

Swinging Pendulum: Church-State Relations in Russia

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Abstract

The relationship between Church and State in Russia is an ongoing and dynamic process. This thesis is a study of that process. It begins by outlining various theoretical approaches, reviews the relevant history of this relationship, and then attempts a characterization of the present dynamics between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state. The political and social consequences of these dynamics are then assessed using two different case studies. The thesis then concludes that the roles of tradition and history are important elements in determining the actions within the political arena and both tradition and alliances are cards that are played in order to gain legitimacy, by both the state and the Church. The methodology of this thesis was strongly based on a literature review. It is an independent application of the theoretical models of Church-state relations in the context of Russia.

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Introduction

The history of Russia is unlike that of any other nation in the modern world. Church-state relations in Russia are also unique in both their development and the way in which they manifest themselves to both Russian society and to the world. Like any other relationship, the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and state has been formulated through a process that has occurred over time. The purpose of this thesis is to look at that relationship and at the process through which it has acquired its determining characteristics, which we currently find in Russia.

The role of religion in society is not a new debate, although it seems that it is becoming a more noticeable dialogue on the public stage. Given the claim of moral disintegration in modern society, what role religion plays, and whether it should play any role at all is more relevant today than ever before. This thesis is a direct link to that dialogue. The relationship between Church and state is a modern and politically volatile debate, in Russia and elsewhere in the world. This thesis will examine the degree to which theoretical models on Church-state relations can inform our understanding of contemporary Russia.

This research was addressed through an extensive literature review of the theoretical models of Church and state relations, the relevant history of Russia, and current representations of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state. Through the literature review an ethnohistory of

Church-state relations is developed which provides information for the practical application of the theory to current dynamics between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state, as well as an analysis of two case studies that allude to the theoretical model that most appropriately defines the current relationship.

The first chapter of this thesis delves into the theoretical models of relationships that have been developed to describe Church-state relations. Specifically, three models are discussed: *complete separation* (also known as *secularization*), *weak establishment*, and *symphonia*. These three models were chosen for analysis as they, for the purposes of this thesis, represent points on an arc connecting varying political and religious sentiments. The idea of *symphonia* is hard for some people to comprehend, especially those resident in North America where Church and state are kept relatively separate and where states embrace the philosophy of Church and state separation. Outside the Western tradition, however, *symphonia* is a more established practice, especially in the Orthodox world.

The second chapter discusses the history of Russia and passes through many centuries in order to give the reader an understanding of the foundation on which the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and state in Russia developed. The reader will note that this relationship goes through many extreme changes throughout the history of Imperial Russia and later, through the history of the Soviet Union. This chapter concludes with the beginning of the

end of the Soviet Union in 1988. The year 1988 is a natural break as the changes of *glasnost* and *perestroika* under Gorbachev begin to fall into place.

Chapter Three continues the saga through the last years of the Soviet Union, from 1988 to 1991. This period was a time of great change in both the Church and the state, which are not independent from one another. This period presented an opportunity to reinvent the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet state. The Church used this time to re-establish itself in the minds of Russians while the state struggled to institutionalize Gorbachev's seemingly liberal reforms of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

Chapter Four begins with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and continues up until 2005. The chapter covers the extensive changes that occurred in the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the new Russian Federation, and follows the link between that relationship and the perception and value of the Church in Russian society. While the Soviet ideology crashed down around them, people looked to the Church to fill the void.

The next chapter includes two case studies which outline the influence that the Russian Orthodox Church has had over the state. This period, during the 1990s, is unique in that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church feels the pressure of the presence of foreign religions to a much larger extent than in the past. As well, society is adapting to the influence from the West and the new found freedoms of self expression and ideology. This period may be a time for the formation of "modern" relations between the new

Russian state and the Church. It is also a test of the boundaries for the Russian Orthodox Church in the public sphere.

The final chapter of this thesis summarizes the conclusions drawn on the development and current reality of Church-state relations in Russia. This thesis does not aim to resolve the issues of Church-state relations in Russia, nor suggest which theoretical approach would be best applied to the Church, state and society in Russia. However, it does aim to give a solid synopsis of where relations between the Church and state in Russia have been, some explanation as to why current relations are such that they are, and what might be expected in the future.

Chapter One

Political Theory

The history of Church-state relations can be likened to the movement of a pendulum on an arc – from one extreme to another and everywhere in between. This arc encompasses an extremely wide variety of points and perspectives concerning the role of religion in society, the relevance of Churches within a polity, and also the role of the state itself. All these points and perspectives are more than abstract notions and theoretical arguments, and are manifested in public and private discourse around the world as citizens and communities engage in the ongoing contest of ideas. Debates concerning the role of religion and the relationship between Church and state may be fuelled by a variety of other concerns, such as a perceived decline of morality, a nationalist resurgence, or the secularization of society that often accompanies liberal democracy. In post-Soviet Russia, such debates take on special significance.

Most western states pride themselves on keeping the Church relatively separate from the state and religious belief is considered to be a private matter. Within most Muslim societies however, the Church and state are not separate at all and the political systems under Islamic law can be described as theocracies. Islamic law is the law of all and controls all public and private matters. Government and religion are one. Thus, in the contemporary world, we can find the secularism of the West and the theocracy of Islam as well as many variations

of models that lie between. In addition to these variations over space, we also find variations over time: for example, Iran of the 1960s had a different relationship between Church and state than we find today. All nations experience a fluctuation in Church-state relations. These fluctuations are more dramatic in some nations than others. The aim of this thesis is to examine this foundation in the Russian Federation and its predecessors, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union.

In the Bible, Matthew 22:21, Jesus states "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". This was interpreted in different ways, but by many Christians it was taken to mean that the two powers should be balanced, yet distinct and autonomous in their own spheres. Occasionally these lines were blurred, sometimes by design, sometimes by default. During the Middle Ages in Christian Europe, for example, the Church was the only institution that provided education to individuals who, upon completion, received secular administrative positions within each kingdom. In 1534 Henry VIII established a state Church with the Act of Supremacy - the Church of England. With this, power shifted from the Church over the state to the state over the Church. The Protestant Reformation changed the structure of power to one in which the state rose over the Church, and the relationship became that of "two swords."¹ Even at this time, however, there

¹ S.L. Jenkinson, "Church and State" in David Miller, et al, eds., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 69- 70.

was discussion regarding whether or not the separation of Church and state was good for society: "Could a Christian justify a state at all in which a secular sovereign rather than a religious leader decided what was right or wrong?"² Within the writings of Hobbes' *Leviathan* the two swords, as an ideal model of Church-state relations, were replaced by a single secular ruler of both the state and Church. In practice, relationships between Church and state continued to oscillate across time and space, but the primary agent in Church-state relations in the West, after the reformation, was the state. And so, in most of the Western societies, the Church has progressed or regressed, depending on one's position, from being a ruler, to a partner, to an agent, to being a voluntary body responsible for moral education.³

On the one hand, the degree to which the state is kept separate from the Church has been variably maintained over the centuries in most of the Western states that are secularized. On the other hand, the debate on the exact role of the Church in Western society has continued. Three primary models to describe Church and state relations have emerged. These three models each have their own strengths and weaknesses and are primarily descriptive, rather than prescriptive. Since each model also represents a political relationship however, each model leads to consequences for society and the state. This debate will also be studied here.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The three models that reflect Church-state relations which will be discussed here are: *complete separation*, in support of keeping the state secular; *symphonia*⁴, which has the Church and state working together in partnership; and *weak-establishment*, which is the middle ground in which there is some consultation between each.⁵ Veit Bader would add two other possibilities: constitutional pluralism and unconstitutional pluralism – both of which will be discussed in greater detail later.⁶ Of course, it would be simpler if politics were this black and white, but the real world of politics is a much more complex. Church-state relations can also fall anywhere in between. As more countries encounter the diversity of faiths (or lack of faith, as the case may be), there is an ongoing debate as to the role of religion and the Church in the political sphere. An example close to home comes to mind: the former president of the Canadian Society of Muslims has advocated for the right to punish Muslims who convert to other faiths.⁷ While this conflicts with constitutional rights given in Canada by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, advocates for the imposition of *Shar'iah Law* in Canada argue that religious law should transcend constitutional rights.

4 Zoe Knox, "The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate's Post-Soviet Leadership" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 55, No.4 (2003): 575-596.

5 Tariq Modood, "Introduction: Establishment, Reform and Multiculturalism" in Tariq Modood, ed., *Church, State and Religious Minorities*, (England, Policy Studies Institute, 1997), 3 – 15.

6 Veit Bader, "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?" *Political Theory* 27, no. 5 (October 1999): 597 – 633.

7 To leave Islam is one of the *Hadd* crimes, considered to be the most serious crimes, and is punishable under the *Qur'an*. The punishment for this crime is not negotiable as it is written specifically in the *Qur'an*. More liberal followers do not consider apostasy from Islam a *Hadd* crime, but a lesser crime under *Tazir* (information from the Canadian Society of Muslims web site http://muslim-canada.org/Islam_myths.htm).

The first model for Church-state relations presented here is *complete separation*. A primarily secular society supports a separation between Church and state. The proponents for a secular state believe that the only way to prevent religious underpinnings in the general fibre of public decision-making is to create "walls of separation" between Church and state. To support a secular state is to believe that ethics are innate in human nature, not contrived, and do not need to be supported by religious law. Religion is not necessary to establish the ethical fibre of society, and in fact, it is better kept out of the political realm altogether since it favours those who follow a given system of beliefs, those of the dominant religion of society, and infringes upon the rights and liberties of those who do not embrace those beliefs. That is not to say, however, that personal religious beliefs do not influence political decision-making, as can be seen with the second Bush administration in the United States. Those who advocate complete separation presuppose a neutral state, which favours no one faith or group. Religion, it follows, is a private affair. This secular position is strongly supported by Robert Audi and Stephen Macedo.⁸

Macedo argues for liberalism. Essentially, he advocates the separation of Church and state and notes, "politics should respect religious freedom."⁹ There are, however, a few serious objections to this position. Bader, for one, would

⁸ Robert Audi, "The separation of Church and State and the obligation of the citizenship" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 18 (1989): 259 - 296. Audi represents the most extremist view of a secular State, whereas Macedo is more of a moderate secularist.

⁹ Stephen Macedo, "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism" *Political Theory* Vol. 26, No. 1 (February 1998): 56 - 80.

argue that a neutral state does not exist and that the attainment of one is a utopian dream. He continues to argue that the state cannot have "difference blindness"¹⁰ but must try to cultivate a respect for those differences, as well as a certain level of sensitivity. Macedo admits that liberalism is dependent on religious beliefs in order to have sustainable liberal political order. Tolerance, for example, one of the main facets of liberalism, is seen by many as a religious virtue. But Macedo also argues that while religions can flourish in a liberal society, they need to be the "right sort" of religions to thrive. It is not just politics, however, that need to be shielded from conservative religious movements, but that "separation serves to protect our politics from sectarian religious interventions and also to protect religion from the worldly influence of politics."¹¹

Secondly, in a realm that supports the secular voices and relies on the neutrality of the law, where are the voices of religion? A concern of religious groups is that without a religious voice in public affairs the morality of society is based, at least publicly, on secular ideology. In a secular state, religious life is private and people are free to practise their religion behind closed doors and out of the public sphere. But why should the separation of Church and state lead to the separation of religion and politics where religious beliefs are relegated to the

¹⁰ "Difference blindness" is to make the assumption that a group is homogenous, in regards to this discussion, homogenous in religious beliefs.

¹¹ Macedo, 75.

private sector and nearly banished from the public square, having limited influence in secular states?

Such concerns are raised by proponents of separation. Robert Audi, for example, states that the state and Church should be separate in a "free and democratic society,"¹² although he is not deaf to the voices of religion. He feels that people should be free to practice whatever religion they like, as long as it falls within the proper human rights standards, a rule he describes as the *libertarian principle*. He argues that there should be no preference for any religion – known as the *equalitarian principle*; and finally, there should be no preference for religious institutions, what he describes as the *neutrality principle*. As to the role of religion in the public sphere, Audi believes that religious groups should not show favouritism towards any specific candidate or any public policy, especially when that policy is linked to a specific political party – something he cites as an "institutional principle of neutrality."¹³ Audi's other principles include an "individual principle of political neutrality"¹⁴ which applies specifically to clergy, as well as the "principle of conscience,"¹⁵ which applies to any individual. The latter principle states that people should not fight for limits on individual freedoms without a sound *secular* reason. Audi states that sound secular reasoning would "not depend on the existence of God."¹⁶ Other

¹²Audi, 261.

¹³ Audi, 274.

¹⁴ Audi, 277.

¹⁵ Audi, 278.

