sacred character of the priest, and elevated the self-respect of the congregation. This helped men to question a divine right to tithes, the more so when tithes were paid to lay impropriators. Preaching became more important than the sacraments; and so men came to wonder what right non-preaching ministers, or absentees, had to be paid by their congregations. It took a long time to follow out these new lines of thought to their logical conclusions; but ultimately they led men very far indeed. By spreading ideas of sectarian voluntarism they prepared the way for the Revolution of 1640, and trained its more radical leaders.

“In the Revolution episcopacy was abolished, bishops’ and cathedral lands confiscated, the payment of tithes challenged. The radicals rejected not only Henry VIII’s episcopal hierarchy but the whole idea of a state church. ‘O the great judgements of God!’ Windebanke had exclaimed when contemplating the paradoxical outcome of the Henrician Reformation. Henry VIII had denied the supremacy of the Pope; he had confiscated church property; and he had allowed the Scriptures to be translated into English. These challenges to the authoritarianism, to the wealth and to the propaganda monopoly of the Church opened doors wider than was perhaps intended. A century later the authority first of King, then of Parliament, was challenged in the name of the people; the social justification of all private property was called into question; and speculation about the nature of the state and the rights of the people went to lengths which ultimately terrified the victorious Parliamentarians into recalling King, House of Lords, and bishops to help them to maintain law and order.”\(^98\)

Until the death of Henry, the English Reformation had been a mainly politico-economic affair that affected only a small section of the population. But when, in the reign of Edward VI, the Calvinists took over the reins of government, the dissolution of the monasteries assumed such large proportions and brutal destructiveness as finally to arouse the indignation of large parts of the population, who remained essentially Catholic in their

\(^98\) Hill, op. cit., pp. 56-57.
sympathies. Then, during the reign of Mary, a Catholic who was determined to stamp out Calvinism, a persecution of Calvinists got under way that had the good fortune (from a Calvinist point of view) of finding a talented chronicler in the shape of John Foxe, whose *Book of Martyrs* has been called “the third Testament of the English Church”\(^9\), so influential were its gory descriptions of the torture of Calvinists. As Chadwick writes: “The steadfastness of the victims, from Ridley and Latimer downwards, baptized the English Reformation in blood and drove into English minds the fatal association of ecclesiastical tyranny with the See of Rome… Five years before, the Protestant cause was identified with church robbery, destruction, irreverence, religious anarchy. It was now beginning to be identified with virtue, honesty, and loyal English resistance to a half-foreign government.”\(^1\)

Thus the Calvinists found themselves, at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, with both money (from the dissolution of the monasteries) and national sentiment (from the fact that foreigners incited the persecution) on their side.

It was Pope Pius V’s Bull *Regnans in Caelis* (1570), together with the failed Spanish Armada of 1588, that finally ensured the victory of the English Reformation. The Pope declared: “He that reigns in the highest, to Whom has been given all power in heaven and earth, entrusted the government of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (outside which there is no salvation) to one man alone on the earth, namely to Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and to Peter’s successor, the Roman pontiff, in fullness of power. This one man He set up as chief over all nations, and all kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, dispose, plant and build…We declare … Elizabeth to be a heretic and an abettor of heretics, and those that cleave to her in the aforesaid matters to have incurred the sentence of anathema, and to be cut off from the unity of Christ’s body…. We declare her to be deprived of her pretended right to the aforesaid realm, and from dominion, dignity and privilege whatsoever. And the nobles, subjects and peoples of the said realm, and all others who have taken an oath of any kind to her we declare to be absolved for ever from such oath and from all dues of dominion, fidelity and obedience… And we enjoin and forbid all… to obey her and her admonitions, commands, and laws. All who disobey our command we involve in the same sentence of anathema.”\(^2\)

This decree immediately placed all English Catholics who recognised the Pope’s authority into the category of political traitors as well as ecclesiastical heretics. And the failure of the Spanish Armada in 1588 removed their last chance of political redemption; for although there is evidence that Queen Elizabeth shared the Catholic sympathies of her father, she did not have the

\(^9\) Paxman, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
power to resist her Calvinist advisors, especially the Cecils, father and son. From this time, therefore, the decatholicisation of the country proceeded apace with no significant opposition...102

**Holland: the First Capitalist State**

The age began with a long-drawn-out struggle for national freedom that prefigured many such struggles in the future. The Dutch Revolution, while less influential than the English, was extremely significant in that it constituted the beginning of the fall of the greatest monarchical power of the age, the Spanish Empire, and the first successful nationalist revolution in European history.

“The Revolt of the Netherlands,” writes Norman Davies, “which began in 1566 and ended in 1648, constituted a long-running drama which spanned the transition from the supremacy of the Habsburgs to that of France. At the outset, the seventeen provinces of the imperial Burgundian Circle that were transferred to Spanish rule in 1551 presented a mosaic of local privileges and cultural divisions. The feudal aristocracy of the countryside contrasted sharply with the wealthy burghers and fishermen of the coastal towns. The francophone and predominantly Catholic Walloons of Hainault, Namur, and Liège contrasted with the Dutch-speaking and increasingly Calvinist population of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht. The central provinces of Flanders and Brabant lay across the main religious and linguistic divide. Over 200 cities controlled perhaps 50 per cent of Europe’s trade, bringing Spain seven times more in taxes than the bullion of the Indies. Certainly, in the initial stages of Spanish rule, the threat to provincial liberties and to the nobles’ control of Church benefices gave greater cause for popular offence than the threat of activating the Inquisition...

“Under the regency of Margaret of Parma, 1559-67, discontent came to a head over a scheme for ecclesiastical reform. Three protesters – William the Silent, Prince of Orange (1533-84), Lamoral, Count of Egmont, and Philip Montmorency, Count of Horn – petitioned the King with the Regent’s permission. They were ridiculed as Geuzen, les Gueux, ‘the Beggars’, and in 1565, in the Edict of Segovia, Philip indicated his refusal to authorize change. Following further petitions for reform, and a meeting in 1566 of confederated nobles at St. Trond, which demanded religious toleration, there occurred a serious outbreak of rioting and religious desecrations. The action of the confederates in helping the Regent to quell the disorders did not deter Philip

---

102 Hilaire Belloc writes: “The mass of England was Catholic in tradition and feeling during all the last half of the sixteenth century. Even into the beginning of the seventeenth the tradition survived. A good half of the people still had Catholic sympathies in the earlier years of James I. A quarter of them had, in varying degrees, Catholic sympathies (and half that quarter was willing to sacrifice heavily for the sake of openly confessing Catholicism) as late as the fall of the Stuarts in 1685-88.” (*How the Reformation Happened*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1933, p. 176)
from ordering general repression. Under the regency of the Duke of Alva, 1567-73, a Council of Tumults, the notorious Bloedbraad or ‘Blood-Council’ was set up to try the King’s opponents. Egmont and Horn were beheaded in the square at Brussels, their severed heads sent to Madrid in a box. William of Orange escaped to lead the continuing fight. With the whole population of the Netherlands condemned to death as heretics by the Church, the south rebelled as well as the north. The ‘Sea Beggars’ attacked shipping. Haarlem, besieged, capitulated. Spanish garrisons spread fire and plunder. Thousands perished from random arrests, mock trials, and casual violence.

“Under the governorships of Don Luis de Requesens, Grand Commander of Castile 1573-6, and of Don John of Austria 1576-8 reconciliation was attempted but failed. Leyden, besieged, survived. The sack of Antwerp during the Spanish Fury of 1576 hardened resistance. Under the regency of the Duke of Parma 1578-92, the split became irreversible. By the Union of Arras (1578) ten southern provinces accepted Spanish terms and recovered their liberties. By the Union of Utrecht (1579) the seven northern provinces resolved to fight for their independence. Thereafter, there was unremitting war...”\textsuperscript{103}

The Netherlands immediately proclaimed the principle of religious liberty – the first State to do so. Not only all Protestant sects, but also, as we have seen, Jews, and even – most surprisingly, given the current war against Catholic Spain - Roman Catholics were given freedom to practise their beliefs. All strictly religious faiths were given liberty alongside the newest and most important faith, Capitalism. As the English Catholic poet Andrew Marvell put it in his poem, “The Character of Holland” (1653):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hence Amsterdam, Turk-Christian-Pagan-Jew,  
Staple of Sects and Mint of Schism grew;  
That Bank of Conscience, where not one so strange  
Opinion but finds Credit, and Exchange.  
In vain for Catholicks our selves we bear;  
The universal church is onely there.}\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

“In 1581,” writes Almond, “the states of the Union of Utrecht formally abjured their loyalty to Philip II [of Spain]. They denied his divine right to rule. He had betrayed his trust: ‘It is well known to all that if a prince is appointed by God over the land, it is to protect them from harm, even as a shepherd to the guardianship of his flock. The subjects are not created by God for the sake of the prince but rather the prince is established for his subjects’

\textsuperscript{104} The Netherlands has maintained its reputation of being in the vanguard of liberty to the present day. It was not by chance that when the foremost expression of the modern ecumenical movement, the “universal church” of the World Council of Churches, was founded in 1948, its centre was designated in Amsterdam...
sake for without them he would not be a prince. Should he violate the laws, he is to be forsaken by his meanest subjects, and to be no longer recognised as prince.’ These were revolutionary sentiments in the sixteenth century, and for some time to come. Even their authors preferred to avoid becoming a republic and looked around for an alternative monarch who would satisfy their demands…”105

Nevertheless, the constitution of the new State “ensured that the governments of the seven provinces remained separated from a federal council of state at the Hague. The latter was chaired by an executive Stadholder, whose office was generally held, together with the offices of Captain-General and Admiral-General, by the House of Orange…” Despite its peculiar, decentralised constitution, [the Netherlands] had every reason to regard itself as the first modern state.”106

“The Dutch Republic of the ‘United Provinces of the Netherlands’ – misleadingly known to the English as Holland – was the wonder of seventeenth-century Europe. It succeeded for the same reasons that its would-be Spanish masters failed: throughout the eighty years of its painful birth, its disposable resources were actually growing. Having resisted the greatest military power of the day, it then became a major maritime power in its own right. Its sturdy burgher society widely practised the virtues of prudent management, democracy, and toleration. Its engineers, bankers, and sailors were justly famed… The Dutch Republic rapidly became a haven for religious dissidents, for capitalists, for philosophers, and for painters.”107

The Dutch Republic was the first political creation of Calvinism. Its strengths have been enumerated. Its main weakness was that its root was “the root of all evil” – money. Holland was the first society whose aim was the creation of wealth. “Holland is a country,” wrote Claude de Saumaise, “where the demon gold is seated on a throne of cheese, and crowned with tobacco”.108 This commercial character of the new Dutch state was caused, writes Pieter Geyl, by the fact that it was “the urban lower middle classes” who were mainly inspired to act against the Spaniards, while the town oligarchies “felt themselves... the guardians of the privileges and welfare of town and country, rather than the champions of a particularly new religious faith. In other words, they regarded matters from a secular standpoint, and, while the new Church had in their scheme of things its indispensable place, they felt it incumbent on them carefully to circumscribe this place. From one point of view... the great European movement of the Reformation was a

106 Davies, op. cit., pp. 538-539.
107 Davies, op. cit., pp. 538, 539.
108 De Saumaise, in Simon Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches, 1987, p. 188.
revolt of the lay community under the leadership of their rulers – a revolt, that is to say, of the State against priestly influence.”

And so, while, as we have said, the Dutch Republic was the first political creation of Calvinism, its purpose was not so much to protect or spread Calvinism as to protect and increase the material prosperity of its citizens. Their attitude to the state, therefore, was that it “had better stop trying to interfere with the serious business of making money.” Although the Calvinist-Puritans did not make money their goal, and profit-making was encouraged only in order to be more effective in doing good, the decay of Puritanism tended to leave mammon in its place. As Cotton Mather said: “Religion begat prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother.”

We find such a link posited, not surprisingly, by polemical Catholic writers, such as Hilaire Béloq: “If we ask what it was in Calvin’s doctrine, apart from the opportunities of its moment and its effect against the clergy, which gave it so much power, the answer is, I think, that it provided an awful object of worship and that it appealed at the same time to a powerful human appetite which Catholicism [and Orthodoxy] opposes. The novel object of worship was an Implacable God: the appetite was the love of money… A Philosophy which denied good works and derided abnegation let it [the love of money] loose in all its violence.”

But it was the German social scientist Max Weber who developed the idea of a direct link between Protestantism, especially Calvinism, and those attitudes and kinds of working habit that are conducive to capitalism. His theory, writes Landes, postulates “that Protestantism – more specifically, its Calvinist branches – promoted the rise of modern capitalism… not by easing or abolishing those aspects of the Roman faith that had deterred or hindered free economic activity (the prohibition of usury, for example); nor by encouraging, let alone inventing, the pursuit of wealth; but by defining and sanctioning an ethic of everyday behavior that conducd to business success.

“Calvinistic Protestantism, said Weber, did this initially by affirming the doctrine of predestination. This held that one could not gain salvation by faith or deeds; that question had been decided for everyone from the beginning of time, and nothing could alter one’s fate.

“Such a belief could easily have encouraged a fatalistic attitude. If behavior and faith make no difference, why not live it up? Why be good? Because,

according to Calvinism, goodness was a plausible sign of election. Anyone could be chosen, but it was only reasonable to suppose that most of those chosen would show by their character and ways the quality of their souls and the nature of their destiny. This implicit reassurance was a powerful incentive to proper thoughts and behavior. As the Englishwoman Elizabeth Walker wrote her grandson in 1689, alluding to one of the less important but more important signs of grace, ‘All cleanly people are not good, but there are few good people but are cleanly.’ And while hard belief in predestination did not last more than a generation or two (it is not the kind of dogma that has lasting appeal), it was eventually converted into a secular code of behavior: hard work, honesty, seriousness, the thrifty use of money and time (both lent us by God). ‘Time is short,’ admonished the Puritan divine Richard Baxter (1615-1691), ‘and work is long’.

“All of these values help business and capital accumulation, but Weber stressed that the good Calvinist did not aim at riches. (He might easily believe, however, that honest riches are a sign of divine favor.) Europe did not have to wait for the Protestant Reformation to find people who wanted to be rich. Weber’s point is that Protestantism produced a new kind of businessman, a different kind of person, one who aimed to live and work a certain way. It was the way that mattered, and riches were at best a by-product.

“A good Calvinist would say, that was what was wrong with Spain: easy riches, unearned wealth. Compare the Protestant and Catholic attitudes towards gambling in the early modern period. Both condemned it, but Catholics condemned it because one might (would) lose, and no responsible person would jeopardize his well-being and that of others in that manner. The Protestants, on the other hand, condemned because one might win, and that would be bad for character. It was only much later that the Protestant ethic degenerated into a set of maxims for material success and smug, smarmy sermons on the virtues of wealth...

“It is fair to say that most historians today would look upon the Weber thesis as implausible and unacceptable; it had its moment and it is gone.

“I do not agree. Not on the empirical level, where records show that Protestant merchants and manufacturers played a leading role in trade, banking, and industry. In manufacturing centers (fabriques) in France and western Germany, Protestants were typically the employers, Catholics the employed. In Switzerland, the Protestant cantons were the centers of export manufacturing industry (watches, machinery, textiles) the Catholic ones were primarily agricultural. In England, which by the end of the sixteenth century was overwhelmingly Protestant, the Dissenters (read Calvinists) were disproportionately active and influential in the factories and forges of the nascent Industrial Revolution.
“Nor on the theoretical. The heart of the matter lay indeed in the making of a new kind of man – rational, ordered, diligent, productive. These virtues, while not new, were hardly commonplace. Protestantism generalized them among its adherents, who judged one another by conformity to these standards. This is a story in itself, one that Weber did surprisingly little with: the role of group pressure and mutual scrutiny in assuring performance – everybody looking at everyone else and minding one another’s business.

“Two special characteristics of the Protestants reflect and confirm this link. The first was the stress on instruction and literacy, for girls as well as boys. This was a product of Bible reading. Good Protestants were expected to read the holy scriptures for themselves. (By way of contrast, Catholics were catechized but did not have to read, and they were explicitly discouraged from reading the Bible.) The result: greater literacy and a larger pool of candidates for advanced schooling; also greater assurance of continuity of literacy from generation to generation. Literate mothers matter.

“The second was the importance accorded to time. Here we have what the sociologist would call unobtrusive evidence: the making and buying of clocks and watches. Even in Catholic areas such as France and Bavaria, most clockmakers were Protestant; and the use of these instruments of time measurement and their diffusion to rural areas was far more advanced in Britain and Holland than in Catholic countries. Nothing testifies so much as time sensibility to the ‘urbanization’ of rural society, with all that that implies for rapid diffusion of values and tastes…

“Add to this the growing need for fixed capital (equipment and plant) in the industrial sector. This made continuity crucial – for the sake of continued maintenance and improvement and the accumulation of knowledge and experience. These manufacturing enterprises were very different in this regard from mercantile ones, which often took the form of ad hoc mobilizations of capital and labor, brought together for a voyage or venture and subsequently dissolved.”

We should note not only the link between capitalism and Protestantism, but also that of both with Judaism. As we have seen, the Marrano Jews had found a safe refuge in Calvinist Amsterdam, where they prospered exceedingly. And this was no accident. As Cantor notes, “the Calvinists were close readers of the Old Testament and taught a bleak image of a wrathful, judging, and omniscient and omnipotent God that accorded well with Jewish tradition. Calvinist societies were sympathetic to market capitalism as a sign of God’s grace working in the world.

“There was a millenial fervor among the latter-day Calvinists, a sense of the coming end of time. These qualities did not necessarily lead to a more

---

favorable attitude toward the Jews; theoretically it could have gone the other way. But shaped by a Calvinist elite that favored an ethic of hard work, rational application of communal standards to individual behavior, and postponed gratification, a comity of attitude emerged in the early seventeenth century between the ruling capitalist oligarchy in Amsterdam and the rabbinical-capitalist oligarchy that controlled power in the Jewish community. Not only did the Jews of Amsterdam prosper, but Calvinist England readmitted them in 1653, for the first time officially since the 1290s...

“Everywhere that Calvinism spread after 1600 – Holland, England, Scotland, and overseas to the United States, English-speaking parts of Canada, and South Africa (a Dutch colony until 1815, and British thereafter) – the Jews prospered in business. In the nineteenth century they were given the opportunity to enter the learned professions. The Calvinists were too Christian to regard the Jews as fully their equals. But they showed the Jews more than tolerance; they accorded them dignified respect. This was because of Calvinist inclination to the Old Testament literary text in its covenant theology; because the Calvinists and the Jews agreed that business success was a blessing from God and a sign of the worth of the entrepreneur in God’s eyes; and because both religious groups admired the patriarchal family, hard work, social intelligence, rational calculations, and puritanical postponed gratification.”

114 The Old Testament in the New World

The United States of America was founded on strictly religious principles, the principles of Calvinism. Its founders, fleeing persecution at the hands of the Anglican State Church in England, found in New England almost ideal conditions in which to put their doctrine of “theocratic democratism” into practice. These conditions were described by Alexis de Tocqueville in his famous work, Democracy in America, as follows:–

“There was a strong family likeness between all the English colonies as they came to birth. All, from the beginning, seemed destined to let freedom grow, not the aristocratic freedom of their motherland, but a middle-class and democratic freedom of which the world’s history had not previously provided a complete example...

“All the immigrants who came to settle on the shores of New England belonged to the well-to-do classes at home. From the start, when they came together on American soil, they presented the unusual phenomenon of a society in which there were no great lords, no common people, and, one may almost say, no rich or poor. In proportion to their numbers, these men had a greater share of accomplishments than could be found in any European nation now. All, perhaps without a single exception, had received a fairly

114 Cantor, op. cit., pp. 198-199.
advanced education, and several had made a European reputation by their talents and their knowledge. The other colonies [including the southern English colonies such as Virginia] had been founded by unattached adventurers, whereas the immigrants to New England brought with them wonderful elements of order and morality; they came with their wives and children to the wilds. But what distinguished them from all others was the very aim of their enterprise. No necessity forced them to leave their country; they gave up a desirable social position and assured means of livelihood; nor was their object in going to the New World to better their position or accumulate wealth; they tore themselves away from home comforts in obedience to a purely intellectual craving; in facing the inevitable sufferings of exile they hoped for the triumph of an idea.

“The immigrants, or as they so well called themselves, the Pilgrims, belonged to that English sect whose austere principles had led them to be called Puritans. Puritanism was not just a religious doctrine; in many respects it shared the most democratic and republican theories. That was the element which had aroused its most dangerous adversaries. Persecuted by the home government, and with strict principles offended by the everyday ways of the society in which they lived, the Puritans sought a land so barbarous and neglected by the world that there at last they might be able to live in their own way and pray to God in freedom.”

In the imagination of the Pilgrims, their colonisation of America was like Joshua’s conquest of the Promised Land. Just as the Canaanites had to be driven out from the Promised Land, so did the Red Indians from America. Thus one New England meeting agreed: 1. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. Voted. 2. The Lord may give the earth or any part of it to His chosen people. Voted. 3. We are His chosen people. Voted.

And just as Church and State were organically one in Joshua’s Israel, so it was in the Pilgrim Fathers’ America. Thus de Tocqueville writes: “Puritanism... was almost as much a political theory as a religious doctrine. No sooner had the immigrants landed on that inhospitable coast described by Nathaniel Morton than they made it their first care to organise themselves as a society. They immediately passed an act which stated:

“'We whose names are underwritten... having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our king and country a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid: and by virtue hereof, do enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws,

ordinances, acts, constitutions, and officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”117

This act of 1620 was the nearest incarnation, before or since, of the idea of the social contract that later became such a dominant political idea in the English-speaking countries. As President Ronald Reagan said in 1980: “Three hundred and sixty years ago, in 1620, a group of families dared to cross a mighty ocean to build a future for themselves in a new world. When they arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts, they formed what they called a ‘compact’: an agreement among themselves to build a community and abide by its laws. The single act – the voluntary binding together of free people to live under the law – set the pattern for what was to come.”118

It did indeed; and to this day America represents that religious idealism and messianism, that can-do mentality and belief in the possibility of solving all problems by rational debate and democratic decision-making, which the Puritans brought with them to the new world. The Puritan experiment was made possible by the great distance of the new colony from the English king, and by the system adopted by the Crown whereby “a number of immigrants were given the right to form a political society under the patronage of the motherland and allowed to govern themselves in any way not contrary to her laws.”119 Also, of course, the experiment was carried out in a new world, where neither the weight of historical institutions, such as feudalism and the official Church, nor great differences in wealth or limitations of space or the pressure of external enemies, hindered the development of a society that was unique in the degree of its democratism and egalitarianism. “Although Winthrop called the social structure of New England a ‘mixed Aristocracy’, the ‘democratic’ tendencies hostile to any form of hereditary power were nevertheless quite pronounced from the beginning.”120

But this is not to say that the Pilgrims came to America with their minds a complete tabula rasa politically speaking. In 1648, at a synod in Cambridge, Mass., they set out their ideas about authority in quite sophisticated terms: “This Government of the church is a mixed Government.... In respect of Christ, the Head and King of the church, and the Sovereign power residing in Him, and exercised by Him, it is a Monarchy. In respect of the body, or Brotherhood of the church, and power granted unto them, it resembles a Democracy. In respect of the Presbytery (i.e. the Elders) and power committed to them, it is an Aristocracy” (X, 3).”121

117 Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 43-44.
118 Reagan, in Adair, Puritans, op. cit, p. 280.
119 Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 45.
120 Adair, op. cit, p. 166.
The “theocratic democratism” of the Puritan communities became the basis of the federal structure of the United States of America. They claimed that this system corresponded to the practice of the early Church, and especially to the structure of ancient Israel, with its distrust of all monarchical power. For God had allowed Samuel to anoint the first king, Saul, only on sufferance, and the prophets are full of denunciations of the evil deeds of the kings. Indeed, as A.P. Lopukhin writes: "On examining the structure of the Mosaic State, one is involuntarily struck by its similarity to the organisation of the state structure in the United States of Northern America." "The tribes in their administrative independence correspond exactly to the states, each of which is a democratic republic." The Senate and Congress "correspond exactly to the two higher groups of representatives in the Mosaic State - the 12 and 70 elders." "After settling in Palestine, the Israelites first (in the time of the Judges) established a union republic, in which the independence of the separate tribes was carried through to the extent of independent states."\(^{122}\)

However, it needs to be said, first, that although ancient Israel was indeed a theocracy, its near-identity of Church and State represents a very early, embryonic and unrepeatable stage in the history of the people of God. In the New Testament period, the difference, if not always complete separation, between Church and State is an indisputable fact. Christ recognised it - hence His famous words about giving to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's. Caesar was a king, and neither Christ nor the Apostles either deny or criticise that fact. For all their instructions were directed towards the creation of the Church, the Kingdom which is not of this world and which follows quite different laws from those which obtain in this age.

Secondly, the Church is not a democracy. It is a Kingdom, the Kingdom of God on earth; and the element of monarchical hierarchy in it is very pronounced. For just as the 12 and 70 elders of the Mosaic Church were not elected by the people, but were appointed by Moses, so the 12 and 70 Apostles of the New Testament Church were not elected by the believers, but were appointed by Christ Himself. And even though the successors of the Apostles, the Bishops, are in principle elected, it is not their election which makes them bishops, but their consecration by other Bishops. Indeed, if one examines the structure of the Orthodox Church since apostolic times, it resembles the federal structure of the Presbyterians or United States only in not having a single head on earth; for each diocese is like a mini-kingdom, and each bishop is like a king, being a regent of the King of heaven. And this is God’s appointed order for the Church in both the Old and New Testaments. Nor do the Biblical words about the royal priesthood of all Christians (I Peter 2.9) provide a sound basis for Protestant democratism. For, as Berdyaev writes: "This [universal royal priesthood] by no means implies a denial of the

significance of the hierarchical principle in history, as various sectarians would have it. One can come to the universal royal priesthood only by the hierarchical path of the Church. Indeed, the Kingdom of God itself is hierarchical. And the universal royal priesthood is not a denial of the hierarchical structure of existence.”

The Puritan colonies attempted to reproduce the theocratic structure of Israelite society in the time of the Judges and Moses. Thus in 1650 the little state of Connecticut drew up a code of laws, which begins: “If any man after legal conviction shall have or worship any other God but the Lord God, he shall be put to death.” “There follow,” writes De Tocqueville, “ten or twelve provisions of the same sort taken word for word from Deuteronomy, Exodus, or Leviticus. Blasphemy, sorcery, adultery, and rape are punished by death; a son who outrages his parents is subject to the same penalty. Thus the legislation of a rough, half-civilised people was transported into the midst of an educated society with gentle mores; as a result the death penalty has never been more frequently prescribed by the laws or more seldom carried out.

“The framers of these penal codes were especially concerned with the maintenance of good behaviour and sound mores in society, so they constantly invaded the sphere of conscience, and there was hardly a sin not subject to the magistrate’s censure. The reader will have noticed the severity of the penalties for adultery and rape. Simple intercourse between unmarried persons was likewise harshly repressed. The judge had discretion to impose a fine or a whipping or to order the offenders to marry. If the records of the old courts of New Haven are to be trusted, prosecutions of this sort were not uncommon; under the date May 1, 1660, we find a sentence imposing a fine and reprimand on a girl accused of uttering some indiscreet words and letting herself be kissed. The code of 1650 is full of preventive regulations. Idleness and drunkenness are severely punished. Innkeepers may give each customer only a certain quantity of wine; simple lying, if it could do harm, is subject to a fine or a whipping. In other places the lawgivers, completely forgetting the great principle of religious liberty which they themselves claimed in Europe, enforced attendance at divine service by threat of fines and went so far as to impose severe penalties, and often the death penalty, on Christians who chose to worship God with a ritual other than their own. Finally, sometimes the passion for regulation which possessed them led them to interfere in matters completely unworthy of such attention. Hence there is a clause in the same code forbidding the use of tobacco. We must not forget that these ridiculous and tyrannical laws were not imposed from outside – they were voted by the free agreement of all the interested parties themselves – and that their mores were even more austere and puritanical than their laws. In 1649 an association was solemnly formed in Boston to check the worldly luxury of long hair…”

123 Berdyaev, N. “Tsarstvo Bozhie i Tsarstvo Kesaria” ("The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar"), Put’ (The Way), September, № 1, September, 1925, p. 44 (in Russian).
124 Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 47-49.
Consequently “tolerance” was not, for the Puritans, that queen among virtues that it has become in the contemporary West. Thus in 1645 Thomas Shepard of Newtown (Cambridge) said to Hugh Peter of Salem (where the famous witches’ trial took place): “Toleration of all upon pretence of conscience – I thank God my soul abhors it. The godly in former times never fought for the liberty of consciences by pleading for liberty for all.”

And yet uniformity was not a practical possibility in a nation that combined the Puritanism of New England with the Anglicanism of Virginia, the Roman Catholicism of Maryland with the Quakerism of Pennsylvania. So tolerance, and a strict separation of Church and State, became a necessity if the country was not to fall apart along confessional lines (the Quakers, it should be remembered, rejected all political authority on principle). The first State to be founded on the principle of religious tolerance was Maryland, designed as a refuge for Roman Catholics persecuted elsewhere. And then there was Rhode Island, founded by refugees fleeing from intolerant Massachusetts. Its early code of laws defined it as a place “where all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every man in the name of his God”. As a consequence, the State was described by its opponents as “the sink into which all the rest of the colonies empty their heretics”, “the receptacle of all sorts of riff-raff people, and nothing else than the sewer or latrina of New England”. And then there was Pennsylvania, conceived by William Penn as a refuge first of all for Quakers, but then for all persecuted people, the only condition for residence in Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love, being belief in one God, the Creator of the Universe. This tendency towards tolerance was reinforced by the Enlightenment, with the result that America was to move away from its “democratic totalitarian” beginnings to complete separation of Church and State and liberty of conscience.

**The Anglican Monarchy**

England under the Tudors achieved a degree of stability amidst the extreme religious instability of the time. The “Virgin Queen”, Elizabeth I, believed in the Divine right of kings and in the supremacy of the sovereign over all other estates of the realm, including the Church (of which she was the “supreme governor”). Thus in her letters to James VI of Scotland (later James I of England), she lashes out “against Presbyterians and Jesuits alike for their separate attacks on royal authority and power.”

---

125 Quoted in Barzun, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
127 Gascoigne, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
128 Susan Doran claims that Elizabeth’s views had their roots in a Christian Platonism according to which earthly rule was a reflection of the Divine harmony and order, and that consequently “diversity, variety, contention and vain love of singularity, either in our ministers or in the people, must provoke the displeasure of Almighty God.” (“Elizabeth I’s Religion: The Evidence of Her Letters”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 51, no. 4).
Elizabeth’s position as head of both Church and State was necessitated by the constant threat of civil war between Catholics and Calvinists. In this respect her dilemma was similar to that of the contemporary Henry IV of France, who, though a Calvinist by upbringing, converted to Catholicism in order to bring the his country’s religious wars to an end. For “Paris is worth a mass”, he said: the important thing was that “we are all French and fellow-citizens of the same country”.129 The Anglican monarchy similarly aimed to make everyone consciously English and citizens of the same country, whatever their religion. The result was a nation united around “a Calvinist creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy.”130

It is instructive to compare the position of these European monarchs with that of the almost exactly contemporary Moghul Emperor Akbar, who had to avert a similar threat of civil war between Hindus and Muslims. Sir A.C. Lyall writes: “[Akbar] instituted a kind of metaphysical society, over which he presided in person, and in which he delighted in pitting against each other Persian mystics, Hindu pantheists, Christian missionaries and orthodox Mohammedans. He even assumed by public edict the spiritual headship of his empire, and declared himself the first appellate judge of ecclesiastical questions. ‘Any opposition,’ said the edict, ‘on the part of subjects to such orders passed by His Majesty shall involve damnation in the world to come, and loss of religion and property in this life.’... Akbar’s political object was to provide some common ground upon which Hindus and Mohammedans might be brought nearer to religious unity; though it is hardly necessary to add that no such modus vivendi has at any time been discovered.”131

Just as Akbar tried to unite his subjects through inter-religious ecumenism, so Elizabeth tried to unite her subjects through inter-denominational ecumenism. For both the sovereign had to be above the religious fray, just as God was above all religions. After the fall of the Moghul empire, the two forms of ecumenism would be united in the Masonic lodges of British India...

Elizabeth’s task was hardly less difficult than Akbar’s, and the attempt to contain the pressures of conflicting religions under an absolutist monarch collapsed within forty years of her death. However, she made a valiant attempt, clothing and obscuring the Calvinist, and therefore anti-monarchical, creed of the State in a purely Catholic monarchical pomp and ritualism. Thus while the 39 articles of the Anglican Creed admitted only two sacraments, baptism and the eucharist (the latter interpreted in a distinctly Protestant

130 The words of William Pitt the Elder in 1760 (Barzun, op. cit., p. 33). The Arminians were Calvinists who ascribed a greater role to free will than was acceptable to the Calvinist orthodoxy.
sense), and rejected the sacrament of the priesthood, room was somehow found for a sacramental mystique of the monarchy, as expressed in Shakespeare’s Richard II (III, ii, 54-7):

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

and Hamlet (IV, v, 123-4):

There’s such a divinity doth hedge a king
That treason can but peep to what it would…

She used her royal dignity to greatest effect during the Spanish Armada of 1588 when, “full of princely resolution and more than feminine courage, she passed like some Amazonian Empress through all her army”, and uttered the famous words: “I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too…”

The monarch was the capstone of the whole social order, founded on hierarchy (or “degree”), as expressed in Troilus and Cressida (I, 3, 109):

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows! Each thing melts
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead;
Force should be right; or, rather, right and wrong –
Between whose endless jar justice resides –
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.

It is worth pondering why the monarchy continued to exert such a mystical attraction in a nation that was well on the way to ejecting all mysticism from its political and ecclesiastical life. Part of the answer must lie in the upsurge of patriotism that accompanied the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, whose focus became the virgin Queen Elizabeth. Another part must lie in the nostalgia for the past that was so rapidly being destroyed, a past in which the figure of the anointed king played such an important role.

Even today, when democratism appears to have finally triumphed, the monarchy remains popular in England. And at the heart of the democracy, Westminster Abbey, there still lies the body of the most holy of the Orthodox kings of England, Edward the Confessor, like a rose among thorns. It is as if the English people, even while leading the way into the new democratic age,
subconsciously feel that they have lost something vitally important, and cling to the holy corpse with despairing tenacity, refusing to believe that the soul has finally departed. Thus even such a convinced democrat as C.S. Lewis could write of the monarchy as “the channel through which all the **vital** elements of citizenship - loyalty, the consecration of secular life, the hierarchical principle, splendour, ceremony, continuity - still trickle down to irrigate the dustbowl of modern economic Statecraft”.\(^{132}\) And even today, hysteria can seize a whole nation on the death of a princess, for little other reason than that she was a princess. Thus monarchism is something deeply rooted with the human psyche which we attempt to uproot at our peril…

Roger Scruton has spoken of the English monarchy as “the light above politics, which shines down on the human bustle from a calmer and more exalted sphere. Not being elected by popular vote, the monarch cannot be understood as representing the views only of the present generation. He or she is born into the position, and also passes it on to a legally defined successor. The monarch is in a real sense the voice of history, and the very accidental [sic] way in which the office is acquired emphasises the grounds of the monarch’s legitimacy, in the history of a place and a culture. This is not to say that kings and queens cannot be mad, irrational, self-interested or unwise. It is to say, rather, that they owe their authority and their influence precisely to the fact that they speak for something **other** than the present desires of present voters, something vital to the continuity and community which the act of voting assumes. Hence, if they are heard at all, they are head as limiting the democratic process, in just the way that it must be limited if it is to issue in reasonable legislation. It was in such a way that the English conceived their Queen, in the sunset days of Queen Victoria. The sovereign was an ordinary person, transfigured by a peculiar enchantment which represented not political power but the mysterious authority of an ancient ‘law of the land’. When the monarch betrays that law – as, in the opinion of many, the Stuarts betrayed it – a great social and spiritual unrest seizes the common conscience, unrest of a kind that could never attend the misdemeanours of an elected president, or even the betrayal of trust by a political party.”\(^{133}\)

Chadwick writes: “Something about an English king distinguished him from the godly prince of Germany or Sweden. While everyone agreed that a lawful ruler was called of God, and that obedience was a Christian duty, it would not have been so natural for a Lutheran to write that a divinity doth hedge a king. Offspring of an ancient line, crowned with the anointing of medieval ritual, he retained an aura of mystique which neither Renaissance nor Reformation at once dispelled. It is curious to find the Catholic king of France touching the scrofulous to heal them until a few years before the French Revolution. It is much more curious to find the Protestant sovereigns


of England, from Elizabeth to James II, continuing to perform the same ritual
cures, and to note that the last reigning sovereign to touch was Queen Anne
in 1714... The supernatural aura of the anointed head was long in dying, and
must be reckoned with when judging the unusual English forms of the divine
right.”134

The Rise of Parliament

From about the beginning of the seventeenth century we see the
beginnings of what we might call the first politically organized and intellectually
justified assault on the Monarchy in European history. It came from the
English parliament, an ancient institution which in earlier centuries had been
used to help the king in his administration, but which was now to be used
against him.

The leaders of parliament, writes George, “set about defending the ‘ancient
constitution of the realm’, righting the abuses of Magna Carta, and similar
‘conservative’ enterprises, while in fact building procedures and precedents
and organizational devices intended to alter radically the relation of
Parliament to the King and his non-Parliamentary councils. All the initiative
came from the Commons, but the House of Lords was skilfully used by the
Commoners so that the potentially radical nature of the change from power
organized by hierarchy to power based on property was not perceived until
too late by the peers.

“Once the organizational mechanisms (committee systems, House control
of the Speaker, and, above all, the informal caucuses about which we know
least but which were crucially the genius of the new English politicians) were
fixed, and the interior lines of communication among the interested
oligarchies established, the Commons elite increasingly ventured public
argument for their revolutionary precepts. In 1604 the new King, James I, was
greeted with a document drafted in the House of Commons that would have
been inconceivable in the generation which hailed the accession of Elizabeth –
a long, rambling, theoretical, and blatantly propagandistic statement of the
constitutional position of Parliament. More significant that the actual words
of the document is the fact that the Commoners could feel themselves ready
for such a redefinition of their power in terms completely alien to the form
and spirit of that ‘ancient’ constitution they purported to defend. The Apology
argued at length and with heat that the Commons (which they already are
beginning to make synonymous with Parliament) alone represented ‘the voice
of the people’ and the generality of the commonwealth (and there is an
interesting assumption that the vaguer terms ‘generality’, ‘people’, ‘subjects’ –
the nationalistic concepts – stand for a higher, more authoritative political
reality than ‘estates’ and ‘orders’). Based upon this claim to speak for the
whole of the commonwealth, Commons asserted a very broad right to

134 Chadwick, op. cit., p. 222.
consultation and decision in matters of religion, foreign policy, and other matters of state which in the medieval constitution had been no concern of the knights and burgesses summoned to ‘hear and do’. In the Petition of Right of 1610 they repeated their attack on the prerogative of the Crown (this time in financial matters) and reasserted that they ‘held it on ancient, general, and undoubted right of Parliament to debate freely all matters which do properly concern the subject and his right or state.’

“The institutional struggle – or, more properly, to correct the Whiggish cast the history of this period is usually given, the revolutionary usurpation of the Commons – continued as a public debate for forty years before the decision was left to the armies. James wrote a letter to the Commons warning of his displeasure with those ‘fiery and popular spirits’ who were meddling in ‘matters far above their reach and capacity’ and commanding the Speaker ‘to make known, in our name, unto the House that none therein shall presume henceforth to meddle with anything concerning our government or deep matters of State.’ Under the leadership of the great jurist Sir Edward Coke, the House stood up intractably for its revolutionary dogma: ‘That the liberties, franchises, privileges, and jurisdictions of Parliament are the ancient and undoubted birthright and inheritance of the subjects of England; and that the arduous and urgent affairs concerning the King, State, and defense of the Realm and of the Church of England, and the maintenance and making of laws, and redress of mischiefs and grievances which daily happen within this Realm, are proper subjects and matter of counsel and debate in Parliament; and that in the handling and proceeding of those businesses every member of the House of Parliaments hath, and of right ought to have, freedom of speech... and that every member of the said House hath like freedom from all impeachment, imprisonment, and molestation.’

“The strategy which put teeth into the rhetoric of the Commons was the withholding of the revenue upon which the operation of the state depended. The battle joined on the issue of revenues forced the monarchy to exploit every possible legal ruse to raise monies for the increasing expenses of the state. This desperation in the Privy Council of the King thoroughly alarmed the community of the prosperous – the exigencies of the government, a government which the propertied classes felt irresponsible, began to threaten the security of property even in the courts of common law. Coke once more led the attack; he proposed a bill in 1628 ‘for the better securing of every freeman touching the propriety of his goods and liberty of his person’, and helped send to King Charles in the same year a meticulously drawn document which summed the revolutionary argument as a Petition of Right...

“The Petition of Right was followed in a few weeks by a general ‘Remonstrance’ directed against the chief figure at Court – the Duke of Buckingham – and complaining of unconscionable government. The debates in Commons pushed the new theories of Parliamentary power to extreme
limits; it was even demanded that the King renounce his ancient right to the
desperately important revenues from Tonnage and Poundage. ‘...forced by
that duty which they owe to your Majesty, and to those whom they represent,
to declare, that there ought not any imposition to be laid upon the goods of
merchants, exported or imported, without common consent by Act of
Parliament, which is the right and inheritance of your subjects, founded not
only upon the most ancient and original constitution of this kingdom, but
often confirmed and declared in divers statute laws.’ Charles could retreat no
farther without defaulting the throne he was born to;... he prorogued the
Parliament he could not control...”\(^{135}\)

What made the situation more difficult for Charles than for his father was
that, under the influence of his Catholic wife, while not formally abandoning
the \textit{via media}, he had leaned further to the right in ecclesiastical matters.
Meanwhile the left, in the form of the Protestant landowners, fattened from
the proceeds of the dissolution of the monasteries, became increasingly self-
confident and assertive. They were determined never to let this wealth slip
from their hands, whether through a Catholic restoration returning their
lands to the Church or through allowing the king the right to tax their money
from them...

\textit{The English Revolution}

And so the scene was set for the English revolution - “that grand crisis of
morals, religion and government”, as Coleridge called it\(^{136}\), or “the first major
breech in Absolute Monarchy and the spawning of the first major, secular,
egalitarian and liberal culture in the modern world”, as George calls it\(^{137}\).

The English revolution was, together with the French revolution of 1789
and the Russian revolution of 1917, the most important event of modern
European history. Like the later revolutions, if not to the same degree, it
replaced a mild and moral monarch with a bloody and immoral anarchy. Like
them, too, it elicited a very broad range of arguments on the fundamental
questions of the origin and nature of the State and its relationship to the
Church and people. With the single exception of the Orthodox symphony of
powers – which, however, received a powerful contemporary advocate in the
person of Patriarch Nicon of Moscow (see next chapter) – the pros and cons of
all the major forms of government were exhaustively discussed, often by men
such as John Milton who were of undoubted, if not well-balanced, genius.

The revolution was sparked by the attempt of King Charles to impose a
“popish” prayer book on the Scottish Church. In 1639 the Scots created a \textit{de
facto} independent aristocratic republic. King Charles went to war, but was

\(^{135}\) George, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 73-75, 77.
\(^{136}\) Coleridge, \textit{Table Talk}, 9 November, 1833.
\(^{137}\) George, \textit{op. cit.}, p. viii.
defeated at Newburn in 1640. Desperate for men and money to continue the war, he turned to parliament. But a group of Puritan nobles led by the Earls of Warwick and Essex and Lords Saye and Brooks used the opportunity created by the king’s need to organize a conspiracy against him.

“They were driven,” writes John Adamson, “by a complex amalgam of motives partly religious, provoked by hatred of the ‘popish’ innovations Charles and his bishops had introduced into the church; partly legal, moved by alarm at the King’s erosion of his subjects’ traditional rights of property and what they believed to be his disdain for the rule of law; partly also a matter of noble honour, outraged by the King’s indifference to the advice of the ‘ancient nobility’ and his promotion of social parvenus. By the summer of 1640, however, they were united by one common ambition: the desire to topple the existing regime and to redefine permanently the powers of the Crown. To achieve this, the conspirators had entered into direct negotiations with the rebel leadership in Scotland, and were preparing themselves, if necessary, to fight what they believed would be a short and decisive civil war.”138

Faced by traitors from within and without, the king was forced to back down and allow the convening of a Parliament on November 3, 1640 that was dominated by his enemies. “Within a matter of months, they had usurped many of the key functions of government which, hitherto, would have been the business of the Privy Council. Perhaps most importantly, in September, they won control of the new treaty negotiations that were to redefine a new ‘Union’ between England and Scotland, and over the following 11 months, they worked with the very same Scots with whom they had conspired during the summer to redraft the constitution of both British kingdoms.”139

In 1642 civil war broke out...

“Taking everything together,” wrote Guizot, “the English revolution was essentially political; it was brought about in the midst of a religious people and in a religious age; religious thoughts and passions were its instruments; but its chief design and definite aim were political, were devoted to liberty, and the abolition of all absolute power.”140

What Guizot meant is illustrated by the words of John Lilburne, who clothed his communist political programme in religious quotations: “Christ doth not choose many rich, nor many wise, but the fools, idiots, base and contemptible poor men and women in the esteem of the world.”141

---

139 Adamson, op. cit., p. 15.
140 Guizot, op. cit., p. 217.
141 Quoted by Barzun, op. cit., p. 270.
John Milton used similarly religious language to clothe his revolutionary message: “Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her as out of Zion should be sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of reformation to all Europe? Now once again, by all concurrence of signs and the general instinct of holy and devout men, God is decreeing to begin some new and great reformation in his Church, even to the reforming of the Reformation itself. What does He, then, but reveal Himself to His servants, and (as His manner is) first to His Englishmen?”

The English revolution was a “revolution” in the older sense of a cyclical movement. For it brought things back to the status quo ante formally, if not essentially. Thus in the space of two generations, from 1642 to 1688, England underwent successively: an Anglican monarchy, a Calvinist parliamentocracy, the beginnings of a communist revolution, a military dictatorship, the restoration of the Anglican monarchy, a Catholic absolute monarchy, and the second restoration of the Anglican (now constitutional) monarchy under new (Dutch) secular leadership.

And yet the English revolution was also a revolution in the more radical sense in that nothing was ever really the same again in England, and by extension, the West. It illustrated the fact that, to misquote Dostoyevsky: “If the king does not exist, everything is permitted.” In a remarkably short space of time the initiative passed from the king and the aristocracy to the propertied gentry to the army to the army agitators, until the slide to the extreme left was halted by force – the force of Cromwell’s military dictatorship. The eventual winners were the landowning aristocracy, who succeeded in muzzling the power of the king, on the one hand, and suppressing the revolutionary commoners, on the other. Whether that made it a “glorious” revolution, as the English like to think, is a moot point...

The Divine Right of Kings

Let us examine the two main sets of ideas that the revolution threw up: the Divine Right of Kings, on the one hand, and the sovereignty of the people, on the other. We have seen that the first century or so of the Protestant Reformation witnessed a strengthening of monarchical power. This had happened for different reasons in different countries: on the continent because the Protestants had looked to the Princes to protect them against the Catholic powers, and because the rising class of the bourgeoisie wanted some protection against the anti-mercantile aristocracy, in England because the king himself had initiated the break with Rome for his own personal and political ends.

142 Milton, To the Lords and Commons of England, 1644.
143 Thus in France in 1614 the bourgeois order in the Estates General made the Divine Right of Kings Article I of their petition. Barzun, op. cit., p. 248.
But Protestantism of both the Lutheran and Calvinist varieties contained within itself the seeds of the overthrow of all authority, both religious and political; it threatened bishops as well as Popes, kings as well as bishops. Luther’s doctrine of the priesthood of all believers directly attacked the special authority of bishops and priests; but indirectly it attacked the power of kings, too, insofar as they were perceived as receiving their authority from God via the priesthood in the sacrament of royal anointing. Calvin’s doctrine of the elect’s absolute assurance of salvation, and of the supremacy of conscience over law, was as much a threat to the laws of the kings as it was to the doctrines of the bishops.

Moreover, the Calvinist doctrine contained a frightening corollary which was rarely expressed in so many words but was about to be expressed in many actions: the conviction, namely, that just as the elect had absolute assurance of their own salvation, they had similar assurance of their opponents’ damnation, and could therefore dispose of them with the ruthlessness that befitted the knowledge of their worthlessness. Transposed onto a more secular soil and into a less godly age, this belief would justify the elimination of whole classes and peoples supposedly doomed to extinction by the ruthless and irresistible march of history...

In England, the Stuart kings, being conscious of at least some of these consequences of the State’s officially Calvinist doctrine, began to move to the religious and political “right” at the same time as their subjects began to fan out, as it were, to the left. In international affairs, they became less unambiguously supportive of their brethren in the Protestant International, and more supportive of their fellow monarchs’ authority, whether they were Catholic or Protestant (after the Restoration, James II received subsidies from the ultramontane Louis XIV). In internal affairs, they began to act more by fiat, consulting less with parliament and other elected assemblies, and began to develop the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings.

James I, like his predecessor Elizabeth I, believed in hierarchy and the order of being, and considered that “equality is the mother of confusion and an enemy of the Unity which is the Mother of Order”. At the same time he acknowledged that there is an important distinction between an autocrat, who “acknowledges himself ordained for his people”, and a tyrant, who “thinks his people ordained for him, a prey to his passions and inordinate appetites.” Although a king was “a little God to sit on this throne and rule over other men”, he nevertheless had to provide a good example to his subjects. But while not free in relation to God, the king was free in relation to his subjects. Hence the title of James’ book, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*. “Kings are justly called gods,” said James to parliament in 1610, “for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will

---

consider the attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of the king. God hath power to create or destroy; make or unmake at His pleasure; to give life or send death; to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none; to raise low things and to make high things low at His pleasure. And the like power have kings.”

At the same time, while unlimited by any power on earth, a king should follow his own laws: “A king governing in a settled kingdom, leaves to be a king, and degenerates into a tyrant as soon as he leaves off to rule according to his laws. In which case the king’s conscience may speak unto him, as the poor widow said to Philip of Macedon: either govern according to your own law, Aut ne rex sis [or you are not a king]. And though no Christian man ought to allow rebellion of people against their prince, yet doth God never leave kings unpunished when they transgress these limits; for in that same psalm where God saith to kings, Vos dii estis [you are gods], he immediately thereafter concludes, But ye shall die like men.”

However, desirable though it is that kings should follow their own laws, the important point is that kings, having their authority from God, and having no authority higher than themselves on earth, can be judged only by God, and not by men. As Shakespeare puts it in Richard II:

And shall the figure of God’s majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy elect,
Anointed, crowned, planted many years,
Be judged by subject and inferior breath?

This position was well summed up in an address presented by the elders of Cambridge University to King Charles II in 1681: “We still believe and maintain that our Kings derive not their title from the people, but from God; that to Him only they are accountable; that it belongs not to subjects either to create or censure, but to honour and obey their sovereign, who comes to be so by a fundamental hereditary right of succession, which no religion, no law, no fault or forfeiture can alter or diminish.”

The principle that the king can do no wrong is “a logical inference,” writes Barzun, “from sovereignty itself: the ultimate source of law cannot be charged with making a wrong law or giving a wrong command. Modern democracies follow the same logic when they given their lawmakers immunity for anything said or done in the exercise of their duty; they are members of the sovereign power. Constitutions, it is true, limit lawmaking; but the sovereign people can change the constitution. There is no appeal against the acts of the

---

148 Nicolson, op. cit., p. 194.
sovereign unless the sovereign allows, as when it is provided that citizens can sue the state.

“Of course, the monarch can do wrong in another sense – in a couple of senses. He can add up a sum and get a wrong total and he can commit a wrongful act morally speaking – cheating at cards or killing his brother. To make clear this distinction between sovereign and human being, theorists developed quite early the doctrine that ‘the king has two bodies’; as a man he is fallible, as king he is not. Similarly in elective governments, a distinction is made between the civil servant acting in his official capacity and as a private citizen…”

An important aspect of royalist thinking was what may be called the patriarchal theory of royal authority. James I argued that just as God is the Father of mankind, “so the style of Pater patriae was ever, and is commonly applied to Kings.” As such, the King does not merely represent his people: he embodies them – which is why in his edicts he says We, not I. In its fully developed form, writes Ashton, “the patriarchal theory of royal authority was to prove a powerful argument both against the idea that government originated in a political contract between ruler and ruled and against the far more influential notion that representative government and the limitations which it placed on the royal exercise of power were immemorial features of the constitution…. Just as kings were little Gods, so were fathers little monarchs. He who does not honour the king, maintained Thomas Jordan, cannot truly honour his own parents, as the fifth commandment bids him. So, in his speech on the scaffold in February, 1649, the royalist Lord Capel affirmed ‘very confidently that I do die here… for obeying that fifth commandment given by God himself.’.. ‘For this subordination of children is the foundation of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself.’

The best known defence of the Divine Right of Kings was Sir Robert Filmer’s Patriarchia or the Natural Power of Kings, which was written under Cromwell and published in 1680, during the reign of Charles II. His thinking was based on the idea that Adam was the first father and king of the whole human race. “He believed,” writes Western, “that God had given the sovereignty of the world to Adam and that it had passed by hereditary descent, through the sons of Noah and the heads of the nations into which mankind was divided at the Confusion of Tongues, to all the modern rulers of the world. Adam was the father of all mankind and so all other men were bound to obey him: this plenary power has passed to his successors.”

---

150 Quoted by Ashton, The English Civil War, p. 7.
151 Barzun, op. cit., p. 249.
152 Ashton, op. cit., p. 249.
The problem with this view, according to John Locke in his *First Treatise of Civil Government* (1681), as interpreted by McClelland, is that “the book of Genesis does not actually say that God gave the world to Adam to rule; Adam is never referred to as king.” However, this is not a powerful objection, because, even if the word “king” is not used, God does say to Adam that he is to have “dominion over… every living thing that moves upon the earth” (*Genesis* 1.28). But “Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede, for which there is no biblical evidence, that Adam really was king by God’s appointment. That still leaves the awkward fact that Genesis makes no mention of the kingly rights of the sons of Adam; there is simply no reference to the right of hereditary succession. Locke then goes on to say: suppose we concede both Adam’s title to kingship and the title of the sons of Adam, for neither of which there is biblical evidence, how does that help kings now to establish their titles by Divine Right? Despite the biblical concern with genealogy, the line of Adam’s posterity has become hopelessly scrambled. How can any king at the present time seriously claim that he is in the line of direct descent from Adam?… Because the genealogy since Adam is scrambled, it is perfectly possible that all the present kings are usurpers, or all the kings except one. Perhaps somewhere the real, direct descendant of Adam is alive and living in obscurity, cheated of his birthright to universal monarchy by those pretending to call themselves kings in the present world.”

However, shorn of its dependence on the idea of Adam as the first king, Filmer’s teaching that kingship, like fatherhood, is natural and therefore Divine in origin, is not so easily refuted. The people “are not born free by nature” and “there never was any such thing as an independent multitude, who at first had a natural right to a community [of goods]”. As Harold Nicolson writes: “‘This conceit of original freedom’, as he said, was ‘the only ground’ on which thinkers from ‘the heathen philosophers’ down to Hobbes had built the idea that governments were created by the deliberate choice of free men. He [Filmer] believed on the contrary, as an early opponent put it, that ‘the rise and right of government’ was natural and native, not voluntary and conventional’. Subjects therefore could not have a right to overturn a government because the original bargain had not been kept. There were absurdities and dangers in the opposing view. ‘Was a general meeting of a whole kingdom ever known for the election of a Prince? Was there any example of it ever found in the world?’ Some sort of majority decision, or the assumption that a few men are allowed to decide for the rest, are in fact the only ways in which government by the people can be supposed to have been either initiated or carried on. But both are as inconsistent as monarchy with the idea that men are naturally free. ‘If it be true that men are by nature free-born and not to be governed without their own consents and that self-preservation is to be regarded in the first place, it is not lawful for any

154 McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 232. Rousseau also pointed out, in *The Social Contract*, that since every man is equally a descendant of Adam, it was not clear which descendants of Adam were to exercise lordship over others.
government but self-government to be in the world... To pretend that a major part, or the silent consent of any part, may be interpreted to bind the whole people, is both unreasonable and unnatural; it is against all reason for men to bind others, where it is against nature for men to bind themselves. Men that boast so much of natural freedom are not willing to consider how contradictory and destructive the power of a major part is to the natural liberty of the whole people.’ The claims of representative assemblies to embody the will of the people are attacked on these lines, in a manner recalling Rousseau. Filmer also points out that large assemblies cannot really do business and so assemblies delegate power to a few of their number: ‘hereby it comes to pass that public debates which are imagined to be referred to a general assembly of a kingdom, are contracted into a particular or private assembly’. In short ‘Those governments that seem to be popular are kinds of petty monarchies’ and ‘It is a false and improper speech to say that a whole multitude, senate, council, or any multitude whatsoever doth govern where the major part only rules; because many of the multitude that are so assembled... are governed against and contrary to their wills.’“

**English Radicalism**

The English revolution threw up a wide range of anti-monarchical sects. The most important of them was the Levellers, who “were so called,” write Downing and Millman, “because they insisted that since all men were equal before God so should they be equal before the law. They were never a political party in the modern sense, but they put forward a number of Leveller programmes. On the basis of these programmes, the Levellers gained support and allies, particularly in London where most of their activities were centred. They were able to raise thousands of signatures for their petitions and thousands turned out for their demonstrations; their support ranged from religious radicals to craftsmen, small masters and shopkeepers. In the same tradition as many religious radicals, they appealed for freedom of religious belief. In pamphlets and petitions they demanded liberty of conscience, the disestablishment of the Church and the abolition of compulsory tithes. As time went on, their outlook became more secular with demands for legal reforms and for equal application of the laws, the end of imprisonment for debt, the abolition of trade monopolies and the end of press censorship. They appealed to many people who had expected and hoped that the end of the war [the first Civil War, which ended in 1646] would herald a new order but instead were faced with high taxes, economic depression and a Parliament which abused its powers.

---


156 Religious radicalism always leads to secularism. Pope Gregory VII was a religious radical for his time, and his revolution led to a secularisation of the Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformers were religious radicals, leading to a further secularisation. (V.M.)
“The truly revolutionary programme of the Levellers emerged from their attack on the unrepresentativeness of England’s constitution. They looked back to the period when the Norman conquerors had imposed their tyrannical laws on the people of England and looked forward to a new order in which the sovereignty of the people was central and when representative institutions were democratically elected. The alliance with the army was not as strange as might first appear, for the army had entered the arena of national politics and their claim that they were ‘not a mere mercenary army’ but defenders of the people’s liberties clearly had resonances with the Levellers. In the heady mixture of radical ideas, stirred by unrest among the soldiers for the delay in the settlement of their grievances, the Levellers drew up their challenge to the commanders of the army. In October 1647 in *The Case of the Army Truly Stated*, they strongly argued for actions to be taken speedily to redress the soldiers’ grievances. From the specifics relating to the army the *Case* moved on a more general attack on Parliament and demands for long-term constitutional reforms. Fairfax, the Commander-in-Chief of the New Model Army, knew that if he was to retain unity he must respond quickly. A General Council was summoned to a meeting at Putney church in London on 28 October 1647. These discussions, now famous as the Putney Debates, have become historically significant because they attempted to provide a new constitution for England. At the centre of these debates on democracy was another Leveller manifesto, *The Agreement of the People*, jointly drafted by civilian and army Levellers...

“The Agreement called for the same freedoms as the other Leveller manifestos but went further in its claims for the rights of the people within a new constitutional and democratic framework. The basic principle of the new constitution was that it was to be subscribed by the people who would elect a representative parliament, answerable only to the people and not to the King nor the House of Lords. ‘Therefore these things in the Agreement, the people are to claim as their native right and price of their blood, which you obliged absolutely to procure for them. And these being the foundation of freedom, it is necessary that they should be settled unalterably, which can be done by no means but this Agreement with the people.’ Controls on parliamentary power would be effected by biennial Parliaments and the decentralization of power from central government to local authorities, also democratically elected. To achieve this, an extension of the franchise was imperative; although the Levellers were accused of speaking for ‘hobnayles, clouted shoes and leather aprons’, they did not argue for universal suffrage – servants, apprentices, beggars and women (the latter never even mentioned) were excluded. To twentieth-century eyes, this is a remarkable omission but the Levellers wanted the vote for those who were truly independent and the argument against giving it to servants, apprentices and women was that their vote could too easily be influenced by their ‘masters’. Even so, the Levellers programme was too radical to be acceptable to Cromwell and the other army grandees and neither side was prepared to make concessions...
“...A return to fighting did not halt the progress of the radical impulse which during the 1640s and 50s opened up the possibility of a fundamental overturning of seventeenth-century society. During 1648 the Agreement of the People continued to be discussed and a compromise reached. Some reforms recommended by the Levellers were adopted by the government of the new republic, the Commonwealth, which abolished the House of Lords and the monarchy the following year. The failure to concede the more fundamental reforms was greeted by [the Levellers’ leaders] Lilburne, Walwyn and Overton with a series of pamphlets denouncing the new government as hypocritical and despotic. They were all arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Cromwell, recognizing their threat to the stability of the new Parliament, warned ‘if you do not break them, they will break you’.”

Another revolutionary sect was the Diggers, who followed in the communist traditions of the Bohemian Taborites and German and Dutch Anabaptists. “In April 1649,” write Downing and Millman, “a group of poor men and women collected on the common on St. George’s Hill in Surrey and began to dig up the land and form a squatter community. Led by the charismatic George Winstanley their actions symbolized the assumption of ownership of common land. Winstanley believed in universal salvation and in what we would now call communist theories, that all property should be held in common. His visions of common ownership, rather than private property, also extended to equality between the sexes. Drawing on a theory of natural rights, Winstanley also quoted the Bible to support his arguments. Rejecting the traditional teachings of the Church, his was a visionary form of spirituality.

“The Digger colony on St. George’s Hill was not unique; there were others in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire, as well as in other parts of the country. The Diggers of ‘True Levellers’ produced specific demands that confiscated Church, Crown and Royalists’ lands be turned over to the poor. Set out in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley challenged existing property relations in the name of true Christian freedom and put forward his hopes for a communist Utopia. Earlier had had written: ‘they had resolved to work and eat together, making the earth a common treasury, doth join hands with Christ to lift up the creation from bondage, and restores all things from the curse.’ Almost inevitably, the Digger colonies failed, some harassed by local residents, others by local justices. However, their ideas lay in their ideas and their actions...

---

158 Thus among Winstanley’s “revelations” “was one, That the earth shall be made a common Treasury of livelihood to whole mankind, without respect of persons; and I had a voice within me declare it all abroad, which I did obey...” (Watch Word to the City of London).
“One group, known as the Ranters, pushed toleration to the limit. In no way a sect nor an organized congregation, this loose group of individuals provoked fear and hostility quite out of proportion to their numbers. As individuals they were undeniably provocative; taking their belief in the individual’s personal relationship with God to its extreme, they broke with all traditions and moral constraints. By the standards of their day they appeared sexually and socially immoral….

“Mainstream Protestantism was, however, to face its biggest challenge from the Quakers. The Quakers of the seventeenth century had little in common with the Friends of today, known for their pacifism and quietism. The Quakers originated in the north of England and found adherents among farmers and artisans as well as the poor. Like the Diggers, they believed in universal salvation and the notion of Christ within the individual. Their success in evangelising is proved by the numbers of converts: in 1652 they numbered about 500, by 1657 there were perhaps 50,000. Their leaders were often flamboyant and aggressive in their beliefs; Quakers also demanded religious freedom alongside calls for social reforms. They were to be found disrupting services in the ‘steeplehouses’, their name for parish churches. They refused to pay tithes and challenged the authority of local magistrates. Their belief in equality of all men in the sight of God led them to eschew traditional forms of deference; they refused ‘hat-honour’, the removing of hats in front of figures of authority. Equality also meant that large numbers of women were attracted to the Quaker faith and shared in the preaching and dissemination of the Quaker faith. The trial of James Nayler was significant not just in the brutality of Nayler’s punishment but because it focused the confusion around the idea of liberty of ‘godly conscience’. The Quaker menace brought a return to an established order with an attempt to impose compulsory religious worship on Sundays. But the national church was split irrevocably…”

The Killing of the King

The climax of the English revolution was the trial and beheading of King Charles I in 1649, the first ideologically motivated and judicially executed regicide in history. Before then, kings had been killed in abundance, and many Popes since Gregory VII had presumed to depose kings. But Charles I was not deposed by any Church or Pope; nor was he the victim of a simple coup; he was charged with treason against the State by his subjects, laymen like himself.

Treason by a king rather than against him?! As Christopher Hill writes: “high treason was a personal offence, a breach of personal loyalty to the King: the idea that the King himself might be a traitor to the realm was novel”, to say the least. The king himself articulated the paradoxicality of the revolution

159 Downing and Millman, op. cit., pp. 119-121, 125.
during his trial, declaring: “A King cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth.”

As a supposedly Shakespearean addition to the play *Sir Thomas More* put it:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{For to the king God hath his office lent} \\
&\text{Of dread of justice, power and command,} \\
&\text{Hath bid him rule and willed you to obey;} \\
&\text{And to add ampler majesty to this,} \\
&\text{He hath not only lent the king his figure,} \\
&\text{His throne and sword, but given him his own name,} \\
&\text{Calls him a god on earth. What do you, then,} \\
&\text{Rising 'gainst him that God himself installs} \\
&\text{But rise 'gainst God?}\end{align*}
\]

At his trial Charles had said that the king was the guarantor of his people’s liberties: “Do you pretend what you will, I will stand for their liberties – for if a power without law may make laws, may alter the fundamental laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject can be sure of his life, or of anything that he calls his own.” As for the people, “truly I desire their liberty and freedom, as much as anybody whomsoever; but I must tell you that their liberty and their freedom consists in having of government those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not for having share in government, sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things…”

Charles presented his case superbly well. And he went, as he believed, “from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown” with great courage and dignity. And yet the new idea of political liberty had sown its seeds; and in time it came to seem less paradoxical and unnatural. It entered the bloodstream, as it were, of human thought, no longer warred against by antibodies, the censorship of public opinion.

Traditionally, since Magna Carta, it had been the aristocrats who reined in tyrannical kings; and when King Charles was brought to trial in January, 1649, the parallel with Magna Carta was uppermost in his judges’ minds. Thus the court’s first meeting was held in the Painted Chamber at the Palace of Westminster where the nobles traditionally put on their robes. For, writes Sean Kelsey, “the revolution was portrayed as a new chapter in the history of that aristocratic constitutionalism which had long sustained English traditions of resistance to royal authority. In the course of proceedings, John Bradshaw, Lord President of the High Court of Justice, recalled the ‘Barons’ Wars’, ‘when the nobility of the land did stand up for the liberty and property of the subject and would not suffer the kings that did invade to play the tyrant freely…

But... if they [the peers] do forbear to do their duty now and are not so mindful of their own honour and the kingdom's good as the barons of England of old were, certainly the Commons of England will not be so unmindful of what is for their preservation and for their safety.”

Unlike the barons in 1215, the Parliamentarians in 1649 were already a “rump”, purged by the army radicals; and this rump knew that if they did not do what the army wanted, they would be swept away. For the revolution could not stop half way: once legitimacy had been taken from the king by the lords, it would not remain with them, but had to pass on to the Commons, and from the Commons to the people. And to the lowest of the people at that; for, as Denzill Holles, once a leading opponent of the king, wrote in 1649: “The meanest of men, the basest and vilest of the nation, the lowest of the people have got power into their hands; trampled upon the crown; baffled and misused the Parliament; violated the laws; destroyed or suppressed the nobility and gentry of the kingdom.”

Almost too late did the leader of the Revolution, Oliver Cromwell, realise that he could not give in to the demands of the Levellers, who wanted to “level” society to its lowest common denominator. In May, 1649, only four months after executing the king, he executed some mutinous soldiers who sympathised with the Levellers. And four years later he was forced to dissolve Parliament and seize supreme power himself (although he refused the title of King, preferring that of “Protector”).

Earlier, just after his victory over the King at Naseby in 1645, he had declared: “God hath put the sword in the Parliament’s hands, - for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that, - he knows not the Gospel”. But when anarchy threatened, he found an exemption: “Necessity hath no law,” he said to the dismissed representatives of the people. Napoleon had a similar rationale when he dismissed the Directory and the elected deputies in 1799. As did Lenin when he dismissed the Constituent Assembly in 1918. “Necessity” in one age becomes the “revolutionary morality” – that is, exemption from the rules of morality - of the next.

At the same time, it must be admitted that the gentry leader Cromwell to some extent restrained the full power of the English revolution. As Metropolitan Anastasius (Gribanovsky) of New York writes: “It bore within itself all the typically destructive traits of subsequent revolutions; but the religious sources of this movement, the iron hand of

---

163 Quoted in Almond, op. cit, p. 51.
Oliver Cromwell, and the immemorial good sense of the English people, restrained this stormy element, preventing it from achieving its full growth. Thenceforth, however, the social spirit of Europe has been infected with the bacterium of revolution.”

Another revolutionary leader from the gentry was the poet John Milton. He set himself the task of justifying the revolution (Engels called him “the first defender of regicide”) in theological terms. For unlike the later revolutions, the English revolution was still seen as needing justification in terms of Holy Scripture. Milton began, in his Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, with a firm rejection of the Divine Right of Kings. Charles I was to be identified with the Antichrist, and in overthrowing him the English people had chosen God as their King. Moreover, it was now the duty of the English to spread their revolution overseas (Cromwell had begun the process in Scotland and Ireland in 1649-51), for the saints in England had been “the first to overcome those European kings which receive their power not from God but from the Beast”.

“No man who knows aught,” wrote Milton, “can be so stupid as to deny that all men naturally were born free”. Kings and magistrates are but “deputies and commissioners of the people”. “To take away from the people the right of choosing government takes away all liberty”. Milton attributed the dominance of bishops and kings to the Norman Conquest, and he bewailed men’s readiness “with the fair words and promises of an old exasperated foe… to be stroked and tamed again into the wonted and well-pleasing state of their true Norman villeinage.” Far better for him than the traditional Christian virtues of humility and obedience was Satan’s adamantine pride in Paradise Lost (262-263):

To reign is worth ambition though in hell:
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven…

Of course, the “inconstant, irrational and image-doting rabble”, cannot have the rule; the better part – i.e. the gentry, people like Milton himself – must act on their behalf. This does raise the problem, as Filmer argued against Milton, that even if we accept that “the sounder, the better and the uprighter part have the power of the people... how shall we know, or who shall judge, who they can be?” But Milton brushed this problem aside.

---

166 For, as Sir Edmund Leach writes, “at different times, in different places, Emperor and Anarchist alike may find it convenient to appeal to Holy Writ” (“Melchisedech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy”, Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Society, 1972, p. 6).
169 Quoted in Hill, op. cit., p. 169.
Within a week of the king’s execution, *Eikon Basilike* was published by the royalists, being supposedly the work of Charles himself. This enormously popular defence of the monarchy was countered by the argument that the veneration of the king was idolatry. “Every King is an image of God,” wrote N.O. Brown. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Revolutionary republicanism seeks to abolish effigy and show.”

Milton, too, came out against *Eikon Basilike* with his *Eikonklastes*, in which the destruction of the icon of the king was seen as the logical consequence of the earlier iconoclasm of the English Reformation. For, as Hill explains: “An ikon was an image. Images of saints and martyrs had been cleared out of English churches at the Reformation, on the ground that the common people had worshipped them. Protestantism, and especially Calvinism, was austerely monotheistic, and encouraged lay believers to reject any form of idolatry. This ‘desacralisation of the universe’ in the long run was its main contribution to the rise of modern science.”

Thus did the anti-papist, anti-monastic iconoclasm of the English Reformation reap its fruits in the anti-monarchist iconoclasm of the English Revolution.

The transition from rebellion against the Church to rebellion against all authorities was inevitable. If Luther tried to resist it, it was nevertheless implicit in his teaching. And the more consistent Calvinists were less afraid to cross the Rubicon by ascribing all authority to the plebs. As Jacques Barzun writes, “if a purer religion, close to the one depicted in the gospel, was attainable by getting rid of superiors in the church, a better social and economic life, close to the life depicted in the gospels, would follow from getting rid of social and political superiors.”

Nevertheless, there was something of a recovery of traditional Christian forms of government in the seventeenth century. In Russia, the autocracy recovered from the despotism of Ivan the Terrible and the Time of Troubles. France recovered from her civil wars with a stable Catholic absolutist monarchy. Monarchs still ruled in most countries, even in formally Calvinist countries such as England and Holland. And absolutist monarchies still ruled in Persia, India and China.

At the same time the acid of anti-monarchism did not cease to eat away at the foundations of states. While the English Revolution did not succeed in finally abolishing the monarchy, it undoubtedly weakened it – and scattered

---

the seeds of liberalism into absolutist France and America.\textsuperscript{173} Even in Russia there was a rebellion on the part of the Old Ritualists with their “theocratic democratism”, not unlike the contemporary self-governing communities of the American Puritans…

It was the appearance of relatively homogeneous nation-states, with their need for a unifying symbol and centre of political power, that saved monarchism for the time being. Only Germany and Italy, still bogged down in a multitude of feudal principalities, escaped the trend towards the monarchical nation-state. Their time would come after the next wave of anti-monarchism had swept away the last stronghold of Catholic absolutism in the French Revolution…

\textit{The Scientific Outlook}

Out of Protestant rationalism there grew \textit{the scientific outlook}, or empiricism. This is the methodology which declares that the only reliable way of attaining non-mathematical truth is by inferences from the evidence of the senses (mathematical truth describes the structure of inferential and deductive reasoning). This principle, first proclaimed by Francis Bacon in his \textit{Advancement of Learning} (1605), rejects the witness of non-empirical sources – for example, God or intuition or so-called “innate ideas”. The reverse process – that is, inferences about God and other non-sensory realities from the evidence of the senses – was admitted by the early empiricists, but rejected by most later ones.\textsuperscript{174} By contrast, the religious outlook, while not rejecting the evidence of the senses, admits other sources of truth – especially Divine Revelation.

In time empiricism became not only a methodological or epistemological, but also an ontological principle, the principle, namely, that reality not only is best discovered by empirical means, but also \textit{is}, solely and exclusively, that which can be investigated by empirical means; non-empirical reality simply \textit{does not exist}. Thus empiricism led to materialism. However, it must be emphasized that it is possible to espouse the scientific outlook and not be a materialist, but to be religious, as many believing scientists from Newton onwards have demonstrated.

\textsuperscript{173} As Edmund Burke said in 1775: “The people of the colonies are descendants of Englishmen. England, sir, is a nation which still, I hope, respects, and formerly adored, her freedom. The colonists emigrated from you when this part of your character was most predominant; and they took this bias and direction the moment they parted from your hands” (Macarthur, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 82)

\textsuperscript{174} The transition from the early to the later empiricism is marked by David Hume’s \textit{Dialogues concerning Natural Religion} (1747), in which he writes: “While we argue from the course of nature and infer a particular intelligent cause which first bestowed and still preserves order in the universe, we embrace a principle which is still uncertain and useless. It is uncertain because the subject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience. It is useless because… we can never on that basis establish any principles of conduct and behaviour.”
In accordance with the difference in the kinds of evidence they admit, there is a difference in the nature and structure of the authority that science (in its more “advanced”, materialist form) and religion rely on. Science relies on the authority of millions of observations that have been incorporated into a vast structure of hypotheses that are taken as “proved” – although in fact no hypothesis can ever be proved beyond every possible doubt, and science advances by the systematic application of doubt to what are thought to be weak points in the hypothetical structure. For, as John Donne said, “new philosophy [science] calls all in doubt”.175

Religion and science (in their most characteristic forms) are also motivated by different spirits. The spirit of true religion is the spirit of the humble receiving of the truth by revelation from God; it does not preclude active seeking for truth, but recognizes that it will never succeed in this search if God on His part does not reveal it. For Wisdom “goes about seeking those worthy of her, and She graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought” (Wisdom 6.16). In science, on the other hand, there is a Faustian spirit, a striving for power over nature, rather than simply knowledge of it, which is incompatible with the true religious spirit (as opposed to the spirit of magic). Thus Bacon thought that the “pure knowledge of nature and universality” would lead to power (“knowledge is power”, in his famous phrase) and to “the effecting of all things possible”.176

Bacon compared science to the knowledge of essences that Adam had before the fall – “the pure knowledge of nature and universality, a knowledge by the light whereof man did give names unto other creatures in Paradise, as they were brought to him”177 “This light should in its very rising touch and illuminate all the border-regions that confine upon the circle of our present knowledge; and so, spreading further and further should presently disclose and bring into sight all that is most hidden and secret in the world.”178 “God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world: rather may He graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on His creatures.”179

As J.M. Roberts writes, Bacon “seems to have been a visionary, glimpsing not so much what science would discover as what it would become: a faith. ‘The true and lawful end of the sciences’, he wrote, ‘is that human life be enriched by new discoveries and powers.’ Through them could be achieved ‘a restitution and reinvigorating (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and

176 Bacon, New Atlantis; see Porter, op. cit., p. 17.
177 Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, Book I, 1, 3.
178 Bacon, The Interpretation of Nature, proemium.
179 Bacon, The Great Instauration, “The Plan of the Work”.
power... which he had in his first creation.’ This was ambitious indeed – nothing less than the redemption of mankind through organised research; he was here, too, a prophetic figure, precursor of later scientific societies and institutes.”

This striving for power over nature indicates a kinship in aims, if not in methods, between science and magic. And Erasmus’ humorous critique of the scientists of his time pointed to a common spirit: “Near these march the scientists, reverenced for their beards and the fur on their gowns, who teach that they alone are wise while the rest of mortal men flit about as shadows. How pleasantly they dote, indeed, while they construct their numberless worlds, and measure the sun, moon, stars, and spheres as with thumb and line. They assign causes for lightning, winds, eclipses, and other inexplicable things, never hesitating a whit, as if they were privy to the secrets of nature, artificer of things, or as if they visited us fresh from the council of the gods. Yet all the while nature is laughing grandly at them and their conjectures. For to prove that they have good intelligence of nothing, this is a sufficient argument: they can never explain why they disagree with each other on every subject. Thus knowing nothing in general, they profess to know all things in particular; though they are ignorant even of themselves, and on occasion do not see the ditch or the stone lying across their path, because many of them are blear-eyed or absent-minded; yet they proclaim that they perceive ideas, universals, forms without matter, primary substances, quiddities, and eccentrics – things so tenuous, I fear, that Lynceus himself could not see them. When they especially disdain the vulgar crowd is when they bring out their triangles, quadrangles, circles, and mathematical pictures of the sort, lay one upon the other, intertwine them into a maze, then deploy – and all to involve the uninitiated in darkness. Their fraternity does not lack those who predict future events by consulting the stars, and promise wonders even more magical; and these lucky scientists find people to believe them.”

For, as Fr. Seraphim Rose points out: “Modern science was born out of the experiments of the Platonic alchemists, the astrologers and magicians. The underlying spirit of the new scientific world-view was the spirit of Faustianism, the spirit of magic, which is retained as a definite undertone of contemporary science. The discovery, in fact, of atomic energy would have delighted the Renaissance alchemists very much: they were looking for just such power. The aim of modern science is power over nature. Descartes, who formulated the mechanistic scientific world-view, said that man was to become the master and possessor of nature. It should be noted that this is a religious faith that takes the place of Christian faith.”

---

True Religion, on the other hand, does not seek power over nature, but obedience to God. It relies on no other ultimate authority than the Word of God as communicated either directly to an individual or collectively to the Church, “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3.15), which preserves and nurtures individual revelations. Doubt has no place within the true religion, but only when one is still in the process of seeking it, when different religious systems are still being approached as possible truths - in other words, as hypotheses. Having cleaved to the true religion by faith, however, - and faith is defined as the opposite of doubt, as “the certainty of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1), - the religious believer advances by the deepening of faith, by ever deeper immersion in the undoubted truths of religion.

When the differences between science and religion are viewed from this perspective, the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, there are seen to be important differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. For from this perspective, Catholicism is more “religious”, and Protestantism - more “scientific”. For Protestantism arose as a protest against, and a doubting of, the revealed truths of the Catholic religion. From an Orthodox point of view, some of these doubts were justified, and some not. But that is not the essential point here. The essential point is that Protestantism arose out of doubt rather than faith, and, like Descartes in philosophy, placed doubt at the head of the corner of its new theology.

How? First, by doubting that there is any organization that is “the pillar and ground of the truth”, any collective vessel of God’s revelation. So where is God’s revelation to be sought? In the visions and words of individual men, the Prophets and Apostles, the Saints and Fathers? Yes; but - and here the corrosive power of doubt enters again - not all that the Church has passed down about these men can be trusted, according to the Protestants. In particular, the inspiration of the post-apostolic Saints and Fathers is to be doubted, as is much of what we are told of the lives even of the Prophets and Apostles. In fact, we can only rely on the Bible - Sola Scriptura. After all, the Bible is objective; everybody can have access to it, can touch it and read it; can analyse and interpret it. In other words, it corresponds to what we would call scientific evidence.

writes: “There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the wisdom of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique; and both, in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious - such as digging up and mutilating the dead.” (quoted in Fr. Seraphim Johnson, “A Sane Family in an Insane World”, www.trueorthodoxy.net/a_sane_family_in_an_insane_world.htm.)
But can we be sure even of the Bible? After all, the text comes to us from the Church, that untrustworthy organization. Can we be sure that Moses wrote Genesis, or Isaiah, or Paul Hebrews? To answer these questions we have to analyze the text, subject it to scientific verification. Then we will find the real text, the text we can really trust, because it is the text of the real author. But suppose we cannot find this real text? Or the real author? And suppose we come to the conclusion that the “real” text of a certain book was written by tens of authors, none of whom was the “inspired” author, spread over hundreds of years? Can we then be sure that it is the Word of God? But if we cannot be sure that the Bible is not the Word of God, how can we be sure of anything? Thus Protestantism, which begins with the doubting of authority, ends with the loss of truth itself. Or rather, it ends with a scientific truth which dispenses with religious truth, or accepts religious truth only to the extent that it is “confirmed by the findings of science”. It ends by being a branch of the scientific endeavour of systematic doubt, and not a species of religious faith at all.

If we go back to the original error of Protestantism, we will find that it consists in what we may call a false reductionist attitude to Divine Revelation. Revelation is given to us in the Church, “the pillar and ground of the truth”, and consists of two indivisible and mutually interdependent parts – Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Scripture and Tradition support each other, and are in turn supported by the Church, which herself rests on the rock of truth witnessed to in Scripture and Tradition. Any attempt to reduce Divine Revelation to one of these elements, any attempt to make one element essential and the other inessential, is doomed to end with the loss of Revelation altogether. The Truth is one irreducible whole.

Where does this false reductionist attitude come from? Vladimir Trostnikov has shown that it goes back as far as the 11th century, to the nominalist thinker Roscelin. Nominalism, which had triumphed over its philosophical rival, universalism, by the 14th century, “gives priority to the particular over the general, the lower over the higher”. As such, it is in essence the forerunner of reductionism, which insists that the simple precedes the complex, and that the complex can always be reduced, both logically and ontologically, to the simple.183

Thus the Catholic heresy of nominalism gave birth to the Protestant heresy of reductionism, which reduced the complex spiritual process of the absorption of God’s revelation in the Church to the unaided rationalist dissection of a single element in that life, the book of the Holy Scriptures. As Trostnikov explains, the assumption that reductionism is true has led to a series of concepts which taken together represent a summation of the

contemporary world-view: that matter consists of elementary particles which themselves do not consist of anything; that the planets and all the larger objects of the universe arose through the gradual condensation of simple gas; that all living creatures arose out of inorganic matter; that the later forms of social organization and politics arose out of earlier, simpler and less efficient ones; that human consciousness arose from lower phenomena, drives and archetypes; that the government of a State consists of its citizens, who must therefore be considered to be the supreme power.

We see, then, why science, like capitalism, flourished especially in the Protestant countries. Protestantism, according to Landes, “gave a big boost to literacy, spawned dissent and heresies, and promoted the skepticism and refusal of authority that is at the heart of the scientific endeavor. The Catholic countries, instead of meeting the challenge, responded by closure and censure.”\(^{184}\)

However, it is misleading to make too great a contrast between science-loving, democratic religion and science-hating authoritarian religion. Much confusion has been generated in this respect by Galileo’s trial, in which, so it is said, a Pope who falsely believed that the earth was flat and that the sun circled the earth persecuted Galileo, who believed on empirical evidence that the earth circled the sun. But the truth, as Jay Wesley Richards explains, is somewhat different. “First of all, some claim Copernicus was persecuted, but history shows he wasn’t; in fact, he died of natural causes the same year his ideas were published. As for Galileo, his case can’t be reduced to a simple conflict between scientific truth and religious superstition. He insisted the church immediately endorse his views rather than allow them to gradually gain acceptance, he mocked the Pope, and so forth. Yes, he was censured, but the church kept giving him his pension for the rest of his life.”\(^{185}\)

“Bruno’s case was very sad,” Richards continued. “He was executed in Rome in 1600. Certainly this is a stain on [Roman Catholic] church history. But again, this was a complicated case. His Copernican views were incidental. He defended pantheism and was actually executed for his heretical views on the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other doctrines that had nothing to do with Copernicanism.”\(^{186}\)

\(^{185}\) Richards, in Lee Strobel, The Case for a Creator, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, pp. 162-163. “The historian William R. Shea said, ‘Galileo’s condemnation was the result of the complex interplay of untoward political circumstances, political ambitions, and wounded prides.’ Historical researcher Philip J. Sampson noted that Galileo himself was convinced that the ‘major cause’ of his troubles was that he had made ‘fun of his Holiness’ – that is, Pope Urban VIII – in a 1632 treatise. As for his punishment, Alfred North Whitehead put it this way: ‘Galileo suffered an honorable detention and a mild reproof, before dying peacefully in his bed.’” (Strobel, op. cit., p. 163)
\(^{186}\) Richards, in Strobel, op. cit., p. 163.
In fact, neither Holy Scripture\textsuperscript{187} nor the Holy Fathers\textsuperscript{188} ever denied the idea of a spherical earth. “The truth is,” writes David Lindberg, “that it’s almost impossible to find an educated person after Aristotle who doubts that the Earth is a sphere. In the Middle Ages, you couldn’t emerge from any kind of education, cathedral school or university, without being perfectly clear about the Earth’s sphericity and even its approximate circumference.”\textsuperscript{189}

The truth is that both science and religion depend on authority – that is, the reports of reliable men about what they have seen, touched and heard (the Resurrection of Christ was verified by Thomas’ touch). And just as false reports can lead to false religion and superstition, so can they produce false science. Moreover, the reports on which both religion and science are based may have an empirical character: the emptiness of a tomb or the touch of a pierced side, on the one hand; the falling of an apple or the bending of a ray of light, on the other. Both seek truth, both rely on authority. The difference lies, first, in the kinds of truth they seek, and secondly, in the nature and structure of the authority they rely on.

There is no contradiction between true science and true religion. This was understood even by the prophet of the scientific revolution, Francis Bacon. Thus he wrote: “Undoubtedly a superficial tincture of philosophy [science] may incline the mind to atheism, yet a farther knowledge brings it back to religion; for on the threshold of philosophy, where second causes appear to absorb the attention, some oblivion of the highest cause may ensue; but when the mind goes deeper, and sees the dependence of causes and the works of Providence, it will easily perceive, according to the mythology of the poets, that the upper link of Nature’s chain is fastened to Jupiter’s throne...”\textsuperscript{190}

In fact, true science is the product of Christianity. As C.S. Lewis writes: “Professor Whitehead points out that centuries of belief in a God who combined ‘the personal energy of Jehovah’ with ‘the rationality of a Greek philosopher’ first produced that firm expectation of systematic order which rendered possible the birth of modern science. Man became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator...”\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{187} Cf. Isaiah 40.22: “It is He Who sits above the circle of the earth”. So the Pope need not have worried.
\textsuperscript{188} St. Gregory of Nyssa calls the earth “spherical” in his On the Soul and the Resurrection, chapter 4.
2. THE EAST: MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

Romania has passed away, Romania is taken.
Even if Romania has passed away, it will flower and bear fruit again.
Pontic folk-song, on the Fall of Constantinople.

In truth, pious tsar, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and this thought is from God, and will be realised by you. For the Old Rome fell to the Apollinarian heresy, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, is in the possession of the grandsons of the Hagarenes, the godless Turks: but your great Russian kingdom, the Third Rome, has exceeded all in piety. And all the pious kingdoms have been gathered into your kingdom, and you alone under the heavens are named the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians.
Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople.

What is more iniquitous than for a tsar to judge bishops, taking to himself a power which has not been given him by God?... This is apostasy from God.
Patriarch Nicon of Moscow.

Orthodoxy under the Turkish Yoke

There had been one immediate and major gain from the fall of the Empire in 1453: the conqueror of Constantinople gave the patriarchate into the hands of Gennadius Scholarius, a disciple of St. Mark of Ephesus and a firm opponent of the union. He it was who brought the Ecumenical Patriarchate back to Orthodoxy; at a Council in 1484 the Florentine union was condemned. Moreover, the fact that all the Christians of the Balkans were now placed under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch as ethnarch of the whole Orthodox nation, or millet, put a temporary halt to the fissiparous tendencies of Orthodoxy in the region. In this way, the increase in the Patriarch’s power that had already been clear before the Conquest was reinforced. He was now de facto ruler, under the Sultan, of all the Orthodox Christians outside Russia and Georgia...

However, in almost every other respect the Christians of the Greek lands and the Balkans suffered greatly from their new rulers. Thus soon after the Conquest the Turks began charging a fee every time a new patriarch was elected. They found this so profitable that soon patriarchs were being removed and replaced at an ever more rapid rate, while the fees for their elevation were constantly being increased. As well as being inherently uncanonical, and encouraging ambitious adventurers to aim for the patriarchate, the system impoverished and demoralized the Church.

---

192 On his deathbed St. Mark praised Gennadius’s irreconcilable attitude towards the Latins and the union (Patrologia Graeca, CLX, 529).
“In the century form 1595,” writes Sir Steven Runciman, “when Jeremias II ended his last Patriarchal reign, to 1695, there were sixty-one changes on the Patriarchal throne, though, as many Patriarchs were reinstated after deposition, there were only thirty-one individual Patriarchs... The average length of reign was slightly less than twenty months. Occupational risks were higher: four Patriarchs, Cyril I, Parthenius II, Parthenius III and Gabriel II, were put to death by the Turks on the suspicion of treason. Occasionally a candidate had such powerful friends among the authorities that he achieved his ambition without a specific money-payment; but such men were rare. By the end of the seventeenth century the usual price paid by a Patriarch on his election was in the neighbourhood of 20,000 piastres – roughly 3,000 gold pounds. At the same time the Patriarchate had been paying to the Porte from early in the century an annual tax of 20,000 piastres, as well as various minor taxes which included the obligation to provide the mutton required daily by the Palace Guard, men of voracious appetite.

“The climax was reached early in the eighteenth century, in 1726, when the Patriarch Callinicus III paid no less than 36,400 piastres for his election – roughly 5,600 gold pounds. As he died of joy, from a sudden heart attack, the following day, the transaction proved expensive for the Church...”

The Patriarchate could not pay its debts (15,000 gold pounds by 1730) from its own revenues, so it came to rely on the richer members of the laity, the aristocratic and merchant families known as the Phanariots (because they lived in the Phanar, near the Patriarchate), with lamentable results, since the Phanariots tended to imbibe the latest western philosophical theories more than the Orthodox Faith...

Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) of Novgorod writes: “After the fall of Constantinople, Sultan Mahomet composed a firman which defined the position of the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman empire. In many points it recalled the agreement of Patriarch Sophronius with Caliph Omar.

“Half the churches in Tsargrad, including the church of Hagia Sophia, were turned into mosques, the rest remained the property of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. The preaching of Christianity to Muslims was forbidden, and also opposition to Islamic preached the violent seduction of Christians to Islam. At the same time the patriarch was recognized as the head of the Christian people and received the right to collect taxes and judge the Christian population in civil cases. On the whole the civil rights of the Constantinopolitan patriarch over the Christian peoples was even increased by comparison with its position in the Byzantine empire. Even the Slavic

193 Runciman, The Great Church in Captivity, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 201-202. Not only Turkish officials, but also Greek merchants, Georgian kings, Romanian princes and, increasingly, Western ambassadors became involved in the intrigues.
Churches of Serbia and Bulgaria, who had earlier achieved autocephaly, fell under its power, as did the eastern patriarchates in Syria and Palestine.

“The sultan retained for himself the right to confirm the patriarch, who was elected by the Synod. The Turks did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Church, but their external violence on the Christian population and clergy exceeded the cruelty of the Arabs. Hundreds of churches and monasteries were sacked and thousands of Christians converted to Islam. Tens of dioceses ceased to exist.

“The Ottoman empire, by contrast with the Roman, was not a state based on the rule of law. The sultan was not bound even by his own laws: he could bestow rights, and take them back again. There was even less firm law-abidingness in the provinces; any local pasha (provincial governor), any local judge (kady) could insult Christians as he wished. None of the local authorities tried to restrain the masses of fanatics who lynched Christians at any time. Islam respect only force. The Christians in the Ottoman empire were a subject people and they didn’t treat them with excessive consideration...

“And so the administration of the Church not only fell under the control of the antichristian authorities, but an ugly vice reigned in it – simony, which had been frequently anathematized by the Ecumenical Councils. The consequence of this was the demoralization and moral degradation of the majority of the higher clergy, a weakening of faith, and the falling away of many thousands of Orthodox into Islam.

“The Constantinopolitan patriarch had to pray for the sultan and his army – that army which had brought death to Christian states and peoples, the devastation of the Christian Church and the forcible seizure of Christian boys, their transformation into Janissaries and their conversion to Islam…”

How precarious was the position of the Orthodox in the Ottoman empire is illustrated by the following incident, recounted by Sir Steven Runciman: “In about 1520 Sultan Selim I, who disliked Christianity, suggested to his horrified vizier that all Christians should be forcibly converted to Islam. When he was told that this was impracticable, he demanded that at least all their churches should be surrendered. The vizier warned the Patriarch, Theoleptus I, who engaged the services of a clever lawyer called Xenakis. Theoleptus admitted that he had no firman protecting the churches. It had been burnt in a fire at the Patriarchate, he said. But Xenakis was able to produce three aged Janissaries who had been present when the Conquering Sultan entered Constantinople. They swore on the Koran that they had seen a number of notables from the city come to the Sultan as he was waiting to

make his entrance and offer him the keys of their respective districts. In return he promised them that they could retain their churches. Sultan Selim accepted this evidence and even allowed the Christians to reopen some of their churches which his officials had closed. All the same, several more churches were annexed during his reign…”

In the towns and villages, conditions also deteriorated. Gradually, more and more churches were converted into mosques; bribes and intrigues were often necessary to keep the few remaining churches in Christian hands, and these usually had to have drab exteriors with no visible domes or crosses. On the whole, Christians were allowed to practise their faith. But all influential positions were restricted to Muslims, and conversion from Islam to Christianity was punishable by death. Many of the martyrs of this period were Orthodox who had, wittingly or unwittingly, become Muslims in their youth, and were then killed for reconverting to the faith of their fathers. The general level of education among the Christians plummeted, and even the most basic books often had to be imported from semi-independent areas such as the Danubian principalities or from Uniate presses in Venice.

For all the sorrow and humiliation that Ottoman rule brought to the Orthodox Balkans, writes Mark Mazower, “Islamic rule was far less damaging than Catholic. Catholic armies had brought destruction to Balkan Christians in the crusades of 1204 and 1444. Venetian rule had been harsh and repressive in Crete and the Peloponnese. After the brief occupation of Chios by the Venetians in 1694 islanders said ‘they were better off under the ‘Turks’. ‘I’d rather turn Turk than join you Latins who hate and persecute us,’ an Orthodox monk told a Catholic missionary in 1641. In fact, Orthodox-Catholic relations were often more harmonious inside the empire than outside: in the seventeenth-century Cyclades, for instance, where there was a small Catholic population, Catholics and Orthodox islanders often attended each others’ services and build adjacent churches. As late as 1749, the Orthodox Patriarchate reprimanded the folk of Sifnos and Mikonos for failing to recognise any difference between the two rites. But on the whole few peasants converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, despite the activity of Jesuits and other missionaries across the Balkans. Turkish rule tilted the balance of power between Patriarchate and Papacy in favour of the former, not least because the former – unlike the Papacy – was a servant of the Porte…

“The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, far from crushing Christian Orthodoxy, brought it many advantages, as both the Patriarchate and its enemies and rivals realised. After the chaos of the final fragmented phase of Byzantine rule, the Church was now able to recover and indeed expand its power both in the Balkans and in Anatolia. Thanks to the Turks, it was largely freed from the threat of Catholicism presented by the Venetians and Genoese

195 Runciman, op. cit., pp. 189-190.
in the eastern Mediterranean. Ottoman power in effect unified the Balkans for the first time in centuries. In the late sixteenth century it was reported from the Ottoman capital that the Christians there ‘do not want any other domination in preference to the Turks’. And when Turkish troops reconquered the Peloponnese from the Venetians in 1715, the Greek peasants welcomed and supported them…”197

The Struggle for Romania

The fall of the New Rome of Constantinople in 1453 was a great shock for the whole of the Orthodox world. It was not only the political outlook that was threatening: if the empire was no more, what would become of the Church? Did not the prophecies link the fall of Rome with the coming of the Antichrist? But perhaps the empire was not yet dead… There were two possibilities here. One was that the Ottoman empire could be construed as a continuation of Rome. After all, there had been pagans and heretics and persecutors of the Church on the throne, so why not a Muslim? Or Rome was to be translated elsewhere, as St. Constantine had once translated the capital of his empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople.

Unlikely as it may sound, some Greeks embraced the idea of Istanbul being Rome, and the Sultan – the Roman emperor. Thus in 1466 the Cretan historian George Trapezuntios said to the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmet II: "Nobody doubts that you are the Roman emperor. He who is the lawful ruler in the capital of the empire and in Constantinople is the emperor, while Constantinople is the capital of the Roman empire. And he who remains as emperor of the Romans is also the emperor of the whole world."198

However, the Ottoman Sultans could not be compared even with the heretical Roman emperors, such as the iconoclasts Leo and Constantine Copronymus. The latter had at least claimed to be sons of the Church, they had claimed to confess the Orthodox faith and receive the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. But there could be no deception here: the Ottoman Sultans made no pretence at being Orthodox. Therefore at most they could be considered analogous in authority to the pagan emperors of Old Rome, legitimate authorities to whom obedience was due (as long as, and to the degree that, they did not compel Christians to commit impiety), but no more.

So had the clock been turned back? Had the Christian Roman Empire returned to its pre-Christian, pre-Constantinian origins? No, the clock of Christian history never goes back, never repeats itself. The world could never be the same again after Constantine and the Christian empire of New Rome, which had so profoundly changed the consciousness of all the peoples living

in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. So if the Antichrist had not yet come, there was only one alternative: the one, true empire had indeed been translated somewhere - but not unlawfully, to some heretical capital such as Aachen or Old Rome, but lawfully, to some Orthodox nation capable of bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom.

What could that nation be? It had to be one that was independent of the Ottomans, or that could re-establish its independence. The last remaining Free Greeks showed little sign of being able to do this. The last Byzantine outpost of Morea in the Peloponnese fell in 1461, and in the same year the Comnenian “empire” of Trebizond on the south coast of the Black Sea also fell, after a siege of forty-two days. Another possibility was the land we now call Romania, but which was then comprised of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (“Romania” was then the name for the lost Orthodox empire). Prince Vlad “the Impaler” of Wallachia conducted a courageous rearguard action north of the Danube. Stronger still was the resistance of the northern Romanian principality of Moldavia, under its great Prince Stephen (1457-1504).

On coming to the throne, Stephen had taken St. Daniel the Hesychast to be his counsellor. He ‘often visited his cell, confessed his sins, asked him for a profitable word, and did nothing without his prayer and blessing. The Saint encouraged him and exhorted him to defend the country and Christianity against the pagans. Saint Daniel assured him that if he would build a church to the glory of Christ after each battle, he would be victorious in all his wars.

“Stephen the Great obeyed him and defended the Church of Christ and the Moldavian land with great courage for nearly half a century after the fall of Byzantium. He won forty-seven battles and built forty-eight churches. Thus Saint Daniel the Hesychast was shown to be a great defender of Romanian Orthodoxy and the spiritual founder of those monasteries that were built at his exhortation…

“After Stephen the Great lost the battle of Razboieni in the summer of 1476, he went to the cell of his good spiritual father, Saint Daniel the Hesychast, at Voroneţ. Then, when ‘Stephen Voda knocked on the hesychast’s door for him to open it, the hesychast replied that Stephen Voda should wait outside until he had finished praying. And after the hesychast had finished praying, he called Stephen Voda into his cell. And Stephen Voda confessed to him. And Stephen Voda asked the hesychast what he should do now, since he was no longer able to fight the Turks. Should the country surrender to the Turks or not? And the hesychast told him not to surrender it, for he would win the war; but that after saving the country he should build a monastery there in the name of Saint George.’

“Believing Saint Daniel’s prophecy that he would defeat the Turks, the Prince of Moldavia took his prayer and blessing and immediately assembled the army and drove the Turks from the country. Thus the Saint helped deliver Moldavia and the Christian countries from enslavement to the infidels by his ardent prayers to God.”

*The Rise of the Muscovite Great Princes*

But it was not Romania that was destined to be the Third Rome: in the following centuries the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia came under the power of the Turkish Sultans and the Greek Phanariots. The honour and cross of being the protector and restorer of the fortunes of the Orthodox Christians fell to a nation far to the north – Russia... The idea that the Orthodox Roman Empire, which had always been an essentially Mediterranean empire, could be translated to the remote forests of the north was a bold one. St. Constantine’s moving the capital of the empire from Old Rome to New Rome had also been bold - but that step, though radical and fraught with enormous consequences, had not involved going beyond the bounds of the existing empire, and had been undertaken by the legitimate emperor himself. The Serbs and Bulgarians had each in their time sought to capture New Rome and make it the capital of a Slavic-Greek kingdom – but this, again, had not involved moving the empire itself, as opposed to changing its dominant nation. The Frankish idea of the *translatio imperii* from New Rome to Aachen had involved both changing the dominant nation and taking the capital beyond the bounds of the existing empire – and had been rejected by the Greeks as heretical, largely on the grounds that it involved setting up a second, rival empire, where there could only be one true one.

Let us remind ourselves of the eschatological idea on which the idea of the *translatio imperii* rested. According to this idea, Rome in its various successions and reincarnations will exist to the end of the world – or at least, to the time of the Antichrist. As Michael Nazarov writes: “This conviction is often reflected in the patristic tradition (it was shared by Saints: Hippolytus of Rome, John Chrysostom, Blessed Theodoret, Blessed Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem and others). On this basis [the fifteenth-century] Elder Philotheus [of Pskov] wrote: ‘the Roman [Romejskoe] kingdom is indestructible, for the Lord was enrolled into the Roman [Rimskuiu] power’ (that is, he was enrolled among the inhabitants at the census in the time of the Emperor Augustus). Here Philotheus distinguishes between the indestructible ‘Roman [Romejskoe] kingdom’, whose successor was now Rus’, and Roman [Rimskoj] power, which had gone into the past.”

---


In fact the only real candidate for the role of leadership in the Orthodox world was Muscovite Russia. (Moscow was not the only Russian principality in the middle of the fifteenth century, but after its conquest of Novgorod in 1487 it had no real rivals. But more on this below.) Only the Russians could be that “third God-chosen people” of the prophecy. Only they were able to re-express the Christian ideal of the symphony of powers on a stronger, more popular base - as a symphony, in effect, of three powers - Church, State and People - rather than two. For the Russians had the advantage over the Romans and the Greeks that they were converted to the faith as a single people, with their existing social organisation intact, and not, as in Rome, as an amalgam of different peoples whose indigenous social structures had already been smashed by the pagan imperial power. Thus whereas in Rome, as Lev Tikhomirov writes, “the Christians did not constitute a social body”, and “their only organisation was the Church”\textsuperscript{203}, in the sense that it was not whole peoples or classes but individuals from many different peoples and classes that joined the Church, in Russia the whole of the richly layered and variegated, but at the same time socially and politically coherent society came to the Church at one time and was baptised together. Moreover, Russia remained a nation-state with a predominantly Russian or Russian-Ukrainian-Belorussian population throughout its extraordinary expansion from the core principality of Muscovy, whose territory in 1462 was 24,000 square kilometres, to the multi-national empire of Petersburg Russia, whose territory in 1914 was 13.5 million square kilometres.\textsuperscript{204}

The 600-year history of Russia from her baptism under St. Vladimir in 988 until the official proclamation of the Russian Empire as the Orthodox Empire by the Ecumenical Patriarchs Joachim (in 1561) and Jeremiah II (in 1588) presents a very striking and instructive illustration of the Lord’s words: "the last shall be first" (Matthew 20.16). For most of this period Russia was the most populous and flourishing nation in Orthodoxy. The beauty of her churches and the piety of her people amazed all comers. The monastic missionary movement inspired by St. Sergius of Radonezh in the fourteenth century came to be called "the Northern Thebaid" because of the resemblance of its piety to that of the Egyptian Thebaid. And yet during the whole of this period the Russian Church remained no more than a junior metropolitan district of the Ecumenical patriarchate! Unlike the much smaller Serbian and Bulgarian Churches, the Russian Church never sought autocephaly, and even when the Byzantine empire had contracted to a very small area around the capital city, the Russian Grand-Princes looked up to the emperors in Constantinople as to their fathers or elder brothers.\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{203} Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 164 (in Russian).

\textsuperscript{204} Dominic Lieven, Empire, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 262, 278.

This voluntary self-limitation and national humility on the part of the princes and people brought many blessings to Russia. First and most important, it implanted Orthodoxy in all its purity into the hearts of the people with no admixture of heterodoxy. Secondly, the fact that the metropolitan of the Russian Church was appointed by Constantinople gave him the ability to arbitrate in the frequent quarrels between the Russian princes in the Kievan period, thus preserving the spiritual unity of the Russian nation that had been achieved under St. Vladimir. And thirdly, it ensured the survival and resurrection of Russia as a single Orthodox nation even after the Mongols had destroyed Kiev and subdued most of Russia in the 1240s.

The Russians retained their loyalty to the Byzantine Church and Empire until the very last moment — that is, until both emperor and patriarch betrayed the Orthodox faith at the Council of Florence in 1438-39. Even after this betrayal, the Russians did not immediately break their canonical dependence on the patriarch. And even after the election of St. Jonah to the metropolitanate, the Great Prince’s letter to the patriarch shows great restraint and humility, speaking only of a “disagreement” between the two Churches. He stressed that St. Jonah had received the metropolitanate without asking the blessing of the patriarch, but in accordance with the canons, only out of extreme necessity. The patriarch’s blessing would again be asked once they were assured that he adhered to “the ancient piety”.

Since the Russian Great Prince was now the only independent Orthodox ruler, and was supported by an independent Church, he had a better claim than any other to inherit the throne of the Roman Emperors and therefore call himself “Tsar” (from “Caesar”, the Russian equivalent of the Greek Basileus). The title had been floated already before the fall of

---

206 The Russians were not even exposed to the classical pagan authors; for, as Meyendorff (op. cit., pp. 119-120) writes, because of “the availability of Scriptures and other literature in translation”, “there was no compelling need to study a ‘classical’ language, classical civilisation was not assimilated in Russia together with Christianity, as was the case in the West. Indeed a Latin medieval scholar who knew Latin would not read only Christian scriptures, but also Cicero, Augustine, and eventually Aristotle. Instead, a Russian knizhnik would only have at his disposal works translated from the Greek and channeled through the Church, i.e., liturgical, hagiographic, canonical, and some historical materials.”


208 With the exception of Georgia, which later entered the Russian empire. The metropolitan of Georgia had been among the very few, with St. Mark of Ephesus, who refused to sign the union in Florence. Romania, as we have seen, was also independent for a time, but soon came under the suzerainty of the Ottomans.

209 “The primary sense of imperium is ‘rule’ and ‘dominion’, with no connotation of overseas territories, or oppressed indigenous peoples. Though ambitious monarchs, of course, aspired to as extensive an imperium as possible, the main point about being an emperor was that you did not have to take orders from anybody.” (Alan MacColl, “King Arthur and the Making of an English Britain”, History Today, volume 49 (3), March, 1999, p. 11).
Constantinople: in 1447-48 Simeon of Suzdal had called Great Prince Basil Vasilyevich “faithful and Christ-loving and truly Orthodox... White Tsar”.

And St. Jonah wrote to Prince Alexander of Kiev that Basil was imitating his “ancestors” – the holy Emperor Constantine and the Great-Prince Vladimir.

The Russian Great Princes’ claim was further strengthened by the marriage of Great Prince Ivan III Vasilyevich to the last surviving heir of the Paleologan line, Sophia, in 1472. It was on this basis that a letter of the Venetian Senate accorded Ivan the imperial title. Ivan himself indicated that in marrying Sophia he had united Muscovite Russia with Byzantium by uniting two coats of arms – the two-headed eagle of Byzantium with the image of St. George piercing the dragon with his spear. From now on the two-headed eagle became the Russian coat of arms with the image of St. George in the centre of it, as it were in its breast. In 1492 Metropolitan Zosimus of Moscow wrote: “The Emperor Constantine built a New Rome, Tsarigrad; but the sovereign and autocrat of All the Russias, Ivan Vassilievitch, the new Constantine, has laid the foundation for a new city of Constantine, Moscow.”

In 1498 Ivan had himself crowned by Metropolitan Simon as “Tsar, Grand Prince and Autocrat of All the Russias”. “In the coronation ceremony, which was a rough copy of the Byzantine, the metropolitan charged the Tsar ‘to care for all souls and for all Orthodox Christendom’. The title of Tsar had now become the official title and brought with it the implication that the Russian monarch was, before God, the head of the Orthodox, that is, of the true Christian world.”

A generation later, in the reign of Vassily III, Elder Philotheus of Pskov expressed the idea of Moscow – the Third Rome in its full splendour: “I would like to say a few words about the existing Orthodox empire of our most illustrious, exalted ruler. He is the only emperor on all the earth over the Christians, the governor of the holy, divine throne of the holy, ecumenical,

---

210 Simeon of Suzdal, in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T., Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, p. 242 (in Russian).
211 Meyendorff, “Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?”, Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, op. cit., p. 108.
213 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 44 (in Russian).
214 Runciman, op. cit., p. 323. Ya.S. Lourié writes: “The idea of ‘Moscow – the new city of Constantine’ was put forward by Zosimus, who was linked with the heretical movement [of the Judaizers] at the end of the 15th century; Zosimus boldly referred the New Testament prophecy, ‘the first shall be last, and the last first’ to the Greeks and the Russians...” (“Perepiska Groznogo s Kurbskim v Obschestvennoj Mysli Drevnej Rusi” (“The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Kurbsky in the Political Thought of Ancient Rus”), in Ya.S. Lourié and Yu.D. Rykov, Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andream Kurbskim (The Correspondence of the Terrible one with Andrew Kurbsky), Moscow: “Nauka”, 1993, p. 230 (in Russian)).
apostolic Church which in place of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople is in the city of Moscow, protected by God, in the holy and glorious Dormition church of the most pure Mother of God. It alone shines over the whole earth more radiantly than the sun. For know well, those who love Christ and those who love God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the books of the prophet [Daniel 7.14], which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth…”216

However, there were problems associated with the assumption of this title at this time. The first was the traditional respect of the Russians for their elder brothers in Byzantium. This respect would gradually wane as the Russians gradually became convinced that Byzantium had fallen because of its sins against the faith. Nevertheless, in the fifteenth century it was still strong. And there was no question that in the consciousness of the Russian people the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch was required for such a major step as the assumption of the role of Orthodox emperor by the Russian Great Prince.

Secondly, the status of the Russian metropolitan was problematic. In 1451 the uniate Patriarch Gregory Mamas of Constantinople had fled to Rome, where he consecrated Gregory Bolgarin, a former deacon of Isidore’s, as metropolitan of Kiev in opposition to St. Jonah. This was justified by the Latins not only on the grounds that there was no communion between themselves and the Orthodox of Muscovy, and the Pope had called St. Jonah “the schismatic monk Jonah, son of iniquity”, but also because a large part of the Russian population was now living within the domain of King Casimir of Poland-Lithuania, who was a Roman Catholic. Thus the fall of the Greek Church into uniatism led directly to a schism in the Orthodox Russian Church, which had the former consequence that the Russian Great Prince could not count on the obedience even of all the Russian people – hardly a strong position from which to be proclaimed emperor of all the Orthodox Christians!

Moreover, even when both Gregory Bolgarin and the later Patriarchs of Constantinople beginning with Gennadius Scholarius returned to Orthodoxy, the schism continued in the Russian lands, with one metropolitan, that of Kiev, under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, and the other, that of Moscow, independent of Constantinople.217 The Greeks argued that, now that the unia had been renounced, the Russian Church of the independent Muscovite kingdom should return into obedience to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. But that would have meant the subjection of the free Russian Church living under a free and Orthodox sovereign to a metropolitan living under a hostile Roman Catholic king and a patriarch living under a hostile Muslim sultan!

216 Philotheus, Letter against the Astronomers and the Latins. In van den Bercken, op. cit.
Thirdly, before the Russian Great Prince could assume the title of Tsar, or Emperor, he had to reunite all the Russian lands under his dominion, and then, if possible, all the lands of the Orthodox East. This point can be better appreciated if it is remembered that when the Emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, he was already the undisputed ruler of the whole of the Roman Empire, in which the great majority of Orthodox Christians lived. The Russian Great Prince, by contrast, ruled none of the traditional territories of the Roman empire, and not even “the mother of Russian cities”, Kiev.

Moreover, there were other Russian princes with claims to be “the new Constantine”, “the saviour of Orthodoxy” – “for instance, “the prince Boris of Tver, who had also sent a representative to the council [of Florence] and now, after rejecting the Latin faith, was said by one polemicist to deserve an imperial diadem. Furthermore, in Novgorod, under Archbishop Gennadius (1484-1509), there appeared a curious Russian variation on the Donation of Constantine, the Legend of the White Cowl. According to the Legend, the while cowl (клюк; Gr. επικαλυμμακρον) was donated by Constantine the Great to pope Sylvester following his baptism; the last Orthodox pope, foreseeing Rome’s fall into heresy, sent the cowl for safe-keeping to patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, who eventually (also foreseeing the betrayal of Florence), sent the precious relic to the archbishop of Novgorod. Thus, not only Moscow, but also Tver and Novgorod, were somehow claiming to be the heirs of ‘Rome’, the center of the true Christian faith…”

Fourthly, thus far Moscow was only an embryonic Third Rome: several tasks needed to be carried out before the embryo could become a fully adult man. The first task was that of becoming truly independent rulers – independent, that is, of their Tatar overlords. This aim was more or less achieved by 1480, when Moscow first refused to give tribute to the Horde. Of course, the Tatars did not take this lying down, and the y continued to be a threat to the Russian State until well into the eighteenth century. But being under threat from a State is not the same as being in subjection to it. By the end of the fifteenth century Muscovy was a fully independent State for the first time in her history. For this reason alone the Great Princes had the right to call themselves “tsar”, that is, “autocrat”.

Their second task was the gathering of the Russian lands, the building up of a national kingdom uniting all the Russias, which involved at least three major stages: (i) the uniting of the free Russian principedoms under Moscow, (ii) the final liberation of the Eastern and Southern Russian lands from the Tatar-Mongol-Turkish yoke, and (iii) the liberation of the Western Russian lands from the Catholic yoke of Poland-Lithuania.

