# CONTENTS

**FOREWORD** ......................................................................................................................... 5

1. THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY ................................................................. 6
   The Appeal to Riurik .................................................................................................................. 6
   Vladimir the Saint ...................................................................................................................... 7
   Church and State in Kievan Rus’ ............................................................................................. 10
   The Breakup of Kievan Rus’ ..................................................................................................... 14
   Autocracy restored: St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo ................................................................. 16
   St. Alexander Nevsky .............................................................................................................. 21
   St. Peter of Moscow .................................................................................................................. 22
   St. Alexius of Moscow ............................................................................................................ 24
   St. Sergius of Radonezh ......................................................................................................... 26

2. MOSCOW: THE THIRD ROME ......................................................................................... 29
3. THE HERESY OF THE JUDAIZERS ............................................................................. 35
4. POSSESSORS AND NON-POSSESSORS .................................................................... 45
5. IVAN THE TERRIBLE: SAINT OR SINNER? ............................................................... 49
   Early Years ............................................................................................................................... 49
   The Orthodox Tsar ................................................................................................................... 50
   The Bloodthirsty Tyrant ......................................................................................................... 55
   St. Philip of Moscow ............................................................................................................... 61
   Bishop Dionysius’ Thesis ....................................................................................................... 63
   Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 67

6. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE ..................................... 69
7. THE TIME OF TROUBLES .............................................................................................. 74
8. THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE ...................................................................................... 85
9. TSAR, PATRIARCH AND PEOPLE IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA ........................................ 92
10. THE SCHISM OF THE OLD RITUALISTS .................................................................. 96
   The Liturgical Reforms .......................................................................................................... 97
   Patriarch Nicon of Moscow .................................................................................................... 104
   The False Council of 1666-1667 ......................................................................................... 108
   Patriarch Nicon on Church-State Relations ......................................................................... 112
   The Rebellion of the Streltsy ............................................................................................... 117

11. THE “STATE HERESY” OF PETER THE GREAT .......................................................... 123
   From Holy Rus’ to Great Russia ............................................................................................. 123
   Peter and the West .................................................................................................................. 128
   Peter’s Leviathan .................................................................................................................... 131
   Peter and His Family ............................................................................................................ 134
   Theophan Prokopovich ........................................................................................................ 136
   Tsar Peter and the Orthodox East ....................................................................................... 143
   Was Peter an Orthodox Tsar? ............................................................................................. 145

12. THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN FREEMASONRY ........................................................... 150
13. TSAR PAUL I ................................................................................................................ 158
   Restorer of Orthodox Autocracy .......................................................................................... 158
   The Annexation of Georgia ................................................................................................. 163
   The Yedinoverie .................................................................................................................... 169
   The Murder of Tsar Paul ...................................................................................................... 172
FOREWORD

This book contains twenty-five essays on the subject of the Russian Orthodox Autocracy. The essays are arranged in roughly chronological order, covering the period from the founding of the Russian Autocracy by St. Vladimir in 988 to its apparent demise with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917, with the two last chapters on the fate of the Church after the fall of the Autocracy. The book was felt to be necessary because at the moment there exists very little literature in the English language on the subject of the Russian Autocracy from an Orthodox Christian point of view. Its aim is, with the help of God, to increase the understanding of a central concept in the Russian people’s understanding of themselves and their history. A secondary purpose of the book is to make a little better known to English-speaking readers the works of some of the best writers on the Orthodox Autocracy, such as Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Ivan Solonevich, C.P. Pobedonostsev, L.A. Tikhomirov, M.V. Zyzykin, I.A. Ilyin, St. John Maximovich and Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow.

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

Vladimir Moss.
May 9/22, 2013.

Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas of Myra.
East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey. GU22 0SB.
1. THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY

In 860 a new nation which St. Photius called “Ros” (Ρωσ)\(^1\) appeared in the waters surrounding Constantinople and ravaged the suburbs. These came from Russia, but were probably Scandinavian Vikings by race (the Finns call the Swedes “Rossi”, and the Estonians “Rootsi”, to this day). Through the grace of the Mother of God the invaders were defeated\(^2\), and in the treaty which followed the ceasefire the Russians agreed to accept Christianity. A large number of Kievan merchants were catechized and baptized in the suburb of St. Mamas.

Later, St. Photius sent a group of missionaries with a Bishop Michael at its head to catechize and baptize in Kiev itself (he may also have sent St. Methodius). Michael began to preach the word of God among the pagans, and at their demand worked a miracle: he ordered a fire to be kindled and placed in it a book of the Gospels, which remained unharmed.\(^3\) Many were then converted, including Prince Askold of Kiev, who was baptized with the name Nicholas and opened diplomatic relations with Constantinople in 867.\(^4\)

There is a tradition that, even earlier than Askold, early in the ninth century, a Russian prince called Bravlin received Holy Baptism after witnessing miracles at the tomb of St. Stephen of Sourozh in the Crimea.\(^5\)

And so St. Photius was able to write to the other Eastern Patriarchs, that “the formerly terrible people, the so-called Ros… are even now abandoning their heathen faith and are converting to Christianity, receiving bishops and pastors from us, as well as all Christian customs… The zeal of faith has burned them to such a degree that they have received a Bishop and shepherd and have accepted the Christian religion with great eagerness and care.”\(^6\)

The Appeal to Riurik

Two years after the defeat of 860, the Slavs of the northern city of Novgorod made an unprecedented change in the form of their political organisation, inviting the

---

\(^1\) The word Ρωσ appears in Ezekiel 38.2, as part of the coalition of powers called “God and Magog” coming against Israel “from the extreme parts of the north” in the last times. Several interpreters identified Ρωσ with Russia. See Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Sobranie Pism (Collected Letters)*, Moscow, 2000, p. 840.

\(^2\) The feast of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was instituted to commemorate the City’s miraculous deliverance (October 1).


\(^5\) See the *Menaion* for St. Stephen on December 15.

\(^6\) St. Photius, in *Patrologia Graeca* 102, 736-737.
Scandinavian Vikings under Rurik to rule over them: “Our land is great and abundant, but there is no order in it - come and rule over us.”

As N.M. Karamzin writes: “The citizens perhaps remembered how useful and peaceful the rule of the Normans had been: their need for good order and quiet made them forget their national pride, and the Slavs, ‘convinced,’ as tradition relates, ‘by the advice of the Novgorod elder Gostomysl,’ demanded rulers from the Varyangians.”7

As I. Solonevich notes8, this appeal was similar to that of the British Christians to the Saxons Hengist and Horsa. However, the results were very different. Whereas in Britain the invitation led to a long series of wars between the Britons and Saxons and the eventual conquest of most of England by the pagans, in Russia it led, without bloodshed, to the foundation of a strong and stable State, in which the Germanic element was quickly swallowed up by the Slavs.

Thus by inviting the Vikings to rule over them, the Russian Slavs triumphed at one stroke over egoism and self-will in both the individual and the national spheres. As New Hieromartyr Andronicus of Perm wrote: “At a time when, in the other peoples of Europe, the power of the princes and kings was subduing the peoples to themselves, appearing as external conquerors of the disobedient, but weak, - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and ourselves placed the princes, the prototypes of our tsars, over ourselves. That is how it was when Riurik and his brothers were recognised by Ilmen lake. We placed them to rule over ourselves at a time when we had only just begun to be conscious of ourselves as a people, and when our statehood was just beginning to come into being”.9

But why was it necessary for the Russians to invite foreigners to rule over them? Because, according to F. Vinberg, of a special trait of the Russian national character, “the complete inability of our people to display the statist instincts of creativity and constructiveness on the soil of social self-activity, without the initiative and influence of the central, national power of the Autocratic Order…”10 As Russian history was to show, the Russians prospered when a powerful Orthodox Christian Autocracy was put in place over them, and perished when it was taken away from them...

**Vladimir the Saint**

Although it took many centuries for the Russian Autocracy to establish itself over its external and internal rivals, and effect the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, “the real state life of Rus’, “ writes St. John Maximovich, “begins with Vladimir the Saint. The princes who were before him were not so much ruler-lords as conquerors, for whom the establishment of good order in their country was less

---

important than subduing the rich country to themselves and forcing it to pay some
tribute. Even Svyatoslav preferred to live in Bulgaria, which he had conquered, and
not in his own capital. It was Christianity, which was brought into Russian first by
Olga, who had great influence on her eldest grandsons Yaropolk and Oleg, and then
finally by St. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun, who baptised Rus‘, that laid the firm
foundations of Statehood.

“Christianity bound together by a common culture the princely race, which was,
they say, of Norman extraction, and the numerous Slavic and other races which
constituted the population of ancient Rus‘. It taught the princes to look on
themselves as defenders of the weak and oppressed and servants of the
righteousness of God. It taught the people to see in them not simply leaders and
war-commanders, but as people to whom power had been given by God Himself.”

It was St. Vladimir’s grandmother, St. Olga, who in 957 initiated the
Christianization of her country by submitting to baptism in Constantinople. Her
godfather was the Byzantine Emperor himself. However, she did not succeed in
converting her son Svyatoslav, and towards the end of her reign a pagan reaction set
in, which intensified under Svyatoslav and in the early years of Vladimir’s rule.

Like Moses, St. Vladimir, the baptiser of Russia, was expelled from his homeland
in his youth. But in 980 he returned and conquered Kiev. After a period of fierce
idolatry, during which he put to death the first martyrs of Russia, Theodore and
John, he repented and led his people out of the Egypt of idolatry and through the
Red Sea of baptism in the Dniepr on August 1, 988, and thence into the inheritance of
the promised land, the new Israel of “Holy Russia”, which had been all but
evangelised by his death in 1015.

In view of this, the usual epithet of “new Constantine” granted to the kings of
new Orthodox nations was more than usually appropriately applied to St. Vladimir,
as Metropolitan Hilarion applied it in his famous Sermon on the Law and Grace in
about 1050. Indeed, Russia was not only an offshoot of Christian Rome, like Bulgaria
or Georgia. Through her racial and dynastic links with Western Europe (especially
the Anglo-Scandinavian north-west), Russia became the heir of what was left of the
Old, Orthodox Rome of the West, regenerating the ideal of the Symphony of Powers
just as it was being destroyed in the West by the heretical Papacy. And by her filial
faithfulness to Byzantium, as well as through the marriage of Great-Prince Ivan III to
Sophia Palaeologus in the fifteenth century, she became the heir of the Second or New
Rome of Constantinople. Thus Vladimir was not a “new Constantine” in the
conventional sense attached to all founders of new Christian dynasties in the early

11 St. John Maximovich, Proiskhozdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii (The Origins of the Law of
Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 3.
12 However, according to D. Rybakov, St. Olga received Holy Baptism at the end of 944 in Kiev,
possibly together with her husband, Great Prince Igor. See Vestnik I.P.Ts. (Messenger of the True
Orthodox Church), № 2 (12), April-June, 1998, p. 43.
13 This marital bond with Byzantium was first created by Vladimir himself, when he married the
purple-born princess Anna, sister of Emperor Basil II.
Middle Ages. His kingdom evolved from being a part of the New Rome into being its reincarnation or successor or heir. In fact, it was the Third Rome in embryonic form\textsuperscript{14}…

Thus G. Podskalsky writes: “Although Hilarion compared Vladimir with Constantine the Great and recognised his sovereignty over Kievan Rus’, he ascribed the title of ‘Emperor’ neither to him nor to his successor. The collector (or editor) of the Izbornik of 1076 everywhere exchanged the term βασιλεύς (‘emperor’) for ‘prince’ or ‘kahan’, so as thereby to adapt the Byzantine texts to Russian conditions, while the term βασιλεύς, ‘tsar’, was kept only when it referred to God. The idea of the ‘transfer of the empire’ (translatio imperii), which captivated the Bulgarian tsar Simeon or Charles the Great in relation to the Frankish empire, was foreign to pre-Mongol Rus’. The Byzantine supremacy in the hierarchy of States was also strengthened by the emperors’ practice of adopting the role of sponsor at the baptism of newly converted kings or princes.”\textsuperscript{15}

Thus the Emperor became the sponsor at the baptisms of Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria and Princess Olga of Kiev. Such sponsorship, according to Richard Fletcher, “indicated secular lordship as well. The experience of baptism could thus become a token of submission. Exported to the west we can see the idea at work in the baptismal sponsorship of Widukind by Charlemagne in 785, or of Harald Klak by Louis the Pious in 826, or of the Viking leader Guthrum by Alfred of Wessex in 878.”\textsuperscript{16}

The inferiority of the other Orthodox rulers to the Byzantine Emperor was indicated in various ways: by differences in titles (the Russian princes were called αρχοντές), and by the fact that only the emperors were anointed at their enthronement.

Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: “The Russian Great Princes and the Serbian, Georgian and Bulgarian rulers were defenders of the Church only in their territories. They were also raised to the princedom with the blessing of the Church, but by a different rite (ο εζε βλαγοσλοβί κνηγαζύα), which included the crowning of the prince, but contained no anointing.”\textsuperscript{17} If the Frankish and Bulgarian rulers had been accorded the title of basileus, this was only under compulsion and was withdrawn as soon as politically expedient. And even much later, in 1561, when the pre-eminence of Russia in the Orthodox world could not be denied, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joasaph II accorded the Ivan the Terrible the title Basileus only because he was thought to

\textsuperscript{14} Vladimir minted coins showing himself in imperial attire (Vladimir Volkoff, Vladimir the Russian Viking, Bath: Honeyglen, 1984, p. 256.
\textsuperscript{15} Podskalsky, Kristianstvo i Bogoslovskaia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237 gg.) (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus’ (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{17} Alferov and Alferov, O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow: “Russkaia Idea”, p. 18.
descend from a Byzantine princess – Anna, the wife of St. Vladimir. So tenacious was the idea among the Greeks that there could be no Third Rome after the Second…

Church and State in Kievan Rus’

St. Vladimir’s great work of unifying and evangelizing Russia was continued and consolidated by his son Yaroslav and his great-grandson Vladimir Monomakh. Protected and led by the Autocracy, the Church prospered. And in its turn the Autocracy was strengthened and sanctified by its union with the Church.

It is sometimes stated that the Church was always enslaved to the State in Russia from the time that St. Vladimir supposedly forced his people into the waters of baptism at the point of a spear. However, the very rapid spread of Orthodox Christianity in Russia from the time of St. Vladimir, and the fact that it remained firmly entrenched until at least the Russian revolution, can only be explained through the voluntary and joyful reception of the faith by the people. And if the State took the lead in this, as in every other major aspect of Russian life, this in no way entailed that the Church was enslaved to the Great Princes and Tsars.

From the beginning Church and State were exceptionally close in Kievan Rus’. This was the result, in part, of the fact that in Russia it was the Great Princes who introduced the Church into Russia, whereas in Byzantium St. Constantine came to power when the Church was already three hundred years old and well-established. St. Vladimir threatened those who threatened this order as follows: “If anyone breaks my rule, whether he be my son or a servant, or anyone of my race or one of the boyars, and interferes in the ecclesiastical affairs of the metropolitan, which I gave into the hands of the metropolitan, and of the Church, and of the bishops in all the cities in accordance with the canons, he will be judged and punished. If anyone tries to seize the judgement of the Church, he will be deprived of the name of Christian, and may all such be cursed by the Holy Fathers.”

18 However, there were exceptions to this viewpoint. According to Podskalsky, a Greek Metropolitan of Kiev in the early twelfth century, Nicephorus I, “without hesitation called both the emperor and the prince equally likenesses of the Divine archetype. This meant that he rejected the Byzantine idea of the single and undivided imperial power, which was inherent only in the Basileus of the Romans and which in this capacity reflected the Divine order of the world. The conception of the emperor as ‘the image of God’ (imago Dei, εικον θεου) became well-known in Kiev thanks to the Mirror of Princes composed in 527 by Deacon Agapetus for Justinian. Extracts from it, in which the discussion was about the duty of subjects to submit to the visible deputy (prince) of the invisible ruler of the world (God), were included in the Izbornik of 1076 (pp. cit., pp. 67-68). “Yet it was a quite exceptional case,” writes G. Fedotov, “when the author of the panegyric of Prince Andrew of Vladimir dared to apply to him the famous definition of Chrysostom-Agapit, so popular in later Moscow: ‘Caesar by his earthly nature is similar to any man, but by the power of his dignity he is similar to God alone’ (The Russian Religious Mind, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 398).

19 Alferov, “Teokratia ili ierokratia”.

20 St. Vladimir, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Russkaia Ideologia (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 83-84.
Yaroslav the Wise, strengthened this tendency in “The Church Statute of Kiev”. “In this document, we observe the symphony already developing between the Russian princes and the Church: ‘I, Grand Prince Yaroslav, son of Vladimir, in accordance with the wish of my father, have conferred with Metropolitan Illarion and have prepared [this] Church Statute because I believe that there are matters that belong neither to [the exclusive] jurisdiction of the prince nor to that of the boyars. I have granted this jurisdiction, as embodied in the present rules of the Church Church Statute, to the metropolitan and the bishops.’ An examination of these rules reveals that their nature is primarily concerning morality as determined by Church law, for example, ‘If the godfather should have illicit relations with the mother [of his godchild], the bishop shall receive one grivna of gold and at his discretion he shall also impse [an appropriate] penance.’ Sometimes the line between Church and State is blurred, as in the following statute: ‘If a husband should force his wife into prostitution, this is a religious crime. The prince [however] shall administer justice [in this case in accordance with the ancient customs and traditions].’ Occasionally the decision is shared: ‘The bishop shall receive 100 grivnas as the fine from whoever sets a dwelling, or a barn, or anything else afire. The prince shall the jurisdiction ‘in this matter in accordance with ancient custom and traditions].’ As we see from the above statutes, the State both acknowledged and deferred to the Church from the beginning of Russian history. This relationship between the Prince and (in this case) the Metropolitan was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The State had its older traditions but incorporated a Christian worldview into its legal system and invited the Church to take part in the judicial side of Russian life when it deemed it appropriate.”

As an example of the closeness of Church and State in Kievan Rus’, we may cite an incident from Novgorod in 1078, as described by Bishop Dionysius (Alferov): “A certain sorcerer by demonic power wrought many signs and wonders, collected a huge crowd of people whom he had deceived and went with them to destroy the church of Hagia Wisdom. The Bishop of Novgorod with a cross in his hands stood in front of the church and called the Christians to help him. But only very few hastened to his side. Only the Prince of Novgorod, Gleb Svyatoslavich, did not fear. He went alone to meet the armed mob and in the sight of all struck with his sword the servant of satan who had proudly prophesied to the people that he would be enthroned that day. After this the crowd dispersed. It is evident that in such a situation no ordinary good fellow could take the place in the defence of the Church of the Christian Autocrat, who had received from her a blessing on his service and who was protected by the power of God through her prayers”.

The relationship between Church and State in Kievan Rus’ is described by Podskalsky as follows: “The relations between the sovereign and his subjects were based on principles drawn from Old- and New-Testament texts. This, for example, how the chronicler views princely virtue: ‘If there are righteous princes on the earth,
then many sins are forgiven to the earth, but if they are evil and cunning, then God brings more evil on the earth, insofar as its head is of the earth’. The Novgorod Bishop Luke the Jew looks at the matter differently: ‘Fear God, honour the prince, you are slaves first of God, and also of the lord (that is, the prince – G.P.). The logical consequence of both utterances is, in principle, the right to resist the authorities, although its existence and the practical possibilities of applying it were just not formulated sufficiently clearly in Rus’. On the contrary, the Church willingly resorted to helping the State in its struggle with the remnants of paganism and the reappearance of heresies, and also in the missionary absorption of new territories. In the first place this was a work of the monks, whose ranks at the beginning were filled up with many from the land-owning nobility and the social élite of society. But the metropolitans, who were all practically without exception Greeks, tried, on their part, to direct the efforts of the Russian princes to ward off the attacks of the nomads on the East Roman empire, without, however, overstepping the bounds of loyalty to the princely power….”

“The princes in their turn gradually gave the Church juridical privileges, steady income and possessions in land... Crimes in the sphere of family relations, which were subject to punishment from the point of view of Christian morality, entered into the administration of the Church already in the 11th century. The jurisdiction of the prince’s power was limited by the immunity of the clergy and the members of their families, and also of the monks and the ‘church people’, that is, people under the special protection of the Church (the poor, the sick, strangers, etc.). However, sometimes representatives of the clergy were still brought before the prince’s court...

“Just as the princes took part in the administration of Church affairs, so the episcopate strove to influence the princes’ politics. Such cooperation between Church and State reached its zenith during the rule of Vladimir Monomakh [1113-1125]. But, according to the words of Hilarion, already Vladimir I had taken part in councils, discussing with the Church leadership ways and means of strengthening faith amidst the newly converted. In the future such cooperation gradually broadened in proportion as the place of the Greek hierarchs was taken by bishops of Russian extraction, while the princes thereby received the possibility of exerting greater influence on the choice of candidates and their consecration. The chronicler tells us of a whole series of bishops who recommended themselves by carrying out complicated diplomatic missions. The triumphant conclusion of treaties by the princes was accompanied by oaths and kissing of the cross. The monks of the Kiev Caves monastery more than once took up a critical position in relation to the prince. Thus, for example, in 1073 Abbot Theodosius refused to join the princely civil war on the side of Svyatoslav, who had then seized the princely throne, and did not even fear sharply to point out to the prince the lawlessness of his actions, and of his exiling his brother Izyaslav. Only the lofty authority of the monastery leader and the pleas of the brethren saved him from persecution, and after the laying of the foundations of a new monastery church complete reconciliation was achieved. If the monks thereby kept an inner distance in relation to politics, the episcopate was

forced sometimes to enter into it, although it did not take an immediate part in the counsels of the princes…

“In general, in the course of the civil wars of the 11th-12th centuries, the Church acquired a new moral authority in the eyes both of the princes and the people, while the State, for its part, received from the Church a confirmation of its divine purpose for the sake of the common good. From the Slavonic translation of the Nomocanon in 14 chapters Kievan Rus’ drew the ideal formula for the relations between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities going back to Justinian’s Sixth Novella…. The emperor was bound to concern himself with the teaching of the faith, with respect for the clergy and with the observation of the canons. It was precisely this postulate that was laid by Metropolitan Hilarion at the base of his reasonings on agreement between the Church and the State…

“And so, in all the manifestations of theological and church-political thought, in art, in Divine services and in literary works of various genres, already in the 11th century one and the same national tendency was revealed, a leaning towards a State Church… The strength of the Church consisted in the fact that it worthily presented itself in a non-standard situation which it was impossible to master without the aid of earlier conceptual models and models of behaviour transferred to the new situation; while the strength of the State consisted in an understanding of the far-reaching commonality of its interests with the interests of the Church, by virtue of which it was necessary to give the Church necessary aid in the fulfilment of her mission. In spite of, or even thanks to the fact that not one of these two powers was able to boast of complete independence from the other, the sphere of their external activity and internal freedom was as great as it would ever be later.”

Kievan Rus’ represented a rare balance of freedom and obedience in State life. Thus Fedotov writes: “Kievan chroniclers are very outspoken about the vices and flaws of their princes; they obviously felt no restraint imposed by princely dignity upon the freedom of their judgement. All they can afford to do, in order to alleviate the guilt of a prince, is to attribute his deficiency to the influence of bad counselors. Bad counselors, mostly ‘young ones’ (compare Isaiah 3.1-4), are the root of all political evils. The youth of the prince himself is often considered as a great misfortune and a sign of God’s wrath against the country.

“Good and bad princes alike are sent by God as a reward or punishment to the people. ‘If a country is right before God, He ordains in it a just Caesar or prince, loving law and justice, and he installs governors and judges administering justice.’ But ‘woe to the city where the prince is young, and likes to drink wine at the sound of the gusli with young counselors… Such are given by God for our sins’ (Lavr. 1015).

“If a bad prince is sent by God and his tyranny has a penitential significance this seems to exclude revolt against the tyrant as a legitimate political action. This

---

conclusion would be quite correct in the spirit of the Byzantine and even early Christian ethics; it was indeed the doctrine of Anastasius Sinaitas in the seventh century and it was repeated by some Russian moralists as well. And yet the import of this doctrine of obedience was greatly exaggerated by the modern historians who often viewed the early Russian ways of life from the viewpoint of Muscovy. The Kievan chronicler may consider a revolt of the citizens against their prince as the act of God’s will, punishing the prince in his turn (Lavr. 1068)…. The chastising providence of God, in the political sphere, is double-faced; occasionally, it can use to its own ends even a popular revolution.

“There was, however, one thing before which ancient Russia, unlike Byzantium, stopped with horror: the murder of a prince. Regicide in Byzantium was so common that it seems a part of the political system, a necessary corrective to autocracy. In Russia,… a revolt, although it was sometimes justified if it ended in the overthrow of a prince, was never pardoned if it resulted in his murder…”

And yet the very first saints canonized in Kievan Rus’ were Princes Boris and Gleb, the sons of St. Vladimir, who were killed by their evil brother Sviatopolk. And it was the fratricide of the Kievan princes that was to destroy the State… Nevertheless, it remains true that a far greater proportion of rulers died peacefully in their beds in Russia than in Byzantium.

The Breakup of Kievan Rus’

The unity of Kievan Rus’ under St. Vladimir and his immediate successors was an extraordinary achievement in view of the country’s lack of natural frontiers, constant invasions of barbarians and multinational character. However, as G. Podskalsky writes, on the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, according to his will, “the rule of the Kievan princes was replaced by a federation of independent princedoms linked between themselves only by the hierarchy of princely thrones and the constant redistribution of princedoms within the princely clan (according to the principle of seniority) that flowed from that. These new traits of State construction were fraught with constant political tension, and forced the Church to step forward in a new for her role of preserver and defender of State unity”.

From the beginning of the twelfth century the State began to weaken from both within and without. The basic reason was the internecine warfare of the princes who, though belonging to the same family, fought each other for princedoms. For the Russian custom – introduced, according to Solonevich, from feudal Hungary, Poland and, in part, Germany – was that the Great Prince of Kiev would divide up his realm into principalities and give each of his sons one part. This opened the gates to fratricidal strife. It was not until the fourteenth century that Muscovite Russia, under the influence of St. Sergius of Radonezh, introduced the law of primogeniture…

26 Podskalsky, op. cit., p. 62.
However, Solonevich considers the civil wars of the Kievan princes to be insufficient to explain why none of them succeeded in creating a lasting and powerful empire. “For the question inevitably arises: why did Kiev and those with her not cope with situation, and why did Moscow and those with her cope? Neither does the idea that the Moscow princes were talented, or the Kievan ones untalented, contribute to our understanding: was Yaroslav, who, though called ‘the Wise’, divided the Kievan land between his sons, stupider than, for example, Daniel Alexandrovich, who ascended the throne at the age of ten, or Michael Fyodorovich, who ascended the throne at the age of sixteen? Under these princes the Muscovite land was not divided. Would it not be more correct to seek for the reasons for success and failure in some deeper or much broader phenomena than princely childbirths, and more constant causes than the talent or lack of it of some tens of princes who shone on the Kievan or Muscovite thrones?”

“The most obvious reason for the failure of the pre-Muscovite rulers was the ‘civil wars’ in the Novgorodian or Kievan veches [assemblies or parliaments], independently of whether they were decided by the armed combat of princes on the field of battle or by the battle of parties. If we take the main lines of development of Novgorod and Kiev, Galich and Vilna, on the one hand, and Moscow, on the other, then it will become sufficiently obvious: both Novgorod and Kiev, and Galich and Vilna created a purely aristocratic order for themselves. And in Novgorod, and partly also in Kiev, the princes, that is, the representatives of the monarchical principle in the country, were simply hirelings, whom the veches sometimes invited and sometime expelled as seemed fit to them. In Galich the princely power was completely eaten up by the boyars. In the Lithuanian-Russian State the aristocracy was just waiting for the moment to establish their freedoms before the face of the representative of one-man rule. They succeeded in this – at the price of the existence of the State. ‘In Kiev in the 11th century the administration of the city and district was concentrated in the hands of the military elders’ (Klyuchevsky). ‘The veches in Kiev and Novgorod, which appeared according to the chronicler already at the beginning of the 11th century, from the time of the struggle between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk in 1015, began, from the end of the century, to make louder and louder noises, making themselves felt everywhere and interfering in the relations between the princes. The princes had to take account of this force, enter into deals with it, conclude political agreements with the cities. ‘The prince, sitting in Kiev, had to strengthen the senior throne under him by compacts with the Kievan veches. The princes were not fully empowered sovereigns of the land, but only their military-political rulers.’

“Not so long ago Russian social thought looked on Kiev Rus’, and in particular Novgorod, as, very unfortunately, unsuccessful attempts to establish a democratic order in Rus’. The coarse hand of eastern despotism crushed these attempts: ‘the veches are not to exist, the bell is not to exist, and Novgorod is to exist under the complete control of the Muscovite princes’... Now opinions of this democracy have changed somewhat. Neither in Kiev nor in Novgorod was there any democracy.
There was a feudal-mercantile aristocracy (in Vilna it was a feudal-landowning aristocracy). And it was this, and by no means ‘the people’, that tried by all means to limit and bind the princely power. And not, of course, in the name of ‘the people’, but in its own class interests. One can say: both in Galich, and in Novgorod, and in Vilna, and in Kiev the aristocracy – whether land-owning or mercantile – swallowed up the supreme power. But one can also put it another way: neither in Galich, nor in Novgorod, nor in Vilna, nor in Kiev did the popular masses succeed in creating their own power. And for that reason the lower classes attached themselves to that power which the Muscovite lower classes had succeeded in creating: ‘we want to be under the Muscovite Tsar, the Orthodox Tsar’.”

Archpriest Lev Lebedev is in essential agreement with this verdict: “What a misfortune is democracy, whether it be of the veche or of the boyars! And what madness! Never was the people (or even the best part of it) the source of power and law, nor can it be. In democracy everyone wants to ‘drag’ things in their direction, as a result of which they ‘break up’ the Russian Land, as the chronicler puts it… The fall of great Kiev was accomplished to a significant degree under the influence of the veche. Often it either summoned princes that it liked, driving out the lawful ones, or, on the contrary, invited the latter and drove out the others, thereby ‘helping’ the princes ‘to break up’ Great Kievan Rus’, which had been gathered together by the great labours of St. Vladimir, Yaroslav the Wise and Vladimir Monomakh.”

**Autocracy restored: St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo**

The first major attempt by a Russian ruler to halt the decline of Kievan Rus’ by imposing a more disciplined, centralized and truly autocratic power began in 1155,
when Prince Andrew, son of Great Prince George Dolgoruky of Kiev, left the small southern principality of Vyshgorod to settle in Rostov-Suzdal, one of the smaller principalities situated in the dense forests of the Volga-Oka triangle.

Here, far from the fratricidal politics of the south, as N.M. Karamzin writes, “the people had not yet exhibited a mutinous spirit, they did not judge and change their sovereigns, but fervently obeyed them and fought bravely for them”. It was therefore the perfect base for Andrew, who, “having not only a good heart, but also an excellent mind, clearly saw the reasons for the woes of the State and wanted to save at least his own land from them: that is, he removed the unfortunate system of appanages and ruled on his own, giving cities neither to his brothers nor to his sons”.

“Here in the north,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “the princes felt themselves to be the owners of the territory, which they could dispose of according to their discretion. And recognizing themselves to be creators and builders of that which was being formed more than was the case in the south, they could no longer be reconciled with the character of the temporary ownership of thrones that had brought them to unending transfers of their princedoms, and which gave the impression of some kind of queue, albeit a disordered queue. Now the prince does not leave his appanage, even if he obtains a great princedom. ‘This is mine, for it has been brought into being by me’ – that was the consciousness of the prince in the north. If earlier, in the south, there had still been some idea of a collective ownership by the Riurik family, now a more complete isolation of the princely lines took place… Together with the concept of property, that appeared in the north as a result of the personal activity and personal political creativity of the princes in the building up of society, there came to an end not only the transfer of princes from throne to throne, but also a change took place in the order of inheritance as the concept of private civil right was introduced into it. Earlier, in order that a prince should obtain the transfer of a throne in favour of the candidate he desired, he had to come to an agreement with the desired heir, with those relatives whom he was bypassing, with his boyars, and finally, with the veche of the city, and, last of all, his desire was often not fulfilled after his death, even if the promise to fulfil it was accompanied by kissing the cross. But now the prince, as the owner, could divide his princedom and leave it in his will, according to his discretion, to his sons, his wife, his daughters and distant

---

30 N.M. Karamzin, *Predania Vekov (The Traditions of the Ages)*, Moscow, 1989, p. 207. Lebedev sees in this trait the influence of the Finnish element of the population. For the Finns, according to Tacitus, “did not fear people, and were not frightened of enemies, but attained that which is difficult to attain - they wanted nothing”! So when the Russians emigrated to these areas from the south and absorbed the Finnish population, they “also wanted nothing in their earthly life”. Only, since they were Orthodox Christians, these Russians “wanted life in the Heavenly Kingdom, which is why sedentary Rus’ strove to construct her earthly Fatherland in the image of the Heavenly, eternal Fatherland!” (op. cit., pp. 12, 15).

31 Karamzin, op. cit., p. 214.
relatives – sometimes as their property, and sometimes for lifetime use. His private right as a property-owner became the basis for his rights as a ruler...”

This new political order introduced above all Prince Andrew received support from the heavenly realm, as Archpriest Lev explains: “In Vyshgorod at that time, in 1154-55, there was a holy icon of the Mother of God which had been brought not long before from Constantinople. This was a special holy thing! It was one of the icons created by the Evangelist Luke, which he painted having before his eyes the Most Holy Theotokos herself. He painted this icon on part of a plank from a table that had belonged to the Holy Family in Nazareth. Kiev, however, did not value this holy thing in a fitting manner. But meanwhile it worked miracles. It was often found in Vyshgorod, having departed from its place [in Kiev]. In 1155 it again moved, as it were showing that it did not want to remain there [in Kiev]. This time Prince Andrew was a witness of the event. He fell to his knees in prayer before the icon. And the Most Pure Mother of God told him what he should do. That night, secretly, without asking his father, Andrew of Bogoliubovo took the icon of our Lady and some priests of Vyshgorod and their families, and went away to the North... Again on the instructions of the All-Pure One he did not take it to Rostov, but left it in Vladimir. From that time this great icon began to be called the Vladimir icon. In accordance with God’s providence (for otherwise it is impossible to explain it), the father was not angry with his son. Prince Andrew remained in Vladimir, and built next to it the village of Bogoliubovo in which he constructed his palace. In 1157 Yury Dolgoruky [his father] died. His son did not go to live in Kiev. Moreover, he began to petition in Constantinople for the founding of a metropolitan see in Vladimir, that is, a see having the same ecclesiastical significance as that of Kiev. [However,] he was blessed to have only a bishopric. But then Bishop Theophanes of Vladimir was murdered in a bestial manner in Kiev at the command of the new Metropolitan, Constantine II, who had been despatched there from Constantinople. In reply to this evil act, and also because of the other injustices of the Kievans, Prince Andrew sent an army there, taking the Polovtsians as his allies. In 1169 Kiev was terribly burned down and looted. The churches were also looted.

“The Great Prince, who already bore the title ‘of Kiev’, moved the centre of Rus’ to Vladimir, to the North. Here, in Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus’, he erected about 30 churches, among them the noted Dormition cathedral in Vladimir, and the first church in honour of the new feast of the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos – the wonderful ‘Pokrov on the Nerl’. The ‘Golden Gates’ of Vladimir are also his creation. Thus, not accidentally, but consciously, a new capital of Rus’ was being constructed in the image of the former. Prince Andrew himself put his hand to the writing of a service to the feast of the Protecting Veil, which did not exist in the Greek Church, so that it became the first purely Russian national feast.33 It is also thought that he participated in the composition of the service to the All-Merciful Saviour and the

32 Zyzykin, Tsarskaia Vlast’ (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm, pp. 11-12.
33 In spite of the fact that it commemorated the miraculous deliverance of Constantinople by the Mother of God from the then still pagan Russians in 862! (V.M.)
All-Holy Theotokos on August 1/14 in commemoration of the victory of the Volga Bulgars, when the Vladimir icon and the icon of the Saviour gave out heavenly rays that were visible to all. The Byzantine Emperor Manuel had the same vision in the same year and day during his battle with the Saracens, as Andrew and Manuel learned from letters they wrote to each other. Prince Andrew also composed a prayer that was attached to the ‘Instruction’ of Vladimir Monomakh. Andrew loved God and people, and they loved him, not in vain giving him the nickname ‘God-loving’ [Bogoliubski]. To the end of his days he had a special veneration for the passion-bearer Prince Boris, and always had his cap and sword by him.

“But, as in the life of a people, so in the earthly life of a man, not everything is unambiguous. Here they live partly according to Christ, but partly still according to the old Adam. Andrew, for all his love for God, could ‘become spiteful’, as was already said, against Kiev. He also ‘became spiteful’ in 1170 against wilful Novgorod. And he sent a powerful army there. But none other than the Mother of God Herself now began to become the Opponent of Prince Andrew, through her icon of the Sign defending the Novgorodians and bringing about a stinging defeat for the Suzdalian armies. However, Bogoliubsky nevertheless later brought Novgorod into obedience by ‘peaceful’ means – by cutting off the movement of bread to it from the Volga region and Ryazan.

“Having moved to the North, Prince Andrew himself hardly waged war at all. Here he was the builder of a state. And not everything was in order in the land. He was an opponent of paganism in everything, including such manifestations of it as the veneration of the military war-band and the ancient veche, which was especially strong in Rostov. He did not want to obey the old war-band nobles of his father. A plot was hatched among them. Prince Andrew wanted to be and become autonomous, an Autocrat, relying on the new Vladimir, and in general on the new people who were settling the new Rus’. For old Rostov was a stronghold of resistance not only to Prince Andrew personally. Here, as far back as the Baptism of Rus’, there had been strong opposition to the Christian faith, and there had been a rebellion of the sorcerers. Then they had expelled the bishops, not allowing them to preach, so that the holy Hierarch Leontius had had to begin teaching the people outside the city with teaching the children. Then, in the 12th century, through the efforts of many saints, Orthodoxy shone out there also. But something from paganism, and above all self-will and pride, still remained. And these are always the sources of every kind of disturbance. Therefore, while wanting to crush them, Prince Andrew of Bogolyubovo did not at all want to become a tyrant and disregard the rule of the Russian princes of ruling ‘together with the land’, having its voice as an advisor. That is how he ruled – but as an Autocrat, and not as a plaything in the hands of the powerful boyars, or of the people’s veche!…

“In 1174, in Bogolyubovo, Prince Andrew was killed in a terrible way by plotters. Before this one of them had stolen the sword of Prince Boris from his bedroom. Thus did the first Autocrat of Great Russia end his life in a martyrlic fashion, and the commemoration of his death is celebrated on the very day, July 4/17, when the last
Autocrat of Great Russia, his Majesty Nicholas Alexandrovich, was killed together with the whole of his Holy Family!...”34

Andrew’s achievement, according to Georgievsky, was to change “the principles on which ancient Kievan Rus’ had lived before him, proclaiming the idea of the autocracy as the basis of the political life of the Russian people. Orthodoxy and autocracy – these corner-stones of the great building of the Russian State – were first indicated to the Russian people by Andrew Bogolyubsky as the foundation for the attainment of State might and popular prosperity. Bogolyubsky’s later successors, the Great Princes of Moscow who founded the great Muscovite State which then grew into a mighty empire, only developed and realised Bogolyubsky’s ideas in their own political activity”.35

Andrew’s achievements were consolidated by his brother, Vsevolod III, who was, as John Fennell writes, “one of the shrewdest and more farsighted of all the descendants of Vladimir I, [and] was widely acknowledged among his fellow-rulers. ‘All lands trembled at his name and his fame spread throughout the whole country,’ wrote his chronicler, who... probably represented the views of most of his contemporaries. All Suzdalia owed him allegiance of some kind or other; the great city-state of Novgorod with its vast subject lands to the west, north and north-east had, for the first eight years of the thirteenth century, only his sons as its rulers; Kiev’s eastern neighbour, Southern Pereyaslavl’, was firmly under his control; and the princes of Murom and Ryazan’ to the south were little more than his vassals.”36

Then, in 1211, writes G.G. Litavrin, Vsevolod “obtained from a congress of the boyars, cities, villages, merchants, nobles, abbots, priests and ‘all the people’ a recognition of his son Yury’s hereditary rights to the Vladimir-Suzdal throne, which at that time held the seniority in Rus’. L.V. Cherepnin considers this date critical in the history of Old Russian Statehood: there began the change from the system of princedoms headed by a given Prince at a given moment, to a centralised, hereditary Monarchy. The bearer of the seniority, the Great Prince of Rus’, became the true Autocrat of the whole of the Russian land”.37

Vsevolod’s rule, according to Kliuchevsky, “was in many respects the continuation of the external and internal activity of Andrew of Bogolyubo. Like

34 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 17-18. There was another link between Andrew and the Tsar-Martyr: in both murders Jews took part. Thus A.I. Solzhenitsyn writes: “There was at least one Jew among the confidants of Andrew Bogoliubsky in Vladimir. ‘Among those close to Andrew was a certain Ephraim Moizich, whose patronymic, Moizich or Moiseevich, points to his Jewish origin’, and he, in the words of the chronicler, was among the plotters by whom Andrew was killed. But there is also a record that under Andrew Bogoliubsky ‘there came from the Volga provinces many Bulgars and Jews and accepted baptism’, and after the murder of Andrew his son George fled to Dagestan to the Jewish prince” (Dvesti let vmesce (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 17.
37 Litavrin, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvietem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, pp. 177-178.
his elder brother, Vsevolod forced people to recognise him as Great Prince of the whole of the Russian land, and like him again, he did not go to Kiev to sit on the throne of his father and grandfather. He rules the south of Russia from the banks of the distant Klyazma. Vsevolod’s political pressure was felt in the most distant southwestern borders of the Russian land. The Galician Prince Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav Osmomys, who won back his father’s throne with Polish help, hastened to strengthen his position on it, under the protection of his distant uncle, Vsevolod of Suzdal. He sent him the message: ‘Father and Lord, keep Galicia under me, and I, who belong to you and God, will always remain in your will together with the whole of Galicia.’

However, on the death of Vsevolod in 1212 disturbances again broke out between the princes of Russia. Novgorod separated from Vladimir, and the brothers and nephews of the Great Prince held sway in different cities of the land of Vladimir-Suzdal. As a result, “because of our sins”, as the chronicler put it, “God sent upon us the pagans”, that is the Tatars… However, as Nicholas Riasanovsky points out, “the Mongol invasion and other wars and disasters of the time also contributed to the growth of princely authority, for they shattered the established economic and social order and left it to the prince to rebuild and reorganize devastated territory.” So the survival of autocracy was assured…

St. Alexander Nevsky

The fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the Roman Catholic crusaders was an acid test of the depth of the filial feelings of the other Orthodox kingdoms towards the leader of the Orthodox world, the New Rome of Constantinople, which now went into exile in Nicaea. The Serbs and Bulgarians passed the test, after a certain wavering between Rome and Constantinople, as did Georgia under St. Tamara. Russia, too, remained faithful – although the conquest of most of the Russian lands by the Mongols in the 1220s had at least this advantage: that it cut them off from the attentions of Romanist missionaries.

The only Russian principality not destroyed by the Mongols was Novgorod. This was because the Novgorodians’ ruler, Great-Prince Alexander Nevsky of Vladimir, decided to pay tribute to the Mongols in the East in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be their more dangerous enemies in the West - the papist Swedes and the quasi-monastic orders of the Teutonic Knights and the “Knights of God”. These orders played a critical part in the crusades in both the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and were answerable only to the Pope. Their wealth – and violence – was legendary. As the Knights said in 1309: “The sword is our pope”. But in 1240 St. Alexander defeated a Swedish army on the Neva. And on April 5, 1242, he crushed the “Knights of God” on the ice of Lake Chudov in present-day Estonia.

---

38 Kluchevsky, quoted in Solonevich, op. cit., p. 296.
Having failed with the stick, the Pope now tried the carrot. In 1248 he sent “the two cleverest” of his cardinals to Alexander, in order that he might “forsake the false way of corruption which leads to the damnation of eternal death… and recognise the Roman church as mother and obey its pope.” But Alexander refused, saying that Holy Tradition, the constant teaching of the Church from the beginning, had been passed down to the Orthodox alone.\(^{41}\) Then, in accordance with his principle: “Not in might, but in truth, is God”, he made the historic decision to submit to the Mongols, who might subdue the Russians politically but would not harm their Orthodox faith, rather than to the Pope, who would destroy both their statehood and their faith.

However, there was strong opposition to his policy. Thus one of his brothers, Andrew, having adopted the opposite course of standing up to the Tatars, was routed and had to flee to Catholic Sweden. And the other brother, Yaroslav, placed himself at the head of the anti-Alexander party in Novgorod, which led to an armed confrontation between the two sides in 1255. The tax imposed by the Tatars was very burdensome; and even in Vladimir-Suzdal there were uprisings. The Tatars responded harshly, forcing the Russians to fight in their armies… Alexander’s last major act was to journey to the Khan to plead for mercy… He died on his return home, exhausted by his efforts, having taken the schema as Monk Alexis. “My children,” said Metropolitan Cyril, know that the sun of the land of Suzdal has now set! For nevermore shall such a prince be found in the land…”

The Church had strongly supported Alexander not simply because it believed that it was necessary to give to Caesar (the Tatars) what was Caesar’s: there were also substantial benefits for the Church itself. For under the Tatars, as Fennell writes, “its lands and possessions were secure and the clergy was immune from taxation and conscription. Religious toleration had been Mongol policy ever since the time of Chinghis Khan, and the khans of the Golden Horde, whether pagan or Moslem, always showed consideration and even generosity to the churches in the lands under their sway,”\(^{42}\) considering that God would look favourably on them if they honoured His priests.

St. Peter of Moscow

A new phase in the history of Russia had begun in 1299, when Metropolitan Maximus of Kiev, whose title now included the phrase “of all Russia”, moved the seat of the Russian metropolitanate from the devastated ruins of Kiev in the South to Vladimir-Suzdal in the North. In this way the Church followed where the State, in the person of St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo, had led in the previous century. This indicated that the political leadership of Russia had to come from the north, from the area that we shall now call “Great Russia”, as opposed to “Little Russia” centred on

---


Kiev or “White Russia”, which was increasingly coming under the dominion of the pagan rulers of Lithuania.

On the death of Maximus, Grand-Prince Yury of Galicia petitioned Patriarch Athanasius I to consecrate a “metropolitan of Galicia”. This move was potentially very dangerous for the unity of the Russian lands. For once the Russian territories under Lithuanian rule had their own metropolitan, they might be tempted to break with Great Russia ecclesiastically as well as politically. And this in turn would certainly expose Little Russia to the danger of absorption into Roman Catholicism, which threatened from Poland and the Baltic German lands…

It appears that the patriarchate recognised its mistake, because when Maximus died and Grand Prince Yury put forward a Galician abbot, Peter, for the metropolitanate of Galicia, the patriarchate appointed him “metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia” instead, rejecting the candidate put forward by the great prince of Vladimir, Michael of Tver.

Beginning with St. Peter, the metropolitans firmly maintained their rights to rule over the whole of the Russian flock, having for this the support of the Tatars in the same way that the ecumenical patriarch would later have the support of the Turks. St. Peter moved the seat of Church government again, from Vladimir to Moscow – that is, to the town whose princes, more than any others, followed the “Alexandrian” pro-Tatar and anti-Catholic policy, and which was neither too far east to be under the shadow of the Tatars nor too far west to be under the shadow of the Lithuanians. And the Tatar Khan in a gramota of 1315 gave to the prince of Moscow the same privileges in the State that he had already given to the metropolitan in the Church.

St. Peter advised Great Prince Ivan I Danilovich to build a stone church dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, which became the first church of Russia. “If, my son, you obey me, and build the church of the Most Pure Mother of God, and give me rest in your city, God will bless you and make you higher than all the other princes, and will extend this city more than all other cities. And your race will possess this place to the ages”.45

---

43 That this was a real threat already in the fourteenth century, and even in some parts of Great Russia, is illustrated by an incident that took place in Novgorod, which was traditionally, because of its foreign merchant colony, less anti-Catholic than other parts of Great Russia. “On one occasion at the end of the fourteenth century, the city, in bargaining with the patriarch of Constantinople for privileges for its archbishop, threatened to go to Rome as a final argument. This threat was not serious and did not fail to elicit a severe rebuke from the patriarch, but, up to the time of the loss of their independence, the Novgorodians saw no objection against a political alliance with the Catholic kings of Lithuanian Poland” (G. Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind, Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 336).


In 1326 St. Peter moved his see to Moscow, and died in December of the same year. As he had prophesied, a process of political and economic centralisation around Moscow now began. The first step in this process consisted in the replacing of Tver by Moscow as the most favoured principality in the eyes of the Mongols.

**St. Alexis of Moscow**

Now the Mongols liked to appoint one of the Russian princes as their chief tax-collector for the Russian dominions. In exchange for providing the Horde with regular income, this prince was given the Great Princely title, was protected from Mongol raids and had the opportunity of making considerable gains for himself from the other tribute-paying princes. At the time of St. Peter’s death, the prince of Tver had the “yarlik” of tax-collector and Great Prince.

Almost immediately, however, in 1327, the citizens of Tver rose up against the khan and killed a high-level deputation from the Mongol capital of Sarai sent to oversee the collection of tribute. After some hesitation, the prince of Tver sided with the rebels – which gave Prince Ivan of Moscow his chance. He set off for Sarai and returned at the head of a Mongol-Russian force which devastated Tver. In reward for this service, the khan bestowed the title of Grand Prince on Ivan together with the responsibility of farming all the taxes due to the khan from the whole of Russia.

In 1345 Great-Prince Olgerd ascended the throne of Lithuania. He was a pagan; but, as Papadakis writes, he “would extend his domains over Russian territories from the Baltic to the Black seas, including the prestigious city of Kiev. His avowed goal was to free Russia from the Mongol rule and assume the legacy of the ancient Kievan princes. To reach that goal he was ready to embrace Orthodox Christianity, which was already the religion of his two successive wives (who were Russian princesses), of all his numerous children, and of the vast majority of his subjects.

“In the circumstances,” writes Aristides Papadakis, “the Church was actually holding the trump card: the real center of the country had to be the metropolitan’s residence, since that prelate controlled the only administrative structure covering Moscow, Novgorod, Kiev, Vilna (the Lithuanian capital) and distant Galicia. He was, in addition, a representative of Byzantium and a religious official respected by the Tatar khans.”

It was at about this time, in 1347, that three young Orthodox, Anthony, John and Eustathius, were martyred by Olgerd in Vilna for refusing to accept paganism. It then suddenly became clear to all those with eyes to see that the interests of Orthodoxy lay with Moscow rather than Lithuania. And at the same time the issue of the metropolitanate again became of political importance. In 1353, Metropolitan Theognostus of Kiev, a Greek had “personally arranged his succession in the person of a Russian, Alexis, whom he had consecrated as bishop of Vladimir (1352)...

---

1352 the Lithuanian grand-prince strongly demanded from the patriarchate that the seat of the metropolitanate be returned to Kiev, and even sent his candidate, Theodoret, to Constantinople for consecration. Facing a rebuke, he took the unusual step of having Theodoret ordained by the Bulgarian patriarch of Trnovo. Understandably, Theodoret was labelled a schismatic in Constantinople and in Moscow. Upon the death of Theognostus, political confusion in Constantinople – and strong political and financial pressures from both Moscow and Vilna – led to the almost simultaneous (1354-5) consecration, in the Byzantine capital, of two metropolitans: Alexis (the candidate nominated by Theognostus) and Roman, pushed forward by Olgerd. Both claimed the see of Kiev as Theodoret was abandoned by his sponsor, Olgerd…

“Metropolitan Alexis, an experienced, respected and able prelate (1354-70)\textsuperscript{47}, continued the policies of his predecessors Peter and Theognostus. His prestige at the Golden Horde was enhanced by a visit there, during which he healed the influential widow of khan Uzbek, Taidul, from her sickness (1357). His influence in Byzantium led to the unification of the metropolitanate, under his sole rule, following the death of Roman (1362).”\textsuperscript{48}

In 1369 Great Prince Demetrius Ivanovich of Moscow, having consolidated his position within Great Russia, sent an army against Lithuanian-controlled Smolensk and Briansk. “At the same time Metropolitan Alexis excommunicated from the Church those princes who had entered into union with the Lithuanian pagans against the Christian prince of Moscow.”\textsuperscript{49} Olgerd hit back by asking the Ecumenical Patriarch Philotheus to grant a second metropolitan for all the lands which he and his allies controlled. He was supported by a threat coming from King Casimir of Poland “forcibly to convert the Galicians to Roman Catholicism. Faced with an emergency situation, Philotheus reestablished a separate metropolitanate in Galicia (1371), and called on Alexis to exercise more even-handedness towards Olgerd and his Orthodox subjects. In 1375, he also consecrated a man of his immediate entourage, the learned Bulgarian monk Cyprian, as metropolitan in Lithuania. He made sure, however, that this consecration would not lead to a lasting division of the metropolitanate: Cyprian received the right to succeed Alexis. Upon his arrival in Kiev in 1376, he restored order and the prestige of the metropolitanate in territories controlled by Lithuania.”\textsuperscript{50}

At the same time, Great Prince Demetrius of Moscow was bringing Tver, which previously had been in the Lithuanian sphere of influence, in vassalage to himself, and Prince Sviatoslav of Smolensk broke with Olgerd and entered into union with Demetrius. With the change in political orientation in these lands, Metropolitan Alexis was able to appoint new bishops for Smolensk and Briansk. As Lithuania began to be threatened by the Catholic Teutonic knights from the Baltic, Prince

\textsuperscript{47} Sic. This should read: (1354-1378). (V.M.).
\textsuperscript{48} Papadakis, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 338-339.
\textsuperscript{49} Boris Floria, “Tochka raspada” (“The Point of Dissolution”), \textit{Rodina (Homeland)}, № 11, 2003, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{50} Papadakis, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 339.
Demetrius took the title “Great Prince of all Russia” when signing a treaty with Novgorod; and it looked as if the reunification of the Russian lands under Moscow was about to begin....

Then the Metropolitan of Lithuania Cyprian urged a union between Orthodox Muscovy and Lithuania against the Tatars. However, this policy was not favoured by the Muscovite Great-Prince; and so on the death of St. Alexis in 1378 he expelled Cyprian from Moscow, which led to a prolonged struggle to fill the vacant metropolitan’s throne.

**St. Sergius of Radonezh**

It was at this time that one of the greatest saints of this or any other age, Sergius of Radonezh, assumed the spiritual leadership of the Russian Church.

In 1380, a Tatar usurper, Mamai, invaded Muscovy. St. Sergius blessed the Great-Prince to fight only when all other measures had failed: “You, my lord prince, must care and strongly stand for your subjects, and lay down your life for them, and shed your blood in the image of Christ Himself, Who shed His blood for us. But first, O lord, go to them with righteousness and obedience, as you are bound to submit to the khan of the Horde in accordance with your position. You know, Basil the Great tried to assuage the impious Julian with gifts, and the Lord looked on Basil’s humility and overthrew the impious Julian. And the Scripture teaches us that such enemies want glory and honour from us, we give it to them; and if they want silver and gold, we give it to them; but for the name of Christ, the Orthodox faith, we must lay down our lives and shed our blood. And you, lord, give them honour, and gold, and sliver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride.”

“I have already done that,” replied the Great Prince: “but my enemy is exalted still more.”

“If so,” said the God-pleaser, “then final destruction awaits him, while you, Great Prince, can expect help, mercy and glory from the Lord. Let us hope on the Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God, that They will not abandon you”.51

And he added: “You will conquer your enemies.”52

Fortified by the blessing of the saint, Great-Prince Demetrius defeated the enemy at the great battle of Kulikovo Polje, at which over 100,000 Russian warriors gave their lives for the Orthodox faith and their Russian homeland. Some have seen in

---

51 Archimandrite Nikon, Zhitiie i Pobedy Prepodobnago i Bogonosnago Otsa Nashego Sergia, Igumena Radonezhskago (The Life and Victories of our Holy and God-bearing Father Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh), Sergiev Posad, 1898, p. 149.
this, the first victory of the Russians over the Tatars, a sign that the Russians had changed the policy of submission to the Tartars that they had inherited from St. Alexander Nevsky, and that St. Sergius actively blessed a policy of rebellion against those whom previous princes and metropolitans had seen as their lawful sovereigns. However, as we have seen, the saint advised submission in the first place, and war only if the Tatar could not be bought off. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that Mamai was himself a rebel against the Horde, so that in resisting him the Russians were in no way rebelling against their lawful sovereigns. In any case, two years later the lawful khan came and sacked Moscow; so there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy. It was not until a century later, in 1480, that the Muscovites refused to pay any further tribute to the khans. The real significance of Kulikovo Polje lies in the fact that a union of princes had defeated an external foe under the leadership of the Orthodox Church, thereby holding out the promise that the spiritual unity of the Russian lands, which had never been lost, could be complemented by that political unity which had been lost two hundred years before.

As it turned out, in spite of the pan-Russian vision of such leaders as Metropolitan Cyprian and St. Sergius, political union with Lithuania was not achieved: although, in 1383, the Lithuanian Great Prince Jagiello signed a treaty with Moscow and agreed to convert to Orthodoxy, he quickly changed his mind and instead, in 1386, converted to Catholicism, which led to the union of Lithuania with Catholic Poland and the increasing identification of Russian Orthodox statehood with Muscovite Great Russia alone. Nevertheless, although only Great Russia remained faithful to the ecumenical vision of Orthodoxy, that vision, drawing strength from the Palamite renewal of monasticism taking place in Constantinople and the Balkan lands, helped produce that flowering of monasticism, iconography and missionary activity that makes the Age of St. Sergius such a glorious one in the annals of Russian history. The northern forests were covered with new monasteries founded by the disciples of St. Sergius (over 100 of whom were canonized). And icon-painters such as Andrei Rublev glorified the newly-built churches with their wonderful works.

Moreover, it was in this time that important steps were taken towards the unification of Great Russia. Under the influence of St. Sergius, Great-Prince Demetrius ordered his children to observe a new order of inheritance, whereby his eldest son was to inherit the Great Principedom, not allowing any quarrels or claims from the other children. Once again, St. Sergius was entrusted with guarding this most important decree, which served to strengthen the institution of one-man, autocratic rule in Russia.53

For, as St. John Maximovich writes, “under Demetrius Ivanович the significance of the Great Prince grew mightily. The most powerful appanages of the Great Prince – Tver and Ryazan – were forced to conclude agreements with him in which they recognised themselves to be his younger brothers... Basil Demetrievich continued the work of his father. He joined some appanages to Moscow, and with the remaining

53 Archimandrite Nikon, op. cit., p. 169.
appanage princes he concluded agreements to the effect that they had to submit to him and not seek the Great Princedom".54

The Russians’ defeat of the Mongols at Kulikovo Polje in 1380 and the Serbs’ defeat by the Ottomans at Kosovo Polje in 1389, represent the opposite poles of Orthodox fortunes in the Middle Ages. The first marked the beginning of the rise of the last of the Orthodox autocracies, while the second marked the beginning of the end of Orthodox autocracy in its original Mediterranean homeland.

54 St. John Maximovich, op. cit., p. 12.
2. MOSCOW: THE THIRD ROME

The idea that the Orthodox Empire could be translated, after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, to the forests of the Russian 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."\(^{55}\)

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.) Only the Russians could be that “third God-chosen people” of the Byzantine prophecy.\(^{56}\) 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

---


\(^{56}\) An 8\(^{th}\) or 9\(^{th}\) century Greek prophecy found in St. Sabbas’ monastery in Jerusalem says: “The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State. Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks.” (Archbishop Seraphim, “Sud’by Rossii” (“The Destinies of Russia”), *Pravoslavniy Vestnik (Orthodox Messenger)*, № 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7 (in Russian). Translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996)
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”\(^{57}\), 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.\(^{58}\)

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.\(^{59}\)

This voluntary self-limitation and national humility on the part of the princes and people brought many blessings to Russia. First and foremost, it implanted Orthodoxy in all its purity into the hearts of the people with no admixture of heterodoxy.\(^{60}\) Secondly, the fact that the metropolitan of the Russian Church was appointed by Constantinople gave him the ability to arbitrate in the frequent


\(^{60}\) 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 channelled through the Church, i.e., liturgical, hagiographic, canonical, and some historical materials.”
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”.  

But that promise was not kept (for very understandable reasons, as we shall see), and so, while the break was inevitable, it the cause of a gradual alienation of Russia from the Byzantine traditions that had formed her.

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 equivalent of the Greek Basileus). The title had been floated already before the fall of 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

61 Boyeikov, Tserkov', Rus' i Rim (The Church, Rus’ and Rome), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983.
62 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.
63 “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).
64 Simeon of Suzdal, in Fomin, S. & Fomina, T., Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, p. 242.
65 Meyendorff, “Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?”, Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, op. cit., p. 108.
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 and 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. In 1492 Metropolitan Zosimus of Moscow wrote: “The Emperor Constantine built a New Rome, Tsarigrad; but the sovereign and autocrat (samoderzhets) of All the Russias, Ivan Vassilievitch, the new Constantine, has laid the foundation for a new city of Constantine, Moscow.”

In 1498 Ivan was 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 Basil 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, 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…”

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

---

67 Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 44.  
69 Runciman, op. cit, pp. 323-324.  
70 Philotheus, Letter against the Astronomers and the Latins.
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 Mammee 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.71 The Greeks argued that, now that the union 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!

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 white cowl (klobuk; Gr. ἐπικαλλιμαυκον) was donated by Constantine the Great to pope Sylvester following

71 Meyendorff, “Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?”, op. cit., p. 109.
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 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 they 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”… The second task was the gathering of the Russian lands into a national kingdom uniting all the Russians, which involved at least three major stages: (i) the uniting of the free Russian princedoms 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 and third aims, that of the gathering of the Russian lands was finally accomplished in 1915, when Tsar Nicholas II reconquered Galicia from the Catholic Austrians...

The final 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...

---

3. THE HERESY OF THE JUDAIZERS

The greatest internal threat to the Muscovite kingdom in the medieval period was the heresy of the Judaizers.

In the wake of persecution by Emperor Romanus I, large groups of Jews who refused to become Christian emigrated beyond the bounds of the empire to the north of the Black Sea. This region was ruled at the time by a Turkic tribe, the Khazars, who had converted to Judaism, thus becoming “the thirteenth tribe” of Israel.74

“The first Russo-Jewish contact,” writes A.I. Solzhenitsyn, “could be considered to be the war between Kievan Rus’ and the Khazars [in the time of St. Vladimir’s father, Sviatoslav] – but this is not quite accurate, for only the elite of the Khazars were of Jewish blood, and they themselves were Turks who had accepted the Jewish confession of faith.

“If we follow the exposition of the solid Jewish author of the middle of our century, Yu. D. Brutskus, a part of the Jews from Persia moved to the lower Volga across the Derbent passage. There, in about 724 A.D., there grew the city of Itil, the capital of the Khazar kaganate. The leaders of the Turco-Khazar tribes (at that time still idol-worshippers) did not want Mohammedanism, so as not to submit to the Baghdad caliph, nor Christianity, so as to avoid the suzerainty of the Byzantine emperor; and so in about 732 they converted to the Jewish religion. There was a Jewish colony in the Bosporian kingdom (Crimea, the Taman peninsula), where the emperor Hadrian had resettled some Jewish captives in 137, after the crushing of Bar-Kochba. Later the Jewish population in the Crimea held out stubbornly both under the Goths and under the Huns, and Kafa (Kerch) especially remained Jewish. In 933 Prince Igor [of Kiev] took Kerch for a time, while Sviatoslav Igorevich conquered the mouth of the Don from the Khazars. In 969 the Rossi were already in control of the whole of the Volga, with Itil, and Russian ships had appeared at Semender (the Derbent coast). The remains of the Khazars were the Kumiks in the

---

74 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. Friedman (The Truth about the Khazars, Los Angeles, 1954).

However, it should be pointed out that recent genetic research by Michael Hammer on the male Y chromosome has proved that modern Jews are truly Semitic, being related to the Arabs and descended, with them, from one man. As Jonathan Sarfati writes, Koestler’s “theory presupposes lots of gentiles assimilating into Jewish society, the exact opposite of what normally happens where Jew/Gentile intermarriage occurs. In reality only a tiny number of Khazars converted to Judaism, while far more converted to Islam and also some to Russian Orthodoxy. The Khazar converts to Judaism had disappeared by the 14th century, largely by being incorporated into already existing Jewish communities in Poland. There is also a problem of what happened to the real Jews who are supposed to have mass-evangelised the Khazars, then disappeared without trace out of history… The studies by Hammer et al. shows that the Ashkenazi Jews really are the same people group as the other [Sephardic] Jews, and that there is a common ancestry for the Cohanim from Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, so [these] are the last nails in the coffin for Koestler’s idea.” (“Genesis correctly predicts Y Chromosome pattern”, http://creation.com/genesis-correctly-predicts-y-chromosome-pattern)
Caucasus, while in the Crimea they together with the Polovtsians constituted the Crimean Tatars. (However, the Karaites and the Jews of the Crimea did not convert to Mohammedanism.) The Khazars were finished off by Tamerlane…”

In 965-969 Russian pagan armies under Great Prince Syatoslav destroyed the Khazar capital at Itil. 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…

So the first independent Jewish kingdom since the fall of Jerusalem was crushed by the Russians just before their conversion to Christianity… Consequently, “the Jews migrated in some numbers in a westerly and north-westerly direction through the southern Russian space. Thus the expert on the East and the Semites, Avrakham Garkavi, writes that the Jewish community in the future Russia ‘was formed by Jews who had migrated from the shores of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, where their forefathers had lived after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.’ Yu. D. Brutskus is sympathetic to this view. (There is also an opinion that these were the remnants of the ten ‘lost’ tribes of Israel.) This move may have come to an end after the fall of Tmutarakan to the Polovtsians in 1097. In the opinion of Garkavi, the conversational language of these Jews, at least from the 9th century, was Slavonic, and only in the 17th century, when the Ukrainian Jews fled from the pogroms of Khmelnytsky into Poland, did their language become Yiddish, which the Jews in Poland spoke…

“Thus at the end of the 10th century, by the time of Vladimir’s choice of a new faith for the Rossi, there was no lack of Jews in Kiev, and learned men were found among them who proposed the Jewish faith. But the choice took place in a different way from in Khazaria 250 years before. Karamzin retells the story as follows: ‘Having heard out the Jews, [Vladimir] asked: where was their fatherland? “In Jerusalem,” replied the preachers, “but God in His anger scattered us in foreign lands.” “And how do you, being punished by God, dare to teach others?” said Vladimir. “We do not want to be like you, and be deprived of our fatherland.”’

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 Kievnans “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

---

77 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 14, 15.
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 Oleg 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.”

The most important of these was the heresy of the Judaizers, when "the whole Russian Church," as General A. Nechvolodov writes, "had at her head a Judaizer, and the immediate entourage of the sovereign... were also Judaizers."

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 Trnovo, 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. 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 Chufu-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.

"... 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

---

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. (V.M.)
deceived to renounce their Mother-Church, blaspheme against the holy icons 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.

"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."83

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

82 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.)
83 Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' (The Russian Orthodox Church), Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 25-26.
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, 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

84 “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.).
for 70 years into the 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. 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 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

85 “If this second Judas is not rooted out,” he wrote, “little by little the apostasy will encompass everybody”. (V.M.)
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

86 Others fled to Lithuania, “where they formally accepted Judaism”.
88 “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 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 envisaged 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.
Judaizing heresy represented a most serious threat to both the Church and the State of Moscow.

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 no 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.

“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. The Judaizers were enemies both of the Faith and the State of Russia, and their triumph would have led to the extinction of Russian Orthodox civilization. In this way, they were forerunners of that other Jewish-led movement which did lead to the virtual extinction of Russia – Bolshevism…

4. 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 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. 90 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”.91

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

---

90 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 (Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 50). (V.M.)
91 St. Joseph, Prosvetitel’ (The Enlightener), Word 16.
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 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

---

92 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). (V.M.)

93 Zyzykin, Patriarkh Nikon (Patriarch Nicon), Warsaw, 1931, part I, pp. 153-154. 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 Istorii Russkoj Sviatosti (Sketches on the History of Russian Sanctity), Brussels, 1961, p. 204).
his flock is not a pastor, but a wolf.” 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 Sir Steven 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 sterner 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, 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

---

94 St. Joseph, Prosvetitel’ (The Enlightener), Word 16.
96 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 151.
heretics. They failed in their aim97; 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
dwell on the faults inherent in the bearers of royal power which caused misfortunes
to the State.”98

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.”99

97 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, Arsenious Komelsky and Diodore Yuriegorsky
barely escaped violent death.” (Russian Mystics, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, p. 54)
98 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 158.
5. IVAN THE TERRIBLE: SAINT OR SINNER?

In the Moscow Patriarchate today there is a movement to canonize Tsar Ivan the Terrible. Many are puzzled and alarmed by this complete reversal of the generally accepted picture of the famous tsar. Let us look at some of the relevant facts.

**Early Years**

The circumstances of Ivan’s birth were not auspicious. His father, Great Prince Basil III, put away his lawful wife Solomonia because of her barrenness, and with the blessing of Metropolitan Daniel of Moscow (whose predecessor, Barlaam, had been unlawfully removed from his see) married Helen Glinskaya. (Solomonia was forcibly tonsured in Suzdal and was later canonised under her monastic name of Sophia.)

The famous monk St. Maximus the Greek 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.”

Also, 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”...

Ivan’s childhood was very troubled. As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, he “was only three years old in 1533 when his father, Basil III, died, leaving the government of Russia to his wife... and the boyar duma. The new regent acted in a haughty and arbitrary manner, disregarding the boyars and relying first on her uncle, the experienced Prince Michael Glinsky, and after his death on her lover, the youthful Prince Telepnev-Obolensky. In 1538 she died suddenly, possibly of poison. Boyar rule – if this phrase can be used to characterize the strife and misrule which ensued – followed her demise...

“All evidence suggests that Ivan IV was a sensitive, intelligent, and precocious boy. He learned to read early and read everything that he could find, especially Muscovite Church literature. He became of necessity painfully aware of the struggle and intrigues around him and also of the ambivalence of his own position. The same

---

100 “Our Father among the Saints Maxim the Greek”, *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, № 1, January-February, 1991, p. 11.
boyars who formally paid obeisance to him as autocrat and treated him with utmost respect on ceremonial occasions, neglected, insulted, and injured him in private life. In fact, they deprived him at will of his favourite servants and companions and ran the palace, as well as Russia, as they pleased. Bitterness and cruelty, expressed, for instance, in his torture of animals, became fundamental traits of the young ruler’s character.\textsuperscript{102}

In the opinion of some, Ivan’s later cruelties can be explained, at least in part, by mental illness induced by the extreme insecurity of his upbringing...

\textit{The Orthodox Tsar}

On January 16, 1547 Ivan 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 Catholic 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”.

“Ivan the Terrible also presented to the [Stoglav] Church council his new legal code, the Sudebnik of 1550, and the local government reform, and received its approval. Both measures became law. The institution of a novel scheme of local

\textsuperscript{102} Riasanovsky, \textit{A History of Russia}, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 143-144, 145.
government deserves special attention as one of the more daring attempts in Russian history to resolve this perennially difficult problem. The new system aimed at the elimination of corruption and oppression on the part of centrally appointed officials by means of popular participation in local affairs. Various localities had already received permission to elect their own judicial authorities to deal, drastically if need be, with crime. Now, in areas whose population guaranteed a certain amount of dues to the treasury, other locally elected officials replaced the centrally appointed governors. And even where the governors remained, the people could elect assessors to check closely on their activities and, indeed, impeach them when necessary…”

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.” In retrospect, we can see that the nationalist attitude of the Stoglav council laid the foundations of the Old Ritualist schism in the next century…

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 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. Their 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…”

103 Riasanovsky, op. cit., p. 146.
105 Metropolitan Macarius, Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi (A History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 1996, vol. 4, part 2, pp. 91, 93.
All this went with an ideology worked out, in part, by the tsar himself\textsuperscript{106}, 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 chapter 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’\textsuperscript{107}. 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.”\textsuperscript{108}

“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,

\textsuperscript{106} For more details of Ivan’s ideology, see M.V. Zyzykin, \textit{Tsarskaia Vlasi} (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; \texttt{http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm}, pp. 17-96.

\textsuperscript{107} 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.)

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 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, or “Land Councils”. This was also the decade of his great victories over the Tatars of Kazan and Astrakhan, 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 Trans-Volgan 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...” \( ^{110} \)

**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 \( ^{111} \) - by the boyars. Now Ivan turned vengefully against the boyars...

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”, \( ^{112} \) 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 in Ivan’s Sudebnik, “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’. \( ^{113} \)

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

---

\( ^{110} \) Khrapovitsky, in Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), Zhizneopisanie Blazhennейшаго Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), New York, 1971, volume 1, pp. 14-15.

\( ^{111} \) 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.

\( ^{112} \) Pokrovsky, quoted in Solonevich, Narodnaiа Monarkhia (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 331.

\( ^{113} \) Solonevich, op. cit., p. 340.
militarization 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 clergy. 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

---

114 Lourié, op. cit., p. 232.
115 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 392.
116 Ivan IV, Sochinenia (Works), St. Petersburg: Azbuka, 2000, p. 49.
they worked. For in the century 1550-1650, the tsars gradually enserfed them in order to prevent them from simply disappearing into the woods or fleeing to the steppes in the south. 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 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 votschina, 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 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 multi-mutinous 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 [nobles] 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

---

117 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).

118 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 40.
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 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 reveals a list of thousands of names of those executed by Ivan, mainly in the period 1567-1570, that the tsar sent to the monasteries for commemoration. “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.”119

119 Skrynnikov, Tsarstvo Terrora (The Kingdom of Terror), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 17, 104.
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 employed, show that this was not justified repression against a rebellion, but the manifestation of demonic psychopathology. In this way, it is argued, 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 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.

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 votchiny – that is, they were not hereditary possessions and remained the legal property of the tsar, and could be taken back by him if he was dissatisfied with the servitors.

Ivan justified his cruelties against the boyars 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 begged him to return.

120 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.
Although the tsar failed to justify his excessive cruelty, he was not completely wrong in his estimate of the people’s attitudes. For, in their understanding, Tsar Ivan may have been an evil man, but he was still a true authority. The fact that they 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 were doing God’s will, 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.”

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.

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…”

St. Philip of Moscow

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…

As a young man he was deeply struck on hearing the words of the Saviour: “No man can serve two masters”, and resolved to 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

126 van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 153.
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?…”

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...

---

128 Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.
Bishop Dionysius’ Thesis

If Tsar Ivan had died in 1560, before the period of his terrible cruelties, he may well have gone down in history as one of the greatest of the Orthodox kings. His tragedy was that he lived so long…

Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) has written: “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 Orthodox 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 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 zemschina 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 degradations 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, Vlochek) 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
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, hieromons, 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…” 129

Conclusion

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.” 130

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. 131 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 Byzantines] 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.”

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 cruelties 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 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 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. Although he showed great skill in defending Orthodoxy before emissaries from the Vatican, 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. 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.”

---

132 Kireevsky, “Pis’mo k A.I. Koshelevu” (“Letter to A.I. Koshelev”), Razum na puti k istine (Reason on the Way to Truth), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 107.
133 Lebedev has even suggested 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 (op. cit., p. 97).
134 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 90.
6. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

“After the horrors of the reign of Ivan IV,” writes Archpriest Lev 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.”135

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.136 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 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

---

135 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 105.
136 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).
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 Ioseliani 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 Tsar 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 Tsar 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…” 139

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. 140 Then he went 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 see still more timely. In 1596 the Orthodox hierarchs in the region had signed the union of Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholics. 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

---

139 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

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 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

---

141 M.V. Zzyzkin, Patriarkh Nikon, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, 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.”

142 Appendix to Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984, p. 379.
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.
7. THE TIME OF TROUBLES

Tsar Theodore died in 1598. He left no children, and there was no member of the family of Riurik to take his place on the throne. Therefore the election rested on Boris Godunov, who had been the tsar’s protector and aided him to ascend the throne. 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. 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 Riurik 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.”

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.” 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....”

---

144 Quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Russkaia Ideologia (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg: Suvorina, 1992, p. 64.
145 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 ‘multi-mutinous’ 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 Ivan 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

---

146 St. John Maximovich, Proiskhozhdenie Zakona o Prestolonasledii v Rossii (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia); in “Nasledstvennost’ ili Vybor?” (“Hereditariness or Elections?”), Svecha Pokayania (Candle of Repentance), No. 4, February, 2000, p. 12.

147 Solonevich, Narodnaia Monarkhia (The People’s Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 81.

148 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 Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Velikorossia, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 114).
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 was the Providence of God,” writes 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 Gostinodvordsky 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 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...

149 Solonevich, op. cit., p. 82.
151 According to Archpriest 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 (op. cit., p. 112).
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 unia 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 mean 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 thiefflet’. 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 Zholevsky went up to Moscow. The boyars who were not contented with Shuisky removed him from the throne (forced him to abdicate) in July, 1610.153 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 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

153 The Zemsky Sobor of 1613 called this act “a common sin of the land, committed out of the envy of the devil”. (Fomin S. & Fomina T., Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem (Russian before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1998, vol. I, p. 255). (V.M.)
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 Sir 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.”

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…”

154 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 118-121.
“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 Archpriest 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 martyrlic 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

156 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 121-123.
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…” 158

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 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 Zemsky 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.” 159

158 The Life of St. Irinarchus, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
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...”

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?”

“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

160 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia, op. cit., pp. 63, 64.
161 Arsène de Goulévitch, Czarism and Revolution, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 34.
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 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...”

And so, with the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar, Muscovy was re-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 Zemsky Sobor in 1613.

---

162 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
8. THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE

In the Zemsky Sobor of 1613 the Russian people elected a hereditary dynasty, that of the Romanovs, and specifically bound themselves by a fearsome oath to be loyal to that dynasty forever. However, the word “election” should not make us think that this was 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 Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: “Tsars are not elected! And a Council, even a Zemsky 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.”

Again, as Ivan 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

163 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 126.
164 Solonevich, Narodnaia Monarkhia (The People’s Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, pp. 82-83.
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 Tsar 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 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 Nikitich. 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

167 Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 84, 85.
of the country as a whole. “Western thought,” writes Solonevich, “sways from the dictatorships 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’.”¹⁶⁹

“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.”¹⁷⁰

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

¹⁶⁹ Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 85-86.
¹⁷⁰ Solonevich, op. cit., p. 86.
cards... An ace is an ace. No election, no merit, and consequently no quarrel. Power passes without quarrel and pain: the king is dead, long live the king!"171

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.”172 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.”173 This being the case, it was only natural that the law of succession in Orthodox countries 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 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

171 Solonevich, op. cit., p. 87.
173 Brianchaninov, Pis’ma (Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781.
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 chances of such ‘chance’ events occurring 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.”

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.

9. TSAR, PATRIARCH AND PEOPLE IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

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!” And 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 Zemsky 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 A.P. Dobroklnsky 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

177 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow, 1995, p. 20.
178 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), op. cit., p. 20.
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 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 he 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 baptized first in the Orthodox Church, and that in general all Catholics and uniates joining the Orthodox Church, and all Orthodox who had been baptized incorrectly, without full immersion, should be baptized. For, as Patriarch Philaret said (probably unjustly): ‘The Latin-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.”

180 Quoted in Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, 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, namesniki 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 L.A. 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 Zemsky 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 brought before 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.”

---

181 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), op. cit., pp. 270-271, 272.
182 Archbishop Andronicus, O Tserkvi Rossii (On the Church of Russia), Fryazino, 1997, pp. 132-133.
10. THE SCHISM OF THE OLD RITUALISTS

By the middle of the seventeenth century the prestige of the Muscovite monarchy had reached its height. Even the Greeks were looking to it to deliver them from the Turkish yoke. 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. 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.”

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.”

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. From the left came the attack 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.

The Liturgical Reforms

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.185

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), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 136). This attitude may have been influenced by a debate that took place in 1650 between Greek and Russian hierarchs: “It was in Tirgoviste between April 24 and June 6, 1650 that Arsenij participated in four public debates with the Greek clergy. The Greek side included Patriarch Paisios (of Jerusalem), several local Greek Metropolitans etc...Arseniy alone represented the Russian side. The heated discussions revolved around divergences in Muscovite and Greek usage, and Arsenij's condemnation of Greek Orthodoxy as a whole. He later recorded the Debate with the Greeks in a rather tendentious report to to the Moscow authorities...He accuses the Greeks of baptising without full immersion, for praying with heretics (Armenians, Romans and Franks) and giving them Antidoron together with the Orthodox faith, and being educated by the Latins...” (Vassa Larin, "The Byzantine Hierarchal Divine Liturgy in Arsenij Sukhanov's Proskinitarj", Rome, 2010, Orientalia Christiana Analecta No. 286, p. 48-9. Information provided by Bishop Ambrose of Methone).
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.

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. “Not immediately,” writes Archpriest Lev 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, [Nicon] 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\(^{186}\) and the age-old practice of the Orthodox East.\(^{187}\) A series of other Church

\(^{186}\) 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, op. cit., p. 70). (V.M.)

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
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.188 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.189 This gave the Church historian Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) a basis on which to assert, with justice, that ‘if Nicon had not

---

187 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 in first millenium Europe”, ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU (Orthodox Christianity), 11/10/1999) (V.M.)

188 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 wellversed 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).

189 In this tolerance Nicon followed the advice of Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople. (V.M.)
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 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 Ritualists’ 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, especially 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...

190 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow: “Veche”, 1995, pp. 36-37.
191 See Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), Zhizneopisanie Blazhennmshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskskago i Galitskago (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, p. 161. 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 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)
“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 ‘Nestorianism’. By branding his opponents as heretics, Nikon was making schism inevitable.”

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 hardening of the schism. 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 yedinoverie 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 (Khраповитский), 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.”

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).

193 Meyendorff, op. cit., pp. 61, 62.
194 Rklitsky, op. cit., p. 162.
195 Rklitsky, op. cit., p. 175.
“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.

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

---

196 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia, op. cit., p. 37.
197 Pokrovsky, Puteshestvija 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”. 
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 Judaizing 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 apostasized 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 rebellion. But the wolf Nicon along with the devil introduced the tradition that one had to cross oneself with three fingers…”

It was this attempt to force the Russian Church into schism from the Greeks, and not their opposition to the liturgical reforms that was the real sin of the Old

---

Ritualists and made them into what was in effect the first nationalist schism in Russian history.

**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 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 (and 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...”

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”.

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 pan-national 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 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 [Ministry for Monasteries] established in Moscow in accordance with the Ulozhenie [Law Code] 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

202 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia, op. cit., p. 87.
suits. He considered this situation radically unecclesiastical 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”. Another bone of 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.

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

---

204 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaia, op. cit., pp. 88-89.
205 Fomin S. & Fomina T., Rossiia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, volume I, p. 281.
Sardica and the words of the Gospel: “If they persecute you in one city, depart to another, shaking off the dust from your feet”. 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.”

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’.”

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, 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.

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 Dormition cathedral in the

---

207 “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.”


210 Lebedev, Moskov Patriarshaia, op. cit., p. 141.

Moscow Kremlin 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 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.

---

212 Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., volume I, pp. 24-25.
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 not on his own condemn a bishop, when earlier even complaints against prominent protopriests were reviewed by him at a Council of the clergy.”

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

215 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 monastyrja, 1997, p. 71).
216 A.P. Dobroklonsky, Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 290; S.G. Burgaft and I.A. Ushakov, Staroobriadchestvo (Old Ritualism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 206-207. 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.
217 Lebedev, Moskva Patriarshaja, op. cit., p. 100.
not Paisius Ligarides who undermined Alexis Mikhailovich: it was the ecumenical patriarchs who deliberately decided the matter in favour of the tsar.\footnote{Lebedev, \textit{Moskva Patriarshaia}, op. cit., p. 132.}

However, opposition was voiced by Metropolitans Paul of Krutitsa and Hilarion of Ryazan, who feared “that the Patriarchal Replies would put the hierarchs under 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.\footnote{Dobroklonsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 350.}

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).”\footnote{Zyzykin, \textit{op. cit.}, part III, pp. 274, 275.}

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 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...\footnote{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, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 193.).}

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 Prince Vladimir and continuing with Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich 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 Mikhailovich sincerely believed this is clear from his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: “The most important task of the Orthodox Tsar is care for the

---

223 Lebedev, “Razmyshlenia vozle sten novogo Ierusalima” (“ Thoughts next to the Walls of New Jerusalem”), Vozvrashchenie (Return), №№ 12-13, 1999, p. 60.
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 symphony 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 Mikhailovich. As Fr. 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’”.224

**Patriarch Nicon on Church-State Relations**

“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.”225

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).226 “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 firmly 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.”227

---

227 Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 16.
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.”230 “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.”231

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 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.”232

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.”233 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

228 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 41.
229 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 91.
230 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 86.
231 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 17.
232 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 30, 32.
233 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 shouldst not be king over Israel’ (I Kings 15.26)” (op. cit., part II, p. 17).
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 papocaesarism of a Pope Gregory VII, who claimed to be able to depose kings precisely “as kings”. And yet he received a reputation for papocaesarism (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 latter metaphor had been used by Pope Innocent III; but 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.”  

---

234 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 55
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 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),…

238 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 63-64.
[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).”

For “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

---

239 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, pp. 24-25, 28.
240 Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 27.
242 Quoted in Hackel, op. cit., p. 9.
244 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.
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 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

---

245 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 165.
246 Rusak, op. cit., p. 194.
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 continue to deteriorate was the stubborn fanaticism of the Old Ritualists and their turning a Church quarrel into a rebellion against the State.

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 the 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…”

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”. 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.”

---

248 Zenkovsky, op. cit., p. 89.
249 Zenkovsky, op. cit., p. 92.
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 Miloslavskiaia. 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 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…”[251]

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...

[251 Lebedev, Velikorossia, pp. 154-156.]
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 reforms. And yet the parallel here, paradoxically, is with the Protestants, who similarly believed that true Christianity ended when State and Church came to work together 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 apostasized, but in the common people.

And so, 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. Georges 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 raskolouchitelei [‘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

---

252 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...

253 Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov characterised the difference between the Popovtsi (with priests) and Bespopovtsi (without priests) Old Ritualists 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).

‘Nikon’ Church had become a den of thieves. Such a mood became universal in the Schism: ‘the censer is useless; the offering abominable’.

“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 Kliuchevskii’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…”

---

256 Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
11. THE "STATE HERESY" OF PETER THE GREAT

The transition from the kingdom of Muscovy to the Empire of Russia whose capital was St. Petersburg was largely the work of one man – Peter the Great. Peter transformed Russia profoundly and in many ways. Perhaps the profoundest and most damaging was his destruction of the “symphonic” structure of Church-State relations and its replacement by an absolutist system on the western model.

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 eves 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 Rozhintsev 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.’”

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…”

However, this boldness evaporated when the domineering personality of Peter the Great came to full power in the kingdom. Thus M.V. Zyzykin writes: “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 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, Hobbesian 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 the Slavophile 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 despotic government all the servants of the power are autocrats, thereby forcibly limiting the autocracy of the highest guardian of the law by their own lawlessness.”

Peter and the West

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 Fr. Alexis 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

---

261 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. 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 Bozhie i tsarstvo kesaria” (“The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar”), Put’ (The Way), September, 1925, pp. 39-40)
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 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.”

In August, 1698 Peter returned from his first trip abroad, and his westernizing reforms began immediately. It was decreed that all beards should be removed by New Year, 1699. There followed a struggle against the traditional form of Russian dress and its replacement by western fashions.

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 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

---

262 Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 103.
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 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 Wil van den Bercken

\[263 \text{“The Life of our Father among the Saints Metrophanes, Bishop of Voronezh”, } \text{Living Orthodoxy, vol. XII, No 6, November-December, 1990, p. 16.}\]

\[264 \text{“Under Peter I a beginning was laid to that serfdom which for a long time became the shame and } \text{illness of Russia. Before Peter from time immemorial not only state peasants, but also those of the } \text{landowners were not deprived of rights, they were under the protection of the laws, that is, they } \text{could never be serfs or slaves, the property of their lords! We have already seen that there were } \text{measures to limit and, finally, to ban the free departure of peasants, or their transfer from one lord to another. And there were measures to tie the Russian peasants to the land (but not to the lords!) with the aim of preserving the cultivation of the land in the central lands of Great Russia, keeping in them the cultivators themselves, the peasants that were capable of working. But Russian landowners always had bond-slaves, people who had fallen into complete dependence on the lords, mortgaging themselves for debts, or runaways, or others who were hiding from persecution. Gradually (not immediately) the landowners began to provide these bond-slaves, too, with their own (not common) land, forcing them to work on it to increase the lords’ profits, which at that time consisted mainly in the products of the cultivation of the land. Peter I, in introducing a new form of taxation, a poll-tax (on the person), and not on the plot of land and not on the ‘yard’ composed of several families, as had been the case before him, also taxed the bond-slaves with this poll-tax, thereby putting them in the same rank as the peasants. From that time the lords gradually began to look on their free peasants, too, as bond-slaves, that is, as their own property. Soon, under Catherine II, this was already legalised, so that the Empress called the peasants ‘slaves’, which had never been the case in Russia!” (Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 173-174).} \]
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’…

“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

---

266 Priest Timothy and Hieromonk Dionysius Alferov, *O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Times)*, Moscow: “Russkaia Idea”, 1998, p. 66.
much good and of being a great blessing to mankind, and in some sort a god on earth”. 267

Peter certainly came to believe a similar teaching concerning his role as tsar. “By God’s dispensation,” he said, “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.” 268 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 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. Demetrios 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.” 269

The Church lost not only her economic independence, but also her right 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 dodderly 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

268 It had not always been so, however. 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).
269 Fomin S. & Fomina T. Rossia pered Vtorym Prishhestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, volume I, p. 290.
deprive the traditional centres of book-learning and scholarship of their significance. 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.”

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”. 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 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 policemen. Now “a ‘police state’, ” writes Florovskiy, “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. Through its own paternalist inspiration, the ‘police state’ inescapably turns against the church. It also usurps the church’s proper

271 “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. Dobroljonsky, Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi (Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 717).
function and confers them upon itself. It takes on the undivided care for the people’s religious and spiritual welfare.”

**Peter and His Family**

Before Peter could complete his reforms, he had to crush the opposition to them. This meant, in the first place, his son Alexis. For the Tsarevich, whose mother Peter had cast away in favour of the German Anna Mons and then the Balt Catherine, represented a focus around which all those who hoped for a restoration of the old traditions gathered. So in killing him Peter was declaring that there was no going back. In 1918, the Bolsheviks would do the same, and for the same reasons, to Tsar Nicholas II...

Archpriest 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...”

---

273 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 185, 186.
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 – which he found his excuse in Alexis’ flight to Europe with his mistress. Although he was tempted back by the promise of forgiveness (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 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 ‘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 against 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 had 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). Therefore 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 ‘Judaizing’ 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…”

Theophan Prokopovich

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 Metropolitan Theophanes (Prokopovich) of Pskov, a man

---

275 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 194.
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 M.V. 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 Kaiserliched Majestät in Russland Petri Alexievich unde seines grossen Reichs dass dasselbe ast nach Evangelisch Lutherischen 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
The sermons of Prokopovich show his attachment to the Lutheran teaching on Church-State relations. Thus in his sermon on Palm Sunday, 1718, he said: “Do we not see here [in Christ’s 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

---

278 Van den Brecken, op. cit., p. 176.
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 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.”

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.”

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 in his Leviathan: “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…” “The fatherland,” intoned the Regulation, “need not fear from an administrative council [the Ecclesiastical

---

280 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, “Dorevoliutionnnie kanonisty i sinodal’ni stroj” (“The Pre-revolutionary Canons and the Synodal Order”), http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=4895762&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhy.

281 Cracraft, op. cit., p. 284.

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 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.  

The full extent of the Peter’s secularization 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 promised “to defend unsparingly all the powers, rights, and prerogatives belonging to the High Autocracy of His Majesty” and his “august and lawful successors”. Igor Smolitsch, called it the capitulation document of the Russian Church.

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”. 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...”

As Bishop Nicodemus of Yenisetsk (+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.” In worldly matters, according to the bishop, the Tsar was the supreme power, but “in spiritual matters his Majesty is a son of the Church” and therefore subject to the Church.

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

---

284 Thus, according to 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.” (op. cit., in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 132).
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 on the basis, not of the Divine call, but of the sovereignty of the people…”

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 most perfect and better than one-man rule’ since, on the one hand, ‘truth is more certainly found by a conciliar association than by one man’, and on the other, ‘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.”

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. 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.”

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

289 Zyzykin, op. cit., part III, p. 239.
290 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 302-303.
291 Karamzin, in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 137.
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 important difference, however. While Ivan never attempted to impose a caesaropapist constitution on the Church (although he did kill her leader!), Peter did just that. The result was that Ivan’s caesaropapism disappeared after his death, whereas Peter’s lasted for another 200 years…

**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”. The reply came 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”. 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

---

293 Cracraft, op. cit., p. 223.
294 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 Janet M. Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 242).
295 Fomin & Fomina, 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.
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, we need to remind ourselves of the new relationship between Church and State established by the Turkish sultan after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. “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 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.”

In fact, by 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.

296 Ware, The Orthodox Church, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 89. 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.” (Fr. Elia, “[paradosis] Re: Bareheaded”, orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, May 9, 2006)
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’?”

Any or all of these factors may have persuaded the Eastern Patriarchs to employ “economy” and bless the absolutist form of Church-State relations imposed by Peter on Russia. Nevertheless, every transgression of the sacred canons is regrettable. And the transgression in this case was to have serious long-term consequences…

Was Peter an Orthodox Tsar?

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, who believe that Petrine absolutism was not an unmitigated evil. 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 [!]”

“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 enslavement 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 enslaved Russia did not fall into the hands of foreigners, as happened immediately after his death.”298

However, Archpriest 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 delection 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-centuries’ 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 anti-Russian 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 verst 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 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

299 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 175.
300 Zzykin, op. cit., part III, p. 259.
301 Van den Bercken, op. cit., p. 176.
302 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 196.
303 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).
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? 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…”

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 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

---

304 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”).


307 Ivanov, op. cit. 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.
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...”\(^{308}\)

\(^{308}\) *Svecha Pokaiania* (The Candle of Repentance), № 1, March, 1999, p. 7.
12. THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN FREEMASONRY

Russia became infiltrated by Freemasonry in the second half of the seventeenth century. “There is no doubt,” writes V.F. 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 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.’”

---

309 Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 95-96. Keith founded his Russian lodge in 1741-1742, and left Russia in 1747. 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…” (Richard I. Rhoda, “Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, paper delivered at Orient Lodge no. 15 on June 29, 1996, http://members.aol.com/houltonme/rus.htm)
Why did Russians join the lodges? According to Sir Geoffrey Hosking, it was because 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…” \(^{310}\) There were also 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.” \(^{311}\)

Russian aristocrats, 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 not means prepared to live without religion altogether. “Finding myself at the crossroads between Voltaireanism 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.” \(^{312}\)

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 [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.” \(^{313}\) 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.” \(^{314}\) And it was Leibnitz, together with his pupil Wolf, who played the leading role in the foundation of the Russian Academy of Sciences. \(^{315}\)

---


\(^{313}\) Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

\(^{314}\) Valishevsky, *Petr Velikij* (Peter the Great), in Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

\(^{315}\) Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
Masonry continued to grow until the reign of Elizabeth, when “...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 venerated 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...” 

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 Matseyevich, Cyril Lyshevetsky, 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.

---

317 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 165, 166.
“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-marshall of the Russian army, but in fact carried out the role of 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 Tsorndof 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 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 Saltykov 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....”

Frederick was saved because Elizabeth died unexpectedly in 1761 and was succeeded by Peter III, a grandson of Peter the Great who nevertheless preferred the Germany he had been brought up in to Russia. As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes: “Having lost his mother in infancy and his father when a boy, Peter was brought up first with the view of succeeding to the Swedish throne, for his father was a son of Charles XII’s sister. After Elizabeth’s decision, he was educated to succeed to the throne of the Romanovs. Although he lived in Russia from the age of fourteen, Peter III never adjusted to the new country. Extremely limited mentally, as well as crude and violent in his behaviour, he continued to fear and despise Russia and the Russians while he held up Prussia and in particular Frederick II as his ideal. His reign of several months, best remembered in the long run for the law abolishing the compulsory state service of the gentry, impressed many of his contemporaries as a violent attack on everything Russian and a deliberate sacrifice of Russian interests to those of Prussia. While not given to political persecution and in fact willing to sign a law abolishing the security police, the new emperor threatened to disband the guards, and even demanded that icons be withdrawn from the churches and that Russian priests dress like Lutheran pastors, both of which orders the Holy Synod did not dare execute. In foreign policy Peter III’s admiration for Frederick the Great led to the withdrawal of Russia from the Seven Years’ War, an act which probably saved

\[319\] Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 169, 170, 171-172.
Prussia from a crushing defeat and deprived Russia of great potential gains. Indeed, the Russian emperor refused to accept even what Frederick the Great was willing to give him for withdrawing and proceeded to make an alliance with the Prussian king.”

Peter III was succeeded (or murdered) by his wife, the German princess Catherine the Great. 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.”

Fr. Georges 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 images and symbols, greatly attracted them. Freemasons highly valued Orthodox’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

321 Riasanovsky, A History of Russia.
322 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 664.
323 Florovsky, op. cit., pp. 155-156.
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 knighting 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 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 Jaroslavl’. 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, Trubetskoi, Vorontsov 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.”

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 18th 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...”

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. And Masonry remained in the formative stage until the French revolution in 1789. But then it exploded upon the world in a way that nobody, least of all the Russian tsars, could ignore; and it would be up to Russia to crush the Masonic revolution as it forced its way into the capital of the Third Rome in 1812...

---

325 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 243.
13. TSAR PAUL I

Tsar Paul I has in general had a bad press from historians. Nevertheless, it was he who began the slow process whereby the absolutist Russian empire of the eighteenth century was transformed into the less absolutist, more truly autocratic empire of the nineteenth, by restoring the links of the monarchy with the people’s faith, Orthodoxy. For, contrary to the generally held view, the Orthodox Autocracy is not a form of absolutism. It is limited, not by the people, but by the faith of the people, which he incarnates. Indeed, as D.A. Khomiakov writes, “the tsar is ‘the denial of absolutism’ precisely because it is bound by the confines of the people’s understanding and world-view, which serve as that framework within which the power can and must consider itself to be free.”

Restorer of Orthodox Autocracy

St. John Maximovich writes that the Tsarevich Paul, “was very different in his character and convictions from the Empress Catherine. Catherine II preferred to remove her son from the inheritance and make her eldest grandson, Alexander Pavlovich, her heir... At the end of 1796 Catherine II finally decided to appoint Alexander as her heir, passing Paul by, but she suddenly and unexpectedly died. The heir, Tsarevich Paul Petrovich, ascended the throne...”

Tsar Paul, who had been educated by Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, and shared his teacher’s devotion to pre-Petrine Russia, witnessed to the terrible condition to which his predecessors had brought Russia: “On ascending the throne of All-Russia, and entering in accordance with duty into various parts of the state administration, at the very beginning of the inspection We saw that the state economy, in spite of the changes in income made at various times, had been subjected to extreme discomforts from the continuation over many years of unceasing warfare and other circumstances. Expenses exceeded income. The deficit was increasing from year to year, multiplying the internal and external debts; in order to make up a part of this deficit, large sums were borrowed, which brought great harm and disorder with them.”