¹⁶ Audi, 278.

principles that Audi outlines in support of the separation of Church and state include:

- i) principle of secular rationale,
- ii) principle of secular advocacy in which religion is kept entirely out of the public debate,
- iii) principle of secular resolution whereby policy decisions should only be made through secular considerations,
- iv) principle of secular motivation¹⁷, an individual should only be motivated by secular reason in the public sphere.¹⁸

Audi's main argument for separation is that one person, in the public sphere, should not oppose the actions of another on the basis of religious beliefs. Audi believes that an individual can be moral without being religious, as "moral truths do not depend on religious ones."¹⁹ Audi finally argues that separation is good for pluralism, or a multi-faith society, as there is no need for competing religious beliefs on public issues, such as abortion or capital punishment. He also states that despite differences in religious beliefs, a core moral order can be agreed upon that is not dependent on one religious faith. His final note on the subject is stated thusly,

But a free society must still constantly respect, and, in some cases, legally guarantee, principles of separation of Church and state. We are prone to extremes in the service of our holy causes. Conflicting secular ideas, even when firmly held, can often be blended and harmonized in the crucible of

¹⁷ Within this principle Audi also differentiates between: "principle of essential secular motivation", an individual must be motivated primarily by secular reasons, not by religious beliefs. (Audi States this as "secular reason must be necessary for one's actions rather than just sufficient") and "principle of partial secular motivation", or the principle that secular reason must be some part of an individual's motivation.

¹⁸ Audi, 279 - 286.

¹⁹ Audi, 292.

free discussion; but a clash of gods is like a meeting of an irresistible force with an immovable object.²⁰

An opposing viewpoint is given by Richard Neuhaus. According to Neuhaus, the removal of religion from public life creates the "naked public square."²¹ The state is expected to fill the void that is left from the removal of religion and to do so creates a civil religion. The "burden [is] on [the] law to act religiously without being suspected of committing religion," creating a secular humanism. Neuhaus further argues that religion is the foundation for the perpetuation of the traditions of society. Society cannot be separated from the state without the delegitimization of the state - to have a state with no religion, or vice versa, is to head down the road to totalitarianism because no other actors are in the arena to keep the state, or the Church, in check. Morality is created by the state and is not faith-based or, religiously based. The state becomes the religion. Neuhaus proposes that the state is just one actor among many, all of whom work together for society while maintaining their independence from each other, religion being one of those actors. In all, Neuhaus does not support a completely secular state and supports a pluralist society in which there are a multitude of actors and institutions, including religion, all working in cooperation and competition, in order to further the process of democracy.

The second model for Church-state relations to be discussed here is that of *weak establishment*. In this relationship there is a flexible link between the state

²⁰ Audi, 296.

and religion, and while there may be one Church of the majority that may have more access to the state, essentially all religions have access. One advocate for this model is Veit Bader. Bader disagrees that complete separation is the best thing for society, and in fact states that some of the main arguments for complete separation, neutrality being one, is impossible to achieve. In his article "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy" Bader poses two questions: does religious freedom and equal treatment of religions require disestablishment of religion, and does political equality require complete separation? In Bader's view, liberal philosophers "believe that... values of freedom, equality and toleration are best preserved if religion is removed from public affairs."²²

Among these "liberal philosophers," Bader targets Audi. Bader argues that in the real world, states are not neutral and that distinctions used so freely by liberal thinkers, such as public - private and social - political, are never as clear as they would have one believe. Bader even goes so far as to state that a separation of religion from the public - political sphere may be a disadvantage to society because not all voices are being heard and the view that religion is a threat to political stability is outdated. "It is possible for a state not to have an established Church, but the state cannot help but give partial establishment to a culture".²³ Despite the best efforts of a state to be neutral, it will always bow to

²¹ Richard John Neuhaus, "The Vulnerability of the Naked Square" in *Good Order: Right Answers to Contemporary Questions*, ed. Brad Miner (New York, NY, Touchstone, 1995): 58 - 77.

²² Veit Bader, "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?" *Political Theory* 27, no. 5 (October 1999): 598.

²³ Bader, 603.

whatever culture is dominant at the moment, regardless of whether it is based on religion or not. In Audi's argument, secular philosophy is preferred over religious. Further, the dichotomy between faith and religion should be distinguished in that religion is more institutional, whereas faith is linked to belief patterns and culture that may not necessarily be aligned with any institution.

To emphasize this "myth of neutrality," Bader uses the case point of the United States – one of the first modern states to constitutionalize a separation of Church and state. One does not need to look too deeply into American culture to see how saturated everyday things are with Christian undertones: the phrase "In God We Trust" on the U.S. currency is a prime example. Bader supports discarding the "separation metaphor" for four reasons:

1. it deflects attention from more fundamental principles (e.g. liberty, equality, tolerance) that undergird the two clauses²⁴,
2. it conceptualizes Church-state relations in singular and monolithic terms,
3. it conceals the variety of ways in which Church and state interact, and
4. it constrains our ability to imagine new possibilities for their relation.²⁵

His position is that it should not matter whether a state is secular or religious, but whether its system is compatible with democratic constitutionalism and whether, if the state is religious, the particular religion respects democratic constitutionalism. As mentioned earlier, Bader maintains that the state should

²⁴ These clauses refer to the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

aim for a “difference-sensitivity” as opposed to “difference blindness” and should view “fairness as even-handedness”. It should be emphasized that ignoring the differences within a society does not make a state neutral in its decision-making, but that a state should focus more on being acutely aware of those differences and on making policy-decisions that would treat all fairly.

The guiding idea of even-handedness is that what fairness entails is a sensitive balancing of competing claims for recognition and support in matters of culture and identity. Instead of trying to abstract from particularity, we should embrace it, but in a way that is fair to all the different particularities. Now being fair does not mean that every cultural claim and identity will be given equal weight, but rather that each will be given appropriate weight under the circumstances and given a commitment to equal respect for all. History matters, numbers matter, the relative importance of the claim to those who present it matters, and so do many other considerations.²⁶

Firstly, Bader argues that separation does not guarantee equal treatment of different faiths and in fact, secularism closes the doors on those of faith:

The secular mode is merely another point on the spectrum of religious expression, but one which has no understanding of and which makes no allowance for, other modes of religious expression... Just how do we organize ourselves so that the many voices can be heard, so that one dominant culture doesn't impose itself on us all?²⁷

Bader sees secularism as one voice among the many, and not the only road to liberalism and democracy.

Bader argues that the state maintaining a secular morality is misleading, as it assumes that all secular thought is compatible with democracy; a secular state discriminates against religious supporters of liberal democracy; and it

²⁵ Bader, 607.

creates an 'us versus them' mentality and paints all followers of religion with the same bleak brush of anti-freedom and anti-tolerance. Instead, Bader advocates a "priority for democracy" since the truths of the secular, or the religious citizens, or any other voice, are merely the "truths [that] are no more than opinions among others"²⁸. In Bader's mind, as opposed to Audi, the only important ideology for the state is democracy, and any argument that is compatible with this, whether secular or religious, should be welcomed in the public sphere. Conversely, the state should not look for consensus but look for ways to live with differences, including religious differences, in the public sphere as well as disagreements, as that is the basis of democracy. Finally, Bader supports the notion that the dichotomy of separation and strong establishment should be expanded to include weak establishment, and constitutional pluralism, which institutionalizes pluralism in a formal manner. The relationship that Bader favours is non-constitutional pluralism. While Bader does not give descriptions of these three models for Church-state relations, it could be understood that weak establishment is a relationship in which religion is included within political dialogue and constitutional pluralism is a relationship in which pluralism of religion and ideas are formally written into the laws of the country. Non-constitutional pluralism is the relation in which pluralism is not formalized by the constitution but is innate in the workings of society. In other words,

²⁶ Bader, 608.

²⁷ Bader, 609.

²⁸ Bader, 614.

pluralism takes the role of being a bottom-up philosophy as opposed to a top-down imposition.

While allowing more voices than Audi's, the problem with Bader's analysis is that he gives no basis for implementation of his ideology and acknowledges that the idea of implementing non-constitutional pluralism needs to be researched further. Who determines which religious beliefs are compatible with democracy? There are some who would argue that the Islamic faith is not conducive to equality for all, especially women. Perhaps Bader is only arguing for the political floor to be opened up to religious faith. Audi, I think, would argue that this would be a slippery slope into a strong Church-state relationship with the dominant faith that would ignore minority faiths and the secular. If Bader's argument is that each faction is weighted with "even-handedness", then does it not follow that a dominant faith (Protestantism among many countries in the West) will have the majority voice to implement policy, which may not be conducive to the freedom of all? A recent political debate within Canada comes to mind, that of same-sex marriage legislation. Many Christian groups, as well as others, vehemently oppose this legislation. How can religious opinions be taken into account if they disagree with secular policy? Can the state find the healthy balance between secular and strong religious establishment? And once found, can a balance be maintained?

The third model of Church-state relations to be discussed here is often ignored in Western literature. *Symphonia*, as discussed by Zoe Knox in "The

Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate's Post-Soviet Leadership", is at the opposite end of the spectrum from separation. *Symphonia* represents a strong link between Church and state and views the Church as the backbone to the ethical framework of a nation. In essence, the two institutions work "in concert" with each other. In order for the state to perform its duties properly, it must be in consultation with the Church and the Church must be part of the political sphere. Each body has influence over the other. This relationship grants privilege to one majority faith over other religions. This is not to say that there is persecution of other faiths: Pluralism may be nominally equal in theory; however, in practice, some are more equal than others. As in Bader's argument, history, numbers, and other considerations are given to each faith. When there is an establishment of a Church, where the state has a close relationship with one Church, what are the implications for the non-majority faiths? Where is the voice of the secular?

Symphonia emphasizes the importance of history and traditions. It also gives society a sense of unity and identity, especially in public life. *Symphonia* gives clear support to morality and ethics within public life and education through the Church. It recognizes the importance of the Church in the formation of nations and states and gives a conscience and accountability to the state and to society. Bhiku Parekh notes that:

Religion provides a valuable counterweight to the state... Just as we need opposition parties to check the government of the day, we need powerful non-state institutions to check the statist manner of thinking, including the

glorification of the state. If religion is prone to the vice of fundamentalism, the state is prone to the equally undesirable evil of nationalism.²⁹

However, *symphonia* also holds the danger of violating individual rights to freedom of conscience and does not appear to be conducive to religious pluralism. Further, *symphonia* often relies on the *mythos* of religion – those ideas that give understanding and meaning to people's day-to-day lives, helping people focus on the eternal and universal. In most Western societies, people rely more on the *logos* – the scientific reasoning and logic of understanding the world – than *mythos*. Within the context of *symphonia*, the Church supports the state implementing social policies and public decision-making that coincides with religious virtues and ideology. However, the cost of this relationship is heavy. How do Church and state achieve *symphonia* without violating principles of individual rights and introducing excessive state influence on religious groups? Is a strong established Church-state relationship the best system for a diverse and pluralist society? At what point do boundaries get defined regarding Church influence on the state? Can there be an unbiased justice where there is such a strong influence of religion? Some would argue that a strong established Church-state might not even be the best thing for the Church.

The three positions outlined here can be seen as points on an arc linking political and religious sentiment. The strengths and weaknesses of each are

²⁹ Bhiku Parekh "Religion and Public Life" in *Church, State and Religious Minorities*, (London: land: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), pp. 16-23. Quote on p. 21.

outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Three models for Church-state relations

	Morality	Strengths	Weaknesses	Examples
Complete Separation (Secularism)	State Law defines morality	i) Little or no religious influence on state ii) No state involvement in Church iii) Supportive of religious pluralism iv) Supportive of individual rights	i) Voice of religion excluded from public square. ii) Limits moral actors. iii) Ignores tradition	i) Soviet Union – the philosophy of the state became the religion of Soviet society, leaving a void in the lives of people when that philosophy collapsed. ii) Canada – when controversial legislation is brought up for debate, such as the same-sex marriage legislation, religious voices are heard but individual rights come first.
Weak Establishment	Religion has some influence over state law and morality	i) Supportive of religious pluralism ii) No pronounced role for majority religion.	i) How to maintain equality between faiths? ii) State decision-making vulnerable to the religious beliefs of those holding office.	USA – while the US was the first to constitutionalize secularism, it is in fact not a secular state. Those who hold office impart religious influence on the state. For example, President Bush is far more prone to use religious judgement in his office than was President Clinton.
Symphonia	Religion defines morality	i) Focus on tradition ii) Acknowledgement of role of religion in formation of society iii) Provides unity and identity	i) Not supportive of religious pluralism. ii) Lesser role for secular voice. iii) Increase in bureaucracy for state and Church iii) State involvement in Church affairs iv) Not supportive of individual right to choose.	Islam – Within Muslim nations the Church and the state cannot be separated. State laws are based on religious texts and individual rights are not important. The five pillars of Islam: religion, life, intellect, offspring and property.

The relationship between the Church and the state brings about intense political questions and tensions within established political systems. Imagine now the challenges of establishing Church-state relations during political transition. It is to that task that we now turn.