---

Steady progress towards the first end was made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries until the “The Time of Troubles”, which shook the Russian State to its foundation. Progress was resumed after the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar in 1613.

The second aim, that of the gathering of the Russian lands was finally accomplished in 1915, when Tsar Nicholas II reconquered Galicia from the Catholic Austrians.

Their third task was the gathering of the Orthodox lands, including the Greek and Semitic lands of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Muscovite State first turned its attention seriously to this aim under the Grecophile Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nicon. At this moment, however, the Muscovite autocracy suffered its most severe crisis and was transformed into the “Orthodox absolutism” of Peter the Great, whose ideal was rather the First Rome of the Caesars and Augusti. During the reign of Tsar Alexander II the idea of Moscow the Third Rome began to be revived, and Orthodox Christians again began to see this as the role that Divine Providence had entrusted to Russia. The wars waged by Russia for the liberation of Bulgaria in 1877-78 and Serbia in 1914-17 can be seen as prefiguring the full realization of that role. But then came the revolution, in which the Third International represented a grotesque parody of the noble ideal of the Third Rome. That ideal has yet to be realised in its fullness...

*The Church in Muscovy*

Since Byzantium fell, according to the prophecy, because there was no true “symphony” between Church and State, but rather the subordination of strictly ecclesiastical interests to those of the State, it is necessary to examine Church-State relations in Muscovy. And here, too, unfortunately, we find that, while the Church remained formally an independent institution throughout the period from 15th to the 17th centuries, the general trend was for increasing integration of the Church into the State, and subordination of the interests of the Church to those of the State. This subordination reached a first peak during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, who murdered Metropolitan Philip of Moscow, and a second during the reign of Alexis Mikhailovich, who secured the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nicon of Moscow. In between there were periods of greater ecclesiastical independence. But the general pattern was the one noted by Archbishop Mark (Arndt) in relation to preaching: “Quite a few Russian metropolitan in the 15th and 16th centuries were condemned to silence by the clearly expressed bans on preaching by the tsars”.

---

220 Arndt, “Mitropolit Moskovskij Filaret (Drozdov) i ego mesto v kontekste russkoj propovedi” (Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow and his place in the context of
In order to understand this process, we need to compare the periods before and after the fall of Constantinople. A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: “The previously established link between the Church and the State became still stronger from the 13th to the 16th centuries. You constantly encounter facts that indicate the influence of the former on the latter and vice-versa. But in the history of their mutual relations the increasing dominance of the State over the Church is noticeable. Before the State was only organized and brought together under the tutelage of the Church. But now it passes from the anarchic life of the principalities to the concentration of power around the Muscovite throne in the north and around the Polish throne in the south-west of Russia. And at the same time it not only removes from itself the tutelage of the Church, but places her in subjection to itself. This goes in tandem with the exaltation of the secular power. Therefore between the beginning of the given period, when there still existed independent principalities, and the metropolitan acted as the centre unifying Russians amidst their scatteredness, and the end [of the period], when the principalities ceased to exist and the Muscovite sovereign and the Polish king were exalted to autocratic status, a large difference in the relationship of the secular power to the ecclesiastical power and ecclesiastical life is noticeable.

“The influence of the secular power on ecclesiastical life is expressed in the given period in the most varied activities in all branches of ecclesiastical life. The princes in the north of Russia cared for the instalment of Christianity in the newly-acquired regions and for the Christian enlightenment of the newly converted. But in the south the Polish king, under the influence of the Catholic party, tried to weaken the power of Orthodox Christianity and help Catholic propaganda. The Russian princes themselves built churches and monasteries, opened dioceses, defined their boundaries, gave money for the upkeep of sees and churches, themselves influenced the election of clergy, and in the course of time even chose the highest representatives of ecclesiastical power on their own. In the south of Russia this became one of the rights of the king, but in the north at the end of the 15th century and during the 16th it was practised so frequently that it became a normal phenomenon. The secular authorities deposed hierarchs in the same arbitrary manner in which they had elevated them: the Polish king even ascribed judgement over them to himself, as his right. In the inner life of the Church the influence of the secular authorities was no less. It issued decrees defining the rights of the clergy, the character of ecclesiastical administration and courts;... it interfered in the administration of monasteries...; it ascribed to itself the right of court of highest appeal in doubtful cases of local arbitration; it checked the monasteries’ accounts; it sometimes confiscated monastic property; it often convened councils, where it pointed out ecclesiastical deficiencies and suggested that the hierarchs remove them; it confirmed with

Russian preaching), in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867, Jordanville; The Variable Press, 2003, p. 82 ©.
its own seals important decisions of the metropolitan; it accepted reports from
the bishops on ecclesiastical issues; it investigated heresies, and itself
sometimes fought with heretics (for example, at the Council of 1503); it itself
sometimes entered into negotiations with the Patriarch of Constantinople on
the needs of the Church (for example, the letters of Basil Vasilievich in the
case of the election of Jonah); it even sometimes of itself abolished
ecclesiastical deficiencies (for example, Ioann IV wrote decrees to the Cyrillo-
Beloozersk monastery against the disorders that were taking place there);
finally it itself imposed various restrictions on the hierarchs of the Church,
even in their private way of life, for example, interfering in their selection of
assistants in the administration of houses and dioceses. It is difficult to say
where the pressure of the central secular authorities on Church life was
stronger – in the south, or in the north of Russia; but there is no doubt that the
local officials restricted it more, and the abuses were greater as a result of the
interference of the secular authorities in Church life, in the south of Russia.
The decrees often issued by the princes and kings concerning the inviolability
of Church administration and courts were for the most part voices crying in
the wilderness: in the south of Russia the regional officials did not obey them,
and the kings themselves did not observe them strictly; while in the north, if
the former feared to violate them, the Great Princes themselves often got
round them.

“In such a situation the ecclesiastical authorities were more and more
subsumed under the power of the secular authorities and acted on their
initiative; it manifested comparatively greater independence either at the
beginning of the period, when the secular authorities were not so strong, or at
the end, when the sovereigns were still underage or not yet firmly established
in power. Correspondingly, the level of the influence of the ecclesiastical
authorities on the course of secular affairs varied at different times. Under the
system of the principalities and veches the bishops blessed and ‘installed’ the
princes on their thrones; it was with their blessing that the princes issued
letters patent, they were invited to be present at the writing of their spiritual
wills, they were given tutelage over underage children; they were sent by
them to conduct negotiations on the inheritance and the dividing up of lands
and in general for mutual explanations; they were often ambassadors in the
drawing up of peace treaties, and advisors and reprovers of the prince...
Among the bishops the bishop of Novgorod had, as before, a particular
significance. His name was placed above the name not only of the posadnik
but also of the prince... When the system of principalities fell, and there were
no longer any appanage princes, the bishops in the cities occupied a leading
position. For that reason one can see their names at the head of the conspiracy
when this or that town rose up against the Muscovite sovereign with the aim
of recovering their independence. For example, Theophilus of Novgorod
entered into negotiations with Casimir [of Poland] under Ioann III, and
Barsanuphius of Smolensk – with Sigismund [of Poland] under Basil III. But
for that very reason the Moscow princes dealt with the bishops as if they were
representatives of the city – they exiled them and imprisoned them, as, for example, with the above-mentioned Barsanuphius and Theophilus. For the same reason, finally, if the metropolitans wanted to enlist the help of some city for the Muscovite prince or suppress a rebellion there, they sometimes acted through the local bishop and the clergy subject to him. The role played in political affairs by bishops was sometimes taken upon themselves by archimandrites, abbots and city priests both on their own initiative and on the orders of the prince or bishop. With the ending of the principality system, and the subjection of the cities to the Muscovite Great Prince and the introduction everywhere of definite civil forms, the bishops lost their political significance. Only in council did they boldly express their opinions, and that only if the prince gave them leave, or if it was to please the Great Prince. Thus, for example, at the ‘Hundred Chapters’ Council they expressed themselves in favour of the sudebnik of Ioann IV, and in 1447, in an accusatory letter to Demetrius Yuryevich Shemyak, they expressed themselves in favour of the new order of succession that was being installed in Moscow. The cases when the bishops dared on their own to give political advice to the Great Prince without knowing how the latter would take it, were exceptional: the bishops were afraid to do this and presented their opinions to the metropolitan. An exception was Bishop Bassian Rylo of Rostov’s reproaching Great Prince Ioann III for his cowardice in the struggle with Khan Ahmed; but it should be noted that Bassian was the prince’s spiritual father and was respected by him. The metropolitan’s sphere of political activities was much broader. He was the head of the Russian Church and for that reason could extend her influence over all spheres; he was closer to the Great Prince and for that reason could more easily influence the very heart of civil life. The metropolitans interfered into the principalities’ quarrels and by all means tried to stop them. For example, when in 1270 the citizens of Novgorod expelled Prince Yaroslav Yaroslavich and sent their army against him, Metropolitan Cyril III sent them a letter in which among other things he said: ‘God entrusted with the archiepiscopate in the Russian land, and you must listen to God and to me and not shed blood; I can vouch that Yaroslav has cast aside all ill will; but if you kiss the cross against him, I will take upon myself the penance for your breaking of your vows and will answer for this before God’. The Novgorodians followed his advice and were reconciled with the prince. When Boris took Nizhny Novgorod from his brother Demetrius of Suzdal, Metropolitan Alexis sent St. Sergius of Radonezh to Nizhny Novgorod to persuade Boris to make concessions to his brother, and there he closed all the churches and stopped the services. The metropolitan then deprived Bishop Alexis, who had been supporting Boris, of the Nizhny region that belonged to him (1365). Boris had to humble himself. When in 1328 the citizens of Pskov hid amongst themselves Prince Alexander Mikhailoovich of Tver, who was being summoned to the Horde, and did not want to give him up, Metropolitan Theognostus ‘sent a curse and excommunication’ on Prince Alexander and the Pskovians, so that they had to give way. The metropolitan acted in this way in the given case because he was afraid that the wrath of the
Khan would fall on the whole of Russia because of Prince Alexander’s non-appearance at the Horde, and in this way he obliquely protected the prosperity of Russia. But we know of a case when the metropolitan acted directly for this purpose. When Berdibek, who had killed his father Chanibek, became the Khan of the Horde, he demanded fresh tribute from all the Russian princes and began to prepare for war against them. At the request of the Great Prince Metropolitan Alexis set off for the Horde, calmed the wrath of the Khan and diverted the woes that were expected for Russia (1357). When the Muscovite princes had to fight with the Tatars, the metropolitans would try and persuade the appanage princes to set about this task. Thus, for example, Metropolitan Jonah sent a decree with Bishop Gerontius of Kolomna to Prince Ivan Andreyevich of Mozhaisk; but he also called on Prince Boris Alexandrovich of Tver to help through the local Bishop Elias. The metropolitan would intercede for defeated princes, and this how they regarded him. The metropolitans did still more in the interests of the Muscovite Great Prince. They supported him in his struggles with his enemies, and tried to draw all the Russian regions towards Moscow. They were exhorted to this by the prince himself, and as well as by their own interests, since the secular unity of Russia contributed to the great subjection of the dioceses to the power of the metropolitan of Moscow. In 1364 Metropolitan Alexis was a mediator in securing a treaty between Great Prince Dmetrius Ivanovich and his cousin Vladimir Andreyevich; several years later the same metropolitan excommunicated Prince Svyatoslav of Smolensk and other princes for breaking their oaths in going with the army of Olgerd [of Lithuania] against Dmetrius Ivanovich. Metropolitan Photius himself travelled to Galich in order to try and persuade Prince Yury Dimitrievich of Zvenigorod to be reconciled with his new, Prince Basil Vasilyevich of Moscow; but when he refused to give in, the metropolitan departed, blessing neither him nor the city. Finally he attained his aim. Yury caught up with him on the road and promised not to lay hands on his nephew (1425). While Basil Vasilyevich was prince, Metropolitan Jonah took a lively participation in his struggle with Dmetrius Vasilyevich Shemyaka. In his encyclical letter (1448) the holy hierarch tried to persuade all the sons of Russia to recognise Prince Basil as the lawful Great Prince, and not to support Dmetrius, whose supporters he exhorted to submit to the Great Prince and cease the bloodshed, threatening them in the opposite case with the closure of the churches in their country. The next year the metropolitan even travelled with the Great Prince to Kostroma and by his personal exhortations persuaded Shemyaka to conclude peace. But the reconciliation turned out to be insincere; several months later Shemyaka rose up again in Galich and, defeated by the prince, established himself in Novgorod. Jonah several times sent his messengers and missives there, trying to persuade the Novgorodians not to keep Prince Dmetrius amongst themselves and not to proceed with him to the shedding of blood. He also tried to persuade Archbishop Euthymius to act, if he could, on Dmetrius, incline him to give way, but if did not succeed, to have no communion with him as with a person excommunicated from the Church.
(1452-1453).... In helping the Muscovite Great Prince to be exalted above the other princes, the metropolitans took part in the internal political affairs of the Moscow Great Princedom. Sometimes this participation was made evident only in the blessing of the metropolitan, sometimes in advice, instruction and rebukes, but sometimes also in external activity. The metropolitan by his blessing strengthened the agreements of the Great Prince, while by his signature and seal he witnessed the spiritual wills of the prince. The princes asked for his blessing in important civil affairs: we often find ‘in accordance with the blessing of our metropolitan' in important princely documents – not only at the beginning, but also at the end. For example, even such a tsar as Ioann IV, who could not stand the interference of others in his affairs and their influence on him, nevertheless secured the blessing of the metropolitan and the council when he published his sudebnik (1549 and 1551) or when he was wavering about war with Poland (1551). The metropolitans were counsellors of the Great Prince. This was directly expressed by many princes. For example, Simeon Ivanovich in his will to his brothers commanded them to ‘obey’ Metropolitan Alexis as a father; Basil Vasilyevich in one of his letters to the Patriarch of Constantinople declares that the prince had to talk things over with the metropolitan about civil – sometimes secret - matters also. After the terrible Moscow fire of 1547 Ioann IV publicly addressed Metropolitan Macarius with these words: ‘I beseech you, holy Vladyko, be my helper and champion in love’. There are very many cases when the metropolitans really were the counsellors and helpers of the Great Prince. Metropolitan Alexis, who had been entrusted by the dying Prince Simeon with the direction of his young brothers, was the chief director of Ivan Ivanovich and after him – of Demetrius Ivanovich; and while the latter was underage he stood at the head of the Boyar Duma. Although Metropolitan Gerontius did not have a great influence on civil affairs, he nevertheless counselled Great Prince Ioann III. Thus when, in 1480, Ahmed moved into the confines of Russia, and the Great Prince, at the instigation of some of the boyars, was ready to remove himself to some safe place, the metropolitan with Archbishop Bassian of Rostov and the clergy applied all their efforts to arouse the prince to open warfare with the Tatars. He did in fact set out with his army and positioned it where he considered fitting; but then he returned to Moscow. The metropolitan and Bassian met him there with reproaches, suggesting that he was a coward.221

221 “Let me remind the reader of the situation in 1480. A military alliance had been formed between Poland and the Horde against Moscow, which yet again illustrates the theory of ‘the defence of Europe’ [by Moscow from the Tatars]. The Tatar Khan Ahmed, counting on this alliance, moved towards Moscow, but not from the East, as he usually did, but to meet his ally at the headwaters of the Oka. Ivan III waited for the enemy on the traditional routes of the Tatars to Moscow, and when Ahmed turned up on the Ugra, Tsar Ivan III, after standing opposite the Tatar camp for a long time, returned to Moscow.

“Moscow met him exceptionally rudely. Bishop Bassian of Rostov called him a ‘deserter’, the plebs was angry, and the Great Prince literally could find no way through: he was pushed in the street and his beard was pulled, and this was the first officially autocratic sovereign of Moscow…” (Ivan Solonevich, Narodnaia Monarkhia (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: “Luchi Sophii”, 1998, p. 313 ©. (V.M.)
But when he set off for the battle, the metropolitan blessed him; but on hearing that the Great Prince was ready to conclude peace with Ahmed, he sent him an epistle in the name of the whole of the clergy in which he tried to persuade the prince to enter into a decisive battle with the Tatars and invoked the blessing of God on the endeavour. During the struggle of Ioann III with Novgorod, Metropolitan Gerontius was on the side of the prince and agreed to send a new archbishop to Novgorod in the place of Theophilus. Finally, he also sent epistles to Vyatka, exhorting the inhabitants to submit to the Great Prince and not to devastate his inherited estates. Metropolitan Daniel enjoyed the unflagging favour of Basil Ivanovich, although the latter was bought at the price of concessions on the part of the metropolitan; and when he was dying, Basil Ivanovich even ‘ordered’ his young son and heir, Ivan IV to Metropolitan Daniel - i.e., entrusted him to his care. The latter immediately on the death of his benefactor led the boyars and the members of the royal family to swear allegiance to the new sovereign and the regent, his mother Helena. A short time later he blessed Ioann to ascend the princely throne and, while his mother was alive, took part in the affairs of external and internal politics: he frequented the Duma, blessed the war against Lithuania, and mediated in the reconciliation between Ioann IV and his uncle Andrew Ivanovich. But after the death of Helena, when war broke out between the Belskys and the Shuiskys, the metropolitan, standing on the side of the former, on their fall had to abandon his see. It was taken by Metropolitan Joasaph (1539). He supported the Belskys and, together with Ivan Belsky, was for a time the person closest to the tsar and his ‘first counsellor’. His concern was to bring peace to the fatherland. But soon, in 1542, the Shuiskys again gained the upper hand and the Belskys fell: Joasaph was imprisoned. Metropolitan Macarius was elected. He had a great influence on State life and the tsar himself; this influence continued, in spite of the severity and capriciousness of the tsar, throughout Macarius’ life. The tsar ran to him when he had to defend Vorontsov from the Shuiskys, who wanted to kill him; he asked his advice and discussed the question of his entering into marriage with him for a long time; he opened his soul before him and gave a vow to correct himself after the fire (1547); in the period that followed he asked for his help and direction. Only the priest Sylvester and Adashev could rival him for a time in their influence on the tsar. When he set out on his expedition to Kazan, the tsar asked for the prayers and blessing of the metropolitan; during the expedition he corresponded with him several times; and he attributed the success of the expedition to the prayers of the metropolitan. During his departure from the capital, the tsar left the State and his family in the care of Macarius: ‘You, my father, to the extent God gives you, must take care for the supervision of all the affairs of the kingdom, while you must instruct our brother and the boyars who remain here in everything; also show spiritual care for my wife, the Tsaritsa Anastasia’, said the tsar to the metropolitan on leaving Moscow. Knowing the influence that the metropolitan had on the tsar, the Lithuanian landowners often turned to the intercession of Metropolitan Macarius to get what they wanted; and Russians who were in disgrace with the tsar usually
turned to him with their pleas, obtaining the tsar’s reprieve ‘for the sake of my father Metropolitan Macarius’. His influence on the tsar was so powerful that he restrained him from those excesses that he began to commit later. [But] with the death of Macarius there as it were came to an end the time when the metropolitans could interfere in the secular administration. Ioann IV himself began to declare that the clergy headed by the metropolitan were sheltering those boyars who were guilty of treason by their intercession, and that ‘it is not fitting for priests to take upon themselves the affairs of the tsar’. With the establishment of the oprichina in 1565, the tsar declared the clergy together with the boyars to be in disgrace because they were sheltering the boyars who were worthy of death. It is understandable that the position of the metropolitan was restricted by this; every advice of his concerning secular affairs might appear to be an encroachment on his power to the suspicious tsar. For that reason Metropolitan Athanasius had to look on the beginning of the oprichina’s activities in silence; for some reason Herman, who had been elected in his place, was removed before he could be installed. For that reason, too, Philip II on his instalment in the metropolitan’s see received from the tsar, among other things, the demand that he ‘not interfere in the oprichina and the tsar’s everyday life at home’, and, when he did so, he was subjected to imprisonment and a martyrlic end. For the same reason, finally, Cyril IV and Anthony were not only silent witnesses of the deeds of the Terrible one, but also his ‘indulgers’, in Kurbsky’s expression. It would have been possible for Metropolitan Dionysius to influence the course of civil affairs under Tsar Theodore, and he tried, but he could do nothing against the powerful upstart Boris Godunov…”

**The Heresy of the Judaizers**

The greatest internal threat to the Muscovite kingdom in this period was the heresy of the Judaizers. Russia first came into conflict with the Jews in the form of the Khazars, a Turkic people inhabiting the Volga basin whose leaders had converted to Judaism in about 679, thus becoming “the thirteenth tribe” of Israel. In 965-969 Russian pagan armies under Great Prince Syatoslav destroyed the Khazar capital at Itel. His victory propelled the Khazars westwards towards what is now Belorussia and Poland, where they were joined, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, by large numbers of Ashkenazi Jews fleeing persecution in Italy, Provence and Germany. From this time the Jewish community in Poland and the Russian territories under Polish dominion in Ukraine and Belorussia began to multiply rapidly...

Arthur Koestler writes that the Khazars were branching out westwards "long before the destruction of the Khazar state by the Mongols - as the ancient Hebrew nation had started branching into the Diaspora long before..."

---

the destruction of Jerusalem. Ethnically, the Semitic tribes on the waters of the Jordan and the Turko-Khazar tribes on the Volga were of course 'miles apart', but they had at least two important formative factors in common. Each lived at a focal junction where the great trade routes connecting east and west, north and south intersect; a circumstance which predisposed them to become nations of traders, of enterprising travellers, or 'rootless cosmopolitans' - as hostile propaganda has unaffectionately labelled them. But at the same time their exclusive religion fostered a tendency to keep to themselves and stick together, to establish their own communities with their own places of worship, schools, residential quarters and ghettos (originally self-imposed) in whatever town or country they settled. This rare combination of wanderlust and ghetto-mentality, reinforced by Messianic hopes and chosen-race pride, both ancient Israelites and medieval Khazars shared - even though the latter traced their descent not to Shem but to Japheth.  

In 1113 there was a pogrom of the Jews in Kiev caused by the exorbitant rates of interest that their money-lenders charged (up to 50%). When Prince Vladimir Monomakh arrived on the scene, the Kievans “asked him publicly for satisfaction from the Jews. They said that they had taken over all the trades from the Christians and under Sviatopolk had enjoyed great freedom and power... And they had enticed many into their faith.” Vladimir summoned a council of the Princes, at which it was decided to restrict interest rates and to expel all the Jews from the Kievan land.

However, they crept back in, and according to Platonov, the Jews Anbal and Ofrem Moizovich played a leading part in the murder of Andrew of Bogolyubovo in the twelfth century.

Platonov writes: “The transformation of Russia into the spiritual centre of Christian civilisation almost exactly coincided in time with the establishment of a secret Jewish Talmudic centre in the West Russian lands, which were occupied at that time by Poland and Lithuania. Although the entrance of Jews into Russia was cut off by a temporary frontier, their gradual secret assault on the stronghold of the Christian world was realised inexorably through the appearance of various Jewish heretical movements.”

---

224 Koestler, The Thirteenth Tribe. London: Pan Books, 1980, pp. 125-26. Koestler claims that about 82% of the present-day Jews are in fact of Turkic Khazar, that is, non-semitic, descent. This conclusion is supported by B. Freedman (The Truth about the Khazars, Los Angeles, 1954).
The most important of these was the heresy of the Judaizers, when "the whole Russian Church," as Nechvolodov writes, "had at her head a Judaizer, and the immediate entourage of the sovereign... were also Judaizers."\(^{227}\)

The roots of the heresy of the Judaizers, writes a publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, "go deeper than is usually imagined. The part played by national elements in the heresy, which exploded like epidemics onto medieval Europe, has not yet been sufficiently clarified. The acts of the inquisition demonstrate that most of the sects were Judeo-Christian in character with a more or less pronounced Manichaean colouring. The flourishing of the Albigensian heresy in France has been directly linked by historians with the rise of Jewish influence in that country. The heresy of the Templars, 'the knights of the Temple', who were condemned in 1314, was linked with esoterical Judaism and blasphemy against Christ...

"Judaizers were also known in the Orthodox East. In Salonica in the first third of the 14th century 'there existed a heretical Judaizing society in the heart of the Greek population' which had an influence on 'the Bulgarian Judaizers of the 40s and 50s of the same century'. In 1354 a debate took place in Gallipoli between the famous theologian and hierarch of the Eastern Church Gregory Palamas, on the one hand, and the Turks and the Chionians, i.e the Judaizers, on the other. In 1360 a council meeting in Trrnovo, the then capital of the Bulgarian patriarchate, condemned both the opponents of Hesychasm (the Barlaamites) and those who philosophise from the Jewish heresies.

"The successes of the heresy in Russia could be attributed to the same cause as its success in France in the 14th century. Jews streamed into the young state of the Ottomans from the whole of Western Europe.\(^{228}\) Thereafter they were able to penetrate without hindrance into the Genoan colonies of the Crimea and the Azov sea, and into the region of what had been Khazaria, where the Jewish sect of the Karaites had a large influence; for they had many adherents in the Crimea and Lithuania and were closely linked with Palestine. As the inscriptions on the Jewish cemetery of Chuf-Kale show, colonies of Karaites existed in the Crimea from the 2nd to the 18th centuries. The Karaites were brought to Lithuania by Prince Vitovt, the hero of the battle of Grunwald (1410) and great-grandfather of Ivan III Vasilievich. From there they spread throughout Western Russia.

\(^{228}\) Another cause was the introduction into Russian service-books of several materials that were read in the cycle of synagogue feasts and readings. Also in the 15th century the five books of Moses and the Book of Daniel were translated from Jewish (non-Greek) texts. See Platonov, op. cit., p. 91.
"... One has to admit that the beginning of the polemic between the Orthodox and the heretics was made, not in Byzantium, but in Russia. Besides, the polemic began... in the time of Metropolitan Peter (+1326), the founder of the Muscovite ecclesiastical centre. In the life of St. Peter it is mentioned among his other exploits for the good of the Russian Church that he 'overcame the heretic Seit in debate and anathematised him.' The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaizers' allows us to see in Seit a Karaite preacher.

"... The heresy did not disappear but smouldered under a facade of church life in certain circles of the Orthodox urban population, and the Russian church, under the leadership of her hierarchs, raised herself to an unceasing battle with the false teachings. The landmarks of this battle were: Metropolitan Peter's victory over Seit in debate (between 1312 and 1326), the unmasking and condemnation of the strigolniki in Novgorod in the time of Metropolitan Alexis (1370s), the overcoming of this heresy in the time of Metropolitan Photius (+1431), and of the heresy of the Judaizers - in the time of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515).

"'From the time of the holy Prince Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus', who rejected the solicitations of the Khazar Rabbis, wrote St. Joseph of Volotsk, 'the great Russian land has for 500 years remained in the Orthodox Faith, until the enemy of salvation, the devil, introduced the foul Jew to Great Novgorod. On St. Michael's day, 1470, there arrived from Kiev in the suite of Prince Michael Olelkovich, who had been invited by the veche [the Novgorodian parliament], 'the Jew Scharia' and 'Zachariah, prince of Taman. Later the Lithuanian Rabbis Joseph Smoilo Skaryavei and Moses Khanush also arrived.

"The heresy began to spread quickly. However, 'in the strict sense of the word this was not merely heresy, but complete apostasy from the Christian faith and the acceptance of the Jewish faith. Using the weaknesses of certain clerics, Scharia and his assistants began to instil distrust of the Church hierarchy into the faint-hearted, inclining them to rebellion against spiritual authority, tempting them with 'self-rule', the personal choice of each person in the spheres of faith and salvation, inciting the deceived to renounce their Mother-Church, blaspheme against the holy icons229 and reject veneration of the saints - the foundations of popular morality - and, finally, to a complete denial of the saving Sacraments and dogmas of Orthodoxy concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. So they went so far as to conduct a Jewish war against God and the substitution of Christ the Saviour by the false messiah and antichrist.

229 According to St. Joseph of Volotsk, “they said: we are mocking these icons just as the Jews mocked Christ” (Platonov, op.cit., opposite page 320). (V.M.)
"The false teaching spread in secret. Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod first heard about the heresy in 1487; four members of a secret society, while abusing each other in a drunken frenzy, revealed the existence of the heresy in front of some Orthodox. The zealous archpastor quickly conducted an investigation and with sorrow became convinced that not only Novgorod, but also the very capital of Russian Orthodoxy, Moscow, was threatened. In September 1487 he sent Metropolitan Gerontius in Moscow the records of the whole investigation in the original. Igumen Joseph (Sanin) of the Dormition monastery of Volotsk, who had an unassailable reputation in Russian society at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, also spoke out against the heresy.

"But the battle with the heresy turned out to be no simple matter, for the heretics had enlisted the support of powerful people in Moscow. Great Prince Ivan III, who had been deceived by the Judaizers, invited them to Moscow, and made the two leading heretics protopriests - one in the Dormition, and the other in the Archangels cathedrals in the Kremlin. Some of those close to the Tsar, such as Theodore Kurytsyn, who headed the government, and whose brother became the heretics’ leader, were co-opted into the heresy. The Great Prince's bride, Helen Voloshanka, was converted to Judaism. In 1483 a correspondence between Ivan III and the heresiarch Scharia himself was established through diplomatic channels between Moscow and Bakhchisarai. Finally, the heretic Zosimus was raised to the see of the great hierarchs of Moscow Peter, Alexis and Jonah.\textsuperscript{230}

A.P. Dobroklonsky continues the story: “Under his [Zosimus’] protection the heretics in Moscow began to act more boldly. Priest Dionysius supposedly even allowed himself to dance behind the altar and mock the cross; a circle of the more active heretics gathered at the house of Theodore Kurytsyn. Many heretics, on hearing that their comrades were living peacefully in Moscow, fled there from Novgorod; Gennadius was suspected of heterodoxy: the metropolitan demanded a confession of faith from him; the monk Zakhar spread leaflets against him everywhere. In Novgorod itself the heretics, hoping for impunity, again began to blaspheme openly. Gennadius considered it necessary to write epistles to Metropolitan Zosimus, to Archbishop Tikhon of Rostov, and to the bishops: Bassian of Tver, Niphon of Suzdal, Prochorus of Sarsk and Philotheus of Perm. He tried to persuade them to review the question of the heretics in council and take decisive measures against them: to execute, burn, hang and curse them. In 1490 a council did indeed take place, but without the participation of Gennadius. At it several heretics were accused of spreading Judaism and of trying to destroy Orthodox Christianity, of celebrating Pascha in the Jewish style, of breaking the weekly fasts, of celebrating the Liturgy after receiving food and drink,

\textsuperscript{230} Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' (The Russian Orthodox Church), Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 25-26 (in Russian).
etc. They were cursed, defrocked and imprisoned. Some of them, on the orders of the Great Prince, were sent to Gennadius in Novgorod. He ordered them to be met 40 versts from the city, to be clothed in garments turned inside-out and to be seated on pack-horses with their faces turned to the tail. Pointed birch-bark helmets were put on their heads with bast brushes and straw crowns with the inscription: ‘this is the army of Satan’. In such a form they were led into the city; those who met them, on the orders of the bishop, spat on them and said: ‘these are the enemies of God and Christian blasphemers’. Then the helmets on their heads were burned. All this was done with the aim of frightening the heretics and cautioning the Orthodox.

“But the triumph of Orthodoxy was short-lived and not complete. The cruder and more ignorant of the heretics were punished, those who allowed themselves openly to mock the Orthodox holy things; but the intelligentsia, which had power in the heretical party, was not touched: Zosimus remained on the metropolitan see, Theodore Kuritsyn and Helena reigned in society and at the court, the brother of Kuritsyn Ivan the wolf, Klenov and others acted as before in Moscow. Therefore the heretical movement was bound to appear again even after the Council of 1490. One chance circumstance strengthened this movement. In the 15th century there was a widespread opinion in Russia and Greece that with the end of the seventh thousand of years (from the creation of the world) there would come the end of the world and the Coming of Jesus Christ. The Paschalia we had at the time ended at the year 7000, after which there was the addition: ‘Here is fear, here is sorrow; this year has at last appeared and in it we expect Thy universal Coming’. This year fell in 1492 (from the Birth of Christ). But then, contrary to the universal expectation, 1492 passed without incident, and the end of the world did not follow. The heretics began to laugh at them and say: ‘7000 years have passed, and your Paschalia has passed; why has Christ not appeared? That means the writings both of your Apostles and of your Fathers, which (supposedly) announced the glorious Coming of Christ after 7000 years are false’. A great ‘disturbance among the Christians’ appeared, as well as a critical attitude towards the patristic and sacred literature and ‘many departed from Orthodoxy’. Thus the heresy was again strengthened; the blasphemous scenes were repeated. Metropolitan Zosimus himself supposedly mocked the crosses and icons, blasphemed Jesus Christ, led a debauched life and even openly denied life after death. Those Orthodox who reproached him he excommunicated from Holy Communion, defrocked, and even, by means of slander, obtained their detention in monasteries and prisons. Archbishop Gennadius, seeing that his practical activity in the former spirit was bearing little fruit, started writing. He composed the paschalia for 70 years into the

231 “From the [conciliar] verdict,” writes the Jewish Encyclopaedia, “it is evident that the Judaizers did not recognise Jesus Christ to be the Son of God... [and] taught that the Messiah had not yet appeared... They venerated the Old-Testament Sabbath ‘more than the Resurrection of Christ’” (St. Petersburg, 1906-1913, vol. 7, p. 580; in Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 21) (V.M.).
eighth thousand, showing in a foreword that the former opinions concerning
the end of the world and the method of calculating the paschalia were
baseless. Then he devoted his efforts to collecting the sacred books into one
Bible, so as to give the Orthodox the necessary means of struggling with
heresy and protecting the Orthodox faith that had been lacking for many. Into
the arena of active struggle with the Judaizers there stepped St. Joseph of
Volokolamsk. In his epistle to Niphon of Suzdal, a very influential bishop of
the time (1493), he told him about the licentious behaviour and apostasy from
the faith of Metropolitan Zosimus, about the bad religio-moral condition of
Orthodox society, and asked him to overthrow Zosimus and save the Russian
Church.232 At about this time he gave his final edition to his first sermons
against the Judaizers and, prefacing them with a history of the heresy to 1490,
he published them in a special book for general use; in it he also did not spare
Metropolitan Zosimus, calling him a Judas-traitor, a forerunner of the
Antichrist, a first-born son of Satan, etc. Zosimus was forced to abandon his
see and depart into retirement (1494). His place was taken (1495) by Simon,
abbot of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery, an indecisive and compromising
man, albeit disposed against the heretics. Under the protection of Theodore
Kuritsyn and Helena the heretics were able to act boldly. They wanted to
organize a heretical community in Novgorod as well as in Moscow; on their
insistence the tsar appointed Cassian, a supporter of the Judaizers, as
archimandrite of the Novgorod Yuriev monastery. With his arrival the
heretical movement was strengthened in Novgorod, and the Yuriev
monastery became the centre and den of the heretics: here they held meetings,
here they acted in an extremely blasphemous manner. Gennadius could do
nothing with the heretics, who were supported in Moscow. Their triumph
was aided by the fact that after the open plot against the tsar’s grandson,
Demetrius Ivanovich, the son of Helena, he was declared the heir to the
throne and married to a Great Princess. In this way Helena’s party, which
protected the heretics, became still stronger. However, from 1499 a turn-
around began to take place. Several supporters of Helena were executed;
instead of Demetrius, the grandson, Basil, the son, was declared heir to the
throne (1502); Helena and Demetrius were imprisoned. The blow delivered to
them was at the same time a heavy blow to the heretics. Now it was easier to
persuade Ivan III to take decisive measures against them. Joseph of
Volokolamsk tried to do this. After the Council of 1503 he several times talked
with the tsar and directly said: ‘Your majesty, move against the heretics’; but
he did not succeed in persuading him. The tsar was fearful of committing a
sin in executing the heretics, although he did promise to conduct a search
through all the cities. In 1504 Joseph wrote a letter to the tsar’s spiritual father,
Metrophanes, archimandrite of the Andronikov monastery, asking him to
exert influence on the tsar... In December, 1504 a Council did convene in
Moscow. Present were Ivan III, Basil Ivanovich, Metropolitan Simon, the
bishops and many clergy. Joseph spoke out against the heretics. The guilty

232 “If this second Judas is not rooted out,” he wrote, “little by little the apostasy will
encompass everybody”. (V.M.)
ones were sentenced to various punishments. Some were burned in cages in Moscow (Ivan the wolf and others); others had their tongues cut out and were exiled to Novgorod where they were burned (together with Archimandrite Cassian); others, finally, were dispersed to various monastery prisons. The executions frightened the heretics. Many of them began to repent in order to receive clemency. Prince-Monk Bassian Patrikiev and the White Lake elders interceded for them, saying that it was necessary to receive repentant heretics into communion with the Church. But their repentance seemed insincere to Joseph; he thought it was necessary to keep the repentant heretics in prison and not allow them to receive Communion and communion with the Church; he expressed this view in his epistles and the last sermons of The Enlightener. In his private letters to Basil Ivanovich, who had taken the place of his father (1505), he demanded that searches for the heretics should continue and that they should be severely punished. An impassioned literary struggle began between the Josephites and the White Lake elders, which was expressed in works composed on both sides, especially by Joseph and Bassian Patrikiev. Bassian was so embittered that he called Joseph a misanthrope, a teacher of lawlessness and a breaker of the law of God, and those of the Judaizers who had been subjected to execution in spite of their late repentance, he glorified as martyrs. However, Joseph’s views prevailed. Basil Ivanovich ‘ordered that all the heretics should be cast into prison and kept there without coming out until the end of their lives’. On the death of Joseph (1515), the Judaizers for a time revived. Isaac the Jew seduced and drew away the Orthodox, so that in about 1520 a special Council was convened, Maximus the Greek wrote his ‘advice’ to the Fathers of this Council that they should move with zeal for Orthodoxy and give Isaac over to be executed. Joseph’s disciple Daniel [the future metropolitan] and Maximus the Greek considered it necessary to write works against the remnants of the heresy…”

This episode represents perhaps the only clear-cut case in Orthodox history when heretics have been executed precisely for their heresy. There is no doubt that the predominant tradition in the Orthodox Church with regard to the treatment of heretics was represented here by the White Lake Elders, and not by the Josephites. Some have speculated that such harshness betrayed the influence of the contemporary Spanish Inquisition, which was also directed primarily at Judaizing heretics. Be that as it may, it should be remembered that the death penalty for heresy was on the statute books of both the Byzantine and Russian empires, and that the Judaizing heresy represented a most serious threat to both the Church and the State of Moscow.

---

233 Others fled to Lithuania, “where they formally accepted Judaism”.
235 “There were state laws in both Byzantium and Russia that envisaged the death penalty for heretics (not for all, but for separate groups), and which the Church called on the emperor to observe. Everyone – this has always been the teaching of the Orthodox Church – must pass
Moreover, St. Joseph claimed apostolic and patristic authority for the Great Prince’s severe treatment of the heretics. He pointed out that the holy apostles and fathers did not seek the punishment of heretics when they kept themselves to themselves, but only when they sought to corrupt others to their false teachings: “In The Acts of the Apostles there is a description of how, when the holy Apostles Peter and John came to Samaria, Simon Magus offered him silver and said: ‘Give me the ability that upon whomever I lay my hand he receives the Holy Spirit’ – and the holy apostles did not condemn him to death at that time. But when he came to complete dishonour, and began to corrupt the pious, and seduce the believers, then they condemned him to death.

“St. John the Theologian acted in exactly the same way. As long as Kinop lived in his own house and did not seduce any of the faithful, he was not condemned. But when he arrived in the city intending to corrupt the believers, he was condemned to death. The holy Apostle Philip also acted in exactly the same way: he did not go to the chief priest, and did not condemn him; but when he saw that the chief priest had come only in order to corrupt the pious, then he condemned him to death.

“The Apostle Paul acted in a similar way: he did not begin to search out Elymas the sorcerer, to condemn or destroy him. But when he saw that he was seducing the Proconsul from the faith, he condemned him so that he became blind and could not see the sun.

“When St. John Chrysostom saw that the Arians were living in Constantinople and caused no harm to any of the Orthodox, he himself also did not evil to them. But when he saw that they were occupied in seduction and were composing a series of songs and hymns so as to shake faith in the Unity of Essence, he asked the Emperor to drive him out of the city.

his life in accordance with his station: the monk and the hermit must love everybody, the hierarch is obliged to speak out against heresy, and the emperor is obliged, in accordance with the laws, to execute heretics. If they will not do this, the monk will destroy his silence, the hierarch his flock and the emperor the state given to him by God. And all will give an answer for this at the Terrible Judgement.

“The laws concerning heretics in Russia and Byzantium were as follows. In Byzantium the state laws envisage the death penalty for apostates and Manichaeans, that is how they related to a series of public and more dangerous crimes (it was not the beliefs themselves that were punished, but the spreading of them), but other heresies were sometimes subsumed under these two large categories. Russia fully accepted the Byzantine laws (changing several of them in form), and already from the Ustav of St. Vladimir until the Ulozhenie of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, native laws envisaged such penalties as death for ‘blasphemy’ (burning, ch. 1, article 2 of the Ulozhenie), ‘for seducing from the Orthodox Faith into Islam [Judaism]’ (burning, ch. 22, article 24), ‘wizardry’ (burning), sacrilege (death penalty), etc.” (“Iosif Volotsky” (“Joseph of Volotsk”), http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=4176471&fs=0&board=287&1st=&archv (09/08/02) (in Russian).
In exactly the same way when St. Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza, saw that the Manichaean heretics were living in Gaza and were not seducing any of the Orthodox, he did not condemn them. But when he saw that they had come there to seduce the Christians, he condemned them at first to dumbness, and then to death.

In the same way St. Leo, Bishop of Catania, did not at first condemn Liodorus the heretic to death. But when he saw that he had come to the church and was sowing confusion in order to seduce those who were faithful to piety, he went out of the church and arranged that Liodorus should be burned with fire, and then he returned to the church and served the Divine service.

In the same way when St. Theodore, Bishop of Edessa, found many heretics in Edessa who did not want to cause any particular harm to the Orthodox, he did not do them any evil. But when he saw that they had gathered to do such an evil, to seduce the Orthodox and steal church property, he even set off for Babylon and asked the Emperor to destroy the heretics.

And there are many further cases in the Divine Writings, when heretics holding to certain heresies and not doing any harm to the Orthodox are not judged by our Holy and God-bearing Fathers. But when they see that the faithless heretics are intending to seduce the Orthodox, then they condemn them. That is how we, too, should act...

Of course, these were very exceptional cases; and in Sulpicius Severus’ Life of St. Martin of Tours we find the saint refusing to have communion with a synod of bishops that had executed some Spanish heretics. However, if even non-ruler saints have killed heretics in exceptional cases, how much greater justification do Christian rulers have, who “bear not the sword in vain”, in that they are “God’s ministers, avengers to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Romans 13.4)? Biblical rulers such as Kings David, Solomon and Josiah were required by God to defend and nourish the faith of the people as their first duty. The prophets constantly called them to this, and reminded them that they would be approved or condemned by God primarily in accordance with their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this duty. Therefore the Muscovite Great Prince’s treatment of the Judaizing heretics, though severe and exceptional, was not without precedent or justification.

Possessors and Non-Possessors

The immediate result of the Judaizing heresy was a major increase in the Great Prince’s power and in the Church’s reliance on the State. For churchmen now saw in the monarchical power the major bulwark against

236 St. Joseph, “Slovo ob Osuzhdenii Eretikov” (Sermon on the Condemnation of Heretics) ®.
heresy, more important even than the metropolitanate, which, for the second time in little more than fifty years (the first time was at the council of Florence) had betrayed Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{237} Thus Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod wrote to Bishop Niphon of Suzdal: “You go to the Metropolitan and ask him to intercede with his majesty the Great Prince, that he cleanse the Church of God from heresy”. Again, St. Joseph wrote: “The Tsar is by nature like all men, but in power he is similar to the Supreme God. And just as God wishes to save all people, so the Tsar must preserve everything that is subject to his power from all harm, both spiritual and bodily”.\textsuperscript{238}

According to St. Joseph, as M.V. Zyzykin interprets him, the defence of the truth “is placed on the tsar alone, for in his eyes it is in the monarchical power that the will of God is reflected; he is God’s deputy. The tsar is not only the servant of God, chosen by God and placed by Him on his throne, but he is also the representative of God, immeasurably exalted above [ordinary] people: he is like them only in accordance with his human nature, but in his power he is like God. From the point of view of the aim, the manifestations of monarchical power are analogous to those of Divine power. Just as the All-Highest wishes that all men be saved, so the tsar must keep those entrusted to his care from spiritual and bodily harm. For his fulfilment and non-fulfilment of his duty the tsar is responsible only before God. His power cannot be placed beside any other power on earth. And Joseph applies the words of Chrysostom to the tsars: ‘Hear, O kings and princes, your dominion is given you from God, you are the servants of God; it is for this reason that He placed you as pastor and guard over His people to protect His flock unharmed from wolves...’ The tsar must revenge Christ on the heretics, otherwise he will have to give an account at the terrible judgement. He must send them to prison or tortures and submit them to death. Heretical agreements are for Joseph worse than robbery and theft, than murder or fornication or adultery. Those who pretended to repent of their Judaism after the Council of 1490 deceived many, and the tsar was responsible for that before God. The spread and fall of heresy is the cause of the fall and destruction of a great kingdom; it is analogous to state disturbances and coups. ‘The great kingdoms of the Armenians, Ethiopians and Romans, who fell away from the Catholic and Apostolic Church and from the Orthodox Christian faith perished evilly because of the negligence of the Orthodox kings and hierarchs of those times, and these kings and hierarchs will be condemned at the terrible judgement of Christ for this negligence.’ In 1511 Joseph persuaded Basil III to apply his power against the heretics in the same way that he had previously spoken with the father against the Novgorod Judaizers, so that they should not destroy the whole of Orthodox Christianity. It was on the soil of the struggle

\textsuperscript{237} However, the tsar, too, had not been without blame. Once he summoned St. Joseph and said to him: Forgive me, Father. I knew about the Novgorodian heretics, but thought that they were mainly occupied in astrology.” “Is it for me to forgive you?” asked the saint. “No, father, please, forgive me!” said the tsar (Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50). (V.M.)

\textsuperscript{238} St. Joseph, \textit{Prosvetitel’ (The Enlightener)}, Word 16.
with heresy that the duty of the Russian Great Prince to defend the faith was revealed. If in Byzantium the kings’ encroachment on the teaching authority of the Church stands to the fore, in Rus’ we encounter first of all the striving to ascribe to the tsar Archpastoral rights in the realisation of Christianity in life.

“Joseph gave a very broad interpretation to the range of the tsar’s rights, extending them to all spheres of life, to everything ecclesiastical and monastic. He did not think twice about bringing Archbishop Serapion of Novgorod to trial before the tsar for banning him for leaving his jurisdiction, although the tsar had permitted it. For Joseph the tsar’s power was unlimited already by virtue of its origin alone. For him the tsar was not only the head of the state, but also the supreme protector of the Church. He had, besides, a leadership role in relation to all ecclesiastical institutions; not one side of ecclesiastical life was exempt from it; the circle of his concerns included Church rites and Church discipline, and the whole ecclesiastical-juridical order. The tsar establishes the rules of ecclesiastical order and entrusts to bishops and nobles the task of seeing to their fulfilment, threatening the disobedient with hierarchical bans and punishments. One can have resort to the tsar’s court, according to Joseph, against all ecclesiastics and monastics. This theory would have been the exact restoration of ancient caesaropapism in Russian colours if Joseph had not limited the king in principle by the observance of the Church canons. In this exaltation of the tsar we see a reflection of the Byzantine theory of the 14th century, which, while recognising the priority of the canon over the law, nevertheless exalted the emperor to the first place even in Church affairs.”

St. Joseph was far from ascribing absolute power to the tsar, as is evident from the following: “The holy apostles speak as follows about kings and hierarchs who do not care for, and worry about, their subjects: a dishonourable king who does not care for his subjects is not a king, but a torturer; while an evil bishop who does not care for his flock is not a pastor,

239 At the very moment that Joseph passed into eternal life, Serapion stood up and said to those around him: “Our brother Joseph has died. May God forgive him: such things happen even with righteous people” (Moskovskij Paterik (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: “Stolitsa”, 1991, p. 46 (in Russian)). (V.M.)
240 Zyzykin, Patriarkh Nikon (Patriarch Nicon), Warsaw, 1931, part I, pp. 153-154 (in Russian). Hieromonk Ioann (Kologrivov) writes: “Although Joseph considered the power of the Church to be higher than that of the sovereign in theory, in practice he extended the latter over the Church also. For him the Tsar was the head both of the State and of the Church – the supreme preserver and defender of the faith and the Church. The sovereign’s concern for the Church was revealed particularly in the fact that he was always “Christ’s avenger on the heretics. Lack of zeal for the good of the Church constituted, in the eyes of Joseph, one of the most serious crimes the sovereign could be guilty of, and it brought the wrath of God upon the whole country. In the single person of the sovereign Joseph thereby united both spiritual and secular power. He, and not Peter the Great, must be considered to be the founder of “State Orthodoxy” in Russia. A little later Ivan the Terrible, basing himself on the teaching of the abbot of Volokolamsk, acquired the opportunity to declare that the Tsar was “called to save the souls of his subjects”. (Ocherki po Istoriǐ Russkoi Sviatosti (Sketches on the History of Russian Sanctity), Brussels, 1961, p. 204 (in Russian)).
but a wolf.” However, his theory of Church-State relations lays great responsibility on the tsar as the representative of God on earth, and less emphasis on the bishop’s duty to reprove an erring tsar.

An attempt to restore the balance was made at the Council of 1503, in which the debate on the Judaizers led naturally to the problem of the monasteries’ landed estates; for one of the reasons for the popularity of the heretics was the perceived justice of their criticisms of monasticism, and in particular of the wealth of the monasteries. St. Joseph defended this wealth, claiming that it was necessary in order to support the poor and the Great Prince and the education of the clergy – and there can be no doubt that the role of the monasteries in these matters was very important. However, Monk-Prince Bassian and St. Nilus of Sora, preached the monastic ideal of non-possessiveness. The Josephites’ or “Possessors’” views prevailed at the Council; but the argument has continued to this day…

“The Non-Possessors,” writes Runciman, “derived their tradition from Mount Athos, not from the Athos of rich monasteries with wide mainland estates and with splendid churches and refectories and well-stocked libraries, but from the stern Athos of the ascetes and eremites, of the Hesychasts and Arsenites. Their spiritual ancestor was Gregory of Sinai, who had left the Holy Mountain because it was too sociable, preferring to live a life of greater solitude in the Balkan hills. Gregory’s leading pupil had been the Bulgarian Euthymius, an erudite scholar who had become the last Patriarch of Trnovo, but who had used his authority to enforce poverty and asceticism on the Bulgarian Church. After the Turks occupied Bulgaria many of his disciples migrated to Russia, bringing with them not only a knowledge of Greek mystical and hesychastic literature but also a close connection between the ascetic elements on Mount Athos and the Russian Church. The tradition that they introduced was akin to that of the Arsenites of Byzantium and the old tradition which had always opposed state control. Its first great exponent in Russia was Nil, Abbot of Sor…”

St. Nilus and his disciples wanted the dissolution of the vast land holdings not only because they contradicted the spirit and the letter of monastic vows, but also because this would liberate the clergy, as Zyzykin writes, “from dependence on the secular government and would raise the Hierarchy to the position of being the completely independent religious-moral power of the people, before which the despotic tendencies of the tsars would bow.”

The debate between the Possessors and Non-Possessors was therefore also a debate about the relationship between the Church and the State. And insofar as the Non-Possessors favoured greater independence for the Church,

---

241 St. Joseph, Prosvetitel’ (The Enlightener), Word 16.
242 Runciman, op. cit., p. 326.
they also argued that the Church, and not the State, should punish the Judaizer heretics – which would mean less severe sentences for them in accordance with the Orthodox tradition of non-violence in the treatment of heretics. They failed in their aim; but their stand was remembered in subsequent generations...

The non-possessors showed a quite different attitude to the tsar’s power. “They drew attention to the conditions under which the tsar’s will in the administration of the kingdom could be considered as the expression of the will of God. They drew attention not only to the necessity of counsellors to make up the inevitable deficiencies of limited human nature, but also to the necessity of ‘spiritual correctness’. Thus Prince Bassian did not exalt the personality of the tsar like Joseph. He did not compare the tsar to God, he did not liken him to the Highest King, but dwelt on the faults inherent in the bearers of royal power which caused misfortunes to the State.”

The boldness of St. Nilus and Monk Bassian in relation to the secular powers was firmly in the tradition, not only of the fourth-century Fathers, but also of the early Trans-Volga monks, such as St. Cyril of Beloozersk. Thus in 1427 St. Cyril wrote to Prince Andrew of Mozhaisk that he “should abstain from drunkenness and give alms according to your means; for, my lord, you are unable to fast and are lax in praying, and thus, alms, in their place, will make up for your deficiency”. He even gave political advice to Grand Prince Basil I: “We have heard, my lord great prince, that there is trouble between you and your friends, the princes of Suzdal. You, my lord, insist on your right and they on theirs; for this reason great bloodshed in inflicted on Christians. But consider closely, my lord, what are their rightful claims against you, and then humbly make concessions; and insofar as you are right toward them for that stand firm, my lord, as justice says. And if they begin to ask pardon, my lord, you should, my lord, grant them what they deserve, for I have heard, my lord, that until today they have been oppressed by you and that is, my lord, why they went to war. And you, my lord, for God’s sake show your love and grace that they should not perish in error amid the Tatar realms and should not die there. For, my lord, no kingdom or principality, nor any other power can rescue us from God’s impartial judgement.”

244 Perhaps not coincidentally, the triumph of the Possessors coincided with a growth of violence against monks. Sergius Bolshakoff writes that “with the growth of monastic wealth, the attitude of the peasants towards the monks changes. The monks are now considered exploiters and hated as slave-owners. The appearance of a hermit often suggested the possible foundation of a new monastery with the reduction to serfdom of the neighboring peasants. St. Adrian of Andrushov was murdered in 1549 by peasants suspicious of his intentions. Likewise Adrian of Poshekhon was murdered in 1550, Agapetus Markushevsky in 1572, Simon Volomsky in 1613 and Job Ushelsky in 1628, all of them for the same reason. Others, like St. Nilus Stolbensky, Arsenius Komelsky and Diodore Yuriegorsky barely escaped violent death.” (Russian Mystics, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, p. 54)

245 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 158.

St. Maximus the Greek

After the death of St. Nilus in 1508, the tradition of the Non-Possessors was revived in Russia by an Athonite monk - St. Maximus the Greek. He was sent, writes Runciman, “by the Patriarch Theoleptus I to Russia in response to Vassily III’s request for a skilled librarian. Maximus, whose original name was Michael Trivolis, had been born in Epirus, at Arta, in 1480. During his travels through France and Italy in search of education he had arrived in Florence when it was under the influence of Savonarola, whom he greatly admired and in whose memory he joined the Dominican Order. But he was not happy in Renaissance Italy. After a short time he returned to Greece and settled on Athos, where he occupied himself principally with the libraries of the Holy Mountain. When he came to Russia the Tsar employed him not only to build up libraries for the Russian Church but also to translate Greek religious works into Slavonic.”

St. Maximus “complained that among the pastors of his time there was ‘no Samuel’, ‘a Priest of the Most High who stood up boldly in opposition to the criminal Saul’, that there were ‘no zealots like Elijah and Elisha who were not ashamed in the face of the most lawlessly violent kings of Samaria; there is no Ambrose the wonderful, the Hierarch of God, who did not fear the loftiness of the kingdom of Theodosius the Great; no Basil the Great, whose most wise teachings caused the persecutor (of the Church) Valens to fear; no Great John of the golden tongue, who reproached the money-loving usurer Empress Eudocia’. In accordance with Byzantine conceptions, Maximus the Greek looked on the priesthood and the kingdom as the two greatest gifts given by the most High Divine Goodness to man, as two powers on whose agreement in action depended the happiness of mankind. Among the duties laid upon the representatives of the Church, he mentioned that they must by their most wise advice and stratagems of every kind… always correct the royal sceptres for the better, so that they should be alien to any fawning before secular power and should exert a restraining, moderating influence upon it. Maximus spoke of the superiority of the spiritual power over the secular…”

St. Maximus was in favour as long as Metropolitan Barlaam, a follower of St. Nilus of Sora, was in power. But when Barlaam was uncanonically removed by the Great Prince Basil III and replaced by Metropolitan Daniel, a disciple of St. Joseph of Volotsk, his woes began… For a while the Great Prince continued to protect him, even when he rebuked the vices of the nobility, the clergy and the people and supported the position of the non-possessors against the metropolitan. However, his enemies found the excuse they were looking for when the Grand Prince, with the blessing of Metropolitan Daniel, put away his wife Solomonia for her barrenness and

---

247 Runciman, op. cit., p. 327.
married Elena Glinskaya (Solomonia was forcibly tonsured in Suzdal and was later canonised under her monastic name of Sophia).

St. Maximus immediately rebuked the Great Prince. He wrote him an extensive work: *Instructive chapters for right-believing rulers*, which began: “O most devout Tsar, he is honoured as a true ruler who seeks to establish the life of his subjects in righteousness and justice, and endeavours always to overcome the lusts and dumb passions of his soul. For he who is overcome by them is not the living image of the Heavenly Master, but only an anthropomorphic likeness of dumb nature.”

The saint was to suffer many years in prison because of his boldness. But he had admirers and supporters both within and outside Russia. Thus Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem, wrote prophetically to the Great Prince: “If you do this wicked thing, you will have an evil son. Your estate will become prey to terrors and tears. Rivers of blood will flow; the heads of the mighty will fall; your cities will be devoured by flames.” The prophecy was fulfilled with exactitude in the reign of his son, Ivan IV, better known as “the Terrible”...

After his release from prison St. Maximus continued his bold preaching. Thus he refused to bless a pilgrimage of Tsar Ivan, saying that he should look after the widows and orphans of those killed at Kazan instead. And he threatened that if he did not, his newborn son Demetrius would die. Ivan ignored his advice, and Demetrius died...

Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié) dates the beginning of the fall of the Russian Church into “Sergianism”, that is, captivity to the State to the time of Metropolitan Daniel and Great Prince Basil: “Still earlier they should have excommunicated – not even Ivan IV, but his father Basil III for his adulterous ‘marriage’, which gave Russia Ivan the Terrible. Then we wouldn’t have had Peter I. That’s what they did in such cases in Byzantium...”

However, it should be noted that St. Maximus never broke communion with Daniel, and was restored to favour under his successor, Metropolitan Macarius. Moreover, as we have seen and will see in more detail later, caesaropapism was by no means the rule in the Russian Church even in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. This episode must therefore be considered unfortunate, but not “the beginning of the end”...

---

Ivan the Terrible: (1) The Orthodox Tsar

A major step forward in Russia’s path towards becoming fully the Third Rome was made on January 16, 1547, when Ivan the Terrible was anointed and crowned with the Cap of Vladimir Monomakh by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow. At first, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joasaph said that the act “has no validity, since not only does a Metropolitan not have the right to crown, but not even every Patriarch, but only the two Patriarchs: the Roman and Constantinopolitan”. However, he granted Ivan the right to call himself Tsar and suggested that he have the coronation repeated by Metropolitan Joasaph, the patriarchal exarch, who would bring a gramota to Moscow.

Ivan refused not only to be crowned again, but even to ask the blessing of Metropolitan Joasaph, saying that he had kissed the cross of the Lithuanian king on his way to Moscow. It was only in September, 1562 that Ivan received a gramota signed by all four patriarchs and thirty-two bishops calling him “our Tsar”, ascribing to him authority over “Orthodox Christians in the entire universe”, and applying to him the same epithets, “pious, God-crowned and Christ-loving” as had been applied to the Byzantine Emperors. This was an important advance in Ivan’s status in the eyes of the Orthodox world.

In view of the fearsome reputation Ivan has acquired, not without reason, it is worth reminding ourselves of the great achievements of the first half of his reign. He vastly increased the territory of the Muscovite kingdom, neutralising the Tatar threat and bringing Kazan and the whole of the Volga under Orthodox control; he began the exploration and conquest of Siberia; he strengthened the army and local administration; he introduced the Zemskie Sobory, “Councils of the Land”, in which he sought the advice of different classes of the people; he subdued the boyars who had nearly destroyed the monarchy in his childhood; he rejected Jesuit attempts to bring Russia into communion with Rome; he convened Church Councils that condemned heresies (e.g. the Arianism of Bashkin) and removed many abuses in ecclesiastical and monastic life. Even the Tsar’s fiercest critic, Prince Andrew Kurbsky, had to admit that he had formerly been “radiant in Orthodoxy”.

The only major mistake of this part of his reign was the decision of the famous Stoglav (‘Hundred Chapters’) Church Council of 1551 that, in all cases where Russian Church ritual differed from Greek, the Russian version was correct. “This unilateral decision shocked many of the Orthodox. The monks of Athos protested and the Russian monks there regarded the decisions of the synod as invalid.”252

Nevertheless, Ivan’s respect for the Church prevented him from becoming, in the first half of his reign, an absolutist ruler in the sense that he admitted no power higher than his own. This is illustrated by his behaviour in the Stoglav

252 Runciman, op. cit., p. 329.
Council, which was conducted by the Tsar putting forward questions to which the hierarchy replied. The hierarchy was quite happy to support the tsar in extirpating certain abuses within the Church, but when the tsar raised the question of the sequestration of Church lands for the sake of the strengthening of the State, the hierarchs showed their independence and refused. The tsar sufficiently respected the independence of the hierarchy to yield to its will on this matter, and in general the sixteenth-century Councils were true images of sobornost’.

As Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) writes: “At most of the Councils there were present, besides the hierarchs, the superiors of the monasteries – archimandrites, igumens, builders, also protopriests, priests, monks and the lower clergy generally. Often his Majesty himself was present, sometimes with his children, brothers and with all the boyars… It goes without saying that the right to vote at the Councils belonged first of all to the metropolitan and the other hierarchs… But it was offered to other clergy present at the Councils to express their opinions. There voice could even have a dominant significance at the Council, as, for example, the voice of St. Joseph of Volokolamsk at the Councils of 1503-1504… The conciliar decisions and decrees, were signed only by the hierarchs, others – by lower clergy: archimandrites and igumens. And they were confirmed by the agreement of his Majesty…”

All this went with an ideology worked out, in part, by the tsar himself, and partly by advisors such as Ivan Semenovich Peresvetov, a minor nobleman from Lithuania who had served in the Ottoman empire. At the base of this programme there remained the concept of Moscow as the Third Rome. Thus in 1540 Elder Philotheus of Pskov wrote to the young tsar, who was not yet of age, that the “woman clothed with the sun” of Revelation 12 was the Church, which fled from the Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, and thence, after the fall of Constantinople, to the third Rome “in the new, great Russia”. And the master of the third Rome, in both its political and ecclesiastical spheres, was the tsar: “Alone on earth the Orthodox, great Russian tsar steers the Church of Christ as Noah in the ark was saved from the flood, and he establishes the Orthodox faith.”

Ya.S. Lourié writes: “The idea that Russia was the only country in the world that had kept the true faith was very majestic, but also very responsible. If the truth was concentrated with us, and the whole of the surrounding world had spiritually ‘collapsed’, then in constructing their State the Russians had to go along a completely individual path, and rely on the experience of others only to a very limited degree – and rely on it as negative experience.

---

“The complexities linked with such an ideological position were very clearly revealed in the work of the writer to whom it was entrusted, at the very beginning of the reign of Ivan IV, to express words that might at first glance appear to be a kind of programme of this reign. Turning to the history of the fall of Constantinople and the victory of Mehmet the Sultan over the Greeks, Peresvetov explained these events in terms of the ‘meekness’ of the Greek Emperor Constantine: ‘It is not possible to be an emperor without being threatening; as a horse without a bridle, so is an empire without threatenings’. And he foretold to the young tsar: ‘You are a threatening and wise sovereign; you will bring the sinful to repentance and install justice and truth in your kingdom.’ It is important to note that ‘justice’ in this programme was no less important than ‘threatening’; the ‘meekness’ of the Greek Emperor consisted in the fact that he ceded power to the ‘nobles’, and they had enslaved the people.”

“Peresvetov,” writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, “was almost certainly right. The Ottomans owed the creation of their empire at least in large part to reforms which weakened the native Turkish nobles who had previously formed the backbone of its tribal confederacies. Those nobles had been supplanted at the Ottoman court by Christian youths recruited from the Balkans and converted to Islam under the devshirme system. They furnished both the Janissaries, the elite corps of the army, and the principal civilian advisors. The Sultan required all his military and governmental leaders, whatever their provenance, to accept the status of his personal slaves, in order to separate them forcibly from their kinship loyalties. The conquered city of Constantinople was used for the same purpose: to give his new elite a power base remote from the native grazing lands of the Turkish nobles.

“Such a system had obvious attractions for a Muscovite ruler also building an empire on vulnerable territories on the frontier between Christianity and Islam, and also struggling to free himself from aristocratic clans. Peresvetov did not go as far as his Ottoman model, and refrained from recommending slavery; but he did propose that the army should be recruited and trained by the state and paid for directly out of the treasury. This would ensure that individual regiments could not become instruments of baronial feuding. He favoured a service nobility promoted on the basis of merit and achievement, but he did not envisage serfdom as a means of providing them with their livelihood: in so far as he considered the matter at all, he assumed they would be salaried out of tax revenues.

“Peresvetov’s importance was that he offered a vision of a state able to mobilize the resources of its peoples and lands equitably and efficiently. He

---

254 It should be remembered that the word groznij, which is translated “terrible” in the title “Ivan the Terrible”, should better be translated as “threatening”. And so Ivan IV was “Ivan the Threatening”, a title that sounded much less terrible to Russian ears. (V.M.)

was one of the first European theorists of monarchical absolutism resting on the rule of law. He believed that a consistent law code should be published, and that its provisions should be guided by the concept of pravda (which in Russian means both truth and justice): it would be the task of the ‘wise and severe monarch’ to discern and uphold this principle, without favour to the privileged and powerful.

“In the early years of his reign we can see Ivan endeavouring to implement, in his own way, some of Peresvetov’s ideas, especially where they would enhance the strength and efficiency of the monarchy. At the same time he was trying to reach out beyond the fractious boyars and courtiers to make contact with the local elites of town and countryside and bind them into a more cohesive system of rule. Together with his Chosen Council, an ad hoc grouping of boyars, clergymen and service nobles personally chosen by him, he tried to make a start towards removing the ‘sovereign’s affairs’ (gosudarevo delo) from the private whims of the boyars and their agents, and bringing them under the control of himself in alliance with the ‘land’ (zemlia).”

The tsar started putting this programme into effect in the decade 1547-1556, when he convened his Zemskie Sobory. This was also the decade of his great victories over the Tatars of Kazan and Astrakhan, which constituted an important new stage in the history of Russia, when the State began to spread from Europe into Asia, and change from a racially fairly homogeneous nation-state into a multi-national empire, “the Third Rome”. The famous cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed – originally dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the Virgin – was built to celebrate the conquest of Kazan.

In 1909, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) pointed out that “this event was great precisely because with it there began the gradual ascendancy of Christianity over Islam, which had already subjected the Eastern Churches and before that time had not yet been subdued by the Muscovite kingdom. Having now destroyed the wasps’ nest of the Tatar God-fighting tribe, our forefathers understood that this event defined with all clarity the great calling of the Russian land gradually to unite at the foot of the Cross of Christ all the eastern peoples and all the eastern cultures under the leadership of the White Tsar. The great ascetics of piety Gurias, Barsonuphius and Herman were immediately sent to Kazan together with church valuables. There they built churches and monasteries and by the light of their inspired teaching and angelic holiness drew crowds upon crowds of various foreigners to holy baptism. The Russians understood that now – not in separate rivulets, but in a single broad wave – the life and faith of the Transvolgan region and Siberia would pour into the sea of the Church, and that the work of St. Stephen of Perm and the preachers of God in the first centuries that were like him would continue without hindrance. And then our ancestors decided, on the one

---

hand, to cast off from themselves every shadow of exaltation in the glorious victory and conquest, and to ascribe all this to Divine Providence, and on the other hand to seal their radiant hope that Moscow, which was then ready to proclaim itself the Third and last Rome, would have to become the mediator of the coming universal and free union of people in the glorification of the Divine Redeemer. The tsar and people carried out their decision by building a beautiful cathedral on Red square, which has justly been recognized as the eighth wonder of the world. The pious inspiration of the Russian masters exceeded all expectation and amazed the beholders. Before them stands a church building whose parts represent a complete diversity, from the ground to the higher crosses, but which as a whole constitutes a wonderful unity – a single elegant wreath – a wreath to the glory of Christ that shone forth in the victory of the Russians over the Hagarenes. Many cupolas crown this church: there is a Mauritanian cupola, an Indian cupola, there are Byzantine elements, there are Chinese elements, while in the middle above them all there rises a Russian cupola uniting the whole building.

“The thought behind this work of genius is clear: Holy Rus’ must unite all the eastern peoples and be their leader to heaven. This thought is a task recognized by our ancestors and given by God to our people; it has long become a leading principle of their state administration, both inwardly and outwardly: the reigns of the last Ruriks and the first Romanovs were marked by the grace-filled enlightenment of the Muslims and pagans of the North and East, the support of the ancient Christians of the East and South and the defence of the Russian Christians of the West, oppressed by heretics. Rus’ expanded and became stronger and broader, like the wings of an eagle; in the eyes of her sons the cross of the Russian head on Basil the Blessed shone ever more brightly; her impious enemies in the South and West trembled; the hands of the enslaved Christians – the Greeks, the Serbs and the Arabs - were raised imploringly to her; at various times Moscow saw within her walls all four eastern patriarchs and heard the liturgy in her churches in many languages…”

Ivan the Terrible: (2) The Bloodthirsty Tyrant

However, things began to go wrong from 1558, when Ivan began a campaign against the Livonian Knights that was to prove expensive and unsuccessful. Then, in 1560, his beloved first wife, Anastasia, died – killed, as he suspected - and modern scientific research has confirmed by the boyars. Now Ivan turned vengefully against the boyars...


258 In fact, modern science has established the astonishing fact that Tsar Ivan, his mother, Great Princess Helena, his first wife Tsaritsa Anastasia, his daughter Maria, his son Ivan and his other son Tsar Theodore were all poisoned. See V. Manyagin, Apologia Groznogo Tsaria (An Apology for the Awesome Tsar), St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 101-124 (in Russian).
So what threat did the boyars really pose? Before answering this question, it should be pointed out that in Russia, unlike most West European countries, the Great Prince or Tsar was not seen as simply the most powerful member of the noble class, but as standing above all the classes, including the nobility. Therefore the lower classes as often as not looked to the Great Prince or Tsar to protect them from the nobility, and often intervened to raise him to power or protect him from attempted coups by the nobility. There are many examples of this in Russian history, from Andrew of Bogolyubovo to the Time of Troubles to the Decembrist conspiracy in 1825. Thus Pokrovsky wrote of the failed Decembrist conspiracy: “The autocracy was saved by the Russian peasant in a guard’s uniform.” And in fact the tsars, when allowed to rule with truly autocratic authority, were much better for the peasants than the nobles, passing laws that surpassed contemporary European practice in their humaneness.

Thus Solonevich points out that according to Ivan’s Sudebnik of 1550, “the administration did not have the right to arrest a man without presenting him to the representatives of the local self-government..., otherwise the latter on the demand of the relatives could free the arrested man and exact from the representative of the administration a corresponding fine ‘for dishonour’. But guarantees of security for person and possessions were not restricted to the habeas corpus act. Klyuchevsky writes about ‘the old right of the ruled to complain to the highest authority against the lawless acts of the subject rulers’.”

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that sixteenth-century Russia was in many ways a less free State than in the 11th or 14th centuries. The reason lay in the task imposed by Divine Providence on Russia of defending the last independent outpost of Orthodoxy in the world, which required, in the context of the threat posed by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, an ever-increasing centralisation and militarisation of society, and therefore great sacrifices from all classes of the population.

“The particularity of Ivan the Terrible’s ideological position,” writes Ya. S. Lourié, “consisted in the fact that the idea of the new State incarnating the right faith, which had ‘collapsed’ in the whole of the rest of the world, was completely freed in him from all freethinking and social-reformatory traits and became the official ideology of the already-existing ‘true Orthodox Christian autocracy’. The main task, therefore, became not reforms in the State, but its defence against all the anti-state forces that were ‘corrupting’ the country ‘with disorders and civil disturbances’. Sharing Peresvetov’s hostility

to the ‘nobles’, the tsar drew one important conclusion from it: the unsuitable and ‘treacherous’ had to be replaced by new people…”  

Although some of the boyars were unfaithful to Ivan, it is not true that the boyar class wanted to abolish the autocracy. For, as Protopriest Lev Lebedev writes, “Russia without the Tsar was inconceivable to it; the Tsar was even necessary to it (otherwise the princes would simple have fought against each other, as in the time of the appanage wars). The boyar opposition attained a relative independence, as it were autonomy, and, of course, it was not against ruling the Tsars, but this could never be fully realised because of the inevitable and constant quarrels within the princely boyar or court opposition itself, which consisted of various grouping around the most powerful families, which were doomed to an absence of unity because of the love of power and avarice of each of them. One can say that the princely-courtly opposition from time immemorial tried to weaken (and did weaken, did shake!) the Autocracy, while at the same time unfailingly wanting to preserve it! A shaky and inconsistent position…”

The freest class was the servitors of the Church. As we have seen, Ivan respected the Church, and did not in general try to impose his will on her. And yet he liked to emphasise that the Church had no business interfering in affairs of State, constantly bringing the argument round to the quasi-absolute power of the tsar – and the insubordination of the boyars: “Remember, when God delivered the Jews from slavery, did he place above them a priest or many rulers? No, he placed above them a single tsar – Moses, while the affairs of the priesthood he ordered should be conducted, not by him, but by his brother Aaron, forbidding Aaron to be occupied with worldly matters. But when Aaron occupied himself with worldly affairs, he drew the people away from God. Do you see that it is not fitting for priests to do the work of tsars! Also, when Dathan and Abiron wanted to seize power, remember how they were punished for this by their destruction, to which destruction they led many sons of Israel? You, boyars, are worthy of the same!”

The lower classes – that is, the peasants, shopkeepers and artisans, who paid taxes and services to the tsar and his servitors - were increasingly chained to the land that they worked. For in the century 1550-1650, in order to prevent them from simply disappearing into the woods or fleeing to the steppes in the south, the tsars gradually enserfed them. They were not technically slaves (slaves at any rate have the privilege of not paying taxes); but a combination of political and economic factors (e.g. peasant indebtedness to landlords, landlords’ liability for collecting peasants’ taxes, the enormous demand for manpower as the state’s territory expanded) bonded them to the

---

261 Lourié, op. cit., p. 232.
262 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 392.
land; and the hereditary nature of social status in Muscovite Russia meant that they had little hope of rising up the social ladder.

However, it was the boyars who lost most from the increasing power of the tsar. In medieval Russia, they had been theoretically free to join other princes; but by the 1550s there were no independent Russian princes – Orthodox ones, at any rate – outside Moscow. Moreover, their lands, or votochiny, were now held on condition they served the Great Prince, and if they failed to serve him, their lands were theoretically forfeit. The boyars traditionally served in the army or the administration. But the administration, being historically simply an extension of the prince’s private domain, was completely controlled by him. Moreover, his patrimony was greatly increased by his conquest of Novgorod in 1478, his appropriation of all the land of the local aristocratic and merchant elites, and, especially, by his conquest of the vast lands of the former Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in the 1550s and 1560s.

However, the boyars with their clannish rivalries and habits of freedom were still a potential problem. For Ivan, their independent power, which may have been a matter of course in the western kingdoms, was incompatible with his conception of the Russian autocracy. As he wrote to the rebellious boyar, Prince Kurbsky in 1564: “What can one say of the godless peoples? There, you know, the kings do not have control of their kingdoms, but rule as is indicated to them by their subjects. But from the beginning it is the Russian autocrats who have controlled their own state, and not their boyars and grandees!” For Ivan was not in the least swayed by the ideology of democracy, being, as he wrote, “humble Ioann, Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia, by God’s will, and not by the multimutinous will of man…” On another occasion he wrote to King Sigismund Augustus of Poland, whose power was severely limited by his nobles, that the autocratic power of the Russian tsars was “not like your pitiful kingdom; for nobody gives orders to the great Sovereigns, while your Pans tell you what they want”.

Kurbsky defended the boyars on the grounds of their personal valour; they were “the best of the mighty ones of Israel”. In reply, Ivan pointed out that personal qualities do not help if there are no correct “structures”: “As a tree cannot flower if its roots dry up, so here: if there are no good structures in the kingdom, courage will not be revealed in war. But you, without paying attention to structures, are glorified only with courage.” The idea that there can be more than one power in the land is Manichaeism, according to Ivan; for the Manichaeans taught that “Christ possesses only the heavens, while the

---

264 One of the last to be absorbed by Moscow was Pskov, in 1509. The chronicler, mourning over his native city of Pskov, wrote that “the glory of the Pskovian land perished because of their self-will and refusal to submit to each other, for their evil slanders and evil ways, for shouting at veches. They were not able to rule their own homes, but wanted to rule the city”. As Lebedev rightly remarks: “A good denunciation of democracy!” (op. cit., p. 61).
265 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 40.
earth is ruled independently by men, and the nether regions by the devil. But I believe that Christ possesses all: the heavens, the earth and the nether regions, and everything in the heavens, on the earth and in the nether regions subsists by His will, the counsel of the Father and the consent of the Holy Spirit.” And since the tsar is anointed of God, he rules in God’s place, and can concede no part of what is in fact God’s power to anyone else.

When, crazed by grief and suspicion at his wife’s death, Ivan resolved finally to do away with the boyars, he designated the boyars’ lands as oprichnina, that is, his personal realm, and ordered the oprichniki, that is, a kind of secret police body sworn to obey him alone, to enter the boyars’ lands and to kill, rape and pillage at will. They carried out unbridled terror and torture on thousands of people, and were rewarded with the expropriated lands of the men they had murdered. The climax of the slaughter came with the unparalleled pogrom of the citizens of Novgorod in 1570.

In recent years, supporters of the canonization of Ivan in Russia have tended to minimize the significance of this slaughter, and to justify it as a necessary measure to preserve the state against sedition. However, the foremost expert on the reign of Ivan, R.G. Skrynnikov, has cited data that decisively refutes this argument. His edition of the Synodicon of Those Disgraced by Ivan the Terrible revealed a list of thousands of names of those killed by Ivan that the tsar sent to the monasteries for commemoration. “The main part of the Synodicon includes detailed lists of disgraced persons executed from 1567 to 1570... All the lists of the period 1567-1570 are inextricably linked with each other, since the court ‘cases’ of this period were parts of a single political process, the ‘case’ of the betrayal of the Staritskys, which lasted for several years, from 1567 to 1570. The ‘case’ was begun in the autumn of 1567 after the return of the Tsar from the Latvian expedition. In the course of it the boyars Fyodorov (1568) and Staritsky (1569) were executed, Novgorod was devastated (1570) and the leaders of the land offices in Moscow were killed (1570). ‘The Staritsky Case’ was the most important political trial in the reign of the Terrible one. The materials of this trial were preserved in the tsarist archives until the time of the composition of the Synodicon in relatively good order. On the basis of these materials the main part of the tsarist Synodicon was composed. This part comprises nine tenths of the whole volume of the Synodicon. In it are written about 3200 people disgraced by the tsar out of a combined total of about 3300 people....

“Among the victims of the Novgorod devastation, about one fifth (455 people) were called by their names in the tsarist Synodicon. In the main these were representatives of the higher classes: landowners and officials (250-260 people) and the members of their families (140 people). The people indicated
in the Synodicon without names (1725) were mainly from the lower classes.”

These figures indicate that Ivan’s terror was by no means exclusively directed against the boyars. Moreover, the fact that such large numbers could not have been given a fair trial in the period indicated, and the extraordinary cruelty of the methods of torture and execution, show that this was not justified repression against a rebellion, but the manifestation of demonic psychopathology.

By the end of his reign the boyars’ economic power had been in part destroyed, and a new class, the dvoriane, had taken their place. This term originally denoted domestic servitors, both freemen and slaves, who were employed by the appanage princes to administer their estates. Ivan now gave them titles previously reserved for the boyars, and lands in various parts of the country. However, these lands were pomestia, not votochiny – that is, they were not hereditary possessions and remained the legal property of the tsar, and could be taken back from the servitors if they failed to render satisfactory service.

Ivan justified his cruelties against the boyars with on scriptural grounds: “See and understand: he who resists the power resists God; and he who resists God is called an apostate, and that is the worst sin. You know, this is said of every power, even of a power acquired by blood and war. But remember what was said above, that we have not seized the throne from anyone. He who resists such a power resists God even more!”

The tsar’s power does not come from the people, but from God, by succession from the first Christian autocrat of Russia, St. Vladimir. He is therefore answerable, not to the people, but to God alone. And the people, being “not godless”, recognizes this. Kurbsky, however, by his rebellion against the tsar has rebelled against God and so “destroyed his soul”. And so many, submitting humbly to the tsar’s unjust decrees, and to the apostolic command: “Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward” (I Peter 2.18), received the crown of life in an innocent death. There was no organised mass movement against his power in the Russian land. Even when he expressed a desire to resign his power, the people – completely sincerely, it seems, - begged him to return.

266 Skrynnikov, Tsarstvo Terrora (The Kingdom of Terror), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 17, 104 (in Russian).
267 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.
269 In this way the victims of Ivan’s rule prefigure the Christian victims of Lenin and Stalin, while the oprichnina looks forward to Stalin’s Russia, the NKVD-KGB, dekulakisation and the great terror of the 1930s. There has been no shortage of historians who have seen in Stalin’s terror simply the application of Ivan the Terrible’s methods on a grander scale. This
For, in their understanding, Tsar Ivan may have been an evil man, but he was still a true authority. The fact that the people revered and obeyed him as the anointed of God did not mean that they were not aware that many of his deeds were evil and inspired by the devil. But by obeying him in his capacity as the anointed of God, they believed that they ascended from the earthly kingdom to the Heavenly, while by patiently enduring his demonic assaults on them they believed that they received the forgiveness of their sins and thereby escaped the torments of hell, so far exceeding the worst torments that any earthly ruler could subject them to.

As Heidenstein said: “They consider all those who depart from them in matters of the faith to be barbarians... In accordance with the resolutions of their religion, they consider faithfulness to the sovereign to be as obligatory as faithfulness to God. They exalt with praises those who have fulfilled their vow to their prince to their last breath, and say that their souls, on parting from their bodies, immediately go to heaven.”

For according to Orthodox teaching, even if a ruler is unjust or cruel, he must be obeyed as long as he provides that freedom from anarchy, that minimum of law and order, that is the definition of God-established political authority (Romans 13.1-6). Thus St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: “Some rulers are given by God with a view to the improvement and benefit of their subjects and the preservation of justice; others are given with a view to producing fear, punishment and reproof; yet others are given with a view to displaying mockery, insult and pride – in each case in accordance with the deserts of the subjects. Thus... God’s judgement falls equally on all men.”

Again, St. Isidore of Pelusium writes that the evil ruler “has been allowed to spew out this evil, like Pharaoh, and, in such an instance, to carry out extreme punishment or to chastise those for whom great cruelty is required, as when the king of Babylon chastised the Jews.”

But there is line beyond which an evil ruler ceases to be a ruler and becomes an anti-ruler, and not to be obeyed. Thus the Jews were commanded by God through the Prophet Jeremiah to submit to the king of Babylon, evil though he was; whereas they were commanded through another prophet, Moses, to resist and flee from the Egyptian Pharaoh. For in the one case the authority, though evil, was still an authority, which it was beneficial to obey; whereas in the other case the authority was in fact an anti-authority, obedience to which would have taken the people further away from God.

theory is supported by the fact that Stalin called Ivan “my teacher”, and commissioned Eisenstein’s film, Ivan the Terrible, instructing him to emphasise the moral that cruelty is sometimes necessary to protect the State from its internal enemies.


Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna writes: “If a Russian person of the 14th-16th centuries had been asked why he with complete forgetfulness of self served his Tsar and his State, and why he considered it his ineluctable duty to serve them in this way, then every Russian person, or in any case the overwhelming majority of them, would have replied that they served in this way in order to provide for themselves and for their children the possibility of living without hindrance in accordance with the rules of Christianity, that is, the Orthodox laws and customs, so as not to submit to a heterodox state power or one that was indifferent to good and evil. No extra-ecclesiastical, secular or lay aims, such as state glory, national pride, territorial size or a guaranteed life of freedom, etc., would have been placed as an aim of state life by a Russian person of the 14th-16th centuries; and if he sometimes did, then in any case he would in no way have been inclined to live or die for it.

“At the head of life, not in a political sense, but in their capacity as generally recognized spiritual leaders of society, stood the saints, and amongst them in particular Saints Sergius of Radonezh and Cyril of Belozersk, and the hierarchs Peter and Alexis, metropolitans of all Russia.

“It is in the unbroken unity with them of the whole of the Russian people of the 14th-16th centuries that we find the key to an understanding of the formula “Holy Rus’”. Rus’ was never holy in the sense that the whole or a significant part of its people were holy. But holiness was the only ideal for everyone. The Russian man of that time knew no other ideal. He did not know the ideals of culture, good education and heroism as ideals separate from holiness. All these separate ideals were included for him in the single, all-embracing ideal – holiness. But culture, heroism and the other virtues were valuable only when they were sanctified by holiness. Not being saints themselves, but often being very sinful, the Russian people of that time repented of their sins, felt compunction and, in confessing their unity with their contemporary and past saints, they recognised their infinite superiority over themselves, and asked for their prayers for themselves…”

It was this ideal of holiness that made Russia great and led so many of her children into the Heavenly Kingdom. And it was the undermining of this attitude, from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, that led to the Russian revolution. Having said that, the Orthodox tradition of obedience to legitimate authorities goes together with the tradition of protest against unrighteousness. And in this respect there was truth in Prince Kurbsky’s lament over the state of Russia in Ivan’s reign: “The authority which comes from God devises unprecedented pains of death for the virtuous. The clergy – we will not judge them, far be that from us, but bewail their wretchedness – are ashamed to bear witness to God before the tsar; rather they endorse the

sin. They do not make themselves advocates of widows and orphans, the poor, the oppressed and the prisoners, but grab villages and churches and riches for themselves. Where is Elijah, who was concerned for the blood of Naboth and confronted the king? Where are the host of prophets who gave the unjust kings proof of their guilt? Who speaks now without being embarrassed by the words of Holy Scripture and gives his soul as a ransom for his brothers? I do not know one. Who will extinguish the fire that is blazing in our land? No-one. Really, our hope is still only with God…”

Moreover, while we have asserted that Ivan was a true ruler, it must be admitted that his theory of government contained absolutist elements which were closer to the theories of Protestant Reformers such as Luther and contemporary Protestant monarchs such as Elizabeth I of England than to Orthodoxy. In fact, the nineteenth-century Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky went so far as to call him a heretic, and attributed to his heretical view of Church-State relations all the woes of the later part of his reign: “The terrible one acted in a restrictive manner because he was a heretic; this is proved… by his striving to place Byzantinism [i.e. the absolutist ideas of some Byzantine emperors and canonists] in a position of equal dignity with Orthodoxy. From this there came the oprichnina as a striving towards state heresy and ecclesiastical power. And that this concept of the limits or, more correctly, the lack of limits of his power and of its lack of connection with the people was not Christian, but heretical is witnessed publicly to this day by the holy relics of Metropolitan Philip.”

St. Philip was the one man who, together with the fools-for-Christ Basil the Blessed and Nicholas Salos, did oppose the unrighteousness of the tsar. His ideas about the nature of tsarist power did not differ substantially from those of his predecessors, and especially St. Joseph of Volotsk. The tsar was complete master in his kingdom, and deserved the obedience of all, including churchmen, as long as he confessed the Orthodox faith. But he was bound by the ecclesiastical canons when acting in the ecclesiastical sphere.

However, it was not clear, according to this Josephite theory, to what extent the tsar was also bound in the personal, moral sphere and could rightly be rebuked by the metropolitan for personal sins. St. Philip was notable for his combination, as it were, of the theories of St. Joseph with the practice of Saints Nilus and Maximus, recognising the supremacy of the tsar while rebuking him for his personal sins. For this boldness he was killed…

273 Kurbsky, letter to Monk Vassian of the Pskov Caves monastery; translated in van den Bercken, op. cit., pp. 157-158.
As a young man he was deeply struck on hearing the words of the Saviour: “No man can serve two masters”, and resolved to leave the world and become a monk. Later, as metropolitan, at the height of the terror, he would put those words into practice, saying to the Tsar: “Sovereign, I cannot obey your command more than that of God.” And again he said: “Ruling tsar, you have been vested by God with the highest rank, and for that reasons you should honour God above all. But the sceptre of earthly power was given to so that you should foster justice among men and rule over them lawfully. By nature you are like every man, as by power you are like God. It is fitting for you, as a mortal, not to become arrogant, and as the image of God, not to become angry, for only he can justly be called a ruler who has control over himself and does not work for his shameful passions, but conquers them with the aid of his mind. Was it ever heard that the pious emperors disturbed their own dominion? Not only among your ancestors, but also among those of other races, nothing of the sort has ever been heard.”

When the tsar angrily asked what business he had interfering in royal affairs, Philip replied: “By the grace of God, the election of the Holy Synod and your will, I am a pastor of the Church of Christ. You and I must care for the piety and peace of the Orthodox Christian kingdom.” And when the tsar ordered him to keep silence, Philip replied: “Silence is not fitting now; it would increase sin and destruction. If we carry out the will of men, what answer will we have on the day of Christ’s Coming? The Lord said: “Love one another. Greater love hath no man than that a man should lay down his life for his friends. If you abide in My love, you will be My disciples indeed.”

And again he said: “The Tatars have a law and justice, but do not. Throughout the world, transgressors who ask for clemency find it with the authorities, but in Russia there is not even clemency for the innocent and the righteous... Fear the judgement of God, your Majesty. How many innocent people are suffering! We, sovereign, offer to God the bloodless sacrifice, while behind the altar the innocent blood of Christians is flowing! Robberies and murders are being carried out in the name of the Tsar.... What is our faith for? I do not sorrow for those who, in shedding their innocent blood, have been counted worthy of the lot of the saints; I suffer for your wretched soul: although you are honoured as the image of God, nevertheless, you are a man made of dust, and the Lord will require everything at your hands”.

However, even if the tsar had agreed that his victims were martyrs, he would not have considered this a reason for not obeying him. As he wrote to

---

Kurbsky: “If you are just and pious, why do you not permit yourself to accept suffering from me, your stubborn master, and so inherit the crown of life?”279

Betrayed by his fellow-hierarchs, Philip was about to resign the metropolitanate, and said to the tsar: “It is better to die as an innocent martyr than to tolerate horrors and lawlessnesses silently in the rank of metropolitan. I leave you my metropolitan’s staff and mantia. But you all, hierarchs and servers of the altar, feed the flock of Christ faithfully; prepare to give your reply and fear the Heavenly King more than the earthly…”

The tsar refused to accept his resignation, and after being imprisoned and having escaped the appetite of a hungry bear that had been sent to devour him, on December 23, 1569 the holy metropolitan was suffocated to death by the tsar’s servant after his refusal to bless his expedition against Novgorod. Metropolitan Philip saved the honour of the Russian episcopate in Ivan’s reign as Metropolitan Arsenius of Rostov was to save it in the reign of Catherine the Great…

Was Ivan Orthodox?

Michael Cherniavksy has pointed to the tension, and ultimate incompatibility, between two images of the kingship in the reign of Ivan the Terrible: that of the basileus and that of the khan – that is, of the Orthodox autocrat and of the pagan despot. “If the image of the basileus stood for the Orthodox and pious ruler, leading his Christian people towards salvation, then the image of the khan was perhaps preserved in the idea of the Russian ruler as the conqueror of Russia and of its people, responsible to no one. If the basileus signified the holy tsar, the ‘most gentle’ (tishaishii) tsar in spiritual union with his flock, then the khan, perhaps, stood for the absolutist secularised state, arbitrary through its separation from its subjects.”280

If there was indeed something of eastern absolutism as well as purely Orthodox autocracy in Ivan’s rule, then this would explain, not only the crueltics of his own reign, but also why, only a few years after his death, Russia descended into civil war and the Time of Troubles. For eastern absolutism, unlike Orthodox autocracy, is a system that can command the fear and obedience, but not the love of the people, and is therefore unstable in essence. Hence the need to resist to it – but not out of considerations of democracy or the rights of man, but simply out of considerations of Christian love and justice. An Orthodox tsar has no authority higher than him in the secular sphere. And yet the Gospel is higher than everybody, and will judge

---

279 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.
everybody on the Day of Judgement; and in reminding Ivan of this both St. Philip and Kurbsky were doing both him and the State a true service...

Ivan rejected this service to his own detriment. For at the very end of his life, he destroyed even his reputation as a defender of Orthodoxy by encroaching on Church lands and delving into astrology.\textsuperscript{281} It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, therefore, that Ivan the Terrible was indeed terrible in his impiety, and must be numbered among the evil tyrants and persecutors of the Church. Indeed, Lebedev calls the latter part of his reign “not a struggle with rebellion, but the affirmation of his permission to do everything. So we are concerned here not with the affirmation of the Orthodox Autocracy of the Russian Tsars, but with a prefiguring of the authority of the Antichrist.”\textsuperscript{282}

In view of contemporary attempts to canonize Tsar Ivan, in spite of the fact that the Church has canonized two of his most prominent victims, St. Philip of Moscow and St. Cornelius of Pskov, let us dwell a little longer on this aspect of his reign, borrowing at length from the work in this area of Bishop Dionysius (Alferov): “The reign of Ivan the Terrible is divided by historians, following his contemporaries, into two periods. The first period (1547-1560) is evaluated positively by everyone. After his coronation and acceptance of the title of Tsar, and after his repentance for his aimless youth by subjecting his life to the rules of Orthodoxy piety, Ioann IV appears as an exemplary Christian Sovereign. He convened the first Zemskie Sobory in the 1550s, kept counsel with the best men of the Russian Land, united the nation’s forces, improved the interior administration, economy, justice system and army. Together with Metropolitan Macarius he also presided at Church Councils, which introduced order into Church life. Under the influence of his spiritual father, Protopriest Sylvester, he repented deeply for the sins of his youth, and lived in the fear of God and in the Church, building a pious family together with his wife Anastasia Romanova. The enlivening of piety and the consolidation of the people also brought external successes to the Russian state in this period. By the good will of God the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan were crushed, and the Crimean khanate was pacified for the time being. The whole of the Volga region from Kazan to the Caspian and a part of the Northern Caucasus went to Moscow. Under the blows of the Russian armies the Livonian Order in the Baltic was crushed. A positive estimate of this period does not elicit disagreement among historians.

“The second period begins after the expulsion of his spiritual father, Protopriest Sylvester and close friends of the Tsar, who were united into the ‘Chosen Assembly’ (the Adashevs, Prince Kurbsky and others). This period

\textsuperscript{281} Lebedev has even suggested that that the half-military, half-monastic nature of Ivan’s oprichina was modelled on the Templars, and that the terrible change in his appearance that took place after his return to Moscow from Alexandrov in 1564 was the result of “a terrible inner upheaval”, his initiation into a satanic, masonic-like sect (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 97).

\textsuperscript{282} Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.} p. 90.
finally becomes well established by 1564, with the proclamation of the oprichnina. After the oprichnina’s great terror (1564-1572), the system of government created in this period, albeit in a ‘weakly flowing regime’, continued right to the death of the Terrible one in March, 1584. The negative consequences of this period completely blot out the attainments of the first period. All historians also agree on this. Let us note the main results of this period:

“1. The liquidation of elementary justice and legality, mass repressions without trial or investigation of the suspects, and also of their relatives and house servants, of whole cities. The encouragement of denunciations created a whole system of mass terror and intimidation of people.

“2. The destruction of national unity through an artificial division of the country into two parts (the zemshchyna and the oprichnina, then the system of ‘the Sovereign’s Court’) and the stirring up of enmity between them.

“3. The destruction of the popular economy by means of the oprichnina’s deprivations and the instilling of terror, the mass flight of people from Russia to Lithuania and to the borderlands. A great devastation of the central provinces of Russia, a sharp decline in the population (according to Skrynnikov’s data, from 8 to 5 million).

“4. Massive repressions against the servants of the Church who spoke out against the oprichnina or those suspected of it, beginning with the killing of Metropolitan Philip and individual bishops (of Novgorod and Tver), and continuing with the executions of prominent church-servers (St. Cornelius of Pechersk), and ending with the massive slaughter of the clergy in certain cities (Novgorod, Tver, Torzhok, Volochek) and the expoliation of the churches.

“5. As a consequence of the internal ravaging of the state – external defeats, both military and diplomatic: the complete loss of the conquests in Lithuania and the outlet to the Baltic sea, the loss of possessions in the Caucasus, international isolation, incapacity to defend even Moscow from the incursions of the Crimean Tatars.

“All historians agree that the Terrible one left Russia after his death in an extremely sorry state: an economically ruined and devastated country, with its population reduced by one-and-a-half times, frightened and demoralised. But this does not exhaust the woes caused to Russia by the Terrible one. Perhaps the most tragic consequences of his reign consisted in the fact that he to a great extent prepared the ground for the Time of Troubles, which exploded 17 years after his death and placed the Russian state on the edge of complete annihilation. This was expressed concretely in the following.
“1. A dynastic crisis – the destruction by the Terrible one of his closest relatives, the representatives of the Moscow house of the Riuriks. First of all this concerned the assassination of his cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreevich Staritsky with his mother, wife and children, and also with almost all his servants and many people close to him (in 1569). This was not execution following an investigation and trial, but precisely the repression of innocent people (some were poisoned, others were suffocated with smoke), carried out only out of suspicion and arbitrariness. Then it is necessary to note the killing of his son Ivan, the heir to the throne....

“Thus Ivan the Terrible undoubtedly hewed down the dynasty with his own hands, destroying his son, grandson and cousin with all his house, and thereby prepared a dynastic crisis, which made itself sharply felt during the Time of Troubles.

“2. The oprichnina and the consequent politics of ‘the Sovereign’s Court’ greatly reduced the aristocracy and service class. Under the axe of repressions there fell the best people morally speaking, the honourable, principled and independent in their judgements and behaviour, who were distinguished by their abilities, and for that reason were seen as potentially dangerous. In their place intriguers, careerists and informants were promoted, unprincipled and dishonourable time-servers. It was the Terrible one who nourished such people in his nearest entourage, people like Boris Godunov, Basil Shuisky, Bogdan Belsky, Ivan Mstislavsky and other leaders in the Time of Troubles, who were sufficiently clever to indulge in behind-the-scenes intrigues and ‘under the carpet struggle’, but who absolutely did not want to serve God and the fatherland, and for that reason were incapable of uniting the national forces and earning the trust of the people.

“The moral rottenness of the boyars, their class and personal desires and their unscrupulousness are counted by historians as among the main causes of the Troubles. But the Moscow boyars had not always been like that. On the contrary, the Moscow boyars nourished by Kalita worked together with him to gather the Russian lands, perished in the ranks of the army of Demetrius Donskoj on Kulikovo polje, saved Basil the Dark in the troubles caused by Shemyaka, went on the expeditions of Ivan III and Basil III. It was the Terrible one who carried out a general purge in the ranks of the aristocracy, and the results of this purge could not fail to be felt in the Troubles.

“3. The Terrible one’s repressions against honourable servers of the Church, especially against Metropolitan Philip, weakened the Russian Church, drowned in its representatives the voice of truth and a moral evaluation of what was happening. After the holy hierarch Philip, none of the Moscow metropolitans dared to intercede for the persecuted. ‘Sucking up’ to unrighteousness on the part of the hierarchs of course lowered their authority
in the eyes of the people, this gave the pretenders the opportunity to introduce their undermining propaganda more successfully in the people.

“We should note here that the defenders of the Terrible one deny his involvement in the killing of Metropolitan Philip in a rather naïve way: no written order, they say, has been discovered. Of course, the first hierarch of the Russian Church, who was beloved by the people for his righteous life, was not the kind of person whom even the Terrible tsar would dare to execute just like that on the square. But many of the Terrible one’s victims were destroyed by him by means of secret assassinations (as, for example, the family of the same Vladimir Andreyevich). It is reliably known that the holy hierarch Philip reproved the Terrible one for his cruelties not only in private, but also, finally, in public, and that the latter began to look for false witnesses against him. By means of bribes, threats and deceit he succeeded in involving Abbot Paisius of Solovki (a disciple of St. Philip) and some of the hierarchs in this. Materials have been preserved relating to this ‘Council of 1568, the most shameful in the history of the Russian Church’ (in the expression of Professor Kartashev), which condemned its own chief hierarch. The majority of the bishops did not decide to support the slanderers, but they also feared to defend the holy hierarch – and simply kept silent. During the Liturgy the oprichniki on the tsar’s orders seized the holy confessor, tore off his vestments, beat him up and took him away to prison. At the same time almost all the numerous relatives of St. Philip, the Kolychev boyars, were killed. They cast the amputated head of the hierarch’s favourite nephew into his cell. A year later, the legendary Maliuta came to the imprisoned Philip in the Otroch monastery, and the holy hierarch just died suddenly in his arms – the contemporary lovers of the oprichnina force us to believe in this fairy-tale!

“Detailed material on this subject was collected in the book of Professor Fedotov, The Holy Hierarch Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow. Those descendants who lived nearest to those times also well remembered who was the main perpetrator of the death of St. Philip. For that reason Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich transferred the relics of the hieromartyr to Moscow, and wrote a penitent letter to him as if he were alive, asking forgiveness for the sin of his predecessor Ivan the Terrible (in imitation of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, who repented for the sin of his mother, the Empress Eudoxia, against St. John Chrysostom). Therefore the apologists of the Terrible one, in denying his guilt against St. Philip, simply reject the tradition of the whole Russian Church as established in documents.

“Besides St. Philip, on the orders of the Terrible during the devastation of Novgorod, one of those who envied and slandered St. Philip, Archbishop Pimen was killed. And if contemporary ‘oprichniki’ consider it to the credit of the Terrible one that he dealt with the false witnesses in the affair of the holy hierarch, then let them remember that a timely ‘clean-up’ of witnesses and agents who have done their work is a common phenomenon in the course of
large-scale repressions. Only it is not a work of God. The unknown author of the Tale of the Devastation of Novgorod tells us that on the orders of the Terrible one up to three hundred abbots, hieromonks, priests and deacons in Novgorod itself and its environs, monasteries and villages were killed. Several tens of Church servers were killed in each of the cities of Tver, Torzhok, Volokolamsk and other places. One can argue about the accuracy of the numbers of victims cited, but one cannot doubt that the clergy slaughtered during the reign of the Terrible one numbered at least in the tens, but more likely in the hundreds. There is every reason to speak about a persecution of the clergy and the Church on the part of the Terrible one. The holy hierarch Philip and St. Cornelius of Pskov-Pechersk are only the leaders of a whole host of hieromartyrs, passion-bearers and confessors of that time. It is those whose glorification it is worth thinking about!

“4. Finally, the Terrible one’s epoch shook the moral supports of the simple people, and undermined its healthy consciousness of right. Open theft and reprisals without trial or investigation, carried out in the name of the Sovereign on any one who was suspect, gave a very bad example, unleashing the base passions of envy, revenge and baseness. Participation in denunciations and cooperation in false witnesses involved very many in the sins of the oprichnina. Constant refined tortures and public executions taught people cruelty and inured them to compassion and mercy. Everyday animal fear for one’s life, a striving to survive at any cost, albeit at the cost of righteousness and conscience, at the cost of the good of one’s neighbours, turned those who survived into pitiful slaves, ready for any baseness. The enmity stirred up between the zemschina and the oprichnina, between ‘the Sovereign’s people’ and ‘the rebels’, undermined the feeling of popular unity among Russian people, sowing resentment and mistrust. The incitement of hatred for the boyars, who were identified with traitors, kindled class war. Let us add to this that the reign of the Terrible one, having laid waste to the country, tore many people away from their roots, deprived them of their house and land and turned them into thieves, into what Marxist language would call ‘declassified elements’. Robbed and embittered against the whole world, they were turned aside into robber bands and filled up the Cossack gangs on the border-lands of Russia. These were ready-made reserves for the armies of any pretenders and rebels.

“And so, if we compare all this with the Leninist teaching on the preparation of revolution, we see a striking resemblance. The Terrible one did truly do everything so that ‘the uppers could not, and lowers would not’ live in a human way. The ground for civil war and the great Trouble had thus been fully prepared...”

The Moscow Patriarchate

“After the horrors of the reign of Ivan IV,” writes Lebedev, “a complete contrast is represented by the soft, kind rule of his son, Theodore Ivanovich. In Russia there suddenly came as it were complete silence... However, the silence of the reign of Theodore Ivanovich was external and deceptive; it could more accurately be called merely a lull before a new storm. For that which had taken place during the oprichnina could not simply disappear: it was bound to have the most terrible consequences.”

But this lull contained some very important events. One was the crowning of Theodore according to the full Byzantine rite, followed by his communion in both kinds in the altar. This further established the Russian Tsars as the Emperors of the Third Rome, which status, as we shall see, was confirmed publicly by the Ecumenical Patriarch himself.

No less important was the raising of the metropolitanate of Moscow to patriarchal status with the blessing of the Eastern Patriarchs. There was good reason for such a step. As A.P. Dobroklonsky writes, “the Moscow metropolitan see stood very tall. Its riches and the riches of the Moscow State stimulated the Eastern Patriarchs – not excluding the Patriarch of Constantinople himself – to appeal to it for alms. The boundaries of the Moscow metropolitanate were broader than the restricted boundaries of any of the Eastern Patriarchates (if we exclude from the Constantinopolitan the Russian metropolitan see, which was part of it); the court of the Moscow metropolitan was just as great as that of the sovereign. The Moscow metropolitan was freer in the manifestation of his ecclesiastical rights than the Patriarchs of the East, who were restricted at every step. Under the protection of the Orthodox sovereigns the metropolitan see in Moscow stood more firmly and securely than the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, which had become a plaything in the hands of the sultan or vizier. The power of the Moscow metropolitan was in reality not a whit less than that of the patriarchate: he ruled the bishops, called himself their ‘father, pastor, comforter and head, under the power and in the will of whom they are the

Book of Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), ‘The Autocracy of the Spirit’),

Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 105 (in Russian).

It appears that the first Russian patriarch received a second (or even third) Episcopal consecration when he became patriarch. Thus Igumen Gregory (Lourié) writes: “The case of the raising to the patriarchy of Job, who was already Metropolitan of Moscow by that time, was strangely dual. The first Episcopal consecration was carried out on Job already in 1581, when he became Bishop of Kolomna, and the second in 1587, when he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow. Now, with his raising to the rank of Patriarch of Moscow, a third Episcopal ordination was carried out on him (Uspensky, 1998).” This uncanonical custom appears to have originated with Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, when he transferred St. Alexis from Vladimir to Moscow (http://hgr.livejournal.com/1099886.html), June 1, 2006 (in Russian).
Vladykas of the whole Russian land’. Already in the 15th century, with the agreement of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, he had been elected in Rus’ without the knowledge or blessing of the Patriarch; the Russian metropolia had already ceased hierarchical relations with the patriarchal see. If there remained any dependence of the Moscow metropolitan on the patriarch, it was only nominal, since the Russian metropolia was still counted as belonging to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate…”

Not only was the Moscow metropolia a de facto patriarchate already: its exaltation would simultaneously raise the status of the Russian Autocracy, whose prosperity was vital for the survival, not only of Russian Orthodoxy, but of Greek, Balkan and Georgian Orthodoxy, too. The exceptional importance of the Autocracy, not only for Russia but for the whole Orthodox world, and the necessity of preserving its power and authority by all means, had just been highlighted by the terrible plight of the Orthodox Kingdom of Georgia. For, as Loseliani writes, “oppressed by internal discord, and by the dissensions of ambitious and unsettled princes, Georgia was again exposed to a severe persecution on the part of the Persians. These enemies of the Christian name ceased not to lay their sacrilegious hands on the riches of Iberia. The messengers of King Alexander to Moscow lamented the fearful misfortunes of their country, and represented how the great Shah-Abbas, having endeavoured to leave to himself the protection of the kingdom of Georgia, made in reality the Georgians enemies of the Russian Tzar.

“In the year 1587 King Alexander II, having declared himself a vassal of Russia, sent to Moscow the priests Joachim, Cyril, and others; and, pressed on all sides as he was by the Persians and the Turks, entreated with tears the Russian Tzar Theodore Iohannovitch to take Iberia under his protection, and thus to rescue her from the grasp of infidels. ‘The present disastrous times,’ wrote he, ‘for the Christian faith were foreseen by many men inspired by God. We, brethren of the same faith with the Russians, groan under the hand of wicked men. Thou, crowned head of the Orthodox faith, canst alone save both our lives and our souls. I bow to thee with my face to the earth, with all my people, and we shall be thine forever.’ The Tzar Theodore Iohannovitch having taken Iberia under his protection, busied himself earnestly in rendering her assistance and in works of faith. He sent into Georgia teachers in holy orders for the regulation of Church ceremonies, and painters to decorate the temples with images of saints; and Job, patriarch of all the Russias, addressed to the Georgian king a letter touching the faith. King Alexander humbly replied that the favourable answer of the Tzar had fallen upon him from Heaven, and brought him out of darkness into light; that the clergy of the Russian Church were angels for the clergy of Iberia, buried in ignorance. The Prince Zvenigorod, ambassador to Georgia, promised in the

name of Russia the freedom of all Georgia, and the restoration of all her 
churches and monasteries."

Because of her internal and external troubles, Russia was not able to offer 
significant military aid to Georgia for some time. And so “in 1617,” writes 
Dobroklonsky, “Georgia was again subjected to destruction from the Persians: 
the churches were devastated, the land was ravaged. Therefore in 1619 
Teimuraz, king of Kakhetia, Imeretia and Kartalinia, accepted Russian 
citizenship, and Persia was restrained from war by peaceful negotiations. But 
the peace was not stable. In 1634 the Persian Shah placed the Crown Prince 
Rostom on the throne of Kartalinia. He accepted Islam, and began to drive the 
Orthodox out of Kartalinia. The renewal of raids on Georgia had a disturbing 
effect on ecclesiastical affairs there, so that in 1637 an archimandrite, two 
priests and two icon-painters with a craftsman and materials for the 
construction of churches were sent from Moscow ‘to review and correct the 
peasants’ faith’. And in 1650 Prince Alexander of Imeretia and in 1658 
Teimuraz of Kakhetia renewed their oath of allegiance to the Russian Tsar. 
Nevertheless, even after this the woes continued. Many Georgians, restricted 
by the Muslims in their homeland, fled to Russia and there found refuge. But 
Georgia did not receive any real help from Russia throughout this period.

“As regard the Orthodox Greeks who were suffering under the Turkish 
yoke, Russia gave them generous material assistance, and sometimes tried to 
ease the yoke of the Turkish government that was weighing on them…”

All this demonstrated that the Russian tsar and patriarch were now in 
essentially the same relationship with the Eastern Orthodox Christians as the 
Constantinopolitan emperors and patriarchs had been centuries before, and 
that Russia had taken the place of Constantinople in God’s Providential Plan 
for His Church, a fact which the Eastern Patriarchs were now ready to accept.

In 1586 talks began with Patriarch Joachim of Antioch, who had arrived in 
Moscow. He promised to discuss the question of the status of the Russian 
Church with his fellow patriarchs. Then, in 1588, the Ecumenical Patriarch 
Jeremiah II (Trallas) came to Moscow on an alms-raising trip. Then he went

---

287 P. Ioseliani, A Short History of the Georgian Church, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity 
288 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., pp. 278-279. Among the Georgian martyrs of this period we may 
mention the 6000 monks inhabiting twelve monasteries in the wilderness of David-Garejeli 
who were martyred by Shah Abbas I in 1615. Again, several of the Georgian monarchs 
suffered martyrdom in the struggle at the hands of the Persian Muslims. See, for example, the 
Life of Great-Martyr Queen Ketevan, Living Orthodoxy, vol. XVI, no. 5, September-October, 
1994, pp. 3-12.
289 See A.V. Kartashev, Ocherki po Istoriu Russkoj Tserkvi (Sketches in the History of the Russian 
Church), Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, pp. 10-46; Vladimir Rusak, Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi (A 
History of the Russian Church), 1988, pp. 152-156, Dobroklonsky, op. cit., pp. 282-285; and the 
life of St. Job, first patriarch of Moscow, in Moskovskij Paterik (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: 
on an important tour of the beleagured Orthodox in the Western Russian lands, ordaining bishops and blessing the lay brotherhoods.

It was the desperate situation of the Orthodox in Western Russia that made the exaltation of the Muscovite seem still more timely. In 1596 the Orthodox hierarchs in the region had signed the union of Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholics (see below). It was now obvious that Divine Providence had singled out the Church and State in Muscovy, rather than that in Poland-Lithuania, as the centre and stronghold of Russian Orthodoxy as a whole, and this needed to be emphasised in the eyes of all the Orthodox. Patriarch Jeremiah understood this. And in agreeing to the tsar’s request for a patriarchate of Moscow, he showed that he understood that in having a Patriarch at his side, the status of the Tsar, too, would be exalted: “In truth, pious tsar, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and this thought is from God, and will be realised by you. For the Old Rome fell to the Apollinarian heresy, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, is in the possession of the grandsons of the Hagarenes, the godless Turks: but your great Russian kingdom, the Third Rome, has exceeded all in piety. And all the pious kingdoms have been gathered into your kingdom, and you alone under the heavens are named the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians.”

The Patriarch’s language here (if it is truly his) is very reminiscent of that of the famous prophecy of Elder Philotheus of Pskov in 1511. In particular, the Patriarch follows the elder in ascribing the fall of Old Rome to “the Apollinarian heresy”. Now the Apollinarian heresy rarely, if ever, figures in lists of the western heresies. And yet the patriarch here indicates that it is the heresy as a result of which the First Rome fell. Some have understood it to mean the Latin practice of using unleavened bread in the Eucharist.

However, to understand why the patriarch should have spoken of it as the heresy of the West, we need to look for some matching in form, if not in substance, between the Apollinarian and papist heresies. Smirnov’s definition of the heresy gives us a clue: "accepting the tripartite composition of human nature - spirit, irrational soul, and body - [Apollinarius] affirmed that in Christ only the body and the soul were human, but His mind was Divine." In other words, Christ did not have a human mind like ours, but this was replaced, according to the Apollinarian schema, by the Divine Logos.

A parallel with Papism immediately suggests itself: just as the Divine Logos replaces the human mind in the heretical Apollinarian Christology, so a

290 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 156. This thought was echoed by the patriarch of Alexandria, who wrote to the “most Orthodox” tsar in 1592: “The four patriarchates of the Orthodox speak of your rule as that of another, new Constantine the Great… and say that if there were no help from your rule, then Orthodoxy would be in extreme danger.” (Quoted in van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 160).

291 Appendix to Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984, p. 379.
quasi-Divine, infallible Pope replaces the fully human, and therefore at all times fallible episcopate in the heretical papist ecclesiology. The root heresy of the West therefore consists in the unlawful exaltation of the mind of the Pope over the other minds of the Church, both clerical and lay, and its quasi-deification to a level equal to that of Christ Himself. From this root heresy proceed all the heresies of the West.

Thus the Filioque with its implicit demotion of the Holy Spirit to a level below that of the Father and the Son becomes necessary insofar as the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth Who constantly leads the Church into all truth has now become unnecessary - the Divine Mind of the Pope is quite capable of fulfilling His function.