Tsar Paul’s coronation took place in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow on April 5, 1797, the first day of Holy Pascha. The rite moved a significant step away from the symbolism of the First Rome, which had been the model of the eighteenth-century Tsars, and back to the symbolism of the New Rome of Constantinople, the Mother-

---

326 Khomiakov, Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost’ (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk, 1997, p. 103.
328 Tsar Paul, in V.F. Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 211.
State of Holy Rus’. For before putting on the purple, Paul ordered that he be vested in the dalmatic, one of the royal vestments of the Byzantine emperors…

Then, writes Protopriest Lev Lebedev, “he himself read out a new law [Uchrezhdenie] on the Imperial Family which he had composed together with [the Tsaritsa] Maria Fyodorovna. By this law he abolished Peter I’s decree of 1722 on the right of the Russian Autocrat to appoint the Heir to the Throne according to his will and revived the Basic Act of 1613. From now on and forever (!) a strict order of succession was established according to which the eldest son became his father’s heir, and in the case of childlessness – his elder brother. The law also foresaw various other cases, determining the principles of the succession to the Throne in accordance with the ancient, pre-Petrine (!) Russian customs and certain important new rules (for example, a Member of the Imperial Family wanting to preserve his rights to the succession must enter only into an equal by blood marriage with a member of a royal or ruling house, that is, who is not lower than himself by blood). Paul I’s new law once and for all cut off the danger in Russia of those ‘revolution’-coup which had taken place in the eighteenth century. And it meant that the power of the nobility over the Russian Tsars was ending; now they could be independent of the nobility’s desires and sympathies. The autocracy was restored in Russia! Deeply wounded and ‘offended’, the nobility immediately, from the moment of the proclamation of the law ‘On the Imperial Family’, entered into opposition to Paul I. The Tsar had to suffer the first and most powerful blow of the opposition. This battle between the Autocrat and the nobility was decisive, it determined the future destiny of the whole state. It also revealed who was who in Great Russia. All the historians who hate Paul I are not able to diminish the significance of the Law of 1797, they recognise that it was exceptionally important and correct, but they remark that it was the only outstanding act of this Emperor (there were no others supposedly). But such an act would have been more than sufficient for the whole reign! For this act signified a radical counter-coup – or, following the expression of the time, counter-revolution - to that which Catherine II had accomplished.

“However, the haters lie here, as in everything else! The law was not the only important act of his Majesty. On the same day of 1797 Paul I proclaimed a manifesto in which for the first time the serf-peasants were obliged to make an oath of allegiance to the Tsars and were called, not ‘slaves’, but ‘beloved subjects’, that is, they were recognised as citizens of the State! There is more! Paul I issued a decree forbidding landowners to force serfs to work corvée for more than three days in the week: the other three days the peasants were to work for themselves, and on Sundays – rest and celebrate ‘the day of the Lord’, like all Christians. Under the threat of severe penalties it was confirmed that masters were forbidden to sell families of peasants one by one. It was

329 The decree said: “The Law of God given to us in the ten commandments teaches us to devote the seventh day to God; which is why on this day, which is glorified by the triumph of the Faith, and on which we have been counted worthy to receive the sacred anointing and royal crowning on our Forefathers’ Throne, we consider it our duty before the Creator and Giver of all good things to confirm the exact and constant fulfilment of this law throughout our Empire, commanding each and every one to observe it, so that no one should have any excuse to dare to force his peasants to work on Sundays....”
forbidden to subject serfs older than seventy to physical punishments. (And at the same time it was permitted to apply physical punishments to noblemen who had been condemned for criminal acts.) All this was nothing other than the beginning of the liberation of the Russian peasants from serfdom! In noble circles of the time it was called a ‘revolution from above’, and for the first time they said of about their Emperor: ‘He is mad!’ Let us recall that this word was used in relation to the ‘peasant’ politics of Paul I. He even received a special ‘Note’ from one assembly of nobles, in which it was said that ‘the Russian people has not matured sufficiently for the removal of physical punishments’.\textsuperscript{330}

“We know of a case when the Tsar came to the defence of some peasants whose landowner was about to sell them severally, without their families and land, so as to make use of the peasants’ property. The peasants refused to obey, and the landowner informed the governor of the rebellion. But the governor did not fail to carry out his duty and quickly worked out what was happening. On receiving news about what was happening, Tsar Paul declared the deal invalid, ordered that the peasants be left in their places, and that the landowner be severely censured in his name. The landowner’s conscience began to speak to him: he gathered the village commune and asked the peasants for forgiveness. Later he set off for St. Petersburg and asked for an audience with his Majesty. ‘Well, what did you sort out with your peasants, my lord? What did they say?’ inquired the Emperor of the guilty man. ‘They said to me, your Majesty: God will forgive…’ ‘Well, since God and they have forgiven you, I also forgive you. But remember from now on that they are not your slaves, but my subjects just as you are. You have just been entrusted with looking after them, and you are responsible for them before me, as I am for Russia before God…’ concluded the Sovereign.’\textsuperscript{331}

The Tsar also acted to humble the pride of the Guards regiments which, together with the nobility, had acted in the role of king-makers in the eighteenth century. “He forbade the assigning of noblemen’s children, babies, into the guards (which had been done before him to increase ‘the number of years served’). The officers of the guards were forbidden to drive in four- or six-horse carriages, to hide their hands in winter in fur muffs, or to wear civilian clothing in public. No exception was made for them by comparison with other army officers. At lectures and inspections the Guards were asked about rules and codes with all strictness. How much, then and later, did they speak (and they still write now!) about the ‘cane discipline’ and the amazing cruelties in the army under Paul I, the nightmarish punishments which were simply means of mocking the military…. Even among the historians who hate Paul I we find the admission that the strictnesses of the Emperor related only to the officers (from the nobility), while with regard to the soldiers he was most concerned about their food and upkeep, manifesting a truly paternal attentiveness. By that time the ordinary members of the Guards had long been not nobles, but peasants. And the soldierly mass of the Guards of Paul I very much loved him and were devoted to him. Officers were severely punished for excessive cruelty to soldiers… On the

\textsuperscript{330} Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 239-240.

fateful night of the murder of Paul I the Guards soldiers rushed to support him. The Preobrazhensky regiment refused to shout ‘hurrah!’ to Alexander Pavlovich as to the new Emperor, since they were not sure whether his Majesty Paul I was truly dead. Two soldiers of the regiment demanded that their commanders give them exact proof of the death of the former Emperor. These soldiers were not only not punished, but were sent as an ‘embassy’ of the Preobrazhensky to the grave of Paul I. On their return the regiment gave the oath of allegiance to Alexander I. That was the real situation of the Russian soldier of Paul’s times, and not their fictitious ‘rightlessness’!

“The Emperor Paul’s love for justice and care for the simple people was expressed also in the accessibility with which he made his subjects happy, establishing the famous box in the Winter palace whose key was possessed by him personally and into which the first courtier and the last member of the simple people could cast their letters with petitions for the Tsar’s immediate defence or mercy. The Tsar himself emptied the box every day and read the petitions, leaving not a single one of them unanswered.

“There was probably no sphere in the State which did not feel the influence of the industrious Monarch. Thus he ordered the minting of silver rubles to struggle against the deflation in the value of money. The Sovereign himself sacrificed a part of the court’s silver on this important work. He said that he himself would eat on tin ‘until the ruble recovers its rate’. And the regulation on medical institutions worked out by the Emperor Paul could be used in Russia even in our day.”

“Paul I gave hierarchs in the Synod the right themselves to choose a candidate for the post of over-procurator, took great care for the material situation of the clergy, and the widows and orphans of priests, and forbade physical punishments for priests before they had been defrocked.”

He also increased the lands of hierarchical houses and the pay of the parish clergy, and freed the clergy from being pressed into army service. The power of bishops was extended to all Church institutions and to all diocesan servers. He opened many seminaries, increased the income of the theological academies by five times, and greatly broadened the curriculum.

---

333 “Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel”, op. cit.
334 Lebedev, Velikorossia, p. 242. A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: “At the beginning of the [19th] century the over-procurator Yakovlev planned to place [the consistories] in a position more independent of the bishops and presented to the sovereign a report about establishing in them a special post of procurator subject only to the over-procurator; but the realisation of this report was hindered by Metropolitan Ambrose Podobedov of St. Petersburg, who presented a report on his part that in such a case the canonical authority of the bishops would be shaken and they would become dependent on secular officials” (Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi (Handbook on the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 534).
335 Fr. Alexis Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (The Church and the State), Moscow, 1997, p. 106.
In general, as K.A. Papmehl writes, “Paul proved to be much more generous and responsive to the Church’s financial needs than his mother. Although this may to some – perhaps considerate – extent be attributed to his general tendency to reverse her policies, it was probably due, in at least equal measure, to his different attitude toward the Church based, as it undoubtedly was, on sincere Christian belief…. One symptom of this different attitude was that, unlike his predecessor – or, indeed, successor, Paul dealt with the Synod not through the Ober-Prokurator, but through the senior ecclesiastical member: first Gavriil and later Amvrosii.”

“One of the Tsar’s contemporaries, N.A. Sablukov, who had the good fortune, thanks to his service at the Royal Court, to know the Emperor personally, remembered the Emperor Paul in his memoirs as ‘a deeply religious man, filled with a true piety and the fear of God…. He was a magnanimous man, ready to forgive offences and recognise his mistakes. He highly prized righteousness, hated lies and deceit, cared for justice and was merciless in his persecution of all kinds of abuses, in particular usury and bribery.’

“The well-known researcher of Paul, Shabelsky-Bork, writes: ‘While he was Tsarevich and Heir, Paul would often spend the whole night in prayer. A little carpet is preserved in Gatchina; on it he used to pray, and it is worn through by his knees.’ The above-mentioned N.A. Sablukov recounts, in agreement with this: ‘Right to the present day they show the places on which Paul was accustomed to kneel, immersed in prayer and often drenched in tears. The parquet is worn through in these places. The room of the officer sentry in which I used to sit during my service in Gatchina was next to Paul’s private study, and I often heard the Emperor’s sighs when he was standing at prayer.’

“The historical records of those years have preserved a description of the following event: ‘A watchman had a strange and wonderful vision when he was standing outside the summer palace… The Archangel Michael stood before the watchman suddenly, in the light of heavenly glory, and the watchman was stupefied and in trembling from this vision… And the Archangel ordered that a cathedral should be raised in his honour there and that this command should be passed on to the Emperor Paul immediately. The special event went up the chain of command, of course, and Paul Petrovich was told about everything. But Paul Petrovich replied: “I already know”: he had seen everything beforehand, and the appearance to the watchman was a kind of repetition…” From this story we can draw the conclusion that Tsar Paul was counted worthy also of revelations from the heavenly world…”

We should also not forget here the salutary influence of Tsar Paul’s wife, Empress Maria Fyodorovna, who was very popular among the people. A.V. Buganov writes: “While it was the inveterate desire of the enserfed peasants throughout Russia to be

338 “Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel”, op. cit.
liberated, in the villages of Maria Fyodorovna the complete opposite was observed: tradesmen and free men generally were assigned to the number of her peasants. The empress took care that they had enough, and founded village charitable-educational institutions. She often put on feasts for her peasants in her park, where in her presence the young people sang songs and had round dances. The summit of Maria Fyodorovna’s activity and the crown of her charitable work was her educational system, which was known as ‘the institutions of Empress Maria’. These included shelters and children’s homes and educational institutions, especially for women.”

**The Annexation of Georgia**

Tsar Paul’s love for the Church found expression in two important events in the year 1800: the peaceful annexation of Georgia and the reunion of some of the Old Ritualists with the Orthodox Church on a “One Faith” (Yedinoverie) basis. The former strengthened the security of the Orthodox world against the external foe, and the latter - its internal unity.

The Georgians had first appealed for Russian protection in 1587. Since then, they had suffered almost continual invasions from the Persians and the Turks, leading to many martyrdoms, of which the most famous was that of Queen Ketevan in 1624. One king, Rostom, even adopted Islam and persecuted Orthodoxy. In fact, from 1634 until the crowning of King Wakhtang in 1701, all the sovereigns of Georgia were Mohammedan. The eighteenth century saw only a small improvement, and in 1762 King Teimuraz II travelled to Russian for help. In 1783, in the treaty of Georgievsk, protection was formally offered to King Heraclius II of Kartli-Kakhetia by Catherine II.

“The last, most heavy trial for the Church of Iberia,” writes P. Ioseliani, “was the irruption of Mahomed-Khan into the weakened state of Georgia, in the year 1795. In the month of September of that year the Persian army took the city of Tiflis, seized almost all the valuable property of the royal house, and reduced the palace and the whole of the city into a heap of ashes and of ruins. The whole of Georgia, thus left at the mercy of the ruthless enemies of the name of Christ, witnessed the profanation of everything holy, and the most abominable deeds and practices carried on in the temples of God. Neither youth nor old age could bring those cruel persecutors to pity; the churches were filled with troops of murderers and children were killed at their mothers’ breasts. They took the Archbishop of Tiflis, Dositheus, who had not come out of the Synod of Sion, made him kneel down before an image of [the most holy Mother of God], and, without mercy on his old age, threw him from a balcony into the river Kur; then they plundered his house, and set fire to it. The pastors of the Church, unable to hide the treasures and other valuable property of the Church, fell a sacrifice to the ferocity of their foes. Many images of saints renowned in those days perished for ever; as, for instance, among others, the image of [the most holy Mother

---

339 Buganov, “Lichnosti i sobytia istorii v pamiati russkikh krestian XIX – nachala XX veka” (Personalities and historical events in the memory of the Russian peasants of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries), Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History), December, 2005, p. 120.
of God] of the Church of Metekh, and that of the Synod of Sion. The enemy, having rifled churches, destroyed images, and profaned the tombs of saints, revelled in the blood of Christians; and the inhuman Mahomed-Khan put an end to these horrors only when there remained not a living soul in Tiflis.

“King George XIII, who ascended the throne of Georgia (A.D. 1797-1800) only to see his subjects overwhelmed and rendered powerless by their incessant and hopeless struggles with unavoidable dangers from enemies of the faith and of the people, found the resources of the kingdom exhausted by the constant armaments necessary for its own protection; before his eyes lay the ruins of the city, villages plundered and laid waste, churches, monasteries, and hermitages demolished, troubles within the family, and without it the sword, fire, and inevitable ruin, not only of the Church, but also of the people, yea, even of the very name of the people. In the fear of God, and trusting to His providence, he made over Orthodox Georgia in a decided manner to the Tzar of Russia, his co-religionist; and thus obtained for her peace and quiet. It pleased God, through this king, to heal the deep wounds of an Orthodox kingdom.

“Feeling that his end was drawing near, he, with the consent of all ranks and of the people, requested the Emperor Paul I to take Georgia into his subjection for ever (A.D. 1800). The Emperor Alexander I, when he mounted the throne, promised to protect the Georgian people of the same faith with himself, which had thus given itself over unreservedly and frankly to the protection of Russia. In his manifesto to the people of Georgia (A.D. 1801) he proclaimed the following: ‘One and the same dignity, one and the same honour, and humanity laid upon us the sacred duty, after hearing the prayers of sufferers, to grant them justice and equity in exchange for their affliction, security for their persons and for their property, and to give to all alike the protection of the law.’”

What we have called “Georgia” was in fact the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in Eastern Georgia. But there was another Georgian kingdom in the West, Imeretia. After the annexation of Kartli-Kakhetia, “the Russian government,” we read in the Life of Hieroschemamonk Hilarion the Georgian of Mount Athos, “initiated correspondence with the Imeretian king concerning the uniting of his nation with Russia. King Solomon II sought the counsel of his country’s foremost nobles, and in 1804, due to pressure from Russia, he was left with little choice but to set forth the following: since the king did not have an heir to the throne, Imeretia would retain her independence until his death, remaining in brotherly relations with Russia as between two realms of the same faith. The Russian army had free passage across Imeretian territory to the Turkish border, and the Imeretian army was required to render them aid. The relations of the two countries were to be upheld in those sacred terms which are proper to God’s anointed rulers and Christian peoples united in an indivisible union of soul – eternally and unwaveringly. But after the king’s death the legislation of the Russian Empire would be introduced. The resolution was then sent to the Governor-General of the Caucasus in Tbilisi for forwarding to Tsar Alexander.

“Despite the general approval of the resolution by the king’s subjects, one nobleman, Prince Zurab Tsereteli, began plotting how he could seize the Imeretian throne for himself. He first attempted to erode the friendly relations between the two monarchs by slandering each to the other. Unable to sow discord, he began a communication with the Russian governor-general of the Caucasus, Alexander Tormasov. Depicting the royal suite in the darkest colors to the governor-general, after repeated intrigues he finally succeeded in his designs. Eventually, the report reached the tsar. He, believing the slander, ordered Tormasov to lure Solomon II to Tbilisi and escort him to Russia, where he would remain a virtual prisoner.

“Not able to believe that others could be so base, treacherous and ignoble, the king fell into the trap set by Tormasov and Prince Zurab. Fr. Ise [the future Hieroschemamonk Hilarion] had initially warned the king of Prince Zurab’s disloyalty. However, upon learning of his wife’s reposed he returned to Kutaisi and was unable to further counsel the king.

“King Solomon II and his entire retinue were eventually coaxed all the way to Tbilisi. There they were put under house arrest; the plan being to send the king to live out his days in a palace in St. Petersburg. Preferring exile to imprisonment, the king and his noblemen conceived a plan of escape and fled across the border to Turkey. There, with Fr. Ise and his retinue, he lived out the remainder of his life. After great deprivations and aborted attempts to reclaim the Imeretian Kingdom from Russia, King Solomon II reposed at Trebizond on February 19, 1815, in his forty-first year…

“After the king’s death, Fr. Ise intended to set out for Imeretia (then annexed to Russia) no matter what the consequences. He informed all the courtiers, who numbered about six hundred men, and suggested that they follow his example. Many of them accepted his decision joyfully, but fear of the tsar’s wrath hampered this plan. Fr. Ise reassured everyone, promising to take upon himself the task of mediating before the tsar. He immediately wrote out a petition in the name of all the princes and other members of the retinue, and sent it to the tsar. The sovereign graciously received their petition, restored them to their former ranks, and returned their estates…”

Although union with Russia protected Georgia from the incursions of the Muslims, it had the unfortunate effect of destroying the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and weakening its culture. Archpriest Zakaria Machitadze writes: “The foreign officials sent to rule in Georgia began to interfere considerably in the affairs of the Church, and it soon became clear that the Russian government [contrary to eighth paragraph of the treaty of 1783] intended to abolish the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and subordinate it to the Russian Synod.

---

“On June 10, 1811, Tsar Alexander summoned Anton II, Patriarch of All Georgia, to his court and from there sent him into exile. For ten years Georgia had neither a king nor a spiritual leader, and the people began to lose their sense of political and spiritual independence.

“There ensued a period of great difficulty in the life of the Georgian Church. The Church was subordinated to the Russian Synod through an exarch, or representative, of the synod. From 1811 to 1817 the Georgian nobleman Varlaam served as exarch, but after his term all the subsequent exarchs were Russian by descent. The foreign exarchs’ ignorance of the Georgian language, traditions, local saints, and feast gave rise to many conflicts between the foreign clergy and the Georgian Orthodox believers. The most contemptible exarchs stole valuable pieces of jewelry and masterpieces of the Georgian enamel arts and sent them to Russia. Many cathedrals were left to fall into ruin, and the number of diocese in Georgia dropped dramatically from twenty-four to five. Divine services in the Georgian language and ancient polyphonic chants were replaced by services in Slavonic and the music of the post-Petrine Russian Church.

“Russian domination of the Church aroused considerable vexation and indignation in the Georgian people, and evidence of the exarchs’ anti-Georgian activities exacerbated their discontent. Despite the wise admonitions of many Russian elders to respect the portion assigned by lot to the Theotokos and converted by the holy Apostles themselves, appalling crimes continued to be committed against the Georgian Church and nation. Frescoes in churches were whitewashed, and the Khakuli Icon of the Theotokos along with other icons and objects adorned with precious gold and silver were stolen…”

In spite of these deviations, the annexation of Georgia marked an important step forward in Russia’s progress to becoming the Third Rome. In the eighteenth century “the gathering of the Russian lands” was on its way to completion, and the more or less continuous wars with Turkey demonstrated Russia’s determination to liberate the Orthodox of the Balkans and the Middle East. Georgia was the first non-Russian Orthodox nation to enter the empire of the Third Rome on a voluntary basis...

In 1901 Fr. John Vostorgov meditated on this almost unprecedented union of two peoples and Churches as follows: “In voluntarily uniting herself with Russia, Georgia gained much. But we must not forget that she also lost: she lost her independent existence as a separate state, that which served and serves as the object of ardent desires and bloody struggles up to now in many peoples, and which Georgia herself defended for a long series of centuries as an inestimable treasure with as lofty heroism as can be attributed to any people in history.

“Whether we recognize or not the providential significance of peoples in history, we must in any case agree that historical and geographical conditions at least place

---

before this or that people this or that world task. Only from this point of view do the ardent enthusiasms of patriotism, and the fervent desire and care to bring greatness and power to one’s homeland, acquire a meaning and higher justification: her greatness and power are not an end, but the means to serve the universal, pan-human good. But what was the destiny of Russia on the universal-historical plane? It would not be an exaggeration, nor an artificial invention to point to the fact that she, as standing on the borders of the East and the West, is destined to mediate between them, and to work out in her own history a higher synthesis of the principles of life of the East and the West, which are often contradictory and hostile to one another, pushing them onto the path of bitter struggle, reconciling them in the unity of a higher, unifying cultural type. This task – a great, colossal, unique task – was bequeathed to Russia by deceased Byzantium, which in her turn inherited it from ancient Greece with her eastern-Persian armies, her powerful Hellenism, which was victoriously borne even in the time of Alexander the Great into the very heart of the East.

“But much earlier than Russia this great task was recognized and accepted by Georgia…

“In the days of the ancient struggle between Greece and Persia, the West was characterized, spiritually speaking, by the religions of anthropomorphism, and the East – by Parsism. Georgia, like Armenia, stood at that time completely on the side of the latter. The Persians placed a seal on the clothing, morals and customs of the Georgians, and on their royal dynasties, language and religion, that is perceptible to this day, because in deep antiquity the native paganism of the Georgians was supplanted by the worship of Armazd, in whose name we can undoubtedly hear the name of the Persian Ormuzd. A new, powerful influence entered into the world when the West accepted Christianity and placed it on the banner of her historical existence. And before the appearance of Christianity, under Caesar and Pompey, we see in Georgia the beginnings of an attraction towards the West. But she finally understood her own mission in the world only in the light of Christianity: under the emperor Hadrian, this was still expressed in an indecisive manner and bore the character of a certain compulsion, but under Constantine the Great this was finally and irreversibly recognized.

“It is not in vain that the year of the victory of Constantine the Great near Adrianople (323), and the declaration that Christianity was not only permitted (as it had been in 312 and 313) but the dominant religion of the Roman empire, coincides with the year of the baptism of the Georgians in Mskhet… A remarkable coincidence! King Mirian, who was by birth from a Persian dynasty, wavered quite a bit until, propelled by the historical calling of his people, in spite of his family links with Persia, he decided to make this step, which irreversibly defined the destiny of Georgia. Soon the East, in its turn, exchanged Parsism for Islam, and there began the great duel of two worlds. Western Europe responded, and responded powerfully, to this duel with its crusades. But we can say that the life and history of Georgia was one long crusade, one long heroic and martyrlic feat! The arena of the great struggle
was continually being widened in the direction of the north: from ancient Greece to Byzantium, to Georgia, to the south-western Slavic peoples. But when Byzantium began to decline, from the tenth century, still further to the north, the young Russian people was called into the arena, bearing upon herself the seal of great powers and a great destiny. But until she grew up and thrust aside a multitude of paths that bound her childhood and youth, until she had passed through the educational suffering of her struggle with the wild hordes, with the infidels, in the crucible of the Tatar yoke, and in domestic upheavals, Georgia remained alone. It is difficult to represent and describe her boundless sufferings, her faithfulness to the Cross, her heroism worthy of eternal memory, her merits before the Christian world.

“Soon the Tatar yoke became synonymous with Islam; Russia, casting aside that yoke, moved further and further into the Muslim world, became stronger and stronger, and finally the hour of the will of God sounded: she gave the hand of help and complete union to exhausted Iberia, which had reached the final limits of exhaustion in her unequal struggle. Peoples having a single world task naturally merged into one on the level of the state also...

“But this is not all: the situation of the struggle between Islam and Christianity, between the East and the West, immediately changed. Russia, having established herself in Transcaucasia, immediately became a threat to Persia and Turkey; with unprecedented rapidity and might she cast the banner of Islam far from the bounds of tormented Georgia. Only one century has passed since the time of the union of Russia and Georgia, and in the meantime what a huge, hitherto unseen growth has taken place in Christian Russia, and, by contrast, fall in Muslim Turkey and Persia! This demonstrates to all how much good the executed decision of the two peoples to merge into one on the basis of the communality of their world tasks brought to the history of the world one hundred years ago.

“But did both peoples understand these tasks, and do they understand them now?

“Even if they had not understood them clearly, they would have striven towards them semi-consciously; if a people is an organism, then in it there must be instincts which subconsciously direct its life purposefully and infallibly, having before it, not death, but life. But there is a force which gave to both the one and the other people an understanding of their world tasks, and the means of their fulfilment. This force is Orthodoxy. It alone includes in itself the principles of true Catholicity, and does not suppress nationalities, but presents to each one spiritual freedom without tying its spiritual life to a person, a place or an external discipline, while at the same time it stands higher than all nationalities. By means of undying tradition it preserves a man from confusing freedom with licence, from destructive spiritual anarchy, and makes possible in him constant vitality and growth, as of a spiritual organism. Not being tied to a place or time, and including in itself the principles of true democracy and good, healthy cosmopolitanism (in the Orthodox understanding of the Church), Orthodoxy – and only Orthodoxy – serves as a religion having an eternal and global significance, uniting mankind inwardly, and not outwardly. Without suppressing
nationalities, it can at the same time become a pan-popular religion in the full sense of the word. And truly it has become the fundamental strength and popular religion both for the Russians and for the Georgians. Outside Orthodoxy both Russians and Georgians cease to be themselves. But in it they find the true guarantee of their preservation of their spiritual personalities under any hostile attacks. For that reason it has become infinitely dear to the hearts of both peoples; for that reason it has so quickly and firmly united both peoples in an unbroken union hitherto unknown in history of state and Church, in spite of the absence of tribal kinship, for kinship according to faith is higher that kinship according to blood, union in the spirit is higher than union in race, and stronger than unions created for the avaricious aims of states. This is a union in life and death, for the present and the future, since it rests on spiritual, age-old foundations. And the eternal and the spiritual give sense to the temporal and make it truly fertile…”

The Yedinoverie

Although the Old Ritualists were not allowed to have open churches, the numbers of those executed or tortured were not large – and certainly smaller than the numbers of those who immolated themselves in the burnings. As long as they did not seek to make converts, they were in general left alone. Some emigrated to the Urals, Siberia, Lithuania and Courland; but the Empress Elizabeth invited those who had gone abroad to return to Russia.

“In 1761,” writes S.A. Zenkovsky, “when Peter III came to power, he almost immediately issued a decree forbidding any kind of persecution of the Old Ritualists, which was confirmed in 1762, 1764 and 1784 by Catherine II. She asked the Old Ritualists living abroad to return to the homeland, and tens of thousands of them responded to her appeal, returned to Russia and settled in the Middle and Lower Volga regions and in New Russia, where they were immediately offered large plots of land. The ‘schismatics’ office’ that controlled Old Ritualist affairs was closed, the Old Ritualists received civil rights, and the monasteries of Irgiz on the Lower Volga were opened and became important centres of the Old Ritualist popovtsi.

“At the end of the century large Old Ritualist centres were formed in Moscow – the Rogozhsky (popovtsi) and Preobrazhensky (bespopovtsi), and the Kolevsky in Petersburg. In many cities and village districts there were Old Ritualist (popovtsi) churches or chapels in which priests who had come over from the ‘dominant’ church to Old Ritualism served. To speak of executions or tortures of the Old Ritualists… since 1761 would simply be a distortion of the truth…”


344 Zenkovsky, “Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo” (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), Russkoe Vosrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, pp. 92-93.
It is against this background that we should view the movement that began among some Old Ritualists towards union with the Orthodox on the basis of yedinoverie, or “One Faith” – that is, agreement on dogmas and the acceptance of the authority of the Orthodox hierarchy, together with retention of the pre-Niconian rites. “The essence of the yedinoverie,” writes Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), consisted in the fact that the ‘one-faithers’, while having amongst themselves the priesthood and the fullness of the sacraments, did not at the same time lose their beloved rites, with which they were accustomed to pray to God and to please Him. The first person who had the idea of the yedinoverie was none other than Patriarch Nicon himself. After his Church reforms he allowed the first and most important leader of the Church disturbance that then arose, Gregory Neronov, to carry out Divine services according to the old printed service books and books of needs, and blessed for him ‘to increase the alleluias’ during his presence in the Dormition cathedral. In this way Patriarch Nicon returned the first schismatic to the Church. Moreover, already after the correction of the Divine service books, Patriarch Nicon published books of the Hours in which the controversial passages were printed in the old way. It is evident that Patriarch Nicon treated this necessary Church reform very rationally and clearly understood that after the danger of the Russian Orthodox Church being torn away from Ecumenical Orthodoxy had been averted by the accomplished Church reform, the old books and rites could be freely allowed for those who attached particular significance to them without at the same time violating the dogmas of the faith.

“It is also known that in the best Russian monasteries of the second half of the 17th century they looked upon the old and new books in the same way and carried out Church services with the ones and the others. There are also indications that in the 18th century, too, the Church took a condescending attitude towards the Church rite practice of the Old Ritualists, and her attention was mainly directed at the dogmas of the faith, and not at rites and books. The strict measures taken by the government, and the formal, bureaucratic attitude of the Synodal administration, together with the striving to achieve unity in rites by means of force put an end to this rapprochement and deepened the schism… There is no doubt that the main reasons [for the gradual mutual alienation of the ruling clergy and the Old Ritualists] were not so much religious and ecclesiastical, as political, including the influence of foreign States striving to weaken and disrupt the inner unity of the Russian people…”

“Before 1800,” writes K.V. Glazkov, “almost all the Old Ritualist communities had united with the Orthodox Church on their own conditions. Besides, there were quite a few so-called crypto-Old Ritualists, who formally belonged to the ruling Church, but who in their everyday life prayed and lived according to the Old Ritualist ways (there were particularly many of these amidst the minor provincial nobility and merchant class). This state of affairs was evidently not normal: it was necessary to work out definite rules, common for all, for the union of the Old Ritualists with the

---

Orthodox Church. As a result of negotiations with the Muscovite Old Ritualists the latter in 1799 put forward the conditions under which they would agree to accept a priesthood from the Orthodox Church. These conditions, laid out in 16 points, partly represented old rules figuring in the 1793 petition of the Starodub ‘agreeers’, and partly new ones relating to the mutual relations of the ‘one-fathers’ with the Orthodox Church. These relations required the union of the ‘one-fathers’ with the Orthodox Church, but allowed for their being to a certain degree isolated. On their basis the Muscovite Old Ritualists submitted a petition to his Majesty for their reunion with the Orthodox Church, and Emperor Paul I wrote at the bottom of this document: ‘Let this be. October 27, 1800.’ This petition with the royal signature was returned to the Muscovite Old Ritualists and was accepted as complete confirmation of their suggested conditions for union, as an eternal act of the recognition of the equal validity and honour of Old Ritualism and Orthodoxy.

“But on the same day, with the remarks (or so-called ‘opinions’) of Metropolitan Plato of Moscow, conditions were confirmed that greatly limited the petition of the Old Ritualists. These additions recognised reunited Old Ritualism as being only a transitional stage on the road to Orthodoxy, and separated the ‘old-faith’ parishes as it were into a special semi-independent ecclesiastical community. Wishing to aid a change in the views of those entering into communion with the Church on the rites and books that they had acquired in Old Ritualism, and to show that the Old Ritualists were falsely accusing the Church of heresies, Metropolitan Plato called the ‘agreeers’ ‘one-fathers’…

“The one-fathers petitioned the Holy Synod to remove the curses [of the Moscow Council of 1666-1667] on holy antiquity, but Metropolitan Plato replied in his additional remarks that they were imposed with justice. The Old Ritualists petitioned for union with the Church while keeping the old rites, but Metropolitan Plato left them their rites only for a time, only ‘in the hope’ that with time the reunited would abandon the old rites and accept the new…

“Amidst the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church the view became more and more established that the ‘One Faith’ was a transitional step towards Orthodoxy. But in fact the One Faith implies unity in dogmatic teaching and the grace of the Holy Spirit with the use in the Divine services of various Orthodox rites. But the old rite continued to be perceived as incorrect, damaged and in no way blessed by the Church, but only ‘by condescension not forbidden’ for a time.”

346 Glazkov, “K voprosu o edinoverii v sviazi s ego dvukhsotletiem” (“Towards the Question of the ‘One Faith’ in connection with its 200th anniversary”), Pravoslavnij Put’ (The Orthodox Way), 2000, pp. 74-75, 76-77.
with suspicion and did not satisfy their age-old desire to have a common spiritual father, a [one-father] bishop.

“Thanks to this situation, the yedinoverie gradually fell into decline and disorder, to the great joy of the hardened schismatics and neighbouring States, which used this misfortune and helped in creating for the Old Ritualists the so-called Austrian hierarchy…” 347

The Murder of Tsar Paul

When the Empress Catherine saw the effect that the ideas of the Enlightenment had in generating the French revolution, she backed away from her former support of them. “Yesterday I remembered,” she wrote to Grimm in 1794, “that you told me more than once: this century is the century of preparations. I will add that these preparations consisted in preparing dirt and dirty people of various kinds, who produce, have produced and will produce endless misfortunes and an infinite number of unfortunate people.”

“The next year,” writes Ivanov, “she categorically declared that the Encyclopédie had only two aims: the one – to annihilate the Christian religion, and the other – royal power. ‘I will calmly wait for the right moment when you will see how right is my opinion concerning the philosophers and their hangers-on that they participated in the revolution…, for Helvétius and D’Alambert both admitted to the deceased Prussian king that this book had only two aims: the first – to annihilate the Christian religion, and the second – to annihilate royal power. They spoke about this already in 1777.” 348

In his estimate of Masonry and French influence, if in little else, Tsar Paul was in agreement with his mother. Well-known Masons were required to sign that they would not open lodges (the rumour that Paul himself became a Mason is false 349), and the great General Suvorov was sent to Vienna to join Austria and Britain in fighting the French. 350 But the French continued to advance through Europe, and when, in 1797, Napoleon threatened the island of Malta, the knights of the Order of the Maltese Cross, who had ruled the island since the 16th century, appealed to the protection of Tsar Paul. Paul accepted the responsibility, and in gratitude the Maltese offered that he become their Grand Master. Paul accepted because it was anti-French and anti-revolutionary. 351

347 Rklitsky, op. cit, p. 167.
348 Ivanov, op. cit, p. 211.
349 Sorokin, op. cit. The Maltese Order that he headed was a Roman Catholic, not a Masonic institution.
350 Suvorov’s extraordinarily successful career was based, according to Lebedev, “on Orthodox spirituality. He taught the soldiers prayer and life according to the commandments of God better than any preacher, so that at times it was difficult to say what Suvorov taught his soldiers more – to be a warrior or to be a real Orthodox Christian!” (op. cit., p. 234).
351 Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 33-34. Not too much should be of the fact that the Tsar was sympathetic, or at least not antipathetic, towards Catholicism, which, as Nikolin points out, “was to a large extent linked
In 1798 Napoleon seized Malta. Paul then entered into an alliance union with Prussia, Austria and England against France. A Russian fleet entered the Mediterranean, and in 1799 a Russian army under Suvorov entered Northern Italy, liberating the territory from the French.

However, in 1800, writes Lebedev, “England seized the island of Malta, taking it away from the French and not returning it to the Maltese Order. Paul I sent Suvorov with his armies back to Russia and demanded that Prussia take decisive measures against England (the seizure of Hanover), threatening to break relations and take Hanover, the homeland of the English monarchs, with Russian forces. But at the same time there began direct relations between Paul and Napoleon. They began in an unusual manner. Paul challenged Napoleon to a duel so as to decide State quarrels by means of a personal contest, without shedding the innocent blood of soldiers. Bonaparte declined from the duel, but had a high opinion of Paul I’s suggestion, and as a sign of respect released his Russian prisoners without any conditions, providing them with all that they needed at France’s expense. Paul I saw that with the establishment of Napoleon in power, an end had been put to the revolution in France. Therefore he concluded a union with Napoleon against England (with the aim of taking Malta away from her and punishing her for her cunning), and united Russia to the ‘continental blockade’ that Napoleon had constructed against England, undermining her mercantile-financial might. Moreover, in counsel with Napoleon, Paul I decided [on January 12, 1801] to send a big Cossack corps to India – the most valuable colony of the English. To this day his Majesty’s order has been deemed ‘mad’ and ‘irrational’. But those who say this conceal the fact that the plan for this Russian expedition against India did not at all belong to Paul I: it arose under Catherine II and was seriously considered by her (Paul I only put it into action).

“Russia’s break with England and the allies signified for them a catastrophe and in any case an irreparable blow to the British pocket, and also to the pocket of the major

with fear of the French revolution, which had been cruel to believing Catholics, monks and clergy. This relationship is attested by such facts as his offering the Pope of Rome to settle in Russia, his cooperation with the establishment of the Jesuit order in Russia, and his support for the establishment of a Roman Catholic chapel in St. Petersburg. At the same time attention should be drawn to Paul I’s ukaz of March 18, 1797, which protected the consciences of peasants whom landowners were trying to detach forcibly from Orthodoxy into the union or convert to Catholicism.” (Nikolin, op. cit., p. 106).

“To October 12, 1799 the holy things of the Order were triumphantly brought to Gatchina: the right hand of St. John the Baptist, a particle of the Cross of the Lord and the icon of the Filerma Odigitria icon of the Mother of God. Only a spiritually blind man, on learning this fact, would not see the Providence of God in the fact that the Tsar became Master of the Maltese Order. October 12 was introduced into the number of festal days by the Church, and a special service to this feast was composed…” (“Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel”, op. cit.).

352 This was, of course, a great mistake. Napoleon was a child of the revolution and the instrument of the spread of its ideas throughout Europe. (V.M.)

353 Another mistake, for it did precisely the opposite, weakening the continental economies and allowing England, with her superior navy, to seize the colonies of her rivals around the world. (V.M.)

354 They had crossed the Volga on March 18 when they heard of the death of the Tsar...
Russian land-owners and traders (English trade in Russia had been very strong for a long time!). From the secret masonic centres of England and Germany an order was delivered to the Russian Masons to remove the Emperor and as quickly as possible!

“Long disturbed by Paul I’s attitude, the Russian nobles were quick to respond to the Masonic summons. Even before this,... in 1798 the Russian Masons had succeeded in sowing dissension in the Royal Family. They slandered the Tsaritsa Maria Fyodorovna of supposedly trying to rule her husband and instead of him. At the same time he was ‘set up with’ the beauty Lopukhina, the daughter of a very powerful Mason, and a faithful plotter. But the affair was foiled through the nobility of the Emperor. Learning that Lopukhina loved Prince Gagarin, Paul I arranged their marriage, since he was just good friends with Lopukhina. The Masons had to save the situation in such a way that Prince Gagarin himself began to help his own wife come closer to Paul I. She settled in the Mikhailov palace and became a valuable agent of the plotters. From the autumn of 1800 the plot rapidly acquired a systematic character. Count N.P. Panin (the college of foreign affairs) was drawn into it, as was General Count Peter Alexeyevich von der Pahlen, the governor of Petersburg and a very close advisor of the Tsar, General Bennigsen (also a German), Admiral Ribas (a native of the island of Malta), the brothers Plato, Nicholas and Valerian Zubov and their sister, in marriage Princes Zherbtsova, the senators Orlov, Chicherin, Tatarinov, Tolstoy, Torschinsky, Generals Golitsyn, Depreradovich, Obolyaninov, Talousin, Mansurov, Uvarov, Argamakov, the officers Colonel Tolbanov, Skaryatin, a certain Prince Yashvil, Lieutenant Marin and very many others (amongst them even General M.I. Kutuzov, one of the prominent Masons of those years). At the head of the conspiracy stood the English consul in Petersburg, Sir Charles Whitford. According to certain data, England paid the plotters two million rubles in gold through him.

“The most important plotters were the Mason-Illuminati, who acted according to the principle of their founder Weishaupt: ‘slander, slander – something will stick!’ Floods of slanderous inventions poured onto the head of the Emperor Paul I. Their aim was to ‘prove’ that he was mad, mentally ill and therefore in the interests of the people (!) and dynasty (!) he could not remain in power. The slander was strengthened by the fact that the Emperor’s orders either were not carried out, or were distorted to an absurd degree, or in his name instructions of a crazy character were given out. Von Pahlen was especially successful in this. He began to insinuate to Paul I that his son Alexander Pavlovich (and also Constantine), with the support of the Empress, wanted to cast him from the throne. And when Paul I was upset by these communications, it was insinuated to his sons and Alexander and Constantine that the Emperor by virtue of a paranoid illness was intending to imprison them together with their mother for good, while he was supposedly intending to place the young Prince Eugene of Wurtemburg, who had then arrived in Russia, on the throne. Noble society was frightened by the fact that Paul I in a fit of madness [supposedly] wanted to execute some, imprison others and still others send to Siberia. Pahlen was the person closest to the Tsar and they could not fail to believe him! While he, as he later confessed, was trying to deceive everyone, including Great Prince Alexander.
At first the latter was told that they were talking about removing his father the Emperor from power (because of his ‘illness’), in order that Alexander should become regent-ruler. Count N.P. Panin sincerely believed precisely in this outcome of the affair, as did many other opponents of Paul I who had not lost the last trace of humanity. At first Alexander did not at all agree with the plot, and prepared to suffer everything from his father to the end. But Panin, and then Pahlen convinced him that the coup was necessary for the salvation of the Fatherland! Alexander several times demanded an oath from the plotters that they would not allow any violence to his father and would preserve his life. These oaths were given, but they lied intentionally, as Pahlen later boasted, only in order to ‘calm the conscience’ of Alexander.\footnote{Alan Palmer writes: “One of the older conspirators, more sober than the others, pertinently asked the question which Alexander had always ignored: what would happen if the Tsar offered resistance? ‘Gentlemen,’ Pahlen replied calmly, ‘you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs’. It was an ominous remark, difficult to reconcile with his assurance to Alexander” (Alexander I, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 44). (V.M.)}

They convinced Constantine Pavlovich in approximately the same way. The coup was marked for the end of March, 1801. Before this Ribas died, and Panin landed up in exile, from which he did not manage to return. The whole leadership of the plot passed to Pahlen, who from the beginning wanted to kill the Emperor. Many people faithful to his Majesty knew about this, and tried to warn him. Napoleon also heard about all this through his own channels, and hastened to inform Paul I in time.... On March 7, 1801 Paul I asked Pahlen directly about the plot. He confirmed its existence and said that he himself was standing at the head of the plotters, since only in this way could he know what was going on and prevent it all at the necessary moment... This time, too, Pahlen succeeded in deceiving the Tsar, but he felt that it would not do that for long, and that he himself ‘was hanging by a thread’. He had to hurry, the more so in that many officials, generals and especially all the soldiers were devoted to Paul I. Besides, the Jesuits, who were at war with the Illuminati, knew everything about the plot in advance. In the afternoon of March 11, in the Tsar’s reception-room, Pater Gruber appeared with a full and accurate list of the plotters and data on the details. But they managed not to admit the Jesuit to an audience with Paul I. Palen told Alexander that his father had already prepared a decree about his and the whole Royal Family’s incarceration in the Schlisselburg fortress, and that for that reason it was necessary to act without delay. Detachments of units loyal to Paul I were removed from the Mikhailov castle, where he lived. On March 11, 1801 the father invited his sons Alexander and Constantine and personally asked them whether they had any part in the conspiracy, and, having received a negative reply, considered it necessary that they should swear as it were for a second time to their faithfulness to him as to their Tsar. The sons swore, deceptively... On the night of the 11\textsuperscript{th} to 12\textsuperscript{th} of March, 1801, an English ship entered the Neva with the aim of taking the conspirators on board in case they failed. Before that Charles Whitford had been exiled from Russia. Zherebtsova-Zubova was sent to him in England so as to prepare a place for the conspirators there if it proved necessary to flee. On the night of the 12\textsuperscript{th} March up to 60 young officers who had been punished for misdemeanours were assembled at Palen’s house and literally pumped with spirits. One of them drunkenly remarked that it would be good for Russia if all the
members of the Royal Family were slaughtered at once! The rest rejected such an idea with horror, but it spoke volumes! After much drinking they all moved by night across Mars field to the Mikhailov castle. There the brave officers were scared to death by some crows which suddenly took wing at night in an enormous flock and raised a mighty cry. As became clear later, some of the young officers did not even know where they were being led and why! But the majority knew. One by one (and frightening each other), they managed to enter in two groups into Paul I’s bedroom, having killed one faithful guard, a chamber-hussar at the doors (the second ran for the sentry). Paul I, hearing the noise of a fight, tried to run through a secret door, but a tapestry, ‘The School in Athens’, a gift from the murdered king and queen of France, fell on top of him. The plotters caught the Tsar. Bennigsen declared to him that they were arresting him and that he had to abdicate from the throne, otherwise they could not vouch for the consequences. The greatly disturbed Paul I did not reply. He rushed to a room where a gun was kept, trying to break out of the ring of his murderers, but they formed a solid wall around him, breathing in the face of the Emperor, reeking of wine and spitefulness. Where had the courtier nobles disappeared! ‘What have I done to you?’ asked Paul I. ‘You have tormented us for four years!’ was the reply. The drunken Nicholas Zubov took hold of the Emperor by the hand, but the latter struck the scoundrel on the hand and repulsed him. Zubov took a swing and hit the Tsar on the left temple with a golden snuff-box given by Catherine II, wounding his temple-bone and eyes. Covered with blood, Paul I fell to the ground. The brutalized plotters hurled themselves at him, trampled on him, beat him, suffocated him. Special zeal was displayed by the Zubovs, Skoriatin, Yashvil, Argamakov and, as people think, Pahlen (although there are reasons for thinking that he took no personal part in the fight). At this point the sentries made up of Semenovtsy soldiers faithful to Alexander appeared (the soldiers had not been initiated into the plot). Bennigsen and Pahlen came out to them and said that the Tsar had died from an attack of apoplexy and now his son Alexander was on the throne. Pahlen rushed into Alexander’s rooms. On hearing of the death of his father, Alexander sobbed. ‘Where is your oath? You promised not to touch my father!’ he cried. ‘Enough of crying! They’re going to lift all of us on their bayonets! Please go out to the people!’ shouted Pahlen. Alexander, still weeping, went out and began to say something to the effect that he would rule the state well... The sentries in perplexity were silent. The soldiers could not act against the Heir-Tsarevich, but they could also not understand what had happened. But the simple Russian people, then and later and even now (!) understood well. To this day (since 1801) believing people who are being oppressed by the powerful of this world in Petersburg (and recently also in Leningrad) order pannikhidas for ‘the murdered Paul’, asking for his intercession. And they receive what they ask for!

“And so the plot of the Russian nobles against the Emperor they did not like succeed. Paul I was killed with the clear connivance of his sons. The eldest of them, Alexander, became the Tsar of Russia. In the first hours and days nobody yet suspected how all this would influence the destiny of the country in the future and the personal destiny and consciousness of Alexander I himself. All the plotters had an evil end. Some were removed by Alexander I, others were punished by the Lord
Himself. The main regicide Pahlen was quickly removed from all affairs and sent into exile on his estate. There he for a long time went mad, becoming completely irresponsible. Nicholas Zubov and Bennigsen also went mad (Zubov began to eat his own excreta). Having falsely accused Paul I of being mentally ill, they themselves became truly mentally ill! God is not mocked. ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay’, He said. The joy of the Russian nobility was not especially long-lived. Alexander I and then Nicholas I were nevertheless sons of their father! Both they and the Emperors who followed them no longer allowed the nobility to rule them. Immediately the Russian nobility understood this, that is, that they no longer had any power over the Autocracy, they began to strive for the annihilation of the Autocracy in Russia altogether, which they succeeded in doing, finally, in February, 1917 – true, to their own destruction!.. Such was the zig-zag of Russian history, beginning with Catherine I and ending with Nicholas II.

“The reign of Emperor Paul Petrovich predetermined the following reigns in the most important thing. As we have seen, this Tsar ‘turned his face’ towards the Russian Orthodox Church, strengthened the foundations of the Autocracy and tried to make it truly of the people. Personally this cost him his life. But thereby the later foundations were laid for the State life of Russia in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries: ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality!’ Or, in its military expression – ‘For the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland!’”356

“The prophecy of the clairvoyant monk Abel was completely fulfilled. He personally foretold to the Emperor Paul: ‘Your reign will be short, and I, the sinner, see your savage end. On the feast of St. Sophronius of Jerusalem you will receive a martyric death from unfaithful servants. You will be suffocated in your bedchamber by evildoers whom you warm on your royal breast... They will bury you on Holy Saturday... But they, these evildoers, in trying to justify their great sin of regicide, will proclaim that you are mad, and will blacken your good memory.... But the Russian people with their sensitive soul will understand and esteem you, and they will bring their sorrows to your grave, asking for your intercession and the softening of the hearts of the unrighteous and cruel.’ This part of the prophecy of Abel was also fulfilled. When Paul was killed, for many years the people came to his grave to pray, and he is considered by many to be an uncanonical saint.”357

---

356 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 245-249.
14. TSAR ALEXANDER THE BLESSED

Monk Abel prophesied the following about Paul’s son and successor, Tsar Alexander I: “Under him the French will burn down Moscow, but he will take Paris from them and will be called the Blessed. But his tsar’s crown will be heavy for him, and he will change the exploit of service as tsar for the exploit of fasting and prayer, and he will be righteous in God’s eyes.”\textsuperscript{358}

St. Petersburg and Moscow, liberalism and autocracy, the false “inner church” of Masonry and the True Church of Orthodoxy, divided Alexander’s heart between them, making his reign a crossroads in Russian history. Finally he was forced to make his choice for Orthodoxy by the appearance of that supreme representative of the despotic essence of the revolution – Napoleon.

\textit{Until the Peace of Tilsit}

The reign of Tsar Alexander can be divided into three phases: a first phase until 1812, when he was strongly influenced by the ideas of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment; a second phase from 1812 to about 1822, when the main influence on him was a kind of romantic mysticism; and a third phase until his death, when he returned to True Orthodoxy. Tsar Alexander faced, in a particularly acute form, the problems faced by all the “enlightened despots” of the eighteenth century – that is, how to relieve the burdens of his people without destroying the autocratic system that held the whole country together. Like his fellow despots, Alexander was strongly influenced by the ideals of the French revolution and by the Masonic ferment that had penetrated the nobility of Russia no less than the élites of Western Europe. So it is not surprising that he should have wavered between the strictly autocratic views of his mother the Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna, the Holy Synod and the court historian Nicholas Karamzin, on the one hand, and the liberalism of the Masons that surrounded him, on the other.

Karamzin was one of the first inteligenty, together with the poet Pushkin, who called for a return to Russian traditions in public life, and in particular to the Russian language, after the century of forced westernization since Peter the Great. Karamzin believed that Russia had nothing to be ashamed of by comparison with the West. Nor did he accept the western vogue for republicanism. “Russia was founded through victories and one-man-rule; she perished [at the end of the Kievan period] because of a variety of rulers; and it was saved by the wise autocracy [of the Muscovite tsars].”\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{358} Shabelsky-Bork, in Fomin S., \textit{Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem} (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{359} Karamzin, “Zapiska o novoj i drevenej Rossi i ee politicheskom i grazhdanskom otnosheniakh” (Note on the new and ancient Russia and her political and civil relations), 1811; in N.G. Fyodorovsky, \textit{V poiskakh svoego puti: Rossia mezhdu Evropoj i Aziej} (In Search of her own path: Russia between Europe and Asia), Moscow, 1997, p. 27.
And yet the autocrat of all the Russias had his doubts about autocracy. Only ten days after the death of his father, Alexander returned to the Winter Palace one night to find an anonymous letter on his desk, full of liberal, anti-autocratic sentiments of the kind that Alexander had espoused in his youth.360 “Is it possible,” it asked, “to set aside the hope of nations in favour of the sheer delight of self-rule?… No! He will at last open the book of fate which Catherine merely perceived. He will give us immutable laws. He will establish them for ever by an oath binding him to all his subjects. To Russia he will say, ‘Here lie the bounds to my autocratic power and to the power of those who will follow me, unalterable and everlasting.’”

The author turned out to be a member of the chancery staff, Karazin. “There followed,” writes Alan Palmer, “an episode which anywhere except Russia would have seemed fantastic. When summoned to the Tsar’s presence, Karazin feared a severe rebuke for his presumption. But Alexander was effusively magnanimous. He embraced Karazin warmly and commended his sense of patriotic duty. Karazin, for his part, knelt in tears at Alexander’s feet, pledging his personal loyalty. Then the two men talked at length about the problems facing the Empire, of the need to safeguard the people from acts of arbitrary tyranny and to educate them so that they could assume in time the responsibilities of government…”361

Alexander was further hindered in breaking with his liberal past by the guilt he felt at not stopping his father’s murder, and by the fact that he was still surrounded by many of those Masons who had murdered his father. The result was a continual increase in the power of Masonry, which was not without its effect on the conduct of government. Thus within a few weeks of ascending the throne Alexander formed a neglassny komitet (secret committee) composed of three or four people of liberal views who with the emperor plotted the transformation of Russia on liberal lines.

“On June 24, 1801,” writes V.F. Ivanov, “the secret committee opened its proceedings. Alexander called it, on the model of the revolution of 1789, ‘the Committee of public safety’, and its opponents from the conservative camp – ‘the Jacobin gang’.

“There began criticism of the existing order and of the whole government system, which was recognised to be ‘ugly’. The firm and definite conclusion was reached that ‘only a constitution can muzzle the despotic government’”.362

However, Alexander’s coronation in September, 1801, in Moscow, the heart of Old Russia with its autocratic traditions, pulled him in the opposite direction to the

360 Alexander had once said to his tutor [La Harpe, a Swiss republican]: “Once… my turn comes, then it will be necessary to work, gradually of course, to create a representative assembly of the nation which, thus directed, will establish a free constitution, after which my authority will cease absolutely” (in Geoffrey Hosking, Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 123).
362 Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 246.
liberal ideas of St. Petersburg. “After being anointed with Holy Oil by the Metropolitan, Alexander swore a solemn oath to preserve the integrity of the Russian lands and the sacred concept of autocracy; and he was then permitted, as one blessed by God, to pass through the Royal Doors into the Sanctuary where the Tsars had, on this one occasion in their lives, the privilege of administering to themselves the Holy Sacrament. But Alexander felt unworthy to exercise the priestly office in this way; and, as [Metropolitan] Platon offered him the chalice, he knelt to receive communion as a member of the laity. Although only the higher clergy and their acolytes witnessed this gesture of humility, it was soon known in the city at large and created a deep impression of the new Tsar’s sense of spiritual discipline.”

“The movement was encouraged,” writes Janet Hartley, “by the rumours, which cannot be substantiated, that Alexander I became a mason (he certainly visited lodges in Russia and Germany); his younger brother Constantine certainly was a mason. Regional lodges continued to flourish and young army officers who accompanied Russian forces through Europe in 1813 and 1814 also attended, and were influenced by, lodges in the territory through which they passed. The constitutions of secret societies which were formed by army officers in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, like the Order of the Russian Knights and the Union of Salvation and Welfare, copied some of their rules and hierarchical organization from masonic lodges. In 1815, the higher orders of masonry in Russia were subordinated to the Astrea grand lodge.”

In January, 1800 A.F. Labzin opened the “Dying Sphinx” lodge in Petersburg. The members of the order were sworn to sacrifice themselves and all they had to the aims of the lodge, whose existence remained a closely guarded secret. In 1806 Labzin founded The Messenger of Zion as the vehicle of his ideas. Suppressed at first by the Church hierarchy, it was allowed to appear by Prince Golitsyn in 1817. “The Messenger of Zion,” writes Walicki, “preached the notion of ‘inner Christianity’ and the need for a moral awakening. It promised its readers that once they were morally reborn and vitalized by faith, they would gain suprarational powers of cognition and be able to penetrate the mysteries of nature, finding in them a key to a superior revelation beyond the reach of the Church.

“Labzin’s religion was thus a nondenominational and antiecclesiastical Christianity. Men’s hearts, he maintained, had been imbued with belief in Christ on the first day of creation; primitive pagan peoples were therefore closer to true

364 The Masonic historian Richard Rhoda writes: “The tradition exists that Alexander became a Mason in 1803 and there is evidence that he was the member of a lodge in Warsaw” (“Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, paper read at Orient Lodge № 15 on June 29, 1996, http://members.aol.com/houltonme/ru.htm). (V.M.) But, as we shall see, he later repented and banned Masonry. (V.M.)
Christianity than nations that had been baptized but were blinded by the false values of civilization. The official Church was only an assembly of lower-category Christians, and the Bible a ‘silent mentor who gives symbolic indications to the living teacher residing in the heart’. All dogmas, according to Labzin, were merely human inventions: Jesus had not desired men to think alike, but only to act justly. His words ‘Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden’ showed that he did not mean to set up any intermediate hierarchy between the believers and God.”

In 1802 A.A. Zherebtsov opened the “United Friends” lodge in Petersburg. Its aim was “to remove between men the distinctions of races, classes, beliefs and views, and to destroy fanaticism and superstition, and annihilate hatred and war, uniting the whole of humanity through the bonds of love and knowledge.” Then there was the society of Count Grabianka, “The People of God”. “The aim of the society was ‘to announce at the command of God the imminent Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious reign upon earth’ and to prepare the humble and faithful souls for the approaching Kingdom of God. ‘As in the Rosecrucian lodges,’ writes Sokolskaia, ‘in the lodge of Count Grabianka people indulged, besides theosophy, in alchemy and magic. But while asserting that the brothers of the “Golden Rose Cross” had as their object of study ‘white, Divine magic’, the leaders of the Rosecrucians accused the followers of Count Grabianka of indulging in reading books of black magic and consorting with evil spirits. In sorrow at the lack of firmness of these brothers, who had become enmeshed in a new teaching, the leaders wrote: ‘Those who are known to us are wavering on their path and do not know what to join. And – God have mercy on them! – they are falling into the hands of evil magicians or Illuminati…”

Tsar Paul had been murdered with the connivance of the British. Knowing this, writes Alan Palmer, Alexander “did not trust the British..., and much that Consul Bonaparte was achieving in France appealed to his own political instincts. Provided Napoleon had no territorial ambitions in the Balkans or the eastern Mediterranean, Alexander could see no reason for a clash of interests between France and Russia. The Emperor’s ‘young friends’ on the Secret Committee agreed in general with him rather than with [the Anglophile] Panin, and when Alexander discussed foreign affairs with them during the late summer of 1801, they received the impression that he favoured settling differences with France as a preliminary to a policy of passive isolation. As St. Helens wrote to Hawksbury shortly before Alexander’s departure for Moscow, ‘The members of the Emperor’s Council, with whom he is particularly connected... been... zealous in promoting the intended peace with France, it being their professed System to endeavour to disengage the Emperor from all foreign Concerns... and induce him to direct his principal attention to the affairs of the Interior.”

---

368 Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
369 Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
However, the influence of Napoleon on Alexander began to wane after the Russian Emperor’s meeting with the Prussian king Frederick William and his consort Queen Louise in June, 1802. The closeness of the two monarchs threatened to undermine the Tsar’s policy of splendid isolation from the affairs of Europe, and alarmed his foreign minister Kochubey, as well as annoying the French. But isolation was no longer a practical policy as Napoleon continued to encroach on the rights of the German principalities, and so Alexander replaced his foreign minister and, in May, 1803, summoned General Arakcheev to strengthen the Russian army in preparation for possible conflicts in the future…

In 1804 the Duc d’Enghien was kidnapped by French agents, tried and executed as a traitor. “Alexander was enraged by the crime. The Duc d’Enghien was a member of the French royal house. By conniving at his kidnapping and execution the First Consul became, in Alexander’s eyes, a regicide. Nor was this the only cause of the Tsar’s indignation. He regarded the abduction of the Duke from Baden as a particular insult to Russia, for Napoleon had been repeatedly reminded that Alexander expected the French authorities to respect the lands of his wife’s family. His response was swift and dramatic. A meeting of the Council of State was convened in mid-April at which it was resolved, with only one dissentient voice, to break off all diplomatic contact with France. The Russian Court went into official mourning and a solemn note of protest was despatched to Paris.

“But the French paid little regard to Russian susceptibilities. Napoleon interpreted Alexander’s complaint as unjustified interference with the domestic affairs and internal security of France. He entrusted the reply to Talleyrand, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a bland statement appeared in the official Moniteur: ‘If, when England prepared the assassination of Paul I, the Russian Government had discovered that the organizers of the plot were no more than a league away from the frontier, would it not have seized them at once?’ No allusion could have been better calculated to wound the Tsar than this deliberate reference to the circumstances of his own accession. It was a rhetorical question which he found hard to forgive or forget. A month later news came from Paris that the First Consul had accepted from the French Senate the title of Emperor. Now, to all his other transgressions, Napoleon had added contempt for the dynastic principle. Resolutely the successor of Peter the Great refused to acknowledge the newest of empires.”

Alexander now formed a defensive alliance with Austria and Prussia against France (there were extensive negotiations with Britain, too, but no final agreement was reached). The Tsar and his new foreign minister, the Polish Mason Adam Czartoryski, added an interesting ideological element to the alliance. “No attempt would be made to impose discredited regimes from the past on lands liberated from French military rule. The French themselves were to be told that the Coalition was fighting, not against their natural rights, but against a government which was ‘no less a tyranny for France than the rest of Europe’. The new map of the continent must rest on principles of justice: frontiers would be so drawn that they coincided

370 Palmer, op. cit., pp. 81-82.
with natural geographical boundaries, provided outlets for industries, and associated in one political unit ‘homogeneous peoples able to agree among themselves’.”

Appealing to peoples over the heads of their rulers, and declaring that states should be made up of homogeneous ethnic units were, of course, innovative steps, derived from the French revolution, which presented considerable dangers for multi-ethnic empires such as the Russian and the Austrian. Similarly new and dangerous was the idea that the nation was defined by blood alone. None of these ideological innovations appealed to the other nations, and the Coalition (including Britain) that was eventually patched up in the summer of 1805 was motivated more by Napoleon’s further advances in Italy than by a common ideology.

However, although the British defeated Napoleon at sea at Trafalgar, it was a different story on land. At Austerlitz the Allies lost between 25,000 and 30,000 men killed, wounded or captured. And this was only the beginning. In 1806 Napoleon routed the Prussians at Jena and Auerstadt, and in 1807, after an indecisive conflict at Eylau, he defeated the Russians at Friedstadt. Almost the whole of Europe up to the borders of the Russian empire was in French hands…

Two religious events of the year 1806 gave a deeper and darker hue to the political and military conflict. In France Napoleon re-established the Jewish Sanhedrin, which then proclaimed him the Messiah. Partly in response to this, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church called Napoleon the antichrist, declaring that he was threatening, writes V.F. Ivanov, “to shake the Orthodox Greco-Russian Church, and is trying by a diabolic invasion to draw the Orthodox into temptation and destruction. It said that during the revolution Napoleon had bowed down to idols and to human creatures. Finally, ‘to the greater disgrace of the Church of Christ he has thought up the idea of restoring the Sanhedrin, declaring himself the Messiah, gathering together the Jews and leading them to the final uprooting of all Christian faith”.

In view of this unprecedented anathema, and the solemn pledges he had made to the King of Prussia, it would seem to have been unthinkable for Alexander to enter into alliance with Napoleon at this time. And yet this is precisely what he did at the famous treaty of Tilsit, on the river Niemen, in July, 1807. It came as a terrible shock to many that he should invite Napoleon to the meeting, saying: “Alliance between France and Russia has always been a particular wish of mine and I am convinced that this alone can guarantee the welfare and peace of the world”. Queen Louise of Prussia, who was very close to Alexander, wrote to him: “You have cruelly deceived me”. And it is hard not to agree with her since, with Alexander’s acquiescence, Napoleon took most of the Prussian lands and imposed a heavy indemnity on the Prussians, while Alexander took a part of what had been Prussian territory in Poland,

---

371 Palmer, op. cit., p. 84.
the province of Bialystok. The only concession Alexander was able to wring from the Corsican was that King Frederick should be restored to the heart of his greatly reduced kingdom “from consideration of the wishes of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias”.

“As the days went by with no clear news from Tilsit,” writes Palmer, “the cities of the Empire were again filled with alarming rumours, as they had been after Austerlitz: was Holy Russia to be sold to the Antichrist? For, whatever the fashion on the Niemen, in St. Petersburg and Moscow the Church still thundered on Sundays against Bonaparte, that ‘worshipper of idols and whores’.” Metropolitan Platon of Moscow wrote to the Tsar warning him not to trust Napoleon, whose ultimate aim was to subjugate the whole of Europe. In other letters, Platon compared Napoleon to Goliath and to “the Pharaoh, who will founder with all his hosts, just as the other did in the Red Sea”.

Of course, in view of his crushing military defeats, Alexander was in a weak position at Tilsit. Nevertheless, if he could not defeat his enemy, he did not have to enter into alliance with him or legitimise his conquests, especially since Napoleon did not (at that time) plan to invade Russia. To explain Alexander’s behaviour, which went against the Church, his Allies and most of public opinion at home, it is not sufficient to point to the liberal ideas of his youth, although those undoubtedly played a part. It is necessary to point also to a personal factor, the romantically seductive powers of that truly antichristian figure, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon had already seduced a whole generation of young people in Europe and America; so it is hardly surprising that the Tsar should also have come under his spell.

As Tsaritsa Elizabeth wrote to her mother: “You know, Mamma, this man seems to me like an irresistible seducer who by temptation or force succeeds in stealing the hearts of his victims. Russia, the most virtuous of them, has defended herself for a long time; but she has ended up no better than the others. And, in the person of her Emperor, she has yielded as much to charm as to force. He feels a secret attraction to his enticer which is apparent in all he does. I should indeed like to know what magic it is that he [Napoleon] employs to change people’s opinions so suddenly and so completely…”

Michael Mikhailovich Speransky

In any case, “the peace of Tilsit,” writes Ivanov, “did not bring pacification. A year after Tilsit a meeting took place at Erfurt between Napoleon and Alexander, to which Alexander brought Speransky. At this last meeting Napoleon made a huge

---

375 Papmehl, op. cit., p. 125.
376 Quoted in Palmer, op. cit., p. 148.
impression and convinced him of the need of reforming Russia on the model of France.

“The historian Professor Shiman in his work, *Alexander I*, writes:

“...And so he (Alexander) took with him to Erfurt the most capable of his officials, the privy councillor Michael Mikhailovich Speransky, and put him in direct contact with Napoleon, who did not miss the opportunity to discuss with him in detailed conversations various questions of administration. The result of these conversations was a whole series of outstanding projects of reform, of which the most important was the project of a constitution for Russia."\(^{377}\)

“Alexander returned to Petersburg enchanted with Napoleon, while his State-Secretary Speransky was enchanted both with Napoleon and with everything French.

“The plan for a transformation of the State was created by Speransky with amazing speed, and in October, 1809 the whole plan was on Alexander’s desk. This plan reflected the dominant ideas of the time, which were close to what is usually called ‘the principles of 1789’.

\(^{377}\) Professor Theodore Shiman, *Alexander I*, Moscow, 1908. L. A. Tikhomirov writes: “From the beginning of the 19th century, the Petrine institutions finally collapsed. Already the practice of our 19th century has reduced ‘the collegiate principle’ to nothing. Under Alexander I the elegant French system of bureaucratic centralisation created by Napoleon on the basis of the revolutionary ideas captivated the Russian imitative spirit. For Russians this was ‘the last word’ in perfection, and Speransky, an admirer of Napoleon, together with the Emperor, an admirer of the republic, created a new system of administration which continued essentially until Emperor Alexander II.

“Alexander I’s institutions completed the absolutist construction of the government machine. Until that time, the very imperfection of the administrative institutions had not allowed them to escape control. The supreme power retained its directing and controlling character. Under Alexander I the bureaucracy was perfectly organised. A strict separation of powers was created. An independent court was created, and a special organ of legislation – the State Council. Ministries were created as the executive power, with an elegant mechanism of driving mechanisms operating throughout the country. The bureaucratic mechanism’s ability to act was brought to a peak by the strictest system of centralisation. But where in all these institutions was the nation and the supreme power?

“The nation was subjected to the ruling mechanism. The supreme power was placed, from an external point of view, at the intersection of all the administrative powers. In fact, it was surrounded by the highest administrative powers and was cut off by them not only from the nation, but also from the rest of the administrative mechanism. With the transformation of the Senate into the highest judicial organ, the supreme power lost in it an organ of control.

“The idea of the administrative institutions is that they should attain such perfection that the supreme power will have no need to conduct any immediate administrative activity. As an ideal this is correct. But in fact there is hidden here the source of a constant usurpation of administrative powers in relation to the supreme power. The point is that the most perfect administrative institutions act in an orderly fashion only under the watchful control of the supreme power and his constant direction. But where control and direction by the supreme power is undermined, the bureaucracy becomes the more harmful the more perfectly it is constructed. With this it acquires the tendency to become de facto free of the supreme power and even submits it to itself...” (Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 342-343).
“1) The source of power is the State, the country.

“2) Only that phenomenon which expresses the will of the people can be considered lawful.

“3) If the government ceases to carry out the conditions on which it was summoned to power, its acts lose legality. The centralised administration of Napoleon’s empire influenced Alexander’s ideas about how he should reform his own administration.

“4) So as to protect the country from arbitrariness, and put a bound to absolute power, it is necessary that it and its organs – the government institutions – should be led in their acts by basic laws, unalterable decrees, which exactly define the desires and needs of the people.

“5) As a conclusion from what has been said: the basic laws must be the work and creation of the nation itself.

“Proceeding from Montesquieu’s proposition that ‘three powers move and rule the state: the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power’, Speransky constructed the whole of his plan on the principle of the division of powers – the legislative, the executive and the judicial. Another masonic truth was introduced, that the executive power in the hands of the ministers must be subject to the legislative, which was concentrated in the State Duma.

“The plot proceeded, led by Speransky, who was supported by Napoleon.

“After 1809 stubborn rumours circulated in society that Speransky and Count N.P. Rumyantsev were more attached to the interests of France than of Russia.

“Karamzin [the historian] in his notes and conversations tried to convince Alexander to stop the carrying out of Speransky’s reforms, which were useless and would bring only harm to the motherland. 378

“Joseph de Maistre saw in the person of Speransky a most harmful revolutionary, who was undermining the foundations of all state principles and was striving by all means to discredit the power of the Tsar.

“For two years his Majesty refused to believe these rumours and warnings. Towards the beginning of 1812 the enemies of Speransky in the persons of

---

378 Speransky was a great admirer of Napoleon’s Civil Code. Karamzin noted, however: “Russia really does not need solemnly to acknowledge her ignorance before all of Europe and to bend graying heads over a volume devised by a few perfidious lawyers and Jacobins. Our political principles do not find inspiration in Napoleon’s Code of Laws, nor in an encyclopedia published in Paris, but in another encyclopedia infinitely older, the Bible.” (in Alexis Troubetskoy (Imperial Legend, Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003, p. 85). (V.M.)
Arakcheev, Shishkov, Armfeldt and Great Princess Catherine Pavlovna convinced his Majesty of the correctness of the general conviction of Speransky’s treachery.

"The following accusations were brought against Speransky: the incitement of the masses of the people through taxes, the destruction of the finances and unfavourable comments about the government.

"A whole plot to keep Napoleon informed was also uncovered. Speransky had been entrusted with conducting a correspondence with Nesselrode, in which the main French actors were indicated under pseudonyms. But Speransky did not limit himself to giving this information: on his own, without authorisation from above, he demanded that all secret papers and reports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be handed over to him. Several officials were found who without objections carried out his desire….

"Then from many honourable people there came warnings about the traitrous activities of Speransky.

"At the beginning of 1812 the Swedish hereditary prince Bernadotte, who was in opposition to Napoleon, informed Petersburg that ‘the sacred person of the Emperor is in danger’ and that Napoleon was ready with the help of a big bribe to establish his influence in Russia again.

"A letter was intercepted in which Speransky told a friend about the departure of his Majesty with the aim of inspecting the fortifications that had been raised on the western border, and he used the expression ‘our Boban’. ‘Our Boban’ was a humorous nickname inspired by Voltaire’s story, ‘White Bull’.

"Speransky was completely justly accused of belonging to the most harmful sect of Masonry, the Illuminati. Moreover, it was pointed out that Speransky was not only a member of it, but was ‘the regent of the Illuminati’. 379

"Speransky’s relations with the Martinists and Illuminati were reported by Count Rastopchin, who in his ‘Note on the Martinists’, presented in 1811 to Great Princess Catherine Pavlovna, said that ‘they (the Martinists) were all more or less devoted to

379 In 1810 an Illuminati lodge, “Polar Star”, was opened by the German Lutheran and pantheist mystic Professor I.A. Fessler, whom Speransky had summoned from Germany. Speransky joined this lodge, and Professor Shiman writes that Speransky “was a Freemason who accepted the strange thought of using the organization of the lodge for the reform of the Russian clergy, which was dear to his heart. His plan consisted in founding a Masonic lodge that would have branch-lodges throughout the Russian State and would accept the most capable clergy as brothers. “Speransky openly hated Orthodoxy. With the help of Fessler he wanted to begin a war against the Orthodox Church. The Austrian chargé d’affaires Saint-Julien, wrote in a report to his government on the fall of Speransky that the higher clergy, shocked by the protection he gave to Fessler, whom he had sent for from Germany, and who had the rashness to express Deist, antichristian views, were strongly instrumental in his fall (letter of April 1, 1812). However, our ‘liberators’ were in raptures about Speransky’s activities….” (in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 255) (V.M.)
Speransky, who, without belonging in his heart to any sect, or perhaps any religion, was using their services to direct affairs and keep them dependent on himself.

“Finally, in the note of Colonel Polev, found in Alexander I’s study after his death, the names of Speransky, Fessler, Magnitsky, Zlobin and others were mentioned as being members of the Illuminati lodge...

“On March 11, 1812 Sangley was summoned to his Majesty, who informed him that Speransky ‘had the boldness to describe all Napoleon’s military talents and advised him to convene the State Duma and ask it to conduct the war while he absented himself’. ‘Who am I then? Nothing?’, continued his Majesty. ‘From this I see that he is undermining the autocracy, which I am obliged to transfer whole to my heirs.’

“On March 16 Professor Parrot of Derpt university was summoned to the Winter Palace. ‘The Emperor,’ he wrote in a later letter to Emperor Nicholas I, ‘angrily described to me the ingratitude of Speransky, whom I had never seen, expressing himself with feeling that drew tears from him. Having expounded the proof of his treachery that had been presented to him, he said to me: ‘I have decided to shoot him tomorrow, and have invited you here because I wish to know your opinion on this.’

“Unfortunately, his Majesty did not carry out his decision: Speransky had too many friends and protectors. They saved him, but for his betrayal he was exiled to Nizhni Novgorod, and then – in view of the fact that the Nizhni Novgorod nobility were stirred up against him – to Perm.... At a patriotic banquet in the house of the Provincial Governor Prince Gruzinsky in Nizhni Novgorod, the nobles’ patriotism almost cost Speransky his life. ‘Hang him, execute him, burn Speransky on the pyre’ suggested the Nizhni Novgorod nobles.

“Through the efforts of his friends, Speransky was returned from exile and continued his treachery against his kind Tsar. He took part in the organisation of the uprising of the Decembrists, who after the coup appointed him first candidate for the provisional government.”

After the attempted coup, Tsar Nicholas I used him, but told one of his officials to keep an eye on him...

Napoleon’s Invasion of Russia

However, it was Napoleon’s invasion rather than any internal factors that swung the scales in favour of the status quo, thereby paradoxically saving Russia from revolution. Napoleon decided on this fatal step after a gradual cooling in relations between the two countries that ended with Alexander’s withdrawal, in 1810, from

---

the economically disastrous Continental System that Napoleon had established against England. By May, 1811, Tsar Alexander was showing a much firmer, more realistic, attitude to the political and military situation: "Should the Emperor Napoleon make war on me, it is possible, even probable, that we shall be defeated. But this will not give him peace... We shall enter into no compromise agreements; we have plenty of open spaces in our rear, and we shall preserve a well-organized army... I shall not be the first to draw my sword, but I shall be the last to sheathe it... I should sooner retire to Kamchatka than yield provinces or put my signature to a treaty in my conquered capital which was no more than a truce."³⁸¹

The invasion also probably saved Russia from a union with Catholicism, which by now had made its Concordat with Napoleon and was acting, very probably, on Napoleon’s orders. For in 1810 Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, as K.A. Papmehl writes, “became the recipient of ecumenical overtures by the French senator Grégoire (formerly Bishop of Blois), presumably on Napoleon’s initiative. In a letter dated in Paris in May of that year, Grégoire referred to the discussions held in 1717, at the Sorbonne, between Peter I and some French bishops, with a view of exploring the prospects of re-unification. Peter apparently passed the matter on to the synod of Russian bishops who, in their turn, indicated that they could not commit themselves on a matter of such importance without consulting the Eastern Patriarchs. Nothing had been heard from the Russian side since then. Grégoire nevertheless assumed that the consultation must have taken place and asked for copies of the Patriarchs’ written opinions. He concluded his letter by assuring Platon that he was hoping and praying for reunification of the Churches...

“Platon passed the letter to the Synod in St. Petersburg. In 1811 [it] replied to Grégoire, with Emperor Alexander’s approval, to the effect that a search of Russian archives failed to reveal any of the relevant documents. The idea of a union, Platon added, was, in any case ‘contrary to the mood of the Russian people’ who were deeply attached to their faith and concerned with its preservation in a pure and unadulterated form.”³⁸²

Only a few years before, at Tilsit in 1807, the Tsar had said to Napoleon: “In Russia I am both Emperor and Pope – it’s much more convenient.”³⁸³ But this was not true: if Napoleon was effectively both Emperor and Pope in France, this could never be said of the tsars in Russia, damaged though the Orthodox symphony of powers had been by a century of semi-absolutism. And the restraint on Alexander’s power constituted by what remained of that symphony of powers evidently led him to think again about imitating the West too closely, whether politically or ecclesiastically.

³⁸¹ Palmer, op. cit., p. 203.
³⁸² Papmehl, op. cit., p. 85. In 1805 Platon remarked to an English visitor that “the English government had done a very wicked thing in tolerating Popery” (op. cit., p. 82).
That the symphony of powers was still intact was witnessed at the consecration of the Kazan cathedral in St. Petersburg on September 27, 1811, the tenth anniversary of Alexander’s coronation. “There was an ‘immense crowd’ of worshippers and onlookers. Not for many years had the people of St. Petersburg witnessed so solemn a ceremony symbolizing the inter-dependence of Church and State, for this essential bond of Tsardom was customarily emphasized in Moscow rather than in the newer capital. To some it seemed, both at the time and later, that the act of consecration served Alexander as a moment of re-dedication and renewal, linking the pledges he had given at his crowning in Moscow with the mounting challenge from across the frontier. For the rest of the century, the Kazan Cathedral remained associated in people’s minds with the high drama of its early years, so that it became in time a shrine for the heroes of the Napoleonic wars.”

It was from the Kazan Cathedral that Alexander set out at the start of the campaign, on April 21, 1812. As Tsaritsa Elizabeth wrote to her mother in Baden: “The Emperor left yesterday at two o’clock, to the accompaniment of cheers and blessings from an immense crowd of people who were tightly packed from the Kazan Church to the gate of the city. As these folk had not been hustled into position by the police and as the cheering was not led by planted agents, he was – quite rightly – moved deeply by such signs of affection from our splendid people!... ‘For God and their Sovereign’ – that was the cry! They make no distinction between them in their hearts and scarcely at all in their worship. Woe to him who profanes the one or the other. These old-world attitudes are certainly not found more intensively anywhere than at the extremes of Europe. Forgive me, dear Mamma, for regaling you with commonplaces familiar to everyone who has a true knowledge of Russia, but one is carried away when speaking of something you love; and you know my passionate devotion to this country.”

And so Napoleon’s invasion of Russia acquired a significance that the other Napoleonic wars in continental Europe did not have: it became a struggle, not simply between two not-so-different political systems, but between two radically opposed faiths: the faith in the Revolution and the faith in Orthodoxy. 1812 produced an explosion of Russian patriotism and religious feeling. God’s evident support for the heroic Russian armies, at the head of which was the “Reigning” icon of the Mother of God, reanimated a fervent pride and belief in Holy Russia. As K.N. Leontiev writes: “It was ecclesiastical feeling and obedience to the authorities (the Byzantine influence) that saved us in 1812. It is well-known that many of our peasants (not all, of course, but those who were taken unawares by the invasion) found little purely national feeling in themselves in the first minute. They robbed the

---

385 Palmer, op. cit., p. 215. A century later, at the beginning of a still greater war against a western enemy, another German-born Tsaritsa would express almost exactly similar sentiments on seeing her husband and Tsar go to war...
386 That same icon which was to reappear miraculously on March 2, 1917, at another time of mortal danger for the State.
landowners’ estates, rebelled against the nobility, and took money from the French. The clergy, the nobility and the merchants behaved differently. But immediately they saw that the French were stealing the icons and putting horses in our churches, the people became harder and everything took a different turn…”

Of particular significance was the fact that it had been Moscow, the old capital associated with Orthodoxy and the Muscovite tsars, rather than the new and westernized capital of St. Petersburg, which had borne the brunt of the suffering. For it was not so much the indecisive battle of Borodino, a contest in which, according to Napoleon, “the French showed themselves worthy of victory and the Russians of being invincible”\(^\text{388}\), as the burning of Moscow, which destroyed 80% of dwellings in the city, and Alexander’s refusal to surrender even after that, which proved the decisive turning-point, convincing Napoleon that he could not win…

The leadership on both sides made serious mistakes. But it was the French who suffered most from their mistakes. In this, as in many other ways, especially the weather, God was clearly on the side of the Orthodox. Thus early in the campaign terrible rain storms killed thousands of horses that were desperately needed by Napoleon. Then terrible heat killed many soldiers. The late onset of winter tempted Napoleon to stay too long in Moscow. But then, when the winter did come, it was savage…\(^\text{389}\)

The terrible sufferings of the French on their return march are well-known. There was even cannibalism, - a sure sign of apocalyptic times, - as the soldiers of the Great Army began to put their fellow-soldiers in the stew pots. Out of the vast army - nearly 600,000 men - that set out for Russia, only 120,000 returned, 35,000 of them French. The Russians lost 400,000, but they had saved their homeland…

However, the Russian victory was almost foiled by the intrigues of the Masons, including the commander-in-chief of the army Kutuzov, who, according to Sokolskaia, was initiated into Masonry at the “Three Keys” lodge in Regensburg, and was later received into lodges in Frankfurt, Berlin, Petersburg and Moscow, penetrating into the secrets of the higher degrees.\(^\text{390}\)

The Tsar was against Kutuzov’s appointment, but said: “The public wanted his appointment, I appointed him: as regards myself personally, I wash my hands of him.” He was soon proved right in his premonition. The Russian position at the battle of Borodino was poorly prepared by Kutuzov, and he himself took little part in it. The previous commander-in-chief, Barclay, took the lead and acted heroically, but gained little credit for it.

---

\(^\text{387}\) Leontiev, “Vizantizm i Slavianstvo” (“Byzantinism and Slavdom”), Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 104.

\(^\text{388}\) 70,000 men fell in one day, the largest death-toll in a single day’s warfare until the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916.


\(^\text{390}\) Ivanov, op. cit., p. 261.
In Moscow, the patriotic Count Rastopchin, well aware of the pro-Napoleonic, potentially seditious sentiments of the nobility, had them evacuated from the city with their families while Kutuzov slept. As the Martinist Runich said: “Rastopchin, acting through fear, threw the nobility, the merchants and the non-gentry intellectuals out of Moscow in order that they should not give in to the enticements and influence of Napoleon’s tactics. He stirred up the hatred of the people by the horrors that he ascribed to the foreigners [although he had started it], whom he mocked at the same time. He saved Russia from the yoke of Napoleon.”

“The fire of Moscow started the people’s war. Napoleon’s situation deteriorated from day to day. His army was demoralised. The hungry French soldiers wandered round the outskirts of Moscow searching for bread and provisions. Lootings and murders began. Discipline in the army declined sharply. Napoleon was faced with a threatening dilemma: either peace, or destruction.

“Peace negotiations began. On September 23 at Tarutino camp Kutuzov met Napoleon’s truce-envoy Lauriston. Kutuzov willingly accepted this suggestion and decided to keep the meeting a complete secret. He told Lauriston to meet him outside the camp, beyond the line of our advance posts, on the road to Moscow. Everything was to be done in private and the project for a truce was to be put forward very quickly. This plan for a secret agreement between Napoleon and the Masonic commander-in-chief fell through. Some Russian generals and especially the English agent attached to the Russian army, [General] Wilson, protested against the unofficial secret negotiations with Napoleon. On September 23 Wilson made a scene in front of Kutuzov; he came to him as the representative of the general staff and army generals and declared that the army would refuse to obey him. Wilson was supported by the Duke of Wurttemburg, the Emperor’s uncle, his son-in-law the Duke of Oldenburg and Prince Volkonsky, general-adjutant, who had arrived not long before with a report from Petersburg. Kutuzov gave way, and the meeting with Lauriston took place in the camp headquarters.

“Kutuzov’s failure in securing peace did not stop him from giving fraternal help to Napoleon in the future.

“After insistent urgings from those close to him and at the insistence of his Majesty, Kutuzov agreed to attack near Tarutino.

“The battle of Tarutino revealed the open betrayal of the commander-in-chief.

“’When in the end the third and fourth corps came out of the wood and the cavalry of the main army was drawn up for the attack, the French began a general

---

391 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 264-265. However, Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes that a as a result of the fire of Moscow 15,000 Russian soldiers who were recovering from wounds suffered at Borodino in the military hospitals of the city were burned alive (Le ‘problème russe’ à la fin du xxe siècle (The ‘Russian Problem’ at the End of the 20th Century), Paris: Fayard, 1994, pp. 52-53).
retreat. When the French retreat was already an accomplished fact and the French columns were already beyond Chernishina, Bennigsen moved his armies forward.

“The main forces at the moment of the French retreat had been drawn up for battle. In spite of this, and the persuasions of Yermolov and Miloradovich, Kutuzov decisively refused to move the armies forward, and only a part of the light cavalry was set aside for pursuing the enemy, the rest of the army returned to the Tarutino camp.

“Bennigsen was so enraged by the actions of the field-marshal that after the battle he did not even consider it necessary to display military etiquette in front of him and, on receiving his congratulations on the victory, did not even get off his horse.

“In private conversations he accused Kutuzov not only of not supporting him with the main army for personal reasons, but also of deliberately holding back Osterman’s corps.

“For many this story will seem monstrous; but from the Masonic point of view it was necessary: the Mason Kutuzov was only carrying out his obligations in relation to his brother (Murat), who had been beaten and fallen into misfortune.

“In pursuing the retreating army of Napoleon Kutuzov did not have enough strength or decisiveness to finish once and for all with the disordered French army. During the retreat Kutuzov clearly displayed criminal slowness.

“’The behaviour of the field-marshal drives me mad,’ wrote the English agent General Wilson about this.”

For “the Masonic oath was always held to be higher than the military oath.”

_The Children of 1812_

Orlando Figes writes: “As readers of _War and Peace_ will know, the war of 1812 was a vital watershed in the culture of the Russian aristocracy. It was a war of national liberation from the intellectual empire of the French – a moment when noblemen like the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys struggled to break free from the foreign conventions of their society and began new lives on Russian principles. This was no straightforward metamorphosis (and it happened much more slowly than in Tolstoy’s novel, where the nobles rediscover their forgotten national ways almost overnight). Though anti-French voices had grown to quite a chorus in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the aristocracy was still immersed in the culture of the country against which they were at war. The salons of St. Petersburg were filled with young admirers of Bonaparte, such as Pierre Bezhukhov in _War and Peace_. The most fashionable set was that of Counts Rumiantsev and Caulaincourt, the French ambassador in Petersburg, the circle in which Tolstoy’s Hélène moved. ‘How can we

392 Ivanov, _op. cit._, pp. 269-270, 272.
fight the French?’ asks Count Rostopchin, the Governor of Moscow, in *War and Peace*. ‘Can we arm ourselves against our teachers and divinities? Look at our youths! Look at our ladies! The French are our Gods. Paris is our Kingdom of Heaven.’ Yet even in these circles there was horror at Napoleon’s invasion, and their reaction against all things French formed the basis of a Russian renaissance in life and art.”

This Russian renaissance took many forms. At its simplest it meant that the noble army officers evinced a greater appreciation of the Russian peasants with whom they had marched all the way from Moscow to Paris. In the eighteenth century the only contact the nobility had had with the Russian peasants, their speech and their values, was through their peasant nannies. As Figes shows, this was a vital influence on many nobles, preserving a kind of stream of Russian subconsciousness under their European consciousness. As a result of 1812, this subconscious stream came more to the fore.

One of the consequences of this was the birth of a specifically Russian-language literature in the works of such “children of 1812” as the great poet Pushkin. It was Pushkin who started the trend of looking back to childhood, when the influence of his peasant nanny had been dominant. Thus “compared with their parents, the Russian nobles who grew up after 1812 put a higher valuation on childhood. It took a long time for such attitudes to change, but already by the middle decades of the nineteenth century one can discern a new veneration of childhood on the part of those memoirists and writers who recalled their upbringing after 1812. This nostalgia for the age of childhood merged with a new reverence for the Russian customs which they had known as children through their father’s household serfs.”

Again, the new focus on the Russian language, Russian customs and childhood influences merged with a new focus on history – beginning, of course, with the events of 1812 itself, but going much further back into the childhood of the nation. “‘Oh please, Nurse, tell me again how the French came to Moscow.’ Thus Herzen starts his sublime memoir *My Past and Thoughts*, one of the greatest works of Russian literature. Born in 1812, Herzen had a special fondness for his nanny’s stories of that year. His family had been forced to flee the flames that engulfed Moscow, the young Herzen carried out in his mother’s arms, and it was only through a safe conduct from Napoleon himself that they managed to escape to their Yaroslav estate. Herzen felt great ‘pride and pleasure at [having] taken part in the Great War’. The story of his childhood merged with the national drama he so loved to hear: ‘Tales of the fire of Moscow, of the battle of Borodino, of the Berezina, of the taking of Paris were my cradle songs, my nursery stories, my Iliad and my Odyssey.’ For Herzen’s generation, the myths of 1812 were intimately linked with their childhood memories. Even in the 1850s children were still brought up on the legends of that year. History, myth and memory were intertwined.

---

“For the historian Nikolai Karamzin, 1812 was a tragic year. While his Moscow neighbours moved to their estates, he refused to ‘believe that the ancient holy city could be lost’ and, as he wrote on 20 August, he chose to ‘die on Moscow’s walls’. Karamzin’s house burned down in the fires and, since he had not thought to evacuate his library, he lost his precious books to the flames as well. But Karamzin saved one book – a bulging notebook that contained the draft of his celebrated History of the Russian State (1818-1826). Karamzin’s masterpiece was the first truly national history – not just in the sense that it was the first by a Russian, but also in the sense that it rendered Russia’s past as a national narrative. Previous histories of Russia had been arcane chronicles of monasteries and saints, patriotic propaganda, or heavy tomes of documents compiled by German scholars, unread and unreadable. But Karamzin’s History had a literary quality that made its twelve large volumes a nationwide success. It combined careful scholarship with the narrative techniques of a novelist. Karamzin stressed the psychological motivations of his historical protagonists – even to the point of inventing them – so that his account became more compelling to a readership brought up on the literary conventions of Romantic texts. Medieval tsars like Ivan the Terrible or Boris Godunov became tragic figures in Karamzin’s History – subjects for a modern psychological drama; and from its pages they walked on to the stage in operas by Mussorgsky and Rimsky Korsakov.

“The first eight volumes of Karamzin’s History were published in 1818. ‘Three thousand copies were sold within a month – something unprecedented in our country. Everyone, even high-born ladies, began to read the history of their country,’ wrote Pushkin. ‘It was a revelation. You could say that Karamzin discovered ancient Russia as Columbus discovered America.’ The victory of 1812 had encouraged a new interest and pride in Russia’s past. People who had been raised on the old conviction that there was no history before the reign of Peter the Great began to look back to the distant past for the sources of their country’s unexpected strengths. After 1812 history books appeared at a furious pace. Chairs were established in the universities (Gogol held one for a term at St. Petersburg). Historical associations were set up, many in the provinces, and huge efforts were suddenly devoted to the rescuing of Russia’s past. History became the arena for all those troubling questions about Russia’s nature and its destiny. As Belinsky wrote in 1846, ‘we interrogate our past for an explanation of our present and a hint of our future’.”

Both of the major intellectual movements of the mid-century – the Slavophiles and the Westerners – may be said to have originated in this passion for Russian history, which began after 1812. The Slavophiles believed that the real Russia was to be found in the Orthodox medieval state that existed before Peter the Great, while the Westerners believed that Russian history only really began with Peter and his westernizing reforms. However, both movements represented a turning away from the “pure” westernism of the eighteenth century. For both were speaking in Russian about Russia – and not merely about the upper classes, but about the whole people.

1812 elicited more than patriotic feelings. The victory over Napoleon also elicited an explosion of specifically religious feeling, not least in the Tsar himself, who said: “The burning of Moscow enlightened my soul, and the judgement of God on the icy fields filled my heart with a warmth of faith such as I had not felt before. Then I came to know God as He is depicted in the Holy Scriptures. I am obliged to the redemption of Europe from destruction for my own redemption”. All the crosses and medallions minted in memory of 1812, he said, were to bear the inscription: “Not to us, not to us, but to Thy name give the glory”.

God was teaching the Russians a most important lesson: that those western influences which had so inundated Russia in the century up to 1812, were evil and threatened to destroy Russia. As Bishop Theophan the Recluse wrote some generations later: “We are attracted by enlightened Europe... Yes, there for the first time the pagan abominations that had been driven out of the world were restored; then they passed and are passing to us, too. Inhaling into ourselves these poisonous fumes, we whirl around like madmen, not remembering who we are. But let us recall 1812: Why did the French come to us? God sent them to exterminate that evil which we had taken over from them. Russia repented at that time, and God had mercy on her.”

Tragically, however, that lesson was only superficially learned. Although the Masonic plans to overthrow both Church and State had been foiled, both Masonry and other unhealthy religious influences continued to flourish. And discontent with the existing order was evident in both the upper and the lower classes. Thus the question arose of the emancipation of the peasants, who had played such a great part in the victory, voluntarily destroying their own homes and crops in order to deny them to the French. They hoped for more in return than they actually received. “There was great bitterness,” writes Hosking, “among peasants who returned from their militia service to find that there was no emancipation. Alexander, in his manifesto of 30 August 1814, thanking and rewarding all his subjects for their heroic deeds, said of the peasants simply that they would ‘receive their reward from God’.... Some nobles tried to persuade the authorities not to allow them back, but to leave them in the regular army as ordinary soldiers. The poet Gavriil Derzhavin was informed by his returnees that they had been ‘temporarily released’ and were now state peasants and not obliged to serve him. Rumours circulated that Alexander had intended to free them all, but had been invited to a special meeting of indignant nobles at night in the Senate, from which he had allegedly been rescued, pleading for his life, by his brother Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich.”

Here we have the familiar theme of the people laying the blame for their woes, not on the tsar, but on the nobles. Some peasants may have wanted emancipation and a share in the nobles’ wealth. But they wanted it with the Tsar and through the Tsar, not as the expression of some egalitarian and anti-monarchist ideology. The

---

396 Dobroklonsky, op. cit., p. 666.
397 Bishop Theophan, Mysli na kazhdiy den’ (Thoughts for every day), p. 461.
398 Hosking, op. cit., p. 137.
French revolution in this, its imperialist, expansionist phase, overthrew many kingdoms and laid the seeds for the overthrow of still more. But it broke against the rock of the Russian people’s faith in their God and their Tsar...

However, if the masses of the people were still Orthodox and loyal to the Tsar, this could not be said of the nobility. We have seen the extent to which Masonry penetrated the bureaucracy in the early part of Alexander’s reign. Unfortunately, the triumphant progress of the Russian army into the heart of Masonry, Paris, did not destroy this influence, but only served to strengthen it.

For, as Zamoyski writes, “if nobles at home wanted to keep their serfs, the nobles who served as officers in the armies that occupied Paris were exposed to other, liberal influences. They had been brought up speaking French and reading the same literature as educated people in other countries. They could converse effortlessly with German and English allies as well as with French prisoners and civilians. Ostensibly, they were just like any of the Frenchmen, Britons and Germans they met, yet at every step they were made aware of profound differences. The experience left them with a sense of being somehow outside, almost unfit for participation in European civilisation. And that feeling would have dire consequences...”

All kinds of pseudo-religious mysticism flooded into Russia from the West. There was, writes N. Elagin, “a veritable inundation of ‘mystical’ and pseudo-Christian ideas... together with the ‘enlightened’ philosophy that had produced the French Revolution. Masonic lodges and other secret societies abounded; books containing the Gnostic and millenarian fantasies of Jacob Boehme, Jung-Stilling, Eckhartshausen and other Western ‘mystics’ were freely translated into Russian and printed for distribution in all the major cities of the realm; ‘ecumenical’ salons spread a vague teaching of an ‘inner Christianity’ to the highest levels of Russian society; the press censorship was under the direction of the powerful Minister of Spiritual Affairs, Count Golitsyn, who patronized every ‘mystical’ current and stifled the voice of traditional Orthodoxy by his dominance of the Holy Synod as Procurator; the Tsar Alexander himself, fresh from his victory over Napoleon and the formation of a vaguely religious ‘Holy Alliance’ of Western powers, favored the new religious currents and consulted with ‘prophetesses’ and other religious enthusiasts; and the bishops and other clergy who saw what was going on were reduced to helpless silence in the face of the prevailing current of the times and the Government’s support of it, which promised exile and disgrace for anyone who opposed it. Many even of those who regarded themselves as sincere Orthodox Christians were swept up in the spiritual ‘enthusiasm’ of the times, and, trusting their religious feelings more than the Church’s authority and tradition, were developing a new spirituality, foreign to Orthodoxy, in the midst of the Church itself. Thus, one lady of high birth, Ekaterina P. Tatarinova, claimed to have received the gift of ‘prophecy’ on the very day she was received into the Orthodox Church (from Protestantism), and subsequently she occupied the position of a ‘charismatic’ leader of religious

---

meetings which included the singing of Masonic and sectarian hymns (while holding hands in a circle), a peculiar kind of dancing and spinning when the ‘Holy Spirit’ would come upon them, and actual ‘prophecy’ – sometimes for hours at a time. The members of such groups fancied that they drew closer to the traditions of Orthodoxy by such meetings, which they regarded as a kind of restoration of the New Testament Church for ‘inward’ believers, the ‘Brotherhood in Christ’, as opposed to the ‘outward’ Christians who were satisfied with the Divine services of the Orthodox Church... The revival of the perennial ‘charismatic’ temptation in the Church, together with a vague ‘revolutionary’ spirit imported from the West, presented a danger not merely to the preservation of true Christianity in Russia, but to the very survival of the whole order of Church and State...”