Chapter Two

History

In order to comprehend contemporary challenges to Church-state relations in Russia, the historical context must be recognized. Contemporary politics do not exist within a vacuum but are shaped and defined by historical experience. In this chapter a large period of Russian history is covered. We begin with the onset of Kievan Rus's conversion to Christianity. Hugh Ragsdale suggests that Russia has been a country with a strong state, but a weak society because it has no tradition of public institutions, such as the Church, to inhibit the state.¹ And yet the Orthodox Church in Russia has occasionally exercised significant political influence. This chapter will outline the fluctuations of Church-state relations, the varying factors that impact that relationship and the role of religion in society as it follows through one thousand years of Russian history.

The history of Church and state relations in Russia can be traced back to the conversion to the Greek variant of Christianity by Kievan Rus. In 988 AD, Prince Vladimir officially converted to Orthodox Christianity, then centred in Constantinople. His reasons for choosing Byzantium over Rome, and other faiths, including Judaism, were based on the wealth of Byzantium, the strong culture, the beauty of the Orthodox rituals and churches, and the importance of trade with the Byzantine Empire. Richard Pipes argues that this choice would

¹ Hugh Ragsdale, *The Russian Tragedy: The Burden of History* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), 33.

set the course of Russian history.² In essence, this choice was the first of many that isolated Russia from the West. From its origin, the Orthodox Church in Russia was decentralized, lacking in cohesion and unity as all of its authority came from Constantinople. Issues of conflict or disagreement were settled by synods, or councils of higher clergy, and the regional branches of the Orthodox Church used the local languages for liturgies and theological writings. Each branch had its own hierarchy in its own region, separating each diocese/eparchy by geography and language.

The Byzantine influence on the Russian Orthodox Church was undeniable, especially in Church-state relations. The Byzantine heritage stressed a symbiotic relation between Church and state, reflected by the many deep roots in history and doctrine. In Byzantium, the Emperor was the defender of the Church, and conservatives strongly resisted changes to rituals and practice. These were features that became apparent in the Russian Orthodox Church. The foundation for Church-state relations in Russia was based on the Byzantine model.

The first clergy in Kievan Rus were from abroad and had influence over the princes because of their education and perceived sophistication. The later *metropolita* of Kiev and Russia were primarily without political influence, although these local *metropolita* were the only permanent force for Orthodoxy in the area at the time. After the death of Alexis Metropolitan of Kiev and All

² Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 224

Russia in 1378, the *metropolita* of Russia were weak and divided while the grand prince had become strong. The *metropolita* divided itself into north and south, the centres being in Moscow and Kiev.³

The authority of the metropolitan of Moscow became permanent when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. At this time, there was little connection between the nobility and the clergy, unlike in the West. Clergy, primarily from the population of Russia, were divided into the 'white' (married priests) and the 'black' (monks). Only the black clergy, who lived with monasteries, were eligible for ascending the ranks of the Church hierarchy. Moscow's Grand Prince Vasily I made an agreement with Metropolitan Cyprian that those who served the Grand Prince were not eligible to enter the priesthood. This divided Church and state into distinct institutions that would work in harmony with each other. The clergy maintained their status through education, as they were among the minority of those within society that were educated. This status later declined as foreign teachers were brought in to secularize education by Peter the Great.⁴

Richard Pipes feels that the Golden Age of the Russian Orthodox Church was the time of the Mongol occupation of Russia, a 250 year period which began in 1237. During this time the clergy were exempt from the Mongol tribute faced

³ The hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church is limited to members of the 'black' clergy and is as follows, starting with the lowest in authority: monk, monastic deacon, monastic priest, hegumen, archmandrite (which is essentially the same as a hegumen, but the head of a larger monastery), bishop, archbishop, metropolitan and patriarch. This hierarchy was described by Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (USA: Westview Press, 2003), 162.

⁴ Sergei M. Soloviev, *The Character of Old Russia*, (USA: Academic International Press, 1987).

by the rest of Russian society. In exchange for prayers for the khan and his family, clergy did not have to pay taxes or tribute, they were able to have peasant workers for their land, and were allowed to be landowners. At this time the Orthodox Church owned an estimated third of the land in Russia.⁵

The Church was well immersed in secular affairs during the 14th and 15th centuries, especially due to the massive landholdings that the monastic 'black' clergy had accumulated under the Mongol regime. This was a time of *symphonia* for the Church. However, by the end of the 15th century, there were stirrings of discontentment within the ranks of the Russian Orthodox Church. A movement of monks, the Trans-Volga Elders, led by Nil Sorskii (1433 – 1508) questioned the powerful position of the Church and its extensive landholdings and supported the power of the boyars. At this time, Tsar Ivan III was also looking towards the extensive landholdings of the Church and was somewhat supportive of the dissident monk movement, but was concerned regarding the Trans-Volga Elders' support of the boyars. Ivan III kept a close eye on the landholdings of the Church and on their money. In order to counter the growing criticisms of the Church, a movement led by Joseph Sanin (1439 – 1515), founder and hegumen of Volokolamsk made a move to support unlimited power for the monarchy.⁶ These domestic factors, coupled with the fall of Constantinople, were the impetus for

⁵ Pipes, 226

⁶ Ragsdale, *Tragedy*.

the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, which became a dominant political theory in Muscovy.⁷

In 1448 the Russian Orthodox Church synod elected its own metropolitan. The previous metropolitan, Isidore, from Constantinople, had tried to place Orthodoxy under the Vatican and to merge Catholicism with Orthodoxy. The Russian metropolitan emphasized imperial rule under Orthodox principles and the importance of a long dynasty. Russian rulers became the universal Christian (Orthodox) sovereigns, and the Grand Prince was the Divine Authority. Vasili III, son of Ivan III, was supported by the Josephists. Joseph Sanin "provided full justification for Tsarist absolutism and the subordination of Church to state"⁸ due to his support for the ultimate supremacy of the monarchy. This support offered to the state was the first of many instances in which the Church gauged its political positioning with its own interests. By supporting this royal absolutism, the Russian Orthodox Church managed to save its properties, but also changed the tide towards an increasing reliance on the state and a voluntary subservience. This subservience had few political and economical costs as long as the state honoured and revered Orthodox interests. Yet *symphonia* required a director and the absolutism of the crown meant that the Tsar could assume that role.

⁷ The collapse of Constantinople represented the potential collapse of Orthodoxy, as Constantinople was considered the Second Rome. In order to save Orthodoxy a new Rome would have to be named, hence Moscow became the Third Rome.

⁸ David Mackenzie and Michael W. Curran, *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond*, 4th Edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 145.

Thus, in the 16th century, the Tsars began to take more of a direct interest in the activities of the Church. The Tsar appointed bishops, decided who attended the synods, and interfered with Church justice. In 1521, for the first time in Russian history, Basil III removed a metropolitan for displeasing him and appropriated Church money. One of Joseph Sanin's disciples, among those who supported unlimited monarchical power, became metropolitan in 1522. By the end of the 16th century there was little left of the previous state of *symphonia* as the Church became subservient to the state.⁹

The death of Ivan IV (1533 – 1584), in 1584, left Russia without an heir. During the succession struggle that followed, Russia descended into the 'Times of Troubles', a breakdown of the state which led eventually to a renegotiation of Church-state relations. An ensuing Civil War began with three main parties: the Polish, the Cossacks, and the boyars. With no recognized heir the throne passed through a few different hands, most notably to the "pretender Tsar" Dmitry I (1605 – 1606) in 1605. This Tsar surrounded himself with Poles and married in a Catholic ceremony. The disapproving boyars had had enough and a movement to liberate Russia was initiated by Prince Vasili Shuiskii, who had fingered Dmitry as an impostor, and an uprising quickly gathered momentum throughout Russia. After Dmitry I was murdered and a "fraudulent" boyar council (*zemskii sobor*) was convened, Shuiskii was enthroned as Vasili IV. However, there was a lack of support for this Tsar as well and a two-year civil war ensued. The Polish

⁹ Pipes, 233.

defeated Vasili in 1610 and by the end of the year there was no legal Muscovite government or Tsar. King Sigismund of Poland ruled over Russia as a dictator and had leaders of his opposition, including Filaret Romanov, imprisoned. It was the imprisoned Patriarch Germogen who appealed to Russians not to bow down but to unite. The centre of this uprising was in Nizhnii-Novgorod.¹⁰ The Polish were driven back and the Cossacks were hunted into the southern countryside. After Moscow was liberated, a Russian council elected seventeen-year-old Mikhail Romanov (Mikhail I 1613 – 1645) to be the new Tsar in 1613. This was the beginning of the Romanov dynasty, which would last for 300 years. At this time the power was still held somewhat in the hands of the Church, a position that became all too clear when the popular and powerful boyar Fyodor Romanov, Tsar Mikhail's father, became Patriarch Filaret. This marked a movement along the cycle back to a more symphonic Church-state relationship, although one in which the balance of power lay in the hands of Patriarch Filaret.

Patriarch Filaret gave himself the title of Grand Sovereign, a title he shared with his Tsar son, who ruled from 1613 – 1645. Filaret essentially ruled the state and tried to pass reforms to re-establish Russia after the civil war. It was Filaret who approached the Boyar Duma on reforms and made major decision on state affairs. Filaret held power until his death in 1633. Upon the death of Tsar Mikhail, his son, Alexis took over the throne and ruled from 1645 until 1676. Alexis sought counsel from both the Patriarchate and the Boyar

¹⁰ MacKenzie and Curran, 178 - 183.

Duma. The "symphonic" relationship between Church and state reached its highest point at this time, although it was more of a relationship of Church control over state affairs. Alexis came under the influence of an abbot from a monastery, by the name of Nikon. Nikon had been a married priest of the white clergy. After ten years of service in Moscow he convinced his wife that she should become a nun, and he became a monk. Well educated but imperious, Nikon made quite an impression on Tsar Alexis, who brought Nikon to Moscow and sponsored his election to patriarch in 1652.¹¹ Nikon only consented to accept the position when Tsar Alexis and everyone present promised "to obey him in all things like a chief, and shepherd, and father."¹² Patriarch Nikon was appointed by the Tsar as Grand Sovereign.

Patriarch Nikon believed that the patriarch and Tsar should rule Russia jointly, in symphony, and for a while, he succeeded in controlling the second Romanov Tsar, Alexis. Tsar Alexis entrusted the state to Nikon when he left for the Polish front in 1654. While the Tsar was busy with foreign affairs and war, Nikon tried to establish a theocratic-style authority. Nikon became hated and feared among clergy, boyars and even the Tsar's family. This discord was the beginning of a swing backwards towards a subservient Church to the state.

Nikon made the move towards reforming the Russian Orthodox Church, something that was considered heretical by some clergy. In his mind the Russian

¹¹ S.F. Platonov, *History of Russia* (USA: The MacMillan Company, 1925), 182.

¹² Platonov, 182

Orthodox Church had strayed too far from the Greek Orthodox Church, especially after the Church Council of 1551 when the Russian Orthodox Church was independent, and changes needed to be made in order to bring the Russian Orthodox Church back to its origins, a "restoration of purity". The reforms made concerned ritual but not doctrine. They initiated a division within the Church, alienating some of the most dedicated of followers, "his [Nikon's] opponents perceived them as the introduction of perversions."¹³ Those followers were led by Archbishop Avvakum. This division put the Church in a further state of dependence of the state as the Church became more unstable. Patriarch Nikon, however, still had the support of Tsar Alexis, a personal relationship that had put Church-state relations into a perceived balance. Politically, the state supported shifting the Russian Orthodox Church closer to that of the Greek Orthodox Church since it meant a shift closer to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This move would aid in achieving Ukrainian support for the Tsar and get the Ukrainian clergy to shift their support from Constantinople to Moscow. Unfortunately, Patriarch Nikon's arrogance and habit of overstepping his boundaries alienated him not only from many clergy, but also from the boyars and, eventually, the Tsar. The boyars resented his interference in state affairs.¹⁴ In 1658 Nikon quit Moscow for a self-imposed exile at a monastery. He had

¹³ Ragsdale, 43.

¹⁴ George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, (USA: Yale University Press, 1969), 131.

asserted that while the Church and state were temporally equal, the Church was spiritually superior.¹⁵

At a synod in 1666, attended by the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, Nikon was officially deposed and it was ruled that the Tsar was the head of all, including the Church, except in matters of Church doctrine. However, the synod upheld Nikon's reforms. This move did not sit well with many of the loyal followers of the Russian Orthodox Church, and they refused to implement the reforms. An eventual schism arose between the followers of Nikon and the "Old Believers".