Similarly, the epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts, is also unnecessary - if Christ, the Great High Priest, sanctified the Holy Gifts by His word alone, then His Divine Vicar on earth is surely able to do the same without invoking any other Divinity, especially a merely subordinate one such as the Holy Spirit.

And so on January 26, 1589 Patriarch Jeremiah raised Metropolitan Job to the rank of Patriarch of Moscow in the Dormition cathedral. The exaltation of the Russian Church and State to patriarchal and “Third Rome” status respectively shows that, not only in her own eyes, but in the eyes of the whole Orthodox world, Russia was now the chief bastion of the Truth of Christ against the heresies of the West. Russia had been born as a Christian state just as the West was falling away from grace into papism in the eleventh century. Now, in the sixteenth century, as Western papism received a bastard child in the Protestant Reformation, and a second wind in the Counter-Reformation, Russia was ready to take up leadership of the struggle against both heresies as a fully mature Orthodox nation.

However, at the Pan-Orthodox Council convened by Jeremiah on his return to Constantinople, the Eastern Patriarchs, while confirming the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate, made it only the fifth in seniority, after the four Greek patriarchates. This was to prove a prudent reservation, for in the century that followed, the Poles briefly conquered Moscow during the “Time of Troubles”, necessitating the continued supervision of the Western and Southern Russian Orthodox by Constantinople. And by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Russian patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great and replaced – with the blessing of the Eastern Patriarchs – by a “Holy Governing Synod”.

Nevertheless, the elevation of the head of the Russian Church to the rank of patriarch was to prove beneficial now, in the early seventeenth century, when the Autocracy in Russia had been shaken to its foundations and the patriarchs had taken the place of the tsars as the leaders of the Russian nation.
We witness a similar phenomenon in 1917, when the restoration of the Russian patriarchate to some degree compensated for the fall of the tsardom. In both cases, the patriarchate both filled the gap left by the fall of the state (up to a point), and kept alive the ideals of true Orthodox statehood, waiting for the time when it could restore political power into the hands of the anointed tsars.

**Poles, Cossacks and Jews**

However, at this point, just as the Russian State was beginning to recover its former strength, it came into contact again with the Jews… Persecutions in Western Europe had gradually pushed the Ashkenazi Jews further and further east, until they arrived in Poland. Norman Cantor writes: “The Polish king and nobility held vast lands and ruled millions of newly enserfed [Russian] peasants and could make varied use of the Jews. Hence the Jews were welcomed into Poland in the sixteenth century from Germany and Western Europe. Even Jews exiled from Spain in 1492 and those tired of the ghettos of northern Italy under the oppressive eye of the papacy found their way to Poland. Its green, fruitful, and underpopulated land seemed wonderful to the Jews. “By the end of the sixteenth century Poland was being hailed as the new golden land of the Jews…“

Ivan the Terrible banned the entry of Jewish merchants into Moscow. This “Russian barrier to further eastern penetration”, writes Paul Johnson, “led to intensive Jewish settlement in Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine… By 1575, while the total population [of Poland] had risen to seven million, the number of Jews had jumped to 150,000, and thereafter the rise was still more rapid. In 1503 the Polish monarchy appointed Rabbi Jacob Polak ‘Rabbi of Poland’, and the emergence of a chief rabbinate, backed by the crown, allowed the development of a form of self-government which the Jews had not known since the end of the exilarchate. From 1551 the chief rabbi was elected by the Jews themselves. This was, to be sure, oligarchic rather than democratic rule. The rabbinate had wide powers over law and finances, appointing judges and a great variety of other officials… The royal purpose in devolving power on the Jews was, of course, self-interested. There was a great deal of Polish hostility to the Jews. In Cracow, for instance, where the local merchant class was strong, Jews were usually kept out. The kings found out they could make money out of the Jews by selling to certain cities and towns, such as Warsaw, the privilege de non tolerandis Judaeis. But they could make even more by allowing Jewish communities to grow up, and milking them. The rabbinate and local Jewish councils were primarily tax-raising agencies. Only 30 per cent of what they raised went on welfare and official salaries; all the rest was handed over to the crown in return for protection.

---

“The association of the rabbinate with communal finance and so with the business affairs of those who had to provide it led the eastern or Ashkenazi Jews to go even further than the early-sixteenth-century Italians in giving halakhic approval to new methods of credit-finance. Polish Jews operating near the frontiers of civilization had links with Jewish family firms in the Netherlands and Germany. A new kind of credit instrument, the mamram, emerged and got rabbinical approval. In 1607 Jewish communities in Poland and Lithuania were also authorized to use heter iskah, an inter-Jewish borrowing system which allowed one Jew to finance another in return for a percentage. This rationalization of the law eventually led even conservative authorities, like the famous Rabbi Judah Loew, the Maharal of Prague, to sanction lending at interest.

“With easy access to credit, Jewish pioneer settlers played a leading part in developing eastern Poland, the interior of Lithuania, and the Ukraine, especially from the 1560s onwards. The population of Western Europe was expanding fast. It needed to import growing quantities of grain. Ambitious Polish landowners, anxious to meet the need, went into partnership with Jewish entrepreneurs to create new wheat-growing areas to supply the market, take the grain down-river to the Baltic ports, and then ship it west. The Polish magnates – Radziwills, Sovieskis, Zamojkis, Ostrogskis, Lubomirskis – owned or conquered the land. The ports were run by German Lutherans. The Dutch Calvinists owned most of the ships. But the Jews did the rest. They not only managed the estates but in some cases held the deeds as pledges in return for working capital. Sometimes they leased the estates themselves. They ran the tolls. They built and ran mills and distilleries. They owned the river boats, taking out the wheat and bringing back in return wine, cloth and luxury goods, which they sold in their shops. They were in soap, glazing, tanning and furs. They created entire villages and townships (shtetls), where they lived in the centre, while peasants (Catholics in Poland and Lithuania, Orthodox in the Ukraine) occupied the suburbs.

“Before 1569 [recte: 1596] when the Union of Brest-Litovsk made the Polish settlement of the Ukraine possible, there were only twenty-four Jewish settlements there with 4,000 inhabitants; by 1648 there were 115, with a numbered population of 51,325, the total being much greater. Most of these places were owned by Polish nobles, absentee-landlords, the Jews acting as middlemen and intermediaries with the peasants – a role fraught with future danger. Often Jews were effectively the magnates too. At the end of the sixteenth century Israel of Zloczew, for instance, leased an entire region of hundreds of square miles from a consortium of nobles to whom he paid the

---

293 “Yu. Hessen writes that under the first false Demetrius (1605-06) the Jews appeared in Moscow ‘in comparatively large numbers’, as did other foreigners. But after the end of the Time of Troubles it was declared that the second false Demetrius (‘the thief of Tushino’) was ‘Jewish by race’ (A.I. Solzhenitsyn, Doesli Let Vmeste (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 23 (in Russian). (V.M.)
enormous sum of 4,500 zlotys. He sub-let tolls, taverns and mills to his poorer relatives. Jews from all over Europe arrived to take part in this colonizing process. In many settlements they constituted the majority of the inhabitants, so that for the first time outside Palestine they dominated the local culture. But there were important at every level of society and administration. They farmed the taxes and the customs. They advised government. And every Polish magnate had a Jewish counsellor in his castle, keeping the books, writing letters, running the economic show…

“In 1648-49, the Jews of south-eastern Poland and the Ukraine were struck by catastrophe. This episode was of great importance in Jewish history for several reasons… The Thirty Years War had put growing pressure on the food-exporting resources of Poland. It was because of their Polish networks that Jewish contractors to the various armies had been so successful in supplying them. But the chief beneficiaries had been the Polish landlords; and the chief losers had been the Polish and Ukrainian peasants, who had seen an ever-increasing proportion of the crops they raised marketed and sold at huge profit to the ravenous armies. Under the Arenda system, whereby the Polish nobility leased not only land but all fixed assets such as mills, breweries, distilleries, inns and tolls to Jews, in return for fixed payments, the Jews had flourished and their population had grown rapidly. But the system was inherently unstable and unjust. The landlords, absentee and often spendthrift, put continual pressure on the Jews by raising the price each time a lease was renewed; the Jews in turn put pressure on the peasants…. 

“The Ukrainian peasants finally rose in the late spring of 1648, led by a petty aristocrat called Bogdan Chmielnicki, with the help of Dnieper Cossack and Tartars from the Crimea. His rising was fundamentally aimed at Polish rule and the Catholic church, and many Polish nobles and clergy were among the victims. But the principal animus was directed against Jews, with whom peasants had the most contact, and when it came to the point the Poles always abandoned their Jewish allies to save themselves. Thousands of Jews from villages and shtetls scrambled for safety to the big fortified towns, which turned into death-traps for them. At Tulchin the Polish troops handed over the Jews to the Cossacks in exchange for their own lives294; at Tarnopol, the garrison refused to let the Jews in at all. At Bar, the fortress fell and all the Jews were massacred. There was another fierce slaughter at Narol. At Nemirov, the Cossacks got into the fortress by dressing as Poles, ‘and they killed about 6,000 souls in the town’, according to the Jewish chronicle; ‘they drowned several hundreds in the water and by all kinds of cruel tortments’. In the synagogue they used the ritual knives to kill Jews, then burned the

294 At Tulchin the Cossacks said to the Poles: “We will spare you as long as you pay a ransom, then we will leave. But we will not have mercy on the Jews for any money. They are our accursed enemies; they have insulted our faith, and we have sworn to destroy their tribe. Expel them from the city and be in agreement with us” (O. Platonov, Ternovij Venets Rossii (Russia’s Thorny Crown), Moscow, 1998, p. 228 (in Russian)).
building down, tore up the sacred books, and trampled them underfoot, and used the leather covers for sandals.”  

Cantor writes that “the Ukrainians had a right to resent the Jews, if not to kill them. The Jews were the immediate instrument of the Ukrainians’ subjection and degradation. The Halakic rabbis never considered the Jewish role in oppression of the Ukrainian peasants in relation to the Hebrew prophets’ ideas of social justice. Isaiah and Amos were dead texts from the past in rabbinical mentality.

“Or perhaps the Jews were so moved by racist contempt for the Ukrainian and Polish peasantry as to regard them as subhuman and unworthy of consideration under biblical categories of justice and humanity…”

In 1690 a six-year-old Orthodox child by the name of Gabriel, who lived in Grodno province, was kidnapped by a Jew and ritually slaughtered, “as was confirmed by a judicial investigation. St. Gabriel was crucified, his side was pierced and he was punctured by various instruments until all his blood came out and he died. The body of the child was cast into a field, but was soon discovered and given over to a Christian burial, while his tormentors received their due reward. 30 years later, in 1720, the relics of St. Gabriel were uncovered and found to be incorrupt.”

And so in at least one case the Orthodox Church has officially glorified the victim of a Jewish ritual killing...

**Orthodoxy and the Unia**

Still more dangerous enemies than the Jews for the Orthodox population of the western regions were the Jesuits, who were vigorously trying to impose the union with Rome on the Orthodox. The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540 with the aim of buttressing the Counter-Reformation papacy, and was soon waging war, not only against Protestantism, but also against Orthodoxy. The Jesuits’ methods ranged from crude force in the West Russian lands to the subtler weapon of education: rich Greek families already liked to send their sons to Venice or Padua, and in 1577 the College of Saint Athanasius was founded in Rome for the higher education of Greek boys, which was followed by the setting up of Jesuit schools in the Ottoman lands, in Pera, Thessalonica, Smyrna, Athens and Chalcis.

These methods soon produced results: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several Constantinopolitan and Antiochian patriarchs apostasized to

---

Rome. Nor did the Protestant reformers fail to make gains, especially in Romania. One of the most famous Constantinopolitan patriarchs, Cyril I Lucaris, was a Calvinist...

With the bishops so often wavering in faith or bound by political pressures, it was often left to the lower clergy or the laypeople to take up the banner of Orthodoxy. Thus the unia was fought by hieromonks, such as St. Job of Pochaev, lay theologians such as the Chiot Eustratios Argenti, aristocratic landowners such as Prince Constantine Constantinvich Ostrozhsky, and lay brotherhoods defending Orthodoxy against the unia in Lvov and Vilnius. Many monks wandered around the Orthodox lands strengthening the Christians in the faith and receiving martyrdom as their reward, such as the exarch of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nicephorus, who was killed by the Poles, and St. Athanasius of Brest, who was tortured to death by the Jesuits.

As time passed the uniate project had become more subtle. The Orthodox were not compelled to accept all the papist dogmas (at any rate immediately). They were allowed to retain their ecclesiastical traditions and to celebrate their services in their own language. All that the Jesuits insisted on was the recognition of papal sovereignty. Having in this way lured the Orthodox into the papal fold, the process of latinization could go ahead in a stealthy and gradual way. Meanwhile, the uniate church thus created could act as a “Trojan horse” penetrating the defences of the truly Orthodox Church.

As Fr. Ilea Fratsea writes: “All those who have investigated the problem of the Unia have come to almost the same conclusion: the Unia is the consequence of the attempts of the Catholic Church to impose – by political rather than ecclesiastical means – the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Pope on the Orthodox lands. The Unia was born only where Romanity met Roman Catholicism... There is no ‘Unia’ in the lands of Protestantism or the Anglican Church, in spite of the fact that dialogues have taken place between them. More accurately, the Unia accomplishes the penetration of Papism into Orthodoxy, a Roman Catholic parasite in the body of Romanity [Orthodoxy]. Therefore the Unia feeds on and lays claim to the wealth of Orthodoxy, aiming at its latinization. The Unia ‘feeds on Orthodoxy, while at the same time opposing it’ (Dumitru Staniloae), attempting to bring it under the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome.”

298 Runciman, op. cit, chapters 3-7.
299 See Timothy Ware, Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule, Oxford, 1964.
300 See Boyeikov, op. cit.; Kartashev, op. cit.; Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ (The Russian Orthodox Church), Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 45-48 (in Russian).
“At the end of the 16th century,” writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, “the so-called Lithuanian unia took place, or the union of the Orthodox Christians living in the south-western dioceses in separation from the Moscow Patriarchate, with the Roman Catholic Church.

“The reasons for this event, which was so sad for the Orthodox Church and so wretched for the whole of the south-western region were: the lack of stability in the position and administration of the separated dioceses; the intrigues on the part of the Latins and in particular the Jesuits; the betrayal of Orthodoxy by certain bishops who were at that time administering the south-western part of the Russian Church.

“With the separation of the south-western dioceses under the authority of a special metropolitan, the question arose: to whom were they to be hierarchically subject? Against the will of the initiators of the separation, the south-western metropolia was subjected to the power of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and the patriarchs, in view of the dangers presented by the Latins, intensified their supervision over the separated dioceses.”

The Turks, paradoxically, provided some protection for the Orthodox from the depradations of western missionaries in the Balkan lands. And the Muscovite tsars, of course, provided even more in their territories. But the Russian lands from Kiev westwards were largely deprived of protection until a part of the Ukraine came under the dominion of Moscow in 1654 as a result of the victories of Bogdan Chmielnicki and his Cossack armies. Until then they were persecuted by the Poles and the Jews.

“In such a situation,” continues Smirnov, “the Jesuits appeared in the south-western dioceses and with their usual skill and persistence used all the favourable circumstances to further their ends, that is, to spread the power of the Roman pope. They took into their hands control of the schools, and instilled in the children of the Russian boyars a disgust for the Orthodox clergy and the Russian faith, which they called ‘kholop’ (that is, the faith of the simple people). The fruits of this education were not slow to manifest themselves. The majority of the Russian boyars and princes went over to Latinism. To counter the influence of the Jesuits in many cities brotherhoods were founded. These received important rights from the Eastern Patriarchs. Thus, for example, the Lvov brotherhood had the right to rebuke the bishops themselves for incorrect thinking, and even expel them from the Church. New difficulties appeared, which were skilfully exploited by the Jesuits. They armed the bishops against the brotherhoods and against the patriarchs (the slaves of the Sultans), pointed out the excellent situation of the Catholic bishops, many of whom had seats in the senate, and honours and wealth and

power. The Polish government helped the Jesuits in every way, and at their direction offered episcopal sees to such people as might later turn out to be their obedient instruments. Such in particular were Cyril Terletsky, Bishop of Lutsk, and Hypatius Potsey, Bishop of Vladimir-in-Volhynia....

“...The immediate excuse for the unia was provided by the following circumstance. Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople, during his journey through the south of Russia to Moscow to establish the patriarch, defrocked the Kieven Metropolitan Gnesiphorus for bigamy, and appointed in his place Michael Ragoza, and commanded him to convene a council, by his return, to discuss another bigamist who had been accused of many crimes, Cyril Terletsky. Michael Ragoza was a kind person, but weak in character, he did not convene a council inflicted unnecessary delays and expenses on the patriarch. The Patriarch, summoned out of Russia by his own affairs, sent letters of attorney to Ragoza and Bishop Meletius of Vladimir (in Volhynia) for the trial of Teretsky. Both these letters were seized by Cyril, and the affair continued to be dragged out. Meanwhile, Meletius died, and Cyril Terletsky succeeded in presenting the Vladimir see to his friend, Hypatius Potsey. Fearing the appointment of a new trial on himself from the patriarch, Cyril hastened to act in favour of the unia, and made an ally for himself in Hypatius, who was indebted to him.

“In 1593 they openly suggested the unia to the other south-western bishops in order to liberate themselves from the power of the patriarch and the interference of laymen in Church administration...”304

Now the Russian bishops wanted to secure for themselves a certain degree of autonomy, and the retention of the eastern rite in the Divine services. Differences in rites had been allowed by the decrees of the council of Florence in 1439.

“However,” as Igumen Gregory Lourié writes, “after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic church was not interested in giving anyone the right of administrative autonomy. Therefore we must call it a diplomatic victory for the Orthodox supporters of the unia that they succeeded in convincing the Roman curia of the necessity of establishing in Poland-Lithuania a parallel Catholic hierarchy of the Greek rite, which would be independent of the local Latin bishops. In 1595 the diplomatic efforts of the bishops were directed, on the one hand, to securing the future uniate organization at as high a degree of autonomy as possible, and one the other, to convincing the Orthodox aristocracy to accept the unia. Among the nobles the main opponent of the unia was Prince Constantine Ostrozhsky. By the summer of 1595 such a sharp conflict had been lit between the bishops and the laity that Patriarch Jeremiah Tranos of Constantinople turned directly to the laity, passing by the bishops. The patriarch sent to Jassy (Romania) his

exarch Nicephorus, who convened a council of six bishops, including the metropolitans of Moldavia-Wallachia (Romania) and Ugro-Wallachia (Hungary). On August 17, 1595 this council issued a decree in which it addressed ‘the nobles and simple people’ who were ‘under the power of the Polish king’, telling them not to submit to their local bishops. But the latter were told immediately to present penitential acts to the patriarch, otherwise they would be stripped of their rank, while the laymen would receive the right to put forward their own candidates to the Episcopal sees that had become vacant (Welykyj, 1970, 120-121, document № 69). The bishops found themselves to be not only on the verge of being deprived of their rank, but also under threat of excommunication from the Church. It goes without saying that as private individuals they would not have been able to influence the decision of the question of the unia with Rome.

“...The publication of this act could not be hidden from the Roman curia, and therefore the bishops found themselves in a situation in which their position at the negotiations with Rome was severely shaken. It was necessary to act without delay and agree now even to almost any conditions. And so two of the West Russian bishops set off for Rome as fully-empowered representatives of the whole of the episcopate of the Kievan metropolia. The upshot of their stay in Rome from November, 1595 to March, 1596 was the acceptance of the conditions of the future unia without any guarantees of equality between the Catholic churches of different rites – the Latin and Greek. The unia was established by the will of the Roman Pope, and not at all as the result of negotiations of the two sides. The Russian bishops were not even accepted as a ‘side’. The future uniate church had to accept not only the decrees of the council of Florence but also those of the council of Trent. Moreover, it had to be ready for any changes, including changes in rites, that the Pope might introduce. The only right that the bishops succeeded in preserving was the right of a local council to elect the Metropolitan of Kiev. However, this had to be followed by the confirmation of the Roman Pope.

“Prince Ostrozhsky, in his turn, actively opposed the unia. A significant part of the Orthodox nobility took his side. Prince Ostrozhsky and his supporters succeeded in creating a schism in the pro-uniate party: two bishops separated from the others, refusing to support the unia. Their renunciation of their former position is explained by the fact that they were in a state of significantly greater dependence on the local magnates than on the king. It is of note that Gedeon Balaban, Bishop of Lvov, who was the first to begin preparing his diocese for the unia, was one of these two bishops. Prince Ostrozhsky invited Exarch Nicephorus to Poland-Lithuania.

“In October, 1595 [recte: 1596] two councils were opened simultaneously in Brest. One of them took place with the participation of five bishops and proclaimed the unia with Rome. The other was presided over by Exarch
Nicephorus. This council excommunicated the uniates, which became the beginning of the Orthodox resistance to the unia.

“Soon Nicephorus was accused of spying for Turkey and was put in prison under guard. He died in prison in 1598 or 1599. The role of the spiritual leader of the Orthodox resistance passed to Ivan of Vishna…”

Smirnov writes: “The whole affair was carried through, as was the custom of the Jesuits, with various forgeries and deceptions. Thus, for example, they took the signatures of the two bishops on white blanks, supposedly in case there would be unforeseen petitions before the king on behalf of the Orthodox, and meanwhile on these blanks they wrote a petition for the unia. Potsej and Terletsky made such concessions to the Pope in Rome as they had not been authorised to make even by the bishops who thought like them. Terletsky and Potsej had hardly returned from Rome before these forgeries were exposed, which elicited strong indignation against them on the part of some bishops (Gideon of Lvov and Michael of Peremysl) the Orthodox princes (Prince Ostrozhsky) and others.

“At the end of 1596 there was council in Brest in order to come to a decision about the unia, at which, besides the south-western bishops, there were two patriarchal exarchs, Nicephorus from the Constantinopolitan Patriarch and Cyril Lukaris from the Alexandrian. From the very beginning of the council the Orthodox separated themselves from the uniate party and opened special sessions. At the head of the Orthodox stood the exarchs, six bishops and Prince Ostrozhsky. Four bishops were firmly behind the unia, but they were supported by the king. The metropolitan behaved indecisively and did not know where to go until the Jesuits drew over to their side and against Orthodoxy. The supporters of the unia triumphantly read out the Pope’s bull and the act of union. But the Orthodox, from their side, signed a decree: not to obey the metropolitan and the apostate bishops and consider them defrocked; and not to undertake anything in relation to the faith without the consent of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

“From this time, there began persecutions against the Orthodox. The uniate bishops removed the Orthodox priests and put uniates in their place. The Orthodox brotherhoods were declared to be mutinous assemblies, and those faithful to Orthodoxy were deprived of posts and oppressed in trade and crafts. The peasants were subjected to all kinds of indignities by their Catholic landlords. The [Orthodox] churches were forcibly turned into uniate ones or were leased out to Jews. The leaseholder had the keys to the church and extracted taxes for every service and need. Many of the Orthodox fled from these restrictions to the Cossacks in the steppes, who rose up in defence of the

Orthodox faith under the leadership of Nalivaiki. But the Poles overcame them and Nalivaiki was burned to death in a brazen bull. Then a fresh rebellion broke out under Taras. But, happily for the Orthodox, their wrathful persecutor Sigismund III died. His successor, Vladislav IV, gave the Orthodox Church privileges, with the help of which she strengthened herself for the coming struggle with the uniates and Catholics...

“However, although Vladislav was well-disposed towards the Orthodox, the Poles did not obey him and continued to oppress them. The Cossacks several times took up arms, and when they fell into captivity to the Poles, the latter subjected them to terrible tortures. Some were stretched on the wheel, others had their arms and legs broken, others were pierced with spikes and placed on the rack. Children were burned on iron grills before the eyes of their fathers and mothers.”

Platonov writes: “All the persecutions against the Orthodox in the West Russian lands were carried out by the Jews and the Catholics together. Having given the Russian churches into the hands of the Jews who were close to them in spirit, the Polish aristocracy laughingly watched as the defilement of Christian holy things was carried out by the Jews. The Catholic priests and uniates even incited the Jews to do this, calculating in this way to turn the Russians away from Orthodoxy.

“As Archbishop Philaret recounts: ‘Those churches whose parishioners could by converted to the unia by no kind of violence were leased to the Jews: the keys of the churches and bell-towers passed into their hands. If it was necessary to carry out a Church need, then one had to go and trade with the Jew, for whom gold was an idol and the faith of Christ the object of spiteful mockery and profanation. One had to pay up to five talers for each liturgy, and the same for baptism and burial. The uniate received paschal bread wherever and however he wanted it, while the Orthodox could not bake it himself or buy it in any other way than from a Jew at Jewish rates. The Jews would make a mark with coal on the prosphoras bought for commemorating the living or the dead. Only then could it be accepted for the altar.’”

Especially notorious as a persecutor of the Orthodox was the uniate Bishop Joasaph Kuntsevich of Polotsk. Lev Sapecga, the head of the Great Principality of Lithuania, wrote to Kuntsevich on the Polish king’s behalf: “I admit, that I, too, was concerned about the cause of the Unia and that it would be imprudent to abandon it. But it had never occurred to me that your Eminence would implement it using such violent measures... You say that you are ‘free to drown the infidels [i.e. the Orthodox who rejected the Unia], to chop their heads off’, etc. Not so! The Lord’s commandment expresses a strict prohibition to all, which concerns you also. When you violated human

---

307 Platonov, op. cit., p. 224.
consciences, closed churches so that people should perish like infidels without
divine services, without Christian rites and sacraments; when you abused the
King’s favours and privileges – you managed without us. But when there is a
need to suppress seditions caused by your excesses you want us to cover up
for you… As to the dangers that threaten your life, one may say that everyone
is the cause of his own misfortune. Stop making trouble, do not subject us to
the general hatred of the people and you yourself to obvious danger and
general criticism… Everywhere one hears people grumbling that you do not
have any worthy priests, but only blind ones… Your ignorant priests are the
bane of the people… But tell me, your Eminence, whom did you win over,
whom did you attract through your severity?… It will turn out that in Polotsk
itself you have lost even those who until now were obedient to you. You have
turned sheep into goats, you have plunged the state into danger, and maybe
all of us Catholics – into ruin… It has been rumoured that they (the Orthodox)
would rather be under the infidel Turk than endure such violence… You
yourself are the cause of their rebellion. Instead of joy, your notorious Unia
has brought us only troubles and discords and has become so loathsome that
we would rather be without it!”

On May 22, 1620, local people gathered at the Trinity monastery near
Polotsk to express their indignation at Kuntsevich’s cruelty. “These people
suffered a terrible fate: an armed crowed of uniates surrounded the
monastery and set it on fire. As the fire was raging and destroying the
monastery and burning alive everyone within its walls, Joasaphat Kuntsevich
was performing on a nearby hill a thanksgiving service accompanied by the
cries of the victims of the fire…”

The Gregorian Calendar

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced the new, papal or Gregorian
calendar into the Latin church. This Pope was a Jesuit who had been morally
responsible for the St. Bartholomew’s night massacre of Protestant Huguenots
in Paris in 1572, describing it in a letter to the French king as a victory that
was a hundred times more to be welcomed than fifty victories against the
Turks. He introduced his “reform” of the Julian calendar on the basis of the
findings of the new Copernican astronomy, and immediately suggested to
Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople, in whose jurisdiction the West
Russian lands lay at that time, that he introduce it into his Church, too. The
patriarch refused, and wrote to the Orthodox Church of Poland, forbidding
the use of the new calendar under penalty of excommunication.

308 L. Perepiolkina, Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 227-228.
309 Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 228. In 1623 Kuntsevich was killed by the people of Vitebsk. In
1867 Pope Pius IX “glorified” him, and in 1963 Pope Paul VI translated his relics to the
Vatican. Pope John-Paul II lauded him as a “hieromartyr”...
310 Monk Pavlos of Cyprus, Neoinerologitismos Oikoumenismos (Neocalendarism-Ecumenism),
Jeremiah was one of the outstanding hierarchs of this period of the Church's history, one of the few who could justly be said to have been ecumenical in his vision and his activities.

We have seen his crucial role in the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate. Later, he politely but firmly rejected the confession of the Lutheran Church in a dialogue with Augsburg. But it was the initiative he undertook to reject the papal calendar that earned him everlasting renown.

Jeremiah understood that the acceptance of the seemingly innocuous Gregorian or papal calendar by the Orthodox of the Ukraine would immediately separate them, in terms of liturgical worship, from their fellow Orthodox elsewhere, while bringing them closer to the papist heretics. Moreover, it is likely that he also saw, as the Athonite Elder Augustine has pointed out, that if the Orthodox and the Latins had different calendars, this would be “a Divine economy for the Easterners, in that the masses, the people, who did not know the dogmatic differences which caused the separation, would be able, through this change, to flee the proselytising of papist propaganda by referring to the date of the celebration of the feasts.”

Therefore in 1583 he convened a Council in Constantinople attended by Patriarchs Sylvester of Alexandria and Sophronius of Jerusalem and several metropolitans, which anathematised the papal calendar as well as the other papist heresies as follows:

“1) That whosoever does not confess with heart and mouth that he is a child of the Eastern Church baptized in the Orthodox style, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father essentially and hypostatically, as Christ says in the Gospel, shall be outside of our Church and shall be anathematised.

“2) That whosoever does not confess that at the Mystery of Holy Communion the laity must also partake of both kinds, of the Precious Body and Blood, but instead says that he will partake only of the Body, and that that is sufficient because therein is both flesh and blood, when as a matter of fact Christ said and administered each separately... let all such persons be anathematised.

“3) That whosoever says that our Lord Jesus Christ at the Mystical Supper had unleavened bread (made without yeast), like that of the Jews, and not leavened bread, that is to say, bread raised with yeast, let him depart far from us and let him be anathema as one having Jewish views and those of

---

311 See Fr. Georges Florovsky, “Patriarch Jeremiah II and the Lutheran Divines”, in Christianity and Culture, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974, chapter VII.
Apollinarios and bringing dogmas of the Armenians into our Church, on which account let him be doubly anathema.

“4) Whosoever says that our Christ and God, when He comes to judge us, does not come to judge our souls together with bodies, or embodied souls, but instead comes to sentence only bodies, let him be anathema.

“5) Whosoever says that the souls of Christians who repented while in the world but failed to perform their penance go to a purgatory of fire when they die, where there is a flame and punishment, and are purified, which is simply an ancient Greek myth, and those who, like Origen, think that hell is not everlasting, and thereby afford or offer the liberty of incentive to sin, let him and all such persons be anathema.

“6) That whosoever says that the Pope is the Head of the Church, and not Christ, and that he has authority to admit persons to Paradise with his letters of indulgence or other passports, and can forgive sins as many as a person may commit if such a person pay money to receive from him indulgences, i.e. licences to sins, let every such person be anathema.

“7) That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow, but in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion and Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by the Fathers, let him be anathema and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful…”

These anathemas were confirmed by further Pan-Orthodox Councils in 1587 (attended by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem) and 1593 (attended by all the Eastern Patriarchs, the plenipotentiary of the Russian Church and many other Orthodox hierarchs). In the latter, the following was added as an eighth canon: “Let all those who dare to disturb the rules of the great and holy Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, as held in the presence of the pious and most God-beloved Emperor Constantine in regard to the holy feast of man-saving Pascha, be excommunicated and excluded from the Church.”

The Russian Time of Troubles

The Brest unia made the necessity of a strong autocracy in Moscow more essential than ever. Under Patriarch Job (1589-1605), the patriarchate had become an important player in State affairs. The bishops “together with the tsar and the boyars came together in a zemsky sobor in the dining room of the State palace and there reviewed the matters reported to them by the secretary. The patriarch began to play an especially important role after the death of Theodore Ivanovich (1598). The tsar died without children, and the throne
was vacant. Naturally, the patriarch became head of the fatherland for a time and had to care for State affairs. In the election of the future tsar his choice rested on Boris Godunov, who had protected him, and he did much to aid his ascension on the throne...”313

However, Boris Godunov had been a member of the dreaded oprichnina from his youth, and had married the daughter of the murderer of St. Philip of Moscow, Maliuta Skouratov.314 He therefore represented that part of Russian society that had profited from the cruelty and lawlessness of Ivan the Terrible. Moreover, though he was the first Russian tsar to be crowned and anointed by a full patriarch (on September 1, 1598), and there was no serious resistance to his ascending the throne, he acted from the beginning as if not quite sure of his position, or as if seeking some confirmation of his position from the lower ranks of society. This was perhaps because he was not a direct descendant of the Rurik dynasty (he was brother-in-law of Tsar Theodore), perhaps because (according to the Chronograph of 1617) the dying Tsar Theodore had pointed to his mother’s nephew, Theodore Nikitich Romanov, the future patriarch, as his successor, perhaps because he had some dark crime on his conscience...

In any case, Boris decided upon an unprecedented act. He interrupted the liturgy of the coronation, as Stephen Graham writes, “to proclaim the equality of man. It was a striking interruption of the ceremony. The Cathedral of the Assumption was packed with a mixed assembly such as never could have found place at the coronation of a tsar of the blood royal. There were many nobles there, but cheek by jowl with them merchants, shopkeepers, even beggars. Boris suddenly took the arm of the holy Patriarch in his and declaimed in a loud voice: ‘Oh, holy father Patriarch Job, I call God to witness that during my reign there shall be neither poor man nor beggar in my realm, but I will share all with my fellows, even to the last rag that I wear.’ And in sign he ran his fingers over the jewelled vestments that he wore. There was an unprecedented scene in the cathedral, almost a revolutionary tableau when the common people massed within the precincts broke the disciplined majesty of the scene to applaud the speaker.”315

How different was this democratism from the self-confidence of Ivan the Terrible: “I perform my kingly task and consider no man higher than myself.” And again: “The Russian autocrats have from the beginning had possession of all the kingdoms, and not the boyars and grandees.”316 And again, this time to the (elected) king of Poland: “We, humble Ivan, tsar and great prince of all Rus’, by the will of God, and not by the stormy will of man....”317

313 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 312.
314 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 105.
316 Quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Russkaia Ideologija (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg: Suvorina, 1992, p. 64 (in Russian).
317 Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), op. cit., p. 65.
In fact, Ivan the Terrible’s attitude to his own power, at any rate in the first part of his reign, was much closer to the attitude of the Russian people as a whole than was Boris Godunov’s. For, as St. John Maximovich writes, “the Russian sovereigns were never tsars by the will of the people, but always remained Autocrats by the Mercy of God. They were sovereigns in accordance with the dispensation of God, and not according to the ‘multimutinous’ will of man.”

Sensing that Tsar Boris was not sure of his legitimacy, the people paid more heed to the rumours that he had murdered the Tsarevich Demetrius, the Terrible’s youngest son, in 1591. But then came news that a young man claiming to be Demetrius Ivanovich was marching at the head of a Polish army into Russia. If this man was truly Demetrius, then Boris was, of course, innocent of his murder. But paradoxically this only made his position more insecure; for in the eyes of the people the hereditary principle was higher than any other - an illegitimate but living son of Ivan the Terrible was more legitimate for them than Boris, even though he was an intelligent and experienced ruler, the right-hand man of two previous tsars, and fully supported by the Patriarch, who anathematised the false Demetrius and all those who followed him. Support for Boris collapsed, and in 1605 he died, after which Demetrius, who had promised the Pope to convert Russia to Catholicism, swept to power in Moscow.

How was such sedition against their tsar possible in a people that had patiently put up with the terrible Ivan? Solonevich, points to the importance that the Russian people attached to the legitimacy of their tsars, in sharp contrast to the apparent lack of concern for legitimacy which he claims to find among the Byzantines. “Thus in Byzantium out of 109 reigning emperors 74 ascended onto the throne by means of regicide. This apparently disturbed no one. In Russia in the 14th century Prince Demetrius Shemyaka tried to act on the Byzantine model and overthrow Great Prince Basil Vasilyevich – and suffered a complete defeat. The Church cursed Shemyaka, the boyars turned away from him, the masses did not follow him: the Byzantine methods turned out to be unprofitable. Something of this sort took place with Boris Godunov. The dynasty of the Terrible had disappeared, and Boris Godunov turned out to be his nearest relative. Neither the lawfulness of his election to the kingdom, nor his exceptional abilities as a statesman, can be doubted... With Boris Godunov everything, in essence, was in order, except for one thing: the shade of Tsarevich Demetrius.”

---

This is an exaggeration: there were many things wrong with the reign of Boris Godunov, especially his encouragement of westerners, and his introduction of mutual spying and denunciation. However, there is no doubt that it was Boris’s murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius, the lawful heir to the throne, that especially excited the people to rebel. For “who in Byzantium would have worried about the fate of a child killed twenty years earlier? There might created right, and might washed away sin. In Rus’ right created might, and sin remained sin.” Although these words exaggerate the contrast between Byzantium and Rus’, the point concerning the importance of legitimacy in Muscovy is well taken. “As regards who had to be tsar,” writes St. John Maximovich, “a tsar could hold his own on the throne only if the principle of legitimacy was observed, that is, the elected person was the nearest heir of his predecessor. The legitimate Sovereign was the basis of the state’s prosperity and was demanded by the spirit of the Russian people.”

The people were never sure of the legitimacy of Boris Godunov, so they rebelled against him. However, even if these doubts could excuse their rebellion against Boris (which is doubtful, since he was an anointed Tsar recognized by the Church), it did not excuse cruel murder of his son, Tsar Theodore Borisovich, still less their recognition of a series of usurpers in the next decade. Moreover, the lawless character of these rebellions has been compared, not without justice, to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. First they accepted a real imposter, the false Demetrius – in reality a defrocked monk called Grishka Otrepev. In May, 1606, Prince Basil Shuisky led a successful rebellion against Demetrius, executed him and expelled the false patriarch Ignatius. He then called on Patriarch Job to come out of his enforced retirement, but he refused by reason of his blindness and old age. Another Patriarch was required; the choice fell of Metropolitan Hermogen of Kazan, who anointed Tsar Basil to the kingdom.

“Wonderful is the Providence of God,” writes Protopriest Lev Lebedev, “in bringing him to the summit of ecclesiastical power at this terrible Time of Troubles… In 1579 he had been ordained to the priesthood in the St. Nicholas Gostinodvorsky church in Kazan. And in the same year a great miracle had taken place, the discovery of the Kazan icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. This

---

320 The cellarer of the Holy Trinity Monastery, Abraham Palitsyn, said that he “was a good pander to the heresies of the Armenians and Latins” (in Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 114 (in Russian)).
321 Solonevich, op. cit., p. 82.
324 According to Protopriest Lev Lebedev, Patriarch Job’s blindness and expulsion from his see were his punishment for lying during the Council of 1598 that Ivan the Terrible had “ordered” that Boris Godunov be crowned in the case of the death of his son Theodore, and for lying again in covering up Boris’ guilt in the murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius (Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit., p. 112).
was linked with a great fall in the faith of Christ in the new land, the mocking of the Orthodox by the Muslims for failures in harvest, fires and other woes. A certain girl, the daughter of a rifleman, through a vision in sleep discovered on the place of their burned-down house an icon of the Mother of God. Nobody knew when or by whom it had been placed in the ground. The icon began to work wonders and manifest many signs of special grace. The whole of Kazan ran to it as to a source of salvation and intercession from woes. The priest Hermogen was a witness of all this. He immediately wrote down everything that had taken place in connection with the wonderworking icon and with great fervour composed a narrative about it. The glory of the Kazan icon quickly spread through Russia, many copies were made from it, and some of these also became wonderworking. The Theotokos was called “the fervent defender of the Christian race” in this icon of Kazan. It was precisely this icon and Hermogen who had come to love it that the Lord decreed should deliver Moscow and Russia from the chaos of the Time of Troubles and the hands of the enemies. By the Providence of the Theotokos Hermogen was in 1589 appointed Metropolitan of Kazan for his righteous life, and in 1606 he became Patriarch of all Rus’.

“As his first work it was necessary for him to correct the wavering of the people in relation to the false Demetrius and free them from the oath (curse) they had given. A special strict fast was declared, after which, on February 20, 1607, public repentance began in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin. Patriarch Job repented of having hidden from the people the fact that the Tsarevich Demetrius had been killed ‘by the plotting of Boris’ and called everyone to repentance. Nun Martha [the mother of the Tsarevich Demetrius] repented that out of fear she had recognized the Imposter to be her son. The Muscovites wept and repented of having sworn to Boris Godunov and Grisha Otrepev. Two Patriarchs – Job and Hermogen – absolved everyone with a special prayer-declaration, which was read aloud by the archdeacon.

“However, by this time it was already the question of another Imposter – false Demetrius the second. He was an obvious adventurer. And knowing about this, Rome and certain people in Poland again supported him! The legend was as follows: ‘Tsar’ Demetrius had not been killed in Moscow, but had managed to flee (‘he was miraculously saved’ for the second time!). And again Cossack detachments from Little Russia, the Don and Ukraine attached themselves to him. Again quite a few Russian people believed the lie, for they very much wanted to have a ‘real’, ‘born’ Tsar, as they put it at that time, who in the eyes of many could only be a direct descendant of Ivan IV. Marina Mnishek [the wife of the first false Demetrius] ‘recognized’ her lawful husband in the second false Demetrius. However, her spiritual father, a Jesuit, considered it necessary to marry her to the new Imposter; the Jesuit knew that he was not the same who had been killed in Moscow, but another false Demetrius… Certain secret instructions from Rome to those close to the new Imposter have been preserved. Essentially they come down to ordering them
gradually but steadily to bring about the union of the Russian Church with the Roman Church, and her submission to the Pope. In 1608 the second false Demetrius entered Russia and soon came near to Moscow, encamping at Tushino. For that reason he was then called ‘the Tushino thief’. ‘Thief’ in those days meant a state criminal (those who steal things were then called robbers). Marinka gave birth to a son from the second false Demetrius. The people immediately called the little child ‘the thieflet’. Moscow closed its gates. Only very few troops still remained for the defence of the city. A great wavering of hearts and minds arose. Some princes and boyars ran from Moscow to the ‘thief’ in Tushino and back again. Not having the strength to wage a major war, Tsar Basil Shuisky asked the Swedish King Carl IX to help him. In this he made a great mistake… Carl of Sweden and Sigismund of Poland were at that time warring for the throne of Sweden. By calling on the Swedes for help, Shuisky was placing Russia in the position of a military opponent of Poland, which she used, seeing the Troubles in the Russian Land, to declare war on Russia. Now the Polish king’s army under a ‘lawful’ pretext entered the Muscovite Kingdom. The Imposter was not needed by the Poles and was discarded by them. Sigismund besieged Smolensk, while a powerful army under Zholievsky went up to Moscow. The boyars who were not contented with Shuisky removed him from the throne (forced him to abdicate) in July, 1610.\textsuperscript{325} But whom would they now place as Tsar? This depended to a large extent on the boyars.

“O Great Russian princes and boyars! How much you tried from early times to seize power in the State! Now there is no lawful Tsar, now, it would seem, you have received the fullness of power. Now is the time for you to show yourselves, to show what you are capable of! And you have shown it…

“A terrible difference of opinions began amidst the government, which consisted of seven boyars and was called the ‘semiboyarschina’. Patriarch Hermogen immediately suggested calling to the kingdom the 14-year-old ‘Misha Romanov’, as he called him. But they didn’t listen to the Patriarch. They discussed Poland’s suggestion of placing the son of King Sigismund, Vladislav, on the Muscovite Throne. The majority of boyars agreed. The gates of Moscow were opened to the Poles and they occupied Chinatown and the Kremlin with their garrison. But at the same time a huge Polish army besieged the monastery of St. Sergius, ‘the Abbot of the Russian Land’, the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, but after a 16-month siege they were not able to take it! Patriarch Germogen was ready to agree to having the crown-prince Vladislav, but under certain conditions. Vladislav would be immediately, near Smolensk, baptised into the Orthodox Faith. He would take for a wife only a virgin of the Orthodox Confession. The Poles would leave Russia, and all the Russia apostates who had become Catholic or uniates would be

\textsuperscript{325} The Zemskij Sobor of 1613 called this act “a common sin of the land, committed out of the envy of the devil”. (Fomin & Fomina, \textit{Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem (Russian before the Second Coming)}, Moscow, 1998, vol. I, p. 255 (in Russian)). (V.M.)
executed. There would never be any negotiations between Moscow and Rome about the faith. An embassy was sent from near Smolensk to Sigismund for negotiations about the succession to the Throne. The spiritual head of the embassy was Metropolitan Philaret Nikitich Romanov of Rostov, who had been taken out of exile and then consecrated to the episcopate under Tsar Basil Shuisky. But at the same time Patriarch Germogen did not cease to exhort the Tushintsy who were still with the thief near Moscow, calling on them to be converted, repent and cease destroying the Fatherland.

“However, it turned out that Sigismund himself wanted to be on the Throne of Moscow... But this was a secret. The majority of the boyars agreed to accept even that, referring to the fact that the Poles were already in Moscow, while the Russians had no army with which to defend the country from Poland. A declaration was composed in which it was said that the Muscovite government ‘would be given to the will of the king’. The members of the government signed it. It was necessary that Patriarch Germogen should also give his signature. At this point Prince Michael Saltykov came to him. The head of the Russian Church replied: ‘No! I will put my signature to a declaration that the king should give his son to the Muscovite state, and withdraw all the king’s men from Moscow, that Vladislav should abandon the Latin heresy, and accept the Greek faith... But neither I nor the other (ecclesiastical) authorities will write that we should all rely on the king’s will and that our ambassadors should be placed in the will of the king, and I order you not to do it. It is clear that with such a declaration we would have to kiss the cross to the king himself.’ Saltykov took hold of a knife and moved towards the Patriarch. He made the sign of the cross over Saltykov and said: ‘I do not fear your knife, I protect myself from it by the power of the Cross of Christ. But may you be cursed from our humility both in this age and in the age to come!’ Nevertheless, in December, 1611 the boyars brought the declaration to near Smolensk, to the Russian ambassadors who were there.”

The boyars nearly produced a Russian Magna Carta, as Geoffrey Hosking explains: “They presented King Sigismund with a set of conditions on which they were prepared to accept his son Wladyslaw as Tsar. The first was that the Orthodox faith should remain inviolate. Then came stipulations on the rights of individual estates, for example, not to be punished or to have property confiscated without trial before a properly constituted court, not to be demoted from a high chin [rank] without clear and demonstrable fault. The document implied a state structure in which supreme authority would be shared with a combined boyar assembly and zemskii sobor (duma boiar i vseia zemli), in agreement with which questions of taxes, salaries of service people and the bestowal of patrimonial and service estates would be decided. Such a document might have laid for the basis for a constitutional Muscovite monarchy in personal union with Poland.”

326 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit., pp. 118-121.
327 Hosking, op. cit., p. 60.
The Patriarch’s authority was enough to scupper the plans of the Poles and the Russian boyars. For when the latter brought the document to the Poles at Smolensk, where a Russian embassy led by Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov had been for some time, then, “on not seeing the signature of the Patriarch on the document, the ambassadors replied to our boyars that the declaration was unlawful. They objected: ‘The Patriarch must not interfere in affairs of the land’. The ambassadors said: ‘From the beginning affairs were conducted as follows in our Russian State: if great affairs of State or of the land are begun, then our majesties summoned a council of patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops and conferred with them. Without their advice nothing was decreed. And our majesties revere the patriarchs with great honour... And before them were the metropolitans. Now we are without majesties, and the patriarch is our leader (that is – the main person in the absence of the Tsar). It is now unfitting to confer upon such a great matter without the patriarch... It is now impossible for us to act without patriarchal declarations, and only with those of the boyars...’

“The agreement with Sigismund and the transfer of the Muscovite Kingdom into his power did not take place... That is what such a mere ‘detail’ as a signature sometimes means – or rather, in the given case, the absence of a signature!

“This gave a spiritual and lawful basis (in prevision of fresh boyar betrayals) for the Russian cities to begin corresponding with each other with the aim of deciding how to save Moscow and the Fatherland. In this correspondence the name of Patriarch Hermogen was often mentioned, for he was ‘straight as a real pastor, who lays down his life for the Christian Faith’. The inhabitants of Yaroslavl wrote to the citizens of Kazan: ‘Hermogen has stood up for the Faith and Orthodoxy, and has ordered all of us to stand to the end. If he had not done this wondrous deed, everything would have perished.’ And truly Russia, which so recently had been on the point of taking Poland at the desire of the Poles, was now a hair’s-breadth away from becoming the dominion of Poland (and who knows for how long a time!). Meanwhile Patriarch Hermogen began himself to write to all the cities, calling on Russia to rise up to free herself. The letter-declarations stirred up the people, they had great power. The Poles demanded that he write to the cities and call on them not to go to Moscow to liberate it from those who had seized it. At this point Michael Saltykov again came to Hermogen. ‘I will write,’ replied the Patriarch, ‘... but only on condition that you and the traitors with you and the people of the king leave Moscow... I see the mocking of the true faith by heretics and by you traitors, and the destruction of the holy Churches of God and I cannot bear to hear the Latin chanting in Moscow’. Hermogen was imprisoned in the Chudov monastery and they began to starve him to death. But the voice of the Church did not fall silent. The brothers of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery headed by Archimandrite Dionysius also began to send
their appeals to the cities to unite in defence of the Fatherland. The people’s levies moved towards Moscow. The first meeting turned out to be unstable. Quite a few predatory Cossacks took part in it, for example the cossacks of Ataman Zarutsky. Quarrels and disputes, sometimes bloody ones, took place between the levies. Lyapunov, the leader of the Ryazan forces, was killed. This levy looted the population more than it warred with the Poles. Everything changed when the second levy, created through the efforts of Nizhni-Novgorod merchant Cosmas Minin Sukhorukov and Prince Demetrius Pozharsky, moved towards the capital. As we know, Minin, when stirring up the people to make sacrifices for the levy, called on them, if necessary, to sell their wives and children and mortgage their properties, but to liberate the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Dormition of the All-Holy Theotokos, where there was the Vladimir icon and the relics of the great Russian Holy Hierarchs (that is, he was talking about the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin!) That, it seems, was the precious thing that was dear to the inhabitants of Nizhni, Ryazan, Yaroslavl, Kazan and the other cities of Russia and for the sake of which they were ready to sell their wives and lay down their lives! That means that the Dormition cathedral was at that time that which we could call as it were the geographical centre of patriotism of Russia!

“On the advice of Patriarch Hermogen, the holy Kazan icon of the Mother of God was taken into the levy of Minin and Pozharsky.

“In the autumn of 1612 the second levy was already near Moscow. But it did not succeed in striking through to the capital. Their strength was ebbing away. Then the levies laid upon themselves a strict three-day fast and began earnestly to pray to the Heavenly Queen before her Kazan icon. At this time Bishop Arsenius, a Greek by birth, who was living in a monastery in the Kremlin, and who had come to us in 1588 with Patriarch Jeremiah, after fervent prayer saw in a subtle sleep St. Sergius. The abbot of the Russian Land told Arsenius that ‘by the prayers of the Theotokos judgement on our Fatherland has been turned to mercy, and that tomorrow Moscow will be in the hands of the levy and Russia will be saved!’ News of this vision of Arsenius was immediately passed to the army of Pozharsky, which enormously encouraged them. They advanced to a decisive attack and on October 22, 1612 took control of a part of Moscow and Chinatown. Street fighting in which the inhabitants took part began. In the fire and smoke it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. On October 27 the smoke began to disperse. The Poles surrendered....

“Patriarch Hermogen did not live to this radiant day. On February 17, 1612 he had died from hunger in the Chudov monastery. In 1912 he was numbered with the saints, and his relics reside to this day in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin.
“Thus at the end of 1612 the Time of Troubles came to an end. Although detachments of Poles, Swedes, robbers and Cossacks continued to wander around Russia. After the death of the second false Demetrius Marina Mnishek got together with Zarutsky, who still tried to fight, but was defeated. Marinka died in prison… But the decisive victory was won then, in 1612!”

In the Time of Troubles the best representatives of the Russian people, in the persons of the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen stood courageously for those Tsars who had been lawfully anointed by the Church and remained loyal to the Orthodox faith, regardless of their personal virtues or vices. Conversely, they refused to recognise (even at the cost of their sees and their lives) the pretenders to the tsardom who did not satisfy these conditions – again, regardless of their personal qualities. Most of the Russian clergy accepted the first false Demetrius. But “in relation to the second false Demetrius,” writes Protopriest Lev Lebedev, “[they] conducted themselves more courageously. Bishops Galaction of Suzdal and Joseph of Kolomna suffered for their non-acceptance of the usurper. Archbishop Theoctistus of Tver received a martyric death in Tushino. Dressed only in a shirt, the bare-footed Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, the future patriarch, was brought by the Poles into the camp of the usurper, where he remained in captivity. Seeing such terrible events, Bishop Gennadius of Pskov ‘died of sorrow…”

There were other champions of the faith: the monks of Holy Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra, who heroically resisted a long Polish siege, and the hermits St. Galaction of Vologda and Irinarchus of Rostov, who were both martyred by the Latins. Thus in the life of the latter we read: “Once there came into the elder’s cell a Polish noble, Pan Mikulinsky with other Pans. ‘In whom do you believe?’ he asked. ‘I believe in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!’ ‘And what earthly king do you have?’ The elder replied in a loud voice: ‘I have the Russian Tsar Basil Ioannovich [Shuisky]. I live in Russia, I have a Russian tsar – I have nobody else!’ One of the Pans said: ‘You, elder, are a traitor; you believe neither in our king, nor in [the second false] Demetrius!’ The elder replied: ‘I do not fear your sword, which is corruptible, and I will not betray my faith in the Russian Tsar. If you cut me off for that, then I will suffer it with joy. I have a little blood in me for you, but my Living God has a sword which will cut you off invisibly, without flesh or blood, and He will send your souls into eternal torment!’ And Pan Mikulinsky was amazed at the great faith of the elder…”

The history of the 17th and 18th centuries showed without a doubt which was the superior political principle: Russian Orthodox Autocracy or Polish Elective Monarchy. Thus while Russia went from strength to strength, finally

---

328 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op.cit., pp. 121-123.
330 The Life of St. Irinarchus, in Fomin & Fomina, op.cit., pp. 16-17.
liberating all the Russian lands from the oppressive tyranny of the Poles, Poland grew weaker under its powerless elective monarchy. Finally, by the end of the eighteenth century it had ceased to exist as an independent State, being divided up three ways between Prussia, Austria and Russia...

At the beginning of February, 1613, a Zemskij Sobor was assembled in Moscow in order to elect a Tsar for the widowed Russian land. In accordance with pious tradition, it began with a three-day fast and prayer to invoke God’s blessing on the assembly. “At the first conciliar session,” writes Hieromartyr Nicon, Archbishop of Vologda, “it was unanimously decided: ‘not to elect anyone of other foreign faiths, but to elect our own native Russian’. They began to elect their own; some pointed to one boyar, others to another... A certain nobleman from Galich presented a written opinion that the closest of all to the previous tsars by blood was Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov: he should be elected Tsar. They remembered that the reposed Patriarch had mentioned this name. An ataman from the Don gave the same opinion. And Mikhail Fyodorovich was proclaimed Tsar. But not all the elected delegates had yet arrived in Moscow, nor any of the most eminent boyars, and the matter was put off for another two weeks. Finally, they all assembled on February 21, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and by a common vote confirmed this choice. Then Archbishop Theodoritus of Ryazan, the cellarer Abraham Palitsyn of the Holy Trinity Monastery and the boyar Morozov came out onto the place of the skull and asked the people who were filling Red Square: ‘Who do you want for Tsar?’ And the people unanimously exclaimed: ‘Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov!’ And the Council appointed Archbishop Theodoritus, Abraham Palitsyn, three archimandrites and several notable boyars to go to the newly elected Tsar to ask him to please come to the capital city of Moscow to his Tsarist throne.”

It was with great difficulty that the delegation persuaded the adolescent boy and his mother, the nun Martha, to accept the responsibility. She at first refused, pointing to the fickleness of the Muscovites in relation to their tsars, the devastation of the kingdom, the youth of her son, the fact that his father was in captivity, her own fears of revenge... But in the end they succeeded.

Then, in recognition of the fact that it was largely the nation’s betrayal of legitimate autocratic authority that had led to the Time of Troubles, the delegates at this Sobor swore eternal loyalty to Michael Romanov and his descendants, promising to sacrifice themselves body and soul in his service against external enemies, “Poles, Germans and the Crimeans”.

Moreover, they called a curse upon themselves if they should ever break this oath. In February, 1917 the people of Russia broke their oath to the House

---

of Romanov by their betrayal of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II. The curse duly fell upon them in the form of the horrors of Soviet power...

“The outcome,” writes Lebedev, “suggested that Russians identified themselves with strong authority, backed by the Orthodox Church and unrestrained by any charter or covenant, such as might prove divisive and set one social group against another... The zemlia had for the first time constituted itself as a reality, based on elective local government institutions, and had chosen a new master...”332

For, as Pozharsky said in 1612, “we know that unless we possess a monarch we can neither fight our common enemies – Poles, Lithuanians, Germans nor our own brigands, who threaten the State with further bloodshed. Without a monarch how can we maintain relations with foreign states, or ourselves preserve the stability and strength or our country?”333

The Hereditary Principle

“The Time of Troubles,” writes Lebedev, “illuminated the profound basis of the interrelationship of ecclesiastical and royal power. This problem was reflected, as if in magnifying glass, in the above-mentioned quarrels of the Russian ambassadors with regard to the absence of Patriarch Hermogen’s signature on the document of the capitulation of Russia. It turns out that both the Russian hierarchs and the best statesmen understood the relationship of the tsar and the patriarch in a truly Christian, communal sense. In the one great Orthodox society of Russia there are two leaders: a spiritual (the patriarch) and a secular (the tsar). They are both responsible for all that takes place in society, but each in his own way: the tsar first of all for civil affairs (although he can also take a very active and honourable part in ecclesiastical affairs when that is necessary), while the patriarch is first of all responsible for ecclesiastical, spiritual affairs (although he can also, when necessary, take a most active part in state affairs). The tsars take counsel with the patriarchs, the patriarchs – with the tsars in all the most important questions. Traditionally the patriarch is an obligatory member of the boyars’ Duma (government). If there is no tsar, then the most important worldly affairs are decided only with the blessing of the patriarch. If in the affair of the establishment of the patriarchate in Russia it was the royal power that was basically active, in the Time of Troubles the royal power itself and the whole of Russia were saved by none other than the Russian patriarchs! Thus the troubles very distinctly demonstrated that the Russian ecclesiastical authorities were not, and did not think of themselves as being, a 'legally obedient' arm of the State power, as some (A.V. Kartashev) would have it. It can remain and did remain in agreement with the State power in those affairs

332 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Russia), op. cit., pp. 63, 64.
333 Arsène de Goulévitch, Czarism and Revolution, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 34.
in which this was possible from an ecclesiastical point of view, and to the extent that this was possible.

“In this question it was important that neither side should try to seize for itself the prerogatives of the other side, that is, should not be a usurper, for usurpation can be understood not only in the narrow sense, but also in the broad sense of the general striving to become that which you are not by law, to assume for yourself those functions which do not belong to you by right. It is amazing that in those days there was no precise juridical, written law (‘right’) concerning the competence and mutual relations of the royal and ecclesiastical powers. Relations were defined by the spiritual logic of things and age-old tradition…”334

And so, with the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar, Muscovy was established on the twin pillars of the Orthodox Faith and the Dynastic Principle. The requirement of Orthodoxy had been passed down from the Byzantines. Hereditary Succession was not a requirement in Rome or Byzantium (which is one reason why so many Byzantine emperors were assassinated); but in Russia, as in some Western Orthodox autocracies (for example, the Anglo-Saxon), it had always been felt to be a necessity.

Both pillars had been shaken during the Time of Troubles, after the death of the last Ryurik tsar. But Orthodoxy had been restored above all by the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen refusing to recognise a Catholic tsar, and then by the national army of liberation that drove out the Poles. And the Hereditary Principle, already tacitly accepted if mistakenly applied by the people when they followed the false Demetrius, had been affirmed by all the estates of the nation at the Zemskij Sobor in 1613.

Since the hereditary principle is commonly considered to be irrational as placing the government of the State “at the mercy of chance”, it may be worth pausing to consider its significance in Russian Orthodox statehood.

First, after electing the first Romanov tsar, the people retained no right to depose him or any of his successors. On the contrary, they elected a hereditary dynasty, and specifically bound themselves by an oath to be loyal to that dynasty forever. Secondly, while the Zemskij Sobor of 1613 was, of course, an election, it was by no means a democratic election in the modern sense, but rather a recognition of God’s election of a ruler on the model of the Israelites’ election of Jephtha (Judges 11.11). For, as Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: “Tsars are not elected! And a Council, even a Zemskij Sobor, cannot be the source of power. The kingdom is a calling of God, the Council can determine who is the lawful Tsar and summon him.”335

334 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., pp. 18-19.
335 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit., p. 126.
Again, as Solonevich writes, “when, after the Time of Troubles, the question was raised concerning the restoration of the monarchy, there was no hint of an ‘election to the kingdom’. There was a ‘search’ for people who had the greatest hereditary right to the throne. And not an ‘election’ of the more worthy. There were not, and could not be, any ‘merits’ in the young Michael Fyodorovich. But since only the hereditary principle affords the advantage of absolutely indisputability, it was on this that the ‘election’ was based.”

St. John Maximovich writes: “It was almost impossible to elect some person as tsar for his qualities; everyone evaluated the candidates from his own point of view....

“What drew the hearts of all to Michael Romanov? He had neither experience of statecraft, nor had he done any service to the state. He was not distinguished by the state wisdom of Boris Godunov or by the eminence of his race, as was Basil Shuisky. He was sixteen years old, and “Misha Romanov”, as he was generally known, had not yet managed to show his worth in anything. But why did the Russian people rest on him, and why with his crowning did all the quarrels and disturbances regarding the royal throne come to an end? The Russian people longed for a lawful, “native” Sovereign, and was convinced that without him there could be no order or peace in Russia. When Boris Godunov and Prince Basil Shuisky were elected, although they had, to a certain degree, rights to the throne through their kinship with the previous tsars, they were not elected by reason of their exclusive rights, but their personalities were taken into account. There was no strict lawful succession in their case. This explained the success of the pretenders. However, it was almost impossible to elect someone as tsar for his qualities. Everyone evaluated the candidates from their point of view. However, the absence of a definite law which would have provided an heir in the case of the cutting off of the line of the Great Princes and Tsars of Moscow made it necessary for the people itself to indicate who they wanted as tsar. The descendants of the appanage princes, although they came from the same race as that of the Moscow Tsars (and never forgot that), were in the eyes of the people simple noblemen, “serfs” of the Moscow sovereigns; their distant kinship with the royal line had already lost its significance. Moreover, it was difficult to establish precisely which of the descendants of St. Vladimir on the male side had the most grounds for being recognised as the closest heir to the defunct royal line. In such circumstances all united in the suggestion that the extinct Royal branch should be continued by the closest relative of the last “native”, lawful Tsar. The closest relatives of Tzar Theodore Ioannovich were his cousins on his mother’s side: Theodore, in monasticism Philaret, and Ivan Nikitich Romanov, both of whom had sons. In that case the throne had to pass to Theodore, as the eldest, but his monasticism and the rank of Metropolitan of Rostov was an obstacle to this. His heir was his only son Michael. Thus the question was no longer about the election of a Tsar, but

336 Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
about the recognition that a definite person had the rights to the throne. The Russian people, tormented by the time of troubles and the lawlessness, welcomed this decision, since it saw that order could be restored only by a lawful “native” Tsar. The people remembered the services of the Romanovs to their homeland, their sufferings for it, the meek Tsaritsa Anastasia Romanova, the firmness of Philaret Nikititch. All this still more strongly attracted the hearts of the people to the announced tsar. But these qualities were possessed also by some other statesmen and sorrowers for Rus’. And this was not the reason for the election of Tsar Michael Romanovich, but the fact that in him Rus’ saw their most lawful and native Sovereign.

“In the acts on the election to the kingdom of Michael Fyodorovich, the idea that he was ascending the throne by virtue of his election by the people was carefully avoided, and it was pointed out that the new Tsar was the elect of God, the direct descendant of the last lawful Sovereign.”

The hereditary tsar’s rule is inviolable. As Metropolitan Philaret writes: “A government that is not fenced about by an inviolability that is venerated religiously by the whole people cannot act with the whole fullness of power or that freedom of zeal that is necessary for the construction and preservation of the public good and security. How can it develop its whole strength in its most beneficial direction, when its power constantly finds itself in an insecure position, struggling with other powers that cut short its actions in as many different directions as are the opinions, prejudices and passions more or less dominant in society? How can it surrender itself to the full force of its zeal, when it must of necessity divide its attentions between care for the prosperity of society and anxiety about its own security? But if the government is so lacking in firmness, then the State is also lacking in firmness. Such a State is like a city built on a volcanic mountain: what significance does its hard earth have when under it is hidden a power that can at any minute turn everything into ruins? Subjects who do not recognise the inviolability of rulers are incited by the hope of licence to achieve licence and predominance, and between the horrors of anarchy and oppression they cannot establish in themselves that obedient freedom which is the focus and soul of public life.”

In general, the hereditary autocrat is above the law so long as he does not transgress that unwritten law which defines the very essence of the Orthodox hereditary monarchy. For, as Solonevich writes: “The fundamental, most fundamental idea of the Russian monarchy was most vividly and clearly expressed by A.S. Pushkin just before the end of his life: ‘There must be one person standing higher than everybody, higher even than the law.’

“In this formulation, ‘one man’, Man is placed in very big letters above the law. This formulation is completely unacceptable for the Roman-European cast of mind, for which the law is everything: dura lex, sed lex. The Russian cast of mind places, man, mankind, the soul higher than the law, giving to the law only that place which it should occupy: the place occupied by traffic rules. Of course, with corresponding punishments for driving on the left side. Man is not for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man. It is not that man is for the fulfilment of the law, but the law is for the preservation of man…”

“The whole history of humanity is filled with the struggle of tribes, people, nations, classes, estates, groups, parties, religions and whatever you like. It’s almost as Hobbes put it: ‘War by everyone against everyone’. How are we to find a neutral point of support in this struggle? An arbiter standing above the tribes, nations, peoples, classes, estates, etc.? Uniting the people, classes and religions into a common whole? Submitting the interests of the part to the interests of the whole? And placing moral principles above egoism, which is always characteristic of every group of people pushed forward the summit of public life?”

The idea that the tsar is higher than the law, while remaining subject to the law of God, is also defended by Metropolitan Philaret: “The tsar, rightly understood, is the head and soul of the kingdom. But, you object to me, the soul of the State must be the law. The law is necessary, it is worthy of honour, faithful; but the law in charters and books is a dead letter… The law, which is dead in books, comes to life in acts; and the supreme State actor and exciter and inspirer of the subject actors is the Tsar.”

But if the tsar is above the law, how can he not be a tyrant, insofar as “power corrupts, and absolute power absolutely corrupts” (Lord Acton)?

First, as we have seen, the tsar’s power is not absolute insofar as he is subject to the law of God and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, which the Church is called upon to defend. Secondly, it is not only tsars, but rulers of all kinds that are subject to the temptations of power. Indeed, these temptations may even be worse with democratic rulers; for whereas the tsar stands above all factional interests, an elected president necessarily represents the interests only of his party at the expense of the country as a whole. “Western thought,” writes Solonevich, “sways from the dictatorship of capitalism to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but no representative of this thought has even so much as thought of ‘the dictatorship of conscience’.”

339 Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 84, 85.
341 Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 85-86.
“The distinguishing characteristic of Russian monarchy, which was given to it at its birth, consists in the fact that the Russian monarchy expressed the will not of the most powerful, but the will of the whole nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy and politically given shape by the Empire. The will of the nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy will be ‘the dictatorship of conscience.’ Only in this way can we explain the possibility of the manifesto of February 19, 1861 [when Tsar Alexander II freed the peasants]: ‘the dictatorship of conscience’ was able overcome the terribly opposition of the ruling class, and the ruling class proved powerless. We must always have this distinction in mind: the Russian monarchy is the expression of the will, that is: the conscience, of the nation, not the will of the capitalists, which both French Napoleons expressed, or the will of the aristocracy, which all the other monarchies of Europe expressed: the Russian monarchy is the closes approximation to the ideal of monarchy in general. This ideal was never attained by the Russian monarchy – for the well-known reason that no ideal is realisable in our life. In the history of the Russian monarchy, as in the whole of our world, there were periods of decline, of deviation, of failure, but there were also periods of recovery such as world history has never known.”342

Now State power, which, like power in the family or the tribe, always has an element of coercion, “is constructed in three ways: by inheritance, by election and by seizure: monarchy, republic, dictatorship. In practice all this changes places: the man who seizes power becomes a hereditary monarch (Napoleon I), the elected president becomes the same (Napoleon III), or tries to become it (Oliver Cromwell). The elected ‘chancellor’, Hitler, becomes a seizer of power. But in general these are nevertheless exceptions.

“Both a republic and a dictatorship presuppose a struggle for power – democratic in the first case and necessarily bloody in the second: Stalin –Trotsky, Mussolini-Matteotti, Hitler-Röhm. In a republic, as a rule, the struggle is unbloody. However, even an unbloody struggle is not completely without cost. Aristide Briand, who became French Prime Minister several times, admitted that 95% of his strength was spent on the struggle for power and only five percent on the work of power. And even this five percent was exceptionally short-lived.

“Election and seizure are, so to speak, rationalist methods. Hereditary power is, strictly speaking, the power of chance, indisputable if only because the chance of birth is completely indisputable. You can recognise or not recognise the principle of monarchy in general. But no one can deny the existence of the positive law presenting the right of inheriting the throne to the first son of the reigning monarch. Having recourse to a somewhat crude comparison, this is something like an ace in cards... An ace is an ace. No election, no merit, and

342 Solonevich, op. cit., p. 86.
consequently no quarrel. Power passes without quarrel and pain: the king is dead, long live the king!"343

We may interrupt Solonevich’s argument here to qualify his use of the word “chance”. The fact that a man inherits the throne only because he is the firstborn of his father may be “by chance” from a human point of view. But from the Divine point of view it is election. For, as Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: “There is no blind chance! God rules the world, and everything that takes place in heaven and beneath the heavens takes place according to the judgement of the All-wise and All-powerful God.” 344 Moreover, as Bishop Ignatius also writes, “in blessed Russia, according to the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole.”345 This being so, it was only natural that the law of succession should be hereditary, from father to son.

Solonevich continues: “The human individual, born by chance as heir to the throne, is placed in circumstances which guarantee him the best possible professional preparation from a technical point of view. His Majesty Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich was probably one of the most educated people of his time. The best professors of Russia taught him both law and strategy and history and literature. He spoke with complete freedom in three foreign languages. His knowledge was not one-sided... and was, if one can so express it, living knowledge...

“The Russian tsar was in charge of everything and was obliged to know everything - it goes without saying, as far as humanly possible. He was a ‘specialist’ in that sphere which excludes all specialisation. This was a specialism standing above all the specialisms of the world and embracing them all. That is, the general volume of erudition of the Russian monarch had in mind that which every philosophy has in mind: the concentration in one point of the whole sum of human knowledge. However, with this colossal qualification, that ‘the sum of knowledge’ of the Russian tsars grew in a seamless manner from the living practice of the past and was checked against the living practice of the present. True, that is how almost all philosophy is checked – for example, with Robespierre, Lenin and Hitler – but, fortunately for humanity, such checking takes place comparatively rarely....

“The heir to the Throne, later the possessor of the Throne, is placed in such conditions under which temptations are reduced... to a minimum. He is given everything he needs beforehand. At his birth he receives an order, which he, of course, did not manage to earn, and the temptation of vainglory is liquidated in embryo. He is absolutely provided for materially – the

343 Solonevich, op. cit, p. 87.
344 Brianchaninov, “On the Judgements of God”.
345 Brianchaninov, Pis’ma (Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781 (in Russian).
temptation of avarice is liquidated in embryo. He is the only one having the Right – and so competition falls away, together with everything linked with it. Everything is organised in such a way that the personal destiny of the individual should be welded together into one whole with the destiny of the nation. Everything that a person would want to have for himself is already given him. And the person automatically merges with the general good.

“One could say that all this is possessed also by a dictator of the type of Napoleon, Stalin or Hitler. But this would be less than half true: everything that the dictator has he conquered, and all this he must constantly defend – both against competitors and against the nation. The dictator is forced to prove every day that it is precisely he who is the most brilliant, great, greatest and inimitable, for if not he, but someone else, is not the most brilliant, then it is obvious that that other person has the right to power...

“We can, of course, quarrel over the very principle of ‘chance’. A banally rationalist, pitifully scientific point of view is usually formulated thus: the chance of birth may produce a defective man. But we, we will elect the best... Of course, ‘the chance of birth’ can produce a defective man. We have examples of this: Tsar Theodore Ivanovich. Nothing terrible happened. For the monarchy ‘is not the arbitrariness of a single man’, but ‘a system of institutions’, - a system can operate temporarily even without a ‘man’. But simple statistics show that the chance of such ‘chance’ events are very small. And the chance of ‘a genius on the throne’ appearing is still smaller.

“I proceed from the axiom that a genius in politics is worse than the plague. For a genius is a person who thinks up something that is new in principle. In thinking up something that is new in principle, he invades the organic life of the country and cripples it, as it was crippled by Napoleon, Stalin and Hitler...

“The power of the tsar is the power of the average, averagely clever man over two hundred million average, averagely clever people... V. Klyuchevsky said with some perplexity that the first Muscovite princes, the first gatherers of the Russian land, were completely average people: - and yet, look, they gathered the Russian land. This is quite simple: average people have acted in the interests of average people and the line of the nation has coincided with the line of power. So the average people of the Novgorodian army went over to the side of the average people of Moscow, while the average people of the USSR are running away in all directions from the genius of Stalin.”346

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow expressed the superiority of the hereditary over the elective principle as follows: “What conflict does election for public posts produce in other peoples! With what conflict, and sometimes also with what alarm do they attain the legalisation of the right of public

election! Then there begins the struggle, sometimes dying down and sometimes rising up again, sometimes for the extension and sometimes for the restriction of this right. The incorrect extension of the right of social election is followed by its incorrect use. It would be difficult to believe it if we did not read in foreign newspapers that elective votes are sold; that sympathy or lack of sympathy for those seeking election is expressed not only by votes for and votes against, but also by sticks and stones, as if a man can be born from a beast, and rational business out of the fury of the passions; that ignorant people make the choice between those in whom wisdom of state is envisaged, lawless people participate in the election of future lawgivers, peasants and craftsmen discuss and vote, not about who could best keep order in the village or the society of craftsmen, but about who is capable of administering the State.

“Thanks be to God! It is not so in our fatherland. Autocratic power, established on the age-old law of heredity, which once, at a time of impoverished heredity, was renewed and strengthened on its former basis by a pure and rational election, stands in inviolable firmness and acts with calm majesty. Its subjects do not think of striving for the right of election to public posts in the assurance that the authorities care for the common good and know through whom and how to construct it.”

“God, in accordance with the image of His heavenly single rule, has established a tsar on earth; in accordance with the image of His almighty power, He has established an autocratic tsar; in accordance with the image of His everlasting Kingdom, which continues from age to age, He has established a hereditary tsar.”

We may now define more precisely why the hereditary principle was considered by the Russian people to be not simply superior to the elective principle, but as far superior to it as heaven is to the earth. For while an elected president is installed by the will of man, and can be said to be installed by the will of God only indirectly, by permission, but not actively; the determination of who will be born as the heir to the throne is completely beyond the power of man, and so entirely within the power of God. The hereditary principle therefore ensures that the tsar will indeed be elected – but by God, not by man.

Tsar, Patriarch and People

The first Romanov tsar, Michael Fyodorovich, had his own natural father, Philaret Nikitich, as his Patriarch. This unusual relationship, in which both

---

took the title “Great Sovereign”, was profoundly significant in the context of the times. It was “unique,” according to Lebedev, “not only for Russian history, but also for the universal history of the Church, when a natural father and son become the two heads of a single Orthodox power!” But it was highly significant in that it showed what the relationship between the heads of the Church and the State should be – a filial one of mutual trust and love.

The sixteenth century had seen the power of the tsar, in the person of Ivan the Terrible, leaning dangerously towards caesaropapism in practice, if not in theory. However, the Time of Troubles had demonstrated how critically the Orthodox Autocracy depended on the legitimising and sanctifying power of the Church. In disobedience to her, the people had broken their oath of allegiance to the legitimate tsar and plunged the country into anarchy; but in penitent obedience to her, they had succeeded in finally driving out the invaders. The election of the tsar’s father to the patriarchal see both implicitly acknowledged this debt of the Autocracy and People to the Church, and indicated that while the Autocracy was now re-established in all its former power and inviolability, the tsar being answerable to God alone for his actions in the political sphere, nevertheless he received his sanction and sanctification from the Church in the person of the Patriarch, who was as superior to him in his sphere, the sphere of the Spirit, as a father is to his son, and who, as the Zemskij Sobor of 1619 put it, “for this reason [i.e. because he was father of the tsar] is to be a helper and builder for the kingdom, a defender for widows and intercessor for the wronged.”

Patriarch Philaret’s firm hand was essential in holding the still deeply shaken State together. As Dobroklonsky writes: “The Time of Troubles had shaken the structure of the State in Russia, weakening discipline and unleashing arbitrariness; the material situation of the country demanded improvements that could not be put off. On ascending the throne, Michael Fyodorovich was still too young, inexperienced and indecisive to correct the shattered State order. Having become accustomed to self-will, the boyars were not able to renounce it even now: ‘They took no account of the tsar, they did not fear him,’ says the chronicler, ‘as long as he was a child… They divided up the whole land in accordance with their will.’ In the census that took place after the devastation of Moscow many injustices had been permitted in taxing the people, so that it was difficult for some and easy for others. The boyars became ‘violators’, oppressing the weak; the Boyar Duma contained unworthy me, inclined to intrigues against each other rather than State matters and interests. In the opinion of some historians, the boyars even restricted the autocracy of the tsar, and the whole administration of the State depended on them. A powerful will and an experienced man was necessary to annihilate the evil. Such could be for the young sovereign his father, Patriarch Philaret, in whom circumstances had created a strong character, and

---

349 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 20 (in Russian).
350 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 20.
to whom age and former participation in State affairs had given knowledge of
the boyar set and the whole of Russian life and experience in administration.
Finally, the woes of the fatherland had generated a burning patriotism in him.
In reality, Philaret became the adviser and right hand of the Tsar. The Tsar himself, in his decree to voyevodas of July 3, 1619 informing them of the
return of his father from Poland, put it as follows: ‘We, the great sovereign,
having taken counsel with our father and intercessor with God, will learn
how to care for the Muscovite State so as to correct everything in it in the best
manner.’ The chroniclers call Philaret ‘the most statesmanlike patriarch’,
noting that ‘he was in control of all the governmental and military affairs’ and
that ‘the tsar and patriarch administered everything together’. Philaret was in
fact as much a statesman as a churchman. This is indicated by the title hew
used: ‘the great sovereign and most holy Patriarch Philaret Nikitich’. All
important State decrees and provisions were made with his blessing and
counsel. When the tsar and patriarch were separated they corresponded with
each other, taking counsel with each other in State affairs. Their names
figured next to each other on decrees... Some decrees on State affairs were
published by the patriarch alone; and he rescinded some of the resolutions
made by his son. Subjects wrote their petitions not only to the tsar, but at the
same time to the patriarch; the boyars often assembled in the corridors before
his cross palace to discuss State affairs; they presented various reports to him
as well as to the tsar. The patriarch usually took part in receptions of foreign
ambassadors sitting on the right hand of the tsar; both were given gifts and
special documents; if for some reason the patriarch was not present at this
reception, the ambassadors would officially present themselves in the
patriarchal palace and with the same ceremonies as to the tsar. The influence
of the patriarch on the tsar was so complete and powerful that there was no
place for any influence of the boyars who surrounded the throne.”

The Church’s recovery was reflected in the more frequent convening of
Church Councils. If we exclude the false council of 1666-67 (of which more
anon), these were genuinely free of interference from the State, and the tsar
was sometimes forced to submit to them against his will. Thus a Church
Council in 1621 decreed that the proposed Catholic bridegroom for the Tsar’s
daughter would have to be baptised first in the Orthodox Church, and that in
general all Catholics and uniates joining the Orthodox Church, and all
Orthodox who had been baptised incorrectly, without full immersion, should
be baptised. For, as Patriarch Philaret said, “the Latins-papists are the most
evil and defiled of all heretics, for they have received into their law the
accursed heresies of all the Hellenes, the Judaizers, the Hagarenes (that is, the
Muslims) and the heretical faiths, and in general they all think and act
together with all the pagans and heretics.”

351 Dobroklonksy, op. cit. pp. 323-324.
352 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit. p. 130.
However, seventeenth-century Russia not only displayed a rare symphony of Church and State. It also included in this symphony the People; for all classes of the population took part in the Zemskie Sobory, or “Councils of the Land”. Again, this owed much to the experience of the Time of Troubles; for, as we have seen, the People played a large part at that time in the re-establishment of lawful autocratic rule. Thus in the reign of Tsar Michael Fyodorovich all the most important matters were decided by Councils, which, like the first Council of 1613, were Councils “of the whole land”. Such Councils continued to be convened until 1689.

The symphony between Tsar and People was particularly evident in judicial matters, where the people jealously guarded their ancient right to appeal directly to the Tsar for justice. Of course, as the State became larger it became impossible for the Tsar personally to judge all cases, and he appointed posadniki, namestniki and volosteli to administer justice in his name. At the same time, the Tsars always appreciated the significance of a direct link with the people over the heads of the bureaucracy; and in 1550 Ivan the Terrible created a kind of personal office to deal with petitions called the Chelobitnij Prikaz, which lasted until Peter the Great. It was also Ivan who convened the first Zemskie Sobory.

The bond between Tsar and People was maintained throughout the administration. The central administrative institutions were: (a) the Prikazi, or Ministries, over each of which the Tsar appointed a boyar with a staff of secretaries (dyaki), (b) the Boyar Duma, an essentially aristocratic institution, which, however, was broadened into the more widely representative (c) Councils of the Land (Zemskie Sobory) for particularly important matters. This constituted a much wider consultative base than prevailed in contemporary Western European states.

To the local administration, writes Tikhomirov, “voyevodas were sent, but besides them there existed numerous publicly elected authorities. The voyevodas’ competence was complex and broad. The voyevoda, as representative of the tsar, had to look at absolutely everything: so that all the tsar’s affairs were intact, so that there should be guardians everywhere; to take great care that in the town and the uyezd there should be no fights, thievery, murder, fighting, burglary, bootlegging, debauchery; whoever was declared to have committed such crimes was to be taken and, after investigation, punished. The voyevoda was the judge also in all civil matters. The voyevoda was in charge generally of all branches of the tsar’s administration, but his power was not absolute, and he practised it together with representatives of society’s self-administration... According to the tsar’s code of laws, none of the administrators appointed for the cities and volosts could judge any matter without society’s representatives...
“Finally, the whole people had the broadest right of appeal to his Majesty in all matters in general. ‘The government,’ notes Soloviev, ‘was not deaf to petitions. If some mir [village commune] asked for an elected official instead of the crown’s, the government willingly agreed. They petitioned that the city bailiff... should be retired and a new one elected by the mir: his Majesty ordered the election, etc. All in all, the system of the administrative authorities of Muscovy was distinguished by a multitude of technical imperfections, by the chance nature of the establishment of institutions, by their lack of specialisation, etc. But this system of administration possessed one valuable quality: the broad admittance of aristocratic and democratic elements, their use as communal forces under the supremacy of the tsar’s power, with the general right of petition to the tsar. This gave the supreme power a wide base of information and brought it closer to the life of all the estates, and there settled in all the Russias a deep conviction in the reality of a supreme power directing and managing everything.”

For "in what was this autocratic power of the Tsar strong?” asks Hieromartyr Andronicus, Archbishop of Perm. “In that fact that it was based on the conscience and on the Law of God, and was supported by its closeness to the land, by the council of the people. The princely entourage, the boyars’ Duma, the Zemskij Sobor - that is what preserved the power of the Tsars in its fullness, not allowing anyone to seize or divert it. The people of proven experience and honesty came from the regions filled with an identical care for the construction of the Russian land. They raised to the Tsar the voice and counsel of the people concerning how and what to build in the country. And it remained for the Tsar to learn from all the voices, to bring everything together for the benefit of all and to command the rigorous fulfilment for the common good of the people of that for which he would answer before the Omniscient God and his own conscience.”

The Schism of the Old Ritualists

Unfortunately, this almost ideal relationship between Tsar and people did not survive for long into the second half of the seventeenth century. Under Tsar Michael’s son, Alexis Mikhailovich, there were many rebellions. The most serious, large-scale and long-term rebellion was that of the so-called Old Ritualists against both the State and the Orthodox Church, and more particularly against the Orthodox idea of the Universal Empire...

By the middle of the century, at a time when the principle of monarchical rule was being shaken to its foundations in the English revolution, the Russian Autocracy had acquired such prestige in the Orthodox world that

---

even the Greeks were looking to it to deliver them from the Turkish yoke and take over the throne of the Constantinopolitan Emperor. Thus in 1645, during the coronation of Tsar Alexis, Patriarch Joseph for the first time read the “Prayer of Philaret” on the enthronement of the Russian Tsar over the whole oikoumene.\textsuperscript{355} And in 1649 Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem wrote to the tsar: “May the All-Holy Trinity multiply you more than all the tsars, and count you worthy to grasp the most lofty throne of the great King Constantine, your forefather, and liberate the peoples of the pious and Orthodox Christians from impious hands. May you be a new Moses, may you liberate us from captivity just as he liberated the sons of Israel from the hands of Pharaoh.”\textsuperscript{356}

As Hieromonk Gregory Lourié writes: “At that time hopes in Greece for a miraculous re-establishment of Constantinople before the end of the world [based on the prophecies of Leo the Wise and others], were somewhat strengthened, if not squeezed out, by hopes on Russia. Anastasius Gordius (1654-1729), the author of what later became an authoritative historical-eschatological interpretation of the Apocalypse (1717-23) called the Russian Empire the guardian of the faith to the very coming of the Messiah. The hopes of the Greeks for liberation from the Turks that were linked with Russia, which had become traditional already from the time of St. Maximus the Greek (1470-1555), also found their place in the interpretations of the Apocalypse. Until the middle of the 19th century itself – until the Greeks, on a wave of pan-European nationalism thought up their ‘Great Idea’ – Russia would take the place of Byzantium in their eschatological hopes, as being the last Christian Empire. They considered the Russian Empire to be their own, and the Russian Tsar Nicholas (not their Lutheran King Otto) as their own, to the great astonishment and annoyance of European travellers.”\textsuperscript{357}

Tragically, however, it was at precisely this time, when Russia seemed ready to take the place of the Christian Roman Empire in the eyes of all the Orthodox, that the Russian autocracy and Church suffered a simultaneous attack from two sides from which it never fully recovered.

From the right came the attack of the “Old Ritualists” or “Old Believers”, as they came to be called, who expressed the schismatic and nationalist idea that the only true Orthodoxy was Russian Orthodoxy, and from the left – that of the westernising Russian aristocracy and the Greek pseudo-hierarchs of the council of 1666-67, who succeeded in removing the champion of the traditional Orthodox symphony of powers, Patriarch Nicon of Moscow.

---

\textsuperscript{355} Fomin and Fomina, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, p. 259.


The beginnings of the tragedy lay in the arrival in Moscow of some educated monks from the south of Russia, which at that time was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. They (and Greek hierarchs visiting Moscow) pointed to the existence of several differences between the Muscovite service books and those employed in the Greek Church. These differences concerned such matters as how the word "Jesus" was to be spelt, whether two or three "alleluias" should be chanted in the Divine services, whether the sign of the Cross should be made with two or three fingers, etc.

A group of leading Muscovite clergy led by Protopriests John Neronov and Avvakum rejected these criticisms. They said that the reforms contradicted the decrees of the famous Stoglav council of 1551, which had anathematized the three-fingered sign of the cross, and they suspected that the southerners were tainted with Latinism through their long subjection to Polish rule. Therefore they were unwilling to bow unquestioningly to their superior knowledge.

However, the Stoglav council, while important, was never as authoritative as the Ecumenical Councils, and certain of its provisions have never been accepted in their full force by the Russian Church - for example, its 40th chapter, which decreed that anyone who shaved his beard, and died in such a state (i.e. without repenting), should be denied a Christian burial and numbered among the unbelievers.

Moreover, in elevating ritual differences between the Greek and Russian Churches into an issue of dogmatic faith, the “zealots for piety” were undoubtedly displaying a Judaizing attachment to the letter of the law that quenches the Spirit. In the long run it led to their rejection of Greek Orthodoxy, and therefore of the need of any agreement with the Greeks whether on rites or anything else, a rejection that threatened the foundations of the Ecumenical Church.358

This was the situation in 1652 when the close friend of the tsar, Metropolitan Nicon of Novgorod, was elected patriarch. Knowing of the various inner divisions within Russian society caused by incipient westernism and secularism, on the one hand, and Old Ritualism, on the other, the new patriarch demanded, and obtained a solemn oath from the tsar and all the people that they should obey him in all Church matters. The tsar was very willing to give such an oath because he regarded Nicon as his “special friend” and father, giving him the same title of “Great Sovereign” that Tsar Michael had given to his father, Patriarch Philaret.

358 Thus “Protopriests Neronov, Habbakuk, Longinus and others considered that the faith of the Greeks ‘had become leprous from the Godless Turks’, and that it was impossible to trust the Greeks” (Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit, p. 136).
The “zealots of piety” were also happy to submit to Nicon because he had been a member of their circle and shared, as they thought, their views. However, they were mistaken…

“Not immediately,” writes Lebedev, “but after many years of thought (since 1646), and conversations with the tsar, Fr. Stefan [Bonifatiev], the Greek and Kievan scholars and Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem, he had come to the conviction that the criterion of the rightness of the correction of Russian books and rites consisted in their correspondence with that which from ages past had been accepted by the Eastern Greek Church and handed down by it to Rus’ and, consequently, must be preserved also in the ancient Russian customs and books, and that therefore for the correction of the Russian books and rites it was necessary to take the advice of contemporary Eastern authorities, although their opinion had to be approached with great caution and in a critical spirit. It was with these convictions that Nicon completed the work begun before him of the correction of the Church rites and books, finishing it completely in 1656. At that time he did not know that the correctors of the books had placed at the foundation of their work, not the ancient, but the contemporary Greek books, which had been published in the West, mainly in Venice (although in the most important cases they had nevertheless used both ancient Greek and Slavonic texts). The volume of work in the correction and publishing of books was so great that the patriarch was simply unable to check its technical side and was convinced that they were correcting them according to the ancient texts.

“However, the correction of the rites was carried out completely under his supervision and was accomplished in no other way than in consultation with the conciliar opinion in the Eastern Churches and with special councils of the Russian hierarchs and clergy. Instead of using two fingers in the sign of the cross, the doctrine of which had been introduced into a series of very important books under Patriarch Joseph under the influence of the party of Neronov and Avvakum, the three-fingered sign was confirmed, since it corresponded more to ancient Russian customs and the age-old practice of

359 But not to Russian practice since the Stoglav council of 1551, which had legislated in favour of the two-fingered sign because in some places the two-fingered sign was used, and in others the three-fingered (Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), op. cit., p. 70).

According to S.A. Zenkovsky, following the researches of Golubinsky, Kapterev and others, the two-fingered sign of the cross came from the Constantinopolitan (Studite) typicon, whereas the three-fingered sign was from the Jerusalem typicon of St. Sabbas. “In the 12th-13th centuries in Byzantium, the Studite typicon was for various reasons squeezed out by the Jerusalemite and at almost the same time the two-fingered sign of the cross was replaced by the three-fingered in order to emphasise the importance of the dogma of the All-Holy Trinity. Difficult relations with Byzantium during the Mongol yoke did not allow the spread of the Jerusalemite typicon in Rus’ in the 13th-14th centuries. Only under Metropolitans Cyprian and Photius (end of the 14th, beginning of the 15th centuries) was the Jerusalemite typicon partly introduced into Rus’ (gradually, one detail after another), but, since, after the council of Florence in 1439 Rus’ had broken relations with uniate Constantinople, this reform was not carried out to the end. In the Russian typicon, therefore, a series of features of the Studite
A series of other Church customs were changed, and all Divine service books published earlier with the help of the ‘zealots’ were re-published.

“As was to be expected, J. Neronov, Avvakum, Longinus, Lazarus, Daniel and some of those who thought like them rose up against the corrections made by his Holiness. Thus was laid the doctrinal basis of the Church schism, but the schism itself, as a broad movement among the people, began much later, without Nicon and independently of him. Patriarch Nicon took all the necessary measures that this should not happen. In particular, on condition of their obedience to the Church, he permitted those who wished it (J. Neronov) to serve according to the old books and rites, in this way allowing a variety of opinions and practices in Church matters that did not touch the essence of the faith. This gave the Church historian Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) a basis on which to assert, with justice, that ‘if Nicon had not left his see and his administration had continued, there would have been no schism in the Russian Church.’”

This important point is confirmed by other authors, such as Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky). Again, Sergei Firsov writes: “At the end of his typicon – the two-fingered sign of the cross, processing in the direction of the sun, chanting alleluia twice and other features – were preserved.” (“Staroobiadchestvo, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo” (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, p. 86 (in Russian). (V.M.)

And the Orthodox West. Hieromonk Aidan writes: “We know that in England the change from right shoulder first and probably also to indiscriminate use of the fingers was underway sometime in the 14th century, though there were holdouts... Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) has a commentary on the sign of the cross making clear that the three fingers were used and that it was, in his day, right to left still. There is an interesting sermon of Abbot Aelfric of Abingdon which he gave around the year 1000 in which he states, “Though a man wave wonderfully with his hand, yet it is not the sign of the Cross: With three fingers thou shalt sign thyself.” (Sermon for Sept. 14).” (“Sign of the Cross is first millenium Europe”, ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU (Orthodox Christianity), 11/10/1999) (V.M.)

This elicited the following comments by Epiphany Slavinetsky, one of the main correctors of the books: “Blind ignoramuses, hardly able to read one syllable at a time, having no understanding of grammar, not to mention rhetoric, philosophy, or theology, people who have not even tasted of study, dare to interpret divine writings, or, rather, to distort them, and slander and judge men well-versed in Slavonic and Greek languages. The ignoramuses cannot see that we did not correct the dogmas of faith, but only some expressions which had been altered through the carelessness and errors of uneducated scribes, or through the ignorance of correctors at the Printing Office”. And he compared the Old Ritualists to Korah and Abiram, who had rebelled against Moses (in Paul Meyendorff, Russia, Ritual & Reform, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991, p. 113).

In this tolerance Nicon followed the advice of Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople. (V.M.)

Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., pp. 36-37.

See Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), Zhizneopisanie Blazhennego Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskogo i Galitskogo (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, p. 161 (in Russian). Again, Paul Meyendorff writes, “to its credit, the Russian Church appears to have realized its tactical error and tried to repair the damage. As early as 1656, Nikon made peace with Neronov, one of the leading opponents of the reform, and permitted him to remain in Moscow and even to use the old books at the Cathedral of the Orthodox East.”

199
patriarchy Nicon said about the old and new (corrected) church-service books: ‘Both the ones and the others are good; it doesn’t matter, serve according to whichever books you want’. In citing these words, V.O. Klyuchevsky noted: ‘This means that the matter was not one of rites, but of resistance to ecclesiastical authority’. The Old Believers’ refusal to submit was taken by the church hierarchy and the state authorities as a rebellion, and at the Council of 1666-1667 the disobedient were excommunicated from the Church and cursed ‘for their resistance to the canonical authority of the pastors of the Church’.”

All this is true, but fails to take into account the long-term effect produced by the actions of the Greek hierarchs, and in particular Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, in anathematizing the old books and practices.

Early in 1656 this patriarch was asked by Patriarch Nicon to give his opinion on the question of the sign of the cross. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, “during the anathemas, Makarios stood before the crowd, put the three large fingers of his hand together ‘in the image of the most holy and undivided Trinity, and said: ‘Every Orthodox Christian must make the sign of the Cross on his face with these three first fingers: and if anyone does it based on the writing of Theodoret and on false tradition, let him be anathema!’ The anathemas were then repeated by Gabriel and Gregory. Nikon further obtained written condemnations of the two-fingered sign of the Cross from all these foreign bishops.

“On April 23, a new council was called in Moscow. Its purpose was twofold: first, Nikon wanted to affirm the three-fingered sign of the Cross by conciliar decree; second, he wanted sanction for the publication of the Skrizhal’. Once again, the presence of foreign bishops in Moscow served his purpose. In his speech to the assembled council, Nikon explains the reasons for his request. The two-fingered sign of the Cross, he states, does not adequately express the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation...

“The significance of this council lies chiefly in its formal condemnation of those who rejected the three-fingered sign of the Cross – and, by extension, those who rejected the Greek model – as heretics. For those who make the sign of the Cross by folding their thumb together with their two small fingers ‘are demonstrating the inequality of the Holy Trinity, which is Arianism’, or

---

Dormition. After Nikon left the patriarchal throne in 1658, Tsar Alexis made repeated attempts to pacify the future Old-Believers, insisting only that they cease condemning the new books, but willing to allow the continued use of the old. This was the only demand made of the Old-Believers at the 1666 Moscow Council. Only after all these attempts to restore peace had failed did the 1667 Council, with Greek bishops present, condemn the old books and revoke the 1551 ‘Stoglav (Hundred Chapters)’ Council.” (op. cit, p. 33)

Nestorianism. By branding his opponents as heretics, Nikon was making schism inevitable.\footnote{Meyendorff, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 61, 62.}

Whether it made schism inevitable or not, it was certainly a serious mistake. And, together with the Old Ritualists’ blasphemous rejection of the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, on the one hand, and the over-strict police measures of the State against them, on the other, it probably contributed to the continuation of the schism.\footnote{Rklitsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 162.} Paradoxically, however, this mistake was the same mistake as that made by the Old Ritualists. That is, like the Old Ritualists, Nicon was asserting that differences in rite, and in particular in the making of the sign of the cross, reflected differences in faith, dogmatical differences. But this was not the case, as had been pointed out to Nicon by Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople and his Synod the previous year. And while, as noted above, Nicon himself backed away from a practical implementation of the decisions of the 1656 council, and after retiring from the patriarchate seemed to lose all interest in the question, the fact is that the decisions of the 1656 council remained on the statute books. Moreover, they were confirmed – again with the active connivance of Greek hierarchs – at the council of 1667. Only later, with the \textit{vedinoverie} of 1801, was it permitted to be a member of the Russian Church and serve on the old books.

The process of removing the curses on the old rites began at the Preconciliar Convention in 1906. The section on the Old Ritual, presided over by Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), decreed: “Bearing in mind the benefit to the Holy Church, the pacification of those praying with the two-fingered cross and the lightening of the difficulties encountered by missionaries in explaining the curses on those praying with the two-fingered cross pronounced by Patriarch Macarius of Antioch and a Council of Russian hierarchs in 1656, - to petition the All-Russian Council to remove the indicated curses, as imposed out of ‘not good understanding’ (cf. Canon 12 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council) by Patriarch Macarius of the meaning of our two-fingered cross, which misunderstanding arose in the patriarch as a consequence of getting to know an incorrect edition of the so-called ‘Theodorit’s Word’, which was printed in our books in the middle of the 17th century (Kirillov book; introduction to the Psalter), just as the Council of 1667 ‘destroyed’ the curse of the Stoglav Council laid on those not baptised with the two-fingered cross.”\footnote{Rklitsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 175.}

The All-Russian Council did not get round to removing the curses in 1917-1918. But in 1974 the Russian Church Abroad did remove the anathemas on the Old Rite (as did the sergianist Moscow Patriarchate).
“However,” writes Lebedev, the differences between the Orthodox and the Old Ritualists did not only come down to “differences of opinion with regard to the correction of books and rites. The point was the deep differences in perception of the ideas forming the basis of the conception of ‘the third Rome’, and in the contradictions of the Russian Church’s self-consciousness at the time.”

These differences and contradictions were particularly important at this time because the Russian State, after consolidating itself in the first half of the seventeenth century, was now ready to go on the offensive against Catholic Poland, and rescue the Orthodox Christians who were being persecuted by the Polish and uniate authorities. In 1654 Eastern Ukraine was wrested from Poland and came within the bounds of Russia again. But the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine had been under the jurisdiction of Constantinople and employed Greek practices, which, as we have seen, differed somewhat from those in the Great Russian Church. So if Moscow was to be the Third Rome in the sense of the protector of all Orthodox Christians, it was necessary that the faith and practice of the Moscow Patriarchate should be in harmony with the faith and practice of the Orthodox Church as a whole. That is why Nicon, supported by the Grecophile Tsar Alexis, encouraged the reform of the service-books to bring them into line with the practices of the Greek Church.

In pursuing this policy the Tsar and the Patriarch were continuing the work of St. Maximus the Greek, who had been invited to Russia to carry out translations from Greek into Russian and correct the Russian service books against the Greek originals. For this he was persecuted by Metropolitan Daniel. And yet “the mistakes in the Russian Divine service books were so great,” writes Professor N.N. Pokrovsky, “that the Russian Church finally had to agree with Maximus’ corrections – true, some 120 years after his trial, under Patriarch Nicon (for example, in the Symbol of the faith).”

Paradoxically, the Old Ritualists cited St. Maximus the Greek in their support because he made no objection to the two-fingered sign. However, Professor Pokrovsky has shown that he probably passed over this as being of secondary importance by comparison with his main task, which was to broaden the horizons of the Russian Church and State, making it more ecumenical in spirit – and more sympathetic to the pleas for help of the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans. On more important issues – for example, the text of the Symbol of faith, the canonical subjection of the Russian metropolitan to the Ecumenical Patriarch, and a more balanced relationship between Church and State – he made no concessions.

---

369 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 37.
370 Pokrovsky, Puteshestvia za redkimi knigami (Journeys for rare books), Moscow, 1988; http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=779. The mistake in the Creed consisted in adding the word “true” after “and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord”.

202
The Old Ritualists represented a serious threat to the achievement of the ideal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. Like their opponents, they believed in the ideology of the Third Rome, but understood it differently. First, they resented the lead that the patriarch was taking in this affair. In their opinion, the initiative in such matters should come from the tsar insofar as it was the tsar, rather than the hierarchs, who defended the Church from heresies. Here they were thinking of the Russian Church’s struggle against the false council of Florence and the Judaising heresy, when the great prince did indeed take a leading role in the defence of Orthodoxy while some of the hierarchs fell away from the truth. However, they ignored the no less frequent cases – most recently, in the Time of Troubles – when it had been the Orthodox hierarchs who had defended the Church against apostate tsars.

Secondly, whereas for the Grecophiles of the “Greco-Russian Church” Moscow the Third Rome was the continuation of Christian Rome, which in no wise implied any break with Greek Orthodoxy, for the Old Ritualists the influence of the Greeks, who had betrayed Orthodoxy at the council of Florence, could only be harmful. They believed that the Russian Church did not need help from, or agreement with, the Greeks; she was self-sufficient. Moreover, The Greeks could not be Orthodox, according to the Old Ritualists, not only because they had apostasised at the council of Florence, but also because they were “powerless”, that is, without an emperor. And when Russia, too, in their view, became “powerless” through the tsar’s “apostasy”, they prepared for the end of the world. For, as Fr. Gregory Lourié writes, “the Niconite reforms were perceived by Old Ritualism as apostasy from Orthodoxy, and consequently... as the end of the last (Roman) Empire, which was to come immediately before the end of the world.”

This anti-Greek attitude was exemplified particularly by Archpriest Avvakum, who wrote from his prison cell to Tsar Alexis: "Say in good Russian 'Lord have mercy on me'. Leave all those Kyrie Eleisons to the Greeks: that's their language, spit on them! You are Russian, Alexei, not Greek. Speak your mother tongue and be not ashamed of it, either in church or at home!" Again, Avvakum announced “that newborn babies knew more about God than all the scholars of the Greek church”. And in the trial of 1667, he told the Greek bishops: “You, ecumenical teachers! Rome has long since fallen, and lies on the ground, and the Poles have gone under with her, for to the present day they have been enemies of the Christians. But with you, too, Orthodoxy became a varied mixture under the violence of the Turkish Muhammed. Nor is that surprising: you have become powerless. From now on you must come to us to learn: through God’s grace we have the autocracy. Before the apostate Nicon the whole of Orthodoxy was pure and spotless in our Russia under the pious rulers and tsars, and the Church knew no

---


203
rebellion. But the wolf Nicon along with the devil introduced the tradition that one had to cross oneself with three fingers...“373 It was this attempt to force the Russian Church into schism from the Greeks, and their resistance to the Church’s well-meaning (if clumsily handled) attempt to achieve liturgical uniformity with the Greeks, that was the real sin of the Old Ritualists.

**Patriarch Nicon of Moscow**

Against this narrow, nationalistic and state-centred conception of “Moscow – the Third Rome”, Patriarch Nicon erected a more universalistic, Church-centred conception which stressed the unity of the Russian Church with the Churches of the East. “In the idea of ‘the Third Rome’,” writes Lebedev, “his Holiness saw first of all its ecclesiastical, spiritual content, which was also expressed in the still more ancient idea of ‘the Russian land – the New Jerusalem’. This idea was to a large degree synonymous with ‘the Third Rome’. To a large extent, but not completely! It placed the accent on the Christian striving of Holy Rus’ for the world on high.

“In calling Rus’ to this great idea, Patriarch Nicon successively created a series of architectural complexes in which was laid the idea of the pan-human, universal significance of Holy Rus’. These were the Valdai Iveron church, and the Kii Cross monastery, but especially – the Resurrection New-Jerusalem monastery, which was deliberately populated with an Orthodox, but multi-racial brotherhood (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Germans, Jews, Poles and Greeks).

“This monastery, together with the complex of ‘Greater Muscovite Palestine’, was in the process of creation from 1656 to 1666, and was then completed after the death of the patriarch towards the end of the 17th century. As has been clarified only comparatively recently, this whole complex, including in itself Jordan, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Ramah, Bethany, Tabor, Hermon, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, etc., was basically a monastery, and in it the Resurrection cathedral, built in the likeness of the church of the Sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem with Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Saviour, was a double image – an icon of the historical ‘promised land’ of Palestine and at the same time an icon of the promised land of the Heavenly Kingdom, ‘the New Jerusalem’.

“In this way it turned out that the true union of the representatives of all the peoples (pan-human unity) in Christ on earth and in heaven can be realised only on the basis of Orthodoxy, and, moreover, by the will of God, in its Russian expression. This was a clear, almost demonstrative opposition of the union of mankind in the Church of Christ to its unity in the anti-church of ‘the great architect of nature’ with its aim of constructing the tower of Babylon. But it also turned out that ‘Greater Muscovite Palestine’ with its

373 Avvakum, translated in van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 165.
centre in the New Jerusalem became the spiritual focus of the whole of World Orthodoxy. At the same time that the tsar was only just beginning to dream of become the master of the East, Patriarch Nicon as the archimandrite of New Jerusalem had already become the central figure of the Universal Church.

“This also laid a beginning to the disharmony between the tsar and the patriarch, between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in Russia. Alexis Mikhailovich, at first inwardly, but then also outwardly, was against Nicon’s plans for the New Jerusalem. He insisted that only his capital, Moscow, was the image of the heavenly city, and that the Russian tsar (not the patriarch) was the head of the whole Orthodox world. From 1657 there began the quarrels between the tsar and the patriarch, in which the tsar revealed a clear striving to take into his hands the administration of Church affairs, for he made himself the chief person responsible for them.”

This intrusion of the tsar into the ecclesiastical administration, leading to the deposition of Patriarch Nicon, was the decisive factor allowing the Old Ritualist movement to gain credibility and momentum... On becoming patriarch in 1652, as we have seen, Nicon secured from the Tsar, his boyars and the bishops a solemn oath to the effect that they would keep the sacred laws of the Church and State “and promise... to obey us as your chief pastor and supreme father in all things which I shall announce to you out of the divine commandments and laws.” There followed a short, but remarkable period in which “the undivided, although unconfused, union of state and ecclesiastical powers constituted the natural basis of public life of Russia. The spiritual leadership in this belonged, of course, to the Church, but this leadership was precisely spiritual and was never turned into political leadership. In his turn the tsar... never used his political autocracy for arbitrariness in relation to the Church, since the final meaning of life for the whole of Russian society consisted in acquiring temporal and eternal union with God in and through the Church...”

Although the patriarch had complete control of Church administration and services, and the appointment and judgement of clerics in ecclesiastical matters, “Church possessions and financial resources were considered a pannational inheritance. In cases of special need (for example, war) the tsar could take as much of the resources of the Church as he needed without paying them back. The diocesan and monastic authorities could spend only strictly determined sums on their everyday needs. All unforeseen and major expenses were made only with the permission of the tsar. In all monastic and

374 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., pp. 40-41.
375 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 87. The relationship between the two was characterised in the preface to a service book published in Moscow in 1653, as “the diarchy, complementary, God-chosen” (quoted in Fr. Sergei Hackel, “Questions of Church and State in ‘Holy Russia’: some attitudes of the Romanov period”, Eastern Churches Review, vol. II, no. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 8).
diocesan administrations state officials were constantly present; ecclesiastical properties and resources were under their watchful control. And they judged ecclesiastical peasants and other people in civil and criminal matters. A special Monastirskij Prikaz established in Moscow in accordance with the Ulozhenie of 1649 was in charge of the whole clergy, except the patriarch, in civil and criminal matters. Although in 1649 Nicon together with all the others had put his signature to the Ulozhenie, inwardly he was not in agreement with it, and on becoming patriarch declared this opinion openly. He was most of all disturbed by the fact that secular people – the boyars of the Monastirskij Prikaz – had the right to judge clergy in civil suits. He considered this situation radically uneclesiastical and unchristian. When Nicon had still been Metropolitan of Novgorod, the tsar, knowing his views, had given him a ‘document of exemption’ for the whole metropolia, in accordance with which all the affairs of people subject to the Church, except for affairs of ‘murder, robbery and theft’, were transferred from the administration of the Monastirskij Prikaz to the metropolitan’s court. On becoming patriarch, Nicon obtained a similar exemption from the Monastirskij Prikaz for his patriarchal diocese (at that time the patriarch, like all the ruling bishops, had his own special diocese consisting of Moscow and spacious lands adjacent to it). As if to counteract the Ulozhenie of 1649, Nicon published ‘The Rudder’, which contains the holy canons of the Church and various enactments concerning the Church of the ancient pious Greek emperors. As we shall see, until the end of his patriarchy Nicon did not cease to fight against the Monastirskij Prikaz. It should be pointed out that this was not a struggle for the complete ‘freedom’ of the Church from the State (which was impossible in Russia at that time), but only for the re-establishment of the canonical authority of the patriarch and the whole clergy in strictly spiritual matters, and also for such a broadening of the right of the ecclesiastical authorities over people subject to them in civil matters as was permitted by conditions in Russia.”

From May, 1654 to January, 1657, while the tsar was away from the capital fighting the Poles, the patriarch acted as regent, a duty he carried out with great distinction. Some later saw in this evidence of the political ambitions of the patriarch. However, he undertook this duty only at the request of the tsar, and was very glad to return the reins of political administration when the tsar returned. Nevertheless, from 1656, the boyars succeeded in undermining the tsar’s confidence in the patriarch, falsely insinuating that the tsar’s authority was being undermined by Nicon’s ambition. And they began to apply the Ulozhenie in Church affairs, even increasing the rights given by the Ulozhenie to the Monastirskij Prikaz. The Ulozhenie also decreed that the birthdays of the Tsar and Tsarina and their children should be celebrated alongside the Church feasts, which drew from the Patriarch the criticism that men were being likened to God, “and even preferred to God”.

From May, 1654 to January, 1657, while the tsar was away from the capital fighting the Poles, the patriarch acted as regent, a duty he carried out with great distinction. Some later saw in this evidence of the political ambitions of the patriarch. However, he undertook this duty only at the request of the tsar, and was very glad to return the reins of political administration when the tsar returned. Nevertheless, from 1656, the boyars succeeded in undermining the tsar’s confidence in the patriarch, falsely insinuating that the tsar’s authority was being undermined by Nicon’s ambition. And they began to apply the Ulozhenie in Church affairs, even increasing the rights given by the Ulozhenie to the Monastirskij Prikaz. The Ulozhenie also decreed that the birthdays of the Tsar and Tsarina and their children should be celebrated alongside the Church feasts, which drew from the Patriarch the criticism that men were being likened to God, “and even preferred to God”.

---

376 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., pp. 88-89.
contention was the tsar’s desire to appoint Silvester Kossov as Metropolitan of Kiev, which Nicon considered uncanonical in that the Kievan Metropolitan was in the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople at that time.378

Since the tsar was clearly determined to have his way, and was snubbing the patriarch in many ways, on July 10, 1658 Nicon withdrew to his monastery of New Jerusalem, near Moscow. He compared this move to the flight of the Woman clothed with the sun into the wilderness in Revelation 12, and quoted the 17th Canon of Sardica379 and the words of the Gospel: “If they persecute you in one city, depart to another, shaking off the dust from your feet” 380. “The whole state knows,” he said, “that in view of his anger against me the tsar does not go to the Holy Catholic Church, and I am leaving Moscow. I hope that the tsar will have more freedom without me.”381

Some have regarded Nicon’s action as an elaborate bluff that failed. Whatever the truth about his personal motivation, which is known to God alone, there can be no doubt that the patriarch, unlike his opponents, correctly gauged the seriousness of the issue involved. For the quarrel between the tsar and the patriarch signified, in effect, the beginning of the schism of Church and State in Russia. In withdrawing from Moscow to New Jerusalem, the patriarch demonstrated that “in truth ‘the New Jerusalem’, ‘the Kingdom of God’, the beginning of the Heavenly Kingdom in Russia was the Church, its Orthodox spiritual piety, and not the material earthly capital, although it represented... ‘the Third Rome’.”382

However, Nicon had appointed a vicar-metropolitan in Moscow, and had said: “I am not leaving completely; if the tsar’s majesty bends, becomes more merciful and puts away his wrath, I will return”. In other words, while resigning the active administration of the patriarchy in view of the disobedience of his spiritual children, he had not resigned his rank – a situation to which there were many precedents in Church history. And to show that he had not finally resigned from Church affairs, he protested against moves made by his deputy on the patriarchal throne, and continued to criticise the Tsar for interfering in the Church’s affairs, especially in the reactivation of the Monastirskij Prikaz.

379 “If any Bishop who has suffered violence has been cast out unjustly, either on account of his science or on account of his confession of the Catholic Church, or on account of his insisting upon the truth, and fleeing from peril, when he is innocent and in danger, should come to another city, let him not be prevented from living there, until he can return or find relief from the insolent treatment he had received. For it is cruel and most burdensome for one who has had to suffer an unjust expulsion not to be accorded a welcome by us. For such a person ought to be shown great kindness and courtesy.”
381 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 104.
382 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 141. Italics mine (V.M.).
Not content with having forced his withdrawal from Moscow, the boyars resolved to have him defrocked, portraying him as a dangerous rebel against both Church and State - although, as Zyzykin points out, Patriarch Nicon interfered less in the affairs of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich than St. Philip of Moscow had done in the affairs of Ivan the Terrible. And so, in 1660, they convened a council which appointed a patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Pitirim, to administer the Church independently without seeking the advice of the patriarch and without commemorating his name. Nicon rejected this council, and cursed Pitirim...