V.N. Zhmakin writes: “From 1812 there began with us in Russia a time of the domination of extreme mysticism and pietism... The Emperor Alexander became a devotee of many people simultaneously, from whatever quarter they declared their religious enthusiasm... He protected the preachers of western mysticism, the Catholic paters... Among the first of his friends and counsellors was Prince A.N. Golitsyn, who was ober-procurator of the Synod from 1803... Prince Golitsyn was the complete master of the Russian Orthodox Church in the reign of Alexander I... Having received no serious religious education, like the majority of aristocrats of that time, he was a complete babe in religious matters and almost an ignoramus in Orthodoxy... Golitsyn, who understood Orthodoxy poorly, took his understanding of it only from its external manifestations... His mystical imagination inclined in favour of secrecy, fancifulness, originality... He became simultaneously the devotee of all the representatives of contemporary mysticism, such as Mrs. Krunder, the society of Quakers, Jung Schtilling, the pastors... etc. Moreover, he became the pitiful plaything of all the contemporary sectarians, all the religious utopians, the representatives of all the religious theories, beginning with the Masons and ending with the ... eunuch Selivanov and the half-mad Tatarinova. In truth, Prince Golitsyn at the same time protected the mystics and the pietists, and gave access into Russia to the English missionaries, and presented a broad field of activity to the Jesuits, who, thanks to the protection of the Minister of Religious Affairs, sowed a large part of Russia with their missions... He himself personally took part in the prayer-meetings of the Quakers and waited, together with them, for the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, he himself took part in the religious gatherings of Tatarinova. In truth, Prince Golitsyn at the same time protected the mystics and the pietists, and gave access into Russia to the English missionaries, and presented a broad field of activity to the Jesuits, who, thanks to the protection of the Minister of Religious Affairs, sowed a large part of Russia with their missions... He himself personally took part in the prayer-meetings of the Quakers and waited, together with them, for the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, he himself took part in the religious gatherings of Tatarinova, which were orgies reminiscent of the Shamans and khlysts.... Thanks to Prince Golitsyn, mystical literature received all rights of citizenship in Russia – works shot through with mystical ravings were distributed en masse... By the direct order of Prince Golitsyn all the more significant mystical works and translations were distributed to all the dioceses to the diocesan bishops. In some dioceses two thousand copies of one and the same work were sent to some dioceses... Prince Golitsyn... acted... in the name of the Holy Synod... and in this way contradicted himself;... the Synod as it were in its own name distributed works which actually went right against Orthodoxy.... He strictly persecuted the appearance of such works as were

negatively oriented towards mysticism... Many of the simple people, on reading the mystical works that came into their hands, ... were confused and perplexed.”

Something of the atmosphere of St. Petersburg at that time can be gathered from the recollections of the future Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), when he went there for service in the newly reformed ecclesiastical schools in 1809. “The Synod greeted him with the advice to read ‘Swedenborg’s Miracles’ and learn French. He was taken to court to view the fireworks and attend a masquerade party in order to meet Prince Golitsyn..., quite literally ‘amidst the noise of a ball’... This was Philaret’s first masquerade ball, and he had never before seen a domino. ‘At the time I was an object of amusement in the Synod,’ Philaret recalled, ‘and I have remained a fool’.”

As Alexander pursued the remnants of Napoleon’s Great Army into Poland in the bitterly cold winter of 1812-13, he was “in a state bordering on religious ecstasy. More and more he turned to the eleventh chapter of the Book of Daniel with the apocalyptic vision of how the all-conquering King of the South is cast down by the King of the North. It seemed to him as if the prophecies, which had sustained him during the dark days of autumn and early winter, were now to be fulfilled: Easter this year would come with a new spiritual significance of hope for all Europe. ‘Placing myself firmly in the hands of God I submit blindly to His will,’ he informed his friend Golitsyn from Radzonow, on the Wrkra. ‘My faith is sincere and warm with passion. Every day it grows firmer and I experience joys I had never known before... It is difficult to express in words the benefits I gain from reading the Scriptures, which previously I knew only superficially... All my glory I dedicate to the advancement of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ’... At Kalisch (Kaliz) on the border of the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw and Prussia the Tsar concluded a convention with Frederick William: the agreement provided for a close military alliance between Russia and Prussia, stipulating the size of their respective contingents and promising Prussia territory as extensive as in 1806; but the final clauses went beyond the normal language of diplomacy to echo Alexander’s religious inspiration. ‘Let all Germany join us in our mission of liberation,’ the Kalisch Treaty said. ‘The hour has come for obligations to be observed with that religious faith, that sacred inviolability which holds together the power and permanence of nations.’”

The Peace of Europe

But should Russia go further west into Germany and liberate the whole of Western Europe? Kutuzov and most of the senior officers were against it. “Even the most ardent Russian patriots, such as his Minister of the Interior Admiral Shishkov and the Archimandrite Filaret, were against Alexander’s proposed liberation of Europe. The consensus was that Russia should help herself to East Prussia and much

---

of Poland, providing herself with some territorial gain and a defensible western border, and leave it at that. But Alexander ignored them."

Many have criticized Alexander’s subsequent behaviour in the years 1813-1815. And there was indeed much to criticize. He was an indifferent general and diplomat, and at the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815 the lack of congruence between his proclaimed principles and his actual behaviour squandered for him much of the goodwill that the great sufferings of the Russian people in 1812 had won.

Nevertheless, on the critical question whether he should have stopped at the Vistula or continued all the way to Paris, in hindsight we must conclude that Alexander was right and his critics were wrong. Napoleon’s power was by no means broken in 1813; and if Alexander’s troops had not taken part in the great battle that did finally break it, at Leipzig in October, 1813, it is likely that the ogre would have retaken the whole of Germany and Poland up to the Vistula. True, the ever-chivalrous Alexander was unwise in giving him the island of Elba, very close to the mainland, from which he escaped in 1815, only to be finally defeated with great difficulty at Waterloo in June. However, the Tsar showed great tenacity of purpose, in contrast to his weakness at Tilsit, in pushing all the way to Paris and the complete overthrow of the antichrist-emperor, and must take the main credit for finally seeing the restoration of legitimate monarchism in France and throughout Continental Europe.

Perhaps the best measure of his victory was the Orthodox Divine Liturgy celebrated on Alexander’s namesday, September 12, 1815, on seven altars on the Plaine de Vertus, eighty miles east of Paris, in the presence of the Russian army and all the leading political and military leaders of Europe. Neither before nor since in the modern history of Europe has there been such a universal witness, by all the leaders of the Great Powers, to the true King of kings and Lord of lords. And if this was just a diplomatic concession on the part of the non-Orthodox powers, it was much more than that for Alexander. His Orthodox spirit, so puzzling to the other leaders of Europe, was manifested in a letter he wrote that same evening: “This day has been the most beautiful in all my life. My heart was filled with love for my enemies. In tears at the foot of the Cross, I prayed with fervour that France might be saved…”

A few days later Alexander presented his fellow sovereigns with a treaty designed to bind them in a union in faith and virtue, requiring them “to take as their sole guide the precepts of the Christian religion”. The Tsar insisted on proclaiming the treaty dedicated “to the Holy and Indivisible Trinity” in Paris because it was the most irreligious of all Europe’s capital cities. Only the King of Prussia welcomed the idea. The Emperor of Austria was embarrassed; and in private agreed with his

---


405 Palmer, op. cit., p. 333.

406 Palmer, op. cit., p. 335.
chancellor, Metternich, that Alexander was mad. On the British side, the Duke of Wellington confessed that he could hardly keep a straight face; he and Castlereagh mocked it in private.\textsuperscript{407}

Alexander’s supporters applauded the idea in spite of its ecumenist overtones. Thus Golitsyn wrote in positively chiliastic terms: “This act cannot be recognized as anything other than a preparation for that promised kingdom of the Lord which will be upon the earth as in the heavens.”\textsuperscript{408} And the future Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: “Finally the kingdoms of this world have begun to belong to our Lord and His Christ”.\textsuperscript{409}

The more cynical attitude of the foreign statesmen was not unexpected. After all, religion had long ceased to be seen as the basis of political life in the West. True, the monarchs protected religion as a foundation of their own monarchical power; but in the post-1815 settlement the Catholic Church received few of its lands back, which showed their true attitude to it. Nevertheless, Tsar Alexander was now the most powerful man in Europe, and the others could not afford to reject his religio-political project out of hand. So, led by Metternich, they set about discreetly editing the treaty of its more mystical elements until it was signed by the monarchs of Russia, Austria and Prussia (the British and the Turks opted out, as did the Pope of Rome) on September 26.\textsuperscript{410}

\textsuperscript{407} Zamoyski, \textit{Rites of Peace}, pp. 520-522.

\textsuperscript{408} Quoted by Fr. Georges Florovsky, “Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij” (“Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow”), in \textit{Vera i Kal'tura} (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 265.

\textsuperscript{409} Quoted in Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), \textit{Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' mitropolita Filareta} (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret), Tula, 1994, p. 121. Philaret appears to have been influenced by the ecumenism of his sovereign at this time. For in 1815 he wrote in his \textit{Conversations between one testing and one convinced of the Orthodoxy of the Greco-Russian Church}: “Insofar as the one [the Eastern Church] and the other [the Western Church] confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, in this respect they have a common Spirit, which ‘is of God’. ... Know that, holding to the above-quoted words of Holy Scripture, I do not dare to call any Church which believes ‘that Jesus is the Christ’ false” (Snychev, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 402, 408 (in Russian)). However, in defence of the holy metropolitan, it should be pointed out that in the above-quoted work he rejected the heresies of papism, and that he never served with heterodox hierarchs or sought union with the heterodox churches. And he revered his mentor, Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, who during his journey to Kiev and other Russian cities in 1804 reproached “the Russian authorities for following ‘that new-fangled mode of thinking which is called tolerance’ in their relations with the Jesuits, and blamed the Jews for the impoverishment of the Christian population in the areas in which they are numerous” (Papmehl, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81).

\textsuperscript{410} Palmer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 333-334. The mocking attitude of the British to the Holy Alliance is revealed by the fact that, as Norman Davies writes, “in each of the subsequent Congresses held at Troppau (1820), Laibach (1821), and Verona (1822), the British held strong reservations about the successive expeditions for crushing revolution in Naples, Greece, and Spain. On the critical issue of the revolt of Spain’s South American colonies, the British Foreign Secretary, George Canning, joined the US President, James Monroe, in forbidding any sort of European intervention in the Americas. ‘I called the New World into existence,’ he told the House of Commons in 1826, ‘to redress the Balance of the Old.’ In effect, he killed the Congress System stone dead. ‘Things are getting back to a wholesome state,’ he remarked shortly before his death. ‘Every nation for itself, and God for us all’” (\textit{Europe: A History}, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 763).
“Conformably to the word of the Holy Scriptures,” declared the signatories, “the three contracting Monarchs will remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity, and considering each other as fellow countrymen, they will on all occasions, and in all places lead each other aid and assistance; and regarding themselves towards their subjects and armies as fathers of families, they will lead them, in the same fraternity with which they are animated to protect religion, peace and justice.”411 This was not only the beginning of a new, multilateral approach to politics: it was also the beginning of a kind of United Nations, with the great monarchical powers as the security council who pledged themselves not to take major decisions on the international stage without consulting each other. Moreover, it was a consciously Christian United Nations; for the powers declared themselves to be “members of a single Christian nation” – a remarkable idea in view of the fact that of the three members of the Alliance, one, Russia, was Orthodox, another, Austria, was Catholic, and the third, Prussia, was Protestant.

The most important achievement of the Holy Alliance was the re-establishment of the monarchical principle, and in particular of hereditary monarchism. We have seen that even Napoleon’s regime had acquired monarchical trappings; but he had failed to make it truly hereditary. Thus when an obscure general called Malet had announced Napoleon’s death in Russia in October, 1812, the Emperor had been startled by how close the mutiny came to success. What touched a particularly raw nerve in him, writes Zamoyski, “was that the news of his death in Russia, announced by Malet, had led those who believed it to consider a change of regime, instead of making them proclaim the succession of his son, the King of Rome. ‘Our forefathers rallied to the cry: “The King is dead, long live the King!” he reminded them, adding that ‘These few words encompass the principal advantages of monarchy.’ That they had not been uttered on the night of 23 October revealed to him that for all its trappings, the monarchy he had created lacked consistency, and he was still just a general who had seized power, a parvenu with no title to rule beyond his ability to hold on to it. He felt this setback personally, and the sense of insecurity it induced would have a profound effect on how he behaved over the next two years, making him more aggressive and less amenable, and leading inexorably to his downfall…”412

A hereditary monarch may not be an admirable person, and may suffer many defeats in the field; but he is the king, and in a society that still believes in kingship, this gives his regime solidity and strength. And if he fails or dies, his son will succeed him, and command the same reverence and loyalty. But once Napoleon had been defeated, and the magical aura of invincibility surrounding him began to fade, it was the end both for him and for his upstart dynasty – as he himself recognized after Waterloo.

However, while the Congress of Vienna and the Quadruple Alliance succeeded in re-establishing the principle of hereditary monarchism as the only true principle of

412 Zamoyski, Rites of Peace, p. 5.
political legitimacy, *in practice* hereditary monarchs by no means always recovered their thrones and territories. The great powers, as was to be expected, did not restore the map of Europe to what it had been before 1792. They increased their own power, and many hundreds of smaller rulers were partially or wholly dispossessed in the complex negotiations and horse-trading that took place between them in Vienna and Paris. Moreover, millions of ordinary people, especially in Germany and Italy, now found themselves under new rulers. This created almost as much disruption and discontent as had the Napoleonic invasions, which in turn created a kind of nostalgia for the Napoleonic times in some.

In addition to this, in spite of the defeat of the French revolution, there was a continuing increase in the influence of the idea of nationalism that the revolution had spawned. This was the idea that not only the rulers, but also the nations over which they ruled, had rights and privileges, and that a nation represented an organic and even moral unity that could not be simply cut up and parcelled out as, for example, Poland was. The settlement of 1815, and the congresses of the great powers that took place thereafter, have been much criticized for not taking sufficient account of these new developments, and of vainly trying to resist an unstoppable development by crude police methods and repression.

An eloquent exponent of this point of view is Adam Zamoyski, who writes: “The Vienna settlement imposed an orthodoxy which not only denied political existence to many nations; it enshrined a particularly stultified form of monarchical government; institutionalised social hierarchies as rigid as any that had existed under the ancient regime; and preserved archaic disabilities – serfdom was not abolished in Russia until half a century after the congress. By excluding whole classes and nations from a share in its benefits, this system nurtured envy and resentment, which flourished into socialism and aggressive nationalism. And when, after the ‘Concert of Europe’ had fought itself to extinction in the Great War, those forces were at last unleashed, they visited on Europe events more horrific than the worst fears Metternich or any of his colleagues could have entertained.

“It would be idle to propose that the arrangements made in 1815 caused the terrible cataclysms of the twentieth century. But anyone who attempted to argue that what happened in Russia after 1917, in Italy and Germany in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and in many other parts of central and southern Europe at various other moments of the last century had no connection with them would be exposing themselves to ridicule…”413

And yet, as Zamoyski admits, the peacemakers of 1815 “did face a formidable task, one that defied any ideal solution. Just because certain arrangements they made turned out to have evil consequences, it does not follow that the opposite course would have yielded more benign results.”414

413 Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 569.
414 Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 566.
Indeed, the opposite course of giving in to the propaganda of the French revolution might well have brought the cataclysm of 1914–45 forward by several decades. The kernel of truth in Zamoyski’s argument is that the great powers did not cure the disease of Europe, but only arrested or repressed it by crude measures that were often counter-productive. But the only real cure for the disease was for the peoples of Europe to accept the true faith from their liberator, Russia – a nearly-impossible task, since the attitude of the Europeans to Russia was one of supercilious condescension and non-comprehension, while Russia was herself struggling to contain the disease within herself. In this context, the attempt of Tsar Alexander to save Europe by preaching the faith to his fellow monarchs acquires an extra poignancy. He failed, not only because his fellow monarchs were not interested in the faith, but also because his own faith was mixed with Masonic and heterodox elements. But his failure was less his loss than that of Europe as a whole. For the only hope for a real resurrection of Christian and monarchical Europe lay in accepting the lead of Russia in both the spiritual and the political spheres...

In the final analysis, the defeat of Napoleon and the re-establishment of monarchical order in Europe after his defeat, proved the viability of traditional kingship in the face of the most powerful and determined attempt to overthrow it yet seen in European history. It established an order that, in spite of many upheavals and changes, remained essentially in place until 1914, when the anti-monarchical movements of revolutionary socialism and nationalism finally destroyed the old order. That the old order survived for as long as it did was owing to no small degree to that former-freethinker-turned-Orthodox-monarchist, Tsar Alexander the Blessed...

**The Polish Question**

One of the most important issues faced by the Great Powers in 1815 was the settlement of Poland. As was to be expected, the Poles welcomed Napoleon after he defeated the Prussians at Jena in 1806, although they knew that he was no true champion of liberty, equality and fraternity - Polish soldiers had helped the French tyrant’s attempts to crush Dominican independence. But Napoleon was the instrument, they felt, for the attainment of their own independence. They were doomed to disappointment, however. In 1807 Napoleon created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and by 1812 controlled almost all the lands of the former Republic – but did not restore it to full independence. And then the Russian armies came back... Nevertheless, Polish soldiers faithfully followed Napoleon both to Elba and to St. Helena, and the cult of Napoleon remained alive in Polish hearts for a long time. Thus the poet Mickiewicz signed himself “Adam Napoleon Mickiewicz”.

But in 1818 Tsar Alexander offered the Poles more than Napoleon had ever given them – one of the most liberal constitutions in Europe, and more rights than even the

415 Madame de Staël claimed that “the Poles are the only Europeans who can serve under the banners of Napoleon without blushing” (Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, p. 199).
Russians possessed! As Lebedev writes: “Great was the joy of Emperor Alexander I in connection with the fact that in 1815 he succeeded in creating a Polish Kingdom that was free both from Prussia and from Austria and almost completely – from Russia! For he gave this Kingdom a Constitution! An unparalleled situation was created. While remaining a part of the Russian Empire, Poland was at the same time a state within a state, and distinct from Russia precisely because it had rights and freedoms which did not exist in Russia! But this seemed little to the proud (and therefore the blind) Poles! They were dreaming of recreating, then and there, the [Polish State] in that ‘greatness’ which, as they thought, it had had before the ‘division of Poland. A revolutionary ‘patriotic’ movement began in which even the friend of Alexander I’s youth, A. Chartoryskij, took part. Like other Polish ‘pans’ [nobles], he looked with haughty coldness on the actions of the Emperor in relation to Poland. The Polish gentry did not value them…”

A complicating factor in the Polish question was Freemasonry. The Masonic historian Jasper Ridley writes: “Alexander I’s attitude to Freemasonry in Russia was affected by the position in Poland. The first Freemasons’ lodge in Poland was formed in 1735; but the Freemasons were immediately attacked by the Jesuits and the Roman Catholic Church, which was influential in Poland, and in 1738 King Augustus II issued a decree suppressing them. His successor, King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatovsky, was sympathetic to the Freemasons. He allowed the first Polish Grand Lodge to be formed in 1767, and ten years later he himself became a Freemason.

“The partition of Poland between Catherine the Great, Frederick the Great and Maria Theresa in 1772, was followed by the further partitions of 1793 and 1796, which eliminated Poland as a country. It was a black day for the Polish Freemasons. Only Frederick the Great and his successors in Prussia tolerated them; they were suppressed in Austrian Poland in 1795 and in Russian Poland in 1797. Some of the leaders of the Polish resistance... were Freemasons; but the most famous of all the

As Palmer writes, the Constitutional Charter drawn up by his Polish minister Czartoryski “was a liberal instrument of government. The Polish nation was promised ‘for all time to come’ a bi-cameral Diet (Sejm), which would share legislative power with the Tsar-King, and a separate executive State Council of five ministers and a number of royal nominees. The Charter guaranteed to the Poles freedom of worship for the ‘Christian faiths’, freedom of the press, and freedom from arbitrary arrest; and it also provided for an independent judiciary... The Upper House, the Senate, was a nominated body, with preference given to the older aristocracy and the Catholic episcopate; and the right to elect to the Lower House (in which there were nominated representatives as well as deputies) was limited to the gentry in the countryside and to property-owners in the towns. Moreover the Diet met for only one month in every two years and possessed no right to initiate legislation, being permitted only to discuss laws laid before it. Nevertheless these provisions did at least give the Poles the opportunity of internal self-government with a system of tariffs and taxation of their own, and the terms of the Charter were accepted by Alexander with perfect sincerity. Whatever others at St. Petersburg might feel, the Tsar himself consciously separated in his mind the ‘Kingdom of Poland’ from the Empire as a whole. On more than one occasion in the following seven years he gave his advisers the impression that he was using Poland as a field for constitutional experiments which might be implemented on a larger scale in Russian proper...” (op. cit., pp. 340-341). Moreover, he offered the hope of adding the other Polish lands to the Kingdom.

Lebedev, Velikorossia, op. cit., p. 287.
heroes of Polish independence, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, was not a Freemason, though he was a personal friend of La Fayette.419

“When Napoleon defeated the Russians at Eylau and Friedland, and established the Grand Duchy of Warsaw under French protection in 1807, he permitted and encouraged the Freemasons, and in March 1810 the Grand Orient of Poland was established. After the defeat of Napoleon, Alexander I did not ban the Freemasons in that part of Poland which again came under Russia. When he visited Warsaw in November 1815 he was entertained at a banquet by the Polish Freemasons, and was made a member of the Polish Grand Orient. In 1816 General Alexander Rojnezky became Deputy Grand Master of the Polish Grand Orient, and he drafted a new constitution for the Freemasons which brought the organization to a considerable extent under the control of the Russian government. This aroused the resentment of patriotic Poles who did not like the Russians. In 1819 Major Victor Lukacinsky formed a rival masonic organization. It was free from Russian control and only Poles were admitted.

“The development in Poland was probably one of the factors which persuaded Tsar Alexander to change his attitude towards Freemasonry [and the Polish Kingdom]; though another was his general shift towards a reactionary [sic] policy which followed the formation of the Holy Alliance against revolution between Russia, Austria and Prussia. He asked Lieutenant General Egor Alexandrovich Kushelev, who was a senator and himself a prominent Freemason, to report to him on the masonic lodges in Russia.

“Kushelev’s report, in June 1821, stated that although true Freemasons were loyal subjects and their ideals and activities were praiseworthy, masonic lodges could be used as a cover for revolutionary activities, as they had been in the Kingdom of Naples; and the same was happening in Russia, especially in three of the St. Petersburg lodges.

‘‘This is the state, Most Gracious Sovereign, in which Masonic lodges now exist in Petersburg. Instead of the Spirit of Christian mildness and of true Masonic rules and meekness, the spirit of self-will, turbulence and real anarchy acts through them.’

“Within a month of receiving Kushelev’s report, Alexander I banned the publication of Masonic songs and all other Masonic documents. On 1 August 1822 he issued a decree suppressing the Freemasons throughout Russia. In November he issued a similar decree banning the Freemasons and all other secret societies in Russian Poland. These decrees were re-enacted by his more reactionary brother, Tsar Nicholas I, when Nicholas succeeded Alexander.”420

419 He was also respected by Alexander. When the Tsar visited Kosciuszko near Paris, “Kosciuszko appealed to Alexander to create a free kingdom of Poland with an English-style constitution and himself as King, and offered his services. ‘Your most cherished hopes will be realised,’ Alexander replied” (Zamoyski, Rites of Peace, p. 196). (V.M.)
Alexander’s attempt to combine the Russian autocracy with a Polish liberal constitution failed, as it had to fail. For monarchism and masonry do not mix. The Golden Age of Masonry was over – or so it seemed…

The Jewish Question

If the Polish problem was difficult to solve, the Jewish problem was even more intractable. The two nations had much in common: both were nations without states, distrustful of each other but united in their craving for national autonomy, both fiercely anti-Orthodox and both subjects of the same people, the Russians, whom they had both exploited in the not-so-distant past. The future of Europe, and Christian civilization in general, would to a large extent depend on how well Orthodox Russia would succeed in assimilating and neutralising this breeding-ground of the Revolution…

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, the Jews had been forbidden to settle in Russia. From the beginning of the Muscovite kingdom, however, Jews had begun to infiltrate into Russia from Poland-Lithuania, where, as we have seen, the Polish landowners had given them considerable privileges, employing them to collect very heavy taxes, fees, tolls and produce from the Russian serfs. In some cases the Poles even handed over churches and monasteries to the Jews, who would extort fees for the celebration of sacraments.421

“In the 16th century,” writes Solzhenitsyn, quoting Yury Hessen, “the spiritual leadership of the Jewish world came to be concentrated in German-Polish Jewry… So as to prevent the possibility of the Jewish people being dissolved amidst the surrounding population, the spiritual leaders had from ages past introduced stipulations whose purpose was to isolate the people from close contact with their neighbours. Using the authority of the Talmud,… the Rabbis wrapped round the public and private life of the Jew with a complex web of prescriptions of a religio-social nature, which… prevented them getting close to people of other faiths.’ Real and spiritual needs ‘were brought in sacrifice to outdated forms of popular life’, ‘blind fulfilment of ritual was transformed for the people into the goal, as it were, of the existence of Jewry… Rabbinism, ossified in lifeless forms, continued to keep both the mind and the will of the people in fetters.’”422

In 1648, the Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants rose up against their Polish and Jewish oppressors and appealed to the Tsar for help. The Tsarist armies triumphed, and by the treaty of Andrusovo in 1667 Eastern Ukraine was ceded – together with its Jewish population – to Russia.423 For the next hundred years, writes Hartley, these

422 A.I. Solzhenitsyn, Двести Лет Вместе (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, vol. 1, p. 34.
423 1667 was the very year in which Patriarch Nicon was unjustly deposed; so the first major influx of Jews into Russia coincided with the first serious undermining of Russian Church-State relations. (L.A.
Jews of the Russian empire “lived mostly in the Ukraine although a small Jewish community became established in Moscow. The government legislated to contain and control the Jewish population within the empire’s borders. Both Catherine I (1725-27) and Elizabeth (1741-62) attempted to ban Jews from Russia; one estimate is that 35,000 Jews were banished in 1741.”

From the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the universalism and cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, together with the principles of human and national rights of the French revolution, led to the emancipation of the Jews, first in France, and then in most of the countries of Europe. This process was slow and accompanied by many reverses and difficulties, but inexorable. The only great power which firmly resisted it was Russia.

Contrary to popular myth, the myth of its being “the prison of the peoples”, the record of the Russian empire in its treatment of various subject populations was in general good. We only have to look at the large number of Baltic German names among the senior officials of the empire, the very large measure of autonomy given to the Finns (and to the Poles before they rebelled), and the way in which Tatar khans and Georgian princes were fully assimilated (or rather: assimilated to the degree that they wanted). In fact, Russia was probably more liberal, and certainly less racialist, in its treatment of its subject peoples than its contemporary rival, the supposedly “liberal” empire of Great Britain.

But the Jews presented certain intractable problems not found in the other peoples of the empire. The first problem was the sheer number of Jews who suddenly found themselves within its boundaries. Thus Hartley writes: “The empire acquired a further c. 250,000 Jews after the establishment of the Congress Kingdom of Poland in 1815. There was a substantial Jewish population in Bessarabia (11.3 per cent in 1863). In 1854, the Jewish population of the whole empire was estimated as 1,062,132.” These numbers grew rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. And by the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Lebedev, about half the number of the Jews in the whole world were to be found in the Russian empire.

More fundamental, however, than the administrative problem presented by these large numbers was the fact that, as David Vital writes, “there were differences… between Russia and the other European states… in respect of the place of religion generally and what were taken to be the teachings of religion on what were unquestionably the state’s affairs. It was not merely that in principle Russia continued to be held by its Autocrat and its minions to be a Christian state with a particular duty to uphold its own Orthodox Church. It was that, far from the matter of the state’s specifically Christian duty slowly wasting away, as in the west, it


Hartley, op. cit., p. 15.
continued actively to exercise the minds of Russia’s rulers as one of the central criteria by which questions of public policy were to be judged and decided. The continuous search for an effective definition of the role, quality, and ultimate purposes of the Autocracy itself was an enterprise which, considering the energy and seriousness with which it was pursued, sufficed in itself to distinguish Russia from its contemporaries. The programmes to which the state was committed and all its structures were under obligation to promote varied somewhat over time. But in no instance was there serious deviation from the rule that Russian Orthodoxy was and needed to remain a central and indispensable component of the ruling ethos. Nineteenth-century imperial Russia was therefore an ideological state in a manner and to a degree that had become so rare as to be virtually unknown in Europe and would not be familiar again for at least a century.”

Moreover, if Russia was the last ideological state in Europe, the large numbers of Ashkenazi Jews that came within the Russian empire between 1772 and 1815 constituted an ideological “state within the state” whose anti-christian books, rabbinic leaders and kahal institutions caused them to be bitterly hostile to everything that Russia stood for. To put it bluntly: if the Russians worshipped Christ, the Jews hated Him. And no amount of state intervention, whether in a liberal or illiberal, emancipatory or anti-emancipatory direction, could resolve this basic contradiction or defuse the hostile sentiments it aroused on both sides. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike the Orthodox Christians, who are taught to recognise and obey secular authorities even if they are not Orthodox, and not only out of fear but for conscience’s sake (Romans 13.1-4), the Jews ultimately recognised no authorities beside their own, rabbinical ones. And if they did obey the Gentile powers, it was only because they had been taught that resistance was counter-productive, not because these powers had any moral authority over them.

This led the Jew, writes Vital, “to be deeply sceptical of civil authority of all kinds… The lasting effect of such scepticism was to leave him peculiarly independent in mind and social outlook. “Having no earthly masters to whom he thought he owed unquestioning political obedience (the special case of the Hasidic rebbe or zaddik and his devotees aside), ‘[the European Jew’s] was… a spirit that, for his times, was remarkably free. Permitted no land, he had no territorial lord. Admitted to no guild, he was free of the authority of established master-craftsmen. Not being a Christian, he had neither bishop nor priest to direct him. And while he could be charged or punished for insubordination to state or sovereign, he could not properly be charged with disloyalty. Betrayal only entered into the life of the Jews in regard to their own community or, more broadly, to Jewry as a whole. It was to their own nation alone that they accepted that they owed undeviating loyalty.”

We have seen how important and harmful the internal Jewish authority of the kahal was considered to be by the enlightened Polish Jew Hourwitz. The Tsar’s servants were soon to make this discovery for themselves. Tsar Paul I appointed the

---

poet and state official Gavrili Romanovich Derzhavin to investigate why Belorussia had been afflicted by such a severe famine. After visiting Belorussia twice in 1799 and 1800, Derzhavin came to the conclusion that the main cause of the famine was the desperate poverty into which the Jewish tavern-keepers and money-lenders, in connivance with the Polish landowners, had reduced the Belorussian peasants.428

But more importantly, writes O.A. Platonov, Derzhavin “noted the ominous role of the kahals – the organs of Jewish self-rule on the basis of the bigoted laws of the Talmud, which ‘a well-constructed political body must not tolerate’, as being a state within the state. Derzhavin discovered that the Jews, who considered themselves oppressed, established in the Pale of Settlement a secret Israelite kingdom divided into kahal districts with kahal administrations endowed with despotic power over the Jews which inhumanly exploited the Christians and their property on the basis of the Talmud. …429

“Derzhavin also uncovered the concept of ‘herem’ – a curse which the kahal issued against all those who did not submit to the laws of the Talmud. This, according to the just evaluation of the Russian poet, was ‘an impenetrable sacrilegious cover for the most terrible crimes’.

“In his note Derzhavin ‘was the first to delineate a harmonious, integral programme for the resolution of the Jewish question in the spirit of Russian statehood, having in mind the unification of all Russian subjects on common ground’. 

“Paul I, after reading the note, agreed with many of its positions and decorated the author. However, the tragic death of the Tsar as the result of an international Masonic conspiracy destroyed the possibility of resolving the Jewish question in a spirit favourable for the Russian people. The new Emperor, Alexander I, being under the influence of a Masonic environment, adopted a liberal position. In 1802 he created a special Committee for the improvement of the Jews, whose soul was the Mason Speransky, who was closely linked with the Jewish world through the well-known tax-farmer Perets, whom he considered his friend and with whom he lived.

“Another member of the committee was G.R. Derzhavin. As general-governor, he prepared a note ‘On the removal of the deficit of bread in Belorussia, the collaring of

428 Solzhenitsyn writes, quoting Derzhavin, that “some ‘landowners, giving the sale of wine on franchise to the Jews in their villages, are making agreements with them that their peasants should buy nothing that they needed from anyone else, and should take loans from nobody except these tax-farmers [three times more expensive], and should sell none of their products to anyone except these same Jewish tax-farmers... cheaper than the true price’” (op. cit., p. 47).

429 In 1800, I.G. Friesel, governor of Vilna, reported: “Having established their own administrative institution, called Synagogues, Kahals, or associations, the Jews completely separated themselves from the people and government of the land. As a result, they were exempt from the operation of the statutes which governed the peoples of the several estates, and even if special laws were enacted, these remained unenforced and valueless, because the ecclesiastical and temporal leaders of the Jews invariably resisted them and were clever enough to find means to evade them.” (Isaac Levitats, The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772-1844, New York, 1970, p. 29; quoted in Hartley, op. cit., pp. 98-99). (V.M.)
the avaricious plans of the Jews, on their transformation, and other things’. Derzhavin’s new note, in the opinion of specialists, was ‘in the highest degree a remarkable document, not only as the work of an honourable, penetrating statesman, but also as a faithful exposition of all the essential sides of Jewish life, which hinder the merging of this race with the rest of the population.’

“In the report of the official commission on the Jewish question which worked in the 1870s in the Ministry of the Interior, it was noted that at the beginning of the reign of Alexander I the government ‘stood already on the ground of the detailed study of Jewry and the preparation that had begun had already at that time exposed such sides of the public institutions of this nationality which would hardly be tolerable in any state structure. But however often reforms were undertaken in the higher administrative spheres, every time some magical brake held up the completion of the matter.’ This magical brake stopped Derzhavin’s proposed reform of Jewry, which suggested the annihilation of the kahals in all the provinces populated by Jews, the removal of all kahal collections and the limitation of the influx of Jews to a certain percentage in relation to the Christian population, while the remaining masses were to be given lands in Astrakhan and New Russia provinces, assigning the poorest to re-settlement. Finally, he proposed allowing the Jews who did not want to submit to these restrictions freedom to go abroad. However, these measures were not confirmed by the government.

“Derzhavin’s note and the formation of the committee elicited great fear in the Jewish world. From the published kahal documents of the Minsk Jewish society it becomes clear that the kahals and the ‘leaders of the cities’ gathered in an extraordinary meeting three days later and decided to sent a deputation to St. Petersburg with the aim of petitioning Alexander I to make no innovations in Jewish everyday life. But since this matter ‘required great resources’, a very significant sum was laid upon the whole Jewish population as a tax, refusal from which brought with it ‘excommunication from the people’ (herem). From a private note given to Derzhavin by one Belorussian landowner, it became known that the Jews imposed their herem also on the general procurator, uniting with it a curse through all the kahals ‘as on a persecutor’. Besides, they collected ‘as gifts’ for this matter, the huge sum for that time of a million rubles and sent it to Petersburg, asking that ‘efforts be made to remove him, Derzhavin, from his post, and if that was not possible, at any rate to make an attempt on his life’.”

Not surprisingly, Tsar Alexander’s Statute for the Jews of December 9, 1804 turned out to be fairly liberal – much more liberal than the laws of Frederick Augustus in Napoleon’s Duchy of Warsaw. Its strictest provisions related to a ban on Jews’ participation in the distilling and retailing of spirits. Also, “there was to be no relaxation of the ancient rule that Jews (negligible exceptions apart) were to be prevented from penetrating into ‘inner Russia’. Provision was made for an eventual, but determined, attack on the rabbinate’s ancient – but in the government’s view

---

presumptuous and unacceptable – practice of adjudicating cases that went beyond the strict limits of the religious (as opposed to the civil and criminal domain), but also on rabbinical independence and authority generally…

“But the Jews themselves could take some comfort in it being expressly stated that there was to be no question of forcible conversion to Christianity; that they were not to be oppressed or harassed in the observance of their faith and in their general social activities; that the private property of the Jews remained inviolable; and that Jews were not to be exploited or enserfed. They were, on the contrary, to enjoy the same, presumably full protection of the law that was accorded other subjects of the realm. They were not to be subject to the legal jurisdiction of the landowners on whose estates they might happen to be resident. And they were encouraged in every way the Committee could imagine – by fiscal and other economic incentives, for example, by the grant of land and loans to develop it, by permission to move to the New Russian Territories in the south – to undergo decisive and (so it was presumed) irreversible change in the two central respects which both Friezel and Derzhavin had indeed, and perfectly reasonably, regarded as vital: education and employment. In this they were to be encouraged very strongly; but they were not to be forced…”

However, the liberal Statute of 1804 was never fully implemented, and was succeeded by stricter measures towards the end of Alexander’s reign and in the reign of his successor, Nicholas I. There were many reasons for this. Among them, of course, was Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, which, if it had been successful, would have united the Western Sephardic Jews with the Eastern Ashkenazi Jews in a single State, free, emancipated, and under their own legally convened Sanhedrin. But not only did Napoleon not succeed: the invasion of Russia was the graveyard of his empire. In 1813, and again in 1815, the Russian armies entered Paris. From now on, the chief target of the Jews’ hatred in both East and West would be the Russian Empire…

But the main reason for the tightening of Russian policy was “the Jews’ abhorrence of Christianity, the intensely negative light in which non-Jewish society had always been regarded, and the deeply ingrained suspicion and fear in which all forms of non-Jewish authority were commonly held.” As a result, in the whole of the 19th century only 69,400 Jews converted to Orthodoxy. If the French delegates who emancipated French Jewry could ignore this fact, the Russian Tsars could not.

The Tsars’ gradual tightening of policy had little or no effect on the basic problem of religious and social antagonism. As Platonov writes: “The statute of the Jews worked out in 1804, which took practically no account of Derzhavin’s suggestion,
continued to develop the isolation of the Jewish communities on Russian soil, that is, it strengthened the kahals together with their fiscal, judicial, police and educational independence. However, the thought of re-settling the Jews out of the western region continued to occupy the government after the issuing of the statute in 1804. A consequence of this was the building in the New Russian area (from 1808) of Jewish colonies in which the government vainly hoped to ‘re-educate’ the Jews, and, having taught them to carry out productive agricultural labour, to change in this way the whole structure of their life. Nevertheless, even in these model colonies the kahal-rabbinic administration retained its former significance and new settlements isolated themselves from the Christian communities; they did not intend to merge with them either in a national or in a cultural sense. The government not only did not resist the isolation of the Jews, but even founded for them the so-called Israelite Christians (that is, Talmudists who had converted to Orthodoxy). A special committee existed from 1817 to 1833.”

The Reaction against Masonry

Church-State relations were greatly strained in Alexander’s reign by the Bible Society. “Founded in 1804 in England by Methodists and Masons, the Bible Society extended its wide activity also in Russia. The Society had large financial resources. In 1810 the monetary contributions of the Bible Society attained 150,000 rubles, and at the end of 1823 there were already 300 such societies in Russia. Under the mask of love for one’s neighbour and the spreading of the word of God, the bible societies began to conduct oral propaganda and publish books directed against [the Orthodox Christian] religion and the State order. These books were published under the management of the censor, which was attached to the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Popular Enlightenment, which was headed by the Emperor Alexander’s close friend, Prince A.N. Golitsyn. The main leaders of the Bible societies were members of the Masonic lodges, who preached the rejection of Orthodoxy, the Church and the rites of the Church. In 1819 there was published Stankevich’s book, ‘A conversation in the coffin of a child’, which was hostile to the institution of the Orthodox Church. Then Yastrebov published a work entitled ‘An appeal to men to follow the inner promptings of the Spirit of Christ’. This work was recognised to be a sermon ‘of seditious elements against the Christian religion’ and the good order of the State. In 1824 there appeared ‘a blasphemous interpretation of the Gospel’ published by the director of the Russian Bible Society. This work openly pursued the aim of stirring up people against the Church and the Throne. Besides the publication of books directed against Orthodoxy, foreign religious propaganda was conducted. Two Catholic priests from Southern Germany, Gosner and Lindl, preached Protestantism, a sect beloved by the Masons. The Methodists and other sectarians sowed their tares and introduced heresies amidst the Orthodox. At the invitation of the Mason Speransky, the very pope of Masonry, Fessler, came and took charge of the work of destroying the Orthodox Church.

436 Platonov, op. cit., p. 245.
“The Orthodox clergy were silent. They could not speak against the evil that was being poured out everywhere. All the powerful men of the world were obedient instruments of Masonry. The Tsar, who was falsely informed about the aims and tasks of the Bible Society by Prince Golitsyn, gave the latter his protection from on high.”

“Golitsyn,” writes Oleg Platonov, “invited to the leadership of the Bible Society only certain hierarchs of the Russian Church that were close to him. He de facto removed the Holy Synod from participation in this matter. At the same time he introduced into it secular and clerical persons of other confessions, as if underlining that ‘the aim of the Society is higher than the interests of one, that is the Russian Church, and that it develops its activities in the interests of the whole of Christianity and the whole of the Christian world’.

“As the investigator of the Bible Society I.A. Chistovich wrote in 1873 [Istoria perevoda Biblii na russij iazyk (A History of the Translation of the Bible into Russian), St. Petersburg, pp. 50-55], ‘this indifferent cosmopolitanism in relation to the Church, however pure its preachers might be in their ideal simplicity of heart, was, however, an absurdity at that, as at any other time. Orthodoxy is, factually speaking, the existing form of the Christian faith of the Greco-Russian Church, and is completely in accord with the teaching and statutes of the Ancient Universal Church. Therefore Christianity in its correct ecclesiastical form only exists in the Orthodox Church and cannot have over or above it any other idea... But the Bible Society was directed precisely against such an ideal, and they sought it out or presupposed it.’

“In an official document of the Bible Society the ideas of Masonic ecumenism were openly declared. ‘The heavenly union of faith and love,’ it says in a report of the Russian Bible Society in 1818, ‘founded by means of Bible Societies in the great Christian family, reveal the beautiful dawn of the wedding day of Christians and that time when there will be one pastor and one flock, that is, when there will be one Divine Christian religion in all the various formations of Christian confessions.’

“The well-known Russian public figure, the academic A.S. Shishkov wrote on this score: ‘Let us look at the acts of the Bible Societies, let us see what they consist of. It consists in the intention to construct out of the whole human race one general republic or other and one religion - a dreamy and undiscriminating opinion, born in the minds either of deceivers or of the vainly wise... If the Bible Societies are trying only to spread piety, as they say, then why do they not unite with our Church, but deliberately act separate from her and not in agreement with her? If their intention consists in teaching Christian doctrines, does not our Church teach them to us? Can it be that we were not Christians before the appearance of the Bible Societies? And just how do they teach us this? They recruit heterodox teachers and publish books contrary to Christianity!... Is it not strange - even, dare I say it, funny – to see our metropolitans and hierarchs in the Bible Societies sitting, contrary to the apostolic rules, together with Lutherans, Catholics, Calvinists and Quakers – in a word, with

437 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 278.
all the heterodox? They with their grey hairs, and in their cassocks and klobuks, sit with laymen of all nations, and a man in a frock suit preaches to them the Word of God (of God as they call it, but not in fact)! Where is the decency, where the dignity of the church server? Where is the Church? They gather in homes where there often hang on the walls pictures of pagan gods or lascivious depictions of lovers, and these gatherings of theirs – which are without any Divine services, with the reading of prayers or the Gospel, sitting as it were in the theatre, without the least reverence – are equated with Church services, and a house without an altar, unconsecrated, where on other days they feast and dance, they call the temple of God! Is this not similar to Sodom and Gomorrah?" 

At this critical moment for Russian Orthodoxy, God raised up righteous defenders of the faith, such as Metropolitan Michael (Desnitsky) and Archimandrite Innocent (Smirnov). Metropolitan Michael protested at Golitsyn’s removal of the censorship of spiritual books from the Holy Synod, which meant giving free expression to the pseudo-mystical sects. There were stormy scenes between the prince and the metropolitan even in the Synod.

“As a Member of the Synod, the hierarch Philaret [at that time archbishop of Yaroslavl], was witness to the heated speeches of Metropolitan Michael in defence of the Church and undoubtedly approved of his actions. In his eyes the first-ranking hierarch was rightly considered to be a pillar of the Orthodox Church, restraining the onslaught of false mysticism. And when this pillar collapsed, and the storms did not die down, Philaret, like many others, was seized by fear for the destiny of the Church. Under the influence of a vision seen by someone concerning Metropolitan Michael, a sorrowful picture of Church life, full of misery and darkness, was revealed. He believed that in such a situation only a person possessing the spirit and power of the Prophet Elijah could work with benefit for the Church. However, the holy hierarch was profoundly convinced that the Church was supported, not by people, but by the Lord. And since he saw that it was impossible to save the Church only by human efforts, without the help of God, he decided that it was better for him to withdraw himself from everything as far as he could. Evidently, Philaret preferred a different method of warfare with various kinds of heterodox preachers and sectarian societies from that employed by Metropolitan Michael. And these methods were: a correct organization of the spiritual schools throughout Russia and the spiritual enlightenment of the Russian people through the distribution of Orthodox spiritual literature…”

However, while Philaret withdrew to concentrate on spiritual education, a man with the spirit and strength of the Prophet Elijah was found. Fr. Photius (Spassky),

---

438 Platonov, op. cit., pp. 262-263.
439 Two weeks before he died, in March, 1821, he wrote to the Emperor: “Your Majesty, when this epistle reaches you, I will no longer be in this world. I have communicated nothing except the truth to people, especially now, when in my actions I am preparing to give an account to the Supreme Judge” (Snychev, op. cit., p. 147). (V.M.)
440 Snychev, op. cit., pp. 148-149.
later archimandrite of the Yuriev monastery near Novgorod, began his open defence of Orthodoxy in 1817. "Bureaucratic and military Petersburg were angry with the bold reprover. His first speech was unsuccessful. Photius' struggle... against the apostates from Orthodoxy, the followers of the so-called inner Church, ended with his expulsion from Petersburg.

"After the expulsion of Photius the Masons celebrated their victory. But the joy of the conquerors turned out to be short-lived. The exile was found to have followers. Photius received special support at a difficult time of his life from the great righteous woman, Countess Anna Alexeevna Orlova-Chesmenskaia, who presented a model of piety. She not only protected him, but chose him as her leader and confessor. The firmness and courage with which Photius fought against the enemies of Orthodoxy attracted the mind and heart of Countess Orlova, a woman of Christian humility and virtue. After the death of her instructor, Countess Orlova explained why it was Photius whom she chose as her spiritual director. 'He attracted my attention,' wrote Countess Orlova, 'by the boldness and fearlessness with which he, being a teacher of the law of God at the cadet corps and a young monk, began to attack the dominant errors in faith. Everybody was against him, beginning with the Court. He did not fear this. I wanted to get to know him and entered into correspondence with him. His letters seemed to me to be some kind of apostolic epistles. After getting to know him better, I became convinced that he personally sought nothing for himself.'"

However, the struggle against Masonry was helped by other events. As we have seen, Kushelev reported to the Tsar on the revolutionary activity in the Polish and Russian lodges. And then there was the Congress of the Sacred Alliance in Verona in 1822.

Lebedev writes that at this Congress "Metternich unexpectedly, on the basis of Masonic documents that had unexpectedly fallen into his possession, demonstrated that the secret societies of all countries, being in constant communication with each other, constituted one common plot, which was subject only to the secret leaders, and only for form's sake accepted different programmes in different countries, depending on circumstances and conditions. He was supported by the Prussian minister, Count Haugwitz, who himself had formerly been a Mason. He made a detailed report in which he showed that the 'enmity' of various unions of Masonry was only for show, to divert attention. In actual fact Masonry in its depths was one and its aim was the subjection of the world, and in the first place the subjection of the monarchs, so that they become weapons in the hands of the Masons. Haugwitz added that since 1777 he had personally ruled not only a part of the Prussian lodges, but also Masonry in Poland and Russia! We can imagine how shocked his Majesty Alexander I was as he sat in the hall. He had been born in the same year of 1777 and had entered Masonry in 1803. Everybody was stunned. The Austrian Emperor Frantz and the Russian Emperor Alexander I decided to attack this great evil. In 1822 Masonry was forbidden in Russia by a decree of the Tsar. The lodges were disbanded, the 'brothers’ correspondence with abroad was strictly forbidden. At the same time

---

441 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 280.
this was the third powerful blow that shook the soul of Alexander I with the collapse of his faith in the nobility of the Masonic ideas and strivings. Strict censorship was introduced, especially in the publication of books of a spiritual nature. Now his Majesty began to pay attention to the rebukes of Masonry and mysticism issuing from Archimandrite Innocent, who had suffered earlier for this, of the metropolitan of the capital Michael, Metropolitan Seraphim who succeeded him, and also of the zealous defender of Orthodoxy Archimandrite Photius (Spassky)… Seraphim and Photius, joining forces, were able to show Alexander the danger for Orthodoxy of ‘fashionable’ tendencies in thought, the harmfulness of the activity of Prince Golitsyn, and return the heart of the Tsar to Holy Orthodoxy. A visit to Valaam monastery, conversations with Vladyka Seraphim, with Elder Alexis of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra made a great impression on Alexander and showed him that what his exalted soul had sought throughout his life was contained in the experience, rules and methods of Orthodox asceticism, which was just then experiencing an unusual ascent, being armed with such books as The Philokalia and others, especially on the doing of the Jesus prayer (‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’). This was Alexander’s fourth powerful spiritual shock. It had two kinds of consequences. When, in April, 1824, after many fruitless exhortations, Archimandrite Photius publicly (in a private house) pronounced ‘anathema’ on Prince Golitsyn and the latter retired\(^{442}\), his Majesty accepted his retirement.\(^{443}\)

\(^{442}\) “In 1822 Prince A.N. Golitsyn became acquainted with Photius and tried to incline him to his side. The meetings of Prince Golitsyn with Archimandrite Photius made a great impression on the former, which he noted in his letters to Countess Orlova. In these letters to Countess Orlova Prince Golitsyn calls Photius ‘an unusual person’ and recognises that ‘the edifying conversation of Photius has a power that only the Lord could give’. In one of his letters to Countess Orlova Prince Golitsyn expresses regret that he cannot enjoy the conversation of ‘our Chrysostom’ and that he ‘wants to quench my thirst with pure water drawn up by a pure hand and not by the hand of one who communicates to others stingily.’

“Prince Golitsyn’s attempt by subtle flattery to bring Archimandrite to his side was unsuccessful. A rapprochement and union between Archimandrite Photius, a pure and true zealot of Orthodoxy, with Prince Golitsyn, an enemy of the faith and the Church, was impossible.

“On April 22, 1822 Archimandrite Photius went to Petersburg. There his ‘great toil’ began. Every day, according to the witness of Archimandrite Photius himself, he was called to various people to talk about the Lord, the Church, the faith, and the salvation of the soul. Eminent and learned noblemen and noblewomen gathered to hear him talk about the Lord. But such conversations took place especially in the house of the virgin Anna, Abba Photius’ daughter, of the noblewoman Daria Derzhavina, and sometimes in the Tauris palace.

“Without fear or hypocrisy Photius reproved the enemies of Orthodoxy.

“Once in 1822 Archimandrite Photius began to reprove Golitsyn, who could not stand it and began to leave the living-room, but Photius loudly shouted after him: ‘Anathema! Be accursed! Anathema!’

“By this time the Emperor Alexander himself returned.

“Rumours about the cursing of Prince Golitsyn had reached the ears of the Emperor, and he demanded that Photius come and explain himself. At first the Emperor received the fearless reprover threateningly, but then he changed his wrath for mercy. The Emperor was struck by the bold speech of the simple monk against the lofty official, who also happened to be a close friend of the Emperor himself. Photius described Golitsyn to the Emperor as an atheist, and the Bible Society headed by him - as a nest of faithlessness that threatened to overthrow the Orthodox Church. At the end of the conversation Photius began to speak to the Emperor about what was most necessary.

“These are his remarkable words:
Archimandrite Photius wrote: “the Masonic faith is of Antichrist, and its whole teaching and writings are of the devil”\textsuperscript{444}, and “in the spring of 1824 [he] wrote two epistles to his Majesty. In one of them he said that ‘in our time many books, and many societies and private people are talking about some kind of new religion, which is supposedly pre-established for the last times. This new religion, which is preached in various forms, sometimes under the form of a new world..., sometimes of a new teaching, sometimes of the coming of Christ in the Spirit, sometimes of the union of the churches, sometimes under the form of some renewal and of Christ’s supposed thousand-year reign, sometimes insinuated under the form of a so-called new religion – is apostasy from the faith of God, the faith of the apostles and the fathers. It is faith in the coming Antichrist, it is propelling the revolution, it is thirsting for blood, it is filled with the spirit of Satan. Its false-prophets and apostles are Jung-Stilling, Eckartshausen, Thion, Bohme, Labzin, Fessler and the Methodists...’

“His Majesty was favourably disposed to the epistle of Archimandrite Photius in spite of the fact that it contained criticism of all his recent friends and of the people who had enjoyed his protection. Almost at the same time there appeared the book of Gosner, about whose harmful line Archimandrite Photius had reported to his Majesty on April 17, 1824.

“On April 20, 1824, Emperor Alexander received Photius, who was ordered: ‘Come by the secret entrance and staircase into his Majesty’s study so that nobody should know about this’. Their conversation lasted for three hours, and on May 7 Photius sent his second epistle with the title: ‘Thoroughly correct the work of God. The plan for the revolution published secretly, or the secret iniquities practised by secret society in Russia and everywhere.’

“On April 29 Photius gave his Majesty another note: ‘To your question how to stop the revolution, we are praying to the Lord God, and look what has been revealed. Only act immediately. The way of destroying the whole plan quietly and successfully is as follows: 1) to abolish the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and remove two others from a well-known person; 2) to abolish the Bible Society under the pretext that there are already many printed Bibles, and they are now not needed; 3) the Synod is, as before, to supervise education, to see if there is anything against the authorities and the faith anywhere; 4) to remove Koshelev, exile Gosner, exile Fessler

\textsuperscript{443} Lebedev, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 289.
\textsuperscript{444} Elagin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 243.
and exile the Methodists, albeit the leading ones. The Providence of God is now to do nothing more openly."

“This flaming defence of Orthodoxy [by Photius] together with Metropolitan Seraphim was crowned with success: on May 15, 1824 the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs was abolished.”

The Synod was now freer; it had a new over-procurator in the place of Golitsyn, and was purged of those members that had been linked with him. The Tsar had paid heed to Photius’ appeal, and so had become a spiritual as well as a physical conqueror. “God conquered the visible Napoleon who invaded Russia,” he said to him. “May He conquer the spiritual Napoleon through you!”

However, not everyone saw only good in the struggle against the Bible Society and the false mystics. Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, who had been Archimandrite Photius’ early sponsor, had declined to enter into open warfare with them, partly because of his personal friendship with Golitsyn, and partly because he had another approach to the mystical ferment in Russia. “Under the cover of the mystical temptations,” writes Florovsky, “Philaret was able to recognize a living religious need, a thirst for religious instruction and enlightenment. He recognized the need in Russian society for the living encirchment of the whole of life, whatever distorted and corrupt forms it sometimes assumed. And he considered that what was necessary was not rebuke, but pastoral admonishment, penetrated by the spirit of love and completed by positive teaching.”

As for Golitsyn, writes Snychev, “the Muscovite archpastor saw in him much that was positive and recognized him to be one of the zealots of the spiritual side of the ecclesiastical organism. One way or the other, with the support of Prince Golitsyn it had been possible to publish many useful ecclesiastical books of a mystical character, but in an Orthodox spirit. Of course, Philaret was Orthodox in his views on mysticism. He clearly understood that in mysticism the most important question is its relation to the Church and the institutions of the Church. Every form of isolation could bring only harm, not good. Philaret recognized the usefulness of mystical teaching in the spirit of Orthodoxy and was far from sympathizing with a superficial approach to the latter. In the actions of the opponents of mysticism he found excesses, while the very method of the struggle against the latter he considered to be open to criticism and of little use. What, for example, did the party of Arakcheev and Photius gain by their victory? Absolutely nothing…. First of all, mystical literature was subjected to terrible attacks, and that which was formerly considered useful was now recognized to be harmful, demonic and heretical. All books of a mystical character were ordered to be removed from the libraries of educational institutions and a veto placed on them. Terrible difficulties were placed in the way of the

446 This, however, did not stop him from firmly refusing Golitsyn’s request to distribute a work published by the Tatarinova group. See Snychev, op. cit., p. 144.
publication of patristic literature. Publishers were frightened, as it were, to publish, for example, the writings of St. Macarius, they were frightened to appear thereby to be supporters of mysticism. The opponents of the Bible Society did great harm also to the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Russian…”

Philaret had been taking an active part in this translation because he saw in it the best means of diverting the often misdirected religious aspirations of Russian society in the direction of Orthodoxy. “‘Let the bread not be taken away from the child’… - Metropolitan Philaret firmly believed in the renovatory power of the Word of God. He uninterruptedly bound his destiny with the work on the Bible, with the translation of the Holy Scriptures. And it is difficult properly to value his Biblical exploit. For him personally it was bound up with great trials and sorrow.”

For the work of translation was vigorously opposed by Metropolitan Seraphim, Archimandrite Photius and Admiral Shishkov, the new minister of education. Thus Shishkov ‘denied the very existence of the Russian language – ‘as if he saw in it only baseness and meanness’, ‘the simple people’s’ dialect of the single Slavic-Russian language. He saw in [Philaret’s] determination to translate the Word of God an ill-intentioned undertaking, ‘a weapon of revolutionary plots’, ‘how can one dare to change the words which are venerated as having come from the mouth of God?’… And translate it into what? Who would read these translations, would they not pile up everywhere in torn-up copies?… From the translation of the Bible Shishkov turned to the Catechism of Philaret and to his Notes on the Book of Genesis, where the Biblical and New Testament texts were translated in a Russian ‘reworking’. He was particularly disturbed by the fact that the Catechism was printed in a large print-run (18,000!) – he saw in this the clear manifestation of some criminal intention. Archimandrite Photius, on his part,… reproached the ‘unhealthy and harmful’ work of the Biblical translation – ‘the power of the translation was such that it clearly overthrew the dogmas of Church teaching or cast doubt on the truth of the Church’s teaching and traditions’. And Photius directly attacked Philaret, who, in his words, ‘was struggling on behalf of a God-fighting assembly’ and was supposedly ‘influencing the translation of the Bible in order rather to give a new appearance to the Word of God, thereby assisting faithlessness, innovation and all kinds of ecclesiastical temptations’. He directly called Philaret’s Catechism ‘gutter water’. As Philaret was told by his disciple Gregory, who was then rector of the Petersburg Academy and many years later Metropolitan of Novgorod and Petersburg, they were saying about the Bible Society that ‘it was founded in order to introduce a reformation’. They feared the translation of the Old Testament, and in particular the five books of Moses, lest it somehow seduced people to return to the Old Testament ritual law, or fall into Molokanism and Judaism (this thought was Magnitsky’s). They began ‘to say unpleasant things’ about Philaret in Petersburg, and it was suggested that he be removed to the Caucasus as exarch of Georgia… In these years Philaret was in Moscow and took no notice of the Petersburg rumours and ‘Alexandrine politics’. As before, he directly and openly defended the work on the

Bible and attempted to show that ‘the very desire to read the Holy Scriptures is already an earnest of moral improvement’. To the question, what was the purpose of this new undertaking in a subject so ancient and not subject to change as Christianity and the Bible, Philaret replied: ‘What is the purpose of this new undertaking? But what is new here? Dogmas? Rules of life? But the Bible Society preaches none of these things, and gives into the hands of those who desire it the book from which the Orthodox dogmas and pure rules of life were always drawn by the true Church in the past and to the present day. A new society? But it introduces no novelty into Christianity, and produces not the slightest change in the Church’… They asked: ‘Why is this undertaking of foreign origin?’ But, replied Philaret, so much with us ‘is not only of foreign origin, but also completely foreign’…

“The supposed zealots succeeded in obtaining the banning of Philaret’s Catechism on the excuse that there were ‘prayers’ in it – the Symbol of faith and the Commandments – in Russian. The Russian translation of the New Testament was not banned, but the translation of the Bible was stopped. And as Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev remembered later ‘with great sorrow and horror’, from fear of conversions to Judaism, ‘they found it necessary to commit to the flames of brick factories several thousand copies of the five books of the Prophet Moses translated into Russian in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and printed by the Bible Society’. M. Philaret reacted sharply and sorrowfully to these actions, which were carried out bypassing the Holy Synod. [He wrote to Metropolitan Seraphim]: ‘I cannot understand by whom and how and why doubt can be cast on a work as pure and approved by all, as sacred as anything on earth. It would be no small matter if the doubt threatened only the one man who was the instrument of this work; but does it not threaten the Hierarchy? Does it not threaten the Church? If the Orthodoxy of a Catechism that was triumphantly approved by the Most Holy Synod is in doubt, then will not the Orthodoxy of the Most Holy Synod itself not be in doubt? Will not allowing this shake the Hierarchy to its foundations, will it not disturb the peace of the Church? Will it not produce a serious temptation for the Church?” Metropolitan Seraphim calmed Philaret, saying that Orthodoxy was not in question here, that everything came down to the language, but he refused ‘to reply in a satisfactory manner’ ‘why the Russian language must have no place in the Catechism, which was, moreover, short, and intended for small children who had no knowledge whatsoever of the Slavonic language, and for that reason were not able to understand the truths of the faith which were expounded to them in that language’… The ban on the Catechism (1828) was removed only when all the texts had been put into Slavonic and the Russian translation of the Symbol, the Lord’s Prayer and the Commandments had been left out. M. Philaret was deeply shaken by these events. ‘Smoke is eating into their eyes’, he wrote to his vicar, ‘and they are saying: how corrosive is the light of the sun! They can hardly breathe from the smoke and with difficulty decree: how harmful is the water from the source of life! Blessed is he who can not only raise his eyes to the mountains, but run there for the clean air, the living water!… Blessed is he who can sit in his corner and weep for his sins and pray for the Sovereign and the Church, and has no need to take part in public affairs, becoming tainted with the sins of others and multiplying his own
sins!’ Above all Philaret was alarmed by the un-thought-through hastiness and interference of secular people, ‘people who have been called neither by God, nor by their superiors’, and who rise up in bold self-opinionated fashion against the appointed teachers.”

The destruction of the Holy Scriptures simply because they were in a Russian translation, and of the official Catechism simply because it quoted them in Russian rather than Slavonic, would, in another age, have led to a schism. But Philaret refrained from open protest precisely because he did not want to create a schism. However, with heresy overwhelming so many from the left, and blind prejudice parading as traditionalism from the right, the Russian Church was in a precarious position...

Nevertheless, in the last analysis Alexander I triumphed over Masonry, the spiritual Napoleon, as he had triumphed over the visible Napoleon in 1812. It was a fitting end to a momentous reign...

---

450 Florovsky, “Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij”, pp. 273-275. And yet his main enemies, sadly, were the zealots of Church piety. Thus Fr. Photius, on reading Philaret’s letter to Seraphim, wrote: “From the letters of Philaret it is not evident that he valued the faith, the Church and Orthodoxy, but only his own personality and honour” (in A.I. Yakovlev, “Sviatitel’ Filaret (Drozdov) in gosudarstvennaia zhizn’ Rossii v 1821-1831 godakh” (The Hierarch Philaret (Drozdov) and State life in Russia from 1821 to 1831), in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867, Jordanville: Variable Press, 2003, p. 138.

451 Metropolitan Seraphim of St. Petersburg had threatened to retire if Philaret insisted on continuing his translation. (Snychev, op. cit., p. 181)

452 The Russian Bible Society was forced to close down its operations in 1826 by Tsar Nicholas I, and its property, worth some two million roubles, was transferred to the Holy Synod. The Society re-established itself in Russia in 1990. The project for the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Russian was resumed in the reign of Alexander II...
15. THE DECEMBRIST REBELLION

The wave of revolutionary violence sweeping Europe reached Russia after the supposed death of Tsar Alexander I on November 19, 1825. During the interregnum, on December 14, a group of army officers attempted to seize power in St. Petersburg.

Just before the Decembrist rebellion, a young officer-Decembrist came up to St. Seraphim of Sarov, “and, taking off his cap, asked for his blessing. The always meek and quiet elder Seraphim was suddenly filled with such anger as nobody had ever seen in him. He began to shout loudly at the officer and cursed him. The unfortunate one, struck as if by thunder, went away, swaying from the shock and forgetting to put on his cap… An involuntary witness of the event had been a young monk who had brought Elder Seraphim some food. ‘Did you see?’ the elder asked him. ‘I saw,’ replied the monk. The elder pointed at the source, which he had so carefully tended: ‘Look!’ The monk glanced and saw that the source of grace-filled water, which had healed many sick people, and which was always clean and transparent, this time had become completely disturbed. ‘That’s how these gentlemen want to disturb Russia,’ said St. Seraphim. Soon Russia learned of the plot and the attempt at rebellion of the ‘Decembrists’ (the officer was one of them)...”

Already in 1823 Alexander I had been given a list of the future “Decembrists”. But he refused to act against them. Archpriest Lev Lebedev explains why: “‘It is not for me to punish them,’ said his Majesty, and cast the paper into the fire. ‘I myself shared their views in my youth,’ he added. That means that now, in 1823, Alexander I evaluated these diversions of his youth as sin, which also had to receive their retribution. Neither he nor [Grand Duke] Constantine [his brother] had the spiritual, moral right to punish the plotters, insofar as both of them had been guilty of the plot against their own father! That was the essence of the matter! Only he had the right to punish who had in no way been involved in the parricide and the revolutionary delusions – that is, the younger brother Nicholas. It was to him that the reins of the government of Russia were handed.”

The Decembrist conspirators were divided into a Northern Society based in St. Petersburg and a Southern society based in Tulchin, headquarters of the Second Army in the Ukraine.

---


455 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 291.
“In the ideology of the Northern Society especially,” writes Andrzej Walicki, “there were certain elements reminiscent of the views of the aristocratic opposition of the reign of Catherine II. Many of the members in this branch of the Decembrist movement were descendants of once powerful and now impoverished boyar families… Nikita Muraviev claimed that the movement was rooted in the traditions of Novgorod and Pskov, of the twelfth-century Boyar Duma, of the constitutional demands presented to Anne by the Moscow nobility in 1730, and of the eighteenth-century aristocratic opposition. The poet Kondraty Ryleev painted an idealized portrait of Prince Andrei Kurbsky (the leader of the boyar revolt against Ivan the Terrible) and even devoted one of his ‘elegies’ to him…In his evidence before the Investigating Commission after the suppression of the revolt, Petr Kakhovsky stated that the movement was primarily a response to the high-handedness of the bureaucracy, the lack of respect for ancient gentry freedom, and the favoritism shown to foreigners. Another Northern Decembrist, the writer and literary critic Aleksandr Bestuzhev… wrote that his aim was ‘monarchy tempered by aristocracy’. These and similar facts explain Pushkin’s view, expressed in the 1830’s, that the Decembrist revolt had been the last episode in the age-old struggle between autocracy and boyars…

“The Decembrists used the term ‘republic’ loosely, without appearing to be fully aware that there were essential differences between, for instance, the Roman republic, the Polish gentry republic, the old Russian city states, and modern bourgeois republics… Muraviev modelled his plan for a political system on the United States… The theorists of the Northern Society made no distinction between criticism of absolutism from the standpoint of the gentry and similar criticism from a bourgeois point of view. Hence they saw no difficulty in reconciling liberal notions taken largely from the works of Bentham, Benjamin Constant and Adam Smith with an idealization of former feudal liberties and a belief in the role of the aristocracy as a ‘curb on despotism’. The theoretical premise here was the ‘juridical world view’ of the Enlightenment, according to which legal and political forms determined the revolution of society.”456

The Northern Decembrists were in favour of the emancipation of the serfs. However, they insisted that the land should remain with the gentry, thereby ensuring the continued dependence of the serfs on the gentry. “The conviction that the peasants ought to be overjoyed merely at the abolition of serfdom was shared by many Decembrists. Yakushkin, for instance, could not conceal his exasperation at his peasants’ demand for land when he offered to free them. When they were told that the land would remain the property of the landlord, their answer was: ‘Then things had better stay as they were. We belong to the master, but the land belongs to us.’”457

The Northern Decembrists worked out a new interpretation of Russian history conceived “as an antithesis to Karamzin’s theory of the beneficial role of autocracy”. “An innate Russian characteristic, the Decembrists maintained – one that later

457 Walicki, op. cit., p. 61.
developments had blunted but not destroyed – was a deep-rooted love of liberty. Autocracy had been unknown in Kievan Russia: the powers of the princes had been strictly circumscribed there and decisions on important affairs of state were taken by the popular assemblies. The Decembrists were especially ardent admirers of the republican city-states of Novgorod and Pskov. This enthusiasm was of practical significance, since they were convinced that the ‘spirit of liberty’ that had once imbued their forbears was still alive; let us but strike the bell, and the people of Novgorod, who have remained unchanged throughout the centuries, will assemble by the bell tower, Ryleev declared. Kakhovsky described the peasant communes with their self-governing mir as ‘tiny republics’, a living survival of Russian liberty. In keeping with this conception, the Decembrists thought of themselves as restoring liberty and bringing back a form of government that had sound historical precedents.”

This reinterpretation of Russian history was false. Russia was imbued from the beginning with the spirit of Orthodox autocracy and patriarchy: the “republics” of Pskov and Novgorod were exceptions to the historical rule. And if Kievan autocracy was less powerful than the Muscovite or Petersburg autocracies, this was not necessarily to its advantage. Russia succumbed to the Mongols because the dividedness of her princes precluded a united defence. And there can be little doubt that she would not have survived into the nineteenth century as an independent Orthodox nation if she had not been an autocracy.

The leader of the Southern Society, Colonel Pavel Pestel, had more radical ideas in his draft for a constitution, Russian Justice, which was based on two assumptions: “that every man has a natural right to exist and thus to a piece of land large enough to allow him to make a basic living; and that only those who create surplus wealth have a right to enjoy it. After the overthrow of tsarism, therefore, Pestel proposed to divide land into two equal sectors: the first would be public property (or, more accurately, the property of the communes); the second would be in private hands. The first would be used to ensure everyone a minimum living, whereas the second would be used to create surplus wealth. Every citizen was entitled to ask his commune for an allotment large enough to support a family; if the commune had more land available, he would even be able to demand several such allotments. The other sector would remain in private hands. Pestel felt that his program ensured every individual a form of social welfare in the shape of a communal land allotment but also left scope for unlimited initiative and the opportunity of making a fortune in the private sector.

“Pestel believed that his program had every chance of success since land ownership in Russia had traditionally been both communal and private. Here he obviously had in mind the Russian village commune; it should be emphasized, however, that Pestel’s commune differed essentially from the feudal obshchina in

458 Walicki, op. cit., p. 67.
that it did not restrict its members’ movement or personal freedom and did not impose collective responsibility for individual members’ tax liabilities.”

579 people arrested and brought to trial. 40 were given the death sentence and the rest – hard labour. In the end only five were executed. The soldiers were flogged. In August, 1826 Tsar Nicholas confirmed the ban on Masonry.

“And so for the first time in Russian history,” writes Lebedev, “a rebellion of the nobility had as its aim not the removal of one sovereign by another, but the annihilation of tsarist power altogether... It became clear that [the Decembrists’] links in ‘society’ were so significant and deep, and the sympathy for them so broad, that one could speak of a betrayal of the Throne and Church – or, at any rate, of the unreliability – of the noble class as a whole.”

V.F. Ivanov writes: “As an eyewitness put it, the rebellion in Petersburg shocked the general mass of the population of Russia profoundly. In his words, ‘the attempt to limit the Tsar’s power and change the form of government seemed to us not only sacrilege, but an historical anomaly; while the people, seeing that the plotters belonged exclusively to the upper class, considered the nobility to be traitors, and this added one more sharp feature to that secret hatred which it nourished towards the landowners. Only the progressives and the intelligentsia of the capital sympathised with the unfortunate madmen’ (Schilder).

“The best people turned away from the affair in disgust and branded the work of the Mason-Decembrists that of Cain. In the words of Karamzin: ‘Look at the stupid story of our mad liberals! Pray God that not so many real rogues are found among them. The soldiers were only victims of a deception. Sometimes a fine day begins with a storm: may it be thus in the new reign... God saved us from a great disaster on December 14...’”

In 1826 Karamzin wrote: “Liberals! What do you want? The happiness of men? But is there happiness where there is death, illness, vices, passions?... For a moral being there is no good without freedom: but this freedom is given not by his Majesty, not by Parliament, but by each of us to ourselves, with the help of God. We must conquer freedom in our hearts by peace of conscience and trust in Providence!”

In the same year Metropolitan Philaret said: “It is becoming clearer and clearer from what horrors and iniquities God delivered us, when he strengthened His Majesty on December 14. Pray that this evil will be completely annihilated by

460 One of those executed was Sergius Ivanovich Muraviev-Apostol, a leader of the southern society. In his Catechesis we find a strong Christian element, but a tirade against the tsars for having “seized the people’s freedom” and a confession that he wanted to kill the tsar (http://decemb.hobby.ru/index.shtml?archive/pokaz5).
461 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 318.
462 Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 307-308.
righteousness and wisdom. But there are people who, after talking previously about the visitation of God, are now talking about the wrath of God on us."

The Decembrist rebellion was important not only for what it represented in itself but also for the halo of martyrdom which its exiles acquired. They were romantic dreamers rather than hardened revolutionaries – one of their leaders, the poet Ryleev, mounted the scaffold with a volume of Byron in his hands, and another, Count Sergius Volkonsky, remained a monarchist to the end of his life, breaking down in tears on hearing of the death of Nicholas I. But of course they were not monarchists: as Alexis Khomyakov said, they “preferred the tyranny of an armed minority to one-man rule”. And their naivety did not diminish the evil effect of their words and deeds on succeeding generations. From now on, Russian liberals could appeal to the example of the “heroic” Decembrists in their struggle against the Orthodox autocracy…

464 Oliver Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 143. He also petitioned to serve as a private in the Crimean war, which he saw as a return to the spirit of 1812. Figes sees Volkonsky as the link between the Decembrists and the Populists of a later generation. He wrote to his son in 1857: “I gave my blessing when you went into the service of the Fatherland and the Tsar. But I always taught you to conduct yourself without lordly airs when dealing with your comrades from a different class (op. cit., pp. 143-143). For more on the Decembrists and their wives (from a pro-Decembrist perspective), see Christine Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, London: Quartet Books, 2001.
16. TSAR NICHOLAS I

Few rulers have dominated their epoch as much as Tsar Nicholas I. It was the arguments for and against his policies that stimulated much of the thinking on Russia and her destiny, especially the debates between the Slavophiles and the westerners. He was the archetypal reactionary against which liberals and westerners raged, but whom saints such as Seraphim of Sarov and Theophilus of the Kiev Caves venerated.

Tsar Nicholas had never been swayed by liberal ideas. Having tasted something of the flavour of democratic life in France during the reign of his father, he said to Golenischev-Kutuzov: “If, to our misfortune, this evil genius transferred all these clubs and meetings, which create more noise than substance, to us, then I would beseech God to repeat the miracle of the confusion of the tongues or, even better, deprive those who use their tongues in this way of the gift of speech.” A man of strict life and strict opinions, his rule was made still stricter by the fact that he came to the throne in the midst of the Decembrist rebellion.

Some have portrayed the Tsar as having been unreasonably strict and censorious. However, he wanted to abolish serfdom, and took important preparatory measures towards that great act carried out by his son. Moreover, he had the ability to convert, and not simply crush, his opponents. Thus it was after a long, sincere conversation with Pushkin that he was able to say: “Gentlemen, I present to you a new Pushkin!” “And it was truly thus,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev. “Not out of fear before the authorities, not hypocritically, but sincerely and truly, Pushkin, the friend of the ‘Decembrists’, the worldly skiver, in life as in poetry, after 1826 renounced his free-thinking and Masonry and created his best and greatest works!”

Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood

“Having rejected a rotten support, the nobility,” writes Lebedev, Tsar Nicholas “made his supports the Orthodox Church, the system of state institutions (in which the class of bureaucrats, of officials, acquired great significance) and the Russian people which he loved! Having grasped this main direction of the Tsar’s politics, Count S. Uvarov, the minister of enlightenment, expressed it [on March 21, 1833] in the remarkable formula: Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood….”

“This schema,” writes Sergius Firsov, “can be called a political reincarnation of the Byzantine theory of ‘the symphony of powers’ in the changed conditions of State

---

465 V.F. Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 316-317.
466 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 331.
467 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 319.
realities in Russia.” It “was often misunderstood,” writes Fr. Alexis Nikolin, “as follows: the Russian people in the sphere of faith lives by Orthodoxy; in the sphere of statehood it is maintained by Autocracy, and in the sphere of everyday life is strong through its Nationhood.” But the three elements of the formula were closely linked, and this link had to be explained.

Moreover, the priorities had to be understood: first Orthodoxy (as opposed to Catholicism and Protestantism), then Autocracy (as opposed to Absolutism and Democracy), and then Nationhood (as opposed to Internationalism and chauvinistic Nationalism). The supreme value was Orthodoxy, whose first line of defence was the Autocracy, and second - national feeling. Any attempt to invert this order – as, for example, by making Orthodoxy merely a support for Autocracy, or both as supports of Nationhood, would be equivalent to idolatry and lead to the downfall of Russia.

Some, such as D.S. Khomiakov, thought that an inversion of this order, placing Autocracy as the supreme value, did indeed take place. However, this is not the

468 Firsov, Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets, 1890-x – 1918 gg.) (The Russian Church on the eve of the changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, p. 51.
469 Nikolin, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 114.
470 “Orthodoxy as the everyday faith of the Russian people can be respected also by others, even by non-Christians. This is, so to speak, the inner pledge of the life of the Russian people, and it is completely possible to respect it and even make up to it while remaining in the sphere of personal conscience a complete and irreconcilable opponent of ‘ecclesiastical-dogmatic Orthodoxy’. It is hardly likely that the government of the 30s of the 19th century reasoned like that: but it seems undoubted that unconsciously it understood the matter in this way. It truly represented Orthodoxy as an ecclesiastical-everyday institution founded a long time ago for the enlightenment of the people; and as such the people got used to it completely in the sense of a cult and especially as a ‘teaching on unquestioning obedience to the civil, God-given authorities’. In this form, truly, Orthodoxy closely touches the sphere of the State and fits in well into the general picture for the programme of state education. With Orthodoxy of such a kind, strictly speaking, anyone can get on, of whatever faith he may be – since he only recognises the main part of the programme, its root – Autocracy (absolutism, according to the official understanding, also). This part was obligatory for absolutely everybody; but the first and third were meant only to serve as a certain ethnographic colouring for the middle member [of the programme’s triad]: everyone was obliged to recognise that its essence was Autocracy. Of what kind? Russian. But the concept of what is Russian falls into two parts: the Orthodox-Russian and the ethnographic-Russian. Thus for a purely Russian youth the programme had its complete significance, that is, the first and last concepts were obligatory only as defining the sole completely essential concept in it, ‘Autocracy’ (absolutism). Of course, however diluted the concept of Orthodoxy may be so as to fit into the government’s programme of civil education, it was, to a large degree, inseparable from the Church’s teaching and dogma. But in the present case we have to firmly establish the position that, without in any way rejecting the absolute significance of Orthodoxy as the expression of the faith and the ethics that flows from that, we are dealing with it here in a somewhat different sense, as it is placed at the foundation of civil education, that is, in the sense of its application to civil and cultural life, which are expressed firstly by the term ‘Autocracy’ and secondly by the term ‘Nationhood’: and this is because (to repeat) Orthodoxy in the absolute sense can stand only ‘for itself’ and excludes the possibility of a union with any state task whatever, and even with any national task. Orthodoxy is universal, it is far higher than states and peoples; it denies neither statehood nor nationalities, but it is united with nothing…

“None of these questions were clarified officially; and the Orthodoxy of Nicholas Pavlovich and Count Uvarov remained the same diffuse concept as the liberté of the French revolution. It in fact remained at the level only of a negative concept, as did the concept ‘Nationhood’. Only ‘Autocracy’
view of Lebedev, who writes: “Beginning already with Paul I, the rapprochement of imperial power with the Church continued under Nicholas I, being raised to a qualitatively higher level. The All-Russian Autocrat from now on did not oppose himself to the Church and did not even consider himself ‘self-sufficient’ or ‘independent’ of her. On the contrary, he saw himself as a faithful son of the Orthodox Church, completely sharing the faith of his people and bound in all his politics to be guided by the commandments of God, proceeding precisely from the Orthodox world-view (and not from the demands of a certain non-existent ‘religion of nature’, as under Catherine II). This was a good, grace-filled radical change. It made itself immediately felt also in the relations of the two powers – the tsar’s and the Church’s. From now on the over-procurators of the Synod were people who enjoyed the respect and trust of the Russian hierarchs and considered themselves faithful children of the Church. Such were Admiral Shishkov and Count Protasov. There was not always unanimity between them and the members of the Synod. Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), for example, more than once ‘warred’ with Protasov. But these were quarrels about separate matters, where both sides were governed by the single desire to benefit Holy Orthodoxy (even if they understood this differently).”

This beneficial change in Church-State relations was reflected in the voluntary reunion of the uniates in the western territories with the Orthodox Church. Favourable conditions for this change had been created by the fall of Poland in 1815, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Russia in 1820 and the suppression of the Polish rebellion in 1830-1831. Then, in 1835, a secret committee on the uniate question was formed in St. Petersburg consisting of the uniate bishop Joseph Semashko, the real soul of the movement, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, the over-procurator of the Holy Synod and the minister of the interior. By 1839 1,600,000 had converted to Orthodoxy.

In spite of these positive changes, there was no formal change in the Tsar’s relationship to the Church, which continued to fall short of true “symphony”. In fact, formally speaking, the power of the Tsar over the Church was increased. Thus in 1832 a new collection of the Fundamental Laws was published that included the words: “The Emperor as the Christian sovereign is the supreme defender and received a positive meaning, because, firstly, this is in essence a more concrete concept than the other two; and then mainly because it was and is a term clearly understood by those who established the formula. Autocracy for them is, both theoretically and practically, absolutism. Nobody was mistaken in this meaning and there were no misunderstandings concerning it: the more so in that it indeed revealed itself graphically. But Orthodoxy was understood only as not Roman Catholicism – a very convenient faith from the state’s point of view; and not Protestantism, which unleashed the undesirable liberty, not only in the sphere of the faith alone (if you can criticise the faith, then all the more the rest, also); and not as sectarianism – also a teaching displeasing to the police. In the same way ‘Nationhood’ did not find a concrete expression of itself; and in the absence of this it settled on language: the spread of the Russian language was respected as the spread also of the Russian spirit – its nationality...” (Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost’ (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood), Minsk: Belaruskaia Gramata, 1997, pp. 13-15)

471 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 321.
preserver of the dogmas of the dominant faith and the supervisor of right faith and every good order in the Holy Church”. In the administration of the Church, intoned articles 42 and 43, “the autocratic power acts by means of the Holy Governing Synod, which was founded by it.” In these formulae, writes Fr. Georges Florovsky, “there is clearly and faithfully conveyed the State’s consciousness of itself and self-definition: in them there is taken to its logical conclusion the thought of Peter, who considered himself to be ‘the supreme judge’ of the Spiritual College, and who openly derived its privileges from his own autocratic power – ‘when it was established by the Monarch and under his rule’.”

Such an overbearing attitude of the State towards the Church was bound to lead to friction. And yet when there were clashes between the Tsar and the hierarchs on matters of conscience, the Tsar showed himself ready to give way, which gives strength to Lebedev’s claim that a qualitatively higher level of Church-State relations had been attained. Thus once Metropolitan Philaret refused to bless a triumphal monument because it had some pagan hieroglyphs and representations of pagan gods. The Emperor, showing a good grasp of church history, said: “I understand, but tell him [Philaret] that I am not Peter the Great and he is not St. Metrophanes.” Still, he allowed Philaret not to take part in the ceremony. According to another account, on hearing of Philaret’s disinclination to serve, the Emperor said: “Prepare the horses; I’m leaving today”, so that the ceremony took place without either Tsar or metropolitan. Afterwards, on returning to the Trinity Lavra, Philaret said to his spiritual father, Archimandrite Anthony: “Did I act well? I annoyed the Tsar. I don’t have the merits of the hierarch Metrophanes.” “Don’t take them upon yourself,” replied Fr. Anthony, “but remember that you are a Christian bishop, a pastor of the Church of Christ, to whom only one thing is terrible: to depart from the will of Jesus Christ.” Then the hierarch revealed that the previous night St. Sergius had entered his locked room, come up to his bed, and said: “Don’t be disturbed, it will all pass…”

Again, in 1835 the Emperor wanted his son and heir, the Tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich, to become a member of the Holy Synod. But Metropolitan Philaret, together with the other hierarchs, was against the idea, and on meeting the tsarevich, asked him when he had received clerical ordination. Shamed, the tsarevich henceforth refrained from attending sessions of the Holy Synod.

---

473 Nicholas entrusted this work to the Mason Speransky, because his expertise in the subject was unrivalled. However, above him he placed his former teacher Balugiansky, saying: “See that he (Speransky) does not get up to the same pranks as in 1810. You will answer for that to me” (in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 317).


475 Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), Zhizn’ i deiatel’nost’ mitropolita Philareta (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow), Tula, 1994, p. 238.


478 Sergius and Tamara Fomin, Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. 1, p. 322.
Although the relationship between Church and State in Russia was far from ideal, particularly in the over-powerful role of the over-procurator, its faults can be exaggerated. When the Englishman William Palmer criticised the dominance of the State over the Church in Russia, Alexis Khomiakov replied: “That the Church is not quite independent of the state, I allow; but let us consider candidly and impartially how far that dependence affects, and whether it does indeed affect, the character of the Church. The question is so important, that it has been debated during this very year [1852] by serious men in Russia, and has been brought, I hope, to a satisfactory conclusion. A society may be dependent in fact and free in principle, or vice-versa. The first case is a mere historical accident; the second is the destruction of freedom, and has no other issue but rebellion and anarchy. The first is the weakness of man; the second the depravity of law. The first is certainly the case in Russia, but the principles have by no means been damaged. Whether freedom of opinion in civil and political questions is, or is not, too much restrained, is no business of ours as members of the Church (though I, for my part, know that I am almost reduced to complete silence); but the state never interferes directly in the censorship of works written about religious questions. In this respect, I will confess again that the censorship is, in my opinion, most oppressive; but that does not depend upon the state, and is simply the fault of the over-cautious and timid prudence of the higher clergy. I am very far from approving of it, and I know that very useful thoughts and books are lost in the world, or at least to the present generation.

“But this error, which my reason condemns, has nothing to do with ecclesiastical liberty; and though very good tracts and explanations of the Word of God are oftentimes suppressed on the false supposition of their perusal being dangerous to unenlightened minds, I think that those who suppress the Word of God itself should be the last to condemn the excessive prudence of our ecclesiastical censors. Such a condemnation coming from the Latins would be absurdity itself. But is the action of the Church quite free in Russia? Certainly not; but this depends wholly on the weakness of her higher representatives, and upon their desire to get the protection of the state, not for themselves, generally speaking, but for the Church. There is certainly a moral error in that want of reliance upon God Himself; but it is an accidental error of persons, and not of the Church, and has nothing to do with our religious convictions. It would be a difference case, if there was the smallest instance of a dogmatic error, or something near to it, admitted or suffered without protestation out of weakness; but I defy anybody to find anything like that…”

The Russian Church and the Anglicans

It was in the reign of Tsar Nicholas I that a beginning was made to ecumenical relations with the western confessions.

The pioneer in this on the Orthodox side was Khomiakov, whose correspondence with Palmer is one of the earliest and best examples of how to conduct ecumenical relations without betraying the truth. He was very well informed about the religious situation in both East and West, clearly longed for union, and was not seeking merely to “score points” over an adversary. He was generous about what was good in the West, and not afraid to admit weaknesses in the East. But he was politely but unbendingly firm in his defence of the Orthodox position on questions of faith (e.g. the Filioque) and ecclesiology (i.e. where the True Church is and where it is not).

In spite of his ardent desire for union, Khomiakov was pessimistic about its prospects; and this not so much because of the doctrinal obstacles, as of the moral obstacles. As he explained to Palmer: “A very weak conviction in points of doctrine can bring over a Latin to Protestantism, or a Protestant to the Latins. A Frenchman, a German, an Englishman, will go over to Presbyterianism, to Lutheranism, to the Independents, to the Cameronians, and indeed to almost every form of belief or unbelief; he will not go over to Orthodoxy. As long as he does not step out of the circles of doctrines which have taken their origin in the Western world, he feels himself at home; notwithstanding his apparent change, he does not feel that dread of apostasy which renders sometimes the passage from error to faith as difficult as from truth to error. He will be condemned by his former brethren, who will call his action a rash one, perhaps a bad one; but it will not be utter madness, depriving him, as it were, of his rights of citizenship in the civilized world of the West. And that is natural. All the Western doctrine is born out of the Latins; it feels (though unconsciously) its solidarity with the past; it feels its dependence on one science, on one creed, on one line of life; and that creed, that science, that life was the Latin one. This is what I hinted at, and what you understand very rightly, viz., that all Protestants are Crypto-Papists; and, indeed, it would be a very easy task to show that in their theology (as well as philosophy) all the definitions of all the objects of creed or understanding are merely taken out of the old Latin System, though often made negative in the application. In short, if it was to be expressed in the concise language of algebra, all the West knows but one datum, \( a \); whether it be preceded by the positive sign +, as with the Latins, or with the negative –, as with the protestants, the \( a \) remains the same. Now, a passage to Orthodoxy seems indeed like an apostasy from the past, from its science, creed, and life. It is rushing into a new and unknown world, a bold step to take, or even to advise.

“This, most reverend sir, is the moral obstacle I have been speaking about; this, the pride and disdain which I attribute to all the Western communities. As you see, it is no individual feeling voluntarily bred or consciously held in the heart; it is no vice of the mind, but an involuntary submission to the tendencies and direction of the past. When the unity of the Church was lawlessly and unlovingly rent by the Western clergy, the more so inasmuch as at the same time the East was continuing its former friendly intercourse, and submitting to the opinion of the Western Synods the Canons of the Second Council of Nicaea, each half of Christianity began a life apart, becoming from day to day more estranged from the other. There was an
evident self-complacent triumph on the side of the Latins; there was sorrow on the side of the East, which had seen the dear ties of Christian brotherhood torn asunder — which had been spurned and rejected, and felt itself innocent. All these feelings have been transmitted by hereditary succession to our time, and, more or less, either willingly or unwillingly, we are still under their power. Our time has awakened better feelings; in England, perhaps, more than anywhere else, you are seeking for the past brotherhood, for the past sympathy and communion. It would be a shame for us not to answer your proffered friendship, it would be a crime not to cultivate in our hearts an intense desire to renovate the Unity of the Church; but let us consider the question coolly, even when our sympathies are most awakened.

“The Church cannot be a harmony of discords; it cannot be a numerical sum of Orthodox, Latins, and Protestants. It is nothing if it is not perfect inward harmony of creed and outward harmony of expression (notwithstanding local differences in the rite). The question is, not whether the Latins and Protestants have erred so fatally as to deprive individuals of salvation, which seems to be often the subject of debate — surely a narrow and unworthy one, inasmuch as it throws suspicion on the mercy of the Almighty. The question is whether they have the Truth, and whether they have retained the ecclesiastical tradition unimpaired. If they have not, where is the possibility of unity?

“Do not, I pray, nourish the hope of finding Christian Truth without stepping out of the former protestant circle. It is an illogical hope; it is a remnant of that pride which thought itself able and wished to judge and decide by itself without the Spiritual Communion of heavenly grace and Christian love. Were you to find all the truth, you would have found nothing; for we alone can give you that without which all would be vain — the assurance of Truth.”

In 1864, four years after Khomiakov’s death, Pastor Jung, a delegate of the New York convocation of the Episcopalian Church with authority from some of the bishops there to enter into relations with the older Russian hierarchs, came to Russia. In a meeting with Metropolitan Philaret and other bishops, he explained the significance of the 39 articles for the Anglicans and Episcopalians. The metropolitan said that a rapprochement between the Russian and American Episcopalian Churches might create problems with their respective “mother churches” in England and Greece. For example, the Greeks were less accommodating with regard to the canonicity of baptism by pouring than their Russian co-religionists. The metropolitan probably had in mind here the experience of William Palmer, who, being a member of the “Oxford movement” and its “branch theory” of the Church (i.e. that the True Church consists of three branches: the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Anglican), had been shocked to find that the Greeks would receive him into communion by baptism, and the Russians by chrismation only. In spite of Khomiakov’s attempts to explain the Orthodox use of condescension or “economy”,

Palmer remained dissatisfied by what he saw as a difference in ecclesiology between the Greeks and the Russians, and eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church.

In another meeting with Pastor Jung, Metropolitan Philaret posed five questions relating to the 39 articles:

1. How can the 39 articles not be a stumbling-block to the union of the Churches?
2. How can the teaching of the American Episcopalian Church’s teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit [the Filioque] be made to agree with the teaching of the Eastern Church?
3. Is the uninterruptedness of apostolic hierarchical ordination fully proven in the American Church?
4. Does the American Church recognize reliable Church Tradition to be a subsidiary guiding principle for the explanation of Holy Scripture and for Church orders and discipline?
5. What is the view of the American Church on the sevenfold number of sacraments in the Eastern Church?

At another meeting the pastor gave preliminary replies to these questions, and insisted that the 39 articles had a political rather than a spiritual meaning, and did not have a fully dogmatic force.

Although the two sides parted on friendly terms, nothing positive came from the meeting. The public in America were not ready for this, and there even began something in the nature of a reaction. Learning about this, Philaret sadly remarked: “The reconcilers of the churches… are weaving a cover for division, but are not effecting union.” “How desirable is the union of the Churches! But how difficult to ensure that the movement towards it should soar with a pure striving for the Truth and should be entirely free from attachment to entrenched opinions.” “O Lord, send a true spirit of union and peace.”

The Jews under Nicholas

Tsar Alexander’s project of settling the Jews as farmers on the new territories of Southern Russia had proved to be a failure, in spite of very generous terms offered to them – terms that were not offered to Russian peasants. In spite of this failure, writes Solzhenitsyn, Nicholas I in his Statute of 1835, which replaced Alexander’s of 1804, “not only did not abandon Jewish agriculture, but even broadened it, placing in the first place in the building of Jewish life ‘the setting up of the Jews on the basis of rules that would open to them a free path to the acquisition of a prosperous existence by the practice of agriculture and industry and to the gradual education of their youth, while at the same time cutting off for them excuses for idleness and unlawful trades’. If before a preliminary contribution of 400 rubles was required for each family [settling in the new territories] from the Jewish community, now without any condition ‘every Jew is allowed “at any time” to pass over to

---

481 Snychev, op. cit., p. 357.
agriculture’, and all his unpaid taxes would immediately be remitted to him and to the community; he would be allowed to receive not only State lands for an unlimited period, but also, within the bounds of the Pale of Settlement, to buy, sell and lease lands. Those passing over to agriculture were freed from poll-tax for 25 years, from land tax for 10, and from liability to military service – for 50. Nor could any Jew ‘be forced to pass over to agriculture’. Moreover, ‘trades and crafts practised in their village life’ were legalised.

“(150 years passed. And because these distant events had been forgotten, an enlightened and learned physicist formulated Jewish life at that time as ‘the Pale of Settlement in conjunction with a ban [!] on peasant activity’. But the historian-publicist M.O. Gershenzon has a broader judgement: ‘Agriculture is forbidden to the Jew by his national spirit, for, on becoming involved with the land, a man can more easily become rooted to the place’.”

In general, the Statute of 1835 “did not lay any new restrictions on the Jews’, as the Jewish encyclopaedia puts it in a restrained way. And if we look into the details, then according to the new Statute ‘the Jews had the right to acquire any kind of real estate, including populated estates, and carry out any kind of trade on the basis of rights identical with those granted Russian subjects’, although only within the bounds of the Pale of Settlement. The Statute of 1835 defended all the rights of the Jewish religion, and introduced awards for rabbis and the rights of the merchants of the first guild. A rational age for marriage (18 and 16 years) was established [contrary to the rabbis, who married off young Jews at much younger ages]. Measures were undertaken that Jewish dress should not be so different, separating Jews from the surrounding population. Jews were directed to productive means of employment (forbidding the sale of wine on credit and on the security of household effects), all kinds of manufacturing activity (including the farming of wine distilleries). Keeping Christians in servitude was forbidden only for constant service, but it was allowed ‘for short jobs’ without indication of exactly how long, and also ‘for assisting in arable farming, gardening and work in kitchen gardens’, which was a mockery of the very idea of ‘Jewish agriculture’. The Statute of 1835 called on Jewish youth to get educated [up to then the rabbis had forbidden even the learning of Russian. No restrictions were placed on the entry of Jewish to secondary and higher educational institutions. Jews who had received the degree of doctor in any branch of science... were given the right to enter government service. (Jewish doctors had that right even earlier.) As regards local self-government, the Statute removed the Jews’ previous restrictions: now they could occupy posts in dumas, magistracies and town councils ‘on the same basis as people of other confessions are elected to them’. (True, some local authorities, especially in Lithuania, objected to this: the head of the town on some days had to lead the residents into the church, and how could this be a Jew? Or how could a Jew be a judge, since the oath had to be sworn on the cross? The opposition proved to be strong, and by a decree of 1836 it was established for the western provinces that Jews could occupy only a third of the posts in magistracies and town councils.) Finally, with regard to the economically

482 A.I. Solzhenitsyn, Dvesti Let Vmeste (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 114.
urgent question linked with cross-frontier smuggling, which was undermining State interests, the Statute left the Jews living on the frontiers where they were, but forbade any new settlements.

“For a State that held millions of its population in serfdom, all this cannot be characterised as a cruel system…”483

This is an important point in view of the persistent western and Jewish propaganda that Nicholas was a persecutor of the Jews. And in this light even the most notorious restriction on the Jews – that they live in the Pale of Settlement – looks generous. For while a peasant had to live in his village, the Jews could wander throughout the vast territory of the Pale, an area the size of France and Germany combined; while for those who were willing to practise agriculture, or had acquired education, they could go even further afield.

Of particular importance were the Tsar’s measures encouraging Jewish education, by which he hoped to remove the barriers built up around the Jews by the rabbis. “Already in 1831 he told the ‘directing’ committee that ‘among the measures that could improve the situation of the Jews, it was necessary to pay attention to their correction by teaching… by the building of factories, by the banning of early marriage, by a better management of the kahals… by a change of dress’. And in 1840, on the founding the ‘Committee for the Defining of Measures for the Radical Transformation of the Jews in Russia’, one of its first aims was seen to be: ‘Acting on the moral formation of the new generation of Jews by the establishment of Jewish schools in a spirit opposed to the present Talmudic teaching’…”484

“The masses, fearing coercive measures in the sphere of religion, did not go.