Old Believers did not recognize priests ordained after the reforms, a fact which they later had to reconsider as their older ranks started dying. Old Believers were strongly persecuted for about a century after the schism. The schism was a disaster for the Russian Orthodox Church as it decimated its numbers and, as mentioned, caused it to lose many of its most loyal followers. This period unveiled the discord in the symphony of Church-state relations. Nikon has been considered by some to have been a decimating blow to the Russian Orthodox Church: "After Nikon, Russia no longer had a Church: it had a religion of state. From there to state religion it required but one step. The state religion was instituted by that power which in 1917 succeeded the imperial".¹⁶ Nikon had created a Church-state relationship such that the Church was making

¹⁵ Platonov, *History of Russia*.

¹⁶ Pierre Pascal, *Avvakum et les débuts du raskol* (Paris 1938), 574, as cited in Pipes, 239.

decisions on state issues. The line between the two became blurred in that one could not tell where Tsar Alexis's authority ended and that of Patriarch Nikon began.

Even with this striking blow to its composition, however, the Russian Orthodox Church still managed to hold on to some institutional identity and autonomy.¹⁷ But with the fall of Nikon in the eyes of the Tsar and the boyars, the Church was removed slowly from its role in influencing the state, which removed an obstacle for Western influence.¹⁸ James Billington suggests that "the first two-thirds of the 17th century were consumed by one last great effort of the Russian Orthodox Church to re-establish and extend its authority over all Russian life."¹⁹ It failed. Between 1700 and 1917 the Russian Orthodox Church slowly saw its influence in state affairs whittled away and the increasing use of the Church to fulfill state purposes. However, the Church was still a pillar of the state in that it was a representation of the faith of the people. The Church as an institution became increasingly at the mercy of the state agenda.

The principle of *symphonia* maintained its theoretical validity, even if it was not upheld in practice, until it was crushed by Peter the Great, who became Tsar in 1689. Peter differed greatly in opinion from those of the patriarch at the time, Adrian (1690-1700), who was strongly opposed to foreign influence. Peter

¹⁷ Pipes, *Old Regime*, 239.

¹⁸ V.O. Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: the 17th Century* (USA: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994) - no page number and I don't have the book here....

¹⁹ James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), 58.

disliked the Russian Orthodox Church, primarily for its anti-West sentiments. He wanted to put the Russian Orthodox Church in its place and remove its remaining privileges. Between 1700 and 1721 the administrative functions were entrusted to the *metropolita*, and a new patriarch was not elected. In 1701 the state took over administration of Church lands.²⁰ Those lands became administered by the Secular Department of Monastic Affairs. All those living on Church lands (except clergy and their families) were subject to military service. The Church courts were limited and much of their authority was passed onto the secular courts.²¹ In 1721 Peter released the *Ecclesiastical Regulation* charter which administered both the parish and monastic clergy operations. Clergy were told what they could and could not do as well as what they were required to do. The Church became the "bureaucratic constitution of the Russian Church."²² As well, in 1721, Peter abolished the Patriarchate, established in 1589, an office which had remained vacant since 1700, and replaced it with the Most Holy All-Ruling Synod, later to become known simply as the Holy Synod. Essentially, the Russian Orthodox Church, or at least the management of it, became a ministry of the state.

The Holy Synod replaced the patriarchate and assumed all powers of the patriarch. However, the Synod had no powers in civil affairs and was under the control of the state. The head of this Synod was generally, at least in the 18th

²⁰ Pipes, *Old Regime*, 240.

²¹ Platonov, 242-243.

²² Pipes, 241

century, a military man appointed by the Tsar. This council was responsible for administering the Russian Orthodox Church. This was the official swallowing of the Church by the state.

All clergy opposed Peter's reforms, whether they were Old Believers or followers of Nikon. Ordained priests had to make an oath to the Tsar and inform on any denouncement of the Tsar, even if heard in confession. Clergy were also invited to collaborate with the police and became a form of ideological police themselves. Peter's modernization victimized the Church. Education, newspapers, clothing, and Peter's mandatory shaving of beards all had negative impacts on Church-society relations. Peter's reforms were not just an end to the status quo of Church-state relations, but also a secularization of society.²³

The stance of the Russian Orthodox Church during these times of extensive reformation was a position of silent submission. The Church no longer held a position of moral authority in enlightened Russian society.²⁴ That is not to say that faith was not strong in the populace: faith still mattered, but the Church as an institution had been pushed aside by the state, which no longer needed the Church.

By 1762, Peter III (1762) had ordered that all Russian Orthodox Church lands be incorporated into the state holdings and that the parish and 'black' (monastic) clergy were to be placed on government salary. Landless abbeys

²³ Pipes, *Old Regime*, 241-2.

²⁴ Vernadsky, 179.

were shut down since they generated no revenue, which decreased the numbers of monasteries by about 50%, and those left received no government funding. In the 1860s, lists of clergy were drawn up and those without active parishes were conscripted into the army or included into a tax-paying estate. The nineteenth century secured the position of the Russian Orthodox Church as an arm of the state: "denunciation of political dissidents was considered a regular part of a priest's obligations."²⁵

The Church accorded little attention to secular issues, unless they were found to undermine religious faith and practice, such as serfdom.²⁶ The state forbade the clergy to intercede on behalf of peasants during such conflicts and clergy were told to teach the serfs to be obedient to their masters. Although there are some cases of proactive involvement, for the most part, clergy did not get involved in conflict and tried to iterate in their sermons that both serf and master were responsible to each other.²⁷ There were several reasons why the clergy were silent against serfdom in Russia. Ecclesiastical censorship was enforced by the hierarchy within the Church and the ecumenical press could not be used for public writings. As well, there was little motivation to help the serfs as clergy came from a unique caste within society and had little experience in the lives of either the peasantry or the nobles. Clergy consisted of a separate social and

²⁵ Pipes, 242

²⁶ Gregory L. Freeze, "The Orthodox Church and Serfdom in Prereform Russia," in Gary M. Hamburg, ed., *Imperial Russian History 1700 - 1861*. (USA: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), pp. 461 - 488.

²⁷ Freeze

cultural composition unlike that of any other group in Russian society because they were their own independent caste. Further, the Church was, by this time, subservient to a very strong state along with a polarized society, putting the Church further into a position of instability if it took any position on serfdom.

The Russian Orthodox Church struggled during this time for support within Russian society. Societal perceptions of the Church and its clergy were that of a bloated class living on the backs of the peasantry. This perception was seen in much of the art of the 19th century. Two such examples are by paintings by Vasily Perov (1834 - 1882). In the first painting the clergy is presented as being drunk while the village celebrates Easter, while in the second painting the Church is seen as living a life of luxury and excess (see Figures 1 and 2 below²⁸).

²⁸ Paintings by Vasily Perov found at <http://www.abcgallery.com/P/perov/perov.html>. The first painting is entitled *Easter Procession in a Village* (1861) and is intended to depict the corruption of rural clergy. The second picture is entitled *A Meal in the Monastery* (1865 - 1876) and shows the perceived opulence of the Church in the eyes of society.

Figure 1: (Vasily Perov) *Easter Procession in a Village* (1861)



Figure 2: (Vasily Perov) *A Meal in the Monastery* (1865 - 1876)



The Russian Orthodox Church had lost much of its support among the peasants during the schism, especially from those peasants who supported the Old Believers. There was also little support from the educated, an increasing

segment of society, as the Russian Orthodox Church was considered to be anti-intellectual. There was also little support from the elite, which was the consequence of a few different factors: first, Peter passed a law forbidding families of the elite to construct family parishes and to have family priests; second, the upper classes were given a western education, as opposed to a Church-based one; third, nobles were not permitted to join the clerical estate so most Russian clerics were commoners, similar to members of the "urban petty bourgeoisie."²⁹ That is not to say, however, that these segments of society did not turn to their faith when looking for guidance, but there was little support for the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The choices for the Russian Orthodox Church seemed bleak, but the Church held strong in its belief in the principle of equality of church and state and the Church stood up for basic Christian values. As Pipes noted, however, despite the Church's eventual opposition to serfdom and the massacres of Ivan IV and Stalin, "no branch of Christianity has shown such callous indifference to social and political injustice."³⁰ This perceived callousness, which seemed to be consistently held by the Russian Orthodox Church, created a "spiritual vacuum" which would be later filled by secular ideology.

In the 1830s, a movement arose among some Russian intellectuals which was known as Slavophilism. It arose out of a need for identity among a group of

²⁹ Pipes, 245.

³⁰ Pipes, 245.

intellectuals who felt themselves caught between two worlds – one world where there was an increasing negative reaction to westernization of Russia, and another where the state refused to adapt to modern times. Slavophiles rejected the notion that the West offered all the answers to Russia's questions and felt that Russians needed to look towards tradition in order to build a modern Russia. They desired a Russian Enlightenment, a "development in Russian culture" which would play a critical role in the universal enlightenment.³¹ This was a resurgence of the political ideology of Moscow as the Third Rome. The inspiration for this tradition was founded in the idealization of the communal life of the peasantry and in the Russian Orthodox faith. Slavophiles held that their religious identity formed their national identity:

In having both a spiritual and a national character, the Russian Enlightenment, unlike the Western, was closely connected to the moral condition of both the individual and the people; in fact, it was the very life of the Russian soul.³²

Orthodoxy was to become the universal, basic Christianity. Peasants were viewed, rather romantically, as having a glorified life carrying with it the concept of *narodnost*, or the "spirit of the people", by which it was meant the "unspoiled wisdom of the noble savage".³³ The Slavophiles "sought the link between the awakening culture of Russia and the classical antiquity".³⁴ This link was found

³¹ Susanna Rabow-Edling, "The Political Significance of Cultural Nationalism: The Slavophiles and their Notion of a Russian Enlightenment" *Nationalities Papers* 32, no.2 (June 2004): 441-456.

³² Rabow-Edling, 449.

³³ Billington, *Icon*, 324.

³⁴ Billington *Icon*, 347.

among the life of the peasantry, who lived within the "organic religious community".³⁵

During the 1860s Slavophilism morphed into a Pan-Slavic movement which was far more autocratic than the previous ideology. This movement was supported by the state as it called for a unification of Slavs under the leadership of Russia with three characteristics: Moscow as the centre, Russian as the language, and Orthodoxy as the faith.

During the late 19th century the cycle began to turn back favourably for the Church in its relationship to the state, especially as intellectuals spoke out about the social condition of Russia and its politics. One of these was Vladimir Solov'ev, son of the Russian historian Sergius Solov'ev and an opponent of Tolstoy, who argued for a free theocracy. His theory was that the Tsar could unite Christendom politically. Billington suggests that Solov'ev was responsible for the movement of intellectuals back to the Russian Orthodox Church during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This movement was part of the reaction to the growing influence of the West on Russia. Orthodoxy still symbolized a sacred tradition of Russian identity.

In 1900 a Church council was brought together by members of the hierarchy to secure liberation from the state. The Church was aiming for a form of self-government it had not had since before Peter the Great. The Church was

³⁵ Billington *Icon*, 374.

also looking to re-establish the Patriarchate.³⁶ Nicholas II feared bringing the council together as he feared the emancipation of the Church. Due to the Tsar's opposition, the Russian Orthodox Church did not have an opportunity to organize prior to the Revolution.³⁷ The abdication of the Tsar in February 1917, and a subsequent collapse of the state gave the Church a window of opportunity to pick itself up and dust itself off after being under the thumb of the state for 200 years. This would not be the last time that the Church took advantage of an unstable state. The situation in 1917 is parallel to the dynamics experienced by the Church in 1991. In 1917 the first patriarch since 1721 was elected. It was a sign of some independence while the political waters around the Church were turbulent.³⁸

The Revolution changed the climate surrounding the Church's existence. After the Revolution the Church was forced to develop in relation to a new state.³⁹ As a Marxist, Lenin distrusted the Russian Orthodox Church and religion in general. He also saw the Russian Orthodox Church as the final symbol of Old Russia and knew the dangers of turning Orthodox believers into martyrs. To avoid the martyrdom of believers, Lenin would need to dispose of the Church in a subtle manner. In the future socialist utopia there would be no need for

³⁶ Vernadsky, 260.

³⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: the Christian Religion in the USSR* (Oxford: A.R. Mowbreay and Company Ltd., 1965), 43.

³⁸ Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (USA: Westview Press, 2003).

³⁹ Andrew Sorokowski, "Church and State 1917 - 1964" in *Candle in the Wind*, eds. Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe, 21 - 64 (Washington, D.C. : Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989).

consolation from the Church. Atheism was required for party membership and was promoted in order to weaken the authority of the Church.

Between 1917 and 1920 there was heavy persecution of clergy, who were shot or starved to death in prison. On January 23, 1918 the tie between Church and state was completely severed when Church buildings were nationalized and Church services could only be held through contracts with local soviets. The July 1918 constitution allowed for freedom of religious and non-religious propaganda, a sentiment that was carried in the constitution of 1923.⁴⁰ The practice of this freedom, however, was not recognized within the state enforcement of atheism.