But the State that encroaches on the Church is itself subject to destruction. Thus in 1661 Patriarch Nicon had a vision in which he saw the Moscow Dormition cathedral full of fire: “The hierarchs who had previously died were standing there. Peter the metropolitan rose from his tomb, went up to the altar and laid his hand on the Gospel. All the hierarchs did the same, and so did I. And Peter began to speak: ‘Brother Nicon! Speak to the Tsar: why has he offended the Holy Church, and fearlessly taken possession of the immovable things collected by us. This will not be to his benefit. Tell him to return what he has taken, for the great wrath of God has fallen upon him because of this: twice there have been pestilences, and so many people have died, and now he has nobody with whom to stand against his enemies.’ I replied: ‘He will not listen to me; it would be good if one of you appeared to him.’ Peter continued: ‘The judgements of God have not decreed this. You tell him; if he does not listen to you, then if one of us appeared to him, he would not listen to him. And look! Here is a sign for him.’ Following the movement of his hand I turned towards the west towards the royal palace and I saw: there was no church wall, the palace was completely visible, and the fire which was in the church came together and went towards the royal court and burned it up. ‘If he will not come to his senses, punishments greater than the first will be added,’ said Peter. Then another grey-haired man said: ‘Now the Tsar wants to take the court you bought for the churchmen and turn it into a bazaar for mammon’s sake. But he will not rejoice over his acquisition.’”

The False Council of 1666-1667

With Nicon’s departure, the tsar was left with the problem of replacing him at the head of the Church. S.A. Zenkovsky writes that he “was about to return Protopope Habbakuk, whom he personally respected and loved, from exile, but continued to keep the new typicon... In 1666-1667, in order to resolve the question of what to do with Nicon and to clarify the complications with the typicon, [the tsar] convened first a Russian council of bishops, and then almost an ecumenical one, with the participation of the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch [who had been suspended by the Patriarch of Constantinople]. The patriarch of Constantinople (he wrote that small details

384 Fomin, op. cit., volume I, pp. 24-25.
in the typicon were not so important – what was important was the understanding of the commandments of Christ, the basic dogmas of the faith, and devotion to the Church) and the patriarch of Jerusalem did not come to this council, not wishing to get involved in Russian ecclesiastical quarrels.

“The first part of the council sessions, with the participation only of Russian bishops, went quite smoothly and moderately. Before it, individual discussions of each bishop with the tsar had prepared almost all the decisions. The council did not condemn the old typicon, and was very conciliatory towards its defenders, who, with the exception of Habbakuk, agreed to sign the decisions of the council and not break with the Church. The stubborn Habbakuk refused, and was for that defrocked and excommunicated from the Church. The second part of the council sessions, with the eastern patriarchs, was completely under the influence of Metropolitan Paisius Ligarides of Gaza (in Palestine) [who had been defrocked by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and was in the pay of the Vatican]. He adopted the most radical position in relation to the old Russian ecclesiastical traditions. The old Russian rite was condemned and those who followed it were excommunicated from the Church (anathema). Also condemned at that time were such Russian writings as the Story of the White Klobuk (on Moscow as the Third Rome), the decrees of the Stoglav council, and other things.”

The council then turned its attention to Patriarch Nicon. On December 12, 1666 he was reduced to the rank of a monk on the grounds that “he annoyed his great majesty [the tsar], interfering in matters which did not belong to the patriarchal rank and authority”. The truth was the exact opposite: that the tsar and his boyars had interfered in matters which did not belong to their rank and authority, breaking the oath they had made to the patriarch.

Another charge against the patriarch was that in 1654 he had defrocked and exiled the most senior of the opponents to his reforms, Bishop Paul of Kolomna, on his own authority, without convening a council of bishops. But, as Lebedev writes, “Nicon refuted this accusation, referring to the conciliar decree on this bishop, which at that time was still in the patriarchal court. Entering now [in 1654] on the path of an authoritative review of everything connected with the correction of the rites, Nicon of course could

---

387 Ironically, they also transgressed those articles of the Ulozhenie, chapter X, which envisaged various punishments for offending the clergy (Priest Alexis Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Izdanie Sretenskogo monastyria, 1997, p. 71 (in Russian)).
388 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 290; S.G. Burgaft and I.A. Ushakov, Staroobriadchestvo (Old Ritualism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 206-207 (in Russian). According to the Old Ritualists, Bishop Paul said that, in view of Nicon’s “violation” of Orthodoxy, his people should be received into communion with the Old Ritualists by the second rite, i.e. chrismation.
not on his own condemn a bishop, when earlier even complaints against prominent protopriests were reviewed by him at a Council of the clergy.”389

The council also sinned in that the *Tomos* sent by the Eastern Patriarchs to Moscow in 1663 to justify the supposed lawfulness of Nicon’s deposition and attached to the acts of the council under the name of *Patriarchal Replies* expressed a caesaropapist doctrine, according to which the Patriarch was exhorted to obey the tsar and the tsar was permitted to remove the patriarch in case of conflict with him. Patriarch Dionysius of Constantinople expressed this doctrine as follows in a letter to the tsar: “I inform your Majesty that in accordance with these chapters you have the power to have a patriarch and all your councillors established by you, for in one autocratic state there must not be two principles, but one must be the senior.” To which Lebedev justly rejoins: “It is only to be wondered at how the Greeks by the highest authority established and confirmed in the Russian kingdom that [caesaropapism] as a result of which they themselves had lost their monarchy! It was not Paisius Ligarides who undermined Alexis Mikhailovich: it was the ecumenical patriarchs who deliberately decided the matter in favour of the tsar.”390

However, opposition was voiced by Metropolitans Paul of Krutitsa and Hilarion of Ryazan, who feared “that the *Patriarchal Replies* would put the hierarchs into the complete control of the royal power, and thereby of a Tsar who would not be as pious as Alexis Mikhailovich and could turn out to be dangerous for the Church”. They particularly objected to the following sentence in the report on the affair of the patriarch: “It is recognized that his Majesty the Tsar alone should be in charge of spiritual matters, and that the Patriarch should be obedient to him”, which they considered to be humiliating for ecclesiastical power and to offer a broad scope for the interference of the secular power in Church affairs.391

So, as Zyzykin writes, “the Patriarchs were forced to write an explanatory note, in which they gave another interpretation to the second chapter of the patriarchal replies... The Council came to a unanimous conclusion: ‘Let it be recognized that the Tsar has the pre-eminence in civil affairs, and the Patriarch in ecclesiastical affairs, so that in this way the harmony of the ecclesiastical institution may be preserved whole and unshaken.’ *This was the principled triumph of the Niconian idea, as was the resolution of the Council to close the Monastirskij Prikaz and the return to the Church of judgement over clergy in civil matters (the later remained in force until 1700).”*392

And yet it had been a close-run thing. During the 1666 Council Ligarides had given voice to an essentially pagan view of tsarist power: “[The tsar] will

---

391 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 350.
be called the new Constantine. He will be both tsar and hierarch, just as the
great Constantine, who was so devoted to the faith of Christ, is praised
among us at Great Vespers as priest and tsar. Yes, and both among the
Romans and the Egyptians the tsar united in himself the power of the
priesthood and of the kingship.” If this doctrine had triumphed at the Council,
then Russia would indeed have entered the era of the Antichrist, as the Old
Ritualists believed. And if the good sense of the Russian hierarchs finally
averted a catastrophe, the unjust condemnation of Patriarch Nicon, the chief
supporter of the Orthodox doctrine, cast a long shadow over the proceedings,
and meant that within a generation the attempt to impose absolutism on
Russia would begin again…

Now Muscovite Russia in the seventeenth century was a stable, prosperous
society. Nor was the prosperity confined only to the upper classes. As J.
Krijanich, a Serb by birth, and a graduate of the Catholic College of Vienna,
wrote in 1646, after he had spent five years in Russia: “The Russians lead a
simpler life than other Europeans. The gulf between rich and poor is not as
great as in the West, where some wallow in riches and others are sunk in the
depths of misery. Everyone in Russia, rich and poor, eats to his heart’s content
and lives in well-heated houses, whereas in the West the poor suffer from
cold and hunger…. Thus life for the workman and peasant in Russia is better
than in other countries.”

But this material prosperity was based on spiritual piety – that is, on firm
obedience to the Orthodox Church in spiritual matters and to the Orthodox
Autocracy in secular matters. However, the rebellion of the Old Ritualists and
the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nicon in the middle years of the century
opened a schism within the people, and between the secular and ecclesiastical
authorities, that was never fully overcome. And so, the Lord allowed the State
based on the Orthodox ideal of the symphony of powers of Muscovite Russia
to be transformed into the State modelled on heretical Western ideas of
statehood founded by Peter the Great.

What should be the relationship of an Orthodox King to the Orthodox
Church within his dominions? “There is no question,” writes Protopriest Lev
Lebedev, “that the Orthodox Sovereign cares for the Orthodox Church,
defends her, protects her, takes part in all her most important affairs. But not
he in the first place; and not he mainly. The Church has her own head on
earth – the Patriarch. Relations between the head of the state and the head of
the Church in Russia, beginning from the holy equal-to-the-apostles Great

393 The tsar asked forgiveness of the patriarch just before his death. The patriarch replied to
the messenger: “Imitating my teacher Christ, who commanded us to remit the sins of our
neighbours, I say: may God forgive the deceased, but a written forgiveness I will not give,
because during his life he did not free us from imprisonment” (quoted in Rusak, op. cit., p.
193).
394 Krijanich, in Arsène de Goulévitch, Czarism and Revolution, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni
Prince Vladimir and continuing with Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch and Patriarch Nicon, were always formed in a spirit of symphony.

“Not without exceptions, but, as a rule, this symphony was not broken and constituted the basis of the inner spiritual strength of the whole of Rus’, the whole of the Russian state and society. The complexity of the symphony consisted in the fact that the Tsar and Patriarch were identically responsible for everything that took place in the people, in society, in the state. But at the same time the Tsar especially answered for worldly matters, matters of state, while the Patriarch especially answered for Church and spiritual affairs. In council they both decided literally everything. But in worldly affairs the last word lay with the Tsar; and in Church and spiritual affairs – with the Patriarch. The Patriarch unfailingly took part in the sessions of the State Duma, that is, of the government. The Tsar unfailingly took part in the Church Councils. In the State Duma the last word was with the Sovereign, and in the Church Councils – with the Patriarch. This common responsibility for everything and special responsibility for the state and the Church with the Tsar and the Patriarch was the principle of symphony or agreement.”

That Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch sincerely believed this teaching is clear from his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: “The most important task of the Orthodox Tsar is care for the faith, the Church, and all the affairs of the Church.” However, it was he who introduced the Ulozhenie, the first serious breach in Church-State symphony. And it was he who deposed Patriarch Nicon.

Therefore while it is customary to date the breakdown of Church-State symmetry or agreement in Russia to the time of Peter the Great, the foundations of Holy Russia had been undermined, already in the time of his father, Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch. As Lev Lebedev writes, “the condemnation of Patriarch Nicon was a kind of end of the world in the sense that there ended the world of Russian life, in which the most important and central in everything was that which can conditionally be signified by the general concept of ‘Holy Russia’”.

“In Church-State questions,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “Nicon fought with the same corruption that had crept into Muscovite political ideas after the middle of the 15th century and emerged as political Old Ritualism, which defended the tendency towards caesaropapism that had established itself. The fact that the guardian of Orthodoxy, at the time of the falling away of the Constantinopolitan Emperor and Patriarch and Russian Metropolitan into the unia, turned out to be the Muscovite Great Prince had too great an influence on the exaltation of his significance in the Church. And if we remember that at

that time, shortly after the unia, the Muscovite Great Prince took the place of the Byzantine Emperor, and that with the establishment of the de facto independence of the Russian Church from the Constantinopolitan Patriarch the Muscovite first-hierarchs lost a support for their ecclesiastical independence from the Great Princes, then it will become clear to us that the Muscovite Great Prince became de facto one of the chief factors in Church affairs, having the opportunity to impose his authority on the hierarchy.”

Patriarch Nicon corrected the caesaropapist bias of the Russian Church as expressed especially by the friend of the tsar, the defrocked metropolitan and crypto-papist Paisius Ligarides. He set down his thoughts in detail in his famous work Razzorenie (“Destruction”), in which he defined the rights and duties of the tsar as follows: “The tsar undoubtedly has power to give rights and honours, but within the limits set by God; he cannot give spiritual power to Bishops and archimandrites and other spiritual persons: spiritual things belong to the decision of God, and earthly things to the king” (I, 555). “The main duty of the tsar is to care for the Church, for the dominion of the tsar can never be firmly established and prosperous when his mother, the Church of God, is not strongly established, for the Church of God, most glorious tsar, is thy mother, and if thou art obliged to honour thy natural mother, who gave thee birth, then all the more art thou obliged to love thy spiritual mother, who gave birth to thee in Holy Baptism and anointed thee to the kingdom with the oil and chrism of gladness.”

Indeed, “none of the kings won victory without the prayers of the priests” (I, 187). For “Bishops are the successors of the Apostles and the servants of God, so that the honour accorded to them is given to God Himself.” “It was when the evangelical faith began to shine that the Episcopate was venerated; but when the spite of pride spread, the honour of the Episcopate was betrayed.” “A true hierarch of Christ is everything. For when kingdom falls on kingdom, that kingdom, and house, that is divided in itself will not stand.” “The tsar is entrusted with the bodies, but the priests with the souls of men. The tsar remits money debts, but the priests – sins. The one compels, the other comforts. The one wars with enemies, the other with the princes and rulers of the darkness of this world. Therefore the priesthood is much higher than the kingdom.”

The superiority of the priesthood is proved by the fact that the tsar is anointed by the patriarch and not vice-versa. “The highest authority of the priesthood was not received from the tsars, but on the contrary the tsars are...”

---

398 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 15.
399 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 16.
400 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 41.
401 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 91.
402 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 86.
403 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 17.
anointed to the kingdom through the priesthood… We know no other lawgiver than Christ, Who gave the power to bind and to loose. What power did the tsar give me? This one? No, but he himself seized it for himself… Know that even he who is distinguished by the diadem is subject to the power of the priest, and he who is bound by him will be bound also in the heavens.”

The patriarch explains why, on the one hand, the priesthood is higher than the kingdom, and on the other, the kingdom cannot be abolished by the priesthood: “The kingdom is given by God to the world, but in wrath, and it is given through anointing from the priests with a material oil, but the priesthood is a direct anointing from the Holy Spirit, as also our Lord Jesus Christ was raised to the high-priesthood directly by the Holy Spirit, as were the Apostles. Therefore, at the consecration to the episcopate, the consecrator holds an open Gospel over the head of him who is being consecrated” (I, 234, 235)... There is no human judgement over the tsar, but there is a warning from the pastors of the Church and the judgement of God.” However, the fact that the tsar cannot be judged by man shows that the kingdom is given him directly by God, and not by man. “For even if he was not crowned, he would still be king.” But he can only called an Orthodox, anointed king if he is crowned by the Bishop. Thus “he receives and retains his royal power by the sword de facto. But the name of king (that is, the name of a consecrated and Christian or Orthodox king) he receives from the Episcopal consecration, for which the Bishop is the accomplisher and source.” (I, 254).

We see here how far Nicon is from the papocaeasism of a Pope Gregory VII, who claimed to be able to depose kings precisely “as kings”. And yet he received a reputation for papocaeasism (which prevented his recognition at least until the Russian Council of 1917-18) because of his fearless exposure of the caesaropapism of the Russian tsar: “Everyone should know his measure. Saul offered the sacrifice, but lost his kingdom; Uzziah, who burned incense in the temple, became a leper. Although thou art tsar, remain within thy limits. Wilt thou say that the heart of the king is in the hand of God? Yes, but the heart of the king is in the hand of God [only] when the king remains within the boundaries set for him by God.”

In another passage Nicon combines the metaphor of the two swords with that of the sun and moon. The analogy with the sun and the moon had been

---

404 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 30, 32.
405 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 41. As Zyzykin says in another place, Nicon “not only does not call for human sanctions against the abuses of tsarist power, but definitely says that there is no human power [that can act] against them, but there is the wrath of God, as in the words of Samuel to Saul: ‘It is not I that turn away from thee, in that thou has rejected the Word of the Lord, but the Lord has rejected thee, that thou shouoldst not be king over Israel’ (I Kings 15.26)” (op. cit., part II, p. 17).
used by Pope Innocent III; but Patriarch Nicon’s development of it is Orthodox and does not exalt the power of the priesthood any more than did the Fathers of the fourth century: “The all-powerful God, in creating the heaven and the earth, order the two great luminaries – the sun and the moon – to shine upon the earth in their course; by one of them – the sun - He prefigured the episcopal power, while by the other – the moon – He prefigured the tsarist power. For the sun is the greater luminary, it shines by day, like the Bishop who enlightens the soul. But the lesser luminary shines by night, by which we must understand the body. As the moon borrows its light from the sun, and in proportion to its distance from it receives a fuller radiance, so the tsar derives his consecration, anointing and coronation (but not power) from the Bishop, and, having received it, has his own light, that it, his consecrated power and authority. The similarity between these two persons in every Christian society is exactly the same as that between the sun and the moon in the material world. For the episcopal power shines by day, that is, over souls; while the tsarist power shines in the things of this world. And this power, which is the tsarist sword, must be ready to act against the enemies of the Orthodox faith. The episcopate and all the clergy need this defence from all unrighteousness and violence. This is what the secular power is obliged to do. For secular people are in need of freedom for their souls, while spiritual people are in need of secular people for the defence of their bodies. And so in this neither of them is higher than the other, but each has power from God.”

But Nicon insists that when the tsar encroaches on the Church he loses his power. For “there is in fact no man more powerless than he who attacks the Divine laws, and there is nothing more powerful than a man who fights for them. For he who commits sin is the slave of sin, even if he bears a thousand crowns on his head, but he who does righteous deeds is greater than the tsar himself, even if he is the last of all.” So a tsar who himself chooses patriarchs and metropolitans, breaking his oath to the patriarch “is unworthy even to enter the church, but he must spend his whole life in repentance, and only at the hour of death can he be admitted to communion... Chrysostom forbade every one who breaks his oath ... from crossing the threshold of the church, even in he were the tsar himself.”

Nicon comes very close to identifying the caesaropapist tsar with the Antichrist. For, as Zyzykin points out, “Nicon looked on the apostasy of the State law from Church norms (i.e. their destruction) as the worship by the State of the Antichrist, ‘This antichrist is not satan, but a man, who will receive from satan the whole power of his energy. A man will be revealed who will be raised above God, and he will be the opponent of God and will destroy all gods and will order that people worship him instead of God, and

408 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 59.
410 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 63-64.
he will sit, not in the temple of Jerusalem, but in the Churches, giving himself out as God. As the Median empire was destroyed by Babylon, and the Babylonian by the Persian, and the Persian by the Macedonian, and the Macedonian by the Roman, thus must the Roman empire be destroyed by the antichrist, and he – by Christ. This is revealed to us by the Prophet Daniel. The divine Apostle warned us about things to come, and they have come for us through you and your evil deeds (he is speaking to the author of the Ulozhenie, Prince Odoyevsky) Has not the apostasy from the Holy Gospel and the traditions of the Holy Apostles and holy fathers appeared? (Nicon has in mind the invasion by the secular authorities into the administration of the Church through the Ulozhenie). Has not the man of sin been discovered - the son of destruction, who will exalt himself about everything that is called God, or that is worshipped? And what can be more destructive than abandoning God and His commandments, as they have preferred the traditions of men, that is, their codex full of spite and cunning? But who is this? Satan? No. This is a man, who has received the work of Satan, who has united to himself many others like you, composer of lies, and your comrades. Sitting in the temple of God does not mean in the temple of Jerusalem, but everywhere in the Churches. And sitting not literally in all the Churches, but as exerting power over all the Churches. The Church is not stone walls, but the ecclesiastical laws and the pastors, against whom thou, apostate, hast arisen, in accordance with the work of satan, and in the Ulozhenie thou hast presented secular people with jurisdiction over the Patriarch, the Metropolitans, the Archbishops, the Bishops, and over all the clergy, without thinking about the work of God. As the Lord said on one occasion: ‘Depart from Me, satan, for thou thinkest not about what is pleasing to God, but about what is pleasing to men.’ ‘Ye are of your father the devil and you carry out his lusts.’ Concerning such Churches Christ said: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you will make it a den of thieves’; as Jeremiah says (7.4): ‘Do not rely on deceiving words of those who say to you: here is the temple of the Lord.’ How can it be the temple of God if it is under the power of the tsar and his subjects, and they order whatever they want in it? Such a Church is no longer the temple of God, but the house of those who have power over it, for, if it were the temple of God, nobody, out of fear of God, would be capable of usurping power over it or taking anything away from it. But as far as the persecution of the Church is concerned, God has revealed about this to His beloved disciple and best theologian John (I, 403-408),... [who] witnesses, saying that the Antichrist is already in the world. But nobody has seen or heard him perceptibly, that is, the secular authorities will begin to rule over the Churches of God in transgression of the commandments of God.’ For the word ‘throne’ signifies having ecclesiastical authority, and not simply sitting... And he will command people to bow down to him not externally or perceptibly, but in the same way as now the Bishops, abandoning their priestly dignity and honour, bow down to the tsars as to their masters. And they ask them for everything and seek honours from them” (I, 193).”

“there is apostasy also in the fact that the Bishops, abandoning their dignity, bow down before the tsar as their master in spiritual matters, and seek honours from him.”

The power of the Roman emperors, of which the Russian tsardom is the lawful successor, is “that which restraineth” the coming of the Antichrist. And yet “the mystery of iniquity is already being accomplished” in the shape of those kings, such as Nero, who ascribed to themselves divine worship. The warning was clear: that which restrains the antichrist can be swiftly transformed into the antichrist himself.

Even the present tsar could suffer such a transformation; for “what is more iniquitous than for a tsar to judge bishops, taking to himself a power which has not been given him by God?... This is apostasy from God.”

It was not only the Russian State that had sinned in Nicon’s deposition: both the Russian hierarchs and the Eastern Patriarchs had displayed pusillanimity in submitting to the pressure of tsar and boyars. (In 1676 Patriarch Joachim convened a council which hurled yet more accusations against him... But judgement was deferred for a generation or two, while the Russian autocracy restored the Ukraine, “Little Russia”, to the Great Russian kingdom. With the weakening of Poland and the increase in strength of the generally pro-Muscovite Cossacks under Hetman Bogdan Khmelnitsky, large areas of Belorussia and the Ukraine, including Kiev, were freed from Latin control, which could only be joyful news for the native Orthodox population who had suffered so much from the Polish-Jesuit yoke. Moreover, the liberated areas were returned to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church in 1686. This meant that most of the Russian lands were now, for the first time for centuries, united under a single, independent Russian State and Church. The Russian national Church had been restored to almost its original dimensions. The final step would be accomplished by Tsar Nicholas II in 1915, just before the fall of the empire...

As if in acknowledgement of this, at the coronation of Tsar Theodore Alexeyevich certain additions were made to the rite that showed that the

---

412 Zyzykin, op. cit. part II, p. 27.
413 Zyzykin, op. cit. part II, p. 48.
414 Quoted in Hackel, op. cit., p. 9.
416 However, Constantinople’s agreement to the transfer was extracted under heavy pressure. Patriarch Dionysius signed the transfer of power under pressure from the Sultan, who wanted to ensure Moscow’s neutrality in his war with the Sacred League in Europe. Then, in 1687, Dionysius was removed for this act, and the transfer of Kiev to Moscow denounced as anti-canonical by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Things were made worse when, in 1688, Moscow reneged on its promise to give Kiev the status of an autonomous metropolia and turned it into an ordinary diocese. This had consequences in the twentieth century, when Constantinople granted the Polish Church autocephaly in 1924, and then, from the beginning of the 1990s, began to lay claims to the Ukraine.
Russian Church now looked on the tsardom as a quasi-priestly rank. “These additions were: 1) the proclamation of the symbol of faith by the tsar before his crowning, as was always the case with ordinations, 2) the vesting of the tsar in royal garments signifying his putting on his rank, and 3) communion in the altar of the Body and Blood separately in accordance with the priestly order, which was permitted only for persons of the three hierarchical sacred ranks. These additions greatly exalted the royal rank, and Professor Pokrovsky explained their introduction by the fact that at the correction of the liturgical books in Moscow in the second half of the 17th century, the attention of people was drawn to the difference in the rites of the Byzantine and Muscovite coronation and the additions were introduced under the influence of the Council of 1667, which wanted to exalt the royal rank.”

The pious tsar did not use his exalted position to humiliate the Church. On the contrary, he tried, as far as it was in his power, to correct the great wrong that had been done to the Church in his father’s reign. Thus when Patriarch Nicon died it was the tsar who ordered “that the body should be conveyed to New Jerusalem. The patriarch did not want to give the reposed hierarchical honours. [So] his Majesty persuaded Metropolitan Cornelius of Novgorod to carry out the burial. He himself carried the coffin with the remains.”

Again, it was the tsar rather than the patriarch who obtained a gramota from the Eastern Patriarchs in 1682 restoring Nicon to patriarchal status and “declaring that he could be forgiven in view of his redemption of his guilt by his humble patience in prison.” This was hardly an adequate summary of the situation. But it did go some of the way to helping the Greeks redeem their guilt in the deposition of the most Grecophile of Russian patriarchs…

The Rebellion of the Streltsy

We have noted the opinion that if Patriarch Nicon had not been forced to leave his see, there would have been no Old Ritualist schism. Nor would there have been that weakening of the authority of the Church vis-à-vis the State that was to have such catastrophic consequences in the next century. And yet in the reign of the pious Tsar Theodore Alexeyevich, Patriarch Nicon was posthumously restored to his see, the Old Ritualist schism was still of small proportions, and Church-State relations were still essentially “symphonic”. Even the Monastirskij Prikaz, which Nicon had fought so hard and unsuccessfully to remove, was in fact removed in 1675. What made the situation worse, and made the schism more or less permanent, was the stubborn fanaticism of the Old Ritualists and their turning a Church quarrel into a rebellion against the State.

417 Zyzykin, op. cit, part I, p. 165.
418 Rusak, op. cit, p. 194.
Zenkovsky writes: “The struggle between the supporters of the old rite, on the one hand, and the state (the tsar) and the Church, on the other, was complicated by two important phenomena: the rebellion of the Solovki monastery (the monks were joined, at the beginning of the 1670s, by a part of the defeated rebels of Stepan Razin) and the burnings. The siege of Solovki, the very important monastery and fortress on the White Sea, lasted for ten years and ended with the deaths of almost all its defenders. This was no longer a conflict between the Church and the Old Ritualists, but between rebels and the state. More important in their consequences were the burnings – mass immolations of those Old Ritualists who considered that after the council of 1667 grace in the Church had dried up and that the Antichrist was already ruling on earth. The burnings had already begun in the middle of the 1660s under the influence of the ‘woodsman’, the fanatical and religiously completely pessimistic elder Capiton.

“The burnings lasted until the beginning of the 19th century, but at the end of the 17th, especially in the 1670s, they acquired a terrible character of a mass religio-psychological epidemic. In Poshekhonye (in the Trans-Volga region, near Kostroma) between 4000 and 5000 people perished in the burnings; in one of the northern burnings about 2500 people died at once. It is very difficult to estimate the general number of victims of the burning before the end of the 17th century, but in all probability their number was no less than 20,000, and perhaps even more...

“The uprising on Solovki, the burnings, the participation of the Old Ritualists in the Razin rebellion, and the formation of a Cossack Old Ritualist ‘republic’ that separated from the Russian State at the turn of the 17th-18th centuries, gave the government enough reasons to persecute all the supporters of the Old Russian faith [sic] without examination…”

A critical point came with the death of Tsar Theodore in 1682. Lebedev writes: “He did not have a son and heir. Therefore power had to pass to the brother of the deceased, Ivan, the son of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich from his first marriage with Maria Ilyinichna Miloslavskaya. Behind Ivan Alexeyevich, there also stood his very active sister the Tsarevna Sophia. But we know that from the second marriage of Alexis Mikhailovich with Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina there was another son, Peter Alexeyevich, who was born in 1672. In 1682 he was ten years old, while his half-brother Ivan was fifteen. The Naryshkins did not want to let their interests be overlooked, and wanted

420 Zenkovsky, op. cit. p. 89. Zenkovsky also notes that the priestless communities were not touched by the authorities, and that in general “the persecutions affected [only] those who tried to preach amidst the non-Old Ritualist population” (p. 92). Bishop Gregory Grabbe writes: “The Church Herself hardly participated in the persecution... The persecutions were from the State and for political reasons, insofar as (some of) the Old Believers considered the power of the State to be antichristian and did not want to submit to it.” (Pis’ma (Letters), Moscow, 1998, p. 24 (in Russian)). (V.M.)
Peter to be made Tsar. A battle began between them and their supporters and the supporters of the Miloslavsky princes. The result was yet another schism, this time in the Royal Family itself... This of course elicited a time of troubles. Behind Sophia and the Miloslavskys there stood a part of the boyars, including Prince Basil Vasilyevich Golitsyn. Against them was Patriarch Joachim (at first not openly) and other supporters of the Naryshkins. A rumour was spread about them that they wanted to ‘remove’ (kill) Ivan Alexeyevich. The army of riflemen [streltsy] in Moscow rebelled. The riflemen more than once burst into the royal palace looking for plotters and evil-doers, and once right there, in the palace, before the eyes of the Royal Family, including Peter, they killed the boyars A. Matveev and I. Naryshkin. The country was on the edge of a new time of troubles and civil war. The wise Sophia was able to come to an agreement with the Naryshkins and in the same year both Tsareviches, Ivan and Peter, were proclaimed Tsars, while their ‘governess’, until they came of age, became the Tsarevna Sophia. The leader of the riflemen’s army, the very aged Prince Dolgorukov, was removed in time and Prince Ivan Andreevich Khovansky was appointed. He was able quickly to take the riflemen in hand and submit them to his will.

“The Old Ritualists decided to make use of these disturbances. Protopriest Nikita Dobrynin, aptly nicknamed ‘Emptyholy’, together with similarly fanatical Old Ritualists, unleashed a powerful campaign amidst the riflemen and attained the agreement of the Royal Family and the Patriarch to the holding of a public debate on the faith with the ‘Niconians’, that is, first of all with the Patriarch himself. This debate took place on July 5, 1682 in the Granovita palace in the Kremlin in the presence of the Royal Family, the clergy and the Synclite. Nikita read aloud a petition from the Old Ritualists that the new books and rites should be removed, declaring that they constituted ‘the introduction of a new faith’. Against this spoke Patriarch Joachim, holding in his hands an icon of Metropolitan Alexis of Moscow. He was very emotional and wept. The Old Ritualists did not want even to listen to him! They began to interrupt the Patriarch and simply shout: ‘Make the sign of the cross in this way!’, raising their hands with the two-fingered sign of the cross. Then Archbishop Athanasius of Kholmogor (later Archangelsk), who had himself once been an Old Ritualist, with knowledge of the subject refuted ‘Emptyholy’s’ propositions, proving that the new rites were by no means ‘a new faith’, but only the correction of mistakes that had crept into the services. Protopriest Nikita was not able to object and in powerless fury hurled himself at Athanasius, striking him on the face. There was an uproar. The behaviour of the Old Ritualists was judged to be an insult not only to the Church, but also to the Royal Family, and they were expelled. Finding themselves on the street, the Old Ritualists shouted: ‘We beat them! We won!’ – and set off for the riflemen in the area on the other side of the Moscow river. As we see, in fact there was no ‘beating’, that is, they gained no victory in the debate. On the same night the riflemen captured the Old Ritualists and
handed them over to the authorities. On July 11 on Red Square Nikita Dobrynin ‘Emptyholy’ was beheaded in front of all the people.

“Then, at a Church Council in 1682, it was decided to ask their Majesties to take the most severe measures against the Old Ritualists, to the extent of executing the most stubborn of them through burning. And so Protopriest Avvakum was burned in Pustozersk. This is perhaps the critical point beyond which the church schism began in full measure, no longer as the disagreement of a series of supporters of the old rites, but as a movement of a significant mass of people. Now the Old Ritualists began to abuse not only the ‘Niconian’ Church, but also the royal power, inciting people to rebel against it. Their movement acquired not only an ecclesiastical, but also a political direction. It was now that it was necessary to take very severe measures against them, and they were taken, which probably saved the State from civil war. Many Old Ritualists, having fled beyond the boundaries of Great Russia, then began to undertake armed raids on the Russian cities and villages. It is now considered fashionable in our ‘educated’ society to relate to the schismatical Old Ritualists with tender feeling, almost as if they were martyrs or innocent sufferers. To a significant degree all this is because they turned out to be on the losing, beaten side. And what if they had won? Protopriest Avvakum used to say that if he were given power he would hang ‘the accursed Niconians’ on trees (which there is no reason to doubt, judging from his biography). He said this when he had only been exiled by the ‘Niconians’, and not even defrocked. So if the Old Ritualists had won, the Fatherland would simply have been drowned in blood. Protopriest Avvakum is also particularly venerated as the author of his noted ‘Life’. It in fact displays the very vivid Russian language of the 17th century and in this sense, of course, it is valuable for all investigators of antiquity. But that is all! As regards the spirit and the sense of it, this is the work of a boundlessly self-deceived man. It is sufficient to remember that none of the Russian saints wrote a ‘Life’ praising himself…”

The apocalyptic element in Old Ritualism took its starting-point from the prophecy of Archimandrite Zachariah (Kopystensky) of the Kiev Caves Lavra, who in 1620 had foretold that the coming of the Antichrist would take place in 1666. And in a certain sense the Antichrist did indeed come in 1666. For as a result of the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nicon, the symphony of powers between Church and State in Russia was fatally weakened, leading, in the long run, to the appearance of Soviet power, in 1917...

The Old Ritualists also saw apocalyptic signs in the increase of western influence in Muscovy, and in the Tsar’s acceptance of the Patriarch’s...

---

421 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), pp. 154-156.
422 There is evidence that drunkenness, long thought to be the vice of Russians from the beginning, was in fact rare before the seventeenth century and severely punished. Things began to change under the Romanovs, and western traders encouraged the new trend...
reforms. And yet the parallel here, paradoxically, is with the Protestants, who similarly believed that true Christianity ended when State and Church supposedly reverted to idolatry in the time of the Emperor Constantine. The Old Ritualists fled into the woods to escape the Antichrist and wait for the Second Coming of Christ in their democratic communes, accepting the authority of neither king nor priest. Similarly, the Czech Taborites and German Anabaptists and English Puritans and Independents and Quakers fled from existing states to build their millenial communities in which the only king and priest was God. This was particularly so with the priestless Old Ritualists, called the Bespopovtsi (as opposed to the Popovtsi, who still had priests, and the Beglopopovtsi who used priests fleeing from the official Church). The communities of the priestless, like those on the River Vyg in the north, were almost democratic communes, having no priests and recognising no political authority – not unlike the contemporary Puritan communities of North America. And gradually, as in the writings of Semeon Denisov, one of the leaders of the Vyg community, they evolved a new conception of Holy Russia, according to which the real Russia resided, not in the Tsar and the Church, for they had both apostasised, but in the common people. As Sergius Zenkovsky writes, Denisov “transformed the old doctrine of an autocratic Christian state into a concept of a democratic Christian nation.”

From that time an apocalyptic rejection of the State became the keynote of Old Ritualism. As Fr. George Florovsky writes, “the keynote and secret of Russia’s Schism was not ‘ritual’ but the Antichrist, and thus it may be termed a socio-apocalyptical utopia. The entire meaning and pathos of the first schismatic opposition lies in its underlying apocalyptical intuition (‘the time draws near’), rather than in any ‘blind’ attachment to specific rites or petty details of custom. The entire first generation of raskolouchitei [‘schismatic teachers’] lived in this atmosphere of visions, signs, and premonitions, of miracles, prophecies, and illusions. These men were filled with ecstasy or possessed, rather than pedants… One has only to read the words of Avvakum, breathless with excitement: ‘What Christ is this? He is not near; only hosts of demons.’ Not only Avvakum felt that the ‘Nikon’ Church had become a den of thieves. Such a mood became universal in the Schism: ‘the censer is useless; the offering abominable’.

423 Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov characterised the difference between the Popovtsi (with priests) and Bespopovtsi (without priests) Old Believers as follows: “The former are different in certain rites which have no influence on the essence of Christianity, while the latter have no Bishop over themselves, contrary to the ecclesiastical canons. The formation of the former was aided in part by ignorance ascribing to certain rites and customs a greater importance that these rites have; while the formation of the latter was aided by the Protestant tendency of certain individual people.” (“O Raskole” (“On the Schism”), in “Neizdannia proizvedenia episkopa Ignatia (Brianchaninova)” (“Unpublished Works of Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov”), Tserkovnaia Zhizn’ (Church Life), №№ 1-2, January-February-March-April, 2003, p. 18 (in Russian)).

424 Zenkovsky, in Hosking, op. cit., p. 72.
“The Schism, an outburst of a socio-political hostility and opposition, was a social movement, but one derived from religious self-consciousness. It is precisely this apocalyptical perception of what has taken place which explains the decisive or rapid estrangement among the Schismatics. ‘Fanaticism in panic’ is Kliuichevskii’s definition, but it was also panic in the face of ‘the last apostasy’…

“The Schism dreamed of an actual, earthly City: a theocratic utopia and chiliasm. It was hoped that the dream had already been fulfilled and that the ‘Kingdom of God’ had been realised as the Muscovite State. There may be four patriarchs in the East, but the one and only Orthodox tsar is in Moscow. But now even this expectation had been deceived and shattered. Nikon’s ‘apostasy’ did not disturb the Old Ritualists nearly as much as did the tsar’s apostasy, which in their opinion imparted a final apocalyptical hopelessness to the entire conflict.

“"At this time there is no tsar. One Orthodox tsar had remained on earth, and whilst he was unaware, the western heretics, like dark clouds, extinguished this Christian sun. Does this not, beloved, clearly prove that the Antichrist’s deceit is showing its mask?’

“History was at an end. More precisely, sacred history had come to an end; it had ceased to be sacred and had become without Grace. Henceforth the world would seem empty, abandoned, forsaken by God, and it would remain so. One would be forced to withdraw from history into the wilderness. Evil had triumphed in history. Truth had retreated into the bright heavens, while the Holy Kingdom had become the tsardom of the Antichrist…”

In spite of this apocalypticism, some of the Old Ritualists came to accept the Russian State as the legitimate Orthodox empire. Thus an investigator of the Old Rite in the 1860s, V.I. Kel’siev asserted that “the people continue to believe today that Moscow is the Third Rome and that there will be no fourth. So Russia is the new Israel, a chosen people, a prophetic land, in which shall be fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, and in which even the Antichrist will appear, as Christ appeared in the previous Holy Land. The representative of Orthodoxy, the Russian Tsar, is the most legitimate emperor on earth, for he occupies the throne of Constantinople…”

The Antichrist in Turkey

The apocalypticism of the Old Ritualists found another, contemporary parallel amidst the Jews of the Ottoman empire. After the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, the Jews of Spain were invited to the Muslim lands by the promise of

426 Hosking, op. cit., p. 73.
economic concessions and political protection. They settled throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

Thus the Jews had 44 synagogues and 30,000 people in Constantinople, which may have been the seat of their secret government, or exilarchate, which had been abolished by the Arabs of Baghdad in the tenth century. Again, in Thessalonica, which was called the New Jerusalem, there were 36,000 Jews. Their grip on trade was so powerful that in 1568 they appealed to the Sublime Porte to have their tax bill reduced. 427 Powerful though they were these Sephardic Jews still pined for their former life in Andalusia, and it was through them that the Kabbala received an important theoretical and practical development that reflected their longings. 428

“The most important person,” writes Tikhomirov, “who gave an impulse to the Kabbalistic movement here was Issak Lourié Levi [or Louria], a native of Jerusalem, who had a mystical, passionate nature that devoted itself entirely to the idea. He lived for a very short time on the earth (from 1534 to 1572) and died at the age of 38 from the plague. But in the short period of his activity he exerted a powerful influence on the development of Kabbalism. In Jerusalem he founded a kabbalistic circle in which they discussed the Kabbala and practised incantations and the calling up of spirits. He had an enormous influence on those around him, and the movement of Kabbalism continued also after his death.” 429

“Like most kabbalists,” writes Johnson, “he believed that the actual letters of the Torah, and the numbers which they symbolized, offered means of direct access to God. It is a very potent brew once swallowed. However, Luria also had a cosmic theory which had an immediate direct bearing on belief in the Messiah, and which remains the most influential of all Jewish mystical ideas. The kabbalah listed the various layers of the cosmos. Luria postulated the thought that Jewish miseries were a symptom of the breakdown of the cosmos. Its shattered husks, or klippot, which are vile, none the less contain tiny sparks, tikkim, of the divine light. This imprisoned light is the Exile of the Jews. Even the divine Shekinah itself is part of the trapped light, subject to evil influences. The Jewish people have a dual significance in this broken cosmos, both as symbols and as active agents. As symbols, the injuries inflicted on them by the gentiles show how evil hurts the light. But as agents they have the task of restoring the cosmos. By the strictest observance of the Law, they can release the sparks of light trapped in the cosmic husks. When

429 Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 358. According to Armstrong (op. cit., p. 11), “by 1650, Lurianic Kabbalah had become a mass movement, the only theological system to win such general acceptance among Jews at this time.”
this restitution has been made, the Exile of the Light will end, the Messiah will come and Redemption will take place."\textsuperscript{430}

Luria also believed in reincarnation, writing: “If the soul was not purified entirely the first time, and it left this world, that soul must come back in a reincarnation, even a few times, until it is entirely purified.”\textsuperscript{431}

This motif was to receive a fateful development in the thought of one of his disciples, Shabbatai Zevi, who “was educated on the Kabbala and declared himself to be the Messiah. Shabbatai Zevi was born in 1626 and died in 1676, and stirred up the whole Jewish world from the east to the extreme west. His father was from the Morea, and he himself began his activity in Smyrna. Possessing a huge ability to exert influence on those around him, he, while basing himself on Kabbalistic works (especially the \textit{Zohar}), gave his own teaching, whose outlines, however, are not at all clearly known. In this period, both among Christians and among Jews there was an expectation of extraordinary events in 1666: among Christians – the Second Coming, among Jews – the coming of their Messiah. In Shabbatai Zevi those round him had already for a long time supposed to see something great, and in 1648 he finally declared that he was the Messiah. For this he was excommunicated from the synagogue and exiled from Smyrna. Then he began to preach in various other cities, including Constantinople. His fellow-labourer Nathan [Benjamin Levi], who played the role of the resurrected Prophet Elijah, announced that in 1666 the Messiah would appear, would liberate the Jews from the Turks and would take the Sultan into captivity. In 1665 Shabbatai Zevi did indeed triumphantly enter into Jerusalem, where the majority of the Jewish population believed in him. Then with the same pomp he appeared in Smyrna. A psychopathological inspiration that had not been seen for a long time took hold of the Jews. Everywhere the Jews gave themselves over to unrestrained joy, while others – to exploits of fasting and repentance with self-flagellation, giving alms and organizing feasts in honour of the Messiah, who was triumphantly announced in the synagogue. News of this reached Europe, where the same scenes began \textit{en masse}, while the rabbis declared Shabbatai to be a liar and in every way opposed the movement. Meanwhile, the worried Turks arrested Shabbatai in 1666 and imprisoned him in Abydos, where crowds of worshippers continued to surround the Messiah in expectation that he would finally be released and liberate the Jews. The Turkish government decided to put an end this and declared Shabbatai Zevi an ultimatum: either accept Islam or be annihilated. Shabbatai Zevi accepted

\textsuperscript{430} Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 260-261.  
\textsuperscript{431} Recently Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the ultra-orthodox leader known as the “Moses of the Sephardic world” has applied this theory to the Holocaust, declaring that the Jewish victims of Nazism were “the reincarnation of earlier souls who sinned [and who] returned... to atone for their sins” (Lisa Beyer, Eric Silver, “Heresy and Holocaust”, \textit{Time}, August 21, 2000, p. 74).
Islam, but still continued his role, until finally they exiled him to Dulcinea, where he died.432

“However, Shabbataism did not disappear even after that. Up to now [the early twentieth century] there exists in Thessalonica a small sect of his followers, about 4000 souls, who call themselves the maiminim (that is, believers). Although their teaching is preserved in the strictest secrecy, nevertheless its Catechism is known. Both from this Catechism and from a work attributed to Shabbatai Zevi, it is evident that Shabbatai Zevi and the Messiah in general is periodically incarnated. Adam, Abraham, Moses, etc. are only parts of the soul of Shabbatai Zevi. The maiminim affirm that Shabbatai Zevi has been incarnate 18 times.

“After the death of Shabbatai Zevi there were several continuers of his work, who were generally looked upon as incarnations of the original soul of the Messiah, that is, as the Divinity having taken on human form. This incarnation of the Divinity constitutes one of the main points of the teaching of Shabbatai Zevi, and although his followers present several different schools, in this respect they all agree. It is noteworthy that Shabbatai Levi rebuked the Jews for their murder of Jesus Christ and intended to declare Him a prophet. In the work attributed to Shabbatai and which at the same time a certain Nehemiah Hia Hojon (in Graetz’ opinion, a simple rogue) called his own, the religious history of the world is expounded. This world-view should be compared, for clarity’s sake, with the teaching of Hojon on the trihypostacy of the Divinity. It is very possible that this was also Shabbatai’s idea. According to the teaching of Hojon, the Divinity is trinitarian, but not in the same sense as is taught by Christians. In the Divinity there are three Partsefim (persons): 1) the Holy Pre-Eternal Elder, who is the soul of all souls, 2) the Holy King, who is the incarnation of God, and 3) a female essence, the Shehinah. In the above-indicated work of Shabbatai it is explained that the creation of the world by Ayn-Sof (from the Kabbala) turned out to be unsuccessful. Neither

---

432 Dan Cohn-Sherbok writes that Nathan “sent letters to Jews throughout the diaspora requesting that they repent and recognize Shabbatai Zevi as their deliverer. According to Nathan, Shabbatai would bring back the lost tribes and inaugurate the period of messianic redemption. After a short period in Jerusalem, Shabbatai travelled to Smyrna, where he encountered fierce opposition from various local rabbis. In response he declared that he was the Anointed of the God of Jacob and criticized those who refused to accept him. This act provoked hysterical response from his followers; a number fell into trances and had visions of him crowned on a royal throne as the King of Israel.

“In 1666 he went to Istanbul, where he was arrested and put into prison. Soon the prison quarters were transformed into a messianic court, and pilgrims from throughout the Jewish world travelled to Constantinople to join in messianic rituals and ascetic activities. Hymns were composed in Shabbatai’s honour and new festivals introduced. The same year Shabbatai met the Polish kabbalist Nehemiah ha-Kohen, who denounced him to the Turkish authorities. When Shabbatai was brought to the Turkish court, he was given the choice between conversion and death. Given this alternative, Shabbatai converted to Islam…” (Atlas of Jewish History, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 119) (V.M.)
the world, nor God himself were able to realize its ideal character. Only with the incarnation of Shabbatai Zevi – the Messiah, Christ, the Holy King – was the world renewed and attained perfection. Then also ‘the unknown hidden Holy Elder’ became knowable, and attained his development and realization. The Messiah, the highest man, constitutes one whole with God. He is the true creator and founder, for he brings order into the shaken-up structure of the world. Thus Shabbatai Zevi was the incarnation of the Divinity and one of the Partsefim. But we must note that in this theory the highest man, or Holy King, unites in himself the masculine and feminine principles. Consequently, in him is also included the Shehinah, although, perhaps, the trihypostacity is not thereby destroyed.

“In all this we clearly see a variation on what is undoubtedly the Kabbala. But apparently Shabbatai said about the Jews contemporary to him that they worshipped, not God, but the Metatron. In the teaching of the maiminim the Jews, although predestined for salvation, must now be numbered among the unbelievers, and for their salvation they must admit that Shabbatai Zevi is the Messiah.

“The sects of the Hassidim and Frankists in Poland, Russia and Austria are considered offshoots of Shabbataism. But the founder of Hassidism in Poland at that time, Israel Besht (1698-1760), had no relations of any kind with the Shabbataists, and was extremely negatively disposed to Shabbatai Zevi. One presents in his teaching several other Kabbalistic variations. As regards Yankel Leibovich, who accepted the name of Jacob Frankel, he truly recognized the Messianic status of Shabbatai. According to his teaching, there were many Messiahs and there are all incarnations of one and the same Messianic soul, among whom are King David, Elijah the Prophet, Jesus Christ, Mahomet and Shabbatai Zevi. Jacob Frank composed his teaching in Thessalonica after entering into close relations with the Shabbataists…”

The Serbs under the Turkish Yoke

The Serbs were the last Balkan nation to resist the Turks. But not for long. George Branković and his son Vuk held Belgrade for a few years. But the last remnants of Serbian independence, centered on Smederovo, disappeared in 1459. And Bosnia fell in 1463. “The devastation was terrible. According to

434 “Not content with seizing their country, the Turks used the unhappy Serbs as the instrument of their own enslavement. One boy in every family was torn away from his home, and brought up as a Turk and a Mohammedan; and thus were formed the so-called Janissaries, the famous crack regiments which made the Turks so long the terror of Europe. From 1459 to 1804 Serbia ceased to exist as a state and a self-governing nation.” (Srđja Trifković, “Kosovo: The Score Squaring the Circle in the Balkans”, in Kosovo and Metohija: arguments in favour of it future within Serbia, Geopolitika, 2006, p. 34).
435 According to Dr. Miodrag M. Petrović, there was no independent Bosnian Church, although there were Orthodox Christians served by clergy of the Serbian Church. The so-
early Turkish sources, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were ten to fourteen active places of Christian worship left in Kosovo and Metohija.”

Of particular significance in the history of Serbia under the Turkish yoke was the burning of the body of St. Sava, which had been placed in the monastery of Mileshevo. “Mileshevo was plundered and destroyed,” writes Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, “but happily not destroyed. The sarcophagus with Sava’s incorruptible body was not removed or desecrated for one hundred and fifty years after the Turkish conquest. Ever since Sava’s body was laid in it, and for over two hundred years of Serbian freedom and independence, Mileshevo had been a place of pilgrimages, equal to Zhicha and Studenica. It had been endowed and adorned by the Bans of Bosnia, the Princes of Herzegovina, the Zhupans of the seacoast and kings and tsars of Serbia. The petty lords wanted to make themselves great, and the great would make themselves still greater if they had some connection with Sava’s tomb or Sava’s name. So Tvrtko I chose Mileshevo in which to be crowned King of Bosnia at the tomb of St. Sava in 1277, although he was a protector of the Bogomils. Prince Stjepan Kossacha, an open Bogomil, adopted the title ‘Duke of St. Sava’. Of course, the Orthodox rulers competed even more eagerly with each other to do something remarkable for that sanctuary in which the sacred body was preserved. In those bright days of freedom, Mileshevo was a true center of lofty piety, education and educational activity. For Sava’s spirit ruled there and gave an example of strenuous labor and many accomplishments.

“In the dark days of Turkish tyranny, however, Mileshevo became to the Christian people a place of retreat, of deep repentance and of heavenly consolation. It was at the mercy of the Muslims and yet, strange as it may seem, it was for a long time protected by the Muslims themselves and the Serbs who were converted by force to Islam. The Muslims also witnessed called “Bosnian Church” was not an organization with an ecclesiastical territory and jurisdiction, but a completely secular institution, a diplomatic, advisory, arbitration and intermediary body at the courts of Bosnian rulers. (“Kudugers-Bogomils in Byzantine and Serbian sources and the ‘Bosnian Church’, Belgrade, 1998, pp. 90-97).

436 “Orthodox Kosovo”, Saint Herman Calendar 2009, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood. At this time the future scourges of the Serbs, the Albanians, were fighting on the Christian side under their famous ruler Skanderbeg. Jason Tomes writes: “Born Gjergj Kastrioti around 1405, the legendary patriot was taken as a tribute child to be reared as a Muslim and trained for the Ottoman army. He covered himself with glory fighting for the Turks, and to his Islamic name Iskandar was added the honorific title bey (or beg). The Sultan appointed him Governor of Kruja, but in 1443 he mutinied, reverted to Catholicism, and declared himself ruler of Albania. Allied with Hungarians and Venetians, Skanderbeg resisted the Turks for twenty-five years, and his victories against tremendous odds won him an enduring place in European history. But, as so often with a military genius, his legacy proved unsustainable. Skanderbeg died of fever in 1468, and independence was lost within a decade, despite the efforts of his heirs…” (King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007, p. 10).
innumerable miracles at the tomb of Saint Sava. A large village of Muslim converts, Hissarjik, close to the monastery, surpassed all others in their devotion to and protection of Mileshevo. Some of the daring European travellers who came to Serbia under the Osmanlis saw in Mileshevo the sarcophagus of Saint Sava ‘heaped with the gifts given by the Muslims’. Some of them mentioned that even Roman Catholics from Dalmatia and Jews made pilgrimages to the tomb of the saint.

“This situation lasted until the end of the sixteenth century. But in that century the Osmanli Turks became exasperated because of the ceaseless revolts and insurrections of the Serbs. The Serbs had never reconciled themselves to their cruel fate under the Turkish yoke, Guerillas from forests inside the country on the one hand, and refugees from Srem, Slavonia and Banat, on the other, constantly disturbed the Ottoman government. The Turks thought the trouble makers and revolutionaries had been inspired by the ancient Serbian monasteries. The cult and veneration of Saint Sava was then as great as ever before, and even greater on account of increasingly accumulated wonders.

“Facing the growing danger of frequent insurrection, the Turkish sultans of that time were imprudent enough to use means contrary to wisdom. Instead of dousing fire by water, they intensified it by wood and straw. They sent more and more petty tyrants to suppress the revolts by torture, destruction and bloodshed.

“At the beginning of the year 1595, a change took place on the throne in Istanbul. The new sultan, Mohammed III, son of a weak father, cruelly ordered Sinan Pasha to quell the Serbian revolts forever by any means. This ruthless pasha was informed that the Serbian monasteries were inspirational centers for the revolts against the Turks. He was informed that Mileshevo was a place of pilgrimage, a new Kaba, even for Muslims, and that many of them had been converted to the Christian faith because of the healing of their sick relations, and other wonders at the tomb of Saint Sava. Sinan Pasha at once ordered that Sava’s body be taken to Belgrade and burnt.

“A certain Ahmed beg Ochuse was assigned the commission to carry out the pasha’s order. This brutal servant of the brutal lord, true to his nature, did it in a brutal way. He first placed a military cordon around the monastery of Mileshevo. Then he forced the monks to take the wooden coffin with the body of the saint out of the sarcophagus. The coffin was put on horses which were led by the monks themselves, because the Turks were afraid to touch it. And so the melancholy procession started. On the way the sobbing and crying monks were beaten and every Serbian man or women met on the way was killed or taken along, lest they should inform the outlaws in the forests. So in this way the procession swelled considerably by the time it reached Belgrade.
“In the outskirts of the city of Belgrade, at a place called Vrachar, a pyre was made. On that pyre the wooden coffin containing the sacred boy was laid. On April 27, 1595, Saint Sava’s body was burnt to ashes. An unusually big flame soared heavenward, illuminated the city in the night and was seen from over the Danube River. And while the Turks were celebrating with satisfaction, and the enslaved Serbs in Belgrade were weeping and praying, the free Serbs beyond the Danube and the guerrillas on the mountains presented their swords in homage to their saint.

“So Sinan Pasha destroyed the body of Saint Sava, but increased his glory and influence. The triumph was only passing because it destroyed a cage from which the dove had fled long ago. The joy of the Turks was of short duration, for as the flame subsided, a sudden fear seized them, and they ran to their homes and shut the doors behind them. In Vrachar a few monks on their knees watched the fire from afar, waiting to take a handful of sacred ashes back to Mileshevo…”

In the seventeenth century, the persecution against the Serbian Orthodox intensified. Such great pillars of Orthodoxy as St. Basil of Ostrog (+1671) had to struggle both against the Jesuits and against the Turks. Meanwhile, the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija had a further scourge in the shape of the Albanians, who gradually came down from the mountains and settled in the plain, and were then given significant positions of power because of their conversion to Islam.

Mark Mazower writes: “Albania was perhaps a special case from the point of view of religion. ‘We Albanians have quite peculiar ideas,’ one notable told Edith Durham. ‘We will profess any form of religion which leaves us free to carry a gun. Therefore the majority of us are Moslems.’”

Srdja Trifković writes: “Wealth and material position were important factors affecting the decision of conquered peoples to convert to Islam. This contributed to the new stratification of the society under Ottoman rule, and a new power balance among national groups. The balance was shifting, and as far as the Albanians and Serbs were concerned, it was shifting drastically in favour of the Albanians, to the detriment of good relations between them. The emergence of a significant number of Islamized Albanians holding high Ottoman posts was reflected in Kosovo and Metohija. Albanians started appearing as officials and tax collectors in local administration, replacing Turks as the pillar of Ottoman authority. Local Serbs, who remained Christians, and Albanians, who were eager to convert, being divided by language and culture, and subsequently by religion, gradually became members of two fundamentally opposed social and political groups.

---

“The Albanians’ readiness to come to terms with the conquerors gave them the upper hand. This was the beginning of a tragic division, of separate roads. The former became the rulers and the latter the ruled.

“The latent Serbian-Albanian conflict came into the open during the Holy League’s war against the Ottoman Empire (1683-1690). Many Serbs joined the Habsburg troops as a separate Christian militia. The Albanians – with the exception of the gallant Roman Catholic Klimenti (Kelmendi) tribe – reacted in accordance with their recently acquired Islamic identity and took the side of the sultan’s army against the Christians.”

The Austrians advanced as far east as Kosovo, but then retreated, leaving the Serbs who had taken their side at the mercy of the vengeful Turks. Under the leadership of Patriarch Arsenius III Čarnojević of Pec, the Serbs “abandoned their farms and villages to trek north, then crossed the Danube with the retreating Austrians into Habsburg-ruled Hungary. In what was thereafter called Vojvodina, from the Slavonic for ‘duchy’, the emperor gave the Serbs [in 1690] a charter to establish their own community. The Habsburgs used these exiles as the first line of defence against Ottoman incursions.”

According to Noel Malcolm, the document that the Austrian Emperor Leopold I issued to Patriarch Arsenije was not in fact “inviting the Patriarch to bring his people to Hungary; on the contrary, it was urging him and his people to rise up against the Ottomans, so that Austrian rule could be extended all the way to ‘Albania’. For that purpose, it guaranteed (as Marsigli had suggested) that Habsburg dominion over their territory would not infringe their religious freedom or their right to elect their own vojvods. The original manuscript of this document was endorsed: ‘An exhortation to the Patriarch of the Rascians, to rouse his people to rebel against the Turks’; and a key passage in the text said: ‘Do not desert your hearths, or the cultivation of your fields.’ Some nineteenth-century historians of a romantic Serbian persuasion dealt with this passage in a wonderfully economical way: instead of printing the correct text, which says non deserite (do not desert), they simply omitted the ‘non’.

“In the summer of 1690, however, all such plans for reconquest were abandoned. The Ottomans, under their competent Grand Vizier, had built up their forces, and the military tide had definitely turned. A massive Ottoman army advanced on Niš and besieged it; it surrendered on 6 September. The Imperial garrison was allowed to leave, but a large number of ‘Rascian’ soldiers (400 in one account, 4000 in another) were taken out and killed. In the last week of September, Belgrade was under siege; it held out for just twelve

days, before an Ottoman shell hit the fort’s main powder-store on the night of 8 October, blowing the whole citadel to smithereens.

“By September Belgrade had become the natural destination of a large number of refugees. One modern historian estimates that there were 40,000 there; many of these would have come from the Niš region, and the region between Niš and Belgrade – areas which had been under Austrian administration for a whole year. But among them also would have been some of the people who had fled from the Prishtina-Trepča-Vučitěrn area of Kosovo. Their Patriarch had reached Belgrade much earlier in the year. In June he had gathered a large assembly of Serbian religious and secular leaders there, to discuss further negotiations with the Emperor over the question of religious autonomy in the areas still under Austrian control…

“How – and exactly when – the Serb refugees escaped into Hungary is not clear… The conditions most of them had to live in, as they camped out in the central Hungarian region in the winter, were atrocious. Before the end of the year Patriarch Arsenije sent a petition to the Emperor Leopold begging for assistance for these people; he also gave an explicit estimate of their numbers. ‘There have come to Esztergom, Komárom and Buda men with their wives and children, completely destitute and bare, coming to a total of more than 30,000 souls.’ Much later, in 1706, Arsenije made another estimate in a letter to Leopold’s successor: he said he had come to Hungary with ‘more than 40,000 souls’.”

Arsenije created a metropolitanate at Karlovtsy, while a new Patriarch was appointed at Peč. There were now three Serbian Churches: the Patriarchate at Peč under the Turks, the metropolitanate at Karlovtsy under the Austrians, and a small independent Church in Montenegro which escaped the dominion of both great powers...

---

PART II. THE AGE OF ABSOLUTISM (1689-1789)
3. THE WEST: DESPOTS AND PHILOSOPHERS

Temporal and spiritual are two words brought into the world to make men see double, and mistake their lawful sovereign… A man cannot obey two masters… Seeing there are no men no earth whose bodies are spiritual, there can be no spiritual commonwealth among men that are yet in the flesh.

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan.

The good of the people must be the great purpose of government. By the laws of nature and of reason, the governors are invested with power to that end. And the greatest good of the people is liberty. It is to the state what health is to the individual.

Diderot, Encyclopedia.

‘Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.


The early modern period (to 1689) was distinguished by two contrary tendencies in politics: on the one hand, the tendency towards the absolutist state, freed now from the shackles of ecclesiastical and feudal obligation, and on the other hand, the rise of representative institutions and the gradual re-imposition of shackles on the state by “the will of the people” – or those classes of society (usually the aristocrats and landowners) who considered that they stood for the people. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the first tendency had reached its climax in the France of Louis XIV and the Russia of Peter the Great, while the second tendency was beginning to gather strength in the most ideologically “advanced” states of the day, England and Holland. The history of the eighteenth century up to 1789 is to a large extent that of the penetration of French absolutism by the ideas of English scientific rationalism and democratism, and their synthesis by the French philosophes into the universalist system of thought known as the Enlightenment.

Hobbes’ Leviathan

The English revolution gradually ran out of steam. “As the millenium failed to arrive,” writes Christopher Hill, “and taxation was not reduced, as division and feuds rent the revolutionaries, so the image of his sacred majesty loomed larger over the quarrelsome, unsatisfactory scene… The mass of ordinary people came to long for a return to ‘normality’, to the known, the familiar, the traditional. Victims of scrofula who could afford it went abroad to be touched by the king [Charles II] over the water: after 1660 he was back, sacred and symbolic. Eikonoklastes was burnt by the common hangman together with The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates… The men of property in 1659-60 longed for ‘a king with plenty of holy oil about him’…” 442

The men of property may have wanted a king with plenty of holy oil about him. And yet his holiness was a secondary consideration. Their first priority was that he should suppress the revolutionaries, preserve order and let them make money in peace. A Divine Right ruler was not suitable because he might choose to touch their financial interests, as Charles I had done. A constitutional ruler was the answer – that is, a ruler who would rule within limitations imposed by the men of property and drawn up in a constitution. Thus, as Ian Buruma writes, “there is a link between business interests – or at least the freedom to trade – and liberal, even democratic, politics. Money tends to even things out, is egalitarian and blind to race or creed. As Voltaire said about the London stock exchange: Muslims, Christians and Jews trade as equals, and bankrupts are the only infidels. Trade can flourish if property is protected by laws. That means protection from the state, as well as from other individuals.”

However, the working out of such a constitution necessitated a new theory of politics, a theory that depended for its legitimacy less on God’s from above than on the satisfaction of human needs from below. This divorce between political theory and theology, which became commonplace after the English revolution, actually began much earlier, as we have seen, with Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* (1513).

But it was Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651) that developed and systematised this amoral approach to politics. Almost all contemporary theorists, whether monarchist or revolutionary, agreed that all power was from God and was legitimate only if sanctioned by God, differing only in their estimate of which power, the king’s or the people’s, was the final arbiter of conflicts. But Hobbes derived his theory of sovereignty from reason and “the principles of Nature only”, from a social contract between men in which God had no part.

Hobbes began from what he called the State of Nature, which, he believed, was WAR, a state devoid of civilization in which every man’s hand was raised against his neighbour, and in which the life of man was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Some kinds of animals, such as bees and ants, live sociably with each other. But this is not the case of men, because of their various destructive passions.

And so “the agreement of these creatures is natural; that of men, is by covenant only, which is artificial: and therefore it is no wonder if there be somewhat else required, besides covenant, to make their agreement constant and lasting which is a common power, to keep them in awe, and to direct their actions to the common benefit.

---

“The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; ... and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgements, to his judgement. This is more than consent, or concord; it is the real unity of them all, in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence.”

The State was therefore a Leviathan, “a monster composed of men” headed by a sovereign, personal or collective, whose power was created by a social contract, but who, after the “signing” of the contract, was answerable to no man or law.

But why should the sovereign’s power be unlimited in this way? “Since the sovereign,” explains Roger Scruton, “would be the creation of the contract, he could not also be party to it: he stands above the social contract, and can therefore disregard its terms, provided he enforces them against all others. That is why, Hobbes thought, it was so difficult to specify the obligations of the sovereign, and comparatively easy to specify the obligations of the citizen.” Here, then, we find the Divine Right of Kings in secular garb.

And yet were not men free and equal in the beginning? Yes, but the burden of that liberty was too great for men to bear (Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor was to say something similar). For, as J.S. McClelland explains, interpreting Hobbes: “if everyone has that same equal and unlimited liberty to do as he pleases in pursuit of the literally selfish end of self-preservation, then without law every man is a menace to every other man. Far from being an original endowment for which men should be grateful, the unlimited liberty of the Right of Nature is a millstone round men’s necks, of which they would be wise to unburden themselves at the first opportunity.” And they did, by giving up their rights to the sovereign, who, however, retained all of his.

---

444 Hobbes, Leviathan.
The lack of accountability of the sovereign is regrettable, but a necessity; and “necessity”, as Cromwell said, “hath no law...” Or rather, the sovereign’s will is the law, so it makes no sense to accuse the sovereign of acting unlawfully. “It follows from this that a Sovereign may never justly be put to death by his subjects because they would be punishing the Sovereign for their own act, and no principle of jurisprudence could ever conceivably justify punishing another for what one did oneself.” So Hobbes had learned from both sides in the Civil War!

Hobbes defined liberty negatively, as the absence of impediments to motion. Subjects are free when the laws do not interfere with them, allowing them some liberty of action. However, liberty is not a right, and subjects have no right to rebel for any reason except self-preservation (for that is the very purpose of the social contract). Thus subjects have the right to refuse military service – a right that no modern democratic government would concede to them. And they have the right to refuse to obey a sovereign who cannot protect them against their enemies.

“Hobbes’s Leviathan,” continues McClelland, “is certainly not the blueprint for universal monarchy that it is sometimes taken to be. Quite the reverse. Leviathan contains a very clear explanation of why supra-national organisations like the League of Nations or the UN are bound to fail in their avowed purpose of keeping the international peace, or even in their intention to provide some measure of international co-operation which is different from traditional alliances between states for traditional foreign policy ends. For Hobbes, there is no peace without law, and there can be no law without a Sovereign whose command law is. Hobbes is absolutely insistent that individuals in the State of Nature cannot make law by agreement; all they can do by contract is to choose a Sovereign. What applies to individuals in the State of Nature also applies to sovereigns in their State of Nature in relation to each other. The only way there could be a guarantee of international peace would be if all the sovereigns of the earth, or an overwhelming majority of them, were voluntarily to give up the right of national self-defence to some kind of super-sovereign whose word would be law to all the nations of the earth. This the various nations of the earth have been notoriously reluctant to do. They have tried to make international law by agreement, but that has never stopped war. They have tried to make international law by agreement, but that has never stopped war. Hobbes could have told them why: covenants without the sword are but breath, without any power to bind a man at all. No all-powerful international Sovereign, then no international peace.”

---

447 McClelland, op. cit., p. 207.
448 Russell, op. cit., p. 575.
449 McClelland, op. cit., p. 203.
Now Bertrand Russell criticised Hobbes on the grounds that while his model of the absolutist state decreased anarchy and destructiveness within states, it increased it between states. “So long as there is international anarchy, it is by no means clear that increase of efficiency in the separate States is in the interest of mankind, since it increases the ferocity and destructiveness of war. Every argument that he adduces in favour of government, in so far as it is valid at all, is valid in favour of international government. So long as national States exist and fight each other, only inefficiency can preserve the human race.”

However, Russell’s criticism fails to take into account the fact that Hobbes’ argument is not about absolutism as such, but about sovereignty, and that the sovereign, in his theory, “can be one man, a few, or many men. He knows his ancient political theory well enough (he made a famous translation of Thucydides) to know that states are either monarchies, aristocracies or democracies…. He thinks that the sovereignty which is exercised by a Sovereign is the same sovereignty, no matter how that sovereignty is in fact constituted. The sovereignty which is exercised by a Sovereign people, as at ancient Athens or republican Rome, does not change its nature as sovereignty just because it is democratic. Democratic sovereignty properly understood would have the same attributes as the sovereignty of an absolute monarch.”

The logic of Hobbes’ theory for international relations – either an international sovereign government or continued war – may be unpalatable, but it was not refuted by Russell. It may be that democratic governments are inherently less “efficient” or warlike than absolutist ones. But the reason for that would not be that they are less sovereign, but that they pursue different aims (peaceful moneymaking as opposed to world domination, for example). The permanent truth of Hobbes’ theory of international relations, which has particular relevance to the modern arguments about the sovereignty of, for example, member-states of the European Union or the United Nations, is that sovereignty is an absolute, not a relative concept. This truth can be clearly seen if we compare the political sovereignty of states to the free will of individual human beings. A person either has free will or he does not. His will may be weak, it may be constrained by external circumstances or illness; but as long as the person is a person in his sound mind he must be acknowledged to have free will. In the same way, a state – be it monarchical, aristocratic or democratic – either has sovereignty or it does not. Its sovereignty can be constrained or weakened by other states or external circumstances; but it cannot be “pooled” or diluted as long as it remains a state worthy of the name. The proof that a state is sovereign is its ability to wage wars; for the act of waging war is the act of enforcing a command upon another state or of saying “no” to another’s state’s command.

450 Russell, op. cit., p. 579.
451 McClelland, op. cit., p. 201.
Another very important consequence of Hobbes' theory is his refusal of any share in power to the Church. "Where others," writes A.L. Smith, "reserved a coordinate or even superior share of Divine Right to another body, the Church, Hobbes will have no such dualism; no man can serve two masters, the civil sovereign is also the supreme pastor". This follows from the fact that Leviathan is "our mortal God", and that "there must be in every State a sovereign power, illimitable, indivisible, unalienable; that the attempt to separate it, to set it up against itself, to create a 'balance of powers' or a 'mixed government', is chimerical".\footnote{Smith, op. cit., pp. 786-787.} “Even Henry VIII is a pale shadow beside the spiritual supremacy in which the Leviathan is enthroned. There are only two positions in history which rise to this height; the position of a Caliph, the vicerect of Allah, with the book on his knees that contains all law as well as all religion and all morals; and the position of the Greek πολιτεία where heresy was treason where the State gods and no other gods were the citizens' gods, and the citizen must accept the State's standard of virtue.”\footnote{Smith, op. cit., pp. 789.}

Hobbes' theory was admired on the continent, but rejected with horror in England (Leviathan was burned at Oxford in 1683). One reason was its implicit amoralism, which was unacceptable in a country that, for all its recent rebelliousness against Church and State, was still deeply religious. For Hobbes “had made short work of the 'power ecclesiastical', he had identified bishops with elders, and reduced their office to teaching, referred their appointment to the civil sovereign, and left their sustenance to voluntary contributions. All dogmas, except that of the Divinity of our Lord, he had declared unessential; the idea of life in another world than this earth, and the idea of a kingdom of God in opposition to earthly kingdoms, he had rejected. His analysis of good and evil into appetite and aversion, seemed to sap the foundations of morality. Above all, his caustic humour, his malicious insinuations, were still harder to bear. His whole tone and manner provoked more resentment than even his matter.”\footnote{Smith, op. cit., p. 791.}

Another problem with Leviathan was its perceived support for absolutism. In fact, Hobbes was arguing only that there could be only one sovereign power in a State, not that that sovereign power had to be a king or dictator, as opposed to an aristocratic clique or the people as a whole. However, it was obvious that the theory tended towards absolutism. But absolutism, as well as being behind the times philosophically\footnote{For “even before the Reformation,” as Russell writes, “theologians tended to believe in setting limits to kingly power” (op. cit., p. 643).}, was unsatisfactory to the capitalist landowning class in another, more important way: it threatened to deprive them of their complete control of their property. Of course, an absolutist government is not necessarily opposed to the interests of capital; it may allow the capitalists to enrich themselves, while retaining political power for itself.
But it would clearly make more sense to install from the beginning a constitutional monarch more favourable to landed interests. Only the real sovereign now would be, not the monarch (since he is bound by a constitution imposed by others), but a capitalist landowning oligarchy meeting in parliament.

**Locke’s Theory of the Social Contract**

The “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 overthrew the Catholic absolutism of James II and brought to power the Protestant constitutional monarchy of William III. Its de jure justification was worked out by John Locke, who set out to prove that James had broken some kind of agreement with the people, and so had been rightly overthrown, whereas William was abiding by its terms and so should be obeyed. What was needed was to retain the social contract theory, but rework it so as to bring the monarch within the contract (impossible according to Hobbes), make parliament the real sovereign, and bring God back into the picture, if only for decency’s sake.

Like Hobbes, Locke began his argument by positing an original State of Nature in which all men were equal and free. But, unlike Hobbes, he considered that this original state was not one of total anarchy and vicious egoism - might is not right, but of some social cohesion, with men “living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth”. “Though this (State of Nature) be a state of liberty,” he wrote, “yet it is not a state of licence.”456 For, in addition to the State of Nature, Locke also posited a “Law of Nature” inspired by “the infinitely wise Maker” and identifiable with “reason”, which instructed men not to infringe on the freedom of other men. Thus “the state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.”457 In the State of Nature every man owns the land that he tills and the product of that labour: “Though the earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a Property in his own Person. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property”.458

The critical words here are “property” and “possessions”. For Locke’s second aim, after the justification of the overthrow of James II and enthronement of William III, was to make sure that the constitutional monarchy was in the hands of the men of property, the aristocratic landowning class. And so those who signed the original social contract, in his view, were not all the men of the kingdom, but those who had substantial property and therefore the right to vote for members of parliament in elections. For “the great and chief end of men uniting into commonwealths is the preservation of their property.”

The Natural Rights, as Locke calls them, are based on God’s own word. For, writes McClelland, interpreting Locke, He “means us to live at his pleasure, not another’s, therefore no-one may kill me (except in self-defence, which includes war); God commands me to labour in order to sustain and live my life, therefore I have the right to the liberty to do so; and God must mean what I take out of mere nature to be mine, therefore a natural right to property originates in the command to labour: the land I plough, and its fruits are mine. Man, being made in God’s image and therefore endowed with natural reason, could easily work out that this was so, and they have Holy Writ to help them.

“Men’s natural reason also tells them two other very important things. First, it tells each man that all other men have the same rights as he. All rights have duties attached to them (a right without a corresponding duty, or set of duties, is a privilege, not a right, a sinecure for instance, which carries with it the right to a salary without the duty to work for it). Rational men are capable of working this out for themselves, and they easily recognise that claiming Natural Rights requires that they respect the exercise of those same rights in others, and it is this reciprocity which makes the State of Nature social. If everybody recognises naturally that Natural Rights are universal or they cease to be natural, then plainly this implies that men could live together without government. That is what Locke really means when he says that the State of Nature is a state of liberty, not licence.

“However, the State of Nature is still the state of fallen man. Sinful men, alas, will sometimes invade the Natural Rights of others. From this it follows that men have another Natural Right, the right of judgement (and punishment) when they think their Natural Rights have been violated by others. This right is not a substantive right, a right to something; rather it is an energising right, or a right which gives life to the other Natural Rights. Rights are useless unless there is a right to judge when rights have been violated, and so the right to judgement completes the package of Natural Rights.”

459 Quoted in Russell, op. cit., p. 651.
460 McClelland, op. cit., p. 234.
The purpose of the state is to protect Natural Rights. It follows that “society is natural while the state is artificial. Human nature being composed as it is of certain Natural Rights which rational men recognise that they and others possess, society arises spontaneously. It follows that, because society is prior to the state, both logically and as a matter of history, it is up to society to decide what the state shall be like, and not the state which shall decided what society shall be like. This insistence [on] the separation of society from the state, and a society’s priority over the state, was to become the bedrock of the doctrine which came to be known as liberalism. Put another way, Locke thinks that what the state is like is a matter (within limits) of rational reflection and choice, but society is a given about which men have no choice. Society is what God meant it to be, capitalist and naturally harmonious, except that in the real world societies tend to become a bit ragged at the edges. Offences against Natural and positive law, murder, theft, fraud and riot for instance, happen from time to time, and men need the special agency of the state to cope with them.”

The social contract consists in men giving up “to the state their right to judgement when their Natural Rights have been violated. Of course, a Natural Right being God’s gift, part of what it is to be a human being, it is impossible to alienate it completely. At the moment of contract, Locke’s men give up the absolute minimum for the maximum gain: they entrust the state with their right to judgement on the condition that the state uses the right to judge when Natural Rights have been violated in order to allow men to enjoy their other Natural Rights, to life, liberty and property, more abundantly. “…. Men are capable of making a collective agreement with their rulers in the State of Nature, either in the very beginning or in some future, imaginable emergency when government has collapsed. In Locke’s account of the matter it is easy to see when and why government would in fact collapse: when it violates, or is seen to violate, enough [of] men’s Natural Rights for them justifiably to rebel by taking back to themselves the right of judgement because government has betrayed its trust and misused it. Men therefore have a right of rebellion, and perhaps even a moral duty to rebel, if government begins to frustrate God’s purpose for the world. The moment for rebellion happens when enough men are prepared to repudiate their contract with their rulers and fall back on the original contract of society. In all events, the Lockian Sovereign is party to the contract to set up government. The king is king on terms.”

Locke was scornful of Hobbes’ idea that despotism was necessary to preserve peace. To think that men should seek a peaceful life by surrendering all their power (and property) to an absolute sovereign, he wrote, “is to think that Men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what Mischiefs may be done them by Pole-Cats, or Foxes, but are content, nay think it Safety, to be

---

461 McClelland, op. cit., p. 236.
462 McClelland, op. cit., p. 237.
Therefore government should not be concentrated in the hands of one man or institution; it should be composed of a legislative power – parliament, elected every few years by the property-owning people, and an executive power – the monarchy. The executive and legislative powers must be kept separate, as a check on each other, to prevent the abuse of power.

Locke’s disciple in the next century, Montesquieu, developed this idea in his famous *Spirit of the Laws*. “Constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go... To prevent this abuse, it is necessary from the very nature of things that power should be a check to power. A government may be so constituted, as no man shall be compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him, nor forced to abstain from things which the law permits.”

Thus in order to preserve liberty, said Montesquieu, it is necessary to separate and balance the three arms of government, the executive, the legislative and the judicial.

The monarchy is necessary because only such a power can make laws valid and effective. But the king is not above the laws passed by parliament, and is to that extent subject to parliament. If the king transgresses the laws by, for example, failing to summon the legislative at the proper times, or by setting up “his own arbitrary authority in place of the laws”, then he can be resisted by force. Thus the king can reign, but he cannot really rule, in Locke’s system. As Smith puts it, “Locke put government in its proper position as a trustee for the ends for which society exists; now a trustee has great discretionary powers and great freedom from interference, but is also held strictly accountable, and under a properly drawn deed nothing is simpler than the appointment of new trustees. For after all, the ultimate trust remains in the people, in Locke’s words; and this is the sovereign people, the irrevocable depository of all powers.”

Even the legislative power of parliament, “though its enactments superseded the unwritten law of nature, could not be ‘absolutely arbitrary over the lives and fortunes of the people’. It was bound to rule by ‘promulgating standing laws’ and not ‘extemporary arbitrary decrees’. It could not take away any man’s property without his own consent, though Locke regarded taxation by a representative assembly as conforming to this principle.”

---

465 However, as Held writes, “a fundamental difficulty lay at the very heart of his conception of liberty. Liberty, he wrote, ‘is the right of doing whatever the law permits’. People are free to pursue their activities within the framework of the law. But if freedom is defined in direct relation to the law, there is no possibility of arguing coherently that freedom might depend on altering the law or that the law itself might under certain circumstances articulate tyranny” (*op. cit.*, pp. 59-60).
466 Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 809.
This would appear to allow the people to rebel not only against the king, but also against parliament. The problem is: where to draw the line? When is the use of force against the government just and lawful?

This vital question has never received a satisfactory answer in western political theory. Locke’s answer was: when “estates, liberties, lives are in danger, and perhaps religion too”. Only “perhaps religion”? In the East, danger to religion was the only possible justification for rebellion against the powers that be. But for Locke the justification was, in the end, secular: for “the end of government is the good of mankind, and which is best for mankind, that the people should always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed? Upon the forfeiture of their rulers, [power] reverts to the society and the people have a right to act as supreme and place it in a new form or new hands, as they think good.”468 In other words, if the people feel that their Natural Rights have been violated by king or parliament, then in theory they should be able to declare the contract broken and take power back from their representatives – by force, if need be. For “the Community may be said in this respect to be always the Supreme Power”.469 Thus if the prince seeks to “enslave, or destroy them”, the people are entitled to “appeal to heaven”. But “since Heaven does not make explicit pronouncements,” writes Russell, “this means, in effect, that a decision can only be reached by fighting, since it is assumed that Heaven will give the victory to the better cause. Some such view is essential to any doctrine that divides governmental power.”470

However, the experience of the English revolution and Locke’s own conservative instincts led him to countenance revolution only in extreme cases. Otherwise the right to rebel would “lay a perpetual foundation for disorder”. “Great mistakes in the ruling part... will be born by the People without muting or murmur”, and recourse would be had to force only after “a long trains of Abuses, Prevarications, and Artifices”. For “people are not so easily got out of their old forms as some are apt to suggest”.471 “'Overturning the constitution and frame of any just government’ is ‘the greatest crime a man is capable of’, but ‘either ruler or subject’ who forcibly invades ‘the rights of either prince or people’ is guilty of it. ‘Whosoever uses force without right, as everyone does in society who does it without law, puts himself into a state of war with those against whom he so uses it... every one has a right to defend himself and to resist the aggressor.’”472

468 Locke, An Essay concerning the true, original, extent, and end of Civil Government (1690).
469 Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government, chapter 13, section 149.
470 Russell, op. cit., pp. 662-663.
471 Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government, treatise 2, chapter 14, section 168.
In general, Locke’s system represents an uneasy compromise between older, religious ways of thinking and the new rationalism. On the one hand, he wanted the authority that an established church and an anointed king gives in order to protect property and prevent the revolution that had so nearly destroyed everything a generation before. On the other hand, he wanted to give the people the right to overthrow a tyrant. But it is clearly the secular interests of his class, rather than religious feeling or theology, that motivates his thinking.

And it was those secular interests that triumphed in the end. When the last Stuart King James II veered too much towards Catholicism and absolutism, the Whigs in parliament invited the Dutch King William of Orange to rule over them together with James’ daughter Mary – but on their terms. William accepted these terms, since he needed English arms and money in his struggle against French absolutism. And so the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 took place. By the time William and Mary and James’ other daughter had died, in 1714, and the German Hanoverian dynasty was in its place, the character of the English monarchy had been changed for good, if not for the better. England was a constitutional monarchy ruled by king and parliament together, but with the landed aristocracy that dominated parliament firmly in charge...

**A Critique of Social Contract Theory**

“In all its forms,” writes Roger Scruton, “the social contract enshrines a fundamental liberal principle, namely, that, deep down, our obligations are self-created and self-imposed. I cannot be bound by the law, or legitimately constrained by the sovereign, if I never chose to be under the obligation to obey. Legitimacy is conferred by the citizen, and not by the sovereign, still less by the sovereign’s usurping ancestors. If we cannot discover a contract to be bound by the law, then the law is not binding.”

Walicki writes: “The argument that society was founded on reason and self-interest could of course be used to sanction rebellion against any forms of social relations that could not prove their rationality or utility.”

A basic objection to social contract theory put forward by Hegel is that this original premise, that “our obligations are self-created and self-imposed”, is false. We do not choose the family we are born in, or the state to which we belong, and yet both family and state impose undeniable obligations on us. Of course, we can rebel against such obligations; the son can choose to say that he owes nothing to his father. And yet he would not even exist without his father; and without his father’s nurture and education he would not even be capable of making choices.

---

473 Scruton, op. cit., p. 416.
Thus we are “hereditary bondsmen”, to use Byron’s phrase. In this sense we live in a cycle of freedom and necessity: the free choices of our ancestors limit our own freedom, while our choices limit those of our children. The idea of a social contract entered into in a single generation is therefore not only a historical myth (as many social contract theorists concede); it is also a dangerous myth. It is a myth that distorts the very nature of society, which cannot be conceived as existing except over several generations.

But if society exists over several generations, all generations should be taken into account in drawing up the contract. Why should only one generation’s interests be respected? For, as Scruton continues, interpreting the thought of Edmund Burke, “the social contract prejudices the interests of those who are not alive to take part in it: the dead and the unborn. Yet they too have a claim, maybe an indefinite claim, on the resources and institutions over which the living so selfishly contend. To imagine society as a contract among its living members, is to offer no rights to those who go before and after. But when we neglect those absent souls, we neglect everything that endows law with its authority, and which guarantees our own survival. We should therefore see the social order as a partnership, in which the dead and the unborn are included with the living.”

“Every people,” writes L.A. Tikhomirov, “is, first of all, a certain historical whole, a long row of consecutive generations, living over hundreds or thousands of years in a common life handed down by inheritance. In this form a people, a nation, is a certain socially organic phenomenon with more or less clearly expressed laws of inner development... But political intriguers and the democratic tendency does not look at a people in this form, as a historical, socially organic phenomenon, but simply in the form of a sum of the individual inhabitants of the country. This is the second point of view, which looks on a nation as a simple association of people united into a state because they wanted that, living according to laws which they like, and arbitrarily changing the laws of their life together when it occurs to them.”

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: “It is obligatory, say the wise men of this world, to submit to social authorities on the basis of a social contract, by which people were united into society, by a general agreement founding government and submission to it for the general good. If they think that it is impossible to found society otherwise than on a social contract, - then why is it that the societies of the bees and ants are not founded on it? And is it not right that those who break open honeycombs and destroy ant-hills should be entrusted with finding in them... a charter of bees and ants? And until such a thing is done, nothing prevents us from thinking that bees and ants create

---

475 Scruton, op. cit., p. 417.
their societies, not by contract, but by nature, by an idea of community implanted in their nature, which the Creator of the world willed to be realised even at the lowest level of His creatures. What if an example of the creation of a human society by nature were found? What, then, is the use of the fantasy of a social contract? No one can argue against the fact that the original form of society is the society of the family. Thus does not the child obey the mother, and the mother have power over the child, not because they have contracted between themselves that she should feed him at the breast, and that he should shout as little as possible when he is swaddled? What if the mother should suggest too harsh conditions to the child? Will not the inventors of the social contract tell him to go to another mother and make a contract with her about his upbringing? The application of the social contract in this case is as fitting as it is fitting in other cases for every person, from the child to the old man, from the first to the last. Every human contract can have force only when it is entered into with consciousness and good will. Are there many people in society who have heard of the social contract? And of those few who have heard of it, are there many who have a clear conception of it? Ask, I will not say the simple citizen, but the wise man of contracts: when and how did he enter into the social contract? When he was an adult? But who defined this time? And was he outside society before he became an adult? By means of birth? This is excellent. I like this thought, and I congratulate every Russian that he was able – I don’t know whether it was from his parents or from Russia herself, - to agree that he be born in powerful Russia... The only thing that we must worry about is that neither he who was born nor his parents thought about this contract in their time, and so does not referring to it mean fabricating it? And consequently is not better, as well as simpler, both in submission and in other relationships towards society, to study the rights and obligations of a real birth instead of an invented contract – that pipe-dream of social life, which, being recounted at the wrong time, has produced and continues to produce material woes for human society. ‘Transgressors have told me fables, but they are not like Thy law, O Lord’ (Psalm 118.85).”

In spite of these contradictions, social contract theory has remained the dominant model of society in Anglo-Saxon countries. Thus probably the most influential contemporary work of political philosophy, John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*, is in essence a variation on Lockean social contract theory with one or two original twists. One of these is the idea that people enter into the social contract from a so-called “original position” in which they are covered with a “veil of ignorance”. That is, “they are denied knowledge of everything which makes them who they are: their class, skills, age, gender, sexuality, religious views and conceptions of the good life. Rawls argues that the principles which these people would choose to regulate their relations with one another are definitive of justice... The veil of ignorance is meant to ensure that our views on justice are not distorted by our own interests. 'If a man knew that he

was wealthy, he might find it rational to advance the principle that various taxes for welfare measures be counted unjust; if he knew that he was poor, he would most likely propose the contrary principle…”

This theory escapes the objection that people entering into a social contract are simply choosing their self-interest. It does this by completely abstracting from the concrete human being with his concrete desires, interests and beliefs. Thus not only is the original social contract a historical myth in the strictest sense of the word: the “conception of the good” of those who enter into it must not be allowed to intrude into political life in any shape or form.

As Scruton notes, Rawls’s social contract aims to remove “from the legal order all reference to the sources of division and conflict between human groups, so as to create a society in which no question can arise that does not have a solution acceptable to everyone. If religion, culture, sex, race, and even ‘conceptions of the good’ have all been relegated to the private sphere, and set outside the scope of jurisdiction, then the resulting public law will be an effective instrument for the government of a multicultural society, forbidding citizens to make exceptions in favor of their preferred group, sex, culture, faith, or lifestyle…. This simply reinforces the status of the theory as the theology of a post-religious society.”

Rawls’ teacher Locke had argued that religion was a private matter, and that people should be allowed as far as possible to mind their own business; but he drew the line at Catholics and atheists. Rawls goes further in making the State completely value-free (we are tempted to say: value-less) – and Catholics and atheists are equally welcome! Thus social contract theory, while not explicitly anti-religious, actually leads, in its modern variants, to the purest secularism: the original social contract must be postulated to be between irreligious people and to lead to a state that is strictly irreligious, relegating religion entirely to the private sphere. But such a state will be accepted only by a society for which religion has ceased to be the primary focus of life, and has become merely one “interest” or “need” among many others. Such a society was England after the English revolution. And such a society has the whole of the West, following England, become in the decades and centuries that have passed since “the Glorious Revolution”…

**French Absolutism**

So far we have reviewed the rise of liberalism in the countries of Northern Europe and North America. For this was the wave of the future, and these ideas would in time conquer almost the whole world. However, the seventeenth century was, in political and cultural terms, the century of France; so it is to the more conservative society of France that we now turn.

---

If we compare the English monarchy in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries with the French one in the same period, we see a striking contrast. In England a powerful monarchy becomes steadily stronger, defeating the most powerful despotism of the day in the Spanish Armada, only to be gradually overcome by the wealthier classes and reduced, finally, to the position of symbolic head of an essentially aristocratic society. The vital changes here, as we have seen, were the rejection of the papacy and the dissolution of the monasteries, which caused both the temporary increase in the monarchy’s power and its longer-term descent into impotence, especially after Charles I’s loss of the power of taxation.

In France, on the other hand, the reverse took place: a weak monarchy besieged by a semi-independent nobility within and the united Hapsburg domains of Germany, Italy and Spain from without, gradually recovered to reach a pinnacle of fame and power under the sun king, Louis XIV. The vital factors here were: (i) the retention of Catholicism as the official religion, (ii) the monarchy’s retention, in accordance with its Concordat with the Vatican, of control of the Church’s appointments and lands, and (iii), last but not least, the monarchy’s retention of the power of general taxation.

Both countries had consolidated their internal unity by the end of the period, but in different ways that gave to each the complex character of the modern nation-state. In England, the monarchy adopted the Anglican middle ground. In France, on the other hand, the monarchy took the Catholic side (Paris, as Henry IV said when he converted to Catholicism, was worth a mass), from which it did not waver until the revolution of 1789. In England, while the Protestant aristocracy first persecuted and then tolerated the diminished and tamed Catholic minority, the latter’s eventual absorption within the State left a permanent traditionalist stamp on the English national character. In France, on the other hand, while the Catholic monarchy first tolerated and then expelled the Protestant (Huguenot) minority, the latter’s cultural heritage left a permanent rationalist stamp on the French national character.

The problems of keeping the nation-state together when it is being torn apart by religious passions was discussed in Jean Bodin’s *Six Books on the Republic* (1576). Bodin was one of the earliest apologists of the absolutist monarchy in modern times. He believed that such a monarchy was necessary in France to balance the claims of the nobles and the Huguenots in the interests of the state as a whole. He allowed only one check on monarchy – the Estates General, an assembly representing clergy, nobles and commoners which met irregularly to vote new taxes and of which he was the secretary in 1576. Ironically, it was the Estates General that brought down the monarchy in 1789…
“Bodin,” writes McClelland, “is probably the first important political thinker to offer what is recognisably a modern theory of sovereignty, and in essence this theory is very simple: a well-ordered state needs an absolute and legitimate sovereign centre. Bodin’s motives for saying that are much more intelligible than his arguments. We can see that the France of the sixteenth century civil wars, those wars being based on differences of religious opinion, needed a strengthening of the monarchy if France was to survive as a political community. By harking back to Aristotelian precedents, Bodin took the theory of sovereignty out of Divine Right theology and tied it to a view of what a political community needed in its own best interest. Bodin is impeccably classical in his recognition that states are typically destroyed by faction, and the fact that these factions are religious factions does not alter this truth at all... Bodin’s defence of sovereignty is really a defence of rule against faction. He defends the division of Christendom’s individual kingdoms into Protestant and Catholic as an accomplished fact. The problem is then how it can ever be that a realm divided into contending religious factions, each of which would coerce the other if it could, could possibly live at peace with itself and prosper...

“For all his Aristotelianism, Bodin recognises that the ancient city-state cannot be identified with the sixteenth-century realm of France. That is why the state’s law must be supreme over other potentially competing systems of law, whether law means manners, morals, customs, or the law which defines minority or local privilege... Sovereignty is absolute and undivided. All surviving law-bound corporations – religious bodies, municipalities, commercial companies and guilds – owe their rights and privileges to the sovereign. It follows, therefore, that estates and parliaments exist only to advise the sovereign, and it also follows that the sovereign cannot be bound to take their advice... Bodin was anti-feudal where competing jurisdictions got in the way of the exercise of sovereignty. Far from thinking that the king’s position was at the head of a hierarchy whose justification was the hierarchy itself, Bodin looked at the matter from the top down, and attempted to show that all subordinate authorities derived from the supreme sovereign.”

The same tendency to place the interests of the nation-state above those of the faith is discernible in the career of the greatest French statesman of the period, and the architect of her rise to pre-eminence in Europe, Cardinal Richelieu. What would have been more natural than for a powerful and sincerely believing Catholic Churchman such as Richelieu to work, in concert with the great Catholic Hapsburg power of Spain and Germany, for the triumph of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in Europe? But that would have meant subordinating the interests of the French monarchy to those of the Hapsburgs. And this Richelieu was not prepared to do. For “he had no zeal,” writes Belloc, “such as had so many men of his time, for the triumph of Catholicism; he did not consider Europe as a battlefield between tradition and

---

480 McClelland, op. cit., pp. 281-282, 283, 284.
revolution in doctrine and philosophy. He considered the conflict between
them mainly as one by the right manipulation of which the interests of the
French monarchy might be advanced. It is probable that he hardly
understood, he certainly never yielded to, the instinctive feeling [of] all
around him – that unless French policy were whole-heartedly Catholic in that
critical moment 1620-40, Europe would never be reunited. He presumably
thought the ultimate reunion of Europe, that is, the ultimate triumph of
Catholicism, certain, and would not, to accelerate it, sacrifice one detail of his
policy. He abandoned, and at last combated, the effort to restore Catholicism
throughout Europe. He devoted himself to the consolidation and
aggrandisement of the nation he governed. Hence toleration at home and
alliance with Protestantism abroad against the Catholic Powers. Hence his
nickname of ‘the Cardinal of the Huguenots’. Hence the worship by those
who accept the new religion of Nationalism and have forgotten, or think
impossible, the idea of [Roman Catholic] Christendom.’’

Thus just as the idea of natural law preached by the Jesuits Las Casas and
De Mariana, Suarez and Bellarmine, was the worm in the apple of the theology
of Catholic Absolutism, so the nationalism so successfully practised by
Cardinal Richelieu was the blow that finally put paid to the politics of Catholic
Absolutism. Already the attempts by Francis I to limit the power of the Holy
Roman Emperor Charles V in the middle of the sixteenth century had injured
Catholic unity in the vital first stage of the struggle with Protestantism. Now,
when Catholicism had reorganized itself at the Council of Trent and was back
on the offensive in Germany especially, it was Richelieu’s anti-Catholic
diplomacy, driving a nationalist wedge into the united internationalist
offensive of the Hapsburg Catholic monarchs against the Protestant princes,
that guaranteed the survival of German Protestantism. As the Pope said on
hearing of his death: “If there be a God, the Cardinal de Richelieu will have
much to answer for. If there be none, why, he lived a successful life.”

The fruit of Bodin’s theories and Richelieu’s politics was the reign of the
Sun King, Louis XIV, a true despot in that, like every despot, he tried to gain
control of the Church and the nobility. “The position of the French nobility,”
writes Ridley, “had greatly changed during the previous hundred years. In
the sixteenth century the great noble houses of Guise and Bourbon, with their
power bases in eastern and south-west France, had torn the kingdom apart by
thirty years of civil war; and the fighting between the nobility had started up
again in the days of the Fronde, when Louis XIV was a child. But when he
came of age, and established his absolute royal authority, he destroyed the
political power of the nobles by bribing them to renounce it. He encouraged
them to come to his court at Versailles, to hold honorific and well-paid
sinecure offices – to carve for the King at dinner, or to attend his petit levé
when he dressed in the morning, and hand him his shirt, his coat and his wig.

482 Belloc, Richelieu, op. cit., p. 304.
He hoped that when the nobles were not engaged in these duties at court, they would be staying in their great mansions in Paris. He wished to prevent them as far as possible from living on their lands in the country, where they could enrol their tenants in a private army and begin a new civil war.

“The King governed France through middle-class civil servants, who were mostly lawyers. The provincial Parlements had limited powers, most of which were judicial rather than legislative; but the King could veto all their decrees. The government was administered by the intendants, who had absolute authority in their districts, and were subject only to the directives of their superiors, the surintendants, who were themselves subject only to the King’s Council, where the King presided in person, and might either accept or reject the advice given to him by his councillors.

“The nobles had the privilege of having their seigneurial courts in which they exercised a civil and a criminal jurisdiction over their tenants; but the presiding judges in the seigneurial courts were the same middle-class lawyers who presided in the King’s courts, which could on appeal override the decisions of the seigneurial courts.”

As for the lower nobility, their energies were channelled into army service, in accordance with their medieval conception of themselves as the warrior class. War therefore became a constant feature of Louis’ reign, together with the crippling burden of taxation that war brings. But this did not disturb the nobility, who paid no taxes.

And so “the nobility developed a growing confidence that their needs were best served within rather than against the state. This compact would survive for as long as the élites remained sure that the monarchy was protecting their vital interests.”

The other major estate of the land that needed to be controlled was the Church. A parish priest of St. Sulpice said, “he was so absolute that he passed above all the laws to do his will. The priests and nobility were oppressed; the parlements had no more power. The clergy were shamefully servile in doing the king’s will.”

Here Louis had two aims: to make the Catholic Church in France a national, Gallican Church under his dominion, and not the Pope’s; and to destroy the protected state within the state that the Edict of Nantes (1594) had created for the Protestant Huguenots. In this way he would have “one faith, one king, one law”.

---

“For thirty years,” writes Norman Davies, “Louis was a true Gallican – packing the French bishoprics with the relatives of his ministers, authorising the Declaration of the Four Articles (1682), and provoking in 1687-8 an open rupture with the Papacy. The Four Articles, the purest formulation of Gallican doctrine, were ordered to be taught in all the seminaries and faculties of France:

1. The authority of the Holy See is limited to spiritual matters.
2. The decisions of Church Councils are superior to those of the Pope.
3. Gallican customs are independent of Rome.
4. The Pope is not infallible, except by consent of the universal Church.

But then, distressed by his isolation from the Catholic powers, Louis turned tail. In 1693 he retracted the Four Articles, and for the rest of his life gave unstinting support to the ultramontane [extreme papist] faction…

“In his policy towards the Protestants, Louis passed from passive discrimination through petty harassment to violent persecution… [In 1685] the King revoked the [Nantes] edict of toleration. Bishop Bossuet awarded him the epithet of the ‘New Constantine’. Up to a million of France’s most worthy citizens were forced to submit or to flee amidst a veritable reign of terror…”

Nevertheless, write Baigent and Leigh, “through the ensuing vicissitudes of French history, ‘Gallicanism’, with its adherence to ‘Conciliar’ authority, was to characterise the Church in France. By its very nature, it was potentially inimical to the Papacy. Pursued to its logical conclusion, ‘Gallicanism’ would effectively demote the Pope to what he had originally been – merely the Bishop of Rome, one among numerous bishops, enjoying some kind of nominal or symbolic leadership, but not any actual primacy or power. In short, the Church was decentralised.

“The opposing position, which advocated the Pope’s supremacy over bishops and councils, became known as ‘Ultramontane’, because it regarded authority as residing with the Papacy in Rome, ‘on the other side of the mountains’ from France…”

Absolutism reached its height under Louis XIV, who famously stated: “I am the State”. His most determined opponent, the Dutch King William, said that Louis’ aim in Europe was to establish “a universal monarch and a universal religion”.

486 Davies, op. cit., pp. 620, 621. However, as Jean Comby writes, “the next generation rebelled in the Cévennes (the Camisards, 1702) and organized a desert church (Antoine Court, 1715)” (How to Read Church History, London: SCM Press, 1989, p. 42).


Louis’ philosophy was followed by his successor, Louis XV, who said: “It is in my person alone that sovereign power resides... It is from me alone that my courts derive their authority; and the plenitude of this authority, which they exercise only in my name, remains always in me... It is to me alone that legislative power belongs, without any dependence and without any division... The whole public order emanates from me, and the rights and interests of the nation... are necessarily joined with mine and rest only in my hands.”

The difference between Orthodox autocracy and Catholic absolutism is that while the former welcomes the existence of independent institutions, such as the Church, and institutions with limited powers of self-government, such as provincial administrations or guilds, the latter distrusts all other power bases and tries to destroy them. The result is that, as the absolutism weakens (as weaken it must), institutions spring up to fill the power vacuum which are necessarily opposed to the absolutist power and try to weaken it further, leading to violent revolution. The art of true monarchical government consists, not in ruling without support from other institutions, but in ruling with their support and with their full and voluntary recognition of the supremacy of the monarchy. Moreover, the supremacy of the monarchy must be recognised de jure, and not merely de facto. When the majority of the people ceases to believe that their monarch has the right to rule them, or when he believes that his right to rule is limited by nothing except his own will, then his regime is doomed, whatever the external trappings of its power.

As François Guizot wrote: “By the very fact that this government had no other principle than absolute power, and reposed upon no other base than this, its decline became sudden and well merited. What France, under Louis XIV, essentially wanted, was political institutions and forces, independent, subsisting of themselves, and, in a word, capable of spontaneous action... The ancient French institutions, if they merited that name, no longer existed: Louis XIV completed their ruin. He took no care to endeavour to replace them by new institutions, they would have cramped him, and he did not choose to be cramped. All that appeared conspicuous at that period was will, and the action of central power. The government of Louis XIV was a great fact, a fact powerful and splendid, but without roots... No system can exist except by means of institutions. When absolute power has endured, it has been supported by true institutions, sometimes by the division of society into strongly distinct castes, sometimes by a system of religious institutions. Under the reign of Louis XIV institutions were wanting to power as well as to liberty... Thus we see the government helping on its own decay. It was not Louis XIV alone who was becoming aged and weak at the end of his reign: it was the whole absolute power. Pure monarchy [i.e. absolutism] was as much

worn out in 1712 as was the monarch himself: and the evil was so much the more grave, as Louis XIV had abolished political morals as well as political institutions.â”²⁴⁰

**The Idea of Religious Toleration**

In the early sixteenth century, in the wake of the resurrection of the old pagan ideas of the dignity of man, the pagan idea of religious toleration also revived. We say “pagan”, because the justification adduced for religious toleration was not Orthodox Christian, but what we would now call ecumenist: a belief that religious differences are not worth fighting and dying over. This humanist attitude would not survive the appearance of Protestantism in the 1520s and the religious wars that followed. But it revived as the era of the wars of religion was coming to an end. Of course, some relaxation of religious persecution was only to be expected, when in Germany, for example, as a result of the Thirty Years War, between a third and a half of the population lay dead.â”²⁴¹ No society can continue to take such losses without disappearing altogether. Believers on both sides of the conflict were exhausted. They longed for a rest from religious passions and the opportunity to rebuild their shattered economies in peace. It was as a result of this cooling of religious passions, and rekindling of commercial ones, that the idea of religious toleration was born. Or rather, reborn. For even the fiercest of ancient despotisms of the past had gone through phases of religious toleration – for example, the Roman empire in the late third century.

We find the idea well expressed in Sir Thomas More’s fantasy-manifesto, *Utopia: the Best State of the Commonwealth* (1516), where King Utopus has introduced a social system characterized by common ownership of property and religious toleration, with no official church or religion. “King Utopus, even at the first beginning hearing that the inhabitants of the land were before his coming thither at continual dissension and strife among themselves for their religions, perceiving also that this common dissension (whiles every several sect took several parts in fighting for his country) was the only occasion of his conquest over them all, as soon as he had gotten the victory, first of all made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly, and soberly, without hasty and contentious rebuking and inveighing against others. If he could not by fair and gentle speech induce them unto his opinion, yet he should use no kind of violence, and refrain from unpleasant and seditious words. To him that would vehemently and fervently in this cause strive and contend was decreed banishment or bondage.

â”²⁴⁰ Guizot, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.
â”²⁴¹ Norman Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 568.
“This law did King Utopus make, not only for the maintenance of peace, which he saw through continual contention and mortal hatred utterly extinguished, but also because he thought this decree should make for the furtherance of religion... Furthermore, though there be one religion which alone is true, and all other vain and superstitious, yet did he well foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason and sober modesty) that the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light. But if contention and debate in that behalf should continually be used, as the worst men be most obstinate and stubborn and in their evil opinion most constant, he perceived that then the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot and destroyed by most vain superstitions, even as good corn is by thorns and weeds overgrown and choked.”

More seems to be hovering here between two contrary propositions: that free debate will ultimately lead to the triumph of truth (“the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light”), and that this freedom will used by the worst men for the triumph of heresy (“then the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot”). For nearly two hundred years, it would be the second that would be believed by the majority of men.

However, the beginning of a politics of toleration can be seen in Germany in 1555, when the bitter struggle between Catholicism and Lutheranism was brought to an end by the Peace of Augsburg, which enshrined the *cuius regio eius religio* formula: the religion of a country, whether Catholic or Lutheran, was determined by the faith of its ruler. This Peace may not have been much comfort to a Catholic living in a Lutheran state, or to a Lutheran living in a Catholic state, but it at least recognised a plurality of religions in Germany as a whole. Then, after the still bitterer Thirty Years War, the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 modified this framework further to allow Calvinism as a third religious alternative for rulers, acknowledging that “subjects whose religion differs from that of their prince are to have equal rights with his other subjects” (V. 35). This was a landmark in political history. The goal was no longer *unanimity*, but *unity* – or rather, an agreement to “live and let live”...

And yet the idea of religious toleration had not yet penetrated the popular consciousness. As late as 1646 Thomas Edwards wrote: “Religious toleration is the greatest of all evils; it will bring in first scepticism in doctrine and looseness of life, then atheism”. It was the English Revolution and the triumph of Cromwell that finally pushed the idea into the forefront of political debate. For, as Winstanley wrote in *The Law of Freedom* (1651), Cromwell “became the main stickler for liberty of conscience without any limitation. This toleration became his masterpiece in politics; for it procured him a party that stuck close in all cases of necessity.”

---

Cromwell’s supporter, Milton, produced a whole tract, *Areopagitica* (1646) in favour of freedom of speech and the abolition of censorship. “Let her [Truth] and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?” Besides, “how”, he asked ironically, “shall the licensers themselves be confided in, unless we can confer upon them, or they assume to themselves above all others in the Land, the grace of infallibility and uncorruptedness?”

But, as Barzun writes, “diversity, inside or outside his army, could not be reduced. Cromwell’s toleration was of course not complete – nobody’s has ever been or ought to be: the most tolerant mind cannot tolerate cruelty, the most liberal state punishes incitement to riot or treason. To all but the Catholic minority in England, the church of Rome was intolerable.” Nor was Calvinism an inherently tolerant creed, insofar as “the Calvinist dogma of predestination,” as Porter points out, “had bred ‘enthusiasm’, that awesome, irresistible and unfalsifiable conviction of personal infallibility”.

Religious toleration needed a philosophical justification. This was provided by the philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, especially the latter.

Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651), published during Cromwell’s Protectorate, at first sight seems a recipe for intolerance – indeed, the most complete tyranny of the State over the religious beliefs of its citizens. For religious truth, according to Hobbes, was nothing other than that which the sovereign ruler declared it to be: “An opinion publicly appointed to be taught cannot be heresy; nor the Sovereign Princes that authorise them heretics.” Being in favour of the absolute power of the sovereign, Hobbes was fiercely opposed to the other major power in traditional societies, religion, which he relegated to an instrument of government; so that the power of censorship passed, in his theory, entirely from the Church to the State.

However, Hobbes was not opposed to dissent so long as it did not lead to anarchy, “for such truth as opposeth no man’s profit nor pleasure, is to all men welcome.” In fact, he did not believe in objective Truth, but only in “appetites and aversions, hopes and fears”, and in the power of human reason to regulate them towards the desired end of public and private tranquillity. He was not anti-religious so much as a-religious.

---

495 Milton, *Areopagitica*.
Hobbesean indifference to religion was a step towards its toleration, but it
did not go very far. It was Locke, according to Roy Porter, who became the
real “high priest of toleration”. “In an essay of 1667, which spelt out the key
principles expressed in his later Letters on Toleration, Locke denied the prince’s
right to enforce religious orthodoxy, reasoning that the ‘trust, power and
authority’ of the civil magistrate were vested in him solely to secure ‘the good
preservation and peace of men in that society’. Hence princely powers
extended solely to externals, not to faith, which was a matter of conscience.
Any state intervention in faith was ‘meddling’.

“To elucidate the limits of those civil powers, Locke divided religious
opinions and actions into three. First, there were speculative views and modes
of divine worship. These had ‘an absolute and universal right to toleration’,
since they did not affect society, being either private or God’s business alone.
Second, there were those – beliefs about marriage and divorce, for instance –
which impinged upon others and hence were of public concern. These ‘have a
title also to toleration, but only so far as they do not tend to the disturbance of
the State’. The magistrate might thus prohibit publication of such convictions
if they would disturb the public good, but no one ought to be forced to
forswear his opinion, for coercion bred hypocrisy. Third, there were actions
good or bad in themselves. Respecting these, Locke held that civil rulers
should have ‘nothing to do with the good of men’s soul or their concernments
in another life’ – it was for God to reward virtue and punish vice, and the
magistrate’s job simply to keep the peace. Applying such principles to
contemporary realities, Locke advocated toleration, but with limits: Papists
should not be tolerated, because their beliefs were ‘absolutely destructive of
all governments except the Pope’s’; nor should atheists, since any oaths they
took would be in bad faith.\(^{500}\)

“As a radical Whig in political exile in the Dutch republic, Locke wrote the
first Letter on Toleration, which was published, initially in Latin, in 1689.
Echoing the 1667 arguments, this denied that Christianity could be furthered
by force. Christ was the Prince of Peace, his gospel was love, his means
persuasion; persecution could not save souls. Civil and ecclesiastical
government had contrary ends; the magistrate’s business lay in securing life,
liberty and possessions, whereas faith was about the salvation of souls. A
church should be a voluntary society, like a ‘club for claret’; it should be shorn
of all sacerdotal pretensions. While Locke’s views were contested – Bishop
Stillingfleet, for example, deemed them a ‘Trojan Horse’ – they nevertheless
won favour in an age inclined, or resigned, to freedom of thought and
expression in general.”\(^{501}\) “Since you are pleased to enquire,” wrote Locke,

\(^{500}\) According to the principles of this father of liberalism, therefore, communist parties should
be banned, as well as the expression of communist opinions, first, because communists are
atheists, and therefore cannot be trusted to keep their oaths, and secondly because they work
towards the destruction of all non-communist governments. (V.M.)

\(^{501}\) Porter, op. cit., pp. 106-197.
“what are my thoughts about the mutual toleration of Christians in their different professions of religion, I must needs answer you freely, that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristical mark of the true church.”

As Smith interprets his thought: “Religion is a man’s private concern, his belief is part of himself, and he is the sole judge of the means to his own salvation. Persecution only creates hypocrites, while free opinion is the best guarantee of truth. Most ceremonies are indifferent; Christianity is simple; it is only theologians who have encrusted it with dogma. Sacerdotalism, ritual, orthodoxy, do not constitute Christianity if they are divorced from charity. Our attempts to express the truth of religion must always be imperfect and relative, and cannot amount to certainty... Church and State can be united if the Church is made broad enough and simple enough, and the State accepts the Christian basis. Thus religion and morality might be reunited, sectarianism would disappear with sacerdotalism; the Church would become the nation organised for goodness...”

Such lukewarmness would hardly have satisfied a religious nation; but from 1688 England’s religious zeal rapidly cooled, at any rate in the educated classes, and to this day “toleration” represents for English Christianity the cardinal virtue, hardly distinguishable from love.

It was ironic, in view of Locke’s lack of tolerance for Catholics, that it was the Catholic King James II, who first bestowed freedom of religion on Catholics, Anglicans and Non-Conformists in his Declaration of Indulgence (1688), declaring: “We cannot but heartily wish, as it will easily be believed, that all the people of our dominions were members of the Catholic Church; yet we humbly thank Almighty God, it is and has of long time been our constant sense and opinion (which upon divers occasions we have declared) that conscience ought not to be constrained nor people forced in matters of mere religion: it has ever been directly contrary to our inclination, as we think it is to the interest of government, which it destroys by spoiling trade, depopulating countries, and discouraging strangers, and finally, that it never obtained the end for which it was employed...”

The generosity shown by James to non-Catholics was not reciprocated by his Protestant successors, who, through the Toleration Act (1689) and Declaration of Indulgence (1690), reimposed restrictions on the Catholics while removing them from the Protestants. The justification given for this was purely secular: “Some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion” was to be granted, since this “united their Majesties’ Protestant subjects in interest and affection...” In other words, tolerance was necessary

---

502 Locke, A Letter concerning Toleration (1689).
503 Smith, op. cit., p. 813.
504 Bettenson & Maunder, op. cit., p. 342.
in order to avoid the possibility of civil war between the Anglicans and the Non-Conformist Protestants.

For, as Porter goes on, “the so-called Toleration Act of 1689 had an eye first and foremost to practical politics, and did not grant toleration. Officially an ‘Act for Exempting their Majesties’ Protestant Subjects, Dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of Certain Laws’, it stated that Trinitarian Protestant Nonconformists who swore the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and accepted thirty-six of the Thirty-nine Articles [the official confession of the Anglican Church] could obtain licences as ministers or teachers. Catholics and non-Christians did not enjoy the rights of public worship under the Act – and non-Trinitarians were left subject to the old penal laws. Unitarians, indeed, were further singled out by the Blasphemy Act of 1697, which made it an offence to ‘deny any one of the persons in the holy Trinity to be God’. There was no official Toleration Act for them until 1813, and in Scotland the death penalty could still be imposed – as it was in 1697 – for denying the Trinity.