“However, the school reform took its course in… 1844, in spite of the extreme resistance of the ruling circles among the kahals. (Although ‘the establishment of Jewish schools by no means envisaged a diminution in the numbers of Jews in the general school institutions; on the contrary, it was often pointed out that the general schools had to be, as before, open for Jews’.) Two forms of State Jewish schools ['on the model of the Austrian elementary schools for Jews'] were established: two-year schools, corresponding to Russian parish schools, and four-year schools, corresponding to uyezd schools. In them only Jewish subjects were taught by Jewish teachers. (As one inveterate revolutionary, Lev Deutsch, evaluated it: ‘The crown-bearing monster ordered them [the Jews] to be taught Russian letters’.) For many years Christians were placed at the head of these schools; only much later were Jews also admitted.

“’The majority of the Jewish population, faithful to traditional Jewry, on learning or guessing the secret aim of Uvarov [the minister of enlightenment], looked on the educational measures of the government as one form of persecution. (But Uvarov, in

483 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 115-117.
484 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 122.
seeking possible ways of bringing the Jews and the Christian population closer together through the eradication of prejudices instilled by the teaching of the Talmud, wanted to exclude it completely from the educational curriculum, considering it to be an antichristian codex.) In their unchanging distrust of the Russian authorities, the Jewish population continued for quite a few years to keep away from these schools, experiencing ‘school-phobia’: ‘Just as the population kept away from military service, so it was saved from the schools, fearing to give their children to these seed-beds of “free thought”’. Prosperous Jewish families in part sent other, poor people’s children to the State schools instead of their own… And if by 1855 70 thousand Jewish children were studying in the ‘registered’ heder [rabbinic schools], in the State schools of both types there were 3,200.”

This issue of education was to prove to be crucial. For when, in the next reign, the Jews did overcome their “school-phobia”, and send their children to the State schools, these had indeed become seed-beds of “free-thinking” and revolution. It is ironic and tragic that it was the Jews’ education in Russian schools that taught how to overthrow the Russian Orthodox Autocracy…

The Old Ritualists Acquire a Hierarchy

The Old Ritualists continued to represent a large proportion of the population of the Empire that was hostile to its dominant religion. From 1843 they had begun to seek a degree of legality from the State and permission to build churches and prayer houses. Tsar Nicholas would have none of it, and large Old Ritualist centres were closed first in Irgiz (1839), then in Vyg, in Moscow and Petersburg (at the beginning of the 1850s). “At the closing of the Irgiz monasteries,” writes S.A. Zenkovsky, “the Old Ritualists resisted and, in view of the application by the administration of armed force, many of them suffered physically. But again these were victims of the conflict, and not of tortures or executions of arrested Old Ritualists. These were not religious persecutions, but the desire of Nicholas I and his ministers of the interior to introduce ‘order’ into the religious life of the country and control the religious communities of the Old Ritualists that were de facto independent of the administration.”

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow supported the Tsar’s policy. He was very disturbed by the Old Ritualists’ not commemorating the Emperor during their services. And he reported that in the Preobrazhensky workhouse the Old Ritualists were distributing books that taught “that no marriages should be recognised; the schismatics in marital unions with people not belonging to the schism should have their union broken; that bodily relationship should not be recognized in Christian

486 “According to data from the statistical committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1863, 10% of the whole population of Russia, or one sixth of the Orthodox population, was Old Ritualist” (L.E. Sikorskaya, Viatskij Ispovednik: Sviatitel’ Viktor (Ostrovidov) (The Vyatka Confessor: Holy Hierarch Victor (Ostrovidov)), Moscow, 2010, p. 42.
487 Zenkovsky, “Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo” (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration), 1987 – I, pp. 93-94.
marriages; that from 1666… married Christians are a satanic nest of vipers and the most shameful dwelling-place of his demons; that now satan is thinking about the multiplication of the human race and a soul is being given from the devil for the conception of a child.”

At about this time the Popovtsi Old Ritualists began to look for a bishop overseas. No such bishop was found in the Caucasus, Syria, Palestine, Persia and Egypt. Finally, writes Dobroklonsky, they “lured to themselves a former metropolitan of Bosnia, the Greek Ambrose, who had been deprived of his see and was living in Constantinople. In 1846 he was brought to Bélaia Krinitsa (in Bukovina, in Austria) and was received into the communion of the Popovtsi by cursing some supposed heresies and chrismation. In 1847, in accordance with the wish of the schismatics, he consecrated Bishop Cyril as his deputy and Arcadius for the Nekrasovtsy (in Turkey). Thus was the existence of the Belokrinitsy hierarchy established. Although in the following year, at the insistence of the Russian government, Ambrose was removed from Bélaia Krinitsa to restricted residence in the city of Tsilla (in Styria) and the Belokrinitsky monastery was sealed, in 1859 the Austrian government again recognised the lawfulness of the Belokrinitskaia metropolia and the monastery was unsealed. Cyril, who succeeded Ambrose, took care to consecrate new bishops, and such soon appeared for the Turkish, Moldavian and, finally, Russian schismatics. The first of the Russians was the shopkeeper Stephen Zhirov, who was made bishop of Simbirsk with the name Sophronius in 1849; by 1860 there were already up to 10 schismatic dioceses within the boundaries of Russia. A ‘spiritual council’ was formed in Moscow to administer church affairs; it was composed of false bishops and false priests. Sophronius was dreaming of founding a patriarchate, and even set up a patriarch, but, at the insistence of the schismatics, himself condemned his own undertaking. At first the government repressed the Old Ritualist hierarchs and the priests ordained by them. However, the Austrian priesthood continue to spread. From the time of Alexander II it began to enjoy toleration, although the government did not recognize it as lawful. In spite of a visible success, the Austrian hierarchy from the very beginning of its existence displayed signs of disintegration. Quarrels constantly arose between the schismatic bishops. They became especially fierce after the publication in 1862 in the name of the spiritual council of a certain ‘encyclical of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church’. It was composed by an inhabitant of Starodub, Hilarion Egorovich Kabanov with the aim of condemning the reasonings of the Bespopovtsi, whose distribution had dealt a blow to the Austrian priesthood. Having examined several books of the Bespopovtsi, the epistle expressed [the following] view of the Orthodox Church: ‘The ruling church in Russia, as also the Greek, believe in the same God as we (the Old Ritualists), the Creator of heaven and earth… Therefore, although we pronounce and write the name of the Saviour ‘Isus’,

---

488 Snychev, op. cit., p. 319.
489 “In 1866 Patriarch Anthimus of Constantinople wrote an epistle to Metropolitan Joseph of Karlovtsy, in which he wrote the following about Metropolitan Ambrose: ‘The hierarch whom we are discussing, being considered subject to trial because of his flight, canonically cannot carry out hierarchical actions’” (Archbishop Nicon (Rlitsky), Zhizneopisanie Blazhennego Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, p. 167). (V.M.)
we do not dare to condemn that which is written and pronounced ‘Iisus’ as being the name of some other Jesus, the opponent of Christ, as certain Bespopovtsi think to do. Similarly, we do not dishonour and blaspheme the cross with four ends...’ It was also recognised that the true priesthood of Christ continued in the Orthodox Church (Great Russian and Greek) and would remain until the day of judgement. While some accepted the epistle, others condemned it. Thus there appeared mutually opposing parties of ‘encyclicalers’ and ‘anti-encyclicalers’. The latter, who had tendencies towards Bespopovschina, began to affirm that the name ‘Iisus’, as accepted by the Orthodox Church, is the name of another person than ‘Isus’, and is the name of the Antichrist. Both parties had their own bishops...

After the creation of the Belokrinitskaia hierarchy, the attitude of the Tsar towards the Old Ritualists became stricter. In 1854 they were deprived of all rights as merchants, and their chapel in the Rogozhsky cemetery was closed. However, from the beginning of Alexander II’s reign, they were allowed to have services in the cemetery. In 1865 the government wanted to introduce a further weakening of the legislation against the Old Ritualists, and only the voice of Metropolitan Philaret stopped it. ‘In 1858, for example, he complained that the Old Believers [Ritualists] were increasingly confident that the government would refrain from enforcing various restrictions on their influence and activities. Warning of the Old Believers’ pernicious moral influence, Philaret insisted on the need for strict control and rejected the idea of religious tolerance then gaining popularity in educated society... Philaret... appealed not to tradition or canons, but to the state’s own self-interest: ‘The idea [of religious tolerance] appears good, but it is fair only when the subject and limits are precisely and correctly determined. The idea of protecting the unity of the ruling confession in the state (thereby preserving the popular spirit – a source of strength for the state and an important aid to governance) should come before the idea of religious tolerance and should impose limits on the latter.’ Hence, he noted, European countries (even liberal England) imposed limits on religious freedom. Moreover, the state had a particular interest in defending the Church against the Old Belief [Rite]: ‘But tolerance extended without limits to the schism (which emerged as much from a refusal to obey the Church as from a rebellion against the state, and through its intensified proselytism constantly acts to harm the unity of the Church and state) would be both an injustice to the Church and a serious political mistake.’ Despite such arguments, Philaret could do little to halt the gradual liberalization of policy toward Old Believers that only fuelled their expectations for still more concessions. Unable to arrest this process, Philaret darkly warned that, ‘if the secular government fails to show sufficient caution against the pseudo-bishops and pseudo-priests [of the schism], then this will fall on its conscience before God, the Church, and the fatherland.’


However, Snychev argues that “the struggle of the holy hierarch with the schism in the last years of his life had, if not a very large, at any rate a definite success. Many of the schismatics joined either Orthodoxy or the Yedinoverie. Thus in 1854 some schismatics from the Preobrazhensky cemetery joined the Yedinoverie, and in 1865 the following activists of the Belokrinitskaja metropolia joined the Orthodox Church with the rights of the Yedinoverie: among the bishops, the metropolitan’s deputy, Onuphrius of Braila, Paphnutius of Kolomna, Sergius of Tula and Justin of Tulchinsk; Hieromonk Joasaph; the archdeacon of Metropolitan Cyril, his secretary and the keeper of the archives Philaret; Hierodeacon Melchizedek, who was able to take the archive of the metropolia and transfer it across the Russian frontier. The success might have been greater if the government had more actively supported Philaret and his deeds in the struggle against the schism…”

The Crimea: The Last Religious War

As the Emperor of “the Third Rome”, Tsar Nicholas saw himself as the natural protector of the Orthodox Christians, not only in Russia, but also in the Ottoman empire. But the Catholics, whose main political protector was France, were not prepared to allow him to play this role; and the English and the Ottomans were prepared to support the Catholics for their own reasons. This led to the Crimean War, the last war waged for specifically religious reasons on European soil.

Now the 1848 revolution, while in general unsuccessful, had changed the balance of forces in Europe. Gratitude to Russia for keeping the peace by defeating the Hungarian revolutionaries, never strong, had completely disappeared with the rise of a new generation of leaders, such as the rabidly anti-Russian Palmerston in England. In 1851 the exiled Hungarian revolutionary Kossuth denounced Russian “despotism” in front of a cheering crowd in London. Meanwhile, the new French Emperor Napoleon III was looking to challenge the Vienna settlement of 1815 and divide Austria and Russia.

One factor making for instability was the gradual weakening of the power of Ottoman Turkey, “the sick man of Europe”, in the Tsar’s phrase. Clearly, if Turkey collapsed, its subject peoples of Orthodox Christian faith would look to Russia to liberate them. But the Western Powers were determined to prevent this, which would threaten their hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean and greatly increase the power of their rival Russia.

Nevertheless, it was a remarkable turn-around for these countries to ally themselves with the Ottoman empire against a Christian state, Russia, when they were in no way threatened by Russia…

“The spark to the tinderbox,” writes Trevor Royle, “was the key to the main door of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. By tradition, history, and a common

492 Snychev, op. cit., p. 359.
usage which had been built up over the centuries, the great key was in the possession of the monks of the eastern, or Greek Orthodox… Church; they were the guardians of the grotto in which lay the sacred manger where Christ himself was… born. That state of affairs was contested with equal fervour by their great rivals, the monks of the Roman Catholic, or Latin, church who had been palmed off with the keys to the lesser inner doors to the narthex (the vestibule between the porch and the nave). There was also the question of whether or not a silver star adorned with the arms of France should be permitted to stand in the Sanctuary of the Nativity, but in the spring of 1852 the rivals’ paramount thoughts were concentrated on the possession of the great key to the church’s main west door….

"[Alexander] Kinglake wrote: ‘When the Emperor of Russia sought to … keep for his Church the holy shrines of Palestine, he spoke on behalf of fifty millions of brave, pious, devoted subjects, of whom thousands for the sake of the cause would joyfully risk their lives. From the serf in his hut, even up to the great Tsar himself, the faith professed was the faith really glowing in his heart...’" 494

“Nicolas I had both temporal and spiritual reasons for wanting to extend his protection of the Eastern Church within the Ottoman Empire. Napoleon III’s were rather different. Having dismissed the French parliament he needed all the support he could get, most especially from the Roman Catholics, before he could declare himself emperor. It suited him therefore to have France play a greater role in Palestine and ‘to put an end to these deplorable and too-frequent quarrels about the possession of the Holy Places’. To that end the Marquis de Lavalette, his ambassador to the Porte – or the Sublime Porte, the court or government of the Ottoman Empire – insisted that the Turks honour the agreement made in 1740 that confirmed that France had ‘sovereign authority’ in the Holy Land. Otherwise, hinted de Lavalette, force might have to be used.

“On 9 February 1852 the Porte agreed the validity of the Latin claims but no sooner had the concession been made than the Turks were forced to bow once more, this time to Russian counter-claims. Basing his argument on an agreement, or firman, of 1757 which restored Greek rights in Palestine and on the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainarji (1774) which gave Russia protection of the Christian religion within the Ottoman Empire, Nicholas’s ambassador succeeded in getting a new firman ratifying the privileges of the Greek Church. This revoked the agreement made to the French who responded by backing up their demands with a show of force.

“Later that summer, much to Nicholas’s fury and to Britain’s irritation, Napoleon III ordered the 90-gun steam-powered battleship Charlemagne to sail through the Dardanelles. This was a clear violation of the London Convention of 1841 which kept the Straits closed to naval vessels, but it also provided a telling demonstration of French sea power. It was nothing less than gunboat diplomacy and it seemed to work. Impressed by the speed and strength of the French warship, and persuaded by French diplomacy and money, Sultan Abd-el-Medjid listened ever more intently to

the French demands. At the beginning of December he gave orders that the keys to the Church of the Nativity were to be surrendered to the Latins and that the French-backed church was to have supreme authority over the Holy Places. On 22 December a new silver star was brought from Jaffa and as Kinglake wrote, in great state ‘the keys of the great door of the church, together with the keys of the sacred manger, were handed over to the Latins’.

“Napoleon III had scored a considerable diplomatic victory. His subjects were much gratified, but in so doing he had also prepared the ground for a much greater and more dangerous confrontation. Given the strength of Russian religious convictions Tsar Nicholas was unwilling to accept the Sultan’s decision – which he regarded as an affront not just to him but to the millions of Orthodox Christians under his protection – and he was determined to have it reversed, if need be by using force himself.”

In October, 1852, the Tsar arrived in Kiev and confided to the metropolitan: “I do not want to shed the blood of the faithful sons of the fatherland, but our vainglorious enemies are forcing me to bare my sword. My plans are not yet made – no! But my heart feels that the time is nearing and they will soon be brought to fulfilment.”

Seeking advice on his political projects, the Tsar asked if there were any holy elders in Kiev. The Metropolitan mentioned the clairvoyant fool-for-Christ, Hieroschemamonk Theophilus. They set off there immediately. On the way, they saw Blessed Theophilus lying by the side of the road in the middle of an ant-hill, not moving. His arms were folded on his chest crosswise, as in death, and his eyes were completely closed. Ants swarmed in masses all over his body and face, but he, as if feeling nothing, pretended to be dead. Puzzled, the Tsar and the Metropolitan returned to Kiev...

Russian troops moved into the Romanian Principalities, and on July 2, 1853, Tsar Nicholas proclaimed: “By the occupation of the Principalities we desire such security as will ensure the restoration of our dues [in the Holy Land]. It is not conquest that we seek but satisfaction for a just right so clearly infringed.” As he told the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, Seymour: “You see what my position is. I am the Head of a People of the Greek religion, our co-religionists of Turkey look up to me as their natural protector, and these are claims which it is impossible for me to disregard. I have the conviction that good right is on my side, I should therefore begin a War, such as that which now impedes, without compunction and should be prepared to carry it on, as I have before remarked to you, as long as there should be a rouble in the Treasury or a man in the country.”

Nevertheless, when the Powers drew up a compromise “Note”, Nicholas promptly accepted it.

---

495 Royle, op. cit., 19-20.
496 Royle, op. cit., p. 52.
However, the Turks rejected it, having been secretly assured of Franco-British support. On October 4, 1853 they delivered an ultimatum to the Russians to leave the Principalities within a fortnight. When the Tsar rejected the ultimatum, war broke out. On the same day A.F. Tiutcheva noted in her diary: “A terrible struggle is being ignited, gigantic opposing forces are entering into conflict with each other: the East and the West, the Slavic world and the Latin world, the Orthodox Church in her struggle not only with Islam, but also with the other Christian confessions, which, taking the side of the religion of Mohammed, are thereby betraying their own vital principle.”

The British, the French and later the Sardinians joined the Turks. Palmerston, in a letter to the British Prime Minister John Russell, made clear that his war aim was not the restoration of some supposed injustice, but the weakening of Russia and the giving of different parts of her territory to different western powers. A.S. Khomiakov wrote: “Whatever political bases and excuses for the struggle there may be for the struggle that is convulsing Europe now, it is impossible not to notice, even at the most superficial observation, that on one of the warring sides stand exclusively peoples belonging to Orthodoxy, and on the other – Romans and Protestants, gathered around Islam.” And Khomiakov quoted from an epistle of the Catholic Archbishop of Paris Sibur, who assured the French that the war with Russia “is not a political war, but a holy war; not a war of states or peoples, but solely a religious war”. All other reasons were “in essence no more than excuses”. The true reason was “the necessity to drive out the error of Photius [Orthodoxy]; to subdue and crush it”. “That is the recognized aim of this new crusade, and such was the hidden aim of all the previous crusades, even if those who participated in them did not admit it.”

On February 18, 1855, the Tsar, worn out and intensely grieved by the losses in the war, died. (According to one version, he was poisoned by the the medic Mandt on the orders of Napoleon III. Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev asked his valet whether he remembered the trip with the Tsar to Blessed Theophilus, and the fool-for-Christ’s strange behaviour when he appeared on the side of the road with ants crawling all over him. “Up to now I could not understand his strange behaviour. Now, the prophecy of the Starets is as clear as God’s day. The ants were the malicious enemies of our fatherland, trying to torment the great body of Russia. The arms folded on his chest and the closed eyes of Theophilus were the sudden, untimely death of our beloved Batiushka-Tsar....”

---

497 Tiutcheva, Pri Dvore Dvukh Imperatorov (At the Court of Two Emperors), Moscow, 1990, p. 52; in N.Yu. Selischev, “K 150-letiu nachala Krymskoj vojny” (Towards the 150th Anniversary of the Crimean War), Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Rus’), № 24 (1741), December 15/28, 2003, p. 11.
499 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 327.
17. SLAVOPHILES AND WESTERNERS

Under the shock of the Decembrist rebellion, and of the resumption of the revolution’s march in Europe, it was necessary for Russia clearly to formulate the foundations of her national life, and her religio-moral-political differences from Europe. This process now began, in informal discussion circles in St. Petersburg and in elegant aristocratic salons in Moscow.

**Instinct and Consciousness**

“It is completely natural,” writes L.A. Tikhomorov, “that the clarification of our political principle lagged behind the clarification of the principles of nationality and the faith. As long as our moral-religious ideal was wrapped in a kind of fog or was even, in our opinion, unsound, the monarchy could be represented to consciousness only as absolutism, that is, as a completely unlimited power. Monarchy... is limited by the content of its ideal: if the ideal is unclear, then the power is already in fact unlimited and becomes absolutist.

“And so the development of the monarchical principle, its self-consciousness, in this period could not fail to decline. It was preserved amongst us in accordance with the former voice of instinct, but it was not explained by reason. Therefore of all the aspects of scientific creativity, the state-legal remained throughout the new period the least developed among us, as well as being the most imitative, the most imbued by a simple copying of European ideas, and for that reason – in conformity with the state thought of Europe – assumed a constitutional character.

“The legitimists in Europe in their time were the channels of the monarchical idea. Our juridical thought was the channel of the anti-monarchical, democratic idea.

“When the question of limiting the autocracy or even of external external manifestations of the power of the Monarch in international relations was raised, voices were found among us that pointed to some close bond between the Tsar and Russia, a bond that was a limitation for the Monarch. By this absolutism was denied, as was the teaching that the sovereign can order everything ‘as he likes’. The political thought of Russian State law was as it were raised to the level of consciousness.

“Thus at the moment when Emperor Alexander I, who had been brought up on republican ideas and considered the republic higher than the monarchy, was thinking about limiting his own autocratic power, he heard an eloquent protest from Karamzin.

“’If Alexander,’ wrote Karamzin, ‘inspired by a magnanimous hatred for the abuses of autocracy, had taken a pen to prescribe for himself new laws besides those of God and conscience, then the true Russian citizen would have been so bold as to
stop his hand and say: Your Majesty, you are transgressing the bounds of your power. Taught by long-term disasters, Russia entrusted the autocracy to your forebear before the holy altar and demanded that he rule her supremely and undividedly. This covenant is the foundation of your power: we have no other. You can do everything, but you cannot lawfully limit your power.'

“In his note, ‘The Opinion of a Russian Citizen’, given to the sovereign in 1819 with reference to plans for the restoration of Poland, Karamzin tried to prove again that the sovereign had no right to do this:

"'You think,' writes Karamzin, ‘to restore the ancient kingdom of Poland, but is this restoration in accordance with the law of the State good of Russia? Is it in accordance with Your sacred duties, with Your love for Russia and justice itself?… Do the sovereigns not swear to preserve the integrity of their domains? These lands (that is, Belorussia, Lithuania, Volhynia and Podolia) were already Russia when Metropolitan Plato entrusted to you the crown of Monomakh, Peter and Catherine… Will they say that they unlawfully divided Poland? But You would be acting still more unlawfully if You thought to wipe out its injustice by dividing Russia herself. We took Poland by the sword: that is our right, to which all States are obliged for their existence, for all have been constituted from conquests. Catherine is responsible before God, and before history, for her act, but it is already done, and for You it is already holy: for You Poland is a lawful Russian dominion. There are no old deeds of purchase in politics: otherwise we would be bound to re-establish the Kazan and Astrakhan kingdoms, the Novgorod republic, the great Princedom of Ryazan, etc. Moreover, even according to the old deeds of purchase Belorussia, Volhynia and Podolia, together with Galicia, were once the indigenous heritage of Russia…"

"'Until now,' he continues, ‘our rule was: not a step towards an enemy, not a step towards a friend. Napoleon was able to conquer Russia, but You, although You are an Autocrat, were not able to cede to him a single Russian hut for free. That is our character and our State character… Your Majesty, I would vouch my life to You that an inevitable consequence of the wholesale restoration of Poland would be the loss, not only of our beautiful provinces, but also of our love for the Tsar; we would cool in soul in our feeling for the Fatherland, seeing it become the plaything of self-willed caprice…’

“In these interesting reasonings we catch the voice of feeling which Karamzin had in his heart and wanted to stir up in the heart of the Sovereign. But from the point of view of principle this is all very unclear and even questionable: Karamzin even refers to some pact between the tsar and the people when the dynasty was elected, although, of course, if that was the whole issue then the pact agreed upon by the parties could always be reviewed and changed. In his reasonings on Poland Karamzin bases everything on the obligation to preserve tradition… This, of course, is easily refuted. Nevertheless a certain truth can be felt here, the rejection of absolute power and an indication of the bond between the Tsar and the nation, a bond which serves as the source of the Tsar’s obligations.
“Instinctual feelings surfaced in Russia sufficiently constantly, but there was very little consciousness, very little theory of Tsarist power and the mutual relations of Tsar and people.

“This consciousness became the more necessary in that bureaucratic practice inexorably brought to us the idea of absolutism, while the European influence, affirming that Tsarist power was nothing other than absolutism, rejected it. In the 19th century Russian thought was sharply divided into ‘westerners’ and ‘Slavophiles’, and the whole of the westernising part conducted propaganda against autocracy…

“Throughout the 19th century the whole current of educated westernising thought, which created the so-called ‘intelligentsia’, conducted propaganda against autocracy – in Russia as far as censorship allowed it, and with complete openness in its press abroad. The national part of educated society could not help trying to defend its historical Russian institution of monarchy. The schism in the educated part of Russia between the ‘westerners’ (under various names) and the national part of the educated class grew still wider after 1861. Moreover, in the ‘westernizing’ tendency there developed a terrible rejection of everything that was typically Russian, while its ideas gained great strength in all the middle educated classes and encompassed the whole people. This struggle, which embraced every aspect of life, was concentrated especially strongly on the autocracy, as a principle and as an institution.

“In this long historical period the monarchical idea was nevertheless clarified to a certain degree. The words of our great artists – Pushkin, Gogol, A. Majkov and others – sound like excellent expressions of the monarchical consciousness. But all these were expressions of feeling, manifestations of instinct, which was so strong in the Russian personality generally that quite often it unexpectedly appears even in the most extreme deniers, as, for example, Bakunin.

“But in the sense of consciousness, the monarchical idea was clarified mainly by means of public debates, in quarrels with opponents, not by a strictly scientific method. Scientific works, which remained basically imitative, in general gave almost nothing to clarify autocracy and most often served only to mix it up hopelessly with absolutism.

“In general, when our statist scholars went on to explain autocracy, then in the best case they repeated the publicists’ judgements. If the monarchical idea of power was in any way clarified amongst us, then it was not in science, not in the study or auditorium of the professor and academic, but on the pages of newspapers and journals, in the verbal disputes of the representatives of the parties and tendencies. Russian political thought, insofar as it had any success in the national spirit, was indebted in everything not to statist science, which instilled European ideas and concept – but to the publicists.
“Among its representatives especially much was done by the Slavophiles in general and by I.S. Aksakov in particular, and particularly by M.N. Katkov who stood behind them.”

Russia and Europe: (1) Chaadaev vs. Pushkin

These questions and preoccupations led to the emergence of two schools of thought on the nature and destiny of Russia: the westerners, who basically thought that the westernizing path chosen by Peter had been correct, and the Slavophiles, who believed in Orthodoxy, in the pre-Petrine symphony of powers, and in a special, distinct path chosen by God for Russia. Almost the whole of the public intellectual life of Russia until the revolution could be described as increasingly complex variations on these two viewpoints and the various intermediate positions: Chaadaev and Pushkin, Belinsky and Gogol, Herzen and Khomiakov, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev and Pobedonostev, Lenin and Tikhomorov. The result was paradoxical: an increasing westernization of the noble educated classes, who had suffered most from Peter’s revolution, and an increasing “Slavophilisation” of the tsars themselves, culminating in the most Orthodox and Slavophile of all the tsars, Nicholas II.

The great debate began in 1836 with the publication, by Chaadaev, of the first of his *Philosophical Letters* (1829 – 1831). N.O. Lossky writes: “The letters are ostensibly addressed to a lady who is supposed to have asked Chaadaev’s advice on the ordering of her spiritual life. In the first letter Chaadaev advises the lady to observe the ordinances of the Church as a spiritual exercise in obedience. Strict observance of church customs and regulations may only be dispensed with, he says, when ‘beliefs of a higher order have been attained, raising our spirit to the source of all certainty;’ such beliefs must not be in contradiction to the ‘beliefs of the people’. Chaadaev recommends a well-regulated life as favorable to spiritual development and praises Western Europe where ‘the ideas of duty, justice, law, order’ are part of the people’s flesh and blood and are, as he puts it, not the psychology, but the physiology of the West. He evidently has in mind the disciplinary influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

“As to Russia, Chaadaev is extremely critical of it. Russia, in his opinion, is neither the West nor the East. ‘Lonely in the world, we have given nothing to the world, have taught it nothing; we have not contributed one idea to the mass of human ideas.’ ‘If we had not spread ourselves from [the] Behring Straits to [the] Oder, we would never have been noticed.’ We do not, as it were, form part of the

---


502 The idea that Church regulations and customs, such as fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, could be dispensed with was an attitude of the nobility which St. Seraphim of Sarov, in particular, criticised. He said that he who does not fast is not Orthodox. (V.M.)
human organism and exist ‘solely in order to give humanity some important lesson’.”

According to Chaadaev, “not a single useful thought has sprouted in our country’s barren soil; not a single great truth has emerged from our ambit.... Something in our blood repulses all true progress. In the end we have lived and now live solely to serve as some inscrutable great lesson for the distant generations that will grasp it; today, whatever anyone may say, we are a void in the intellectual firmament.”

Though writing from a westernizing viewpoint, Sir Isaiah Berlin sums up the matter well: “Chaadaev’s attack, with its deification of Western traditions, ideas and civilisation, was the key to later Russian ‘social thought’. Its importance was enormous. It set the tone, it struck the dominant notes which were echoed by every major Russian writer up to and beyond the Revolution. Everything is there: the proclamation that the Russian past is blank or filled with chaos, that the only true culture is the Roman West, and that the Great Schism robbed Russia of her birthright and left her barbarous, an abortion of the creative process, a caution to other peoples, a Caliban among nations. Here, too, is the extraordinary tendency toward self-preoccupation which characterises Russian writing even more than that of the Germans, from whom this tendency mainly stems. Other writers, in England, France, even Germany, write about life, love, nature and human relations at large; Russian writing, even when it is most deeply in debt to Goethe or Schiller or Dickens or Stendhal, is about Russia, the Russian past, the Russian present, Russian prospects, the Russian character, Russian vices and Russian virtues. All the ‘accursed questions’ (as Heine was perhaps the first to call them) turn in Russian into notorious proklyatyye voprosy - questions about the destinies (sud’by) of Russia: Where do we come from? Whither are we bound? Why are we who we are? Should we teach the West or learn from it? Is our ‘broad’ Slav nature higher in the spiritual scale than that of the ‘Europeans’ - a source of salvation for all mankind - or merely a form of infantilism and barbarism destined to be superseded or destroyed? The problem of the ‘superfluous man’ is here already; it is not an accident that Chaadaev was an intimate friend of the creator of Eugene Onegin [Pushkin]. No less characteristic of this mental condition is Chaadaev’s contrary speculation that was also destined to have a career in subsequent writing, in which he wondered whether the Russians, who have arrived so late at the feast of the nations and are still young, barbarous and untried, do not thereby derive advantages, perhaps overwhelming ones, over older or more civilised societies. Fresh and strong, the Russians might profit by the inventions and discoveries of the others without having to go through the torments that have attended their mentors’ struggles for life and civilisation. Might there not be a vast positive gain in being late in the field? Herzen and Chernyshevsky, Marxists and anti-Marxists, were to repeat this with mounting optimism. But the most central and far-reaching question was still that posed by Chaadaev. He asked: Who are we and what should be our path? Have we unique treasures (as the

Slavophils maintained) preserved for us by our Church – the only true Christian one – which Catholics and Protestants have each in their own way lost or destroyed? Is that which the West despises as coarse and primitive in fact a source of life – the only pure source in the decaying post-Christian world? Or, on the contrary, is the West at least partially right: if we are ever to say our own word and play our part and show the world what kind of people we are, must we not learn from the Westerners, acquire their skills, study in their schools, emulate their arts and sciences, and perhaps the darker sides of their lives also? The lines of battle in the century that followed remained where Chaadaev drew them: the weapons were ideas which, whatever their origins, in Russian became matters of the deepest concern – often of life and death – as they never we in England or France or, to such a degree, in Romantic Germany. Kireyevsky, Khomiakov and Aksakov gave one answer, Belinsky and Dobrolyubov another, Kavelin yet a third."

Chaadaev’s letter had an enormous impact on Russian society; Herzen remarked that it “shook the whole of intellectual Russia”. The tsar was furious. Klementy Rosset, an officer of the General Staff, wrote to the famous poet Alexander Pushkin: “The Emperor has read Chaadaev’s article and found it absurd and extravagant, saying that he was sure ‘that Moscow did not share the insane opinions of the Author’, and has instructed the governor-general Prince Golitsyn to inquire daily as to the health of Chaadaev’s wits and to put him under governmental surveillance…”

This letter, together with the other Philosophical Letters, elicited from Pushkin the first, and one of the best statements of the opposing, Slavophile position. Pushkin had known Chaadaev for a long time. In 1818, when his views were more radical (and blasphemously atheist) than they came to be at the end of his life, he had dedicated to Chaadaev the following lines:

\[
\text{Comrade, believe: joy’s star will leap} \\
\text{Upon our sight, a radiant token;} \\
\text{Russia will rise from her long sleep;} \\
\text{And where autocracy lies, broken,} \\
\text{Our names shall yet be graven deep.}
\]

But even here anti-autocratic sentiments are combined with a belief in Russia. So although Pushkin admitted to the Tsar that he would have participated in the Decembrist rebellion if he had not been in exile, he was never a typical westernizer.

This fact, combined with his deep reading in Russian history, the stabilising experience of marriage and, as we have seen, an enlightening interview with the Tsar himself, led Pushkin to a kind of conversion to Russia and to a belief in her

---

significance as a phenomenon independent of Europe. Pushkin’s change of views with regard to the autocracy is demonstrated by the following words: “Why is it necessary that one of us should become higher than all and even higher than the law itself? Because the law is a tree, and in the law man hears something cruel and unfraternal. You don’t get far with merely the literal fulfilment of the law: but none of us must break it or not fulfil it: for this a higher mercy softening the law is necessary. This can appear to men only in a fully-empowered authority. The state without a fully-empowered monarch is an automaton: many, if attains to what the United States has attained. But what is the United States? A corpse. In them man has disappeared to the point that he’s not worth a brass farthing. A state without a fully-empowered monarch is the same as an orchestra without a conductor. However good the musicians, if there is not one among them who gives the beat with the movement of his baton, the concert gets nowhere…”

The sincerity of his conversion was demonstrated during the Polish rebellion in 1830. Although “enlightened” Europe condemned the Tsar for crushing the rebellion, on August 2, 1830, just three weeks before the taking of Warsaw by Russian troops, Pushkin wrote “To the Slanderers of Russia”. From that time, as the friend of the poet’s brother, Michael Yuzefovich, wrote, “his world-view changed, completely and unalterably. He was already a deeply believing person: [he now became] a citizen who had changed his mind, having understood the demands of Russian life and renounced utopian illusions.”

However, Chaadaev had not undergone this conversion, and was still not convinced that Russia’s past was anything more than “a blank sheet of paper”, “an unhappy country with neither past, present nor future”.

Valery Lepakhin and Andrei Zavarzin have summarised the debate as follows: “Russia and Europe. This problem especially occupied the minds of Russians at the beginning of the 19th century. Chaadaev considered the schism (the division of the Churches [in 1054]) as a tragedy for Russia, which separated it from Christianity (of course, from Catholicism, and not from Christianity, but at that time these terms were synonymous for Chaadaev), from ‘the world idea’, form ‘real progress’, from ‘the wonderworking principle’, from ‘the enlightened, civilised peoples’. In principle Pushkin agreed with Chaadaev, but specified that ‘the schism disunited us from backward Europe’: first, it separated ‘us’, that is, not only Russia, but in general the whole of the eastern branch of Christianity, and secondly, it separated simply from ‘backward Europe’, and not from ‘enlightened and civilised people’, as Chaadaev claimed. In reading the Russian chronicles, sermons and lives of saints, it is impossible not to notice the fact that they are full of gratitude to God for the fact the Russ’ accepted baptism from Orthodox Constantinople, and not from Catholic

---

508 Razgovory Pushkina (The Conversations of Pushkin), Moscow, 1926.
This fact is never viewed as a tragedy in Russian literature and history, rather the opposite: beginning with the description of the holy Prince Vladimir’s choice of faith, this event became the subject of poetry and chant. And not out of hostility to Catholicism, and from faith in Divine Providence, which judged that it should be so and which the consciousness of believers perceived with gratitude, for Providence cannot err. But Chaadaev, who speaks so much about Christianity, sees in this fact ‘the will of fate’ in a pagan manner.

“Pushkin agreed with his friend of many years that ‘we did not take part in any of the great events which shook her (Europe)’. But it does not occur to Chaadaev to ask the simple question: why should Rus’ have taken part. Or, for example, would not this ‘participation’ have been for the worse, both for Europe and for Rus’? Pushkin gives a simple, but principled reply at this point: Russia has ‘her own special calling’, which Pushkin in another place calls ‘lofty’: ‘It was Russia and her vast expanses that were swallowed up by the Mongol invasion. The Tartars did not dare to cross our western frontiers and leave us in their rear. They departed for their deserts, and Christian civilisation was saved... By our martyrdom the energetic development of Catholic Europe was delivered from all kinds of hindrances’. From Pushkin’s reply it follows that indirectly at any rate Russia did take part in the life of Western Europe, and, in accordance with its historical significance, this participation was weighty and fraught with consequences for the West. It was not a direct participation insofar as Russia had a different calling. The complete opposition of Pushkin’s and Chaadaev’s views on the problem is characteristic. For the latter the Tartar-Mongol yoke was a ‘cruel and humiliating foreign domination’. For Pushkin this epoch was sanctified by the lofty word ‘martyrdom’, which Russia received not only for herself, but also for her western brothers, for Christian civilization generally. In his reply Pushkin links the special calling of Russia with her reception of Orthodoxy, and see in it not ‘the will of fate’, but Russia’s preparation of herself for this martyrdom.

“Chaadaev’s attitude to Byzantium also elicited objections from Pushkin. Chaadaev called Byzantium ‘corrupt’, he affirmed that it was at that time (the 10th century – the reception of Christianity by Rus’) ‘an object of profound disdain’ for the West European peoples. Now it is difficult even to say what there is more of in this passage from Chaadaev: simple ignorance of the history of Byzantium and Europe and complete absorption in his speculative historiosophical conception, or the conscious prejudice of a westerniser. The beginning of the 10th century in Byzantium was marked by the activity of Leo VI, ‘the Wise’, the middle – by the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, and the end – by the victories of Basil II the Bulgar-slayer. It was precisely this period that saw the development of political theories and the science of jurisprudence, theoretical military thought and knowledge of the natural sciences. New schools were opened, and a good education was highly prized both in the world and in the Church. Significant works were produced in the sphere of philosophy, literature and the fine arts, and theology

510 At the time of the baptism of Rus’ in 988, Rome was still formally Orthodox and in communion with Constantinople. Nevertheless, the tendencies that led to the schism in 1054 were already clearly evident and deeply rooted.
produced such a light as Simeon the New Theologian, the third (after the Holy Evangelist John the Theologian and St. Gregory the Theologian) to be given the title ‘theologian’ by the Orthodox Church. … This period is considered by scientists to be the epoch of the flourishing of Byzantine aesthetic consciousness, of architecture and music. If one compares the 10th century in Byzantium and in Europe, the comparison will not be in favour of the latter. Moreover, Chaadaev himself speaks of the ‘barbarism’ of the peoples that despised Byzantium.

“...You say,’ writes Pushkin, ‘that the source from which we drew up Christianity was impure, that Byzantium was worthy of disdain and was disdained’, but, even if it was so, one should bear in mind that ‘from the Greeks we took the Gospel and the traditions, and not the spirit of childish triviality and disputes about words. The morals of Byzantium never were the morals of Kiev. For Chaadaev it was important ‘from where’, but for Pushkin ‘how’ and ‘what’ they took it. After all, ‘was not Jesus Christ Himself born as a Jew and was not Jerusalem a proverb among the nations?’ Pushkin did not want to enter into polemics on the subject of Byzantium insofar as that would have dragged out his letter. Moreover, the problem was a special one not directly connected with the polemic surrounding the history of Russia. For him it was evident that Russia, as a young and healthy organism, had filtered through her Byzantine heritage, assimilated the natural and cast out that which was foreign and harmful. Above mention was made of the fact that in the chronicles praise was often offered to God for the reception of Christianity by Rus’ from Byzantium. But no less often do we find critical remarks about the Greek metropolitans, and of the Greeks and Byzantium in general. Therefore Pushkin placed the emphasis on the critical assimilation of the Byzantine heritage. For him, Rus’ received from Byzantium first of all ‘the light of Christianity’....

“Both Chaadaev and Pushkin highly esteemed the role of Christianity in world history. In his review of The History of the Russian People by N. Polevoj, the latter wrote: ‘The greatest spiritual and political turning-point [in the history of] of our planet is Christianity. In this sacred element the world disappeared and renewed itself. Ancient history is the history of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome. Modern history is the history of Christianity.’ Chaadaev would also have signed up to these words, but immediately after this common affirmation differences would have arisen. For Chaadaev true Christianity rules, shapes and ‘lords over everything’ only in Catholic Europe – ‘there Christianity accomplished everything’. Chaadaev even considers the history of Catholic Europe to be ‘sacred, like the history of the ancient chosen people’.

“He recognises the right of the Russians, as, for example, of the Abyssinians, to call themselves Christians, but in the Christianity of the former and the latter that ‘order of things’, which ‘constitutes the final calling of the human race’ was not realised at all. ‘Don’t you think,’ says Chaadaev to his correspondent, ‘that these stupid departures from Divine and human truths (read: Orthodoxy) drag heaven down to earth?’ And so there exist Catholic Europe, the incarnation of Christianity, and Russia, Abyssinia and certain other historical countries which have stagnated in
‘stupid departures from Divine and human truths’. Chaadaev refuses these countries the right to their own path, even the right to have a future.

“In one of his reviews Pushkin indirectly replies to Chaadaev: ‘Understand,’ he writes, ‘that Russia never had anything in common with the rest of Europe; her history demands other thoughts, other formulae, different from the thoughts and formulae extracted by Guizot from the history of the Christian West’. For Pushkin it is absolutely obvious that any schema of historical development will remain a private, speculative schema and will never have a universal character. Any conception is built on the basis of some definite historical material, and to transfer it, out of confidence in its universality, to other epochs or countries would be a mistake. After all, as often as not that which does not fit into a once-worked-out schema is cut off and declared to have no significance and not worthy of study or analysis. But Pushkin makes his own generalisations, proceeding from history, from concrete facts. S. Frank wrote: ‘The greatest Russian poet was also completely original and, we can boldly say, the greatest Russian political thinker of the 19th century’. This was also noticed by the poet’s contemporaries. Vyzamesky wrote: ‘In Pushkin there was a true understanding of history... The properties of his mind were: clarity, incisiveness, sobriety... He would not paint pictures according to a common standard and size of already-prepared frames, as is often done by the most recent historians in order more conveniently to fit into them the events and people about to be portrayed’. But it was precisely this that was the defect of Chaadaev’s method. Moreover, the non-correspondence of schema and historical reality (frame and picture) was sometimes so blatant with him that he had completely to reject the historical and religious path of Russia for the sake of preserving his schema of world development.

“Pushkin also did not agree with Chaadaev concerning the unity of Christianity, which for Chaadaev ‘wholly consisted in the idea of the merging of all the moral forces of the world’ for the establishment of ‘a social system or Church which would have to introduce the kingdom of truth among people’. To this Pushkin objected already in his letter of 1831: ‘You see the unity of Christianity in Catholicism, that is, in the Pope. Does it not consist in the idea of Christ, which we find also in Protestantism?’ Pushkin notes the Catholico-entrism of Chaadaev, and reminds him of the Protestant part of the Western Christian world. But the main point is that Pushkin turns out to be better-prepared theologically than Chaadaev. The Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ Himself is Her Head, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 1.23, 4.16; Colossians 1.18, etc.). Here Pushkin in a certain sense anticipates the problems of Dostoyevsky, who considered that Rus’ had preserved that Christ that the West had lost, and that the division of the Churches had taken place precisely because of different understandings of Christ.

511 For Chaadaev “the supreme principle” was “unity”, which he saw incarnate in Western Catholic Christendom – completely forgetting that the West was torn by the division between Catholicism and Protestantism. See Pushkin’s remark below. (V.M.)
“Pushkin considered it necessary to say a few words also about the clergy, although Chaadaev had not directly criticised them in his first letter. ‘Our clergy,’ writes the poet, ‘were worthy of respect until Theophan [Prokopovich]. They never sullied themselves with the wretchednesses of papism..., and, of course, they would never have elicited a Reformation at a moment when mankind needed unity more than anything.’ In evaluating the role of the clergy in Russian history, Pushkin distinguished between two stages: before Peter and after Peter. The role of the clergy in Russian life before Peter was exceptionally great. Ancient Rus’ inherited from Byzantium, together with the two-headed eagle on her arms, the idea of the symphony of secular and ecclesiastical power. This idea was equally foreign both to caesaropapism and papocaesarism and the democratic idea of the separation of the Church from the State. Of course, symphony never found its full incarnation in State life, but it is important that as an idea it lived both in the Church and in the State, and the role of the clergy as the necessary subject of this symphony was naturally lofty and indisputable. But even outside the conception of ‘symphony’, the clergy played an exceptionally important role in the history of Russia. In the epoch of the Tatar-Mongol yoke they were almost the only educated class in Russian society: ‘The clergy, spared by the wonderful quick-wittedness of the Tatars alone in the course of two dark centuries kept alive the pale sparks of Byzantine education’. In another place Pushkin even found it necessary to contrast the Russian and Catholic clergy — true, without detailed explanations of his affirmation: ‘In Russia the influence of the clergy was so beneficial, and in the Roman-Catholic lands so harmful... Consequently we are obliged to the monks of our history also for our enlightenment’.

“A new era began from the time of Theophan Prokopovich (more exactly: Peter I), according to Pushkin. In a draft of a letter dated 1836 he wrote to Chaadaev: ‘Peter the Great tamed (another variant: ‘destroyed’) the clergy, having removed the patriarchate’. Peter made the clergy into an institution obedient to himself and destroyed the age-old idea of symphony. Now they had begun to be excised from the consciousness both of the clergy and of the simple people, and of state officials. In losing their role in society, the clergy were becoming more and more backward, more and more distant from the needs and demands of the life of society. They were being forced to take the role of ‘fulfillers of the cult’.

“In Pushkin’s opinion, a serious blow against the clergy was later delivered by Catherine II. And if we are to speak of the backwardness of the Russian clergy, it is there that we must see its source. ‘Catherine clearly persecuted the clergy, sacrificing it to her unlimited love of power, in the service of the spirit of the times... The seminaries fell into a state of complete collapse. Many villages did not have priests... What a pity! For the Greek [Orthodox Christian] confession gives us our special national character’. If Chaadaev reproaches Russia for not having ‘her own face’, then for Pushkin it is evident that Russia has ‘her own face’ and it was formed by Orthodoxy. Therefore a sad note is heard in Pushkin’s evaluation of the era of Catherine: she has her own face, her own ‘special national character’, if only she does not lose it because of ill-thought-out reforms and regulations foreign to the spirit of Russian life. In contrast to Chaadaev, Pushkin linked the backwardness of the
contemporary clergy not with the reception of Christianity from Byzantium, but with the recent transformations in Russian State and Church life, and sought the roots of this backwardness not in the 10th century but in the 18th century, in the reforms of Peter and in the epoch of the so-called Enlightenment…”

Such was the debate in its main outlines. And yet, just as Pushkin moved towards the Slavophile position later in life, so, less surely, did Chaadaev. Thus in 1830 he praised Pushkin’s nationalist poems on the Warsaw insurrection. And later, in his *Apology of a Madman* (1837), he was inclined to think that the very emptiness of Russia’s past might enable her to contribute to the future. Indeed, he then believed that Russia was destined “to resolve the greater part of the social problems, to perfect the greater part of the ideas which have arisen in older societies, to pronounce judgement on the most serious questions which trouble the human race”. Moreover, in the same *Apology* (1837), he spoke of the Orthodox Church as “this church that is so humble and sometimes so heroic”. And in a conversation with Khomiakov in 1843 he declared: “Holy Orthodoxy shines out for us from Holy Byzantium”.

However, while Slavophile tendencies sometimes surfaced in Chaadaev, as in other westerners, his fundamentally westernising radicalism was revealed by his anti-monarchical remark on the occasion of the European revolutions in 1848: “We don’t want any king except the King of heaven”…

Russia and Europe: (2) Belinsky vs. Gogol

The figure of Peter the Great continued to be a critical point of difference between the Westerners and the Slavophiles. The Westerners admired him (for Chaadaev he was, with Alexander I, almost the only significant Russian): the Slavophiles criticised him as the corrupter of the true Russian tradition. All felt they had to interpret his place in Russian history.

---


514 But Byzantium, he notes, was still in communion with Rome at that time, and “there was a feeling of common Christian citizenship”. (Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 198).

515 Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 49. Moreover, in 1854, during the Crimean War, he wrote: “Talking about Russia, one always imagines that one is talking about a country like the others; in reality, this is not so at all. Russia is a whole separate world, submissive to the will, caprice, fantasy of a single man, whether his name be Peter or Ivan, no matter – in all instances the common element is the embodiment of arbitrariness. Contrary to all the laws of the human community, Russia moves only in direction of her own enslavement and the enslavement of all the neighbouring peoples. For this reason it would be in the interest not only of other peoples but also in that of her own that she be compelled to take a new path” (in Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 266). Note the use of the word “compel”…
Once again it was Pushkin who began the reappraisal with his famous poem on the statue of Peter, *The Bronze Horseman*. However, it was the literary critic Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky who made the decisive contribution from the Westerners’ side. And another writer, Nicholas Vasilyevich Gogol, who took the Slavophile argument one step further...

Unlike most of the intellectuals of the time, Belinsky was not a nobleman, but a raznochinenets (that is, of undetermined or “sundry” rank, a nobleman by birth who did not occupy himself with a nobleman’s pursuits). Moreover, he was an atheist. In fact, he rejected all the traditional pillars of Russian life. He was one of the first to recognize the greatness of Pushkin. And he was equally perceptive of the talent of Gogol and Dostoyevsky. And yet these writers, “discovered” by Belinsky, turned decisively against his westernising philosophy...

Belinsky was concerned, writes Walicki, “above all with the role of Peter the Great and the antithesis of pre-and post-reform Russia. In his analysis, he made use of a dialectical scheme current among the Russian Hegelians, although he was the first to apply it to Russian history. Individuals as well as whole nations, he argued, pass through three evolutionary stages: the first is the stage of ‘natural immediacy’; the second is that of the abstract universalism of reason, with its ‘torments of reflection’ and painful cleavage between immediacy and consciousness; the third is that of ‘rational reality’, which is founded on the ‘harmonious reconciliation of the immediate and conscious elements’.

“Belinsky developed this idea in detail as early as 1841, in his long essay on ‘The Deeds of Peter the Great’, in which he wrote: ‘There is a difference between a nation in its natural, immediate and patriarchal state, and this same nation in the rational movement of its historical development’. In the earlier stage, he suggested, a nation cannot really properly be called a nation (natsiia), but only a people (narod). The choice of terms was important to Belinsky: during the reign of Nicholas the word narodnost’, used… by the exponents of Official Nationality [together with the words ‘Orthodoxy’ and ‘Autocracy’ to express the essence of Russian life], had a distinctly conservative flavour; natsional’nost’, on the other hand, thanks to its foreign derivation evoked the French Revolution and echoes of bourgeois democratic national developments.

“Belinsky’s picture of pre-Petrine Russia was surprisingly similar to that presented by the Slavophiles, although his conclusions were quite different from theirs. Before Peter the Russian people (i.e. the nation in the age of immediacy) had been a close-knit community held together by faith and custom – i.e. by the unreflective approval of tradition idealized by the Slavophiles. These very qualities, however, allowed no room for the emergence of rational thought or individuality, and thus prevented dynamic social change.

“Before Russians could be transformed into a nation it was necessary to break up their stagnating society… Belinsky argued that the emergence of every modern
nation was accompanied by an apparently contradictory phenomenon – namely the cleavage between the upper and lower strata of society that so disturbed the Slavophiles. He regarded this as confirmation of certain general rules applying to the formation of modern nation-states: ‘In the modern world,’ he wrote, ‘all the elements within society operate in isolation, each one separately and independently… in order to develop all the more fully and perfectly… and to become fused once more into a new and homogeneous whole on a higher level than the original undifferentiated homogeneity’. In his polemics with the Slavophiles, who regarded the cleavage between the cultivated elite and the common people as the prime evil of post-Petrine Russia, Belinsky argued that ‘the gulf between society and the people will disappear in the course of time, with the progress of civilization’. This meant ‘raising the people to the level of society’, he was anxious to stress, and not ‘forcing society back to the level of the people’, which was the Slavophiles’ remedy. The Petrine reforms, which had been responsible for this social gulf, were therefore, in Belinsky’s view, the first and decisive step toward modern Russia. ‘Before Peter the Great, Russia was merely a people [narod]; she became a nation [natsiia] thanks to the changes initiated by the reformer.’

Berlin writes: “The central question for all Russians concerned about the condition of their country was social, and perhaps the most decisive single influence on the life and work of Belinsky was his social origin. He was born in poverty and bred in the atmosphere, at once bleak and coarse, of an obscure country town in a backward province. Moscow did, to some degree, soften and civilise him, but there remained a core ofcrudeness, and a self-conscious, rough, sometimes aggressive tone in his writing. This tone now enters Russian literature, never to leave it. Belinsky spoke in this sort of accent because this kind of raised dramatic tone, this harshness, was as natural to him as to Beethoven. Belinsky’s followers adopted his manner because they were the party of the enragés, and this was the traditional accent of anger and revolt, the earnest of violence to come, the rough voice of the insulted and the oppressed peasant masses proclaiming to the entire world the approaching end of their suffering at the hands of the discredited older order.

“Belinsky was the first and most powerful of the ‘new men’, the radicals and revolutionaries who shook and in the end destroyed the classical aristocratic tradition in Russian literature. The literary élite, the friends of Pushkin, despite radical ideas obtained abroad after the Napoleonic wars, despite Decembrist tendencies, was on the whole conservative, if not in conviction, yet in social habits and temper, connected with the court and the army, and deeply patriotic. Belinsky, to whom this seemed a retrograde outlook, was convinced that Russia had more to learn from the West than to teach it, that the Slavophile movement was romantic illusion, at times blind nationalistic megalomania, that Western scientific progress offered the only hope of lifting Russia from her backward state. And yet this same prophet of material civilisation, who intellectually was so ardent a Westerner, was emotionally more deeply and unhappily Russian than any of his contemporaries, spoke no foreign language, could not breathe freely in any environment save that of

516 Walicki, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
Russia, and felt miserable and persecution-ridden abroad. He found Western habits worthy of respect and emulation, but to him personally quite insufferable. When abroad he began to sigh most bitterly for home and after a month away was almost insane with nostalgia. In this sense he represents in his person the uncompromising elements of a Slav temperament and way of life to a far sharper degree than any of his contemporaries, even Dostoyevsky.

“This deep inner clash between intellectual conviction and emotional – sometimes almost physical – predilection is a very characteristically Russian disease. As the nineteenth century developed, and as the struggle between social classes became sharper and more articulate, this psychological conflict which tormented Belinsky emerges more clearly: the revolutionaries, whether they are social democrats, or social revolutionaries, or communists, unless they are noblemen or university professors – that is, almost professionally members of an international society – may make their bow with great conviction and sincerity to the West in the sense that they believe in its civilisation, above all its sciences, its techniques, its political thought and practice, but when they are forced to emigrate they find life abroad more agonising than other exiles…

“To some degree this peculiar amalgam of love and hate is intrinsic to contemporary Russian feeling about Europe: on the one hand intellectual respect, envy, admiration, desire to emulate and excel; on the other emotional hostility and suspicion and contempt, a sense of being clumsy, de trop, of being outsiders; leading as a result to an alternation between excessive self-prostration before, and aggressive flouting of, Western values. No recent visitor to the Soviet Union can have failed to remark this phenomenon: a combination of intellectual inadequacy and emotional superiority, a sense of the West as enviably self-restrained, clever, efficient and successful; also cramped, cold, mean, calculating and fenced in, incapable of large views or generous emotion, incapable of feeling which at times rises too high and overflows its banks, unable to abandon everything and sacrifice itself in response to some unique historical challenge; incapable of ever attaining a rich flowering of life. This attitude is the most constant element in Belinsky’s most personal and characteristic writings: if it is not the most valuable element in him, it is the most Russian: Russian history past and present is not intelligible without it, today more palpably than ever…”

The Slavophiles were free of this neurotic attitude to the West that Belinsky typified among the westerners; they were both more critical of the West, and calmer in relation to it. The reason was that they, unlike the Westerners, had discovered the heart of Russia, her Orthodox Christianity. For them, the critical event in European history was not the Catholic-Protestant schism, but the schism between Eastern and Western Christianity in the middle of the eleventh century. In thus tracing the origins of the difference between East and West to the religious schism between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics of the eleventh century, as opposed to later events such as the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century or the reforms of

Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, the Slavophiles made a very important step towards the reintegration of Russian historical thought with the traditional outlook on history of Orthodox Christianity. This wider and deeper historical perspective enabled them to see that, after the schisms of the West from the unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East for so many centuries, it was inevitable that a new kind of man, homo occidentalis, with a new psychology, new aims and new forms of social and political organization, should have been created in the West, from where it penetrated into the Orthodox East.

One of the first to see this clearly was Gogol. Having made his name by satirical and fantastical works such as Notes of a Madman, The Greatcoat, The Government Inspector and, above all, Dead Souls, he suddenly and quite unexpectedly turned to Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood. This change of heart was clearly proclaimed in Selected Passages from Correspondence with My Friends (1847), where he expressed a clearly monarchical consciousness (even while going too far in an absolutist direction): “A State without an absolute monarch is an orchestra without its conductor... The more deeply one looks into the workings of our administration, the more one admires the wisdom of its founders; the more one feels that God Himself, unseen by us, built it through the hands of the sovereigns. Everything is perfect, everything is sufficient unto itself. I cannot conceive what use could be found for even one more official.”

While Belinsky looked forward to the rationalism of Tolstoy, Gogol’s views on the Slavophile-Westerner controversy both looked back to Pushkin and forward to Dostoyevsky’s Pushkin Speech. “All these Slavists and Europeans,” he wrote, “or old believers and new believers, or easterners and westerners, they are all speaking about two different sides of one and the same subject, without in any way divining that they are not contradicting or going against each other.” The quarrel was “a big misunderstanding”. And yet “there is more truth on the side of the Slavists and easterners”, since their teaching is more right “on the whole”, while the westerners are more right “in the details”.

“The main theme of the book,” writes I.M. Andreev, “was God and the Church. And when Gogol was reproached for this, he replied, simply and with conviction: ‘How can one be silent, when the stones are ready to cry out about God.’

“Like Khomiakov and Ivan Kireyevsky, Gogol summoned all ‘to life in the Church’.

“The pages devoted to the Orthodox Church are the best pages of the book! No Russian writer had expressed as did Gogol such sincere, filial love for the Mother Church, such reverence and veneration for Her, such a profound and penetrating

---

understanding both of Orthodoxy as a whole and of the smallest details of the whole of the Church’s rites.

“‘We possess a treasure for which there is no price,’ is how he characterizes the Church, and he continued: ‘This Church which, as a chaste virgin, has alone been preserved from the time of the Apostles in her original undefiled purity, this Church, which in her totality with her profound dogmas and smallest external rites has been as it were brought right down from heaven for the Russian people, which alone has the power to resolve all our perplexing knots and questions… And this Church, which was created for life, we have to this day not introduced into our life’…

“The religio-political significance of Correspondence was huge. This book appeared at a time when in the invisible depths of historical life the destiny of Russia and Russian Orthodox culture was being decided. Would Russia hold out in Orthodoxy, or be seduced by atheism and materialism? Would the Russian Orthodox autocracy be preserved in Russia, or would socialism and communism triumph? These questions were linked with other, still more profound ones, that touched on the destinies of the whole world. What was to come? The flourishing and progress of irreligious humanistic culture, or the beginning of the pre-apocalyptic period of world history?

“Gogol loudly and with conviction proclaimed that the Truth was in Orthodoxy and in the Russian Orthodox Autocracy, and that the historical ‘to be or not to be’ of Russian Orthodox culture, on the preservation of which there also depended the destiny of the whole world in the nearest future, was now being decided. The world was on the edge of death, and we have entered the pre-apocalyptic period of world history.

“Correspondence came out in 1847. Pletnev published it at Gogol’s behest.

“This book, in its hidden essence, was not understood by its contemporaries and was subjected to criticism not only on the part of enemies, but also of friends (of course, the former and the latter proceeded from completely different premises).

“The enemies were particularly disturbed and annoyed by Gogol’s sincere and convinced approval of the foundations of those social-political ordered which to so-called ‘enlightened’ people seemed completely unsustainable.”

Belinksy was furious. “Russia expects from her writers salvation from Orthodox, Nationhood and Autocracy,” he wrote in his Letter to Gogol in 1847. And he now called Gogol a “preacher of the knout, apostle of ignorance, champion of superstition and obscurantism”. Russia, he thundered, “does not need sermons (she has had her fill of them!), nor prayers (she knows them by heart), but the awakening in people of the feeling of human dignity, for so many centuries buried in mud and dung; she

needs laws and rights compatible not with the doctrines of the church, but with justice and common sense.”

Gogol’s friends, continues Andreyev, “criticized Correspondence for other reasons... The most serious and in many respects just criticism belonged to the Rzhov Protopriest Fr. Matthew Konstantinovsky, to whom Gogol, who did not yet know him personally, sent his book for review. Fr. Matthew condemned many places, especially the chapter on the theatre, and wrote to Gogol that he ‘would give an account for it to God’. Gogol objected, pointing out that his intention had been good. But Fr. Matthew advised him not to justify himself before his critics, but to ‘obey the spirit living in us, and not our earthly corporeality’ and ‘to turn to the interior life’.

“The failure of the book had an exceptionally powerful effect on Gogol. After some resistance and attempts to clarify ‘the whirlwind of misunderstandings’, without rejecting his principled convictions, Gogol humbled himself and acknowledged his guilt in the fact that he had dared to be a prophet and preacher of the Truth when he personally was not worthy of serving it. Even to the sharp and cruel letter of Belinsky Gogol replied meekly and humbly: ‘God knows, perhaps there is an element of truth in your words.’”

Gogol became more firmly established in Orthodoxy towards the end of his life. As St. Barsanuphius of Optina said in 1909: “Our great writer Gogol was spiritually reborn under the influence of talks with Elder Macarius, which took place in this very cell, and a great turning point resulted in him. As a man of sound nature, not fragmented, he was not capable of compromise. Having understood that he could not live as he had done previously, he, without looking back, turned to Christ and strove towards the Heavenly Jerusalem. From Rome and the holy places which he visited, he wrote letters to his friends, and these letters comprised an entire book, for which his contemporaries condemned him. Gogol had not yet begun to live in Christ – hardly had he begun to wish for this life – and the world, which is at enmity with Christ, raised a persecution against him and passed a harsh sentence on him, considering him half crazy.”

Russia and Europe: (3) Herzen vs. Khomiakov

Belinsky had deified the West, but never felt at home there. Alexander Herzen was the first Westernizer to symbolize the westerners’ exile from Russian values by permanently settling in the West, in London. From there, writes Berlin, “he established his free printing press, and in the 1850s began to publish two periodicals in Russia, The Pole Star [recalling the Masonic lodge of the same name] and The Bell (the first issues appeared in 1855 and 1857 respectively), which marked the birth of

521 Hosking, op. cit., p. 299.
522 Andreyev, op. cit., p. 175.
systematic revolutionary agitation – and conspiracy – by Russian exiles directed against the tsarist regime.”\textsuperscript{524}

Herzen followed Belinsky and the westerners in his disdain for Russia’s pre-Petrine past: “You need the past and its traditions, but we need to tear Russia away from them. We do not want Russia before Peter, because for us it does not exist, but you do not want the new Russia. You reject it, but we reject ancient Rus’”.\textsuperscript{525}

However, after the failure of the 1848 revolution, Herzen began to lose faith in the western path to happiness. He began to see the futility (if not the criminality) of violent revolution, and of such senseless slogans as Proudhon’s “all property is theft”, or Bakunin’s “the Passion to destroy is the same as the Passion to create”. The revolution had only left the poor poorer than ever, while the passion to destroy seemed as exhilarating as the passion to create only in the heat of the moment, and not when the pieces had to be picked up and paid for the next day…

“A curse on you,” he wrote with regard to 1848, “year of blood and madness, year of the triumph of meanness, beastliness, stupidity!… What did you do, revolutionaries frightened of revolution, political tricksters, buffoons of liberty?… Democracy can create nothing positive… and therefore it has no future… Socialism left a victor on the field of battle will inevitably be deformed into a commonplace bourgeois philistinism. Then a cry of denial will be wrung from the titanic breast of the revolutionary minority and the deadly battle will begin again… We have wasted our spirit in the regions of the abstract and general, just as the monks let it wither in the world of prayer and contemplation.”\textsuperscript{526}

And again: “If progress is the goal, or whom are we working? Who is this Moloch who, as the toilers approach him, instead of rewarding them, draws back; and, as a consolation to the exhausted and doomed multitudes, shouting ‘morituri te salutant’ [‘those who are about to die salute you’], can only give the… mocking answer that after their death all will be beautiful on earth. Do you truly wish to condemn the human beings alive today to the sad role… of wretched galley-slaves who, up to their knees in mud, drag a barge… with… ‘progress in the future’ upon its flag?… a goal which is infinitely remote is no goal, only… a deception; a goal must be closer – at the very least the labourer’s wage, or pleasure in work performed.”\textsuperscript{527}

“He was disillusioned with western civilization and found that it was deeply penetrated by the petty bourgeois spirit, and was built on ‘respect for the sacred right of property’ and ‘has no other ideals except a thirst for personal security’.
“‘Europe,’ said Herzen, ‘is approaching a terrible cataclysm. The medieval world is collapsing. The political and religious revolutions are weakening under the burden of their own powerlessness, they have done great things, but they have not fulfilled their task... They have destroyed faith in the throne and the altar, but have not realized freedom, they have lit in hearts a desire which they are not able to satisfy. Parliamentarism, Protestantism – all these were deferments, temporary salvation, powerless outposts against death and degeneration; their time has passed. From 1849 they began to understand that neither ossified Roman law nor cunning casuistry nor nauseating deistic philosophy nor merciless religious rationalism are able to put off the realization of the destinies of society.’

“Herzen did not believe in the creative function of contemporary democracy, he considered that it possessed only a terrible power of destruction, but not the capacity to create.

“‘In democracy,’ said Herzen, ‘there is a terrible power of destruction, but when it takes it upon itself to create something, it gets lost in student experiments, in political etudes. There is no real creativity in democracy.’

“Hence Herzen drew the merciless conclusion that the perishing order must be destroyed to its foundations.

“This destruction had to be universal, it would come in a storm and blood.

“‘Who knows what will come out of this blood? But whatever comes out, it is enough that in this paroxysm of madness, revenge, discord and retribution the world that restricts the new man, and hinders him from living, hinders him from establishing himself in the future, will perish. And that is good, and for that reason let chaos and destruction flourish and may the future be constructed.’”

But then the unexpected: disillusioned with the West, this westernizer par excellence turns in hope to – Russia. “‘The future,’ declared Herzen, not without some pride, ‘belongs to the Russian people, who is called to bring an end to the decrepit and powerless world and clear a place for the new and beautiful [world].’

“In 1851 in a letter to Michelet Herzen wrote: ‘Amidst this chaos, amidst this dying agony and tormented regeneration, amidst this world falling into dust around its cradle, men’s gaze is involuntarily directed towards the East.’”

And when Alexander II emancipated the peasants in 1861, he hailed him in the words of Julian the Apostate to Christ: “You have conquered, Galilaean!”

---

528 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 341-342.
529 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 342.
530 And yet he continued his revolutionary agitation against “the Galilaean”, especially in Poland. But when the Polish uprising failed in 1863, subscriptions to Kolokol fell by a factor of six times.
That which particularly aroused the hopes of Herzen for Russia was the peasant commune or mir. He thought that this was a specifically Russian kind of socialism. As N.O. Lossky writes: “Disappointed with Western Europe and its ‘petty bourgeois’ spirit, he came to the conclusion that the Russian village commune and the artel hold a promise of socialism being realized in Russia rather than in any other country. The village commune meant for him peasant communism [‘The Russian People and Socialism’, 1852, II, 148]. In view of this he came to feel that reconciliation with the Slavophiles was possible. In his article ‘Moscow Panslavism and Russian Europeanism’ (1851) he wrote: Is not socialism ‘accepted by the Slavophiles as it is by us? It is a bridge on which we can meet and hold hands’ (I, 338).”

Certainly, the Slavophiles agreed with Herzen on the mir. The most famous of them, Alexis Stepanovich Khomiakov, praised “its meetings that passed unanimous decisions and its traditional justice in accordance with custom, conscience, and inner truth.” As Richard Pipes writes, the Slavophiles “became aware of the peasant commune as an institution confined to Russia, and extolled it as proof that the Russian people, allegedly lacking in the acquisitive ‘bourgeois’ impulses of western Europeans, were destined to solve mankind’s social problems. Haxthausen popularised this view in his book, published in 1847. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian mir became in Western Europe the starting-point of several theories concerning communal land-tenure of primitive societies…” Moreover, there seemed to be some prima facie similarity between Herzen’s idea of “Russian socialism” and Khomiakov’s key idea of sobornost’...

Khomiakov had not gone through the tormenting journey from westernism to Orthodoxy that his friend Kireyevsky had undergone, but had remained that rarity in the Russian educated classes – a committed Orthodox who practised his faith openly and without shame while remaining completely au courant with modern developments (he had several technological inventions to his credit). As Roy Campbell writes, “he was as far removed from the ‘ridiculousness of conservatism’ as he was from the revolutionary movement with its ‘immoral and passionate self-reliance’”.

---

533 Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 17. “In 1854, however, this whole interpretation was challenged by Boris Chicherin, a leading spokesman for the so-called Westerner camp, who argued that the peasant commune as then known was neither ancient nor autochthonous in origin, but had been introduced by the Russian monarchy in the middle of the eighteenth century as a means of ensuring the collection of taxes. Until then, according to Chicherin, Russian peasants had held their land by individual households. Subsequent researches blurred the lines of the controversy. Contemporary opinion holds that the commune of the imperial period was indeed a modern institution, as Chicherin claimed, although older than he had believed. It is also widely agreed that pressure by the state and landlord played a major part in its formation. At the same time, economic factors seem also to have affected its evolution to the extent that there exists a demonstrable connection between the availability of land and communal tenure: where land is scarce, the communal form of tenure tends to prevail, but where it is abundant it is replaced by household or even family tenure” (*op. cit.*, pp. 17-18).
“In contradistinction to Kireyevsky and K. Aksakov,” writes Lossky, “Khomiakov does not slur over the evils of Russian life but severely condemns them. At the beginning of the Crimean War (against Turkey, France and England, 1854-1855) he denounced with the fire and inspiration of a prophet, the Russia of his day (before the great reforms of Alexander II) and called her to repentance.

“Western Europe has failed to embody the Christian ideal of the wholeness of life through overemphasizing logical knowledge and rationality; Russia has so far failed to embody it because complete, all-embracing truth from its very nature develops slowly… Nevertheless Khomiakov believes in the great mission of the Russian people when it comes fully to recognize and express ‘all the spiritual forces and principles that lie at the basis of Holy Orthodox Russia.’ ‘Russia is called to stand at the forefront of universal culture; history gives her the right to do so because of the completeness and manysidedness of her guiding principles; such a right given to a nation imposes a duty upon every one of its members.’ Russia’s ideal is not to be the richest or most powerful country but to become ‘the most Christian of all human societies’.

“In spite of Khomiakov’s… critical attitude toward Western Europe,… [he] speaks of it in one of his poems as ‘the land of holy miracles’. He was particularly fond of England. The best things in her social and political life were due, he thought, to the right balance being maintained between liberalism and conservatism. The conservatives stood for the organic force of the national life developing from its original sources while the liberals stood for the personal, individual force, for analytical, critical reason. The balance between these two forces in England has never yet been destroyed because ‘every liberal is a bit of a conservative at bottom because he is English’. In England, as in Russia, the people have kept their religion and distrust analytical reason. But Protestant scepticism is undermining the balance between the organic and the analytic forces, and this is a menace to England in the future…” 535 In another place, Khomiakov saw the menace to England in her conservatism: “England with her modest science and her serious love of religious truth might give some hope; but – permit the frank expression of my thoughts – England is held by the iron chain of traditional custom.” 536

While attached to England, when it came to comparing the Eastern and Western forms of Christianity, Khomiakov was severe in his judgements. Influenced by Elder Ambrose of Optina as Kireyevsky had been by Elder Macarius, he had a deep, unshakeable confidence in the Orthodox Church. “Peter Christoff characterizes Khomiakov’s belief as follows, ‘Although Khomiakov respected and valued much in the Western nations he was absolutely convinced of the superiority of Orthodoxy.’ The Slavic world-view and the Russian peasant commune specifically served as a foundation for a new social order with the emphasis on the Orthodox Church. To

535 Lossky, op. cit., p. 40.
refer to Khomiakov’s Christian Orthodox messianism would in no way do him an injustice. Khomiakov believed that Russia had a mission to bring the whole world under the ‘roof’ of the Orthodox Church.”

“The Church,” wrote Khomiakov, “does not recognise any power over herself other than her own, no other’s court than the court of faith”. The Church is One, and that Church is exclusively the Orthodox Church. “Western Christianity has ceased to be Christianity,” he wrote. “In Romanism [Roman Catholicism] there is not one word, not one action, upon which the seal of spiritual life might lie”. “Both Protestantisms (Roman and German)... already bear death within themselves; it is left to unbelief only to take away the corpses and clean the arena. And all this is the righteous punishment for the crime committed by the ‘West’”. This sharp rejection of the right of Catholics and Protestants to call themselves members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was in itself remarkable in view of the mild ecumenism so prevalent in his time. This anti-ecumenism was shared by some of his educated contemporaries, such as Elder Ambrose and Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, but not by many.

However, it was not only the Oneness of the Church that Khomiakov explicated with particular success, but also Her Catholicity (sobornost’ in the Slavonic translation), which he defined as “unity-in-diversity”. “The Church is called Catholic,” writes Khomiakov, “because She belongs to the whole world, and not to some particular locality; because the whole of humanity and the whole of the earth is sanctified by Her, and not some particular people or country; because Her essence consists in the agreement and unity of spirit and life of all Her members who recognize Her throughout the earth.

“It follows from this that when a community is called a local Church, like the Greek, Russian or Syrian, this signifies only the gathering of the members of the Church living in such-and-such a country (Greece, Russia, Syria, etc.), and does not contain within itself the presupposition that one community of Christians could express the teaching of the Church, or give a dogmatic interpretation to the teaching of the Church, without the agreement of the other communities; still less does it presuppose that some community or community pastor could prescribe its or his interpretation to others. The grace of faith is not separate from holiness of life and not one community of Christians or pastor can be recognized as preservers of the whole faith, just as not one pastor or community can be considered representative of

538 Khomiakov, The Church is One, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij (Complete Works), Moscow, 1907, vol. II.
the whole holiness of the Church.” For “it is not people, or a multitude of people, that preserve tradition and write in the Church, but the Spirit of God, Who lives in the coming together of the Church.”

The principle of sobornost’, writes Lossky, “implies that the absolute bearer of truth in the Church is not the patriarch who has supreme authority, not the clergy, and not even the ecumenical council, but only the Church as a whole. ‘There have been heretical councils,’ says Khomiakov; ‘for instance, those in which a half-Arian creed was drawn up; externally, they differed in no way from the ecumenical councils – but why were they rejected? Solely because their decisions were not recognized by the whole body of the faithful as the voice of the Church.’ Khomiakov is referring here to the epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX (1848), which says: ‘The invincible truth and immutable certainty of the Christian dogma does not depend upon the hierarchs of the Church; it is preserved by the whole of the people composing the Church which is the body of Christ’ (A letter to Palmer, October 11, 1850, II, 363).”

“Solely because their decisions were not recognized as the voice of the Church by the entire ecclesial people, but that people and within that world where, in questions of faith, there is no difference between the scholar and the unlearned, cleric and lay person, man and woman, and king and subject... and where... the heresy of a learned bishop is refuted by an illiterate shepherd, so that all might be joined in the free unity of living faith which is the manifestation of the Spirit of God.”

Although councils are not infallible, it is nevertheless in the coming together of the people in councils to decide dogmatic and canonical questions that the Holy Spirit of truth reveals Himself, as in the Seven Ecumenical Councils. And so the Church is Conciliar by essence; Her truth is revealed to a multitude of Her members meeting in council, and not to just one of her members thinking in solitude, as the West supposes - whether that individual is the Roman Pope or a Protestant layman.

It is at this point that the Slavonic translation of the Greek word κοινόλακη, “Catholic”, by the Slavonic word sobornaia becomes illuminating. For the word sobornaia is derived from sobor, meaning a council or a large church with two or three altars. This implies a direct link between the Church’s Catholicity and Her Conciliarity. And this in turn suggests that the vital distinguishing quality of

540 Khomiakov, The Church is One, 4. Quotations from Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), “Istinnaia Sobornost’” (True Conciliarity), 1930; in Tserkov’ i yeia Uchenie v Zhizni (The Church and her Teaching in Life), Montreal: Brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev, 1964, pp. 112-113.

541 Khomiakov, The Church is One, 5. In Grabbe, op. cit., p. 113.

542 Lossky, op. cit., p. 35. The epistle continues: “With us neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce anything new, because the defender of religion is the very body of the Church, or the people itself, who wanted their religion to remain forever unchanged and in accord with the religion of their Fathers.”

Orthodox Catholicity, as opposed to Roman “Catholic” despotism and Protestant “Anti-Catholic” democratism, lies in its Conciliarity. For it is in Her conciliar life that the Church preserves Her unity in the truth. This the Protestants cannot do, since they make the opinion of every man the supreme arbiter of truth. And the Romanist cannot do it, since they make the opinion of one man the supreme arbiter.

Now, as Fr. Michael Pomazansky points out, "in Greek there is no philological or linguistic connection between the concepts "catholic" and "council" (ecumenical). A council of the Church is called in Greek Συνόδος, and an ecumenical council, οἰκουμενικὴ Συνόδος".544

Nevertheless, there is a philological link between the Greek word “Catholic” and the Greek word for a parish church, “Catholicon”.545 In any case, the lack of a philological connection does not mean that there is no deeper semantic and theological connection, a connection seen by the translators Saints Cyril and Methodius when they chose this translation.

Moreover, there is no serious difference between Khomiakov’s definition of Catholicity and Pomazansky’s: "Catholicity refers to the fact that the Church is not limited to space, by earthly boundaries, nor is it limited in time, that is, by the passing of generations into the life beyond the grave. In its catholic fullness, in its catholicity, the Church embraces both the Church of the called and the Church of the chosen, the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven."546

Khomiakov wrote: “'Sobor' expresses the idea of a gathering not only in the sense of an actual, visible union of many in a given place, but also in the more general sense of the continual possibility of such a union. In other words: it expresses the idea of unity in multiplicity. Therefore, it is obvious that the word καθολικός, as understood by the two great servants of the Word of God sent by Greece to the Slavs, was derived not from κατά and ολά, but from κατά and ολόν; for κατά often has the same meaning as our preposition 'according to', for instance: κατά Ματθαίου, κατά Μαρκον, 'according to Matthew', 'according to Mark'. The Catholic Church is the

545 Fr. Andrew Louth writes: “A parish church was called in Greek the katholikon (the church for all)” (Greek East and Latin West, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 195).
546 Pomazansky, op. cit., p. 49.
547 St. Maximus the Confessor, Mystagogy, I, P.G. 91, 665-668.
Church according to all, or according to the unity of all, καθ’όλου των πιστευόντων, the Church according to complete unanimity, the Church in which all peoples have disappeared and in which there are no Greeks, no barbarians, no difference of status, no slave-owners, and no slaves; that Church about which the Old Testament prophesied and which was realised in the New Testament - in one word, the Church as it was defined by St. Paul."\textsuperscript{548}

"The Apostolic Church of the ninth century (the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius) is neither the Church καθ’ εκκλησίαν (according to the understanding of each) as the Protestants have it, nor the Church κατά τον επισκόπον τῆς Ῥωμῆς (according to the understanding of the bishop of Rome) as is the case with the Latins; it is the Church καθ’ όλουν (according to the understanding of all in their unity), the Church as it existed prior to the Western split and as it still remains among those whom God preserved from the split: for, I repeat, this split is a heresy against the dogma of the unity of the Church."\textsuperscript{549}

The Catholicity of the Orthodox Church was shared, according to Khomiakov, neither by the Roman Church, which sacrificed diversity for the sake of unity, nor by Protestantism, which sacrificed unity for diversity. Instead of Orthodox Catholicity, which belonged only to the Orthodox Church, the Papists had Romanism, that is, mechanical obedience to the Bishop of Rome and his ex cathedra definitions of truth. This guaranteed external unity (for a time), but no inner consensus. And so it violated the truth of the Church Herself, Her Catholicity.

Moreover, Romanism contains the seeds of Protestantism insofar as the Pope was the first protester against the inner Catholicity of the Church. This Catholicity was expressed especially in the Seven Ecumenical Councils, which were accepted in both East and West but which the Romanists later replaced with the “infallibility” of the Pope. As Khomiakov put it: "Having appropriated the right of independently deciding a dogmatic question within the area of the Ecumenical Church, private opinion carried within itself the seed of the growth and legitimation of Protestantism, that is, of free investigation torn from the living tradition of unity based on mutual love.\textsuperscript{550}

The truth is given, not to individuals as such, but to the Church, - “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3.15), in St. Paul’s words, - understood as a conciliar organism united in freedom and love. Thus “clarity of understanding is placed in dependence on the moral law. The communion of love is not only useful, but completely necessary for the attainment of the truth, and the attainment of the truth is based on it and is impossible without it. The truth, being unattainable for individualistic thought, is accessible only to the coming together of thoughts bound by love."\textsuperscript{551}

\textsuperscript{548} Khomiakov, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij (Complete Works), Moscow, 1907, vol. II, pp. 312-313. 
\textsuperscript{549} Khomiakov, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij, vol. II, p. 313. 
We see, then, that Khomiakov’s conception of sobornost’ is theological, and cannot be identified with Herzen’s idea of the mir as the embryo of “Russian socialism”. However, some have accused him of just such a degradation of a theological mystery into a secular ideal, of confusing sobornost’ with democracy, the spiritual warmth of communion in Christ with the natural warmth of a family or society.

It is certainly true to say that for Khomiakov, as for the other early Slavophiles, there was a close connection between his teaching on the Church and his teaching on the peasant commune. Indeed, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, “the hidden meaning of the Slavophile teaching becomes completely clear only when we divine that both these, at first sight discordant teachings coincide completely, in that what the commune should be in the sphere of external inter-human relationships, in the sphere of ‘earthly’ life, is what the Church is in the order of the spiritual life of the person. And the other way round: the commune is that form of social existence which is realized as a result of the application of the principles of Orthodox ecclesiasticism to the question of social inter-relations.”

“One could even say,” writes S. Khoruzhij, “that the social aspect, the interpretation of sobornost’ as the principle of social existence, in time came to occupy centre stage, leaving the original ecclesiological meaning of the concept in the background and almost forgotten. Here we see a fairly systematic evolution. From the beginning there lived in the minds of the early Slavophiles an idea of the communal ideal expressing the harmonious management of social life. They were in agreement in considering the closest historical approximation to it the village commune, the peasant mir, and, correspondingly, the ideal was usually called ‘communality’ or ‘communal unity’, being defined as ‘unity which consists in… the concept of a natural and moral brotherhood and inner justice’ (I, 99). It is a banal tradition to reproach the Slavophiles for idealizing the communal set-up and Russian history. For all its triteness, the reproach is just; although Khomiakov tried to moderate this tendency (especially after the Crimean war), he never managed to measure with one measure and judge with an equal judgement home and abroad, Russia and the West. But we must point something else out here. However embellished were his descriptions of the sources and bases of Russian history and statehood, embellishment never became deification, nor was communality identified with sobornost’. They were two different principles, and Khomiakov did not think of merging them into each other, bringing a human, secular matter to the level of the Theandric and grace-filled. He saw an impassible boundary between the one and the other.

“However, it was not long before people with frightening ease lost the ability to discern this boundary – and then learned to deny it. Sobornost’ was inexorably, with greater and greater strength and openness, brought down to earth, deprived of its grace-filled content and reduced to a simple social and organic principle: to a certain

Florovsky, “Vechnoe i prekhodiaschee v uchenii russkikh slavianofilov” (The eternal and the passing in the teaching of the Russian Slavophiles”), in Vera i Kul’tura, op. cit., p. 93.
degree this process was the very essence of the ideological evolution of Slavophilism, from its earlier to its later variants, and from it to the conservatism of the last reign, to post-revolutionary Eurasianism and still further. In this process of the degeneration of the path of sobornost' it crossed paths with the socialist idea: as has been pointed out more than once, 'in this attraction to the ideal of ... the commune it is not difficult to discern a subconscious and erroneous thirst for sobornost' [Florovsky]. Therefore in the same descending line we find in the end all the communard variations on the theme of collectivisation, Soviet patriotism and even National Bolshevism... At the same time as grace freedom is cast out – and, as a result, sobornost' completely lost its spiritual nature, being turned into the regulative principle either of mechanical statehood, or of the organic life of the primitive community. The link with the Church, churchness, was for the most part preserved externally. However, it goes without saying that the very idea of the Church could here degenerate as much as the idea of sobornost'. In the first case the Church was likened to the state to the point of being indistinguishable from it, and in the second it was a primitively pagan institution for the sanctification of life and manners. They claimed to be preserving churchness, while rejecting the principle of freedom – and this was spiritual blindness. ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’, says Paul, and Orthodoxy reveals his covenant through the ascetic principle of synergy: the grace of the Holy Spirit lives in the Church, but each member of the Church acquires it by his personal spiritual activity, to the realization of his own personal liberty. And only in ‘the agreement of personal liberties’ (Khomiakov) is the grace-filled Body of the Lord put together.”

Russia and Europe: (4) Kireyevsky

We have seen that the Slavophiles believed that western civilization since the Schism in the eleventh century had created a new kind of man, homo occidentalis. The question, then, was: what were the main characteristics of this new man, and in what did he differ from homo orientalis, the older, original kind of Christian and European, who was now to be found only in Russia and the Balkans? The first clear answer to this question was expounded by Ivan Vasilievich Kireyevsky, a man of thoroughly western education, tastes and habits, who converted to the Orthodox ideal in adult life, becoming a disciple of the Optina Elder Macarius. In his Reply to Khomiakov (1839) and On the Character of European Civilization and Its Relationship to Russian Civilization (1852), he gave his own answer to the question of the cause of the appearance of homo occidentalis - the growth of western rationalism.

The beginning of Kireyevsky’s spiritual emancipation may be said to date to 1829, when, as Fr. Sergius Chetverikov writes, he “appeared for the first time in the field of literature with an article about Pushkin, which revealed a remarkably clear understanding of the works of this poet. In this article he already expressed doubt in the absolute truth of German philosophy and pointed out the pressing need for the development of a school of original Russian scientific thought. ‘German philosophy cannot take root in us. Our philosophy must arise from current questions, from the

prevailing interest of our people and their individual ways of life.’ But at the same time we must not reject the experience of Western European thought. ‘The crown of European enlightenment served as the cradle of our education. It was born when the other states had already completed the cycle of their intellectual development; and where they finished, there we began. Like a young sister in a large harmonious family, Russia was enriched by the experience of her older brothers and sisters prior to her entry into the world.’”

At this stage the full uniqueness and saving truth of Orthodoxy was perhaps not yet fully revealed to Kireyevsky. The decisive moment in his conversion, as Nina Lazareva writes, was his marriage to Natalya Petrovna Arbeneva in 1834: “The beginning of his family life was for Ivan Vasilievich also the beginning of the transformation of his inner world, the beginning of his coming out of that dead-end in which his former rationalistic world-view had led him. The difference between the whole structure of Natalya Petrovna’s life, educated as she had been in the rules of strict piety, and that of Ivan Vasilievich, who had passed his days and nights in tobacco-filled rooms reading and discussing the latest philosophical works, could not fail to wound both of them.

“In the note written by A.I. Koshelev from the words of N.P. Kireyevsky and entitled ‘The Story of Ivan Vasilievich’s Conversion’, we read: ‘In the first period after their marriage her fulfilment of our Church rites and customs made an unpleasant impression on him, but from the tolerance and delicacy that was natural to him he did not hinder her in this at all. She on her side was still more sorrowfully struck by his lack of faith and complete neglect of all the customs of the Orthodox Church. They had conversations which ended with it being decided that he would not hinder her in the fulfilment of her obligations, and he would be free in his actions, but he promised in her presence not to blaspheme and by all means to cut short the conversations of his friends that were unpleasant to her. In the second year of their marriage he asked his wife to read Cousin. She willing did this, but when he began to ask her for her opinion of this book, she said that there was much good in it, but that she had not found anything new, for in the works of the Holy Fathers it was all expounded in a much profounder and more satisfying way. He laughed and was quiet. He began to ask his wife to read Voltaire with him. She told him that she was ready to read any serious book that he might suggest to her, but she disliked mockery and every kind of blasphemy and she could neither hear nor read them. Then after some time they began to read Schelling together, and when great, radiant thoughts stopped them and I.V. Kireyevsky demanded wonderment from his wife, she first said that she knew these thoughts from the works of the Holy Fathers. She often pointed them out to him in the books of the Holy Fathers, which forced Ivan Vasilievich to read whole pages sometimes. It was unpleasant for him to recognise that there really was much in the Holy Fathers that he had admired in Schelling. He did not like to admit this, but secretly he took his wife’s books and read them with interest.’

“At that time the works of the Holy Fathers were hardly published in Russia, lovers of spiritual literature transcribed them themselves or for small sums of money they engaged transcribers. Natalya Petrovna made notes from those books which her spiritual father, Hieromonk Philaret (Puliashkin) gave her to read. In his time he had laboured much to prepare the Slavonic Philokalia for publication. These were works of the Holy Fathers collected by St. Paisius Velichkovsky which contained instructions on mental prayer, that is, on the cleansing of the soul from passions, on the means to attaining this and in particular on the union of the mind and the heart in the Jesus prayer. In 1836 Ivan Vasilievich for the first time read the works of St. Isaac the Syrian, who was called the teacher of silence. Thus the philosopher came into contact with the hitherto unknown to him, centuries-old Orthodox enlightenment, which always witnessed to the True Light, our Lord Jesus Christ.

“‘Acquaintance with the Novospassky monk Philaret, conversations with the holy elder and the reading of various works of the Holy Fathers gave him pleasure and drew him to the side of piety. He went to see Fr. Philaret, but each time as it were unwillingly. It was evident that he wanted to go to him, but forcing was always necessary.’ This continued until, according to the Providence of God, and thanks to the clairvoyance of Elder Philaret and his knowledge of the human soul, a truly wondrous event took place: ‘I.V. Kireyevsky in the past never wore a cross round his neck. His wife had more than once asked him to do that, but Ivan Vasilyevich had not replied. Finally, he told her once that he would put on a cross if it would be sent to him by Fr. Philaret, whose mind and piety he warmly admired. Natalya Petrovna went to Fr. Philaret and communicated this to him. The elder made the sign of the cross, took it off his neck and said to Natalya Petrovna: ‘Let this be to Ivan Vasilyevich for salvation.’

“When Natalya Petrovna went home, Ivan Vasilyevich on meeting her said: ‘Well, what did Fr. Philaret say?’ She took out the cross and gave it to Ivan Vasilyevich. Ivan Vasilyevich asked her: ‘What is this cross?’ Natalya Petrovna said to him that Fr. Philaret had taken it off himself and said: let this be to him for salvation. Ivan Vasilyevich fell on his knees and said: ‘Well, now I expect salvation for my soul, for in my mind I had determined: if Fr. Philaet takes off his cross and sends it to me, then it will be clear that God is calling me to salvation.’ From that moment a decisive turnaround in the thoughts and feelings of Ivan Vasilyevich was evident.’""555

Soon Kireyevsky met the famous Optina Elder Macarius, with whom he started the series of Optina translations of the works of the Holy Fathers into Russian. This, as well as being of great importance in itself, marked the beginning of the return of a part of the educated classes to a more than nominal membership of the Church. It was on the basis of the teaching of the Holy Fathers that Kireyevsky determined to build a philosophy that would engage with the problems felt by the Russian intelligentsia of his day and provide them with true enlightenment.

555 Lazareva, “Zhizneopisanie” (“Biography”), introduction to I.V. Kireyevsky, Razum na puti k Istine (Reason on the Path to Truth), Moscow: “Pravilo very”, 2002, pp. XXXVI-XXXIX.
A very important element in this philosophy would be a correct “placing” of Russia in relation to Western Europe.

According to Kireyevsky, “three elements lie at the foundation of European [i.e. Western European] education: Roman Christianity, the world of the uneducated barbarians who destroyed the [western] Roman empire, and the classical world of ancient paganism.

“This classical world of ancient paganism, which did not enter into the inheritance of Russia, essentially constitutes the triumph of the formal reason of man over everything that is inside and within him – pure, naked reason, based on itself, recognizing nothing higher than or outside itself and appearing in two forms – the form of formal abstraction and the form of abstract sensuality. Classicism’s influence on European education had to correspond to this same character.

“Whether it was because Christians in the West gave themselves up unlawfully to the influence of the classical world, or because heresy accidentally united itself with paganism, the Roman Church differs in its deviation from the Eastern only in that same triumph of rationalism over Tradition, of external ratiocination over inner spiritual reason. Thus it was in consequence of this external syllogism drawn out of the concept of the Divine equality of the Father and the Son [the Filioque] that the dogma of the Trinity was changed in opposition to spiritual sense and Tradition. Similarly, in consequence of another syllogism, the pope became the head of the Church in place of Jesus Christ. They tried to demonstrate the existence of God with a syllogism; the whole unity of the faith rested on syllogistic scholasticism; the Inquisition, Jesuitism – in a word, all the particularities of Catholicism, developed by virtue of the same formal process of reason, so that Protestantism itself, which the Catholics reproach for its rationalism, proceeded directly from the rationalism of Catholicism…

“Thus rationalism was both an extra element in the education of Europe at the beginning and is now an exclusive characteristic of the European enlightenment and way of life. This will be still clearer if we compare the basic principles of the public and private way of life of the West with the basic principles of the same public and private way of life which, if it had not developed completely, was at least clearly indicated in old Russia, when she was under the direct influence of pure Christianity, without any admixture from the pagan world.

“The whole private and public way of life of the West is founded on the concept of individual, separate independence, which presupposes individual isolation. Hence the sacredness of formal relationships; the sacredness of property and conditional decrees is more important than the personality. Every individual is a private person; a knight, prince or city within his or its rights is an autocratic, unlimited personage that gives laws to itself. The first step of each personage into
society is to surround himself with a fortress from the depths of which he enters into negotiations with others and other independent powers.

“... I was speaking about the difference between enlightenment in Russia and in the West. Our educative principle consisted in our Church. There, however, together with Christianity, the still fruitful remnants of the ancient pagan world continued to act on the development of enlightenment. The very Christianity of the West, in separation from the Universal Church, accepted into itself the seeds of that principle which constituted the general colouring of the whole development of Greco-Roman culture: the principle of rationalism. For that reason the character of European education differs by virtue of an excess of rationalism.

“However, this excess appeared only later, when logical development had already overwhelmed Christianity, so to speak. But at the beginning rationalism, as I said, appeared only in embryo. The Roman Church separated from the Eastern because it changed certain dogmas existing in the Tradition of the whole of Christianity into others by deduction. She spread other dogmas by means of the same logical process, again in opposition to Tradition and the spirit of the Universal Church. Thus a logical belief lay at the very lowest base of Catholicism. But the first action of rationalism was limited to this at the beginning. The inner and outer construction of the Church, which had been completed earlier in another spirit, continued to exist without obvious changes until the whole unity of the ecclesiastical teaching passed into the consciousness of the thinking part of the clergy. This was completed in the philosophy of scholasticism, which, by reason of the logical principle at the very foundation of the Church, could not reconcile the contradictions of faith and reason in any other way than by means of syllogism, which thereby became the first condition of every belief. At first, naturally, this same syllogism tried to demonstrate the truth of faith against reason and subdue reason to faith by means of rational arguments. But this faith, logically proved and logically opposed to reason, was no longer a living, but a formal faith, not faith as such, but only the logical rejection of reason. Therefore during this period of the scholastic development of Catholicism, precisely by reason of its rationality, the Western church becomes an enemy of reason, its oppressive, murderous, desperate enemy. But, taken to its extreme, as the continuation of this same logical process, this absolute annihilation of reason produced the well-known opposite effect, the consequences of which constitute the character of the present enlightenment. That is what I meant when I spoke of the rational element of Catholicism.

“Christianity in the East knew neither this struggle of faith against reason, nor this triumph of reason over faith. Therefore its influence on enlightenment was dissimilar to that of Catholicism.

“When examining the social construction of old Russia, we find many differences from the West, and first of all: the formation of society into so-called mirs [communes]. Private, personal idiosyncracy, the basis of western development, was as little known among us as was social autocracy. A man belonged to the mir, and
the mir to him. Agricultural property, the fount of personal rights in the West, belonged with us to society. A person had the rights of ownership to the extent that entered into the membership of society.

“But this society was not autonomous and could not order itself, or itself acquire laws for itself, because it was not separated from other similar communities that were ruled by uniform custom. The innumerable multitude of these small communes, which constituted Russia, was all covered with a net of churches, monasteries and the remote dwellings of hermits, whence there spread everywhere identical concepts of the relationship between social matters and personal matters. These concepts little by little were bound to pass over into a general conviction, conviction – into custom, whose place was taken by law, which established throughout the whole space of the lands subject to our Church one thought, one point of view, one aim, one order of life. This universal uniformity of custom was probably one of the reasons for its amazing strength, which has preserved its living remnants even to our time, in spite of all the opposition of destructive influences which, in the course of two hundred years, strove to introduce new principles in their place.

“As a result of these strong, uniform and universal customs, it was impossible for there to be any change in the social order that was not in agreement with the order of the whole. Every person’s family relationships were defined, first of all, by his birth; but in the same predetermined order the family was subject to the commune, and the wider commune to the assembly, the assembly to the yeche, and so on, whence all the private circles came together in one centre, in one Orthodox Church. No personal reasoning, no artificial agreement could found any new order, think up new rights and privileges. Even the very word right was unknown among us in its western sense, but signified only justice, righteousness. Therefore no power could be given to any person or class, nor could any right be accorded, for righteousness and justice cannot be sold or taken, but exist in themselves independently of conditional relationships. In the West, by contrast, all social relationships are founded on convention or strive to attain this artificial basis. Outside convention there are no correct relationships, but only arbitrariness, which in the governing class is called autonomy, in the governed – freedom. But in both the one and the other case this arbitrariness demonstrates not the development of the inner life, but the development of the external, formal life. All social forces, interests and rights exist there in separation, each in itself, and they are united not by a normal law, but either accidentally or by an artificial agreement. In the first case material force triumphs, in the second – the sum of individual reasonings. But material force, material dominance, a material majority, the sum of individual reasonings in essence constitute one principle only at different moments of their development. Therefore the social contract is not the invention of the encyclopaedists, but a real ideal to which all the western societies strove unconsciously, and now consciously, under the influence of the rational element, which outweighs the Christian element.”556

“Private and social life in the West,’ Kireyevsky wrote, ‘are based on the concept of an individual and separate independence that presupposes the isolation of the individual. Hence the external formal relations of private property and all types of legal conventions are sacred and of greater importance than human beings”.