Under the Bolsheviks, Church lands were nationalized, the Church lost all of its remaining judiciary power, there was a ban of state subsidies to churches, Church bank accounts were seized and there was a denial of legal standing to all church marriages, divorces and baptisms as well as a ban of organized religious education of the young. In 1922 there was a requisition of ritual objects in order to "break the power of the clergy"⁴¹, or at least the perceived power the clergy had over the peasantry, as well as to aid in famine relief and there was a series of more persecutions and executions of clergy. The Bolsheviks were on a mission to wipe out any remnant of the old regime, and the Church represented a consistent and conservative tradition of that regime. The

⁴⁰ Vernadsky, 403.

⁴¹ Davis, Nathaniel, 3.

Soviet government tried to instigate internal disorganization by supporting a group of Church dissidents that argued for radical changes to the Russian Orthodox Church. These dissidents became known as the "Living Church" and a legal council was created which described Patriarch Tikhon as a counter-revolutionary. In 1923, upon release from prison, Tikhon gave Russian Orthodox Church support for the Soviet government. When Patriarch Tikhon died in 1925, Metropolitan Peter became the head of the Church, although not the patriarch, until he was imprisoned.⁴² Metropolitan Sergei became head of the Church, but not as the patriarch, and in 1927 declared the Russian Orthodox Church loyal to the Soviet government:

We wish to be Orthodox and at the same time claim the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, the joys and successes of which are our joys and successes, the misfortunes of which are our misfortunes... Remaining Orthodox, we remember our duty to be citizens of the Union, "not from fear, but from conscience," as the Apostle has taught us (Romans 13:5).⁴³

This assertion divided the Church into two groups, one of which, the Tikhonites, felt Sergei was too soft on the Soviets and saw it as a rapprochement with the anti-Christ. The Soviet government turned its support to the Church under Sergei, and under his leadership, the Living Church was little more than a puppet of the state.⁴⁴

After 1927, the state imposed a ban on church construction and limits were placed on Orthodox practices. The state-sponsored 'League of the Militant

⁴² Vernadsky, 403.

⁴³ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experience: Russia, The USSR, and the Successor States*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 189.

⁴⁴ Billington, *Icon*, 521.

Godless', founded in 1926, launched an aggressive atheist propaganda and anti-religious sentiment. By the late 1930s there was a third wave of Church closures and it is estimated that 80,000 clerics, monks and nuns were executed by the Bolsheviks, roughly half of the clergy population.⁴⁵

On the eve of the onset of World War II Stalin made a pact with Hitler in 1939 and the USSR acquired much of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. Stalin's plan was to use the Russian Orthodox Church as an assimilation tool for these new members. This was a complete reversal of his previous policy to eradicate the Church and its clergy. Stalin met with *Metropolita* Sergi (Stagarodski), Aleksei (Simanski), and Nikolai (Yarushevich), the then current leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, at the Kremlin in 1941. The *metropolita* requested that the state allow the re-election of a patriarch, that theological courses may be offered to priests and that the Church be allowed to operate shops, candle factories, publish a monthly journal, open new churches, consecrate new bishops and ordain new priests. Stalin was very accommodating in all requests and also allowed for the establishment of seminaries and academies.⁴⁶

There are three possible reasons for these allowances – one being that the Germans were relaxed on the practice of Orthodoxy in the occupied territory and so Stalin also needed to relax in his persecution of Orthodox practitioners;

⁴⁵ Davis, Nathaniel, 11.

⁴⁶ Davis, Derek, 17 – 18.

secondly, Stalin was concerned about anti-Soviet sentiment among the Soviet people due to his harsh policies and implementation of his Five Year Plans; and finally, Stalin was thinking of foreign policy and the need for foreign aid, and the West had been critical of the religious policies of the Soviet Union up to that point. By 1942 there was a high desertion rate among Soviet soldiers and dissension among the ranks. Stalin appealed to tradition and he sought reconciliation with the Church in order to rally soldiers to fight for the fatherland. The appeal worked and the army was again strong with pride and nationalism.⁴⁷

Stalin was quite secure in his consolidation of power and felt he had the flexibility to make allowances to the Church. By this time, the Russian Orthodox Church was no threat to him. In 1943 the Patriarchate was re-established under state supervision⁴⁸ and in 1945 the Church became a "legal entity"⁴⁹ and was able to lease, construct and purchase houses. A new patriarch, Alexis, was elected with a lot of ceremony. In 1943 the Soviet government also developed the 'Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church' which was closely linked to the NKVD, the precursor to the KGB.⁵⁰ At this time, there were three dominant faiths in the USSR: Orthodoxy, Islam and Roman Catholicism (in new territories only). The first head of this council was the former police official in charge of religious affairs and acquired the nickname of the Narkomopium, or

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ MacKenzie and Curran, 693.

⁴⁹ Davis, Nathaniel, 20.

⁵⁰ Bourdeaux, 61-64.

the 'people's commissar for opium'. The Church was used to implement government initiatives, including foreign policy, a move which enabled Moscow to exert more authority over the satellite Orthodox churches.⁵¹

However, this "Golden Age" was not to last - it ended in 1948. In the last 5 years of Stalin's life there was an increase in repression of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is estimated that at least 1,000 more churches were lost in this period.⁵² The Church had served its nationalistic purpose during the war and now it was back to 'business as usual'. Under Stalin's last years of rule, Orthodoxy was replaced with the religion of Leninism and Stalinist ritual and propaganda with a new ideological fervour. Priests and missionaries were replaced with:

soldiers of the cultural army, who departed from mass rallies for cultural relay races into the countryside to see who could win the most converts for communism and collectivization in the shortest possible time.⁵³

Reasons for this last effort by Stalin to crush the Church may have been due to his increased security in his position that came with the onset of the Cold War. Stalin no longer needed to cater to the West or be concerned with their disapproval of his policies regarding religion.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, a respite in religious policy was a consequence of a leadership struggle that lasted until 1958. By that, it is meant that Church numbers remained relatively stable. Once established in power,

⁵¹ Bourdeaux, 61-64.

⁵² Davis, Nathaniel, *Long Walk*.

⁵³ S. Afanasiev, "Cultural Movements of the Masses," *Soviet Culture Bulletin* 1931 July, 11-14, as cited in Billington, *Icon*, 538.

however, Khrushchev vowed that the last Christian would be shown on television in 1980. From 1958 until 1964 there was a new push of anti-religious policies, in fact, the strongest anti-religious policies that the Church had seen since Stalin's terrors of the 1930s⁵⁴.

Khrushchev was a Soviet idealist, and believed that religion could be wiped out of society. Throughout his rule Church registrations decreased and Church buildings were demolished.⁵⁵ However, the Church still pursued a state sponsored role. In 1961 the Russian Orthodox Church joined the World Council of Churches, which the state used in order to influence the WCC opinion on world issues.⁵⁶

During the Brezhnev era, 1964 to 1982, there were pressures on clergy to collaborate with the KGB and the Communist Party. There were no large scale Church closures, but still a steady decline. Church numbers, however, were not able to recover from Khrushchev's persecutions, and almost six thousand, or about 44%, of registered Orthodox communities were lost between 1958 and 1966⁵⁷. In 1966 Brezhnev put new policies in place that charged fines to Churches that avoided registration, unauthorized meetings, and the organization of forbidden youth activities. These policies affected all faiths. In 1967 there was

⁵⁴ Davis, Nathaniel, 33.

⁵⁵ Davis, Nathaniel, 33-45.

⁵⁶ Felix Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*. (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

⁵⁷ In order for a religious group to register between 1945 and into the 1990s, it had to apply to the town executive council, which then forwarded the papers to the district authorities, and then on to the oblast or constituent republic of ministers and republic commissioners of the Council for Religious Affairs, and then finally to the USSR Council of Religious Affairs for approval. Davis, Nathaniel, 42, 55, 69.

an increase in anti-religious propaganda, but also an increase in dissidents who were frustrated with the stagnation.

Between 1966 and 1986, the so called period of stagnation, Orthodox parishes only decreased by 10%.⁵⁸ A growing concern for the Church, however, was the aging population of its followers. People who had been baptised prior to the Revolution were getting older and there was a real fear on the part of the Church that its followers would die out. The period of stagnation that took place under Brezhnev relied more on the natural dying off of the Russian Orthodox Church rather than the active suppression of it.

Of course, at this time, and during any time during the Soviet era, accurate numbers for followers would be hard to determine. The only ones that were open about their religiosity were typically elderly women who had nothing to lose - no education to lose, no job to lose, no fear of persecution. This inability to openly express one's religiosity led to an unofficial privatization of religion in the Soviet Union, perhaps one of the few true steps taken during this era that led down the path to secularization. While the state continued during this time to maintain control over Church activities, society was inadvertently beginning its own separation of Church and state.

The 1980s brought a shift in ideology as atheists became less stringent and Mikhail Gorbachev took over the USSR in 1985. Gorbachev turned to the

⁵⁸ Davis, Nathaniel, 55.

Russian Orthodox Church to aid in his policy of *perestroika*.⁵⁹ He asked the Church to raise the level of morality within the Russian society and to aid in the control of alcoholism. At the same time however, Gorbachev also asked for more atheistic work, but did take a softer policy on religion.⁶⁰

The previous thousand years of history were tumultuous for Church-state relations. The ideal of *symphonia* never really existed. At each opportunity for such cooperation, either the state dominated the Church or the Church dominated the state. Perhaps the closest the relationship ever got to *symphonia* was under Grand Prince Vasiliy I and Metropolitan Cyprian in the fourteenth century. This relationship was maintained in relative peace up until Ivan the Terrible, when the state began taking more of an interest in Church assets and the rise of state power was less favourable for the Church. The Church was able to assert more influence during the 'Time of Troubles', moving the relationship back towards *symphonia* after the Church liberated Russia from the Catholic Poles. The supremacy of the Church was attempted under Patriarch Nikon, who placed himself into the seat of the absent Tsar. This usurpation resulted in the state reaction of forcing the Church back under its subjugation, a move that was brilliantly completed under Peter the Great. Peter the Great officially made the Church an extension of the bureaucracy of the state, a position it held until the collapse of Imperial Russia in 1917. Despite the religious revivals that took place

⁵⁹ It was rumoured that Gorbachev had been baptised by his grandmother.

⁶⁰ Davis, Nathaniel, 63.

during the 19th century, the Church was never able to gain back the authority it had lost previously. Despite a brief admonition of independence while the state was weak in 1917, the Church became further subjugated by the state under the Bolsheviks. The Soviet era hosted a period of the Church surviving by the whim of the state, taking gifts when it could and waiting for the final blow that would collapse what was left of the Church's infrastructure.

Symphonia, for the most part, was an illusion for the Russian Orthodox Church and the state. For the last 300 years of Russian history, the Church was under the direct control of the state. This was the old relationship. The era of Gorbachev, however, brought about a new dawn for the Church. It seemed that the best was yet to come in the world of the Russian Orthodox Church, but Gorbachev had "taken off the lid of a seething cauldron"⁶¹ and only God knew what was next.

⁶¹ Michael Bourdeaux, "Religion Revives in all its Variety: Russia's Regions Today," *Religion, State & Society*, 28, no. 1(2000): 13.

Chapter Three

Church-State Relations in Transition 1988 - 1991

"For what you hold is, to speak somewhat plainly, a tyranny; to take it perhaps was wrong, but to let it go is unsafe." – Pericles to Athenian empire¹

By the late 1980s, Gorbachev and the Soviet state had adopted a softer position regarding the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as religion in general. The pendulum had begun to swing away from complete state domination and the Church was becoming a more important player in the rapidly changing politics of the Soviet Union. This chapter discusses the short period of *perestroika* and *glasnost* that would change the fate of the Soviet Union and the Russian Orthodox Church. As the state passed through this period of instability and eventual collapse, the Church also underwent change that closely linked it with the fate of the state and caused a myriad of internal struggles and strife. This chapter will outline how political, economic and social change led to a new, yet volatile, relationship between Church and state.

STATE TURMOIL AT THE END OF THE SOVIET PERIOD

By 1988, it was clear that any success in economic restructuring would require political and social reforms as well. This context is vital to understanding the rationale for renegotiating the relationship. The primary rationale for Gorbachev to develop a stronger relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church

¹ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991*. (New York The Free Press, 1994), 445.

was a solicitation of societal support for his economic reforms. In 1988 Gorbachev met with Patriarch Pimen and five *metropolita* from the Holy Synod. It was the first time that the Russian Orthodox Church had been received at the Kremlin since Stalin met with Russian Orthodox leaders in 1943. Along with the widening berth being given to religious groups, the motives for this meeting were political in nature. Gorbachev was looking to the Russian Orthodox Church for support of his programs and reforms. Gorbachev stated:

Not everything has been easy and simple in the sphere of Church-state relations. Religious organizations have been affected by the tragic developments that occurred in the period of the cult of personality. Mistakes made in relation to the Church and believers in the 1930s and subsequently are being rectified. ... Believers are Soviet people, workers, patriots, and they have the full right to express their convictions with dignity. *Perestroika*, democratization and *glasnost* concern them as well – in full measure, and without any restrictions. This is especially true of ethics and morals, a domain where universal norms and customs are so helpful for our common cause.²

The circumstances behind this statement set the stage for the establishment of different Church-state relations with the Soviet state. Never before had a communist leader outlined a 'common cause' with the Russian Orthodox Church. This meeting marked the end of state-imposed atheism.³ Gorbachev acknowledged the Russian Orthodox Church's patriotism and the Church's role in rallying the people during World War II as well as its constant fight for peace and its voice against nuclear destruction. Gorbachev made some concessions to the delegates, as Stalin had done 45 years earlier, urging the

² Michael Bourdeaux, "Religion Revives in all its Variety: Russia's Regions Today" *Religion, State & Society*, 28, no. 1 (2000): 9-21, quote on p.9.