“Scope for prosecution remained. Ecclesiastical courts still had the power of imprisoning for atheism, blasphemy and heresy (maximum term: six months). Occasional indictments continued under the common law, and Parliament could order books to be burned. Even so, patriots justly proclaimed that England was, alongside the United Provinces, the first nation to have embraced religious toleration – a fact that became a matter of national pride. ‘My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I looked,’ remarked Defoe’s castaway hero, Robinson Crusoe; ‘we had but three subjects, and they were of different religions. My man Friday was a pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist: however, I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions’.

“Two developments made toleration a fait accompli: the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695, and the fact that England had already been sliced up into sects. It was, quipped Voltaire, a nation of many faiths but only one sauce, a recipe for confessional tranquility if culinary tedium: ‘If there were only one religion in England, there would be danger of despotism, if there were only two they would cut each other’s throats; but there are thirty, and they live in peace’ [Letters concerning the English Nation].”

The Licensing Act ended pre-publication censorship. From now on, “though laws against blasphemy, obscenity and seditious libel remained on the statute book, and offensive publications could still be presented before the courts, the situation was light years away from that obtaining in France, Spain or almost anywhere else in ancien régime Europe.”

505 Porter, op. cit., p. 108.
506 Porter, op. cit., p. 31.
The more religious justifications of tolerance offered in, for example, More’s *Utopia* or Milton’s *Areopagitica*, were no longer in fashion. In the modern age that was beginning, religious tolerance was advocated, not because it ensured the eventual triumph of the true religion, but because it prevented war. And war, of course, “spoiled trade”…

“To enlightened minds,” writes Porter, “the past was a nightmare of barbarism and bigotry: fanaticism had precipitated bloody civil war and the axing of Charles Stuart, that man of blood, in 1649. Enlightened opinion repudiated old militancy for modern civility. But how could people adjust to each other? Sectarianism, that sword of the saints which had divided brother from brother, must cease; rudeness had to yield to refinement. Voltaire saw this happening before his very eyes in England’s ‘free and peaceful assemblies’: ‘Take a view of the Royal Exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together as tho’ they all profess’d the same religion, and give the name of Infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker’s word. And all are satisfied’. [*Letters concerning the English Nation*]. This passage squares with the enlightened belief that commerce would unite those whom creeds rent asunder. Moreover, by depicting men content, and content to be content – differing, but agreeing to differ – the *philosophe* pointed towards a rethinking of the *summum bonum*, a shift from God-fearingness to a selfhood more psychologically oriented. The Enlightenment thus translated the ultimate question ‘How can I be saved?‘ into the pragmatic ‘How can I be happy?’”

**Capitalism and the Jews**

The Jews have influenced modern Europe through three major channels: economic, religious and political. Economically, the Jews played a decisive part in the development of capitalism in Europe, and in the breaking down of the Christian beliefs and habits which hindered the full emergence of that socio-economic system, capitalism, that now dominates the world. Religiously, Cabbalistic Judaism greatly influenced a whole series of heretical sects and magical practices that flooded Western Europe from the time of the Templars. From the beginning of the eighteenth century these sects and practices began to converge into the movement known as Freemasonry. Politically, from the second half of the eighteenth century the Jews began to harness the economic power they wielded through the banks, and the religious power they wielded through the masonic lodges, to assist that vast phenomenon which we shall simply call the *Revolution*.

---

Capitalism on the grand scale is the product of avarice, the love of money, which St. Paul called “the root of all kinds of evil” (I Timothy 6.10). Of course, avarice was not invented by the Jews or the modern capitalists, but has been a trait of fallen man since the beginning. However, in most historical societies, while many men might dream of great wealth, only very few could have a realistic hope of acquiring it. Or rather, those few who had great wealth did not acquire it so much as inherit it. For they were the sons of the great landowning aristocratic families. Most ordinary people, on the other hand, were born as peasants. A peasant might dream of wealth, but his bondage to his landowning master and the necessity of spending all his time tilling the soil and bringing in the harvest, condemned his dreams to remain no more than that - dreams. This was especially the case in the feudal society of the medieval West – and indeed in almost all societies before the sixteenth century, insofar as almost all societies were based on a rural economy.

However, the growth of towns in the Renaissance, and especially the growth of capitalism and banking, made a certain measure of wealth a real possibility for a rapidly increasing proportion of the population. And it was the Jews who very quickly came to dominate the burgeoning capitalism of the West. The reason for this was that the Talmud has a specific economic doctrine that favours the most ruthless kind of capitalist exploitation.

According to Platonov, the Talmud “teaches the Jew to consider the property of all non-Jews as ‘gefker’, which means free, belonging to no one. ‘The property of all non-Jews has the same significance as if it had been found in the desert: it belongs to the first who seizes it’. In the Talmud there is a decree according to which open theft and stealing are forbidden, but anything can be acquired by deceit or cunning...

“From this it follows that all the resources and wealth of the non-Jews must belong to representatives of the ‘chosen people’. ‘According to the Talmud,’ wrote the Russian historian S.S. Gromeka, “God gave all the peoples into the hands of the Jews” (Baba-Katta, 38); “the whole of Israel are children of kings; those who offend a Jew offend God himself” (Sikhab 67, 1) and “are subject to execution, as for lèse-majesté” (Sanhedrin 58, 2); pious people of other nations, who are counted worthy of participating in the kingdom of the Messiah, will take the role of slaves to the Jews’ (Sanhedrin 91, 21, 1051). From this point of view, ... all the property in the world belongs to the Jews, and the Christians who possess it are only temporary, ‘unlawful’ possessors, usurpers, and this property will be confiscated by the Jews from them sooner or later. When the Jews are exalted above all the other peoples, God will hand over all the nations to the Jews for final extermination.”

Israel Shahak writes that many Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have failed because “displaying the flag of a ‘non-Jewish state’ within the Land of Israel contradicts the sacred principle which states that all this land ‘belongs’ to the Jews” (“Jewish History, Jewish Religion, Political Consequences”, http://www.ptimes.com/current/articles.html).
“The historian of Judaism I. Lyutostansky cites examples from the ancient editions of the Talmud, which teaches the Jews that it is pleasing to God that they appropriate the property of the goyim. In particular, he expounds the teaching of Samuel that deceiving a goy is not a sin…

“Rabbi Moses said: ‘If a goy makes a mistake in counting, then the Jew, noticing this, must say that he knows nothing about it.’ Rabbi Brentz says: ‘If some Jews, after exhausting themselves by running around all week to deceive Christians in various places, come together at the Sabbath and boast of their deceptions to each other, they say: “We must take the hearts out of the goyim and kill even the best of them.” – of course, if they succeed in doing this.’ Rabbi Moses teaches: ‘Jews sin when they return lost things to apostates and pagans, or anyone who doesn’t reverence the Sabbath.’…

“To attain the final goal laid down in the Talmud for Jews – to become masters of the property of the goyim – one of the best means, in the opinion of the rabbis, is usury. According to the Talmud, ‘God ordered that money be lent to the goyim, but only on interest; consequently, instead of helping them in this way, we must harm them, even if they can be useful for us.’ The tract Baba Metsiya insists on the necessity of lending money on interest and advises Jews to teach their children to lend money on interest, ‘so that they can from childhood taste the sweetness of usury and learn to use it in good time.’”

Now the Old Testament forbids the lending of money for interest to brothers, but allows it to strangers (Exodus 22.25; Leviticus 25.36; Deuteronomy 23.24). This provided the Jews’ practice of usury with a certain justification according to the letter of the law. However, as the above quotations make clear, the Talmud exploited the letter of the law to make it a justification for outright exploitation of the Christians and Muslims.

Johnson, while admitting that some Talmudic texts encouraged exploitation of Gentiles, nevertheless argues that the Jews had no choice: “A midrash on the Deuteronomy text [about usury], probably written by the nationalistic Rabbi Akiva, seemed to say that Jews were obliged to charge interest to foreigners. The fourteenth-century French Jew Levi ben Gershom agreed: it was a positive commandment to burden the gentile with interest ‘because one should not benefit an idolater… and cause him as much damage as possible without deviating from righteousness’; others took this line. But the most common justification was economic necessity:

“‘If we nowadays allow interest to be taken from non-Jews it is because there is no end of the yoke and the burden kings and ministers impose upon us, and everything we take is the minimum for our subsistence; and anyhow

we are condemned to live in the midst of the nations and cannot earn our living in any other manner except by money dealings with them; therefore the taking of interest is not to be prohibited.'

“This was the most dangerous argument of all because financial oppression of Jews tended to occur in areas where they were most disliked, and if Jews reacted by concentrating on moneylending to gentiles, the unpopularity – and so, of course, the pressure – would increase. Thus the Jews became an element in a vicious circle. The Christians, on the basis of the Biblical rulings, condemned interest-taking absolutely, and from 1179 those who practised it were excommunicated. But the Christians also imposed the harshest financial burdens on the Jews. The Jews reacted by engaging in the one business where Christian laws actually discriminated in their favour, and so became identified with the hated trade of moneylending. Rabbi Joseph Colon, who knew both France and Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century, wrote that the Jews of both countries hardly engaged in any other profession..."510

Whichever was the original cause – the Talmud’s encouragement of usury, or the Christians’ financial restrictions on the Jews – the fact was that it was through usury that the Jews came to dominate the Christians economically.

“Therefore,” writes Platonov, “already in the Middle Ages the Jews, using the Christians’ prejudice against profit, the amassing of wealth and usury, seized many of the most important positions in the trade and industry of Europe. Practising trade and usury and exploiting the simple people, they amassed huge wealth, which allowed them to become the richest stratum of medieval society. The main object of the trade of Jewish merchants was slave-trading. Slaves were acquired mainly in the Slavic lands511, whence they were exported to Spain and the countries of the East. On the borders between the Germanic and Slavic lands, in Meysen, Magdeburg and Prague, Jewish settlements were formed, which were constantly occupied in the slave trade. In Spain Jewish merchants organized hunts for Andalusian girls, selling them into slavery into the harems of the East. The slave markets of the Crimea were served, as a rule, by Jews. With the opening of America and the penetration into the depths of Africa it was precisely the Jews who became suppliers of black slaves to the New World.

“From commercial operations, the Jews passed to financial ones, to mortgages and usury, often all of these at once. Already from the 15th century very large Jewish fortunes were being formed. We can judge how big their resources were from the fact that in Spain merchants kept almost a whole army of mercenaries who protected their dubious operations – 25,000 horsemen and 20,000 infantry.

510 Johnson, op. cit, p. 174.
511 Hence the English word “slave”, and the French “esclave”, come from “Slav”.

264
“‘The great universal historical event,’ wrote the Jewish historian V. Zombardt, author of the book *The Jews and Economic Life*, ‘was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal (1492 and 1497). It must not be forgotten that on the very day that Columbus sailed from Palos to discover America (August 3, 1492), 300,000 Jews were expelled to Navarra, France, Portugal and the East512, and that in the years in which Vasco da Gama was discovering the sea route to East India, the Jews were also being expelled from other parts of the Pyrenean peninsula.’ According to Zombardt’s calculations, already in the 15th century the Jews constituted one third of the numbers of the world’s bourgeoisie and capitalists.

“In the 16th to 18th centuries the centre of Jewish economics became Amsterdam, which the Jews called ‘the new, great Jerusalem’… In Holland, the Jews became key figures in government finance. The significance of the Jewish financial world in this country went beyond its borders, for during the 17th and 18th centuries it was the main reservoir out of which all monarchs drew when they needed money…”513

Jews also became influential in Germany, in spite of Luther’s strong opposition to Judaism. Thus “in the seventeenth century,” writes Dan Cohn-Sherbok, “the court Jew came to play a crucial role in state affairs. Each royal or princely court had its own Jewish auxiliary. Throughout the country court Jews administered finances, provisioned armies, raised money, provided textiles and precious stones to the court… Such court Jews stood at the pinnacle of the social scale, forming an elite class.”514

“Beginning from the 17th century, the bankers of the Viennese Court were only Jews.515 The same situation could be observed in many German principalities. And “in France under Louis XIV and XV the leading position in the financial world was occupied by the Jewish banker Samuel Bernard, about whose help to France contemporaries said that ‘his whole merit consisted in the fact that he supported the State, as a string supports that which hangs on it.’”516

Thus in the 18th century the Jewish banker Jean Lo (Levi) founded a huge “Mississipi company” in Paris, which gave him monopoly rights to trade with China, India, the islands of the southern seas, Canada and all the colonies of France in America, and which “guaranteed” dividends of 120% a year to

---

512 As we have seen, these figures are considered vastly exaggerated by Norman Cantor, *The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1996, p. 189 (V.M.)
514 Cohn-Sherbok, op. cit., p. 115.
515 Thus “by 1694 the Austrian state debt to Oppenheimer alone amounted to no less than 3 million florins. At his death, by Emmanuel’s estimate, it had reached double that figure.” (Vital, op. cit., p. 14).
516 Platonov, op. cit., p. 155.
investors. However, the paper he issued was founded on nothing, the company collapsed, “millions of Frenchmen were ruined and for many years the finances of the country were hopelessly disordered. At the same time many representatives of the Jewish community of Paris amassed huge fortunes on this misery.”

Jewish power increased during the three great wars of the seventeenth century: the Thirty Years War in Germany, during which Jews supplied both the Catholics and the Protestants; the Austrian wars against France and then Turkey, during which Samuel Oppenheimer was the Imperial War Purveyor to the Austrians; and the wars against Louis XIV, when Oppenheimer was again the chief organizer of the finances of the anti-French coalition.

“William of Orange,” notes Johnson, “later William III of England, who led the coalition from 1672 to 1702, was financed and provisioned by a group of Dutch Sephardic Jews operating chiefly from the Hague.”

And yet, as we have seen, Louis XIV was himself served by a Jewish banker. So the Jews profited whichever side won…

Thus, as the well-known Jewish publicist Hannah Arendt writes, with the rise of capitalism, “Jewish banking capital became international. It was united by means of cross-marriages, and a truly international caste arose,” the consciousness of which engendered “a feeling of power and pride.”

After centuries of exile, the Jews were back at the heart of the Gentile world, a position they have not surrendered to the present day…

Nor was it only in the West that Jewish money ruled. In the sixteenth century, a French diplomat who lived in Constantinople under Suleyman the Magnificent, Nicolas de Nicolay, wrote: “They now have in their hands the most and greatest traffic of merchandise and ready money that is conducted in all the Levant. The shops and stalls best stocked with all the varieties of goods which can be found in Constantinople are those of the Jews. They also have among them very excellent practitioners of all the arts and manufactures, especially the Marranos not long since banished and expelled from Spain and Portugal who to the great detriment and injury of Christianity have taught the Turks several inventions, artifices and machines of war such as how to make artillery, arquebuses, gunpowdered, cannon-balls and other arms.”

---

518 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 256-258.
519 Johnson, op. cit., p. 281.
Protected by the Ottoman Turks from the attacks of the Christians, the Constantinopolitan Jews intrigued against the West European States. Thus Joseph Nasi, a banker and entrepreneur, through contacts in Western Europe was able, according to Philip Mansel, "to maintain an international network which helped him obtain revenge on Spain and France. It is possible that, from the banks of the Bosphorus, he encouraged the revolt of the Netherlands against Philip II of Spain. An envoy from the rebel leader, the Prince of Orange, came to see him in 1569. The historian Famianus Strada wrote: 'As regards the Flemings, Miche’s [i.e. Nasi’s] letters and persuasions had no little influence on them.' However no letters have come to light."522

A more proseeite interpretation is given to Jewish economic success by Paul Johnson, who writes: "The dynamic impulse to national economies, especially in England and the Netherlands, and later in North America and Germany, was provided not only by Calvinists, but by Lutherans, Catholics from north Italy and, not least, by Jews.

"What these moving communities shared was not theology but an unwillingness to live under the state regimentation of religious and moral ideas at the behest of the clerical establishments. All of them repudiated clerical hierarchies, favouring religious government by the congregation and the private conscience. In all these respects the Jews were the most characteristic of the various denominations of emigrants…

"Capitalism, at all its stages of development, has advanced by rationalizing and so improving the chaos of existing methods. The Jews could do this because, while intensely conservative (as a rule) within their own narrow and isolated world, they had no share in or emotional commitment to society as a whole and so could watch its old traditions, methods and institutions being demolished without a pang – could, indeed, play a leading role in the process of destruction. They were thus natural capitalist entrepreneurs…

"It was the unconscious collective instinct of the Jews both to depersonalize finance and to rationalize the general economic process. Any property known to be Jewish, or clearly identifiable as such, was always at risk in medieval and early modern times, especially in the Mediterranean, which was then the chief international trading area. As the Spanish navy and the Knights of Malta treated Jewish-chartered ships and goods as legitimate booty, fictitious Christian names were used in the paperwork of international transactions, including marine insurance. These developed into impersonal formulae. As well as developing letters of credit, the Jews invented bearer-bonds, another impersonal way of moving money. For an underprivileged community whose property was always under threat, and who might be forced to move at short notice, the emergence of reliable, impersonal paper

522 Mansel, op. cit., p. 126.
money, whether bills of exchange or, above all, valid banknotes, was an enormous blessing.

“Hence the whole thrust of Jewish activity in the early modern period was to refine these devices and bring them into universal use. They strongly supported the emergence of the institutions which promoted paper values: the central banks, led by the Bank of England (1694) with its statutory right to issue notes, and the stock exchanges…

“In general, financial innovations which Jews pioneered in the eighteenth century, and which aroused much criticism then, became acceptable in the nineteenth.

“…Jews were in the vanguard in stressing the importance of the selling function… [and] were among the leaders in display, advertising and promotion…

“They aimed for the widest possible market. They appreciated the importance of economies of scale…

“Above all, Jews were more inclined than others in commerce to accept that businesses flourished by serving consumer interests rather than guild interests. The customer was always right. The market was the final judge. These axioms were not necessarily coined by Jews or exclusively observed by Jews, but Jews were quicker than most to apply them.

“Finally, Jews were exceptionally adept at gathering and making use of commercial intelligence. As the market became the dominant factor in all kinds of trading, and as it expanded into a series of global systems, news became of prime importance. This was perhaps the biggest single factor in Jewish trading and financial success…”523

**The Jews in England**

The migration of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal to Holland and England marked the beginning both of the ascent of these latter powers to the status of world powers, and of the fall of Spain and Portugal from their position of power. For, as R.H. Tawney writes: “Portugal and Spain held the keys of the treasure house of the east and the west. But it was neither Portugal with her tiny population, and her empire that was little more than a line of forts and factories 10,000 miles long, nor Spain, for centuries an army on the march and now staggering beneath the responsibilities of her vast and scattered empire, devout to fanaticism, and with an incapacity for economic affairs which seemed almost inspired, which reaped the material harvest of the empires into which they had stepped, the one by patient toil, the other by

---

luck. Gathering spoils which they could not retain, and amassing wealth which slipped through their fingers, they were little more than the political agents of minds more astute and characters better versed in the arts of peace... The economic capital of the new civilization was Antwerp... its typical figure, the paymaster of princes, was the international financier"\textsuperscript{524} – that is, the Jew. And when the Jews began to move from Antwerp to London, the economic leadership of the world moved to England...

Thus in September, 1653 Menasseh Ben Israel came to London from Amsterdam to plead the case for Jewish readmission to England. At that time, writes Rabbi Jeremy Gordon, “England was in the grip of Messianic excitement. Cromwell had opened Parliament that July with the announcement that ‘this may be the door to usher in the things that God has promised... You are at the edge of the promises and prophecies.’

“Ben Israel lost no time stoking the messianic fervour for his own purposes. In ‘A Humble Adressse to the Lord Protector’ he notes: ‘The opinion of many Christians and mine doe concurre herin, in that we both believe the restoring time of our Nation into their Native Country is very near at hand; I believing that this restauration cannot be before the words of Daniel be first accomplished, And when the dispersion of the Holy people shall be completed in all places, then shall all these things be completed. Signifying therewith, that all be fulfilled, the People of God must be first dispersed into all places of the World. Now we know how our Nation is spread all about, and hath its seat and dwellings in the most flourishing Kindgdomes of the World except only this considerable and mighty Island [Britain]. And therefore this remains onely in my judgements before the MESSIA come.’

“It is fascinating to observe Ben Israel’s theological partnering with the Puritans. He is tempting Christians to let Jews into Britain in order to bring the second coming of Jesus! The ‘Addresse’ is a masterful work of flattery, requestong a ‘free and publick Synagogue’ in order that Jews may, ‘sue also for a blessing upon this [British] Nation and People of England for receiving us into their bosoms and comforting Sion in her distresse.’ But it also reminded Cromwell that no ruler, ‘hath ever afflicted [the Jews] who hath not been, by some ominous Exit, most heavily punished of God Almighty; as is manifest from the Histories of the Kings; Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezer & others.’

“Ben Israel also marshals less spiritual arguments, devoting several pages to a survey of the profitability of ‘The Nation of Jewes’ in a range of states that have seen fit to let in Jews. This might have been particularly interesting to Cromwell, seeking to find ways to keep Britain ahead of the Dutch economy.

“Suitably inspired, Cromwell called a conference of merchants and clergymen but didn’t get the support he was looking for. Admitting the Jews would be a blasphemy, some claimed. Others spread rumours of child murder… There were also fears, if re-admission were formalised, that ‘every Vagabond Jew may purchase the Liberties and Immunities of free-born Englishmen’.

“Not everyone, and least of all the guilds, were anxious to see the Jews’ economic nous and power in competition with the existing British mercantile classes. Perhaps in the face of such opposition, Cromwell disbanded the conference before it could report.”

The Venetian ambassador to England, Giovanni Sagredo describes these events as follows: “A Jew came from Antwerp and… when introduced to his highness [Oliver Cromwell] he began not only to kiss but to press his hands and touch… his whole body with the most exact care. When asked why he behaved so, he replied that he had come from Antwerp solely to see if his highness was of flesh and blood, since his superhuman deeds indicated that he was more than a man… The Protector ordered [i.e. set up] a congregation of divines, who discussed in the presence of himself and his council whether a Christian country could receive the Jews. Opinions were very divided. Some thought they might be received under various restrictions and very strict obligations. Others, including some of the leading ministers of the laws, maintained that under no circumstances and in no manner could they receive the Jewish sect in a Christian kingdom without very grave sin. After long disputes and late at night the meeting dissolved without any conclusion…”

Eventually, in 1656, the Jews got their way. Their success, continues Gordon, “owes its origin to the imprisonment of a converso merchant, Antonio Rodrigues Robles, on the charge of being a papist. Robles was threatened with sequestration of his assets and escaped punishment only when he claimed that, rather than being a papist, he was Jewish. Cromwell intervened, Robles escaped punishment and, as the historian Heinrich Graetz remarked, Jews ‘made no mistake over the significance of this ruling, [and threw] off the mask of Christianity.’


David Vital writes: “When Cromwell resolved to rescind King Edward I’s edict of expulsion of 1290 in the interests of allowing London’s very small colony of crypto-Jews to surface and permit other Jews, mostly from Holland, to join them, he did so primarily because he had his eye on the advantages Spanish and Portuguese Jews, with their worldwide connections might bring to English commerce, the information on foreign affairs with which they could supply him, and the political services they could perform for him on the continent. (op. cit. p. 38)

526 Cohen and Major, op. cit. p. 184.
“It was, in Cromwell’s England, far safer to be an avowed Jew than a closeted pseudo-Puritan who might harbour papist tendencies. Devoid of constitutional upheaval, legislation or fanfare, the Jews got on with the day-to-day business of establishing a community on this ‘considerable and mighty Island’.”

“Indeed,” points out Johnson, “in 1732 a judgement gave Jews, in effect, legal protection against generic libels which might endanger life. Hence... England became the first place in which it was possible for a modern Jewish community to emerge” And “by the end of the eighteenth century,” writes Vital, “the Jews of England had little to complain of…”

Very soon, also, the Jews were once more in control of the finances of England. The decisive event, as we have seen, was King William III’s decision to borrow from the Jews in order to finance his campaigns against France. N. Bogoliubov writes: “With the help of the agent William Paterson [the king] succeeded in persuading the British Treasury to borrow 1.25 million British pounds from Jewish bankers. This strengthened his position. Insofar as the state debt had already, even without this, attained improbable heights, the government could do nothing but agree to the conditions presented:

“1. The name of the creditor will remain in secret: he is allowed to found ‘The Bank of England’ (a Central Bank).

“2. The directors of the above-mentioned bank are given the right to establish the gold support of paper money.

“3. They are given the right to give credits to the extent of ten pounds in paper money to every pound kept in gold.

“4. They are given the right to accumulate a national debt and collect the necessary sum by means of direct taxation of the people.

“Thus there appeared the first private central bank – ‘the Bank of England’. By means of these operations banking procedures were able to produce a 50% profit on the Bank’s capital deposits at 5%. It was the English people who had to pay for this. The creditors were not concerned that the debt should be paid,

---

527 Another reason for this, as R.A. York points out, is that “quite a strong philo-semitic tendency was developing in English Puritanism at this time. Puritanism encouraged the return to the text of the Bible, in particular to the Old Testament. This in turn encouraged greater interest in the study of Hebrew and the Jews themselves.

“Part of the reason for this interest was proselytising. The Jews had long been resistant to Christianity, but they might be more attracted to a purer, more Judaic form...” (Letters, History Today, vol. 50 (12), December, 2000, p. 61) (V.M.)

528 Gordon, op. cit., p. 38.
529 Johnson, op. cit., p. 278.
since in conditions of indebtedness they were able to exert influence also on
the political processes in the country. The national debt of England rose from
£1,250,000 in 1694 to £16,000,000 in 1698...”

Jewish influence was important on the political and religious, no less than
the economic life of England. Eliane Glaser writes: “In 1653... the radical Fifth
Monarchist preacher John Rogers suggested a plan to model the new
parliament on the Sanhedrin. Rogers, like other members of the millenarian
sect, believed that this would hasten Christ’s coming, and the idea appeared
in the manifesto of the Fifth Monarchy rebels in 1657. In fact the use of the
Jewish court as a template for the English religious and political constitution
is one of the most startling aspects of Christian discourse in the 17th century.

“In 1653, the legal scholar John Selden wrote a lengthy tract on the
Sanhedrin; and Selden’s Jewish ideas greatly influence John Milton. Utopian
visions of the English constitution, such as James Harrington’s The Common-
wealth of Oceana (1656) and Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan (1656), contain
numerous references to ancient Israel. The Sanhedrin was at the centre of
debates about the place of religious minorities and the relationship between
religious and civil law, because Christian commentaries could never agree on
whether the Sanhedrin had arbitrated in secular as well as sacred affairs...”

Sir Isaac Newton

The second half of the seventeenth century was the period in which the
scientific revolution, proclaimed at the beginning of the century, was bringing
forth its first solid fruits in the discoveries of such men as Harvey, Gilbert,
Boyle, Hooke and Sir Isaac Newton.

It is worthy of note that Newton, though perhaps the greatest scientist of
all time, was not a reductionist in the full modern sense. Far from dividing
religion and science into separate, hermetically sealed compartments in
accordance with the modern scientific world-view, Newton was, in White’s
words, “interested in a synthesis of all knowledge and was a devout seeker of
some form of unified theory of the principles of the universe. Along with
many intellectuals before him, Newton believed that this synthesis – the
fabled prisca sapientia – had once been in the possession of mankind.”

Of course, there was a large element of hubris in this programme, a hubris
that Newton shared, vaingloriously giving himself the pseudonym “‘Jeova
Sanctus Unus’ – One Holy God – based upon an anagram of the Latinised

---

531 Bogoliubov, in Begunov, Yu.K, Stepanov, A.D, Dushenov, K.Yu., Taina Bezzakonia (The
532 Glaser, “Napoleon’s Jews: A Law unto Themselves”, BBC History Magazine, vol. 8, no. 8,
version of his name, Isaacus Neutonus”. 534 However, the pride of the programme is not the point here. The important point is that the greatest scientist in history refused to see religious truth as sharply segregated from scientific truth, still less that religious truth needed to be “verified” by science.

So far was Newton from segregating the two that he spent – to the puzzlement of his admirers ever since - many years studying alchemy and the Holy Scriptures. For “they who search after the Philosophers’ Stone,” he wrote, “[are] by their own rules obliged to strict & religious life. That study [is] fruitful of experiments.” 535

“A strict and religious life” “fruitful of experiments”?! Considering that no one was more fruitful in scientific experimentation and theorizing than Newton, one might have expected many modern scientists to have followed his advice. But they have not, because, while admiring his science, they have rejected his philosophy of science, preferring instead their own atheist, reductionist scientific outlook.

Newton was not a Deist. He believed that God periodically intervened in the workings of nature. For, as his disciple Samuel Clarke wrote to Leibniz, “the notion of the world’s being a great machine, going on without the interposition of God, as a clock continues to go without the assistance of a clock-maker, is the notion of materialism and fate, and tends... to exclude providence and God’s government in reality out of the world.” 536

Newton’s philosophy of science was based on the fact that, as Maynard Keynes said, “He regarded the universe as a cryptogram set by the Almighty”. 537 If the Almighty set the cryptogram, then only one who was pleasing to the Almighty could be expected to understand it. Hence “his belief that the emotional and spiritual state of the individual experimenter was involved intimately with the success or failure of the experiment.” 538 And hence his quoting of Hermes Trismegistus: “I had this art and science by the sole inspiration of God who has vouchsafed to reveal it to his servant. Who gives those that know how to use their reason the means of knowing the truth, but is never the cause that any man follows error & falsehood.” 539

Now if the universe is a cryptogram written by God, there should be no conflict between the universe and the prophetic writings of the Old and New Testaments. And so Newton set about studying the Holy Scriptures,

534 White, op. cit., p. 140.
535 White, op. cit., p. 121. So assiduous was he in his search for the Philosophers’ Stone that Keynes considered him to have been not so much the first of the men of the Age of Reason as the last of the magicians...
536 Clarke, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 371.
537 White, op. cit., p. 122.
538 White, op. cit., p. 128.
539 White, op. cit., p. 129.
especially *Ezekiel, Daniel* and *Revelation*. “He reasoned that because God’s work and God’s word came from the same Creator, then Nature and Scripture were also one and the same. Scripture was a communicable manifestation or interpretation of Nature, and as such could be viewed as a blueprint for life – a key to all meaning.”

In accordance with this principle, Newton set about interpreting the prophecies, concluding, for example, that the plan of the Temple of Solomon (*Ezekiel* 40-48) was a paradigm for the entire future of the world. Evidently he was less inspired as an interpreter of Scripture than as a scientist, and we know that he was far from Orthodox in his theology (he was probably an Arian and most likely a Unitarian, a fact which he carefully concealed until he was dying). However, it is not as a religious thinker that his example is important, but as showing that great scientific achievement, far from being incompatible with religious “fundamentalism” (Newton believed in the literal truth of the Creation story, rejecting the idea that living creatures came into being by chance) and the belief that the true science comes from Divine inspiration, may actually be nourished by it.

But such examples become increasingly rare after Newton’s death. For he lived just before the “Age of Enlightenment” began to radically change the way men thought. And it changed it, first of all, by making scientific reasoning and the scientific method the measure of all things. The difference is illustrated by a remark of Bertrand Russell: "Almost everything that distinguishes the modern world from earlier centuries is attributable to science, which achieved its most spectacular triumphs in the seventeenth century.” Michael Polanyi confirms this judgement: "Just as the three centuries following on the calling of the Apostles sufficed to establish Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, so the three centuries after the founding of the Royal Society sufficed for science to establish itself as the supreme intellectual authority of the post-Christian age. 'It is contrary to religion!' - the objection ruled supreme in the seventeenth century. 'It is unscientific!' is its equivalent in the twentieth.”

After Newton’s death, scientific doubt would no longer be simply one tool among others to probe the mysteries of God’s universe. It would be the tool used to “demonstrate” that the universe is neither mysterious, nor God’s… And so in the eighteenth century, writes Gabriel Simonov, “science in Western Europe after Newton moved quickly forward. Under the influence of

---

541 White, *op. cit.*, pp. 157, 158. In a recent television programme on Newton, it is claimed that in a manuscript of his now in Jerusalem he calculated that the Apocalypse would come in the year 2060.
the encyclopaedists, rationalism rose up against Descartes, replacing innate ideas with empiricism and clarity of thought with reliability of facts.

"Relying on the successes of scientific determinism, some thinkers and scientists dared to foretell that in the future science would be able to explain everything, and then it would be in a position to foresee everything. From there it was one step not only to criticism of the book of Genesis and the Bible in general, but also to the rejection of God. This step was taken by the major French mathematician and physicist Laplace (1749-1827), who in a conversation with Napoleon Bonaparte, on whom he exerted influence, said: ‘Citizen First Consul, the hypothesis of God is not necessary for me.’”\(^{544}\)

**England: the Conservative Enlightenment**

The War of the Spanish succession (1701-1713) was the last of what we might call the wars of religion. Henceforth wars would be fought, not for the sake of faith but for the sake of territorial or commercial aggrandizement. This development was the single most important cause of that new tone of elegant scepticism and tolerance that defined the Enlightenment more than anything else: “The Enlightenment was not a crusade,” writes Mark Goldie, “but a tone of voice, a sensibility.”\(^{545}\)

This war was also important because it changed the balance of power in Europe from the “old regime” states, especially Spain, to the “new style” victors, especially Britain, which now, as Davies writes, “emerged as the foremost maritime power, as the leading diplomatic broker, and as the principal opponent of French supremacy.”\(^{546}\) From now on, therefore, there were three kinds of state in Western Europe: old-style absolutism, represented by Spain, in which Church and feudalism still exerted their old power; new-style absolutism, represented by France, in which Church and feudalism, while still strong, were becoming increasingly subject to the law of the king; and constitutional monarchy, as represented by Britain and Holland, in which the king, while still strong, was increasingly subject to the law of parliament and, behind parliament, of mammon.

The rise of laissez-faire capitalism was especially important. The reinvention of paper money (it had previously been invented in China) and the stock market produced the first massive financial speculations, such as the South Sea Bubble in England and the Mississippi Company in France.


The most important men now, as Jonathan Swift noted in 1710, were “quite different from any that were ever known before the Revolution [of 1688]; consisting of those... whose whole fortunes lie in funds and stocks; so that power, which... used to follow land, is now gone over into money...”

Since one cannot serve God and mammon, this trend inevitably meant that religion weakened. Already in 1668 in Samuel Butler’s Hudibras we can see the revulsion from the methods of the wars of religion:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Such as do build their faith upon} \\
\text{The holy text of pike and gun} \\
\text{Decide all controversies by} \\
\text{Infallible artillery...} \\
\text{As if religion were intended} \\
\text{For nothing else but to be mended.}
\end{align*}
\]

And the rise of another, no less pernicious tendency:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{What makes all doctrines plain and clear?} \\
\text{About two hundred pounds a year.} \\
\text{And that which was true before} \\
\text{Proved false again? Two hundred more.}
\end{align*}
\]

By the beginning of the next century, the trend was firmly entrenched. Thus H.M.V. Temperley writes: “The earlier half of the eighteenth century in England is an age of materialism, a period of dim ideals, of expiring hopes... We can recognise in English institutions, in English ideals, in the English philosophy of this age, the same practical materialism, the same hard rationalism, the same unreasonable self-complacency. Reason dominated alike the intellect, the will, and the passions; politics were self-interested, poetry didactic, philosophy critical and objective... Even the most abstract of thinkers and the most unworldly of clerics have a mundane and secular stamp upon them.”

The “enthusiasm” of the lower classes was rejected by the self-satisfied upper classes. As the Duchess of Buckingham said of the Methodist George Whitefield: “His doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards his superiors. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth...”

---

A depressing picture; and yet it was precisely in this dull, snobbish, self-satisfied England of the early 18th century that the foundations of the contemporary world were laid. Moreover, the leading intellects of the time looked on it as by no means dull. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, wrote to a comrade in the Netherlands: “There is a mighty Light which spreads its self over the world especially in those two free Nations of England and Holland; on whom the Affairs of Europe now turn; and if Heaven sends us soon a peace suitable to the great Socrates we have had, it is impossible but Letters and Knowledge must advance in greater Proportion than ever... I am far from thinking that the cause of Theisme will lose anything by fair Dispute. I can never... wish better for it when I wish the Establishment of an intire Philosophical Liberty”.\(^{550}\)

This quotation combines many of the characteristic themes of the Enlightenment: first, the image of light itself; then the optimism, the belief that knowledge and education will sweep all before it; the belief in free speech, which, it was felt then, would not damage faith; above all, the belief in liberty. And indeed, with the English Enlightenment there came a tolerance that went far beyond the bounds of what had been considered tolerable in the past. Thus Catholicism was still banned, because that was considered a political threat; but the Earl of Shaftesbury was allowed “to print his scandalous view that religion should be optional and atheism considered a possible form of belief”...\(^{551}\)

The Enlightenment world-view can be summarised as follows: “All men are by nature equal; all have the same natural rights to strive after happiness, to self-preservation, to the free control of their persons and property, to resist oppression, to hold and express whatever opinions they please. The people is sovereign; it cannot alienate its sovereignty; and every government not established by the free consent of the community is a usurpation. The title-deeds of man’s rights, as Sieyès said, are not lost. They are preserved in his reason. Reason is infallible and omnipotent. It can discover truth and compel conviction. Rightly consulted, it will reveal to us that code of nature which should be recognised and enforced by the civil law. No evil enactment which violates natural law is valid. Nature meant man to be virtuous and happy. He is vicious and miserable, because he transgresses her laws and despises her teaching.

“The essence of these doctrines is that man should reject every institution and creed which cannot approve itself to pure reason, the reason of the individual. It is true that if reason is to be thus trusted it must be unclouded by prejudice and superstition. These are at once the cause and effect of the defective and mischievous social, political and religious institutions, which have perverted man’s nature, inflamed his passions, and distorted his

---

\(^{550}\) Porter, op. cit., p. 3.
\(^{551}\) Barzun, op. cit., p. 361.
judgement. Therefore to overthrow prejudice and superstition should be the first effort of those who would restore to man his natural rights.”

The English Enlightenment rested especially on the achievements of Sir Isaac Newton, whose *Principia* astonished the world. His *Opticks*, by explicating the nature of light, provided the Enlightenment thinkers with the perfect image of their programme of intellectual enlightenment. As Alexander Pope put it,

\[
\text{Nature, and Nature's Laws lay Hid from Sight;}
\text{God said, 'Let Newton be!', and all was Light.}
\]

Voltaire so admired of Newton that he called his mistress “Venus-Newton”. Newtonian physics appeared to promise the unlocking of all Nature’s secrets by the use of reason alone – although it must be remembered that Newton believed in revelation as well as reason and wrote many commentaries on the Scriptures.

Roy Porter writes: “Newton was the god who put English science on the map, an intellectual colossus, flanked by Bacon and Locke.

\[
\text{Let Newton, Pure Intelligence, whom God}
\text{To mortals lent to trace His boundless works}
\text{From laws sublimely simple, speak thy fame}
\text{In all philosophy.}
\]

Sang James Thomson in his ‘Ode on the Death of Sir Isaac Newton’ (1727). Wordsworth was later more Romantic:

\[
\text{Newton with his prism and silent face,}
\text{... a mind for ever,}
\text{Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.}
\]

‘Newton’ the icon proved crucial to the British Enlightenment, universally praised except by a few obdurate outsiders, notably William Blake, who detested him and all his works.

“What was crucial about Newton – apart from the fact that, so far as his supporters were concerned, he was a Briton blessed with omniscience – was that he put forward a vision of Nature which, whilst revolutionary, reinforced latitudinarian Christianity. For all but a few diehards, Newtonianism was an invincible weapon against atheism, upholding no mere First Cause but an actively intervening personal Creator who continually sustained Nature and, once in a while, applied a rectifying touch. Like Locke, furthermore, the

---

public Newton radiated intellectual humility. Repudiating the a priori speculations of Descartes and later rationalists, he preferred empiricism: he would ‘frame no hypotheses’ (hypotheses non fingo), and neither would he pry into God’s secrets. Thus, while he had elucidated the law of gravity, he did not pretend to divine its causes. Not least, in best enlightened fashion, Newtonian science set plain facts above mystifying metaphysics. In Newtonianism, British scientific culture found its enduring rhetoric: humble, empirical, co-operative, pious, useful. ‘I don’t know what I may seem to the world, but, as to myself,’ he recalled, in his supreme soundbite, ‘I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me’.

“The affinities between the Newtonian cosmos and the post-1688 polity were played up. In the year after the master’s death, his disciple J.T. Desaguliers produced an explicit application of physics to politics in The Newtonian System of the World: The Best Model of Government, an Allegorical Poem (1728), where the British monarchy was celebrated as the guarantor of liberty and rights: ‘attracting is now as universal in the political, as the philosophical world’.

What made the Planets in such Order move,
He said, was Harmony and mutual Love.

God himself was commended as a kind of constitutional monarch:

His Pow’r, coerc’d by Laws, still leaves them free,
Directs but not Destroys their Liberty.

The Principia thus provided an atomic exploratory model not just for Nature but for society too (freely moving individuals governed by law)…

“This enthronement of the mechanical philosophy, the key paradigm switch of the ‘scientific revolution’, in turn sanctioned the new assertions of man’s rights over Nature so salient to enlightened thought… No longer alive or occult but rather composed of largely inert matter, Nature could be weighted, measured – and mastered. The mechanical philosophy fostered belief that man was permitted, indeed dutybound, to apply himself to Nature for (in Bacon’s words) the ‘glory of God and the relief of man’s estate’. Since Nature was not, after all, sacred or ‘ensouled’, there could be nothing impious about utilizing and dominating it. The progressiveness of science thus became pivotal to enlightened propaganda. The world was now well-lit, as bright as light itself.”

---

But, as we shall see in more detail later, the light in question was a light that cast much of reality into the shadows. For “with the Newtonian mechanistic synthesis,” writes Philip Sherrard, “… the world-picture, with man in it, is flattened and neutralized, stripped of all sacred or spiritual qualities, of all hierarchical differentiation, and spread out before the human observer like a blank chart on which nothing can be registered except what is capable of being measured.”

Locke’s philosophy also began with a tabula rasa, the mind of man before empirical sensations have been imprinted upon it. The development of the mind then depends on the movement and association and ordering of sensations and the concepts that arise from them, rather like the atoms of Newton’s universe. And the laws of physical motion and attraction correspond to the laws of mental inference and deduction, the product of the true deus ex machina of the Newtonian-Lockean universe – Reason. Locke’s political and psychological treatises promised that all the problems of human existence could be amicably settled by reason rather than revelation, and reasonableness rather than passion. Traditional religion was not to be discarded, but purified of irrational elements, placed on a firmer, more rational foundation; for, as Benjamin Whichcote said, with Locke’s agreement, “there is nothing so intrinsically rational as religion”. Hence the title of another of Locke’s works: The Reasonableness of Christianity (1695), in which only one key dogma was proclaimed as necessary: that Jesus was the Messiah, proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. Reason, for Locke, was “the candle of the Lord”, “a natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light, and Fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties”. Armed with reason, and even without Christ, one can know what is the just life lived in accordance with natural law.

This reason, however, was not the deductive reason championed by the contemporary German Gottfried Leibniz. The ideas of Leibniz, writes Sir Isaiah Berlin, “were developed by his followers and interpreters into a coherent and dogmatic metaphysical system which, so their popularisers claimed, was logically demonstrated by deductive steps from simple premises, in their turn self-evident to those who could use that infallible intellectual intuition with which all thinking beings were endowed at birth. This rigid intellectualism was attacked in England, where no form of pure rationalism has ever found a congenial soil, by the most influential philosophical writers of the age, Locke, Hume, and, towards the end of the century, Bentham and the philosophical radicals, who agreed in denying the existence of any such faculty as an intellectual intuition into the real nature of things. No faculty other than the familiar physical senses could provide that initial empirical

---

information on which all other knowledge of the world in ultimately founded. Since all information was conveyed by the senses, reason could not be an independent source of knowledge, and was responsible only for arranging, classifying and fitting together such information, and drawing deductions from it, operating on material obtained without its aid.”

“Locke,” writes Roy Porter, “had no truck with the fideist line that reason and faith were at odds; for the latter was properly ‘nothing but a firm assent of the mind: which… cannot be accorded to anything but upon good reason’. Gullibility was not piety. To accept a book, for instance, as revelation without checking out the author was gross superstition – how could it honour God to suppose that faith overrode reason, for was not reason no less God-given?

“In a typically enlightened move, Locke restricted the kinds of truths which God might reveal: revelation could not be admitted contrary to reason, and ‘faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge’. Yet there remained matters on which hard facts were unobtainable, as, for instance, Heaven or the resurrection of the dead: ‘being beyond the discovery or reason’, such issues were ‘purely matters for faith’.

“In short, Locke raised no objections to revealed truth as such, but whether something ‘be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge – it was the constant court of appeal. The credo, quia impossibile est of the early Church fathers might seem the acme of devotion, but it ‘would prove a very ill rule for men to choose their opinions or religion by’. Unless false prophets were strenuously avoided, the mind would fall prey to ‘enthusiasm’, that eruption of the ‘ungrounded fancies of a man’s own brain’. Doubtless, God might speak directly to holy men, but Locke feared the exploitation of popular credulity, and urged extreme caution.”

Lockean rationalism led to the theology of Deism, which sought to confine God’s activity in the world to the original act of creation. Thus the Deists’ understanding of God was closely modelled on the English monarchy: “‘God is a monarch’, opined Viscount Bolingbroke, ‘yet not an arbitrary but a limited monarch’: His power was limited by His reason”. All history since the creation could be understood by reason alone without recourse to Divine Revelation or Divine intervention. Thus in 1730 Matthew Tyndal, fellow of All Souls, Oxford, published his Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature. In it he declared: “If nothing but Reasoning can improve Reason, and no Book can improve my Reason in any Point, but as it gives me convincing Proofs of its Reasonableness; a Revelation, that will not suffer us to judge of its Dictates by our Reason, is so far from improving Reason, that it forbids the Use of it… Understanding… can only be

---

558 Porter, op. cit., p. 62.
559 Porter, op. cit., p. 100.
improv’d by studying the Nature and Reason of things: ‘I applied my Heart’ (says the wisest of Men) ‘to know, and to search, and to seek out Wisdom and the Reason of Things’ (Ecclesiastes 7.25)...”\(^{560}\)

Of course, the word “Reason” has a long and honourable history in Christian theology; Christ Himself is the Logos, and “Logos” can be translated by “Reason”. But what the Deists were proposing was no God-enlightened use of human reason. Reason for them was something divorced from Revelation and therefore from Christ; it was something purely ratiocinative, rationalist, not the grace-filled, revelation-oriented reason of the Christian theologians. “Reason is for the philosopher what Grace is for the Christian”, wrote Diderot.\(^{561}\)

It followed from this Deistic concept of God and Divine Providence that all the complicated theological speculation and argument of earlier centuries was as superfluous as revelation itself. The calm, lucid religion of nature practised by philosopher-scientists would replace the arid, tortured religion of the theologians. And such a religion, as well as being simpler, would be much more joyful that the old. No more need to worry about sin, or the wrath of God, or hell. No more odium theologicum, just gaudium naturale.

As Porter writes, “rejecting the bogeyman of a vengeful Jehovah blasting wicked sinners, enlightened divines instated a more optimistic (pelagian) theology, proclaiming the benevolence of the Supreme Being and man’s capacity to fulfil his duties through his God-given faculties, the chief of these being reason, that candle of the Lord.”\(^{562}\)

This Deist, man-centred view of the universe was sometimes seen as being summed up in Pope’s verse:

\[\textit{Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,}\\ \textit{The proper study of mankind is man.}\]\(^{563}\)

---


\(^{562}\) Porter, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100. “Indeed,” writes Berlin, “this task was of crucial importance: for without it a true and clear picture of the principal ‘faculties’ and operations of the human mind, one could not be certain how much credence to give to various types of thought or reasoning, nor how to determine the sources and limits of human knowledge, nor the relationship between its varieties. But unless this was known the claims of ignoramuses and charlatans could not be properly exposed; nor the new picture of the material world adequately related to other matters of interest to men – moral conduct, aesthetic principles, laws of history and of social and political life, the ‘inner’ workings of the passions and the imagination, and all the other issues of central interest to human beings. A science of nature had been created; a science of the mind had yet to be made.” (“The Philosophers of the Enlightenment”, in \textit{The Power of Ideas}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40)

However, Pope, a Roman Catholic and therefore a member of a persecuted minority, actually went on to express a scepticism about the powers of human knowledge and the human mind which provided a necessary counter-balance to the prevailing optimism:

Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
   A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic’s pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err.\(^\text{564}\)

But for the Protestants this was too sceptical; they believed in this world with its delightfully harmonious laws, reflecting a wise, beneficent Creator and completely comprehensible to the human mind.

It followed that religion had to be happy and reasonable. “‘Religion is a cheerful thing,’ Lord Halifax explained to his daughter. And Lord Shaftesbury enlarged: ‘Good Humour is not only the best Security against Enthusiasm: Good Humour is also the best Foundation of Piety and True Religion.’ For the proof of that religion, you had only to look about you. It was perfectly evident to anyone standing in the grounds of any English stately home that a discriminating gentleman had created them: how much more overwhelming evidence of that even greater Gentleman above, who had so recently revealed to Sir Isaac Newton that his Estate too was run along rational lines…”\(^\text{565}\)

Porter writes: “The Ancients taught: ‘be virtuous’, and Christianity: ‘have faith’; but the Moderns proclaimed: ‘be happy’. Replacing the holiness preached by the Church, the great ideal of the modern world has been happiness, and it was the thinkers of the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century who first insisted upon that value shift.

Oh Happiness! Our being’s end and aim!
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! Whate’er thy name…

sang poet Alexander Pope. ‘Happiness is the only thing of real value in existence’, proclaimed the essayist Soame Jenyns. ‘Pleasure is now the principal remaining part of your education,’ Lord Chesterfield instructed his son.

\(^{564}\) Pope, \textit{An Essay on Man}, ii, 3-10. "How blind are we," wrote Rousseau, “in the midst of so much enlightenment” (\textit{Letter to D’Alembert} (1758)).

\(^{565}\) Gascoigne, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 164.
“And if phrases like ‘pleasure-loving’ always hinted at the unacceptable face of hedonism, it would be hard to deny that the quest for happiness – indeed the right to happiness – became a commonplace of Enlightenment thinking, even before it was codified into Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarian ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’ definition. That formula was itself a variant upon phrases earlier developed by the moral philosopher Francis Hutcheson, and by the Unitarian polymath, Joseph Priestley, who deemed that ‘the good and happiness of the members, that is, the majority of the members of any state, is the great standard by which everything related to that state must finally be determined.’

“The quest for happiness became central to enlightened thinking throughout Europe, and it would be foolish to imply that British thinkers had any monopoly of the idea. Nevertheless, it was a notion which found many of its earliest champions in this country. ‘I will faithfully pursue that happiness I propose to myself,’… had insisted at the end of the 17th century. And English thinkers were to the fore in justifying happiness as a goal…

“What changes of mind made hedonism acceptable to the Enlightenment? In part, a new turn in theology itself. By 1700 rational Anglicanism was picturing God as the benign Architect of a well-designed universe. The Earth was a law-governed habitat meant for mankind’s use; man could garner the fruits of the soil, tame the animals and quarry the crust. Paralleling this new Christian optimism ran lines of moral philosophy and aesthetics espoused by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury and his admirer, Francis Hutcheson. Scorning gravity and the grave, Shaftesbury’s rhapsodies to the pleasures of virtue pointed the way for those who would champion the virtues of pleasure.

“Early Enlightenment philosophers like Locke gave ethics a new basis in psychology. It was emphasized that, contrary to Augustinian rigour, human nature was not hopelessly depraved; rather the passions were naturally benign – and in any case pleasure was to be derived from ‘sympathy’ with them. Virtue was, in short, part and parcel of a true psychology of pleasure and was its own reward. Good taste and good morals fused in an aesthetic of virtue.

“Like Nature at large, man became viewed as a machine made up of parts, open to scientific study through the techniques of a ‘moral anatomy’ which would unveil psychological no less than physical laws of motion. Building on such natural scientific postulates, thinkers championed individualism and the right to self-improvement. It became common, as in Bernard Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees, to represent society as a hive made up of individuals, each pulsating with needs, desires and drives which hopefully would work for the best: private vices, public benefits. ‘The wants of the mind are infinite,’ asserted the property developer and physician Nicholas Barbon, expressing
views which pointed towards Adam Smith’s celebration of ‘the uniform, constant and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition’. ‘Self love’, asserted Joseph Tucker, Dean of Gloucester Cathedral, ‘is the great Mover in human Nature’.”

Self love was also the prime mover in capitalist economics, the “hidden hand” which, like Divine Providence, led everyone to better themselves and each other. According to Adam Smith, one of the bright lights of the Scottish Enlightenment, “it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of their own necessities but of their advantages.”

So the common interest is best served by everyone being made free to pursue his own self-interest with as little interference from the State or other bodies as possible. The “hidden hand” – the economists’ equivalent of Divine Providence – would see to it that greed and selfishness would be rewarded as unerringly in this life as unacquisitiveness and selflessness, according to the old dispensation, was held to be in the next. Here we see the doctrine of laissez-faire economics which has become one of the corner-stones of the modern world-view.

Garnished with a touch of German moral earnestness, this English concept of Enlightenment was well summed up by the philosopher Immanuel Kant in the words: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding!”

**France: The Radical Enlightenment**

The English Enlightenment, while theologically and philosophically radical, was politically conservative. For the revolution had already taken place in England, and by 1700 the essential freedoms, especially the freedom of the press, which the Enlightenment thinkers so valued, had already been won.

“In these circumstances,” writes Porter, “enlightened ideologies were to assume a unique inflection in England: one less concerned to lambast the status quo than to vindicate it against adversaries left and right, high and low.

---

Poachers were turning gamekeepers; implacable critics of princes now became something more like apologists for them; those who had held that power corrupted now found themselves, with the advent of political stabilisation, praising the Whig regime as the bulwark of Protestant liberties….

“The English, in [Pocock’s] view, were uniquely able to enjoy an enlightenment without philosophes precisely because, at least after 1714, there was no longer any infâme to be crushed…

“There was no further need to contemplate regicide because Great Britain was already a mixed monarchy, with inbuilt constitutional checks on the royal will; nor would radicals howl to string up the nobility, since they had abandoned feudalism for finance. What Pocock tentatively calls the ‘conservative enlightenment’ was thus a holding operation, rationalizing the post-1688 settlement, pathologizing its enemies and dangling seductive prospects of future security and prosperity. The Enlightenment became established and the established became enlightened.”

It was very different in France. The French had not yet beheaded their king; and their Protestants and intellectuals were not free. Therefore the ideas of the English Enlightenment, popularised for a French audience by Voltaire in his Letters on the English and Elements of Newton’s Physics, and by Montesquieu in his The Spirit of the Laws, acquired an altogether sharper, more revolutionary edge. The tolerant English empiricism became the French cult of reason, a fiercely intolerant revolt against all revealed religion. For, as Berlin writes, the French philosophes were perceived to be “the first organised adversaries of dogmatism, traditionalism, religion, superstition, ignorance, oppression.”

Reason for the French philosophes, as for the English thinkers, was something down-to-earth and utilitarian – “not man’s mind as such,” writes Cragg, “but the way in which his rational faculties could be used to achieve certain specific ends. Descartes had relied on deduction; Newton had used inductive analysis in penetrating to the great secret of nature’s marvellous laws, and the spirit and method of Newtonian physics ruled the eighteenth century. Nature was invested with unparalleled authority, and it was assumed that natural law ruled every area into which the mind of man could penetrate. Nature was the test of truth. Man’s ideas and his institutions were judged by their conformity with those laws which, said Voltaire, ‘nature reveals at all times, to all men’. The principles which Newton had found in the physical universe could surely be applied in every field of inquiry. The age was enchanted with the orderly and rational structure of nature; by an easy transition that the reasonable and the natural must be synonymous. Nature was everywhere supreme, and virtue, truth, and reason were her

---

Porter, The Enlightenment, pp. 31, 32.

‘adorable daughters’. The effect of this approach was apparent in every sphere. In France history, politics, and economics became a kind of ‘social physics’. The new outlook can be seen in Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*; thenceforth the study of man’s institutions became a prolongation of natural science. The emphasis fell increasingly on the practical consequences of knowledge: man is endowed with reason, said Voltaire, ‘not that he may penetrate the divine essence but that he may live well in this world’.”571

As important as Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* was Claude Helvétius’ *On the Spirit* (1758). “It is known”, writes Richard Pipes, “that Helvétius studied intensely the philosophical writings of Locke and was deeply affected by them. He accepted as proven Locke’s contention that all ideas were the product of sensations and all knowledge the result of man’s abiliality, through reflection on sensory data, to grasp the differences and similarities that are the basis of thought. He denied as categorically as did Locke man’s ability to direct thinking or the actions resulting from it: for Helvétius, his biographer [Keim] says, ‘a philosophical treatise on liberty [was] a treatise on effects without a cause.’ Moral notions derived exclusively from man’s experience with the sensations of pain and pleasure. People thus were neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’: they merely acted, involuntarily and mechanically, in their self-interest, which dictated the avoidance of pain and the enhancement of pleasure.

“Up to this point Helvétius said nothing that had not been said previously by Locke and his French followers. But then he made a startling leap from philosophy into politics. From the premise that all knowledge and all values were by-products of sensory experience he drew the inference that by controlling the data that the senses fed to the mind – that is, by appropriately shaping man’s environment – it was possible to determine what he thought and how he behaved. Since, according to Locke, the formulation of idea was wholly involuntary and entirely shaped by physical sensations, it followed that if man were subjected to impressions that made for virtue, he could be made virtuous through no act of his own will.

“This idea provides the key to the creation of perfectly virtuous human beings – required are only appropriate external influences. Helvétius called the process of educating man ‘education’, by which he meant much more than formal schooling. When he wrote ‘l’éducation peut tout’ – ‘education can do anything’ – he meant by education everything that surrounds man and affects his thinking, everything which furnishes his mind with sensations and generates ideas. First and foremost, it meant legislation: ‘It is… only by good laws that we can form virtuous men’. From which it followed that morality and legislation were ‘one and the same science’. In the concluding chapter of *L’Esprit*, Helvétius spoke of the desirability of reforming society through legislation for the purpose of making men ‘virtuous’.

“This is one of the most revolutionary ideas in the history of political thought: by extrapolation from an esoteric theory of knowledge, a new political theory is born with the most momentous practical implications. Its central thesis holds that the task of politics is to make men ‘virtuous’, and that the means to that end is the manipulation of man’s social and political environment, to be accomplished mainly by means of legislation, that is, by the state. Helvétius elevates the legislator to the status of the supreme moralist. He must have been aware of the implications of his theory for he spoke of the ‘art of forming man’ as intimately connected with the ‘form of government’. Man no longer is God’s creation: he is his own product. Society, too, is a ‘product’ rather than a given or ‘datum’. Good government not only ensures ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’ (a formula which Helvétius seems to have devised), but it literally refashions man. The logic of Helvétius’s ideas inexorably leads to the conclusion that in the course of learning about human nature man ‘acquires an unlimited power of transforming and reshaping man’. This unprecedented proposition constitutes the premise of both liberal and radical ideologies of modern times. It provides the theoretical justification for using politics to create a ‘new order’…

Helvétius’s theory can be applied in two ways. One may interpret it to mean that the change in man’s social and political environment ought to be accomplished peacefully and gradually, through the reform of institutions and enlightenment. One can also conclude from it that this end is best attained by a violent destruction of the existing order.

“Which approach – the evolutionary or revolutionary – prevails seems to be in large measure determined by a country’s political system and the opportunities it provides for intellectuals to participate in public life.

“In societies which make it possible through democratic institutions and freedom of speech to influence policy, intellectuals are likely to follow the more moderate alternative. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and the United States, intellectuals were deeply involved in political life. The men who shaped the American republic and those who led Victorian England along the path of reform were men of affairs with deep intellectual interests: of some of them it would be difficult to say whether they were philosophers engaged in statesmanship or statesmen whose true vocation was philosophy. Even the pragmatists among them kept their minds open to the ideas of the age. This interplay of ideas and politics lent political life in Anglo-Saxon countries their well-known spirit of compromise. Here the intellectuals had no need to withdraw and form an isolated caste. They acted on public opinion, which, through democratic institutions, sooner or later affected legislation.
“In England and, through England, in the United States, the ideas of Helvétius gained popularity mainly from the writings of Jeremy Bentham and the utilitarians. It was to Helvétius that Bentham owed the ideas that morality and legislation were ‘one and the same science’, that man could attain virtue only through ‘good laws’, and that, consequently, legislation had a ‘pedagogic’ function. On these foundations, Bentham constructed his theory of philosophical radicalism, which greatly affected the movement for parliamentary reform and liberal economics. The preoccupation of modern Anglo-Saxon countries with legislation as a device for human betterment is directly traceable to Bentham, and, through him, to Helvétius. In the speculations of Bentham and the English liberals, there was no place for violence: the transformation of man and society was to be accomplished entirely by laws and enlightenment. But even under this reform-minded theory lay the tacit premise that man could and ought to be remade. This premise links liberalism and radicalism and helps explain why, for all their rejection of the violent methods employed by revolutionaries, when forced to choose they throw their lot in with the revolutionaries. For what separates liberals from the extreme left is disagreement over the means employed, whereas they differ from the right in the fundamental perception of what man is and what society ought to be…”

Voltaire said, “I am not an atheist, nor a superstitious person; I stand for common sense and the golden mean”. “I believe in God, not the God of the mystics and the theologians, but the God of nature, the great geometrician, the architect of the universe, the prime mover, unalterable, transcendent, everlasting.”

So far, so English. But the anti-religious zeal of many of the philosophes, including Voltaire himself, was decidedly unEnglish. Moreover, no English thinker would have declared, with Diderot, that the aim of philosophy was “to enlarge and liberate God” (not only man, but even God was supposedly in chains!!).

The philosophers set about undermining the foundations of Christian civilization. They denied original sin and attacked the Church. Thus Voltaire wrote to Frederick the Great: “Your majesty will do the human race an eternal service in extirpating this infamous superstition [Christianity], I do not say among the rabble, who are not worthy of being enlightened and who are apt for every yoke; I say among the well-bred, among those who wish to think.” Montesquieu, Diderot and others followed him in mocking the faith of believers.

---

573 Cragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 239, 237.
The reaction of the Catholic Church in France was firmer than that of the Anglican Church in England. Thus Archbishop Beaumont of Paris wrote in 1762: “In order to appeal to all classes and characters, Disbelief has in our time adopted a light, pleasant, frivolous style, with the aim of diverting the imagination, seducing the mind, and corrupting the heart. It puts on an air of profundity and sublimity and professes to rise to the first principles of knowledge so as to throw off a yoke it considers shameful to mankind and to the Deity itself. Now it declaims with fury against religious zeal yet preaches toleration for all; now it offers a brew of serious ideas with badinage, of pure moral advice with obscenities, of great truths with great errors, of faith with blasphemy. In a word, it undertakes to reconcile Jesus Christ with Belial.”

The next target was the State. The Enlightenment’s political creed was summed up by Barzun as follows: “Divine right is a dogma without basis; government grew out of nature itself, from reasonable motives and for the good of the people; certain fundamental rights cannot be abolished, including property and the right of revolution”. However, the philosophers did not at first attack the State so fiercely, hoping that their own programme would be implemented by the “enlightened despots” of the time. Moreover, until Rousseau’s theory of the General Will appeared, the philosophers were wary of the destructive impact a direct attack on the State could have.

What, then, was their constructive programme? With what did they plan to replace the Church and State? Surprisingly, perhaps, there were very few planned utopias in this period. It was simply assumed that with the passing of prejudice, and the spread of enlightenment, a golden age would ensue automatically. So there was great emphasis on the future, but not in the form of blueprints of a future society, but rather in the form of rhapsodies on the theme of how posterity, seeing the world changed through education and reason and law (“Legislation will accomplish everything”, said Helvétius), would praise the enlightened men of the present generation. “God had been dethroned as judge, and posterity was exalted in its stead. It would be more than a time of fulfilment; it would provide the true vindication of the aspirations and endeavours of all enlightened men. ‘Posterity,’ wrote Diderot, ‘is for the philosopher what the other world is for the religious man.’”

Thus the Age of Reason created its own mythology of the Golden Age. Only it was to be in the future, not in the past. And in this world, not the next. “The Golden Age, so fam’d by Men of Yore, shall soon be counted fabulous no more”, said Paine. And “the Golden Age of Humanity is not behind us”, said Saint Simon; “it lies ahead, in the perfection of the social order”.

---

576 Quoted in Barzun, op. cit., p. 368.
578 Cragg, op. cit., p. 245.
Thus “if the Enlightenment repudiated ‘supernatural, other-worldly, organized Christianity’,” writes Fr. Michael Azkoul, “it believed in its own brave new world. The ‘great book of Nature’ had recorded the means by which it was to be achieved. Professor Carl Becker shows in his *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* that nature was in fact not ‘the great book’ for them, but Augustine’s *City of God* torn down and rebuilt with ‘up-to-date’ materials.’ For example, Eden was replaced with ‘the golden age of Greek mythology,’ the love of God with the love of humanity, the saving work of Christ with the creative genius of great men, grace with the goodness of man, immortality by posterity or the veneration of future generations... The vision of the Enlightenment, as Becker affirms, was a secular copy, a distorted copy, of Christianity...”

We see here a continuation of that chiliastic, Utopian trend of thought that is already evident in the pseudo-scientific utopias of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1601), and Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis*. The Renaissance utopias contain astonishingly modern visions of society – but secular, this-worldly visions. Thus Jacques Barzun writes: “To make existence better, which for these three Humanists means not more godly, but happier, each drives at a main goal. More wants justice through democratic equality; Bacon wants progress through scientific research; Campanello wants permanent peace, health, and plenty through rational thought, brotherly love, and eugenics. All agree on a principle that the West adopted late: everybody must work.”

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment did not add anything essentially new to this: paradise is to be achieved by reason, science, eugenics, education and work...

The problem for all secular utopias is how to control the fallen nature of man. From the Christian point of view there is only one solution: the acceptance of the true Christian faith, which alone can tame and transform the passions. But the Utopians thought differently: “The great argument used to sustain right conduct is: ‘Live according to Nature. Nature is never wrong and we err by forgetting it.’ Nature here replaces God’s commandments, but although Nature is His handiwork, His commandments are a good deal cleaner than Her dictates...” However, Nature needed some assistance – from an authoritarian, even communistic State. And so, as Robert Service writes, “More could not imagine that the common man, still less the common woman, might independently attain the perfection of society without orders from above. Campanella’s tract depicted a society which instituted universal fairness by means of gross intrusion into private life. More and Campanella advocated thorough indoctrination of their people...”

---

580 Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, pp. 119-120.
The kinship between the Enlightenment utopias and those of the Renaissance shows the spiritual kinship between the two epochs. This was pointed out by Fr. Sergius Bulgakov: “Parallel with the religious individualism of the Reformation a neo-pagan individualism became stronger. It magnified the natural, unregenerated man. According to this viewpoint, man is good and beautiful by nature, which beauty is distorted only by external conditions; it is enough to restore the nature condition of man, and everything will be attained. Here is the root of the various natural law theories, and also of the newest teachings on progress and the supreme power of external reforms alone to resolve the human tragedy, and consequently of the most recent humanism and socialism. The external, superficial closeness of religious and pagan individualism does not remove their deep inner difference, and for that reason we observe in recent history not only a parallel development, but also a struggle between these two tendencies. A strengthening of the themes of humanistic individualism in the history of thought characterizes the epoch of the so-called ‘Enlightenment’ (Aufklärung) in the 17th, 18th and partly the 19th centuries. The Enlightenment drew more radical negative conclusions from the postulates of humanism: in the sphere of religion, by means of Deism, it came to scepticism and atheism; in the sphere of philosophy, through rationalism and empiricism – to positivism and materialism; in the sphere of morality, through ‘natural’ morality – to utilitarianism and hedonism. Materialist socialism can also be seen as the latest and ripest fruit of the Enlightenment…”

**Enlightened Despotism**

But let us turn now to the period of “enlightened despotism”, when the ideals of the Enlightenment appeared to work together with traditional forms of government. The combination of the two words “enlightened” and “despotism” is paradoxical, for the whole thrust of the Enlightenment, as we have seen, was anti-despotic and anti-authoritarian. And yet at precisely this time there came to power in continental Europe a series of rulers who were infected with the cult of reason and democratism, on the one hand, but who ruled as despots, on the other.

Enlightened despotism was made possible because the official Churches – still the main “check” on government - had grown weak. Even the most despotic of earlier rulers had made concessions to the power of the Church. For example, Louis XIV’s rejection of Gallicanism and revocation of the Edict of Nantes giving protection to the Huguenots was elicited by his need to retain the support of the still-powerful Papacy. In France, the Catholic Church, if not the Papacy as such, continued to be strong, which is one reason why the struggle between the old and the new ideas and régimes was so

---

583 Bulgakov, “Geroizm i Podvizhnichestvo” (Heroism and Asceticism), in Vekhi (Signposts), Moscow, 1909, p. 34 (in Russian).
intense there, spilling over into the revolution of 1789. In other continental
countries, however, despotic rulers did not have to take such account of
ecclesiastical opposition to their ideas.

Their success was aided by the demise of their main rivals, the Jesuits. Like
the Jews, the Jesuits were a kind of state within the state. In Paraguay they
had even created a hierocratic society under their control among the
Indians.\footnote{See I.R. Shafarevich, \textit{Sotsializm kak yavlenie mirovoj istorii (Socialism as a Phenomenon of World
History)}, Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 194-204 (in Russian).} Rich, powerful and well-educated, they were a threat to despotic
rulers even when their nominal master, the Pope, had ceased to be.

And so, under pressure from rulers, writes Davies, “Benedict XIV (1740-
58), whose moderation won him the unusual accolade of praise from Voltaire,
initiated an inquiry into their affairs. They were accused of running large-
scale money-making operations, also of adopting native cults to win converts
at any price.\footnote{This refers to their toleration of the cult of ancestors during their missionary work in
China. The Pope eventually banned this toleration, which led to the collapse of the mission. (V.M.)} In 1759 they were banished from Portugal, in 1764 from
France, and in 1767 from Spain and Naples. Clement XIII (1758-69) stood by
the Society with the words \textit{Sint ut sunt, aut non sint} (may they be as they are,
or cease to be). But Clement XIV (1769-74), who was elected under the
shadow of a formal demand by the Catholic powers for abolition, finally
acquiesced. The brief \textit{Dominus ac Redemptor noster} of 16 August 1773
abolished the Society of Jesus, on the grounds that it was no longer pursuing
its founder’s objectives. It took effect in all European countries except for

The downfall of the Jesuit order, that fierce persecutor of Orthodoxy,
would appear to be something to be welcomed. And indeed it was for those
who were being persecuted. But Jesuitism was about to be replaced by
something still more destructive of Orthodoxy: the French revolution. And in
relation to the revolution the Jesuits constituted a restraining power, whose
abolition undoubtedly brought the revolution closer.

This illustrates a principle that we find throughout modern history: that
that which is the primary evil in one era may become a restraining power
against the primary evil of the succeeding era. This explains what may
otherwise seem inexplicable in the behaviour of some Orthodox rulers. Thus
the toleration of, and even support given by Tsars Paul I and Nicholas I to
Catholicism and Jesuitism, is explained by the fact that these institutions,
imimical though they were to Orthodoxy, nevertheless opposed the greater
evil of the revolution...
Having removed the priests who would be kings, the kings could now rule without any priestly limitations on their power. Perhaps the first to begin this trend was the adolescent King Charles XII of Sweden, who demonstrated that he was king whatever the Church might do or not do about it.

Thus at his coronation in 1697, writes Massie, Charles “refused to be crowned as previous kings had been: by having someone else place the crown on his head. Instead, he declared that, as he had been born to the crown and not elected to it, the actual act of coronation was irrelevant. The statesmen of Sweden, both liberal and conservative, and even his own grandmother were aghast. Charles was put under intense pressure, but he did not give way on the essential point. He agreed only to allow himself to be consecrated by an archbishop, in order to accede to the Biblical injunction that a monarch be the Lord’s Anointed, but he insisted that the entire ceremony be called a consecration, not a coronation. Fifteen-year-old Charles rode to the church with his crown already on his head.

“Those who looked for omens found many in the ceremony… The King slipped while mounting his horse with his crown on his head; the crown fell off and was caught by a chamberlain before it hit the ground. During the service, the archbishop dropped the horn of anointing oil. Charles refused to give the traditional royal oath and then, in the moment of climax, he placed the crown on his own head…”

Charles could hardly be called an enlightened despot. But his successor, Gustavus Adolphus III, was. And so, in 1792, he was killed by nobles “outraged at a programme of democratic despotism… [which] made the popular gestures constantly being pressed upon Louis XVI by his secret advisers seem tame.” In neighbouring Germany the princes, who were in effect also first minister of their Churches, were more influenced by the French Enlightenment. Thus Frederick of Prussia dispensed with any religious sanction for his rule and took the Enlightenment philosophers for his guides. “I was born too soon,” he said, “but I have seen Voltaire…”

How could despotism co-exist with the caustic anti-authoritarianism of Voltaire and the other philosophes? It was a question of means and ends. If the aims of the philosophes were “democratic” in the sense that they wished the abolition of “superstition” and increased happiness for everybody through education, the best – indeed the only – means to that end at that time was the enlightened despot.

---

589 Doyle, op. cit., p. 197.
589 And in Portugal, where “John V (r. 1706-50), known as ‘The Faithful’, was a priest-king, one of whose sons by an abbess became Inquisitor-General” (Stone, op. cit., p. 638).
590 Quoted in Davies, op. cit., p. 648. He also gave refuge to Rousseau.
But there is no question that they preferred republicanism to despotism, enlightened or otherwise. Thus Voltaire said: “The most tolerable government of all is no doubt a republic, because it brings men closest to natural equality.” And yet “there has never been a perfect government because men have passions”.

It was not only the philosophes who looked to the enlightened despots: as Hobsbawn writes, “the middle and educated classes and those committed to progress often looked to the powerful central apparatus of an ‘enlightened’ monarchy to realize their hopes. A prince needed a middle class and its ideas to modernize his state; a weak middle class needed a prince to batter down the resistance of entrenched aristocratic and clerical interests to progress.”

For “what possible grounds could the philosophes have had for vesting political trust in the wisdom of the people at large? Almost everywhere in Europe, the bulk of the population consisted of illiterate peasants, labourers, and even serfs – all, to elitist eyes, hopelessly ignorant, backward and superstitious, browbeaten by custom into an unthinking deferential loyalty to throne and altar. The likes of Voltaire habitually depicted the peasantry as hardly distinguishable from the beasts of the field. Their point in making such unflattering comparisons was to criticise a system that reduced humans to the level of brutes; but such comments betray a mind for which the true question was not popular participation in government – that did not seem a real priority – but whether the people were to be ruled wisely or incompetently.”

So the philosophes went to the kings – Voltaire to Frederick of Prussia, Diderot to Catherine of Russia – and tried to make them into philosopher-kings, as Plato had once tried with Dionysius of Syracuse. And the kings were flattered to think of themselves in this light. But neither the kings nor their philosopher advisers ever aimed to create democratic republics, as opposed to more efficient monarchies.

“The Continental philosophes of the High Enlightenment never made their prime demand the maximisation of personal freedom and the reciprocal attenuation of the state, in the manner of later English laissez-faire liberalism. For one thing, a strong executive would be needed to maintain the freedom of subjects against the encroachments of the Church and the privileges of the nobles. Physiocrats such as Quesnay championed an economic policy of free trade, but recognised that only a determined, dirigiste administration would prove capable of upholding market freedoms against encroached vested interests. No continental thinkers were attracted to the ideal of the ‘nightwatchman’ state so beloved of the English radicals…

“It was the thinkers of Germanic and Central Europe above all who looked to powerful, ‘enlightened’ rulers to preside over a ‘well-policed’ state. By this was meant a regime in which an efficient, professional career bureaucracy comprehensively regulated civic life, trade, occupations, morals and health, often down to quite minute details.”

Cragg writes: “Certain characteristics were common to all the enlightened despotisms, but each of the continental countries had its own particular pattern of development. By the middle of the century, Frederick the Great had achieved a pre-eminent position, and his brilliance as a military leader had fixed the eyes of Europe on his kingdom. Prussia appeared to be the supreme example of the benefits of absolute rule. But appearances were deceptive. Frederick had indeed brought the civil service to a high degree of efficiency and had organized the life of the country in a way congenial to a military martinet. Though he was anxious to improve the peasants’ lot, he could not translate his theories into facts. His reign resulted in an actual increase of serfdom. His rule rested on assumptions that were already obsolete long before the advent of the French Revolution. It is true that by illiberal means he achieved certain liberal ends. He abolished torture; he promoted education; in the fields of politics and economics he applied the principles of the Enlightenment. He had no sympathy with Christianity and little patience with its devotees. He regarded the service of the state as an adequate substitute for Christian faith and life. He advocated toleration on the ground that all religious beliefs were equally absurd…”

Thus toleration for all faiths, so long as they accepted “the service of the state” as the supreme cult. Such a religion perfectly suited Frederick, who could only understand religion in terms of its usefulness to the State. But was this really an adequate substitute for Christianity? Why should the people serve the state? For material gain? But Frederick gave them only war and serfdom. In any case, man cannot live by bread alone, and states cannot survive through the provision of material benefits alone. The people need a faith that justifies the state and the dominion of some men over others. Christianity provided such a justification as long as the people believed in it, and as long as the ruler could make himself out to be “the defender of the faith”. But if neither the people nor the ruler believe in Christianity, what can take its place? One alternative is the deification of the nation or state itself, and this was the path Frederick’s successors took. But between Frederick’s enlightened despotism and the Prussian nationalism of the nineteenth century there was a logical and chronological gap. That gap was filled by the teaching of Kant and Herder and Rousseau, the French revolution and Napoleon…

593 Porter, op. cit., p. 29.
594 Cragg, op. cit., p. 218.
We have said that the philosophes like Voltaire and Diderot were happy to work with the enlightened despots. However, this was a purely transitional phase, a tactical ploy which could not last long. For the principles of the philosophes, carried to their logical conclusion, led to the destruction of all monarchies.

This was clearest in the case of Rousseau, as we shall see; but even in Diderot, the friend of Catherine the Great, we find the following: “The arbitrary government of a just and enlightened prince is always bad. His virtues are the most dangerous and the most surely seductive: they insensibly accustom a people to love, respect and serve his successor, however wicked or stupid he might be. He takes away from the people the right of deliberating, of willing or not willing, of opposing even its own will when it ordains the good. However, this right of opposition, mad though it is, is sacred... What is it that characterises the despot? Is it kindness or ill-will? Not at all: these two notions enter not at all into the definition. It is the extent of the authority he arrogates to himself, not its application. One of the greatest evils that could befal a nation would be two or three reigns by a just, gentle, enlightened, but arbitrary power: the peoples would be led by happiness to complete forgetfulness of their privileges, to the most perfect slavery.”

“The right of opposition, mad though it is, is sacred”... Here we find the true voice of the revolution, which welcomes madness, horror, misery, bloodshed on an unprecedented scale, so long as it is the expression of the right of opposition, that is, of satanic rebelliousness. And that madness, that irrationality, that satanism, it must not be forgotten, was begotten in the heart of the Age of Reason...

Hume: the Irrationalism of Rationalism

The Scot David Hume was unique among the rationalist philosophers of the eighteenth-century in claiming to prove, by the method of “experimental philosophy”, or reductionism, the irrationality of reason itself – that is, considered on its own and without any other support. His conclusion was that in real life reason is always buttressed and supplemented by faith. But then he went on to try and “demonstrate” that faith – faith not only in God, but in any enduring, objective reality – is itself a species of irrationalism...

Hume’s A Treatise of Human Nature, was written in 1739-40, shortly after he had had a nervous breakdown. It was subtitled ‘An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects’. This indicated the final end of the Enlightenment Programme: to subdue absolutely everything, even religion and morality, to the “experimental method”.

Hume first disposes of the idea of substance. Since our idea of the external world is derived entirely from impressions of sensation, and since we can never derive from sensation alone the idea of an object existing independently of our sensations, such an idea does not really exist at all. Instead, “the idea of a substance… is nothing but a collection of simple ideas that are united by the imagination and have a particular name assigned to them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection.”

Following the same reasoning, Hume also disposes of the idea of the soul or self. There is no sense-impression which corresponds to the idea of a permanently existing self. For “self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable… and consequently there is no such idea.”

The most famous example of Hume’s method of reductio ad absurdum is his analysis of causation. When we say that A causes B, the word “causes” does not correspond to any impression of sensation. All that we actually see is that events of the class A are constantly followed by events of the class B. This constant conjunction of A and B predisposes the mind, on seeing A, to think of B. Thus a cause in nature “is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.”

Russell has analysed Hume’s teaching into two parts: “(1) When we say ‘A caused B’, all that we have a right to say is that, in part experience, A and B have frequently appeared together or in rapid succession, and no instance has been observed of A not followed or accompanied by B. (2) However many instances we may have observed of the conjunction of A and B, that give no reason for expecting them to be conjoined on a future occasion, though it is a cause of this expectation, i.e. it has been frequently observed to be conjoined with such an expectation. These two parts of the doctrine may be stated as follows: (1) in causation there is no indefinable relation except conjunction or succession; (2) induction by simple enumeration is not a valid argument…

“If the first half of Hume’s doctrine is admitted, the rejection of induction makes all expectation as to the future irrational, even the expectation that we shall continue to feel expectations. I do not mean merely that our expectations may be mistaken; that, in any case, must be admitted. I mean that, taking even

597 Copleston, op. cit., p. 106.
598 Copleston, op. cit., p. 88.
our firmest expectations, such as that the sun will rise to-morrow, there is not a shadow of a reason for supposing them more likely to be verified than not.”

Thus empiricism is shown to be irrational. As Copleston writes, “the uniformity of nature is not demonstrable by reason. It is the object of belief rather than of intuition or demonstration.” We cannot help having such beliefs; for “whatever may be the reader’s opinion at this present moment... an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world.” However, such belief cannot be justified by reason; for it “is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures.”

Hume’s attitude to belief in God is predictably agnostic, if not strictly atheistic. We cannot say that God is the cause of nature because we have never seen a constant conjunction of God, on the one hand, and nature, on the other. Also, “I much doubt,” he says, “that a cause can be known only by its effect.” At most, Hume concedes, “the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence.”

In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Hume wrote: “For aught we know *a priori*, matter may contain the source, or spring, of order originally, within itself, as well as the mind does.” As Edward Skidelsky points out, “This is the seed from which the various 19th-century theories of evolution – of which Darwin’s is only the most famous – spring... After Hume, it is only a matter of time before agnosticism reigns supreme. The perseverance of belief is attributed to mere ignorance or else to a wilful ‘sacrifice of the intellect’. Unbelievers, on the other hand, are congratulated for their disinterested pursuit of truth ‘wherever it may lead’.”

Morality is disposed of as thoroughly as the idea of God. The essential point is that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will”, and reason “can never oppose passion in the direction of the will”. For “‘Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.” And “the life of a man is of no greater important to the universe than that of an oyster.” Reason can oppose a passion only by directing the mind to other passions tending in the opposite direction. For “it is from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity
arises towards any object.”\textsuperscript{608} Hume’s conclusion is that “reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.”\textsuperscript{609}

Nor is this necessarily a bad thing…

“In delineating the workings of propensities integral to human existence, Hume noted that Christian theologians and Platonists alike had condemned the appetites, the former deploring them as sinful, the latter demanding their mastery by reason. For Hume, by contrast, feelings were the true springs of such vital social traits as the love of family, attachment to property and the desire for reputation. Pilloried passions like pride were the very cement of society. Dubbing its denigrators ‘monkish’, Hume defended pride when well regulated; indeed, magnanimity, that quality attributed to all the greatest heroes, was ‘either nothing but a steady and well-establish’d pride and self-esteem, or partakes largely of that passion’. Besides, ‘hearty pride’ was essential to society, whose hierarchy of ranks, fixed by ‘our birth, fortune, employments, talents or reputation’, had to be maintained if it were to function smoothly. A person needed pride to acquit himself well in his station - indiscriminate humility would reduce social life to chaos. Much that had traditionally been reproved as egoistically immoral he reinstated as beneficial.”\textsuperscript{610}

Hume’s essential idea was that, in Edwin Burt’s words, “Reason is a subjective faculty which has no necessary relation with the ‘facts’ we seek to know. It is limited to tracing the relations of our ideas, which themselves are already twice removed from ‘reality’. And our senses are equally subjective, for they can never know the ‘thing in itself’, but only an image of it which has in it no element of necessity and certainty – ‘the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible’.”\textsuperscript{611}

Hume’s significance lies in his rational demonstration of the impotence of reason, of the fact that it can prove the existence of nothing – not only of God, Providence and the immortal soul, but even of material objects and causality, the bedrock of empirical explanation. As Bertrand Russell writes: “Hume… developed to its logical conclusion the empirical philosophy of Locke and Berkeley, and by making it self-consistent made it incredible. He represents, in a certain sense, a dead end: in his direction, it is impossible to go further.”\textsuperscript{612}

\textsuperscript{608}Copleston, op. cit., p. 130.
\textsuperscript{609}Copleston, op. cit., p. 123.
\textsuperscript{610}Porter, op. cit., p. 178.
\textsuperscript{611}Burt, The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill, pp. 593-594; in Rose, op. cit., p. 319.
\textsuperscript{612}Russell, op. cit., p. 685.
But a dead-end for rationalism can only mean an opening for irrationalism. If reason can only serve passion rather than rule it, then the last moral barrier to the overturning of all traditional values is removed. And indeed, in Paris, where Hume was fêted much more than his native Scotland, the revolution against eighteenth-century rationalism was only a few years away.

Hume’s hard-headed empiricism extended also to his political philosophy, which at least had the virtue of exposing the weak foundations on which the theory of the social contract was based. Thus for Hume there never was any such thing as a “state of nature” – “men are necessarily born in a family-society at least.”613 The initial bonds between men are not contractual, but sexual and parental: “Natural appetite draws members of the two sexes together and preserves their union until a new bond arises, their common concern for their offspring. 'In a little time, custom and habit operating on the tender minds of the children makes them sensible of the advantages which they reap from society, as well as fashions them by degrees for it, by rubbing off those rough corners and untoward affections which prevent their coalition.' The family, therefore (or, more accurately, the natural appetite between the sexes), is ‘the first and original principle of human society’. The transition to a wider society is effected principally by the felt need for stabilizing the possession of external goods.”614

Men could continue living in primitive societies like those of the American Indians without the formal structure of government if it were not that quarrels over property led to the need for the administration of justice. “The state of society without government is one of the most natural states of men, and must subsist with the conjunction of many families, and long after the first generation. Nothing but an increase of riches and possessions could oblige men to quit it.”615

Later, quarrels between tribes lead to the emergence of war leaders. Then, during the peace, the war leader continues to lead. And so an ad hoc arrangement dictated by necessity and the need to survive would generate a permanent government. This is a gradual, organic process propelled by “necessity, inclination and habit” rather than an explicit, rational agreement.

Indeed, not only are governments not formed on the basis of consent: “almost all the governments which exist at present, or of which there remains any record in story, have been founded originally, either on usurpation or conquest or both, without any pretence of a fair consent or voluntary subjection of the people... The face of the earth is continually changing, by the increase of small kingdoms into great empires, by the dissolution of great empires into smaller kingdoms, by the planting of colonies, by the migration

---

613 Copleston, op. cit., p. 148.
614 Copleston, op. cit., p. 147.
615 Copleston, op. cit., p. 149.
of tribes. Is there anything discernible in all these events but force and violence? Where is the mutual agreement or voluntary association so much talked of? Even when elections take the place of force, what does it amount to? It may be election by a few powerful and influential men. Or it may take the form of popular sedition, the people following a ringleader who owes his advancement to his own impudence or to the momentary caprice of the crowd, most of whom have little of no knowledge of him and his capacities. In neither case is there a real rational agreement by the people.”

English political liberalism, we may recall, arose from the need to justify the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the Protestant William of Orange usurped the throne of the Catholic James II. William’s rule was tacitly consented to as being more in accord with natural law and reason than the despotism of James II, who was deemed to have broken some kind of contract with his citizens. But Hume undermines both the contractual and the rational elements in this justification, reducing the whole duty of allegiance to naked self-interest. In this way he is closer to Hobbes than to Locke – and to Marx than to J.S. Mills….

“Granted that there is a duty of political allegiance, it is obviously idle to look for its foundation in popular consent and in promises if there is little or no evidence that popular consent was ever asked or given. As for Locke’s idea of tacit consent, ‘it may be answered that such an implied consent can only have place where a man imagines that the matter depends on his choice’. But anyone who is born under an established government thinks that he owes allegiance to the sovereign by the very fact that he is by birth a citizen of the political society in question. And to suggest with Locke that every man is free to leave the society to which he belongs by birth is unreal. ‘Can we seriously say that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners and lives from day to day by the small wages which he acquires?’

“The obligation of allegiance to civil government, therefore, ‘is not derived from any promise of the subjects’. Even if promises were made at some time in the remote past, the present duty of allegiance cannot rest on them. ‘It being certain that there is a moral obligation to submit to government, because everyone thinks so, it must be as certain that this obligation arises not from a promise, since no one whose judgement has not been led astray by too strict adherence to a system of philosophy has ever yet dreamt of ascribing it to that origin.’ The real foundation of the duty of allegiance is utility or interest.

‘This interest I find to consist in the security and protection which we can enjoy in political society, and which we can never attain when perfectly free and independent.’ This holds good both of natural and of moral obligation. ‘It

616 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 150-151.
is evident that, if government were totally useless, it never could have a place, and that the sole foundation of the duty of allegiance is the advantage which it procures to society by preserving peace and order among mankind. Similarly, in the essay Of the Original Contract Hume observes: ‘If the reason be asked of that obedience which we are bound to pay to government, I readily answer, Because society could not otherwise subsist; and this answer is clear and intelligible to all mankind.’

“The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this view is that when the advantage ceases, the obligation to allegiance ceases. ‘As interest, therefore, is the immediate sanction of government, the one can have no longer being than the other; and whenever the civil magistrate carries his oppression so far as to render his authority perfectly intolerable, we are no longer bound to submit to it. The cause ceases; the effect must also cease.’ It is obvious, however, that the evils and dangers attending rebellion are such that it can be legitimately attempted only in cases of real tyranny and oppression and when the advantages of acting in this way are judged to outweigh the disadvantages.

“But to whom is allegiance due? In other words, whom are we to regard as legitimate rulers? Originally, Hume thought or inclined to think, government was established by voluntary convention. ‘The same promise, then, which binds them (the subjects) to obedience, ties them down to a particular person and makes him the object of their allegiance.’ But once government has been established and allegiance no longer rests upon a promise but upon advantage or utility, we cannot have recourse to the original promise to determine who is the legitimate ruler. The fact that some tribe in remote times voluntarily subjected itself to a leader is no guide to determining whether William of Orange or James II is the legitimate monarch.

“One foundation of legitimate authority is long possession of the sovereign power: ‘I mean, long possession in any form of government, or succession of princes’. Generally speaking, there are no governments or royal houses which do not owe the origin of their power to usurpation or rebellion and whose original title to authority was not ‘worse than doubtful and uncertain’. In this case ‘time alone gives solidity to their right and, operating gradually on the minds of men, reconciles them to any authority and makes it seem just and reasonable’. The second source of public authority is present possession, which can legitimize the possession of power even when there is no question of its having been acquired a long time ago. ‘Right to authority is nothing but the constant possession of authority, maintained by the laws of society and the interests of mankind.’ A third source of legitimate political authority is the right of conquest. As fourth and fifth sources can be added the right of succession and positive laws, when the legislature establishes a certain form of government. When all these titles to authority are found together, we have the surest sign of legitimate sovereignty, unless the public good clearly demands a change. But if, says Hume, we consider the actual course of
history, we shall soon learn to treat lightly all disputes about the rights of princes. We cannot decide all disputes in accordance with fixed, general rules. Speaking of this matter in the essay Of the Original Contract, Hume remarks that ‘though an appeal to general opinion may justly, in the speculative sciences of metaphysics, natural philosophy or astronomy, be deemed unfair and inconclusive, yet in all questions with regard to morals, as well as criticism, there is really no other standard by which any controversy can ever be decided. To say, for example, with Locke that absolute government is not really civil government at all is pointless if absolute government is in fact accepted as a recognized political institution. Again, it is useless to dispute whether the succession of the Prince of Orange to the throne was legitimate or not. It may not have been legitimate at the time. And Locke, who wished to justify the revolution of 1688, could not possibly do so on his theory of legitimate government being founded on the consent of the subjects. For the people of England were not asked for their opinion. But in point of fact William of Orange was accepted, and the doubts about the legitimacy of his accession are nullified by the fact that his successors have been accepted. It may perhaps seem to be an unreasonable way of thinking, but ‘princes often seem to acquire a right from their successors as well as from their ancestors.’”

Thus just as Hume had argued that there was no rational reason for believing in the existence of objects, or causative forces, or the soul, or God, or morality, so he argued that there was no rational reason for believing that a given government was legitimate. Or rather, governments are legitimate for no other reason than that they survive, whether by force or the acquiescence of public opinion. Their legitimacy is de facto, as it were, rather than de jure – although, of course, legitimacy is a juridical rather than a factual category.

Legitimacy, according to Hume, is a matter of what the people, whether individually or collectively, consider to be in their self-interest. But since there is no objective way of measuring self-interest, it comes down in the end to a matter of taste, of feeling. And since there is no arguing about tastes, there is also by implication no arguing with a revolutionary who wishes to destroy society to its foundations...

Kant and Schiller: the Reaffirmation of Will

Hume’s demonstration of the irrationalism of rationalism had one very important result: it aroused the greatest philosopher of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant, from what he called his “dogmatic slumbers”. Kant sought to re-establish some of the beliefs or prejudices that Hume’s thorough-going scepticism had undermined.

---

To that end, he determined to subject “pure reason itself to critical investigation”, answering the question: “what and how much can understanding and reason know, apart from all experience?” He established that empirical reason can indeed know certain things, but that the use of reason itself presupposes the existence of other things which transcend reason. Thus “I think” must accompany all our experiences if they are to be qualified as ours, so that there must be what Kant calls a “transcendental unity of apperception” which unifies experience while being at the same time beyond it. “There is thus a being above the world, namely the spirit of man,” which is not a substance in the empirical sense, nor subject to the empirical causal nexus – although it is the seat of that which is greatest and truly rational in man, including the sense of duty or “categorical imperative”.

And so, apart from the “phenomenal” realm of nature, which the mind can understand only by imposing upon it the categories of substance, causality and mutual interaction, there is also the “noumenal” realm of spirit and freedom, which transcends nature and causality. Man himself is noumenally free while being at the same time empirically (phenomenally) determined.

It is significant that Kant is concerned above all to provide grounds for believing in man’s freedom. We have seen how the whole development of western thought from the Renaissance onwards centres on the idea of freedom, of human autonomy and especially the autonomy of human reason. However, this development has led, by the second half of the eighteenth century, to a most paradoxical dead-end: to the conclusion that man, being a part of nature, is not free, but determined, and that the exercise of human reason is based on the most irrational leap of blind faith in substance and causality, without which we could not be assured of the existence of anything external to our own mind – which is in any case just a bundle of sensations.

Kant, by a supreme exercise of that same free reasoning faculty, stanches the flow of irrationalism. But at a price: the price of making man a schizoid creature living on a razor blade between the noumenal and phenomenal realms. Yes, he says, man is a part of nature and determined, otherwise the science of man and the whole Enlightenment project would be impossible (and Kant remains an Enlightenment figure to the end). And yes, he says, man is free and uncaused, otherwise Christianity and morality would be impossible (and Kant remains a devout Lutheran to the end). But the balance and synthesis he achieves between the two is hard to express and difficult to maintain; and succeeding generations preferred to go in one direction or the other: some down the Enlightenment path of seeking a Utopia on earth through science and rational social organisation, and others down the Romantic path of irrational, unfettered self-expression in both the private and the public spheres.

---

618 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, first edition, XVII.
619 Kant, *Opus Postumum*, XXI.
Thus “in his moral philosophy,” writes Berlin, Kant lifted “the lid of a Pandora’s box, which released tendencies which he was among the first, with perfect honesty and consistency, to disown and condemn. He maintained, as every German schoolboy used to know, that the moral worth of an act depended on its being freely chosen by the agent; that if a man acted under the influence of causes which he could not and did not control, whether external, such as physical compulsion, or internal, such as instincts or desires or passions, then the act, whatever its consequences, whether they were good or bad, advantageous or harmful to men, had no moral value, for the act had not been freely chosen, but was simply the effect of mechanical causes, an event in nature, no more capable of being judged in ethical terms than the behaviour of a an animal or plant. If the determinism that reigns in nature – on which, indeed, the whole of natural science is based – determines the acts of a human agent, he is not truly an agent, for to act is to be capable of free choice between alternatives; and free will must in that case be an illusion. Kant is certain that freedom of the will is not illusory but real. Hence the immense emphasis that he places on human autonomy – on the capacity for free commitment to rationally chosen ends. The self, Kant tells us, must be ‘raised above natural necessity’, for if men are ruled by the same laws as those which govern the material world ‘freedom cannot be saved’, and without freedom there is no morality.

“Kant insists over and over again that what distinguishes man is his moral autonomy as against his physical heteronomy – for his body is governed by natural laws, not issuing from his own inner self. No doubt this doctrine owes a great deal to Rousseau, for whom all dignity, all pride rest upon independence. To be manipulated is to be enslaved. A world in which one man depends upon the favour of another is a world of masters and slaves, of bullying and condescension and patronage at one end, and obsequiousness, servility, duplicity and patronage at the other. But whereas Rousseau supposes that only dependence on other men is degrading, for no one resents the laws of nature, only ill will, the Germans went further. For Kant, total dependence on non-human nature – heteronomy – was incompatible with choice, freedom, morality. This exhibits a new attitude to nature, or at least the revival of an ancient [supposedly] Christian antagonism to it. The thinkers of the Enlightenment and their predecessors in the Renaissance (save for isolated antinomian mystics) tended to look upon nature as divine harmony, or as a great organic or artistic unity, or as an exquisite mechanism created by the divine watchmaker, or else as uncreated and eternal, but always as a model from which men depart at their cost. The principal need of man is to understand the external world and himself and the place that he occupies in the scheme of things: if he grasps this, he will not seek after goals incompatible with the needs of his nature, goals which he can follow only through some mistaken conception of what he is in himself, or of his relations to other men or the external world....
“Man is subject to the same kind of causal laws as animals and plants and the inanimate world, physical and biological laws, and in the case of men psychological and economic too, established by observation and experiment, measurement and verification. Such notions as the immortal soul, a personal God, freedom of the will, are for them metaphysical fictions and illusions. But they are not so for Kant.

“The German revolt against France and French materialism has social as well as intellectual roots. Germany in the first half of the eighteenth century, and for more than a century before, even before the devastation of the Thirty Years War, had little share in the great renaissance of the West - her cultural achievement after the Reformation is not comparable to that of the Italians in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of Spain and England in the age of Shakespeare and Cervantes, of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century, least of all of France, the France of poets, soldiers, statesmen, thinkers, which in the seventeenth century dominated Europe both culturally and politically, with only England and Holland as her rivals. What had the provincial German courts and cities, what had even Imperial Vienna, to offer?

“This sense of relative backwardness, of being an object of patronage or scorn to the French with their overweening sense of national and cultural superiority, created a sense of collective humiliation, later to turn into indignation and hostility, that sprang from wounded pride. The German reaction at first is to imitate French models, then to turn against them. Let the vain but godless French cultivate their ephemeral world, their material gains, their pursuit of glory, luxury, ostentation, the witty trivial chatter of the salons of Paris and the subservient court of Versailles. What is the worth of the philosophy of atheists or smooth, worldly abbés who do not begin to understand the true nature, the real purpose of men, their inner life, man's deepest concerns - his relation to the soul within him, to his brothers, above all to God - the deep, the agonising questions of man's being and vocation? Inward-looking German pietists abandoned French and Latin, turned to their native tongue, and spoke with scorn and horror of the glittering generalities of French civilisation, the blasphemous epigrams of Voltaire and his imitators. Still more contemptible were the feeble imitators of French culture, the caricature of French customs and taste in the little German principalities. German men of letters rebelled violently against the social oppression and stifling atmosphere of German society, of the despotic and often stupid and cruel German princes and princelings and their officials, who crushed or degraded the humbly born, particularly the most honest and gifted men among them, in the three hundred courts and governments into which Germany was then divided.

“This surge of indignation formed the heart of the movement that, after the name of a play by one of its members, was called Sturm und Drang. Their
plays were filled with cries of despair or savage indignation, titanic explosions of rage or hatred, vast destructive passions, unimaginable crimes which dwarf the scenes of violence even in Elizabethan drama; they celebrate passion, individuality, strength, genius, self-expression at whatever cost, against whatever odds, and usually end in blood and crime, their only form of protest against a grotesque and odious social order. Hence all these violent heroes – the Kraftmenschen, Kraftschreiber, Kraftkersl, Kraftknaben – who march hysterically through the pages of Klinger, Schubart, Leisewitz, Lenz, Heine and even the gentle Carl Philipp Moritz; until life began to imitate art, and the Swiss adventurer Christoph Kaufmann, a self-proclaimed follower of Christ and Rousseau, who so impressed Herder, Goethe, Hamann, Wieland, Lavater, swept through the German lands with a band of unkempt followers, denouncing polite culture, and celebrating anarchic freedom, transported by wild and mystical public exaltation of the flesh and the spirit.

“Kant abhorred this kind of disordered imagination, and, still more, emotional exhibitionism and barbarous conduct. Although he too denounced the mechanistic psychology of the French Encyclopaedists as destructive of morality, his notion of the will is that of reason in action. He saves himself from subjectivism, and indeed irrationalism, by insisting that the will is truly free only so far as it wills the dictates of reason, which generate general rules binding on all rational men. It is when the concept of reason becomes obscure (and Kant never succeeded in formulating convincingly what this signified in practice), and only the independent will remains man’s unique possession whereby he is distinguished from nature, that the new doctrine becomes infected by the ‘stürmerisch’ mood. In Kant’s disciple, the dramatist and poet Schiller, the notion of freedom begins to move beyond the bounds of reason. Freedom is the central concept of Schiller’s early works. He speaks of ‘the legislator himself, the God within us’, of ‘high, demonic freedom’, ‘the pure demon within the man’. Man is most sublime when he resists the pressure of nature, when he exhibits ‘moral independence of natural laws in a condition of emotional stress’. It is will, not reason – certainly not feeling, which he shares with animals – that raises him above nature, and the very disharmony which may arise between nature and the tragic hero is not entirely to be deplored, for it awakens man’s of his independence.”

Thus to the thesis of the godless worship of reason was opposed the antithesis of the demonic worship of will. Dissatisfied with the dry soullessness of the Enlightenment, western man would not go back to the sources of his civilization in Orthodoxy, but forward to – the Revolution, and the hellish torments of the Romantic hero. For, as Francisco Goya said, “the sleep of Reason engenders monsters”.

“Nowhere was German amour propre more deeply wounded,” continues Berlin, “than in East Prussia, still semi-feudal and deeply traditionalist; nowhere was there deeper resentment of the policy of modernisation which Frederick the Great conducted by importing French officials who treated his simple and backward subjects with impatience and open disdain. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most gifted and sensitive sons of this province, Hamann, Herder, and Kant too, are particularly vehement in opposing the levelling activities of these morally blind imposers of alien methods on a pious, inward-looking culture.” Hamann and Herder were the first thinkers explicitly to attack the whole Enlightenment enterprise. This attack was perhaps the first sign of that great cleavage within western culture that was to take the place of the Catholic/Protestant cleavage: the cleavage between the classical, rationalist and universalist spirit of the Latin lands, and the romantic, irrational and particularist spirit of the Germanic lands (England with its dual Roman and Germanic inheritance stood somewhere in the middle).

“Hamann,” writes Berlin, “was brought up as a pietist, a member of the most introspective and self-absorbed of all the Lutheran sects, intent upon the direction communion of the individual soul with God, bitterly anti-rationalist, liable to emotional excess, preoccupied with the stern demands of moral obligation and the need for severe self-discipline. The attempt of Frederick the Great in the middle years of the eighteenth century to introduce French culture and a degree of rationalisation, economic and social as well as military, into East Prussia, the most backward of his provinces, provoked a peculiarly violent reaction in this pious, semi-feudal, traditional Protestant society (which also gave birth to Herder and Kant). Hamann began as a disciple of the Enlightenment, but, after a profound spiritual crisis, turned against it, and published a series of polemical attacks written in a highly idiosyncratic, perversely allusive, contorted, deliberately obscure style, as remote as he could make it from the, to him, detestable elegance, clarity and smooth superficiality of the bland and arrogant French dictators of taste and thought. Hamann’s theses rested on the conviction that all truth is particular, never general: that reason is impotent to demonstrate the existence of anything and is an instrument only for conveniently classifying and arranging data in patterns to which nothing in reality corresponds; that to understand is to be communicated with, by men or by God. The universe for him, as for the older German mystical tradition, is itself a kind of language. Things and plants and animals are themselves symbols with which God communicates with his creatures. Everything rests on faith; faith is as basic an organ of acquaintance with reality as the senses. To read the Bible is to hear the voice of God, who speaks in a language which he has given man the grace to understand. Some men are endowed with the gift of understanding his ways, of looking at the universe, which is his book no less than the revelations of the

Bible and the fathers and saints of the Church. Only love – for a person or an object – can reveal the true nature of anything. It is not possible to love formulae, general propositions, laws, the abstractions of science, the vast system of concepts and categories – symbols too general to be close to reality – with which the French lumières have blinded themselves to the real experiences which only direct acquaintance, especially by the senses, provides.

“Hamann glories in the fact that Hume had successfully destroyed the rationalist claim that there is an \textit{a priori} route to reality, insisting that all knowledge and belief ultimately rest on acquaintance with the date of direct perception. Hume rightly supposes that he could not eat an egg or drink a glass of water if he did not believe in their existence; the date of belief – what Hamann prefers to call faith – rest on grounds and require evidence as little as taste or any other sensation. True knowledge is direct perception of individual entities, and concepts are never, no matter how specific they may be, wholly adequate to the fullness of the individual experience. ‘\textit{Individuum est ineffabile’}, wrote Goethe to Lavater in the spirit of Hamann, whom Goethe profoundly admired. The sciences may be of use in practical matters; but no concatenation of concepts will give an understanding of a man, of a work of art, of what is conveyed by gestures, symbols, verbal and non-verbal, of the style, the spiritual essence, of a human being, a movement, a culture; nor for that matter of the Deity, which speaks to one everywhere if only one has ears to hear and eyes to see.”

Following up on these insights, Herder “believed that to understand anything was to understand it in its individuality and development, and that this required the capacity of \textit{Einfühlung} (‘feeling into’) the outlook, the individual character of an artistic tradition, a literature, a social organisation, a people, a culture, a period of history. To understand the actions of individuals, we must understand the ‘organic’ structure of the society in terms of which alone the minds and activities and habits of its members can be understood. Like Vico, he believed that to understand a religion, or a work of art, or a national character, one must ‘enter into’ the unique conditions of its life… To grade the merits of cultural wholes, of the legacy of entire traditions, by applying a collection of dogmatic rules claiming universal validity, enunciated by the Parisian arbiters of taste, is vanity and blindness. Every culture has its own unique \textit{Schwerpunkt} (‘centre of gravity’), and unless we grasp it we cannot understand its character or value…”

As he wrote in \textit{Auch eine Philosophie}: “How unspeakably difficult it is to convey the particular quality of an individual human being and how impossible it is to say precisely what distinguishes an individual, his way of


310
feeling and living; how different and how individual [anders und eigen] everything becomes once his eyes see it, once his soul grasps it, his heart feels it. How much depth there is in the character of a single people, which, no matter how often observed, and gazed at with curiosity and wonder, nevertheless escapes the word which attempts to capture it, and, even with the word to catch it, is seldom so recognizable as to be universally understood and felt. If this is so, what happens when one tries to master an entire ocean of peoples, times, cultures, countries with one glance, one sentiment, by means of one single word!”

This admirable sensitivity to the unique and unrepeatable was undoubtedly a needed corrective to the over-generalising and over-rationalising approach of the French philosophes. And in general Herder’s emphasis on warm, subjective feeling and the intuition of quality - “Heart! Warmth! Blood! Humanity! Life!” “I feel! I am!” – was a needed corrective to the whole rationalist emphasis on cold clarity, objectivity and the measurement of quantity that had come to dominate western thought since Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am”. From now on, thanks in part to Herder, western thought would become more sensitive to the aesthetically intuited, as opposed to the scientifically analysed aspects of reality, to organic, living, historical wholes as well as to inorganic, dead, ahistorical parts.

Nevertheless, Herder was as unbalanced in his way as the philosophes were in theirs. This is particularly evident in his relativism, his idea that every nation and culture was not only unique, but also incommensurable – that is, it could not be measured by universal standards of truth and falsehood, right and wrong. As he wrote: “Not one man, country, people, national history, or State, is like another. Hence the True, the Beautiful, the Good in them are not similar either.”

If Herder has been unjustly accused of being an ancestor of German fascist nationalism, he cannot so easily be absolved of being one of the fathers of the modern denial of universal truths and values that has so eaten into and corroded modern western civilization.

Rousseau and the General Will

Another Enlightenment figure who, like Kant, opened the doors to the Counter-Enlightenment was Rousseau. On the one hand, he was a social contract theorist, a man of reason and science. On the other hand, he was a prophet of the Romantic Will in its collective, national form – what he called the General Will.

We have seen that while the French Enlightenment philosophers were admirers of English liberalism, they still believed in relatively unfettered state power concentrated in the person of the monarch. That way, they believed, the light of reason and reasonableness would spread most effectively downward and outward to the rest of the population. Thus their outlook was still essentially aristocratic; for all their love of freedom, they still believed in restraint and good manners, hierarchy and privilege. Perhaps their Jesuit education had something to do with it. Certainly, however much they railed against the despotism of the Catholic Church, they were still deeply imbued with the Catholic ideals of order and hierarchy.

However, Rousseau believed in power coming from below rather than above. Perhaps his Swiss Calvinist upbringing had something to do with that; for, as he wrote, “I was born a citizen of a free State, and a member of the Sovereign [i.e. the Conseil Général] of Geneva, which was considered sovereign by some”\textsuperscript{627}. Certainly, the mutual hatred between Voltaire and Rousseau reflected to some degree the differences between the (lapsed) Catholic and the (lapsed) Calvinist, between the city fop and the peasant countryman\textsuperscript{628}, between the civilized reformer and the uncouth revolutionary.

Rousseau set out to inquire “if, in the civil order, there can be any sure and legitimate rule of administration”\textsuperscript{629}. He quickly rejected Filmer’s patriarchal justification of monarchy based on the institution of the family: “The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural, is the family: and even so the children remain attached to the father only so long as they need him for their preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children, released from the obedience they owed, and the father released from the care he owed his children, return equally to independence. If they remain united, they continue so no longer naturally, but voluntarily; and the family itself is then maintained only by convention... The family then may be called the first model of political societies: the ruler corresponds to the father, and the people to the children; and all, being born free and equal, alienate their liberty only to their own advantage.”\textsuperscript{630}

This argument is not convincing. First, a child is neither free at birth, nor equal to his father. Secondly, the bond between the father and the son continues to be natural and indissoluble even after the child has grown up.\textsuperscript{631}

\textsuperscript{628} Barzun, op. cit., p. 384.
\textsuperscript{629} Rousseau, \textit{op. cit.}, I, introduction; p. 181.
\textsuperscript{630} Rousseau, \textit{op. cit.}, I, 2, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{631} Rousseau has another, more facetious argument against Filmer: “I have said nothing of King Adam, or Emperor Noah, father of the three great monarchs who shared out the universe, like the children of Saturn, whom some scholars have recognized in them. I trust to getting thanks for my moderation; for, being a direct descendant of one of these princes,
Next, Rousseau disposes of the argument that might is right. “To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will – at the most, an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?... What kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? If we must obey perforce, there is no need to obey because we ought; and if we are not forced to obey, we are under no obligation to do so... Obey the powers that be. If this means yield to force, it is a good precept, but superfluous: I can answer for its never being violated. All power comes from God, I admit; but so does all sickness: does that mean that we are forbidden to call in the doctor?... Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers.

“Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men.”

Here we approach the social contract. But Rousseau quickly disposes of the form of contract proposed by Hobbes, namely, that men originally contracted to alienate their liberty to a king. This is an illegitimate argument, says Rousseau, because: (a) it is madness for a whole people to place itself in slavery to a king, “and madness creates no right”; (b) the only possible advantage would be a certain tranquillity, “but tranquillity is found also in dungeons; but is that enough to make them desirable”; and (c) “if each man could alienate himself, he could not alienate his children: they are born men and free.”

In any case, “to renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties... Such a renunciation is incompatible with man’s nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts... so, from whatever aspect we regard the question, the right of slavery is null and void, not only as being illegitimate, but also because it is absurd and meaningless. The words slave and right contradict each other, and are mutually exclusive. It will always be equally foolish for a man to say to a man or to a people: ‘I make with you a convention wholly at your expense and wholly to my advantage; I shall keep it as long as I like, and you will keep it as long as I like.’”

perhaps of the eldest branch, how do I know that a verification of titles might not leave me the legitimate king of the human race? In any case, there can be no doubt that Adam was sovereign of the world, as Robinson Crusoe was of his island, as long as he was its only inhabitant; and this empire had the advantage that the monarch, safe on his throne, had no rebellions, wars, or conspirators to fear” (op. cit., I, 2, pp. 183-184).

632 Rousseau, op. cit., I, 3, 4; pp. 184, 185.
633 By contrast, the French Prime Minister after the Restoration, François Guizot, placed “the great tranquillity” at the core of his vision of the good society. See George L. Mosse, The Culture of Western Europe, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988, p. 144.
634 Rousseau, op. cit., I, 4; pp. 186, 189.
We may interrupt Rousseau at this point to note that his concept of freedom, being “positive” rather than “negative”, led to very different consequences from that of the English empiricists or French philosophes. Freedom was for Rousseau, as for Kant, the categorical imperative, and the foundation of all morality. “Both Rousseau and Kant, writes Norman Hampson, “aspired to regenerate humanity by the free action of the self-disciplined individual conscience”. Rousseau’s concept of freedom “rested, not on any logical demonstration, but on each man’s immediate recognition of the moral imperative of his own conscience. ‘I hear much argument against man’s freedom and I despise such sophistry. One of these arguers [Helvétius?] can prove to me as much as he likes that I am not free; inner feeling, more powerful than all his arguments, refutes them all the time.’”635

Rousseau’s conscience was to him both Pope and Church: “Whatever I feel to be right is right, what I feel to be wrong is wrong; the best of all casuists is the conscience... Reason deceives us only too often and we have earned all too well the right to reject it, but conscience never deceives... Conscience, conscience, divine instinct, immortal and heavenly voice, sure guide to men who, ignorant and blinkered, are still intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and ill who shapes men in the image of God, it is you who form the excellence of man’s nature and the morality of his actions; without you, I feel nothing within that raises me above the beasts, nothing but the melancholy privilege of straying from error to error, relying on an understanding without rule and a reason without principle.”636

Now conscience, according to Rousseau, was likely to be stifled by too much education and sophistication. So he went back to the idea of the state of nature as expounded in Hobbes and Locke, but invested it with the optimistic, revolutionary spirit of the Levellers and Diggers. Whereas Hobbes and Locke considered the state of nature as an anarchic condition which civilization as founded on the social contract transcended and immeasurably improved on, for Rousseau the state of nature was “the noble savage”, who, as the term implied, had many good qualities.637 Indeed, man in the original state of nature was in many ways better and happier than man as civilized through the social contract. In particular, he was freer and more equal. It was the institutions of civilization that destroyed man’s original innocence and freedom. As Rousseau famously thundered: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains!”638

636 Quoted in Hampson, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 34.
637 The term “noble savage” first appears in John Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* (Act 1, scene 1) in 1672:

\[I\text{ am as free as Nature first made man}\\I\text{ ’Ere the base Laws of servitude began}\]

\[When wild in woods the noble Savage ran.\]

638 Rousseau, *op. cit.*, I, 1; p. 181.
This concept did not stand the test of experience. “Among those who believed in Rousseau’s ideas,” writes Fr. Alexey Young, “was the French painter Gaughin (1848-1903). So intent was his commitment that he abandoned his family and went to Tahiti to find Rousseau’s ‘noble savage’. But, to his great dismay, he discovered that Rousseau’s conception was an illusion. ‘Primitive’ man could be just as cruel, immoral and heartless as men under the influence of the civilized world. Seeing this, Gaughin was driven to despair…”

Since man is born free, according to Rousseau, and his conscience is infallible, the common man is fully equal as a moral agent to his educated social superiors and should be entrusted with full political power. Thus the social contract should be rewritten to keep sovereignty with the ruled rather than the rulers. For Hobbes, the people had transferred sovereignty irrevocably to their rulers; for Locke, the transfer was more conditional, but revocable only in exceptional circumstances. For Rousseau, sovereignty was never really transferred from the people.