“Only one serious thing was left to man, and that was industry. For him the reality of being survived only in his physical person. Industry rules the world without faith or poetry. In our times it unites and divides people. It determines one’s fatherland, it delineates classes, it lies at the base of state structures, it moves nations, it declares war, makes peace, changes mores, gives direction to science, and determines the character of culture. Men bow down before it and erect temples to it. It is the real deity in which people sincerely believe and to which they submit. Unselfish activity has become inconceivable; it has acquires the same significance in the contemporary world as chivalry had in the time of Cervantes.”

This long and tragic development had its roots, according to Kireyevsky, in the falling away of the Roman Church. "In the ninth century the western Church showed within itself the inevitable seed of the Reformation, which placed this same Church before the judgement seat of the same logical reason which the Roman Church had itself exalted... A thinking man could already see Luther behind Pope Nicolas I just as... a thinking man of the 16th century could foresee behind Luther the coming of 19th century liberal Protestantism..."  

According to Kireyevsky, just as in a marriage separation or divorce takes place when one partner asserts his or her self against the other, so in the Church schisms and heresies take place when one party asserts itself over against Catholic unity. In the early, undivided Church “each patriarchate, each tribe, each country in the Christian world preserved its own characteristic features, while at the same time participating in the common unity of the whole Church.”

A patriarchate or country fell away from that unity only if it introduced heresy, that is, a teaching contrary to the Catholic understanding of the Church. The Roman patriarchate fell away from the Unity and Catholicity of the Church through an unbalanced, self-willed development of its own particular strength, the logical development of concepts, by introducing the Filioque into the Creed in defiance of the theological consciousness of the Church as a whole. But it fell away from that Unity and Catholicity in another way, by preaching a heresy about Unity and Catholicity. For the Popes taught that the Church, in order to be Catholic, must be first and above all Roman – and “Roman” not in the sense employed by the Greeks when they called themselves Roman, that is, belonging to the Christian Roman Empire and

---

558 Kireyevsky, quoted by Fr. Alexey Young, A Man is His Faith: Ivan Kireyevsky and Orthodox Christianity, London: St. George Information Service, 1980.
559 Kireyevsky, in Young, op. cit.
including both Italians and Greeks and people of many nationalities. The Popes now understood “Rome”, “the Roman Church” and “the Roman Faith” in a different, particularist, anti-Catholic sense – that is, “Roman” as opposed to “Greek”, “the Roman Church” as opposed to “the Greek Church”, “the Roman Faith” as opposed to, and something different from and inherently superior to, “the Greek Church”. From this time that the Roman Church ceased to be a part of the Catholic Church, having trampled on the dogma of Catholicity. Instead she became the anti-Catholic, or Romanist, or Latin, or Papist church.

“Christianity penetrated the minds of the western peoples through the teaching of the Roman Church alone – in Russia it was kindled on the candle-stands of the whole Orthodox Church; theology in the West acquired a ratiocinative-abstract character – in the Orthodox world it preserved an inner wholeness of spirit; there there was a division in the powers of the reason – here a striving for their living unity; there: the movement of the mind towards the truth by means of a logical chain of concepts – here: a striving for it by means of an inner exaltation of self-consciousness towards wholeness of heart and concentration of reason; there: a searching for external, dead unity – here: a striving for inner, living unity; there the Church was confused with the State, uniting spiritual power with secular power and pouring ecclesiastical and worldly significance into one institution of a mixed character – in Russia it remained unmixed with worldly aims and institution; there: scholastic and juridical universities – in ancient Russia: prayer-filled monasteries concentrating higher knowledge in themselves; there: a rationalist and scholastic study of the higher truths – here: a striving for their living and integral assimilation; there: a mutual growing together of pagan and Christian education – here: a striving for the purification of truth; there: statehood arising out of forcible conquest – here: out of the natural development of the people’s everyday life, penetrated by the unity of its basic conviction; there: a hostile walling-off of classes – in ancient Russia their unanimous union while preserving natural differences; there: the artificial connection of knights’ castles with what belonged to them constituted separate states – here: the agreement of the whole land spiritually expresses its undivided unity; there: agrarian property is the first basis of civil relationships – here: property is only an accidental expression of personal relationships; there: formal-logical legality – here: legality proceeding from everyday life; there: the inclination of law towards external justice – here: preference for inner justice; there: jurisprudence strives towards a logical codex – here: instead of an external connectedness of form with form, it seeks the inner connection of lawful conviction with convictions of faith and everyday life; there improvements were always accomplished by violent changes – here by a harmonious, natural growth; there: the agitation of the party spirit – here: the unshakeability of basic conviction; there: the pursuit of fashion – here: constancy of everyday life; there: the instability of personal self-rule – here: the strength of familial and social links; there: the foppishness of luxury and the artificiality of life – here: the simplicity of vital needs and the exuberance of moral courage; there: tender dreaminess – here: the healthy integrity of rational forces; there: inner anxiety of spirit accompanied by rational conviction of one’s moral perfection – among the Russians: profound quietness and the calm of
inner self-consciousness combined with constant lack of trust of oneself and the unlimited demands of moral perfection – in a word, there: disunity of spirit, disunity of thoughts, disunity of sciences, disunity of state, disunity of classes, disunity of society, disunity of family rights and obligations, disunity of the whole unity and of all the separate forms of human existence, social and personal – in Russia, by contrast, mainly a striving for integrity of everyday existence both inner and outer, social and personal, speculative and practical, aesthetic and moral. Therefore if what we have said above is just, disunity and integrity, rationalism [rassudochnost'] and reason [razumnost'] will be the final expression of West European and Russian education.”

We may wonder whether the contrast between East and West has been drawn too sharply, too tidily here. But there can be no doubt that Kireyevsky has unerringly pointed to the main lines of bifurcation between the development of the Orthodox East and the Catholic-Protestant West. The explanation lies in his spiritual development. “Having himself been a son of the West and gone to study with the most advanced philosophers,” writes Fr. Seraphim Rose, ‘Kireyevsky was thoroughly penetrated with the Western spirit and then became thoroughly converted to Orthodoxy. Therefore he saw that these two things cannot be put together. He wanted to find out why they were different and what was the answer in one’s soul, what one had to choose…”

Russia and Europe: (5) Dostoyevsky

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky had, like Gogol, been a protégé of Belinsky. But, again like Gogol, he had broken with Belinsky, because of the latter’s atheism and readiness to subordinate art to propaganda. However, he did not decisively cast off his socialist acquaintances, and his return to conscious Christianity was correspondingly tortuous, slow and punctuated by harsh lessons from life.

Dostoyevsky’s Christian critique of socialism, though not yet fully articulate in the 1840s, had already begun to reveal itself in his relations with Belinsky, of whom he wrote much later: “Treasuring above all reason, science and realism, at the same time he comprehended more keenly than anyone that reason, science and realism alone can merely produce the ant’s nest, and not social ‘harmony’ within which man can organize his life. He knew that moral principles are the basis of all things. He believed, to the degree of delusion and without any reflex, in the new moral foundations of socialism (which, however, up to the present have revealed nothing but abominable perversions of nature and common sense). Here was nothing but rapture. Still, as a socialist he had to destroy Christianity in the first place. He knew that the revolution must necessarily begin with atheism. He had to dethrone that

560 Kireyevsky, “O kharaktere prosveschenia Evropy i o ego otnoshenii k prosvescheniu Rossii” (On the Character of the Enlightenment of Europe and its Relationship to the Enlightenment of Russia), in Razum na puti k istine, op. cit., pp. 207-209.
561 Monk Damascene Christenson, Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993, pp. 589-590.
religion whence the moral foundations of the society rejected by him had sprung up. Family, property, personal moral responsibility - these he denied radically. (I may observe that, even as Herzen, he was also a good husband and father.) Doubtless, he understood that by denying the moral responsibility of man, he thereby denied also his freedom; yet, he believed with all his being (much more blindly than Herzen, who, at the end, it seems, began to doubt) that socialism not only does not destroy the freedom of man, but, on the contrary, restores it in a form of unheard-of majesty, only on a new and adamantine foundation.

“At this juncture, however, there remained the radiant personality of Christ Himself to contend with, which was the most difficult problem. As a socialist, he was duty bound to destroy the teaching of Christ, to call it fallacious and ignorant philanthropy, doomed by modern science and economic tenets. Even so, there remained the beatific image of the God-man, its moral inaccessibility, its wonderful and miraculous beauty. But in his incessant, unquenchable transport, Belinsky did not stop even before this insurmountable obstacle, as did Renan, who proclaimed in his *Vie de Jésus* - a book permeated with incredulity - that Christ nevertheless is the ideal of human beauty, an inaccessible type which cannot be repeated even in the future.

“‘But do you know,’ he screamed one evening (sometimes in a state of great excitement he used to scream), ‘do you know that it is impossible to charge man with sins, to burden him with debts and turning the other cheek, when society is organized so meanly that man cannot help but perpetrate villainies; when, economically, he has been brought to villainy, and that it is silly and cruel to demand from man that which, by the very laws of nature, he is impotent to perform even if he wished to…?’

“That evening we were not alone: there was present one of Belinsky’s friends whom he respected very much and obeyed in many ways. Also present was an author, quite young, who later gained prominence in literature [Dostoyevsky].

“‘I am even touched to look at him,’ said Belinsky, suddenly interrupting his furious exclamations, turning to his friend and pointing at me. ‘Every time I mention Christ his face changes expression, as if he were ready to start weeping… But, believe me, naïve man,’ he jumped at me again, ‘believe me that your Christ, if He were born in our time, would be a most imperceptible and ordinary man; in the presence of contemporary science and contemporary propellers of mankind, He would be effaced!’”

The essence of “The Parable of the Grand Inquisitor” is in that scene, with Belinsky in the role of Inquisitor and Dostoyevsky - in that of the silent Christ.

However, Dostoyevsky was not yet ready to break decisively with the socialist camp. As he wrote: “All these new ideas of those days were very appealing to us in

Petersburg; they seemed holy in the highest degree and moral, and – most important of all – cosmopolitan, the future law of all mankind in its totality. Even long before the Paris revolution of ’48 we fell under the fascinating influence of these ideas. Already in ’46 I had been initiated by Belinsky into the whole truth of that future ‘regenerated world’ and into the whole holiness of the forthcoming communist society. All these convictions about the immorality of the very foundations (Christian) of modern society, the immorality of religion, family, right of property; all these ideas about the elimination of nationalities in the name of universal brotherhood of men, about the contempt for one’s native country as an obstacle to universal progress, and so on and so forth – all these constituted such influences as we were unable to overcome and which, contrariwise, swayed our hearts and minds in the name of some magnanimity. At any rate, the theme seemed lofty and far above the level of the then prevailing conceptions, and it was precisely this that was tempting...

“The human mind, once having rejected Christ, may attain extraordinary results. This is an axiom. Europe, in the persons of her highest intellectual representatives, renounces Christ, while we, as is known, are obligated to imitate Europe…”

The revolution of 1848 in Europe, writes V.F. Ivanov, “gave wings of hope to all the antichristian and destructive forces.

“The profound thinker V.A. Zhukovsky, in January, 1848, in an excerpt from a letter, What is Going to Happen, prophetically foretold the bloody chaos of which we are the witnesses in our own days.

“’We live,’ wrote Zhukovsky, ‘on the crater of a volcano which not long ago was giving out fire, which calmed down and which is now again preparing to throw up. Its first lava flow has not yet cooled, and already in its depths a new one is bubbling, and the thunder of stones flying out of the abyss is announcing that it will soon pour out. One revolution has ended, and another stepping on its toes, and what is remarkable is that the course of the last is observing the same order as did the first, in spite of the difference in their characters. The two are similar in their first manifestations, and now, as then, they are beginning with a shaking of the main foundation of order: religion. But now they are doing it in a bolder way and on a broader scale. Then they attack the faith obliquely, preaching tolerance, but now they are directly attacking every faith and blatantly preaching atheism; then they were secretly undermining Christianity, apparently arming themselves against the abuses of Church authorities, but now they are yelling from the roots that both Christianity and the Church and the Church authorities and every authority is nothing other than abuse. What is the aim of the present reformers? – I am speaking about those who sincerely desire what is better, sincerely believe in the reality and beneficence of their speculations – what is the aim of the present reformers?, who are entering on the same path which their predecessors trod, whose end we saw with shuddering, knowing that the desired improvement would never be found there.

What is the aim of the present reformers? They themselves do not clearly see it. It is very probable that many of them are deceiving themselves, and, while going forward with banners on which there shine the words of our age: forward, freedom, equality, humanity, they themselves are sure that their path leads straight to the promised land. And perhaps it is fated for them, as for many others of their predecessors, to shudder on the edge or on the bottom of this abyss, which will soon open up under their feet.

“'Behind these preachers of education and progress, who are acting openly, others are acting in secret, who are not blinded, who have a practical aim which they see clearly in front of them: for them it is no longer a matter of political transformation, or of the destruction of privileges and age-old historical formations (that was already accomplished in the first revolution), but simply of the annihilation of the difference between yours and mine, or, more correctly, of turning yours into mine.'”

The first revolutionary movement in Russia after 1848 was the abortive “Petrashevtsy” rebellion of 1849, named after its leader, Michael Petrashevsky. He expressed his “realist” views with typically Russian explicitness: "[Naturalism] means a science which holds that by thought alone, without the help of tradition, revelation, or divine intervention, man can achieve in real life a state of permanent happiness through the total and independent development of all his natural faculties. In the lower phases of its evolution, naturalism considers the appearance of the divine element in positive religions to be a falsehood, the result of human rather than divine action. In its further evolution, this science - having absorbed pantheism and materialism - conceives divinity as the supreme and all-embracing expression of human understanding, moves towards atheism, and finally becomes transformed into anthropotheism - the science that proclaims that the only supreme being is man himself as a part of nature. At this stage of its rational evolution, naturalism considers the universal fact of the recognition of God in positive religions to be a result of man's deification of his own personality and the universal laws of his intellect; it considers all religions that reflected the historical evolution of mankind to be a gradual preparation for anthropotheism, or - in other words - total self-knowledge and awareness of the vital laws of nature." 

The Petrashevtsy especially admired Fourier; and at a meeting on his birthday D.D. Akhsharumov declared: “We venerate his memory because he showed us the path we must follow, he revealed the source of wealth, of happiness. Today is the first banquet of the Fourierists in Russia, and we are all here: ten people, not much more! Everything begins from something small and grows into something big. Our aim is to destroy the capitals and cities and use all their materials for other buildings, and turn the whole of this life of torments, woes, poverty and shame into a life that is luxurious, elegant, full of joy, wealth and happiness, and cover the whole poor land with palaces and fruits and redecorate them in flowers. We here, in our country, will

---

564 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 337-338.
begin its transfiguration, and the whole land will finish it. Soon the human race will be delivered from intolerable sufferings..." 566

One member of the circle, the proud, silent and handsome Nikolai Speshnev, considered all distinctions between beauty and ugliness, good and evil to be “a matter of taste”. He did not believe in the transformation of Russia from the top, but in a socialist revolution from below, to which end only verbal propaganda was necessary. “I intend to use it, without the slightest shame or conscience, to propagandise socialism, atheism, terrorism, and all that is good.” 567 Speshnev formed his own “Russian Society”, which was joined by Dostoyevsky. He called him his “Mephistopheles”, and was fascinated by him. But he was never wholly convinced by him, and continued to believe in Christ...

However, in 1849 the Petrashevtsy, including Dostoyevsky, were arrested – Dostoevsky, for reading Belinsky’s Letter to Gogol in public. They were imprisoned in the Peter and Paul fortress, and then, after a mock-execution, sent to four years’ hard labour in Siberia. The experience – recounted in The House of the Dead – brought Dostoevsky to repentance. As he wrote to his brother: “In my absolute spiritual solitude, I re-examined the whole of my former life. I scrutinized every minute detail. I thought very carefully about my past. Alone as I was, I judged myself harshly, without mercy. Sometimes I even thanked my fate because it had sent me into solitude, for without it, this new judgement of myself would never have happened...” 568 As St. Ambrose of Optina said: “This is a man who repents!” 569

Then, in Siberia, by being “personally classed with villains”, he came to know the Russian people as they really were for the first time. And through them, as he wrote later, “I again received into my soul Christ, Who had been revealed to me in my parents’ home and Whom I was about to lose when, on my part, I transformed myself into a ‘European liberal’.” 570 “The moral idea is Christ,” wrote Dostoevsky. “In the West, Christ has been distorted and diminished. It is the kingdom of the Antichrist. We have Orthodoxy. As a consequence, we are the bearers of a clear understanding of Christ and a new idea for the resurrection of the world... If faith and Orthodoxy were shaken in the people, then they would begin to disintegrate... The whole matter lies in the question: can one believe, being civilized, that is, a European, that is, believe absolutely in the Divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? (for all faith consists in this)... You see: either everything is contained in faith or nothing is: we recognize the importance of the world through Orthodoxy. And the whole question is: can one believe in Orthodoxy? If one can, then everything is saved: if not, then better to burn... But if Orthodoxy is impossible for the enlightened man, then... all this is hocus-pocus and Russia’s whole strength is provisional... It is

566 Akhsharumov, in Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 323-324.
568 Dostoevsky, in Kjetsaa, op. cit., p. 105.
570 Dostoevsky, The Diary of a Writer, 1880.
possible to believe seriously and in earnest. Here is *everything*, the burden of life for the Russian people and their entire mission and existence to come...”

And so Dostoyevsky became, after Pushkin and Gogol, the third great Russian writer to be rescued from European atheism and converted to “the Russian God”, Jesus Christ...

Like the other Slavophiles, Dostoyevsky saw the beginning of the European disease in the reforms of Peter the Great. Unlike them, however, he came to believe that this turning to the West was providential – and not only in that enabled Russians to acquire European arts and sciences. “Throughout these hundred and fifty years after Peter we have done nothing but live through a communion with all human civilization, affiliating ourselves with their history and their ideals. We have learned, and trained ourselves, to love the French, the Germans and everybody else, as if they were our brethren – notwithstanding the fact that they never liked us and made up their minds never to like us. However, this was the essence of our reform – the whole Peter cause; we have derived from it, during that century and a half, an *expansion* of our view, which, perhaps, was unprecedented and cannot be traced in any other nation, whether in the ancient or the new world. The pre-Peter Russia was active and solid, although politically she was slow to form herself; she had evolved unity within herself and she had been ready to consolidate her border regions. And she had tacitly comprehended that she bore within herself a treasure which was no longer existent anywhere else – Orthodoxy; that she was the conservatrix of Christ’s truth, genuine truth – the true image of Christ which had been dimmed in all other religions and in all other nations. This treasure, this eternal truth inherent in Russia and of which she had become the custodian, according to the view of the best Russians of those days, as it were, relieved their conscience of the duty of any other enlightenment. Moreover, in Moscow the conception had been formed that any closer intercourse with Europe might even exercise a harmful and corrupt influence upon the Russian mind and the Russian *idea*; that it might distort Orthodoxy itself and lead Russia along the path to perdition ‘much in the same way as all other peoples’. Thus ancient Russia, in her isolation, *was getting ready to be unjust* – unjust to mankind, having taken the resolution to preserve passively her treasure, her Orthodoxy, for herself, to seclude herself from Europe – that is, mankind – much as our schismatics who refuse to eat with you from the same dish and who believe it to be a holy practice that everyone should have his own cup and spoon. This is a correct simile because prior to Peter’s advent, there had developed in Russia almost precisely this kind of political and spiritual relation with Europe. With Peter’s reform there ensued an unparalleled broadening of the view, and herein – I repeat – is Peter’s whole exploit. This is also that very treasure about which I spoke in one of the preceding issues of the *Diary* – a treasure which we, the upper cultured Russian stratum, are bringing to the people after our century-and-a-half absence from Russia, and which the people, after we ourselves shall have bowed before their truth, must accept from us *sine qua non*, ‘without which the fusion of both strata would prove impossible and everything would come to ruin.’ Now, what is this ‘expansion of the

---

view’, what does it consist of, and what does it signify? Properly speaking, this is not enlightenment, nor is it science; nor is it a betrayal of the popular Russian moral principles for the sake of European civilization. No, this is precisely something inherent only in the Russian people, since nowhere and at no time has there ever been such a reform. This is actually, and in truth, almost our brotherly fifty-year-long living experience of our intercourse with them. This is our urge to render universal service to humanity, sometimes even to the detriment of our own momentous and immediate interests. This is our reconciliation with their civilizations; cognition and excuse of their ideals even though these be in discord with ours; this is our acquired faculty of discovering and revealing in each one of the European civilizations – or, more correctly, in each of the European individualities – the truth contained in it, even though there be much with which it would be impossible to agree. Finally, this is the longing, above all, to be just and to seek nothing but truth. Briefly, this is, perhaps, the beginning of that active application of our treasure – of Orthodoxy – to the universal service of mankind to which Orthodoxy is designated and which, in fact, constitutes its essence. Thus, through Peter’s reform our former idea – the Russian Moscow idea – was broadened and its conception was magnified and strengthened. Thereby we got to understand our universal mission, our individuality and our role in humankind; at the same time we could not help but comprehend that this mission and role do not resemble those of other nations since, there, every national individuality lives solely for, and within, itself. We, on the other hand, will begin – now that the hour has come – precisely with becoming servants to all nations, for the sake of general pacification. And in this there is nothing disgraceful; on the contrary, therein is our grandeur because this leads to the ultimate unity of mankind. He who wishes to be first in the Kingdom of God must become a servant to everybody. This is how I understand the Russian mission in its ideal.”

18. THE SLAVOPHILES ON THE AUTOCRACY

We have discussed Orthodoxy and Nationhood, but said little about the central element in the tripartite formula of Nicholas I’s reign: Autocracy, which was coming more and more under attack from the westerners as the century wore on. With the exception of Kireyevsky, the Slavophiles had little to say about Autocracy. As L.A. Tikhomirov wrote, “the greatest merit of the Slavophiles consisted not so much in their working out of a political teaching, as in establishing the social and psychological bases of public life.”573 They were not opposed to the autocracy; but the emphasis of their thought, especially Alexis Khomiakov’s, was on the people rather than on the autocracy.574

Thus Khomiakov wrote: “The people transferred to the Emperor all the power with which it itself was endowed in all its forms. The sovereign became the head of the people in Church matters as well as in matters of State administration. The people could not transfer to its Emperor rights that it did not itself have. It had from the beginning a voice in the election of its bishops, and this voice it could transfer to its Emperor. It had the right, or more precisely the obligation to watch that the decisions of its pastors and their councils were carried out – this right it could entrust to its chosen one and his successors. It had the right to defend its faith against every hostile attack upon it, - this right it could also transfer to its Sovereign. But the Church people did not have any power in questions of dogmatic teaching, and general Church piety – and for that reason it could not transfer such power to its Emperor.”

Here again we see the myth of an early pact between the Tsar and the people. For this was what the Slavophiles were above all concerned to emphasize: that the Tsar is not separated from his people, that Tsar and people form one harmonious whole and have a single ideal.

Khomiakov was also concerned to emphasize that it was not the Tsar who ruled the Russian Orthodox Church, as the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire might have suggested. “‘It is true,’ he says, ‘the expression “the head of the local church” has been used in the Laws of the Empire, but in a totally different sense than it is interpreted in other countries’ (II, 351). The Russian Emperor has no rights of priesthood, he has no claims to infallibility or ‘to any authority in matters of faith or even of church discipline’. He signs the decisions of the Holy Synod, but this right of proclaiming laws and putting them into execution is not the same as the right to

573 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 310.

574 Khomiakov, Suschnost’ zapadnogo khristianstva (The Essence of Western Christianity), Montreal, 1974. Fr. Georges Florovsky writes that the Slavophiles “opposed their ‘socialism’ to the statism of West European thought, both in its absolutist-monarchist and in its constitutional-democratic varieties” (“The Eternal and the Passing in the Teaching of the Russian Slavophiles”, in Vera i Kul’tura (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 95).
formulate ecclesiastical laws. The Tsar has influence with regard to the appointment of bishops and members of the Synod, but it should be observed that such dependence upon secular power is frequently met with in many Catholic countries as well. In some of the Protestant states it is even greater (II, 36-38, 208).”

“The whole pathos of Slavophilism,” writes Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), “lay in ‘sobornost’, ‘zemstvo’, in ‘the popular character of the monarchy, and not in its service as ‘he who restrains [the coming of the Antichrist]’. Byzantium, in which there were neither Zemskie Sobory nor self-government of the land, elicited only irritation in them and was used by them to put in the shade the free ‘Slavic element’. The Russian Tsar for the Slavophiles was first of all ‘the people’s Tsar’, and not the Tsar of the Third Rome. According to the witness of Konstantin Leontiev, Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich himself noticed that under the Slavophiles’ Russian caftan there stuck out the trousers of the most vulgar European democracy and liberalism (K. Leontiev, ‘Slavophilism in theory and Slavophilism in life”).

This estimate is probably least true in relation to Kireyevsky, although of all the Slavophiles he had the most problems with the Tsarist censor. At one point he was required to give an assurance to the minister of popular enlightenment that in his thinking he did not “separate the Tsar from Russia”. Offended by the very suggestion, Kireyevsky proceeded to give one of the earliest, and, with Metropolitan Philaret’s writings on the subject, one of the best justifications of the Autocracy in post-Petrine Russian history.

He began from the fact that “the Russian man loves his Tsar. This reality cannot be doubted, because everyone can see and feel it. But love for the Tsar, like every love, can be true and false, good and bad – I am not speaking about feigned love. False love is that which loves in the Tsar only one’s advantage; this love is base, harmful and, in dangerous moments, can turn to treachery. True love for the Tsar is united in one indivisible feeling with love for the Fatherland, for lawfulness and for the Holy Orthodox Church. Therefore this love can be magnanimous. And how can one separate in this matter love for the Tsar from the law, the Fatherland and the Church? The law is the will of the Tsar, proclaimed before the whole people; the Fatherland is the best love of his heart; the Holy Orthodox Church is his highest link with the people, it is the most essential basis of his power, the reason for the people’s trust in him, the combination of his conscience with the Fatherland, the living junction of the mutual sympathy of the Tsar and the people, the basis of their common prosperity, the source of the blessing of God on him and on the Fatherland.

“But to love the Tsar separately from Russia means to love an external force, a chance power, but not the Russian Tsar: that is how the Old Ritualist schismatics and Balts love him, who were ready to serve Napoleon with the same devotion when they considered him stronger than Alexander. To love the Tsar and not to venerate

the laws, or to break the laws given or confirmed by him under the cover of his trust, under the protection of his power, is to be his enemy under the mask of zeal, it is to undermine his might at the root, to destroy the Fatherland’s love for him, to separate the people’s concept of him from their concept of justice, order and general well-being – in a word, it is to separate the Tsar in the heart of the people from the very reasons for which Russia wishes to have a Tsar, from those good things in the hope of which she so highly venerates him. Finally, to love him without any relation to the Holy Church as a powerful Tsar, but not as the Orthodox Tsar, is to think that his rule is not the service of God and His Holy Church, but only the rule of the State for secular aims; it is to think that the advantage of the State can be separated from the advantage of Orthodoxy, or even that the Orthodox Church is a means, and not the end of the people’s existence as a whole, that the Holy Church can be sometimes a hindrance and at other times a useful instrument for the Tsar’s power. This is the love of a slave, and not that of a faithful subject; it is Austrian love, not Russian; this love for the Tsar is treason before Russia, and for the Tsar himself it is profoundly harmful, even if sometimes seems convenient. Every counsel he receives from such a love bears within it a secret poison that eats away at the very living links that bind him with the Fatherland. For Orthodoxy is the soul of Russia, the root of the whole of her moral existence, the source of her might and strength, the standard gathering all the different kinds of feelings of her people into one stronghold, the earnest of all her hopes for the future, the treasury of the best memories of the past, her ruling object of worship, her heartfelt love. The people venerates the Tsar as the Church’s support; and is so boundlessly devoted to him because it does not separate the Church from the Fatherland. All its trust in the Tsar is based on feeling for the Church. It sees in him a faithful director in State affairs only because it knows that he is a brother in the Church, who together with it serves her as the sincere son of the same mother and therefore can be a reliable shield of her external prosperity and independence…

“He who has not despaired of the destiny of his Fatherland cannot separate love for it from sincere devotion to Orthodoxy. And he who is Orthodox in his convictions cannot not love Russia, as the God-chosen vessel of His Holy Church on earth. Faith in the Church of God and love for Orthodox Russia are neither divided nor distinguished in the soul of the true Russian. Therefore a man holding to another confession cannot love the Russian Tsar except with a love that is harmful for the Tsar and for Russia, a love whose influence of necessity must strive to destroy precisely that which constitutes the very first condition of the mutual love of the Tsar and Russia, the basis of his correct and beneficent rule and the condition of her correct and beneficent construction.

“Therefore to wish that the Russian government should cease to have the spirit and bear the character of an Orthodox government, but be completely indifferent to the confessions, accepting the spirit of so-called common Christianity, which does not belong to any particular Church and was thought up recently by some unbelieving philosophers and half-believing Protestants – to wish for this would signify for the present time the tearing up of all bonds of love and trust between the
government and the people, and for the future, - that is, if the government were to hide its indifference to Orthodoxy until it educates the people in the same coldness to its Church, - it would produce the complete destruction of the whole fortress of Russia and the annihilation of the whole of her world significance. For for him who knows Russia and her Orthodox Faith, there can be no doubt that she grew up on it and became strong by it, since by it alone is she strong and prosperous.”

In a critical review of an article by the Protestant Pastor Wiener, who was defending the principle of complete separation of Church and State and the most complete tolerance, Kireyevsky wrote: “The author says very justly that in most states where there is a dominant religion, the government uses it as a means for its own private ends and under the excuse of protecting it oppresses it. But this happens not because there is a dominant faith in the state, but, on the contrary, because the dominant faith of the people is not dominant in the state apparatus. This unfortunate relationship takes place when, as a consequence of some chance historical circumstances, the rift opens up between the convictions of the people and of the government. Then the faith of the people is used as a means, but not for long. One of three things must unfailingly happen: either the people wavers in its faith and then the whole state apparatus wavers, as we see in the West; or the government attains a correct self-knowledge and sincerely converts to the faith of the people, as we hope; or the people sees that it is being deceived, as we fear.

“But what are the normal, desirable relations between the Church and the State? The state must not agree with the Church so as to search out and persecute heretics and force them to believe (this is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and has a counter-productive effect, and harms the state itself almost as much as the Church); but it must agree with the Church so as to place as the main purpose of its existence to be penetrated constantly, more and more, with the spirit of the Church and not only not look on the Church as a means to its own most fitting existence, but, on the contrary, see in its own existence only a means for the fullest and most fitting installation of the Church of God on earth.

“The State is a construction of society having as its aim earthly, temporal life. The Church is a construction of the same society having as its aim heavenly, eternal life. If society understands its life in such a way that in it the temporal must serve the eternal, the state apparatus of this society must also serve the Church. But if society understands its life in such a way that in it earthly relationships carry on by themselves, and spiritual relations by themselves, then the state in such a society must be separated from the Church. But such a society will consist not of Christians, but of unbelievers, or, at any rate, of mixed faiths and convictions. Such a state cannot make claims to a harmonious, normal development. The whole of its dignity must be limited by a negative character. But there where the people is bound inwardly, by identical convictions of faith, there it has the right to wish and demand that both its external bonds – familial, social and state – should be in agreement with

577 Kireyevsky, “Ob otnoshenii k tsarskoj vlasti” (On the relationship to Tsarist power), in Razum na puti k istine (Reason on the Path to Truth), Moscow: “Pravilo very”, 2002, pp. 51-53, 62.
its religious inspirations, and that its government should be penetrated by the same spirit. To act in hostility to this spirit means to act in hostility to the people itself, even if these actions afford it some earthly advantages.**578**

Another Russian supporter of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality who is sometimes classified as a Slavophile was the poet and diplomat Fyodor Ivanovich Tiutchev. Already at the age of 19, in his poem, *On Pushkin’s Ode on Freedom*, he had rebuked his fellow-poet for disturbing the hearts of the citizens by his call to freedom. While sharing the world-view of the Slavophiles, he took their sympathies and antipathies to their logical conclusions.**579**

Thus he posed the contrast between Russia and the West as a struggle between Christ and Antichrist. “The supreme power of the people,” he wrote, “is in essence an antichristian idea.” Popular power and Tsarist power mutually exclude each other. So it was not a question of two cultures living side by side with each other and complementing each other in some sense. No: it was a fight to the death between the Russian idea and the European idea, between the Rome of the Papacy and the political and social structures it evolved, and the Third Rome of the Orthodox Tsar…

Tiutchev believed in the Empire, whose soul was the Orthodox Church and whose body was the Slavic race. More particularly, he believed in “the Great Greco-Russian Eastern Empire”, whose destiny was to unite the two halves of Europe under the Russian Emperor, with some Austrian lands going to Russia. There would be an Orthodox Pope in Rome and an Orthodox Patriarch in Constantinople. The Empire was a principle, and so indivisible. Western history had been a struggle between the schismatic Roman papacy and the usurper-empire of Charlemagne and his successors. This struggle “ended for the one in the Reformation, i.e. the denial of the Church, and for the other in the Revolution, i.e. the denial of the Empire”. The struggle between Russia and Napoleon had been the struggle “between the lawful Empire and the crowned Revolution”.**580**

As a diplomat Tiutchev knew much about the threat to the Orthodox autocracy posed by the 1848 revolution under the new Napoleon in Europe; and in April, 1848, just as this revolution was gathering pace, he wrote: “There have long been only two real powers in Europe – the revolution and Russia. These two powers are now opposed to each other, and perhaps tomorrow they will enter into conflict. Between them there can be no negotiations, no treaties; the existence of the one is equivalent to the death of the other! On the outcome of this struggle that has arisen between them, the greatest struggle that the world has ever seen, the whole political and religious future of mankind will depend for many centuries.


**579** As Demetrius Merezhkovsky expressed it, Tiutchev put bones into the soft body of Slavophilism, crossed its ‘t’s and dotted its ‘i’s (**Dve tajny russkoj poezii. Nekrasov i Tiutchev** (Two Mysteries of Russian Poetry. Nekrasov and Tiutchev), St. Petersburg, 1915).

“The fact of this rivalry is now being revealed everywhere. In spite of that, the understanding of our age, deadened by false wisdom, is such that the present generation, faced with a similar huge fact, is far from completely comprehending its true significance and has not evaluated its real causes.

“Up to now they have sought for its explanation in the purely political sphere; they have tried to interpret by a distinction of concepts on the exclusively human plane. In fact, the quarrel between the revolution and Russia depends on deeper causes. They can be defined in two words.

“Russia is first of all the Christian Empire; the Russian people is Christian not only by virtue of the Orthodoxy of its convictions, but also thanks to something more in the realm of feelings than convictions. It is Christian by virtue of that capacity for self-denial and self-sacrifice which constitutes as it were the basis of her moral nature. The revolution is first of all the enemy of Christianity! Antichristian feeling is the soul of the revolution: it is its special, distinguishing feature. Those changes in form to which it has been subjected, those slogans which it has adopted in turn, even its violence and crimes have been secondary and accidental. But the one thing in it that is not accidental is precisely the antichristian feeling that inspires it, it is that (it is impossible not to be convinced of this) that has acquired for it this threatening dominance over the world. He who does not understand this is no more than a blind man present at a spectacle that the world presents to him.

“The human I, wishing to depend only on itself, not recognising and not accepting any other law besides its own will – in a word, the human I, taking the place of God, - does not, of course, constitute something new among men. But such has it become when raised to the status of a political and social right, and when it strives, by virtue of this right, to rule society. This is the new phenomenon which acquired the name of the French revolution in 1789.

“Since that time, in spite of all its permutations, the revolution has remained true to its nature, and perhaps never in the whole course of this development has it recognized itself as so of one piece, so sincerely antichristian as at the present moment, when it has ascribed to itself the banner of Christianity: ‘brotherhood’. In the name of this we can even suppose that it has attained its apogee. And truly, if we listen to those naively blasphemous big words which have become, so to speak, the official language of the present age, then will not everyone think that the new French republic was brought into the world only in order to fulfil the Gospel law? It was precisely this calling that the forces created by the revolution ascribed to themselves – with the exception, however, of that change which the revolution considered it necessary to produce, when it intended to replace the feeling of humility and self-denial, which constitutes the basis of Christianity, with the spirit of pride and haughtiness, free and voluntary good works with compulsory good works. And instead of brotherhood preached and accepted in the name of God, it intended to
establish a brotherhood imposed by fear on the people-master. With the exception of these differences, its dominance really promises to turn into the Kingdom of Christ!

“And nobody should be misled by this despicable good will which the new powers are showing to the Catholic Church and her servers. It is almost the most important sign of the real feeling of the revolution, and the surest proof of the position of complete power that it has attained. And truly, why should the revolution show itself as hostile to the clergy and Christian priests who not only submit to it, but accept and recognize it, who, in order to propitiate it, glorify all its excesses and, without knowing it themselves, become partakers in all its unrighteousness? If even similar behaviour were founded on calculation alone, this calculation would be apostasy; but if conviction is added to it, then this is already more than apostasy.

“However, we can foresee that there will be no lack of persecutions, too. On that day when concessions have reached their extreme extent, the catholic church will consider it necessary to display resistance, and it will turn out that she will be able to display resistance only by going back to martyrdom. We can fully rely on the revolution: it will remain in all respects faithful to itself and consistent to the end!

“The February explosion did the world a great service in overthrowing the pompous scaffolding of errors hiding reality. The less penetrating minds have probably now understood that the history of Europe in the course of the last thirty three years was nothing other than a continuous mystification. And indeed with what inexorably light has the whole of this past, so recent and already so distant from us, been lit up? Who, for example, will now not recognize what a laughable pretension was expressed in that wisdom of our age which naively imagined that it had succeeded in suppressing the revolution with constitutional incantations, muzzling its terrible energy by means of a formula of lawfulness? After all that has happened, who can still doubt that from the moment when the revolutionary principle penetrated into the blood of society, all these concessions, all these reconciling formulas are nothing other than drugs which can, perhaps, put to sleep the sick man for a time, but are not able to hinder the further development of the illness itself…”

In spite of his fervent support for the Autocracy, Tiutchev criticised the Tsarist imposition of censorship. In 1857 he wrote: “It is impossible to impose on minds an absolute and too prolonged restriction and yoke without substantial harm for the social organism.... Even the authorities themselves in the course of time are unable to avoid the disadvantages of such a system. Around the sphere in which they are present there is formed a desert and a huge mental emptiness, and governmental thought, not meeting from outside itself either control or guidance or even the

slightest point of support, ends by weakening under its own weight even before it destined to fall under the blows of events.\textsuperscript{582}

“Why,” he wrote to his daughter Anna in 1872, “can we oppose to harmful theories and destructive tendencies nothing except material suppression? Into what has the true principle of conservatism been transformed with us? Why has our soul become so horribly stale? If the authorities because of an insufficiency of principles and moral convictions pass to measures of material oppression, it is thereby being turned into the most terrible helper of denial and revolutionary overthrow, but it will begin to understand this only when the evil is already incorrigible.”

Other Slavophiles, such as the Aksakov brothers, similarly combined a belief in the autocracy and the imperial mission of Russia with a belief in civil liberties. This sometimes brought them into conflict with Tsar Nicholas.

Thus in his memorandum, \textit{The Eastern Question} (February, 1854), Constantine Aksakov hoped that the Tsar would promote “an alliance of all Slavs under the supreme patronage of the Russian Tsar... Galicia and the whole Slavonic world will breathe more easily under the patronage of Russia once she finally fulfils her Christian and fraternal duty.”

Konstantin’s brother Ivan was somewhat more cautious. He recognized that “The Catholicism of Bohemia and Poland constitutes a hostile and alien element” and in any case “the greater part of these Slavic peoples are already infected by the influence of Western liberalism which is contrary to the spirit of the Russian people and which can never be grafted onto it.”

So Ivan was less “Pan-Slavist” than Constantine...

However, both brothers believed in the spiritual freedom of the individual within the autocratic state. Thus, as N. Lossky writes, “on the accession of Alexander II to the throne in 1855 [Constantine] Aksakov submitted to him, through Count Bludov, a report ‘On the Inner Condition of Russia’. In it he reproached the Government for suppressing the people’s moral freedom and following the path of despotism, which has led to the nation’s moral degradation. He pointed out that this might popularise the idea of political freedom and create a striving to attain it by revolutionary means. To avoid these dangers he advised the Tsars to allow freedom of thought and of speech and to re-establish the practice of calling Zemski Sobors.”\textsuperscript{583}

There was some truth in this. The government’s oppressive measures could be undiscerning, and its inability to develop a coherent philosophy to counteract the revolutionary propaganda limited its success in counteracting it. This was due in large part to the superficial Orthodoxy of the ruling circles, which Tiutchev expressed as follows:

\textsuperscript{582} Tiutchev, “O tsenzure v Rossii” (On Censorship in Russia).

\textsuperscript{583} Lossky, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 44-45.
Not flesh, but spirit is today corrupt,
And man just pines away despairingly.
He strives for light, while sitting in the dark,
And having found it, moans rebelliously.
From lack of faith dried up, in fire tossed,
The unendurable he suffers now.
He knows right well his soul is lost, and thirsts
For faith – but ask for it he knows not how.
Ne'er will he say, with prayers and tears combined,
However deep before the closed door his grief:
“O let me in, my God, O hear my cry!
Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!”

By contrast, Tiutchev continued to believe in the Orthodoxy of the common people and in the unique destiny of Russia, poor in her exterior aspect but rich in inner faith and piety:

These poor villages which stand
Amidst a nature sparse, austere –
O beloved Russian land,
Long to pine and persevere!
The foreigner’s disdainful gaze
Will never understand or see
The light that shines in secret rays
Upon your humility.
Dear native land! While carrying
The Cross and struggling to pass through,
In slavish image Heaven’s King
Has walked across you, blessing you.

However, the successes of government measures are easily forgotten. We have already noted the conversion of Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoyevsky. Moreover, those who were urging the government to remove censorship were not supported by the leading churchmen of the age, and showed a dangerous naivety about the way in which the forces of evil could – and, in the reign of Alexander II, did – exploit this freedom. This naivety manifested itself in a certain anti-statism, an attempt to bypass the state as being irrelevant to the deeper life of the people, the “ancient Russian freedom” that existed in the peasant communes and the Church.

We see this particularly clearly, as Andrezj Walicki writes, “in the historical writings of Konstantin Aksakov. Republican liberty, he argued, was political freedom, which presupposed the people’s active participation in political affairs; ancient Russian freedom, on the other hand, meant freedom from politics – the right to

584 Tiutchev, Nash Vek (Our Age).
live according to unwritten laws of faith and tradition, and the right to full realization in a moral sphere on which the state would not impinge.

“This theory rested on a distinction the Slavophiles made between two kinds of truth: the ‘inner’ and the ‘external’ truth. The inner truth is in the individual the voice of conscience, and in society the entire body of values enshrined in religion, tradition, and customs – in a word, all values that together form an inner unifying force and help to forge social bonds based on shared moral convictions. The external truth, on the other hand, is represented by law and the state, which are essentially conventional, artificial, and ‘external’ – all the negative qualities Kireyevsky and Khomiakov ascribed to institutions and social bonds that had undergone a rationalizing and formalizing process. Aksakov went even further than the other Slavophiles in regarding all forms of legal and political relations as inherently evil; at their opposite pole was the communal principle embodied in the village commune, based (in Aksakov’s view) purely on truth and unanimity and not on any legal guarantees or conditions and agreements characteristic of a rational contract. For Aksakov the difference between Russia and the West was that in Russia the state had not been raised to the ‘principle’ on which social organization was largely founded. When the frailty of human nature and the demands of defense appeared to make political organization necessary, Russians ‘called’ their rulers from ‘beyond the sea’ in order to avoid doing injury to the ‘inner truth’ by evolving their own statehood; Russian tsars were given absolute powers so that the people might shun all contacts with the ‘external truth’ and all participation in affairs of state. Relations between ‘land’ (that is the common people who lived by the light of the inner truth) and state rested upon the principle of mutual non-interference. Of its own free will the state consulted the people, who presented their point of view at Land Assemblies but left the final decision in the monarch’s hands. The people could be sure of complete freedom to live and think as they pleased, while the monarch had complete freedom of action in the political sphere. This relationship depended entirely on moral convictions rather than legal guarantees, and it was this that constituted Russia’s superiority to Western Europe. ‘A guarantee is an evil,’ Aksakov wrote. ‘Where it is necessary, good is absent; and life where good is absent had better disintegrate than continue with the aid of evil.’ Aksakov conceded that there was often a wide gap between ideal and reality, but ascribed this entirely to human imperfections. He strongly condemned rulers who tried to interfere in the inner life of the ‘land’, but even in the case of Ivan the Terrible, whose excesses he condemned, he would not allow that the ‘land’ had the right to resistance and he praised its long-suffering loyalty.”

Although there is some truth in this account, it is exaggerated. Certainly, the “inner truth” of Orthodoxy was more important than the “external truth” of government and law; and it was true that the presence of this inner truth in Russia had prevented statehood becoming the “primary principle” it had become in the West, where “inner truth” had been lost. And yet the State had always taken a very active and essential role in Russian life from the beginning in protecting and fostering

the internal freedom provided by the Orthodox way of life, and was accepted as such with gratitude by the people.

Moreover, it was inaccurate to represent the power of the Russian tsars as being “external” to the true life of the people. For the tsars were themselves Orthodox Christians anointed for their role by the Church and guided in their decisions by the Church, the Holy Scriptures and the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils.

Paradoxically, Aksakov betrays the influence of precisely that western political tradition – in its English liberal variant – which he sincerely claimed to deplore. As Walicki writes, “he subconsciously adopted and applied to Russia’s past one of the chief assumptions of Western European liberal doctrine – the principle of the total separation of the political and social spheres. At the same time he rejected both liberal constitutionalism and the very content of the liberal idea of freedom. Aksakov’s interpretation of the freedom of the ‘land’ is not to be confused with the freedom of the individual, since in his interpretation freedom only applied to the ‘land’ as a whole; it was not the freedom of the individual in the community, but the community’s freedom from outside interference in matters of faith, traditions, or customs. This non-interference had nothing to do with the liberal doctrine of laissez-faire, since, according to Aksakov, the moral principles of the ‘land’ rendered economic individualism out of the question. Even his call for freedom of speech was not a truly liberal postulate since it did not envisage the acceptance of pluralistic beliefs or of minority oppositions within society. While demanding freedom in the non-political sphere, Aksakov wanted every individual to submit totally to his mir – a submission, moreover, that was to be ‘according to conscience’ and not only ‘according to law’. His ideal was a ‘free unity’ based on a total unanimity that would reduce external constraints to a minimum but at the same time exclude individual autonomy and any departure from communal tradition.”

With the failure of the 1848 revolution in Europe, hopes were raised in the hearts of Russian Slavophiles that the time had at last come for the fulfilment of the age-old dream of Russia the Third Rome. Tiutchev had his own idiosyncratic version of this dream, seeing Russia as the new Slavic Empire which could liberate the East Europeans, including even the Czechs and Moravians, from the false empire, church and civilization of the West. According to V. Tsimbursky, Tiutchev called on Nicholas I “to play on the revolutionary self-destruction of western civilization to place on its ruins the ‘ark’ of the new Empire: may ‘the Europe of Peter’ take the place of ‘the Europe of Charles’. With Tiutchev, as in the fears of the West, the europeanization of Russia becomes the growth of a power called to take the place and replace Romano-German Europe. Tiutchev… in return for the Florentine unia of 1439, puts forward a project for helping the Roman papacy out of the corner it was driven into by the Italian revolution on condition of its honourable return to Orthodoxy.”

---

587 Walicki, op. cit., pp. 97-98.
However, Nicholas did not share this vision. Alone among the rulers of Europe, he believed in the legitimacy of Europe’s existing regimes, with the exception of revolutionary France but including Austria’s, in which many Slavs lived. For as K.N. Leontiev wrote, he “was a true and great ‘legitimist’. He did not like even the Orthodox ‘rayas’ [peoples of the Ottoman Empire] permitting themselves to rebel against the Sultan, reasonably ascribing to himself alone the lawful right to conquer the Sultan and bring him into submission, as the right of a tsar…

“The unsuccessful and lightmindedly liberal Decembrist rebellion of the nobility had a less profound influence on his royal mind than the later events of the 1830s, which shook him and made him understand. From that time the Tsar became an opponent of all emancipation, all equalization, all confusion both in Russia and in other countries….

“Of special interest is the explanatory note which the young [I.S.] Aksakov was forced to present in reply to the questions of the Third Department in 1849. Some passages in this reply were underlined by Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich, and objections against them were made by the Tsar in his own hand. Opposite the place where Aksakov writes about ‘the heartfelt sympathy of the so-called Slavophiles for the western Slavs and in general for the situation of their co-religionist and consanguineous brothers’, the Emperor made the following comment: ‘Under the guise of sympathy for the Slavic tribes supposedly oppressed in other states, there is hidden the criminal thought of a rebellion against the lawful authority of neighbouring and in part allied states, and of a general union they expect to attain not through the will of God’….

“By these ‘states’ we must understand, of course, first of all Austria, and then in part Turkey… Nicholas Pavlovich recognized himself to have the right of exerting pressure on the Sultan in favour of his co-religionists, the right to war with him and even subject him to himself, but did not recognize the right of the subjects of the Sultan to carry out their own self-willed liberation….

“Nicholas Pavlovich understood at that time that liberationist politics beyond the bounds of one’s own state is something that, while useful at the beginning, is in essence extremely dangerous and can, with the slightest incaution, turn onto the head of the liberator.

“He understood half a century ago that of which it is impossible to convince many of us even now, in spite of all the crude evidence of events, in spite of the fact that everything is simply ‘bursting at the seams’ both in old Europe and in the Orthodox countries of the East!

“Emperor Nicholas was called by Divine Providence to hold back for a time the general disintegration which even now nobody knows how to stop…
“...Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich did not live to the end of the 19th century, when ‘reaction’ is beginning little by little to acquire for itself theoretical justifications and foundations. However, he felt by his political instinct not only that the West was on the path to a corruption which could be contagious for us, too, but also that our Russia herself under him had attained its cultural-state apogee, after which living state construction would come to an end and on which it was necessary to stop as far as possible and for as long as possible, not fearing even a certain stagnation. And all his major political actions and sympathies are explained by this conservative instinct of genius: his revulsion from the liberal monarchy of Louis Philippe; his defence of the ‘crafty’, but necessary for some time to come, perhaps, Austria; the Hungarian war; his helping of the Sultan against Mehmed Ali; his good disposition toward England, which was still at that time aristocratic and conservative; his desire that the Eastern Christians should not of their own will rise up against the lawful and autocratic Turkish government; and finally, his disillusionment in emancipated Greece, which was expressed in his words (legendary or historical, it doesn’t matter): ‘I will not give an inch of land to this demagogic people.’”

---

589 Leontiev, “Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij”, Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996 pp. 542, 543-544, 545, 545-546.
19. THE CHURCH ON THE AUTOCRACY

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow was the outstanding churchman of his age, a great pastor who ruled the see of Moscow for nearly half a century, a great theologian and a great defender of the Church. But he was also a great defender of the State, as was demonstrated during his conduct during December, 1825, when his wise refusal to reveal the contents of Tsar Alexander’s will immediately helped to guarantee the transfer of power to his brother, Tsar Nicholas I. Of particular interest, therefore, are his views on the relationship between the Church and the State...

According to Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), Metropolitan Philaret said that “it was necessary for there to be a close union between the ruler and the people – a union, moreover, that was based exclusively on righteousness. The external expression of the prosperity of a state was the complete submission of the people to the government. The government in a state had to enjoy the rights of complete inviolability on the part of the subjects. And if it was deprived of these rights, the state could not be firm, it was threatened with danger insofar as two opposing forces would appear: self-will on the part of the subjects and predominance on the part of the government. ‘If the government is not firm,’ taught Philaret, ‘then the state also is not firm. Such a state is like a city built on a volcanic mountain: what does its firmness signify when beneath it is concealed a force which can turn it into ruins at any minute? Subjects who do not recognize the sacred inviolability of the rulers are incited by hope of self-will to attain self-will; an authority which is not convinced of its inviolability is incited by worries about its security to attain predominance; in such a situation the state wavers between the extremes of self-will and predominance, between the horrors of anarchy and repression, and cannot affirm in itself obedient freedom, which is the focus and soul of social life.’

“The holy hierarch understood the rebellion [of the Decembrists] as being a rebellion against the State, against itself. ‘Subjects can themselves understand,’ said Philaret, ‘that in destroying the authorities they are destroying the constitution of society and consequently they are themselves destroying themselves.’”

Philaret “did not doubt that monarchical rule is ‘power from God’ (Romans 13.1) in its significance for Russian history and statehood, and more than once in his sermons expressed the most submissively loyal feelings with regard to all the representatives of the Royal Family. But he was one of the very few archpastors who had the courage to resist the tendency – very characteristic of Russian conditions – to reduce Orthodoxy to ‘glorification of the tsar’. Thus, contrary to many hierarchs, who from feelings of servility warmly accepted Nicholas I’s attempt to introduce the heir among the members of the Synod, he justly saw in this a manifestation of

---

590 Snychev, Zhizn’ i Deiatel’nost’ Mitropolita Filareta (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret), Tula, 1994, p. 177.
caesaropapism..., and in the application of attributes of the Heavenly King to the 
earthly king – a most dangerous deformation of religious consciousness..., and in 
such phenomena as the passing of a cross procession around statues of the emperor 
– a direct return to paganism.”

Metropolitan Philaret, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, “distinctly and firmly 
reminded people of the Church’s independence and freedom, reminded them of the 
limits of the state. And in this he sharply and irreconcilably parted with his epoch, 
with the whole of the State’s self-definition in the new, Petersburgian Russia. 
Philaret was very reserved and quiet when speaking. By his intense and courageous 
silence he with difficulty concealed and subdued his anxiety about what was 
happening. Through the vanity and confusion of events he saw and made out the 
threatening signs of the righteous wrath of God that was bound to come. Evil days, 
days of judgement were coming – ‘it seems that we are already living in the suburbs 
of Babylon, if not in Babylon itself,’ he feared... ‘My soul is sorrowful,’ admitted 
Metropolitan Philaret once. ‘It seems to me that the judgement which begins at the 
house of God is being more and more revealed... How thickly does the smoke come 
from the coldness of the abyss and how high does it mount’... And only in 
repentance did he see an exit, in universal repentance ‘for many things, especially in 
recent years’.

“Philaret had his own theory of the State, of the sacred kingdom. And in it there 
was not, and could not be, any place for the principles of state supremacy. It is 
precisely because the powers that be are from God, and the sovereigns rule by the 
mercy of God, that the Kingdom has a completely subject and auxiliary character. 
‘The State as State is not subject to the Church’, and therefore the servants of the 
Church already in the apostolic canons are strictly forbidden ‘to take part in the 
administration of the people’. Not from outside, but from within must the Christian 
State be bound by the law of God and the ecclesiastical order. In the mind of 
Metropolitan Philaret, the State is a moral union, ‘a union of free moral beings’ and a 
union founded on mutual service and love – ‘a certain part of the general dominion 
of the Almighty, outwardly separate, but by an invisible power yoked into the unity 
of the whole’... And the foundation of power lies in the principle of service. In the 
Christian State Philaret saw the Anointed of God, and before this banner of God’s 
good will he with good grace inclined his head. ‘The Sovereign receives the whole of his 
lawfulness from the Church’s anointing’, that is, in the Church and through the Church. 
Here the Kingdom inclines its head before the Priesthood and takes upon itself the 
vow of service to the Church, and its right to take part in ecclesiastical affairs. He 
possesses this not by virtue of his autocracy and authority, but precisely by virtue of 
his obedience and vow. And this right does not extend or pass to the organs of state 
administration, and between the Sovereign and the Church there cannot and must 
not be any dividing wall or mediation. The Sovereign is anointed, but not the State.

591 V. Shokhin, “Svt. Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij i ‘shkola veruiushchego razuma’ v russkoj 
filosofii” (“Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and the ‘school of believing reason’ in Russian 
philosophy”), Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia (Herald of the Russian Christian Movement), 
175, I-1997, p. 97.
The Sovereign enters into the Church, but the State as such remains outside the Church. And for that reason it has no rights and privileges in the Church. In her inner constitution the Church is completely independent, and has no need of the help or defence of the secular authorities – ‘the altar does not fear to fall even without this protection’. For the Church is ruled by Christ Himself, Who distributes and realizes ‘his own episcopacy of souls’ through the apostolic hierarchy, which ‘is not similar to any form of secular rule’.

“The Church has her own inviolable code of laws, her own strength and privileges, which exceed all earthly measures. ‘In His word Jesus Christ did not outline for her a detailed and uniform statute, so that His Kingdom should not seem to be of this world’… The Church has her own special form of action – in prayer, in the service of the sacraments, in exhortation and in pastoral care. And for real influence on public life, for her real enchurchment, according to Metropolitan Philaret’s thought, the interference of the hierarchy in secular affairs is quite unnecessary – ‘it is necessary not so much that a bishop should sit in the governmental assembly of grandees, as that the grandees and men of nobles birth should more frequently and ardently surround the altar of the Lord together with the bishop’… Metropolitan Philaret always with great definiteness drew a firm line between the state and ecclesiastical orders. Of course, he did not demand and did not desire the separation of the State from the Church, its departure from the Church into the arbitrariness of secular vanity. But at the same time he always sharply underlined the complete heterogeneity and particularity of the State and the Church. The Church cannot be in the State, and the State cannot be in the Church – ‘unity and harmony’ must be realized between them in the unity of the creative realization of God’s commandments.

“It is not difficult to understand how distant and foreign this way of thinking was for the State functionaries of the Nicolaitan spirit and time, and how demanding and childish it seemed to them. Philaret did not believe in the power of rebukes and reprimands. He did not attach great significance to the external forms of life – ‘it is not some kind of transformation that is needed, but a choice of men and supervision’, he used to say. And above all what was necessary was an inner creative uplift, a gathering and renewal of spiritual forces. What was needed was an intensification of creative activity, a strengthening and intensification of ecclesiastical and pastoral freedom. As a counterweight to the onslaught of the State, Metropolitan Philaret thought about the reestablishment of the living unity of the local episcopate, which would be realized in constant consultative communion of fellow pastors and bishops, and strengthened at times by small congresses and councils, until a general local Council would become inwardly possible and achievable. Metropolitan Philaret

592 “Already in the reign of Alexander I the hierarch used to submit the thought of the restoration of Local Councils and the division on the Russian Church into nine metropolitan areas. At the command of Emperor Alexander he had even composed a project and given it to the members of the Synod for examination. But the Synod rejected the project, declaring: ‘Why this project, and why have you not spoken to us about it?’ ‘I was ordered [to compose it]’ was all that the hierarch could reply, ‘and speaking about it is not forbidden’” (Snychev, op. cit., pp. 226). (V.M.)
always emphasized that ‘we live in the Church militant’… And with sadness he recognized that ‘the quantity of sins and carelessnesses which have mounted up in the course of more than one century almost exceeds the strength and means of correction’… Philaret was not a man of struggle, and was weighed down ‘by remaining in the chatter and cares of the city and works of men’. He lived in expectation ‘of that eternally secure city, from which it will not be necessary to flee into any desert’, He wanted to withdraw, to run away, and beyond the storm of affairs to pray for the mercy and longsuffering of God, for ‘defence from on high’.”

The State, wrote Philaret, is “a union of free moral beings, united amongst themselves with the sacrifice of part of their freedom for the preservation and confirmation by the common forces of the law of morality, which constitutes the necessity of their existence. The civil laws are nothing other than interpretations of this law in application to particular cases and guards placed against its violation.”

Philaret emphasised the rootedness of the State in the family, with the State deriving its essential properties and structure from the family: “The family is older than the State. Man, husband, wife, father, son, mother, daughter and the obligations and virtues inherent in these names existed before the family grew into the nation and the State was formed. That is why family life in relation to State life can be figuratively depicted as the root of the tree. In order that the tree should bear leaves and flowers and fruit, it is necessary that the root should be strong and bring pure juice to the tree. In order that State life should develop strongly and correctly, flourish with education, and bring forth the fruit of public prosperity, it is necessary that family life should be strong with the blessed love of the spouses, the sacred authority of the parents, and the reverence and obedience of the children, and that as a consequence of this, from the pure elements of family there should arise similarly pure principles of State life, so that with veneration for one’s father veneration for the tsar should be born and grow, and that the love of children for their mother should be a preparation of love for the fatherland, and the simple-hearted obedience of domestics should prepare and direct the way to self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness in obedience to the laws and sacred authority of the autocrat…”

If the foundation of the State is the family, and each family is both a miniature State and a miniature monarchy, it follows that the most natural form of Statehood is Monarchy – more specifically, a Monarchy that is in union with, as owing its origin to, the Heavenly Monarch, God. Despotic monarchies identify themselves, rather than unite themselves, with the Deity, so they cannot be said to correspond to the Divine order of things. In ancient times, the only monarchy that was in accordance with the order and the command of God was the Israelite autocracy.

---

As Metropolitan Philaret demonstrated, this superiority of the Israelite Autocracy makes of it a model for all nations in all times: “It is in the family that we must seek the beginnings and first model of authority and submission, which are later opened out in the large family which is the State. The father is... the first master... but since the authority of the father was not created by the father himself and was not given to him by the son, but came into being with man from Him Who created man, it is revealed that the deepest source and the highest principle of the first power, and consequently of every later power among men, is in God – the Creator of man. From Him ‘every family in heaven and on earth is named’ (Ephesians 3.15). Later, when sons of sons became a people and peoples, and from the family there grew the State, which was too vast for the natural authority of a father, God gave this authority a new artificial image and a new name in the person of the King, and thus by His wisdom kings rule (Proverbs 8.15). In the times of ignorance, when people had forgotten their Creator... God, together with His other mysteries, also presented the mystery of the origin of the powers that be before the eyes of the world, even in a sensory image, in the form of the Hebrew people whom He had chosen for Himself; that is: in the Patriarch Abraham He miraculously renewed the ability to be a father and gradually produced from him a tribe, a people and a kingdom; He Himself guided the patriarchs of this tribe; He Himself raised judges and leaders for this people; He Himself ruled over this kingdom (I Kings 8.7). Finally, He Himself enthroned kings over them, continuing to work miraculous signs over the kings, too. The Highest rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He wills. ‘The Kingdom is the Lord’s and He Himself is sovereign of the nations’ (Psalm 21.29). ‘The power of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and in due time He will set over it one that is profitable’ (Sirach 10.4).”

“A non-Russian would perhaps ask me now: why do I look on that which was established by God for one people (the Hebrews) and promised to one King (David) as on a general law for Kings and peoples? I would have no difficulty in replying: because the law proceeding from the goodness and wisdom of God is without doubt the perfect law; and why not suggest the perfect law for all? Or are you thinking of inventing a law which would be more perfect than the law proceeding from the goodness and wisdom of God?”

“Let us not go into the sphere of the speculations and controversies in which certain people – who trust in their own wisdom more than others – work on the invention... of better, as they suppose, principles for the transfiguration of human societies... But so far they have not in any place or time created such a quiet and peaceful life... They can shake ancient States, but they cannot create anything firm... They languish under the fatherly and reasonable authority of the King and introduce the blind and cruel power of the mob and the interminable disputes of those who seek power. They deceive people in affirming that they will lead them to liberty; in actual fact they are drawing them from lawful freedom to self-will, so as later to subject them to oppression with full right. Rather than their self-made theorising they should study the royal truth from the history of the peoples and kingdoms...
which was written, not out of human passion, but by the holy prophets of God, that is – from the history of the people of God which was from of old chosen and ruled by God. This history shows that the best and most useful for human societies is done not by people, but by a person, not by many, but by one. Thus: What government gave the Hebrew people statehood and the law? One man – Moses. What government dealt with the conquest of the promised land and the distribution of the tribes of the Hebrew people on it? One man – Joshua the son of Nun. During the time of the Judges one man saved the whole people from enemies and evils. But since the power was not uninterrupted, but was cut off with the death of each judge, with each cutting off of one-man rule the people descended into chaos, piety diminished, and idol-worship and immorality spread; then there followed woes and enslavement to other peoples. And in explanation of these disorders and woes in the people the sacred chronicler says that ‘in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was pleasing in his own eyes’ (Judges 21.25). Again there appeared one man, Samuel, who was fully empowered by the strength of prayer and the prophetic gift; and the people was protected from enemies, the disorders ceased, and piety triumphed. Then, to establish uninterrupted one-man rule, God established a King in His people. And such kings as David, Josaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah present images of how successfully an autocratic Majesty can and must serve for the glorification of the Heavenly King in the earthly kingdom of men, and together with that – for the strengthening and preservation of true prosperity in his people… And during the times of the new grace the All-seeing Providence of God deigned to call the one man Constantine, and in Russia the one man Vladimir, who in apostolic manner enlightened their pagan kingdoms with the light of the faith of Christ and thereby established unshakeable foundations for their might. Blessed is that people and State in which, in a single, universal, all-moving focus there stands, as the sun in the universe, a King, who freely limits his unlimited autocracy by the will of the Heavenly King, and by the wisdom that comes from God.”

In 1851, Metropolitan Philaret preached as follows: “As heaven is indisputably better than the earth, and the heavenly than the earthly, it is similarly indisputable that the best on earth must be recognised to be that which was built on it in the image of the heavenly, as was said to the God-seer Moses: ‘Look thou that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount’ (Exodus 25.40). In accordance with this, God established a king on earth in the image of His single rule in the heavens; He arranged for an autocratic king on earth in the image of His almighty power; and He placed an hereditary king on earth in the image of His imperishable Kingdom, which lasts from ages to ages.

“Oh if only all the kings of the earth paid sufficient attention to their heavenly dignity and to the traits of the image of the heavenly impressed upon them, and faithfully united the righteousness and goodness demanded of them, the heavenly unsleeping watchfulness, purity of thought and holiness of intention that is in God’s image! Oh if only all the peoples sufficiently understood the heavenly dignity of the

596 Metropolitan Philaret, in Fomin S. & Fomina T., Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), volume I, pp. 320-321.
king and the construction of the heavenly kingdom in the image of the heavenly, and constantly signed themselves with the traits of that same image – by reverence and love for the king, by humble obedience to his laws and commands, by mutual agreement and unanimity, and removed from themselves everything of which there is no image in the heavens – arrogance, disputes, self-will, greediness and every evil thought, intention and act! Everything would be blessed in accordance with the heavenly image if it were well constructed in accordance with the heavenly image. All earthly kingdoms would be worthy of being the ante-chamber of the Heavenly Kingdom.

“Russia! You participate in this good more than many kingdoms and peoples. ‘Hold on to that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown’ (Revelation 3.11). Keep and continue to adorn your radiant crown, ceaselessly struggling to fulfil more perfectly the crown-giving commandments: ‘Fear God, honour the king’ (I Peter 2.17).

“Turning from the well-known to that which has perhaps been less examined and understood in the apostle’s word, I direct our attention to that which the apostle, while teaching the fear of God, reverence for the king and obedience to the authorities, at the same time teaches about freedom: ‘Submit’, he says, ‘to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether to the king, as being supreme, or to governors as being sent through him… as free’. Submit as free men. Submit, and remain free...

“But how are we more correctly to understand and define freedom? Philosophy teaches that freedom is the capacity without restrictions rationally to choose and do that which is best, and that it is by nature the heritage of every man. What, it would seem, could be more desirable? But this teaching has its light on the summit of the contemplation of human nature, human nature as it should be, while in descending to our experience and actions as they are in reality, it encounters darkness and obstacles.

“In the multiplicity of the race of men, are there many who have such an open and educated mind as faithfully to see and distinguish that which is best? And do those who see the best always have enough strength decisively to choose it and bring it to the level of action? Have we not heard complaints from the best of men: ‘For to will is present in me, but how to perform that which is good I find not’ (Romans 7.18)? What are we to say about the freedom of people who, although not in slavery to anybody, are nevertheless subject to sensuality, overcome by passion, possessed by evil habits? Is the avaricious man free? Is he not bound in golden chains? Is the indulger of his flesh free? Is he not bound, if not by cruel bonds, then by soft nets? Is the proud and vainglorious man free? Is he not chained, not by his hands, and not by his legs, but by his head and heart, to his own idol?
“Thus does not experience and consciousness, at least of some people in some cases, speak of that of which the Divine Scriptures speak generally: ‘He who does sin is the servant of sin’ (John 8. 34)?

“Observation of people and human societies shows that people who to a greater degree allow themselves to fall into this inner, moral slavery – slavery to sin, the passions and vices – are more often than others zealots for external freedom – freedom broadened as far as possible in human society before the law and the authorities. But will broadening external freedom help them to freedom from inner slavery? There is no reason to think that. With greater probability we must fear the opposite. He in whom sensuality, passion and vice has already acquired dominance, when the barriers put by the law and the authorities to his vicious actions have been removed, will of course give himself over to the satisfaction of his passions and lusts with even less restraint than before, and will use his external freedom only in order that he may immerse himself more deeply in inner slavery. Unhappy freedom which, as the Apostle explained, ‘they have as a cover for their envy’! Let us bless the law and the authorities which, in decreeing and ordering and defending, as necessity requires, the limits placed upon freedom of action, hinder as far they can the abuse of natural freedom and the spread of moral slavery, that is, slavery to sin, the passions and the vices.

“I said: as far as they can, because we can not only not expect from the law and the earthly authorities a complete cutting off of the abuse of freedom and the raising of those immersed in the slavery of sin to the true and perfect freedom: even the law of the Heavenly Lawgiver is not sufficient for that. The law warns about sin, rebukes the sinner and condemns him, but does not communicate to the slave of sin the power to break the bonds of this slavery, and does not provide the means of blotting out the iniquities committed, which lie on the conscience like a fiery seal of sinful slavery. And in this consists ‘the weakness of the law’ (Romans 8.3), to which the Apostle witnesses without a moment’s hesitation.

“Here the question again presents itself: what is true freedom, and who can give it, and – especially – return it to the person who has lost it through sin? True freedom is the active capacity of the man who has not been enslaved to sin and who is not weighed down by a condemning conscience, to choose the best in the light of the truth of God and to realize it with the help of the power of God’s grace.

“Only He Who gave this freedom to sinless man at his creation can give it back to the slave of sin. The Creator of freedom Himself declared this: ‘If the Son will set you free, then you will truly be free’ (John 8.36). ‘If you remain in My words, you will truly be My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 31.32). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, having suffered and died for us in the nature He received from us, by His ‘Blood has cleansed our conscience from dead works’ (Hebrews 9.14), and, having torn apart the bonds of death by His resurrection, has torn apart also the bonds of sin and death that bind us, and, after
His ascension to heaven, has sent down the Spirit of truth, giving us through faith the light of His truth to see what is best, and His grace-filled power to do it.

“This is freedom, which is restrained neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by hell, which has as its limit the will of God, and this not to its own diminution, because it also strives to fulfil the will of God, which has no need to shake the lawful decrees of men because it is able to see in these the truth that ‘the Kingdom is the Lord’s and He Himself is sovereign of the nations’ (Psalm 21.28), which in an unconstrained way venerates lawful human authority and its commands that are not contrary to God, insofar as it radiantly sees the truth that ‘there is no power that is not of God, the powers that be are ordained of God’ (Romans 13.1). And so this is freedom, which is in complete accord with obedience to the law and lawful authority, because it itself wishes for that which obedience demands.

“I would have much to say about the freedom that is Christian and inner, and not external, which is moral and spiritual, and not carnal, which always does good and is never rebellious, which can live in a hut just as comfortably as in a noble’s house or a royal palace, which a subject, without ceasing to be a subject, can enjoy as much as a master, which is inviolable in bonds and prison, as we can see in the Christian martyrs. But it is already bring our sermon to an end.

“Love Christian freedom – freedom from sin, from passion, from vice, the freedom of willing obedience to the law and the authorities, and do good for the sake of the Lord, in accordance with your faith in and love for Him. And let nobody be seduced by the people from whom the Apostolic word warns us, who ‘promise freedom, being themselves the slaves of corruption’ (II Peter 2.19). Amen.”

The Ecumenical Patriarch

The Ecumenical Patriarch was divided in his political loyalties, not only between the Turkish Sultan, to whom he had sworn an oath of allegiance, and the Free Kingdom of Greece, but also between the Sultan and the Tsar of Russia, whom Patriarch Jeremiah II had called “the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians,” and whose kingdom he had explicitly called “the Third Rome.” In the Age of Revolution, whose main characteristic was the defiance of the Christian teaching on authority under the influence of the French revolutionary ideology, it was necessary for the first hierarch in Orthodoxy to give a good example in the carrying out of the Christian teaching. So the question was: whom was the Patriarch bound to obey as his political sovereign?

The answer might seem self-evident: if the Patriarch had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Sultan, and even commemorated the Sultan at the Divine Liturgy,

---

then the Sultan was his political master. Certainly, this was the position of Patriarch Gregory V, and of other distinguished teachers of the Greek nation, such as the Chian, Athanasios Parios. Moreover, even the Tsars had recognized the Sultan as a lawful ruler, and as lawful ruler of his Christian subjects, even to the extent of refusing their help when the Greeks rose up against the Sultan.

Sir Steven Runciman argues that the Russians “let down” the Greeks in this way. But this is an unjust comment if we accept the thesis that the Sultan was sincerely recognized by the Tsar as the lawful ruler of the Ottoman Empire and of the Christian inhabitants of that Empire. Moreover, over the centuries the Russians had steadily, and at enormous cost to themselves, pushed the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire southward, thereby significantly aiding the eventual liberation of the Balkan Orthodox.

In any case, the situation was complicated by the fact that, even if the Patriarch commemorated the Sultan at the Liturgy, almost nobody else did! Thus Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov writes: “In Mohammedan Turkey the Orthodox did not pray for the authorities during Divine services, which was witnessed by pilgrims to the Sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem. Skaballonovich in his Interpreted Typicon writes: ‘With the coming of Turkish dominion, the prayers for the kings began to be excluded from the augmented and great litanies and to be substituted by: “Again we pray for the pious and Orthodox Christians” (p. 152). In Austro-Hungary the Orthodox Serbs and Romanians did not pray for their emperor Franz-Joseph, who was not Orthodox. In exactly the same way the names of King George, a Lutheran, and King Ferdinand, a Catholic, were not commemorated in Orthodox Greece and Bulgaria. Instead their Orthodox heirs to the throne were commemorated. This attitude to the authorities sometimes led to conflict with them. Thus in 1888 the Bulgarian Synod was dismissed by Ferdinand of Coburg, and the members of the Synod were expelled by gendarmes from the capital because they refused to offer prayer in the churches for the Catholic prince, who had offended the Orthodox Church by many of his actions. After this the government did not allow the Synod to assemble for six years…”

But perhaps commemoration and obedience are different matters, so that commemoration of an authority may be refused while obedience is granted... And perhaps the Mohammedan Sultan and the Catholic King Ferdinand could not be commemorated by name because no heterodox can be commemorated at the Divine Liturgy, but could still be prayed for as the lawful authorities in accordance with the apostolic command... For St. Paul called on the Christians to pray “for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Timothy 2.2), although the authorities at that time were pagans...

599 Zhukov, Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ na Rodine i za Rubezhom (The Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and Abroad), Paris, 2005, pp. 18-19.
However, there was one important difference between the pagan authorities of St. Paul’s time and the heterodox authorities of the nineteenth century. In the former case, the pagan Roman empire was not only the only political authority of the Oecumene: outside it there was no more lawful authority. But in the latter case, there was a more lawful authority than the heterodox authorities – the Orthodox Christian authority of the Tsar.

**Elder Hilarion the Georgian**

The critical question, therefore, was: if there was a war between the Mohammedan or Catholic authorities, on the one side, and the Orthodox Tsar, on the other, whom were the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans to pray for and support?

This situation arose during the Crimean War. And during that war the Athonite Elder Hilarion the Georgian (whom we have met before as Fr. Ise, confessor of the Imeretian King Solomon II) instructed his disciple, Hieromonk Sabbas, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy every day and to pray for the Russians during it, and to read the whole Psalter and make many prostrations for the aid of “our Russian brethren”… “When some time had passed,” witnesses Hieromonk Sabbas, “the elder said to me: ‘Let’s go to the monastery, let’s ask the abbot what they know about the war, whether the Russians are winning or the enemies.’ When we arrived at the monastery, the abbot with the proestoses showed us a paper which the Patriarch and one other hierarch had sent from Constantinople, for distributing to the serving hieromonks in all the monasteries. The Patriarch wrote that they were beseeching God, at the Great Entrance in the Divine Liturgy, to give strength to the Turkish army to subdue the Russians under the feet of the Turks. To this was attached a special prayer which had to be read aloud. When the abbot, Elder Eulogius, had read us this patriarchal epistle and said to the elder: ‘Have you understood what our head, our father is writing to us?’, my elder was horrified and said: ‘He is not a Christian,’ and with sorrow asked: ‘Have you read this in the monastery during the Liturgy, as he writes?’ But they replied: ‘No! May it not be!’ But in the decree the Patriarch was threatening any monastery that did not carry out this order that it would suffer a very severe punishment. The next day we went back to our cell. A week passed. A monk came from Grigoriou monastery for the revealing of thoughts, and my elder asked him: ‘Did you read this prayer which the Patriarch sent to the monasteries?’ He replied: ‘Yes, it was read last Sunday during the Liturgy.’ The elder said: ‘You have not acted well in reading it; you have deprived yourselves of the grace of Holy Baptism, you have deprived your monastery of the grace of God; condemnation has fallen on you!’ This monk returned to the monastery and told his elders and abbot that ‘we have deprived the monastery of the grace of God, the grace of Holy Baptism – that is what Papa Hilarion is saying.’ On the same day a flood swept away the mill, and the fathers began to grumble against the abbot: ‘You have destroyed the monastery!’ In great sorrow the abbot hurried to make three prostrations before the icon of the Saviour and said: ‘My Lord Jesus Christ, I’m going to my spiritual father Hilarion to confess what I have done, and whatever penance he gives me I will carry...
it out, so that I should not suffer a stroke from sorrow.’ Taking with him one
hierodeacon and one monk, he set off for the cell of the Holy Apostle James, where
we living at the time. When they arrived, my elder was outside the cell. The abbot
with his companions, on seeing my elder, fell face downwards in prostrations to the
earth and said: ‘Bless, holy spiritual father.’ Then they went up to kiss his hand. But
my elder shouted at them: ‘Go away, away from me; I do not accept heretics!’ The
abbot said: ‘I have sinned, I have come to ask you to give me a penance.’ But the
closer said: ‘How did you, wretched one, dare to place Mohammed higher than
Christ? God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ says to His Son: “Sit Thou at My
right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet’ (Psalm 109.1), but
you ask Him to put His Son under the feet of His enemies! Get away from me, I will
not accept you.’ With tears the abbot besought the elder to receive him in repentance
and give him a penance. But my elder said: ‘I am not your spiritual father, go, find a
spiritual father and he will give you a penance.’ And leaving them outside his cell
weeping, the elder went into it and locked the door with a key. What could we do?
We went into my cell and there served an all-night vigil, beseeching God to incline
the elder to mercy and give a penance to the abbot. In the morning the elder went
into the church for the Liturgy, not saying a word to those who had arrived, and
after the dismissal of the Liturgy he quickly left for his cell. Those who had arrived
with the abbot began to worry that he would suffer a heart attack; they asked me to
go in to the elder and call him; perhaps he would listen to me. I went, fell at his feet
and asked him: ‘Be merciful, give them a penance – the abbot may suffer a stroke in
the heart attack with fatal consequences.’ Then the elder asked me: ‘What penance
shall I give them? God on high is angry with them. What epitimia should I give them
which would propitiate God?’ When I said to my father: ‘Elder, since I read the
whole Psalter of the Prophet-King David every day, as you told me, there is one
psalm there which fits this case – the 82nd: “O God, who shall be likened unto Thee?
Be Thou not silent, neither be still, O God…” Command them to read this psalm
tomorrow during the Liturgy, when the Cherubic hymn is being sung, at the Great
Entrance; let the hieromonk who read the prayer of the Patriarch before stand under
the great chandelier, and when all the fathers come together during the Great
Entrance, the priest must come out of the altar holding the diskos and chalice in his
hands, then let one monk bring a parchment with this psalm written on it in front,
and let the hieromonk, who has been waiting under the chandelier, read the whole
psalm loudly to the whole brotherhood, and while they are reading it from the
second to the ninth verses let them all repeat many times: “Lord, have mercy”. And
when the remaining verses are being read, let them all say: “Amen!” And then the
grace of God will again return to their monastery.’ The elder accepted my advice and
asked me to call them. When they joyfully entered the cell and made a prostration,
the elder said to them: ‘Carry out this penance, and the mercy of God will return to
you.’ Then they began to be disturbed that the exarch sent by the Patriarch, who was
caring for the fulfilment of the patriarchal decree in Karyes, might learn about this
and might bring great woes upon the monastery. They did not know what to do. The
closer said: ‘Since you are so frightened, I will take my hieromonk and go to the
monastery; and if the exarch or the Turks hear about it, tell them: only Monk
Hilarion the Georgian ordered us to do this, and we did it, and you will be
without sorrow.’ Then the abbot said: ‘Spiritual father, we are also worried and sorrowful about you, because when the Turks will learn about this, they will come here, take you, tie you up in sacks and drown you both in the sea.’ My elder replied: ‘We are ready, my hieromonk and I, let them drown us.’ Then we all together set off in the boat for Grigoriou monastery. When the brothers of the monastery saw us, they rejoiced greatly. In the morning we arranged that the hieromonk who had read the prayer of the Patriarch should himself liturgize; they lit the chandelier during the Cherubic hymn, and when all the fathers were gathered together and the server had come out of the altar preceded by the candle and candle-holder and carrying the chalice and diskos on his head and in his hands, he declared: “May the Lord remember you all in His Kingdom”, and stopped under the great chandelier. Then one monk, having in his hand the parchment with the 82nd psalm written on it, stood in front of the priest and began to read: “O God, who shall be likened unto Thee? Be Thou not silent, neither be still, O God…” – to the end. Meanwhile the fathers called out: “Lord, have mercy” until the 10th verse, and then everyone said: “Amen” many times. And they all understood that the grace of God had again come down on the monastery, and the elders from joy embraced men, thanking me that I had done such a good thing for them; and everyone glorified and thanked God.’

“All this took place under Patriarch Anthimus VI. At the end of the war he was again removed from his throne. After this he came to Athos and settled in the monastery of Esphigmenou, where he had been tonsured. Once, in 1856, on a certain feast-day, he wanted to visit the monastery of St. Panteleimon, where Fr. Hilarion was at that time. During the service the Patriarch was standing in the cathedral of the Protection on the hierarchical see. Father Hilarion passed by him with Fr. Sabbas; he didn’t even look at the venerable Patriarch, which the latter immediately noticed. The Patriarch was told about the incident with the prayer in Grigoriou monastery. At the end of the service, as usual, all the guests were invited to the guest-house. The Patriarch, wanting somehow to extract himself from his awkward situation in the eyes of the Russians and Fr. Hilarion, started a conversation on past events and tried to develop the thought that there are cases when a certain ‘economia’ is demanded, and the care of the Church sometimes requires submission also to some not very lawful demands of the government, if this serves for the good of the Church. ‘And so we prayed for the granting of help from on high to our Sultan, and in this way disposed him to mercifulness for our Church and her children, the Orthodox Christians.’ When Patriarch Anthimus, under whom the schism with the Bulgarians took place, arrived on Athos after his deposition, and just stepped foot on the shore, the whole of the Holy Mountain shuddered from an underground quake and shook several times. All this was ascribed by the Athonites to the guilt of the Patriarch, and the governing body sent an order throughout the Mountain that they should pray fervently to God that He not punish the inhabitants of the Holy Mountain with His righteous wrath, but that He have mercy according to His mercy.”

Thus there was a fine line to be drawn between submission to the Sultan as the lawful sovereign, and a too-comfortable adaptation to the conditions of this
Babylonian captivity, forgetting the Jerusalem of a truly Orthodox polity. The Tsar considered that the Orthodox peoples did not have the right to rebel against the Sultan of their own will, without the blessing of himself as the Emperor of the Third Rome. But the corollary of this view was that when the Tsar entered into war with the Sultan, it was the duty of the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan to pray for victory for the Tsar.

For, as Fr. Hilarion said, echoing the words of St. Seraphim: “The other peoples’ kings often make themselves out to be something great, but not one of them is a king in reality, but they are only adorned and flatter themselves with a great name, but God is not favourably disposed towards them, and does not abide in them. They reign only in part by the condescension of God. Therefore he who does not love his God-established tsar is not worthy of being called a Christian.”

---

20. THE EASTERN QUESTIONS

“On April 12th, 1791,” writes Roman Golicz, “a cartoon was published in London entitled ‘An Imperial Stride!’ depicting Catherine the Great… with one foot in Russia and the other in Constantinople. The image recalls the empress’s epic tour to the Crimea in 1787 when she entered Kherson through an arch inscribed ‘The Way to Constantinople’.”

Russia had been looking to liberate Constantinople from the Turkish yoke since the seventeenth century, and would continue to see it as an imperial aim until the very fall of the Russian Empire in 1917. But it was only at two moments, 1829-30 and 1877-78, that the achievement of the aim looked like a distinct possibility, even probability; and the period 1829-1878 can be called the period of “the Eastern Question”. This was the question which power was to rule Constantinople; or, alternatively, the question of the liberation of the Orthodox nations subject to the Ottoman empire – was it to be at their own hands, at the hands of the Russians, or through the concerted pressure of the great powers on Turkey?

But the Eastern Question, or the “Great Game”, as the British called it, can only be understood properly in the context of an examination of the other “eastern questions” that preoccupied the minds, not only of statesmen, but of many ordinary Orthodox Christians in this period. These were the questions of Orthodox nationalism, of legitimism, of Moscow the Third Rome, of Pan-Hellenism and Pan-Slavism, and of Byzantinism. In this article we shall study the political Eastern Question in the context of these other “eastern questions”.

The Rise of Orthodox Nationalism

If liberalism, socialism and other false beliefs were sapping the foundations of Holy Russia, a different, albeit related disease was corrupting the rest of the Orthodox oikoumene: nationalism. Like many in the West, the Orthodox nations of the Balkans and the Middle East were thinking of one thing: freedom! The Southern Slavs – the Serbs and the Bulgarians – wanted freedom from the Turks – and looked to the Russians to liberate them. And the Greeks in the Free State of Greece wanted freedom for their fellow countrymen still under the Ottoman yoke in accordance with their “great idea” of the re-establishment of the Byzantine Empire. The only anti-liberal and (relatively) anti-nationalist group in the Orthodox East was its ruling class under the old millet system – the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

There were both good and bad reasons for this. The good reason was that the patriarchate, together with the monks of Mount Athos over whom it had jurisdiction, stood for strict, traditional Orthodoxy. As such, it could not fail to resist the liberal, westernizing trends that were gradually gaining the upper hand in Athens, Belgrade,

---

Sophia and Bucharest. This Orthodox traditionalism made the patriarchate and the Russian government natural allies – although, as we shall see, events were to test that relationship.

A less good reason for the patriarchate’s conservatism was the fact that it and the leading Greek merchant families, the “Phanariots”, led what was in many ways a comfortable and privileged life under the Ottomans. And so they were in no hurry to be “liberated” – whether by their fellow countrymen in Free Greece or by the Russian Tsar. In fact, as Philip Mansel writes, “the bishops, aware of the tsars’ cavalier treatment of the Russian Orthodox Church, feared that ‘protection’ would mean ‘slavery’. They told a Russian diplomat: ‘We are now rich and strong. Nine million souls in the hands of the Patriarch, his synod and seventy bishops. You with the right of protectorate will deprive us of everything.’”

However, after the Crimean War, Russia was no longer protector of the Christians at the Sublime Porte – and the Greeks felt the difference. And not only the Greeks. Thus in 1860 the Orthodox of Damascus were subjected to a massacre which the Russians were not able to prevent or avenge. According to Professor A.P. Lopukhin, “the Christian subjects of the Sultan, whatever oppression and humiliation they were suffering, were now unable to rely on any outside help but were obliged to rely solely on their own resources… During the last years of the reign of Abdul Mecid [1839-61],… the Greeks… not only remained in a dreadful social and economic state, but even lost many of their former rights and privileges.”

The reason for this was a series of liberal reforms that the Western Powers imposed on Turkey at the Treaty of Paris in 1856, and which the Ottomans issued in the form of an Imperial Rescript. These were seen as supplementing and strengthening the policy of reform known as tanzimat which Turkey had begun in 1839. They aimed to improve the lot of the Christians under Ottoman rule - but actually made it worse. Thus both Christians and Muslims were promised equality before the law in place of their separate legal systems – which, however, both groups wanted to retain. Again, the economic reforms, which essentially involved the imposition of liberal free-trade principles on the empire, were harmful to both groups. For neither the Orthodox Christians nor the Muslims could compete with the mass-produced products now pouring in from the West, especially Britain, while Ottoman infant industries were deprived of the protection they needed in order to survive.

“The truth was,” writes Mansfield, “that there was no prospect of a ‘great leap forward’ in the Ottoman economy which would have enabled it to compete with

604 One of the victims of this massacre was Hieromartyr Joseph the Damascene (http://aaron.org/midwest/Articles/St._Joseph_Of_Damascus_A.htm).
those of the industrialized powers of Western Europe. The main features of advanced nineteenth-century capitalism and the expertise to manage them were lacking, and it would take much more than a generation to develop them. Moreover, the system of Capitulations meant that much of the more progressively managed parts of the economy were in foreign hands and therefore outside Ottoman control. In 1867 an amendment to the land code for the first time allowed foreigners to own land in the empire.

“The reformers did attempt to develop the backward infrastructure of the Ottoman economy – roads, railways and ports. But every effort in this direction only increased the burden of government debt. Despite some improvement in the collection of taxes, expenditure always outran revenues. Soon the Ottoman government was forced to take the fatal step of using receipts from foreign loans to meet the growing deficits. Finally, in October 1875, the government issued a public declaration that only half the amount needed to service the foreign debt could be paid in cash; the remainder would be covered with a new issue of government bonds. This was equivalent to a declaration of bankruptcy. Although twentieth-century experience has shown how debtor nations can skilfully exploit their position with their creditors, this was an appalling position in which the proud Ottomans found themselves.”

As living conditions declined, and the power of the patriarch over his people weakened, national passions exploded. In 1861 rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldavia. In 1866 it was the turn of the island of Crete, where in an extraordinary outburst of patriotic passion reminiscent of the Russian Old Ritualists Abbot Gabriel of the monastery of Arkadiou blew up himself and nearly a thousand other Greeks rather than surrender to the Turks. Further rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria in the 1870s, which finally brought the Russians into the region in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878.

Russia’s Dilemma

These events placed the Russian government in a quandary. For most of the nineteenth century Russia had been governed in her foreign policy by two not completely compatible principles or obligations: her obligations as a member of the Triple Alliance of monarchist states (Russia, Austria and Prussia) against the revolution, and her obligations as the Third Rome and the Protector of Orthodox Christians everywhere. As a member of the Triple Alliance Russia could not be seen to support any revolution against a legitimate power. That is why Tsar Alexander I refused to support the Greek Revolution in 1821, for the monarchist powers considered the Ottoman empire to be a legitimate power. On the other hand, as the Third Rome and Protector of all Orthodox Christians, Russia naturally wished to come to the aid of the Orthodox Greeks, Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians under the oppressive Turkish yoke. That is why Tsar Nicholas I did intervene in the Greek

revolution in 1829 by invading the Ottoman empire – the decisive event enabling the emergence of the Free State of Greece in 1832.

In spite of Nicholas I’s intervention in Greece in 1829-32, he was in general a legitimist – that is, his priority was the protection of what he considered legitimate regimes (in practice, all the Major Powers including Turkey but excluding France) against revolution rather than Orthodox Christians against Turkey. So it was from a legitimist position that he twice crushed uprisings of the Poles against his own rule, and in 1848 crushed the Hungarian rising against Austro-Hungary. However, the quarrels between the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics over the Holy Sepulchre led him to take a more specifically “Third Rome” stand. This led eventually to the Crimean War against Turkey, Britain and France, which, as Oliver Figes’ authoritative study of the war confirms, was essentially a religious war between Orthodoxy and Islam, with the Western states supporting the Muslims.\textsuperscript{607}

Although the Crimean War constituted a defeat for the “Third Rome” policy, it inflicted even more damage on the legitimist principle; for illegitimate France was now legitimized again (the treaty ending the war was signed in Paris), while the Tsars never again fully trusted the legitimate monarchy of Austro-Hungary, which had not supported Russia in the war. So intervention for the sake of the Orthodox again became popular, especially as a new wave of rebellions against Turkish rule began in the Balkans.

However, the Russian intervention under Alexander II was different from earlier interventions under Nicholas I. Under Nicholas, wrote the Russian diplomat (and future Optina monk) Constantine Leontiev, “the matter had been put in a more direct, clearer and \textit{spiritually more original manner}: there was more talk of the rights of Russian protection, of Russian power. This was better essentially: but it did not come at the right time. It was too early. We had a failure [in the Crimea]. Europe did not recognise in our actions at that time \textit{her own idea} - emancipationist, democratic, egalitarian. She could not comprehend the Orthodox monarchist spirit; she hated it; she was not then in contradiction with herself and she won. From the 1860s Russian diplomacy, the Russian press and Russian society began to speak more and more loudly in favour of the Christians of the East, without relying, as in the 50s, on the right of our power, but much more on the rights of the Sultan’s Christian subjects themselves. Our politics after the Crimean war became \textit{more western} in thought, that is, more liberal; in essence worse, \textit{more corrupt} from a civil point of view. But it came at a better time; Europe, paralysed by an inner contradiction, could no longer unite in a friendly manner against us; she was forced to make concessions to us constantly on the path of the liberal reforms that we suggested for the Christians. Because of this Turkey became weaker; the Christians became bolder and bolder, and we in the course of twenty years in all, step by step, destroyed the Turkish empire…”.\textsuperscript{608}

\textsuperscript{608} Leontiev, “Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh – I” (Letters on Eastern Matters – I), in \textit{Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo} (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 354. Cf. Mansel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 248: “Wellington revealed the great truth: ‘The Ottoman Empire stands not for the benefit of the Turks but
This was paradoxical, but true: that the gradual weakening of the Ottoman empire, and liberation of the Christians from under the Turkish yoke, while to be welcome in itself, contained great spiritual dangers for the Orthodox commonwealth. Why? In order to answer this question, we need to remember that even before 1453 the Orthodox Christians were plagued by two diseases: an inclination towards western humanist culture; and disunity among themselves on ethnic lines. The Turkish conquest of the whole of the Balkans suppressed both diseases without completely eliminating either. On the one hand, western influence was seen as harmful by the Turks as it was by the Christians, and the Ottoman authorities acted to cut it off. On the other hand, the millet system recognised only one Orthodox nation under the Ecumenical Patriarch, thereby cutting off the possibility of inter-Orthodox wars.

These two very important benefits of the Turkish yoke outweighed its disadvantages in the form of the restrictions on missionary activity, the forced induction of Bosnian boys into the Janissaries, and intermittent persecutions; just as the advantages of the pagan pax Romana had outweighed its disadvantages. The Christian leaders in both Church and State – specifically, the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople – understood this. So they did not try to destroy the empire, while trying to mitigate its savagery.

Leontiev also understood this. Thus “it is necessary,” he wrote, “as far as possible, to preserve the Porte; the Porte must be served; it must be defended. And I agree with this point of view of the Phanariots: the pasha is better than the Hellene democratic nomarch (prefect): the pasha is more monarchical, more statist, cleverer, broader.”

However, the above-mentioned diseases, while suppressed by the Turkish yoke, had not been driven out completely. And from the time of the French revolution, and especially after the Greek revolution of 1821, they began to work on each other. Thus western ideas about freedom and the rights of individuals and nations began to interact with frictions among the Christians caused by Greek bishops’ insensitivity to the needs of their Slavic, Romanian and Arabic flocks to produce a potentially revolutionary situation.

of Christian Europe.’ Metternich pronounced the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe ‘a political necessity for Austria.’”

609 For example, “when in the eighteenth century the Orthodox in Syria complained to the Porte of Catholic propaganda, the following decree was issued: ‘Some of the devilish French monks, with evil purposes and unjust intentions, are passing through the country and are filling the Greek rayah with their worthless French doctrine; by means of stupid speeches they are deflecting the rayah from its ancient faith and are inculcating the French faith. Such French monks have no right to remain anywhere except in those places where their consuls are located; they should not undertake any journeys or engage in missionary work” (in Fr. Alexander Schmemann, The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1963, p. 284).

610 Leontiev, “Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh” (Letters on Eastern Affairs), op. cit., p. 362.
Pan-Hellenism versus Pan-Slavism

The idea animating the Greek part of this revolutionary movement was Pan-Hellenism, also known as “the great idea” (η μεγαλή ιδέα) – the idea, namely, that all the traditionally Greek lands not yet freed from the Turks - Crete, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, even Constantinople and the vast territory of Asia Minor – should be united under Greek suzerainty. This idea dated from well before the Greek revolution of 1821; some say it began immediately after the fall of Constantinople in 1453; but it gathered headway after the foundation of the Free State of Greece, being nourished especially by western-educated liberal thinkers in Athens. It is not to be confused with Byzantinism, the faith and culture of Christian Rome…

Unfortunately, Pan-Hellenism tended to enter into conflict with other Orthodox nationalisms, especially those of the Serbs and Bulgars. Thus in Macedonia and Thrace there were now more Slavs than Greeks – and the Slavs were not going to give up their lands to the Greeks without a fight. Moreover, Greek nationalist pressure was exerted not only in lands that had traditionally been inhabited mainly by Greeks, like Macedonia and Thrace, but also in originally Slavic lands.

Thus Fr. Alexander Schemann writes: “The first Greek had been appointed to the patriarchate of Peč in 1737 at the insistence of the Dragoman Alexandros Mavrokordatos on the plea that the Serbs could not be trusted. The Phanariots began a policy which led to the exclusion of any Serbian nationals in the episcopacy.”611 In September, 1766 the Ecumenical Patriarch Samuel took over the Serbian patriarchate at Peč, and in January, 1767 the Bulgarian Church was absorbed with the forced retirement of Archbishop Arsenius of Ochrid.

“Everywhere former bishops who were native Bulgars and Serbs were deposed and replaced by Greeks. This canonical abuse of power was accompanied by forced ‘Grecizing’, particularly in Bulgaria, where it later served as the basis of the so-called Bulgarian question.

“This same sad picture prevailed in the East as well, in the patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, where Orthodox Arabs became the victims of this forced unification. All these offenses, stored up and concealed – all these unsettled accounts and intrigues – would have their effect when the Turkish hold began to slacken and the hour for the rebirth of the Slavic peoples drew near…”612

The cause of Greek oppression was not simply contempt for Christians of non-Greek race. The Phanariots - that is, the leading Greek laymen, who lived in the Phanar district of Constantinople - had to raise money from all the Christians in order to pay the bribes that the Ottoman authorities required for raising candidates

---

612 Schmemann, op. cit., p. 280.
to the patriarchy. As Mark Mazower writes, “the money, often borrowed by candidates for office from wealthy Phanariots, could only be recouped through the Church’s taxation of Christian peasants. Growing centralisation under the Ecumenical Patriarch increased the resources at stake and probably made the problem worse. ‘A saying common among the Greek peasants,’ according to a British traveller, was that ‘the country labours under three curses, the priests, the cogia bashis [local Christian notables] and the Turks, always placing the plagues in this order.’ In nineteenth-century Bosnia, ‘the Greek Patriarch takes good care that these eparchies shall be filled by none but Fanariots, and thus it happens that the… Orthodox Christians of Bosnia, who form the majority of the population, are subject to ecclesiastics alien in blood, in language, in sympathies, who oppress them hand in hand with the Turkish officials and set them, often, an even worse example of moral depravity.’ The reason was clear: ‘They have to send enormous bribes yearly to the fountainhead.’ This story of extortion and corruption spelled the end of the old Orthodox ecumenicism, created bitterness between the Church and its flock, and - where the peasants were not Greek speakers – provoked a sense of their exploitation by the ‘Greek’ Church which paved the way for Balkan nationalism.”