³ Bourdeaux, "Religion Revives", 9.

Church to commence with charitable work. Gorbachev made two promises: he authorized the official celebration of the Millennium of Russia's conversion to Orthodoxy in 1988; and he promised a new law regarding religion to replace the law put in place by Stalin in 1929.

As promised by Gorbachev and in a true Church-state partnership, the Russian Orthodox Church marked the Millennium of Orthodoxy in the Bolshoi Theatre with the participation of the symphony and seminary choirs. The celebration was closed with a ringing of the church bells, which had been outlawed since 1961. It took Gorbachev two more years to draft a new law to fulfill his second promise.⁴ Another noteworthy event that took place that same year was the movement of the patriarch's seat from the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Zagorsk, back to the Danilov Monastery in Moscow, which had been returned to the Church in 1983. Gorbachev was using his power wisely, and creating friendships within the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church. By making concessions, he hoped to secure their support for his reforms. In June 1989 the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, Konstantin Kharchev, was removed from his office after the Holy Synod made complaints about him to the Supreme Soviet, the final straw in a series of complaints about Kharchev by members of both the state and the Church. During his tenure, which started in 1984, Kharchev had made enemies in the Communist Party, the Soviet government, as well as the Church. Specifically, Kharchev was a proponent of

⁴ Bourdeaux, "Religion Revives", 10.

the multi-candidate patriarchal elections, which was not looked upon fondly by some of the leaders within the hierarchy, who wanted the election process to remain the way it had been. Church leaders saw Kharchev as an administrator who interfered in Church affairs. He had made enemies among members of the Communist Party through his support for the return of churches to believers and had spoken out against some local party bosses for persecuting local believers. He was opposed to, and tried to limit, the high involvement of the KGB in Church affairs. All involved had complaints against Kharchev. Yet the dismissal of Kharchev was considered a setback for Church reform.⁵ Kharchev seemed to be working to free the Church from being under the thumb of the Communist Party and the KGB. The supporters of Kharchev allied with him due to his ideas of Church reform but unfortunately, these ideas also made enemies among the more conservative of Church leaders and Party members. While the Church would have supported the removal of the Church from being under the watchful eye of the KGB, the more conservative members were opposed to internal reform. As for his supporters within the Church, Kharchev was seen as a means to an end. It had been hoped that his help would diminish interference from the KGB, the Communist Party, and the Soviet government. Without his leadership, the Council for Religious Affairs' role was also diminished, and was later abolished in December 1991.⁶

⁵ Davis, Nathaniel, 73 - 74.

⁶ Davis, Nathaniel, 89.

It was also during this period that more discussion took place regarding the Church's collaboration with the KGB. Kharchev, while still Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs confirmed that the Russian Orthodox Church was under tight controls of the Central Committee of the Communist Party as well as the KGB. There were KGB agents within the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Affairs and many clergy were working as agents of either the Kremlin or the KGB. A former KGB agent, A. Shushpanov, had the job of working against the efforts of one dissident priest, Father Gleb Yakunin. He kept track of Yakunin's activities and led an operation against him, trying to set him up to commit espionage, a tactic that failed. Later, Shushpanov confessed his dealings to Yakunin and asked for forgiveness, which was granted.⁷

In March 1990 the All-Russian Council of Bishops formed a commission to look into the links of the Church with the KGB. All of the clergymen that were on the Commission were ordained after 1989 and hence, after the KGB screening era. The KGB and the Communist Party had previously wanted to ensure that those who climbed the ranks of the hierarchy were people who could be controlled.⁸ Four of the six permanent members of the Moscow Patriarchate Holy Synod were found later to be KGB agents: Patriarch Aleksii II, Metropolitan Iuvenalii of Krutitsy, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Metropolitan Filaret of

⁷ John Dunlop, "The Russian Orthodox Church as an "Empire-Saving" Institution" in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Bourdeaux, Michael, 15 - 40 (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 29.

⁸ Dunlop states that in 1995 most of the 119 bishops were ordained during the time of KGB and Communist Party screening.

Minsk. As well, the head of Patriarchate publishing, Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk, was also an agent. It should be understood that agents were more than informers, they were considered to be active operatives, for the Committee for State Security: "given the route by which these men became bishops, it seems more likely that they would be agents and defenders of a strong state first and Churchmen second".⁹ Yet, this seemingly unfitting relationship was actually of benefit for each party involved. The Church used the KGB information in developing their own domestic and foreign policy, which would more than likely be the same as the state, and the KGB kept well informed of the activities of clergy and society.

It was not only former collaboration with the KGB that the Church needed to concern itself with. Both the state and the Russian Orthodox Church needed to acknowledge the growing voice of Catholics in the Soviet Union. As well, and perhaps harder for Gorbachev to deal with, Ukrainian Greek-Catholics were demanding legal acknowledgement and a return of their churches and property. Gorbachev was pressured by Pope John Paul II into granting rights for Catholics in the USSR. In response, Gorbachev met with the Pope in Rome on December 1, 1989, a meeting which Gorbachev hoped would bolster international acceptance of his domestic reforms. The strengthening of freedom of conscience would play well in the international arena. But the Pope was not going to give his "blessing" without some concessions. The Pope requested a legalization of the Ukrainian

⁹ Dunlop, 30.

Greek-Catholic Church and a return of churches seized in 1946. Gorbachev did legalize Ukrainian Greek-Catholic parishes, but made no commitment regarding the confiscated properties.¹⁰

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE END OF THE SOVIET PERIOD

As the end of the 1980s approached, the Church was faced with a series of difficulties. This section will discuss those difficulties, namely: divisions within Orthodoxy; divisions in the Russian Orthodox Church between conservatives and reformers, complicated by leadership succession; politically motivated murders within the clergy; and the new law on freedom of conscience enacted in 1990. The Russian Orthodox Church had three objectives in the late 1980s and early 1990s: the Church wanted state aid to better compete with its rivals, especially those of foreign origin; it wanted new legislation favouring "democratic centralism"; and it wanted the Russian Orthodox Church to be the only heir to the property of the pre-Revolutionary Church. Property became a key issue at this time for the Church, as the many schisms became apparent as the USSR faced its end. In Ukraine, a divided Orthodox Church and other religions vied for property. These divisions in Ukraine affected Soviet and foreign relations as well as the Russian Orthodox Church.

At the beginning of the Soviet era, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a division within the Church when some of its leaders gave support to

¹⁰ Davis, Nathaniel, 75-77.

the Soviet government. One of the results of this was the formation of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad as well as other groups who split, went underground, and opposed the acceptance of Sergi of the Communist regime. In May 1990 some of the disillusioned clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church started to turn to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In the same month, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad established its parishes in Russia the Free Russian Orthodox Church. It set up a parallel Church network and Russian Orthodox Church clerics were invited to join the "Free Russian Orthodox Church" through repentance for serving the Russian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate. There would be no relations or negotiations with the Russian Orthodox Church until certain conditions were fulfilled:

1. The Russian Orthodox Church had to condemn Metropolitan Sergii's 1927 Declaration of Loyalty to the Soviet State and its subsequent subordination of the Church to the atheistic communist government;
2. Its hierarchy and the whole clergy publicly repented for their collaboration with the atheistic and theomachistic state;
3. The Russian Orthodox Church exposed and carried out a purge of the most politically compromised members of the clergy;
4. It pulled out of all ecumenical bodies, primarily the World Council of Churches.¹¹

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church noted that dual Churches would hurt Orthodoxy and that by ignoring the Moscow Patriarchate

¹¹ Dimitry V. Pospelovsky, "The Russian Orthodox Church in the Post Communist CIS" in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, 41 - 74 (USA, M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 46.

as the legitimate local Church of Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was excluding itself from the Orthodox family.¹²

The second response pointed to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad's collaboration with the Nazis; therefore they had no moral right to condemn the Russian Orthodox Church for collaboration with the communists. The final response came when Patriarch Aleksii made his address on the anniversary of the October Revolution. The patriarch took responsibility for the historical actions of the Russian Orthodox Church over the last 70 years. He explained that Sergii's statement in 1927 was only to save the Russian Orthodox Church from destruction. He admitted that there were two paths to be taken under the communist regime. First, there was that of the "Catacomb Christians", who were praised for their courage. Their path, however, was described as one of personal salvation through hiding from both the KGB and those who sought faith. The second path was taken by the Russian Orthodox Church, who made compromises to enable people to still have access to their Church. On Forgiveness Sunday (the last Sunday before Lent) the patriarch asked the forgiveness of his congregation.¹³

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was gaining popularity again after being persecuted throughout the Soviet period. A priest in Lithuania began the revival. The Church became official throughout the Ukraine on

¹² Pospelovsky, 46.

¹³ Pospelovsky, 47-48.

October 22, 1989 when the Orthodox bishop of Zhitomir, Ioann proclaimed that the Church had been re-established. The Holy Synod in Moscow officially excommunicated Ioann. In January 1990, in western Ukraine a council of priests and laypersons met to declare their loyalty to the re-established order. Later that year, in June, a group of bishops, priests and laypersons met in Kiev to elect a new Patriarch. Metropolitan Mstyslav of Philadelphia was chosen, but since he was denied a Soviet visa, Bishop Ioann was elected Metropolitan and acting head. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church would later join with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 1992.

The new feeling of freedom also brought internal divisions within the Russian Orthodox Church. These divisions became more evident in the leadership succession that followed the death of Patriarch Pimen in 1990. Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev was chosen as the interim head of the Church and June 6, 1990 was selected as the date for the election of a new patriarch. Many clergy were outraged by the swift pace of elections as the Synod was not going to wait the 40 days required after Pimen's death before calling the council together. The reasons for requesting a council and an election of new patriarch were based on the growing divisions within the Church, the possible exploitation of patriarchal candidates due to documentation left by Pimen, and especially, the fragile state of the Soviet Union. Aleksii was elected as patriarch, which further divided the Church as reformers felt he "carried the baggage of past Church-

state collaboration".¹⁴ Father Gleb Yakunin predicted that "if one of the "people of the past" were elected, a Church schism would be inevitable".¹⁵

Patriarch Aleksii II first became known to the state in December 1985 when, while still a Metropolitan, he sent a letter to Gorbachev. In the letter, Aleksii stated that the separation of Church and state does not mean the exclusion of Church from the public sphere and that the Russian Orthodox Church was linked to the country by "invisible threads"¹⁶. Gorbachev passed this letter on to the CPSU Central Committee Secretariat, who believed that Aleksii represented clergy who wanted more influence, which was something that the Secretariat would find intolerable. By March 1986 Aleksii had been transferred from Moscow to Leningrad and he lost his position as the chancellor to the Moscow Patriarchate.¹⁷ At this time, it was clear that Aleksii saw a moral and spiritual role for the Church, and that he thought that the Church should be independent from the state. After Aleksii became patriarch, his vision for the role of the Russian Orthodox Church changed little. In the early 1990s he did not support the establishment of a state Church unless 100% of the population were believers. Any less would result in a union between the Church and the state which would further result in the use of faith against those who were not Orthodox. There needed to be a full representation of the Orthodox Church within Russian society, "otherwise, nothing good comes out of symbiosis where

¹⁴ Davis, Nathaniel, 87.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Pospelovsky, 54.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the Church begins to be used as a weapon: and when the Church is used as a club, it disintegrates into sawdust".¹⁸

While Patriarch Aleksii was defining his vision, Father Gleb Yakunin, remained a vocal and dynamic liberal within the folds of the Russian Orthodox Church. He was also one of the most vocal political dissidents in the Church who openly criticized policies of the Moscow Patriarchate. He was particularly critical of some of the anti-Semitic tones of some members of the Church hierarchy. Father Yakunin also rallied for political changes in state structure and was active in political life. He spent from 1979 until 1987 in a labour camp for his views and became known as the "chief Democrat of the Church".¹⁹ His important role in Russian Orthodox Church will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

During the late Soviet period there were also murders among the Orthodox clergy in Russia. It is believed that at least two of these were politically based. The first occurred on September 9, 1990 with the brutal murder of Archpriest Aleksandr Men while he was walking to church early in the morning. Men was born to a Jewish family but was raised an Orthodox Christian. He became a "prominent liberal theological force in Russian Orthodoxy, writing for publications of the Moscow Patriarchate and via

¹⁸ Pospelovsky, 48.