Rousseau rejected the idea that the people could have “representatives” who exerted sovereignty in their name. “Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated… the people’s deputies are not, and could not be, its representatives; they are merely its agents; and they cannot decide anything finally. Any law which the people has not ratified in person is void; it is not law at all. The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing.”

Thus representative government is “elective autocracy”.

Essentially Rousseau wanted to abolish the distinction between rulers and ruled, to give everyone power through direct democracy. The citizen can exercise this power only if he himself makes every decision affecting himself. But the participation of all the citizens in every decision is possible only in a small city-state like Classical Athens, not in modern states. Thus Rousseau represents a modern, more mystical version of the direct democratism of the Greek philosophers. He echoes Aristotle’s Politics: “If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.”

And yet there was a modern state that seemed to promise the kind of mystical, direct democracy that Rousseau pined for – Corsica, which in 1755 threw off the centuries-old yoke of Genoa and created its own constitution. In Corsica,” writes Zamoyski, “Rousseau believed he had found a society untainted by the original sin of civilization. In his Project de constitution pour la

---

640 Rousseau, op. cit., III, 15; p. 266.
Corse, written in 1765, he suggested ways of keeping it so. ‘I do not want to give you artificial and systematic laws, invented by man; only to bring you back under the unique laws of nature and order, which command to the heart and do not tyrannize the free will,’ he cajoled them. But the enterprise demanded an act of will, summed up in the oath to be taken simultaneously by the whole nation: ‘In the name of Almighty God and on the Holy Gospels, by this irrevocable and sacred oath I unite myself in body, in goods, in will and in my whole potential to the Corsican Nation, in such a way that I myself and everything that belongs to me shall belong to it without redemption. I swear to live and to die for it, to observe all its laws and to obey its legitimate rulers and magistrates in everything that is in conformity with the law.’”

Now one of the problems of democratic theory lies in the transition from the multitudinous wills of the individual citizens to the single will of the state: how was this transition to be effected without violating the will of the individual? Rousseau recognised this problem: “The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem of which the social contract provides the solution.”

This is a major, indeed insuperable problem for most liberal theorists insofar as they recognise that individuals have different interests and therefore different wills, so that any single decision expressing what we may call the collective will of the state will inevitably be in the interests of some and not in the interests of others. For Rousseau, however, it is less of a problem insofar as he holds a much more optimistic (and, his critics would say, wholly unrealistic) view of human nature. For since each individual citizen has an infallible conscience, if each individual finds and expresses that infallible conscience, his will will be found to coincide with the will of every other individual citizen.

This general will will then express the will of every citizen individually while being common to all of them collectively. “Each of us comes together to place his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will, and we in a body admit each member as an indivisible part of the whole. This act of association produces a moral and collective entity... As for the associates, they all take on the name of the people when they participate in the sovereign authority, and call themselves specifically citizens and subjects when they are placed under the laws of the State.”

641 Zamoyski, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
642 Rousseau, op. cit., I, 6, p. 191.
643 Rousseau, op. cit., I, 6.
On which Voltaire commented: “All that is wrong. I am certainly not prepared to hand myself over to my fellow-citizens unreservedly. I am not going to give them the power to kill me and rob me by majority vote...”

This general will is not the will of the majority; for that will is by definition not the will of the minority, and the general will must embrace all. Nor, more surprisingly, is it the will of all when all agree; for the will of all is sometimes wrong, whereas the general will is always right. “The general will is always upright and always tends to the public advantage; but it does not follow that the deliberations of the people always have the same rectitude. Our will is always for our own good, but we do not always see what that is; the people is never corrupted, but it is often deceived, and on such occasions only does it seem to will what is bad. There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills: but take away from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences.”

The general will is a mysterious entity which reveals itself in certain special conditions: “If, when the people, being furnished with adequate information, held its deliberations, the citizens had no communication one with another, the grand total of the small differences would always give the general will, and the decision would always be good.” In other words, when the self-interest of each citizen is allowed to express itself in an unforced manner, without the interference of external threats and pressures, a certain highest common denominator of self-interest, what Russell calls “the largest collective satisfaction of self-interest possible to the community”, reveals itself. This is the general will, the wholly infallible revealed truth and morality of the secular religion of the revolution.

What are the conditions for the appearance of the general will? The fundamental condition is true equality among the citizenry, especially economic equality. For where there is no equality, the self-interest of some carries greater weight than the self-interest of others. This is another major difference between Rousseau and the English and French liberals. They did not seek to destroy property and privilege, but only to prevent despotism; whereas he is a much more thorough-going egalitarian.

This first condition is linked to a second condition, which is the absence of “partial associations” or parties. For the wills of partial associations, which come together as expressing some common economic or class interest, conflict with the will of the community as a whole. For “when intrigues arise, and

---

646 Russell, op. cit., p. 725.
partial associations are formed at the expense of the great association, the will of each of these associations becomes general in relation to its members, while it remains particular in relation to the State: it may then be said that there are no longer as many votes as there are men, but only as many as there are associations. The differences become less numerous and give a less general result. Lastly, when one of these associations is so great as to prevail over all the rest, the result is no longer a sum of small differences, but a single difference; in this case there is no longer a general will, and the opinion which prevails is purely particular. It is therefore essential, if the general will is to be able to make itself known, that there should be no partial society in the state and that each citizen should express only his own opinion.” 647 A third condition (here Rousseau harks back again to Athens) is that the citizen body should consist only of men. For women, according to Rousseau, are swayed by “immoderate passions” and require men to protect and guide them. 648

Such a system appears at first sight remarkably libertarian and egalitarian (except in regard to women). Unfortunately, however, the other side of its coin is that when the general will has been revealed – and in practice this means when the will of the majority has been determined, for “the votes of the greatest number always bind the rest”, – there is no room for dissent. For in joining the social contract, each associate alienates himself, “together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others. Moreover, the alienation being without reserve, the unions is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything more to demand: for, if the individuals retained certain rights, as there would be no common superior to decided between them and the public, each, being on one point his own judge, would ask to be so on all; the state of nature would thus continue, and the association would necessarily become inoperative or tyrannical. Finally, each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over which he does not acquire the same right as he yields over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has…” 649

“In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free…” 650

---

647 Rousseau, op. cit., II, 3, pp. 203-204.
650 Rousseau, op. cit., I, 7; p. 195. More gently put, the people must be trained “to bear with docility the yoke of public happiness”.
Forced to be free – here the totalitarian potentialities of Rousseau’s concept of positive freedom become painfully clear. Thus of all the eighteenth-century philosophers, Rousseau is the real prophet of the revolution. The others, especially Voltaire, paved the way for it, but it was Rousseau who gave it its justification, its metaphysical, quasi-mystical first principle.

But the most striking characteristic of this principle, considering it was proclaimed in “the Age of Reason”, was its irrationality. For the general will was not to be deduced or induced by any logical or empirical reasoning, nor identified with any specific empirical phenomenon or phenomena. It was not the concrete will of any particular man, or collection of men, but a quasi-mystical entity that welled up within a particular society and propelled it towards truth and righteousness.

This accorded with the anti-rational, passionate nature of the whole of Rousseau’s life and work. As Hume said of him: “He has only felt during the whole course of his life.”651 Thus while the other philosophers of the Age of Reason believed, or did not believe, in God or the soul or the Divine Right of kings, because they had reasons for their belief or unbelief, for Rousseau, on the other hand, religion was just a feeling; and as befitted the prophet of the coming Age of Unreason, he believed or disbelieved for no reason whatsoever. So religious belief, or the lack of it, was not something that could be objectively established or argued about. True, in his ideal political structure, Rousseau insisted that his subjects should believe in a “civil religion” that combined belief in “the existence of an omnipotent, benevolent divinity that foresees and provides; the life to come; the happiness of the just; the punishment of sinners; the sanctity of the social contract and the law”.652 If any citizen accepted these beliefs, but then “behaved as if he did not believe in them”, the punishment was death.653 However, the only article of this faith he argued for was the social contract...

As Barzun writes: “Rousseau reminds the reader that two-thirds of mankind are neither Christians nor Jews, nor Mohammedans, from which it follows that God cannot be the exclusive possession of any sect or people; all their ideas as to His demands and His judgements are imaginings. He asks only that we love Him and pursue the good. All else we know nothing about. That there should be quarrels and bloodshed about what we can never know is the greatest impiety.”654

Superficially, this irrationalist attitude seems like that of Pascal, who said: “The heart has its reasons, of which reason is ignorant”. But Pascal, while pointing to the limits of reason, did not abandon reason; he sought the truth

651 Russell, op. cit., p. 717.
653 Gascoigne, op. cit., p. 214.
654 Barzun, op. cit., p. 387.
with every fibre of his being. Rousseau, on the other hand, in both his life and his work, appeared quite deliberately to abandon reason and surrender himself to irrational forces. In these forces he saw freedom and nobility, while others saw only slavery to the basest instincts. The revolution would soon allow the world to judge the truth for itself...

*Tikhomirov on the General Will*

Eighteenth-century ideas about society, wrote L.A. Tikhomirov, though pagan and materialist in essence, can nevertheless not be understood except in the context of the Christian society that Western Europe still was – or, more precisely, “a Christian society, but one that has renounced Christ”, to use Aksakov’s phrase.

This is especially true of the idea of the general will. Thus “in the very concept of the 18th century about society there is a clearly materialised reminiscence of the Church. From the Church was copied the idea of society as a certain collectivity defined exclusively by the spiritual nature of man. The cosmopolitanism of the new society, its mysterious people’s will, which as it were saturates it completely, which in some incomprehensible way rules all while remaining infallible in all its private mistakes, - all these are echoes of the Christian Church. They are in all points ‘the Kingdom that is not of this world’, which is squeezed into, without being contained in, the bounds precisely of ‘this world’…

“Contemporary society, torn apart by this basic contradiction, is not conscious of it intellectually and even denies it. The materialist understanding of life is so strongly rooted that people for the most part are simply incapable of seriously paying attention to the action of the spiritual element. ‘What contradiction is here?’ they say. ‘In truth, the valuable element of Christianity is constituted by its moral concepts and its lofty conception of personality. And it is this that the new era has held onto. It has cast out only the outdated, mystical element of Christianity. Isn’t that natural? Isn’t that how all progress comes about in the world, holding on to everything valuable from the past and throwing out the unnecessary old rags?’ In this, however, the present age is mistaken. It doesn’t understand that it is impossible to throw out the mystical principles from Christianity without thereby destroying the social significance of the personality created by it. Historically Christian moral concepts have to the highest degree exerted a positive influence on earthly, social life. However this takes place only when the Christian remains completely a Christian, that is, when he lives not for this earthly life, and does not seek the realisation of his ideals in this life, does not put his soul into it. It turns out completely differently if the Christian remains without guidance by Divine authority, without a spiritual life on earth and without this spiritual activity of his having its final ends beyond the grave. Then he remains with infinite demands before an extremely finite world, which is unable to satisfy
them. He remains without discipline, because he knows nothing in the world higher than his own personality, and he bows before nothing if for him there is no God. He is not capable of venerating society as a material phenomenon, nor bow down even before a majority of personalities like his, because from their sum there still emerges no personality more lofty than his own. The lot and social role of such a person is extremely unhappy and harmful. He is either an eternal denier of real social life, or he will seek to satisfy his strivings for infinity in infinite pleasures, infinite love of honour, in a striving for the grandiose which so characterises the sick 18th and 19th centuries. The Christian without God is completely reminiscent of Satan. Not in vain did the image of unrestrained pride so seduce the poets of the 18th century. We all – believers or non-believers in God – are so created by Him, so incapable of ripping out of ourselves the Divine fire planted by Him, that we involuntarily love this spiritual, immeasurably lofty personality. But let us look with the cold attention of reason. If we need only to construct well our earthly, social life, if nothing else exists, then why call those qualities and strivings lofty and elevated which from an earthly point of view are only fantastic, unhealthy, having nothing in common with earthly reality? These are the qualities of an abnormal person. He is useful, they will say, for his eternal disquietude, his striving for something different, something other than that which is. But this striving would be useful only if his ideals were basically real. But the disquietude of the Christian deprived of God knocks the world out of the status quo only in order to drag it every time towards the materially impossible.

“They err who see in the 18th and 19th centuries the regeneration of ancient ideas of the State. The pagan was practical. His ideals were not complicated by Christian strivings for the absolute. His society could develop calmly. But the lot of a society that is Christian in its moral type of personality, but has renounced Christ in the application of its moral forces, according to the just expression of A.S. Aksakov, will be reduced to eternal revolution.

“This is what the 18th century’s attempt to create a new society also came to. Philosophy succeeded in postulating an ideal of society such as a personality forged by eighteen centuries of Christian influence could agree to bow down to. But what was this society? A pure mirage. It was constructed not on the real laws and foundations of social life, but on fictions logically deduced from the spiritual nature of man. Immediately they tried to construct such a society, it turned out that the undertaking was senseless. True, they did succeed in destroying the old historical order and creating a new one. But how? It turned out that this new society lives and is maintained in existence only because it does not realise its illusory bases, but acts in spite of them and only reproduces in a new form the bases of the old society.
“It is worth comparing the factual foundations of the liberal-democratic order with those which are ascribed to it by its political philosophy. The most complete contradiction!

“Rousseau, of course, was fantasising when he spoke of the people’s will as supposedly one and always wants only the good and never goes wrong. But one must not forget that he was not speaking of that people’s will which our deputies, voters and journalists talk about. Rousseau himself grew up in a republic and he did not fall into such traps. He carefully qualified himself, saying that ‘there is often a difference between the will of all (volonté de tous) and the general will (volonté générale).

“Rousseau sincerely despised the will of all, on which our liberal democratism is raised. Order and administration are perfect, he taught, only when they are defined by the general will, and not by the egoistic, easily frightened and bribed will of all. For the creation of the new, perfect society it is necessary to attain the discovery and activity precisely of the general will.

“But how are we to attain to it? Here Rousseau is again in radical contradiction with the practice of his disciples. He demands first of all the annihilation of private circles and parties. ‘For the correct expression of the general will it is necessary that there should be no private societies in the State and that every citizen should express only his own personal opinion’ (n’opine que d’après lui). Only in this case does one receive a certain sediment of general will from the multitude of individual deviations and the conversation always turns out well. With the appearance of parties everything is confused, and the citizen no longer expresses his own will, but the will of a given circle. When such individual interests begin to be felt and ‘small societies (circles, parties) begin to exert influence on the large (the State), the general will is no longer expressed by the will of all’. Rousseau therefore demands the annihilation of parties or at least their numerical weakening. As the most extreme condition, already unquestionably necessary, it is necessary that there should exist no party which would be noticeably stronger than the rest. If even this is not attained, if ‘one of these associations (parties) is so great as to dominate all the others, then the general will no longer exists and the only opinion that is realisable is the individual opinion.’

“In other words, democracy, the rule of the people’s will, no longer exists.

“Just as decisively and insistently does Rousseau demonstrate that the people’s will is not expressed by any representation. As a sincere and logical democrat, he simply hates representation, he cannot denounce it enough. When the citizens are corrupted, he says, they establish a standing army so as to enslave society, and they appoint representatives so as to betray it.
“He also reasons about representative rule in the section on the death of the political organism. Neither the people’s autocracy, he says, nor the people’s will can be either handed over or represented by the very nature of things.

“It is not difficult to imagine what Rousseau would have said about our republics and constitutional monarchies, about the whole order of liberal democratism, which is maintained in existence exclusively by that which its prophet cursed. This order is wholly based on representation, it is unquestionably unthinkable without parties, and, finally, the administration of the country is based unfailingly on the dominance of one or another party in parliament. When there is no such dominance, administration is ready to come to a stop and it is necessary to dissolve parliament in the hope that the country will give the kind of representation in which, in the terminology of Rousseau, there exists no people’s will, but only ‘individual opinion’.

“And this political system, as the height of logicality, is consecrated by the all-supporting fiction of the people’s will!…”

Thus Rousseauism is not democratic in the usual sense. “Properly speaking, the principle of the people’s will requires direct rule by the people. Even on this condition the principle would not produce any good results. In Switzerland there is the right of appeal to the people’s vote (referendum) and the presentation of the basic laws for confirmation to the direct vote of the people. No useful results proceed from this for the reasonableness of the law; moreover, the practice of such luxury of democratism is possible only in very unusual circumstances. In essence this is a system of ‘self-indulgence’, and not a serious resource of legislative construction.

“But the most important question is: what is this ‘people’s will’? Where, and in what, does it really exist? The people firmly wants one thing: that things should go well. A people with a history, which constitutes something united in distinction from its neighbours, which has not yet been shattered into insuperably hostile groups, has another will; that affairs in the country should go in a familiar spirit to which it is historically accustomed and which it trusts.

“And then in the innumerable individual cases from the solution of which the government is formed, the people has no will except in extreme cases – such as war or peace or the handing over of its salvation to such-and-such a popular person…. But in the everyday questions of government there is no people’s will. How can I have a will in relation to that of which I have no comprehension? In every question a few think well, a few think something, and 99 out a hundred – exactly nothing. Ivan has some understanding of one question, but Theodore not, while on another Theodore has some ideas, but Ivan not. But in each case there is the huge majority that understands nothing and has no other will except that everything should go well.
“It is from this majority that they demand that it should express its own opinion and its own will! But, you know, it’s simply comical, and besides harmful. Let us suppose that there are a hundred people who understand the given question, and several million who do not. To demand a decision from the majority means only to drown the hundred knowing voices in the hundreds of thousands who have no thoughts on the matter!

“The people, they say, can listen to those who know; after all, it wants the best for itself. Of course. But the people who are knowledgeable are, in the first place, occupied with their work, which is precisely why they are familiar with the question; secondly, they by no means exercise their capabilities in oratory or the technique of agitation. In connection with the art of stultifying the crowd, flattering it, threatening it, attracting – this disastrous, poisonous art of agitation – people will always be beaten down by those who have specially devoted themselves to political intrigue. And people are specially chosen to be intriguers, they are suitable for this trade because of their innate capabilities; they then exercise their capabilities; and then finally they are shaped into a party… But how is the man of action to fight against them? This is quite impossible, and in fact the people that is placed in this situation always goes, not for those who know, but for those who are skilled in political intrigue. It plays a most stupid role and cannot get out of it, even if they are completely aware of their stupid situation. I, for example, completely understand the role of the political intriguer and despise it, but if they were to force me to give my vote for measures which I am personally unable to weigh up myself, then of course I have not the slightest doubt that I would be fooled, and crafty people would shield me from the people who know and are honourable.

“Such is the reality of the people’s will. It is a toy of crafty people even if we have unmediated rule by the people. But unmediated rule by the people is practically impossible. It is impossible to collect, and it is impossible to turn the whole people into legislators. Somebody has to sow the bread and work in the factories. Finally, everyone has his own private life, which is dearer to him than politics. In generally, one has to resort to representation.

“Theoretically this is senseless. One can hand over one’s right as a citizen. But one cannot hand over one’s will. After all, I’m handing it over for future time, for future decisions, on questions that have not yet arisen. Therefore in choosing a deputy, I give him the right to express that will of mine that I do not yet myself know. Electing representatives would have a realisable meaning only if I were to hand over my right as a citizen, that is, if I simply said that I entrust the given person to carry out my political affairs and that I will not quarrel with or contradict whatever he does lawfully until the end of his term of office. But such a handing over of the very right of the people’s autocracy is the idea of Caesarism, and not parliamentarism. Parliamentarism
requires from the country representatives of its will, opinion and desire – that is, something impossible, an obvious deception. In sending its deputies, the country does not renounce its will for the term of their office. If, for example, our deputy, even if he were Ferri, should out of deep conviction consider it necessary to send an expedition to the Bay of Tonkin, and we, the voters, do not want this, then, according to the theory, Ferri must lay down his deputyship. If the president of the republic supposes that his chamber does not express the will of the country, he will dissolve it and demand new representatives from the country. He demands that it should be precisely the country’s will that is expressed.

“And so the country is offered elections. But whom will it send?

“First of all, there is still the question: who will want to become a deputy?

“In extreme cases, when the salvation of the fatherland is required (in 1612 in Russia, in 1789 in France, in 1871 in France again), in extreme cases generally, which demand a temporary and moreover very necessary exploit of self-sacrifice, of course the better people will want the representatives not of that will which the democratic theory demands, but of the spirit and capacities of the country, its genius, to become deputies, - the flower of the nation will come to the help of the fatherland. It will express the spirit of the nation, the maximum of its capacities; therefore the crowd in such decisions will recognise, not its will, but its ideal, not what it may want by its own poor discrimination, but what it would want if it was mindful. It highly estimates this mind (for it is in its spirit), it recognises its decisions and supports them. But this is a triumphant moment of history.

“During simple administration and ordering of affairs nothing of the sort takes place or can take place. The flower of the nation – the real representatives of its genius and its greatness are occupied with their own affairs: the scientist, the doctor, the technician, the factory-owner, the worker of the land – all these are occupied with their own affairs and will not give them up because they love it, they put their whole soul into it. It is only because they are the best people that they have this feeling. In an ordinary time the representatives of the genius of the nation do not become deputies, especially parliamentary deputies. A parliamentary deputy is obliged to express another person’s will. For a man with his own ideas this is not at all enticing, quite the opposite. He will enter a Constitutive Assembly, but not a parliament. He will rather remain at his own work and with his own ideas... Generally speaking, for a person who is able to make his own way in something more useful, the significance of being a deputy is not enticing. Moreover, it requires such external capacities as most of the best people do not
have. Glibness of speech, pushiness, a capacity for intrigue, superficial convictions. Such are the people elected for the trade of representation.655

“In elections they will most easily be successful, even the first time, when there are not yet any solidly based parties. But parties have longer ago been formed - also out of necessity. Since there is no general people’s will in everyday administrative matters, it has to be created for the people, the people has to be convinced, and it is easier and more convenient to do this when the whole of the nation’s complicated life has been broken down into separate elements and principles, and then out of each a programme is constructed by logical deduction. It is hard for the elector to grasp the complex whole; as an average person, he does not posses a very broad mind or wide knowledge. But when he is presented with a simplified party programme, it dawns on him, he is forced to think that he has understood everything. But the competition of those seeking deputyship forces the thinking of up of programmes for which there is not even any foundation in real life. Otherwise why would I recommend that the people elect me, and not my competitor? It is necessary to put forward something special which distinguishes me from the others.

“Thus parties and political programmes would without fail arise and be composed, even if national life were still whole. Political intriguers will undoubtedly first cut it up in programmes, and them - because of their activity - the cutting up of national integrity will take root in reality as far as possible...

“In general, in laying claim to the deputyship, I must join some party. I will be pushed forward not by the people, but by the party. I will be obliged to it for everything, I will have to take it into account. The people is - for him who is being elected - the last thing to worry about. It has to be incited to give its vote, but it is not at all necessary to learn what its vote is. The election campaign is a hunt for votes, but in no way a poll of the people. Hares are not asked whether they want to land up on the table, they are caught; their own desires are interesting only in order to clarify how precisely they can best be caught. That is exactly how interested they are in the people during elections.

“And so the candidacies are put forward. Noise, fuss, walls plastered with proclamations and names, journeys, conferences, false rumours, mutual slanders, loud words, avaricious promises, promises that are consciously false, bribes, etc. The people goes crazy: before it knew little, now it cannot make

655 Cf. Madame Germaine de Stael: “In a democratic state, one must be continually on guard against the desire for popularity. It leads to aping the behaviour of the worst. And soon people come to think that it is of no use - indeed, it is dangerous - to show too plain a superiority over the multitude which one wants to win over” (On Literature and Society (1800), in Barzun, op. cit, p. 451). (V.M.)
out anything at all. The greatest art of this hunt does not consist in a preliminary preparation of the people, but in some concluding surprise, which will snatch away votes at the last minute without giving time to think again. Finally the triumphant moment has arrived, the votes have been collected and counted, the ‘will of the people’ ‘has said its word’, and the representatives of the nation gather in the Palais Bourbon.

“What happens then? During the elections they still had to reckon with the voters. But having received the votes and gathered in the palace, the representatives of the people can completely forget about it right until the approach of the following elections. During this period they live exclusively their own party’s life, developing all the qualities of cliquishness. The deputy, who in theory represents the will of the voters, has real obligations only in relation to his party… “ As Benjamin Disraeli said: ‘Damn your principles. Stick to your party…”656

**Two Concepts of Freedom**

We have noted Pipes’ important observation that liberals and revolutionaries differ only with regard to means, not ends, and that whether a state develops along the peaceful, liberal path or the violent, revolutionary one depends on the degree to which intellectuals gain access to the levers of power. However, the two traditions also differ, according to Sir Isaiah Berlin, in their concepts of freedom. The English liberal tradition, which emerged in part as the continuance of, and in part as a reaction against, the English revolution, defined freedom in a negative way, as freedom from certain restraints on, and violence to, the individual. Thus “liberty,” writes Locke, “is to be free from restraint and violence from others”.657

But this freedom from restraint, paradoxically, was to be attained only by submitting to restraint in the form of law: “Where there is no law, there is no freedom.”658 But since right laws can be framed only through the use of reason, man’s freedom “is grounded on his having reason, which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will.”659 The necessity for reason implies at least a minimal degree of tolerance, for reason cannot operate in a climate of compulsion.

657 Locke, Second Treatise on Government, 57.
658 Locke, op. cit., 57.
659 Locke, op. cit., 63.
This tradition, summed up in the four words: *freedom, law, reason* and *tolerance*, dominated the first half of the eighteenth-century, and continues to dominate political thinking in the Anglo-Saxon countries to this day.

However, from the time of Rousseau another, positive definition of freedom gained currency - the freedom to do what you like and be what you want. This concept of freedom scorned every notion of restraint as foreign to the very idea of liberty; it emphasised lawlessness (freedom from law) as opposed to law, emotion as opposed to reason, the people as a single mystical organism having one will as opposed to the people as individuals having many wills. And even when it admitted the need for laws, it vehemently rejected the idea of the superiority of the lawgiver; for, as Demoulins put it, “My motto is that of every honourable man – no superior”.

The transition between the two concepts of liberty can be seen in the following passage from Rousseau, which begins with an “English”, negative, law-abiding definition of liberty, but goes on to a revolutionary definition which recognizes laws only insofar as they are an expression of “natural law”, i.e. the general will of the people: “Liberty consists less in doing one’s will than in not being submitted to the will of others... There is no liberty without laws, nor where there is someone above the laws: even in the state of nature man is free only by virtue of the natural law which commands everyone. A free people obeys, but does not serve; it has leaders, but not masters; it obeys the laws, but it obeys only the laws, and it is by dint of the laws that it does not obey men... A people is free, whatever form its government may have, when he who governs there is not a man, but an organ of the law”.

660

The difference between the concepts of freedom, freedom *from* and freedom *to*, was illuminatingly explored in a famous essay by Sir Isaiah Berlin entitled *Two Concepts of Freedom*.

Concerning negative freedom, freedom *from*, Berlin writes: “I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no human being interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can do what he wants. If I am prevented by other persons from doing what I want I am to that degree unfree; and if the area within which I can do what I want is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved. Coercion is not, however, a term that covers every form of inability. If I say that I am unable to jump more than 10 feet in the air, or cannot read because I am blind, or cannot understand the darker pages of Hegel, it would be eccentric to say that I am to that degree enslaved or coerced. Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I wish to act. You lack political liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining your

---

goal by human beings. Mere incapacity to attain your goal is not lack of political freedom… ‘The nature of things does not madden us, only ill will does’, said Rousseau. The criterion of oppression is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, in frustrating my wishes. By being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others. The wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom.

“This is certainly what the classical English political philosophers meant when they used this word. They disagreed about how wide the area could or should be. They supposed that it could not, as things were, be unlimited, because if it were, it would entail a state in which all men could boundlessly interfere with all other men; and this kind of ‘natural’ freedom would lead to social chaos in which men’s minimum needs would not be satisfied; or else the liberties of the weak would be suppressed by the strong. Because they perceived that human purposes and activities do not automatically harmonize with one another; and, because (whatever their official doctrines) they put high value on other goals, such as justice, or happiness, or security, or varying degrees of equality, they were prepared to curtail freedom in the interests of other values and, indeed, of freedom itself. For, without this, it was impossible to create the kind of association that they thought desirable. Consequently, it is assumed by these thinkers that the area of men’s free action must be limited by law. But equally it is assumed, especially by such libertarians as Locke and Mill in England, and Constant and Tocqueville in France, that there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated, for if it is overstepped, the individual will find himself in an area too narrow for even that minimum development of his natural faculties which alone makes it possible to pursue, and even to conceive, the various ends which men hold good or right or sacred. It follows that a frontier must be drawn between the area of private life and that of public authority. Where it is to be drawn is a matter of argument, indeed of haggling. Men are largely interdependent, and no man’s activity is so completely private as never to obstruct the lives of others in any way. ‘Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows’; the liberty of some must depend on the restraints of others. Still, a practical compromise has to be found.

“Philosophers with an optimistic view of human nature, and a belief in the possibility of harmonizing human interests, such as Locke or Adam Smith and, in some moods, Mill, believed that social harmony and progress were

---

661 “All his life,” writes Berlin’s biographer, Michael Ignatieff, “he attributed to Englishness nearly all the propositional content of his liberalism: ‘that decent respect for others and the toleration of dissent is better than pride and a sense of national mission; that liberty may be incompatible with, and better than, too much efficiency; that pluralism and untidiness are, to those who value freedom, better than the rigorous imposition of all-embracing systems, no matter how rational and disinterested, better than the rule of majorities against which there is no appeal’. All of this, he insisted, was ‘deeply and uniquely English’ (A Life of Isaiah Berlin, p. 36).
compatible with reserving a large area for private life over which neither the state nor any other authority must be allowed to trespass. Hobbes, and those who agreed with him, especially conservative or reactionary thinkers, argued that if men were to be prevented from destroying one another, and making social life a jungle or a wilderness, greater safeguards must be instituted to keep them in their places, and wished correspondingly to increase the area of centralized control, and decrease that of the individual. But both sides agreed that some portion of human existence must remain independent of the sphere of social control. To invade that preserve, however small, would be despotism. The most eloquent of all defenders of freedom and privacy, Benjamin Constant, who had not forgotten the Jacobin dictatorship, declared that at the very least the liberty of religion, opinion, expression, property, must be guaranteed against arbitrary invasion. Jefferson, Burke, Paine, Mill, compiled different catalogues of individual liberties, but the argument for keeping at authority at bay is always substantially the same. We must preserve a minimum area of personal freedom if we are not to ‘degrade or deny our nature’. We cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest. But total self-surrender is self-defeating. What then must the minimum be? That which a man cannot give up without offending against the essence of his human nature. What is this essence? What are the standards which it entails? This has been, and perhaps always will be, a matter of infinite debate. But whatever the principle in terms of which the area of non-interference is to be drawn, whether it is that of natural law or natural rights, or of utility or the pronouncements of a categorical imperative, or the sanctity of the social contract, or any other concept with which men have sought to clarify and justify their convictions, liberty in this sense means liberty from; absence of interference beyond the shifting, but always recognizable, frontier. ‘The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way’, said the most celebrated of its champions. If this is so, is compulsion ever justified? Mill had no doubt that it was. Since justice demands that all individuals be entitled to a minimum of freedom, all other individuals were of necessity to be restrained, if need be by force, from depriving anyone of it. Indeed, the whole function of law was the prevention of just such collisions: the state was reduced to what Lassalle contemptuously described as the functions of a nightwatchman or traffic policeman."

Berlin goes on to make the important observation that “liberty in this sense is not incompatible with some kinds of autocracy, or at any rate with the absence of self-government. Liberty in this sense is principally concerned with the area of control, not with its source. Just as a democracy may, in fact, deprive the individual citizen of a great many liberties which he might have in some other form of society, so it is perfectly conceivable that a liberal-minded despot would allow his subjects a large measure of personal freedom. The despot who leaves his subjects a wide area of liberty may be unjust, or

---

encourage the wildest inequalities, care little for order, or virtue, or knowledge; but provided that he does not curb their liberty, or at least curbs it less than many other régimes, he meets with Mill’s specification. Freedom in this sense is not, at any rate logically, connected with democracy or self-government. Self-government may, on the whole, provide a better guarantee of the preservation of civil liberties than other régimes, and has been defended as such by libertarians. But there is no necessary connexion between individual liberty and democratic rule. The answer to the question ‘Who governs me?’ is logically distinct from the question ‘How far does government interfere with me?’ It is in this difference that the great contrast between the two concepts of negative and positive liberty, in the end, consists. For the ‘positive’ sense of liberty comes to light if we try to answer the question, not ‘What am I free to do or be?’, but ‘By whom am I ruled?’ or ‘Who is to say what I am, and what I am not, to be or do?’ The connexion between democracy and individual liberty is a good deal more tenuous than it seemed to many advocates of both. The desire to be governed by myself, or at any rate to participate in the process by which my life is to be controlled, may be as deep as that of a free area for action, and perhaps historically older. But it is not a desire for the same thing. So different is it, indeed, as to have led in the end to the great clash of ideologies that dominates our world. For it is this – the ‘positive’ conception of liberty: not freedom from, but freedom to – which the adherents of the ‘negative’ notion represent as being, at times, no better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny.”

Berlin now passes from the “negative” to the “positive” concept of liberty, freedom to: “The ‘positive’ sense of the word ‘liberty’ derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men’s, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer – deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them. This is at least part of what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for his choices and able to explain them by reference to his own ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realize that it is not.

Indeed, it is arguable that in the Prussia of Frederick the Great or in the Austria of Josef II, men of imagination, originality, and creative genius, and, indeed, minorities of all kinds, were less persecuted and felt the pressure, both of institutions and customs, less heavy upon them than in many an earlier or later democracy. (Berlin’s note)

“The freedom which consists in being one’s own master, and the freedom which consists in not being prevented from choosing as I do by other men, may, on the face of it, seem concepts at no great logical distance from each other – no more than negative and positive ways of saying the same thing. Yet the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ notions of freedom developed in divergent directions until, in the end, they came into direct conflict with each other.

“One way of making this clear is in terms of the independent momentum which the metaphor of self-mastery acquired. ‘I am my own master’; ‘I am slave to no man’; but may I not (as, for instance, T.H. Green is always saying) be a slave to nature? Or to my own ‘unbridled’ passions? Are these not so many species of the identical genus ‘slave’ – some political or legal, others moral or spiritual? Have not men had the experience of liberating themselves from spiritual slavery, or slavery to nature, and do they not in the course of it become aware, on the one hand, of a self which dominates, and, on the other, of something in them which is brought to heel? This dominant self is then variously identified with reason, with my ‘higher nature’, with the self which calculates and aims at what will satisfy it in the long run, with my ‘real’, or ‘ideal’, or ‘autonomous’ self, or with my self ‘at its best’; which is then contrasted with irrational impulse, uncontrolled desires, my ‘lower’ nature, the pursuit of immediate pleasures, my ‘empirical’ or ‘heteronomous’ self, swept by every gust of desire and passion, needing to be rigidly disciplined if it is ever to rise to the full height of its ‘real’ nature. Presently the two natures may be represented as something wider than the individual (as the term is normally understood), as a social ‘whole’ of which the individual is an element or aspect: a tribe, a race, a church, a state, the great society of the living and the dead and the yet unborn. This entity is then identified as being the ‘true’ self which, by imposing its collective, or ‘organic’, single will upon its recalcitrant ‘members’, achieves its own, and, therefore, their, ‘higher’ freedom. The perils of using organic metaphors to justify the coercion of some men by others in order to raise them to a ‘higher’ level of freedom have often been pointed out. But what gives such plausibility as it has to this kind of language is that we recognize that it is possible, and at times justifiable, to coerce men in the name of some goal (let us say, justice or public health) which they would, if they were more enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not, because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt. This renders it easy for me to conceive of myself as coercing others for their own sake, in their, not my, interest. I am then claiming that I know what they truly need better than they know it themselves. What, at most, this entails is that they would not resist me if they were rational, and as wise as I, and understood their interests as I do. But I may go on to claim a good deal more than this. I may declare that they are actually aiming at what in their benighted state they consciously resist, because there exists within them an occult entity – their latent rational will, or their ‘true’ purpose – and that this entity, although it is belied by all that they overtly feel and do and say, is their ‘real’ self, of which the poor
empirical self in space and time may know nothing or little; and that this self
in space and time is the only self that deserves to have its wishes taken into
account. Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes
or men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and on behalf,
of their ‘real’ selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal of
man (happiness, fulfilment of duty, wisdom, a just society, self-fulfilment)
must be identical with his freedom – the free choice of his ‘true’, albeit
submerged and inarticulate, self.

“This paradox has often been exposed. It is one thing to say that I know
what is good for X, while he himself does not; and even to ignore his wishes
for its – and his – sake; and a very different one to say that he has eo ipso
chosen it, not indeed consciously, not as he seems in everyday life, but in his
role as a rational self which his empirical self may not know – the ‘real’ self
which discerns the good, and cannot help choosing it once it is revealed. This
monstrous impersonation, which consists in equating what X would choose if
he were something he is not, or at least is not yet, with what X actually seeks
and chooses, is at the heart of all political theories of self-realization. It is one
thing to say that I may be coerced for my own good which I am too blind to
see: and another that if it is my good, I am not being coerced, for I have willed
it, whether I know this or not, and am freed even while my poor earthly body
and foolish mind bitterly reject it, and struggle against those who seek to
impose it, with the greatest desperation.

“This magical transformation, or sleight of hand (for which William James
so justly mocked the Hegelians), can no doubt be perpetrated just as easily
with the ‘negative’ concept of freedom, where the self that should not be
interfered with is no longer the individual with his actual wishes and needs as
they are normally conceived, but the ‘real’ man within, identified with the
pursuit of some ideal purpose not dreamed of by his empirical self. And, as in
the case of the ‘positively’ free self, this entity may be inflated into some
super-personal entity – a state, a class, a nation, or the march of history itself,
regarded as a more ‘real’ subject of attributes than the empirical self. But the
‘positive’ conception of freedom as self-mastery, with its suggestion of a man
divided against himself, lends itself more easily to this splitting of personality
into two: the transcendent, dominant controller, and the empirical bundle of
desires and passions to be disciplined and brought to heel. This demonstrates
(if demonstration of so obvious a truth is needed) that the conception of
freedom directly derives from the view that is taken of what constitutes a self,
a person, a man. Enough manipulation with the definitions of man, and
freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes. Recent
history has made it only too clear that the issue is not merely academic..."665

The Foundation of Freemasonry

By the time of the death of Rousseau in 1774 all the essential elements of the antichristian system that was about to burst upon the world with unparalleled savagery had already appeared in embryonic form. And by the time the American revolution had triumphed in 1781 it was clear that the world could be turned upside down. However, the old despotic order still reigned in Europe; and with rulers such as Frederick the Great in Prussia and Catherine the Great in Russia turning in practice against the ideas they embraced in theory it was clear that the “mystery of iniquity” needed a new stimulus to recover its momentum and propel it towards its goal. That stimulus came in the form of an element that was already well known to European history, but which only now began to acquire a dominant position in politics - Jewish power. One major channel of Jewish influence, as we have seen, was finance; a second was Freemasonry, which because of its close links with Jewry and Judaism is often called “Judaeo-Masonry”.

Now since belief in the existence of a Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy against civilisation is often taken as evidence of madness, or at any rate of political incorrectness, it is necessary to assert from the beginning that, as Tikhomirov rightly says, “it is strange to attribute to the Masons the whole complexity of the evolution of human societies. One must not have the idea that people lived happily and in a healthy state, but then the masonic organisation appeared and corrupted them all. It is necessary to know the laws of the development of societies, which would be such as they are if the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem had never taken place. In general the study of Masonry can be fruitful only on condition that it is conducted scientifically. Only such a study is capable of clarifying the true level of influence of this or that secret society on the evolution of peoples and states.”

While Tikhomirov has no doubts about the existence of the Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy, he nevertheless insists that the blame for the destruction of modern society lies “most of all not on some premeditatedly evil influence of the masons or whatever other organisation, but on the false direction of our own constructive activities.” And again: “There has never been a man or a society which has not been corrupted through his own free will.” In other

---

666 Tikhomirov, “K voprosu o masonakh” (“Towards the Question on the Masons”), Khristianstvo i Politika (Christianity and Politics), op. cit., pp. 330-331.
667 Tikhomirov, “V chem nasha opasnost?” (“In What does the Danger to Us Consist?”), Khristianstvo i Politika (Christianity and Politics), op. cit., p. 333.
668 Tikhomirov, “Bor’ba s masonstvom” (“The Struggle with Masonry”), Khristianstvo i Politika (Christianity and Politics), op. cit., p. 336. Cf. Archpriest Lev Lebedev: “In evaluating the role of the Jewish core of World Masonry, two extremes are possible: the complete denial of any Judaeo-Masonic secret plot and secret leadership of world processes, and the extreme exaggeration of the degree and size of this leadership (when it seems that ‘they’ are everywhere and everything is ruled by ‘them’)… In fact, it is all not like that. The life of the world, even the development of its scientific-technical and industrial civilization is a very
words, the masons would have no power over society if society had not voluntarily abandoned its own defensive principles and institutions.

In the late eighteenth century, these principles and institutions were the hierarchical principle, respect for tradition and the institutions of the Church and the Monarchy. The masons did not originate the attack on these principles and institutions – as we have seen, the roots of anti-authoritarianism in both Church and State go back at least to the eleventh-century Papacy. What they did was to use an already existing sceptical and rationalist climate of opinion to intensify and give direction to the revolutionary movement, “the mystery of iniquity”.

According to the theory, “Free”, “Speculative” or “Symbolic” Masonry began when the meeting-places, or lodges, of the “Operative” Masons, the stonemasons who built the medieval cathedrals, gradually began to decline in importance with the decline in their craft, and they were joined by intellectuals who used the lodges for their own intellectual, and often heretical or occult, activities. One of the first modern “speculative” Masons was the English antiquarian and astrologer, Elias Ashmole, who was initiated in 1646 and died in 1692. Another early Mason was Sir Christopher Wren.

The Masonic writer Christopher Hodapp writes: “The Great London Fire had destroyed much of the city [of London] in 1666, and rebuilding it took decades. Freemason Christopher Wren had designed an astonishing number of the new buildings, and construction projects were everywhere. One of the biggest was the rebuilding of St. Paul’s Cathedral. It started in 1673 and took almost 40 years to complete. Operative Masons came from all over England to work on the project, and many joined the Lodge of St. Paul. By 1710, the great cathedral was complete, and many lodges disbanded as Masons returned to their hometowns. By 1715, there were just four London city lodges left.”

Even at this very early stage, Masonry aroused suspicion. Thus in 1698 a certain Mr. Winter circulated a leaflet in London warning “all godly people in the City of London of the Mischiefs and Evils practised in the Sight of God by those called Freed Masons… For this devilish Sect of Men are Meeters in

weird and changeable combination of elemental, ungovernable processes and planned, governable processes. In the final analysis everything is truly ruled by the Providence of God, but in such a way that the free will of man is not abolished. For that reason in their successful moments it can seem, and seems, to the Judaeo-Masons, who really are striving for ever greater subjection of the processes of global life to themselves, that to an ever greater degree it is by their own, human powers that everything is achieved…” (Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 407 ®)


secret which swear against all without their Following. They are the Anti
Christ which was to come, leading Men from fear of God.”

However, the traditional birthday of Masonry in its modern form is July 24,
1717, when the four remaining London lodges met in a pub in St. Paul’s
churchyard and created a Great Lodge as their ruling centre. The first
grandmaster was a nobleman, and the leaders of English Masonry to the
present day have tended to be members of the royal family. Consonant with
this royal connection, there was nothing revolutionary in a political sense in
early English Masonry. Thus when Dr. James Anderson, a Presbyterian
minister and master of Lodge number 17 of London, drew up the
Constitutions of Masonry in 1723, great emphasis was laid on the Masons’
loyalty to King and country: “A mason is a peaceable subject to the civil
powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concerned in plots
and conspiracies against the peace and welfare of the nation. If a brother
should be a rebel against the state, he is not to be countenanced in his
rebellion, however he may be pitied as an unhappy man; and if convicted of
not other crime, though the brotherhood must and ought to dismiss his
rebellion, and give no umbrage or ground of political jealousy to the
government for the time being; they cannot expel him from the lodge, and his
relation to it remains indefeasible.”

The members of the order, writes O.F. Soloviev, called themselves “men of
good will, peace-lovers, builders of the future just construction of society and
at the same time patriots of their own fatherlands, law-abiding subjects and
citizens, as is emphasized in all the constitutional documents. They went
towards the highest ideals not through the preaching of abstract truths, but by
serving their own peoples. They did not wall themselves off by an invisible
wall from their compatriots, but completely shared their destiny with all their
woes and sufferings. They were distinguished by a striving to help those
around them, to draw a middle line between extremes and introduce at any
rate a little humanism into the bonds of war that have been inevitable up to
now.”

That was the theory, at any rate. But already in the secrecy of the order, in
the religiosity of its three degrees, and in its subversive political influence, a
danger to both Church and State was discerned; and in 1736 Pope Clement
XII anathematized Masonry. Moreover, “it was gradually revealed that the
ritual humility of Symbolical Masonry had ceased to satisfy the leaders of the

---

671 Ridley, op. cit., p. 32.
672 The original lodges were numbers 1 to 4. However, in Scotland, the Kilwinning Lodge,
which called itself “the Mother Lodge of Scotland” and claimed to go back to 1140, rejected
the claims of the English Grand Lodge and pointedly called itself Lodge no. 0 (Hodapp, op.
cit., p. 26).
673 Ridley, op. cit., p. 40.
674 O.F. Soloviev, Masonstvo v Mirovoj Politike XX Veka (Masonry in World Politics in the 20th
‘obediences’, scions of the ruling dynasties and nobility, who strove to elaborate the inner decoration of the lodges and especially the rituals. The desired basis for reform was found in the specially transformed legend of the fate of the knightly order of the Templars, whose leader de Molay and his fellows had perished on the gallows in Paris in 1517 in accordance with the inquisitors’ false [but many believe that they were true – V.M.] accusations of terrible heresies. The Templars began to be portrayed as the immediate forerunners of the ‘free masons’, which required the introduction of several higher degrees into their order, to signify the special merits and great knowledge of individually chosen adepts. One of the initiators of the reform, the Scottish nobleman A. Ramsay, declared in 1737: ‘Our forefathers the crusaders wanted to unite into one brotherhood the subjects of all states’, so as in time to create ‘a new people, which, representing many nations, would unite them in the bonds of virtue and science’. After the introduction of several higher degrees with luxurious rituals, a series of associations formed several systems, including the highly centralized system ‘of strict observance’ with rigorous discipline for its adepts, that was significantly developed in the German lands, in Russia and in Sweden.\footnote{Soloviev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17. Thus Piers Paul Read writes: “Andrew Ramsay, a Scottish Jacobite exiled in France who was Chancellor of the French Grand Lodge in the 1730s, claimed that the first Freemasons had been stonemasons in the crusader states who had learned the secret rituals and gained the special wisdom of the ancient world. Ramsay made no specific claim for the Templars, probably because he did not wish to antagonise his host, the King of France; but in Germany another Scottish exile, George Frederick Johnson, concocted a myth that transformed ‘the Templars… from their ostensible status of unlearned and fanatical soldier-monks to that of enlightened and wise knightly seers, who had used their sojourn in the East to recover its profoundest secrets, and to emancipate themselves from medieval Catholic credulity’. “According to the German Freemasons, the Grand Masters of the Order had learned the secrets and acquired the treasure of the Jewish Essenes which were handed down from one to the other. James of Molay [the last Grand Master of the Order], on the night of his execution, had sent the Count of Beaujew to the crypt of the Temple Church in Paris to recover this treasure which included the seven-branched candelabra seized by the Emperor Titus, the crown of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and a shroud. It is undisputed that in evidence given at the trial of the Templars, a sergeant, John of Châlons, maintained that Gérard of Villiers, the Preceptor of France, had been tipped off about his imminent arrest and so had escaped on eighteen galleys with the Templars’ treasure. If this were so, what happened to this treasure? George Frederick Johnson said that it had been taken to Scotland, one of his followers specifying the Isle of Mull.” \textit{(The Templars, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, pp. 303-304)}}
“respectable” Masonry was. Moreover, a ban was placed on political discussions in the English lodges.

If English Masonry by and large kept its promise to stay out of politics, this was certainly not to be the case with its daughter lodges in Europe and America. Moreover, the Constitutions gave clear evidence both of Masonry’s revolutionary political potential and of its definitely religious nature. This is particularly obvious when in one and the same breath they both disclaim any interest in religion and then claim to profess “the best [religion] that ever was, or will or can be… the true primitive, catholic and universal religion agreed to be so in all times and ages.”

What was this religion? In some formulations it is like the Deism that was becoming fashionable in England at the time, in which God, “the Great Architect of the Universe”, is seen as creating the laws of nature, setting them to work and then playing no further part in history. At others it is closer to Pantheism. Thus the Constitutions declare that “it is the law of Nature, which is the law of God, for God is Nature. It is to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourself…”

Closer examination reveals Masonry in its developed form to be a kind of Manichaean dualism, in which two gods are recognized: Christ and Satan, of whom the one, Christ, is hated, and the other, Satan, is adored. As the famous American Mason, Albert Pike, wrote: “To the crowd we must say: we worship a God, but it is the God one adores without superstition. To you, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, we say this, that you may repeat it to the brethren of the 32nd, 31st and 30th degrees: all of us initiates of the high degrees should maintain the Masonic religion in the purity of the Luciferian doctrine. If Lucifer were not God, would Adonai, the God of the Christians, whose deeds prove his cruelty, perfidy and hatred of man, his barbarism and repulsion for science, would Adonai and his priests calumniate him? Yes, Lucifer is God, and unfortunately Adonai is also God… religious philosophy in its purity and youth consists in the belief in Lucifer, the equal of Adonai.”

“We have the testimony of Copin Albancelli,” wrote Tikhomirov, “whom we can in no way suspect of making up things, when he declares positively that he had genuine documents about this [the Satanism of Masonry] in his hands. I, he says, had the opportunity several years ago to find a proof that there exist certain Masonic societies which are satanic societies, not in the sense that the devil used to come personally to preside at their meetings, as that charlatan Leo Taxil says, but in the sense that their members confess the cult of Satan. They adore Lucifer as being supposedly the true God and are inspired

---

676 Ridley, op. cit., p. 41.
677 Ridley, op. cit., p. 41.
by an irreconcilable hatred against the Christian God.’ They even have a special formula casting ‘curses’ on Him and proclaiming the glory of and love for Lucifer…”

Freemasonry and Ecumenism

Another important feature of the masonic religion is ecumenism. As religious passions cooled round Europe after the end of the religious wars, the masons took the lead in preaching religious tolerance. But they went further than simply preaching tolerance. They said that religious differences did not matter, and that underlying all religions there was a “true, primitive, universal religion”.

The origins of ecumenism go back to Asia Minor in the second century, to Apelles, a disciple of the heretic Marcion. As the Athonite Elder Augustine writes: “Apelles, the head of the numerous sect, venerable both for his life and for his age, wanted to undertake the pacification and unification of all the shoots of the heretic Marcion under a single rule and authority. With this aim he exerted all his powers to come into contact with all the leaders of the sects, but had to admit that it was impossible to persuade each sect to abandon its unreasonable dogmatic teaching and accept that of another. Having come away from his attempts at mediation with no fruit, he decided a bridge had to be built, a way of living together peaceably, or a mutual tolerance of each other, with a single variety of ‘faith’…

“Starting from this point of view, he established an atheist dogma of unity, which has been called, after him, ‘the atheist dogma of Apelles’, with the notorious slogan: ‘… We don’t have to examine the matter thoroughly, everyone can remain in his faith; for those who hope on the Crucified One,’ he declared, ‘will be saved so long as they are found to have good works.’ Or, to put it more simply: ‘it is not at all necessary to examine the matter – the differences between us – but everyone should retain his convictions, because,’ he declared, ‘those who hope on the Crucified One will be saved so long as they are found to practise good works!…’ It would be superfluous to explain that this atheist dogma of Apelles was first formulated by the heretic Marcion himself (whom St. Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John, called ‘the first-born of Satan’) and is entirely alien to the Christians. We Christians love the heterodox and we long for a real and holy union with them – when they become sober and believe in an Orthodox manner in our Lord Jesus Christ, abandoning their heretical and mistaken beliefs and ‘their distorted image of Christ’ (see Eusebius, History, bk. 5, 13-15; Dositheus of Jerusalem, Dodecabiblon, bk. 2, chapter 13, para. 3).”

Apelles’ dogma was condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, but, like all the early heresies, it reappeared at a later date. Thus in the year 384, Symmachus, the pagan leader of the Roman Senate, wrote to the Emperor Theodosius the Great, appealing to him to be tolerant towards the pagans because, as he said, many paths led to God… Again, the twelfth-century Arab philosopher and doctor Avveroes pleaded for a kind of union between Christians, Jews, Muslims and pagans that was avidly discussed in western scholastic circles.681

The variant of Apelleanism known as uniatism – that is, the union between Roman Catholicism and other religions – appeared after the schism of 1054. As Elder Augustine explains: “After the canonical cutting off of the Latins from the Church as a whole in 1054, that is, after their definitive schism and anathematisation, there was also the acceptance, or rather the application, of the atheist dogma of Apelles. The Catholic (=Orthodox) Church of Christ condemned the heresies of the Nestorians, Monophysites and Monothelites in the (Third, Fourth and Sixth) Ecumenical Councils. It anathematised the heretics and their heretical teachings and declared those who remained in the above-mentioned heresies to be excommunicate. The apostate ‘church’ of Rome took no account of the decisions of these Ecumenical Councils, but received into communion the unrepentant and condemned Nestorian, Monophysite and Monothelite heretics without any formality, with only the recognition of the Pope as Monarch of the Church. And not only the heretics, but also many others after this, were received into communion with only the recognition of the Monarchy of the blood-stained beast that presided in it.”682

However, Apelleanism in its modern, ecumenist variety is really a product of the Protestant Reformation. Thus the Anglican Settlement of the mid-sixteenth century was a kind of Protestant Unia, the Anglican Church being allowed to retain some of the outward trappings of Catholicism – but without its central pivot, the papacy, which was replaced by obedience to the secular monarch as head of the Church. Being a politically motivated compromise from the beginning, Anglicanism has always been partial to ever more comprehensive schemes of inter-Church and inter-faith union, and many leaders of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century were Anglicans.683

In 1614 there appeared the first real ecumenist of modern times, George Kalixtos, a man famous, according to Elder Augustine, “for the breadth of his knowledge and his ‘eirenic’ spirit in tackling various questions, including

ecclesiastical ones. Propelled by this spirit, he declared that there was no need of, nor did he even seek, the union of the various Churches… Nevertheless, he did demand their mutual recognition and the retaining of reciprocal ‘love’ through the reciprocal tolerance of the manifold differences of each ‘Church’…”

The ecumenism of Masonry was linked to the crisis of faith in the Anglican church in the early eighteenth century, and in particular to the loss of faith in the unique truth and saving power of Christianity. Thus “in 1717,” wrote William Palmer, “a controversy arose on occasion of the writings of Hoadly, bishop of Bangor, in which he maintained that it was needless to believe in any particular creed, or to be united to any particular Church; and that sincerity, or our own persuasion of the correctness of our opinions (whether well or ill founded) is sufficient. These doctrines were evidently calculated to subvert the necessity of believing the articles of the Christian faith, and to justify all classes of schismatics or separatists from the Church. The convocation deemed these opinions so mischievous, that a committee was appointed to select propositions from Hoadly’s books, and to procure their censure; but before his trial could take place, the convocation was prorogued by an arbitrary exercise of the royal authority…”

Hardly coincidentally, 1717, the year in which Hoadly’s heretical views were published was the same year in which the Grand Lodge of England was founded. And we find a very similar doctrine enshrined in Dr. Anderson’s Constitutions: “Let a man’s religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth.” “A Mason is obliged, by his tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist, nor an irreligious Libertine. But though in ancient Times Masons were charged in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, ‘tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is to be good Men and true, or Men of Honour and Honesty, but whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish’d; whereby Masonry becomes the Centre of Union and the Means of Conciliating true Friendships among Persons that must have remained at a perpetual Distance.”

A new and extremely deceptive concept was here introduced into the bloodstream of European thought: “that Religion in which all men agree”. There is no such thing. Even if we exclude the “stupid Atheists” and “irreligious Libertines” (of whom there are very many), we still find men

686 Quoted in Webster, op. cit., p. 129. In accordance with this principle, Jews were admitted to the masonic lodges as early as 1724 (Ridley, op. cit., p. 40).
disagreeing radically about the most fundamental doctrines: whether God is
one, or one-in-three, or more than three, whether He is to be identified with
nature or distinguished from it, whether He is evolving or unchanging,
whether or not He became incarnate in Jesus Christ, whether or not He spoke
to Mohammed, whether or not He is coming to judge the world, etc. Upon the
answers to these questions depend our whole concept of right and wrong, of
what it is “to be good Men and true”. Far from there being unanimity among
“religious” people about this, there is bound to be the most radical
disagreement between them.

Ecumenism may be described as religious egalitarianism, the doctrine that
one religion is as good as any other. When combined, as it was in the lodges
of Europe and America, with political and social egalitarianism, the doctrine
that one person is as good as any other, it made for an explosive mixture – not
just a philosophy, but a programme for revolutionary action. And this
revolutionary potential of Masonry became evident very soon after it spread
from England to the Continent...

The Grand Orient

Now 1717, the year of the foundation of the Great Lodge of England, was
also important as being the date of an Anglo-French treaty by which the
Catholic Stuart pretender to the English throne was expelled from France and
the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty was recognised by the French
government. This facilitated the spread of Freemasonry to France and the
Continent. As a result, writes the anti-masonic Catholic writer Count Leon de
Poncins, it “evolved in a distinctly revolutionary and anti-religious sense. The
Grand Orient of France led this movement, followed, with some reserve, by
the Grand Lodge of France, and became the guide of the Grand Orients of
Europe and South America. Freemasonry in the United States, while
maintaining its union and friendly relations with the Grand Lodge of
England, occupies an intermediate position between English Freemasonry
and the Grand Orients of Europe. Some of its branches are nearer the English
conception, and others the European...

“English Freemasonry in 1723 was in no way Christian; it was rationalist,
vaguely deistic and secretly gnostic. The latter source of inspiration is still
active, but it had encountered the conservative, traditional spirit of England.
Most English Freemasons were men who were scarcely concerned with
philosophical or metaphysical preoccupations. The revolutionary and anti-
Christian inspiration which constituted the essence of contemporary
Freemasonry everywhere, encountered a veiled and instinctive resistance in
English Masons. The pact which Freemasonry tacitly concluded with the
Protestant monarchy, to fight against Catholicism [and the Catholic Stuart
pretenders to the English monarchy], which it considered its principal enemy,
contributed to restrain the revolutionary tendencies of English Freemasonry,
whereas they developed freely in Europe and South America, and rather more timidly in the United States. In short, the revolutionary virus in Freemasonry is more or less inactive in England, where Freemasonry is more an excuse for social reunion than an organisation claiming to remake the world.”

This difference between English and Continental Masonry has been denied by some writers. And of course, from a religious point of view, at least until Grand Orient Masonry officially adopted atheism in 1877 and was “excommunicated” by the Grand Lodge of England, there was little or no difference between the two, both combining ecumenism with pagan syncretism (see below). Nevertheless, from a political point of view the distinction is a valid one; for English Masonry, linked as it was with the nobility and the monarchy from the beginning, dissociated itself from the revolutionary activities of its brother lodges on the Continent, and as late as 1929 reaffirmed the ban on discussion of politics and religion within the lodge.

It was Continental Masonry, springing from the Grand Orient of France, that was the real revolutionary force in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and beyond.

The revolutionary political significance of Continental Masonry is most clearly seen in the 30th degree of the Scottish rite, the Kadosch degree. Here the myth that forms the core of the earlier degrees, the murder of Hiram or Adoniram, the supposed architect of Solomon’s Temple, is replaced by the myth of Jacques de Molay, the last great master of the order of the Templars, who was burned alive on the orders of King Philippe the Fair of France and Pope Clement V in 1314, and who was supposed to have founded four masonic lodges on his deathbed. The initiates of the Kadosch degree avenge the death of the Templars’ leader by acting out the murder of the French king and the Pope.

“The Kadosch adept,” writes Ivanov, “tramples on a crown as a symbol of tyranny in general, and then tramples on the papal tiara as a symbol of violence over the free human conscience.

“The king and the pope are symbols, and by these symbols we are given to understand the struggle to the death against ‘civil and ecclesiastical despotism’.”

688 Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
689 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
This vengeful rite was not just theatre, but a prelude and preparation for real revolutionary action. Thus in 1784 in Wilhemsbad a pan-European congress of masons in which the mysterious proto-communist sect of the "Illuminati" took a leading role, decided on the murder of Louis XVI of France and Gustavus Adolphus III of Sweden. Both sentences were carried out...

However, the Continental Masons managed to conceal their murderous intentions under a cover of good works and conviviality. This was enough to fool even those who should have been best informed.

Thus Louis XVI’s queen, Marie Antoinette, wrote to her sister Maria Christina in 1781: “It seems to me that you attach too much significance to Masonry in France; it has by no means played the same role in France as in other countries, thanks to the fact that here everybody belongs to it and so we know everything that goes on there. What danger do you see in it? I understand that it would be possible to fear the spread of Masonry if it were a secret political society, but, you know, this society exists only for good works and for entertainments; there they do a lot of eating, drinking, discussing and singing, and the king says that people who drink and sing cannot be conspirators. Thus it is impossible to call Masonry a society of convinced atheists, for, as I have heard, they constantly speak about God there. And besides, they give a lot of alms, educate the children of the poor or dead members of the brotherhood, give their daughters in marriage – I truly see nothing in bad in all this. The other day the Princess de Lambal was elected great mistress of one lodge; she told me how nice they are to her there, but she said that more was drunk than sung; the other day they offered to give dowries to two girls. True, it seems to me that it would be possible to do good without all these ceremonies, but, you know, everyone has his own way of enjoying himself; as long as they do good, what has the rest to do with us?”

However, one year into the revolution she had discovered that Masonry had a great deal to do with them. On August 17, 1790 she wrote to her brother, the Austrian Emperor Leopold II: “Forgive me, dear brother, believe in the tender sentiments of your unhappy sister. The main thing is, keep away from every masonic society. In this way all the horrors that are taking place here are striving to attain one and the same end in all countries.”

As we have seen, the first power in the West clearly to see the threat of Masonry to both Church and State was the Roman Catholic Church. Catholicism made no radical distinction between English and French Masonry. In 1738 Masonry of all kinds was condemned by Pope Clement XII, in 1751 - by Benedict XIV, in 1821 – by Pius VII, in 1825 – by Leo XII, in 1829 – by Pius VIII, in 1832 and 1839 – by Gregory XVI, in 1846, 1864, 1865, 1873 and

---

690 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 82.
691 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 83.
1876 – by Pius IX, and in 1884 – by Leo XIII. The latter’s bull, Humanum Genus declared of the Freemasons: “Their ultimate has been brought into existence by Christianity, and to replace it by another in aim is to uproot completely the whole religious and political order of the world, which harmony with their way of thinking. This will mean that the foundation and the laws of the new structure of society will be drawn from pure Naturalism.”

The bull went on: “In the sphere of politics, the Naturalists lay down that all men have the same rights and that all are equal and alike in every respect; that everyone is by nature free and independent; that no one has the right to exercise authority over another; that it is an act of violence to demand of men obedience to any authority not emanating from themselves. All power is, therefore, in the free people. Those who exercise authority do so either by the mandate or the permission of the people, so that, when the popular will changes, rulers of States may lawfully be deposed even against their will. The source of all rights and civic duties is held to reside either in the multitude or in the ruling power in the State, provided that it has been constituted according to the new principles. They hold also that the State should not acknowledge God and that, out of the various forms of religion, there is no reason why one should be preferred to another. According to them, all should be on the same level.”

In the East, the Orthodox Church also clearly saw the danger of Freemasonry and condemned it. Thus Archbishop Cyprian of Cyprus anathematized it in very strong terms in 1821 before being martyred...

**Freemasonry and the Jews**

To what extent is the term “Judaeo-Masonry” appropriate? The characteristics of Masonry that we have examined so far are purely western in origin; they amount to a religious expression of Enlightenment rationalist philosophy. However, when we examine the rites and religious practices of Masonry, and especially of its later degrees, a strongly Jewish element is immediately apparent; for most of the basic religious doctrines and rites of Freemasonry are in fact Jewish.

As an example, let us take the strange Masonic practice of wearing aprons. Michael Hoffman, following John L. Brooke, writes: “The Babylonian Talmud claims that the forbidden tree in the Garden, from which Adam ate was a fig:  

692 De Poncins, op. cit., p. 31.
693 De Poncins, op. cit., p. 32. Again, in his Encyclical of 19th March, 1902, Leo XIII wrote: “Freemasonry is the personification of the Revolution; it constitutes a sort of society in reverse whose aim is to exercise an occult overlordship upon society as we know it, and whose sole raison d'être consists in waging war against God and his Church.” (De Poncins, op. cit., pp. 49-50)
‘Rabbi Nehemiah holds that the tree of which Adam ate was the fig tree’ (BT Berakoth 40a). The Kabbalah teaches that the leaves of this fig tree conveyed powers of sorcery and magic (Zohar 1:56b Bereshit). Consequently, in the rabbinic mind, the aprons worn by Adam and Eve, being made from the leaves of the fig tree, were garments that gave the wearers magic powers. These aprons made from fig leaves had the power to give the bearer to enjoy ‘the fruits of the world-to-come’ (BT Bava Metzia 114b). It is with this rabbinic understanding that Freemasons and Mormons wear these aprons in their own rituals.”

Moreover, there is a significant personal input of Jewry into Masonry, especially at the highest levels. For the three symbolical degrees of Masonry are supplemented by thirty higher levels, which in turn are crowned by what has been called “invisible Masonry”. And “all this impenetrably dark power is crowned, according to the conviction and affirmation of [the former Mason and investigator of Masonry] Copin Albancelli, by still another level: the Jewish centre, which pursues the aims of the universal lordship of Israel and holds in its hands both visible Masonry with its 33 degrees and the invisible degrees of invisible Masonry or ‘Illuminism’…”

“It is true, of course,” writes Bernard Lazare, “that there were Jews connected with Freemasonry from its birth, students of the Kabbala, as is shown by certain rites which survive. It is very probable, too, that in the years preceding the outbreak of the French Revolution, they entered in greater numbers than ever into the councils of the secret societies, becoming indeed themselves the founders of secret associations. There were Jews in the circle around Weishaupt, and a Jew of Portuguese origin, Martinez de Pasquales, established numerous groups of illuminati in France and gathered around him a large number of disciples whom he instructed in the doctrines of re-integration. The lodges which Martinez founded were mystic in character, whereas the other orders of Freemasonry were, on the whole, rationalistic in their teachings.... There would be little difficulty in showing how these two tendencies worked in harmony; how Cazotte, Cagliostro, Martinez, Saint-Martin, the Comte de Saint Germain and Eckartshausen were practically in alliance with the Encyclopaedists and Jacobins, and how both, in spite of their seeming hostility, succeeded in arriving at the same end, the undermining, namely, of Christianity.

“This, too, then, would tend to show that though the Jews might very well have been active participants in the agitation carried on by the secret societies, it was not because they were the founders of such associations, but merely because the doctrines of the secret societies agreed so well with their own.”

---

695 Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 443.
Thus Freemasonry was not controlled by the Jews, according to Lazare, but they had a great deal in common: Anti-Christianity (French Grand Orient Masonry to a much greater extent than English “regular” Masonry), a taste for a Kabballistic type of mysticism, revolutionary politics and many members of Jewish blood. But this is only the beginning. It is when one enters into the details of the rites, especially the rites of the higher degrees, that the resemblances become really striking.

“The connections are more intimate,” writes a Parisian Jewish review, “than one would imagine. Judaism should maintain a lively and profound sympathy for Freemasonry in general, and no matter concerning this powerful institution should be a question of indifference to it…

“The spirit of Freemasonry is that of Judaism in its most fundamental beliefs; its ideas are Judaic, its language is Judaic, its very organisation, almost, is Judaic. Whenever I approach the sanctuary where the Masonic order accomplishes its works, I hear the name of Solomon ringing everywhere, and echoes of Israel. Those symbolic columns are the columns of the Temple where each Hiram’s workmen received their wages; they enshrine his revered name. The whole Masonic tradition takes me back to that great epoch when the Jewish monarch, fulfilling David’s promises, raised up to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a religious monument worthy of the creator of Heaven and earth – a tradition symbolised by powerful images which have spread outside the limits of Palestine to the whole world, but which still bear the indelible imprint of their origin.

“That Temple which must be built, since the sanctuary in Jerusalem has perished, the secret edifice at which all Masons on earth labour with one mind, with a word of command and secret rallying-points – it is the moral sanctuary, the divine asylum wherein all men who have been reconciled will re-unite one day in holy and fraternal Agapes; it is the social order which shall no longer know fratricidal wars, nor castes, nor pariahs, and where the human race will recognise and proclaim anew its original oneness. That is the work on which every initiate pledges his devotion and undertakes to lay his stone, a sublime work which has been carried on for centuries.”

This talk of universal fraternity in the rebuilding of the Temple is deception. “As for the final result of the messianic revolution,” writes Batault, “it will always be the same: God will overthrow the nations and the kings and will cause Israel and her king to triumph; the nations will be converted to Judaism and will obey the Law or else they will be destroyed and the Jews will be the masters of the world. The Jews’ international dream is to unite the world with the Jewish law, under the direction and domination of the priestly people – a general form.. of imperialism…”

697 La Vérité Israélite (The Israelite Truth), 1861, vol. 5, p. 74; De Poncins, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
698 G. Batault, Le Problème Juif (The Jewish Problem); De Poncins, op. cit., pp. 77-78.
However, it remains true that the main aim of Freemasonry, as of Judaism, is to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. And this alone should be enough to warn us of its Antichristianity, insofar the Lord decreed that “not one stone [of it] shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24.2), and every attempt to rebuild it has been destroyed by the Lord, as in the time of Julian the Apostate. Moreover, the rites of Freemasonry themselves declare that the secret aim of the rebuilding of the Temple is to undo the work of Christ on the Cross.

Thus the 18th or Rosicrucian Degree speaks of the ninth hour of the day as “the hour when the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain and darkness overspread the earth, when the true Light departed from us, the Altar was thrown down, the Blazing Star was eclipsed, the Cubic Stone poured forth Blood and Water, the Word was lost, and despair and tribulation sat heavily upon us. It goes on to exhort the Masons: “Since Masonry has experienced such dire calamities it is our duty, Princes, by renewed labours, to retrieve our loss.”

The Reverend Walter Hannah, an Anglican clergyman, has justly commented on this: “For any Christian to declare that Masonry experienced ‘a dire calamity’ at the Crucifixion, or that Masons suffered a ‘loss’ at the triumphant death of our Saviour on the Cross which the Excellent and Perfect Princes of the Rose Croix of Heredom can by their own labour ‘retrieve’ seems not only heretical but actually blasphemous. The only interpretation which makes sense of this passage would appear to be that it is not the death of our Lord which is mourned, but the defeat of Satan.” Indeed, for “the eclipse of the Blazing Star” can only mean the defeat of Satan, while the Cubic Stone pouring forth Blood and Water can only mean the triumph of Christ on the Cross - Christ, Who is “the Stone that the builders rejected” which became “the chief Corner-Stone” of the New Testament Church (Matthew 21.42), having been rejected as “the wrong shape” by the leaders of Old Israel. As the Apostle Peter said to the Sanhedrin: “This [Christ] is the Stone which was rejected by you builders [Jews, Masons], which has become the chief Corner-Stone” (Acts 4.11). Any Temple which does not have Christ as the chief Corner-Stone is an abomination to God and will be destroyed by Him just as the Old Testament Temple was destroyed; for “whoever falls on this Stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to power” (Matthew 21.44). It is in the same Rosicrucian Degree that initiates are told to walk over the Cross of Christ...

---

699 On Rosicrucianism as a separate order with Masonry, see Platonov, op. cit., chapter 21. It was founded in 1757 in Frankfurt-on-Main and counted among its leading adepts the charlatans Johann Welner, Saint-Germain and Caliostro.
The American Revolution

And so Masonry is revealed as a web of deceit whose outer layers are liberalism, scientism, and rationalism; whose inner layers are the overthrow of the existing world order in both Church and State; and whose innermost sanctum is the most explicit Antichristianity.

The first major historical event in which the hand of Masonry is clearly discernible is the American revolution. The first lodges had been established in Boston and Philadelphia by 1730\textsuperscript{702}, and several of the leaders of the American revolution were Freemasons, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Hancock, James Madison, James Monrose, Paul Revere, John Paul Jones and La Fayette.\textsuperscript{703} However, many of the leaders of the British forces were also Freemasons, and “of the 7 Provincial Grand Masters [of American Masonry], 5 supported George III, and condemned revolutionary agitation against the established authority.”\textsuperscript{704}

This confirms the point made above, namely that English, as opposed to Continental Masonry, was not revolutionary (or not so revolutionary) in character; while American Masonry, being a mixture of the two (Lafayette represented French Masonry, and Franklin was also influenced by the French), had leading representatives on both sides of the conflict. But it was not simply a question of English versus Continental Masonry: the movement in general had the unexpected property of spawning, as well as most of the leaders of the revolution, several of the leaders of the counter-revolution. Hence the paradox that Tom Paine, one of the leading apologists of the revolution, was not a Freemason, while his reactionary opponent, Edmund Burke, was; that the anti-revolutionary Comte d’Artois and King Gustavus Adolphus III of Sweden were Freemasons, while the ultra-revolutionary Danton and Robespierre were not; that Napoleon, the exporter of the ideals of the revolution, was not a Freemason (although he protected it), while the reactionary generals who defeated him – Wellington, Blücher and Kutuzov – all were.

One reason for this paradoxical, but important phenomenon was undoubtedly the philosophical distinction we have already discussed between freedom as a negative concept, freedom \textit{from}, and freedom as a positive concept, freedom \textit{to}. Those who joined the ranks of the Masons were lovers of freedom in a general sense; but when some of them saw how the Rousseauist, positive concept of freedom led to Jacobinism and all the horrors of the French revolution, they turned sharply against it. Some still remained members of the lodge, but others broke all links with it. Thus Wellington

\textsuperscript{702} Ridley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{703} Ridley, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 108-109.
\textsuperscript{704} Ridley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
never entered a lodge after his membership lapsed in 1795, and in 1851 wrote that he “had no recollection of having been admitted a Freemason…”\textsuperscript{705}

Another reason had to do with the decentralised, diffuse organisation of Masonry, and its very broad criteria of membership. This meant that a very wide range of people could enter its ranks, and precluded the degree of control and discipline that was essential for the attainment and, still more important, the \textit{retention} of supreme political power. Masonry was therefore the ideal kind of organisation for the \textit{first} stage in the revolutionary process, the dissemination of revolutionary ideas as quickly as possible through as large a proportion of the population as possible. But if “the mystery of iniquity” was to achieve real political power, this first stage has to be succeeded by a second in which a more highly disciplined and ruthless, Communist-style party took over the leadership. As we shall see, such a takeover is discernible in both the French and the Russian revolutions. In France the masonic constitutionalists, such as Mirabeau and Lafayette, were pushed aside by the anti-democratic, anti-constitutionalist Jacobins or “Illuminati”, while in Russia the masonic constitutionalists, such as Kerensky and Lvov, were pushed aside by Lenin and Stalin… The American revolution was unique in that the first stage has not been succeeded by the second – yet.

This was partly because it was not \textit{that} revolutionary. As Barzun writes: “No new Idea entailing a shift in forms of power – the mark of revolutions – was proclaimed. The 28 offences that King George was accused of had long been familiar in England. The language of the Declaration is that of protest against abuses of power, not of proposals for recasting the government on new principles.”\textsuperscript{706} Just as Hume took the principles of Lockean liberalism, made them self-consistent and thereby showed their absurdity, so the American revolutionaries took the principles of the English “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, applied them more generally and in a Rousseauist spirit, and thereby showed that English liberalism was dangerously open-ended, tending to its own destruction. Indeed, as Niall Ferguson writes, the American revolution “was the moment when the British ideal of liberty hit back. It was the moment when the British Empire began to tear itself apart…

“The war [of Independence] is at the very heart of Americans’ conception of themselves: the idea of a struggle for liberty against an evil empire is the country’s creation myth. But it is the great paradox of the American Revolution… that the ones who revolted against British rule were the best-off of all Britain’s colonial subjects. There is good reason to think that, by the 1770s, New Englanders were about the wealthiest people in the world. Per capita income was at least equal to that in the United Kingdom and was far more evenly distributed. The New Englanders had bigger farms, bigger families and better education than the Old Englanders back home. And,

\textsuperscript{705} Ridley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{706} Barzun, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 397.
crucially, they paid far less tax. In 1763 the average Briton paid 26 shillings a year in taxes. The equivalent figure for a Massachusetts taxpayer was just one shilling. To say that being British subjects had been good for these people would be an understatement. And yet it was they, not the indentured labourers of Virginia or the slaves of Jamaica, who first threw off the yoke of imperial authority.”

In the American, as in all revolutions, idealistic motives were mixed with greed. Its idealism, however, had, as Norman Davies writes, “important repercussions in Europe. For one thing, it pushed France’s financial crisis towards the brink. It also made Frenchmen, and others, consider their own predicament: if poor old bumbling George III was to be classed as a tyrant, how should one classify the other monarchs of Europe? If the Americans could rebel against a 3d. duty on tea, what possible justification could there be for the massive imposts under which most Europeans groaned? If the USA had to be created because Americans had no representation in the British Parliament, what should all those Europeans think whose countries did not even possess a parliament?”

But there were serious implications for parliamentarism, too. If parliament placed limits on the king in the name of the people and natural law, there was no reason why limits should not also be placed on parliament in turn by other estates of the realm, even colonials, in the name of the same principles. Thus the American revolution showed, as one historian has put it, that “parliamentary supremacy”, no less than monarchy, “was vulnerable to riot, agitation and boycott…”

Moreover, the process of rebellion could go on forever; for there were always people who did not feel that they belonged to this people, and therefore felt the right to rebel against it. Thus Noam Chomsky points out that many American loyalists fled to Canada “because they didn’t like the

---

708 Thus Sir Winston Churchill wrote: “Vast territories had fallen to the Crown on the conclusion of the Seven Years War. From the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico the entire hinterland of the American colonies became British soil, and the parcelling out of these new lands led to further trouble with the colonists. Many of them, like George Washington, had formed companies to buy these frontier tracts from the Indians, but a royal proclamation restrained any purchasing and prohibited their settlement. Washington, among others, ignored the ban and wrote to his land agent ordering him ‘to secure some of the most valuable lands in the King’s part [on the Ohio], which I think may be accomplished after a while, notwithstanding the proclamation that restrains it at present, and prohibits the settling of them at all; for I can never look upon that proclamation in any other light (but this I must say between ourselves) than as a temporary expedient to quiet the minds of the Indians.’ (italics – WSC). This attempt by the British government to regulate the new lands caused much discontent among the planters, particularly in the Middle and Southern colonies.” (A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, London: Educational Book Company, 1957, volume III, pp. 151-152):
709 Davies, op. cit., p. 678.
doctrinaire, kind of fanatic environment that took hold in the colonies. The percentage of colonists who fled in the American Revolution was actually about 4 percent, it was probably higher than the percentage of Vietnamese who fled Vietnam after the Vietnam War. And remember, they were fleeing from one of the richest places in the world – these were boat-people who fled in terror from Boston Harbor in the middle of winter to Nova Scotia, where they died in the snow trying to get away from all of these crazies here. The numbers are supposed to have been in the neighbourhood of maybe a hundred thousand out of a total population of about two and a half million – so it was a substantial part of the population. And among them were people from groups who knew they were going to get it in the neck if the colonists won – blacks and Native Americans, for example. And they were right: in the case of the Native Americans, it was genocide; in the case of the blacks, it was slavery."711

“And that,” goes on Zamoyski, “still left a considerable proportion of the population out of sympathy with the state of affairs in 1783. The unassimilated communities of Germans, Swiss, Dutch and Finns, and the religious settlements of Quakers, Shakers, Dunkers, Mennonites, Schwenkenfelders and others carried on as before – oblivious to government and resistant to national inclusion. The settlers of what later became Kentucky and Tennessee debated the possibility of switching to Spanish sovereignty. In 1784 the western counties of North Carolina attempted to go their own way. Three years later the Wyoming Valley tried to secede from Pennsylvania. There was opposition, rioting and even revolt against the Congress, just as there had been against Westminster. One reason was that the tax burden had increased dramatically. In the last years of British rule, the colonies enjoyed lower taxation than any people in the Western world except for the Poles. By the late 1780s the Massachusetts per capita tax burden of one shilling had gone up to eighteen shillings; the rise in Virginia was from five pence to ten shillings. And it is worth remembering that tax was what had sparked off the revolution in the first place…”712

However, all this was not foreseen when Thomas Jefferson presented a doctrine of “self-evident” natural rights known as the Declaration of Independence to the Second Continental Congress: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...”

712 Zamoyski, op. cit, p. 38.
When he was ambassador in Paris, Jefferson was asked why he had substituted “happiness” for the traditional Lockean emphasis on “property”. He replied that since the secure possession of property was an important condition of happiness, there was no real contradiction. However, this was the first time in history that “the pursuit of Happiness” had been taken to be one of the purposes of the State, and the failure to achieve this end as a justification for revolution.

“This was not, of course,” writes McClelland, “to say that it was government’s business to regulate the details of people’s lives to make sure that they were cheerful, but it did mean that a very exact sense emerged of government’s duty to provide those conditions in which rational men could pursue happiness, that is further their own interests, without being hindered unnecessarily either by government or by their fellow men. This was more radical than it sounds, because in eighteenth-century political thought it meant that government’s capacity to promote the happiness of its subjects, however negatively, was connected with the vital question of the legitimacy of government. No political theory ever invented, and no actual government since the Flood, had ever had as its proclaimed intention the idea of making men miserable. All governments more or less claim that they have their subjects’ happiness at heart, but most governments have not based their claims to be entitled to rule directly on their happiness-creating function. The reason why governments do not typically base their claim to rule on their capacity to increase happiness is obvious enough, because to do so would be to invite their subjects to judge whether their governments are competent or not. Indeed, it could be argued that most of the justifications for forms of rule which have been on offer since Plato are all careful to distinguish between questions about legitimacy and questions about happiness…”

Mark Almond writes: “The Declaration, approved by congress on 4 July 1776 and signed by its members on 2 August, was greeted with incredulity by the British. The British Gentleman’s Magazine for September, 1776 ridiculed the idea of equality: ‘We hold, they say, these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal. In what are they created equal? Is it in size, strength, understanding, figure, civil or moral accomplishments, or situation of life?”

The British had a point: the equality of men is far from self-evident from a humanist point of view. In fact, the only real justification for it is religious: that all men are made in the image of God, and that Christ died for all men equally. But, having been the leaders in political thought, the British were now behind the times. Rousseau had preached the general will and the nobility of the common man, and it was now the Americans with their “We, the People” Declaration who were more in tune with the latest political ideas.

---

713 McClelland, _op. cit._ pp. 354-355.
In any case, was it not a British philosopher, John Locke, who had spoken of an original state of human equality, and had even looked across the Atlantic to the primitive societies there for its incarnation, saying: “In the beginning all the world was America”? And were not the Americans simply applying the same principle in opposing parliament as the English had in opposing the king nearly a century before?  

However, while Locke had invoked the sovereign power of the people in order to place limits on the king, he never dreamed that any but the landowning gentry, should qualify as “the people” and do the limiting. But the Americans claimed that “the people” included even unrepresented colonials, and that “the will of the people” had a wider meaning than “the will of parliament”. The uncomfortable fact for the British was that, however little basis the doctrine of equality had in empirical fact, it was in the air of public debate, while the Americans’ feeling that they should be treated equally, that is, on equal terms with Britons of similar wealth and breeding, was a very powerful force that brooked no resistance.

But the demand for equality could only go so far without undermining the basis of American society, too. This was a particular problem in relation to the black slaves, who numbered about 400,000, one-fifth of the population of the new country. Thus in April, 1776 Benjamin Franklin admitted “that our struggle has loosened the bonds of government everywhere; that children and apprentices were disobedient; that schools and colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their guardians, and negroes grew more insolent to their masters…” And several of the authors of the Declaration of Independence who spoke so eloquently about the equality of all, such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, were themselves slave-owners. Jefferson wanted to include a clause condemning George III for the slave trade, but the delegates from South Carolina and Georgia succeeded in having it deleted. He himself owned 200 slaves, only seven of whom he ever freed…

“The irony is,” writes Ferguson, “that having won their independence in the name of liberty, the American colonists went on to perpetuate slavery in the southern states. As Samuel Johnson acidly asked in his anti-American pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny*: ‘How is it that the loudest YELPS for liberty come from the drivers of Negroes?’ By contrast, within a few decades of having lost the American colonies, the British abolished first the slave trade and then slavery itself throughout their Empire. Indeed, as early as 1775 the British Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, had offered emancipation to slaves who rallied to the British cause. This was not entirely opportunistic: Lord Mansfield’s famous judgement in Somersett’s case had pronounced

---

715 Thus Edmund Burke “considered the Americans as standing at that time and in that controversy, as England did to King James II in 1688” (Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 63).


717 Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
slavery illegal in England three years before. From the point of view of most African-Americans, American independence postponed emancipation by at least a generation. Although slavery was gradually abolished in northern states like Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island, it remained firmly entrenched in the South, where most slaves lived.

“Nor was independence good news for the native Americans. During the Seven Years War the British government had shown itself anxious to conciliate the Indian tribes, if only to try to lure them away from their alliance with the French. Treaties had been signed which established the Appalachian mountains as the limit of British settlement, leaving the land west of it, including the Ohio Valley, to the Indians. Admittedly, these treaties were not strictly adhered to when peace came, sparking the war known as Pontiac’s Uprising in 1763. But the fact remains that the distant imperial authority in London was more inclined to recognize the rights of the native Americans than the land-hungry colonists on the spot.”

In 1778 France entered the war on the American side – hardly a wise move for a state that was more absolutist than Britain and therefore still more vulnerable to the propaganda of revolution. Indeed, “French assistance to the rebel Americans helped to bankrupt the royal regime in France and create the conditions for revolution in 1789.” But the assistance given to the Americans by the French was decisive in turning the tide of war: on October 19, 1781 the British marched out of Yorktown to surrender to the Americans with their bands playing the old song, “The World Turned Upside Down”...

In 1787 delegates from the Thirteen States assembled at Philadelphia to draft a new Constitution. Their major motivation was fear of despotism and distrust of big government; they wanted to create a government which would interfere as little as possible in the private lives of the citizens. For, as James Madison put it: “Wherever the real power in government lies, there is the danger of oppression. In our government the real power lies in the majority of the community, and the invasion of private rights is chiefly to be apprehended, not from acts of government contrary to the sense of its constituents, but from acts in which the government is the mere instrument of the major number of the constituents. This is a truth of great importance, but not yet sufficiently attended to…”

The Constitution included elements that were familiar from Montesquieu, such as the separation of the powers of the executive (the President), the legislature (the two houses of Congress) and the judiciary (the Supreme Court). However, the Americans went a significant step further in granting

---

719 Almond, op. cit., p. 69.
720 Madison, in James M. Rafferty, Prophetic Insights into the New World Order, Malo, WA: Light Bearers Ministry, 1992, p. 73.
individual citizens the right to bear arms in defence of their rights. Such an innovation was perhaps possible only in America, whose distance from its most powerful rivals, decentralised system of semi-sovereign states and ever-expanding frontiers made strong central government less essential and gave unparalleled freedom to the individualist farmer-settlers.

There is a rich irony in the fact that the State which after 1917 became the main bulwark of ordered government against the revolution should have been the most revolutionary State prior to 1789. Thus in 1787 Jefferson wrote to the future President, James Madison: “A little rebellion now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical... It is a medicine for the sound health of government.”

Indeed, what can be more revolutionary, more undermining of legitimate political authority than the statement made by Abraham Lincoln in 1861: “This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it...” 721 Or, as he said two years later in the Gettysburg address: “government of the people, by the people, for the people”...

Burke pointed to a deeper root of the revolution than its masonic-rationalist ideology - the indomitably Protestant temper of the Americans: “The people are Protestants, and of the kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion. All Protestantism is a sort of dissent. But the religion in our northern colonies is a refinement on the principle of resistance. It is the dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion.” 722

But can a government truly be built on perpetual dissidence? Benjamin Franklin had his doubts. He was prepared to support the constitution of 1787 “with all its faults – if they are such – because I think a general government necessary for us, and there is no form of government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered; and I believe, further, that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other...” 723 So even Franklin believed that democracy, if the people become corrupt, can descend into despotism...

---

721 Almond, op. cit., p. 69.
722 Burke, Speech on Conciliation with America (March, 1775); quoted in Barzun, op. cit., p. 398.
The Great Awakening

But there were two kinds of American Protestantism: the Deist Protestantism of the cultured leaders of the Revolution, who, as Karen Armstrong writes, “experienced the revolution as a secular event,” which merged easily with Masonry, and the Protestantism of Calvinist lower classes. A revival of religious enthusiasm in the Calvinist lower classes is discernible already in the early eighteenth century. This movement had its roots in similar European movements: the German pietism of Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and the British Methodism of John Wesley (1703-1791). The fiery preaching of George Whitefield (1714-1770) was instrumental in bringing this wave of Protestant revivalism to America.

“However, there was also a distinctive American dimension: the colonies’ roots in Puritan dreams of a new godly Commonwealth which would remedy the corruption of Old England. By the end of the seventeenth century these dreams had come to seem very threadbare, and many felt that the Calvinist Congregationalist establishments of New England had lost their way. Nevertheless, from the 1720s the same Calvinist impulse which had so inspired the early colonists was beginning to produce fresh energy: and frequently fresh quarrels! A group of Presbyterian ministers in the Middle Colonies led by Gilbert Tennent (1703-64) caused controversy by insisting on the importance of individual conversion in church life, in reaction to what they saw as the formalism of much contemporary religion; they found a powerful if unlooked for ally in George Whitefield when he began a series of spectacular preaching tours in 1739, often reaching great crowds by speaking to them in the open air.

“The scenes of wild enthusiasm which Whitfield’s sermons generated (although he did not encourage such outbursts) set a tone of emotionalism which was to remain characteristic of ‘Revivalism’ in American Protestant religion: and even during the eighteenth century, the gulf between this religious style and a more restrained, reflective strain in American Protestantism became obvious…”

Revivalism now interacted with the American revolution in such a way that the revivalists “were ready to ascribe apocalyptic significance to current events…

“The Founding Fathers of the American republic were an aristocratic elite and their ideas were not typical. The vast majority of Americans were Calvinists, and they could not relate to this rationalist ethos. Initially, most of the colonists were just as reluctant to break with England as their leaders were. Not all joined the revolutionary struggle. Some 30,000 fought on the

---

725 Comby, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
British side, and after the war between 80,000 and 100,000 left the new states and migrated to Canada, the West Indies, or Britain. Those who elected to fight for independence would be as much motivated by the old myths and millenial dreams of Christianity as by the secularist ideals of the Founders…

“During the first decade of the revolutionary struggle, people were loath to make a radical break with the past. Severing relations with Britain seemed unthinkable, and many still hoped that the British government would change its policies. Nobody was straining forward excitedly to the future or dreaming of a new world order. Most Americans still instinctively responded to the crisis in the old, premodern way: they looked back to an idealized past to sustain them in their position. The revolutionary leaders and those who embraced the more secular Radical Whig ideology drew inspiration from the struggle of the Saxons against the invading Normans in 1066, or the more recent struggle of the Puritan Parliamentarians during the English Civil War. The Calvinists harked back to their own Golden Age in New England, recalling the struggle of the Puritans against the tyrannical Anglican establishment in Old England; they had sought liberty and freedom from oppression in the New World, creating a godly society in the American wilderness. The emphasis in the sermons and revolutionary rhetoric of this period (1763-73) was on the desire to conserve the precious achievements of the past. The notion of radical change inspired fears of decline and ruin. The colonists were seeking to preserve their heritage, according to the old conservative spirit. The past was presented as idyllic, the future as potentially horrific. The revolutionary leaders declared that their actions were designed to keep at bay the catastrophe that would inevitably ensue if there was a radical severance from tradition. They spoke of the possible consequences of British policy with fear, using the apocalyptic language of the Bible.

“But this changed. As the British clung obstinately to their controversial imperial policies, the colonists burned their boats. After the Boston Tea Party (1773) and the Battles of Lexington and Concord (1775) there could be no going back. The Declaration of Independence expressed a new and courageous determination to break away from the old order and go forward to an unprecedented future. In this respect, the Declaration was a modernizing document, which articulated in political terms the intellectual independence and iconoclasm that had characterized the scientific revolution in Europe. But the majority of the colonists were more inspired by the myths of Christian prophecy than by John Locke…

“… The Great Awakening had already made New Light Calvinists wary of the establishment and confident of their ability to effect major change. When revolutionary leaders spoke of ‘liberty’, they used a term that was already saturated with religious meaning: it carried associations of grace, of the freedom of the Gospel and the Sons of God. It was linked with such themes as the Kingdom of God, in which all oppression would end, and the myth [sic]
of the Chosen People who would become God’s instrument in the transformation of the world. Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), president of Yale University, spoke enthusiastically of the revolution ushering in ‘Immanuel’s Land’, and of America becoming ‘the principal seat of that new, that peculiar Kingdom which shall be given to the saints of the Most High’. In 1775, the Connecticut preacher Ebenezer Baldwin insisted that the calamities of the war could only hasten God’s plans for the New World. Jesus would establish his glorious Kingdom in America: liberty, religion and learning had been driven out of Europe and had moved westward, across the Atlantic. The present crisis was preparing the way for the Last Days of the present corrupt order. For Provost William Smit of Philadelphia, the colonies were God’s ‘chosen seat of Freedom, Arts and Heavenly Knowledge’.

“But if churchmen were sacralizing politics, secularist leaders also used the language of Christian utopianism. John Adams looked back on the settlement of America as God’s plan for the enlightenment of the whole of humanity. Thomas Paine was convinced that ‘we have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation such as the present hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand’. The rational pragmatism of the leaders would not itself have been sufficient to help people make the fearsome journey to an unknown future and break with the motherland. The enthusiasm, imagery, and mythology of Christian eschatology gave meaning to the revolutionary struggle and helped secularism and Calvinists alike to make the decisive, dislocating severance from tradition.”

**America and Religious Toleration**

“Thus,” continues Armstrong, “religion played a key role in the creation of the first modern secular republic. After the Revolution, however, when the newly independent states drew up their constitutions, God was mentioned in them only in the most perfunctory manner. In 1786, Thomas Jefferson disestablished the Anglican church in Virginia; his bill declared that coercion in matters faith was ‘sinfull and tyrannical’, that truth would prevail if people were allowed their own opinions, and that there should be a ‘wall of separation’ between religion and politics. The bill was supported by the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians of Virginia, who resented the privileged position of the Church of England in the state. Later the other states followed Virginia’s lead, and disestablished their own churches, Massachusetts being the last one to do so, in 1833. In 1787, when the federal Constitution was drafted at the Philadelphia Convention, God was not mentioned at all, and in the Bill of Rights (1789), the First Amendment of the Constitution formally separated religion from the state: ‘Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof’. Henceforth faith would be a private and voluntary affair in

---

726 Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 80, 82-84.
the United States. This was a revolutionary step and has been hailed as one of the great achievements of the Age of Reason. The thinking behind it was indeed inspired by the tolerant philosophy of the Enlightenment, but the Founding Fathers were also moved by more pragmatic considerations. They knew that the federal Constitution was essential to preserve the unity of the states, but they also realized that if the federal government established any single one of the Protestant denominations and made it the official faith of the United States, the Constitution would not be approved. Congregationalist Massachusetts, for example, would never ratify a Constitution that established the Anglican Church. This was also the reason why Article VI, Section 3, of the Constitution abolished religious tests for office in the federal government. There was idealism in the Founders’ decision to disestablish religion and to secularize politics, but the new nation could not base its identity on any one sectarian option and retain the loyalty of all its subjects. The needs of the modern state demanded that it be tolerant and, therefore, secular.”

Already in Europe the notion of toleration had undergone a subtle but important change, the change from toleration as “a utilitarian expedient to avoid destructive strife” to toleration as “an intrinsic value”. It became a dogma of the Enlightenment and Masonry that a ruler could not impose his religion on his subjects. In fact, certain rulers, such as Frederick the Great, a

---

727 Armstrong, op. cit., p. 85. As Patrick Henry, “the firebrand of the American revolution”, wrote in 1776: It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For that reason alone, people of other faiths have been afforded freedom of worship here.”

728 Isaiah Berlin, “Nationalism”, in The Proper Study of Mankind, London: Pimlico, 1998, p. 581. An example of toleration as a utilitarian expedient is provided by England’s attitude to Roman Catholics before the twentieth century. As Joseph Sobran writes: “For centuries England tolerated Roman Catholics, who were regarded as heretics owing their chief loyalty to a foreign power (the papacy). But Roman Catholics were also barred from public offices, universities, and other positions of influence. Toleration wasn’t considered a virtue: it was only a policy, based on the assumption that ideally there should be no Roman Catholics in England. The policy was to allow Roman Catholicism to exist (in private), while discouraging people from embracing it” (The Wanderer, July 1, 1999). In the twentieth century, however, toleration of Catholics has been seen as a positive virtue, and the only remnant of the old, utilitarian attitude is the ban on a Roman Catholic becoming king or queen of England.

729 According to Enlightenment philosophers, “physical matter in identical circumstances would always behave in the same way: all stones dropped from a great height fall to the ground. What applied to the physical world applied to the human world too. All human beings in human circumstances other than their own would act in very different ways. How human beings conducted themselves was not accidental, but the accident of birth into particular societies at particular moments in those societies’ development determined what kinds of people they would eventually turn out to be. The implications of this view were clear: if you were born in Persia, instead of France, you would have been a Muslim, not a Catholic; if you had been born poor and brought up in bad company you would probably end up a thief; if you had been born a Protestant in northern Europe, rather than a Catholic in southern Europe, then you would be tolerant and love liberty, whereas southerners tended to be intolerant and to put up with autocratic government. If what human beings were like was
Mason himself, had taken religious toleration to the point of almost complete indifference.

However, the complete separation of Church and State, religion and politics, was still unheard-of in Europe. This idea was first put into practice in the United States, a land founded mainly by Calvinist refugees fleeing from the State’s persecution of their religion. What the Calvinist refugees valued above all was the freedom to practice their religion free from any interference from the State.

For, as K.N. Leontiev writes: “The people who left Old England and laid the foundations of the States of America were all extremely religious people who did not want to make any concessions with regard to their burning personal faith and had not submitted to the State Church of Episcopal Anglicanism, not out of progressive indifference, but out of godliness.

“The Catholics, Puritans, Quakers, all were agreed about one thing – that there should be mutual tolerance, not out of coldness, but out of necessity. And so the State created by them for the reconciliation of all these burning religious extremes found its centre of gravity outside religion. Tolerance was imposed by circumstances, there was no inner indifferentism.”

The new doctrine, as we have seen, was enshrined in the Constitution’s First Amendment (1791): “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

the necessary effect of the circumstances they were born to, then nobody had a right to be too censorious about anybody else. A certain toleration of other ways of doing things, and a certain moderation in the criticism of social and political habits, customs and institutions, seemed the natural corollary of the materialistic view of mankind” (McClelland, op. cit., p. 297).


Rafferty, op. cit., p. 54.

Some further quotations will show what this meant for the early Americans. Thus Benjamin Franklin said: “When religion is good, it will take care of itself; when it is not able to take care of itself, and God does not see fit to take care of it, so that it has to appeal to the civil power for support, it is evident to my mind that its cause is a bad one.” (Rafferty, op. cit., p. 71).

Again, in 1786 Thomas Jefferson “drew up for Virginia a statute of religious freedom, the first ever passed by a popular assembly. It said: ‘Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry… but that all men shall be free to profess, and by arguments to maintain their opinions in matters of religion and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capability” (in De Rosa, Vicars of Christ, London: Bantam books, 1988, p. 147).

Again, in 1787 Thomas Jefferson wrote: “The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does no injury for my neighbour to say there
The religious toleration of the United States has undoubtedly been a precious boon for the immigrants from many countries and of many faiths who have fled there to escape persecution. The assumption underlying it was well expressed by a law report in 1917: “If... the attitude of the law both civil and criminal towards all religions depends fundamentally on the safety of the State and not on the doctrines or metaphysics of those who profess them, it is not necessary to consider whether or why any given body was relieved by the law at one time or frowned on at another, or to analyse creeds and tenets, Christian and other.”

However, the idea that the safety of the State is completely independent of the religion (or lack of it) confessed by its citizens is false. For, as Solomon says: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14.34). The history of the people of God demonstrates that their prosperity depended crucially on their fulfilling of the commandments of God. The idea that the religion of a State has no bearing on its prosperity could occur only to a person who has not studied history (or any human science) or believes in a Deist conception of God as a Being Who created the world but does not interfere in its history thereafter.

Also false is the idea that anyone worshipping “according to the dictates of his own conscience” is for that reason alone worthy of protection. “Conscience” very often refers, not to the real voice of God speaking in the soul of man, but any voice, however demonic, that a man thinks is the voice of God. It is therefore inherently dangerous to consider a religion worthy of protection, not because it is objectively true, but because the believers are sincere in their beliefs, whether these are in fact true or false, profitable to society or profoundly harmful to it.

False religion is always harmful, both for its adherents, and for those right-believers who are tempted away from the right path by them. We would never accept the argument that a poison can be sold freely so long as its traders sincerely believe it to be harmless or because the traders “are accountable to God alone” for the harm they cause. And the spiritual poison of heresy is far more harmful than material poison, in that it leads, not simply

are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg...” (Notes on Virginia, Query 17)

Again, in 1789 George Washington said: “Any man, conducting himself as a good citizen and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.” (Rafferty, op. cit., p. 53).

Again, in 1823 James Madison said: “Religion is not in the purview of human government. Religion is essentially distinct from civil government, and exempt from its cognizance; a connection between them is injurious to both.” (Rafferty, op. cit., p. 53).

to the temporal dissolution of the body, but to the eternal damnation of the soul. Of course, it is another question how a false religion is to be combatted. Crude forms of persecution are often counter-productive in that they strengthen the fanaticism of the persecuted. Persuasion and education that respects the freewill of the heretic is without question the best means of combatting false belief. The free will of the heretic is not violated, and he is able to come freely, by the free exercise of his reasoning power, to a knowledge of the truth.\textsuperscript{733}

However, what about those who are too young to reason for themselves or for some other reason unable to exercise their reasoning powers? Should they not be protected from the influence of heretics? If allowed to live in a truly Christian atmosphere, these weak members of society may become stronger in faith and have less need of the protection of the State. But while they are still weak, the influence of heretics, if unchecked, could well lead them astray. It is a generally accepted principle that the young and the weak, who are not yet fully independent spiritually, are entitled to the protection of the State against those who would exploit their weakness to their destruction. So in cases where the heretic is himself stubbornly impenitent, and is leading others astray, physical forms of oppression may be justified. The spiritually strong may refuse to offer physical resistance to religious evil, choosing instead the path of voluntary martyrdom. But the spiritually weak cannot choose this path, and must be protected from the evil, if necessary by physical means. Indeed, one could argue that the government that does not protect the weak in this way is itself persecuting them, laying them open to the most evil and destructive influences. For, as Sir Thomas More’s King Utopus understood, “the worst men be most obstinate and stubborn and in their evil opinion most constant”, so that without some restraint on them “the best and holiest religion would be trodden underfoot by most vain superstitions, even as good corn is by thorns and weeds overgrown and choked.”\textsuperscript{734}

\textsuperscript{733} That is why St. Photius the Great, when writing to the Emperor Basil I who had exiled him, complained most bitterly, not about his physical privations, but about his being deprived of the possibility of reading, for the reason that reading enabled people to exercise their reasoning power better and thereby come to a knowledge of the truth: “No one of the Orthodox has suffered such a thing even at the hands of the heterodox. Athanasios, who suffered much, had often been driven from see both by heretics and by pagans, but no one passed a judgement that he be deprived of his books. Eustathios, the admirable, endured the same treachery at the hands of the Arianizers, but his books were not, as in our case, taken away from him, nor from Paulos, the confessor, John, the golden-mouthed, Flavianos, the inspired; and countless others. Why, pray, should I enumerate those whom the Book of Heaven has enrolled? And why should I mention the Orthodox and most holy Patriarchs? The great Constantine exiled Eusebios, Theogonos, and along with them other heretical men for their impiety and the fickleness of their views. But he neither deprived them of their belongings nor punished them in the matter of their books. \textit{For he was ashamed to hinder from reasoning those whom he used to exile because they acted contrary to reason...}” (D.S. White, \textit{Patriarch Photios of Constantinople}, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, pp. 161-162.).

\textsuperscript{734} More, \textit{Utopia}, \textit{op. cit.}, book II, pp. 119-120.
Lev Tikhomirov writes: “Man is a bodily being. Moral ‘persuasion’ is inseparable from moral ‘coercion’, and in certain cases also from physical ‘violence’. If one says: ‘Act through moral persuasion, but do not dare to resort to physical violence’, this is either absurdity or hypocrisy. Every conviction sooner or later unfailingly finds its expression in forms of physical action for the simple reason that man is not [only] spirit and lives in a physical form. All our acts represent a union of spiritual and physical acts. If a man does something, it is unfailingly accompanied by physical actions. This relates both to good and to evil. One can oppose evil sometimes by moral persuasions, but at other times it is impossible to resist it otherwise than physically, and then ‘resistance’ and ‘violence’ are morally obligatory.”

Moreover, the State needs religion even more than religion needs the State. For “the legislative mind cannot fail to value the religious spirit of a people in view of the unbreakable bond between religion and morality…

“State order and the energetic pursuit of the aims of the public good are attained by a good organisation of the governmental mechanism, by the establishment of rational laws, and by a series of measures of observation, coercion, punishment, encouragement, etc. But however well worked-out the laws may be, and however perfected may be the governmental mechanism, courts and administration, this still will not lead to the attainment of the good ends of the state if citizens do not strive on their own initiative to live in accordance with justice and their own moral duty. A living, self-dependent feeling of moral duty in the souls of citizens is the foundation of the public good: when this is present, the very oversights of the law and the authorities do not become particularly fatal, for the citizens will not hurry to exploit the possibility of abuse, and by their own self-dependent moral acts will significantly correct the evil permitted by the imperfection of the law or the governmental mechanism. On the contrary, however, in the absence of a self-dependent striving of the citizens to act in accordance with righteousness, there will be no question of the State keeping track of everyone, and there will be nobody to keeping an eye on them, for the State’s agents themselves, as products of society, will always have the same character and the same level of morality as exists in the people.

“Thus a living moral feeling constitutes the foundation for the success of the State’s actions. But the State does not of itself have the means to generate this feeling that is necessary to it. The State can take measures that the moral feeling should not be undermined by the spread of immoral teachings or the demoralising spectacle of vice triumphant, etc. By a firm insistence on the fulfilment of the prescribed norms of life and by the systematic punishment of crime the State can ‘drill’ the citizens, make the observance of righteousness

into a habit. But all this has a useful significance only if the moral feeling is somehow ‘generated’ in souls, that is, when the ‘material’ by which the mechanical measures can operate already exists.

“Whence is this necessary material to be taken? By what is the moral feeling ‘generated’?

“… In itself, by its very nature, the moral feeling is not social, but religious…

“The moral feeling of man is the demand that his feelings and actions should be in harmony with a ‘higher’ power of the world’s life… Man wishes to be in union with this higher power, leaving aside all calculations of benefit or non-benefit. Out of all that life can give him, he finds the greatest joy in the consciousness of his union with the very foundation of the world’s powers…

“Man impresses his idea of what is the main, highest world power, and his striving to be in harmony with it, in all spheres of his creativity, including Statehood.

“Therefore the State has all the more to protect and support everything in which the very generation of the moral feeling takes place.

“In the vast majority of cases – this is a general fact of history – people themselves directly link the source of their moral feeling with the Divinity. It is precisely in God that they see that higher power, harmony with which constitutes their morality. Morality flows from religion, religion interprets and confirms morality.

“Besides, it is a general historical fact that people unite into special societies in order to live together in accordance with their religious-moral tasks. These religious organisations interweave with social and political organisations, but they are never completely merged with them, even in the most theocratic States. In the Christian world this collective religious life is carried out, as we know, in the Church…

“In this way the demand to preserve and develop social morality naturally leads the State to a union with the Church. In trying to help the Church make society as moral as possible, the State aims to use in its own work that moral capital which it [the Church] builds up in people…

“Autonomous morality, on the contrary, is founded on the premise that the innate moral feeling guides man by itself. We do not know from where this feeling, this ‘altruism’, comes from, but it rules our moral acts just as the force of gravity rules the movement of the heavenly lights. The religious principle, qua impulse, is quite unnecessary. To clarify what must and what must not be
done, we need only enlightenment, knowledge of the needs of man and society, an understanding of the solidarity of human interests, etc.

“From this point of view, the work of the State in the development of morality comes down to the development of the school and the multiplication of other means of the development of enlightenment, perhaps with the teaching of ‘courses of morality’….

“The tendency to substitute the school for the Church is now [in 1903] very strong, and in general the State and the law of contemporary countries have to all practical purposes already done much for the triumph of the idea of autonomous morality in place of religious morality….

“‘Autonomous’ morality leads to an endless diversity of moral rules, and to the disappearance of any generally accepted line of behaviour.

“Moreover, the right of the person to have his ‘autonomous’ morality annihilates the possibility of public moral discipline. Whatever foulness a man may have committed, he can always declare that according to ‘his’ morality this act is permissible or even very lofty. Society has no criterion by which to reproach the lie contained in such a declaration. It can kill such a person, but it cannot morally judge him or despise him. But this ‘moral’ condemnation is society’s most powerful weapon for the education of the person, beginning from childhood and throughout almost the whole course of a man’s life…

“All in all, therefore, the autonomy of morality leads to moral chaos, in which neither law nor custom nor public opinion are possible – that is, no social or political discipline in general…

“Even leaving aside plain debauchery, which unbridles predatory instincts and similar phenomena, developing autonomy under its all-permissive protection, and taking into consideration only chosen natures that are truly endowed with a subtle moral feeling, we nevertheless find in them an extremely harmful, fruitlessly revolutionary type of character, an element that is forever striving to destroy social-political forms, but which is satisfied with no new constructions. In the cultured world we have already been observing such a picture for more than one hundred years now…”

And yet the autonomy of morality from religion was never preached by America’s Founding Fathers. Thus John Adams, the second president and also chairman of the American Bible Society, said in an address to military leaders: “We have no government armed with the power capable of contending with human passions, unbridled by morality and true religion.

Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Again, his son, John Quincy Adams, the sixth president and also chairman of the American Bible Society, said on July 4, 1821: “The highest glory of the American revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.” The great tragedy of modern America is that this “indissoluble bond” has now been broken...

Europe versus the World

It is one of the mysteries of world history why it was Europe, not China, that became the leading world civilization and the chief agent of globalization in her image. In the Middle Ages, China had suffered from a Mongol dynasty (the Yuan) and a massive population loss from 100 to 60 million as a result of the Black Death. However, towards the end of the fourteenth century the Ming emperors restored the unity of the Chinese world, and led the country on a remarkable course of economic development and expansion. As John Darwin writes: “Around 1400, it might have seemed to any well-informed observer that China’s pre-eminence in the Old World was not only secure but likely to grow stronger. Under Ming rule, China’s subordination to the Mongols and their imperial ambitions all across Eurasia had been definitively broken. Ming government reinforced the authority of the emperor over his provincial officials. The use of eunuchs at the imperial court was designed to strengthen the emperor against the intrigues of his scholar-gentry advisers (as well as protect the virtue of his concubines). Great efforts were made to improve the agrarian economy and its waterway network. Then, between 1405 and 1431, the emperors dispatched the eunuch admiral Cheng-ho on seven remarkable voyages into the Indian Ocean to assert China’s maritime power. Commanding fleets carrying over twenty thousand men, Cheng-ho cruised as far as Jeddah in the Red Sea and the East African coast, and made China’s presence felt in Sri Lanka, whose recalcitrant ruler was carried off to Peking. Before the Europeans had gained the navigational know-how needed to find their way into the South Atlantic (and back) China was poised to assert its maritime supremacy in the eastern seas.”

But then mysteriously the Ming Empire retreated within itself. The Great Wall was completed, the great voyages westwards stopped, and contacts with other cultures were cut short. “The greatest puzzle in Chinese history is why the extraordinary dynamism that had created the largest and richest commercial economy in the world seemed to dribble away after 1400. China’s lead in technical ingenuity and in the social innovations required for a market economy was lost. It was not China that accelerated towards, and through, an industrial revolution, but the West…”

---

And yet, even as later as 1750, it was not at all clear why the West should have taken the lead over China. “Kiangnan (the Yangtze delta) was a great manufacturing region, producing cotton cloth for ‘export’ to the rest of China. With a dense population (a thousand people to the square mile) of over 30 million, numerous cities, and a thick web of water communications connecting it with the middle and upper Yangtze (a colossal hinterland), as well as the rest of China (via the Grand Canal), Kiangnan was comparable to Europe’s commercial heartland. A powerful case can be made that as a market economy it was as wealthy and productive as North West Europe. Textile production was similar, while the consumption of items like sugar and tea may well have been higher. Technical ingenuity was widespread. Moreover, China benefited from laws that made buying and selling land easier than in Europe, and from a labour market in which serfdom had practically vanished (unlike in Europe). In an orderly, well-regulated society, with low levels of taxation and a state that actively promoted better practice (usually in agriculture), there seemed no obvious reason why material progress along Adam Smith’s lines (what economists call ‘Smithian growth’) should not continue indefinitely, on a scale comparable with Europe…

“The question becomes: why did Kiangnan (and China) fail to match the economic expansion of Europe, and check the emergence of a Europe-centred world economy? The best answer we have is that it could not surmount the classic constraints of pre-industrial growth. By the late eighteenth century it face steeply rising costs for food, fuel and raw materials. Increasing population and expanding output competed for the produce of a more or less fixed land area. The demand for food throttled the increase in raw cotton production. Raw cotton prices probably doubled in the Yangtze delta between 1750 and 1800. The demand for fuel (in the form of wood) brought deforestation and a degraded environment. The escape route from this trap existed in theory, Kiangnan should have drawn its supplies from further away. It should have cut the costs of production by mechanization, enlarging its market and thus its source of supply. It should have turned to coal to meet the need for fuel. In practice there was little chance for change along such lines. It faced competition from many inland centres where food and raw materials were cheaper, and which could also exploit China’s well-developed system of waterway transport. The very perfection of China’s commercial economy allowed new producers to enter the market with comparative ease at the same technological level. Under these conditions, mechanization – even if technologically practical – might have been stymied at birth. And, though China had coal, it was far from Kiangnan and could not be transported there cheaply. Thus, for China as a whole, both the incentive and the means to take the industrial ‘high road’ were meager or absent.