These injustices suffered by the Slavs at the hands of the Greeks elicited the sympathy of notable Russians such as Alexis Khomiakov and Bishop Theophan the Recluse. The latter, as archimandrite, was sent by the Russian government and the Holy Synod to Constantinople to gather information on the Greco-Bulgarian quarrel. On March 9, 1857 he presented his report, in which his sympathies for the Bulgarians were manifest. However, he also called on “magnanimous” Russia to come to the help of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – “we must not abandon our mother in the faith in this helpless situation of hers”. Later, the atrocities suffered by the Bulgarians in the 1870s stirred up much larger swathes of Russian society with the idea of liberating the Southern Slavs from the Turkish yoke...

The Greeks distrusted this movement in Russian society for the liberation of the Southern Slavs. Whereas earlier generations would have welcomed any incursion of Russia into the Balkans, hoping that the Tsar would liberate Constantinople and give it to the Greeks, the modern, more liberal- and nationalist-minded Greeks rejected any such interference. For in Free Greece Russia was no longer seen as the liberator of the Balkans for the sake of the Orthodoxy that the Russian and Balkan peoples shared, but as the potential enslaver of the Balkans for the sake of Russian Pan-Slavism. More specifically, the Greeks suspected that Russia wanted to help Bulgaria take the ancient Greek lands of Thrace and Macedonia in which there was now a large Bulgarian population. Thus Pan-Slavism was seen as the great threat to Pan-Hellenism.

True, many Greeks, especially in the Ottoman Empire and on Mount Athos, cherished more charitable views of Russia, which continued to support the

Christians under the Turkish yoke in many ways. But the views of the western-educated liberals in Athens were gaining ground... A sign of the times was the court case that took place on Mount Athos in 1874-1875 between the Russian and Greek monks of the monastery of St. Panteleimon with regard to the rights of the Russian monks to stay there. “The case divided the whole of Athos into two opposing camps: the Greek monks and the Russian monks. Only a few of the Greeks had the courage to support the Russians. Thanks to the energy and insistence with which the Russian monks defended their rights to the monastery, with documents in their hands and with the strong support of the Russian consul at the Porte [Count N.P. Ignatiev], the case ended with victory for the Russians.”

The phenomenon of Pan-Slavism was misunderstood and exaggerated by the Greeks. While there was some talk in Russia – for example, by Michael Katkov at the ethnographic exhibition in Moscow in 1867616 – of bringing all the Slavs together into a single polity under Russia just as the German lands were being brought together under Prussia, this was never a serious political proposition and never entertained by any of the Tsars. Pan-Slavism existed more in the minds of the Greeks than in reality.617

For what in fact united all the Slavs as opposed to the Orthodox Slavic nations? Less than one might expect. Russia herself was far from being a purely Slavic empire; her aristocracy had been accepting Tatar and German nobles into its ranks for centuries. With the next largest Slavic nation, Poland, she was in a state of constant friction, as the Roman Catholic Poles did everything in their power to undermine Orthodox Russian power. With the Catholic and Protestant Slavs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes – she was on more friendly terms. But it was not in her interests to foment revolution on ethnic lines in Austria, and as recently as 1848 Russian armies had acted to bolster Austrian power against the Magyars. With the Serbs and the Bulgars Russia had both blood and Orthodox Christianity in common. But a political union with these nations – even if they wanted it, which most did not – would have required absorbing non-Orthodox Hungary and non-Slavic Romania as well.

---

615 Lopukhin, op. cit., pp. 136-137.
617 Even the Pan-Slavism of a man like General Fadeyev can be called “Pan-Slavist” only with major qualifications. Thus consider his Opinion on the Eastern Question of 1876: “The liberated East of Europe, if it be liberated at all, will require: a durable bond of union, a common head with a common council, the transaction of international affairs and the military command in the hands of that head, the Tsar of Russia, the natural chief of all the Slavs and Orthodox... Every Russian, as well as every Slav and every Orthodox Christian, should desire to see chiefly the Russian reigning House cover the liberated soil of Eastern Europe with its branches, under the supremacy and lead of the Tsar of Russia, long recognized, in the expectation of the people, as the direct heir of Constantine the Great.”(A.N. Wilson, The Victorians, London: Arrow Books, 2002, p. 395) The ideology expressed here is not Pan-Slavism, but that of Russia the Third Rome, the idea – which goes a long way back, before the age of nationalism – that Russia, as the successor of Rome and Byzantium, is the natural protector of all Orthodox Christians. Hence the reference to “all the Slavs and Orthodox”, and “every Slav and every Orthodox Christian”, and to Constantine the Great – who, needless to say, was not a Slav.
Nor was it in Russia’s interests to support individual Slavic nationalisms. As Tom Gallacher points out, “as a multi-national empire in its own right, Russia was hostile to the pretensions of European small state nationalism.” For to support, say, Bulgarian pretensions to an independent Greater Bulgaria – as opposed to simply protecting Bulgarians suffering from Turkish cruelty – would have created conflicts with the Greeks, the Romanians and the Serbs; whereas it was in Russia’s interests to see unity among all the Orthodox nations. Even supposing that Russia in the name of some mythical Pan-Slavist ideal had been willing and able to conquer the whole of the Balkans and take Constantinople, she could not have held on to her gains for long. First, the western powers, including the new rising power of Germany, would have been stirred up to launch another crusade against her. Secondly, to drive the Turks out of Constantinople would not have meant their final defeat, and further operations deep into Asia would have been necessary. But thirdly and most importantly, the union between the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople, upon which the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth was based, would have been shattered. For what then would the position of the Patriarch within the Russian empire have been? Still the first hierarch of Orthodoxy, or de facto subordinate to the Russian Synod? How would the Greeks (not to mention the Southern Slavs) react to exchanging one form of foreign dominion for another, albeit Orthodox?

A true Pan-Slavist in the political sense was Nicholas Danilevsky, whose *Russia and Europe* (1869) made use of Slavophile ideas from the 1840s. Danilevsky distinguished ten types of civilization in the past: (1) Egyptian, (2) Chinese, (3) Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician or Ancient Semitic, (4) Hindu, (5) Iranian, (6) Hebrew, (7) Ancient Greek, (8) Roman, (9) Neo-Semitic or Arabian, and (10) Romano-Germanic or European. He believed that after Russian had conquered Constantinople and liberated and united the Slavs under her rule, she would create an eleventh type of civilization or cultural type.

Being a form of nationalist historicism, Danilevsky’s theory identified the latest in history with the best. And so Slavism, being the last in the series of “historico-cultural” types was the best, in his view. “The new Slavic civilization, with its capital at Constantinople, would synthesize the highest achievements of its predecessors in religion (Israel), culture (Greece), political order (Rome) and socio-economic progress (modern Europe), and would supplement them with the Slavic genius for

---

618 Gallacher, “Folly & Failure in the Balkans”, *History Today*, September, 1999, p. 48. As Hosking points out, “the official Foreign Office view was that Russia should cooperate with Germany and Austria to reaffirm the legitimist monarchical principle in Eastern Europe, to counteract revolutionary movements there, whether nationalist or not, and to promote a stable balance of power. Panslavism could never be consistently espoused by the Russian government, for it was a policy which would inevitably lead to war against the Ottomans and Habsburgs, if not against the European powers in general. Besides, it was in essence a revolutionary strategy, directed against legitimate sovereign states. For the Russian empire to promote the principle of insurrectionary nationalism was, to say the least, double-edged.” (op. cit., pp. 370-371)

social and economic justice. ‘These four rivers will unite on the wide plains of Slavdom into a mighty sea.’”  

Strictly speaking, however, “best” should not be understood here in relation to a universal scale of values, insofar as each “historico-cultural” type was sui generis and incommensurable, according to Danilevsky. However, this reduced the significance of Danilevsky’s theory. For if no one civilization, even the Slavic, can be considered better than any other according to a universal scale of values, then there is no reason to consider it to be better in any real, objective sense…

In spite of the existence of one or two true Pan-Slavists like Danielevsky, the famous Serbian Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich) was inclined to deny the very existence of Pan-Slavism, saying that it was invented by the Germans: “Who thought up Pan-Slavism and spoke about it to the world? The Pan-Germanists! Yes, it was precisely the Pan-Germanists who thought up Pan-Slavism and sounded out about it to the whole world. Man always judges about others from himself. If Pan-Germanism exists, then why should Pan-Slavism not exist? However, this analogy, however much it may appear to represent the rule, is inaccurate in this case. Pan-Germanism existed and exists, while Pan-Slavism was not and is not now. Everybody knows that there is a Pan-German party in both Germany and Austria. We know that there exists Pan-German journalism, and pan-German clubs, and German literature, and pan-German organizations, and German banks. But in the Slavic world, by contrast, there exists nothing of the kind. As a Slav, I would have known about it, and as a free man I would have spoken about it all openly. However,

---

620 Hosking, op. cit., p. 369.
621 As Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, speaking of the later Slavophiles, “Significance is ascribed to this or that cultural achievement or discovery of the Slavic nationality not because we see in it the manifestation of the highest values, values which surpass those that inspired ‘European’ culture, but simply because they are the organic offshoots of the Slavic national genius. And so not because they are good, but because they are ours…

“The ideals and concrete tasks for action are inspired not by autonomous seeking and ‘the re-evaluation of all values’, but solely by ‘the milieu’ and ‘circumstances’ of one’s ‘chance’ belonging to the given ‘cultural-historical type’, to the given ‘ethnic group of peoples’. This nationalism should be given the epithet ‘anthropological’, as opposed to the ethnic nationalism of the ‘older Slavophiles’, [since] the basis for ‘idiosyncracy’ is sociological or anthropological particularity, not originality of cultural content. There individual variations are allowed on universal and eternal motifs: here they are taken to be various unshakeable and unmixed relative melodies…”

“It was on this plane, continues Florovsky, “that the annihilating criticism to which Vladimir Soloviev subjected the imitative nationalism of the later Slavophiles lay. His words had the greater weight in that, even though he was not conscious of it, he stood squarely on the ground of the old, classical Slavophile principles. True, his criticism suffered from wordiness and ‘personalities’. Too often a harsh phrase took the place of subtle argumentation. But the basic fault of ‘false’ nationalism was sensed by him and illumined completely correctly. Only on the soil of universal principles that are absolutely significant to all is genuine culture possible, and the national task of Slavdom can lie only in actively converting itself to the service of values that will be chosen for their supreme good in the free exercise of thought and faith... But the denial of the ‘universal-historical’ path is a step towards nihilism, to the complete dissolution of values... in the final analysis, the abolition of the category of values altogether...” (“Vechnoe i prekhodiaschee v uchenii russkikh slavianofilov” (The eternal and the passing in the teaching of the Russian Slavophiles), in Vera i Kul’tura (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 101, 102-103, 104-105).
in the Slavic world there exists something which is somewhat different from the Pan-Slavic spectre – a feeling, only a feeling, which is to be found more often in literature than in politics – Slavophilism. This is the same feeling of blood kinship and sympathy that exists in Italy towards the French, which is far from political Pan-Romanism, or the same feeling of kinship that exists in the United State towards the English and in England towards the Americans, although here also it is far from any kind of fantastic Pan-Anglicanism. It is a sentimental striving for kin, a nostalgia of the blood, a certain organic fear of being separated from one’s own. And if in this Slavophilism the penetrating note of love is just a little more audible than in Romanophilism or Anglophilism (and I think that it is audible), then this is completely natural and comprehensible. People who suffer are closer to each other than people who are lords. We Slavs, first of all as Slavs, and secondly as oppressed slaves, love and strive towards those who suffer from the same injustice, from the same arrogant pride, from the same disdain. Who can understand a slave better than a slave? And who is more likely to help a sufferer than a sufferer?...”

Bishop Nikolai went too far in denying the very existence of Pan-Slavism. But Mark Almond is right in asserting that “Pan-Slavism remained a minority taste in Alexander II’s Russia. Although it attracted interest among journalists and academics as well as curious politicians wondering whether it might serve imperial interests abroad or undermine stability at home, even the Slavic Congress founded in 1858 or the high profile Slavic Congress in Moscow in 1867 attracted little more than interest. Cash to support the idea of Pan-Slavism was in short supply. The Slavic Committee made do with 1700 rubles a year even in 1867, at the height of public interest before the war a decade later.”

**Leontiev on Byzantinism**

An important disciple of Danilevsky was Constantine Leontiev. However, if Leontiev had ever really been an adherent of Danilevsky’s Pan-Slavism, he soon abandoned it under the influence of the holy Optina Elders, especially St. Ambrose, and a closer knowledge of the East. Thus “towards the end of his life, in the early 1890s, he finally lost his faith in Russia’s ability to create a distinctive new cultural type. The future, he prophesied, belonged to socialism; possibly a Russian tsar would stand at the head of the socialist movement and would organize and discipline it just as the Emperor Constantine had ‘organized’ Christianity; or perhaps, he wrote in another apocalyptic prediction, a democratic and secular Russia would become the home of the Antichrist...”

A more important enduring influence in the work of Leontiev was early Slavophilism. However, he was more appreciative than any of the Slavophiles of

---

624 Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.
625 Thus “one of the sources of Leontiev’s ideas”, writes S.V. Khatuntsev, “on the inevitability of serious conflicts between a Russia that was renewing and transforming itself and the civilization of
the continuing importance of Greek Orthodoxy. Leontiev believed that if one subtracted Byzantinism from Slavdom, very little distinctively different was left. An ardent Philhellene, he thought that narrowly Serbian and Bulgarian nationalisms were real and powerful forces, very similar in their aims and psychology to Greek nationalism, and, like contemporary Greek nationalism, sadly lacking in that exalted and spiritual form of “universalist nationalism” that he called Byzantinism. These petty nationalisms, argued Leontiev, were closely related to liberalism. They were all rooted in the French revolution: just as liberalism insisted on the essential equality of all men and their “human rights”, so these nationalisms insisted on the essential equality of all nations and their “national rights”. But this common striving for “national rights” made the nations very similar in their essential egoism; it erased individuality in the name of individualism, hierarchy in the name of egalitarianism.

Leontiev believed, as Walicki writes, that “nations were a creative force only when they represented a specific culture: ‘naked’ or purely ‘tribal’ nationalism was a corrosive force destroying both culture and the state, a levelling process that was, in the last resort, cosmopolitan; in fact, nationalism was only a mask for liberal and egalitarian tendencies, a specific metamorphosis of the universal process of disintegration.”

According to Leontiev, the nations’ striving to be independent was based precisely on their desire to be like every other nation: “Having become politically liberated, they are very glad, whether in everyday life or in ideas, to be like everyone else”. Therefore nationalism, freed from the universalist idea of Christianity, leads in the the West was undoubtedly the ideas of the Slavophiles. Proceeding from a recognition of the complete opposition of the two worlds – the ‘western’, ‘Romano-Germanic’, ‘Catholic-Protestant’, and the ‘eastern’, ‘Slavic-Orthodox’, the Slavophiles concluded that conflicts and wars between them were inevitable. So for Yu.F. Samarin, ‘the essential, root difference’ between the two worlds was already ‘a condition of struggle’ between them in all spheres, including the political. The political opposition between Western Europe and Slavdom was the initial basis of the views of I.S. Aksakov. Already in 1861 he was speaking about ‘the hatred, often instinctive’ of Europe for the Slavic, Orthodox world, the case of which was ‘the antagonism between the two opposing educational principles and the decrepit world’s envy of the new one, to which the future belongs’. Several years later Aksakov wrote: ‘The whole task of Europe consisted and consists in putting an end to the material and moral strengthening of Russia, so as not to allow the new, Orthodox-Slavic world to arise…’ However, he did not think that the opposition between the West and Russia unfailingly signified enmity or war between them. No less important for the genesis of the ideas of Leontiev that are being reviewed was his conception of the war of 1853-56 and the anti-Russian campaigns in Europe during the Polish rebellion of 1863-1864. Both the Eastern war and the anti-Russian campaigns convinced him that the West was irreconcilably hostile to Russia.” ("Problema ‘Rossia –Zapad’ vo vzgliadakh K.N. Leontieva (60-e gg. XIX veka)” (The Problem of Russia and the West in the views of K.N. Leontiev (in the 60s of the 19th century), Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History), 2006 (3), p. 119).

As Leontiev put it: “The Greeks have ‘the Byzantine empire’, ‘the Great Hellenic Idea’; while the Bulgars have ‘Great Bulgaria’. Is it not all the same?” (“Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh – IV” (Letters on Eastern Matters – IV), op. cit., p. 363.

“So much for the national development, which makes them all similar to contemporary Europeans, which spreads... petty rationalism, egalitarianism, religious indifference, European bourgeois uniformity in tastes and manners: machines, pantaloons, frock-coats, top hats and demagogu!” (“Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij” (The Fruits of the National Movements), op. cit., p. 560).

Walicki, op. cit., p. 303.
end to a soulless, secular cosmopolitanism. “In the whole of Europe the purely national, that is, *ethnic* principle, once released from its *religious fetters*, will at its triumph give fruits that are by no means national, but, on the contrary, in the highest degree cosmopolitan, or, more precisely, *revolutionary*.”\(^{629}\) The nations were like a man who is released from prison during an epidemic. It would be safer for him to remain in prison until the epidemic passes instead of striving for “liberation”. In the same way, “the political nationalism of our time does not give national isolation, because the overwhelming influence of cosmopolitan tastes is too strong...”\(^{630}\)

Leontiev foresaw that state nationalism could lead to the internationalist *merging* of states. “A grouping of states according to pure nationalities,” wrote Leontiev, “will lead European man very quickly to the dominion of internationalism”\(^{631}\) – that is, a European Union or even a Global United Nations. “A state grouping *according to tribes and nations* is... nothing other than the preparation - striking in its force and vividness - for the transition to a cosmopolitan state, first a pan-European one, and then, perhaps, a global one, too! This is terrible! But still more terrible, in my opinion, is the fact that so far in Russia nobody has seen this or wants to understand it...”\(^{632}\)

“This striving for unity”, writes Wil van den Bercken, “provoked in Leontiev a fear of cultural impoverishment. He feared that the old capital cities of Europe would be swept off the map because formerly they had been centres of hostility between the European nations, and that the monarchies would disappear in favour of ‘a banal workers’ republic. Leontiev asks himself: ‘What price must be paid for such a fusion? Will not a new pan-European state have to dispense in principle with recognizing all local differences?... In any case France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc. will cease to exist as states; they will become districts of the new state as former Piedmont, Tuscany, Rome and Naples have become districts for Italy, and as now Hessen, Hanover and Prussia have themselves become districts of pan-Germany; they will become for pan-Europe what Burgundy and Brittany have long become for France!’ According to Leontiev, the cultural complexity of Europe cannot be maintained in a Europe which has been democratically levelled down, but only in the various monarchistic states of Europe...”\(^{633}\)

Orthodoxy recognizes no essential difference between Jew and Greek, Scythian and barbarian *so long as they are all Orthodox*, all members of the Church. The same applies on the collective level, between nations. This is the *Orthodox egalitarianism*. So it went against the spirit of Orthodoxy for Russia to take the side of one Orthodox nation against another, or of Slavs against non-Slavs. The aim of Russia, as the protectress of Orthodoxy throughout the world, had to be to cool passions, avert

\(^{629}\) Leontiev, *Letter of a Hermit*.
conflicts and build bridges among the Orthodox of different races, rejecting both Pan-Hellenism and Pan-Slavism. Therefore neither Pan-Hellenism nor Pan-Slavism but Byzantinism, was the ideal: the ideal of a commonwealth of all Orthodox nations united by a strict adherence to Holy Orthodoxy in the religious sphere and loyalty to the Orthodox Emperor in the political sphere. This vision has repelled many. Thus it has been argued that “for Leontiev, ‘ascetic and dogmatic Orthodoxy’ was mainly distinguished by its ‘Byzantine pessimism’, its lack of faith in the possibility of harmony and universal brotherhood.” However, this criticism is unjust: Orthodoxy does not reject the possibility of universal brotherhood, still less the actuality of Orthodox brotherhood. But it is realistic; it knows that man is fallen, and that neither the idea of human rights nor that of national rights can take the place of true fraternity, or love in Christ, acquired through true faith in Christ and ascetic struggle.

The Greco-Bulgarian Schism

In her role as the defender of Ecumenical Orthodoxy, Russia’s natural ally was the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the more perspicacious Russians always strove to preserve good relations with the patriarchate. In 1872, however, relations with Constantinople were put to a severe test when an ecclesiastical schism took place between the Greeks and the Bulgarians.

---

634 Walicki, op. cit., p. 308.
635 This was a point stressed by Leontiev’s spiritual father, Elder Ambrose of Optina: “In your note about the living union of Russia with Greece, in our opinion you should first of all have pointed out how the Lord in the beginning founded the Ecumenical Orthodox Church, consisting of five Patriarchates, or individual Churches; and, when the Roman Church fell away from the Ecumenical Church, then the Lord as it were filled up this deprivation by founding the Church of Russia in the north, enlightening Russia with Christianity through the Greek Church, as the main representative of the Ecumenical Church. The attentive and discerning among the Orthodox see here two works of the Providence of God. First, the Lord by his later conversion of Russia to Christianity preserved her from the harm of the papists. And secondly, He showed that Russia, having been enlightened with Christianity through the Greek Church, must be in union with this people, as the main representative of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church, and not with others harmed by heresy. That is how our forefathers acted, seeing, perhaps, a pitiful example, beside the Romans, in the Armenian Church, which through its separation from the Ecumenical Church fell into many errors. The Armenians erred for two reasons: first, they accepted slanders against the Ecumenical Church; and secondly, they wanted self-government and instead of this subjected themselves to the subtle influence of the westerners, from which they were protected by their very geographical position. The cunning hellish enemy also wove his nets and is still weaving them over the Russians, only in a somewhat different form. The Armenians were confused first by accepting a slander against the Ecumenical Church, but afterwards by their desire for self-government. But the Russian could be closer to the same actions by accepting slanders against the first-hierarchs of the Ecumenical Church. And thus, through the enemy’s cunning and our blunders, it will turn out that we, wilfully departing from a useful and saving union with the Ecumenical Church, involuntarily and imperceptibly fall under the harmful influence of western opinions, from which Providence Itself has preserved and protected us, as was said earlier... You should have pointed out that absolute obedience is one thing, and relations with the Greek Church another. In the latter case there is nothing obligatory with regard to absolute obedience...” (Letter 226, Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’ (Orthodox Life), 478, November, 1989, pp. 208-209)
Now the Bulgarians were the only Orthodox nation in the Balkans that had not achieved some measure of political independence through revolution. By the same token, however, they were the only nation that had not been divided by revolution. Thus the Greek revolution had divided the Greek nation between the Free State of Greece and the Ottoman Empire, and successive Serbian rebellions had divided the Serbs between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, the Free States of Serbia and Montenegro. Romania was a more-or-less independent state, but with many Romanians still outside her borders. Of the Balkan Christian nations in 1871, only the Bulgarians had no independent State or statelet – almost all Bulgarians were all living within the borders of one State – the Ottoman empire. However, things were stirring in Bulgaria, too. Only the Bulgarians saw the main obstacle to their national ambitions not in the Ottomans - some were even happy at the thought of a “Turkish tsar” (after all, the Bulgarians were partly of Turkic origin) – but in the neighbouring Christian nations. There was particular tension in the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, which from ancient times had been Greek\textsuperscript{636}, but where there were now more Bulgarians than Greeks. The question was: if Turkish power finally collapsed west of the Bosphorus, which nation would take control of these provinces – the Greeks or the Bulgarians?

Parallel to the movement for political independence was a movement for ecclesiastical independence. “The impetus for the Bulgarian movement for ecclesiastical independence,” writes Eugene Pavlenko, “was provided by the issuing in 1856 by the Turkish government of a decree promising liberal reforms. In 1860 there followed a de facto refusal of the Bulgarians to submit to the Patriarchate, which did not satisfy their demands for the right to elect their own bishops in their own dioceses and the granting to them the possibility of occupying the higher Church posts on an equal basis with the Greeks. The Patriarchate of Constantinople made various concessions: it issued Divine service books for the Bulgarian clergy in the Slavonic language, and appointed archimandrites from the Bulgarians. Later, under the influence of passions aroused on both sides, the demands of the Bulgarians intensified and flowed out into the desire to have their own separate exarchate. In 1867 the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Gregory VI proposed a project for the creation of a separate Bulgarian exarchate, but no meeting of minds was achieved on this project. It was hindered not only by the impossibility of precisely delineating dioceses with Greek and Bulgarian populations, but also by the gradually formed striving of the Bulgarians to create their own national Church, in which every Bulgarian, wherever he might be – in Bulgaria or in Asia Minor - would be in subjection only to the Bulgarian hierarchy. Such a striving was leading to a situation of ecclesiastical dual powers and to schism, but the Bulgarians were no longer upset by this. They wanted a schism, they were seeking it. They wanted separation not only from the Greeks, but also from the whole of Orthodoxy, since such a separation made them an independent people. ‘Look how willingly religion

\textsuperscript{636} Moreover, the 28\textsuperscript{th} canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council specifically mentions Thrace and Macedonia as coming within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Greeks were to use this canon in defence of their position.
has been sacrificed for the same purely tribal principle, for the same national-cosmopolitan impulses!’ said K.N. Leontiev in this connection.637

“In 1868 Patriarch Gregory VI of Constantinople attempted to settle the Greco-Bulgarian question by convening an Ecumenical Council, but without success. In these circumstances the Bulgarians decided to act through the sultan and submitted to him a petition concerning the re-establishment of the ecclesiastical independence which had been lost because of the abolition of the Trnovo Patriarchate. ‘Asking the Porte to establish their national independent hierarchy,’ wrote Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, ‘shows that although the Bulgarians have had sufficient time to think over what they are doing, they still have the stubborn desire without having acquired understanding. It is possible to establish a new independent hierarchy only with the blessing of a lawfully existing hierarchy.’638 In reply to this request of the Bulgarians the Porte put forward two projects. According to point 3 of both projects, ‘in Constantinople, next to the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, a pre-eminent Orthodox Metropolitan of Bulgaria must be introduced…, to whom the supervision of the administration of the Bulgarian churches is to be entrusted and under whom there will be an assembly, that is, a kind of Synod, occupied with church affairs.’ In point 5 of one of these projects the Bulgarian Church is also called ‘a separate body’, while the aforementioned assembly is more than once called a Synod.”639

The patriarch objected to this project on sound canonical grounds: it is forbidden by the Holy Canons for two separate hierarchies to exist on the same territory (8th canon of the First Ecumenical Council; 34th and 35th canons of the Holy Apostles). However, in 1870 the sultan issued a firman giving permission to the Bulgarians to establish a separate exarchate with a specified number of dioceses. The administration of the exarchate was given to the Synod of the Bulgarian bishops under the presidency of the exarch. However, the following concessions were made to the Ecumenical Patriarch: the Bulgarian exarch had to commemorate his name in the liturgy; he had to refer to him in connection with the most important matters of the faith; the election of a new exarch had to be confirmed by the patriarch; and the Bulgarians had to receive chrism from the patriarch. Patriarch Gregory asked the Ottoman authorities for permission to convene an Ecumenical Council to examine this question, but he was refused, and resigned his see.

In April, 1872 a Bulgarian Assembly in Constantinople elected its exarch. However, the new Patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimus IV, refused, as Pavlenko writes, “not only to recognize, but also to receive the exarch, from whom he demanded written repentance for all that had been done. But the semi-independent existence of the exarchate no longer suited the Bulgarians, either. They longed for complete separation from the Greeks, which could only be achieved by means of an

637 Leontiev, “Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij” (The Fruits of the National Movements), op. cit., p. 559.
638 Metropolitan Philaret, in Leontiev, “Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh” (Letters on Eastern Matters), op. cit., p. 360.
ecclesiastical schism. On May 11, 1872, after the Gospel during the Liturgy, which was celebrated in Constantinople by the exarch together with the other Bulgarian bishops and many clergy, an act signed by the Council of seven Bulgarian bishops was proclaimed, which declared that the Bulgarian Church was independent. On May 15, the Patriarchal Synod declared the Bulgarian exarch deprived of his rank and defrocked; the other Bulgarian bishops, together with all the clergy and laity in communion with them, were subjected to ecclesiastical punishments. A declaration was also made concerning the convening of a Local Council...

“The Local Council of Constantinople opened on August 29, 1872. 32 hierarchs and all the Eastern Patriarchs except Jerusalem took part in it. On September 16, in its third session, the Constantinopolitan Council confirmed the decision according to which all the Bulgarian hierarchs with their clergy and laity were declared schismatics, and the whole of the Bulgarian Church was declared schismatic. In relation to phyletism the Council made the following decision: ‘...We have concluded that when the principle of racial division is juxtaposed with the teaching of the Gospel and the constant practice of the Church, it is not only foreign to it, but also completely opposed, to it.’ ‘We decree the following in the Holy Spirit: 1. We reject and condemn racial division, that is, racial differences, national quarrels and disagreements in the Church of Christ, as being contrary to the teaching of the Gospel and the holy canons of our blessed fathers, on which the holy Church is established and which adorn human society and lead it to Divine piety. 2. In accordance with the holy canons, we proclaim that those who accept such division according to races and who dare to base on it hitherto unheard-of racial assemblies are foreign to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are real schismatics.’”

The Churches of Russia, Jerusalem, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania remained in communion with the Bulgars. So it is difficult to say that the Bulgarians were in the full sense schismatics... Nevertheless, the Greek and the Bulgarian Churches remained out of communion until 1945...

Now the synodical condemnation of “phyletism”, or ecclesiastical nationalism, was certainly timely. However, for many the conciliar condemnation of nationalism carried little weight because it came from the patriarchate that they considered the first sinner in this respect. Thus D.A. Khomiakov wrote. “Is not ‘pride in Orthodoxy’ nothing other than the cultural pride of the ancient Greek? And, of course, the true ‘phyletism’, formulated for the struggle against the Bulgarians, is precisely the

---

640 Pavlenko, op. cit. The full report of the special commission can be found in Hildo Boas and Jim Forest, For the Peace from Above: an Orthodox Resource Book, Sydnesmos, 1999; in “The Heresy of Racism”, In Communion, Fall, 2000, pp. 16-18.
characteristic of the Greeks themselves to a much greater extent than the Bulgarians, Serbs, Syrians and others. With them it is only a protest against the basic phyletism of the Greeks. The contemporary Greek considers himself the exclusive bearer of pure Orthodoxy...

Even the Philhellene Leontiev agreed. Although he supported the Greeks on the purely canonical issue, he thought that both sides were equally responsible for the schism: “Both you [Greeks] and the Bulgarians can equally be accused of phyletism, that is, in introducing ethnic interests into Church questions, and in the use of religion as a political weapon; but the difference lies in the fact that Bulgarian phyletism is defensive, while yours is offensive. Their phyletism seeks only to mark out the boundaries of their tribe; yours seeks to cross the boundaries of Hellenism…”

642 Khomiakov, Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost' (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk: Belaruskaya Gramata, 1997, p. 19. Cf. Glubokovsky, N.N.: "Greek nationalism historically merged with Orthodoxy and protected it by its own self-preservation, while 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, enduing 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 Grigoriios 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 a '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-eclesiastical strivings to be impermissible in others and even labelled them 'phyletism', a new-fangled heresy." ("Pravoslavie po ego sushchestvu" (Orthodoxy in its essence), in Tserkov' i Vremia (The Church and the Times), 1991, pp. 5-6).

643 Leontiev, “Panslavism i Greki” (Pan-Slavism and the Greeks), op. cit., p. 46.
We return now to the “Eastern Question” in the political sense - the competition between the Great Powers, especially Russia and Britain, to control territories of “the sick man of Europe”, Turkey. The British persistently tried to oppose Russia’s expansion towards the Mediterranean in defence of her co-religionists, the Orthodox. “British interests in the Balkans,” writes Roman Golicz, “derived from wider economic interests in India via the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1858 the British Government had taken direct control over Indian affairs. Since 1869 the Suez Canal had provided it with a direct route to India. Britain needed to secure the shipping routes which passed through areas, like Suez, that were nominally Turkish.”

Or rather, that was the theory. In fact, Russia presented no threat to British interests in India, whether in the Eastern Mediterranean or in Central Asia, the other area of Anglo-Russian tensions. Rather, the real cause of British hostility to Russian expansion was simply visceral jealousy – the jealousy of the world’s greatest maritime empire in relation to the world’s greatest land-based empire. And it was expressed in a fierce, “jingoistic” spirit. As Selischev writes: “If Palmerston unleashed the Crimean war, then Disraeli was ready to unleash war with Russia in 1877-78, in order, as he wrote to Queen Victoria, to save the Ottoman state and ‘cleanse Central Asia from the Muscovites and throw them into the Caspian sea.’” Palmerston himself commented once that “these half-civilized governments such as those of China, Portugal, Spanish America require a Dressing every eight or ten years to keep them in order”. “And no one who knew his views on Russia,” writes Dominic Lieven, “could doubt his sense that she too deserved to belong to this category.”

The conflict really began in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, “a series of disconnected incidents, beginning with strident Muslim resistance to the plan that a new Orthodox cathedral being built in Sarajevo would tower over the sixteenth-century Begova mosque, sparked violence. From 1872 onwards there was resistance to Ottoman tax-gatherers, with peasants arming themselves and taking refuge in nearby Montenegro. The local authorities responded, as they usually did, with a knee-jerk brutality: by 1876 hundreds of villages had been burned and more than 5,000 Bosnian peasants killed. Soon the contagion of rebellion began to seep into the Bulgarian provinces. The threat of a general uprising seemed imminent.

“Every piece of revolutionary propaganda and each intelligence report read served to bolster the fear. Was the government in Constantinople to disregard the terrorist threats made by the Bulgarian revolutionaries? The insurgents wrote:

645 Selischev, “Chto neset Pravoslaviu proekt ‘Velikoj Albanii’?” (What will the project of a ‘Greater Albania’ bring for Orthodoxy), Pravoslavnaja Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 2 (1787), January 15/28, 2005, p. 10.
‘Herzegovina is fighting; Montenegro is spreading over the mountains and coming with help; Serbia is ready to put its forces on the move; Greece is about to declare war; Rumania will not remain neutral. Is there any doubt that death is hanging over Turkey?’ In July 1875, at Nevesinje in Herzegovina, the clan chiefs had met and thrown down a challenge to the Turks. One declared: ‘Ever since the damned day of Kosovo [Polje, in 1389] the Turk robs us of our life and liberty. Is it not a shame, a shame before all the world, that we bear the arms of heroes and yet are called Turkish subjects? All Christendom waits for us to rise on behalf of our treasured freedom… Today is our opportunity to rebel and to engage in bloody fight.’ This guerilla war, in Harold Temperley’s view, led directly to the revolt in Bulgaria and all that followed. It was a cruel war on both sides. The first things that the British Consul Holmes [in Sarajevo] saw as he entered Nevesinje were a Turkish boy’s head blackening in the sun, and a bloody froth bubbling from the slit throat of a young Turkish girl…”

The Turks replied in kind. When the Bulgars rebelled in the town of Panagyurishte in Central Bulgaria the Turkish “Bashi Bazouks” unleashed a savage wave of reprisals that left about 12,000 dead. Many of the slain were martyred precisely because they refused to renounce their Orthodox faith for Mohammedanism.

For example, early in May, 1876, the Turks came to the village of Batak, and said to the second priest, Fr. Peter: “We’d like to say a couple of words to you, priest. If you carry them out, priest, we shall not kill you. Will you become a Turk [the word actually means: ‘become a Muslim’], priest?” Fr. Peter boldly replied: “I will give up my head, but I will not give up my faith!” Then the Turks beheaded him.

The other priest of the village, Fr. Nyech, saw all of his seven daughters beheaded. “And each time he was asked: ‘The turban or the axe?’ The Hieromartyr replied with silence. His last child having been put to death, the torturers plucked out the Priest’s beard, pulled out his teeth, gouged out his eyes, cut off his ears, and chopped his body, already lifeless, into pieces…”

And yet Western governments at first dismissed these reports, preferring to believe their ambassadors and consuls rather than The Daily Telegraph. Disraeli dismissed public concern about the Bulgarian atrocities as “coffee-house babble”. And when a conference was convened in Constantinople by the Great Powers, it failed to put any significant pressure on the Turks.

---

In July, 1876 Serbia and Montenegro also declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The main cause here was slightly different – the Ottomans’ imposition of a tithe of one-tenth or one-eighth of their crop on the Orthodox peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. When the harvest failed in 1874, the Ottomans resorted to force, and by the end of July all the peasants in the region had fled to the mountains in armed rebellion. As Noel Malcolm writes, “the basic cause of popular discontent was agrarian; but this discontent was harnessed in some parts of Bosnia by members of the Orthodox population who had been in contact with Serbia, and who now publicly declared their loyalty to the Serbian state. Volunteers from Serbia, Slavonia, Croatia, Slovenia and even Russia (plus some Italian Garibaldists, and a Dutch adventuress called Johanna Paulus) were flooding into the country, convinced that the great awakening of the South Slavs was at hand. The Bosnian governor assembled an army in Herzegovina, which acted with ineffective brutality during the autumn and harsh winter of 1875-6. The fiercer begs raised their own ‘bashi-bazooks’ (irregular troops) and, fearing a general overthrow in Bosnia, began terrorizing the peasant population. During 1876, hundreds of villages were burnt down and at least 5000 peasants killed; by the end of the year, the number of refugees from Bosnia was probably 100,000 at least, and possibly 250,000.”

Opposition to Disraeli’s policy of inaction was now mounting. In September, 1876 Gladstone, his great rival, published *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*: “Let the Turks now carry off their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mindirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope to clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.”

Disraeli, on the other hand, ascribed the violence to the activities of the secret societies, which he said were on the side of Serbia. “Serbia declared war on Turkey, that is to say, the secret societies of Europe declared war on Turkey, societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination and which, if necessary, could produce massacre.”

Public opinion was also demanding action in Russia. As Hosking writes, “Army officers, society ladies and merchants formed Slavic Benevolent Committees which called meetings, collected money, and began to send volunteers to fight for the Serbian army. Dostoevskii… preached war against the Turks as a means of achieving ‘eternal peace’. The authorities decided they could not condemn these efforts out of hand, and allowed Russian officers and men to take leave and volunteer for the Serbian army: among them was Fadeyev’s friend, General Mikhail Cherniaev, who soon became an emblematic hero for the Panslavs.”

But Cherniaev’s support was not enough to save the Serbs from defeat by the Turks. The Russians were now faced with a dilemma. Either they committed themselves officially to war with Turkey, or they had to resign themselves to seeing a sharp fall in their influence in the Balkans. In November, 1876 the Tsar spoke of the

---

need to defend the Slavs. And his foreign minister Gorchakov wrote that “national and Christian sentiment in Russia... impose on the Emperor duties which His Majesty cannot disregard”. Ivan Aksakov then took up the Tsar’s words, invoking the doctrine of Moscow the Third Rome: “The historical conscience of all Russia spoke from the lips of the Tsar. On that memorable day, he spoke as the descendant of Ivan III, who received from the Paleologi the Byzantine arms and combined them with the arms of Moscow, as the descendant of Catherine and of Peter... From these words there can be no drawing back... The slumbering east is now awakened, and not only the Slavs of the Balkans but the whole Slavonic world awaits its regeneration.”

On April 24, 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey - “but more”, argues Hosking, “to preserve Russia’s position in the European balance of power than with Panslav aims in mind. At a Slavic Benevolent Society meeting Ivan Aksakov called the Russo-Turkish war a ‘historical necessity’ and added that ‘the people had never viewed any war with such conscious sympathy’. There was indeed considerable support for the war among peasants, who regarded it as a struggle on behalf of suffering Orthodox brethren against the cruel and rapacious infidel. A peasant elder from Smolensk province told many years later how the people of his village had been puzzled as to ‘Why our Father-Tsar lets his people suffer from the infidel Turks?’, and had viewed Russia’s entry into the war with relief and satisfaction.”

As we have seen, there was also a large section of British opinion, led by Gladstone, that was against the Turks. However, nationalism and geopolitical considerations prevailed. The British Prime Minister Disraeli and his cabinet, supported by Queen Victoria, decided that if the Russians succeeded in taking Constantinople, this would be a casus belli.

After a victorious campaign across the Balkans, the Russian armies captured Adrianople, only a short march from Constantinople, in January, 1878. The Russians were now in a similar position to where they had been in 1829. At that time Tsar Nicholas I had held back from conquering Constantinople because he did not have the support of the Concert of Europe. That Concert no longer existed in 1878. However, it was a similar fear of provoking a war with the Western powers that held the Russians back again now...

As Serb and Bulgarian volunteers flocked to the Russian camp, the commander-in-chief and brother of the Tsar, Grand Duke Nikolai, wrote to the Tsar: “We must go to the centre, to Tsargrad, and there finish the holy cause you have assumed.” He was not the only one who clamoured for the final, killer blow. “‘Constantinople must be ours,’ wrote Dostoyevsky, who saw its conquest by the Russian armies as nothing less than God’s own resolution of the Eastern Question and as the fulfilment of Russia’s destiny to liberate Orthodox Christianity.

---

652 Hosking, op. cit., p. 371.
653 Figes, op. cit., p. 40.
“’It is not only the magnificent port, not only the access to the seas and oceans, that binds Russia as closely to the resolution... of this fateful question, nor is it even the unification and regeneration of the Slavs. Our goal is more profound, immeasurably more profound. We, Russia, are truly essential and unavoidable both for the whole of Eastern Christendom and for the whole fate of future Orthodoxy on the earth, for its unity. This is what our people and their rulers have always understood. In short, this terrible Eastern Question is virtually our entire fate for years to come. It contains, as it were, all our goals and, mainly, our only way to move out into the fullness of history.’”

Immediately, however, the entire British Mediterranean Squadron was sent to the Dardanelles by Disraeli as British public opinion turned “jingoistic”:

We don’t want to fight, but by jingo if we do,
We’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, and got the money too;
We’ve fought the bear before, and while we’re Britons true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.

Under the influence of this threat, the Russians agreed not to send troops into Constantinople if no British troops were landed on either side of the Straits. Then, on March 3, at the village of San Stefano, just outside Constantinople, they signed a treaty with the Turks, whereby the latter recognized the full independence of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and the autonomy of an enlarged Bulgarian state that was to include Macedonia and part of Thrace. “The Treaty also constituted Bulgaria as a tributary principality of Russia; it required a heavy financial indemnity from Turkey; it gave to Russia the right to select a port on the Black Sea; it opened up the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus at all times to Russian vessels; it obtained full right for all Christians remaining under Turkish rule; and it gave Bessarabia to Russia in exchange for the corner of Bulgaria known as Dobruja.”

In a little more than 20 years the Crimean war had been avenged: it was a great victory for the Orthodox armies... However, the Great Powers were determined to rob Russia of the fruits of her victory by diplomatic means. As Disraeli demanded that the Russians surrendered their gains, Bismarck convened a congress in Berlin in June, 1878. It was agreed that all troops should be withdrawn from the area of Constantinople, and Greater Bulgaria was cut down to two smaller, non-contiguous areas, while Britain added Cyprus to her dominions. Serbia, Montenegro and Romania were recognised as independent States (on condition that they gave full rights to the Jews), but Serbia and Montenegro lost the acquisitions they had made in the war.

More importantly, writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “Bosnia and Herzegovina were for some reason handed over to Austria for her ‘temporary’ use in order to

---

655 Golicz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
establish ‘normal government’. In this way a mine was laid which, according to the plan of the Masons, was meant to explode later in a new Balkan war with the aim of ravaging and destroying Russia. At the congress Bismarck called himself an ‘honest broker’. But that was not how he was viewed in Russia. Here the disturbance at his behaviour was so great that Bismarck considered it necessary secretly (in case of war with Russia) to conclude with Austria, and later with Italy, the famous ‘Triple Union’…”

Disraeli, the Jewish leader of the Western Christian world, had triumphed… And then the Jews proceeded to punish Russia again. “In 1877-1878 the House of Rothschild, by agreement with Disraeli, first bought up, and then threw out onto the market in Berlin a large quantity of Russian securities, which elicited a sharp fall in their rate.”

Epilogue

The Eastern Question in the political sense has remained the Eternal Question of Russia’s foreign policy, while the more philosophical eastern questions linked with it have remained the eternal questions that surround Russia’s and the Orthodox world’s understanding of herself to this day.

In the First World War Britain and France – on Russia’s side this time – promised her the Straits and Constantinople in the event of an Allied victory. This looked a wholly feasible prospect as the Russians were victorious on the Caucasian front, and as Russia’s industries and armies geared up for a major offensive against the Germans in the spring of 1917. However, the revolution intervened, and by the early 1920s it was a British, not a Russian, army that occupied Constantinople, while Ataturk, supported by the Bolsheviks, drove the Greeks into the sea, ending forever the Greek Pan-Hellenist dream.

In our time Constantinople and the Straits still remain the geopolitical centre of the world. Just as in the nineteenth century, Tsarist Russia wanted control of the Straits in order to guarantee her increasingly important grain trade with the rest of the world, so in the twenty-first century Putin’s Russia wants control of the Straits in order to guarantee her increasingly important trade in oil and gas with the rest of the world – and in order to cut off, if need be, the western oil pipe-lines that pass through Turkey. The geopolitical reasons for a Russian conquest of the Straits remain as strong as ever.

---

656 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 349. The disturbance was such that “at a Slavic Benevolent Society banquet in June 1878 Ivan Aksakov furiously denounced the Berlin Congress as ‘an open conspiracy against the Russian people, [conducted] with the participation of the representatives of Russia herself!’” (Hosking, op. cit., pp. 372-373)

However, it is in the spiritual, ecclesiastical realm that the continuing relevance of the eastern questions is most striking. The Orthodox commonwealth of nations remained comparatively strong and united in the nineteenth century thanks to the concord of those two pillars of Orthodoxy – the Russian Empire and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. But then the first pillar, Russia, was toppled, which led quickly to the toppling of the other pillar. Now the Russian empire of Putin is trying on the role of the Third Rome, while the Ecumenical Patriarchate seeks to become the Eastern papacy, the highest court of appeal in Orthodoxy. But these are both fakes – which is why Moscow and Constantinople quarrel for dominion over the Orthodox world in a way that would have horrified their nineteenth-century predecessors.

Now, as in the nineteenth century, various Orthodox nationalisms – Greek, Slav and others – are rampant, while the super-national ideal that we have labelled Byzantinism is ignored. The only solution is to turn again to the epicentre of the Orthodox world, to Hagia Sophia, the Wisdom of God, and learn again what it means to be one in Christ. “Constantinople will be ours” – the capital not of Russia, nor Greece, but of the whole Orthodox oikoumene…

January 26 / February 8, 2011.
21. DOSTOYEVSKY AND THE LATER SLAVOPHILES ON RUSSIA

The last three years in Dostoyevsky’s life, 1878-1881, are notable for an intensification and deepening of his thought on Russia and her destiny. It was triggered particularly by Russia’s failure to conquer Constantinople and unite the Orthodox peoples under the Tsar, which was a great blow to the Slavophiles. “At a Slavic Benevolent Society banquet in June 1878 Ivan Aksakov furiously denounced the Berlin Congress as ‘an open conspiracy against the Russian people, [conducted] with the participation of the representatives of Russia herself!’”

Dostoyevsky was also disillusioned. But his disillusionment was not the product of the failure of his “Pan-Slavist” dreams, as some have made out. For while Dostoyevsky was a Slavophile in the tradition of Khomiakov and Kireyevsky, his dreams was not “Pan-Slavist”, but “Pan-Human”; he longed was for the conversion of the whole world to Christ, and thereby to real fraternity – that fraternity which the revolutionaries had promised, but had not delivered, and would never be able to deliver. A major step on the road to this dream was to be the liberation and unification of the Orthodox peoples of the East under the Russian tsar through the planting of the Cross on the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople by the Russian armies; and for that reason he took the failure of the Russian armies to take Constantinople in 1878 so badly.

Dostoyevsky found real brotherhood only in the Orthodox Church, and in that Orthodox nation which, he believed, had most thoroughly incarnated the ideals of the Gospel – Russia. “The moral idea is Christ. In the West, Christ has been distorted and diminished. It is the kingdom of the Antichrist. We have Orthodoxy. As a consequence, we are the bearers of a clearer understanding of Christ and a new idea for the resurrection of the world... There the disintegration, atheism, began earlier: with us, later, but it will begin certainly with the entrenchment of atheism... The whole matter lies in the question: can one, being civilized, that is, a European, that is, believe absolutely in the Divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? (for all faith consists in this)... You see: either everything is contained in faith or nothing is: we recognize the importance of the world through Orthodoxy. And the whole question is, can one believe in Orthodoxy? If one can, then everything is saved: if not, then, better to burn... But if Orthodoxy is impossible for the enlightened man, then... all this is hocus-pocus and Russia’s whole strength is provisional... It is possible to believe seriously and in earnest. Here is everything, the burden of life for the Russian people and their entire mission and existence to come...”

It was for the sake of Orthodoxy, the true brotherhood, that the Russian armies had sacrificed, and would continue to sacrifice themselves, for the freedom of the Greek, Slav and Romanian peoples. “I am speaking of the unquenchable, inherent

thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ.” 660 Russia, Dostoyevsky believed, had only temporarily been checked at the Gates of Constantinople, and would one day conquer it and hand it back to the Greeks, even if it took a hundred years and more. Nor was this universalist love confined to Russia’s brothers in the faith: it extended even to her enemies in Western Europe – that “graveyard of holy miracles”. The lost half of Europe, immersed in Catholicism and its child, Protestantism, and its grandson, atheism, would be converted from Russia: “Light will shine forth from the East!” “Europe is a mother to us, as is Russia, she is our second mother; we have taken much from her and shall do so again, and we do not wish to be ungrateful to her.” No Westernizer said this; it is beyond Westerners, as it is beyond Slavophiles. Dostoyevsky wrote it at the height of his wisdom, on the threshold of death… His last hope was Messianism, but a Messianism which was essentially European, which developed out of his perception of Russia as a sort of better Europe, which was called upon to save and renew Europe.” 661

But in the meantime, what sorrows, what torture and bloodshed, lay in store for Europe, and first of all for Russia, whose ruling classes were already Orthodox only in name! It was all the fault of the misguided idealism that sought, on the basis of science and rationalism, to force men to be happy – or rather, to give them happiness of a kind in exchange for their freedom. This rationalist-absolutist principle was common both to the most believing (Catholic) and most unbelieving (Socialist) factions in Western political life, and was typified in the Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov, who “in his last remaining years… comes to the clear conviction that it is only the advice of the great and terrible spirit that could bring some sort of supportable order into the life of the feeble rebels, ‘the unfinished experimental creatures created as a mockery’. And so, convinced of that, he sees that one has to follow the instructions of the wise spirit, the terrible spirit of death and destruction. He therefore accepts lies and deceptions and leads men consciously to death and destruction. Keeps deceiving them all the way, so that they should not notice where they are being led, for he is anxious that those miserable, blind creatures should at least on the way think themselves happy. And, mind you, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man believed so passionately all his life! Is not that a calamity?…” 662

Since so many in Russia’s educated classes thought like Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor (although much less seriously and systematically, for the most part), it was premature to think of the unification of the Orthodox peoples – still less, of the whole of Europe - under the leadership of Russia. The first need was to unite Russia within herself. And that meant uniting the educated classes with the bulk of the peasant narod, whose lack of education and poverty, and attachment to the Orthodox Tsar and Church, repelled the proud, self-appointed

660 Dostoyevsky, The Diary of a Writer, January, 1881.
guardians of the nation’s conscience. In fact, populism had been an underlying theme of that generation of liberals, most notably in the attempt of the young revolutionary narodniki to “go out to the people”. Dostoyevsky took it upon himself to show them a surer, because humbler way of being united with the people...

In his youth Dostoyevsky had been converted from the socialist ideas of his youth to the official slogan of Nicholas I’s Russia, “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Narodnost’”. But he wrote little directly about Orthodoxy or Autocracy, probably because this would immediately have put off his audience, confining himself to such remarks as: "Our constitution is mutual love. Of the Monarch for the people and of the people for the Monarch." A generation earlier, Slavophiles such as Khomiakov and Kireyevsky had been able to speak openly in support of the Church and the Tsar. But the years 1860-1880 had entrenched liberalism and positivism firmly in the hearts and minds of the intelligentsia. So Dostoyevsky had to approach the subject more indirectly, through the third element of the slogan – Narodnost’, Nationhood. Such an approach had the further advantage that it was the way Dostoyevsky himself had returned to the faith: from the time of his imprisonment in Siberia, his eyes had slowly been opened to the reality of the people, their spiritual beauty and their Orthodox faith.

At the same time, a whole pleiad of artists, the so-called pochvenniki, “lovers of the soil”, were coming to a similar discovery, giving a kind of second wind to Slavophilism. For example, in 1872, during the celebrations of the bicentenary of that most “anti-pochvennik” of tsars, Peter the Great, the young composer Modest Mussorgsky wrote to his closest friend: “The power of the black earth will make itself manifest when you plough to the very bottom. It is possible to plough the black earth with tools wrought of alien materials. And at the end of the 17th century they ploughed Mother Russia with just such tools, so that she did not immediately realize what they were ploughing with, and, like the black earth, she opened up and began to breathe. And she, our beloved, received the various state bureaucrats, who never gave her, the long-suffering one, time to collect herself and to think: ‘Where are you pushing me?’ The ignorant and confused were executed: force!... But the times are out of joint: the state bureaucrats are not letting the black earth breathe.

“‘We’ve gone forward!’ – you lie. ‘We haven’t moved!’ Paper, books have gone forward – we haven’t moved. So long as the people cannot verify with their own eyes what is being cooked out of them, as long as they do not themselves will what is or is not to be cooked out of them – till then, we haven’t moved! Public benefactors of every kind will seek to glorify themselves, will buttress their glory with documents, but the people groan, and so as not to groan they drink like the devil, and groan worse than ever: haven’t moved!”

Mussorgsky composed in *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanschina* two “popular” dramas which evoked the spirit of Mother Russia and the Orthodox Church as no other work of secular art had done. Dostoyevsky was to do the same in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He hoped, through the beauty of his art, to open the eyes of his fellow intelligentsya to the people’s beauty, helping them thereby to “bow down before the people’s truth” – Orthodoxy. In this way, “beauty” – the beauty of the people’s truth, the Russian God – “will save the world”.

However, Dostoyevsky’s concept of the people is easily misunderstood, and needs careful explication. Some have seen in it extreme chauvinism, others – sentimental cosmopolitanism. The very diversity of these reactions indicates a misunderstanding of Dostoyevsky’s antinomical reasoning.

Let us consider, first, the following words of Shatov in *The Devils*: “Do you know who are now the only ‘God-bearing’ people on earth, destined to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new god and to whom alone the keys of life and of the new word have been vouchsafed?” 665 The “people” here is, of course, the Russian people. And the God they bear is Christ, Who is “new” only in the sense that the revelation of the truth of Christ in Orthodoxy is something new for those other nations who were once Christian but who have lost the salt of True Christianity. Not that the Russians are considered genetically or racially superior to all other nations; for “Russianness” is a spiritual concept closely tied up with confession of the one true faith, which may exclude many people of Russian blood (for example, the unbelieving intelligentsia), but include people of other nations with the same faith. Thus Shatov agrees with Stavrogin that “an atheist can’t be a Russian”, and “an atheist at once ceases to be a Russian”. And again: “A man who does not belong to the Greek Orthodox faith cannot be a Russian.” 666

It follows that “the Russian people” is a concept with a universalist content insofar as her Orthodox faith is universal; it is virtually equivalent to the concept of “the Orthodox Christian people”, in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither barbarian nor Scythian” (Colossians 3.11). For “if,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “it is possible to call the fact that Christianity has become the content of a certain people’s narodnost’ the national property of that people, then such a property belongs also to the Russian people. But we should rather add the term ‘universal’ here, because the very nationality is expressed in universality, universality has become the content of the narodnost’.” 667

Shatov continues: “The purpose of the whole evolution of a nation, in every people and at every period of its existence, is solely the pursuit of God, their God, their very own God, and faith in Him as the only true one... The people is the body of God. Every people is a people only so long as it has its own particular god and

---

666 Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, p. 255.
excludes all other gods in the world without any attempt at reconciliation; so long as
it believes that by its own god it will conquer and banish all the other gods from the
world. So all believed from the very beginning of time – all the great nations, at any
rate, all who have been in any way marked out, all who have played a leading part
in the affairs of mankind. It is impossible to go against the facts. The Jews lived only
to await the coming of the true God, and they left the true God to the world. The
Greeks deified nature and bequeathed the world their religion - that is, philosophy
and art. Rome deified the people in the State and bequeathed the State to the nations.
France throughout her long history was merely the embodiment and development of
the idea of the Roman god, and if she at last flung her Roman god into the abyss and
gave herself up to atheism, which for the time being they call socialism, it is only
because atheism is still healthier than Roman Catholicism. If a great people does not
believe that truth resides in it alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively), if it does not
believe that it alone is able and has been chosen to raise up and save everybody by
its own truth, it is at once transformed into ethnographical material, and not into a
great people…”

It follows that what we would now call “ecumenism” – the belief that other
nations’ religions are as good as one’s own – is the destruction of the nation. And
indeed, this is what we see today. For the modern nations who recognize each
other’s gods have become mere “ethnographical material”, members of the United
Nations but not nations in the full sense of entities having a spiritual principle and
purpose for their independent existence. According to the ecumenist logic, any
nation that asserts its own truth in the face of other supposed truths must be
“nationalist”, and steps must be taken to reduce or destroy its power. Universalism
is declared to be good and nationalism bad. It cannot be that a nation’s particular,
national faith may have a universalist content. And yet this is precisely what
Dostoyevsky insisted on for Russia…

“Dostoyevsky,” wrote Florovsky, “was a faithful follower of the classical
Slavophile traditions, and he based his faith in the great destiny marked out for the
God-bearing People, not so much on historical intimations, as on that Image of God
which he saw in the hidden depths of the Russian people’s soul, and on the
capacities of the Russian spirit for ‘pan-humanity’. Being foreign to a superficial
disdain and impure hostility towards the West, whose great ‘reposed’ he was drawn
to venerate with gratitude, he expected future revelations from his own homeland
because only in her did he see that unfettered range of personal activity that is
equally capable both of the abyss of sanctity and the abyss of sin…, because he
considered only the Russian capable of become ‘pan-human’.”

668 Dostoyevsky, The Devils, pp. 256, 257-258.
669 Florovsky, “Vechnoe i prekhodiaschee v uchenii russkikh slavianofilov” (The eternal and the
passing in the teaching of the Russian Slavophiles), in Vera i Kul’tura (Faith and Culture), St.
Petersburg, 2002, pp. 105-106.
This, Dostoyevsky’s fundamental insight on Russia was summarized and most eloquently expressed in his famous *Pushkin Speech*, delivered at the unveiling of the Pushkin Monument in Moscow on June 8, 1880. In this speech, writes Andrezej Walicki, Dostoyevsky presents Pushkin as the supreme embodiment in art of the Russian spirit, “a ‘prophetic’ apparition who had shown the Russian nation its mission and its future.

“In the character of Aleko, the hero of the poem *Gypsies*, and in Evgeny Onegin, Dostoyevsky suggested, Pushkin had been the first to portray ‘the unhappy wanderer in his native land, the traditional Russian sufferer detached from the people….’ For Dostoyevsky, the term ‘wanderer’ was an apt description of the entire Russian intelligentsia – both the ‘superfluous men’ of the forties and the Populists of the seventies. ‘The homeless vagrants,’ he continued, ‘are wandering still, and it seems that it will be long before they disappear’; at present they were seeking refuge in socialism, which did not exist in Aleko’s time, and through it hoped to attain universal happiness, for ‘a Russian sufferer to find peace needs universal happiness – exactly this: nothing less will satisfy him – of course, as the proposition is confined to theory.’

“Before the wanderer can find peace, however, he must conquer his own pride and humble himself before ‘the people’s truth’. ‘Humble thyself, proud man, and above all, break thy pride,’ was the ‘Russian solution’ Dostoyevsky claimed to have found in Pushkin’s poetry. Aleko failed to follow this advice and was therefore asked to leave by the gypsies; Onegin despised Tatiana – a modest girl close to the ‘soil’ – and by the time he learned to humble himself it was too late. Throughout Pushkin’s work, Dostoyevsky declared, there were constant confrontations between the ‘Russian wanderers’ and the ‘people’s truth’ represented by ‘positively beautiful’ heroes – men of the soil expressing the spiritual essence of the Russian nation. The purpose of these confrontations was to convince the reader of the need for a ‘return to the soil’ and a fusion with the people.

“Pushkin himself was proof that such a return was possible without a rejection of universal ideals. Dostoyevsky drew attention to the poet’s ‘universal susceptibility’, his talent for identifying himself with a Spaniard (Don Juan), an Arab (‘Imitations of the Koran’), an Englishman (‘A Feast During the Plague’), or an ancient Roman (‘Egyptian Nights’) while still remaining a national poet. This ability Pushkin owed to the ‘universalia’ of the Russian spirit: ‘to become a genuine and complete Russian means… to become brother of all men, an all-human man.’

“In his speech Dostoyevsky also spoke about the division into Slavophiles and Westerners, which he regretted as a great, though historically inevitable, misunderstanding. The impulse behind Peter’s reform had been not mere utilitarianism but the desire to extend the frontiers of nationality to include a genuine ‘all-humanity’. Dreams of serving humanity had even been the impulse behind the political policies of the Russian state: ‘For what else has Russia been doing in her policies, during these two centuries, but serving Europe much more
than herself? I do not believe that this took place because of the mere want of aptitude on the part of our statesmen.'

‘Oh the peoples of Europe,’ Dostoyevsky exclaimed in a euphoric vein, ‘have no idea how dear they are to us! And later – in this I believe – we, well, not we but the Russians of the future, to the last man, will comprehend that to become a genuine Russian means to seek finally to reconcile all European controversies, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-human and all-unifying Russian soil, to embrace in it with brotherly love all our brothers, and finally, perhaps, to utter the ultimate word of great, universal harmony, of the fraternal accord of all nations abiding by the law of Christ’s Gospel!’

‘Before delivering his ‘Address’, Dostoyevsky was seriously worried that it might be received coldly by his audience. His fears proved groundless. The speech was an unprecedented success: carried away by enthusiasm, the crowd called out ‘our holy man, our prophet’, and members of the audience pressed around Dostoyevsky to kiss his hands. Even Turgenev, who had been caricatured in The Possessed [The Devils], came up to embrace him. The solemn moment of universal reconciliation between Slavophiles and Westerners, conservatives and revolutionaries, seemed already at hand…”

The Slavophile Ivan Aksakov “ran onto the stage and declared to the public that my speech was not simply a speech but an historical event! The clouds had been covering the horizon, but here was Dostoyevsky’s word, which, like the appearing sun, dispersed all the clouds and lit up everything. From now on there would be brotherhood, and there would be no misunderstandings.”

It was indeed an extraordinary event. And while the enthusiasm was short-lived, the event represented in a real sense an historic turning-point: the point at which the unbelieving intelligentsia had the Gospel preached to them in a language and in a context that they could understand and respond to. For a moment it looked as if the “the Two Russias” created by Peter the Great’s reforms might be united. With the advantage of hindsight one may pour scorn on such an idea.

But, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes: “However accustomed people are to crawling in the dust, they will be grateful to every one who tears them away from the world below and bears them up on his powerful wings to the heavens. A man is ready to give up everything for a moment of pure spiritual joy and bless the name of him who is able to strike on the best strings of his heart. It is here that one must locate the secret of the amazing success won by the famous speech of Dostoyevsky at the Pushkin festival in Moscow. The genius writer himself later described the impression produced by him upon his listeners in a letter to his wife: ‘I read,’ he writes, ‘loudly, with fire. Everything that I wrote about Tatiana was

671 Dostoyevsky, in Igor Volgin, Poslednij God Dostoevskogo (Dostoyevsky’s Last Year), Moscow, 1986, p. 267.
received with enthusiasm. But when I gave forth at the end about the universal union of men, the hall was as it were in hysterics. When I had finished, I will not tell you about the roars and sobs of joy: people who did not know each other wept, sobbed, embraced each other and swore to be better, not to hate each other from then on, but to love each other. The order of the session was interrupted: grandes dames, students, state secretaries — they all embraced and kissed me. How is one to call this mood in the auditorium, which included in itself the best flower of the whole of educated society, if not a condition of spiritual ecstasy, to which, as it seemed, our cold intelligentsia was least of all capable? By what power did the great writer and knower of hearts accomplish this miracle, forcing all his listeners without distinction of age or social position to feel themselves brothers and pour together in one sacred and great upsurge? He attained it, of course, not by the formal beauty of his speech, which Dostoyevsky usually did not achieve, but the greatness of the proclaimed idea of universal brotherhood, instilled by the fire of great inspiration. This truly prophetic word regenerated the hearts of people, forcing them to recognize the true meaning of life; the truth made them if only for one second not only free, but also happy in their freedom.”

* 

June 8, 1880 was the last date on which the deep divisions in Russian society might have been healed, and the slide to revolution halted. However, the opportunity was lost. Disillusion and criticism set in almost immediately from all sides. This was less surprising from the liberals, who were looking for another, leftist answer to the question: “What is to be done?” from Dostoyevsky. They forgot that, as Chekhov wrote in 1888, an artist does not attempt to solve concrete social, political or moral problems, but only to place them in their correct context...

Somewhat more surprising was the less than ecstatic reaction of the right-wing litterati. Thus M.N. Katkov was very happy to publish the Speech in his Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette) — but laughed at it in private. Perhaps for him, too, the Speech offered too little in the form of concrete political solutions or advice – an open endorsement of the monarchy, for example.

And yet Katkov was not far from Dostoyevsky in his views. “M.N. Katkov wrote that the opposition between Russia and the West consists in the fact that there everything is founded on contractual relations, and in Russia – on faith. If western society is ruled by law, then Russian society is ruled by the idea... There is no question that good principles can be laid at the base of any state, but they are deprived of a firm foundation by the absence of religious feeling and a religious view of the world. Good principles are then held either on instinct, which illumines nothing, or on considerations of public utility. But instinct is an unstable thing in a

672 Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), Besedy so svoim sobstvennym serdtsem (Conversations with my own Heart), Jordanville, 1948, pp. 9–10.
673 The only person who retained his enthusiasm for the Speech for years to come was Ivan Aksakov.
674 Volgin, op. cit., p. 266.
675 Volgin, op. cit., p. 271.
reasoning being, while public utility is a conventional concept about which every person can have his own opinion." 676

Like Dostoyevsky, Katkov was striving to build bridges, and especially a bridge between the Tsar and the People (he had been a liberal in his youth). “Russia is powerful,” he wrote, “precisely in the fact that her people do not separate themselves from their Sovereign. Is it not in this alone that the sacred significance that the Russian Tsar has for the Russian people consists?” 677 “Only by a misunderstanding do people think that the monarchy and the autocracy exclude ‘the freedom of the people’. In actual fact it guarantees it more than any banal constitutionalism. Only the autocratic tsar could, without any revolution, by the single word of a manifesto liberate 20 million slaves.” 678 “They say that Russia is deprived of political liberty. They say that although Russian subjects have been given legal civil liberty, they have no political rights. Russian subjects have something more than political rights: they have political obligations. Each Russian subject is obliged to stand watch over the rights of the supreme power and to care for the benefit of the State. It is not so much that each one only has the right to take part in State life and care for its benefits: he is called to this by his duty as a loyal subject. That is our constitution. It is all contained, without paragraphs, in the short formula of our State oath of loyalty…” 679

This was all true, and Dostoyevsky undoubtedly agreed with it in principle. 680 However, he was doing something different from Katkov, and more difficult: not

676 K.V. Glazkov, “Zashchita ot liberalizma” ("A Defence from Liberalism"), Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 15 (1636), August 1/14, 1999, pp. 9, 10, 11.
677 Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1867, № 88; in L.A. Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 312.
678 Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1881, № 115; in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 314.
679 Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1886, № 341; in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 314.
680 Thus he wrote: ‘Is the saying that “the Tsar is their father” a mere phrase, an empty sound in Russia? He who so believes understands nothing about Russia! Nay, this is a profound and most original idea, - a live and mighty organism of the people merging with the Tsar. This idea is a force which has been moulding itself in the course of centuries, especially the last two centuries, which were so dreadful to the people, but which we so ardently eulogize for European enlightenment, forgetting the fact that this enlightenment was bought two centuries ago at the expense of serfdom and a Calvary of the Russian people serving us. The people waited for their liberator, and he came. Why, then, shouldn’t they be his own, true children? The Tsar to the people is not an extrinsic force such as that of some conqueror (as were, for instance, the dynasties of the former Kings of France), but a national, all-unifying force, which the people themselves desired, which they nurtured in their hearts, which they came to love, for which they suffered because from it alone they hoped for their exodus from Egypt. To the people, the Tsar is the incarnation of themselves, their whole ideology, their hopes and beliefs.

“So recently these hopes have been completely realized. Would the people renounce their further hopes? Wouldn’t the latter, on the contrary, be strengthened and reinforced, since after the peasants’ reform the Tsar became the people’s father not merely in hope but in reality. This attitude of the people toward the Tsar is the genuine, adamant foundation of every reform in Russia. If you wish, there is in Russia no creative, protective and leading force other than this live organic bond of the people with their Tsar, from which everything is derived. For instance, who would have ventured to dream about the peasants’ reform without knowing and believing in advance that the Tsar was a father to the people, and that precisely this faith of the people in the Tsar as their father would save
simply *state the truth* before an audience that was in no way ready to accept it in this direct, undiluted form, but *bring them closer to the truth, and inspire them with the truth*. And with this aim he did not call on his audience to unite around the Tsar. In any case, he had certain reservations about the Tsardom that made him in some ways closer to his liberal audience than Katkov. In particular, he did not support the “paralysis” that the Petrine system had imposed on the Church, whereas Katkov’s views were closer to the official, semi-absolutist position.

For example, he wrote: “The whole labour and struggle of Russian History consisted in taking away the power of each over all, in the annihilation of many centres of power. This struggle, which in various forms and under various conditions took place in the history of all the great peoples, was with us difficult, but successful, thanks to the special character of the Orthodox Church, which renounced earthly power and never entered into competition with the State. The difficult process was completed, everything was subjected to one supreme principle and there had to be no place left in the Russian people for any power not dependent on the monarch. In his one-man-rule the Russian people sees the testament of the whole of its life, on him they place all their hope.”

And again he wrote: “[The Tsar] is not only the sovereign of his country and the leader of his people: he is the God-appointed supervisor and protector of the Orthodox Church, which does not recognize any earthly deputy of Christ above it and has renounced any non-spiritual action, presenting all its cares about its earthly prosperity and order to the leader of the great Orthodox people that it has sanctified.”

If Katkov would have preferred more on the monarchy in Dostoyevsky’s speech, Constantine Leontiev was scandalised by the lack of mention of the Church. Volgin writes that “at the end of the Pushkin festival Pobedonostev in a restrained way, without going into details, congratulated Dostoyevsky on his success. And then immediately after his congratulations he sent him ‘Warsaw Diary’ with an article by Constantine Leontiev. This article was angry and crushing. C. Leontiev not only annihilated the Speech point by point from the point of view of his ascetic… Christianity, but compared it directly with another public speech that had taken place at almost the same time as the Moscow festivities, in Yaroslavl diocese at a graduation ceremony in a school for the daughters of clergymen. ‘In the speech of Mr. Pobedonostev (the speaker was precisely him – I.V.),’ writes Leontiev, ‘Christ is known in no other way that through the Church: “love the Church first of all”. In the speech of Mr. Dostoyevsky Christ… is so accessible to each of us in bypassing the Church, that we consider that we have the right… to ascribe to the Saviour promises and protect everything and stave off the calamity?…” (The Diary of a Writer, January, 1881, London: Cassell, pp. 1032-1033).

that He never uttered concerning “the universal brotherhood of the peoples”, “general peace” and “harmony”...”

Leontiev wrote much on the invasion of the twin spirits of liberal cosmopolitanism and nationalism into the Orthodox world. So when he writes that Dostoyevsky “extracted out of the spirit of Pushkin’s genius the prophetic thought of the ‘cosmopolitan’ mission of the Slavs”, it is with scarcely concealed irony. This irony becomes crushing when he speaks about waiting for “the fulfilment of the prophecy of Dostoyevsky, ‘until the Slavs teach the whole of humanity this pan-human love’, which neither the Holy Fathers nor the Apostles nor the Divine Redeemer Himself was able to confirm absolutely in the hearts of men”.

But was he being fair? Dostoyevsky was not looking to the fusion of the races into one liberal-ecumenist conglomerate, but to their union in spirit and true brotherhood through the adoption of the Orthodox faith. Nor was he a chauvinist, but simply believed that the Russian people was the bearer of a truly universal content, the Orthodox Christian Gospel, which it would one day preach to all nations; for “this Kingdom of the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24.14). Speaking of the need that “Constantinople shall be ours”, he said that it was not a question “even of the unification and regeneration of the Slavs. Our goal is more profound, immeasurably more profound. We, Russia, are truly essential and unavoidable both for the whole of Eastern Christendom and for the whole fate of future Orthodoxy on the earth, for its unity”.

Leontiev returned to his criticism of this romantic, “chiliast” faith of Dostoyevsky, as he considered it, in an article entitled “On Universal Love”, in which he supported the liberal writer A.D. Gradovsky’s claim that Dostoyevsky was ignoring the prophecies of the Antichrist. “The prophecy of the general reconciliation of people in Christ,” he wrote, “is not an Orthodox prophecy, but some kind of general-humanitarian [prophecy]. The Church of this world does not promise this, and ‘he who disobeys the Church, let him be unto thee as a pagan and a publican’.”

Dostoyevsky himself replied to Gradovsky (and therefore also to Leontiev) as follows: “In your triumphant irony concerning the words in my Speech to the effect that we may, perhaps, utter a word of ‘final harmony’ in mankind, you seize on the Apocalypse and venomously cry out:

683 Volgin, op. cit., pp. 269-270.
684 Leontiev, “G. Katkov i ego vragi na prazdnike Pushkina” (G. Katkov and his enemies at the Pushkin festivities), in Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 279.
685 Leontiev, op. cit., p. 282.
686 Dostoevsky, in Oliver Figes, Crimea, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p. 462. As he wrote in another place: “You see, I’ve seen the Truth. I’ve seen it, and I know that men can be happy and beautiful without losing the ability to live on earth. I cannot - I refuse to believe that wickedness is the normal state of men. And when they laugh at me, it is essentially at that belief of mine.” (The Dream of a Ridiculous Man)
“‘By a word you will accomplish that which has not been foretold in the Apocalypse! On the contrary, the Apocalypse foretells, not “final agreement”, but final “disagreement” with the coming of the Antichrist. But why should the Antichrist come if we utter a word of “final harmony”?’

“This is terribly witty, only you have cheated here. You probably have not read the Apocalypse to the end, Mr. Gradovsky. There it is precisely said that during the most powerful disagreements, not the Antichrist, but Christ will come and establish His Kingdom on earth (do you hear, on earth) for 1000 years. But it is added at this point: blessed is he who will take part in the first resurrection, that is, in this Kingdom. Well, it is in that time, perhaps, that we shall utter that word of final harmony which I talk about in my Speech.”

Leontiev counters by more or less accusing Dostoyevsky of the heresy of chiliasm: “It is not the complete and universal triumph of love and general righteousness on this earth that is promised to us by Christ and His Apostles; but, on the contrary, something in the nature of a seeming failure of the evangelical preaching on the earthly globe, for the nearness of the end must coincide with the last attempts to make everyone good Christians… Mr. Dostoyevsky introduces too rose-coloured a tint into Christianity in this speech. It is an innovation in relation to the Church, which expects nothing specially beneficial from humanity in the future…”

However, of one thing the author of The Devils, that extraordinary prophecy of the collective Antichrist, cannot be accused: of underestimating the evil in man, and his capacity for self-destruction. The inventor of Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov did not look at contemporary Russian society with rose-tinted spectacles. Dostoyevsky’s faith in a final harmony before the Antichrist did not blind him to where the world was going in his time. "Europe is on the eve of a general and dreadful collapse," he wrote. “The ant-hill which has been long in the process of construction without the Church and Christ (since the Church, having dimmed its ideal, long ago and everywhere reincarnated itself in the state), with a moral principle shaken loose from its foundation, with everything general and absolute lost - this ant-hill, I say, is utterly undermined. The fourth estate is coming, it knocks at the door, and breaks into it, and if it is not opened to it, it will break the door. The fourth estate cares nothing for the former ideals; it rejects every existing law. It will make no compromises, no concessions; buttresses will not save the edifice. Concessions only provoke, but the fourth estate wants everything. There will come to pass something wholly unsuspected. All these parliamentarisms, all civic theories professed at present, all accumulated riches, banks, sciences, Jews - all these will instantly perish without leaving a trace - save the Jews, who even then will find their way out, so that this work will even be to their advantage.”

---

689 Leontiev, op. cit., pp. 315, 322.  
However, Leontiev accuses him also, and still more seriously, of distorting the basic message of the Gospel. Dostoyevsky’s “love” or “humaneness” (gumannost’) is closer to the “love” and “humaneness” of Georges Sand than that of Christ. Christian love and humaneness is complex; it calls on people to love, not simply as such, without reference to God, but “in the name of God” and “for the sake of Christ”. Dostoyevsky’s “love”, on the other hand, is “simple and ‘autonomous’; step by step and thought by thought it can lead to that dry and self-assured utilitarianism, to that epidemic madness of our time, which we can call, using psychiatric language, mania democratica progressiva. The whole point is that we claim by ourselves, without the help of God, to be either very good or, which is still more mistaken, useful... “True, in all spiritual compositions there is talk of love for people. But in all such books we also find that the beginning of wisdom (that is, religious wisdom and the everyday wisdom that proceeds from it) is “the fear of God” – a simple, very simple fear both of torments beyond the grave and of other punishments, in the form of earthly tortures, sorrows and woes.”

However, far from espousing a “dry and self-assured utilitarianism”, Dostoyevsky was one of its most biting critics, satirising the rationalist-humanist-utilitarian world-view under the images of “the crystal palace” and “the ant-hill”. Nor did he in any way share in mania democratica progressiva.

Again, Leontiev rejects Dostoyevsky’s call to the intelligentsia to humble themselves before the people. “I don’t think that the family, public and in general personal in the narrow sense qualities of our simple people would be so worthy of imitation. It is hardly necessary to imitate their dryness in relation to the suffering and the sick, their unmerciful cruelty in anger, their drunkenness, the disposition of so many of them to cunning and even thievery... Humility before the people... is nothing other than humility before that same Church which Mr. Pobedonostsev advises us to love.”

However, “one must know,” wrote Dostoyevsky, “how to segregate the beauty of the Russian peasant from the layers of barbarity that have accumulated over it... Judge the people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations, they constantly yearn. Not all the people are villains; there are true saints, and what saints they are: they are radiant and illuminate the way for all!... Do not judge the People by what they are, but by what they would like to become.”

“I know that our educated men ridicule me: they refuse even to recognize ‘this idea’ in the people, pointing to their sins and abominations (for which these men themselves are responsible, having oppressed the people for two centuries); they also emphasize the people’s prejudices, their alleged indifference to religion, while some of them imagine that the Russian people are simply atheists. Their great error

691 Leontiev, op. cit., p. 324.
692 Leontiev, op. cit., pp. 326, 327.
693 Dostoyevsky, The Diary of a Writer; in Figes, op. cit., p. 331.
consists of the fact that they refuse to recognize the existence of the Church as an element in the life of the people. I am not speaking about church buildings, or the clergy. I am now referring to our Russian ‘socialism’, the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of an oecumenical Church on earth in so far as the earth is capable of embracing it. I am speaking of the unquenchable, inherent thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ. And even if this fellowship, as yet, does not exist, and if that church has not completely materialized, - not in prayers only but in reality – nevertheless the instinct for it and the unquenchable, oftentimes unconscious thirst for it, indubitably dwells in the hearts of the millions of our people.

“Not in communism, not in mechanical forms is the socialism of the Russian people expressed: they believe that they shall be finally saved through the universal communion in the name of Christ. This is our Russian socialism! It is the presence in the Russian people of this sublime unifying ‘church’ idea that you, our European gentlemen, are ridiculing.”

* 

So Dostoyevsky’s “theology” was by no means as uneclesiastical as Leontiev and Pobedonostsev thought. The idea of universal communion in the Christ may be considered utopian, but it is not heretical. And even if some of his phrases were not strictly accurate as ecclesiology, it is quite clear that the concepts of “Church” and “people” were much more closely linked in his mind than Leontiev and Pobedonostsev gave him credit for. Indeed, according to Vladimir Soloviev, on a journey to Optina in June, 1878, Dostoyevsky discussed with him his plans for his new novel, The Brothers Karamazov, and “the Church as a positive social ideal was to constitute the central idea of the new novel or series of novels”.

In some ways, in fact, Dostoyevsky was more inoculated against Westernism than Leontiev. Thus Leontiev complained to his friend Vasily Rozanov that Dostoyevsky’s views on Papism were too severe. And he was so fixated on the evils of liberalism and cosmopolitanism that he could be called an ecumenist in relation to medieval and contemporary Papism – an error that Dostoyevsky was not prone to.
Dostoyevsky started where his audience were – outside the Church, in the morass of westernism, and tried to build on what was still not completely corrupted in that world-view in order to draw his audience closer to Christ. In this way, he imitated St. Paul in Athens, who, seeing an altar with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD”, gave the Athenians the benefit of the doubt, as it were, and proceeded to declare: “He Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you” (Acts 17.23).

Constantine Leontiev would perhaps have objected that the Athenians, as pagans, were certainly not worshipping the True God at this altar. And he would have been formally right... And yet St. Paul saw the germ of true worship in this inchoate paganism, and, building upon it, led at any rate a few to the truth. This was also the method of Dostoyevsky with his semi-pagan Russian audience. And he, too, made some converts...

Again, if Dostoyevsky emphasised certain aspects of the Christian teaching such as compassionate love and humility more than others such as the fear of God, fasting, sacraments, obedience to authorities, this is not because he did not think the latter were important, but because he knew that his audience, being spiritually infants, could not take this “hard” food, but had to begin on the “milk” of those teachings which were not so distasteful to their spoil palates. And the results proved him right from a pragmatic, missionary point of view. For the unbelieving intelligentsia of several subsequent generations have been stimulated to question their unbelief far more by the writings of Dostoyevsky than by those of Leontiev and Pobedonostev, undoubtedly Orthodox though the latter are.

An admirer of Leontiev, V.M. Lourié, has developed Leontiev’s line of criticism. Analysing Dostoyevsky’s remarks about “that rapture which most of all binds us to [God]”, Lourié concludes that “‘deification’ is interpreted [by Dostoyevsky] as a psychological and even natural condition – a relationship of man to Christ, in Whom he believes as God. From such ‘deification’ there does not and cannot follow the deification of man himself. On the contrary, man remains as he was, ‘on his own’, and with his own psychology... In such an – unOrthodox – soteriological perspective, the patristic ‘God became man, so that man should become God’ is inevitably exchanged for something like ‘God became man, so that man should become a good man’; ascetic sobriety turns out to be simply inadmissible, and it has to be squeezed out by various means of eliciting ‘that rapture’.”

And yet what is more significant: the fact that there is a certain inaccuracy in Dostoyevsky’s words from a strictly theological point of view, or the fact that Dostoyevsky talks about deification at all as the ultimate end of man? Surely the latter... Even among the Holy Fathers we find inaccuracies, and as Lourié points out

in other places, the Palamite ideas of uncreated grace and the deification of man through grace had almost been lost even among the monasteries and academies of nineteenth-century Russia.

This makes Dostoyevsky’s achievement in at least placing the germs of such thoughts in the mind of the intelligentsia, all the greater. For in what other non-monastic Russian writer of the nineteenth century do we find such a vivid, profound and above all relevant (to the contemporary spiritual state of his listeners) analysis of the absolute difference between becoming “god” through the assertion of self (Kirillov, Ivan Karamazov) and becoming god through self-sacrificial love and humility (Bishop Tikhon, Elder Zosima)?

Leontiev also asserted (followed by Lourié) that Dostoyevsky’s monastic types are not true depictions of monastic holiness. “In his memoirs, Leontiev wrote: ‘The Brothers Karamazov can be considered an Orthodox novel only by those who are little acquainted with true Orthodoxy, with the Christianity of the Holy Fathers and the Elders of Athos and Optina.’ In Leontiev’s view (he himself became an Orthodox monk and lived at Optina for the last six months of his life), the work of Zola (in La Faute de l’abbé Mouret) is ‘far closer to the spirit of true personal monkhood than the superficial and sentimental inventions of Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov.’”

There is some truth in this criticism, and yet it misses more than one important point. The first is that Dostoyevsky was not intending to make a literal representation of anyone, but “an artistic tableau”. And for that reason, as he wrote to Pobedonostsev in August, 1879, he was worried whether he would be understood. The “obligations of artistry… required that I present a modest and majestic figure, whereas life is full of the comic and is majestic only in its inner sense, so that in the biography of my monk I was involuntarily compelled by artistic demands to touch upon even the most vulgar aspects so as not to infringe artistic realism. Then, too, there are several teachings of the monk against which people will simply cry out that they are absurd, for they are all too ecstatic; of course, they are absurd in an everyday sense, but in another, inward sense, I think they are true.”

Again, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes: “To the ‘synthetic’ Christianity of Dostoyevsky Leontiev opposed the contemporary monastic way of life or ethos, especially on Athos. And he insisted that in Optina The Brothers Karamazov was not recognized as ‘a correct Orthodox composition’, while Elder Zosima did not correspond to the contemporary monastic spirit. In his time Rozanov made a very true comment on this score. ‘If it does not correspond to the type of Russian monasticism of the 18th-19th centuries (the words of Leontiev), then perhaps, and even probably, it corresponded to the monasticism of the 4th to 6th centuries’. In any case, Dostoyevsky was truly closer to Chrysostom (and precisely in his social teachings) than Leontiev… Rozanov adds: ‘The whole of Russia read The Brothers Karamazov, and believed in the representation of the Elder Zosima. “The Russian

---

698 Magarshack, introduction to his Penguin translation of The Brothers Karamazov, p. xviii.
699 Magarshack, op. cit., p. xvi.
Monk” (Dostoyevsky’s term) appeared as a close and fascinating figure in the eyes of the whole of Russia, even her unbelieving parts.’… Now we know that the Elder Zosima was not drawn from nature, and in this case Dostoyevsky did not draw on Optina figures. It was an ‘ideal’ or ‘idealised’ portrait, written most of all from Tikhon of Zadonsk, and it was precisely Tikhon’s works that inspired Dostoyevsky, constituting the ‘teachings’ of Zosima… By the power of his artistic clairvoyance Dostoyevsky divined and recognized this seraphic stream in Russian piety, and prophetically continued the dotted line.”

* 

The philosopher Vladimir Soloviev was, for good and for ill, the most influential thinker in Russia until his death in 1900, and for some time after. In 1874, at the age of 23, he defended his master’s thesis, “The Crisis of Western Philosophy”, at the Moscow Theological Academy. Coming at a time when the influence of western positivism was at its peak, this bold philosophical vindication of the Christian faith drew the attention of many; and his lectures on Godmanship in St. Petersburg were attended by Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Unfortunately, his philosophy of “pan-unity” contained pantheistic elements, and his theory of Sophia, the Wisdom of God, was both heretical in itself and gave birth to other heresies.

Turning from his metaphysics to his social and political teaching, we find in Soloviev a mixture of East and West, Slavophilism and Westernism. On the one hand, he believed fervently, with the Slavophiles, in the Divine mission of Russia. But on the other, he was fiercely critical of the nationalism of the later Slavophiles, he admired Peter the Great and did not admire Byzantium, and felt drawn to the universalism of the Roman Catholics, becoming an early “prophet” of Orthodox-Roman Catholic ecumenism. The problem with the Slavic world and Orthodoxy, Soloviev came to believe, was its nationalism. Thus in 1885 he wrote with regard to the Bulgarian schism: "Once the principle of nationality is introduced into the Church as the main and overriding principle, once the Church is recognized to be an attribute of the people, it naturally follows that the State power that rules the people must also rule the Church that belongs to the people. The national Church is necessarily subject to the national government, and in such a case a special church authority can exist only for show..."

Moving still more in a westernizing direction, Soloviev feared that Russia’s political ambitions in the Balkans and the Middle East were crudely imperialist and did not serve her own deepest interests, but rather the petty nationalisms of other nations. Thus he wrote: “The true greatness of Russia is a dead letter for our pseudo-patriots, who want to impose on the Russian people a historical mission in their image and in the limits of their own understanding. Our national work, if we are to

---

701 For Soloviev Sophia was the feminine principle of God, His ‘other’. For some of his heretical followers, such as Protopriest Sergius Bulgakov, it was the Mother of God.
702 Soloviev, V. “Golos Moskvy” (The Voice of Moscow), 14 March, 1885.
listen to them, is something that couldn’t be more simple and that depends on one force only – the force of arms. To beat up the expiring Ottoman empire, and then crush the monarchy of the Habsburgs, putting in the place of these states a bunch of small independent national kingdoms that are only waiting for this triumphant hour of their final liberation in order to hurl themselves at each other. Truly, it was worth Russia suffering and struggling for a thousand years, and becoming Christian with St. Vladimir and European with Peter the Great, constantly in the meantime occupying its unique place between East and West, and all this just so as in the final analysis to become the weapon of the ‘great idea’ of the Serbs and the ‘great idea’ of the Bulgarians!

“But that is not the point, they will tell us: the true aim of our national politics is Constantinople. Apparently, they have already ceased to take the Greeks into account – after all, they also have their ‘great idea’ of pan-hellenism. But the most important thing is to know: with what, and in the name of what can we enter Constantinople? What can we bring there except the pagan idea of the absolute state and the principles of caesaropapism, which were borrowed by us from the Greeks and which have already destroyed Byzantium? In the history of the world there are mysterious events, but there are no senseless ones. No! It is not this Russia which we see now, the Russia which has betrayed its best memories, the lessons of Vladimir and Peter the Great, the Russia which is possessed by blind nationalism and unfettered obscurantism, it is not this Russia that will one day conquer the second Rome and put an end to the fateful eastern question…”

In 1889, in his work *Russia and the Universal Church* (published in French as *La Russie et l’Eglise universelle*), Soloviev tried to argue in favour of a union between the Russian empire and the Roman papacy. (It is said that he himself became a Catholic, but returned to Orthodoxy on his deathbed.) The Roman papacy was to be preferred above the Orthodox Church as the partner to the Russian empire because, in Soloviev’s opinion, the Orthodox Church had become a group of national Churches, rather than the Universal Church, and had therefore lost the right to represent Christ.

Dostoyevsky disagreed with his friend on this point, considering the papacy to be, not so much a Church as a State. Nor did he agree with the doctrine of papal infallibility, which Soloviev also supported. As Metropolitan Anthony (Khраповицky) wrote in 1890, in his review of Soloviev’s book: “If a sinful man cannot be accepted as the supreme head of the Universal Church without this bride of Christ being completely dethroned, accepting the compatibility of the infallibility of religious edicts with a life of sin, with a wicked will, would amount to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of wisdom by admitting His compatibility with a sinful mind. Khomiakov very justly says that besides the holy inspiration of the apostles and prophets, Scripture tells us of only one inspiration – inspiration of the obsessed. But if this sort of inspiration was going on in Rome, the Church would not be the Church

---

of Christ, but the Church of His enemy. And this is exactly how Dostoyevsky defines it in his ‘Grand Inquisitor’ who says to Christ: ‘We are not with Thee, but with him’… Dostoyevsky in his ‘Grand Inquisitor’ characterised the Papacy as a doctrine which is attractive exactly because of its worldly power, but devoid of the spirit of Christian communion with God and of contempt for the evil of the world…”

The Orthodox Church, wrote Soloviev, had a wealth of mystical contemplation, which must be preserved. “In Eastern Christendom for the last thousand years religion has been identified with personal piety, and prayer has been regarded as the one and only religious activity. The Western church, without disparaging individual piety as the true germ of all religion, seeks the development of this germ and its blossoming into a social activity organized for the glory of God and the universal good of mankind. The Eastern prays, the Western prays and labours.”

However, only a supranational spiritual power independent of the State could be a worthy partner of the State, forming the basis of a universal theocracy. For “here below, the Church has not the perfect unity of the heavenly Kingdom, but nevertheless she must have a certain real unity, a bond at once organic and spiritual which constitutes her a concrete institution, a living body and a moral individual. Though she does not include the whole of mankind in an actual material sense, she is nevertheless universal insofar as she cannot be confined exclusively to any one nation or group of nations, but must have an international centre from which to spread throughout the whole universe… Were she not one and universal, she could not serve as the foundation of the positive unity of all peoples, which is her chief mission. Were she not infallible, she could not guide mankind in the true way; she would be a blind leader of the blind. Finally were she not independent, she could not fulfil her duty towards society; she would become the instrument of the powers of this world and would completely fail in her mission…

“If the particular spiritual families which between them make up mankind are in reality to form a single Christian family, a single Universal Church, they must be subject to a common fatherhood embracing all Christian nations. To assert that there exist in reality nothing more than national Churches is to assert that the members of a body exist in and for themselves and that the body itself has no reality. On the contrary, Christ did not found any particular Church. He created them all in the real unity of the Universal Church which He entrusted to Peter as the one supreme representative of the divine Fatherhood towards the whole family of the sons of Man.

“It was by no mere chance that Jesus Christ specially ascribed to the first divine Hypostasis, the heavenly Father, that divine-human act which made Simon Bar-Jona the first social father of the whole human family and the infallible master of the school of mankind.”

---

705 Soloviev, La Russie et l’Eglise universelle.
For Soloviev, wrote Nicholas Lossky, “the ideal of the Russian people is of [a] religious nature, it finds its expression in the idea of ‘Holy Russia’; the capacity of the Russian people to combine Eastern and Western principles has been historically proved by the success of Peter the Great’s reforms; the capacity of national self-renunciation, necessary for the recognition of the Pope as the Primate of the Universal Church, is inherent in the Russian people, as may be seen, among other things, from the calling in of the Varangians. Soloviev himself gave expression to this characteristic of the Russian people when he said that it was ‘better to give up patriotism than conscience’, and taught that the cultural mission of a great nation is not a privilege: it must not dominate, but serve other peoples and all mankind.

“Soloviev’s Slavophil messianism never degenerated into a narrow nationalism. In the nineties he was looked upon as having joined the camp of the Westerners. In a series of articles he violently denounced the epigons of Slavophilism who had perverted its original conception. In the article ‘Idols and Ideals’, written in 1891, he speaks of ‘the transformation of the lofty and all-embracing Christian ideals into the coarse and limited idols of our modern paganism… National messianism was the main idea of the old Slavophils; this idea, in some form of other, was shared by many peoples; it assumed a pre-eminently religious and mystical character with the Poles (Towianski) and with some French dreamers of the thirties and forties (Michel, Ventra, etc.). What is the relation of such national messianism to the true Christian idea? We will not say that there is a contradiction of principle between them. The true Christian ideal can assume this national messianic form, but it becomes then very easily pervertible (to use an expression of ecclesiastical writers); i.e., it can easily change into the corresponding idol of anti-Christian nationalism, which did happen in fact.’…

“Soloviev struggled in his works against every distortion of the Christian ideal of general harmony; he also struggled against all the attempts made by man to satisfy his selfishness under the false pretence of serving a noble cause. Such are for instance the aims of chauvinistic nationalism. Many persons believe, Soloviev tells us, that in order to serve the imaginary interests of their people, ‘everything is permitted, the aim justifies the means, black turns white, lies are preferable to truth and violence is glorified and considered as valor… This is first of all an insult to that very nationality which we desire to serve.’ In reality, ‘peoples flourished and were exalted only when they did not serve their own interests as a goal in itself, but pursued higher, general ideal goods.’ Trusting the highly sensitive conscience of the Russian people, Soloviev wrote in his article, ‘What is Demanded of a Russian Party?’ ‘If instead of doping themselves with Indian opium, our Chinese neighbors suddenly took a liking to the poisonous mushrooms which abound in the Siberian woods, we would be sure to find Russian jingos, who in their ardent interest in Russian trade, would want Russia to induce the Chinese government to permit the free entry of poisonous mushrooms into the Celestial empire… Nevertheless, every plain Russian will say that no matter how vital an interest may be, Russia’s honor is
also worth something; and, according to Russian standards, this honor definitely forbids a shady deal to become an issue of national politics.

“Like Tiutchev, Soloviev dreamed of Russia becoming a Christian world monarchy; yet he wrote in a tone full of anxiety: ‘Russia’s life has not yet determined itself completely, it is still torn by the struggle between the principle of light and that of darkness. Let Russia become a Christian realm, even without Constantinople, a Christian realm in the full sense of the word, that is, one of justice and mercy, and all the rest will be surely added unto this.’”

Dostoyevsky represents the peak of later Slavophile thought and, contrary to his critics, its full identification with the Orthodox ideal of universal brotherhood in Christ. Soloviev, by comparison, represents a certain falling away from the Orthodox ideal. His attempt to tear Russia away from Constantinople and towards Rome was misguided, and it had an unhealthy influence on other writers, such as D.S. Merezhkovsky, who compared the Pope and the Tsar. Nevertheless, as a warning against the dangers of a Russian nationalism lacking the universalist dimension of the early Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev’s critique had value in his time and still has value to this day. It reminds us that the God-bearing nation will remain such only so long as it serves, not only itself, but all nations, leading them all to Christ in Whom there is “neither Greek nor Jew, neither barbarian nor Scythian” (Colossians 3.11).

*February 1/14, 2011.*

---

Merezhkovsky’s comparison of the Pope and the Tsar, though greatly exaggerated, had a certain basis in fact; in the fact, namely, that the relationship between Church and State in Russia since Peter the Great had not been canonical, but leaned in a caesaropapist direction. The fact was that the Tsar had too great a control over the decisions of the Church hierarchy, and the hierarchy had become accustomed to following the lead of the secular power to an alarming degree. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this question became increasingly topical, with general agreement on the nature of the problem, but much less on its solution.

The debate centred especially on the personality and policies of Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev, who from April, 1880 to October, 1905 was over-procurator of the Russian Holy Synod and whose policy of Orthodox conservative nationalism was dominant in Russia until the publication of the October manifesto in 1905. Since Pobedonostsev personified this policy of the supremacy of the Orthodox Autocracy perhaps even more than the tsars whom he served, and since his influence extended far beyond his role as over-procurator, he was reviled more than any other figure by the liberal press. He was portrayed as standing for the complete, tyrannical domination by the State of every aspect of Russian life; and among the epithets the press gave him were “prince of darkness, hatred and unbelief”, “state vampire”, “the great inquisitor” and “the greatest deicide in the whole of Russian history”.  

These were vile slanders; for Pobedonostev was a pious man who believed in the Church, and educated the future Tsar Nicholas on the necessity of his being a servant of the Church. And although he never tried to correct the uncanonical state of Church-State relations, and even expressed the view that Peter the Great’s removal of the patriarchate was “completely lawful”, his work as over-procurator was in fact very beneficial. Thus he did a great deal for the development of parish schools, an essential counter-measure to the spread of liberal and atheist education in the secular schools, for the spread of the Word of God in various languages throughout the empire, for the improvement in the lot of the parish priest and for an enormous (fourfold) increase in the number of monks over the previous reign.