¹⁹ Zoe Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges to the Moscow Patriarchate, 1991 - 2001" *Religion, State & Society*, 32, no. 2 (June 2004): 106.

manuscripts smuggled abroad".²⁰ Men spoke out against the more conservative members of the Russian Orthodox clergy and commanded the ability to amass audiences in massive numbers to hear him speak.²¹ Under Brezhnev, Men was seen as a threat and underwent constant harassment, a confiscation of books and interrogation. He also spoke out against the anti-Semitism that was circulating through the more conservative circles of the Church. He quoted the Metropolitan Aleksii in "urging Orthodox faithful not to level fall into bigotry, intolerance and chauvinism".²²

Men's briefcase was stolen from the murder scene and the incident was followed by a very poor police investigation. Apparently, the day before someone submitted the license plate number of a car that had been following Men and a man was identified being seen near Men's home the day of the murder. The police did not follow-up. Some claim that the murder was ordered by the KGB, others claim it was the hard-line conservatives that placed the order, while others claim that it was ordered by right-wing chauvinists.²³ Davis cites James Billington, who stated that Men's murder was "sanctioned at the KGB's highest level".²⁴ Documents that were believed to have been in Men's stolen briefcase provided further links between the Church, Communist Party, Soviet

²⁰ Davis, Nathaniel, 91.

²¹ Davis makes note of one talk he attended in which a stadium was filled with 15,000 people to hear Father Men speak. Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

government and KGB leaders. Of note as well is that members of Pamyat²⁵ had visited Men earlier that summer.

Men's funeral was broadcast on the television program *The Fifth Wheel* in which it was insinuated that Metropolitan Iuvenalii had arranged the murder, even though Iuvenalii presided over the ceremony. Father Men's widow also asked Metropolitan Iuvenalii to preside over Men's archives and written legacy. Men represented a beacon of light for those aiming for reformation of the Russian Orthodox Church and an example of how the Church can adapt to modern times. A follower of Men's, as well as a religious affairs commentator, Yakov Krotov notes:

The real meaning of Fr. Aleksandr (Men) is his symbolic position in the mass media. Many of his parishioners, acquaintances, and readers still work as journalists. When they need to name someone as an exemplar of 'good Christianity', they name Men. Who else? Yakunin is too politicized a figure and he is still alive; so he is not as good for a myth. The majority of the intelligentsia is peacefully minded, and Men carries quite a peaceful name: he didn't struggle with the Patriarchy and didn't collaborate with the KGB either. So his name symbolizes for the audience of mass media ... non-aggressive, non-politicized, non-silly, non-ghetto, non-fundamentalist Russian Orthodoxy.²⁶

²⁵ Pamyat, meaning "memory" in Russian, was founded by Dmitrii Vasilev during the early Gorbachev period, became one of the first opposition parties in the USSR, and organized the first, large, unsanctioned public demonstration. It has been described as an "Orthodox monarchistic and national union of loyal citizens of Russian power. Its motto is "God, tsar, nation". Its goal is to restore the monarchy and the succession of autocratic power. It was a blatantly anti-Semitic group that believed in the "Elders of Zion" theory of a Jewish conspiracy to take over Russia. It is opposed to communism as well as democracy. Members of Pamyat have been known to argue heatedly with other well-known Russian nationalists. During the early 1990s, the party began to lose political clout and Dmitri Vasilev died in 1993. It is still active and maintains a website which can be found at www.pamyat.ru. Other information was found at www.hri.org/news/balkans/rfer/2003/03-07-18.rferl.html#15.

²⁶ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 104.

The other two murders occurred within five months of the murder of Men. Both men, who were also high profile clergymen, were tortured before they were murdered. The second to be murdered was Father Lazar, who was a member of the investigation team for the murder of Men. The third murder was of Father Serafim, a monastic priest who had recently re-opened a church in Moscow. His congregation was deeply divided, with one side including anti-Semitic sentiments of the Pamyat organization. To date, none of these murders have been solved.²⁷

It was during this turmoil within the Church that Gorbachev's promised new law emerged. The law "Freedom of Faiths", or the Soviet Law on Freedom of Conscience, was passed on October 1, 1990 and went above and beyond what was expected for religious freedom. All religions were equal under the law, and freedom of conscience for all was declared. The Soviet Union was described as a secular state; there would be no state religion or state intervention in Church affairs.²⁸ The new law also ended the ban on religious education, ended the official funding of atheist propaganda, gave legal standing to all religious organizations, and, as mentioned, allowed churches to participate in religious instruction, charitable activities and publishing of literature. The law also allowed (and in fact the state encouraged) an influx of foreign missionaries into

²⁷ Pospelovsky, 52.

²⁸ Derek H. Davis, "The Russian Orthodox Church and the Future of Russia" *Journal of Church and State*, 44, no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 659.

Russia.²⁹ The Russian Orthodox Church criticized the law, despite the fact it had a say in its content, but the law was an opportunity for Church-state separation, and perhaps even true religious pluralism, for the first time in Russia's history.

The problem facing the Soviet Union, or one of the many problems, was that it had no history of the practical application of religious freedom. There was no foundation on which this new law could be implemented. Previous Soviet officials who regulated religious activity found themselves with nothing to do. In 1989, less than 10% of the population was born before the October Revolution and hence, had no knowledge of much religiosity or freedom thereof. Zoe Knox points out, for example, that "the claim of Ioann Bellyustin, a nineteenth-century Orthodox priest, that Orthodox adherents did not have 'the remotest conception of anything spiritual' was not remedied by seventy years of religious persecution."³⁰ The Russian Orthodox Church had been state supported for centuries. By 1988, there were only about 6,800 parishes in the Soviet Union.³¹ As a result, many people did not even have access to a church. The role of Church changed during this time. It held some common ground with state ideology in regards to family, a strong and united Russia, the importance of tradition and a peaceful co-existence with nations and nationalities. The views held by the Church on liberal democracy, however, were not clear, and there was a definite anti-Western sentiment, such as its opposition to the opening of Russia

²⁹ Missionaries were further encouraged with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

³⁰ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 93.

³¹ Davis, Nathaniel, 66.

to foreign missionaries, in the Russian Orthodox Church's philosophy. But the Church maintained public confidence, at least for a while. It still held some influence and was the only foreseeable domestic alternative to Marxism-Leninism for the majority of the Russian populace.

As well, the Church was seen as the only surviving overt institution linking Russia's present with the past. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church had been almost synonymous with citizenship, and was more aligned with both the state and society than in many Western nations. While Soviet leaders spoke of a secular nation and the state pushed atheistic propaganda, the state still turned to the Church in times of crisis, once during World War II, and again as the Soviet Union was crumbling. The partnership between Church and state as the USSR faced the end of the 1980s was one of "a coalition of believers and non-believers in a struggle to construct a society of societal justice, democracy and humanism."³²

The Russian Orthodox Church feared loss of its property with talk from those republics that were fighting for independence from the unstable Soviet Union. Two laws were also passed in 1990 regarding property rights for Churches. The first law gave religious organizations the right of land tenure, an important development given the historic subsistence (untenured) lifestyle of Churches, monasteries and convents. The second law gave all religious

³² Stephen White and Ian McAllister, "Orthodoxy and Political Behaviour in Post-communist Russia" *Review of Religious Research*, 41, no. 3 (2000): 362

organizations the right to own buildings "essential for their activities". The state also abolished the requirement for priests to be approved by the Council for Religious Affairs before they could serve a parish.³³

In the early 1990s, many political groups were looking to the Russian Orthodox Church for support. Communist Party leader Ivan Polozkov went so far as to say that the Russian Orthodox Church was "a natural ally of the Communist Party in the struggle for moral value and against interethnic conflict".³⁴ In April 1991 the "Souiz"³⁵ parliamentary fraction singled out the Russian clergy, along with the army, as one of two "eternal institutions of [Russian] statehood".³⁶ Patriarch Aleksii adopted a view, named for the sentiments of Metropolitan Sergi in the 1920s, known as "Sergianstvo", which meant "the joys and sorrows of the [communist] Motherland were those of the Russian Church". Aleksii saw that the interests of the Church coincided with the interests of the state. That the reverse should also be true was silently expected.

In December 1990, Patriarch Aleksii signed the "Letter of the Fifty-Three" addressed to Gorbachev. The letter requested that Gorbachev "counter separatists, anti-state activity, incitement and inter-ethnic discord, employing for this purpose the law and the powers granted to [him]".³⁷ The letter continued to direct Gorbachev to rely on the Church and the Communist Party to re-establish

³³ Davis, Nathaniel, 83.

³⁴ Dunlop, 19.

³⁵ "Souiz" was the Union of Right Forces in parliament. The Russian word means "union".

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

order. Patriarch Aleksii's signature on that letter, which was published in the *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, became a huge scandal that lasted from the end of 1990 until August 1991.³⁸ On the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1990, Patriarch Aleksii made the first moral - political statement that had been made by the Church since the 1920s. He stated that the anniversary should:

remind us that not a single political, cultural, or national idea is worth more than a human life ... Do not let the spirit of mutual hatred and vengeance once again celebrate its victory in Russia! ... Those who can, join me and the Church in the following prayer: O Lord, renew, protect and make wise our nation, for in 'distress it sought thee, it poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon it.' (Isaiah 26:16).³⁹

Following the attempted hard-line coup in August 1991, the Patriarch issued a statement in support of Gorbachev and appealed to the army to remain calm under the circumstances.⁴⁰ He made the appeal to try to ensure that no lives would be lost, hoping that the coup would come to a diplomatic end.

COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

During the last year of the Soviet Union, Patriarch Aleksii appeared to be more politically vocal. He spoke out against the Gulf War, and on the increasing violence in the Baltic States. He also announced the Church's support for a "yes" vote to Gorbachev's referendum on renewing the Soviet multinational federation. As the end came closer for Gorbachev and the Soviet Union, however, Aleksii had less to say. Not everyone in the Church hierarchy supported the statement

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Pospelovsky, 47.

⁴⁰ Dunlop, 21.

discussed earlier, which appealed to the army for peace. Metropolita Kirill of Smolensk, Iuvenalii of Krutitsy and Filaret of Kiev were among the most prominent who did not sign the statement. When the coup happened on August 19, 1991, Aleksii held back his public voice, despite the request of Yeltsin to publicly condemn the coup, in order to avoid getting caught up in the political struggle. During his Church service that morning, the patriarch omitted his prayers for Gorbachev and for any other government. On the Tuesday, August 20th, Yeltsin made a public appeal to Aleksii to speak out about the coup. Later that day the Patriarch finally spoke, "questioning the junta's legitimacy and calling for the restraint by the military, demanding that Gorbachev be allowed to address the people, and calling on the Supreme Soviet to take charge. Shortly after midnight he made a second appeal to armed civilians and soldiers not to commit the "grave sin" of fratricide and "bloody acts"". ⁴¹

After the coup was defeated, Aleksii informed Parliament that he had opposed the coup but did not speak publicly sooner because some in the hierarchy disagreed with him. Davis suggests that Aleksii's purpose was to show solidarity:

the Synod tried to convince the public that it had remained united during the days of the August coup. The harder they tried, the more dubious this looked. One might suppose that the Synod members managed to convince the Patriarch that an open rupture within the Synod was fraught with highly undesirable consequences for him. ⁴²

⁴¹ Davis, Nathaniel, 96.

⁴² Davis, Nathaniel, 95-96.

Other priests were less hesitant to show their support for Yeltsin. Father Gleb Yakunin called for a general strike and prayed for the defenders of the White House. The coup leadership was opposed to *glasnost*, democracy, liberalization, constitutionalism, self-determination and a market economy, as well as preservation of the Soviet system:

the price of preserving the USSR had become repressions, the instrument that preserved czarist Russia so often over the centuries. The price of upholding the democratic path had become the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. Schism in the patriarch's Church would be an inevitable ultimate result of such a political disintegration.⁴³

This ominous statement seemed to foreshadow those things that were to come after the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

There were many struggles facing the Russian Orthodox Church at this time, especially regarding public perceptions. Firstly, the Russian Orthodox Church was facing the consequences of its support of, or passivity towards, the Soviet regime. The Church was seen by some as being an institution of the Soviet system, and so, was seen as a tool of that system. As well, the Church had become stagnant in a modernizing Russia and had not looked within itself to begin a process of internal change. Some citizens saw the Church as being in the way of modernization. Finally, the Church was openly anti-Western, at a time when Russians were lured by Western influence. Society was largely secular, the Russian Orthodox Church was losing its already tenuous position, there was an

⁴³ Davis, Nathaniel, 96.

influx of foreign missionaries, and the political system was in a process of collapse.⁴⁴

By the end of 1991 the Russian Orthodox Church was taking a far more conservative line than many Russians, including the state. This line seemed to become even more conservative as the 1990s continued. The Church's relationship with the state was also becoming increasingly more complicated. Research done by S.B. Filatov and D.E. Furman found that initially under Gorbachev there was a religious boom, but by 1990 and 1991 there was a weakening of sympathy for the Church due to the Church's right-wing stance, the revelations concerning the Church's collaboration with the KGB, and the seemingly anti-democratic view held by clergy.⁴⁵ This shortage of sympathy was compounded by the number of extremist, nationalist groups that were aligning themselves with the Russian Orthodox Church as well as the anti-Semitic sentiments of some outspoken clergy members.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about a flurry of change as archives were opened, clergymen spoke more openly, republics gained independence, and the former Soviet Union was opened up to a barrage of Western ideologies. By the end of the Soviet Union the Russian Orthodox Church was a house divided within a union that was collapsing. The horizon was looking bleak indeed.