“The most developed parts of Europe did not face these constraints…”739

But these economic factors, though important, were not the decisive ones. Still more important were cultural factors, and in particular the changes induced in European thinking by the Enlightenment. Darwin continues: “It was in this period that Europeans first advance the claim that their civilization and culture were superior to all others – not theologically (that was old hat) but intellectually and materially. Whether this claim was true need not detain us. Much more important was the Europeans’ willingness to act as if it were. This was shown in their eagerness to collect and categorize the knowledge they gleaned from other parts of the world. It was revealed in the confidence with which they fitted this knowledge into a structure of thought with themselves at the centre. The intellectual annexation of non-European Eurasia preceded the imposition of a physical dominance. It was expressed in the ambition by the end of our period (earlier if we include the French invasion of Egypt) to ‘remake’ parts of Afro-Asia as the ‘New World’ had been ‘made’. And it ultimately rested on the extraordinary conviction that Europe alone could progress through history, leaving the rest of the world in a ‘stationary state’ awaiting Europe’s Promethean touch.

“In China between the 1750s and 1820s there was to be no great change in cultural direction, no drastic reappraisal of China’s place in the larger world, certainly no repudiation of the cultural past. Nor was there any obvious reason why there should have been. This was a wealthy, successful and sophisticated gentry society. The Chi’ien-lung (Qianlong) reign (1735-1796) was one of political stability, prosperity and (in China proper) peace. In the slogan of the day, it was the ‘Flourishing Age’. Their conquests in Inner Asia, the final victory over the turbulent steppe, crowned the Ch’ing’s achievement in pacifying, reunifying, consolidating and securing the Chinese realm. The perpetual threat of dynastic collapse in the face of barbarian attack – the great constant in China’s long history as a unified state – had been lifted at last: confirmation, were it needed, of China’s cultural and technological superiority where it mattered most. It was, after all, a triumph which, in geographical scale and geopolitical importance (if not economic value) matched Europe’s in America.

“There were of course social and cultural stresses. Military failures against Burma and Vietnam; symptoms of growing bureaucratic corruption; popular millenarian uprisings like the White Lotus movement: all hinted as the onset of dynastic decline, the gradual decay of the ‘mandate of heaven’ on which dynastic legitimacy was thought to depend. But the Confucian tradition remained immensely strong. Its central assumption was that social welfare was maximized under the rule of scholar-bureaucrats steeped in the paternalist and hierarchical teachings of K’ung-fu-tzu. The Confucian synthesis, with its Taoist elements (which taught the need for material simplicity and harmony with the natural world), face no significant intellectual challenge. Religion in China played a role quite different from that
of its counterpart in Europe. While ‘pure’ Taoism had some intellectual influence, and its mystical beliefs attracted a popular following, it had no public status, and was regarded with suspicion by the Confucian bureaucracy. Salvationist beliefs were officially frowned upon. Buddhism was followed mainly in Tibet and Mongolia. The emperors were careful to show it respect, as a concession to the Buddhist elites co-opted into their system of overrule. In China proper it was marginalized. Buddhist monks, like Taoist priests, were seen as disruptive and troublesome.

“The scholar-bureaucracy, and the educated gentry class from which it was drawn, thus faced no competition from an organized priesthood. No challenge was made from within the social elite by the devotees of religious enthusiasm. Nor was the bureaucrats’ classical learning threatened by new forms of ‘scientific’ knowledge. For reasons that historians have debated at length, the tradition of scientific experimentation had faded away, perhaps as early as 1400. Part of the reason may lie in the striking absence in Confucian thought of the ‘celestial lawgiver’ – a god who had prescribed the laws of nature. In Europe, belief in such a providential figure, and the quest for ‘his’ purposes and grand design, had been a (perhaps the) central motive for scientific inquiry. But the fundamental assumption that the universe was governed by a coherent system of physical laws that could be verified empirically was lacking in China. Even the scholarly kaozheng movement in the eighteenth century, which stressed the importance of collecting empirical data across a range of scientific and technical fields, rejected ‘the notion of a lawful, uniform and mathematically predictable universe’. It should be seen instead as part of the long tradition of critique and commentary upon ‘classical’ knowledge, not an attack upon its assumptions…”

This is an important insight. We have seen how the scientific revolution, which had such an important impact on the Enlightenment, was pioneered by highly religious scientists, like Newton, who believed that in describing the laws of nature they were uncovering a little of the Mind of God. This assumption proceeded from the fundamental Christian belief that man is made in the image of God, and that his logical and reasoning powers are also in the image of the “Logos”, or Word and Wisdom of God. However, this assumption was lacking in Chinese thought, which stunted experimentation and scientific research. And this fact, combined with certain environmental disadvantages – for example, the lack of easy access to coal – meant that China stagnated while Europe moved forward in the vital technological race.

However, this is not enough to explain the sheer aggressiveness of the European expansion into the rest of the world, which was so destructive was it that the traditional societies of the East had the choice: either to become part of that expansion and that civilization, or be destroyed by it. Thus Japan chose, after some hesitation, to join – and prospered, at least materially. China,

---

however, resisted, which led to the collapse of her imperial system at the beginning of the twentieth century, and then a period of anarchy and war before the disastrous imposition of the Enlightenment philosophy in its most consistent but also most destructive form - communism.

The Europeans still chose to call their civilization Christian. And yet the spread of Christian civilization had been by no means as destructive in earlier ages, and was able to convert indigenous societies without destroying them. What was it about this new expansion of Christianity that made it so much more violent and harmful than previous periods of expansion?

The answer lies in the fact that the Enlightenment, and before it, Renaissance humanism and Protestant rationalism, had introduced a kind of virus into European Christianity that in fact turned it into *anti-Christianity*. Yes, the Christian belief in the One Creator of heaven and earth was the vital stimulus to modern science. But the “reasonable rationalism” of Christian scientists like Newton, who believed in revelation as well as reason, and in humbling the human mind before the Original Mind, was undermined by the “irrational rationalism” of the philosophers, who subjected *everything* to corrosive doubt, raising their own feeble reason above the whole of reality, and thereby undermining not only Christianity but even the possibility of any kind of rational thought. We have seen where this irrational rationalism led in the case of the philosophy of David Hume, and with what difficulty Immanuel Kant constructed a very limited breakwater against its ravages. It is not surprising that it should also have ravaged other traditional societies such as the Chinese, destroying, as Darwin writes, “the scholastic monopoly of ‘classical’ knowledge that remained so immensely powerful in Islamic and Confucian culture.”

Darwin provides another reason why the impact of Europe on the traditional societies of the East should have been so destructive at this time: the fact that the Europeans had acquired the habit of ruling and destroying in the West – in North and South America. “It was in the Americas that the Europeans discovered their capacity to impose radical change upon other societies – through enslavement, expropriation, conversion, migration and economic exploitation. It was there that they saw the devastating effects that one culture or people could have on another – an impact without parallel elsewhere in Eurasia. It was there, above all, that they found peoples who were living in what seemed an earlier age, following modes of life that, conjecture suggested, might once have prevailed in Europe. ‘In the beginning,’ said Locke, ‘all the world was America’. The result was a great backward extension of the historical past (far beyond the limits of biblical creation) and a new mode of speculative inquiry into the stages through which European society must have passed to reach its contemporary form.

---

“America revolutionized the European sense of time. It encouraged Europeans to devise a historical framework into which they could fit the states and peoples of the rest of the world. It helped to promote a conjectural history of progress in which Europe had reached the highest stage. In the later eighteenth century this sense of Europe’s premier place in a global order was reinforced by three hugely influential ideas. The first was the virtue of commerce as a civilizing agent, on which Hume and the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment insisted. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith pressed the case for commercial freedom as the surest route to material progress, and the idea of unfettered trade as a means to global harmony was taken up by Immanuel Kant in his *Perpetual Peace* (1798). It was a short step to argue (like the Victorian free-traders) that Europe should lead the rest of the world into universal free trade, and to see the world itself as a vast single market. The second was the extraordinary confidence displayed by Enlightenment thinkers that human institutions and even human behaviour could be reconstructed along ‘rational’ lines. No one carried this further than the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, whose utilitarian calculus (the greatest happiness for the greatest number) supplied a measure against which laws and institutions anywhere in the world could be tested. Armed with the calculus, the enlightened legislator (from Europe) could frame better laws than benighted locals mired in superstition and antiquated prejudices. To his follower James Mill, the history of India revealed that ‘the manners, institutions and attainments of the Hindus have been stationary for many years’ (since about 300 BC he suggested), a savage indictment he extended to China. Europe’s Promethean touch offered the only hope for a resumption of progress. The third proposition was just as startling. It was the growing conviction by the end of the century that there rested on the Christian societies of Europe an urgent obligation to carry the gospel throughout the world. What was especially significant was the force of this evangelizing urge in Protestant Britain, the richest and strongest of the European maritime states, and by 1815 the dominant sea power throughout Southern Asia.

“The second half of the eighteenth century thus saw the crystallization of a new and remarkable view of Europe’s place in the world. The sense of the limits and peculiarities of European civilization characteristic of the Age of Equilibrium had been replaced by a conviction that Europe’s beliefs and institutions had a universal validity. This confident claim drew strength from the expansion of dominion, trade and influence, strikingly symbolized in the conquest of India. It rested on the conviction that European thought had explained the stages of history, and that European science could provide systematically – all the data that were needed to understand the globe as a whole. The vital ingredients for a new mentality of global preponderance had now been assembled.”

J.H. Randall, Jr. writes: “It was from the spread of reason and science among individual men that the great apostles of the Enlightenment hoped to bring about the ideal society of mankind. And from there they hoped for a veritable millenium. From the beginning of the [eighteenth] century onward there arose one increasing paean of progress through education. Locke, Helvétius, and Bentham laid the foundations for this generous dream; all men, of whatever school, save only those who clung... to the Christian doctrine of original sin, believed with all their ardent natures in the perfectibility of the human race. At last mankind held in its own hands the key to its destiny: it could make the future almost what it would. By destroying the foolish errors of the past and returning to a rational cultivation of nature, there were scarcely any limits to human welfare that might not be transcended.

“It is difficult for us to realize how recent a thing is this faith in human progress. The ancient world seems to have had no conception of it; Greeks and Romans looked back rather to the Golden Age from which man had degenerated. The Middle Ages, of course, could brook no such thought. The Renaissance, which actually accomplished so much, could not imagine that man could ever rise again to the level of glorious antiquity; its thoughts were all on the past. Only with the growth of science in the seventeenth century could men dare to cherish such an overweening ambition... All the scientists, from Descartes down, despised the ancients and carried the day for the faith in progress.”

There were obvious deficiencies in this optimistic view of the world. In the first place, it failed to explain the existence of evil - prejudice and bad education could hardly account for all evil. If this was the best of all possible worlds, as Leibniz claimed, why did the terrible earthquake of Lisbon in 1755 take place? Some fault in the harmony of God’s laws? Or a deliberate irruption of God’s wrath into a sinful world? In either case one had to admit, with Voltaire himself, that “the world does, after all, contain evil”, and that either nature was not harmonious and perfect, or that God did intervene in its workings – postulates that were both contrary to the Enlightenment creed.

Secondly, it failed to satisfy the cravings of the religious man; for man, again contrary to the Enlightenment creed, is not only a rational animal, but also a religious animal. For, as Roger Scruton writes, “Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, Hume, Smith, and the Scottish Enlightenment, the Kant of Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone – such thinkers and movements had collectively remade the God of Christianity as a creature of the head rather than the heart. God retreated from the world to the far reaches of infinite space, where only vertiginous thoughts could capture him. Daily life is of

---

little concern to such a God, who demands no form of obedience except to the
universal precepts of morality. To worship him is to bow in private towards
the unknowable. Worship conceived in such a way offers no threat to the
Enlightenment conception of a purely legal citizenship, established by a social
contract and maintained by a secular power.

“As God retreated from the world, people reached out for a rival source of
membership, and national identity seemed to answer to the need…”744

The cult of the nation did not really get underway until the nineteenth
century. But already in the first half of the eighteenth century, as we have
seen, the religious cravings suppressed by Enlightenment rationalism were
seeking outlets in more emotional forms of religion, the very opposite of
enlightened calm. Such were Methodism in England and Pietism in Germany,
Revivalism and the Great Awakening in America and “Convulsionarism” in
France. In some ways, however, these very emotional, passionate forms of
religion worked in the same direction as the cult of reason. They, too, tended
to minimise the importance of theology and dogma, and to maximise the
importance of man and human activity and human passion. Thus in
American Revivalism, writes Cragg, “conversion was described in terms of
how a man felt, the new life was defined in terms of how he acted. This was
more than an emphasis on the moral consequences of obedience to God; it
was a preoccupation with man, and it became absorbed in what he did and in
the degree to which he promoted righteousness. In a curious way man’s
activity was obscuring the cardinal fact of God’s rule.”745

The French revolution was to bring together the streams of Enlightenment
rationalism and irrational religion in a single, torrential rebellion against
God... The rationalists became adept at explaining religion in naturalistic
terms. Religion was simply a “need”, no different in principle from other
needs, as Freud later tried to demonstrate. Of course, no religious person – or
rather, no person, religious or not, who simply wishes to examine the facts
objectively - will find such explanations even remotely convincing. But it
must be admitted that, unconvincing though their explanations might be, the
Enlightenment philosophers managed to convince enough people to create
whole generations of men possessing not even a spark of that religious
“enthusiasm” which they so despised.

Were they happier for it? Of course, worldly “happiness” as the goal of life
is in itself an Enlightenment criterion, which would be rejected by believers.
But let us see whether the Enlightenment attained the goal it set itself.

744 Scruton, The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat, London: Continuum,
2002, p. 43.
745 Cragg, op. cit., p. 181.
The immediate result of the Enlightenment was the French revolution and all the revolutions that took their inspiration from it, with all their attendant bloodshed and misery, destroying both the bodies and souls of men on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Science and education have indeed spread throughout the world. But poverty has not been abolished, nor war nor disease nor crime. If it were possible to measure “happiness” scientifically, then it is highly doubtful whether the majority of men are any happier at the beginning of the twenty-first century than they were before the bright beams of the Enlightenment began to dawn on the world. Condorcet wrote: “The time will come when the sun will shine only upon a world of free men who recognise no master except their reason, when tyrants and slaves, priests, and their stupid or hypocritical tools will no longer exist except in history or on the stage”. That time has not yet come. Most men do indeed “recognise no master except their reason”. But there are still tyrants and slaves (and priests) – and no discernible decrease in human misery. It is especially the savagery of the twentieth century that has convinced us of this. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer write: “In the most general sense of progressive thought the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.”\textsuperscript{746} And as Nadezhda Mandelstam writes: “We have seen the triumph of evil after the values of humanism have been vilified and trampled on. The reason these values succumbed was probably that they were based on nothing except boundless confidence in the human intellect.”\textsuperscript{747}

And the reason why “boundless confidence in the human intellect” has brought us to this pass is that, as L.A. Tikhomirov writes, the cult of reason “very much wants to establish worldly prosperity, it very much wants to make people happy, but it will achieve nothing, because it approaches the problem from the wrong end.

“It may appear strange that people who think only of earthly prosperity, and who put their whole soul into realising it, attain only disillusionment and exhaustion. People who, on the contrary, are immersed in cares about the invisible life beyond the grave, attain here, on earth, results constituting the highest examples yet known on earth of personal and social development! However, this strangeness is self-explanatory. The point is that \textit{man} is by his nature precisely the kind of being that Christianity understands him to be \textit{by faith}; the aims of life that are indicated to him \textit{by faith} are precisely the kind of aims that he has in reality, and not the kind that reason divorced from faith delineates. Therefore in educating a man in accordance with the Orthodox world-view, we conduct his education correctly, and thence we get results that are good not only in that which is most important [salvation] (which unbelievers do not worry about), but also in that which is secondary (which is


\textsuperscript{747} Nadezhda Mandelstam, \textit{Hope against Hope}. 

375
the only thing they set their heart on). In losing faith, and therefore ceasing to worry about the most important thing, people lost the possibility of developing man in accordance with his true nature, and so they get distorted results in earthly life, too.”748

The problem is, continues Tikhomirov, that “reason is a subordinate capacity. If it is not directed by the lofty single organ of religion perception – the feeling of faith, it will be directed by the lower strivings, which are infinitely numerous. Hence all the heresies, all the ‘fractions’, all contemporary reasonings, too. This is a path of seeking which we can beforehand predict will lead to endless disintegration, splintering and barrenness in all its manifestations, and so in the end it will only exhaust people and lead them to a false conviction that in essence religious truth does not exist.”749

And yet such a conclusion will be reached only if the concept of reason is limited in a completely arbitrary manner. For, as Copleston points out, the idea of reason of the Enlightenment philosophers “was limited and narrow. To exercise reason meant for them pretty well to think as les philosophes thought; whereas to anyone who believes that God has revealed Himself it is rational to accept this revelation and irrational to reject it.”750

But the Enlightenment philosophers not only limited and narrowed the concept of reason: they deified it.

As Berlin writes: “Reason is always right. To every question there is only one true answer which with sufficient assiduity can be infallibly discovered, and this applies no less to questions of ethics or politics, of personal and social life, than to the problems of physics or mathematics. Once found, the putting of a solution into practice is a matter of mere technical skill; but the traditional enemies of progress [priests and despots] must first be removed, and men taught the importance of acting in all questions on the advice of disinterested experts whose knowledge is founded on reason and experience. Once this has been achieved, the path is clear to the millenium.

“But the influence of environment is no less important than that of education. If you should wish to foretell the course of a man’s life, you must consider such factors as the character of the region in which he lives, its climate, the fertility of its soil, its distance from the sea, in addition to his physical characteristics and the nature of his daily occupation. Man is an

749 Tikhomirov, “Dukhovenstvo i obshchestvo…”, op. cit., p. 32.
object in nature, and the human soul, like material substance, is swayed by no supernatural influences and possesses no occult properties; its entire behaviour can be adequately accounted for by means of ordinary verifiable physical hypotheses. The French materialist La Mettrie developed this empiricism to, and indeed beyond its fullest limits in a celebrated treatise, L'Homme Machine, which caused much scandal at the time of its publication. His views were an extreme example of opinions shared in varying degrees by the editors of the Encyclopedia, Diderot and d’Alembert, by Holbach, Helvétius and Condillac, who, whatever their other differences, were agreed that man’s principal difference from the plants and lower animals lies in his possession of self-consciousness, in his awareness of certain of his own processes, in his capacity to use reason and imagination, to conceive ideal purposes and to attach moral values to any activity or characteristic in accordance with its tendency to forward or retard the ends which he desires to realise. A serious difficulty which this view involved was that of reconciling the existence of free will on the one hand, with complete determination by character and environment on the other; this was only the old conflict between free will and divine foreknowledge in a new form, with Nature in the place of God. Spinoza had observed that if a stone falling through the air could think, it might well imagine that it had freely chosen its own path, being unaware of the external causes, such as the aim and force of the thrower and the natural medium, which determine its fall. Similarly, it is only ignorance of the natural causes of his behaviour that makes man suppose himself in some fashion different from the falling stone: omniscience would quickly dispel this vain delusion, even though the feeling of freedom to which it gives rise may itself persist, but without its power to deceive. So far as extreme empiricism is concerned, this deterministic doctrine can be made consistent with optimistic rationalism: but it carries the very opposite implications with regard to the possibility of reform in human affairs. For if men are made saints or criminals solely by the movement of matter in space, the educators are as rigorously determined to act as they do, as are those whom it is their duty to educate. Everything occurs as it does as a result of unalterable processes of nature; and no improvement can be effected by the free decisions of individuals, however wise, however benevolent and powerful, since they cannot, any more than any other entity, alter natural necessity. This celebrated crux, stripped of its old theological dress, emerged even more sharply in its secular form; it presented equal difficulties to both sides, but became obscured by the larger issues at stake. Atheists, sceptics, deists, materialists, rationalists, democrats, utilitarians, belonged to one camp; theists, metaphysicians, supporters and apologists of the existing order to the other. The rift between enlightenment and clericalism was so great, and the war between them so savage, that doctrinal difficulties within each camp passed relatively unperceived.”

The contradiction between freewill and natural necessity was in fact a much greater problem for the philosophes than for their theist opponents; but Berlin, being himself an atheist, chose to overlook this. Let us therefore turn to another, theist philosopher for a deeper explanation of the contradiction at the heart of the Enlightenment – C.S. Lewis. Although Lewis’ argument is directed first of all against two later products of the Enlightenment – Marxism and Freudianism – it applies in a general way to all attempts to enthrone reason above everything else: “It is a disastrous discovery, as Emerson says somewhere, that we exist. I mean, it is disastrous when instead of merely attending to a rose we are forced to think of ourselves looking at the rose, with a certain type of mind and a certain type of eyes. It is disastrous because, if you are not very careful, the colour of the rose gets attributed to our optic nerves and is scent to our noses, and in the end there is no rose left. The professional philosophers have been bothered about this universal black-out for over two hundred years, and the world has not much listened to them. But the same disaster is now occurring on a level we can all understand.

“We have recently ‘discovered that we exist’ in two new senses. The Freudians have discovered that we exist as bundles of complexes. The Marxians have discovered that we exist as members of some economic class. In the old days, it was supposed that if a thing seemed obviously true to a hundred men, then it was probably true in fact. Nowadays the Freudian will tell you to go and analyze the hundred: you will find that they all think Elizabeth [I] a great queen because they have a mother-complex. Their thoughts are psychologically tainted at the source. And the Marxist will tell you to go and examine the economic interests of the hundred; you will find that they all think freedom a good thing because they are all members of the bourgeoisie whose prosperity is increased by a policy of laissez-faire. Their thoughts are ‘ideologically tainted’ at the source.

“Now this is obviously great fun; but it has not always been noticed that there is a bill to pay for it. There are two questions that people who say this kind of things ought to be asked. The first is, Are all thoughts thus tainted at the source, or only some? The second is, Does the taint invalidate the tainted thought – in the sense of making it untrue – or not?

“If they say that all thoughts are thus tainted, then, of course, we must remind them that Freudianism and Marxism are as much systems of thought as Christian theology or philosophical idealism. The Freudian and the Marxist are in the same boat with all the rest of us, and cannot criticize us from outside. They have sawn off the branch they were sitting on. If, on the other hand, they say that the taint need not invalidate their thinking, then neither need it invalidate ours. In which case they have saved their own branch, but also saved ours along with it.
“The only line they can really take is to say that some thoughts are tainted and others are not – which has the advantage (if Freudians and Marxians regard it as an advantage) of being what every sane man has always believed. But if that is so, then we must ask how you find out which are tainted and which are not. It is no earthly use saying that those are tainted which agree with the secret wishes of the thinker. Some of the things I should like to believe must in fact be true; it is impossible to arrange a universe which contradicts everyone’s wishes, in every respect, at every moment. Suppose I think, after doing my accounts, that I have a large balance at the bank. And suppose you want to find out whether this belief of mine is ‘wishful thinking’. You can never come to any conclusion by examining my psychological condition. Your only chance of finding out is to sit down and work through the sum yourself. When you have checked my figures, then, and then only, will you know whether I have that balance or not. If you find my arithmetic correct, then no amount of vapouring about my psychological condition can be anything but a waste of time. If you find my arithmetic wrong, then it may be relevant to explain psychologically how I came to be so bad at my arithmetic, and the doctrine of the concealed wish will become relevant – but only after you have yourself done the sum and discovered me to be wrong on purely arithmetical grounds. It is the same with thinking and all systems of thought. If you try to find out which are tainted by speculating about the wishes of the thinkers, you are merely making a fool of yourself. You must find out on purely logical grounds which of them do, in fact, break down as arguments. Afterwards, if you like, go on and discover the psychological causes of the error.

“In other words, you must show that a man is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion that he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly. In the course of the last fifteen years I have found this vice so common that I have had to invent a name for it. I call it Bulverism. Some day I am going to write the biography of its imaginary inventor, Ezekiel Bulver, whose destiny was determined at the age of five when he heard his mother say to his father – who had been maintaining that two sides of a triangle were together greater than the third – ‘Oh you say that because you are a man.’ ‘At that moment,’ E. Bulver assures us, ‘there flashed across my opening mind the great truth that refutation is no necessary part of argument. Assume that your opponent is wrong, and then explain his error, and the world will be at your feet. Attempt to prove that he is wrong or (worse still) try to find out whether he is wrong or right, and the national dynamism of our age will thrust you to the wall.’ This is how Bulver became one of the makers of the Twentieth Century.

“I find the fruits of his discovery almost everywhere. Thus I see my religion dismissed on the grounds that ‘the comfortable parson had every reason for assuring the nineteenth century worker that poverty would be
rewarded in another world’. Well, no doubt he had. On the assumption that Christianity is an error, I can see early enough that some people would still have a motive for inculcating it. I see it so easily that I can, of course, play the game the other way round, by saying that ‘the modern man has every reason for trying to convince himself that there are no eternal sanctions behind the morality he is rejecting’. For Bulverism is a truly democratic game in the sense that all can play it all day long, and that it gives no unfair privilege to the small and offensive minority who reason. But of course it gets us not one inch nearer to deciding whether, as a matter of fact, the Christian religion is true or false. That question remains to be discussed on quite different grounds – a matter of philosophical and historical argument. However it were decided, the improper motives of some people, both for believing it and for disbeliefing it, would remain just as they are.

“I see Bulverism at work in every political argument. The capitalists must be bad economists because we know why they want capitalism, and equally the Communists must be bad economists because we know why they want Communism. Thus, the Bulverists on both sides. In reality, of course, either the doctrines of the capitalists are false, or the doctrines of the Communists, or both; but you can only find out the rights and wrongs by reasoning – never by being rude about your opponent’s psychology.

“Until Bulverism is crushed, reason can play no effective part in human affairs. Each side snatches it early as a weapon against the other; but between the two reason itself is discredited. And why should reason not be discredited? It would be easy, in answer, to point to the present state of the world, but the real answer is even more immediate. The forces discrediting reason, themselves depend on reasoning. You must reason even to Bulverize. You are trying to prove that all proofs are invalid. If you fail, you fail. If you succeed, then you fail even more – for the proof that all proofs are invalid must be invalid itself.

“The alternative is either self-contradicting idiocy or else some tenacious belief in our power of reasoning, held in the teeth of all the evidence that Bulverists can bring for a ‘taint’ in this or that human reasoner. I am ready to admit, if you like, that this tenacious belief has something transcendental or mystical about it. What then? Would you rather be a lunatic than a mystic?

“So we see there is a justification for holding on to our belief in Reason. But can this be done without theism? Does ‘I know’ involve that God exists? Everything I know is an inference from sensation (except the present moment). All our knowledge of the universe beyond our immediate experiences depends on inferences from these experiences. If our inferences do not give a genuine insight into reality, then we can know nothing. A theory cannot be accepted if it does not allow our thinking to be a genuine
insight, nor if the fact of our knowledge is not explicable in terms of that theory.

“But our thoughts can only be accepted as a genuine insight under certain conditions. All beliefs have causes but a distinction must be drawn between (1) ordinary causes and (2) a special kind of cause called ‘a reason’. Causes are mindless events which can produce other results than belief. Reasons arise from axioms and inferences and affect only beliefs. Bulverism tries to show that the other man has causes and not reasons and that we have reasons and not causes. A belief which can be accounted for entirely in terms of causes in worthless. This principle must not be abandoned when we consider the beliefs which are the basis of others. Our knowledge depends on the certainty about axioms and inferences. If these are the result of causes, then there is no possibility of knowledge. Either we can know nothing or thought has reasons only, and no causes...

“It is admitted that the mind is affected by physical events; a wireless set is influenced by atmospherics, but it does not originate its deliverances – we’d take notice of it if we thought it did. Natural events we can relate to another until we can trace them finally to the space-time continuum. But thought has no father but thought. It is conditioned, yes, not caused...

“The same argument applies to our values, which are affected by social factors, but if they are caused by them we cannot know that they are right. One can reject morality as an illusion, but the man who does so often tacitly excepts his own ethical motive: for instance the duty of freeing morality from superstition and of spreading enlightenment.

“Neither Will nor Reason is the product of Nature. Therefore either I am self-existent (a belief which no one can accept) or I am a colony of some Thought or Will that are self-existent. Such reason and goodness as we can attain must be derived from a self-existent Reason and Goodness outside ourselves, in fact, a Supernatural…”

Thus Lewis does not decry Reason, but vindicates it; but only by showing that Reason is independent of Nature. However, in doing this he shatters the foundations of Enlightenment thinking, which is based on the axioms: (a) Truth and Goodness are attainable by Reason alone, without the need for Divine Revelation; and (b) Reason, as a function of Man, and not of God, is entirely a product of Nature. Lewis demonstrates that even if (a) were true, which it is not, it could only be true if (b) were false. But the Enlightenment insisted that both were true, and therefore condemned the whole movement of western thought founded upon it to sterility and degeneration into nihilism.

The whole tragedy of western man since the Enlightenment – which, through European colonization and globalization has become the tragedy of the whole world - is that in exalting himself and the single, fallen faculty of his mind to a position of infallibility, he has denied himself his true dignity and rationality, making him a function of irrational nature – in effect, subhuman. But man is great, not because he can reason in the sense of ratiocinate, that is, make deductions and inferences from axioms and empirical evidence, but because he can reason in accordance with the Reason that created and sustains all things, that is, in accordance with the Word and Wisdom of God in Whose image he was made. It is when man tries to make his reason autonomous, independent of its origin and inspiration in the Divine Reason, that he falls to the level of irrationality. For *Man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them* (Psalm 48.12).
4. THE EAST: THE PETERSBURG EMPIRE

As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.

O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err,
   And destroy the way of your paths.

Isaiah 3.12

By God’s dispensation it has fallen to me to correct both the state and the clergy; I am to them both sovereign and patriarch; they have forgotten that in [pagan] antiquity these [roles] were combined.

Tsar Peter the Great.

In humiliating the Church in the eyes of the people, Peter cut down one of the deepest and most nutritious roots on which the tree of autocracy stood, grew and developed.

L.A. Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’.

From Holy Rus’ to Great Russia

Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna writes: “By the time of Peter Holy Rus’ was not an integral, full-blooded vital phenomenon, since it had been broken… The Moscow Rus’ of Tsars Alexis Mikhailovich and Theodore Alekseyevich and Tsarevna Sophia, with whom Peter had to deal, was already only externally Holy Rus’.

“There is evidence that Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich had an illegitimate son (who later became the boyar Ivan Musin-Pushkin). Concerning Tsaritsa Natalia Kirillovna Tikhon Streshnev said that he was not her only lover, and Tsarevna Sophia had a “dear friend” in Prince Basil Golitsyn. Such sinful disruptions had been seen earlier, being characteristic of the generally sensual Russian nature. But earlier these sins had always been clearly recognised as sins. People did not justify them, but repented of them, as Great Prince Ivan III repented to St. Joseph of Volotsk for his sin of sorcery and fortune-telling, as the fearsome Ivan the Terrible repented of his sins. But if the tsars did not repent of their sins, as, for example, Basil III did not repent of his divorce from St. Solomonia, these sins were rebuked by the representatives of the Church and burned and rooted out by long and painful processes. In the second half of the 17th century in Moscow we see neither repentance for sins committed, not a pained attitude to them on the part of the sinners themselves and the surrounding society. There was only a striving to hide sins, to make them unnoticed, unknown, for ‘what is done in secret is judged in secret’. A very characteristic trait distinguishing Muscovite society of the second half of the 17th century from preceding epochs, a trait fraught with many consequences, was the unrestrained gravitation of the upper echelons of Muscovite society towards the West, to the sinful West, to the sinful free life there, which, as always with sin viewed from afar, seemed especially alluring and attractive against the background of the wearisome holy Russian way of life.
“Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, and all the higher Moscow boyars after him, introduced theatres. Originally the theatrical troupes most frequently played ‘spiritual’ pieces. But that this was only an offering to hypocrisy is best demonstrated by the fact that the actors playing ‘sacred scenes’ gratifying unspoiled sensuality about Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, David and Bathsheba and Herod and Salome, were profoundly despised by the tsar and other spectators, who considered them to be sinful, ‘scandal-mongering’ people. Neither holy days nor festal days, and still more not the eve of feasts, were chosen for the presentation of these scenes. (It is known that Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich changed the date of a presentation fixed for December 18, for ‘tomorrow is the eve of the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ’.) The real exponents of the really sacred scenes: The Action in the Cave and the Procession on the Donkey were considered by nobody to be sinful people, and their scenes were put on precisely on holy days. The tsar was followed by the boyars, and the boyars by the noblemen; everything that was active and leading in the people was drawn at this time to a timid, but lustful peeping at the West, at its free life, in which everything was allowed that was strictly forbidden in Holy Rus’, but which was so longed for by sin-loving human nature, against which by this time the leading echelons of Muscovite life no longer struggled, but indecisively pandered to. In this sinful gravitation towards the West there were gradations and peculiarities: some were drawn to Polish life, others to Latin, a third group to German life. Some to a greater degree and some to a lesser degree, but they all turned away from the Orthodox Old Russian way of life. Peter only decisively opened up this tendency, broke down the undermined partition between Rus’ and the West, beyond which the Muscovites timidly desired to look, and unrestrainedly threw himself into the desired sinful life, leading behind him his people and his state.

“Holy Rus’ was easily broken by Peter because much earlier it had already been betrayed by the leading echelons of Muscovite society.

“We can see the degree of the betrayal of the Holy Rus’ to a still greater degree than in the pandering to the desires of the flesh and the gravitation towards the free and sinful life, in the state acts of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, and principally in the creation of the so-called Monastirskij Prikaz, through which, in spite of the protests of Patriarch Nicon, the tsar crudely took into his own hands the property of the Church ‘for its better utilisation’, and in the persecutions to which ‘the father and intercessor for the tsar’, his Holiness Patriarch Nicon, was subjected. Nicon understood more clearly than anyone where the above-listed inner processes in the Muscovite state were inclining, and unsuccessfully tried to fight them. For a genuinely Old Russian consciousness, it was horrific to think that the state could ‘better utilise’ the property of the Church than the Church. The state had been able earlier - and the more ancient the epoch, and the more complete its Old Russianness, the
easier and the more often – to resort to Church property and spend it on its own urgent military and economic needs. After all, the Church took a natural interest in this. A son or daughter can freely take a mother’s money in a moment of necessity, and in the given case it is of secondary importance whether he returns it or not: it is a question of what is more convenient to the loving mother and her loving son. They do not offend each other. But in the removal of the monastery lands by Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich (although this measure was elicited by the needs of the war in the Ukraine, which the Church very much sympathised with), another spirit was clearly evident: the spirit of secularisation. This was no longer a more or less superficial sliding towards the longed-for sinful forms of western entertainment, it was not a temporary surrender to sin: it was already a far-reaching transfer into the inner sphere of the relations between Church and State – and what a state: Holy Rus’ (!), - of the secular ownership relations with a view to ‘better utilisation’ instead of the loving relations between mother and children characteristic of Orthodox morality. Better utilisation for what ends? For Church ends? But it would be strange to suppose that the state can use Church means for Church ends better than the Church. For state ends? But then the degree of the secularisation of consciousness is clear, since state ends are placed so much higher than Church ends, so that for their attainment Church property is removed. State ends are recognised as ‘better’ in relation to Church ends.

“Finally, the drying up of holiness in Rus’ in the second half of the 17th century is put in clearer relief by the fact that, after the period of the 14th-16th centuries, which gave a great host of saints of the Russian people, the 17th century turned out to be astonishingly poor in saints. There were far more of them later. In the century of the blasphemous Peter there were far more saints in Russia than in the century of the pious tsars Alexis Mikhailovich and Theodore Alexeyevich. In the second half of the 17th century there were almost no saints in Rus’. And the presence or absence of saints is the most reliable sign of the flourishing or, on the contrary, the fall of the spiritual level of society, the people or the state.

“And so it was not Peter who destroyed Holy Rus’. Before him it had been betrayed by the people and state nurtured by it. But Peter created Great Russia.”

Although this conclusion is true, there were short periods when improvements are discernible. Thus Alexander Rozhantsev writes: “The rule of Tsarevena Sophia,’ in the words of Tsar Peter’s brother-in-law Prince B.I. Kurakin, ‘began with all diligence and justice for all, to the satisfaction of the people, so that there had never been such a wise administration in the Russian state; and the whole state during her reign of seven years came to a

peak of great wealth; commerce multiplied as did every kind of trade, and the study of Greek and Latin began to be set up... Then did the satisfaction of the people triumph.’ These witnesses of Sophia’s enemy, Prince Kurakin, were confirmed by the observations of foreigners.

“We can judge the peak of great wealth from the fact that in wooden Moscow, which at that time contained 5000 people, more than 3000 stone houses were built during Golitsyn’s ministry. And in spite of this, in 1689 Tsarevna Sophia was supported neither by the boyars, nor by the riflemen, and at the insistence of the latter she renounced the Throne and was imprisoned in Novodevichi monastery.

“In 1727 the same Prince B. Kurakin wrote that after the seven-year reign of Tsarevna Sophia, which had been carried out ‘in all order and justice’, when ‘the satisfaction of the people triumphed’, there began the ‘anarchical’ time of the reign of Peter’s mother, Natalia Kirillovna (1689-1696). It was then that there began ‘great bribe-taking and state theft, which continues at an increasing rate to the present day, and it is hard to extirpate this plague.’

“Tsar Peter Alexandrovich then and later struggled fiercely but unsuccessfully with this plague. It is known, as V.O. Kliuchevsky writes, that once in the Senate, exasperated by such universal unscrupulousness, Peter Alexandrovich wanted to issue a decree ordering every official who stole enough to buy even a rope to be hanged. Then ‘the eye of the sovereign’ and guardian of the law, General-Procurator Yagzhinsky got up and said: ‘Does your Majesty wanted to reign alone, with servants or subjects? We all steal, only some more and more noticeably than others.’”754

It was at this critical transitional period that the last Patriarch of Muscovite Russia, Adrian, was enthroned in 1690. He expressed a traditional, very Niconian concept of the relationship between the Church and the State: “The kingdom has dominion only on earth, ... whereas the priesthood has power on earth as in heaven... I am established as archpastor and father and head of all, for the patriarch is the image of Christ. He who hears me hears Christ. For all Orthodox are the spiritual sons [of the patriarch] – tsars, princes, lords, honourable warriors, and ordinary people... right-believers of every age and station. They are my sheep, they know me and they heed my archpastoral voice...”755

However, this boldness evaporated when the domineering personality of Peter the Great came to full power in the kingdom. Thus “when Tsaritsa Natalia, who had supported Patriarch Adrian, a supporter of the old order of life, died [in 1694], there began a reform of customs which showed itself

---

755 Quoted by Hackel, op. cit., p. 10.
already in the outward appearance of the Tsar [Peter]. The Tsar’s way of life did not accord with the sacred dignity of the Tsar and descended from this height to drinking bouts in the German suburb and the life of a simple workman. The Church with its striving for salvation.. retreated into the background, and, as a consequence of this, a whole series of changes in customs appeared. Earlier the First-hierarchs and other hierarchs had been drawn into the Tsar’s council even in civil matters; they had been drawn to participate in the Zemskie Sobory and the Boyar’s Duma; now Peter distanced the Church’s representatives from participation in state matters; he spoke about this even during the lifetime of his mother to the Patriarch and did not summon him to the council. The ceremony on Palm Sunday in which the Tsar had previously taken part only as the first son of the Church, and not as her chief master, was scrapped. This ceremony on the one hand exalted the rank of the Patriarch before the people, and on the other hand also aimed at strengthening the authority of his Majesty’s state power through his participation in front of the whole people in a religious ceremony in the capacity of the first son of the Church. Until the death of his mother Peter also took part in this ceremony, holding the reins of the ass on which Patriarch Adrian [representing Christ Himself] sat, but between 1694 and 1696 this rite was put aside as if it were humiliating for the tsar’s power. The people were not indifferent to this and in the persons of the riflemen who rebelled in 1698 they expressed their protest. After all, the motive for this rebellion was the putting aside of the procession on Palm Sunday, and also the cessation of the cross processions at Theophany and during Bright Week, and the riflemen wanted to destroy the German suburb and beat up the Germans because ‘piety had stagnated among them’. In essence this protest was a protest against the proclamation of the primacy of the State and earthly culture in place of the Church and religion. So as to introduce this view into the mass of the people, it had been necessary to downgrade the significance of the First Hierarch of the Church, the Patriarch. After all, he incarnated in himself the earthly image of Christ, and in his position in the State the idea of the churchification of the State, that lay at the foundation of the symphony of powers, was vividly expressed. Of course, Peter had to remove all the rights of the Patriarch that expressed this. We have seen that the Patriarch ceased to be the official advisor of the Tsar and was excluded from the Boyars’ Duma. But this was not enough: the Patriarch still had one right, which served as a channel for the idea of righteousness in the structure of the State. This was the right to make petitions before the Tsar, and its fall symbolised the fall in the authority of the Patriarch. Soloviev has described this scene of the last petitioning in connection with the riflemen’s rebellion. ‘The terrible preparations for the executions went ahead, the gallows were placed on Belij and Zemlyanoj gorod, at the gates of the Novodevichi monastery and at the four assembly houses of the insurgent regiments. The Patriarch remembered that his predecessors had stood between the Tsar and the victims of his wrath, and had petitioned for the disgraced ones, lessening the bloodshed. Adrian raised the icon of the Mother of God and set off for Peter at Preobrazhenskoye.
But the Tsar, on seeing the Patriarch, shouted at him: ‘What is this icon for? Is coming here really your business? Get away from here and put the icon in its place. Perhaps I venerate God and His All-holy Mother more than you. I am carrying out my duties and doing a God-pleasing work when I defend the people and execute evil-doers who plot against it.’ Historians rebuke Patriarch Adrian for not saying what the First Priest was bound to say, but humbly yielded to the Tsar, leaving the place of execution in shame without venturing on an act of heroic self-sacrifice. He did not oppose moral force to physical force and did not defend the right of the Church to be the guardian of the supreme righteousness. The petitioning itself turned out to be, not the heroism of the Patriarch on his way to martyrdom, but an empty rite. The Patriarch’s humiliation was put in the shade by Peter in that he heeded the intercession of a foreigner, the adventurer Lefort. ‘Lefort, as Golikov informs us, firmly represented to Peter that his Majesty should punish for evil-doing, but not lead the evil-doers into despair: the former is the consequence of justice, while the latter is an act of cruelty.’ At that very moment his Majesty ordered the stopping of the execution.”  

In February, 1696 Patriarch Adrian was paralyzed, and in October, 1700, he died. Peter did not permit the election of a new patriarch, but only a locum tenens. Later in his reign he abolished the patriarchate itself and introduced what was in effect a Protestant form of Church-State relations…  

Thus the seventeenth century ended with the effective fall of the symphony of powers in Russia in the form of the shackling of one of its two pillars – the patriarchate… That this would eventually lead to the fall of the other pillar, the tsardom, had been demonstrated by events in contemporary England. For there were uncanny parallels in the histories of the two countries at this time. Thus 1649 saw both the enactment of the Ulozhenie, the first official and legal expression of caesaropapism in Russia, and the execution of the king in England - the first legalised regicide in European history. And if by the 1690s both the patriarchate in Russia and the monarchy in England appeared to have been restored to their former status, this was only an illusion. Soon the doctrine of the social contract, which removed from the monarchy its Divine right and gave supreme power to the people, would triumph in both countries: in England in its liberal, Lockean form, and in Russia in its absolutist, Hobbesean form…  

In the eighteenth century the Russian autocracy gradually developed in the direction of western absolutist monarchy or despotism. The difference between the Orthodox autocracy and the absolutist monarchies was explained by Ivan Kireevsky as follows: “Autocracy is distinguished from despotism by the fact that in the former everyone is bound by the laws except the supreme sovereign, who supports their force and holiness for their own advantage, while in a despotistic government all the servants of the power are autocrats,  

756 Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, pp. 218-220.
thereby forcibly limiting the autocracy of the highest guardian of the law by their own lawlessness.”

The change in the political system of government from autocracy to absolutism led to a still deeper change in the spiritual life of the nation as a whole.

“On the whole,” writes Nikolin, “the 18th century was an age of practically unceasing attempts on the part of the State power to rework the world-view of the Russian man, and the way of life of the Russian people, on a German, Protestant model. It was an age when the State power, instead of working together with the Church ‘to adorn the life of men’ through the religious education of the people, set out on the path of its gradual religious corruption, its alienation from the Church.

“As a result of the Church, or more accurately anti-Church, reforms of Peter I and the actions of his successors, there began a cooling towards the Orthodox faith in the Russian people, in the first place among the nobility. Freethinking and superstition increased. Russian educated society began to be ashamed of its faith, the faith of its fathers. Peter I injected into the Russian people, who were living a life of sincere, childlike, simple-hearted religiousness, the seeds of rationalist Protestantism – when the mind begins to prevail over the faith and deceive man by the supposed independence and progressiveness of its origins. At the same time the Russian Church was deprived of the possibility of fighting with Protestantism, and of educating men in the true faith. The actions of the State power led to a situation in which in Rus’ there began to empty many ‘places sanctified by the exploits of the holy monks. The path along which the masses of the people walked to the holy elders for instruction, and to the holy graves for prayer, began to be

---

757 Kireyevsky, “Ob otnoshenii k tsarkoj vlasti” (“On the Relationship to Royal Power”), in Razum na puti k istine (Reason on the Way to Truth), Moscow, 2002, p. 67 (in Russian). Again, Nicholas Berdyaev writes: “[In the Orthodox autocracy] there are no rights to power, but only obligations of power. The power of the tsar is by no means absolute, unrestricted power. It is autocratic because its source is not the will of the people and it is not restricted by the people. But it is restricted by the Church and by Christian righteousness; it is spiritually subject to the Church; it serves not its own will, but the will of God. The tsar must not have his own will, but he must serve the will of God. The tsar and the people are bound together by one and the same faith, by one and the same subjection to the Church and the righteousness of God. Autocracy presupposes a wide national social basis living its own self-sufficient life; it does not signify the suppression of the people’s life. Autocracy is justified only if the people has beliefs which sanction the power of the tsar. It cannot be an external violence inflicted on the people. The tsar is autocratic only if he is a truly Orthodox tsar. The defective Orthodoxy of Peter the Great and his inclination towards Protestantism made him an absolute, and not an autocratic monarch. Absolute monarchy is a child of humanism… In absolutism the tsar is not a servant of the Church. A sign of absolute monarchy is the subjection of the Church to the State. That is what happened to the Catholic Church under Louis XIV. Absolutism always develops a bureaucracy and suppresses the social life of the people.” (“Tsarstvo Bozhiie i tsarstvo kesaria” (“The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar”), Put’ (The Way), September, 1925, pp. 39-40 (in Russian).)
grown over. Many schools, hospitals and workhouses attached to the churches and monasteries were closed. Together with the closing of the monasteries an end [only a temporary end, fortunately] was also put to the great work of the enlightenment of the natives in Siberia and other places in boundless Russia.”

And yet, as so often in history, we see that the seeds of revival were being sown in this, the nadir of Russian spiritual history. For it was in the reign of Catherine that St. Paisius Velichkovsky was laying the foundation for the revival of Russian monasticism in the nineteenth century that would produce such beautiful fruits as the elders of Optina. And it was in her reign that a young man called Seraphim entered the monastery of Sarov and from there began his ascent to the summit of spiritual excellence. For history remains the domain, not only of psychological, sociological, political and economic laws, which are in principle predictable, but also of the free will of man and the grace of God, which no man can predict...

And so, on the one hand, the results of the transformation of the Russian State from an autocracy into an absolutist state were spiritually disastrous (even if they had some good results in the secular realm). And on the other hand, while groaning beneath this western yoke, the people retained its Orthodox faith, making possible the slow but steady, if incomplete return of Russia to its pre-Petrine traditions from the reign of the Emperor Paul onwards. Thus while the eighteenth century represented the deepest nadir yet in Russian statehood, Russia still remained recognisably Russia, the chief bearer and defender of Orthodoxy in the world.

Peter and the West

The westernisation of official Russia was accomplished by a revolution from above, by Tsar Peter I and his successors, especially Catherine II. However, state power would have been insufficient to carry out such a radical change if it had not been supported and propelled by the spread of Masonic ideas among the aristocracy, in whose hands the real power rested after the death of Peter. So before examining Peter’s reforms, it will be useful to examine the beginnings of Masonry in Russia.

“There is no doubt,” writes Ivanov, “that the seeds of Masonry were sown in Russian by the ‘Jacobites’, supporters of the English King James II, who had been cast out of their country by the revolution and found a hospitable reception at the court of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich.

“Independently of the Masonic propaganda of the Jacobite Masons, the Russians had learned of the existence of the mysterious union of free stonemasons during their journeys abroad. Thus, for example, Boris Petrovich

---

758 Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 103 (in Russian).
Sheremetev had got to known Masonry during his travels. Sheremetev had been given a most triumphant meeting on Malta. He took part in the great feast of the Maltese order in memory of John the Forerunner, and they had given him a triumphant banquet there. The grand-master had bestowed on him the valuable Maltese cross made of gold and diamonds. On returning to Moscow on February 10, 1699, Sheremetev was presented to the Tsar at a banquet on February 12 at Lefort’s, dressed in German clothes and wearing the Maltese cross. He received ‘great mercy’ from the Tsar, who congratulated him on becoming a Maltese cavalier and gave him permission to wear this cross at all times. Then a decree was issued that Sheremetev should be accorded the title of ‘accredited Maltese cavalier’.

"The early shoots of Russian Masonry," writes Vernadsky, ‘were particularly possible in the fleet, since the fleet had been created entirely on western models and under western influence.

"In one manuscript of the Public library the story is told that Peter was received into the Scottish degree of St. Andrew, and ‘made an undertaking that he would establish this order in Russia, a promise which he carried out (in the form of the order of St. Andrew the First-Called, which was established in 1698)...

"Among the manuscripts of the Mason Lansky, there is a piece of grey paper on which this fact is recorded: 'The Emperor Peter I and Lefort were received into the Templars in Holland.'

"In the Public library manuscript ‘A View on the Philosophers and the French Revolution’ (1816), it is indicated that Masonry ‘existed during the time of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. Bruce was its great master, while Tsar Peter was its first inspector.'"759

One contemporary Masonic source writes: “One Russian tradition has it that Peter became a Mason on trip to England and brought it back to Russia. There is no hard evidence of this…”760

Why did Russians join the lodges? Because, according to Sir Geoffrey Hosking, they “became a channel by which young men aspiring to high office or good social standing could find acquaintances and protectors among their superiors; in the Russian milieu this meant an easier and pleasanter way of rising up the Table of Ranks… “761

There were deeper reasons, however. "Freemasonry," as Walicki points out, "had a dual function: on the one hand, it could draw people away from the official Church and, by rationalizing religious experience, could contribute to the gradual secularisation of their world view; on the other hand, it could attract people back to religion and draw them away from the secular and rationalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. The first function was fulfilled most effectively by the rationalistic and deistic wing of the movement, which set the authority of reason against that of the Church and stood for tolerance and the freedom of the individual. The deistic variety of Freemasonry flourished above all in England, where it had links with the liberal movement, and in France, where it was often in alliance with the encyclopedists. The second function was most often fulfilled by the mystical trend, although this too could represent a modernization of religious faith, since the model of belief it put forward was fundamentally anti-ecclesiastical and postulated a far-reaching internalisation of faith founded on the soul’s immediate contact with God."\(^\text{762}\)

Russians, though not uninfluenced by the rationalist side of Masonry, were especially drawn by its mystical side. For while their faith in Orthodoxy was weak, they were by no means prepared to live without religion altogether. "Finding myself at the crossroads between Voltairianism and religion", wrote Novikov, "I had no basis on which to work, no cornerstone on which to build spiritual tranquillity, and therefore I fell into the society."\(^\text{763}\)

The conversion of Tsar Peter to Masonry, if it is a fact, was the fulfilment of the fervent hopes of western Masons such as the philosopher Leibnitz, who in 1696 had written to Ludolph: "If only the Muscovite kingdom inclined to the enlightened laws of Europe, Christianity \(\text{sic}\) would acquire the greatest fruits. There is, however, hope that the Muscovites will arise from their slumbers. There is no doubt that Tsar Peter is conscious of the faults of his subjects and desires to root out their ignorance little by little."\(^\text{764}\)

According to K.F. Valishevsky, Leibnitz “had worked out a grandiose plan of scientific undertakings, which could be achieved with the help of the Muscovite monarch and in which the greatest German philosopher marked out a role for himself. Leibnitz studied the history and language of Russia.”\(^\text{765}\)

And it was Leibnitz, together with his pupil Wolf, who played the leading role in the foundation of the Russian Academy of Sciences.\(^\text{766}\)

---


\(^\text{764}\) Ivanov, op. cit., p. 110.

\(^\text{765}\) Valishevsky, Petr Velikij (Peter the Great), in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 120.

\(^\text{766}\) Ivanov, op. cit., p. 137.
Tsar Peter’s conversion to Masonry and the western ideals of civilisation was accompanied by strong eschatological expectations. For “the coming of the Antichrist,” writes B.A. Uspensky, “was expected in 1666, but when it was not fulfilled, they began to calculate it as 1666 years not from the Nativity of Christ, but from His Resurrection, that is, they began to expect him in 1699 (1666 + 33 = 1699). And only a few days before the beginning of this year (15 August, 1698 (one must bear in mind that the New Year began on the first of September) Peter appeared from his first journey abroad. Besides, his arrival was immediately marked by a whole range of cultural innovations (already in the next year there began the forcible shaving of beards; the destruction of beards was marked for the New Year, 1699: it was then that there also began the struggle against Russian national dress and a range of other reforms of the same kind).”

Peter learned many useful things on his journey to the West, especially as related to warfare. But in religion, as we shall see, the influences were harmful. And many, and not only the Old Ritualists, were prepared to condemn his undermining of the foundations of Russian society. Thus in 1699 or 1700, on a visit to Voronezh, he ordered the bishop of the city, St. Metrophanes, to visit him at the palace he had erected on an island in the River Voronezh. “Without delay the holy hierarch set out on foot to go to the tsar. But when he entered the courtyard which led to the palace, he saw that statues of the ancient Greek gods and goddesses had been set up there on the tsar’s order, to serve as architectural adornment. The holy one immediately returned to his residence. The sovereign was apprised of this, but, not knowing the reason why the holy Metrophanes had turned back, he sent another messenger to him with orders that he attend upon the sovereign in the palace. But when he entered the courtyard which led to the palace, he saw that statues of the ancient Greek gods and goddesses had been set up there on the tsar’s order, to serve as architectural adornment. The holy one immediately returned to his residence. The sovereign was apprised of this, but, not knowing the reason why the holy Metrophanes had turned back, he sent another messenger to him with orders that he attend upon the sovereign in the palace. But the saintly bishop replied: ‘Until the sovereign commandeth that the idols, which scandalise all the people, be taken away, I cannot set foot in the palace!’ Enraged by the holy hierarch’s reply, the tsar sent him the following message: ‘If he will not come, he shall incur the death sentence for disobedience to the powers that be.’ To this threat the saint replied: ‘The sovereign hath authority over my life, but it is not seemly for a Christian ruler to set up heathen idols and thus lead the hearts of the simple into temptation.’ Towards evening, the tsar suddenly heard the great bell of the cathedral toll, summoning the faithful to church. Since there was no particular feast being celebrated the following day, he sent to ask the bishop why the bell was being rung. ‘Because His Majesty has condemned me to be executed, I, as a sinful man, must bring the Lord God repentance before my death and ask forgiveness of my sins at a general service of prayer, and for this cause I have ordered an all-night vigil to be served.’ When he learned of this, the tsar laughed and straightway commanded that the holy hierarch be told that his sovereign forgave him, and that he cease to alarm the people with the extraordinary tolling. And afterwards, Tsar Peter ordered the statues

767 Quoted in Fomin & Fomin, Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1998, volume I, p. 268 (in Russian).
removed. One should understand that Peter never gave up his innovations, and if in this respect he yielded, it merely demonstrates the great respect he cherished for the bishop of Voronezh…”

It was not only the Church that suffered from Peter’s drive to westernize and modernize the country. The nobility were chained to public service in the bureaucracy or the army; the peasants - to the land. And the whole country was subjected, by force at times, to the cultural, scientific and educational influence of the West. This transformation was symbolized especially by the building, at great cost in human lives, of a new capital at St. Petersburg. Situated at the extreme western end of the vast empire as Peter’s ‘window to the West’, this extraordinary city was largely built by Italian architects on the model of Amsterdam, peopled by shaven and pomaded courtiers who spoke more French than Russian, and ruled, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, by monarchs of German origin.

In building St. Petersburg, Peter was also trying to replace the traditional idea of Russia as the Third Rome by the western idea of the secular empire on the model of the First Rome, the Rome of the pagan Caesars and Augusti. As van den Bercken writes: “Rome remains an ideological point of reference in the notion of the Russian state. However, it is no longer the second Rome but the first Rome to which reference is made, or ancient Rome takes the place of Orthodox Constantinople. Peter takes over Latin symbols: he replaces the title tsar by the Latin imperator, designates his state imperia, calls his advisory council senat, and makes the Latin Rossija the official name of his land in place of the Slavic Rus’...

768 “The Life of our Father among the Saints Metrophanes, Bishop of Voronezh”, Living Orthodoxy, vol. XII, № 6, November-December, 1990, p. 16.
769 “Under Peter I a beginning was laid to that serfdom which for a long time became the shame and illness of Russia. Before Peter from time immemorial not only state peasants, but also those of the landowners were not deprived of rights, they were under the protection of the laws, that is, they could never be serfs or slaves, the property of their lords! We have already seen that there were measures to limit and, finally, to ban the free departure of peasants, or their transfer from one lord to another. And there were measures to tie the Russian peasants to the land (but not to the lords!) with the aim of preserving the cultivation of the land in the central lands of Great Russia, keeping in them the cultivators themselves, the peasants that were capable of working. But Russian landowners always had bond-slaves, people who had fallen into complete dependence on the lords, mortgaging themselves for debts, or runaways, or others who were hiding from persecution. Gradually (not immediately) the landowners began to provide these bond-slaves, too, with their own (not common) land, forcing them to work on it to increase the lords’ profits, which at that time consisted mainly in the products of the cultivation of the land. Peter I, in introducing a new form of taxation, a poll-tax (on the person), and not on the plot of land and not on the ‘yard’ composed of several families, as had been the case before him, also taxed the bond-slaves with this poll-tax, thereby putting them in the same rank as the peasants. From that time the lords gradually began to look on their free peasants, too, as bond-slaves, that is, as their own property. Soon, under Catherine II, this was already legalised, so that the Empress called the peasants ‘slaves’, which had never been the case in Russia!” (Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 173-174 (in Russian)).
“Although the primary orientation is on imperial Rome, there are also all kinds of references to the Christian Rome. The name of the city, St. Petersburg, was not just chosen because Peter was the patron saint of the tsar, but also to associate the apostle Peter with the new Russian capital. That was both a diminution of the religious significance of Moscow and a religious claim over papal Rome. The adoption of the religious significance of Rome is also evident from the cult of the second apostle of Rome, Paul, which is expressed in the name for the cathedral of the new capital, the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral. This name was a break with the pious Russian tradition, which does not regard the two Roman apostles but Andrew as the patron of Russian Christianity. Thus St. Petersburg is meant to be the new Rome, directly following on the old Rome, and passing over the second and third Romes…”

And yet the ideal of Russia as precisely the Third Rome remained in the consciousness of the people. “The service of ‘him that restraineth’, although undermined, was preserved by Russian monarchical power even after Peter – and it is necessary to emphasize this. It was preserved because neither the people nor the Church renounced the very ideal of the Orthodox kingdom, and, as even V. Klyuchevsky noted, continued to consider as law that which corresponded to this ideal, and not Peter’s decrees.”

But if Russia was still the Third Rome, it was highly doubtful, in the people’s view, that Peter was her true Autocrat. For how could one who undermined the foundations of the Third Rome be her true ruler? The real Autocrat of Russia, the rumour went, was sealed up in a column in Stockholm, and Peter was a German who had been substituted for him...

**Peter’s Leviathan**

Perhaps the most important and dangerous influence that Peter had received on his journey to the West was that of the Anglican Bishop Gilbert Burnet. The Tsar and the famous preacher had many long talks, and according to Burnet what interested the Tsar most was his exposition of the “authority that the Christian Emperors assumed in matters of religion and the supremacy of our Kings”. Burnet told the Tsar that “the great and comprehensive rule of all is, that a king should consider himself as exalted by Almighty God into that high dignity as into a capacity of doing much good and of being a great blessing to mankind, and in some sort a god on earth”.

---

Peter certainly came to believe a similar teaching concerning his role as tsar. And he now set out gradually to enslave the Church to the power of the State. From 1701 to 1718 he acted through a series of piecemeal measures, but was to some extent inhibited by the intermittent resistance of the locum tenens, Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky of Ryazan, and of his own son, the Tsarevich Alexis. However, after the execution of the Tsarevich and the effective replacement of Yavorsky by a man more after his reforming heart, Metropolitan Theophanes Prokopovich of Pskov, Peter set about a systematic codification and consolidation of his reforms in his Ecclesiastical Regulation, published in 1721.

On January 24, 1701 Peter ordered the re-opening of the Monastirskij Prikaz which Patriarch Nicon had so struggled against. The Prikaz was authorized to collect all state taxes and peasant dues from the estates of the church, as well as purely ecclesiastical emoluments. A large proportion of this sum was then given to the state to help the war-effort against Sweden. In other words, while the Church was not formally dispossessed, the State took complete control over her revenues. St. Demetrius of Rostov protested: “You want to steal the things of the Church? Ask Heliodorus, Seleucus’ treasurer, who wanted to go to Jerusalem to steal the things of the Church. He was beaten by the hands of an angel.”

The Church lost not only her economic independence, but also her judicial independence, her ability to judge her own people in her own courts. The State demanded that clergy be defrocked for transgressing certain state laws. It put limits on the numbers of clergy, and of new church buildings. Monks were confined to their monasteries, no new monasteries could be founded, and the old ones were turned into hospitals and rest-homes for retired soldiers.

“Under Peter”, writes Andrew Bessmertny, “a fine for the giving of alms (from 5 to 10 rubles) was introduced, together with corporal punishments followed by cutting out of the nostrils and exile to the galleys ‘for the proclamation of visions and miracles’. In 1723 a decree forbidding the tonsuring of monks was issued, with the result that by 1740 Russian monasticism consisted of doddery old men, while the founder of eldership, St. Paisius Velichkovsky, was forced to emigrate to Moldavia. Moreover, in the monasteries they introduced a ban on paper and ink - so as to deprive the traditional centres of book-learning and scholarship of their significance.

---

773 It had not always been so. Thus early in his reign, in 1701, he replied to some Catholic Saxons who proposed a union between the Orthodox and Catholic churches: “Sovereigns have rights only over the bodies of their people. Christ is the sovereign of their souls. For such a union, a general consent of the people is necessary and that is in the power of God alone....” (Robert Massie, Peter the Great, London: Phoenix, 2001, p. 345).

Processions through the streets with icons and holy water were also banned (almost until the legislation of 1729)! At the same time, there appeared... the government ban on Orthodox transferring to other confessions of faith.\textsuperscript{775}

If Peter was a tyrant, he was nevertheless not a conventional tyrant, but one who genuinely wanted the best for his country. And in spite of the drunken orgies in which he mocked her institutions and rites, he did not want to destroy the Church, but only “reform” her in directions which he thought would make her more efficient and “useful”.\textsuperscript{776} Some of the “reforms” were harmful, like his allowing mixed marriages (the Holy Synod decreed the next year that the children of these marriages should be Orthodox, which mitigated, but did not remove the harmfulness of the decree). Others were beneficial. Thus the decree that the lower age limit for ordination to the diaconate should be twenty-five, and for the priesthood – thirty, although motivated by a desire to limit the number of persons claiming exemption from military service, especially “ignorant and lazy clergy”, nevertheless corresponded to the canonical ages for ordination. Again, his measures ensuring regular attendance at church by laypeople, if heavy-handed, at least demonstrated his genuine zeal for the flourishing of Church life. Moreover, he encouraged missionary work, especially in Siberia, where the sees of Tobolsk and Irkutsk were founded and such luminaries as St. John of Tobolsk and St. Innocent of Irkutsk flourished during his reign. And in spite of his own Protestant tendencies, he blessed the publication of some, if not all, books defending the principles of the Orthodox faith against Protestantism.

The measure that most shockingly revealed the extent of the State’s invasion of the Church’s life was the demand that priests break the seal of confession and report on any parishioners who confessed anti-government sentiments. Thus did Peter create a “police state” in which the priests were among the policemen. Now “a ‘police state’, “ writes Florovsky, “is not only, or even largely, an outward reality, but more an inner reality: it is less a structure than a style of life; not only a political theory, but also a religious condition. ‘Policism’ represents the urge to build and ‘regularize’ a country and a people’s entire life – the entire life of each individual inhabitant – for the sake of his own and the ‘general welfare’ or ‘common good’. ‘Police’ pathos, the pathos of order and paternalism, proposes to institute nothing less than universal welfare and well-being, or, quite simply, universal ‘happiness’. [But] guardianship all too quickly becomes transformed into surveillance.


\textsuperscript{776} “We know of a case when he beat Tatischev with a club for permitting a certain liberty relative to church traditions. He added: ‘Don’t scandalise believing souls, don’t introduce freethinking which is harmful to public good order; I did not teach you to be an enemy of society and the Church’” (A.P. Dobroklonsky, \textit{Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi} (Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 717 (in Russian)).
Through its own paternalist inspiration, the ‘police state’ inescapably turns against the church. It also usurps the church’s proper function and confers them upon itself. It takes on the undivided care for the people’s religious and spiritual welfare.”

Before Peter could complete his reforms, he had to crush the opposition to them. This meant, in the first place, his son, the Tsarevich Alexis. For the Tsarevich, whose mother Peter had cast away in favour of the German Anna Mons and then the Baltic Catherine, represented a focus around which all those who loved the old traditions of Holy Rus’ gathered, on whom they placed their hopes for a restoration of Patriarchal Orthodoxy. In killing him, therefore, Peter was striking a blow at the whole Orthodox way of life, and declaring, as it were, that there was no going back to the old ways. Exactly two centuries later, in 1918, the Bolsheviks would do the same, and for the same reasons, to Tsar Nicholas II...

Protopriest Lev Lebedev writes: “On returning from his first trip to the West in 1698, Peter I, in spite of all the canons and the opinion of Patriarch Adrian, incarcerated his lawful wife Eudocia Lopukhina in a monastery in the city of Suzdal, the very same in which the first wife of Basil III, Solomonia Saburova, had once been kept. But if Basil III married a second time ‘for the sake of royal procreation’ (Solomonia was infertile), Peter I did not have such a justification for his actions. Eudocia had born him a son, the heir Alexis, in 1690. Peter divorced his wife, the Tsaritsa, for the sake of adultery with the German woman Anna Mons. This had never happened in Rus’ at the highest level of authority!...

“The Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich grew up as kind, clever and capable, but weak in health and will. However, he was not completely without will. In this, as in other capacities, he was perhaps, usual, normal, like the majority of Russian people of the time - not a genius and not without ability, not a hero and not a coward, not an ascetic and not a debauchee, not a righteous man, but also not a criminal. Thus Alexis Petrovich well represented the type of the normal Russian person of his time.

“Above all the Tsarevich grew up into a sincerely and deeply believing Orthodox person...He very much loved everything that was Russian and Orthodox from ages past. And for that reason he from the beginning hated the corruption of the spiritual principles of Great Russia by his Tsar-father... To this should be added the fact that Alexis Petrovich, loving his mother by birth, and seeing her unlawful incarceration and his father’s living with other women, was naturally penetrated by a feeling of pity for her and disdain for his father. This disdain sometimes reached the point that Alexis Petrovich began to wish the death of Peter. Since he himself feared this desire, he perceived it as a sin which needed Confession. And he confessed. His

---

spiritual father completely understood him and said: ‘God will forgive you; we all want his (Peter’s) death’. And so, being a conscious and profound opponent of the anti-Orthodox acts of his father, the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich at the same time tried to be obedient in all things to his father, fulfilling all his instructions to the measure of his ability…”

Peter could not stand the thought that his heir might reverse everything that he stood for. So he gave him the choice: “change your attitude and unhypocritically make yourself worthy to be the heir, or be a monk”. Alexis chose to be a monk. However, this was not really Peter’s intention. He wanted to kill him – and kill him he did, once he had found the right excuse.

He found his excuse in the Alexis’ flight to Europe with his mistress. Although he was tempted back with the promise of complete forgiveness, and the Tsar even announced publicly that “sympathising with a paternal heart over [his son], he forgives him and frees him from every punishment”, he was not really going to be forgiven. For at the same time he let Alexis know that if he kept information about anything or anyone from him, “he would be deprived of life”.

“Usually,” writes Lebedev, “the semi-official historians of Russia have tried to represent the ‘affair’ of the Tsarevich Alexis as the gradual revelation of his treason against the State, the creation by him of a terrible plot against his father the Tsar. But it was not like that at all! It is sufficient to pay heed to this warning concerning Alexis Petrovich’s execution made before any clarification... The investigation began. From the testimonies of the Tsarevich and other people drawn into the case it became clear that Alexis Petrovich had spoken to various people, mainly orally, but sometimes in letters, that he did not agree with the changes made to Russian customs by his father, that he was hoping on the support of the ‘mob’ (people), the clergy and many in the ruling classes, that he sympathised with his mother and did not recognise Catherine [Peter’s new wife] to be the Tsaritsa. The investigation also revealed that people of various ranks and classes were telling the Tsarevich that they supported his views and feelings. Although such conversations directed against the actions of the Tsar were already seditious and people paid for them in those days with their freedom and life, all of this was just conversation (sometimes when ‘tipsy’). Even the actions of those who helped Alexis Petrovich to flee to Vienna did not amount to a plot, but looked like a desire to save the Tsarevich out of natural devotion and love towards him. A special investigation was undertaken in relation to Peter’s first wife Eudocia (forcibly tonsured as Elena), who was in the Protection monastery in the city of Suzdal. They wanted to know just in case whether it was not from her that the ‘harmful’ influence on Alexis Petrovich had proceeded. It turned out that there had been no influence... They also discovered that the clergy, including Metropolitan Dositheus of Rostov, commemorated her during the services as

---

778 Lebedev, *op. cit.* pp. 184, 185, 186.
‘Tsaritsa’. Besides, Dositheus had prophesied to Eudocia that she would return to her royal dignity; he wanted the death of Peter I and the enthronement of his son Alexis Petrovich. An ecclesiastical trial was conducted on Dositheus, at which he declared: ‘Look what is in the hearts of all. Listen to the people, to what the people are saying…’ The Rostov Vladyka was defrocked and then executed ‘with a cruel death’ by being placed on the wheel. But Peter I well knew that Dositheus was by no means the only member of the hierarchy of the Russian Church who was against him. Thus immediately after the announcement of the marriage of the Tsar to Catherine Alexeyevna (after which, by the way, Moscow suffered a terrible fire), on March 17, 1712 such an obedient person to Peter as Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky ‘shouted’ his famous sermon in which he loudly denounced the ‘impiety’ of adultery, of abandoning one’s wife, of breaking the fasts, which the hearers (and later the Tsar himself) rightly understood as a reference to Peter. The sermon was delivered on the day of the commemoration of St. Alexis the Man of God and Metropolitan Stefan called the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich ‘a true servant of Christ’, ‘our only hope’…

“Reprisals on the Church and the removal of the Patriarchate were already planned. But the realisation of a matter that was so unheard-of for the Russian Land would be the more successful the more guilty ‘the only hope’ of the churchmen, the Tsarevich Alexis, would turn out to be.” Not only did the Tsarevich have to appear to be guilty: it has to seem as if it was not the Tsar himself who was punishing him.

Under torture, the Tsarevich “confessed” to asking the Emperor Charles for military help in overthrowing Peter. The Church in a conciliar epistle called on the Tsar to forgive his son. But the Senate decreed the death sentence, and on June 26, 1718 the Tsarevich was secretly smothered in the Peter and Paul fortress.

Lebedev writes: “Peter I’s persecution of his own son, ending with the secret killing of the latter, was in essence the persecution of immemorial Great Russia, which did not want to change its nature, to be reborn according to the will of the monarch into something complete opposite to it. It was not by chance that the characteristics of the personality of the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich mirrored so well the characteristics of the personality of the major part of Russia. In this major part the Tsar continued to be venerated, in spite of everything, as ‘the Anointed of God’, whom it was necessary to obey in everything except in matters of the faith, if he began to break or destroy its root foundations. Peter could not directly and openly war against this Great Russia (that is, with the majority of his people). Therefor he went on the path of slander (that his actions were opposed, supposedly, only by sluggards or traitors) and the hidden, as it were secret suffocation of everything whose root and core was Holy Rus’, Orthodox Rus’. On this path Peter was ineluctably

---

forced to resort to one very terrible means: to cover his deliberately anti-God, dishonourable, if not simply criminal actions with pious words, using the name of God and other holy names, excerpts from the Holy Scriptures and Tradition, false oaths, etc. - or in other words, to act under the *mask* of Orthodox piety. Such had happened in earlier history and especially, as we remember, in the form of the actions of the ‘Judaising’ heretics, Ivan IV and Boris Godunov. But from Peter I it becomes as it were a certain *norm*, a kind of rule for rulers that did not require explanation…”

Now that the Tsarevich was dead, Peter could proceed to the completion of his subjection of the Church to the State. But for that he needed a new first-hierarch. He found him in Theophanes Prokopovich, the metropolitan of Pskov.

Prokopovich was distinguished by an extreme pro-westernism that naturally endeared him to Peter’s heart. Thus he called Germany the mother of all countries and openly expressed his sympathy with the German theologians. “Theophanes was naturally accused of Lutheranism,” writes Zyzykin, “if not in the sense of accepting [its] theological teaching, as in the sense of the general tendency of his convictions and the direction of his activity. His child, which he together with Peter I gave birth to, the *Ecclesiastical Regulation*, received the most flattering review from the Protestants in a brochure which came out in Germany under the title, *Curieuse Nachrichten von der itzigen Religion Ihre Kaiserlliched Majestät in Russland Petri Alexieviich unde seines grossen Reichs dass dasselbe ast nach Evangelisch Lutheranischen Grundsätzen eingerichtet sei*. The brochure concluded by declaring that Peter was drawing Orthodox Russia out on the path of Lutheranizing Russia, although there were still some ‘remnants of Papism’ in her. ‘Instead of the Pope the Russians had their Patriarch,’ writes the author of the brochure, ‘whose significance in their country was as great as the significance of the Pope in Italy and the Roman Catholic Church. The Russians preserved the veneration of the Saints… Such is the Greek religion. But in Peter’s rule this religion changed a great deal, for he understood that with true religion no sciences can bring benefit. In Holland, England and Germany he learned what is the best, true and saving faith, and he imprinted it firmly in his mind. His communion with Protestants still more firmly established him in this manner of thought; we will not be mistaken if we say that His Majesty saw Lutheranism as the true religion. For, although so far in Russia things have not been built in accordance with the principles of our true religion, nevertheless a beginning has been laid, and are not prevented from believing in a happy outcome by the fact that we know that crude and stubborn minds brought up in their superstitious Greek religion cannot be changed immediately and yield only gradually; they must be brought, like children, step by step to the knowledge of the truth.’ Peter’s ecclesiastical reforms were for the author the earnest of the victory of Protestantism in Russia: ‘The Tsar

---

has removed the patriarchate and, following the example of the Protestant princes, has declared himself to be the supreme bishop of the country.‘ The author praised Peter for setting about the reform of the people’s way of life on his return from abroad. ‘As regards calling on the Saints, His Majesty has indicated that the images of St. Nicholas should not be anywhere in rooms, and that there should not be the custom of first bowing to the icons on entering a house, and then to the master... The system of education in the schools established by the Tsar is completely Lutheran, and the young people are being brought up in the rules of the true Evangelical religion. Monasteries have been significantly reduced since they can no longer serve, as before, as dens for a multitude of idle people, who were a heavy burden for the state and could be stirred up against it. Now all the monks are obliged to study something good, and everything is constructed in a most praiseworthy manner. Miracles and relics also no longer enjoy their former veneration; in Russia, as in Germany, they have already begun to believe that in this respect much has been fabricated. If calling on the Saints will be phased out in Russia, then there will not be faith in personal merits before God, and in good works, and the opinion that one can obtain a heavenly reward by going round holy places or by generous contributions to the clergy and monasteries will also disappear; so that the only means for attaining blessedness will remain faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the base of true Evangelical religion.’

The same attachment to Lutheranism, especially as regards Church-State relations, is evident in the sermons of Prokopovich, which is what attracted Peter’s attention to him. Thus in his sermon on Palm Sunday, 1718, he said: “Do we not see here [in the story of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem] what honour is paid to the King? Does this not require us not to remain silent about the duty of subjects to esteem the supreme authority, and about the great resistance to this duty that has been exposed in our country at the present time? For we see that not a small part of the people abide in such ignorance that they do not know the Christian doctrine concerning the secular authorities. Nay more, they do not know that the supreme authority is established and armed with the sword by God, and that to oppose it is a sin against God Himself, a sin to be punished by death not temporal but eternal... “Christians have to be subject even to perverse and unbelieving rulers. How much more must they be utterly devoted to an Orthodox and just sovereign? For the former are masters, but the latter are also fathers. What am I saying? That our autocrat [Peter], and all autocrats, are fathers. And where else will you find this duty of ours, to honour the authorities sincerely and conscientiously, if not in the commandment: ‘Honour thy father!’ All the wise teachers affirm this; thus Moses the lawgiver himself instructs us. Moreover the authority of the state is the primary and ultimate degree of fatherhood, for

on it depends not a single individual, not one household, but the life, the integrity, and the welfare of the whole great nation.”

Already in a school book published in 1702 Prokopovich had referred to the emperor as “the rock Peter on whom Christ has built His Church”. And in another sermon dating from 1718 he “relates Peter, ‘the first of the Russian tsars’, to his patron saint Peter, ‘the first of the apostles’. Like the latter, tsar Peter has an ‘apostolic vocation… And what the Lord has commanded your patron and apostle concerning His Church, you are to carry out in the Church of this flourishing empire.’ This is a far-reaching theological comparison…”

In July, 1721 Prokopovich published an essay “expressing the view that since Constantine’s time the Christian emperors had exercised the powers of a bishop, ‘in the sense that they appointed the bishops, who ruled the clergy’. This was, in short, a justification of Peter’s assumption of complete jurisdiction over the government of the church; for a ‘Christian sovereign’, Prokopovich concluded in a celebrated definition of the term, is empowered to nominate not only bishops, ‘but the bishop of bishops, because the Sovereign is the supreme authority, the perfect, ultimate, and authentic supervisor; that is, he holds supreme judicial and executive power over all the ranks and authorities subject to him, whether secular or ecclesiastical’. ‘Patriarchalism [patriarshestvo]’ – the belief that a patriarch should rule the autocephalous Russian church – Prokopovich equated with ‘papalism’, and dismissed it accordingly.”

The notion that not the Patriarch, but only the Tsar, was the father of the people was developed by Prokopovich in his Primer, which consisted of an exposition of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes: “Question. What is ordained by God in the fifth commandment [‘Honour thy father and thy mother’]? Answer: To honour all those who are as fathers and mothers to us. But it is not only parents who are referred to here, but others who exercise paternal authority over us. Question: Who are such persons? Answer: The first order of such persons are the supreme authorities instituted by God to rule the people, of whom the highest authority is the Tsar. It is the

783 Van den Brecken, op. cit., p. 176.
785 Cracraft, op. cit., p. 60. It should be noted that according to some synodal canonists, notably Zaozersky, Peter’s church reforms were not that different from Byzantine practice. “Byzantium under Justinian and Russia under Peter had, according to Zaozersky, one and the same form of Church administration, ‘state-synodal’, and he gives quite a convincing basis for this view… In the thinking of Theophan Prokopovich, according to their analysis, the dominant elements were Byzantine, not Protestant, that is, the very direction of Peter’s reforms had their roots in Byzantine tradition and organically proceeded from it.” (Evgenij, “Dorevoliutsionnie kanonisty i sinodal’nij stroj” (“The Pre-revolutionary Canonists and the Synodal Order”), http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=4895762&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv (06/11/02).
duty of kings to protect their subjects and to seek what is best for them, whether in religious matters or in the things of this world; and therefore they must watch over all the ecclesiastical, military, and civil authorities subject to them and conscientiously see that they discharge their respective duties. That is, under God, the highest paternal dignity; and subjects, like good sons, must honour the Tsar. [The second order of persons enjoying paternal authority are] the supreme rulers of the people who are subordinate to the Tsar, namely: the ecclesiastical pastors, the senators, the judges, and all other civil and military authorities.” 786

As Cracraft justly observes, “the things of God, the people were being taught by Prokopovich, were the things of Caesar, and vice-versa: the two could not be distinguished.” 787

With Prokopovich as his main assistant, Peter now proceeded to the crown of his caesaropapist legislation, his Ecclesiastical Regulation of 1721, which established an “Ecclesiastical College” in parallel with nine secular Colleges, or Ministries, to replace the old patriarchal system.

Peter did not hide the fact that he had abolished the patriarchate because he did not want rivals to his single and undivided dominion over Russia. In this he followed the teaching of Thomas Hobbes: “Temporal and spiritual are two words brought into the world to make men see double, and mistake their lawful sovereign… A man cannot obey two masters…” 788 “The fatherland,” intoned the Regulation, “need not fear from an administrative council [the Ecclesiastical College] the sedition and disorders that proceed from the personal rule of a single church ruler. For the common fold do not perceive how different is the ecclesiastical power from that of the Autocrat, but dazzled by the great honour and glory of the Supreme Pastor [the patriarch], they think him a kind of second Sovereign, equal to or even greater than the Autocrat himself, and imagine that the ecclesiastical order is another and better state.

“Thus the people are accustomed to reason among themselves, a situation in which the tares of the seditious talk of ambitious clerics multiply and act as sparks which set dry twigs ablaze. Simple hearts are perverted by these ideas, so that in some matters they look not so much to their Autocrat as to the Supreme Pastor. And when they hear of a dispute between the two, they blindly and stupidly take sides with the ecclesiastical ruler, rather than with the secular ruler, and dare to conspire and rebel against the latter. The accursed ones deceive themselves into thinking that they are fighting for God Himself, that they do not defile but hallow their hands even when they resort to bloodshed. Criminal and dishonest persons are pleased to discover such

786 Cracraft, op. cit., p. 284.
788 Hobbes, Leviathan.
ideas among the people: when they learn of a quarrel between their Sovereign and the Pastor, because of their animosity towards the former they seize on the chance to make good their malice, and under pretence of religious zeal do not hesitate to take up arms against the Lord’s Anointed; and to this iniquity they incite the common folk as if to the work of God. And what if the Pastor himself, inflated by such lofty opinions of his office, will not keep quiet? It is difficult to relate how great are the calamities that thereby ensue.

"These are not our inventions: would to God that they were. But in fact this has more than once occurred in many states. Let us investigate the history of Constantinople since Justinian’s time, and we shall discover much of this. Indeed the Pope by this very means achieved so great a pre-eminence, and not only completely disrupted the Roman Empire, while usurping a great part of it for himself, but more than once has profoundly shaken other states and almost completely destroyed them. Let us not recall similar threats which have occurred among us.

"In an ecclesiastical administrative council there is no room for such mischief. For here the president himself enjoys neither the great glory which amazes the people, nor excessive lustre; there can be no lofty opinion of him; nor can flatterers exalt him with inordinate praises, because what is done well by such an administrative council cannot possible be ascribed to the president alone... Moreover, when the people see that this administrative council has been established by decree of the Monarch with the concurrence of the Senate, they will remain meek, and put away any hope of receiving aid in their rebellions from the ecclesiastical order."

Thus the purely imaginary threat of a papist revolution in Russia was invoked to effect a revolution in Church-State relations along Protestant lines. The Catholic threat was already receding in Peter’s time, although the Jesuits continued to make strenuous efforts to bring Russia into the Catholic fold. The real threat came from the Protestant monarchies, where caesaropapism was an article of faith. Sweden and Prussia were the main models by the time of the Ecclesiastical Regulation, but the original ideas had come during Peter’s earlier visit to England and Holland. Thus, according to A. Dobroklonsky, “they say that in Holland William of Orange [who was also king of England] advised him to make himself ‘head of religion’, so as to become the complete master in his state."

The full extent of the Peter’s Protestantisation and secularisation of the Church administration was revealed by the oath that the clerics appointed to the Ecclesiastical College were required to swear: “I acknowledge on oath that the Supreme Judge [Krainij Sud’ia] of this Ecclesiastical College is the Monarch of All Russia himself, our Most Gracious Sovereign”. And they

790 Dobroklonsky, Rukovodstvo po istorii Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi, in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 132.
promised “to defend unsparingly all the powers, rights, and prerogatives belonging to the High Autocracy of His Majesty” and his “august and lawful successors”. The Church historian, Igor Smolitsch, called it the capitulation document of the Russian Church.791 Certainly, no Christian can recognise any mortal man as his supreme judge in the literal sense.

Hobbes wrote in his *Leviathan*: “He who is chief ruler in any Christian state is also chief pastor, and the rest of the pastors are created by his authority”.792 Similarly, according to Peter and Prokopovich, the chief ruler was empowered to nominate not only bishops, “but the bishop of bishops [i.e. the patriarch], because the Sovereign is the supreme authority, the perfect, ultimate, and authentic supervisor; that is, he holds supreme judicial and executive power over all the ranks and authorities subject to him, whether secular or ecclesiastical”. The Tsar henceforth took the place of the Patriarch – or rather, of the Pope, for he consulted with his bishops much less even than a Patriarch is obliged to with his bishops. Thus, as Uspensky relates, “the bishops on entering the Emperor’s palace had to leave behind their hierarchical staffs… The significance of this fact becomes comprehensible if it is borne in mind that according to a decree of the Council of 1675 hierarchs left their staffs behind when concelebrating with the Patriarch… Leaving behind the staff clearly signified hierarchical dependence…”793

As Bishop Nicodemus of Yeniseisk (+1874) put it: “The Synod, according to Peter’s idea, is a political-ecclesiastical institution parallel to every other State institution and for that reason under the complete supreme commanding supervision of his Majesty. The idea is from the Reformation, and is inapplicable to Orthodoxy; it is false. The Church is her own Queen. Her Head is Christ our God. Her law is the Gospel.”

Bishop Nicodemus went on to say that in worldly matters the Tsar was the supreme power, but “in spiritual matters his Majesty is a son of the Church” and therefore subject to the authority of the Church.794

M.V. Zyzykin writes: “Basing the unlimitedness of his power in *Pravda Voli Monarshej* on Hobbes’ theory, and removing the bounds placed on this power by the Church, he changed the basis of the power, placing it on the human base of a contract and thereby subjecting it to all those waverings to which every human establishment is subject; following Hobbes, he arbitrarily appropriated ecclesiastical power to himself; through the ‘dechurchification’ of the institution of royal power the latter lost its stability and the inviolability which is proper to an ecclesiastical institution. It is only by this

---

dechurchification that one can explain the possibility of the demand for the 
abdication of the Tsar from his throne without the participation of the Church 
in 1917. The beginning of this ideological undermining of royal power was 
laid through the basing of the unlimitedness of royal power in Pravda Voli 
Monarshej in accordance with Hobbes, who in the last analysis confirmed it, 
not on the Divine call, but on the sovereignty of the people...”795

The paradox that Petrine absolutism was based on democracy is confirmed 
by L.A. Tikhomirov, who writes: “This Pravda affirms that Russian subjects 
first had to conclude a contract amongst themselves, and then the people ‘by 
its own will abdicated and gave it [power] to the monarch.’ At this point it is 
explained that the sovereign can by law command his people to do not only 
anything that is to his benefit, but also simply anything that he wants. This 
interpretation of Russian monarchical power entered, alas, as an official act 
into the complete collection of laws, where it figures under No. 4888 in 
volume VII.

“.... In the Ecclesiastical Regulation it is explained that ‘conciliar government 
is the most perfect and better than one-man rule’ since, on the one hand, 
‘truth is more certainly sought out by a conciliar association than by one man’, 
and on the other hand, ‘a conciliar sentence more strongly inclines towards 
assurance and obedience than one man’s command’.... Of course, Theophanes 
forced Peter to say all this to his subjects in order to destroy the patriarchate, 
but these positions are advanced as a general principle. If we were to believe 
these declarations, then the people need only ask itself: why do I have to 
‘renounce my own will’ if ‘conciliar government is better than one-man rule 
and if ‘a conciliar sentence’ elicits greater trust and obedience than one man’s 
command?

“It is evident that nothing of the sort could have been written if there had 
been even the smallest clarity of monarchical consciousness. Peter’s era in this 
respect constitutes a huge regression by comparison with the Muscovite 
monarchy.”796

Thus did Peter the Great destroy the traditional symphonic pattern of 
Church-State relations that had characterized Russian history since the time of 
St. Vladimir. Not until the reign of Nicholas II did the Church regain 
something like her former freedom. As Karamzin put it, under Peter “we 
became citizens of the world, but ceased to be, in some cases, citizens of 
Russia. Peter was to blame.”797

795 Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, p. 239.
796 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaiia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 
797 Karamzin, in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 137.
If we compare Peter I with another great and terrible tsar, Ivan IV, we see striking similarities. Both tsars were completely legitimate, anointed rulers. Both suffered much from relatives in their childhood; both killed their own sons and showed streaks of pathological cruelty and blasphemy. Both were great warriors who defeated Russia’s enemies and expanded the bounds of the kingdom. Both began by honouring the Church; both ended by attempting to bend the Church completely to their will…

There is one very important difference, however. While Ivan never attempted to impose a caesaropapist constitution on the Church, Peter did just that. The result was that Ivan’s caesaropapism disappeared after his death, whereas Peter’s, as we shall see, lasted for another 200 years…

*The Orthodox under the Austrian Yoke*

By the eighteenth century, most of the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans lived either in the Ottoman empire or in the Catholic empire of Austria-Hungary. It was hard to know which was the more difficult master. The Turks kept their Christian subjects in poverty and ignorance, but did not, in general, compel them to renounce their religion. The Austrians were more “enlightened”, but at the same time a greater threat to the faith of their subjects. The Corfiot Eugene Voulgaris preached as far as the court of the Russian Empress Catherine II on the dangers of Catholicism to the Orthodox of the Balkans.

There were many Romanian Orthodox living in the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the reign of Empress Maria Theresa (1741-1780), the Orthodox of Transylvania and the Banat suffered great persecution from the Hungarian Catholics. Among those martyred for the faith then were SS. Bessarion, Sophronius and Oprea, and the Priests Moses and John. Others took avoiding action. Thus, fearing papist influence, the great monastic founder Paisius Velichkovsky moved his monks further west, into Turkish-controlled Moldavia.

This persecution coincided with a Catholic onslaught in other parts of the Orthodox world. Thus Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diocleia) writes: “In 1724 a large part of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch submitted to Rome; after this the Orthodox authorities, fearing that the same thing might happen elsewhere in the Turkish Empire, were far stricter in their dealings with Roman Catholics. The climax in anti-Roman feeling came in 1755, when the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem declared Latin baptism to be entirely invalid and demanded that all converts to Orthodoxy be baptized anew. ‘The baptisms of heretics are to be rejected and abhorred,’ the decree stated; they are ‘waters which cannot profit… nor give any

---

sanctification to such as receive them, nor avail at all to the washing away of sins’.”

However, towards the end of the century the Austrian Emperor Joseph II introduced a certain measure of religious freedom: “Serfs were emancipated. Religious toleration was extended to Uniates, Orthodox, Protestants and Jews. Children under nine were forbidden to work. Civil marriage and divorce were permitted. Capital punishment was abolished. Freemasonry flourished. Wealth which derived from the secularization of ecclesiastical property was reflected in a spate of imperial and aristocratic architectural extravagance.”

However, other measures introduced by Joseph II caused great harm to the Orthodox. Thus in the Life of the Serbian Martyr Theodore Sladich we read: “In the late eighteenth century, many confused Serbs who had grown weary under the Turkish yoke and who wanted nothing of the Roman heresy, decided to turn to the ‘new’ ideas of the Enlightenment which came first to Vojvodina from Western Europe via Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and other European university centers. One of these ideas was the reduction of the number of holy days celebrated, in order to facilitate new economic plans and conditions. Some one hundred holy days were to be erased from the liturgical calendar. Also, under the Turkish system, Serbian clerical education was rather limited. Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790), ‘the enlightened despot’ in Vienna, with the blessing of Metropolitan Moses Putnik (1781-1790) in Šrenski Karlovci (Lower Karlovac), advocated the closing of a number of monasteries in order to generate revenue to build various educational institutions. One supporter of this idea was the famous Serbian man of the Age of Reason, Dositheus Obradovich (1739-1811). Beginning as a monk in the Monastery of New Hopovo, he then left for Western Europe, returning to Vojvodina and later to Serbia as a humanist philosopher, a fierce critic of Church practices, and as Serbia’s first Minister of Education! In the end, this opting for the rationalism of the so-called Western European Enlightenment created within the pious Serbian peasantry a tremendous distrust of Church leadership, an abiding disdain for Church life and practices, and a many-faceted regression which was to last well into the nineteenth century.

“With all this in mind, it can now be easily ascertained why pious Serbs everywhere especially venerate St. Theodore Sladich. Quite often in his lifetime he was approached by both propagandists of the Latin Unia and by Serbian converts to Western rationalism who wanted him to leave the Church and embrace ‘modernistic’ ways of thought and living. Theodore was an ardent Orthodox and, due to his love for liturgical ritual and the vision of the doctrines of the Church, he became an outspoken proponent against the Latin Unia and the rationalistic innovations of Western Europe… In regard to rationalism and so-called ‘modern’ education, Theodore responded by

---

800 Davies, op. cit., p. 672.
explaining that the source of every true knowledge flowed from the Church – that all worldly knowledge can never replace that which a true Christian receives in church, God Himself educates the believer wholly: by acting upon his sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, taste, imagination, mind, and will, by the splendor of the images and of the building in general, by the fragrance of the incense, by the veneration of the Gospels, Cross and icons, by the singing and by the reading of the Scriptures. And most importantly, as Theodore once said: ‘In no way can secular education bring about the greatest mystery offered by the Church: the cleansing from sins’.”

**The Rise of the Phanariots**

We have seen that the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s debts were usually paid by wealthy Greek Phanariot families, who thereby acquired a disproportionate influence in the patriarchate’s counsels. Sir Steven Runciman writes: “These sixteenth-century millionaires built up their fortunes as merchants; but they learnt that wealth could best be won and maintained by co-operation with the Ottoman government. By the beginning of the next century rich merchants began to send their sons, together with young scholars and theologians, to study at the universities of Italy, mainly at Padua, though some went to Rome or to Geneva or to Paris. There the boys tended to concentrate on medical studies. There were very few Turkish doctors; and the best way of winning the confidence of an eminent Turk was to cure him of some disease, probably the indigestion which his inordinate love of sweetmeats, combined often with a surreptitious indulgence in alcohol, invariably brought on...

“The system soon proved its value. In about 1650 there arrived back in Constantinople from the West a young Chiot doctor called Panayoti Nicoussios Mamonas, nicknamed the ‘Green Horse’, because of a saying that you could as easily find a green horse as a wise man in Chios. He had been educated by Jesuit fathers in Chios; but they had not converted him, and he had gone on to study philosophy under Meletius Syrigus at Constantinople and from there to the medical school at Padua. On his return he attracted the attention of the great Albanian-born vizier, Ahmet Koprulu, who employed him first as his family doctor but then, noting his general ability and his remarkable gifts as a linguist, found him still more useful in drafting foreign dispatches and interviewing foreign envoys. In 1669 Koprulu created for him the post of Grand Dragoman of the Sublime Porte, that is to say, interpreter-in-chief and acting permanent head of the Foreign Ministry. In that capacity Panayoti was allowed to grow a beard, a privilege hitherto denied to Christian laymen in Turkey, to ride in public with four attendants, and to wear, together with his servants, bonnets trimmed with fur. At the same time the post of Dragoman of the Fleet was created, reserved for Phanariots. In

---

spite of its name, the office really gave its holder authority over the Greek laity, to the detriment of the Patriarch’s power.

“So well did Panayoti serve the vizier that the system was continued after his death four years later, when Kopruş appointed to the office of Grand Dragoman a rich young Greek called Alexander Mavrocordato, who belonged to the innermost circle of the Phanariot aristocracy. With his appointment there opened a new chapter in the history of Phanariot power and aspirations.

“In their desire to consolidate their position both economically and politically the Phanariots looked for land in which they could invest their wealth and which could be a base for the rebuilding of Byzantium. Fortunes could easily be made in Constantinople but as easily lost or could be suddenly confiscated; and it was difficult for a Christian to acquire lands within the Ottoman Empire, and the lands might at any time be expropriated. There were, however, beyond the Danube territories which admitted the Sultan’s suzerainty but which were self-governing. The Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which we now collectively call Roumania, were inhabited by an indigenous race speaking a Latin language with Illyrian forms and Slavonic intrusions, with a Church that was Slavonic-speaking and had earlier been under the Serbian Church but now depended upon Constantinople. For the fourteenth to the seventeenth century the reigning princes of both Principalities, who succeeded each other with startling rapidity, had been connected by birth, often illegitimate, or by marriage to the family of Bassaraba, which gave its name to Bessarabia. Wallachia had accepted Turkish overlordship in the fourteenth century; but in the late fifteenth century Prince Stephen the Great of Moldavia had conquered Wallachia and had been the main bulwark of Christendom against the Turks. His successors had not been able to maintain the struggle. They submitted voluntarily to the Sultan and were permitted to reign on autonomously as his vassals. The two provinces were divided again, under princes of the dynasty who were nominally elected by the boyars, the heads of the local noble families, and whose elections were subject to the Sultan’s confirmation. Vassals though they were, the Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia were the only lay Christian rulers left within the sphere of the old Byzantine world. They saw themselves as being in some way the heirs of the Byzantine Caesars. Some of the more ambitious even took the title of Basileus; and all of them modeled their courts on the lines of the old Imperial court.

“Their ambitions disposed them favourably towards the Greeks. They liked to receive special notice from the Patriarchate; and they realized that it was advisable to have friends in Constantinople who could intrigue for them at the Sultan’s court, the more so as the Sultan increasingly nominated prince for election. On their side the Phanariots saw that here was territory in which
they could entrench themselves. More and more Greeks began to flock across the Danube and to marry into Moldavian and Wallachian nobility…”802

“The Phanariots... consolidated their hold upon the Principalities. The local Church helped in the hellenization of the country. It continued to use a Slavonic liturgy until the end of the seventeenth century, when the Roumanian language was introduced, though the Slavonic script was not replaced by a Latin script till well into the nineteenth century. But, whatever the language of the country, the upper clergy were Greek or Greek-ecuated; and Greek schools and seminaries were founded in both Principalities. This did not represent a crude exploitation of the natives. Rather, it was the voluntary work of the native Church in order to secure the support of Greek learning and Phanariot money and influence and to strengthen itself against Latin missionaries operating from the Habsburg dominions and from Poland. The Greek academies at Bucharest and Jassy [where an important Church Council was held in 1642] were established not for racial purposes but in the general interest of Orthodoxy.” 803

At the same time, “the Phanar disliked any sort of Roumanian separatism. It wished to keep the Ottoman Empire intact until the whole could be transferred to the Greeks of Constantinople. Its influence at the Sublime Porte secured the establishment of a new policy. Henceforward Phanariots from Constantinople should govern the Principalities…”804

The Phanariot rule was not oppressive, and they had a high regard for education, rejuvenating the academies at Bucharest and Jassy and stimulating the establishment of similar institutions in the Greek lands. But the education taught in these institutions was mainly of a western, rationalist kind. And this produced a reaction...

“The strength of the Byzantine Church had been the presence of a highly educated laity that was deeply interested in religion. Now the laity began to despise the traditions of the Church; and the traditional element in the Church began to mistrust and dislike modern education, retreating to defend themselves into a thickening obscurantism. The cleavage between the intellectuals and the traditionalists, which had begun when Neo-Aristotelianism was introduced into the curriculum of the Patriarchal Academy, grew wider. Under Phanariot influence many of the higher ecclesiastics followed the modernist trend. In the old days Orthodoxy had preferred to concentrate on eternal things and modestly to refuse to clothe faith in the trappings of modish philosophy. The Phanariots in their desire to impress the West had no use for such old-fashioned notions. Instead, seeing the high prestige of ancient Greek learning, they wished to show that they

804 Runciman, op. cit., p. 372.
were, by culture as well as by blood, the heirs of ancient Greece. Their sons, lively laymen educated in the new style, were now filling the administrative posts at the Patriarchal court. As a result the Patriarchate began to lose touch with the great body of the faithful, to whom faith meant more than philosophy and the Christian saints more than the sophists of pagan times.

“Above all, the Phanariots needed the support of the Church in the pursuit of their ultimate political aim. It was no mean aim. The Megali Idea, the Great Idea of the Greeks, can be traced back to days before the Turkish Conquest. It was the idea of the Imperial destiny of the Greek people. Michael VIII Palaeologus expressed it in the speech that he made when he heard that his troops had recaptured Constantinople from the Latins; though he called the Greeks the Romaioi. In later Paleologan times the word Hellene reappeared, but with the conscious intention of connecting Byzantine imperialism with the culture and traditions of ancient Greece. With the spread of the Renaissance a respect for the old Greek civilization had become general. It was natural that the Greeks, in the midst of their political disasters, should wish to benefit from it. They might be slaves now to the Turks, but they were of the great race that had civilized Europe. It must be their destiny to rise again. The Phanariots tried to combine the nationalistic force of Hellenism in a passionate if illogical alliance with the oecumenical traditions of Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. They worked for a restored Byzantium, a New Rome that should be Greek, a new centre of Greek civilization that should embrace the Orthodox world. The spirit behind the Great Idea was a mixture of neo-Byzantinism and an acute sense of race. But, with the trend of the modern world the nationalism began to dominate the oecumenicity. George Scholarius Gennadius had, perhaps unconsciously, foreseen the danger when he answered a question about his nationality by saying that he would not call himself a Hellene though he was a Hellene by race, nor a Byzantine though he had been born at Byzantium, but, rather, a Christian, that is, an Orthodox. For, if the Orthodox Church was to retain its spiritual force, it must remain oecumenical. It must not become a purely Greek Church.

“The price paid by the Orthodox Church for its subjection to its Phanariot benefactors was heavy. First, it meant that the Church was run more and more in the interests of the Greek people and not of Orthodoxy as a whole. The arrangement made between the Conquering Sultan and the Patriarch Gennadius had put all the Orthodox within the Ottoman Empire under the authority of the Patriarchate, which was inevitably controlled by Greeks. But the earlier Patriarchs after the conquest had been aware of their oecumenical duties. The autonomous Patriarchates of Serbia and Bulgaria had been suppressed when the two kingdoms were annexed by the Turks; but the two Churches had continued to enjoy a certain amount of autonomy under the Metropolitans of Pec and of Tarnovo or Ochrid. They retained their Slavonic liturgy and their native clergy and bishops. This did not suit the Phanariots. It was easy to deal with the Churches of Wallachia and Moldavia because of the
infiltration of Greeks into the Principalities, where anyhow the medieval dominance of the Serbian Church had been resented. The Phanariot Princes had not interfered with the vernacular liturgy and had, indeed, encouraged the Roumanian language at the expense of the Slavonic. The upper clergy was Graecized; so they felt secure. The Bulgarians and the Serbs were more intransigent. They had no intention of becoming Graecized. They protested to some effect against the appointment of Greek metropolitan. For a while the Serbian Patriarchate of Pec was reconstituted, from 1557 to 1755. The Phanariots demanded tighter control. In 1766 the autonomous Metropolitanate of Pec was suppressed and in 1767 the Metropolitanate of Ochrid. The Serbian and Bulgarian Churches were each put under an exarch appointed by the Patriarch. This was the work of the Patriarch Sameul Hantcherli, a member of an upstart Phanariot family, whose brother Constantine was for a while Prince of Wallachia until his financial extortions alarmed not only the tax-payers but also his ministers, and he was deposed and executed by the Sultan’s orders. The exarchs did their best to impose Greek bishops on the Balkan Churches, to the growing anger of both Serbs and Bulgarians. The Serbs recovered their religious autonomy early in the nineteenth century when they won political autonomy from the Turks. The Bulgarian Church had to wait till 1870 before it could throw off the Greek yoke. The policy defeated its own ends. It caused so much resentment that when the time came neither the Serbs nor the Bulgarians would cooperate in any Greek-directed move towards independence; and even the Roumanians held back. None of them had any wish to substitute Greek for Turkish political rule, having experienced Greek religious rule.

“Only the Church of Montenegro, the tiny mountain-land into which the Turks never managed to penetrate, kept its religious freedom, under a dynasty of Episcopal governors whose title descended from uncle to nephew. The Prince-Bishop Peter I Petrovich Niegoch was recognized as an independent ruler by Sultan Selim III in 1799; and thenceforward even the Phanar admitted Montenegro’s complete religious autonomy…”

The Phanariots were more than any responsible for that invasion of nationalism into Greek Church life which was to have such lamentable consequences in the modern era. As the famous theologian Nicholas Glubokovsky wrote in 1914: "Greek nationalism historically merged with Orthodoxy and protected it by its own self-preservation, while it in its turn found a spiritual basis for its own distinctiveness. Orthodoxy and Hellenism were united in a close mutuality, which is why the first began to be qualified by the second. And Christian Hellenism realized and developed this union precisely in a nationalist spirit. The religious aspect was a factor in national strivings and was subjected to it, and it was not only the Phanariots [the inhabitants of Greek Constantinople] who made it serve pan-hellenic dreams. These dreams were entwined into the religious, Orthodox element and gave it

its colouring, endowing the Byzantine patriarch with the status and rights of "ethnarch" for all the Christian peoples of the East, and revering him as the living and animated image of Christ (Matthew Blastaris, in his 14th century Syntagma, 8). As a result, the whole superiority of the spiritual-Christian element belonged to Hellenism, and could be apprehended by others only through Hellenism. In this respect the enlightened Grigorios Byzantios (or Byzantijsky, born in Constantinople, metropolitan of Chios from 1860, of Heraklion in 1888) categorically declared that 'the mission of Hellenism is divine and universal'. From this source come the age-old and unceasing claims of Hellenism to exclusive leadership in Orthodoxy, as its possessor and distributor. According to the words of the first reply (in May, 1576) to the Tubingen theologians of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Jeremiah II (+1595), who spoke in the capacity of 'successor of Christ' (introduction), the Greek 'holy Church of God is the mother of the Churches, and, by the grace of God, she holds the first place in knowledge. She boasts without reproach in the purity of her apostolic and patristic decrees, and, while being new, is old in Orthodoxy, and is placed at the head', which is why 'every Christian church must celebrate the Liturgy exactly as she [the Greco-Constantinopolitan Church] does' (chapter 13). Constantinople always displayed tendencies towards Church absolutism in Orthodoxy and was by no means well-disposed towards the development of autonomous national Churches, having difficulty in recognising them even in their hierarchical equality. Byzantine-Constantinopolitan Hellenism has done nothing to strengthen national Christian distinctiveness in the Eastern patriarchates and has defended its own governmental-hierarchical hegemony by all means, fighting against the national independence of Damascus (Antioch) and Jerusalem. At the end of the 16th century Constantinople by no means fully accepted the independence of the Russian Church and was not completely reconciled to Greek autocephaly (from the middle of the 19th century), while in relation to the Bulgarian Church they extended their nationalist intolerance to the extent of an ecclesiastical schism, declaring her (in 1872) in all her parts to be 'in schism'. It is a matter of great wonder that the champions of extreme nationalism in the ecclesiastical sphere should then (in 1872) have recognized national-ecclesiastical strivings to be impermissible in others and even labelled them 'phyletism', a new-fangled heresy.\textsuperscript{806}

\textit{Tsar Peter and the Orthodox East}

In September, 1721 Peter wrote to the Ecumenical Patriarch asking for his formal recognition of the new form of ecclesiastical administration in Russia – now more traditionally called a “Spiritual Synod” rather than “Ecclesiastical College”, and endowed “with equal to patriarchal power”.\textsuperscript{807} The reply came

\textsuperscript{806} Glubokovsky, N.N. “Pravoslavie po ego sushchestvu” ("Orthodoxy according to its essence"), in Tserkov' i Vremia (The Church and Time), 1991, pp. 5-6 (in Russian).

\textsuperscript{807} Vladimir Rusak, Istoria Rossijskoi Tserkvi (A History of the Russian Church), USA, 1993, p. 266 (in Russian).
on September 23, 1723 in the form of “two nearly identical letters, one from Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople, written on behalf of himself and the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria, and the other from Patriarch Athanasius of Antioch. Both letters ‘confirmed, ratified, and declared’ that the Synod established by Peter ‘is, and shall be called, our holy brother in Christ’; and the patriarchs enjoined all Orthodox clergy and people to submit to the Synod ‘as to the four Apostolic thrones’.”

If the submission of Russia to the new order can be understood in view of Peter’s iron grip on the country, the Eastern Patriarchs’ agreement to the abolition of the patriarchate they themselves had established needs more explaining. Undoubtedly influential in their decision was the assurance they received from Peter that he had instructed the Synod to rule the Russian Church “in accordance with the unalterable dogmas of the faith of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Greek Church”. Of course, if they had known all the Protestantising tendencies of Peter’s rule, and in particular his reduction of the Church to a department of the State, they might not have felt so assured…

Also relevant was the fact that the Russian tsar was the last independent Orthodox ruler and the main financial support of the Churches of the East. This made it difficult for the Patriarchs to resist the Tsar in this, as in other requests. Thus in 1716 Patriarch Jeremiah III acceded to Peter’s request to allow his soldiers to eat meat during all fasts while they were on campaign; and a little later he permitted the request of the Russian consul in Constantinople that Lutherans and Calvinists should not be rebaptised on joining the Orthodox Church.

But a still more likely explanation is the fact that the Eastern Patriarchs were themselves in an uncanonical situation in relation to their secular ruler, the Sultan, which would have made any protest against a similar uncanonicity in Russia seem hypocritical.

In order to understand this situation, we need to go back to the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, and remind ourselves of the new relationship between Church and State established by the Turkish sultan.

“The Muslims,” writes Bishop Kallistos Ware, “drew no distinction between religion and politics: from their point of view, if Christianity was to be recognized as an independent religious faith, it was necessary for

---

808 Cracraft, op. cit., p. 223.
809 However, “Christopher Hermann von Manstein found that during the Ochakov campaign in the 1730s ‘though the synod grants them a dispensation for eating flesh during the actual campaign, there are few that choose to take the benefit of it, preferring death to the sin of breaking their rule’” (in Hartley, op. cit., p. 242).
810 Fomin & Fomin, op. cit., part I, p. 294. At the Moscow council of 1666-67, it had been decreed, under pressure from Ligarides, that papists should be received, not by baptism, but by chrismation.
Christians to be organized as an independent political unit, an Empire within
the Empire. The Orthodox Church therefore became a civil as well as a
religious institution: it was turned into the Rum millet, the ‘Roman nation’.
The ecclesiastical structure was taken over in toto as an instrument of secular
administration. The bishop became government officials, the Patriarch was
not only the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church, but the civil head
of the Greek nation – the ethnarch or millet-bashi.”

An outward symbol of this change in the status of the Patriarch was his
wearing a crown in the Divine services. Hieromonk Elia writes: “Until
Ottoman times, that is until the 14th century, bishops did not wear crowns, or
anything else upon their heads in church. When there was no longer an
Emperor, the Patriarch began to wear a crown, and the ‘sakkos’, an imperial
garment, indicating that he was now head of the millet or nation.”

The millet system had the consequence that “the Church’s higher
administration became caught up in a degrading system of corruption and
simony. Involved as they were in worldly affairs and matters political, the
bishops fell a prey to ambition and financial greed. Each new Patriarch
required a berat from the Sultan before he could assume office, and for this
document he was obliged to pay heavily. The Patriarch recovered his
expenses from the episcopate, by exacting a fee from each bishop before
instituting him in his diocese; the bishops in turn taxed the parish clergy, and
the clergy taxed their flocks. What was once said of the Papacy was certainly
true of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Turks: everything was for sale.
“When there were several candidates for the Patriarchal throne, the Turks
virtually sold it to the highest bidder; and they were quick to see that it was in
their financial interests to change the Patriarch as frequently as possible, so as
to multiply occasions for selling the berat. Patriarchs were removed and
reinstated with kaleidoscopic rapidity.”

This system actually led to the abolition of the Serbian Patriarchate of Peć
in 1765 and its absorption into the Ecumenical Patriarchate (the same
happened to the Bulgarian Church in 1767). For the Serbs could not afford to
pay the sums demanded of them. Thus Noel Malcolm writes: “By 1760,
according to a Catholic report, the Patriarch in Peć was paying 10,000 scudi
per annum to the Greek Patriarch. In 1766, pleading the burden of the
payments they had to make under this system, the bishops of many Serbian
sees, including Skopje, Niš and Belgrade, together with the Greek-born
Patriarch of Peć himself, sent a petition asking the Sultan to close down the
Serbian Patriarchate and place the whole Church directly under
Constantinople. Some Serbian historians insist that the closure of the
Patriarchate was an act of force; but there is good evidence that the closure

813 Ware, op. cit., pp. 89-90.
was carried out canonically, by a decision of a Serbian synod. The primary cause of this event was not the attitude of the Ottoman state (harsh though that was at times) but the financial oppression of the Greek hierarchy. In the Hapsburg domains, meanwhile, the Serbian Church based in Karlovci continued to operate, keeping up its *de facto* autonomy.\(^{814}\)

Thus in the 18th century we have the tragic spectacle of the Orthodox Church almost everywhere in an uncanonical position vis-à-vis the secular powers: in Russia, deprived of its lawful head and ruled by a secular, albeit formally Orthodox ruler; in the Greek lands, under a lawful head, the Ecumenical Patriarch, who nevertheless unlawfully combined political and religious roles and was chosen, at least in part, by a Muslim ruler; in the Balkans, deprived of their lawful heads (the Serbian and Bulgarian patriarchs) and ruled in both political and religious matters by the Ecumenical Patriarch while being under the supreme dominion of the same Muslim ruler, or, as in Montenegro, ruled (from 1782) by prince-bishops of the Petrovic-Njegos family. Only little Georgia retained something like the traditional symphony of powers. But even the Georgians were forced, towards the end of the eighteenth century, to seek the suzerainty of Orthodox Russia in the face of the Muslim threat: better an Orthodox absolutism than a Muslim one.