At the same time, his views on Peter the Great’s “completely lawful” removal of the patriarchate cannot be accepted. Nor can it be denied that the power that the tsars wielded over the Church through the over-procurators was anti-canonical. In the 16th and 17th centuries there had been something like real “symphony” between Church and State. However, the eighteenth-century tsars from Peter the Great onwards succeeded, through the lay office of over-procurator, in making the Church

---

707 A.I. Peshkov, “‘Kto razoriaet – mal vo Tsarstvii Khristovym’” (He who destroys is least in the Kingdom of Christ), in K.P. Pobedonostev, Sochinenia (Works), St. Petersburg, p. 3.

708 Sergius Firsov, Russkaiia Tserkov’ nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh – 1918 g.) (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, pp. 42-43.
dependent on the State to a large degree. This process reached its apogee in Alexander I’s decrees of November 13, 1817 and May 15, 1824, which made the Holy Synod into a department of State.

Pobedonostsev’s biographer, A.I. Peshkov provides a certain correction to this point of view: “It is necessary to take into account that even in the Synod he [the over-procurator] did not have that direct administrative power which any minister in Russia’s Tsarist government possessed in the department subject to him, since the Most Holy Synod was a collegial organ, whose decision-making required the unanimity of its members. As Pobedonostsev himself emphasised, ‘juridically I have no power to issue orders in the Church and the department. You have to refer to the Synod.’ In particular, when Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg expressed himself against the publication in Russia of the New Testament in the translation of V.A. Zhukovsky, C.P. Pobedonostev had to publish it abroad, in Berlin…”

Moreover, by the Providence of God the de jure power that the State wielded over the Church did not translate into a de facto tyranny that prevented the Church from carrying out her saving mission. Thus it was fortunately the case that the over-procurators of the 19th century were in general more Orthodox than those of the 18th century. This was undoubtedly a consequence of the fact that the tsars themselves were more genuinely Christian than their nineteenth-century predecessors. Moreover, some of the complaints about the State’s interference in Church affairs were exaggerated - for example, the Petrine decree that priests should report the contents of confession if they were seditious. As Pobedonostsev himself pointed out, this had long been a dead letter.

But this did not change the essentially canonical nature of the situation. And there were some consequences of this “Caesaropapism” that threatened to undermine the inner nature of the Church herself – as, for example, the tendency of over-procurators to move bishops from one diocese to another, thereby destroying, or threatening to destroy, the close relationship of knowledge, love and trust that must exist between a bishop and his flock. It is not by accident that when, in 1927, the deputy leader of the Church Metropolitan Sergius tried, at the Bolsheviks’ behest, to use this bad pre-revolutionary habit in order to break the bonds tying Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd to his flock by moving him to another diocese, the patience of the believers finally snapped, and a full-scale schism developed as the faithful refused to be separated from the archpastor whom they knew and trusted.

Sergius Firsov writes: “While C.P. Pobedonostev was over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, the transfer of hierarchs from see to see was finally turned into a kind of ‘educational’ measure. The paradox consisted in the fact that ‘while exalting the position of bishops from an external point of view, he [Pobedonostsev] at the same time had to increase his control over them’. The over-procurator was quite unable to square this circle: he wanted an intensification of Episcopal activity and at the same time did not want to present the hierarchs with the freedom of action that was

---

709 Peshkov, op. cit., p. 7.
necessary for this. State control over the Church had to be kept up. It was precisely for this reason that the over-procurator so frequently moved Vladykos from see to see. According to the calculations of a contemporary investigator, ‘out of 49 diocesan bishops moved in 1881-1894, eight were moved twice and eight – three times. On average in one year three diocesan bishops were moved and three vicars; four vicars received appointments to independent sees’. In 1892-1893 alone 15 diocesan bishops and 7 vicar bishops were moved, while 14 vicar-bishops were raised to the rank of diocesan. At times the new place of their service and the composition of their flock differed strikingly from the former ones. In 1882, for example, a hierarch was transferred to Kishinev from Kazan, then in his place came the bishop of Ryazan, and he was followed by the bishop of Simbirsk.

“One can understand that this ‘shuffling’ could not fail to affect the attitude of hierarchs to their archpastoral duties: they were more interested in smoothing relations with the secular authorities and in getting a ‘good’ diocese. One must recognise that serious blame for this must attach to the long-time over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, C.P. Pobedonostev…”

*  

There were essentially two ways of correcting the Caesaropapist bias in Russian Church-State relations: the gradualist approach which removed the obstacles to the Church’s self-government step-by-step without trying to destroy the symbiotic, “symphonic” relationship between Church and State, and the radical approach which sought complete separation of Church and State on the western model. The gradualist approach was in fact adopted by Tsar Nicholas II, who in 1901 removed the words “Supreme Judge” from the Tsar’s title in the oath of allegiance that the bishops had to swear to him. He actively sought the convening of a Church Council that would restore the relationship of Church and State to what it had been in the 17th century. The radical approach was advocated by many liberal critics. It was opposed by Pobednostsev, who, demonstrating a deep awareness of the importance of the Church in Russian life, argued that the power of the State depended on its incarnating the “idea” of the people, and that since that idea was religious, it could not cut itself off from the religious life of the people without profound damage both to itself and to the nation as a whole.

Thus he wrote: “However great the power of the State, it is confirmed by nothing other than the unity of the spiritual self-consciousness between the people and the government, by the faith of the people: the power is undermined from the moment this consciousness, founded on faith, begins to divide. The people in unity with the State can bear many hardships, they can concede and hand over much to State power. Only one thing does the State power have no right to demand, only one thing will they not hand over to it – that in which every believing soul individually and all together lay down as the foundation of their spiritual being, binding themselves

710 Firsov, op. cit., p. 77.
with eternity. There are depths which State power cannot and must not touch, so as not to disturb the root sources of faith in the souls of each and every person…”

But in recent years a division had opened up between the faith of the people and the ideology of the State. “Political science has constructed a strictly worked out teaching on the decisive separation of Church and State, a teaching in consequence of which, according to the law that does not allow a division into two of the central forces, the Church unfailingly turns out to be in fact an institution subject to the State. Together with this, the State as an institution is, according to its political ideology, separated from every faith and indifferent to faith. Naturally, from this point of view, the Church is represented as being nothing other than an institution satisfying one of the needs of the population that is recognised by the State – the religious need, and the State in its most recent incarnation turns to it with its right of authorization, of supervision and control, with no concern for the faith. For the State as the supreme political institution this theory is attractive, because it promises it complete autonomy, a decisive removal of every opposition, even spiritual opposition, and the simplification of the operations of its ecclesiastical politics…

“If the issue consists in a more exact delineation of civil society from religious society, of the ecclesiastical and spiritual from the secular, of a direct and sincere separation, without cunning or violence – in this case everybody will be for such a separation. If, coming to practical matters, they want the State to renounce the right to place pastors of the Church and from the obligation to pay for them, this will be an ideal situation…

“But they say that we must understand separation in a different, broader sense. Clever, learned people define this as follows: the State must have nothing to do with the Church, and the Church – with the State, and so humanity must devolve in two broad spheres in such a way that in one sphere will be the body and in the other the spirit of humanity, and between the two spheres will be a space as great as between heaven and earth. But is that really possible? It is impossible to separate the body from the spirit; the spirit and the body live one life.

“But we can expect that the Church – I’m not talking just about the Catholic, but any Church – should agree to remove from its consciousness civil society, familial society, human society - everything that is understood by the word ‘State’? Since when has it been decreed that the Church exists in order to form ascetics, fill up monasteries and express in churches the poetry of its rites and processions? No, all this is only a small part of that activity which the Church sets as her aim. She has been given another calling: teach all nations. That is her business. The task set before her is to form people on earth so that people of the earthly city and earthly family should be made not quite unworthy to enter the heavenly city and the heavenly community. At birth, at marriage, at death – at the most important moments of human existence, - the Church is there with her three triumphant sacraments, but they say that the family is none of her business! She has been entrusted with inspiring the people with respect
for the law and the authorities, and to inspire the authorities with respect for human freedom, but they say that society is none of her business!

“No, the moral principle is one. It cannot be divided in such a way that one is a private moral principle and the other public, one secular and the other spiritual. The one moral principle embraces all relationships – private, in the home and political; and the Church, preserving the consciousness of her dignity, will never renounce her lawful influence in questions relations both to the family and to civil society. And so in demanding that the Church have nothing to do with civil society, they only give her greater strength.”

“The most ancient and best known system of Church-State relations is the system of the established or State Church. The State recognises one confession out of all as being the true confession of faith and supports and protects one Church exclusively, to the prejudice of all other churches and confessions. This prejudice signifies in general that all remaining churches are not recognised as true or completely true; but it is expressed in practice in various forms and a multitude of all manner of variations, from non-recognition and alienation to, sometimes, persecution. In any case, under the influence of this system foreign confessions are subject to a certain more or less significant diminution in honour, in law and in privilege by comparison with the native, State confession. The State cannot be the representative only of the material interests of society; in such a case it would deprive itself of spiritual power and would renounce its spiritual unity with the people. The State is the stronger and more significant the clearer its spiritual representation is manifested. Only on this condition is the feeling of legality, respect for the law and trust in State power supported and strengthened in the midst of the people and in civil life. Neither the principle of the integrity or the good of the benefit of the State, nor even the principle of morality are sufficient in themselves to establish a firm bond between the people and State power; and the moral principle is unstable, shaky, deprived of its fundamental root when it renounces religious sanction. A State which in the name of an unbiased relationship to all beliefs will undoubtedly be deprived of this central, centrifugal force and will itself renounce every belief – whatever it may be. The trust of the people for their rulers is based on faith, that is, not only on the identity of the faith of the people and the government, but also on the simple conviction that the government has faith and acts according to faith. Therefore even pagans and Mohammedans have more trust and respect for a government which stands on the firm principles of belief, whatever it may be, than for a government which does not recognise its own faith and has an identical relationship to all beliefs.

“That is the undeniable advantage of this system. But in the course of the centuries the circumstances under which this system received its beginning changed, and there arose new circumstances under which its functioning became more difficult than before. In the age when the first foundations of European civilisation and politics were laid, the Christian State was a powerfully integral and unbroken bond with the one Christian Church. Then in the midst of the Christian Church itself the original unity was shattered into many kinds of sects and different faiths, each of
which began to assume to itself the significance of the one true teaching and the one true Church. Thus the State had to deal with several different teachings between which the masses of the people were distributed. With the violation of the unity and integrity in faith a period may ensue when the dominant Church, which is supported by the State, turns out to be the Church of an insignificant minority, and herself enjoys only weak sympathy, or no sympathy at all, from the masses of the people. Then important difficulties may arise in the definition of the relations between the State and its Church and the churches to which the majority of the people belong.

“From the beginning of the 18th century there begins in Western Europe a conversion from the old system to the system of the levelling of the Christian confessions in the State – with the removal, however, of sectarians and Jews from this levelling process. [However, it continues to be the case that] the State recognises Christianity as the essential basis of its existence and of the public well-being, and belonging to this or that church, to this or that belief is obligatory for every citizen.

“From 1848 this relationship of the State to the Church changes essentially: the flooding waves of liberalism break through the old dam and threaten to overthrow the ancient foundations of Christian statehood. The freedom of the State from the Church is proclaimed – it has nothing to do with the Church. The separation of the State by the Church is also proclaimed: every person is free to believe as he wants or not believe in anything. The symbol of this doctrine is the fundamental principles (Grundrechte) proclaimed by the Frankfurt parliament in 1848/1849. Although they soon cease to be considered valid legislation, they served and serve to this day as the ideal for the introduction of liberal principles into the most recent legislation of Western Europe. Legislation in line with these principles is everywhere now. Political and civil law is dissociated from faith and membership of this or that church or sect. The State asks nobody about his faith. The registration of marriage and acts of civil status are dissociated from the Church. Complete freedom of mixed marriages is proclaimed, and the Church principle of the indissolubility of marriage is violated by facilitating divorce, which is dissociated from the ecclesiastical courts...

“Does it not follow from this that the unbelieving State is nothing other than a utopia that cannot be realized, for lack of faith is a direct denial of the State. Religion, and notably Christianity, is the spiritual basis of every law in State and civil life and of every true culture. That is why we see that the political parties that are the most hostile to the social order, the parties that radically deny the State, proclaim before everyone that religion is only a private, personal matter, of purely private and personal interest.

“[Count Cavour’s] system of ‘a free Church in a free State’ is based on abstract principles, theoretically; at its foundation is laid not the principle of faith, but the principle of religious indifferentism, or indifference to the faith, and it is placed in a necessary bond with doctrines that often preach, not tolerance and respect for the
faith, but open or implied contempt for the faith, as to a bygone moment in the psychological development of personal and national life. In the abstract construction of this system, which constitutes a fruit of the newest rationalism, the Church is represented as also being an abstractly constructed political institution..., built with a definite aim like other corporations recognised in the State...

“... In fact, [however,] it is impossible for any soul that has preserved and experienced the demands of faith within its depths can agree without qualification, for itself personally, with the rule: ‘all churches and all faiths are equal; it doesn’t matter whether it is this faith or another’. Such a soul will unfailingly reply to itself: ‘Yes, all faiths are equal, but my faith is better than any other for myself.’ Let us suppose that today the State will proclaim the strictest and most exact equality of all churches and faiths before the law. Tomorrow signs will appear, from which it will be possible to conclude that the relative power of the faiths is by no means equal; and if we go 30 or 50 years from the time of the legal equalisation of the churches, it will then be discovered in fact, perhaps, that among the churches there is one which in essence has a predominant influence and rules over the minds and decisions [of men], either because it is closer to ecclesiastical truth, or because in its teaching or rites it more closely corresponds to the national character, or because its organisation and discipline is more perfect and gives it more means for systematic activity, or because activists that are more lively and firm in their faith have arisen in its midst...

“And so a free State can lay down that it has nothing to do with a free Church; only the free Church, if it is truly founded on faith, will not accept this decree and will not adopt an indifferent attitude to the free State. The Church cannot refuse to exert its influence on civil and social life; and the more active it is, the more it feels within itself an inner, active force, and the less is it able to adopt an indifferent attitude towards the State. The Church cannot adopt such an attitude without renouncing its own Divine calling, if it retains faith in it and the consciousness of duty bound up with it. On the Church there lies the duty to teach and instruct; to the Church there belongs the performance of the sacraments and the rites, some of which are bound up with the most important acts and civil life. In this activity the Church of necessity enters ceaselessly into touch with social and civil life (not to speak of other cases, it is sufficient to point to questions of marriage and education). And so to the degree that the State, in separating itself from the Church, retains for itself the administration exclusively of the civil part of all these matters and removes from itself the administration of the spiritual-moral part, the Church will of necessity enter into the function abandoned by the State, and in separation from it will little by little come to control completely and exclusively that spiritual-moral influence which constitutes a necessary, real force for the State. The State will retain only a material and, perhaps, a rational force, but both the one and the other will turn out to be insufficient when the power of faith does not unite with them. And so, little by little, instead of the imagined equalisation of the functions of the State and the Church in political union, there will turn out to be inequality and opposition. A condition that is in any case
abnormal, and which must lead either to the real dominance of the Church over the apparently predominant State or to revolution.

“These are the real dangers hidden in the system of complete Church-State separation glorified by liberal thinkers. The system of the dominant or established Church has many defects, being linked with many inconveniences and difficulties, and does not exclude the possibility of conflicts and struggle. But in vain do they suppose that it has already outlived its time, and that Cavour’s formula alone gives the key to the resolution of all the difficulties of this most difficult of questions. Cavour’s formula is the fruit of political doctrinairism, which looks on questions of faith as merely political questions about the equalization of rights. There is no depth of spiritual knowledge in it, as there was not in that other famous political formula: freedom, equality and brotherhood, which up to now has weighed as a fateful burden on credulous minds. In the one case as in the other, passionate advocates of freedom are mistaken in supposing that there is freedom in equality. Or is our bitter experience not sufficient to confirm the fact that freedom does not depend on equality, and that equality is by no means freedom? It would be the same error to suppose that the very freedom of belief consists in the levelling of the churches and faiths and depends on their levelling. The whole of recent history shows that here, too, freedom and equality are not the same thing.”

* 

Fearing a separation of Church and State more than anything, Pobedonostsev opposed even a gradual reform in Church-State relations. He feared that such a reform, even if desirable in itself from a canonical point of view, might lead to Church-State separation and the gradual dechristianization of society. As Firsov writes: “Pobedonostsev saw and understood better than many that the demolishing of the Petrine Synodal system in Russian conditions would not lead to the recreation of correct mutual relations between the Church and the State, but would only strengthen anti-government forces. To represent the Church and the kingdom as existing in isolation from each other was psychologically impossible, while any changes in the ecclesiastical structure could be understood by ‘the simple people’ only as the abolition of the previous Church-State relationship [because ‘for our peasant form is everything’]. It was not by chance that Pobedonostsev, while talking with General A.A. Kireev about Church problems and ‘about learning’, declared that what he feared above all was a new schism: ‘It’s fine for you, but where shall we go with our darkness, with the peasant. I fear a schism, that’s what I fear!’”

It is not clear whether he meant a Church schism, or a schism between the peasants and the State. In either case, the events of 1905, when liberal reforms by the Tsar led to a wave of worker and peasant uprisings, showed that the old man had a point...

However, there was a contradiction in Pobedonostesv’s position. On the one hand, he sincerely believed that the Church was the soul of the State and the People, and should be its teacher, corrector and inspirer. On the other hand, he acted as if he did not believe this, but rather that the Church should be tutored and disciplined by the State, and that he himself, as the representative of the State, should act as the taskmaster of the Church hierarchy…

But the movement for reform was unstoppable. In February, 1905 Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Peterburg published a note entitled “Questions relating to desirable transformations in the position of our Orthodox Church”. “Vladyka reviewed concrete questions of the reform of the ecclesiastical administration that demanded a very speedy resolution. Referring to the discussions on religious toleration that had taken place in the Committee of Ministers, he noted: the authorities are opening to those who have separated from the Orthodox Church (the Old Ritualists, sectarians and others) ‘a definite position in the State’ without touching their inner church life, at the same time that the ‘ruling’ Church is deprived of such freedom. Citing the Popovtsi Old Ritualists who had accepted ‘the Austrian hierarchs’ as an example, Metropolitan Anthony warned: ‘The danger may occur that this community will be turned into the people’s Church while the Orthodox Church will remain only the State Church’.

“In pointing to the Church’s position within the State, Vladyka placed before the authorities a question of principle: had not the moment come to weaken the control of the secular authorities over the life of the Church? Other questions followed logically from that: should not the Church be given a greater freedom in the administration of her internal affairs? Should Orthodox priests also have the right to be permanent members of social-state institutions having their place in the parishes? After this it was natural to pose the further question on the desirability of providing the Church hierarchy with the right to participate in the sessions of the State Council, the Committee of Ministers and other higher state institutions with the right to vote in them.

“The note undoubtedly touched on the privileges of the over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod. After all, if the desires expressed by the metropolitan were to be satisfied, the Orthodox episcopate would receive the possibility of independently, with the mediation of the State, influencing legislative proposals touching the Church, that is, it would have the right of a political voice in the empire. It is understandable that C.P. Pobedonostesv could not welcome such self-will, the more so in that, besides questions on the position of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the metropolitan gave reasons for the need to review the structure of the Church and some aspects of the Church’s administration, and spoke about the particular importance of recognizing the parish as a legal person and on the desirability of reviewing the laws that regulated the right of the Church to own, acquire and use property…”

713 Firsov, op. cit., pp. 149-153.
This debate highlighted two contradictions within the present position of religion in the Russian empire, contradictions that could be removed only simultaneously or not at all. The first contradiction was that the 44th and 45th articles of the Basic Laws of the Empire guaranteed freedom of religion - but the Emperor had to be Orthodox and was obliged both to watch over the purity of the Orthodox Faith and to protect the Orthodox population of the empire from threats presented by schisms and heresies. And the second contradiction was that the Orthodox Church was the dominant confession of the empire - but, since it was also a department of State, it was less, rather than more free in relation to the State than the other confessions. Increasing freedom of religion in the sense, not simply of allowing freedom to practise religious rites (which already existed), but of creating real equality between the religions from the point of view of the State (which did not yet exist) would have the effect of abolishing the first contradiction - but only by removing the Emperor’s role as guardian of the Orthodox faith and substantially increasing the threat to Orthodoxy from certain confessions in certain regions (for example, Catholicism in the west). This could be compensated for, in the view of the hierarchs, only by abolishing the second contradiction at the same time – that is, by giving the Church a free hand to defend herself from the competition of other confessions without interference from the State.

Pobedonostsev suspected that Count Sergius Witte, President of the Council of Ministers, and Metropolitan Anthony were in league against him, and mounted a vigorous campaign to stop the projected reforms, defending the Petrine system. On March 13 he succeeded in persuading the emperor to remove the question of Church reforms from the competence of the Conferences of Ministers and Heads of State Departments and place it before the Holy Synod. However, this was only a seeming victory: the Holy Synod was no less in favour of the reforms than was Witte and the State. On March 17 the Synod recognized the necessity of reviewing the present situation of the Church vis-à-vis the State “in view of the changed situation of the heterodox confessions, the so-called Old Ritualists and sectarians”, and therefore of “transforming the Church's administration”. The restoration of the patriarchate was deemed desirable “for the sake of the honour of the Russian State”, and it was suggested that a Local Council be convened in Moscow composed of the diocesan bishops and their representatives. On March 22 the seven members of the Synod signed an appeal to the Tsar to convene a Council “at the appropriate time” in Moscow, at which a patriarch would be elected and a series of major questions of Church life would be discussed.714

Once again, on March 31, Pobedonostsev succeeded in persuading the Tsar to put off the Synod’s project, and to postpone giving Metropolitan Anthony an audience “for a certain time”. As the Tsar wrote on the Synod’s appeal: “I admit the impossibility of accomplishing, in the anxious times we are living through, such a great work requiring both calm and careful thought as the convening of a Local Council. I reserve for myself, when the fitting time for this will come, in accordance with the ancient examples of the Orthodox Emperors, the task of giving this work

---

714 Firsov, op. cit., p. 163.
momentum and convening a Council of the All-Russian Church for the canonical discussion of matters of faith and Church administration.”

However, Pobedonostev’s victory could only be temporary: society’s interest in the reforms was increasing, and even V.M. Skvortsov in the conservative journal Missionerskoe Obozrenie [Missionary Review], after pointing out that the martyred Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich had been in favour of the reforms, expressed the opinion that “the reform of the administration of the dominant Church has appeared as the logical end and natural consequence of the confessional reform which was so quickly and decisively pushed through by S.Yu. Witte and a special Conference of the Committee of Ministers”. 715 On May 5, the Tsar consented to see the metropolitan, who explained that to delay the reform was neither possible nor desirable. “But as long as Pobedonostsev is alive,” he said, “we cannot expect much.”

But Pobedonostsev did not survive long. On May 18 the Tsar officially thanked the Synod for the icon and the report that had been composed two months before, thereby indicating that Pobedonostsev’s bid to keep the Petrine system untouched had failed... Pobedonostsev soon retired, and with his retirement the Petrine system of Church-State relations was doomed to disappear...

February 24 / March 9, 2011.
Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist.

---

715 Skvortsov, in Firsov, op. cit., p. 172.
The title “Restorer of the Orthodox Autocracy” has been ascribed to Tsar Paul I, and not without reason. After the extreme westernization of the eighteenth-century Tsars, he began to restore Russia, and the Russian autocracy, to her Byzantine and Orthodox roots. He acted to humble the nobility and army officers, and brought the throne closer to the peasantry, improving their lot in many ways. He gave the Holy Synod the right to vote on who should be the over-procurator... However, some of these gains were lost in the next reign. Moreover, the importing of the western doctrines of liberalism and socialism after 1812 served to undermine the autocracy even more profoundly than the absolutist theories of the eighteenth century. It was left to the last and greatest of the Tsars (the phrase belongs to Blessed Pasha of Sarov) to fight the democratic contagion and, still more significantly, to present an image of what an Orthodox autocrat should be that would survive the inter-regnum of the Soviet period and give hope of a restoration of the Orthodox autocracy on a truly solid foundation.

Tsar Nicholas looked for his model of the truly Orthodox autocrat to the Muscovite Tsars of the seventeenth century, and especially to Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. This choice tells us much about Nicholas himself. First, Alexis was an exceptionally pious tsar who spent a great deal of time in prayer and fasting. Secondly, Alexis chose Metropolitan Nicon of Novgorod as Patriarch, and by his initial voluntary submission to him in all spiritual matters showed what the symphony of Church and State could really be. From his admiration for Tsar Alexis, therefore, we may presume that Tsar Nicholas believed that a tsar should be first of all a pious man himself, and then be prepared to enter into a close relationship with the Church on a truly filial basis.

The irony, however, is that the relationship between Tsar Alexis and Patriarch Nicon later broke down in a way that led, in the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, to the uncanonical, caesaropapist submission of the Church to the State – a submission that almost all the Church intelligentsia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, - with the notable exception of C.P. Pobedonostsev, - roundly condemned. So in looking back to the reign of Tsar Alexis, Nicholas was also looking forward to the task that lay ahead of him: the restoration of the relationship between the Church and State in Russia to that almost ideal condition that it had enjoyed in the time of Alexis Mikhailovich. Indeed, we may see this as the main task of Nicholas’ reign, the task upon whose successful completion depended the very survival of both Church and State.

* 

The tragedy of Tsar Nicholas’ reign was that whereas the achievement of his goal of restored Church-State “symphony” required both partners to believe in the goal
and work zealously for its attainment, in the last analysis only one of the partners actually believed and worked in this way. Not that the Church formally rejected the symphonic ideal: on the contrary, in the period 1904-1906 it worked diligently with the Tsar to prepare for the convening of a Sobor – the first since the seventeenth century - that would elect a Patriarch and a patriarchal administration to realize the Church's administrative independence, without which any talk of a “symphony” with the Tsar on even approximately equal terms was simply wishful thinking. Moreover, the fact that the Sobor was never convened in Tsar Nicholas’ reign was not the Church’s fault, but rather the result of the continuing atmosphere of revolutionary violence... However, “ecclesiastical administrative independence” and “Church-State symphony” are not the same thing; and most Church leaders and activists were much more interested in the former than in the latter. Many wanted Church-State separation on the western model; while others were frankly opposed to any kind of cooperation with the Tsar because they were against the Tsar and Tsarism in general...

Of course, the Church remained officially monarchist until the fall of the Empire in 1917. But already in the revolution of 1905, as a result of which the Tsar was forced to transfer some power to the Duma in the October Manifesto, the Church was divided. Thus some of the lower clergy spoke out against the Tsar. And when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius (Tikhomirov) was forced to serve a pannikhida at his grave. Another Archbishop Sergius (Stragorodsky, of Finland) gave refuge in his hierarchical house to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov. Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family: in 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius “must leave the Synod”, and in September, 1916 the Emperor wrote that he had just seen the members of the Holy Synod, and that “it was unpleasant to see only one member there – Sergius of Finland”. After the revolution he joined the renovationist heretics, and then, in 1943, became the first “patriarch” of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate.

However, the great majority of the clergy showed themselves to be monarchists and patriots in the wake of the 1905 revolution. Many clergy joined the monarchist “Union of the Russian People”, the so-called “black-hundredists”. True, Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg, who was suspected by many

---

717 Sergius Firsov, “Mitropolit Sergij (Stragorodsky) v Otsenkakh i Mneniakh Sovremennikov (k Postanovke Voprosa)” (Evaluation of, and Opinions about, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) by his Contemporaries (Towards Setting the Question)”, http://krotov.info/history/20/1900/firsov_strag.html, p. 4. In a previous work (Pravoslavnia Tserkov’ na pereput’ie (1917-1999), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 33), I wrongly ascribed this pannikhida to Archbishop Sergius (Stragorodsky). I take this opportunity to correct this error.
718 Perepiska Nikolaia i Aleksandry Romanovykh (The Correspondence of Nicholas and Alexandra Romanov), 1914-1915, Moscow, Prague, 1923, vol. III, p. 320; in Firsov, op. cit.
of being a closet liberal, opposed the Union. But Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) of Yaroslavl, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia, Bishop Hermogen of Saratov, St. John of Kronstadt, Elder Theodosius of Minvody, Fr. John Vostorgov and many others joined it without doubting.

However, the Union was plagued by poor leadership that gave it a bad name. It was led by A. Dubronin, who was only superficially Orthodox. Thus he was for the tsar - but against hierarchy! And he wanted to rid the empire of “the Germans”, that is, that highly efficient top layer of the administration which proved itself as loyal to the empire as any other section of the population. When interviewed years later by the Cheka, Dubronin declared: “By conviction I am a communist monarchist, that is, [I want] there to be monarchist government under which those forms of government [will flourish] which could bring the people an increase in prosperity. For me all kinds of cooperatives, associations, etc. are sacred.”

Fr. John Vostorgov, one of the founders of the Union, considered Dubronin an enemy of the truth... And in general he stressed that true patriotism can only be founded on true faith and morality. “Where the faith has fallen,” he said, “and where morality has fallen, there can be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious.”

The major problem for the monarchists was the paradoxicality of the idea of a monarchical party within a monarchy. Tsarism has the major advantage over other political systems of standing above the various interests and classes, being in thrall to the interests of no single party and reconciling them all in obedience to the tsar. But the October manifesto had appeared to many to divide ultimate power between


721 Monk Anempodist writes: “Metropolitan Vladimir went on to take part in the movement of the right conservative forces of Russia that was being formed. Thus in 1907 he took part in the work of the All-Russian congress of ‘The Union of the Russian People’. In 1909, while taking part in the work of the First Monarchist congress of Russian People, Metropolitan Vladimir was counted worthy of the honour of passing on a greeting to the congress from his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II in the following telegram:

“‘To his Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow. I entrust to you, Vladyko, to pass on to all those assembled in the first capital at the congress of Russian people and members of the Moscow Patriotic Union My gratitude for their loyal feelings. I know their readiness faithfully and honourably to serve Me and the homeland, in strict observance of lawfulness and order. St. Petersburg. 30 September. Nicholas.’” Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, “Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor’ba s revolutsii” (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’ (Orthodox Life), 53, № 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10.

722 Vostorgov, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., p. 400.
the Tsar and the Duma. And this made party politics inevitable. So the monarchists were forced to conduct party politics in favour of the idea that the state should not be the product of party politics, but incarnate in the tsar who was above all party politics...

There could be no real unity between those who ascribed ultimate power in the State to the Tsar and those who ascribed it to the Duma. Moreover, the struggle between the “reds” and the “blacks” was not simply a struggle between different interpretations of the October manifesto, or between monarchists and constitutionalists, but between two fundamentally incompatible world-views - the Orthodox Christian and the Masonic-Liberal-Ecumenist. It was a struggle between two fundamentally opposed views of where true authority comes from – God or the people; it was a struggle for the very heart of Russia.

As Bishop Andronicus, the future hieromartyr, wrote: “It is not a question of the struggle between two administrative regimes, but of a struggle between faith and unbelief, between Christianity and antichristianity. The ancient antichristian plot, which was begun by those who shouted furiously to Pilate about Jesus Christ: ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him: His blood be on us and on our children’ - continued in various branches and secret societies. In the 16th century it poured into the special secret antichristian order of the Templars, and in the 18th century it became more definite in the Illuminati, the Rosacrucians and, finally, in Freemasonry it merged into a universal Jewish organization. And now, having gathered strength to the point where France is completely in the hands of the Masons, it - Masonry - already openly persecutes Christianity out of existence there. In the end Masonry will be poured out into one man of iniquity, the son of destruction – the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2). In this resides the solution of the riddle of our most recent freedoms: their aim is the destruction of Christianity in Rus’. That is why what used to be the French word ‘liberal’, which meant among the Masons a ‘generous’ contributor to the Masonic aims, and then received the meaning of ‘freedom-loving’ with regard to questions of faith, has now already passed openly over to antichristianity. In this resides the solution of the riddle of that stubborn battle for control of the school, which is being waged in the zemstvo and the State Duma: if the liberal tendency gains control of the school, the success of antichristianity is guaranteed. In this resides the solution of the riddle of the sympathy of liberals for all kinds of sects in Christianity and non-Christian religions. And the sectarians have not been slumbering – they have now set about attacking the little children… And when your children grow up and enter university – there Milyukov and co. will juggie with the facts and deceive them, teaching them that science has proved man’s origin from the apes. And they will really make our children into beasts, with just this difference, that the ape is a humble and obedient animal whereas these men-beasts will be proud, bold, cruel and unclean….”

723 Bishop Andronicus, “Russkij grazhdanskij stroj zhizni pered sudom khristianina” (The Russian civil order before the judgement of the Christian), Fryazino, 1995, pp. 24-25.
Tragically, the new generation that grew up between the first revolution of 1905 and the February revolution of 1917 was largely liberal in faith, and so “the success of antichristianity was guaranteed”…

* 

In spite of the gathering momentum of revolutionary sentiment in the Church and the nation as a whole, the Tsar continued to manifest the image of the true Christian ruler, giving the lie to the liberals’ and revolutionaries’ portrayal of him as “Blood Nicholas”. He was especially distinguished for his mercifulness. He pardoned criminals, even revolutionaries, and gave away vast quantities of his own land and money to alleviate the plight of the peasants. It is believed that he gave away the last of his personal wealth during the Great War, to support the war effort. Even as a child he often wore patched clothing while spending his personal allowance to help poor students to pay for their tuition.

The reign of the meek and gentle Tsar Nicholas II gave an unparalleled opportunity to tens of millions of people both within and outside the Russian empire to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. Moreover, the strength of the Russian Empire protected and sustained Orthodoxy in other parts of the world, such as the Balkans and the Middle East. The Tsar considered it his sacred duty to restore to Russia her ancient traditional culture, which had been abandoned by many of the "educated" classes in favour of modern, Western styles. He encouraged the building of churches and the painting of icons in the traditional Byzantine and Old Russian styles. In the words of Archpriest Michael Polsky, "In the person of the Emperor Nicholas II the believers had the best and most worthy representative of the Church, truly 'The Most Pious' as he was referred to in church services. He was a true patron of the Church, and a solicitor of all her blessings."\(^{724}\)

During the reign of Nicholas II, the Church reached her fullest development and external power. "By the outbreak of revolution in 1917… it had between 115 and 125 million adherents (about 70 per cent of the population), around 120,000 priests, deacons and other clergy, 130 bishops, 78,000 churches [up by 10,000], 1,253 monasteries [up by 250], 57 seminaries and four ecclesiastical academies."\(^{725}\) Traditional church arts were encouraged, and old churches were renovated. The Emperor himself took part in the laying of the first cornerstones and the consecration of many churches. He visited churches and monasteries in all parts of the country, venerating their saints. Moreover, he took a very active part in the glorification of new ones, sometimes urging on an unwilling Holy Synod. Among those glorified during his reign were: St. Theodosius of Chernigov (in 1896), St. Isidore of Yuriev


The Emperor stressed the importance of educating the peasant children within the framework of church and parish and, as a result, the number of parish schools, which were more popular among the peasants than the state, *zemstvo* schools, grew to 37,000. Moreover, Christian literature flourished; excellent journals were published, such as *Soul-Profiting Reading, Soul-Profiting Converser, The Wanderer, The Rudder, The Russian Monk, The Trinity Leaflets* and the ever-popular *Russian Pilgrim*. The Russian people were surrounded by spiritual nourishment as never before.

Nor did the Emperor neglect the material condition of his people. Under his leadership Russia made vast strides in economic development. He changed the passport system introduced by Peter I and thus facilitated the free movement of the people, including travel abroad. The poll tax was abolished and a voluntary programme of hospitalisation insurance was introduced, under which, for a payment of one rouble per year, a person was entitled to free hospitalisation. The parity of the rouble was increased greatly on the international markets during his reign. In 1897, a law was enacted to limit work hours; night work was forbidden for women and minors under seventeen years of age, and this at a time when the majority of the countries in the West had almost no labour legislation at all. As William Taft commented in 1913, "the Russian Emperor has enacted labour legislation which not a single democratic state could boast of".

The young Tsar Nicholas was a peacemaker by nature, and early in his reign he suggested that all nations come together in order to cut their military forces and submit to general arbitration on international disputes. "The preservation of universal peace," he wrote, "and the reduction in weapons that weigh on all the peoples is, in the present situation, a goal to which the efforts of all governments should strive." Military expenses were an ever-increasing burden on the peoples, disrupting their prosperity. "Hundreds of millions are spent on the acquisition of terrible means of destruction which, while considered the last word in science today, must lose all value tomorrow in view of new inventions... Thus as the weapons of each state grow, they answer less and less to the goals put forward by governments."

As a result of the Tsar’s proposal, the Hague Peace Conference was convened on May 18, 1899, and was attended by representatives of 26 nations. Several useful resolutions were passed. In 1921, the American President, Warren Harding, officially acknowledged the Tsar’s noble efforts towards the limitation of armaments by way of binding agreements among the Powers.

The First World War broke out in 1914 despite the best efforts of the Tsar to avert it. In the end, he could not turn away from what he felt was his moral duty, as
Emperor of the Third Rome, the Orthodox Christian commonwealth, to march to the aid of an Orthodox country, Serbia, that was being unjustly attacked by an heretical nation. In August, 1915 he assumed the post of commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, and immediately secured some important victories. On the eve of the February revolution, as has been recognized by many Russian and foreign historians, the Russian armies were better equipped than ever before and in a good position to turn the tide of war against the Germans in a spring offensive. Such a glorious triumph, which would have secured the Tsar’s reputation as one of the great warrior kings of history, was snatched from him by the treason of the leading elites, especially of the generals, and by the indifference of the Church and nation as a whole, as a result of which he was forced to abdicate...

* 

If we compare the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917 with that of the British King Edward VIII in 1936 (who happened to be his godson), then we immediately see the superiority, not only of Tsar Nicholas over King Edward, but also of the system of the Orthodox autocracy over that of the constitutional monarchy.

Constitutionalists – of whom there were very many among the plotters of 1917 – criticized the Orthodox autocracy mainly on the grounds that it presented a system of absolute, uncontrolled power, and therefore of tyranny. They quoted the saying of the historian Lord Acton: “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. But this was a serious misunderstanding. The Orthodox autocracy is based on the anointing of the Church and on the faith of the people; and if it betrays either – by disobeying the Church, or by trampling on the people’s faith, - it loses its legitimacy, as we see in the Time of Troubles, when the people rejected the false Dmitri. It is therefore limited, not absolute, and must not be confused with the system of absolutist monarchy that we see in, for example, the French King Louis XIV, or the English King Henry VIII, who felt limited by nothing and nobody on earth.

Tsar Nicholas perfectly understood the nature of his autocratic power, which is why he never went against the Church or violated Orthodoxy, but rather upheld and championed both the one and the other. Moreover, he demonstrated in his personal life a model of Christian humility and love. If he had been personally ambitious, he would have fought to retain his throne in 1917, but he abdicated, as we have seen, in order to avoid the bloodshed of his subjects. What a contrast with Edward VIII, who lived a life of debauchery, and then abdicated because he could not have both the throne and a continued life of debauchery at the same time. He showed no respect for Church or faith, and perished saying: “What a wasted life!”

Whereas the abdication of Edward VIII only demonstrated his unfitness to rule, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, by contrast, saved the monarchy for the future. For in abdicating he resisted the temptation to apply force and start a civil war in a cause that was just from a purely juridical point of view, but which could not be justified from a deeper, eschatological point of view. In this he followed the example of first
canonized saints of Russia, the Princes Boris and Gleb, and the advice of the Prophet Shemaiah to King Rehoboam and the house of Judah as they prepared to face the house of Israel: “Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house…” (I Kings 12.24).

The Tsar-Martyr resisted the temptation to act like a Western absolutist ruler, thereby refuting those in both East and West who looked on his rule as just that – a form of absolutism. He showed that the Orthodox Autocracy was not a form of absolutism, but something completely sui generis – the external aspect of the self-government of the Orthodox Church and people on earth. He refused to treat his power as if it were independent of the Church and people, but showed that it was a form of service to the Church and the people from within the Church and the people, in accordance with the word: “I have raised up one chosen out of My people… with My holy oil have I anointed him” (Psalm 88.18, 19). So not “government by the people and for the people” in a democratic sense, but “government by one chosen out of the people of God for the people of God and responsible to God alone”…

Immediately after the abdication, on March 11 and 12, 1917, the Council of the Petrograd Religio-Philosophical Society attempted to deny the very concept of the Orthodox autocracy by resolving that the Synod’s acceptance of the Tsar’s abdication “does not correspond to the enormous religious importance of the act, by which the Church recognized the Tsar in the rite of the coronation of the anointed of God. It is necessary, for the liberation of the people’s conscience and to avoid the possibility of a restoration, that a corresponding act be issued in the name of the Church hierarchy abolishing the power of the Sacrament of Royal Anointing, by analogy with the church acts abolishing the power of the Sacraments of Marriage and the Priesthood.”

Fortunately, the Church hierarchy rejected this demand. For the Sacrament of Anointing cannot be abolished, since it is of God. As Shakespeare put it in Richard II (III, ii, 54-7):

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

As such, Nicholas remained an anointed tsar to the end of his life.

For since the power of the anointed autocrat comes from God, not the people, it cannot be removed by the people. The converse of this fact is that if the people attempt to remove the autocrat from power for any other reason than his renunciation of Orthodoxy, then they themselves sin against God and deprive themselves of His Grace. That is why St. John of Kronstadt had said that if Russia were to be deprived of her tsar, she would become a “stinking corpse”. And so it turned out: as a strictly logical and moral consequence, “from the day of his abdication,” as St. John Maximovich wrote, “everything began to collapse. It could not have been otherwise. The one who united everything, who stood guard for the
For, as St. John said in another place: "The Tsar was the embodiment of the Russian people’s… readiness to submit the life of the state to the righteousness of God: therefore do the people submit themselves to the Tsar, because he submits to God. Vladyka Anthony [Khrapovitsky] loved to recall the Tsar’s prostration before God and the Church which he makes during the coronation, while the entire Church, all its members, stand. And then, in response to his submission to Christ, all in the Church make a full prostration to him.”

In agreement with this, the philosopher Ivan Alexandrovich Ilyin wrote: “Faithfulness to the monarchy is a condition of soul and form of action in which a man unites his will with the will of his Sovereign, his dignity with his dignity, his destiny with his destiny… The fall of the monarchy was the fall of Russia herself. A thousand-year state form fell, but no ‘Russian republic’ was put in its place, as the revolutionary semi-intelligentsia of the leftist parties dreamed, but the pan-Russian disgrace foretold by Dostoyevsky was unfurled, and a failure of spirit. And on this failure of spirit, on this dishonour and disintegration there grew the state Anchar of Bolshevism, prophetically foreseen by Pushkin – a sick and unnatural tree of evil that spread its poison on the wind to the destruction of the whole world. In 1917 the Russian people fell into the condition of the mob, while the history of mankind shows that the mob is always muzzled by despots and tyrants… The Russian people unwound, dissolved and ceased to serve the great national work – and woke up under the dominion of internationalists. History has as it were proclaimed a certain law: Either one-man rule or chaos is possible in Russia; Russia is not capable of a republican order. Or more exactly: the existence of Russia demands one-man rule – either a religiously and nationally strengthened one-man rule of honour, fidelity and service, that is, a monarchy, or one-man rule that is atheist, conscienceless and dishonourable, and moreover anti-national and international, that is, a tyranny…"

The Russian constitutionalists demanded of Tsar Nicholas that he give them a “responsible” government, by which they meant a government under their control. But the rule of Tsar Nicholas was already responsible in the highest degree – to God. For this is the fundamental difference between the Orthodox autocrat and the constitutional monarch, that whereas the first is responsible to God alone, the latter,
while claiming to rule “by the Grace of God”, in fact is in thrall to the people and fulfils their will rather than God’s.

So we have three kinds of king: the Orthodox autocrat, who strives to fulfil the will of God alone, and is responsible to Him alone; the absolute monarch, who fulfils only his own will, and is responsible to nobody; and the constitutional monarch, who fulfils the will of the people, and can be ignored or deposed by them as they see fit.

The significance of the reign of Tsar Nicholas II lies in the fact that he demonstrated, in his life and death, what a true Orthodox autocrat – as opposed to an absolutist despot or a constitutional monarch - really is. This knowledge had begun to fade in the minds of the people, and with its fading the monarchy itself became weaker and eventually collapsed. But Tsar Nicholas restored the image to its full glory, and thereby preserved the possibility of the complete restoration of the autocracy in a future generation…

March 2/15, 2011.

Anniversary of the Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II.

“Reigning” Icon of the Mother of God.
24. HOW THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE FELL FROM GRACE

Introduction

In 1393 the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthony IV told Great-Prince Basil of Moscow, who was beginning to show signs of independence from the Byzantine Emperor, that the Church cannot exist without an Emperor. He was wrong about that: the Church existed for nearly three centuries before the arrival of the first Christian emperor, St. Constantine, and the Saviour of the Church has promised that she will ‘prevail against the gates of hell’ itself. However, it is a fact that in general the Orthodox Church has flourished under Christian emperors and declined in their absence...

So how would the Russian Orthodox Church fare after the fall of the Russian Autocracy?

For the first few years of Soviet power the Orthodox Church survived and was even strengthened spiritually in spite of very fierce persecution. In 1922, however, the first pro-Soviet schism in the Russian Orthodox Church took place – the so-called renovationists or “Living Church”. But the people in their great majority rejected the renovationists, and the Patriarchal Church remained unvanquished until the death of Patriarch Tikhon in April, 1925. Two years after that, however, in 1927, the second, “neo-renovationist” schism took place – and this time the official church fell together with the majority of the people...

After the death of Patriarch Tikhon, and the arrest and imprisonment of the patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, in December, 1925, True Orthodoxy in Russia was without a first-hierarch living in freedom and able to administer the Church. By the middle of 1926, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Nizhni-Novgorod had established himself as the leading Russian hierarch, although he was neither patriarch nor patriarchal locum tenens, but only a deputy of Metropolitan Peter. As such, he did not have the authority to undertake any important steps in Church matters without the express authorization of Metropolitan Peter.

Lev Regelson has argued that Metropolitan Peter’s action in appointing deputies was not canonical, and created misunderstandings that were to be ruthlessly exploited later by Metropolitan Sergius. A chief hierarch does not have the right to transfer the fullness of his power to another hierarch as if it were a personal inheritance: only a Council representing the whole Local Church can elect a leader to replace him. Patriarch Tikhon’s appointment of three locum tenentes was an exceptional measure, but one which was nevertheless entrusted to him by – and therefore could claim the authority of – the Council of 1917-18. However, the Council

---

made no provision for what might happen in the event of the death or removal of these three. In such an event, therefore, patriarchal authority ceased, temporarily, in the Church; and there was no canonical alternative, until the convocation of another Council, but for each bishop to govern his diocese independently while maintaining links with neighbouring dioceses, in accordance with the Patriarch’s ukaz no. 362 of November 7/20, 1920.

In defence of Metropolitan Peter it may be said that it is unlikely that he intended to transfer the fullness of his power to Metropolitan Sergius, but only the day-to-day running of the administrative machine. In fact he explicitly said this later, in his letter to Sergius dated January 2, 1930. Moreover, in his declaration of December 6, 1925, he had given instructions on what should be done in the event of his arrest, saying that “the raising of my name, as patriarchal locum tenens, remains obligatory during Divine services.” This was something that Patriarch Tikhon had not insisted upon when he transferred the fullness of his power to Metropolitan Agathangelus in 1922. It suggests that Metropolitan Peter did not exclude the possibility that his deputy might attempt to seize power from him just as the renovationists had seized power from the patriarch and his locum tenens in 1922, and was taking precautions against just such a possibility.

The critical distinction here is that whereas the patriarchal locum tenens has, de jure, all the power of a canonically elected Patriarch and need relinquish his power only to a canonically convoked Council of the whole local Church, the deputy of the locum tenens has no such fullness of power and must relinquish such rights as he has at any time that the Council or the locum tenens requires it. Nevertheless, the important question remains: why did Metropolitan Peter not invoke ukaz no. 362 and announce the decentralization of the Church’s administration at the time of his arrest? Probably for two important reasons:

(1) The restoration of the patriarchate was one of the main achievements of the Moscow Council of 1917-18, and had proved enormously popular. Its dissolution might well have dealt a major psychological blow to the masses, who were not always educated enough to understand that the Church could continue to exist either in a centralized (though not papist) form, as it had in the East from 312 to 1917, or in a decentralized form, as in the catacomb period before Constantine the Great and during the iconoclast persecution of the eighth and ninth centuries.

(2) The renovationists – still the major threat to the Church in Metropolitan Peter’s eyes – did not have a patriarch, and their organization was closer to the synodical, state-dependent structure of the pre-revolutionary Church. The presence or absence of a patriarch or his substitute was therefore a major sign of the difference between the true Church and the false for the uneducated believer.

731 Gubonin, *op. cit.*, p. 422.
There is another important factor which should be mentioned here by way of introduction. Under the rules imposed upon the Church administration by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, the Ruling Synod was permitted to move bishops from one see to another, and even to retire, ban or defrock them, in a purely administrative manner. This was contrary to the Holy Canons, which envisage the defrocking of a bishop only as a result of a full canonical trial, to which the accused bishop is invited to attend three times. Peter’s rules made the administration of the Church similar to that of a government department – which is precisely what the Church was according to his Reglament. It enabled the State to exert pressure on the Church to move and remove bishops in the speediest and most efficient manner, without the checks and balances – and delays – that following the Holy Canons would have involved. This was bad enough in itself, even when the State was kindly disposed towards the Church. It was catastrophic when the State became the enemy of the Church after 1917… Now Patriarch Tikhon, while not rescinding Peter’s rules, had opposed the pressure of the State, on the one hand, and had preserved the spirit of sobornost’, or conciliarity, on the other, consulting his fellow bishops and the people as far as possible. But the danger remained that if the leadership of the Church were assumed by a less holy man, then the combination of the uncanonical, Petrine rules, on the one hand, and an increase of pressure from the State, on the other, would lead to disaster…

The fall of the Moscow Patriarchate took place as a result of a decisive movement by Metropolitan Sergius and a small group of likeminded hierarchs towards a reconciliation between the Orthodox Church and the God-hating Soviet power and their close collaboration in support of the revolution. It was not authorized by Metropolitan Peter, who remained in prison until his martyric death in 1937. And it was in any case contrary both to the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church, and to the anathema of Patriarch Tikhon of January 19 / February 1, 1918 - which was supported by the Local Council of the Russian Church then in session in Moscow - against any such collaboration. It was imposed upon the Church without any conciliar consultation, and the dissidents - who included most of the senior bishops - were ruthlessly disposed of - forcibly retired, banned or defrocked - without the possibility of a trial by their fellow-bishops or appeal against the verdict. The decisions of Sergius and Synod were still more ruthlessly followed up by Soviet power, which cast all those who opposed “our Sergius” into prison or exile, where the great majority of them perished.

The Rise of Metropolitan Sergius

Of course, the Soviets would have preferred to act through the canonical leader of the Church, Metropolitan Peter, rather than a deputy. For that would have given their take-over of the Church greater “canonicity”. However, in December, 1926, when the Soviet official Tuchkov proposed to Metropolitan Peter, who was in prison in Suzdal, that he renounce his locum tenancy, Peter refused, and then sent a message to everyone through a fellow prisoner that he would “never under any
circumstances leave his post and would remain faithful to the Orthodox Church to death itself”.\(^{732}\)

This was a blow to the Soviets: while continuing to try and persuade Metropolitan Peter – through the well-known methods of torture – to change his mind, they would have to try and find another man to act as the Judas of the Russian Church. Fortunately for them, however, on January 1, 1927, while he was in Perm on his way to exile on the island of Khe in Siberia, Metropolitan Peter confirmed Sergius as his deputy. This suited the Soviets perfectly, because Sergius was well-known even from the pre-revolutionary period for his “leftist” views, and had even been a leader of the pro-Soviet renovationist schism in 1922.

Though he came to regret this decision, Metropolitan Peter was not able to revoke it officially from his remote exile. And the Soviets wasted no time in imprisoning Sergius, so as to remind him, if he needed reminding, who the real powers in the land were… After three months in prison, Sergius emerged in April a devoted servant of the revolution…

While Sergius was in prison, Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich had been managing affairs as his deputy. At the beginning of March he was summoned from Uglich to Moscow and interrogated for three days by the GPU. Evidently, they were thinking that if Seraphim might also be useful to them, they might not need Sergius…

But they were mistaken. Seraphim was offered a Synod, and indicated who should be its members. Seraphim rejected this list, and put forward his own list of names, which included Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, probably the most authoritative hierarch in Russia and one of Patriarch Tikhon’s three locum tenentes (the others were Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl and Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa).

“But he’s in prison,” they said.

“Then free him,” said the archbishop.

The GPU then presented him with conditions for the legalization of the Church by Soviet power. This would have involved surrendering the Church into the power of the atheists. Arfed Gustavson writes: “He refused outrightly without entering into discussions, pointing out that he was not entitled to decide such questions without the advice of his imprisoned superiors. When he was asked whom he would appoint as his executive deputy he is said to have answered that he would turn over the Church to the Lord Himself. The examining magistrate was said to have looked at him full of wonder and to have replied:

“’All the others have appointed deputies…’

\(^{732}\) Regelson, op. cit., p. 408.
“To this Seraphim countered: ‘But I lay the Church in the hands of God, our Lord. I am doing this, so that the whole world may know what freedom Orthodox Christianity is enjoying in our free State.’”733

Another account of this dialogue was given by Archbishop Seraphim’s senior subdeacon, Michael Nikolaevich Yaroslavsky: “For 100 days Vladyka Seraphim happened to rule the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church. This was in 1926. Metropolitan Sergius was in prison, everybody was in prison...

“And so, as he had been put in charge, Vladyka told me that at that time the authorities offered him, as the Primate of the Church, a Synod of bishops. He did not agree and immediately received three years in Solovki camp. He did not betray the Church, but... declared the autocephaly of each diocese, since each Church Primate was another candidate for prison...”734

This was a decisive moment, for the central hierarch of the Church was effectively declaring the Church’s decentralization. And not before time. For with the imprisonment of the last of the three possible locum tenentes there was really no canonical basis for establishing a central administration for the Church before the convocation of a Local Council. But this was prevented by the communists. As we have seen, the system of deputies of the deputy of the locum tenens had no basis in Canon Law or precedent in the history of the Church. And if it was really the case that the Church could not exist without a first hierarch and central administration, then the awful possibility existed that with the fall of the first hierarch the whole Church would fall, too...

The communists also wanted a centralized administration; so Tuchkov now turned to Metropolitan Agathangelus with the proposal that he lead the Church. He refused. Then he turned to Metropolitan Cyril with the same proposal. He, too,


“According to a letter written by Archbishop Seraphim a few days after his Lubyanks interview, Tuchkov said to him ‘at parting’: ‘We don’t harbour evil thoughts; we are releasing you and assign to you Uglich as your place of residence; you can officiate wherever you want, but under no circumstances can you govern. You should neither appoint, nor transfer, nor dismiss, nor reward.’ ‘But what about enquiries from the dioceses, current affairs,’ asked Archbishop Seraphim. ‘You cannot stop life, it will claim its own.’ ‘Well, you can make purely formal replies. After all, you have declared autonomy. So what do you want? You have left no deputies. So you should act accordingly: you must not send around any papers on the new government system. You can write to the dioceses that since I have refused to govern, you should manage on your own in your localities.” But it comes into your head to write something, send it to me with a trusted man, I’ll look through it and give you my opinion... As for now, goodbye. We’ll buy you a ticket and see you to the railway station. Go back to Uglich and sit there quietly.’” (in Fr. Alexander Mazyrin, “Legalizing the Moscow Patriarchate in 1927: The Secret Aims of the Authorities”, *Social Science: A Quarterly Journal of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 1, 2009, p. 3. The article was first published in Russian in *Otechestvennaia Istoria*, no. 4, 2008).
refused. The conversation between Tuchkov and Metropolitan Cyril is reported to have gone something like this:-

“If we have to remove some hierarch, will you help us in this?”

“Yes, if the hierarch appears to be guilty of some ecclesiastical transgression… In the contrary case, I shall tell him directly, ‘The authorities are demanding this of me, but I have nothing against you.’”

“No!” replied Tuchkov. “You must try to find an appropriate reason and remove him as if on your own initiative.”

To this the hierarch replied: “Eugene Nikolayevich! You are not the cannon, and I am not the shot, with which you want to blow up our Church from within!”

**Metropolitan Sergius forms a Synod**

On April 2, 1927 Metropolitan Sergius emerged from prison, ready to be the shot that would blow up the Orthodox Church from within… He was released from prison on condition that he did not leave Moscow – although before his arrest he had not had the right to live in Moscow. However, the investigation of his case was not discontinued, showing that the authorities still wanted to keep him on a leash… Five days later, Archbishop Seraphim handed over to him the government of the Russian Church. And another six days later, on April 13, Metropolitan Sergius announced to Bishop Alexis (Gotovtsev), who was temporary administrator of the Moscow diocese, that he had assumed the post of deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens.

On May 16 Sergius asked the NKVD for permission to hold a preliminary meeting with six or seven hierarchs with a view to inviting them to become members of a Synod and then to petition the government for registration of the Synod. The NKVD immediately agreed, acknowledging receipt of one rouble for the certificate. “Thus a one-rouble certificate inaugurated the history of the legalized Moscow Patriarchate.”

On May 18 the meeting took place, and the hierarchs agreed to convert their meeting into a temporary Patriarchal Holy Synod. The members of this Synod, according to Archbishop Seraphim’s subdeacon, were precisely those hierarchs that had been suggested to Archbishop Seraphim, but whom he had rejected… As the Catholic writer Deinber points out, “when the names of the bishops invited to join the Synod were made known, then there could be no further doubts concerning the

---

735 Regelson, op. cit., p. 413.
736 Mazurin, op. cit., p. 5. In later years, after Sergius’ betrayal of the Church, Archbishop Seraphim is reported to have asserted his rights as patriarchal locum tenens. See Michael Khlebnikov, “O tserkovnoi situatsii v Kostrome v 20-30-e gody” (On the Church Situation in Kostroma in the 20s and 30s), Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’ (Orthodox Life), 49, № 5 (569), May, 1997, p. 19.
737 Mazurin, op. cit., p. 6.
capitulation of Metropolitan Sergius before Soviet power. The following joined the Synod: Archbishop Sylvester (Bratanovsky) – a former renovationist; Archbishop Alexis Simansky – a former renovationist, appointed to the Petrograd see by the Living Church after the execution of Metropolitan Benjamin [Kazansky]; Archbishop Philip [Gumilevsky] – a former beglopopovets, i.e. one who had left the Orthodox Church for the sect of the beglopopovtsi; Metropolitan Seraphim [Alexandrov] of Tver, a man whose connections with the OGPU were known to all Russia and whom no-one trusted…”

On May 20, the OGPU officially recognized this Synod, which suggested that Metropolitan Sergius had agreed to the terms of the legalization of the Church by Soviet power which Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter had rejected. One of Sergius’ closest supporters, Bishop Metrophanes of Aksaisk, had once declared that “the legalization of the church administration is a sign of heterodoxy”… In any case, on May 25 Metropolitan Sergius and his “Patriarchal Holy Synod” now wrote to the bishops enclosing the OGPU document and telling them that their diocesan councils should now seek registration from the local organs of Soviet power. Some hierarchs hastened to have their diocesan administrations legalized. But as it turned out, the OGPU was in no hurry to register diocesan councils before their membership had been established to the OGPU’s satisfaction...

“In 1929, when the results were already obvious, [the Catacomb] Bishop Damascene (Tsedrik) wrote this in his ‘Letter to the Legalized Ones’: ‘Fathers and brothers! While it is still not too late, do think and look into the essence of the ‘legalization’ that was graciously granted to you, lest you should later bitterly repent of the mistake that all of you with Metropolitan Sergius at your head are now committing! What you are accepting under the name of ‘legalization’ is, in essence, an act of bondage that guarantees you no rights whatsoever, while imposing upon you some grievous obligations. It would be naïve to expect anything other than that. The Communist Soviet Power is frank and consistent. It openly declared itself hostile to religion and set the destruction of the Church as its goal. It never stops stating openly and clearly its theomachistic tasks through its top governmental representatives and all of its junior agents. This is why it is very naïve and criminal to believe that the so-called legalization by the Soviets is even partially seeking the good of the Church.”

In June, 1927 Sergius wrote to Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris directing him to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet power. He agreed… On July 14, in ukaz № 93, Sergius demanded that all clergy abroad should sign a formal pledge to cease criticizing the Soviet government. It also stated that any clergyman abroad who refused to sign such would no longer be considered to be a part of the Moscow Patriarchate. This ukaz, which completely contradicted his previous ukaz of September 12, 1926, which blessed the hierarchs abroad to form their own independent administration, even included the actual text of the pledge that was to

739 Mazyrin, op. cit., p. 10.
be signed: “I, the undersigned, promise that because of my actual dependence upon
the Moscow Patriarchate, I will not permit myself neither in my social activities nor
especially in my Church work, any expression that could in the least way be
considered as being disloyal with regard to the Soviet government.”

The clergy abroad were given until October 15 to sign this pledge. The ROCOR
Council of Bishops, in their encyclical dated August 26, 1927, refused this demand
and declared: "The free portion of the Church of Russia must terminate relations
with the ecclesiastical administration in Moscow [i.e., with Metropolitan Sergius and
his synod], in view of the fact that normal relations with it are impossible and
because of its enslavement by the atheist regime, which is depriving it of freedom to
act according to its own will and of freedom to govern the Church in accordance
with the canons.”

However, Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, agreed to sign, “but on condition that
the term ‘loyalty’ means for us the apoliticisation of the émigré Church, that is, we
are obliged not to make the ambon a political arena, if this will relieve the difficult
situation of our native Mother Church; but we cannot be ‘loyal’ to Soviet power: we
are not citizens of the USSR, and the USSR does not recognise us as such, and
therefore the political demand is from the canonical point of view non-obligatory for
us…”

The impossible demands that Sergius’ appeal for loyalty to the Soviet Union
placed on hierarchs living outside the Soviet Union was pointed out by the future
hieromartyr, Archbishop John of Latvia, to Metropolitan Eleutherius of Lithuania:
“As far as I know you, your co-pastors and flock, the question of loyalty to the USSR
and the openly antitheist authorities in power there can be resolved sincerely by you
only in a negative sense. But if you and your flock were not such as I know you to be,
the confession of loyalty to the USSR and the authorities in power there would still
be impossible for you from a juridical point of view. And you and your co-pastors
and flock are obliged under oath to be faithful citizens of the Lithuanian Republic.
Simultaneous fidelity both to Lithuania and the USSR is juridically unthinkable. But
even if it were not a question of loyalty in the sense of fidelity to the USSR where the
‘appeal’ [of Metropolitan Sergius] was born, but in the sense of benevolence towards

---

740 Quoted in Protopriest Alexander Lebedeff, “Is the Moscow Patriarchate the ‘Mother Church’ of the

741 Monk Benjamin, “Letopis’ Tserkovnykh Sobytij Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi nachinaia s 1917 goda” (A
Chronicle of Church Events of the Orthodox Church beginning from 1917),

742 Protopriest Vladislav Tsyhin, Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi 1925-1938 (A History of the Russian Church,
172) writes that on September 13, Metropolitan Eulogius wrote to Sergius asking that he be given
autonomy. On September 24 Sergius replied with a refusal.
the USSR, then all the same you, as a faithful son of Lithuania, cannot in the future and in all cases promise benevolence towards the USSR…”

On July 5, 1928, the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR decreed: “The present ukaz [of Sergius] introduces nothing new into the position of the Church Abroad. It repeats the same notorious ukaz of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in 1922, which was decisively rejected by the whole Church Abroad in its time.” In response to this refusal, Metropolitan Sergius expelled the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad from membership of the Moscow Patriarchate. So the first schism between the Russian Church inside and outside Russia took place as a result of the purely political demands of Sergius’ Moscow Patriarchate.

The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius

On July 16/29, Metropolitan Sergius issued the infamous Declaration that has been the basis of the existence of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate ever since, and which was to cause the greatest and most destructive schism in the history of the Orthodox Church since the fall of the Papacy in the eleventh century.

Several points should be noted about this document. First Sergius pretended that Patriarch Tikhon had always been aiming to have the Church legalized by the State, but had been frustrated by the émigré hierarchs and by his own death. There is a limited truth in this – but it was not the émigré hierarchs that frustrated the patriarch, nor did he want the kind of legalization Sergius wanted… Then he went on: “At my proposal and with permission from the State, a blessed Patriarchal Synod has been formed by those whose signatures are affixed to this document at its conclusion. Missing are the Metropolitan of Novgorod, Arsenius, who has not arrived yet, and Archbishop Sebastian of Kostroma, who is ill. Our application that this Synod be permitted to take up the administration of the Orthodox All-Russian Church has been granted. Now our Orthodox Church has not only a canonically legal central administration but a central administration that is legal also according to the law of the State of the Soviet Union. We hope that this legalization will be gradually extended to the lower administrative units, to the dioceses and the districts. It is hardly necessary to explain the significance and the consequences of this change for our Orthodox Church, her clergy and her ecclesiastical activity. Let us therefore thank the Lord, Who has thus favoured our Church. Let us also give thanks before the whole people to the Soviet Government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population. At the same time let us assure the Government that we will not misuse the confidence it has shown us.

“In undertaking now, with the blessings of the Lord, the work of this Synod, we clearly realize the greatness of our task and that of all the representatives of the

Church. We must show not only with words but with deeds, that not only people indifferent to the Orthodox Faith or traitors to the Orthodox Church can be loyal citizens of the Soviet Union and loyal subjects of the Soviet power, but also the most zealous supporters of the Orthodox Church, to whom the Church with all her dogmas and traditions, with all her laws and prescriptions, is as dear as Truth and Life.

“We want to be Orthodox, and at the same time to see the Soviet Union as our civil Fatherland, whose triumphs and successes are also our triumphs and successes, whose failures are our failures. Every attack, boycott, public catastrophe or an ordinary case of assassination, as the recent one in Warsaw, will be regarded as an attack against ourselves…”

Protopriest Lev Lebedev comments on this: “This murder in Warsaw was the murder by B. Koverdaya of the Bolshevik Voikoff (also known as Weiner), who was one of the principal organizers of the murder of the Imperial Family, which fact was well known then, in 1927. So Sergius let the Bolsheviks clearly understand that he and his entourage were at one with them in all their evil deeds up to and including regicide.”

Metropolitan Sergius continued: “Even if we remain Orthodox, we shall yet do our duties as citizens of the Soviet Union ‘not only for wrath but also for conscience’s sake’ (Romans 13.5), and we hope that with the help of God and through working together and giving support to one another we shall be able to fulfil this task.

“We can be hindered only by that which hindered the construction of Church life on the bases of loyalty in the first years of Soviet power. This is an inadequate consciousness of the whole seriousness of what has happened in our country. The establishment of Soviet power has seemed to many like some kind of misunderstanding, something coincidental and therefore not long lasting. People have forgotten that there are no coincidences for the Christian and that in what has happened with us, as in all places and at all times, the same right hand of God is acting, that hand which inexorably leads every nation to the end predetermined for it. To such people who do not want to understand ‘the signs of the times’, it may also seem that it is wrong to break with the former regime and even with the monarchy, without breaking with Orthodoxy… Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organisation, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities. Now, when our Patriarchate, fulfilling the will of the reposed Patriarch, has decisively and without turning back stepped on the path of loyalty, the people who think like this have to either break themselves and, leaving their political sympathies at home, offer to the Church only their faith and work with us only in the name of faith, or (if they cannot immediately break themselves) at least not hinder us, and temporarily leave the scene. We are sure that they will again, and very soon, return to work with us,

---

being convinced that only the relationship to the authorities has changed, while faith and Orthodox Christian life remain unshaken...”

An article in *Izvestia* immediately noted the essence of the declaration – a return to renovationism: “The far-sighted part of the clergy set out on this path already in 1922”. So “sergianism”, as Sergius’ position came to be known, was “neo-renovationism”, and therefore subject to the same condemnation as the earlier renovationism of “the Living Church” received - *anathema*. As recently as November, 2008 the True Orthodox Church of Russia has defined sergianism as “a neo-renovationist schism”.

The radical error that lay at the root of this declaration lay in the last sentence quoted, in the idea that, in an antichristian state whose aim was the extirpation of all religion, it was possible to preserve loyalty to the State while “faith and Orthodox Christian life remained unshaken”. This attitude presupposed that it was possible, in the Soviet Union as in Ancient Rome, to draw a clear line between politics and religion. But in practice, even more than in theory, this line proved impossible to draw. For the Bolsheviks, there was no such dividing line; for them, *everything* was ideological, everything had to be in accordance with their ideology, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Unlike the Roman emperors, who allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state, the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their own ways upon the Christians in every sphere: in family life (civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents), in education (compulsory Marxism), in economics (dekulakization, collectivization), in military service (the oath of allegiance to Lenin), in science (Darwinism, Lysenkoism), in art (socialist realism), and in religion (the requisitioning of valuables, registration, commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, reporting of confessions by the priests). Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. *political* disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one’s political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviet interpretation of the word: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one has become guilty of all of it" (*James* 2.10), such a person was an *enemy of the people*. Metropolitan Sergius’ identification of his and his Church’s joys and sorrows with the joys and sorrows of Soviet communism placed the souls of the millions who followed him in the most serious jeopardy.

The publication of Sergius’ Declaration was greeted with a storm of criticism. Its opponents saw in it a more subtle version of renovationism. Even its supporters and

---

748 At its Council in Odessa under the presidency of Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia.
749 St. John Cassian writes: “You should know that in the world to come also you will be judged in the lot of those with whom in this life you have been affected by sharing in their gains or losses, their joys or their sorrows…” (cited by S. Brakus, [ROCElaity] FW: Communists and Spies in cassocks, January 8, 2007).
neutral commentators from the West recognized that it marked a radical change in the relationship of the Church to the State.

Thus Professor William Fletcher comments: “This was a profound and important change in the position of the Russian Orthodox Church, one which evoked a storm of protest.”\textsuperscript{750} According to the Soviet scholar Titov, “after the Patriarchal church changed its relationship to the Soviet State, undertaking a position of loyalty, in the eyes of the believers any substantial difference whatsoever between the Orthodox Church and the renovationists disappeared.”\textsuperscript{751} According to Archimandrite (later Metropolitan) John (Snychev), quoting from a renovationist source, in some dioceses in the Urals up to 90% of parishes sent back Sergius’ declaration as a sign of protest.\textsuperscript{752} Again, Donald Rayfield writes: “In 1927... Metropolitan Sergi formally surrendered the Orthodox Church to the Bolshevik party and state.”\textsuperscript{753}

On September 14/27, the bishops imprisoned on Solovki issued a statement, denouncing Sergius’ Declaration: “The subjection of the Church to the State’s decrees is expressed [in Sergius’ declaration] in such a categorical and sweeping form that it could easily be understood in the sense of a complete entanglement of Church and State... The Church cannot declare all the triumphs and successes of the State to be Her own triumphs and successes. Every government can occasionally make unwarranted, unjust and cruel decisions which become obligatory to the Church by way of coercion, but which the Church cannot rejoice in or approve of. One of the tasks of the present government is the elimination of all religion. The government’s successes in this direction cannot be recognized by the Church as Her own successes... The epistle renders to the government ‘thanks before the whole people to the Soviet government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population’. An expression of gratitude of such a kind on the lips of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church cannot be sincere and therefore does not correspond to the dignity of the Church... The epistle of the patriarchate sweepingly accepts the official version and lays all the blame for the grievous clashes between the Church and the State on the Church...”

“In 1926 Metropolitan Sergius said that he saw himself only as a temporary deputy of the patriarchal \textit{locum tenens} and in this capacity as not empowered to address pastoral messages to the entire Russian Church. If then he thought himself empowered only to issue circular letters, why has he changed his mind now? The pastoral message of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod leads the Church into a pact with the State. It was considered as such by its authors as well as by the government. Sergius’ action resembles the political activities of the ‘Living Church’ and differs from them not in nature but only in form and scope...”\textsuperscript{754}

\textsuperscript{750} Cited in Fletcher, \textit{The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1971}, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{751} Cited in Fletcher, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{752} Regelson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 434.
\textsuperscript{754} Regelson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 440.
The Solovki bishops affirmed the civic loyalty of the Orthodox Church to the Soviet State. But, as M.B. Danilushkin points out, “the tone of these affirmations was fundamentally different than in the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius. Recognizing necessity – mainly the inevitability of civil submission to the authorities – they decisively protested against the unceremonious interference of the authorities into the inner affairs of the Church, the ban on missionary activity and the religious education of children, firmly expressing their position that in this sphere there could be no compromise on the part of the Church. Although the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius recognized the religious persecutions in the USSR, it called, not the state, but the believers, to peace. In this consists the fundamental difference between the two documents…”

According to different sources, 17 or 20 or 26 bishops signed this epistle. However, the majority of the bishops on Solovki did not consider Sergius’ declaration a reason for breaking communion with him. Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan wrote to an unknown person that the Solovki bishops wanted to wait for the repentance of Sergius “until the convening of a canonical Council... in the assurance that the Council could not fail to demand that of him”.

The Struggle in Petrograd

Although the church revolution engineered by Metropolitan Sergius and supported by the Soviets was conceived and first brought to fruition in the centre, in Moscow, it could not hope to succeed on a large scale if it did not also triumph in the other capital of Russian life, Petrograd – or Leningrad, as the communists now called it. The revolutionaries must have had good hopes of succeeding also in Petrograd. After all, it had been the birthplace of the political revolution in 1917, and had also been pivotal in the renovationists’ church revolution in 1922-23. But by the Providence of God it was precisely in revolutionary Petrograd that the fight-back began. Let us go back a little in time to see how this came to pass.

By the end of 1925 the Episcopal council of vicar-bishops that had ruled the Petrograd diocese since the martyric death of Metropolitan Benjamin in 1922 ceased its existence – three bishops were arrested: Benedict (Plotnikov), Innocent (Tikhonov) and Seraphim (Protopopov). There remained only Bishop Gregory (Lebedev). Also in the city were Bishop Sergius (Druzhinin) and Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov).

---

757 In this section I am particularly indebted to the work of Lydia Sikorskaya, Svyaschennomucheniki Sergij, episkop Narovskij, Vasilij, episkop Kargopolskij, Ilarion, episkop Porechskij. Tainoye sluzhenie Iosiflyan (Holy Hieromartyrs Sergius, Bishop of Narva, Basil, Bishop of Kargopol, Hilarion, Bishop of Porech), Moscow: Bratonezh, 2009, pages 78 et seq.
These three were all thoroughly Orthodox bishops, who would lead the Catacomb Church after 1927 and suffer martyric deaths. However, in the spring of 1926 there returned from exile two Petrograd vicar-bishops, Nicholas (Yarusheovich) and Alexis (Simansky). These two bishops, together with Metropolitan Sergius, would form the core of the apostate Moscow Patriarchate in the 1940s. Alexis had already betrayed the faith once, by removing the anathema placed by Metropolitan Benjamin on the renovationist Vvedensky. Now he, Nicholas and a group of clergy led by Protopriest Nicholas Chukov, who became Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad after the war, represented the neo-renovationist tendency in the city who wanted to improve relations with the Soviets and get the Church legalized by them.

As Fr. Michael Cheltsov writes: “Two groups became clearly delineated: Alexis and Nicholas, and Gregory and Demetrius. Sergius, in view of his closeness to [Protopriest Basil] Veriuzhsky [rector of the zealot Cathedral of the Resurrection “on the Blood”] and to me, also joined the group of Gregory…”

In August, 1926 Bishop Alexis was transferred to the see of Novgorod, and Archbishop Joseph (Petrovykh) of Petrograd was appointed Metropolitan of Petrograd. This appointment was greeted with great joy by the faithful. However, the Soviets refused Joseph permission to go to Petrograd - he served there only once, on September 12, the feast of St. Alexander Nevsky, and never returned to the city. In the meantime, he appointed the little-known Bishop Gabriel (Voyevodin) as his deputy.

Meanwhile, Bishop Alexis received permission from the Soviets to stay in Petrograd and began to serve in the churches of his friends in the city. This was opposed by Bishops Gregory and Demetrius, who obtained from Metropolitan Joseph that bishops from other sees (i.e. Alexis) should not be allowed to serve in the city without the permission of Bishop Gabriel. But Bishop Alexis paid no attention to the metropolitan and continued to serve - to the distress of the faithful.

At the beginning of the Great Fast, 1927 Bishops Gregory and Gabriel were arrested and cast into prison. Since Metropolitan Joseph was still in exile in Ustiuzhna, Bishop Nicholas began to administer the diocese as being the senior bishop by ordination, and in April received official permission to do this from Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow. On his return to Petrograd, Bishop Nicholas began to act authoritatively and brusquely towards his fellow hierarchs, and in August he obtained the forcible retirement of Bishop Sergius from his see.

The previous month Metropolitan Sergius’ Declaration had been published, and Bishop Nicholas tried to get it distributed and read out in church. However, there was widespread resistance to this. When Fr. Nicholas Chukov read it out, there was a great commotion in the church. And when one of the deans, the future Hieromartyr Fr. Sergius Tikhomirov, received it, he immediately sent it back to

---

Nicholas and resigned his deanery. “Whether the epistle was read out somewhere or
not,” writes Fr. Michael Cheltsov, “the mood among the Peterites against
Metropolitan Sergius and to a significant extent against our Nicholas was sharply
negative. Their Orthodoxy, especially of the former, was subjected to powerful
doubt, and trust in them was undermined. Our clergy, if they read the epistle, were
all against it.”

However, it was not the Declaration so much as the actions undertaken by
Metropolitan Sergius against Metropolitan Joseph that stirred the Petrograd flock
into action.

On September 12 (or 17) Metropolitan Joseph was transferred to the see of Odessa
by decree of Sergius’ Synod. On September 28, Metropolitan Joseph wrote to Sergius
that he refused to accept it, saying that he saw in it an evil intrigue by a clique which
did not want him to be in Petrograd. Then he wrote to the GPU agent Tuchkov
asking that he be allowed to administer the Petrograd diocese. Finally he wrote to
Sergius again rebuking him and his Synod for “a woefully servile obedience to a
principle alien to the Church”. He said that he regarded his transfer as “anti-
canonical, ill-advised and pleasing to an evil intrigue in which I will have no part”.
He clearly saw in it the hand of the OGPU, to which Metropolitan Sergius was
simply giving in.

On October 21, Sergius directed all the clergy in Russia to commemorate the
Soviet authorities, and not the bishops who were in exile. This measure greatly
increased the anxiety of the faithful. The commemoration of the Soviet authorities
was seen by many as the boundary beyond which the Church would fall away from
Orthodoxy. And the refusal to commemorate the exiled hierarchs implied that the
hierarchs themselves were not Orthodox and constituted a break with the tradition
of commemorating exiled hierarchs that extended back to the time of the Roman
catacombs. Sergius was in effect cutting the faithful off from their canonical
hierarchs.

One of the leaders of the opposition, the future hieromartyr and possibly bishop,
Mark Novoselov, saw in these events the third step in the revolution’s destruction of
the Church. The first step was the revolution’s depriving the Church of Her civil
protector, the Orthodox Christian Emperor in 1917, “thereby doubling the
significance of the pastors”. The second step was its depriving the Church of the
possibility of convening Councils, by which it “increased their [the pastors’]
significance tenfold, since it made every bishop the real guardian of Orthodoxy in
his province”. The third step took place in 1927, when “under the form of the gift of
legalization the Church was deprived of Her head,” which increased the significance
of the true pastors still more.

Sergius’ act of October 21 “depersonalized” the Liturgy, according to Mark, by “1)
casting into the shade the person of Metropolitan Peter through (a) ceasing to

759 Cheltsov, op. cit., p. 457.
commemorate him as ‘our Lord’ and (b) placing the name of Metropolitan Sergius next to it, that is, two names in one patriarchal place, which is both contrary to the spirit of the canons and deprives the name of the head of the Russian Church – and the personal name of Metropolitan Peter - of its very symbolical meaning; 2) introducing the commemoration of the impersonal name of the authorities, ... and 3) casting into oblivion the names and persons who shone out in their confessing exploit.”

Hieromartyr Mark pointed out that, while transfers of bishops took place frequently in tsarist Russia, those were in the context of a single Church family, when Russia was as it were “one diocese”. But the transfers in Soviet times were far more dangerous. For when the people were deprived of their confessing bishop, whom they knew and loved, there was no guarantee that his replacement – if there was one – would be Orthodox.

On October 25, Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich) proclaimed in the cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Petrograd the decision of the Provisional Synod to transfer Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) from Petrograd to Odessa (the secular authorities had already forbidden Metropolitan Joseph to return to the city). In the same decision Bishops Demetrius and Seraphim were forbidden to leave the diocese “without the knowledge and blessing” of Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich). This caused major disturbances in Petrograd.

However, Metropolitan Sergius paid no attention to the disturbances in Petrograd. Taking upon himself the administration of the diocese, he sent in his place Bishop Alexis (Simansky). So already, only three months after the declaration, the new revolutionary cadres were being put in place...

Then, on October 31, Archimandrite Sergius (Zenkevich) was consecrated Bishop of Detskoe Selo, although the canonical bishop, Gregory (Lebedev), was still alive but languishing in a GPU prison. From that moment many parishioners stopped going to churches where Metropolitan Sergius’ name was commemorated, and Bishop Nicholas was not invited to serve.

On October 30 Metropolitan Joseph wrote to Sergius: “You made me metropolitan of Leningrad without the slightest striving for it on my part. It was not without disturbance and distress that I accepted this dangerous obedience, which others, perhaps wisely (otherwise it would have been criminal) decisively declined... Vladyko! Your firmness is yet able to correct everything and urgently put an end to every disturbance and indeterminateness. It is true, I am not free and cannot now serve my flock, but after all everybody understands this ‘secret’... Now anyone who

---

761 V.V.Antonov, “Otvet na Deklaratsiu” (Reply to the Declaration), Russkij Pastyr’ (Russian Pastor), № 24, 1996, p. 73.
is to any degree firm and needed is unfree (and will hardly be free in the future)…
You say: this is what the authorities want; they are giving back their freedom to
exiled hierarchs on the condition that they change their former place of serving and
residence. But what sense or benefit can we derive from the leap-frogging and
shuffling of hierarchs that this has elicited, when according to the spirit of the
Church canons they are in an indissoluble union with their flock as with a bride?
Would it not be better to say: let it be, this false human mercy, which is simply a
mockery of our human dignity, which strives for a cheap effect, a spectre of
clemency. Let it be as it was before; it will be better like that. Somehow we’ll get to
the time when they finally understand that the eternal, universal Truth cannot be
conquered by exiles and vain torments… One compromise might be permissible in
the given case… Let them (the hierarchs) settle in other places as temporarily
governing them, but let them unfailingly retain their former title… I cannot be
reconciled in my conscience with any other scheme, I am absolutely unable to
recognize as correct my disgustingly tsarist-rasputinite transfer to the Odessa
diocese, which took place without any fault on my part or any agreement of mine,
and even without my knowledge. And I demand that my case be immediately
transferred from the competence of your Synod, in whose competence I am not the
only one to doubt, for discussion by a larger Council of bishops, to which alone I
consider myself bound to display my unquestioning obedience.”

The Birth of the Catacomb Church

On November 24 an important meeting took place in the flat of Protopriest
Theodore Andreyev, at which it was decided to write several letters to Sergius. A
few days later one such letter, composed by Fr. Theodore and Mark (Novoselov),
was read out in the flat of Bishop Demetrius. On December 12 a meeting took place
in Moscow between Metropolitan Sergius and his leading opponents from Petrograd
which deserves to be described in detail because it marked the decisive make-or-
break point between Sergius’ Moscow Patriarchate and what became known as the
True Orthodox or Catacomb Church.

Bishop Demetrius, Protopriest Basil Veryuzhsky, I.M. Andreyevsky and Professor
Sergius Semyonovich Abramovich-Baranovsky were received in Moscow by
Metropolitan Sergius. Bishop Demetrius handed him an appeal by six Petrograd
bishops; Fr. Basil gave him one written in the name of the clergy, which had been
written by Protopriest Theodore Andreyev; and Andreyevsky gave him one written
in the name of the church intelligentsia and written by Professor Abramovich-
Baranovsky. The letters called on Sergius to abandon his present church policy, stop
transferring bishops arbitrarily and return to the position adopted by Patriarch
Tikhon.762

Sergius read everything slowly and attentively, but occasionally broke off to make
a comment.

762 In this section I am indebted especially to Lydia Sikorskaya, Soyaschennomuchenik Dmitrij
Arkhiepiskop Gdovskij (Holy Hieromartyr Demetrius, Archbishop of Gdov), Moscow, 2008.
“Here you are protesting, while many other groups recognize me and express their approval,” he said. “I cannot take account of everyone and please everyone and each group. Each of you judges from your bell-tower, but I act for the good of the Russian Church.”

“We also, Vladyko,” we objected, “want to work for the good of the whole Church. And then: we are not just one of many small groups, but express the church-social opinion of the Leningrad diocese composed of eight bishops – the better part of the clergy. I express the opinion of hundreds of my friends and acquaintances and, I hope, thousands of likeminded scientific workers of the Leningrad diocese, while S.A. represents broad popular circles.

“You are hindered in accepting my appeal by a counter-revolutionary political ideology,” said Metropolitan Sergius, “which was condemned by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon,” and he got out one of the papers signed by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon.

“No, Vladyko, it is not our political convictions, but our religious conscience that does not allow us to accept that which your conscience allows you to accept. We are in complete agreement with his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon (in the indicated paper). We also condemn counter-revolutionary speeches. We stand on the point of view of the condemnation of your declaration made by Solovki. Do you know this epistle from Solovki?”

“This appeal was signed by one man (Bishop Basil Zelentsov), but others approve of me. Do you know that I was accepted and approved by Metropolitan Peter himself?”

“Forgive us, Vladyko, that is not quite right. It was not the metropolitan himself. But did you hear this through Bishop Basil?”

“Yes, but how do you know?”

“We know this from the words of Bishop Basil. Metropolitan Peter said that he ‘understands [ponimaiet’], but does not ‘accept [prinimaiet] you. But has Metropolitan Peter not written anything to you?”

“You must know that I have no communications with him!” said Metropolitan Sergius.

“They why, Vladyko, do you say that Metropolitan Peter himself recognized you?”
“Well, what’s special in commemorating the authorities?” said Metropolitan Sergius. “Since we recognized them, we also pray for them. Did we not pray for the tsar, for Nero and the rest?”

“But is it possible to pray for the Antichrist?” we asked.

“No, that is impossible.”

“But can you vouch that this is not the power of the Antichrist?”

“I can vouch for it. The Antichrist must come for three and a half years, but in this case ten years have already passed.”

“But after all, is this not the spirit of the Antichist, who does not confess that Christ has come in the flesh?”

“This spirit has always been with us from the time of Christ to our days. What antichrist is this, I do not recognize him!”

“Forgive us, Vladyko, you ‘do not recognize him’. Only an elder can say that. But since there is the possibility that this is the antichrist, we do not pray [for him]. Besides, from the religious point of view our rulers are not an authority.”

“How not an authority?”

“A hierarchy is called an authority when not only someone is subject to me, but I myself am subject to someone higher than myself, etc., and all this goes up to God as the source of every authority!”

“Well, that’s a subtle philosophy!”

“The pure in heart simply feel this. But if one reasons, then one must reason subtly, since the question is new, profound, complex and subject to conciliar discussion, and not such a simplified understanding as you give it.”

“But prayer for those in exile and prison is excluded because they have made a political demonstration out of this.”

“And when, Vladyko, will the tenth beatitude be repealed? After all, it, too, can be seen as a demonstration.”

“It will not be repealed, it is part of the liturgy!”

“Prayer for the exiles is also part of the liturgy!”
“My name must be raised in order to distinguish the Orthodox from ‘Borisovschina’, who commemorate Metropolitan Peter but do not recognize me.”

“But do you know, Vladyko, that your name is now pronounced in the renovationist churches?”

“That’s only a trick!”

“Then ‘Borisovschina’ is also a trick!”

“Well, what about the Synod, what don’t you like about it?”

“We do not recognize it, we don’t trust it, but we trust you for the time being. You are the deputy of the Patriarchal locum tenens, but the Synod is some kind of personal secretariat attached to you, is it?”

“No, it is a co-ruling organ.”

“So without the Synod you yourself can do nothing?”

“[after a long period not wanting to reply] Well, yes, without conferring with it.”

“We ask you to report nothing about our matter to the Synod. We do not trust it and do not recognize it. We have come personally to you.”

“Why don’t you like Metropolitan Seraphim?”

“Can it be that you don’t know, Vladyko?”

“That’s all slander and gossip.”

“We haven’t come to quarrel with you, but to declare to you from the many who have sent us that we cannot, our religious conscience does not allow us to recognize, the course that you have embarked on. Stop, for the sake of Christ, stop!”

“This position of yours is called confessing. You have a halo…”

“But what must a Christian be?”

“There are confessors and martyrs. But there are also diplomats and guides. But every sacrifice is accepted! Remember Cyprian of Carthage.”

“Are you saving the Church?”

“Yes, I am saving the Church.”
“The Church does not need salvation, but you yourself are being saved through her.

“Well, of course, from the religious point of view it is senseless to say: ‘I am saving the Church’. But I’m talking about the external position of the Church.”

“And Metropolitan Joseph?”

“You know him only from one side. No, he categorically cannot be returned.”

According to another account, Bishop Demetrius - who was then 70 years old - fell to his knees before Sergius and exclaimed:

"Vladyka! Listen to us, in the name of Christ!"

Metropolitan Sergius immediately raised him up from his knees, seated him in an armchair, and said in a firm and somewhat irritated voice:

"What is there to listen to? Everything you have written has been written by others earlier, and to all this I have already replied many times clearly and definitely. What remains unclear to you?"

"Vladyka!" began Bishop Demetrius in a trembling voice with copious tears. "At the time of my consecration you told me that I should be faithful to the Orthodox Church and, in case of necessity, should also be prepared to lay down my own life for Christ. And now such a time of confession has come and I wish to suffer for Christ. But you, by your Declaration, instead of a path to Golgotha propose that we stand on the path of collaboration with a God-fighting regime that persecutes and blasphemes Christ. You propose that we rejoice with its joys and sorrow with its sorrows... Our rulers strive to annihilate religion and the Church and rejoice at the successes of their anti-religious propaganda. This joy of theirs is the source of our sorrow. You propose that we thank the Soviet government for its attention to the needs of the Orthodox population. But how is this attention expressed? In the murder of hundreds of bishops, thousands of priests, and millions of faithful. In the defilement of holy things, the mockery of relics, in the destruction of an immense number of churches and the annihilation of all monasteries. Surely it would be better if they did not give us such 'attention'!"

"Our government," Metropolitan Sergius suddenly interrupted the bishop, "has persecuted the clergy only for political crimes."

"That is a slander!" Bishop Demetrius cried out heatedly.

"We wish to obtain a reconciliation of the Orthodox Church with the governing regime," Metropolitan Sergius continued with irritation, "while you are striving to
underline the counter-revolutionary character of the Church. Consequently, you are counter-revolutionaries, whereas we are entirely loyal to the Soviet regime!"

"That is not true!" exclaimed Bishop Demetrius heatedly. "That is another slander against the confessors and martyrs, those who have been shot and those who are languishing in concentration camps and in banishment... What counter-revolutionary act did the executed Metropolitan Benjamin perform? What is 'counter-revolutionary' in the position of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa?"

"And the Karlovtsy Council [of the Russian Church in exile], in your opinion, also did not have a political character?" Metropolitan Sergius interrupted him again.

"There was no Karlovtsy Council in Russia," Bishop Demetrius replied quietly, "and many martyrs in the concentration camps knew nothing of this Council."

"I personally," continued the bishop, "am a completely apolitical man, and if I myself had to accuse myself to the GPU, I couldn't imagine anything of which I am guilty before the Soviet regime. I only sorrow and grieve, seeing the persecution against religion and the Church. We pastors are forbidden to speak of this, and we are silent. But to the question whether there is any persecution against religion and the Church in the USSR, I could not reply otherwise than affirmatively. When they proposed to you, Vladyka, that you write your Declaration, why did you not reply like Metropolitan Peter, that you can keep silence, but cannot say what is untrue?"

"And where is the untruth?" exclaimed Metropolitan Sergius.

"In the fact," replied Bishop Demetrius, "that persecution against religion, the 'opium of the people' according to Marxist dogma, not only exists among us, but in its cruelty, cynicism and blasphemy has passed all limits!"

On December 15 Tuchkov, having received a secret report from Petrograd on this meeting with Sergius, wrote the following in his own handwriting: “To Comrade Polyansky. 1. Tell Leningrad that Sergius had a delegation with such-and-such suggestions. 2. Suggest that the most active laymen be arrested under some other pretences. 3. Tell them that we will influence Sergius that he ban certain of the oppositional bishops from serving, and let Yarusheivich then ban some of the priests.”

Having failed to convince Metropolitan Sergius, on December 26 Bishops Demetrius of Gdov and Sergius of Narva separated from Sergius: “for the sake of the peace of our conscience we reject the person and the works of our former leader, who has unlawfully and beyond measure exceeded his rights”.

Sergius soon began issuing bans against the True Orthodox bishops. But the True Orthodox paid no attention to them. On December 30 Archbishop Demetrius wrote

763 Monk Benjamin, op. cit., p. 175.
to Fr. Alexander Sidorov, a priest in Moscow, who had been threatened with defrocking: “May the Lord help you to remain in peace and unanimity in the firm confession of the purity and truth of the Orthodox faith, helping each other with love in everything. Do not be disturbed by any bans that the apostates from the faith of Christ are preparing for you. Any ban or defrocking of you by Metropolitan Sergius, his synod or bishops for your stand in the Truth has not reality for you. As long as there remains just one firmly Orthodox bishop, have communion with him. If the Lord permits it, and you remain without a bishop, then may the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, be with you all, inspiring you to solve all the questions which you may encounter on your path in the spirit of True Orthodoxy.”

Again, on January 4/17, 1928 he wrote “to Father Superiors” that he was breaking communion in prayer with Metropolitan Sergius “until a complete Local Council of the Russian Church, at which will be represented the entire active episcopate - i.e. the present exile-confessors - shall justify by its conciliar authority our way of acting, or until such time as Metropolitan Sergius will come to himself and repent of his sins not only against the canonical order of the Church, but also dogmatically against her person (blaspheming against the sanctity of the exploit of the confessors by casting doubt on the purity of their Christian convictions, as if they were mixed up in politics), against her conciliarity (by his and his Synod’s acts of coercion), against her apostolicity (by subjecting the Church to worldly rules and by his inner break - while preserving a false unity - with Metropolitan Peter, who did not give Metropolitan Sergius authorization for his latest acts, beginning with the epistle (Declaration) of July 16/29, 1927). 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions' (II Thessalonians 2.7).”

On Christmas Day, 1927/28, Metropolitan Joseph officially supported the actions of Bishops Demetrius and Sergius. In a letter to a Soviet archimandrite, he rejected the charge of being a schismatic, accused Sergius of being a schismatic, and went on: “The defenders of Sergius say that the canons allow one to separate oneself from a bishop only for heresy which has been condemned by a Council. Against this one may reply that the deeds of Metropolitan Sergius may be sufficiently placed in this category as well, if one has in mind such an open violation by him of the freedom and dignity of the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. But beyond this, the canons themselves could not foresee many things, and can one dispute that it is even worse and more harmful than any heresy when one plunges a knife into the Church’s very heart – Her freedom and dignity?... ‘Lest imperceptibly and little by little we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us as a free gift by His Own Blood’ (8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council)... Perhaps I do not dispute that ‘there are more of you at present than of us’. And let it be said that ‘the great mass is not for me’, as you say. But I will never consider myself a schismatic, even if I were to remain absolutely alone, as one of the holy confessors once was. The matter is not at all one of quantity, do not forget that for a minute: ‘The Son of God when He cometh shall He find faith on the earth?’ (Luke 18.8). And perhaps the last ‘rebels’ against the betrayers of the Church and the

accomplices of Her ruin will be not only bishops and not protopriests, but the simplest mortals, just as at the Cross of Christ His last gasp of suffering was heard by a few simple souls who were close to Him…”

**The Rebellion Spreads**

Meanwhile, antisergianist groups were forming in different parts of the country. Thus between October 3 and 6, 1927 an antisergianist diocesan assembly took place in Ufa, and on November 8 Archbishop Andrew of Ufa issued an encyclical from Kzyl-Orda in which he said that “even if the lying Sergius repents, as he repented three times before of renovationism, under no circumstances must he be received into communion”. This encyclical quickly circulated throughout Eastern Russia and Siberia.

In November, Bishop Victor of Glazov broke with Sergius. He had especially noted the phrase in the declaration that “only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organisation, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities.” To Sergius himself Bishop Victor wrote: “The enemy has lured and seduced you a second time with the idea of an organization of the Church. But if this organization is bought for the price of the Church of Christ Herself no longer remaining the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organization ceases to be what he was – for it is written, ‘Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take’ (Acts 1.20) – then it were better for us never to have any kind of organization. What is the benefit if we, having become by God’s Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organization for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he who presents such pretexts for sin will be subjected.” And he concluded that Sergius’ pact with the atheists was “not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: ‘Whosoever shall deny Me before men…’ (Matthew 10.33).”

At the same time antisergianism began to develop in the Ukraine with the publication of the “Kievan appeal” by Schema-Archbishop Anthony (Abashidze), Bishop Damascene of Glukhov and Fr. Anatolius Zhurakovsky. They wrote concerning Sergius’ declaration: “Insofar as the deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens makes declarations in the person of the whole Church and undertakes responsible decisions without the agreement of the locum tenens and an array of bishops, he is clearly going beyond the bounds of his prerogatives…”

---

767 Regelson, op. cit., p. 435.
the Kievans were joined by two brother bishops – Archbishops Averky and Pachomius (Kedrov).\textsuperscript{768}

The Kievans were supported by the famous writer Sergius Alexandrovich Nilus, who wrote to L.A. Orlov in February, 1928: “As long as there is a church of God that is not of ‘the Church of the evildoers’, go to it whenever you can; but if not, pray at home... They will say: ‘But where will you receive communion? With whom? I reply: ‘The Lord will show you, or an Angel will give you communion, for in ‘the Church of the evildoers’ there is not and cannot be the Body and Blood of the Lord. Here in Chernigov, out of all the churches only the church of the Trinity has remained faithful to Orthodoxy; but if it, too, will commemorate the [sergianist] Exarch Michael, and, consequently, will have communion in prayer with him, acting with the blessing of Sergius and his Synod, then we shall break communion with it.”

On February 6, 1928 the hierarchs of the Yaroslavl diocese, led by Metropolitan Agathangel, signed an act of separation from Metropolitan Sergius. Metropolitan Joseph also signed the document. Two days later he announced to his Petrograd vicars, pastors and flock that he was taking upon himself the leadership of the Petrograd diocese. This persuaded the authorities to arrest him on February 29, and send him again to the Nikolo-Modensky monastery. On March 11 Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod placed Metropolitan Joseph under ban.

In the birth of the Catacomb Church in 1927-28 we can see the rebirth of the spirit of the 1917-18 Council. In the previous decade, the original fierce tone of reproach and rejection of the God-hating authorities, epitomized above all by the anathematization of Soviet power, had gradually softened under the twin pressures of the Bolsheviks from without and the renovationists from within. Although the apocalyptic spirit of the Council remained alive in the masses, and prevented the Church leaders from actually commemorating the antichristian power, compromises continued to be made – compromises that were never repaid by compromises on the part of the Bolsheviks. However, these acts did not cross the line separating compromise from apostasy. That line was passed by Metropolitan Sergius when he recognized the God-cursed power to be God-established, and ordered it to be commemorated while banning the commemoration of the confessing bishops. At this point the spirit of the Council flared up again in all its original strength. For, as a “Letter from Russia” put it many years later: “It’s no use our manoeuvring; there’s nothing for us to preserve except the things that are God’s. For the things that are Caesar’s (if one should really consider it to be Caesar and not Pharaoh) are always associated with the quenching of the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{769} Again, as Protopresbyter Michael Polsky wrote: “The Orthodoxy that submits to the Soviets and has become a weapon

\textsuperscript{768} Archibishop Ambrose (von Sievers), “Katakombnaia Tserkov’: ‘Kochuiuschij’ Sobor 1928 g.” (The Catacomb Church: The ‘Nomadic’ Council of 1928), Russkoe Pravoslavie (Russian Orthodoxy), № 3 (7), 1997, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{769} Russkaia Mysl’ (Orthodox Thought), № 3143, March 17, 1977.
of the worldwide antichristian deception is not Orthodoxy, but the deceptive heresy of antichristianity clothed in the torn raiment of historical Orthodoxy...”

Already by 1928 Metropolitan Sergius’ church was a Sovietized institution. We see this in the official church calendar for 1928, which included among the feasts of the church: the memory of the Leader of the Proletariat Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (on the 32nd Sunday after Pentecost), the Overthrow of the Autocracy (in the Third Week of the Great Fast), the memory of the Paris Commune (the same week), the Day of the Internationale and the Day of the Proletarian Revolution.

By the end of the 1920s there were vigorous groups of True Orthodox Christians in every part of the country, with especially strong centres in Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Voronezh, the North Caucasus, Kazan, Ufa, Orenburg and the Urals... It remained now to unite these scattered groups under a common leadership, or, at any rate, under a common confession, through the convening of a Council of the Catacomb Church... Now we can infer from a remark of Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov, the first secretly consecrated bishop of the Catacomb Church, that there was some Catacomb Council in 1928 that anathematized the Sergianists. Another source has described a so-called “Nomadic Council” attended at different times by over 70 bishops in 1928 which likewise anathematized the Sergianists. But hard evidence for the existence of this council has proved hard to obtain, and there are reasons for suspecting the authenticity of the council protocols.

771 Pravoslavnoe obozrenie (Orthodox Review), St. Petersburg, №10 (23), 1999, p. 2.
772 His words, as reported by Protopresbyter Michael Polsky (Novie Mucheniki Rossii, Jordanville, 1949-57, vol. II, p. 30), were: “The secret, desert, Catacomb Church has anathematized the ‘Sergianists’ and all those with them.”
773 Our information about this Council is based exclusively on Archbishop Ambrose (von Sievers), “Katakombnaia Tserkov’: Kochuushchij Sobor 1928 g.” (“The Catacomb Church: The ‘Nomadic’ Council of 1928”), Russkoe Pravoslavie (Russian Orthodoxy), № 3 (7), 1997, whose main source is claimed to be the archives of the president of the Council, Bishop Mark (Novoselov), as researched by the Andreivite Bishop Evagrius. Some historians, such as Pavel Protsenko (“Skvoz’ mif ob ‘Istinnoi Tserkvi’”, Russkij Pastyr’, 35, III-1999, pp. 84-97), dismiss the authenticity of the Council completely. Others, such as Osiptsev (“V otvet na statiu ‘Mif ob ‘Istinnoi Tserkvi’’” (In Reply to the Article, “The Myth of ‘the True Church’”), Russkoe Pravoslavie (Russian Orthodoxy), № 3 (7), 1997, pp. 18-19) and Danilushkin (op. cit., p. 534) appear to accept the existence of this Council. But it is difficult to find anything other than oblique supporting evidence for it, and von Sievers has refused to allow the present writer to see the archives. A Smirnov (perhaps von Sivers himself) writes that the “non-commemorating” branch of the Catacomb Church, whose leading priest was Fr. Sergius Mechev, had bishops who “united in a constantly active Preconciliar Convention” and who were linked with each other by special people called ‘svyazniki’ ("Ugashische nepomniamushchische v bege vremenii” (The Extinguished Non-Commemorators in the Passing of Time), Sinvol (Symbol), № 40, 1998, p. 174).

774 “We cannot believe that in the Act of that Council, which was allegedly undersigned by 70 hierarchs of the Greco-Russian Church, the Savior’s name was written as Isus, the way Old Rite Believers wrote it, and the way Ambrosius himself does. Furthermore, the hierarchs could not have unanimously excommunicated the Council of 166-1667 as ‘an assembly of rogues’. The Council could not have agreed to recognize all Onomatodox believers as ‘true believers’, thus easily ending the stalemate unresolved by the Council of 1917-1918. The procedure of assignment by hierarchs of casting vote powers to their proxies, which violated the provisions of the 1917-1918 Local Council, could not have been adopted without any deliberation or objections at all. The seventy attending
A “Little Council” of Catacomb bishops took place in Archangelsk in 1935 and proclaimed: “We declare Metropolitan Sergius, who has violated the purity of the Orthodox faith, who has distorted the dogma of Salvation and of the Church, and who has caused a schism and blasphemed against the Church of Christ and Her confessors, and in scattering the Church has also blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, to be deprived of communion in prayer with us and with all the Orthodox bishops of the Russian Church. We commit him to ecclesiastical trial and ban him from serving. The bishops who think like Metropolitan Sergius are accepted by us into canonical and prayerful communion in accordance with the rite of reception from renovationism.”

How many bishops supported Sergius? Out of the approximately 150 Russian bishops in 1927, 80 declared themselves definitely against the declaration, 17 separated from Sergius but did not make their position clear, and 9 at first separated but later changed their mind.

On August 6, 1929 Sergius’ synod declared: “The sacraments performed in separation from Church unity… by the followers of the former Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) of Leningrad, the former Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) of Gdov, the former Bishop Alexis (Buj) of Urazov, as also of those who are under ban, are also invalid, and those who are converted from these schisms, if they have been baptized in schism, are to be received through Holy Chrismation.”

hierarchs could not have been unaware of the fact that only the First Hierarch, Metropolitan Peter, had the power to convene a Local Council…” (Vertograd (English edition), December, 1998, p. 31).


776 Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 14 (1587), July 15/28, 1997, p. 7. These figures probably do not take into account all the secret bishops consecrated by the Ufa Autocephaly. In 1930 Sergius claimed he had 70% of the Orthodox bishops (not including the renovationists and Gregorians), which implies that about 30% of the Russian episcopate joined the Catacomb Church (Pospievolskoy, "Mitropolit Sergij i raskoly sprava" (Metropolitan Sergius and the schisms from the right)), Vestnik Rossko Khristianskogo Dozhenia (Herald of the Russian Christian Movement), № 158, 1-1990, p. 70). According to the Catholic Bishop Michel D’Erbigny, once the Vatican’s representative in Russia, three quarters of the episcopate separated from him; but this is probably an exaggeration (D’Erbigny and Alexandre Deubner, Evêques Russes en Exil – Douze ans d’Epreuves 1918-1930 (Russian Bishops in Exile – Twelve Years of Trials, 1918-1930), Orientalia Christiana, vol. XXI, № 67).

However, as even the sergianist Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky) had to admit: “It is the best pastors who have fallen away and cut themselves off…”[778]

In 1929, the Bolsheviks began to imprison the True Orthodox on the basis of membership of a “counter-revolutionary church monarchist organization, the True Orthodox Church”. The numbers of True Orthodox Christians arrested between 1929 and 1933 exceeded by seven times the numbers of clergy repressed from 1924 to 1928.[779] In 1929 5000 clergy were repressed, three times more than in 1928; in 1930 – 13,000; in 1931-32 – 19,000.[780]

Vladimir Rusak writes: “The majority of clergy and laymen, preserving the purity of ecclesiological consciousness, did not recognize the Declaration… On this soil fresh arrests were made. All those who did not recognize the Declaration were arrested and exiled to distant regions or confined in prisons and camps. [In 1929] about 15 hierarchs who did not share the position of Metropolitan Sergius were arrested. Metropolitan Cyril, the main ‘opponent’ of Metropolitan Sergius, was exiled to Turukhansk in June-July. The arrest procedure looked something like this: an agent of the GPU appeared before a bishop and put him a direct question: what is your attitude to the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius? If the bishop replied that he did not recognize it, the agent drew the conclusion: that means that you are a counter-revolutionary. The bishop was arrested.”[781]

It is hardly a coincidence that this took place against the background of the collectivization of agriculture and a general attack on religion[782] spearheaded by Yaroslavsky’s League of Militant Godless (who numbered 17 million by 1933). Vladimir Rusak writes: “1928, the beginning of collectivisation. Stalin could no longer ‘leave the Church in the countryside’. In one interview he gave at that time he directly complained against ‘the reactionary clergy’ who were poisoning the souls of the masses. ‘The only thing I can complain about is that the clergy was not liquidated root and branch,’ he said. At the 15th Congress of the party he demanded that all weariness in the anti-religious struggle be overcome.”[783]

---

[782] Although the Protestants had welcomed the revolution and thus escaped the earlier persecutions, they were now subjected to the same torments as the Orthodox (Pospielovsky, "Podvig very", op. cit., pp. 233-34).
Also in 1928, economic cooperatives and all philanthropic organizations were banned.\(^\text{784}\) But this was only the beginning: the real killer was collectivization, which, together with the artificial famine that followed, claimed as many as 14 million lives. Collectivization can be seen as an attempt to destroy religion in its stronghold, the countryside, by destroying the economic base of village life and forcing all the villagers into communes completely dependent on the State. The peasants, led by their priests, put up a fierce opposition to it, and many were brought to trial and sentenced to the camps.

Husband writes: “On 8 April 1929, the VtSIK and Sovnarkom declaration ‘On Religious Associations’ largely superseded the 1918 separation of church and state and redefined freedom of conscience. Though reiterating central aspects of the 1918 separation decree, the new law introduced important limitations. Religious associations of twenty or more adults were allowed, but only if registered and approved in advance by government authorities. They retained their previous right to the free use of buildings for worship but still could not exist as a judicial person. Most important, the new regulations rescinded the previously guaranteed \([\ldots]\) right to conduct religious propaganda, and it reaffirmed the ban on religious instructions in state educational institutions. In effect, proselytising and instruction outside the home were illegal except in officially sanctioned classes, and religious rights of assembly and property were now more circumscribed.”\(^\text{785}\)

“Henceforth,” writes Nicholas Werth, “any activity ‘going beyond the limits of the simple satisfaction of religious aspirations’ fell under the law. Notably, section 10 of the much-feared Article 58 of the penal code stipulated that ‘any use of the religious prejudices of the masses… for destabilizing the state’ was punishable ‘by anything from a minimum three-year sentence up to and including the death penalty’. On 26 August 1929 the government instituted the new five-day work week – five days of work, and one day of rest – which made it impossible to observe Sunday as a day of rest. This measure deliberately introduced ‘to facilitate the struggle to eliminate religion’.

“These decrees were no more than a prelude to a second, much larger phase of the antireligious campaign. In October 1929 the seizure of all church bells was ordered because ‘the sound of bells disturbs the right to peace of the vast majority of atheists in the towns and the countryside’. Anyone closely associated with the church was treated like a kulak and forced to pay special taxes. The taxes paid by religious leaders increased tenfold from 1928 to 1930, and the leaders were stripped of their civil rights, which meant that they lost their ration cards and their right to medical care. Many were arrested, exiled, or deported. According to the incomplete records, more than 13,000 priests were ‘dekulakised’ in 1930. In many villages and towns, collectivisation began symbolically with the closure of the church, and

\(^{784}\) M.I. Odintsev, “Put’ dlinoiu v sem’ deciatiletij; ot konfrontatsii k sotrudnichestvu” (A Path Seven Decades Long: from Confrontation to Cooperation), in \textit{Na puti k svobode sovesti} (in the Path to Freedom of Conscience), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.

dekulakization began with the removal of the local religious leaders. Significantly, nearly 14 percent of riots and peasant uprisings in 1930 were sparked by the closure of a church or the removal of its bells. The antireligious campaign reached its height in the winter of 1929-30; by 1 March 1930, 6,715 churches had been closed or destroyed. In the aftermath of Stalin’s famous article ‘Dizzy with Success’ on 2 March 1930, a resolution from the Central Committee cynically condemned ‘inadmissible deviations in the struggle against religious prejudices, particularly the administrative closure of churches without the consent of the local inhabitants’. This formal condemnation had no effect on the fate of the people deported on religious grounds.

“Over the next few years these great offensives against the church were replaced by daily administrative harassment of priests and religious organizations. Freely interpreting the sixty-eight articles of the government decree of 8 April 1929, and going considerably beyond their mandate when it came to the closure of churches, local authorities continued their guerrilla war with a series of justifications: ‘unsanitary condition or extreme age’ of the buildings in question, ‘unpaid insurance’, and non-payment of taxes or other of the innumerable contributions imposed on the members of religious communities. Stripped of their civil rights and their right to teach, and without the possibility of taking up other paid employment – a status that left them arbitrarily classified as ‘parasitic elements living on unearned wages’ – a number of priests had no option but to become peripatetic and to lead a secret life on the edges of society.”

Religious life did not cease but rather intensified in the underground. Wandering bishops and priests served the faithful in secret locations around the country. Particular areas buzzed with underground activity. Thus Professor Ivan Andreyevsky testified that during the war he personally knew some 200 places of worship of the Catacomb Church in the Leningrad area alone. Popovsky writes that the Catacomb Church “arose in our midst at the end of the 20s. First one, then another priest disappeared from his parish, settled in a secret place and began the dangerous life of exiles. In decrepit little houses on the outskirts of towns chapels appeared. There they served the Liturgy, heard confessions, gave communion, baptized, married and even ordained new priests. Believers from distant towns and regions poured there in secret, passing on to each other the agreed knock on the door.”

Even patriarchal sources have spoken about the falsity of Sergius’ declaration, the true confession of those who opposed him, and the invalidity of the measures he took to punish them. Thus: “Amidst the opponents of Metropolitan Sergius were a multitude of remarkable martyrs and confessors, bishops, monks, priests... The ‘canonical’ bans of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod were taken

787 Grabbe, op. cit, p. 79.
seriously by no one, neither at that time [the 1930s] nor later by dint of the uncanonicity of the situation of Metropolitan Sergius himself…"788 And again: “The particular tragedy of the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius consists in its principled rejection of the podvig of martyrdom and confession, without which witnessing to the truth is inconceivable. In this way Metropolitan Sergius took as his foundation not hope on the Providence of God, but a purely human approach to the resolution of church problems… The courage of the ‘catacombniks’ and their firmness of faith cannot be doubted, and it is our duty to preserve the memory of those whose names we shall probably learn only in eternity…”789

**Metropolitan Sergius Consolidates His Power**

This persecution began to arouse criticism in the West – specifically, from Pope Pius XI and the Archbishop of Canterbury. On February 14, 1930 the Politburo decided “to entrust to Comrades Yaroslavsky, Stalin and Molotov the decision of the question of an interview” to counter-act these criticisms. The result was two interviews, the first to Soviet correspondents on February 15 and published on February 16 in Izvestia and Pravda in the name of Sergius and those members of his Synod who were still in freedom, and a second to foreign correspondents three days later.

In the first interview, which is now thought to have been composed entirely by the Bolsheviks with the active participation of Stalin, but whose authenticity was never denied by Sergius790, it was asserted that “in the Soviet Union there was not and is not now any religious persecution”, that “churches are closed not on the orders of the authorities, but at the wish of the population, and in many cases even at the request of the believers”, that “the priests themselves are to blame, because they do not use the opportunities presented to them by the freedom to preach” and that “the Church herself does not want to have any theological-educational institutions”.791

This interview, writes Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky, “was especially absurd and scandalous in the eyes of the simple people in that the universally venerated chapel of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God had just been destroyed. As N. Talberg writes, ‘the Russian people, fearing not even the chekists, demonstrated their attitude to him (Metropolitan Sergius)... When Metropolitan Sergius went to serve in one of the large churches of Moscow, the crowd whistled at him in the streets, which had never happened before in spite of the most desperate agitation of the atheists. Bishop Pitirim, one of those who had signed the declaration in the press,

---

788 Gubonin, op. cit., pp. 809, 810.
789 Danilushkin, op. cit., pp. 297, 520.
was also whistled at and met in the same way. *Paris-Midi* for March 5 (№ 1392) informed its readers of the insults Metropolitan Sergius had been subjected to by his flock in Moscow. *Vozrozhdenie* for March 6 (№ 178) printed the report of the Berlin *Lokale Anzeiger* to the effect that when Metropolitan Sergius ‘came out of the altar to serve the Liturgy, the crowd began to whistle and showered him with brickbats: “traitor”, “Judas”, “coward”, etc. The noise was so great that Metropolitan Sergius was not able to serve and went into the crowd to pacify them. But the aroused parishioners tried to tear his vestments from him, spat at him and wanted to take off his patriarchal cross. Metropolitan Sergius had to leave the church. He tried to serve the Liturgy in another church, but the believers boycotted his service.’ The Roman newspaper *Today* (№ 64), reporting the same incident, added that ‘not one person’ appeared at the service arranged by Metropolitan Sergius for the other church.”

Commenting on the interview, Archbishop Andrew of Ufa wrote: “Such is the opinion of the false-head of the false-patriarchal church of Metropolitan Sergius… But who is going to recognize this head after all this? For whom does this lying head remain a head, in spite of his betrayal of Christ?… All the followers of the lying Metropolitan Sergius… have fallen away from the Church of Christ. The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is somewhere else, not near Metropolitan Sergius and not near ‘his Synod’.”

In May, 1932, Stalin declared an anti-religious five-year plan: by 1936 the last church was to be closed, and by 1937 the name of God would no longer be pronounced in the Soviet Union. By the beginning of 1933 half the churches in the land had been closed or destroyed. But the census of 1937 established that two-thirds of the peasantry and one-third of the city-dwellers still maintained their faith in God. This impressive figure owed nothing to Sergius’ pact with the State, which divided the faithful and gave the atheists a powerful weapon against them.

In 1933 Metropolitan Sergius stated officially that he “as the deputy of Metropolitan Peter, had not only the temporary authority of the First Hierarch but the Patriarchal Power as well”. He also declared that Metropolitan Peter, the lawful First Hierarch, did not have the right “to interfere in the administration of the Church or even correct the mistakes of his deputy.” As a result of this shocking statement, Bishop Athanasius (Sakharov) of Kovrov broke communion with Sergius, as he stated in a letter to him on his return from exile in December, 1933.

---

792 Krasovitsky, Sergianskij raskol v perspective preodolenia (The Sergianist Schism in the Perspective of Its Overcoming), Moscow, samizdat, p. 25.
793 Zelenogorsky, M. Zhizni i deiatel’nost’ Arkhiiepiskopa Andrea (Kniazia Ukhtomskogo) (The Life and Activity of Archbishop Andrew (Prince Ukhtomsky), Moscow, 1991, p. 216. According to Archbishop Bartholomew (Remov), who never joined the Catacomb Church, the whole activity of Metropolitan Sergius was carried out in accordance with the instructions of the Bolsheviks (*Za Khrista Postradavshie* (Suffered for Christ), Moscow: St. Tikhon’s Theological Institute, 1997, p. 220).
794 Radzinsky, however, claims that by the end of 1930 “80 per cent of village churches were closed” (*Stalin*, New York: Doubleday, 1996, p. 249).
795 Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1933, № 1, p. 3.
In April, 1934 Sergius’ Synod gave him the title of Metropolitan of Kolomna – Metropolitan Peter’s see – thereby making him in effect an “adulterer bishop”. In 1935 Metropolitan Peter returned to Moscow and met Metropolitan Sergius. The latter asked him to recognize the new construction of Church life and to agree to the convening of a Council. On his side, Metropolitan Peter demanded that Sergius return Church power to him. Sergius refused, and Peter returned to the camps. In August, 1936, the NKVD spread the rumour that Metropolitan Peter had died. The Sergianist Synod promptly – and completely uncanonically – passed a resolution transferring the rights and duties of the patriarchal locum tenency to Metropolitan Sergius. In fact, Metropolitan Peter was not martyred until October, 1937. So at this point Sergius not only de facto, but also de jure usurped the position of the canonical leader of the Russian Church.

**Metropolitans Peter and Cyril**

In view of this further departure of Metropolitan Sergius from the holy canons, it may be asked what was the reaction of the leading hierarchs of the Catacomb Church – Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the patriarchal locum tenens and de jure leader of the Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, her de facto leader, and Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, the first locum tenens appointed by Patriarch Tikhon and the favoured candidate of the Russian episcopate for the role of patriarch.

Metropolitan Peter’s attitude was particularly important to ascertain in view of the fact that both the True Orthodox and the sergianists formally acknowledged him as the Church’s first hierarch. Earlier, Bishop Damascene of Glukhov had claimed to have made contact with him through his cell-attendant, who reported that Metropolitan Peter expressed disapproval of Sergius’ policies. Thus on January 22, 1928 he wrote to a certain N. “For a first-hierarch such an appeal [as Sergius’ declaration] is inadmissible. Moreover, I don’t understand why a Synod was formed from (as I can see from the signatures under the appeal) unreliable people. Thus, for example, Bishop Philip is a heretic... In this appeal a shadow is cast upon me and the patriarch, as if we had political relations with abroad, whereas the only relations were ecclesiastical. I do not belong to the irreconcilables, I allowed everything that could be allowed, and it was suggested to me in a more polite manner that I sign the appeal. I refused, for which I was exiled. I trusted Metropolitan Sergius, and I see that I was mistaken.”

On September 17, 1929, the priest Gregory Seletsky wrote to Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd on behalf of Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov): “I am fulfilling the request of his Eminence Archbishop Demetrius and set out before you in written form that information which the exiled Bishop Damascene has communicated to me. He succeeded in making contact with Metropolitan Peter, and in sending him, via a trusted person, full information about everything that has been taking place in the Russian Church. Through this emissary Metropolitan Peter said the following to
him: ‘1. You Bishops must yourselves remove Metropolitan Sergius. ‘2. I do not bless you to commemorate Metropolitan Sergius during Divine services…”796

In December, 1929 Metropolitan Peter wrote to Sergius: “Your Eminence, forgive me magnanimously if by the present letter I disturb the peace of your Eminence’s soul. People inform me about the difficult circumstances that have formed for the Church in connection with the exceeding of the limits of the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to you. I am very sorry that you have not taken the trouble to initiate me into your plans for the administration of the Church. You know that I have not renounced the locum tenancy, and consequently, I have retained for myself the Higher Church Administration and the general leadership of Church life. At the same time I make bold to declare that your remit as deputy was only for the management of everyday affairs; you are only to preserve the status quo. I am profoundly convinced that without prior contact with me you will not make any responsible decision. I have not accorded you any constituent right as long as I retain the locum tenancy and as long as Metropolitan Cyril is alive and as long as Metropolitan Agathangelus was alive. Therefore I did not consider it necessary in my decree concerning the appointment of candidates for the deputyship to mention the limitation of their duties; I had no doubt that the deputy would not alter the established rights, but would only deputize, or represent, so to speak, the central organ through which the locum tenens could communicate with his flock. But the system of administration you have introduced not only excludes this: it also excludes the very need for the existence of the locum tenens. Such major steps cannot, of course, be approved by the consciousness of the Church. I did not admit any qualifications limiting the duties of the deputy, both from a feeling of deep reverence and trust for the appointed candidates, and first of all for you, having in mind at this point your wisdom. It is burdensome for me to number all the details of negative evaluations of your administration: the resounding protests and cries from believers, from hierarchs and laypeople. The picture of ecclesiastical division that has been painted is shocking. My duty and conscience do not allow me to remain indifferent to such a sorrowful phenomenon; they urge me to address your Eminence with a most insistent demand that you correct the mistake you have made, which has placed the Church in a humiliating position, and which has caused quarrels and divisions in her and a blackening of the reputation of her leaders. In the same way I ask you to suspend the other measures that have increased your prerogatives. Such a decision of yours will, I hope, create a good atmosphere in the Church and will calm the troubled souls of her children, while with regard to you it will preserve that disposition towards you which you deservedly enjoyed both as a Church figure and as a man. Place all your hope on the Lord, and His help will always be with you. On my part, I as the first-hierarch of the Church, call on all clergy and church activists to display, in everything that touches on the civil legislation and administration, complete loyalty. They are obliged to submit unfailingly to the governmental decrees as long as they do not violate the holy faith and in general are not contrary to Christian conscience; and they must not engage in any anti-governmental activity, and they are allowed to express neither approval nor

796 V.V. Antonov, "Lozh' i Pravda" (Lies and Truth), Russkij Pastyr' (Russian Pastor), II, 1994, pp. 79-80.
disapproval of their actions in the churches or in private conversations, and in general they must not interfere in matters having nothing to do with the Church..."  

On February 13/26, 1930, after receiving news from Deacon K. about the true state of affairs in the Church, Metropolitan Peter wrote to Sergius: "Of all the distressing news I have had to receive, the most distressing was the news that many believers remain outside the walls of the churches in which your name is commemorated. I am filled with spiritual pain both about the disputes that have arisen with regard to your administration and about other sad phenomena. Perhaps this information is biased, perhaps I am not sufficiently acquainted with the character and aims of the people writing to me. But the news of disturbances in the Church come to me from various quarters and mainly from clerics and laymen who have made a great impression on me. In my opinion, in view of the exceptional circumstances of Church life, when normal rules of administration have been subject to all kinds of distortion, it is necessary to put Church life on that path on which it stood during your first period as deputy. So be so good as to return to that course of action that was respected by everybody. I repeat that I am very sad that you have not written to me or confided your plans to me. Since letters come from other people, yours would undoubtedly have reached me..."

On August 17, 1930, after again refusing to renounce the locum tenancy, Metropolitan Peter was imprisoned in the Tobolsk and Yekaterinburg prisons in solitary confinement with no right to receive parcels or visitors.

On March 11, 1931, after describing the sufferings of his life in Khe (which included the enmity of three renovationist priests), he posed the following question in a letter to J.B. Polansky: "Will not a change in locum tenens bring with it a change also in his deputy? Of course, it is possible that my successor, if he were to find himself incapable of carrying out his responsibilities directly, would leave the same person as his deputy - that is his right. But it is certain, in my opinion, that the carrying out of his duties by this deputy would have to come to an end at the same time as the departure of the person for whom he is deputizing, just as, according to the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, with his departure the synod created by him would cease to exist. All this and other questions require thorough and authoritative discussion and canonical underpinning... Be so kind as to bow to Metropolitan Sergius on my behalf, since I am unable to do this myself, and send him my fervent plea that he, together with Metropolitan Seraphim and Archbishop Philip, to whom I also bow, work together for my liberation. I beseech them to defend, an old man who can hardly walk. I was always filled with a feeling of deep veneration and gratitude to Metropolitan Sergius, and the thought of some kind of worsening of our relations would give me indescribable sorrow."

---

797 Gubonin, op. cit., pp. 681-682, 691-692. Protopresbyter Michael Polsky (Novye Mucheniki Rossijskie (The New Martyrs of Russia), op. cit., p. 133) reported that Metropolitan Peter had written to Sergius: "If you yourself do not have the strength to protect the Church, you should step down and hand over your office to a stronger person."
We have no direct evidence for Metropolitan Peter’s views after 1931. Indirectly, however, we can infer that his attitude towards Metropolitan Sergius hardened. For, as Professor Ivan Andreyev witnesses, “approval of the position of Metropolitan Joseph [whose views on Sergius were known to be uncompromisingly severe] was received from the exiled Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa and from Metropolitan Cyril”. Moreover, “from the fact that in the last years secret relations were established between Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Joseph, we may conjecture that Metropolitan Peter gave his blessing, in the event of his death, to Metropolitan Joseph’s heading the Russian Church in his capacity as Extraordinary Locum Tenens. This right was accorded to Metropolitan Joseph, as is known only to a few, by a Decision of the Local Council of 1917-18 dated January 25, 1918.”

Metropolitan Cyril, like Metropolitan Peter, at first took a relatively “lenient” attitude towards the sergianists. Thus in 1934 he wrote: “If we reproach them for not resisting, and, therefore, of belonging to heresy, we risk depriving them of the psychological opportunity to reunite with us and losing them forever for Orthodoxy.” This relative leniency has been exploited by those who wish to make out that the MP is a true Church even now, nearly eighty years after Sergius’ declaration. However, there are several reasons for thinking that Cyril was less “moderate” than he has been made out.

First, as his correspondent, another Catacomb hierarch said, he was being “excessively cautious” because of his insufficient knowledge of the Church situation from his position in exile. Secondly, he was in the unique position of being the only legal locum tenens that was able to correspond and reason with Sergius. He therefore naturally steered the dialogue to the theme of the canonical rights of the locum tenentes and their deputies, convicting Sergius of usurpation of the power of the First Hierarch. Concentrating on the canonical-administrative aspect of the matter, without entering into the dogmatic aspect of Sergius’ subordination to the atheists, was bound to lead to a less serious estimate of his sin. Nevertheless, in 1934 he wrote that while the Sergianist priests administered valid sacraments, Christians who partook of them knowing of Sergius’ usurpation of power and the illegality of his Synod would receive them to their condemnation.

Several points made by Metropolitan Cyril in his correspondence with Metropolitan Sergius are of vital importance in evaluating the status of the Moscow Patriarchate. The first is the priority of “the conciliar hierarchical conscience of the Church”. As he wrote in 1929: “Church discipline is able to retain its validity only as


799 Uchenie o Tserkvi Sviatykh Novomuchenikov i Ispovednikov Rossijskih (The Teaching on the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia), attachment to Russkoe Pravoslavie (Russian Orthodoxy), № 3 (7), 1997, p. 7; Regelson, _op. cit._, p. 590.
long as it is a true reflection of the hierarchical conscience of the Conciliar [Sobornoj] Church; discipline can never take the place of this conscience”. Sergius violated the hierarchical, conciliar conscience of the Church by his disregard of the views of bishops equal to him in rank.

The second is that a hierarch is justified in breaking communion with a fellow hierarch, not only for heresy, but also in order not to partake in his brother’s sin. Thus while Metropolitan Cyril did not consider Sergius to have sinned in matters of faith, he was forced to break communion with him because “I have no other means of rebuking my sinning brother”. If clergy have mutually opposing opinions within the Church, then their concelebration is for both “to judgement and condemnation”.

Again, in November, 1929, Metropolitan Cyril refused to condemn Metropolitan Joseph and his supporters, who had broken communion with Sergius; and he did not agree with the bishops in exile in Tashkent – Arsenius (Stadnitsky), Nicodemus (Krotkov), Nicander (Fenomenov) and others – who condemned Joseph, considering their hopes of convening a canonical Council to be “naivety or cunning”.

Thirdly, while Metropolitan Cyril did not deny the sacraments of the sergianists, he did so only in respect of those clergy who had been correctly ordained, i.e. by non-sergianist hierarchs.

A fourth point made by the metropolitan was that even when such a break in communion occurs between two parties, both sides remain in the Church so long as dogmatic unanimity is preserved. But this immediately raised the question: had Sergius only sinned “administratively”, by transgressing against the canons, as Metropolitan Cyril claimed (until 1934, at any rate), or had he sinned also “dogmatically”, by transgressing against the dogma of the One Church, as Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov, among others, claimed?

In about the middle of the 1930s Metropolitan Cyril issued an epistle in which he called on the Catacomb hierarchs to confirm his candidacy as the lawful patriarchal locum tenens in the case of the death of Metropolitan Peter. We know the reaction of one hierarch, Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk, to this epistle. He was not enthusiastic, because he considered that in times of persecution a centralized administration was not obligatory for the Church. In any case, at some time in the

---

801 V.V. Antonov, “Vazhnoe Pis'mo Mitropolita Kirilla” (An Important Letter of Metropolitan Cyril), Russkij Pastyr' (Russian Pastor), II, 1994, p. 76. Arsenius appears to have changed his position before his death in 1936.
802 Andreyev, op. cit., pp. 102-103.
803 “Novie dannia k zhizneopisaniu sviashchennomuchenika Fyodora, arkhiepiskopa Volokolamskogo, osnovannia na protokolah doprosov 1937 g.” (New Data towards a Biography of
1930s, as we have seen, both Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Cyril came to accept that Metropolitan Joseph should lead the Russian Church in the event of Metropolitan Peter’s death.

Metropolitan Cyril’s position hardened towards the end of his life. Thus in March, 1937 he wrote: “With regard to your perplexities concerning Sergianism, I can say that the very same questions in almost the same form were addressed to me from Kazan ten years ago, and then I replied affirmatively to them, because I considered everything that Metropolitan Sergius had done as a mistake which he himself was conscious of and wished to correct. Moreover, among our ordinary flock there were many people who had not investigated what had happened, and it was impossible to demand from them a decisive and active condemnation of the events. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, but there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened; and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox. The recent events have finally made clear the renovationist nature of Sergianism. We cannot know whether those believers who remain in Sergianism will be saved, because the work of eternal Salvation is a work of the mercy and grace of God. But for those who see and feel the unrighteousness of Sergianism (those are your questions) it would be unforgiveable craftiness to close one’s eyes to this unrighteousness and seek there for the satisfaction of one’s spiritual needs when one’s conscience doubts in the possibility of receiving such satisfaction. Everything which is not of faith is sin…”

This is an important document, for it shows that by 1937 Metropolitan Cyril considered that enough time had passed for the ordinary believer to come to a correct conclusion concerning the true, “renovationist” – that is, heretical – nature of Sergianism. So from 1937, in Metropolitan Cyril’s opinion, “the excuse of ignorance” was no longer valid. What had been involuntary ignorance in the early days of the schism was now (except in exceptional circumstances caused by, for example, extreme youth or mental deficiency) witting ignorance – that is, indifference to the truth or refusal to face the truth.

The Ust-Kut Council of 1937

On November 20, 1937, Metropolitans Joseph and Cyril were shot together in Chimkent. Following on the shooting of Metropolitan Peter on October 10, this meant that all of the holy patriarch’s locum tenentes, both “ordinary” and “extraordinary”, were now dead… The martyrdom of the last de jure and de facto

leaders of the Catacomb Church meant that the True Russian Church’s descent into the catacombs, which had begun in the early 20s, was completed. From now on, with the external administrative machinery of the Church destroyed, it was up to each bishop – sometimes each believer – individually to preserve the fire of faith, being linked with his fellow Christians only through the inner, mystical bonds of the life in Christ. Thus was the premonition of Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene fulfilled: “Perhaps the time has come when the Lord does not wish that the Church should stand as an intermediary between Himself and the believers, but that everyone is called to stand directly before the Lord and himself answer for himself as it was with the forefathers!”

This judgement was supported by ROCOR at its Second All-Emigration Council in 1938: “Since the epoch we have lived through was without doubt an epoch of apostasy, it goes without saying that for the true Church of Christ a period of life in the wilderness, of which the twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John speaks, is not, as some may believe, an episode connected exclusively with the last period in the history of mankind. History show us that the Orthodox Church has withdrawn into the wilderness repeatedly, from whence the will of God called her back to the stage of history, where she once again assumed her role under more favourable circumstances. At the end of history the Church of God will go into the wilderness for the last time to receive Him, Who comes to judge the quick and the dead. Thus the twelfth chapter of Revelation must be understood not only in an eschatological sense, but in a historical and educational sense as well: it shows up the general and typical forms of Church life. If the Church of God is destined to live in the wilderness through the Providence of the Almighty Creator, the judgement of history, and the legislation of the proletarian state, it follows clearly that she must forego all attempts to reach a legalization, for every attempt to arrive at a legalization during the epoch of apostasy inescapably turns the Church into the great Babylonian whore of blasphemous atheism. The near future will confirm our opinion and prove that the time has come in which the welfare of the Church demands giving up all legalizations, even those of the parishes. We must follow the example of the Church prior to the Council of Nicaea, when the Christian communities were united not on the basis of the administrative institutions of the State, but through the Holy Spirit alone.”

Perhaps the most striking and literal example of the Church’s fleeing into the wilderness is provided by Bishop Amphilochius of Yenisei and Krasnoyarsk, who in 1930 departed into the Siberian forests and founded a catacomb skete there in complete isolation from the world.

However, the catacomb situation of the Church did not mean that it could no longer make decisions and judgements. Thus in this period the following anathema attached to the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy in Josephite parishes was composed: “To those who maintain the mindless renovationist heresy of siergianism;

---

806 Cited by Gustavson, op. cit., p. 102.
to those who teach that the earthly existence of the Church of God can be established by denying the truth of Christ; and to those who affirm that serving the God-fighting authorities and fulfilling their godless commands, which trample on the sacred canons, the patristic traditions and the Divine dogmas, and destroy the whole of Christianity, saves the Church of Christ; and to those who revere the Antichrist and his servants and forerunners, and all his minions, as a lawful power established by God; and to all those... who blaspheme against the new confessors and martyrs (Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod, Nicholas of Kiev and Alexis of Khutyn), and to... the renovationists and the other heretics – anathema.”

Again, Divine Providence convened a Council of the Catacomb Church in July, 1937, in the depths of Siberia: “In the last days of July, 1937, in the Siberian town of Ust-Kut, on the River Lena (at its juncture with the River Kut), in the re-grouping section of the house of arrest, there met by chance: two Metropolitans, four Bishops, two Priests and six laymen of the secret Catacomb Church, who were on a stage of their journey from Vitim to Irkutsk, being sent from Irkutsk to the north.

“It was difficult to anticipate a similarly full and representative gathering of same-minded members of the Church in the near future. Therefore those who had gathered decided immediately to open a ‘Sacred Council’, in order to make canonical regulations concerning vital questions of the Catacomb Church. The time of the Council was, as it seemed, limited to four hours, after which the participants in the Council were sent in different directions.

“The president was Metropolitan John (in one version: “Bishop John”), and the Council chose the layman A.Z. to be secretary. The resolutions of the Council were not signed: A.Z. gave an oath to memorize the decisions of the Council and to pass on to whom it was necessary whatever he remembered exactly, but not to speak at all about what he confused or could not remember exactly. A.Z. in his time succeeded in passing on the memorised decisions of the Church. His words were written down and became Canons of the Church. Among these Canons were some that are especially necessary for the Church:

1. The Sacred Council forbids the faithful to receive communion from the clergy legalized by the anti-Christian State.

2. It has been revealed to the Sacred Council by the Spirit that the anathema-curse hurled by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is valid, and all priests and Church-servers who have dared to consider it as an ecclesiastical mistake or political tactic are placed under its power and bound by it.

3. To all those who discredit and separate themselves from the Sacred Council of 1917-18 – Anathema!”

---

807 S. Verin, “Svidetel'stvno russkikh katakomb” (A Witness of the Russian Catacombs), Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Russia), № 14 (1563), July 1/14, 1996, pp. 11-12.
“4. All branches of the Church which are on the common trunk – the trunk is our pre-revolutionary Church – are living branches of the Church of Christ. We give our blessing to common prayer and the serving of the Divine Liturgy to all priests of these branches. The Sacred Council forbids all those who do not consider themselves to be branches, but independent from the tree of the Church, to serve the Divine Liturgy. The Sacred Council does not consider it necessary to have administrative unity of the branches of the Church, but unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all.”

Thus Sergius was to be condemned, not only because he was a usurper of Church authority and violated the canons, but also because he expressed an heretical attitude towards the antichristian authorities. As Bishop Mark (Novoselov) said during interrogation: “I am an enemy of Soviet power – and what is more, by dint of my religious convictions, since Soviet power is an atheist power and even anti-theist. I believe that as a true Christian I cannot strengthen this power by any means… [There is] a petition which the Church has commanded to be used everyday in certain well-known conditions... The purpose of this formula is to request the overthrow of the infidel power by God... But this formula does not amount to a summons to believers to take active measures, but only calls them to pray for the overthrow of the power that has fallen away from God.”

Again, in another catacomb document dating from the 1960s we read: “Authority is given by God in order to preserve and fulfill the law... But how should one look on the Soviet authority, following the Apostolic teaching on authorities [Romans 13]? In accordance with the Apostolic teaching which we have set forth, one must acknowledge that the Soviet authority is not an authority. It is an anti-authority. It is not an authority because it is not established by God, but insolently created by an aggregation of the evil actions of men, and it is consolidated and supported by these actions. If the evil actions weaken, the Soviet authority, representing a condensation of evil, likewise weakens... This authority consolidates itself in order to destroy all religions, simply to eradicate faith in God. Its essence is warfare with God, because its root is from Satan. The Soviet authority is not authority, because by its nature it cannot fulfil the law, for the essence of its life is evil.

“It may be said that the Soviet authority, in condemning various crimes of men, can still be considered an authority. We do not say that a ruling authority is totally lacking. We only affirm that it is an anti-authority. One must know that the affirmation of real power is bound up with certain actions of men, to whom the instinct of preservation is natural. And they must take into consideration the laws of

---

808 Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), personal communication; B. Zakharov, Russkaia Mysl’ (Russian Thought), September 7, 1949; “Vazhnoe postanovlenie katakombnoj tserkvi” (An Important Decree of the Catacomb Church), Pravoslavnaiia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 18, 1949. According to one version, there is a fifth canon: “To all those who support the renovationist and sergianist heresy – Anathema”. See Bishop Ambrose (von Sievers), “Katakombaia Tserkov’: Ust’-Kutskij Sobor 1937g.” (The Catacomb Church: the Ust-Kut Council of 1937), Russkoe Pravoslavie (Russian Orthodoxy), № 4 (8), 1997, pp. 20-24.

809 Novoselov, quoted in Osipov, op. cit., p. 3.
morality which have been inherent in mankind from ages past. But in essence this authority systematically commits murder physically and spiritually. In reality a hostile power acts, which is called Soviet authority. The enemy strives by cunning to compel humanity to acknowledge this power as an authority. But the Apostolic teaching on authority is inapplicable to it, just as evil is inapplicable to God and the good, because evil is outside God; but the enemies with hypocrisy can take refuge in the well-known saying that everything is from God. This Soviet anti-authority is precisely the collective Antichrist, warfare against God…”

The Ust-Kut Council may be seen as confirming the sixth canon of the “Nomadic Council” of 1928, which defined the essence of Sergianism as its recognition of Soviet power as a true, God-established power. It also harks back to the seventh canon of that Council, which declared: “The anathema of January 19, 1918 laid by Patriarch Tikhon and the Holy Council on the former Christians who became blasphemers, is confirmed. Since Soviet power is a blaspheming and Christ-persecuting power, the action of the anathema very much applies to the God-fighting power, and one must pray not for it, but for the deliverance of people from the bitter torment of the godless authorities and for the suffering land of Russia. We establish the reading of a special prayer for the persecuted and much-suffering Church after the service.”

The Cost of Sergianism

If Metropolitan Sergius thought that his betrayal of the True Orthodox Christians would “save the Church”, the next few years would prove him terribly wrong. From 1935 the Bolsheviks began to repress all the clergy, sergianist as well as True Orthodox. According to Russian government figures, in 1937 alone 136,900 clergy were arrested, of whom 106,800 were killed; while between 1917 and 1980, 200,000 clergy were executed and 500,000 others were imprisoned or sent to the camps. The rate of killing slowed down considerably in the following years. In 1939 900 clergy were killed, in 1940 – 1100, in 1941 – 1900, in 1943 – 500. In the period 1917 to 1940 205 Russian hierarchs “disappeared without trace”; 59 disappeared in 1937 alone. By 1939 there were only four bishops even of the sergianist church at liberty, and only a tiny handful of churches open, in the whole of the country. By 1938, according

---

810 Andreyev, Russia’s Catacomb Saints, pp. 541-42.
812 A document of the Commission attached to the President of the Russian Federation on the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Political Repressions, January 5, 1996; Service Orthodoxe de Presse (Orthodox Press Service), № 204, January, 1996, p. 15. According to another source, from October, 1917 to June, 1941 inclusive, 134,000 clergy were killed, of whom the majority (80,000) were killed between 1928 and 1940 (Cyril Mikhailovich Alexandrov, in V. Lyulechnik, “Tserkov’ i KGB” (The Church and the KGB), in http://elmager.livejournal.com/217784.html)). According to a third source (Kharbinskoye Vremia, February, 1937, № 28), in the nineteen years of Soviet terror to that date there were killed: 128 bishops; 26,777 clergy; 7,500 professors; about 9,000 doctors; 94,800 officers; 1,000,000 soldiers; 200,000 policemen; 45,000 teachers; 2,200,000 workers and peasants. Besides that, 16 million Russians died from hunger and three million died in forced labour in the camps. (Protopriest John Stukach, “Vysokomerie kak prepona k uiedineniu” (Haughtiness as an obstacle to union), http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1357.
to T. Martynov, most of the 180,000 priests from before the revolution had been killed.813

The situation was no better with regard to churches. There were no churches at all in Belorussia (Kolarz), “less than a dozen” in Ukraine (Bociurkiw), and a total of 150-200 in the whole of Russia.814 In all, the numbers of functioning Orthodox churches declined from 54,692 in 1914 to 39,000 at the beginning of 1929 to 15,835 on April 1, 1936.815

And yet the census of 1937 established that one-third of city-dwellers and two-thirds of country-dwellers still confessed that they believed in God. Stalin’s plan that the Name of God should not be named in the country by the year 1937 had failed...

But what of the future? What hopes did the Christians of the Catacomb Church nurture with regard to a deliverance from their terrible sufferings? If some, like Bishop Maximus of Serpukhov, were pessimistic about the future, thinking that the very last days of the world had been reached816, others prophesied the resurrection of Holy Russia before the end, such as Bishop Victor of Glazov. Eldress Agatha of Belorussia, who was starved to death by the authorities in 1939 at the age of 119, told her spiritual children concerning the Soviet Church: “This is not a true church. It has signed a contract to serve the Antichrist. Do not go to it. Do not receive any Mysteries from its servants. Do not participate in prayer with them.” And then she said: “There will come a time when churches will be opened in Russia, and the true Orthodox Faith will triumph. Then people will become baptized, as at one time they were baptized under St. Vladimir. When the churches are opened for the first time, do not go to them because these will not be true churches; but when they are opened the second time, then go – these will be the true churches. I will not live to see this time, but many of you will live to this time. The atheist Soviet authority will vanish, and all its servants will perish...”817

However, the immediate outlook at the end of the thirties was bleak indeed. E.L., writing about Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene, comments: “He warmed the hearts of many, but the masses remained... passive and inert, moving in any direction in accordance with an external push, and not their inner convictions... The long isolation of Bishop Damascene from Soviet life, his remoteness from the gradual process of sovietization led him to an unrealistic assessment of the real relations of forces in the reality that surrounded him. Although he remained unshaken himself, he did not see... the desolation of the human soul in the masses. This soul had been diverted onto another path – a slippery, opportunistic path which led people where

817 Andreiev, Russia’s Catacomb Saints, op. cit., pp. 422-23.
the leaders of Soviet power – bold men who stopped at nothing in their attacks on all moral and material values – wanted them to go… Between the hierarchs and priests who had languished in the concentration camps and prisons, and the mass of the believers, however firmly they tried to stand in the faith, there grew an abyss of mutual incomprehension. The confessors strove to raise the believers onto a higher plane and bring their spiritual level closer to their own. The mass of believers, weighed down by the cares of life and family, blinded by propaganda, involuntarily went in the opposite direction, downwards. Visions of a future golden age of satiety, of complete liberty from all external and internal restrictions, of the submission of the forces of nature to man, deceitful perspectives in which fantasy passed for science… were used by the Bolsheviks to draw the overwhelming majority of the people into their nets. Only a few individuals were able to preserve a loftiness of spirit. This situation was exploited very well by Metropolitan Sergius…“

Sergius has had many apologists. Some have claimed that he “saved the Church” for a future generation, when the whirlwind of the persecution had passed. This claim cannot be justified, as we have seen. It was rather the Catacomb Church, which, as Alexeyev writes, “in a sense saved the official Church from complete destruction because the Soviet authorities were afraid to force the entire Russian Church underground through ruthless suppression and so to lose control over it.” As St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco wrote: “The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius brought no benefit to the Church. The persecutions not only did not cease, but also sharply increased. To the number of other accusations brought by the Soviet regime against clergy and laymen, one more was added – non-recognition of the Declaration. At the same time, a wave of church closures rolled over all Russia… Concentration camps and places of forced labor held thousands of clergymen, a significant part of whom never saw freedom again, being executed there or dying from excessive labors and deprivations.”

Others have tried to justify Sergius by claiming that there are two paths to salvation, one through open confession or the descent into the catacombs, and the other through compromise. Sergius, according to this view, was no less a martyr than the Catacomb martyrs, only he suffered the martyrdom of losing his good name. However, this view comes close to the “Rasputinite” heresy that there can be salvation through sin – in this case, the most brazen lying, the sacrifice of the

820 St. John Maximovich, The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. A Short History, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997, pp. 28-29. Even a recent biography of Sergius by an MP author accepts this fact: “If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38.” (Sergius Fomin, Strazh Doma Gospodnia (Guardian of the House of the Lord), Moscow, 2003, p. 262)
freedom and dignity of the Church and Orthodoxy, and the betrayal to torments and
death of one's fellow Christians! Thus Hieromartyr Sergius Mechev was betrayed by
"Bishop" Manuel Lemeshevsky. And more generally, Metropolitan Sergius' charge
that all the catacomb bishops were "counter-revolutionaries" was sufficient to send
them to their deaths.

Sergianists are constantly trying to prove that the declaration of Metropolitan
Sergius, though disastrous for the Church, was nevertheless motivated by the purest
of feelings. Apart from the inherent improbability that an action motivated by the
purest of feelings - and therefore inspired by the Grace of God - would bring disaster,
both physical and spiritual, to thousands, if not millions of people, we have seen that
Sergius was an opportunist from the beginning, from well before the revolution.

Further proof of this is provided in the Memoirs of Princess Natalya Vladimirovna
Urusova: 'The personality of Metropolitan Sergius was of the basest, crawling before
the authorities. Many people asked each other: 'Does Metropolitan Sergius really
take part in the persecutions and the destruction of churches?' Some did not admit
that he took an active part in this, but, unfortunately, they were wrong. He
completely sold himself to satan. I can cite a case personally known to me which
confirms the fact of his participation in these works.

"In the church of St. Nicholas the Big Cross there chanted in the choir a young girl,
very humble and nice. The whole of her family was religious, and consequently did
not recognize the sergianist church. We got to know each other, and I and
Andryusha would often go to their dacha near Moscow. Verochka worked in the
main post office in Moscow, she was welcoming and good-looking. Once there came
to her department on service matters a GPU boss. He was attracted to her and began
to talk with her. To her horror and that of her family, he asked for their address.
Unexpectedly he came to the dacha, thoroughly frightening everyone, of course.
After all, it was impossible ever to know the intentions of these terrible people.
Having said hello, he brought out a box of pastries, which no simple mortal could
get at that time, and gave it to Verochka, asking her to accept him as a guest. He
began to come often and to court her. Probably everyone was quietly and secretly
crossing themselves, praying to be delivered from this guest. But there was nothing
to be done. He looked about 30, with quite an interesting appearance. Almost
immediately they set off on a walk without Verochka's father and mother, while
Andryusha and I hurried to leave. Verochka said that she could have liked him, but
the single thought that he was not only the boss of a GPU department, but, as he
himself said, in charge of Church affairs, repulsed and horrified her. He proposed to
her. She refused. 'How can I be your wife, when you are not only not a believer, but
a persecutor of the Church, and I can never under any circumstances agree with
that.' During their conversations he tried by every means to draw her away from
faith in God, but she was unbending, the more so in that she was one of the beloved
spiritual children of the murdered Fr. Alexander. He did not give up, but threatened

822 See Alla D. "Svidetel'stvo" (Witness), in Nadezhda (Hope), vol. 16, Basel-Moscow, 1993, 228-230.
to shoot her and himself. Moreover, he once even got out his revolver and pointed it at her. He continued to visit her. The family’s situation was terrible. They couldn't think of sleeping or eating. They spoke only about one thing: how it would all end, with his taking revenge or his leaving them in peace? Verochka rushed around like a trapped bird trying to extricate herself from the claws of a hawk. Once when she was working (at the post office) she was summoned and given a note to go immediately to the GPU at the Lubyanka... It turned out to be his office. He ordered her to take up the telephone receiver. Then he took up another and summoned Metropolitan Sergius. "Listen to the conversation," he told her. The conversation was about the destruction of one of the churches in Moscow. Sergius not only did not register any protest, but took part in this terrible affair and gave his agreement. "Did you hear?" said the boss. "That's the kind of clergy you bow down to." She replied that this conversation could not shake her faith in God, and that even before she had not recognized Metropolitan Sergius, while now she was convinced that she had not been mistaken about him... “824

Sergius made the basic mistake of forgetting that it is God, not man, Who saves the Church. This mistake almost amounts to a loss of faith in the Providence and Omnipotence of God Himself. The faith that saves is the faith that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19.26). It is the faith that cries: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 19.7). This was and is the faith of the Catacomb Church, which, being founded on “the Rock, which is Christ” (I Corinthians 10.7), has prevailed against the gates of hell.

But Sergius’ “faith” was of a different, more “supple” kind, the kind of which the Prophet spoke: “Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we have an agreement; when the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter’; therefore thus says the Lord God,... hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter. Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with hell will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through you will be beaten down by it…” (Isaiah 28.15, 17-19)

Through Sergius, the Moscow Patriarchate made an agreement with hell. We know already that it will not stand in God’s eyes. We await its final exposure and annulment...

Meanwhile, the True Church of Russia – that Church which is founded on the rock of Christ rather than a pact with the Antichrist – continues to struggle in the catacombs of the neo-Soviet Russian Federation. Although confident in the promise of her Saviour, she nevertheless longs for the return of the Orthodox Autocracy, in the absence of whose protective shield she has suffered so terribly. For only then, as in the time of St. Constantine, will she flourish again as in times of old, crying: ‘Save,

O Lord, Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victory to the Orthodox kings over their adversaries. And through Thy Cross preserve Thine inheritance’ (Troparion to the Honourable and Life-Giving Cross).

January 30 / February 12, 2010.
Feast of the Holy Three Hierarchs.
25. THE CATHOLIC ASSAULT ON RUSSIA

Introduction

From the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages, and until the Russian revolution of 1917, the main bastion and protector of Orthodox Christianity in the world was Russia. The Russian Tsars protected the Orthodox of many nations, not only within the bounds of their own realm, but well beyond it – in particular, in the Balkans and the Middle East. They defended them not only against pagan and Muslim Mongols and Tatars and Turks from the East, but also from Christian Swedes, Poles, Germans, Austrians, French and English from the West.

This mission was conducted with notable success right up to the revolution: Napoleon was crushed in 1812; the English, French and Turks were, if not defeated, at any rate repelled in the Crimean War, and the Holy Land was again opened to Orthodox pilgrims; and when the Russian revolution broke out in February, 1917, the Germans and Austrians who had invaded the Orthodox lands of Russia, Serbia and Romania were on the point of being turned back. But then Russia was stabbed in the back by an enemy that came neither from the East nor from the West, but from within – the Jews, vast numbers of whom (half of the world’s total) had been incorporated into the Russian Empire since the end of the eighteenth century, and who, by 1917, had taken control of one-third of Russian commerce and almost all of the country’s newspapers. It was these Jews who whipped up public opinion against the Tsar, viciously slandering him and his family and calling for the overthrow of the dynasty, until almost the whole country believed their lies. Such calls at a time when the country was fighting for its survival would have exacted the death penalty for treason in any other of the combatant countries. But Tsar Nicholas was a gentle and generous man who hated bloodshed… In any case his enemies were too many to be executed en masse, and acting against them would have involved, among other things, a complete purge of the army high command, which was unthinkable at such a time… And so he chose the way of Christ, the way of non-resistance to evil, and abdicated…

Of course, the Bolshevik Jews who, within a few months, seized control of Russia were aided by many other forces – first of all their fellow Jews in New York (such as the banker Jacob Schiff, who financed Trotsky and hundreds of other Bolsheviks), then the German High Command (Lenin was a paid-up German agent with vast funds at his disposal), and then a group of about 300 Russian Freemasons who occupied most of the leading posts in the Russian Army, Industry and Society, together with their French and English brothers who supported them from abroad. And then there was another enemy of Russia that is often forgotten in historical accounts of the revolution, but whose undying hatred of Russia was known to all the Orthodox – the Roman Catholic Church. Let us briefly look at the historical threat posed by the Vatican to Holy Russia before turning to the very present threat that it poses…
The Middle Ages

Throughout the whole of the first millennium of Christian history, almost the whole of Europe and much of the Middle East confessed a single form of Christianity – not Roman Catholicism, as Catholic historians would have us believe, but Orthodox Christianity, which existed in several national and linguistic variants – Greek, Arabic, Slavic, Georgian, Roman, Spanish, Gallic, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon... However, this unity of faith was shattered in 1054, when the Pope of Rome, offended by the refusal of the Christians of the East to accept his authority over them and the new dogmas that he was introducing, anathematized the Eastern Churches. Almost immediately, as if possessed, the Popes began a series of crusades to crush by armed force those who rejected this ecclesiastical revolution that they had effected in one of the historic centres of Christianity.

Probably the first crusade of the Roman Catholic Church against Orthodox Christianity took place in 1066-70, when Duke William of Normandy, with the full blessing and support of Pope Alexander, invaded the “schismatic” land of England. At the battle of Hastings and in its aftermath William killed the English King Harold and perhaps 20% of the population (Harold’s daughter fled to Russia, where she married the Russian Great Prince), forced most of the English aristocracy to flee to Constantinople (where they took service in the armies of the Emperor Alexis and were given land in Bulgaria and the Crimea), took over and “communized” most of the land of England (and, later, Wales, Scotland and Ireland also), destroyed most of the English churches, removed almost all the English bishops, replacing them with French ones, defiled the relics of the English saints, banned the age-old Orthodox liturgy and music, substituted French for English as the official language, and in general created one of the most complete and fateful cultural, political and religious transformations in history... There were further crusades, on a smaller scale, in other parts of Western Europe, particularly in Germany, whose emperors were for long unwilling to become papists...

Then the Popes turned their attention to the eastern “rebels” against his dominion. In 1098-99 Pope Urban incited the footloose and land-hungry western knights to go on a vast scavenging campaign to the East, which ended with the wholesale slaughter of the Jewish and Muslim population of Jerusalem and the devastation of all the Orthodox lands between Serbia and Egypt. Further eastern crusades followed. They failed in their overt purpose, which was to destroy Muslim power in the Middle East, but succeeded in another purpose, which was to undermine the power of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire and the Orthodox Church in the region. The Eastern crusades were “crowned” by the sack of Constantinople in 1204, one of the most barbaric and tragic episodes in Christian history.

By this time, however, the main concentration of power in the Orthodox Christian world was neither in the east nor in the west, but in the north. And so in 1150 the Roman Catholic Bishop Matthew of Crakow in Poland asked the famous Catholic rabble-rouser Bernard of Clairvaux to “exterminate the godless rites and customs of
the Ruthenians [Russians]”. The “Teutonic Knights” duly answered the call and invaded Russia, but were defeated at the famous battle on the ice by St. Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod. Shortly afterwards, the Mongols conquered Russia – a great tragedy, without a doubt, but a tragedy that, by the Providence of God, turned out for the ultimate benefit of Russia, since the Mongols, though pagans, were much more tolerant of Orthodoxy than the Roman Catholics. And on emerging from under the yoke of the Mongols the Russians did not forget the threat of Catholicism: by the sixteenth century they had turned their land into a fortress whose main purpose was: to preserve the Orthodox Faith pure and undefiled from the ravages of the Latins.

Unfortunately, however, the re-emergence of Russia as an independent (in fact, the only independent) Orthodox state coincided with the rise to power of one of the two great states of the Catholic Counter-Reformation – Poland. At the same time that the other great Catholic State, the Hapsburg Empire, was slaughtering Protestants in the West, the Poles – with the active connivance of the Jews – were persecuting the Orthodox over a vast swathe of what is now the Ukraine and Belorussia. Finally, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Poles conquered Moscow and placed a Catholic king, the “false Dmitri”, in the Kremlin. But Patriarch Hermogen of Moscow from his prison cell in the Kremlin dungeon issued appeals to the Russians to rise up against the heretical invaders. And although Hermogen did not live to see the outcome (he was starved to death in his cell), his appeals were heeded, and a great army of national liberation drove the Poles and the Swedes, if not out of Russia completely, at any rate out of her historical heartland.

The Unia

From the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries the Orthodox peasants living in what is now Belorussia and Western Ukraine were severely persecuted by their Polish-Lithuanian landlords and the Jesuits. The cause was the foundation of the Society of Jesus in 1540, which aimed to buttress the buttressing of the Counter-Reformation papacy throughout the world. The Jesuits were soon waging war, not only against Protestantism, but also against Orthodoxy, and their methods included both crude force and the subtler weapon of education.

“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 formerly Russian lands from Kiev westwards were largely deprived of political 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 Kiev Metropolitan Onesiphorus 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 Terletsy succeeded in presenting the Vladimir see to his friend, Hypatius Potsey. Fearing the

---

825 Smirnov, Istoria Khristianskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi (A History of the Orthodox Christian Church), Moscow: Krutitskoe podvorye, 2000, pp. 203-204.
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…” 826

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 that 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 Kievian 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…

“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.”828

Oleg 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.’”829

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 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…”

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”…

Even after the union of the Eastern Ukraine with Russia in 1686, very extensive formerly 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…

Nevertheless, the persecution of the Orthodox living in Poland did not cease. Thus the Polish nobility, writes David 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.”

---

830 L. Perepiolkina, Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 227-228.
831 Perepiolkina, op. cit., p. 228.
“The Orthodox,” writes A.P. 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, Stanislav 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 Stanislav 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 Pereyaslav 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 Koliivschina 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 for Orthodoxy. And yet we may agree with Archpriest Lev 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…”

The voluntary return of the uniates to Orthodoxy continued into the nineteenth century. Favourable conditions for this change had been created by the fall of Poland in 1815, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Russia in 1820 and the suppression of the Polish rebellion in 1830-1831. Then, in 1835, a secret committee on the uniate question was formed in St. Petersburg consisting of the uniate bishop Joseph Semashko, the real soul of the movement, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, the over-procurator of the Holy Synod and the minister of the interior. By 1839 1,600,000 had converted to Orthodoxy.

Poland after the Revolution

However, immediately Poland acquired independence from Russia, during the First World War and the Russian revolution, the persecution of the Orthodox began again. Thus already on October 22, 1919 the Poles had ordered 497 Orthodox churches and chapels, which had supposedly been seized from the Catholics in the past, to be returned to the Catholic Church. Again, in Turkovichi in Kholm region there had been for centuries the miraculous Turkovitskaya Icon of the Mother of God cared for by a convent of nuns. In 1915 the nuns were forced to flee to Moscow, and the icon perished during the revolution. Meanwhile, in 1918, writes Archbishop Athanasius, “the Poles occupied the monastery and turned it into an orphanage under the direction of Polish nuns. The Orthodox were strictly forbidden to enter the monastery. Upon return from exile, the Orthodox inhabitants of Turkovichi built with their own means a small chapel in the cemetery not far from the monastery and ordered from the local artist and iconographer, Zinya, a copy of the miraculous icon, adorning it with a large kiot (shrine) and placing it in the church. The people heard of this and began to make massive pilgrimages to Turkovichi in order to venerate the sacred ‘Turkovitskaya’ Icon as one equal to the original. Thus the feast day of Turkovichi was restored and drew numerous pilgrims on the July 2/15 date.

“But the wheel of fate turned mercilessly for Turkovichi and Kholm. During the terrible years of 1943-1945 during the Second World War Polish bandits attacked the peaceful Orthodox inhabitants at night, slaughtered them, burned their homes, and brought a reign of terror and fear to these Orthodox people. In this tragedy hundreds of thousands of Orthodox people who inhabited the four districts of

---

834 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 232.
Grubeshovsky, Tomashevsky, Zamoisky, and Bielgoraisky perished at the hands of the Poles.837

Long before that, however, the Poles had acted to try and destroy the links between the Russian Orthodox in Poland and their Mother Church in Russia by creating an autocephalous Polish Church. Thus in 1921 Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow appointed Archbishop Seraphim (Chichagov) to the see of Warsaw, but the Poles, whose armies had defeated the Red Army in 1920, did not grant him entry into the country. So on September 27 the Patriarch was forced to accept the Poles’ candidate, Archbishop George (Yaroshevsky) of Minsk. However, he appointed him his exarch in Poland, not metropolitan of Warsaw (that title remained with Archbishop Seraphim). Moreover, he refused Archbishop George’s request for autocephaly on the grounds that very few members of the Polish Church were Poles and the Polish dioceses were historically indivisible parts of the Russian Church.838 Instead, he granted the Polish Church autonomy within the Russian Church,839

On January 24, 1922 Archbishop George convened a hierarchical Council in Warsaw which included Archbishops Dionysius (Valedinsky) and Panteleimon (Rozhnovskiy). Under pressure from the authorities, Bishop Vladimir also joined them. Pekarsky, an official of the ministry of religious confessions, entered into negotiations with the Russian hierarchs that were directed mainly to forcing them to sign the so-called “Temporary Rules”, which had been drawn up in the ministry and which envisaged far-reaching government control over the life of the Orthodox Church in Poland. On January 30 the “Temporary Rules” were signed by Archbishops George and Dionysius, but not by Archbishop Panteleimon and Bishop Vladimir.

On the same day Patriarch Tikhon transferred Archbishop George to the see of Warsaw and raised him to the rank of metropolitan; for it had become evident that it would be impossible to obtain the Polish authorities’ permission for the entrance into Warsaw of Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), who had the reputation of being an extreme rightist. However, the titular promotion of Archbishop George by no means signified that the patriarch supported his intentions, for in the decrees there is no mention of ecclesiastical autocephaly, nor of exarchal rights. Consequently, as was confirmed by the patriarch in 1925, he was simply one of the diocesan bishops in Poland, and not metropolitan “of all Poland”.840

Liudmilla Koeller writes: “The Polish authorities restricted the Orthodox Church, which numbered more than 3 million believers (mainly Ukrainians and Byelorussians). In 1922 a council was convoked in Pochaev which was to have

---

838 Danilushkin, op. cit., p. 197.
840 Monk Benjamin, op. cit., pp. 63-64.
declared autocephaly, but as the result of a protest by Bishop Eleutherios [Bogoyavlensky, of Vilnius] and Bishop Vladimir (Tikhonitsky), this decision was not made. But at the next council of bishops, which gathered in Warsaw in June, 1922, the majority voted for autocephaly, with only Bishops Eleutherios and Vladimir voting against. A council convoked in September of the same year ‘deprived Bishops Eleutherios and Vladimir of their sees. In December, 1922, Bishop Eleutherios was arrested and imprisoned.’  Eleutherios was later exiled to Lithuania. Two other Russian bishops, Panteleimon (Rozhnovskyy) and Sergius (Korolev), were also deprived of their sees. They, too, were then expelled from Poland.

In November, 1923, Metropolitan George was killed by an opponent of his church politics, Archimandrite Smaragd (Laytshenko), and was succeeded by Metropolitan Dionysius with the agreement of the Polish government and the blessing of the Masonic Patriarch Meletius IV (Metaxakis) of Constantinople. Patriarch Tikhon rejected this act as uncanonical. On November 13, 1924 Meletius’ successor, Patriarch Gregory VII, signed a Tomos “on the recognition of the Orthodox Church in Poland as autocephalous”. The Tomo significantly declared: “The first separation from our see of the Kievan Metropolia and from the Orthodox Metropolias of Latvia and Poland, which depended on it, and also their union to the holy Moscow Church, took place by no means in accordance with the prescription of the holy canons, nor was everything observed that had been established with regard to the complete ecclesiastical autonomy of the Kievan metropolitan who bears the title of exarch of the Ecumenical Throne”. Hereby the patriarch indirectly laid claim to Ukraine as his canonical territory, in spite of the fact that it had been under Russian rule for two-and-a-half centuries. And yet, in contradiction with that, he affirmed as the basis of his grant of autocephaly to the Polish Church the fact that “the order of ecclesiastical affairs must follow political and social forms”, basing this affirmation on the 17th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and the 38th canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

The Polish government continued to persecute the Orthodox in the inter-war years. Thus Alexeyev and Stavrou write: “Before the beginning of the Second World War the Poles had closed hundreds of Orthodox churches on their territory on the grounds that the Tsarist government had in 1875 returned theses churches from the unia to Orthodoxy. The Polish government considered the return of the uniates to

841 Koeller, “Kommentarii k pis’imu Arkhiepiskopa Rizhskago i Latvijskago Ioanna Arkhiepiskopu Vilyenskomu i Litovskomu Elevferiu ot 2 noiabria 1927 g.” (Commentary on the Letter of Archbishop John of Riga and Latvia to Archbishop Eleutherios of Vilnius and Lithuania), Tserkovnaia Zhizn’ (Church Life), №№. 3-4, May-June-July-August, 1992, pp. 56-57 ©; Monk Benjamin, op. cit., p. 87.
843 K. Svitich, Pravoslavnaya Tserkov’ v Polshe i ee autokefalia (The Orthodox Church in Poland and its autocephaly); Monk Benjamin, op. cit., p. 133. For a more detailed account of the Polish autocephaly, see M. Zyzykin, “Avtokfalia i printsipy ee primenenia” (Autocephaly and the principles of its application), Prawoslavniiy Put’ (The Orthodox Way), 2004, pp. 101-133. A translation of the whole Tomos is to be found here: http://www.ukrainianorthodoxchurchinexile.org/1924_tomos_of_autocephaly.html.
Orthodoxy an act of violence, and they in their own way restored justice by means of violence, which, needless to say, elicited protests even from the Catholic and Uniate churches.

“The results of these measures of the Polish government were such that, for example, in the region of Kholm out of 393 Orthodox churches existing in 1914, by 1938 there remained 227, by 1939 – 176, and by the beginning of the war – 53 in all. Particularly disturbing was the fact that, of the cult buildings taken away from the Orthodox, 130 churches, 10 houses of prayer and 2 monasteries were simply destroyed.”

After the Soviet victory in the war, it was the turn of the Soviets and the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate to apply pressure. Towards the end of the war it was suggested to the uniate episcopate in Western Ukraine that it simply “liquidate itself”. When all five uniate bishops refused, in April, 1945, they were arrested. Within a month a clearly Soviet-inspired “initiative movement” for unification with the MP headed by Protopresbyter G. Kostelnikov appeared. By the spring of 1946 997 out of 1270 uniate priests in Western Ukraine had joined this movement. On March 8-10 a uniate council of clergy and laity meeting in Lvov voted to join the Orthodox church and annul the Brest unia with the Roman Catholic Church of 1596. Those uniates who rejected the council were forced underground. Similar liquidations of the uniate churches took place in Czechoslovakia and Romania... Central Committee documents show that the whole procedure was controlled by the first secretary of the Ukrainian party, Nikita Khruschev, who in all significant details sought the sanction of Stalin.

In August, 1948, Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw petitioned to be received into the MP, repenting of his “unlawful autocephaly”. In November, the MP granted this request, and gave the Polish Church autocephaly – again. However, because of his “sin of autocephaly”, Dionysius was not allowed to remain head of the Church. Another reason may have been his participation in the creation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church during the war. This decision remained in force despite a plea on Dionysius’ behalf by Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in February, 1950.

844 According to Monk Benjamin (op. cit., part 2, p. 73), in June and July of 1938 150 village churches visited by Ukrainian Orthodox were demolished. On July 16 the Polish Church issued a memorandum on the event, as did the MP on the same day. For further details of the persecution, see Daniulushkin, op. cit., 1997, vol. I, p. 588; K.N. Nikolaev “‘Unia’ i vostochnij obriad” (The ‘Unia’ and the Eastern Rite), Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 6 (1411), March 15/28, 1990. Among the buildings destroyed was the cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky (in 1927), and the Orthodox cathedrals in Liublin, Kalisha, Vlotslavka, Plotsk and Koltsy (Monk Benjamin, part 1, op. cit., p. 175).
845 V.I. Alexeyev, F. Stavrou, “Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ na Okkupirovannoj Nemtsami Territorii” (The Russian Orthodox Church on German-Occupied Territory), Russkoe Vozrozhdenie (Russian Regeneration), 1980 (IV), № 12, pp. 122-124.
846 M.V. Shkarovsky; Monk Benjamin, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 81.
847 M.V. Shkarovsky; Monk Benjamin, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 105-106.
848 Monk Benjamin, op. cit., part 3, pp. 138-139.
In 1951, at the Poles’ request, the MP appointed a new metropolitan for the Polish Church.850

From now on the Polish Orthodox Church returned to Moscow’s orbit. Metropolitan Savva of Poland, the present head of the Polish Church, was recruited by the Polish communist security forces in 1966, with the codename “Yurek”. Another Polish Church leader, Metropolitan Basil, was also an agent.851

**The Vatican and Soviet Russia**

How did the Vatican, Russia’s age-old enemy, react to the revolution? In reality, with joy, as being a wonderful missionary opportunity. However, since the Vatican had always opposed communism as well as Orthodoxy, it had to hide its joy at first….

On March 12, 1919 Pope Benedict XV sent Lenin a protest against the persecutions of the Orthodox clergy, while Archbishop Ropp sent Patriarch Tikhon a letter of sympathy. The Bolshevik Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin noted with dissatisfaction this “solidarity with the servers of the Orthodox Church”.852

In general, however, the attitude of the Vatican to Orthodoxy was hostile to the Orthodox. Thus Deacon Herman Ivanov-Trinadtsaty writes: “Pope Pius X (who was canonized in 1954) pronounced on the very eve of World War I, ‘Russia is the greatest enemy of the [Roman] Church.’ Therefore it is not surprising that the Roman Catholic world greeted the Bolshevik Revolution with joy. ‘After the Jews the Catholics did probably more than anyone else to organize the overthrow of tsarist power. At least they did nothing to stop it.’ Shamelessly and with great candour they wrote in Rome as soon as the Bolshevik ‘victory’ became evident: ‘there has been uncontainable pleasure over the fall of the tsarist government and Rome has not wasted any time in entering into negotiations with the Soviet government.’ When a leading Vatican dignitary was asked why the Vatican was against France during World War II, he exclaimed: ‘The victory of the Entente allied with Russia would have been as great a catastorphe for the Roman Catholic Church as the Reformation was.’ Pope Pius conveyed this feeling in his typically abrupt manner: ‘If Russia is victorious, then the schism is victorious.’…

“Even though the Vatican had long prepared for it, the collapse of the Orthodox Russian Empire caught it unawares. It very quickly came to its senses. The collapse of Russia did not yet mean that Russia could turn Roman Catholic. For this, a new plan of attack was needed. Realizing that it would be as difficult for a Pole to

850 Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 4, pp. 11-12.
852 Peter Sokolov, “$Put’$ Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v Rossii-SSSR (1917-1961)” (The Path of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia-USSR (1917-1961)), in *Russkaja Pravoslavnaja Tserkov’ v SSSR: Sbornik* (The Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR: A Collection), Munich, 1962, p. 16.
proselytise in Russia as for an Englishman in Ireland, the Vatican understood the necessity of finding a totally different method of battle with Orthodoxy, which would painlessly and without raising the slightest suspicion, ensnare and subordinate the Russian people to the Roman Pope. This Machiavellian scheme was the appearance of the so-called ‘Eastern Rite’, which its defenders understood as ‘the bridge by which Rome will enter Russia’, to quote an apt expression of K.N. Nikolaiev.

“This treacherous plot, which can be likened to a ship sailing under a false flag, had very rapid success in the first years after the establishment of Soviet power. This too place in blood-drenched Russia and abroad, where feverish activity was begun amongst the hapless émigrés, such as finding them work, putting their immigration status in order, and opening Russian-language schools for them and their children.

“It cannot be denied that there were cases of unmercenary help, but in the overwhelming majority of cases, this charitable work had a thinly disguised confessional goal, to lure by various means the unfortunate refugees into what seemed at first glance to be true Orthodox churches, but which at the same time commemorated the pope...

“In Russia the experiment with the ‘Eastern Rite’ lasted more than ten years... The heart and soul of the papal ‘Ostpolitik’, its eastern policies, was a Jesuit, the French Bishop d’Erbigny, who was specially authorized by the pope to conduct negotiations with the Kremlin for the wide dissemination of Roman Catholicism in the Soviet Union and by the same token the supplanting of Orthodoxy in Russia and in Russian souls.

“With this in mind, d’Erbigny travelled three times to the Soviet Union on a French diplomatic passport. He consecrated several Roman Catholic hierarchs with the aim of building up a group of Russian Catholic clergymen who would be acceptable to the Soviet authorities. Let us listen to the degree of open amorality that these clerics were capable of: ‘Bolshevism is liquidating priests, desecrating churches and holy places, and destroying monasteries. Is this not where the religious mission of irreligious Bolshevism lies, in the disappearance of the carriers of schismatic thought, as it were presenting a “clean table”, a tabula rasa, which gives us the possibility of spiritual recreation.’ For those to whom it is not clear just what kind of

853 In 1922 Hieromartyr Benjamin, Metropolitan of Petrograd said to Fyodorov: “You offer us unification... and all the while your Latin priests, behind our backs, are sowing ruin amongst our flock.” Nicholas Boyeikov writes: “In his epistle of 25 June, 1925, the locum tenens of the All-Russian Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, who suffered torture in Soviet exile, expressed himself on the ‘Eastern Rite’ as follows: ‘the Orthodox Christian Church has many enemies. Now they have increased their activity against Orthodoxy. The Catholics, by introducing the rites of our divine services, are seducing the believing people – especially those among the western churches which have been Orthodox since antiquity – into accepting the union, and by this means they are distracting the forces of the Orthodox Church from the more urgent struggle against unbelief’ (Tserkovnie Vedomosti (Church Gazette), 1925, №№ 21-22).” (Nikolaiev, Tserkov’, Rus’ i Rim (The Church, Russia and Rome), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, p. 13). (V.M.)
spiritual reconstruction the Benedictine monk Chrysostom Bayer is referring to, his thoughts can be amplified by the official ...Catholic journal, *Bayrischer Kurier*: ‘Bolshevism is creating the possibility of the conversion of stagnant Russia to Catholicism.’

“No one less than the exarch of the Russian Catholics, Leonid Fyodorov, when on trial in March of 1923 along with fourteen other clergymen and one layman, pathetically testified to the sincerity of his feelings in relation to the Soviet authorities, who, Fyodorov thought later, did not fully understand what could be expected from Roman Catholicism. He explained: ‘From the time that I gave myself to the Roman Catholic Church, my cherished dream has been to reconcile my homeland with this church, which for me is the only true one. But we were not understood by the government. All Latin Catholics heaved a sigh of relief when the October Revolution took place. I myself greeted with enthusiasm the decree on the separation of Church and State... Only under Soviet rule, when Church and State are separated, could we breathe freely. As a religious believer, I saw in this liberation the hand of God.

“Let us not lose sight of the fact that all these declarations by Roman Catholics, who were quite friendly with the Soviets, were pronounced during the nightmarish period when the Soviets were trying to eradicate the Orthodox Church. Keeping in mind that Vatican diplomacy adheres to the principle that the end justifies the means, which is illustrated throughout its centuries-old history, the game which the Vatican has been playing with Moscow should be clearly understood. The essence of the matter is that Russia has become a sacrifice to two principles hostile to it, Catholicism and godless communism, which are drawn together by a curious concurrence of interests. Moscow realizes that the eradication of faith from the Russian soul is a hopeless task. As long as the Russian Church remained faithful to itself, and uncompromising towards the godless power, courageously witnessing to the fundamental incompatibility between Christian and communist principles, the Soviet leaders were ready for two reasons to graciously study the variant of Roman Catholicism offered to them. By this means they hoped to manipulate the religiousness of the Russian soul.

“The first reason was Rome’s consistent, impeccable loyalty to the communist regime, both in the U.S.S.R. and outside it [until 1930]. Secondly, it was advantageous to the Kremlin, or simply entertaining, that the religious needs of the Russians should be satisfied by this centuries-old enemy of Orthodoxy. For their part, the Catholics were ready to close their eyes to all the atrocities of Bolshevism, including the shooting of the Roman Catholic Bishop Butkevich in April of 1923 and the imprisonment of Bishops Tseplyak, Malyetsky and Fyodorov. Six weeks later, the Vatican expressed its sorrow over the assassination of the Soviet agent Vorovsky in Lausanne! The People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs told the German Ambassador, ‘Pius XI was amiable to me in Genoa, expressing the hope that we [the Bolsheviks] would break the monopoly of the Orthodox Church in Russia, thus clearing a path for him.’
“We have discovered information of the greatest importance in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A secret telegram № 266 of February 6, 1925 from Berlin, stated that the Soviet ambassador, Krestinsky, told Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pius XII) that Moscow would not oppose the existence of Roman Catholic bishops and a metropolitan on Russian territory. Furthermore, the Roman clergy were offered the very best conditions. Six days later, secret telegram № 284 spoke of permission being granted for the opening of a Roman Catholic seminary. Thus, while our holy New Martyrs were being annihilated with incredible cruelty, the Vatican was conducting secret negotiations with Moscow. In short, Rome attempted to gain permission to appoint the necessary bishops and even permission to open a seminary. Our evidence shows that this question was discussed once more in high circles in the autumn of 1926. In all likelihood, it had not been satisfactorily settled earlier. This might be viewed as the culmination of the unnaturally close relations between the Vatican and the Soviet government.”

In July, 1927 the deputy leader of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Sergius wrote a notorious declaration, committing his church to cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Having broken Sergius, - but not the True Russian Church, which went underground, - the Bolsheviks no longer needed the Catholics. And so, as an “unexpected and indirect result” of the declaration, writes Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, “Moscow put an end to the negotiations and the attention it was devoting to Vatican offers... The restitution of the traditional [in appearance] Russian Orthodox Church, neutralized as it were, seemed more useful to the Soviet authorities than the Vatican. From then on, the Soviets lost interest in the Vatican. Only at the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 did the Vatican finally admit that it had suffered a political defeat and began vociferously to condemn the Bolshevik crimes. It had somehow not noticed them until 1930. Only in 1937 did Pope Pius XI release the encyclical Divini Redemptoris (Divine Redeemer), which denounced communism...”

The Impact of Ecumenism

In the early 1960s the relationship between the Vatican and Russia began to change. The Second Vatican Council introduced ecumenism into the Roman Catholic bloodstream, and the Orthodox were now “separated brethren” rather than schismatics and heretics. So the Popes were now willing to enter into friendly relations with the Orthodox – although whether this was simply the wolf putting on sheep’s clothing remained to be seen... As for the official Russian Orthodox Church, it was now a complete slave of the Bolsheviks. In 1948, at Stalin’s bidding, it had condemned ecumenism and the Roman Catholics. But now, under orders from the same KGB, it entered the World Council of Churches and sent observers to the Vatican Council. The aim, undoubtedly, was not ecclesiastical, but political: to infiltrate western church life with Soviet agents, and to influence western church gatherings in a pro-Soviet direction...

Soviet control of the Russian Orthodox Church, and its influence on the Vatican through the Russian hierarchs, was proved in January, 1992, when a Commission of the Presidium of the Russian Supreme Soviet investigating the causes and circumstances of the 1991 putsch, established that for several decades at least the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate had been KGB agents. Members of the commission obtained access to the records of the fourth, Church department of the KGB’s Fifth Directorate, and revealed that Metropolitans Juvenal of Krutitsa, Pitirim of Volokolamsk, Philaret of Kiev and Philaret of Minsk were all KGB agents, with the codenames “Adamant”, “Abbat”, “Antonov” and “Ostrovsky”.

But it was the Commission’s report on March 6 that contained the most shocking revelations: “KGB agents, using such aliases as Sviatoslav, Adamant, Mikhailov, Nesterovich, Ognev and others, made trips abroad, organised by the Russian Orthodox Department of External Relations [which was headed by the present patriarch, Cyril (Gundiaev], performing missions assigned to them by the leadership of the KGB. The nature of their missions shows that this department was inseparably linked with the state and that it had emerged as a covert centre of KGB agents among the faithful.” “The Commission draws the attention of the Russian Orthodox Church leadership to the fact that the Central Committee of the CPSU and KGB agencies have used a number of church bodies for their purposes by recruiting and planting KGB agents. Such deep infiltration by intelligence service agents into religious associations poses a serious threat to society and the State. Agencies that are called upon to ensure State security can thus exert uncontrolled impact on religious associations numbering millions of members, and through them on the situation at home and abroad.”855

The findings of the Commission included:- (i) the words of the head of the KGB Yury Andropov to the Central Committee sometime in the 1970s: “The organs of state security keep the contacts of the Vatican with the Russian Orthodox Church under control...”; (ii) “At the 6th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, the religious delegation from the USSR contained 47 (!) agents of the KGB, including religious authorities, clergy and technical personnel” (July, 1983); (iii) “The most important were the journeys of agents ‘Antonov’, ‘Ostrovsky’ and ‘Adamant’ to Italy for conversations with the Pope of Rome on the question of further relations between the Vatican and the Russian Orthodox Church, and in particular regarding the problems of the uniates” (1989).856

But the process of infiltration was not one-way: the Vatican also managed to get its agents into the highest reaches of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1992 the Pope said that he had two cardinals among the bishops in Russia.857 We now know that the most powerful Russian bishop in the 1970s, Metropolitan Nicodemus of Leningrad, was both a KGB agent with the nickname “Sviatoslav” and a secret...

857 Liudmilla Perepiolkina, Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 204.
Vatican bishop! This at first sight unlikely combination gains credibility from the
witness of Fr. Michael Havryliv, a Russian priest who was secretly received into the
Havryliv that Metropolitan Nicodemus [of Leningrad] was secretly a Catholic
bishop, recognized by Rome with jurisdiction from Pope Paul VI throughout Russia.
This assertion is not impossible – but neither is it entirely proved.

“On September 6 1975 Havryliv made a sacramental general Confession before
Metropolitan Nicodemus, who then accepted Havryliv’s monastic vows and
profession of Faith to the Apostolic See and the Pope of Rome. Kyr Nicodemus
commanded Havryliv to order his monastic life according to the Jesuit Constitutions,
and presented him with a copy of this document in Russian. This was all done
privately; four days later the Metropolitan tonsured Havryliv a monk. On 9 October
Kyr Nicodemus ordained Havryliv to the priesthood, without requiring the oaths
customary for Russian Orthodox candidates to Holy Orders.

“In 1977 Havryliv was reassigned to the Moscow Patriarchate’s archdiocese of
L’viv and Ternopil… In Havryliv’s final interview with Kyr Nicodemus, the
Metropolitan of Leningrad ‘blessed me and gave me instructions to keep my
Catholic convictions and do everything possible for the growth of the Catholic cause,
not only in Ukraine, but in Russia. The Metropolitan spoke of the practice of his
predecessors – and also asked me to be prudent.”

These words indicate the truth behind the mask of the Vatican’s ecumenism; and
the fact that Havryliv was reordained by Nicodemus show that Rome accepted
the sacraments of the Orthodox for only as long as it suited her. The Orthodox were,
according to Vatican II, not heretics, but “separated brethren”. However, the
“separated brethren” still had to return in repentance to their father, the Pope...

The intriguing question is: which master was Nicodemus really serving – the
Soviets or the Vatican? His pro-Soviet statements on the international stage were
notorious. But his love of Catholicism also seems to have been sincere. He completed
a massive master’s thesis on Pope John XXIII, the originator of Orthodox-Catholic
ecumenism, and in 1969 he engineered a decree establishing partial inter-
communion between Orthodox and Catholics in the Soviet Union. He himself gave
communion to Catholics in the Rossiicum in Rome. And in 1978 he died in Rome at
the feet of Pope John-Paul I, from whom he received the Catholic last rites – a
graphic symbol of the dangers posed by the too-close relationship of Russia’s

---

858 Serge Keleher, Passion and Resurrection – the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine, 1939-1989,
“the Catholic Journal Truth and Life published the memoirs of Miguel Arranz, in which this Jesuit,
who in Nicodemus’ time taught at the Leningrad Theological Academy, told, among other things,
that with Nicodemus’ blessing he celebrated ‘the Eastern Rite Liturgy’ in Nicodemus’ house church at
hierarchs to the Vatican… The career of Nicodemus is not merely of historical interest. He founded a school of theology, “Nikodimovshina”, and a close circle of disciples, that still controls the upper reaches of the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus both the former Patriarch Alexis II (Ridiger) and the present Patriarch Cyril (Gundiaev) were disciples of Nicodemus…

The Fall of Communism

Whatever the Vatican hoped to achieve through its policy of ecclesiastical détente with the Moscow Patriarchate, it must have known that it could achieve little as long as the Soviet regime remained in power and the restrictions on all religions remained in place. However, in the early 1980s the Polish Pope John-Paul II succeeded, with the help of the Polish trade union Solidarnost, in fatally weakening the communist regime in his native land; and when Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the whole of the Soviet power structure in Eastern Europe began to totter. The Vatican saw its chance, and began a more aggressive – although still outwardly “eirenical” and ecumenist – approach to Russia.

The Achilles’ heel of Soviet ecclesiastical diplomacy was the Western Ukraine, where Stalin had forcibly “converted” the majority uniate or Greek Catholic population into the Moscow Patriarchate at the council of Lvov in 1946. The uniates were Catholic through their submission to the Pope, but Orthodox in their ritual and historical ancestry. In other circumstances, they might have been happy to return to the Orthodoxy of their Fathers, from which the Poles had separated them at the false unia of Brest-Litovsk in 1596. However, Stalin’s heavy-handed approach to church unity had only alienated them even further from Orthodoxy and the Russians. At the same time, it was from the former uniate population of the Western Ukraine that the Moscow Patriarchate recruited a large proportion of its clergy (Stalin had killed most of the clergy in the other regions of the country in the previous thirty years).

Now when Gorbachev came to power, the uniates who had resisted absorption into the Moscow Patriarchate came out of their catacombs and began agitating for the legalization of their Church. They were supported, surprisingly, by the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, Constantine Kharchev, who insisted that local authorities keep the law in their dealings with believers and suggested the legalization of the uniates and the free election of bishops. This roused the patriarchate and members of the Ideology department of the Central Committee to complain about Kharchev to the Supreme Soviet, and he was removed in June, 1989.

The ferment in the Western Ukraine also motivated the Moscow hierarchs to refuse the request of Pope John Paul II to attend the festivities commemorating the millennium of the Baptism of Russia by St. Vladimir of Kiev in 1988. The Pope pointed out, correctly, that in 988 there had been no schism between Eastern and

Western Christianity, so his attendance was natural, especially in the contemporary climate of inter-Christian ecumenism. But Moscow feared that the Pope’s visit would elicit a stampede of conversions from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, not only in the Western Ukraine, but also in the heartland of Russia. Not the least of the attractions of Catholicism for many Russians, especially intellectuals, was the fact that the Pope was clearly an independent hierarch, whereas the Moscow hierarchs were “KGB agents in cassocks”, completely dependent on the whims of their communist bosses. Ecumenism was all very well, but it could not be allowed to undermine the power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!

However, the tide of liberalization could not be stopped, and in January, 1990, just after Gorbachev met the Pope in Rome in order to try and stem the tide, the uniates finally achieved legalization for their church. Moreover, even before they had recovered their freedom in law, the uniates started taking over churches in Western Ukraine which they considered to be theirs by right. By December, 1991, 2167 nominally Orthodox parishes had joined the Uniates.

Deprived of the help of the local authorities, who showed every sign of being on the side of the uniates, and discredited by its associations with communism, the Moscow Patriarchate seemed helpless to stop the rot. One reason for this was that for many years the patriarchate had been teaching its seminarians, a large proportion of whom came from the Western Ukraine, that the Orthodox and the Catholics were “sister churches”. 60% of those who joined the uniates were graduates of the Leningrad theological schools founded by that KGB Agent, Orthodox Metropolitan and Catholic bishop, Nicodemus...

This represented the second major diplomatic triumph of the Vatican in the communist bloc (after the legalization of Solidarnost in Poland) and the beginning of the re-establishment of Catholic power in Russia...

When the red flag came down for the last time from over the Kremlin in December, 1991, the way seemed open for a repeat of the Catholic conquest of Moscow in the early seventeenth century, spearheaded once again by a Pole... But then something unexpected happened. Along with the Jesuits and the Freemasons and the Protestant missionaries, there also came into Russia from the West the Russian Church Abroad, the so-called “White Russian” Church. This Church had long been a thorn in the side of the Moscow Patriarchate. Fiercely anti-communist, it was also anti-ecumenist and anti-Catholic. And although the numbers of its adherents in Russia remained small, and its attempt to unseat and replace the Moscow Patriarchate failed, its ideological influence continued to increase throughout the 1990s. Anti-ecumenism and anti-Catholicism grew in Russia, and even found adherents among the hierarchy. True, the patriarchate remained in the World Council of Churches, and ecumenist meetings with leading Catholics continued – but the Pope was still not invited to Moscow...
When KGB Colonel Putin came to power in 2000, he acted swiftly to stop the ideological rot. He summoned the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad to settle their differences, and in 2007, by dint of various forms of persuasion and blackmail, the Russian Church Abroad surrendered and joined the patriarchate. Now only a few “True Orthodox” Churches remained in Russia to contest the ecclesiastical consensus – and in 2009 the largest of these, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, was neutralized and its churches confiscated.

It would seem that the final victory of the “Red Church” is now assured. And yet... it is now not at all clear what the “Red Church” stands for. Is it for the anti-ecumenism and anti-Catholicism of Stalinist times, and the nationalism of the Russian Church Abroad? Perhaps; for Putin is a great admirer of Stalin, and paranoically anti-western. Or does it wish to continue the ecumenist and pro-Catholic policies of the 1960s to early 1980s? Perhaps; for Putin, as one who worked in the Fifth Department of the KGB, is well familiar with this aspect of Soviet diplomacy, and values the power that infiltration of western ecclesiastical institutions and media gives him.860 One thing only is certain: that Russian ecclesiastical policy is as firmly determined by the secular authorities now as it was in Soviet times...

One factor working against the pro-Catholic line is the situation in the Ukraine. Since acquiring political independence, the Ukraine has moved further away from Moscow in Church matters also; both the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch, who is seen as an American agent, have made major inroads there. But Putin and Patriarch Cyril desperately want to keep the Ukraine out of the western orbit...

The Fatima Phenomenon

In this context, it will be useful to take a brief look at what we may call “the Fatima phenomenon”. In 1917, on the thirteenth day of the month for six months the Virgin Mary supposedly appeared to three shepherd girls in Fatima, Portugal, the first appearance being on May 13. The girls were entrusted with “three secrets”, the second of which is the most important. This supposedly revealed that, in order to avoid terrible calamities in the world and the persecution of the Catholic Church, the Virgin will ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. If her request is granted, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace. If not, then she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. “The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”861

860 During a visit to the Vatican in 2007, Putin pledged that his government would “do all it can to favour dialogue between the two churches” (Victor Gaetan, “The Church Undivided”, Foreign Affairs, May-June, 2013, p. 124).
Now from the point of view of the Orthodox Saints and Holy Fathers (and even of some of the Catholic “saints”, such as John of the Cross), these visions and revelations are clear examples of demonic deception and not to be trusted. In May, 1917 it was not difficult to see that Russia was descending into chaos, and the devil used the opportunity to try and persuade people that the chaos could be averted only through the submission of Russia to his tool, the Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, the Vatican seized on these “revelations” and in 1930 pronounced them worthy of trust; and every Pope since then has been committed to belief in the Fatima phenomenon.

However, this poses a major problem for the present ecumenist policies of the Vatican. For Orthodox-Catholic ecumenism presupposes that the two Churches are – in the words of the Balamand agreement of 1994 – “the two lungs” of the single Body of Christ. Such a formulation is incompatible with the idea that Russia has to be “converted” - for it implies she is converted already, if not to Catholicism, at any rate to a sister Church of roughly equal status. The anathemas between the two Churches were supposedly lifted in 1964 by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, and concelebration between hierarchs of the two Churches at the highest level has already taken place. Nor is there any reason why Russia should be “consecrated” to the Mother of God, since she has called herself the House of the Mother of God for centuries. And if reconsecration is necessary (although the Orthodox prefer the word “repentance”), then she has her own hierarchs to lead the way… Perhaps in view of these difficulties, no Pope has yet specifically consecrated Russia. In fact, when Pope John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984 he specifically acknowledged that this was not the consecration of Russia.

But this has aroused the wrath of the Fatima fanatics, otherwise known as the Blue Army. Thus one of their leaders, Fr. Nicholas Gruner, writes: “God asked for the consecration of a specific country - Russia. Now, centuries ago, Russia was known as Holy Mother Russia. It had been, so to speak, consecrated to God, but the Catholics of that country fell into schism not so much directly but through the bishops – between them and Rome. The Catholics of Constantinople fell into schism in 1054 and people from Russia followed suit over time. They have been separated from the True Church ever since. Also, Russia was, in a sense, ‘consecrated’ to the devil in 1917 to be the instrument of atheistic Communism and its worldwide war against God; to deny God’s existence, to fight God in every way.

“Thus God calls for a public reparation, a solemn ceremony by the Pope and the bishops of the world consecrating Russia to the Immaculate Heart – to call people back to the service of God.”862

Another Fatima fanatic, Atila Sinke Guimaraes, writes: “From 1917 until today, the schismatic Russian Church has not changed any of its erroneous doctrines on the

---

Holy Trinity, Papal infallibility, and the immaculate Conception of Mary. It also sustains the same spirit of arrogance towards Rome that it has held for the last 1,000 years”.

Now it will be immediately apparent that this is the old-fashioned, pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism speaking. The modern, ecumenist Vatican would never say that Russia has “separated from the True Church” or that it was “schismatic”. Such language would ruin its ecumenist diplomacy with the Moscow Patriarchate. Of course, in his heart the present Pope may think like the Fatima fanatics, and in practice the Vatican allows this old-fashioned kind of thinking to coexist with the newer spirit of ecumenism. But the fact is that the cult of the Fatima phenomenon and the Vatican’s present ecumenist strategy in relation to Russia are incompatible – which may explain the tensions between the Fatima fanatics and the Pope over the “Third Secret” and other questions...

So there are tensions between ecumenist and anti-ecumenist forces in both Roman Catholicism and the Moscow Patriarchate. However, in spite of that, there are signs that both the pope and the patriarch are pushing forward the ecumenical agenda with renewed vigour. If newspaper reports are to be believed, a visit of the Pope to Russia is imminent…

**Conclusion**

The conclusion, then, must be that Russia is in as imminent danger of being drawn into a unia with the Vatican as it was four hundred years ago. Indeed, the danger is probably greater now for the simple reason that the leaders of the Russian Church are as compromised in their own way as the papacy itself, and can therefore offer far less effective opposition to the threat than the dying Patriarch Hermogen was able to produce from his freezing Kremlin prison. The National Bolshevism (disguised under the slogan of “Sovereign Democracy”) of the neo-Soviet Russian State cannot help – one cannot drive out one demon by employing another, hardly less wicked one. The only hope for the Russians is to begin to repent at last of their apostasy from God since 1917, and to purify themselves by returning to the undefiled truth of the Holy Orthodox Faith. Then, and only then, will a true leader emerge who, like Moses, will use God’s own weapons to drown the spiritual Pharaoh threatening it from the West...

*April 17/30, 2010; revised May 9/22, 2013.*

---