The problem for the smaller Orthodox nations was that there was no clear way out of this situation. Rebellion on a mass scale was out of the question. So it was natural to look in hope to the north, where Peter, in spite of his “state heresy” (Glubokovsky’s phrase), was an anointed sovereign who greatly strengthened Russia militarily and signed all the confessions of the faith of the Orthodox Church. And their hopes were not unfounded: by the end of the century the Ottomans had been defeated several times by the Russian armies, who now controlled the northern littoral of the Black Sea. And the threat posed by the Russian navy to Constantinople itself translated into real influence with the Sultan, which the Russian emperors and empresses used frequently in order to help their co-religionists in the Balkans.

Military defeat undermined the authority of the Ottomans. As Philip Mansel points out, they “owed their authority to military success. Unlike other Muslim dynasties such as the Sherifs, the senior descendants of the Prophet who had ruled in Mecca and Medina since the tenth century, they could not claim long-established right or the blood of the Qureish, the Prophet’s tribe. This ‘legitimacy deficit’ created conflict, even in the mind of a sixteenth-century Grand Vizier like Lutfi Pasha. Could the Ottoman Sultan be, as he frequently proclaimed, [the] ‘Shadow of God’?\(^{815}\)


**Was Peter an Orthodox Tsar?**

All these factors persuaded the Eastern Patriarchs to employ “economy” and bless the absolutist form of government in Russia. Nevertheless, every transgression of the sacred canons is regrettable. And the transgression in this case was to have serious long-term consequences...

In view of all that has been said about Peter’s evil deeds, can we count him as an Orthodox Tsar? There are some, even among conservative historians and commentators, who believe that Petrine absolutism was not an unmitigated evil, but even worked in some ways for the good of the Orthodox Christian People, in accordance with the principle that “all things work together for good for those who love God” ([Romans 8.28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8.28)). Certainly, even an evil Tsar has at least this advantage, that he humbles the Church and People, reminding them how far they have fallen since they were counted worthy of a merciful Tsar, and therefore, albeit unwittingly, laying the foundations for a true resurrection of Orthodoxy at some time in the future...

But some have even seen some of his aims as good in themselves. Thus the distinguished theorist of monarchism L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: “It would be superfluous to repeat that in his fundamental task Peter the Great was without question right and was a great Russian man. He understood that as a monarch, as the bearer of the duties of the tsar, he was obliged dauntlessly to take upon his shoulders a heavy task: that of leading Russia as quickly as possible to as a complete as possible a mastery of all the means of European culture. For Russia this was a ‘to be or not be’ question. It is terrible even to think what would have been the case if we had not caught up with Europe before the end of the 18th century. Under the Petrine reforms we fell into a slavery to foreigners which has lasted to the present day, but without this reform, of course, we would have lost our national existence if we had lived in our barbaric powerlessness until the time of Fredrick the Great, the French Revolution and the era of Europe’s economic conquest of the whole world. With an iron hand Peter forced Russia to learn and work – he was, of course, the saviour of the whole future of the nation.

“Peter was also right in his coercive measures. In general Russia had for a long time been striving for science, but with insufficient ardour. Moreover, she was so backward, such terrible labour was set before her in order to catch up with Europe, that the whole nation could not have done it voluntarily. Peter was undoubtedly right, and deserved the eternal gratitude of the fatherland for using the whole of his royal authority and power to create the cruelest dictatorship and move the country forward by force, enslaving the whole nation, because of the weakness of her resources, to serve the aims of the state. There was no other way to save Russia [!]

419
“But Peter was right only for himself, for his time and for his work. But when this system of enslaving the people to the state is elevated into a principle, it becomes murderous for the nation, it destroys all the sources of the people’s independent life. But Peter indicated no limits to the general enserfment to the state, he undertook no measures to ensure that a temporary system should not become permanent, he even took no measures to ensure that enserfed Russia did not fall into the hands of foreigners, as happened immediately after his death.”

However, Protopriest Lev Lebedev, even while admitting the useful things that Peter accomplished, comes to a different and much darker conclusion: “We are familiar with the words that Peter ‘broke through a window into Europe’. But no! He ‘broke through a window’ into Russia for Europe, or rather, opened the gates of the fortress of the soul of Great Russia for the invasion into it of the hostile spiritual forces of ‘the dark West’. Many actions of this reformer, for example, the building of the fleet, the building of St. Petersburg, of the first factories, were accompanied by unjustified cruelties and merciless dealing with his own people. The historians who praise Peter either do not mention this, or speak only obliquely about it, and with justification, so as not to deprive their idol of the aura of ‘the Father of the Fatherland’ and the title ‘Great’. For the Fatherland Peter I was the same kind of ‘father’ as he was for his own son the Tsarevich Alexis, whom he ordered to be killed – in essence, only because Alexis did not agree with his father’s destructive reforms for the Fatherland. That means that Peter I did not at all love Russia and did not care for her glory. He loved his own idea of the transformation of Russia and the glory of the successes precisely of this idea, and not of the Homeland, not of the people as it then was, especially in its best and highest state – the state of Holy Rus’.

“Peter was possessed by ideas that were destructive for the Great Russian soul and life. It is impossible to explain this only by his delectation for all things European. Here we may see the influence of his initiation into the teaching of evil [Masonry] that he voluntarily accepted in the West. Only a person who had become in spirit not Russian could so hate the most valuable and important thing in Great Russia – the Orthodox spiritual foundations of her many-centuried life. Therefore if we noted earlier that under Peter the monarchy ceased to be Orthodox and Autocratic, now we must say that in many ways it ceased to be Russian or Great Russian. Then we shall see how the revolutionary Bolshevik and bloody tyrant Stalin venerated Peter I and Ivan IV. Only these two Autocrats were venerated in Soviet times by the communists – the fighters against autocracy... Now we can understand why they were venerated – for the antichristian and antirussian essence of their actions and transformations!

“Investigators both for and against Peter I are nevertheless unanimous in one thing: those transformations in the army, fleet, state administration, industry, etc. that were useful to Russia could not have been introduced (even with the use of western models) without breaking the root spiritual foundations of the life of Great Russia as they had been formed up to Peter. Therefore when they say that the actions of Peter can be divided into ‘harmful’ and ‘useful’, we must object: that which was useful in them was drowned in that which was harmful. After all, nobody would think of praising a good drink if a death-dealing poison were mixed with it…”

Certainly, there were many in Peter’s reign who were prepared to pay with their lives for their confession that he was, if not the Antichrist, at any rate a forerunner of the Antichrist. Thus the layman Andrew Ivanov travelled 400 versts from Nizhni-Novgorod province to tell the Tsar that he was a heretic and was destroying the foundations of the Christian faith. Others went further. Thus as early as 1690 Gregory Talitsky circulated a pamphlet calling Moscow the New Babylon and Peter the Antichrist, for which he was executed. In 1718 Hilarion Dokukin publicly refused allegiance to Peter because of his unlawful removal of the Tsarevich from the Russian throne, and was tortured and executed. And in 1722 Monk Varlaam Levin from Penza was publicly executed for calling Peter the Antichrist.

And yet the consensus of the Church was that Peter was not the Antichrist. Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna poses the question: “Why, in the course of two centuries, have we all, both those who are positively disposed and those who are negatively disposed towards Peter, not consider him as the Antichrist? Why, next to the pious rebukers of Peter, could there be pious, very pious venerators of him? Why could St. Metrophanes of Voronezh, who fearlessly rebuked Peter’s comparatively innocent attraction to Greek-Roman statues in imitation of the Europeans, nevertheless sincerely and touchingly love the blasphemer-tsar and enjoy his love and respect in return? Why could Saints Demetrius of Rostov and Innocent of Irkutsk love him (the latter, as ‘over-hieromonk’ of the fleet, had close relations with him)? Why did the most ardent and conscious contemporary opponent of Peter’s reforms, the locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky, who struggled with Peter’s anti-ecclesiastical reforms and was persecuted and constrained by him for that, nevertheless not only not recognise Peter as the Antichrist, but also wrote a book refuting such an opinion? Why in general did the Church, which has always put forward from its midst holy fighters against all antichristian phenomena contemporary to it, however much these

817 Lebedev, op. cit, p. 175.
818 Zzykin, op. cit, part III, p. 259.
819 Van den Bercken, op. cit, p. 176.
820 Lebedev, op. cit, p. 196.
821 Yavorsky is said to have modified this judgement, saying that Peter was “not the Antichrist, but an iconoclast” – which was a contemporary Russian word for “Protestant” (Cracraft, op. cit, pp. 163-164).
phenomena may have been supported by the bearers of supreme power, the Church which later, under Catherine II, put forward against her far more restrained, veiled and far less far-reaching anti-ecclesiastical reforms such uncompromising fighters as Metropolitans Arsenius (Matseyevich) and Paul (Konyuskevich) – why, under the Emperor Peter, did the Church not put forward against him one holy man, recognised as such, not one rebuker authorised by Her? Why did our best Church thinker, who understood the tragedy of the fall of Holy Rus’ with the greatest clarity and fullness, A.S. Khomiakov, confess that that in Peter’s reforms, “sensing in them the fruit of pride, the intoxication of earthly wisdom, we have renounced all our holy things that our native to the heart’, why could he nevertheless calmly and in a spirit of sober goodwill say of Peter: ‘Many mistakes darken the glory of the Transformer of Russia, but to him remains the glory of pushing her forward to strength and a consciousness of her strength’?

“And finally, the most important question: why is not only Russia, but the whole of the rest of the world, in which by that time the terrible process of apostasy from God had already been taking place for centuries, obliged precisely to Peter for the fact that this process was stopped by the mighty hand of Russia for more than 200 years? After all, when we rightly and with reason refer the words of the Apostle Paul: ‘The mystery of lawlessness is already working, only it will not be completed until he who now restrains is removed from the midst’ to the Russian tsars, we think mainly of the Russian [St. Petersburg] emperors, and not of the Muscovite tsars? 822 These comparatively weak, exotic rulers, to whom the world outside their immediate dominions related in approximately the way that, in later times, they related to the Neguses and Negestas of Abyssinia, could not be the restrainers of the world. Consequently Peter was simultaneously both the Antichrist and the Restrainer from the Antichrist. But if that is the case, then the whole exceptional nature of Peter’s spiritual standing disappears, because Christ and Antichrist, God and the devil fight with each other in every human soul, for every human soul, and in this case Peter turned out to be only more gifted than the ordinary man, a historical personality who was both good and evil, but always powerful, elementally strong. Both the enemies and the friends of Peter will agree with this characterisation…” 823

So Peter was both a forerunner of the Antichrist and the Restrainer against the Antichrist. He did great harm to the Church, but he also effectively defended her against her external enemies, and supported her missionary

822 The assertion that in the presence of the Orthodox Kingdom – the Russian Empire – that terrible universal outpouring of evil which we observe today could not be complete, is not an arbitrary claim. This is witnessed to by one of the founders of the bloodiest forms of contemporary anti-theism, Soviet communism – Friedrich Engels, who wrote: “Not one revolution in Europe and in the whole world can attain final victory while the present Russian state exists” (“Karl Marx and the revolutionary movement in Russia”).

work in Siberia and the East. And he sincerely believed himself to be, as he once wrote to the Eastern patriarchs, ‘a devoted son of our Most Beloved Mother the Orthodox Church’.”

Did Peter repent of his anti-Church acts? It is impossible to say. All we know is that “from January 23 to 28 he confessed and received communion three times; while receiving holy unction, he displayed great compunction of soul and several times repeated: ‘I believe, I hope!’...” This gives us, too, reason to hope and believe in his salvation. For from that eternal world his old friend and foe, St. Metrophanes, once appeared to one of his venerators and said: “If you want to be pleasing to me, pray for the peace of the soul of the Emperor Peter the Great...”

The German Persecution of Orthodoxy

Before his death Peter had instituted a new method of determining the succession to the throne. Abolishing primogeniture, which he called “a bad custom”, he decreed “that it should always be in the will of the ruling sovereign to give the inheritance to whomever he wishes”. The result was a woman on the throne, his (unlawful) wife Catherine I. “That,” writes Lebedev, “had never happened before in Great Russia. Moreover, she was not of the royal family, which nobody in Russia could ever have imagined up to that time.”

This retrograde step led to a situation in which, in sharp contrast to the relative stability of succession under the Muscovite tsars, every single change of monarch from the death of Peter I in 1725 to the assassination of Paul I in 1801 was a violent coup d’etat involving the intervention of the Guards regiments and their aristocratic protégés. The result was perhaps the lowest nadir of Russian statehood, when the state was governed by children or women under the control of a Masonic aristocratic élite whose own support did not rest on the people but on the army. This showed that the tsars, far from strengthening their power-base by the suppression of the Church, had actually weakened it.

Moreover, not only was the nationality of the Sovereigns mainly German, but the whole culture of their court was predominantly Franco-German, and most education in ecclesiastical schools was conducted in Latin. And not only was a foreign culture imposed on the native one: for a short time the Russian Autocracy could even be said to have been abolished. For when Anna Ioannovna came to the throne in 1730, it was under certain conditions, which

825 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 140. See also “Smert’ Imperatora Petra I kak obrazets khristianskoj konchiny” (“The Death of Peter I as a Model of Christian Death”), Svecha Pokaiania (The Candle of Repentance), № 1, March, 1999, pp. 6-7 (in Russian).
826 Svecha Pokaiania (The Candle of Repentance), № 1, March, 1999, p. 7.
827 Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 300.
obliged her “in everything to follow the decisions of the Supreme Secret Council, not to marry, not to appoint an Heir, and in general to decide practically nothing on her own. In essence the ‘superiors’ thereby abolished the Autocracy!”

No sooner was Peter dead than thoughts about the restoration of the patriarchate re-surfaced. “The very fact of his premature death,” writes Zyzykin, “was seen as the punishment of God for his assumption of ecclesiastical power. ‘There you are,’ said Archbishop Theodosius of Novgorod in the Synod, ‘he had only to touch spiritual matters and possessions and God took him.’ From the incautious words of Archbishop Theodosius, Theophanes [Prokopovich] made a case for his having created a rebellion, and he was arrested on April 27 [1725], condemned on September 11, 1725 and died in 1726. Archbishop Theophylactus of Tver was also imprisoned in 1736 on a charge of wanting to become Patriarch. On December 31, 1740 he again received the insignia of hierarchical rank and died on May 6, 1741. For propagandising the idea of the patriarchate Archimandrite Marcellus Rodyshevsky was imprisoned in 1732, was later forgiven, and died as a Bishop in 1742. Also among the opponents of Peter’s Church reform was Bishop George Dashkov of Rostov, who was put forward in the time of Peter I as a candidate for Patriarch… After the death of Peter, in 1726, he was made the third hierarch in the Synod by Catherine I. On July 21, 1730, by a decree of the Empress Anna, he, together with Theophylactus, was removed from the Synod, and on November 19 of the same year, by an order of the Empress Anna he was imprisoned, and in February, 1731 took the schema. He was imprisoned in the Spasokamenny monastery on an island in Kubensk lake, and in 1734 was sent to Nerchinsk monastery – it was forbidden to receive any declaration whatsoever from him… Thus concerning the time of the Empress Anna a historian writes what is easy for us to imagine since Soviet power, but was difficult for a historian living in the 19th century: ‘Even from a distance of one and a half centuries, it is terrible to imagine that awful, black and heavy time with its interrogations and confrontations, with their iron chains and tortures. A man has committed no crime, but suddenly he is seized, shackled and taken to St. Petersburg or Moscow - he knows not where, or what for. A year or two before he had spoken with some suspicious person. What they were talking about - that was the reason for all those alarms, horrors and tortures. Without the least exaggeration we can say about that time that on lying down to sleep at night you could not vouch for yourself that by the morning that you would not be in chains, and that from the morning to the night you would not land up in a fortress, although you would not be conscious of any guilt. The guilt of all these clergy consisted only in their desire to restore the canonical form of administration of the

829 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 206.
830 He tried to explain that “the patriarchate is not only the oldest but also the only lawful form of government (understanding by the patriarchate the leadership of the Church by one of her bishops)” (Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, p. 263).
Russian Church and their non-approval of Peter's Church reform, which did not correspond to the views of the people brought up in Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{831}

“But even under Anna the thought of the patriarchate did not go away, and its supporters put forward Archimandrite Barlaam, the empress' spiritual father, for the position of Patriarch. We shall not name the many others who suffered from the lower ranks; we shall only say that the main persecutions dated to the time of the Empress Anna, when the impulse given by Peter to Church reform produced its natural result, the direct persecution of Orthodoxy. But after the death of Theophanes in 1736 Bishop Ambrose Yushkevich of Vologda, a defender of the patriarchate and of the views of Marcellus Rodyshevsky, became the first member of the Synod. With the enthronement of Elizabeth he greeted Russia on her deliverance from her internal hidden enemies who were destroying Orthodoxy.

“Chistovich writes: ‘The Synod remembered its sufferers under Elizabeth; a true resurrection from the dead took place. Hundreds, thousands of people who had disappeared without trace and had been taken for dead came to life again. After the death of the Empress Anna the released sufferers dragged themselves back to their homeland, or the places of their former service, from all the distant corners of Siberia – some with torn out nostrils, others with their tongue cut out, others with legs worn through by chains, others with broken spines or arms disfigured from tortures.’ The Church preachers under Elizabeth attributed this to the hatred for the Russian faith and the Russian people of Biron, Osterman, Minikh, Levenvold and other Lutheran Germans who tried to destroy the very root of eastern piety. They were of this opinion because most of all there suffered the clergy – hierarchs, priests and monks…”\textsuperscript{832}

"In Biron's time,” writes Andrew Bessmertny, “hundreds of clergy were tonsured, whipped and exiled, and they did the same with protesting bishops - and there were quite a few of those. 6557 priests were forced into military service, as a consequence of which in only four northern dioceses 182 churches remained without clergy or readers.”\textsuperscript{833}

\textsuperscript{831} Tikhomirov writes: “In the first decade after the establishment of the Synod most of the Russian bishops were in prison, were defrocked, beaten with whips, etc. I checked this from the lists of bishops in the indicated work of Dobroklnsky. In the history of the Constantinopolitan Church after the Turkish conquest we do not find a single period when there was such devastation wrought among the bishops and such lack of ceremony in relation to Church property” (op. cit., p. 300). (V.M.)
\textsuperscript{832} Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, pp. 261-262.
“This is what happened in Russia,” writes Zyzykin, “when the State secularisation which had begun under Alexis Mikhailovich led to the dominion of the State over the Church, while the authority in the State itself was in the hands of genuine Protestants, who did not occupy secondary posts, as under Peter, but were in leading posts, as under the Empress Anna. The ideology of royal power laid down under Peter remained throughout the period of the Emperors; the position of the Church in the State changed in various reigns, but always under the influence of those ideas which the secular power itself accepted; it was not defined by the always unchanging teaching of the Orthodox Church”834 – the symphony of powers.

How did the hierarchs themselves remember Biron’s time? Bishop Ambrose wrote: “They attacked our Orthodox piety and faith, but in such a way and under such a pretext that they seemed to be rooting out some unneeded and harmful superstition in Christianity. O how many clergymen and an even greater number of learned monks were defrocked, tortured and exterminated under that pretense! Why? No answer is heard except: he is a superstitious person, a bigot, a hypocrite, a person unfit for anything. These things were done cunningly and purposefully, so as to extirpate the Orthodox priesthood and replace it with a newly conceived priestlessness [bezpopovshchina]…

“Our domestic enemies devised a strategem to undermine the Orthodox faith; they consigned to oblivion religious books already prepared for publication; and they forbade others to be written under penalty of death. They seized not only the teachers, but also their lessons and books, fettered them, and locked them in prison. Things reached such a point that in this Orthodox state to open one’s mouth about religion was dangerous: one could depend on immediate trouble and persecution.”835

Biron’s was a time, recalled Metropolitan Demetrius (Sechenov) of Novgorod, “when our enemies so raised their heads that they dared to defile the dogma of the holy faith, the Christian dogmas, on which eternal salvation depends. They did not call on the aid of the intercessor of our salvation, nor beseech her defence; they did not venerate the saints of God; they did not bow to the holy icons; they mocked the sign of the holy cross; they rejected the traditions of the apostles and holy fathers; they cast out good works, which attract eternal reward; they ate eat during the holy fasts, and did not want even to hear about mortifying the flesh; they laughed at the commemoration of the reposed; they did not believe in the existence of gehenna.”836

“This great destructive work,” comments Ivanov, “was carried out by the leading people in the country – Prokopovich, Tatishchev and Kantemir…”

834 Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, p. 263.
835 Ambrose, in Florovsky, op. cit., pp. 128-129.
836 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 155.
“There is no direct historical data to answer the question whether Theophanes [Prokopovich], Kantemir and Tatishchev formally belong to Masonry, that is, were members of Masonic lodges. But this has no significance, for they were all undoubtedly in the power of the destructive ideas of Masonry.

“There is no doubt that during the reign of Anna Ioannovna Masonry pushed down deep roots in Russia.

“In 1731 John Philipps was appointed great provincial master for Russia. After him there appears the notable James Cate.

“‘Cate,’ writes Vernadsky, ‘was the representative of a family that united through its activity three countries – Russia, Scotland and Prussia. James Cate himself fled from England, and after the unsuccessful outcome of the Jacobite rebellion (in which Cate himself took part on the side of the Stuart pretender) in 1728 he became a Russian general. In about 1747 he moved to the service of Prussia; he then took part in the seven-year war on the side of Prussia and in 1758 was killed in the battle of Gochrichen.

“‘His brother John Cate (Lord Kintor) was the grand master of English Masonry; George Cate was the well-known general of Frederick II (and sentenced to death in England for helping the same Stuart). Finally, there was also a Robert Cate who was English ambassador in St. Petersbourg (a little later, from 1758 to 1762).’

“... The name of James Cate was greatly respected by Russian Masons... This father and benefactor of the Russian Masons was none other than the spy and emissary of Frederick II, an ardent Mason, called Great for his hatred for Christianity.

“‘In Germany itself,’ writes Pypin, ‘Masonry had already acquired very many followers by 1730, and there are reasons to believe that during the time of Anna and Biron the Germans had Masonic lodges in St. Petersbourg. Concerning Cate himself there is evidence that he had some kind of contacts with the German lodges even before he became grand master in Russia.’

“... Foreigners were in charge of all the affairs of the Empire. The ruler of the state was a foreigner, the first cabinet minister was a foreigner, two army field-marshals were foreigners. All the more or less significant posts in the army and administration were occupied by foreigners. Prominent Russian nobles, on the other hand, were in disgrace and exile.
“The discontent was general. But, suppressed by fear and terror, the Russians could only express their sorrow at their insults and injury to themselves...”

Hardly coincidentally, the humiliation of the Russians was accompanied by the first real resurgence of Jewish influence since the heresy of the Judaizers.

Thus Solzhenitsyn writes, citing Jewish sources: “In 1728, under Peter II, ‘the admission of Jews into Little Russia was permitted, as being people who were useful for trade in the region’, first as a ‘temporary visit’, but ‘of course, the temporary visit was turned into a constant presence’. Reasons were found. Under Anna this right was extended in 1731 to the Smolensk province, and in 1734 – to Slobodskaya Ukraine (to the north-east of Poltava). At the same time the Jews were allowed to rent property from land-owners, and to take part in the wine trade. And in 1736 the Jews were permitted to transport vodka also to the state taverns of Great Russia.

“Mention should be made of the figure of the financier Levi Lipmann from the Baltic area. When the future Empress Anna Ioannovna was still living in Courland, she had great need of money, ‘and it is possible that already at that time Lipman had occasion to be useful to her’. Already under Peter he had moved to Petersburg. Under Peter II he ‘became a financial agent or jeweller at the Russian court.’ During the reign of Anna Ioannovna he received ‘major connections at the court’ and the rank of ober-gofkommissar. ‘Having direct relations with the empress, Lipmann was in particularly close touch with her favourite, Biron... Contemporaries asserted that... Biron turned to him for advice on questions of Russian state life. One of the consuls at the Prussian court wrote... that “it is Lipmann who is ruling Russia”’. Later, these estimates of contemporaries were subjected to a certain re-evaluation downwards. However, Biron ‘transferred to him [Lipmann] almost the whole administration of the finances and various trade monopolies’. (‘Lipmann continued to carry out his functions at the court even when Anna Leopoldovna... exiled Biron’.)

_Tsaritsa Elizabeth_

By the mercy of God, the Empress Anna died, and although Biron was appointed regent the next day, the Germans fell out amongst themselves. So in 1741, after the brief reign of Ivan VI, the daughter of Peter the Great, Elizabeth, who was both Russian and truly Orthodox, came to the throne.

Under Elizabeth, the Orthodox bishops returned from prison and exile, and the country breathed a sigh of relief. Soon she had restored to the Church

---

837 Ivanov, op. cit, pp. 155, 157-159.
some of its former privileges. Thus in 1742, writes Rusak, “the initial judgement on clergy was presented to the Synod, even with regard to political matters. The Synod was re-established in its former dignity, as the highest ecclesiastical institution with the title ‘Ruling’.

“The members of the Synod (Archbishop Ambrose Yushkevich of Novgorod, Metropolitan Arsenius Matseyevich of Rostov, both Ukrainians) gave a report to the empress in which they wrote that if it was not pleasing to her to restore the patriarchate, then let her at least give the Synod a president and body composed only of hierarchs. In addition, they petitioned for the removal of the post of over-procurator. The empress did not go to the lengths of such serious reforms, but she did agree to return to the clergy its property and submit the College of Economics to the Synod.”

However, writes Nikolin, “there was a significant rise in the significance of the over-procurator, whose post was re-established (during the reign of Anna Ivanovna it had been suspended). Prince Ya.P. Shakhovskoj, who was appointed to the post, was given the right to give daily personal reports to the empress, who entrusted him personally with receiving from her all the ukazes and oral directives for the Synodal administration. Thereby, however, there arose a very ambiguous state of affairs. On the one hand, the Synod’s affairs were being reported directly to the supreme power, but on the other the idea of the State’s interest, and its priority over the ecclesiastical interest, was being constantly emphasised. The strengthening of the over-procurator’s power was aided by an ukaz of the empress introducing a new system of Church administration in the dioceses – the consistories. In these institutions a leading role was acquired by the secretaries, who were appointed by the over-procurator, controlled by him and accountable to him. However, the noticeable tendency evident in these years towards a strengthening of the over-procurator’s executive power in the Church was restrained by the personal goodwill of the empress towards the clergy.”

One of the first things she did, in December, 1742, was to forbid residence for the Jews throughout the Empire, since “from such haters of the name of Christ the Saviour great harm for our subjects must be expected”. 140 Jews were expelled from the Ukraine. But then the wax trade reported to the Senate that “banning the Jews from bringing in merchandise will bring with a diminution of state income”. The Senate itself added its voice to this complaint, telling the empress that her decree had caused great harm to trade in the Ukraine and the Baltic, with a corresponding loss in customs receipts. But the empress replied: “I do not want any profit from the enemies of Christ”… However, it seems likely that the empress’ decree, like similar earlier decrees, remained a dead letter…”

---

839 Rusak, op. cit., p. 273.
840 Nikolin, op. cit., p. 96.
841 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 28, 29.
“On Elizabeth’s accession to the throne,” writes Ivanov, “a popular movement appeared, directed against foreigners, which established itself in the two following reigns. The lower classes were waiting for the expulsion of the foreigners from Russia. But nothing, except some street brawls with foreigners, took place.

“A reaction began against the domination of the foreigners who despised everything Russia, together with a weak turn towards a national regime…

“During the 20 years of Elizabeth’s reign Russia relaxed after her former oppression, and the Russian Church came to know peaceful days…

“The persecution of the Orthodox Church begun under Peter I and continued under Anna Ivanovna began to weaken somewhat, and the clergy raised their voices…

“Under Elizabeth there began the elevation to the hierarchical rank of Great Russian monks, while earlier the hierarchs had been mainly appointed from the Little Russians…

“Under Elizabeth the Protestants who remained at court did not begin to speak against Orthodoxy, whereas in the reign of Anna Ivanovna they had openly persecuted it. Nevertheless, Protestantism as a weapon of the Masons in their struggle with Orthodoxy had acquired a sufficiently strong position in the previous reigns. The soil had been prepared, the minds of society were inclined to accept the Freemasons.

“‘In the reign of Elizabeth German influence began to be replaced by French,’ an investigator of this question tells us. ‘At this time the West European intelligentsia was beginning to be interested in so-called French philosophy; even governments were beginning to be ruled by its ideas… In Russia, as in Western Europe, a fashion for this philosophy appeared. In the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna a whole generation of its venerators was already being reared. They included such highly placed people as Count M. Vorontsov and Shuvalov, Princess Dashkova and the wife of the heir to the throne, Catherine Alexeyevna. But neither Elizabeth nor Peter III sympathised with it.

“Individual Masons from Peter’s time were organising themselves. Masonry was developing strongly…”842

Nevertheless, “in society people began to be suspicious of Masonry. Masons in society acquired the reputation of being heretics and apostates…

---

Most of Elizabethan society considered Masonry to be an atheistic and
criminal matter…

“The Orthodox clergy had also been hostile to Masonry for a long time
already. Preachers at the court began to reprove ‘animal-like and godless
atheists’ and people ‘of Epicurean and Freemasonic morals and mentality’ in
their sermons. The sermons of Gideon Antonsky, Cyril Florinsky, Arsenius
Matsyeveich, Cyril Lyashevetsky, Gideon Krinovsky and others reflected the
struggle that was taking place between the defenders of Orthodoxy and their
enemies, the Masons.”

It was in Elizabeth’s reign that the Secret Chancellery made an inquiry into
the nature and membership of the Masonic lodges. The inquiry found that
Masonry was defined by its members as “nothing else than the key of
friendship and eternal brotherhood”. It was found not to be dangerous and
was allowed to continue, “although under police protection”.

Masonry was particularly strong in the university and among the cadets.
“The cadet corps was the laboratory of the future revolution. From the cadet
corps there came the representatives of Russian progressive literature, which
was penetrated with Masonic ideals….

“Towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna Masonry openly
revealed its real nature. At this time a bitter struggle was developing in the
West between Austria and Prussia for the Austrian succession. In 1756 there
began the Seven-Year war, in which Russia took an active part.

“The Mason Frederick II was again striving to subject Russia to his
influence.

“This aim was to be attained completely by means of the defeat of the
Russian army and her capitulation before the ‘genius’ commander.

“And one has to say that everything promised victory for Frederick II over
the Russian army.

“He had a very well trained, armed and provisioned army with talented
officers.

“Frederick was undoubtedly helped by the Masons – Germans who had
taken high administrative and military posts in Russia.

“The noted James Cate, the great provincial master for the whole of Russia,
was a field-marshal of the Russian army, but in fact carried out the role of

843 Ivanov, op. cit. pp. 165, 166.
Frederick’s spy; in 1747 he fled [Russia] to serve him and was killed in battle for his adored and lofty brother.

“In general the Russian army was teeming with Prussian spies and Russian Mason-traitors.

“The Russian army was deliberately not prepared…

“And at the head of the Russian army the Masons placed Apraxin, who gave no orders, displayed an unforgivable slowness and finally entered upon the path of open betrayal.

“The victory at Gross-Egersford was won exclusively thanks to the courage and bravery of the Russian soldiers, and was not used as it should have been by the Russian commander-in-chief. Apraxin had every opportunity to cross conquered Prussia, extend a hand to the Swedes in Pomerania and appear before the walls of Berlin. But instead of moving forward he stopped at Tilsit and refused to use the position that was favourable for the Russian army… Apraxin was only fulfilling his duty of a Mason, which obliged him to deliver his lofty brother, Frederick II, from his woes…

“But this was not the only help extended to Prussia by the Russian Masons. In 1758, instead of Apraxin, who was placed on trial, Fermor was appointed as commander-in-chief. He was an active Mason and a supporter of Frederick II. Fermor acted just like Apraxin. He displayed stunning inactivity and slowness. At the battle of Tsortndof the commander-in-chief Fermor hid from the field of battle. Deserted and betrayed by their commander-in-chief the Russian army did not panic…

“But this was not the only help extended to Prussia by the Russian Masons. In 1758, instead of Apraxin, who was placed on trial, Fermor was appointed as commander-in-chief. He was an active Mason and a supporter of Frederick II. Fermor acted just like Apraxin. He displayed stunning inactivity and slowness. At the battle of Tsortndof the commander-in-chief Fermor hid from the field of battle. Deserted and betrayed by their commander-in-chief the Russian army did not panic…

“With the greatest equanimity the soldiers did not think of fleeing or surrendering…

“Frederick II had everything on his side: complete gun crews, discipline, superior weapons, the treachery of the Russian commander-in-chief. But he did not have enough faith and honour, which constituted the strength and glory of the Christ-loving Russian Army.

“The help of the dark powers was again required: and the Russian Masons for the third time gave help to Frederick II.

“At first it was suggested that Fermor be replaced by Buturlin, whom Esterhazy quite justly called ‘an idiot’, but when this did not happen, they appointed Peter Saltykov to the post of commander-in-chief. The soldiers called him ‘moor-hen’ and openly accused him of treachery. At Könersdorf the Russian commanders displayed complete incompetence. The left wing of the Russian army under the command of Golitsyn was crushed. At two
o’clock Frederick was the master of Mulberg, one of the three heights where Saltlykov had dug in. By three o’clock the victory was Frederick’s. And once again the situation was saved by the Russian soldiers. The king led his army onto the attack three times, and three times he retreated, ravaged by the Russian batteries. ‘Scoundrels’, ‘swine’, ‘rascals’ was what Frederick called his soldiers, unable to conquer the Russian soldiers who died kissing their weapons.

“‘One can overcome all of them (the Russian soldiers) to the last man, but not conquer them,’ Frederick II had to admit after his defeat.

“The victory remained with the Russian soldiers, strong in the Orthodox faith and devotion to the autocracy….

“The unexpected death of Elizabeth Petrovna on December 24, 1761 at the height of her powers and health saved Frederick II from inevitable ruin.”845

Catherine II

Unfortunately, it also brought to an end the recovery of Orthodoxy that had taken place under Elizabeth…

Elizabeth’s successor, Peter III, brought the war to an end and on February 18, 1762 issued a manifesto giving freedom from obligatory state service to the nobility. Although this was, not unnaturally, applauded by the nobles, within a few months, on June 28, 1762, they staged a coup which led to the death of the Tsar, who, although he was also probably a Mason, was only “superficially” so according to Ivanov.846 His wife, Catherine, a German, appears to have cooperated with the coup that brought her to the throne, a coup that was organised by the Masons Panin and Gregory Orlov…847

Catherine’s accession to the throne was doubly illegal. Not only in that it took place over the dead body of her husband, but also in that the legitimate successor was her son, the future Tsar Paul I. What we may call the German persecution of Orthodoxy resumed…

Catherine’s first act was to reward her co-conspirators handsomely with money and serfs. This pattern of reward became the rule during the reign and grew in scale as the number of those who needed to be rewarded (mainly her lovers) increased, as well as the numbers of serfs “on the market” through the conquest of new territories and the expropriation of church lands. Thus she took away about a million peasants from the Church, while giving about a

845 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 169, 170, 171-172.
846 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 173.
847 According to Lebedev, the famous French Mason Count Saint-Germain, who was in Russia in 1762, also took part (op. cit., p. 215).
million previously free (state) peasants into the personal possession of the
nobility.\textsuperscript{848}

Thus in the course of the eighteenth century, and especially during
Catherine’s reign, the nobility recovered the dominant position they had lost
under the Ivan the Terrible and the seventeenth-century Tsars. With this
dominance of the nobility came the dominance of westernism in all its forms.
As Pipes writes: “It has been said that under Peter [I] Russia learned western
techniques, under Elizabeth western manners, and under Catherine western
morals. Westernization certainly made giant progress in the eighteenth
century; what had begun as mere aping of the west by the court and its élite
developed into close identification with the very spirit of western culture.
With the advance of westernization it became embarrassing for the state and
the dvorianstvo [nobility and civil servants] to maintain the old service
structure. The dvorianstvo wished to emulate the western aristocracy, to
enjoy its status and rights; and the Russian monarchy, eager to find itself in
the forefront of European enlightenment, was, up to a point, cooperative.

“In the course of the eighteenth century a consensus developed between
the crown and the dvorianstvo that the old system had outlived itself. It is in
this atmosphere that the social, economic and ideological props of the
patrimonial regime were removed….

“Dvoriane serving in the military were the first to benefit from the general
weakening of the monarchy that occurred after Peter’s death. In 1730,
provincial dvoriane frustrated a move by several boyar families to impose
constitutional limitations on the newly elected Empress Anne. In
appreciation, Anne steadily eased the conditions of service which Peter had
imposed on the dvorianstvo…

“These measures culminated in the Manifesto ‘Concerning the Granting of
Freedom and Liberty to the Entire Russian Dvorianstvo’, issued in 1762 by
Peter III, which ‘for ever, for all future generations’ exempted Russian
dvoriane from state service in all its forms. The Manifesto further granted
them the right to obtain passports for travel abroad, even if their purpose was
to enroll in the service of foreign rulers – an unexpected restoration of the
ancient boyar right of ‘free departure’ abolished by Ivan III. Under Catherine
II, the Senate on at least three occasions confirmed this Manifesto,
concurrently extending to the dvorianstvo other rights and privileges (e.g. the
right, given in 1783, to maintain private printing presses). In 1785 Catherine
issued a Charter of the Dvorianstvo which reconfirmed all the liberties
acquired by this estate since Peter’s death, and added some new ones. The
land which the dvoriane held was now recognized as their legal property.
They were exempt from corporal punishment. These rights made them – on

\textsuperscript{848} Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 217.
paper, at any rate – the equals of the upper classes in the most advanced countries of the west.\(^{849}\)

“The nobles,” writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, “thus possessed certain secure rights, including that of private property in land. This was an unprecedented situation in Russian society, and, in the absence of a similar charter for peasants, it consolidated in practice their right to buy and sell the serfs who occupied that land as if they too were private property.

“Catherine’s reforms thus took the first step towards creating a civil society in Russia, but at the cost of deepening yet further the already considerable juridical, political and cultural gap between the nobles and the serfs among whom they lived. Serfs became mere chattels in the eyes of their masters, objects which could be moved around or disposed of at will, as part of a gambling debt, a marriage settlement or an economic improvement scheme. In practice, they could normally be sold as commodities, without the land to which they were theoretically attached, and without members of their own families.

“Lords had judicial and police powers over their serfs, as well as economic ones, which meant that they could punish serfs in any way they saw fit: they could flog them, send them to the army or exile them to Siberia. Theoretically, they were not permitted to kill a serf, but if a harsh flogging or other ill-treatment caused a serf’s death, there was very little his fellow peasants could do about it. Not that the great majority of lords were remotely so brutal or careless. But the mentality induced by this impunity nevertheless blunted the lord’s sense of responsibility for the consequences of his own actions.\(^{850}\)

Catherine also gave the nobles the right to trade… and the right to organize local associations that would elect local government officials. All this would seem to indicate the influence on Catherine of her reading of Montesquieu and Diderot. Thus Montesquieu had argued for the creation of

\(^{849}\) Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, 1995, pp. 132, 133. Lebedev writes that “nobility itself was now also transferred by heredity insofar as the nobles had been completely freed from the obligation to serve anywhere. They could send their serfs to forced labour *without trial*, apply physical punishments to them, by and sell them (‘exchange them for wolfhounds’…) Catherine II forbade only the sale of families of peasants one by one: but (this became usual) ordered them to be sold in families. But in practice this ruling was violated pretty often.” (op. cit., p. 227).

\(^{850}\) Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 158. “Only extreme cruelty in relation to serfs (and that in the rarest cases!), sadistic torture and murder was punished, insofar as all this sickened the ‘moral feelings’ of the nobles, who considered themselves an ‘enlightened’ class. They paid no attention at all to ‘ordinary’ cruelty, it was in the nature of things. The serfs no longer *vowed allegiance* to the Tsars, and their testimonies were not admitted in court and they themselves could not take anybody to court. Their whole life, destiny, land and property were the personal property of the landowners. By forbidding the transfer of peasants from their lords in Little Russia, Catherine II began to spread *serfdom into the Ukraine.*” (Lebedev, op. cit., p. 227).
aristocratic “intermediate institutions” between the king and the people – institutions such as the parlements and Estates General in France; he believed that “no monarch, no nobility, no nobility, no monarch.” However, Montesquieu’s aim had been that these institutions and the nobility should check the power of the king. Catherine, on the other hand, was attempting to buttress her power by buying the support of the nobles.

But if the sovereign and the nobility were coming closer together, this only emphasized the gulf between this westernized elite and the masses of the Russian people. Even their concept of Russianness was different. As Hosking writes, “the nobles’ Russianness was very different from that of the peasants, and for that matter of the great majority of merchants and clergy. It was definitely an imperial Russianness, centred on elite school, Guards regiment and imperial court. Even their landed estates were islands of European culture in what they themselves often regarded as an ocean of semi-barbarism. The Russianness of the village was important to them, especially since it was bathed in childhood memories, but they knew it was something different.”

Above all, the Russianness of the nobles was different from that of the peasants because the latter was based on Orthodoxy. But the nobles had different ideals, those of the French Enlightenment. Even the sovereign, the incarnation of Holy Russia, was becoming a bearer of the French ideals rather than those of the mass of his people. Moreover, with the growth in the power of the bureaucracy he was becoming increasingly isolated from ordinary people and unable to hear their voice.

The Muscovite tsars had created a Chelobitnij Prikaz that enabled the ordinary people to bring their complaints directly to the tsar. Even Peter, who, as we have seen, created the beginnings of a powerful bureaucracy, had retained sufficient control over the bureaucrats to ensure that he was not cut off from the people and remained the real ruler of the country. “But after his death, as L.A. Tikhomirov explained, “the supreme power was cut off from the people, and at the same time was penetrated by a European spirit of absolutism. This latter circumstance was aided by the fact that the bearers of supreme power were themselves not of Russian origin during this period, and the education of everyone in general was not Russian. [This] imitation of administrative creativity continued throughout the eighteenth century.”

---

853 Hosking, *op. cit.* p. 159.
Catherine went even further than Peter I in expropriating ecclesiastical and monastic lands. Already between 1762 and 1764 the number of monasteries was reduced from 1072 to 452, and of monastics – from 12,444 to 5105!

It goes without saying, therefore, that Catherine was no supporter of the traditionally Orthodox “symphonic” model of Church-State relations. “[The Archbishop of Novgorod],” she wrote to Voltaire, “is neither a persecutor nor a fanatic. He abhors the idea of the two powers”. And in her correspondence with the Austrian Emperor Joseph II she called herself head of the Greek Church.

Under Peter, the election of bishops had been as follows: the Synod presented two candidates for the episcopacy of a vacant see to the monarch, and he chose one of them. The newly elected bishop then had to swear an oath that included recognizing the monarch as “supreme Judge” of the Church.

Catherine did not change this arrangement; and she restricted the power of the bishops still further in that out of fear of “fanaticism”, as Rusak writes, “cases dealing with religious blasphemies, the violation of order in Divine services, and magic and superstition were removed from the competence of the spiritual court…”

Catherine’s choice of over-procurators further fettered the expression of a truly Orthodox spirit in the Church.

“The first over-procurator in the reign of Catherine II,” writes Rusak, “was Prince A. Kozlovsky, who was not particularly distinguished in anything, but under whom the secularisation of the Church lands took place.

“His two successors, according to the definition of Kartashev, were ‘bearers of the most modern, anti-clerical, enlightenment ideology’. In 1765 there followed the appointment of I. Melissino as over-procurator. His worldview was very vividly reflected in his ‘Points’ – a project for an order to the Synod. Among others were the following points:

“3)… to weaken and shorten the fasts…

---

856 She once said to Countess Dashkova: “Also strike out ‘as a beneficent Deity’ - this apotheosis does not agree with the Christian religion, and, I fear, I have no right to sanctity insofar as I have laid certain restrictions on the Church’s property” (Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 299).
“5)... to purify the Church from superstitions and ‘artificial’ miracles and superstitions concerning relics and icons: for the study of this problem, to appoint a special commission from various unblended-by-prejudices people;

“7) to remove something from the long Church rites; so as to avoid pagan much speaking in prayer, to remove the multitude of verses, canons, troparia, etc., that have been composed in recent times, to remove many unnecessary feast days, and to appoint short prayer-services with useful instructions to the people instead of Vespers and All-Night Vigils…

“10) to allow the clergy to wear more fitting clothing;

“11) would it not be more rational completely to remove the habit of commemorating the dead (such a habit only provides the clergy with an extra excuse for various kinds of extortions)…

“In other points married bishops, making divorces easier, etc., were suggested.

“As successor to Melessino there was appointed Chebyshev, a Mason, who openly proclaimed his atheism. He forbade the printing of works in which the existence of God was demonstrated. ‘There is no God!’ he said aloud more than once. Besides, he was suspected, and not without reason, of spending large sums of Synodal money.

“In 1774 he was sacked. In his place there was appointed the pious S. Akchurin, then A. Naumov. Both of them established good relations with the members of the Synod. The last over-procurator in the reign of Catherine II was the active Count A. Musin-Pushkin, the well-known archaeologist, a member of the Academy of Sciences, who later revealed the “Word on Igor’s Regiment”. He took into his hands the whole of the Synodal Chancellery. Being a Church person, he did not hinder the members of the Synod from making personal reports to the empress and receive orders directly from her.”

The best hierarchs of the time were inhibited from attending Synodal sessions by the impiety of most of the over-procurators. Thus Metropolitan Platon of Moscow protested “on seeing that the over-procurators in the Synod (Melessino and Chebyshev) were penetrated with the spirit of freethinking, and that the opinions of the members of the Synod were paralysed by the influence of the then all-powerful in church matters spiritual father of the empress, Protopriest Ioann Pamphilov”.

859 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 549.
With the hierarchs in paralysis, it is not surprising that in the eighteenth century the lower clergy were in a still more humiliating condition, and were even subjected to physical violence by governors and landowners.

This continued under Catherine, writes Dobroklonsky, “in spite of the fact that educated society was in ferment with the humane ideas of French philosophy. Unfortunately for the clergy, after the noblemen had been given their charter of freedom (1785) liberating them from the obligation of military service, they began to live more than before on their estates and therefore more often come into conflict with the parish clergy. Moreover, under the influence of the fashionable philosophy, they were imbued with contempt for the clergy as being a supposedly ignorant class that supported the people’s superstitions. It is not surprising that it then became common for the landowners to mock the readers and insult the priests – it was even considered a sign of education; it is not surprising that some of the clergy took part in the peasant disturbances against the nobility. The government of Catherine II did nothing new, although it promised much, to raise the civil rights of the clergy. This question was discussed in detail at the deputies’ commission in 1767, and at that time while some wanted to make the clergy equal to the nobility, others, on the contrary, wanted to remove the privileges they had before and number them in the middle class. The projected ulozhenie even had a chapter on the white clergy recommending this, and it was only thanks to Metropolitan Gabriel of St. Petersburg’s insistence that the clergy were placed in a privileged position as before.

“However, much was done in the reign of Catherine II to raise the clergy’s position in the sphere of ecclesiastical courts and administration. Formerly there had reigned in that sphere the same crudity of manners, arbitrariness and despotism as in the civil administration. Physical punishments…, imprisonment, placing in chains and stocks, hard labour in the monastery, the bishop’s house or the seminary, interrogations with the aid of torture – all this was the most common phenomenon in episcopal administration. Neither rank nor sex liberated one from physical punishment. Anyone could apply them who had any power over the clergy… Moreover, the punishments were often carried out in public and were far from corresponding, in their severity, to the importance of the misdeeds. Everything depended on the arbitrary will of the authorities. It was in this way that the threatening images of the hierarchs who terrified the clergy subject to them… were worked out. All protests on the part of the clergy were useless, and so they bore their burden in silence, the more so in that almost the whole of the Church administration was in the hands of the monastic clergy. The government of Catherine II condemned such practices. By a decree of 1766 it ordered all punishments exacted in the spiritual administration to be conducted in a moderate manner, taking human weaknesses into account. Then by its decrees of 1767, 1771 and 1772 it forbade the spiritual authorities from subjecting priests and deacons to physical punishment so that through this they should not lose fitting respect in society.
However, in the civil courts physical punishments of church-servers remained in place. To limit arbitrary self-will the diocesan authorities were forbidden from defrocking clergy without the permission of the Synod, and from using them on works in the bishop’s houses; in the consistory it was ordered that representatives of the while clergy should be appointed together with the monastics. Finally, collections from the clergy going to the bishop’s purse were removed; these had turned them into a taxable class before the diocesan authorities. These measures significantly raised the formerly downtrodden clergy. In many cases protests against the arbitrary wilfulness and cruelty of the diocesan hierarchs began to appear. A powerful intercessor for the while clergy was the empress’ spiritual father, Protopriest Ioann Pamphilov, who was a very influential member of the Synod. Clergy who had been offended by the diocesan authorities often appealed to him for help. The self-consciousness of the white clergy developed to such a degree that some of them began to speak of the possibility and fittingness of ordaining bishops from the while clergy without their being tonsured (Protopriest Alekseev). Alongside all this there went a rapid spreading of humane ideas in society. In the place of the old types of threatening bishops, who had gone into their graves or been deprived of their sees, there came representatives of humane principles who themselves began to care for the softening of administrative practices. Gabriel Petrov, metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Platon Levshin, metropolitan of Moscow, St. Tikhon Sokolov, bishop of Voronezh, Parthenius Sopkovsky, bishop of Smolensk, Simon Lagov, bishop of Kostroma and later Ryazan, and others. St. Tikhon already in 1766 forbade his consistory from subjecting clergy to physical punishments; he forced the members of the consistory to act as he himself acted, with reverence towards the clergy; he defended them from grievances from the secular authorities and strove to raise their social status through education and an improvement of morals. Metropolitan Platon did everything he could to develop a sense of personal dignity... in the white clergy; for this he decreed that clerical superiors should treat their clerical juniors with respect, and should observe gradualism when punishing the guilty, fitting the punishment to the importance of the offence; he abolished humiliating punishments such as lashing and left only the verdict, a fine, prostrations and, in extreme cases, defrocking. In order to arouse a noble competitiveness between clergy he himself strictly observed the degrees of honour between them, distinguishing the learned from the unlearned, the fined from the not-fined, etc. Finally, he tried to raise their social position through education and through introducing them into a circle of noble people. Not in vain did he say of himself that he found the clergy in bast shoes, but put them in boots and introduced them into drawing-rooms.”

“Under Catherine II,” writes Lebedev, “the age-old Russian home and church schools for children were forbidden as not being scientific and aiding superstition. The local authorities were ordered ‘from the highest levels’ to

---

introduce ‘correct’ schools with good teaching. But at that time for a series of reason they were not able to do this, while the schools of the old ‘amateur’ type disappeared both in the cities and in the countryside. And it turned out that ‘the enlightened age of Catherine’ laid a beginning to the wide spreading of illiteracy and ignorance in the masses of the Great Russian people, both in the lower classes of the city population and even more in the country. In the cities... schools and gymnasia were built mainly for the higher classes. It was at that time that lycea for men and the women’s Smolny institute appeared... There they studied the secular sciences thoroughly, but it was necessary to teach something spiritual there as well! The imperial power understood that it was impossible not to teach religion. On the contrary, in the interests of the authorities the Orthodox Faith and Church and Orthodox education were used as a means to educating the ‘new breed’ of noble (above all noble) fathers and mothers in the spirit of devotion to the authorities, a definite ‘morality’ and the honourable fulfilment of duty. But in ‘society’ at that time the Law of God was considered to be a purely ‘priestly’ subject. It was ordered that ‘children should not be infected with superstition and fanaticism’, that is, they were not to speak to them about the Old Testament punishments of God or about miracles and the Terrible Judgement (!), but they were to instil in them primarily ‘the rules of morality’, ‘natural (?)! religion and ‘the importance of religious tolerance’. We shall see later what kind of ‘new breed’ of people were the product of this kind of ‘Law of God’…”

**Pugachev’s Rebellion**

Few were those who, in this nadir of Russian statehood and spirituality, had the courage to expose the vices of Russian society while proposing solutions in the spirit of a truly Orthodox piety. One of the few, as we have seen, was St. Tikhon, Bishop of Zadonsk. He both rebuked tsars and nobles for their profligate lives and injustice to their serfs; and criticized the western education they were giving their children: “God will not ask you whether you taught your children French, German or Italian or the politics of society life – but you will not escape Divine reprobation for not having instilled goodness into them. I speak plainly but I tell the truth: if your children are bad, your grandchildren will be worse... and the evil will thus increase... and the root of all this is our thoroughly bad education...”

Another righteous one was Metropolitan Arsenius (Matseyevich) of Rostov, who rejected Catherine’s expropriation of the monasteries in 1763-1764, saying that the decline of monasticism in Russia might in the end lead “to atheism”. He also refused to swear an oath of allegiance to her as head of the Church. For this he was defrocked and exiled to the Therapontov monastery (where Patriarch Nicon had once been kept). But since he continued to write letters against secularisation, he was deprived of

---

861 Lebedev, op. cit. p. 260.
monasticism and under the name of “Andrew the Liar” was incarcerated for life in the prison of the castle in Revel (Tallinn). There he died in 1772, after accurately prophesying the fates of those bishops who had acquiesced in his unjust sentence.²⁶³

Neither Saint Tikhon nor Metropolitan Arsenius counselled armed rebellion against the State. However, some of the people, seeing the increasing alienation of their sovereigns from traditional Orthodoxy, took action to liberate, as they saw it, the Russian tsardom from foreign and heterodox influence.

Thus the rebellion of Pugachev in 1774, while superficially a rebellion for the sake of freedom, and the rights of Cossacks and other minorities, was the very opposite of a democratic rebellion in the western style. For Pugachev did not seek to destroy the institution of the tsardom: on the contrary, he proclaimed himself to be Tsar Peter III, the husband of the Empress Catherine. He was claiming to be the real Tsar, who would restore the real Orthodox traditions of pre-Petrine Russia – by which he meant Old Ritualism.

As we have seen, a false legitimism, as opposed to liberalism, was also characteristic of the popular rebellions in the Time of Troubles. K.N. Leontiev considered it to be characteristic also of Stenka Razin’s rebellion in 1671, and saw this legitimism as another proof of how deeply the Great Russian people was penetrated by the Byzantine spirit: “Even almost all our major rebellions have never had a Protestant or liberal-democratic character, but have borne upon themselves the idiosyncratic seal of false-legitimism, that is, of that native and religious monarchist principle, which created the whole greatness of our State.

“The rebellion of Stenka Razin failed immediately people became convinced that the tsar did not agree with their ataman. Moreover, Razin constantly tried to show that he was fighting, not against royal blood, but only against the boyars and the clergy who agreed with them.

“Pugachev was cleverer in fighting against the government of Catherine, whose strength was incomparably greater than the strength of pre-Petrine Rus’. He deceived the people, he used that legitimism of the Great Russian people of which I have been speaking.”²⁶⁴

“The slogan of Pugachev’s movement,” writes Ivanov, “was The Freedom of the Orthodox Faith. In his manifestos Pugachev bestowed ‘the cross and the beard’ on the Old Believers. He promised that in his new kingdom, after

²⁶³ Lebedev, op. cit., p. 221. Metropolitan Arsenius has recently been canonised by the Moscow Patriarchate.
Petersburg had been destroyed, everyone would ‘hold the old faith, the shaving of beards will be strictly forbidden, as well as the wearing of German clothes.’ The present churches, went the rumour, would be razed, seven-domed ones would be built, the sign of the cross would be made, not with three fingers, but with two. In Pugachev the people saw the longed-for lawful tsar. It was in this that the power of Pugachev’s movement consisted. There is no doubt that economic reasons played a significant role in this movement. The dominance of foreigners and Russian rubbish under Peter I and of the Masonic oligarchy under his successors had created fertile soil for popular discontent. The Masonic oligarchy acted in its own egoistic interests, despising the needs and interests of the people.”

However, the Church and the great mass of the people still recognised Catherine as the lawful anointed sovereign, and the hierarchs of the Church publicly called on the people to reject the pretender. As a result, ‘it is not surprising that Pugachev dealt cruelly with the clergy. From their midst he created at this time no fewer than 237 martyrs for faithfulness to the throne.”

There were weighty reasons for this. The eighteenth-century sovereigns of Russia, while being despotic in their administration and non-Russian in their culture, never formally renounced the Orthodox faith, and even defended it at times. Thus “Peter I, who allowed himself a relaxed attitude towards the institutions of the Church, and even clowning parodies of sacred actions, nevertheless considered it necessary to restrain others. There was a case when he beat Tatischev with a rod for having permitted himself some liberty in relation to church traditions, adding: ‘Don’t lead believing souls astray, don’t introduce free-thinking, which is harmful for the public well-being; I did not teach you to be an enemy of society and the Church.’ On another occasion he subjected Prince Khovansky and some young princes and courtiers to cruel physical punishments for having performed a blasphemous rite of burial on a guest who was drunk to the point of unconsciousness and mocked church vessels. While breaking the fast himself, Peter I, so as not to lead others astray, asked for a dispensation for himself from the patriarch. Anna Ioannovna, the former duchess of Courland, who was surrounded by Germans, nevertheless paid her dues of veneration for the institutions of the Orthodox Church; every day she attended Divine services, zealously built and adorned churches, and even went on pilgrimages. Elizabeth Petrovna was a model of sincere pity: she gave generous alms for the upkeep of churches, the adornment of icons and shrines both with money and with the work of her own hand: in her beloved Alexandrovska sloboda she was present at Divine services every day, rode or went on foot on pilgrimages to monasteries, observed the fast in strict abstinence and withdrawal, even renouncing official audiences. There is a tradition that before her death she had the intention of becoming tonsured as

865 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 182-183.
866 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 579.
a nun. Even Catherine II, in spite of the fact that she was a fan of the fashionable French philosophy, considered it necessary to carry out the demands of piety: on feastdays she was without fail present at Divine services; she venerated the clergy and kissed the hands of priests...”

Moreover, the eighteenth-century sovereigns undoubtedly served the ends of Divine Providence in other important ways. Thus it was under Peter I, and with his active support, that the Russian Spiritual Mission in Beijing was established. Again, it was towards the end of the eighteenth century that the Russian mission to Alaska began. Moreover, it was under Catherine especially that the age-old persecutor of Russian Orthodoxy, Poland, was humbled, literally disappearing from the map of Europe (see below), while Ottoman Turkey was driven from the north shore of the Black Sea, thus enabling the fertile lands of southern Russia to be colonised and exploited.

These important military triumphs, which were essential for the survival of the Orthodox Empire into the next century (although they created their own problems, as we shall see), would have been impossible, given Russia’s lack of economic development, without a very authoritarian power at the helm. Moreover, it must be remembered that at this low point in Russia’s spiritual progress, a rigid straitjacket may well have been necessary.

Thus with regard to religion, as the historian Mikhail Pogodin once commented, “if the ban on apostasy had been lifted, half the Russian peasants would have joined the raskol [Old Ritualists], while half the aristocrats would have converted to Catholicism.”

Although this is clearly an exaggeration, it nevertheless contains this kernel of truth: that the greater initiative and responsibility given to the Church and people in a true Orthodox autocracy would have been too great a burden for the Russian Church and people to sustain at this time. They were simply not prepared for it.

Sometimes the body needs to regain its strength before the soul can begin the process of regeneration. A broken limb needs to be strapped in a rigid encasement of plaster of Paris until the break has healed, the plaster can be removed and the restored limb is strong enough to step out without any support. In the same say, the straitjacket of “Orthodox absolutism”, contrary to the Orthodox ideal though it was, was perhaps necessary until the double fracture in Russian society caused by westernism and the Old Ritualist schism could be healed...

869 Hosking, op. cit., p. 237.
Poland: Nation without a State

Even after the union of the Eastern Ukraine with Russian in 1686, very extensive Russian lands still remained under Polish control. However, in 1717, as a result of civil war between King Augustus II and his nobles, Poland fell under the effective control of Russia. And so Poland’s domination of the South Russian lands from the fourteenth century onwards now began to be reversed…

“By acting as mediator,” writes Norman Davies, “Peter the Great could save the Polish nobles from their Saxon king while imposing conditions that would reduce the Republic to dependence.” Among the resolutions passed at the “Silent Sejm [the Polish parliament]” was the upholding of the “golden liberties” of the nobles, whereby the central government could be paralysed by the liberum veto of even a single delegate to the Sejm – one of the most perverse constitutional provisions in the history of European statehood, and an enduring monument to the folly of excessive freedom.

“Under August III,” continues Davies, “the central government collapsed completely. The King had to be installed by a Russian army which had overturned the re-election of Stanslaw Leszczynski, thereby sparking off the War of the Polish Succession… The Sejm was regularly summoned, but regularly blocked by the liberum veto before it could meet. Only one session in 30 years was able to pass legislation… Government was left to the magnates and to the provincial dietines. The Republic had no diplomacy, no treasury, no defence. It could enact no reforms. It was the butt of the philosophes. When the first edition of the French Encyclopédie was published in 1751, the prominent article on ‘Anarchie’ was all about Poland.

“The reforming party fled abroad…. Stanislaw Leszczynski, twice elected king and twice driven out by the Russians, took refuge in France. Having married his daughter to Louis XV he was given the Duchy of Lorraine where, at Nancy, as le bon roi Stanislas he could practise the enlightened government forbidden at home.

“Stanislaw August Poniatowski (r. 1764-95), the last King of Poland, was a tragic and in some ways a noble figure. One of Catherine the Great’s earlier lovers, he was put in place with the impossible task of reforming the Republic whilst preserving the Russian supremacy. As it was, shackled by the constitution of 1717, he provoked the very convulsions which reform was supposed to avoid. How could one curtail the nobles’ sacred right of resistance without some nobles’ resisting? How could one limit the Russians’ right of intervention without the Russians intervening? How could one abolish the liberum veto without someone exercising the liberum veto? The King tried to break the vicious circle on three occasions; and on three occasions he failed. One each occasion a Russian army arrived to restore
order, and one each occasion the Republic was punished with partition... In
1794-5 the King’s adherence to the national rising of Tadeusz Kosciuszko led
to the final denouement. After the Third Partition, there was no Republic left
over which to reign. Poniatowski abdicated on St. Catherine’s Day 1795, and

The constitutional weakness of Poland was compounded by her
revolutionary fervour. Thus the Confederation of Bar (1768-1772) was perhaps
the earliest harbinger of the revolutionary turmoil that was to sweep the
whole of Europe, containing within itself the seeds of the libertarian,
nationalist and romantic ideas that were not to become commonplace until
fifty years later.

It based itself, writes Adam Zamoyski, “on an imagined ideal past, when
the Poles were supposedly all brave and uncorrupted Sarmatians. Nostalgia
for lost virtues fused with opposition to the king’s attempts to modernize the
country; the defence of noble privilege was confused with republican
mythology; Catholic devotionalism mixed up with tribal instincts. With its
luridly expressed rejection of the alleged corruption of the Warsaw court, the
movement set itself up as the defender of the nation’s honour, its morals, its
very soul. Its first marshal, Jozef Pulaski, set the tone in a speech at Bar on 30
June 1768. ‘We are to die so that the motherland may live; for while we live
the motherland is dying,’ he began, and carried on in much the same
pathological vein. This was something more than the accepted notion of
‘dulce et decorum est pro patria mori’; it actually demanded death as the
price of the nation’s life which, in this case, had little to do with actual
political liberty. The Barians entertained a mythopoeic conviction that their
ancestors, the legendary Sarmatians, had lived in a kind of ideal republican
anarchy. It was this state of being, this Eden, they were dying to recover.
These and other sentiments were echoed in an abundant crop of political
poetry, woven on a loom of Catholic mysticism.

“In line with the Enlightenment’s usual obloquy of all things Christian,
Voltaire condemned the rebels as grotesque religious fanatics, but for once he
did not go unchallenged. Few people had any idea of what the struggle was
really about, but they were learning to sentimentalise politics. And as soon as
people began to talk in terms of a nation struggling for its existence,
sympathy veered to the side of the confederates. Rousseau met one of the few
intelligent members of the Confederation, its agent in Paris Count Michal
Wielhorski, who gave him his views on the government appropriate to
Poland.

“Rousseau seized on these as a pretext for a theoretical discourse, actually
a kind of utopian fantasy on the subject of nationhood. His \textit{Considérations sur
le gouvernement de Pologne} celebrates the form of the Confederation as a
‘political masterpiece’, allowing as it did a group of public-spirited men to stand up in the name of the nation and to assert its sovereignty by virtue of their will. He extolled the act of fighting for liberty as something great in itself. Realizing that the Confederation would probably be crushed, Rousseau urged the Poles to ‘grasp the opportunity given by the present event to raise souls to the tone of the souls of antiquity’. But they must look to Moses as well as to the state-builders of Greece and Rome, for there was more to a nation than just a state. ‘The laws of Solon, of Numa, of Lycurgus are dead while the even older laws of Moses still live,’ he reminded them. ‘Athens, Sparta, Rome have perished and have left no children on earth. Zion, while destroyed, did not lose its children… They no longer have leaders and yet they are a people, they no longer have a country and yet they are citizens.’ This asserted the primacy of the nation over the state and the geographical motherland, and suggested a role for it akin to that of a religious brotherhood. The title of ‘citizen’, which designated member of this community was, by inference, the most honourable a man could have.”

In view of this cross-fertilisation between revolutionary currents in Poland and France, it is not surprising that at the time of the Confederation of Targowica in 1792 Catherine II should have taken fright, seeing Warsaw as “a brazier of Jacobinism” (a Jacobin Club was founded in Warsaw in 1794). However, the invasion that followed, and the Second Partition, did not discourage the Polish patriots. For the battle of Valmy in the same year, during which the French revolutionary armies defeated Prussia, encouraged them to believe “that a free nation in arms was invincible”.

Even after the revolution of 1792-4 had been comprehensively defeated, and the Third Partition of the country had blotted the name of Poland from the map altogether, the Poles in exile did not give up. In 1818 a movement for the liberation of the country from Russia arose, which led to the failed rebellions of 1830-31, 1846 and 1848.

“'The nation is formed through the law of nature alone', ran the manifesto of the Society of Polish Republicans, founded in exile. 'Government stems from the will of the nation. The nation stands before all things and is the source of all things. Its will is always law. Above it and before it is but the law of nature alone. By virtue of its very existence, the nation is all things that it may be. The nation cannot surrender its rights to a tyrant.'

"Rousseau’s fantasies had been prophetic. The Poles had become a nation without a state, and, repeating the history of the Jews, they were henceforth to carry their Polishness with them.”

---

872 Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
873 Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
The political weakness and revolutionary fervour of the Polish nobility were not the only, or even the most fundamental causes, of the nation’s demise. Still more important was their unremitting persecution of the Orthodox living in Poland. Thus the Polish nobility, writes Vital, were “overwhelmingly opposed to giving non-Roman Catholic Christians (the Orthodox, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists) political rights until well into the eighteenth century. Only in 1768 did ‘dissidents’ get ‘partial equality’. They were admitted to municipal citizenship in 1775. They lost it two years later.”

“The Orthodox,” writes Dobroklonsky, “suffered every possible restriction. In 1717 the Sejm deprived them of their right to elect deputies to the sejms and forbade the construction of new and the repairing of old churches; in 1733 the Sejm removed them from all public posts. If that is how the government itself treated them, their enemies could boldly fall upon them with fanatical spite. The Orthodox were deprived of all their dioceses and with great difficulty held on to one, the Belorussian; they were also deprived of the brotherhoods, which either disappeared or accepted the unia. Monasteries and parish churches with their lands were forcibly taken from them... From 1721 to 1747, according to the calculations of the Belorussian Bishop Jerome, 165 Orthodox churches were removed, so that by 1755 in the whole of the Belorussian diocese there remained only 130; and these were in a pitiful state... Orthodox religious processions were broken up, and Orthodox holy things subjected to mockery... The Dominicans and Basilians acted in the same way, being sent as missionaries to Belorussia and the Ukraine – those ‘lands of the infidels’, as the Catholics called them, - to convert the Orthodox... They went round the villages and recruited people to the unia; any of those recruited who carried out Orthodox needs was punished as an apostate. Orthodox monasteries were often subjected to attacks by peasants and schoolboys; the monks suffered beatings, mutilations and death. ‘How many of them,’ exclaimed [Bishop] George Konissky, ‘were thrown out of their homes, many of them were put in prisons, in deep pits, they were shut up in kennels with the dogs, they were starved by hunger and thirst, fed on hay; how many were beaten and mutilated, and some even killed!’... The Orthodox white clergy were reduced to poverty, ignorance and extreme humiliation. All the Belorussian bishops were subjected to insults, and some even to armed assault....

“The Orthodox sought defenders for themselves in Russia, constantly sending complaints and requests to the court and the Holy Synod. The Russian government according to the eternal peace of 1686 had reserved for itself the right to protect the Orthodox inhabitants of Poland, and often sent its notes to the Polish court and through its ambassadors in Poland demanded that the Orthodox should be given back the dioceses that had been granted to

them according to the eternal peace and that the persecutions should cease; it also wrote about this to Rome, even threatening to deprive the Catholics living in Russia of freedom of worship; more than once it appointed special commissars to Poland for the defence of the Orthodox from abuse and in order to investigate complaints. But the Polish government either replied with promises or was silent and dragged out the affair from one Sejm to another. True, there were cases when the king issued orders for the cessation of persecutions... But such instructions were usually not listened to, and the persecution of the Orthodox continued. Meanwhile the Russian government insufficiently insisted on the carrying out of its demands.

“Only from the time of Catherine II did the circumstances change. On arriving at her coronation in Moscow, George Konissky vividly described for her the wretched condition of the Orthodox in Poland and besought her intervention (1762). A year later all the Orthodox of Poland interceded with her about this. The empress promised her protection and made the usual representation to the Polish court. At that time a new king, Stanislaw Poniatovsky, had been established, with her assistance, on the Polish throne. George Konissky personally appeared before him and described the sufferings of the Orthodox in such a lively manner that the king promised to do everything to restore the rights of the Orthodox (1765) and actually issued a decree on the confirmation of their religious rights, demanding that the uniate authorities cut short their violence. However, the uniate and Catholic authorities were not thinking of obeying the king. Their spite against the Orthodox found fresh food for itself. In 1765-1766, amidst the Russian population of Poland, and mainly in Little Russia, a powerful mass movement against the unia had begun. Its heart was the Orthodox see of Pereyaslavl headed by Bishop Gervasius Lintsevsky and the Motroninsky monastery led by Abbot Melchizedek Znachko-Yavorsky. Multitudes of the people went there and were there inspired to the task of returning from the unia to Orthodoxy. Crowds of people gathered everywhere in the villages; together they swore to uphold the Orthodox faith to the last drop of their blood, they restored Orthodox churches and restored Orthodox priests provided for them by Gervasius. They persuaded uniate priests to return to Orthodoxy, and if they refused either drove them out of the parishes or locked the churches. Whole parishes returned to Orthodoxy. The uniate authorities decide to stop this movement. The uniate metropolitan sent a fanatical zealot for the unia, the official Mokritsky, to the Ukraine with a band of soldiers. The Orthodox churches began to be sealed or confiscated; the people were forced by beatings to renounce Orthodoxy. Abbot Melchizedek was subjected to tortures and thrown into prison. There were even cases of killings for the faith... This violence elicited a fresh representation from the Russian court. Moreover, the courts of Prussia, England, Sweden and Denmark demanded that the Poles reviewed the question of the dissidents (Orthodox and Protestants) at the Sejm and protected their rights. However, the Sejm that took place in 1766 still further restricted their religious liberty. The Catholic
bishops Soltyk and Krasinsky by their epistles stirred up the people against the dissidents; the Pope himself (Clement XIII) tried to persuade Stanislaw not to make concessions. Then the dissidents began to act in a more friendly manner towards each other. In Torn and Slutsk conferences of noblemen were convened, and in other places up to 200 similar unions appeared with the aim of obtaining rights for the non-Catholics of Poland. In her turn Russia, in order to support these demands, moved her army into Poland. Relying on it, the Russian ambassador in Poland Repin demanded a review of the question of the dissidents at the new sejm in 1767. When at this Sejm the Catholic bishops Soltyk, Zalusky and some others continued to resist any concessions in favour of the dissidents, Repin arrested them and the Sejm agreed upon some important concessions: everything published against the dissidents was rescinded, complete freedom of faith and Divine services was proclaimed, they were given the right to build churches and schools, convene councils, take part in Sejms and in the Senate, educate children born from mixed marriages in the faith of their parents – sons in the faith of their fathers and daughters in the faith of their mothers, and forcible conversions to the unia were forbidden. These decrees were confirmed by a treaty between Russia and Poland in 1768. It was then decided that the Belorussian see should remain forever in the power of the Orthodox together with all the monasteries, churches and church properties, while the monasteries and churches that had been incorrectly taken from them were to be returned. For this a special mixed commission of Catholics and dissidents – the latter led by George Konissky – was appointed. In these circumstances the movement among the uniates that had begun before was renewed with fresh force. Most of them – sometimes in whole parishes – declared their desire to return to Orthodoxy; these declarations were addressed to George Konissky, presented to Repin and written down in official books; even the uniate bishops turned to the king with a request that they be allowed to enter into discussions concerning a reunion of the uniates with the Greco-Russian Church. But the indecisiveness of the Polish and Russian governments hindered the realisation of these desires. Comparatively few parishes succeeded in returning to Orthodoxy, and then the matter of their reunion was stopped for a time. Immediately the Russian army left the boundaries of Poland, the Polish fanatics again set about their customary way of behaving. Bishop Krasinsky of Kamenets went round Poland in the clothes of a pilgrim and everywhere stirred up hatred against the dissidents; the papal nuncio fanned the flames of this hatred in appeals to the clergy, and sometimes also in instructions to the people. Those who were discontented with the Sejm of 1767 convened the conference of Bar in order to deprive the dissidents of the rights that had been granted them. Again there arose a persecution of the Orthodox, who could not stand the violence. In Trans-Dnieper Ukraine, under the leadership of the zaporozhets Maxim Zhelezniak, a popular uprising known as the Koliivschina began. The anger of the rebels was vented most of all on the landowners, the Jews, the Catholic priests and the uniate priests. They were all mercilessly beaten up, their homes were burned down, their property was looted; even the whole of the
small town of Uman was ravaged. The rebellion enveloped the whole western region. The Polish government was not able to cope with it. The Russian armies under Krechetnikov came to its aid. The revolt was put down. But unfortunately, Krechetnikov and Repin, listening to the insinuations of the Poles and not seeing the true reasons for the rebellion, looked on it as an exclusively anti-state peasants’ rebellion, and so they themselves helped in destroying that which stood for Orthodoxy and Russian nationality in the Ukraine. Gervasius and Melchizedek, being suspected of rebellion, were retired; the Orthodox people, being accused of stirring up the people, had to hide in order to avoid punishment. The uniate priests took possession of many Orthodox parishes; in many places the Orthodox were forced to appeal with requests to perform needs to parishless priests coming from Moldavia and Wallachia. Fortunately, in 1772 there came the first division of Poland, in accordance with which Belorussia with its population of 1,360,000 was united with Russia. At this the Polish government was obliged to take measures to pacify the Orthodox who remained in their power, but in actual fact nothing was done. A new woe was then added to the already difficult position of the Orthodox: With the union of Belorussia with Russia not one Orthodox bishop was left within the confines of Poland, and for ordinations the Orthodox were forced to turn to Russia or Wallachia. Only in 1785 did the Russian government, with the agreement of the Polish king, appoint a special bishop for them, Victor Sadkovsky, with the title of Bishop of Pereyaslavl and vicar of Kiev, with a salary and place of residence in Slutsk monastery. But when, with his arrival, another movement in favour of Orthodoxy arose among the Ukrainian uniates, the Poles were disturbed. Rumours spread that another Kolivschina was being prepared and that the clergy were inciting the people to rebel. Whatever Victor did to quash these rumours, they continued to grow. They began to say that arms for a planned beating up of the Catholics and uniates were being stored in the hierarchical house and in the monasteries. In accordance with an order of the sejm, Victor was seized and taken in fetters to Warsaw, where he was thrown into an arms depot (1789); some Orthodox priests were subjected to the same treatment; many were forced to save themselves by fleeing to Russia. The whole of the Orthodox clergy were rounded up to swear an oath of allegiance to the king. After this the thought was voiced in the Sejm of 1791 of freeing the Orthodox Church within the confines of Poland from Russian influence by making it independent of the Russian Synod and transferring it into the immediate jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Pinsk congregation, made up of representatives of the clergy and brotherhoods, did indeed work out a project for the conciliar administration of the Church. But it was not fated to be put into effect. Soon there followed, one after the other, the second (1793) and third (1795) divisions of Poland, in accordance with which Russia acquired all the ancient Russian lands with the exception of Galicia, and the Lithuanian region with a population of more than 4 million.
“With the union of Belorussia and the south-western regions to Russia there finally came to an end the age-old sufferings of the Orthodox there. At the same time there came the right opportunity for the uniates to throw off the fetters of the unia that had been forcibly imposed upon them. The Belorussian Archbishop George Konissky received many declarations from uniate parishes wishing to return to Orthodoxy. Although the Russian government did not allow him to do anything about these declarations without special permission, and itself did not give permission for about 8 years, the striving of the uniates for Orthodoxy did not wane. When, finally, permission was given, up to 130,000 uniates went over to Orthodoxy. In the south-western region an energetic assistant of George Konissky in the work of uniting the uniates was Victor Sadkovsky, who had been released from prison and raised to the see of Minsk (1793). With the permission of the government, he published an appeal to the uniates of his diocese urging them to return to Orthodoxy. Soon, on the orders of the government, the same was done in the Belorussian region. Moreover, the government told local authorities to remove all obstacles that might appear in the unification of the uniates on the part of the Roman Catholic clergy and landowners, and threatened the guilty with responsibility before the law, while at the same time forbidding their forcible union. The appeals had an extraordinary success. In less than a year (from the middle of 1794 to the beginning of 1795), more than one-and-a-half million uniates had joined the Orthodox Church; the numbers of those united by the end of the reign of Catherine II came to no less than two million.”

This was a great triumph. And yet we may agree with Lebedev that “from the point of view of the interests of Great Russia, it was necessary to pacify Poland, but not seize the age-old Polish and purely Lithuanian lands. This wrong attitude of Russia to the neighbouring peoples then became a ‘mine’ which later more than once exploded with bad consequences for Russia...”

Catherine and the Jews

As a consequence of the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, the Russian empire acquired a vast new influx of Jews - as many as a million according to one estimate, 1.36 million according to another. Administering this vast new population and territory with its mixed population of Russians, Poles and Jews would have been a major problem for any State. As the worried Catherine II wrote: “what seemed a child’s game is becoming a most serious matter. The Russian state has bumped into the most numerous Jewish masses in Europe”.

---

876 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 232.
877 Martin Gilbert, The Dent Atlas of Russian History, London: Dent, 1993, p. 42; Dobroklonsky, op. cit. However, Vital (op. cit., p. 89) gives 400,000, while Hartley (op. cit., p. 15) gives “anything between 155,000 and 900,000 persons, but probably closer to the lower figure”.
The problem was made much worse by the fact the Jewish population constituted a “State within the State”, being governed by its rabbis and kahals according to the Talmud and its viciously anti-Russian and anti-Christian world-view. The authorities had a responsibility both to that majority of Jews who suffered from the despotism of their rabbis, and to the Belorussian peasants who were exploited by the Jews economically. Nevertheless, Catherine, - influenced, no doubt, by her Masonic courtiers and by the Toleranzpatent (1782) of her fellow “enlightened despot”, Joseph II of Austria – tried giving full rights to the Jews...

Solzhenitsyn writes: “When the Jews passed under the authority of the Russian State, the whole of this internal system in which the kahal hierarchy was interested was preserved. And, as Yu. I. Hessen presupposes with that irritation that by the middle of the 19th century had grown among enlightened Jews against the ossified Talmudist tradition, ‘the representatives of Jewry’s ruling class did all they could to convince the [Russian] government of the necessity of keeping the age-old institution in being, since it corresponded to the interests both of the Russian authorities and of the Jewish ruling class’; ‘the kahal together with the rabbinate possessed the fullness of power, and not infrequently abused this power, stealing public resources, trampling on the rights of poor people, incorrectly imposing taxes and taking revenge on personal enemies’. At the end of the 18th century one of the governors of the region joined to Russia wrote in a report: ‘the rabbi, the spiritual court and the kahal, “yoked together by close bonds, and having in their power and disposing even of the very conscience of the Jews, lords it over them on their own, without any reference to the civil authorities”’.

“And when, in the 18th century, there developed in Jewry the powerful religious movement of the Hassidim, on the one hand, and on the other, there began the enlightenment movement of Moses Mendelssohn towards secular education, the kahals energetically suppressed both the one and the other. In 1781 the Vilnius rabbinate declared kherem [anathema] on the Hassidim, and in 1784 a congress of rabbis in Mogilev declared the Hassidim to be ‘outside the law’ and their property ‘escheated’. After this the common people in some towns destroyed the houses of the Hassidim, that is, they caused an intra-Jewish pogrom. The Hassidim were persecuted in the most cruel and dishonourable way, they were not even spared false political denunciations against them to the Russian authorities. However, in 1799, on the denunciation of the Hassidim, the authorities arrested the members of the Vilnius kahal for expropriating taxes they had collected. Hassidism continued to spread, in some provinces with particular success. The rabbinate delivered the books of the Hassidim to public burning, while the Hassidim spoke out as defenders of the people against the abuses of the kahals. ‘At that time the religious struggle put into the shade, as it would seem, the other questions of Jewish life.’
“The part of Belorussia united to Russia in 1772 was constituted by the Polotsk (later the Vitebsk) and Mogilev provinces. It was declared to them in the name of Catherine that the inhabitants of this region “whatever race or calling they might be” would from now on [retain] the right publicly to practise their faith and possess private property’. Moreover, they would be given ‘all those rights, freedoms and privileges that her subjects enjoyed of old’. 879 Thus the Jews were made equal in rights with the Christians – they had been deprived of this in Poland. Moreover, a special addition was made concerning the Jews, that their communities ‘would be left and preserved with all those freedoms that they now... enjoy’ – that is, nothing would be taken from what they enjoyed in Poland. True, the power of the kahals was thereby preserved, and the Jews through their kahal organization still remained cut off from the rest of the population, and did not yet enter directly into that mercantile-industrial estate that corresponded to their main occupations.

“At first Catherine was wary both of the hostile reaction of the Polish nobility, which had lost power, and of the unpleasant impression [her decree] produced on her Orthodox subjects...” 880 As Lebedev writes, she “was convinced that it was impossible to forbid the entrance of the Jews into Russia, it was necessary to let them in. But she considered it dangerous to do this at the very beginning of her reign, since she understood that she had to deal with the Russian people, ‘a religious people’, who saw in her ‘the defender of the Orthodox Faith’, and that the clergy were extremely upset by Peter III’s order on the expropriation of the Church’s land-holdings. Moreover, she had been shown the resolution of Elizabeth Petrovna on the entrance of the Jews: ‘I wish to derive no profit from the enemies of Christ’. The matter was put off, but only for a time...” 881

“But,” continues Solzhenitsyn, “being sympathetic towards the Jews and expecting from them economic benefit for the country, Catherine was preparing for them still greater rights. Already in 1778 there was extended to the Belorussian region the recent measure that applied to the whole of Russia: those who possessed capital up to 500 roubles from now on constituted the estate of the town-dwellers [meschane], and those who had more – the estate of the merchants [kuptsy], the three guilds, in accordance with their wealth, and were freed from poll tax, and would pay 1% from the capital that they had ‘declared in accordance with conscience’.

879 “Her Imperial Majesty’s love of her fellow men [chelovekolyubie]’ did not permit her to exclude the Jews from the valour with which she treated all her subjects, provided they, for their part, were loyal, obedient, and engaged in occupations that were appropriate to their status (zvanie)” (Vital, op. cit., p. 84).
“This decree had a special, great significance: it destroyed the national isolation of the Jews that had prevailed to that time (Catherine wanted to destroy it). It also undermined the traditional Polish view of the Jews as a non-State element. It also undermined the kahal structure, and the coercive power of the kahal. ‘From this moment there begins the process of the introduction of the Jews into the Russian State organism... The Jews widely used the right of registering among the merchants’ – so that, for example, in Mogilev province 10% of the Jewish population were declared to be merchants (and of the Christians – only 5.5%). The Jewish merchants were now freed from paying taxes to the kahal and were no longer obliged, in particular, to seek permission from the kahal for every trip, as before: they now had to deal only with the common magistrate, on common terms. (In 1780 the Jews of Mogilev and Shklov met Catherine with odes.)

“With the departure of the Jewish merchants the State rubric ‘Jew’ also ceased to exist. All the rest of the Jews now had to be categorised in some estate, and it was evident that they could be categorised only as town-dwellers. But at first there were few who wanted to transfer, because the annual poll tax from town-dwellers at that time was 60 kopecks, while from the Jews it was 50 kopecks. However, no other path remained to them. And from 1783 the Jewish town-dwellers, like the Jewish merchants, had to pay their taxes, not to the kahal, but to the magistrate, on common terms, and receive a passport for a journey from him, too.

“This movement was strengthened by a general municipal decree of 1785, which envisaged only estates, and by no means nations. According to this decree, all the town-dwellers [and therefore all the Jews] received the right to participate in local administration according to estates and to take up public posts. ‘According to the conditions of that time, this meant that the Jews became citizens with equal rights... Entering the merchant and town-dweller classes in the capacity of members with equal rights was an event of major social significance’, and was meant to turn the Jews into ‘a social force of which it was impossible not to take account, thereby raising their moral self-esteem’. This also alleviated the practical task of defending their vital interests. ‘At that time the mercantile-industrial class, as also the municipal societies, enjoyed broad self-rule... Thus into the hands of the Jews, on an equal basis with the Christians, was handed considerable administrative and judicial power, thanks to which the Jewish population acquired strength and significance in social-state life.’ There were now burgomeisters and ratmans and judges from the Jews. At first in the major towns a limitation was applied: that there should be no more Jews than Christians in elected posts. However, in 1786 ‘Catherine sent the Belorussian governor-general an order signed in his own hand’: that equal rights for the Jews ‘in municipal-estate self-rule...
should “unfailingly and without any delay be brought into effect”, while non-
fulfillers of the decree “would be punished by law”. 882

“Let us note that in this way the Jews receive civil equality of rights not
only in distinction from Poland, but earlier than in France or the German
lands. (Under Frederick II there was a very powerful oppression of the Jews.)
And, which is still more significant: the Jews in Russia from the beginning
had that personal freedom which the Russian peasants were not to have for a
further 80 years. And paradoxically: the Jews received even greater freedom
than the Russian merchants and town-dwellers: the latter lived unfailingly in
the towns, while the Jewish population, not following their example, ‘could
live in the uyezd settlements, occupied, particularly, in the wine trade’.
‘Although the Jews lived in large numbers not only in the towns, but also in
the villages, they were registered in the municipal societies… included into
the estates of the merchants and town-dwellers’. ‘By reason of the nature of
their activity, surrounded by unfree peasantry, they played an important
economic role – the [village] trade was concentrated in their hands, they
leased various sections of the landowners’ sources of income, and sold vodka
in the taverns’ – and thereby ‘assisted in the spread of drunkenness’. The
Belorussian administration pointed out that ‘the presence of Jews in the
villages has a harmful effect on the economic and moral condition of the
peasant population, since the Jews… develop drunkenness among the local
population’. ‘In the reports of the local administration, mention was made,
incidentally, that the Jews led the peasants into drunkenness, idleness and
poverty by giving them vodka on credit…’ But ‘the wine industry was a
tempting source of income’ – both for the Polish landowners and for the
Jewish middlemen.

“It is natural that the civil gift received by the Jews could not fail to bring
with it a reverse threat: it was evident that the Jews had to submit to the
common rule, stop the wine trade in the villages and leave them. In 1783 it
was published that “a direct rule obliges each citizen to determine his trade
and craft, a decent wage, and not wine distilling, as being an industry not
appropriate for him”, and if a landowner permits the distilling of vodka in the

882 “In 1785 and again in 1795 (on the occasion of the Third Partition),” writes Vital, “the
principle that Jewish town-dwellers and merchants were entitled to treatment on an equal
footing with all other town-dwellers and merchants was authoritatively restated. Allowance
was made for Jews of the appropriate class to serve as electors to municipal office and to be
elected themselves. But precisely what social class or classes Jews should be permitted to
belong to was (and would remain) a vexed question. Clearly, they were not peasants
(krestyaniny). They were certainly not serfs (krest’yanstvo). They might be merchants (kuptsy),
but membership of the guilds of merchants, especially the higher guilds, was a costly affair and few Jews were of the requisite
wealth and standing to join them; and, in any event, such membership entailed rights to
which the ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ people (korennoye naselenie), namely the ethnic Russian
(and of course the Polish) merchants, objected. That left the class of town-dwellers
(meshchanskoye krest’yanskoye naselenie), but the fact was that the great majority of the Jews of Russia and Poland at
this time were not town-dwellers…” (Vital, op. cit., pp. 84-85). (V.M.)
village “to a merchant, a town-dweller or Jew”, then he will be considered a breaker of the law’. And then: ‘they began to thrust the Jews out of the villages and into the towns, so as to distract them from their age-old pursuits… the leasing of wine distilleries and taverns’.

“It goes without saying that for the Jews the threat of being thrown out of the villages looked, not like a State tidying-up measure, but like a special measure against their national-confessional group. In being clearly deprived of such a profitable industry in the villages, and being moved to the town, the Jewish town-dwellers fell into a thick net of intra-municipal and intra-Jewish competition. The Jews became very upset, and in 1784 a deputation from the kahals to St. Petersburg to lobby for the rescinding of this measure. (At the same time the kahals calculated: with the help of the government they would get back the fullness of the power over the Jewish population that they had lost.) But the reply in the name of the empress was: ‘Since the people of the Jewish confession have already entered into a condition equal with others, it behoves them in all cases to observe the rule established by Her Majesty that everyone in accordance with his calling and condition should enjoy the benefits and rights without distinction of confession or nation.’

“However, she had to take account of the concentrated strength of the highly involved Polish landowners. Although in 1783 the administration of the Belorussian region had forbidden them from farming out or leasing the wine distilleries ‘to people who do not have the right to it, “especially the Jews”,… the landowners continued to farm out the wine distilleries to the Jews. This was their right’, the well-established heritage of age-old Polish customs.

“And the Senate did not dare to compel the landowners. And in 1786 it rescinded the transfer of the Jews to the towns. For this the following compromise was worked out: let the Jews be considered as having been moved to the towns, but retain their right to temporary absence in the countryside. That is, let them remain in the village, wherever they lived. The Senate’s decree of 1786 allowed the Jews to live in the villages, and ‘the landowners were allowed to farm out the production and sale of spirits to the Jews, while the Christian merchants and town-dwellers did not receive these rights.’

“Moreover, the lobbying of the kahal delegation to St. Petersburg did not remain completely without success. It did not obtain what it asked for, the establishment of separate Jewish courts for all law-suits between Jews, but (1786) the kahals were given back a significant part of the administrative rights and oversight over the Jewish town-dwellers, that is, the majority of the Jewish population: the apportionment not only of public duties, but also the collection of the poll-tax, and once again the regulation of the right of absence
from the community. That meant that the government saw its own practical interest in not weakening the power of the kahal.

“In general throughout Russia the whole of the mercantile-industrial estate (merchants and town-dwellers) did not enjoy freedom of movement and was tied to the place of its registration (so that by their departure they not lower the capacity of pay of their municipal societies). But for Belorussia in 1782 the Senate made an exception: the merchants could go from town to town ‘in accordance with the convenience of their commerce’. This rule again gave the advantage to the Jewish merchants.

“However, they began to use this right more broadly than it had been defined: ‘the Jewish merchants began to be registered in Moscow and Smolensk’. ‘The Jews began to settle in Moscow soon after the reunion of the Belorussian region in 1772… At the end of the 18th century there was a significant number of Jews in Moscow… Some Jews, having registered among the local merchants, started to trade on a large scale… But other Jews sold foreign goods in their flats or coaching inns, and also by delivering to houses, which at that time was completely forbidden.’

“And in 1790 ‘the Moscow society of merchants made a judgement’ that ‘in Moscow there had appeared from abroad and from Belorussia ‘a very large number of Jews’, some of whom had registered straight into the Moscow merchants and were using forbidden methods of trading, by which they were causing that trade ‘very significant harm and disturbance’, while the cheapness of their goods indicated that they were contraband. Moreover, ‘the Jews, as is well-known, clip coins; it is possible that they will do this also in Moscow’. And in response to ‘their cunning schemes’ the Moscow merchants demanded the removal of the Jewish merchants from Moscow. But the Jewish merchants in their turn presented ‘a complaint… that they were no longer being received among the Moscow and Smolensk merchants’.

“The ‘Council of the Empress’ reviewed the complaints. In accordance with the unified Russian law it found that the Jews did not have the right ‘to be registered into the Russian mercantile towns and ports’, but only in Belorussia. They said that ‘no benefit is foreseen’ from allowing the Jews into Moscow’. And in December, 1791 an imperial decree was issued ‘on not allowing the Jews to be registered in the inner provinces’, while they could go to Moscow ‘only for definite periods on business’. The Jews could enjoy the rights of the merchants and town-dwellers in Belorussia. But Catherine added a softener: the Jews were given the right to live and be registered as town-dwellers also in newly-acquired New Russia – in the governor-generalship of Yekaterinoslav and in the province of Tauris (soon this would be the Yekaterinoslav, Tauris and Kherson provinces). That is, she opened to the Jews new and extensive provinces into which Christian merchants and town-
dwellers, in accordance with the general rule, were not allowed to settle from the inner provinces…

“The pre-revolutionary Jewish encyclopaedia writes: by the decree of 1791 ‘a beginning was made to the Pale of Settlement, although unintentionally. Under the conditions of the general structure of society and the State at that time, and of Jewish life in particular, the government could not have had in mind to create for the Jews a special oppressive situation, or of introducing exclusive laws for them, in the sense of limiting their rights of residence. According to the circumstances of that time, this decree did not contain in itself anything that could put the Jews in this respect in a less favourable position by comparison with the Christians… The decree of 1791 did not introduce any limitation in the rights of the Jews in respect of residence, it did not create a special ‘pale’, and even ‘before the Jews were opened new provinces into which according to the general rule it was not allowed to move’; ‘the centre of gravity of the decree of 1791 did not lie in the fact that they were Jews, but in the fact that they were trading people; the question was viewed not from a national or religious point of view, but only from the point of view of usefulness’.

“And so this decree of 1791, which was even advantageous for Jewish by comparison with Christian merchants, with the years was turned into the basis of the future ‘Pale of Settlement’, which lay like a dark shadow on the existence of the Jews in Russia almost to the revolution itself…”

Catherine and the Masons

Catherine not only tried to emancipate the Jews: she also allowed the Masons to reach the peak of their influence in Russia. In her reign there were about 2500 Masons in about 100 lodges in St. Petersburg, Moscow and some provincial towns. “By the middle of the 1780s,” writes Dobroklonsky, “it had even penetrated as far as Tobolsk and Irkutsk; Masonic lodges existed in all the more or less important towns. Many of those who were not satisfied by the fashionable scepticism of French philosophy or, after being drawn by it, became disillusioned by it, sought satisfaction for their heart and mind in Masonry”.

Florovsky writes: “The freemasons of Catherine’s reign maintained an ambivalent relationship with the Church. In any event, the formal piety of freemasonry was not openly disruptive. Many freemasons fulfilled all church ‘obligations’ and rituals. Others emphatically insisted on the complete immutability and sacredness of the rites and orders ‘particularly of the Greek religion’. However, the Orthodox service, with its wealth and plasticity of

883 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit.
884 Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia.
885 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 664.
images and symbols, greatly attracted them. Freemasons highly valued Orthodoxy’s tradition of symbols whose roots reach back deeply into classical antiquity. But every symbol was for them only a transparent sign or guidepost. One must ascend to that which is being signified, that is, from the visible to the invisible, from ‘historical’ Christianity to spiritual or ‘true’ Christianity, from the outer church to the ‘inner’ church. The freemasons considered their Order to be the ‘inner’ church, containing its own rites and ‘sacraments’. This is once again the Alexandrian [Gnostic] dream of an esoteric circle of chosen ones who are dedicated to preserving sacred traditions: a truth revealed only to a few chosen for extraordinary illumination.”

Hartley writes: “Freemasonry only became popular amongst the nobility in the reign of Catherine II. This was partly because freemasonry was one of many manifestations of the cultural influence of western and central Europe on the nobility at the time, and partly because, after their freedom from compulsory service in 1762, they had the leisure and opportunity to become involved in private social activities of this nature, both in the capitals and in the provinces.

“Russian lodges were based on English, German or Swedish systems. Ivan Elagin, an influential figure at court in the early years of Catherine II, founded the Russian Grand Provincial Lodge in 1771, modelled on the English system, which involved progression through three degrees within the lodge. Some 14 lodges were opened in St. Petersburg, Moscow and the provinces based on this model. Many Russians, however, were attracted to lodges which had more complex degrees and mystical elements. Baron P.B. Reichel established the Apollo lodge in 1771, which depended on the Grand Lodge of Zinnendorf in Berlin, and soon controlled 8 lodges in German-speaking Riga and Reval. In 1776 the Reichel and Elagin lodges merged and accepted the leadership of the Berlin lodge, and Elagin became the grand master of the new united Grand Provincial lodge. Almost immediately, members of this new lodge became influenced by the Swedish Order of the Temple, a lodge which comprised ten degrees, and whose elaborate robes and knightly degrees particularly appealed to a Russian nobility which lacked knightly orders and traditions of medieval chivalry. In 1778 the first Swedish-style lodge, the Phoenix, was set up in St. Petersburg, followed in 1780 by the Swedish Grand National lodge under the direction of Prince G.P. Gagarin. In the early 1780s there were 14 Swedish lodges in St. Petersburg and Moscow and a few more in the provinces. Most of the Elagin lodges, however, did not join the Swedish system, partly because a direct association with Sweden at a time of diplomatic tension between Russia and Sweden seemed inappropriate.

“Adherents of freemasonry continued to seek new models to help them in their search for further illumination or for more satisfying rituals and

886 Florovsky, op. cit., pp. 155-156.
structures. I.G. Schwartz, a member of the Harmonia lodge in Moscow, founded by Nikolai Novikov in 1781, brought Russian freemasonry into close association with the strict observance lodge of the grand master Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick. The lodge became the VIIIth province of the Brunswick lodge, under the acting head of Prince N. Trubestkoi. It is not known how many of the Elagin lodges joined the VIIIth province. Within the VIIIth province there emerged a small esoteric group of masons who were heavily influenced by the Rosicrucian movement, knowledge of whose charters and seven degrees had been brought back to Russia from Berlin by Schwartz. Masonic and Rosicrucian literature spread through Russia, largely as a result of the activity of the private printing press set up by Novikov (until the 1790s when masonic publications were censured and banned). Lodges were also set up in the provinces, particularly when provincial governors were masons. Governor-General A.P. Mel’gunov, for example, opened a lodge in Iaroslavl’. Vigel’ founded a lodge in remote Penza in the late eighteenth century. Even where there was no lodge, provincial nobles could become acquainted with masonry through subscriptions to publications such as Novikov’s *Morning Light*.

“Who became freemasons? The Russian historian Vernadsky estimated that in 1777 4 of the 11-member Council of State, 11 of the 31 gentlemen of the bedchamber, 2 of the 5 senators of the first department of the Senate, 2 of the 5 members of the College of Foreign Affairs and the vice-president of the Admiralty College were masons (there were none known at this date in the War College). A large number of the noble deputies in the Legislative Commission were masons. Members of the high aristocracy and prominent figures at court were attracted to freemasonry, including the Repnins, Trubetskois, Vorontsovs and Panins. Special lodges attracted army officers (like the Mars lodge, founded at Iasi in Bessarabia in 1774) and naval officers (like the Neptune lodge, founded in 1781 in Kronstadt). There were masons amongst the governors of provinces established after 1775 (including A.P. Mel’gunov in Yaroslavl’ and J.E. Sievers in Tver’), and amongst senior officials in central and provincial institutions. Almost all Russian poets, playwrights, authors and academics were masons. Other lodges had a predominantly foreign membership, which included academics, members of professions, bankers and merchants....

“Catherine II had little sympathy for the mystical elements of freemasonry and their educational work and feared that lodges could become venues for conspiracies against the throne. In the 1790s, at a time of international tension following the French Revolution, Catherine became more suspicious of freemasonry, following rumours that Grand Duke Paul... was being induced to join a Moscow lodge. In 1792 (shortly after the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden), Novikov’s house was searched and Masonic books were found which had been banned as harmful in 1786. Novikov was arrested and sentenced, without any formal trial, to fifteen years imprisonment, though he
was freed when Paul came to the throne in 1796. In 1794, Catherine ordered the closure of all lodges.\textsuperscript{887}

Catherine was not wrong in her suspicion that the Masons were aiming at the Russian throne. Already in 1781, at their convention in Frankfurt, the Illuminati ‘had decided to create in Russia two capitularies ‘of the theoretical degree’ under the general direction of Schwartz. One of the capitularies was ruled by Tatischev, and the other by Prince Trubetskoj. At a convention of the Mason-Illuminati in 1782 Russia was declared to be ‘the Eighth Province of the Strict Observance’. It was here that the Masons swore to murder Louis XVI and his wife and the Swedish King Gustavus III, which sentences were later carried out. In those 80s of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century Masonry had decreed that it should strive to destroy the monarchy and the Church, beginning with France and continuing with Russia. But openly, ‘for the public’, and those accepted into the lower degrees, the Masons said that they were striving to end enmity between people and nations because of religious and national quarrels, that they believed in God, that they carried out charitable work and wanted to educate humanity in the principles of morality and goodness, that they were the faithful citizens of their countries and kings...’\textsuperscript{888}

However, Russia did not follow the path of France at this time because eighteenth-century Russian Masonry, unlike its contemporary French counterpart, was not very radical in its politics.

Thus Novikov, according to Pipes, must be classified as “a political conservative because of his determination to work ‘within the system’, as one would put it today. A freemason and a follower of Saint-Martin, he thought all evil stemmed from man’s corruption, not from institutions under which he lived. He mercilessly exposed ‘vice’ and promoted with such enthusiasm useful knowledge because of the conviction that only improving man could one improve mankind. He never questioned the autocratic form of government or even serfdom. This stress on man rather than the environment became a hallmark of Russian conservatism.”\textsuperscript{889}

Another Mason who was conservative in his political thought was Prince Michael Shcherbatov, who represented the extreme right wing of the aristocratic opposition to Catherine. He was a monarchist who believed in the close alliance of tsar and aristocrats, and opposed all concessions to the peasantry or the merchants. He believed that Russia’s traditional autocracy had been replaced by despotism under Peter, who treated the aristocrats brutally and opened the way for widespread “voluptuousness” in Russian life.

\textsuperscript{887} Hartley, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 233-235. “I made a mistake,” said Catherine, “let us close our highbrow books and set to the ABC” (quoted in Dobroklonsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 662).
\textsuperscript{888} Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 243.
\textsuperscript{889} Pipes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 258.
“Shcherbatov,” writes Walicki, “drew special attention to the individualization of personal relations and to the consequent changes in the attitude to women. In Peter’s reign it became customary for the bride and bridegroom to meet before the wedding, joint ‘assemblies’ were organized for men and women, and more attention was paid to personal appearance. ‘Passionate love, unknown in earlier primitive conditions, began to hold sway over sensitive hearts.’ The only hairdresser in Moscow was besieged by her clients – for feast days some of them came to her three days in advance and had to sleep sitting upright for three nights in order not to spoil their coiffure. Dandies of both capitals vied with each other in extravagance and fashionable dress. Peter, Shcherbatov admitted, had no great love of luxury himself, but he encouraged excess in others in order to stimulate industry, handicrafts, and trade.

“Another cause of the corruption of morals was the bureaucratic hierarchy established by Peter, which encouraged personal ambition and placed government officials above the nobility. ‘Is it possible,’ Shcherbatov asked, ‘for people who from early youth tremble at the stick in the hands of their superiors to preserve virtue and strength of character?’ The brutal suddenness of the reforms had been injurious to the nation’s morals: Peter had waged too radical a war on superstition; Shcherbatov compared him to an inexperienced gardener who prunes his trees too far. ‘There was less superstition, but also less faith; the former servile fear of hell disappeared, but so did love of God and His holy laws.’

“In his criticism of the Petrine reforms and his unusually acute and comprehensive treatment of the issue of ‘ancient and modern Russia’, Shcherbatov was to some extent a precursor of the Slavophiles, as Herzen was to point out. It is significant that Shcherbatov, like the Slavophiles, was strongly critical of the transfer of the capital from the old boyar stronghold of Moscow to the newly built St. Petersburg, which personified the supremacy of bureaucratic absolutism.

“The analogy between Shcherbatov and Slavophilism is, however, largely superficial and even unreliable. In his Discourse there is no antithesis between Russia and Europe; and his views on juridical questions, social systems, and the significance of political rights clearly derived from Western European (especially Enlightenment) sources and were therefore far removed from the romanticism of the Slavophiles and their idealization of the common people. His faith in the role of the aristocracy was equally ‘occidental’; the Slavophiles,... viewed ‘aristocratism’ as a negative phenomenon that was fortunately quite alien to the ‘truly Christian’ principles of ancient Russia.

“An interesting light is cast on Shcherbatov’s political ideals by his utopian tale Journey to the Land of Ophir (1784). In the apt description of a contemporary scholar, this presents an idealized version of the ‘orderly police
state’. This work would not have been to the taste of either the Slavophiles or Montesquieu, from whose writings Shcherbatov drew arguments in support of his critique of despotism.

“The population of Ophir is divided into hermetically sealed-off free estates and serfs, whom the author quite simply calls ‘slaves’. The daily life of every inhabitant is subject to the most detailed control, and excessive luxury or the relaxation of morals is severely punished. Strict regulations lay down what clothes a citizen of each class may wear, how large a house he may live in, how many servants he may have, what utensils he may use, and even what gratuities he may dispense. In his ideal state the opponent of bureaucracy and despotism carried the despotic and bureaucratic regimentation of life to extremes. To Shcherbatov himself there was no contradiction in this, since he did not consider the strict control of morals to be inconsistent with political liberty. In the state of Ophir there were, after all, such guarantees against despotism as ‘fundamental rights,’ representation of the estates, the abolition of the household guard, and so on. One of the important guarantees of liberty was to be the law forbidding peasants to lay complaint against their masters to the sovereign. In Shcherbatov’s eyes the right to petition the emperor was only likely to reinforce the uncouth peasantry’s belief in the ‘good tsar’, whereas rulers, made aware of the people’s support, might become presumptuous and turn into despots.

“Some of the features of Shcherbatov’s utopia can be traced to his Freemasonry and the Masonic cult of formalism, hierarchy, and outward distinctions. This influence is most obvious in the sections devoted to education and religion. Education in Ophir is free and compulsory for every citizen, although its extent differs for every estate. Religion is reduced to a rationalistic cult of the supreme being, and there is no separate priesthood that gains a livelihood from religious practices. Sacraments, offerings, and all mysteries are discarded, prayers are short and few, and communal prayers resemble Masonic ritual. Atheism, however, is forbidden, and attendance at church is compulsory, on pain of punishment.

“The Masonic provenance of certain elements of the utopia does not account for it altogether. The best key to an understanding of Shcherbatov’s tale is probably to be found in his views on ‘ancient and modern Russia’. Attention has been drawn to the fact that the detailed bureaucratic system of the state of Ophir reflects certain features of post-Petrine Russia. However, a comparison between Ophir and the picture of pre-Petrine Russia drawn in the Discourse would seem to offer an even more fruitful approach. In both cases private life is governed by strict regulations and norms – in one by legal decrees, and in the other by hallowed traditions and religion. In both cases the division into estates and the hermetic isolation of those estates – especially the isolation of the nobility – are guarantees of social cohesion and the flowering of civic virtues. Finally, in both cases strict morals and moderate requirements
prevent the spread of the insidious ‘voluptuousness’. It is important to note that his examination of the differences between ancient and modern Russia had convinced Shcherbatov that strict control and regimentation of morals should not be confused with despotism. Ancient Russia, he claimed, had not on the whole been a despotic society, largely because it had remained faithful to a traditional way of life that set out appropriate spheres of activity for everyone – including the tsar – and thus precluded arbitrary rule. In modern Russia, on the other hand, despotism had spawned ‘the corruption of morals that was to become its most faithful ally.’

If Shcherbatov represented a nobleman pining nostalgically for the non-despotic orderliness of pre-Petrine Russia, Count Nikita Panin and Alexander Radishchev represented a more radical, forward-looking element in the aristocracy. Panin and his brother had already, as we have seen, taken part in the coup against Peter III which brought Catherine to the throne. But when Catherine refused to adopt Nikita’s plan for a reduction in the powers of the autocrat and an extension of the powers of the aristocratic Senate, they plotted to overthrow her, too. Their plot was discovered; but Catherine pardoned them.

Nothing daunted, Nikita wrote a Discourse on the Disappearance in Russia of All Forms of Government, intended for his pupil, Crown Prince Paul, in which he declared: “Where the arbitrary rule of one man is the highest law, there can be no lasting or unifying bonds; there is a state, but no fatherland; there are subjects, but no citizens; there is no body politic whose members are linked to each other by a network of duties and privileges.”

With Alexander Radishchev, we come to the first true Enlightenment figure in Russian history. His Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (1790), writes Pipes, “exposed the seamier sides of Russian provincial life…[He] drank deeply at the source of the French Enlightenment, showing a marked preference for its more extreme materialist wing (Helvétius and d’Holbach).”

Thus if Voltaire, Rousseau and the other philosophes introduced English social contract theory into France, thereby providing the philosophical justification for the French revolution, it was Radishchev, whose favourite countries were England and the United States, who introduced the theory into Russia, thereby laying the foundation for the Russian revolution.

“Radishchev thought of the original pre-social state of mankind as a form of isolated existence in which men were not subject to any hierarchical pressures. Human imperfections, however, made it impossible for this state to

891 Walicki, op. cit., p. 33.
892 Pipes, op. cit., p. 258.
continue; men formed nations and thus entered the social state. Radischchev had a wholly rationalist and nominalist view of the nation as ‘a collection of citizens’ rather than a supra-individual whole endowed with a ‘collective soul’. A nation, as he put it, is a ‘collection of individuals’, a political society composed of men who ‘have come together in order to safeguard their own interests and security by their collective efforts; it is a society submitting to authority. Since all men, however, are by nature free, and no one has the right to deprive them of this freedom, the setting up of a society always assumes real or tacit agreement.’ As this quotation shows, ‘nation’ for Radishchev was a juridico-political concept indistinguishable from society, which in its turn was inseparably bound up with state organization. Radishchev even attempted to make a legal definition of ‘fatherland’ as a set of people linked together by mutually binding laws and civic duties. The essay On What It Means to Be a Son of the Fatherland is an excellent illustration of this. Only a man who enjoys civic rights can be a son of his fatherland, Radishchev argues. Peasants cannot claim this privilege since they bear ‘the yoke of serfdom’; they are not ‘members of the state’, or even people, but ‘machines driven by their tormentors, lifeless corpses, draft oxen.’ In order to be a son of the fatherland it is not enough, however, to possess civic rights; it is equally important to show civic virtue by doing one’s best to fulfil one’s duties. Men who are without nobility or honor, who make no contribution to the general good, and who do not respect prevailing laws cannot therefore claim to be sons of the fatherland.

“In keeping with current thinking, Radishchev distinguished between natural law and civil law, the first being an unwritten, innate right, an inalienable attribute of humanity, the second being a written code that only comes into being after the establishment of the social contract. The worst political system is despotism, since in it the arbitrary will of the ruler is placed above the law. Even in his first work – the notes to his translation of Mably’s Observations sur l’histoire de la Grèce – Radishchev gives the following definition of autocracy: ‘Autocracy is the system most repugnant to human nature... If we relinquish part of our rights and our inborn sovereignty in favor of an all-embracing law, it is in order that it might be used to our advantage; to this end we conclude a tacit agreement with society. If this is infringed, then we too are released from our obligations. The injustice of the sovereign gives the people, who are his judges, the same or an even greater right over him than the law gives him to judge criminals. The sovereign is the first citizen of the people’s commonwealth....

“In the Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, a nobleman tells his sons who are about to enter government service: ‘The law, however bad it is, is the bond that holds society together.’ In keeping with this assumption, Radishchev regarded legality – i.e. respect for civil law by all, including the sovereign – as the basic requirement for the proper functioning of society. But it is not enough to replace arbitrary rule by the rule of law; civil law cannot be
contrary to natural law and must be founded on the agreement of the entire nation. Where natural law conflicted with civil law, Radishchev gave priority to the former. In the *Journey* he wrote:

“Every man is born into the world equal to all others. All have the same bodily parts, all have reason and will. Consequently, apart from his relation to society, man is a being that depends on no one in his actions. But he puts limits to his own freedom of action, he agrees not to follow his own will in everything, he subjects himself to the commands of his equals; in a word, he becomes a citizen. For what reason does he control his passions? Why does he set up a governing authority over himself? Why, though free to see fulfilment of his will, does he confine himself within the bounds of obedience? For his own advantage, reason will say; for his own advantage, inner feeling will say; for his own advantage, wise legislation will say. Consequently, wherever being a citizen is not to his advantage, he is not a citizen… If the law is unable or unwilling to protect him, or if its power cannot furnish him immediate aid in the face of clear and present danger, then the citizen has recourse to the natural law of self-defence, self-preservation, and well-being… No matter to what estate may have decreed a citizen’s birth, he is and will always remain a man; and so long as he is a man, the law of nature as an abundant wellspring of goodness will never run dry in him, and whosoever dares wound him in his natural and inviolable right is a criminal.”

This is pure westernism; and Radishchev represents the first truly modern, westernised Russian. The ideas of duty, of self-sacrifice, of God and immortality play no part in his thought. Rightly, therefore, has the *Journey* been called “the first trial balloon of revolutionary propaganda in Russia”.

For everything in it is based on the idea of individual advantage, self-interest pure and simple. Nothing of the sacred, of the veneration due to that which is established by God, remains. Only: “The sovereign is the first citizen of the people’s commonwealth.” “Wherever being a citizen is not to his advantage, he is not a citizen.”

Such ideas lead logically to the self-annihilation of society. In his personal case, they led to suicide… “There are grounds for assuming,” writes Walicki, “that this act was not the result of a temporary fit of depression. Suicide had never been far from his thoughts. In the *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* he wrote: ‘If outrageous fortune hurl upon you all its slings and arrows, if there is no refuge left on earth for your virtue, if, driven to extremes, you find no sanctuary from oppression, then remember this: you are a man, call to mind your greatness and seize the crown of bliss which they are trying to take from you. Die.”

---

893 Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.
Radischev clearly exemplifies the bitter fruits of the westernizing reforms of Peter the Great and his successors. It was this mad, proud striving for mastery of one’s life, without acknowledgement of the Master, God, that was to lead much of Europe to a kind of collective suicide in the next age. And its appearance in Orthodox Russia was the result, in large part, of the “reforms” of Peter I and Catherine II…

We return, finally, to the thought that the eighteenth-century rulers of Russia were both forerunners of the Antichrist, insofar as they undermined the traditional Orthodox way of life in Russia, and restrainers of the Antichrist, in that they built up a mighty state that was able to defend what was left of the Orthodox way of life in the next century. They made possible both the glorious victory of 1812 over the French Antichrist, and the catastrophic surrender of 1917 to the Soviet Antichrist. And so it was in the eighteenth century that Russia finally emerged on the world stage as the universalist empire of the Third Rome, the heir of the Second, New Rome of Byzantium – only to fall, finally, to the pagan spirit of the First Rome that these same eighteenth-century rulers had re-implanted in her...