⁴⁴ Dunlop, "Empire Saving"

⁴⁵ Dunlop, 34-35.

Chapter Four

Contemporary Church-State Relations in the Russian Federation

So far the discussion of Church-state relations in Russia has included a theoretical discussion as well as attention to the changes within the historical relationship. The collapse of the Soviet state forced an obvious renegotiation of Church-state relations. This chapter will look at the period after 1991, as a new relationship between the Church and state took shape. It is during this time that the Russian Orthodox Church played an important role in the re-articulation of a political ideology. The discussion here is divided into four sections: the state, Russian Orthodox Bishops' Council 2000, the Church, and finally, Church-state Relations.

In 1991 the Russian people suddenly found themselves without a political system. The reforms under Gorbachev had opened the floodgates and Russians had discovered the wonderful taste of a freedom that they had not known for generations. The lack of political system, however, left a void within society and people began to look elsewhere to fill that void – to the East, to the West, to the market, and to the past. People needed a belief system to replace Marxism-Leninism, a belief system that was consistent with their own traditions. As it stood, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the purpose for society had been lost when the ideology that supported it collapsed. The Russian Orthodox Church,

with its cultural and historical ties, hoped to fill that void for a large segment of the Russian Federation's population.

Stephen Shenfield has written about the four types of self-identification in the Russian political culture: the Neo-Soviet, which rejects the tsarist past and embraces the heritage of the Soviet Union; the Archaic, which accepts the Tsarist past and rejects that of the Soviet Union; the statist, which accepts both the tsarist and the Soviet pasts; and the Liberal, which rejects both.¹ The Russian Orthodox Church tries to balance between the Archaic and the statist, trying to accept some aspects of the Soviet experience, while rejecting those that are not convenient to it. This is a challenging balance to achieve. Even though the Church was passive under Soviet rule, and at times even an active supporter of that state, the Russian Orthodox Church had been devastated by the policies of the Soviet Union.² Yet the absence of a state and the emergence of a liberal-democratic construct encouraging pluralism seemed to be even more of a challenge to the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, the Church argued that it needed to support the state and its policies in order to survive.

¹ Stephen D. Shenfield, "Post-Soviet Russia in Search of Identity" in *Russia's Future: Consolidation of Disintegration?* ed. Douglas W. Blum, 5 - 16 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994).

² Nathaniel Davis notes that in 1939 there were approximately 14,300 churches and 8,300 priests after the assaults during the 1920s and 1930s. By 1989 those numbers had been depleted to approximately 7,000 churches and 6,000 priests (see page 143 in *A Long Walk to Church*). Approximately 80% of the clergy had been killed during 1920s and of the 1,500 monasteries that existed prior to the Soviet state, only 12 were left before 1985.

In 1991, 57% of Russian citizens identified as being Orthodox.³ Of those who identified as Orthodox, however, only 17% attended service on a weekly basis.⁴ The collapse of the Soviet Union played a part in bringing society back to the Russian Orthodox Church, although the movement was more for cultural than spiritual reasons.⁵ To many Russians, the Russian Orthodox Church was a symbol of both Russia and the Russian nation. Despite internal divisions within the Church, the people viewed the Church as being united and strong. With nothing else to hold on to, society, and the state, chose to hold onto the Church, or at least a belief of what the Church represented.

The Yeltsin government welcomed the Church. It was felt that Church support would legitimize the new government as well as allow for a continuation of Russia as a world power, standing alongside the Russian Orthodox Church.

The emerging alliance between the Church and the state faced many challenges, three of which will be discussed here: legal, internal, and political. The legal challenges arose with the passing of the new Freedom of Conscience Law in 1990. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Russian Orthodox Church felt that the law was too liberal and did not outline enough special privileges for the 'traditional' religions of Russia. The Russian past and its traditions were counter to the Freedom of Conscience law passed in 1990 as well

³ Stephen White and Ian McAllister, "Orthodoxy and Political Behaviour in Postcommunist Russia" *Review of Religious Research* Vol 41, no. 3 (2000): 364

⁴ White and McAllister, 364

⁵ Davis, Derek, 660.

as the democratic principles that the new government hoped to put into place. The Russian state still had a long way to go before it reached the reality of those declared principles. This became clear as the state later supported the Russian Orthodox Church's request to limit the entry of foreign religions into Russia.

In the aftermath of the Millennium in 1988 there was a resurgence of Russians who identified as being Orthodox. By 1992, however, the confidence in the Russian Orthodox Church was beginning to wane. According to White and McAllister, the number of those who identified as Orthodox had dropped to 43%.⁶ There was a distinction between religious belief and the Church, and a further distinction between Orthodoxy and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Church, and specifically the Russian Orthodox Church, was viewed more as an institution, unlike faith and Orthodoxy. People were supportive of faith and Orthodoxy, but not necessarily behind the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution. But despite some growing distrust in the Russian Orthodox Church, the Church held the benefit of being associated with the idea of what it was to be Russian. Even those who were not believers associated themselves with religion.⁷

The second challenge facing Church-state relations, as mentioned, was internal division between reformers and conservatives within Russian society. There was a growing distrust within the Russian Orthodox Church as rumours

⁶ White & McAllister, 364.

⁷ S.B. Filatov, "Religion and Politics in Mass Consciousness" *Russian Social Science Review*. Vol. 34, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 1994): 23.

of collaborations with the KGB and corruption within the patriarchate became more common. The greatest threat to Orthodoxy at this time, according to S.B. Filatov, was not other religions, but "Christians in a general sense".⁸ Russians at this time were in a transitional phase with no clear worldview. More people believed in God, but they were not aligning themselves with any specific Church. Those who held their Orthodox beliefs the strongest tended to be less supportive of democracy and more supportive of a strong authority. Orthodox believers, on average, held a more structured worldview, which originated from the Russian Orthodox Church's resistance to modernization.⁹ The changes of belief patterns can be linked to the political movements at the time.

Finally, the relationship also faced political challenges. While the Church was quickly losing the gains of its recent revival there was an increase in the popularity of Western democratic values and an increase in undefined, unstructured religious consciousness. Filatov describes this sentiment of democracy as equalling ideological lustration, a belief in everything and nothing at the same time. The problem facing the ideology of democracy was that the ideology did not exist within the public sphere. Democracy is a process; it is the underlying currents for this process that make an ideology. The key tenets of an ideology conducive towards democracy – liberalism and pluralism – did not have a strong foundation in either the state or the Church in Russia.¹⁰

⁸ Filatov, 24-25.

⁹ Filatov, 28.

¹⁰ Filatov, 30

For Filatov, the problem with the former Soviet Union was that there was no 'meta-narrative' for democracy. There was no foundation and no support for democracy in the historical worldview of Russia. The void that people now needed to be filled was no longer being filled by the Orthodox Church, but was being filled instead, he argued, by "simple artless ideas" that were being drawn from foreign movies.¹¹

It is difficult to develop democratic and constitutional discipline, stable organizational forms, and even a real dedication to democracy, given such a peculiar worldview underpinning...without any clear grounding in ideas without strong parties, without respect for the law, and with an astounding indifference toward what kind of constitution we live under and even in what sort of state.¹²

In 1991 both the Church and the state were facing challenges to their previously held worldviews which were complicated by the changing worldviews of society with the opening up to the West. The traditionalism of the Church continued to be a struggle for the Church and was the cause of the increasing alienation of Church from society. However, while the Church itself was in isolation, it represented something of a much stronger pull for people – it represented a part of what it was to be Russian. This was the pull that gave the Church some leverage in its relationship with the state, which was grasping for legitimacy.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Filatov, 30-31.

STATE IN TRANSITION

In 1991 the Russian Federation found itself in ruins – an ill-fit image cobbled together from remnants of the puzzle of the former Soviet Union. The result was smaller pieces each trying to find their way on their own, without the bigger picture of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation was no exception. While Gorbachev could see the power slipping from his hands, Yeltsin was working with his counterparts in the Ukraine and Belarus. The result of the broken pieces was a reality of chaos and uncertainty. What would happen next? Yeltsin was focussed primarily on economic reform and dissolving the Soviet Union rather than on strengthening (and/or reforming) political institutions.

Some would say that Yeltsin “led a revolution for ten years”.¹³ The ten years under Yeltsin were certainly a turbulent ride: Shock Therapy in 1992, the October crisis in 1993, a new constitution and parliamentary elections, war with Chechnya and the currency collapse of 1998. There are two critical developments in Church-state relations that we will examine here.

October Crisis 1993

The early 1990s saw significant change in Russia, including the early optimism of economic reform and the growth of many liberties long denied under the Soviet Union. Yeltsin enjoyed the successes until the fall of 1993, when Vice-President

¹³ Janina Sleivyte, “Putin’s Regime and Consolidation of the State” *Baltic Defence Review*, 12, no.2 (2004):60

Aleksandr Rutskoi led a parliamentary putsch to wrest the government from Yeltsin's control. Rutskoi represented the right-wing faction of the government and the coup resulted in an armed conflict involving the military. It was the bloodiest action taken against the government since 1917. On one side of the barricades was President Yeltsin, pulling for radical reform, and on the other, parliament, which took a conservative line. Between these two extreme points of view was a spectrum of political opinion. Yeltsin brought down the putsch in October, and introduced a constitution to referendum in December.

Between 1991 and 1993 the Church had been quiet on its position and which political agenda had its support. The Church wanted to wait and see what happened and which political hopeful would come out ahead. The winner was Yeltsin and his reforms.

The 1993 Russian Constitution, passed in December, contained two articles that dealt directly with religion and the state. Article 14 states "1. The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be established in the capacity of a state or mandatory [religion]. 2. Religious associations are separated from the state and equal before the law."¹⁴ In one interpretation of these articles, however, Nikolas Gvosdev states that:

In the Western understanding of the term, "secular" implies that a government or state favors no particular religion and thus tolerates all faiths. However, I would argue that one can maintain that the term used in the Russian Constitution, "*svetskoe gosudarstvo*," and translated into

¹⁴ Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "Religious Freedom: Russian Constitutional Principles - Historic and Contemporary" *Brigham Young University Law Review*, (2001): 514.

English as "secular state" or "secular government," carries with it not the understanding of secular as religiously neutral" but rather the connotation of "temporal." That is to say, a "*svetskoe gosudarstvo*" is one where the state does not interfere in matters of the Church (e.g. government selection of hierarchs or determination of dogma) and concerns itself with temporal, earthly matters; this does not necessarily imply, however, that society as a whole is religiously neutral.¹⁵

Despite this constitutional foundation for the separation of Church and state, practice did not follow theory.

1997 Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations Law

On 26 September 1997 the Russian Duma passed a bill with 358 votes supporting and 6 votes opposing. The bill was the new Federal Act on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations which was to replace the law implemented in 1990. The law outlines what religions are considered "established" and identifies four traditional religions in Russia: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. The law, however, through its support for those that have contributed to the culture and spirituality of Russia, could further be read to equate Christianity with the Russian Orthodox Church, making the Church an entity unto itself, and places other Christian confessions in limbo. Many groups were concerned with this bill, both inside Russia and internationally. "Non-established" religions, some of which being those new to Russia, were concerned as it favoured "established" religions, such as the

¹⁵ Gvosdev, 515 - 516.

Russian Orthodox Church, over newcomers. The Kremlin argued that the bill was designed to “protect Russians from totalitarian cults and extremist groups”.¹⁶ However, among those groups that were not considered “established”, there was a fear that the Russian Orthodox Church would use the law to thwart the actions of any Church they felt was a competition.

Another important point regarding the 1997 law, apart from being more limiting to new religions than the 1990 counterpart, is that it recognized the historical contribution to the nation made by the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church worked alongside the state in developing the bill, intending to limit the entry of new religions and to limit the activity of those “non-traditional” faiths. Even those within the Russian Orthodox Church were not given leave to criticize the bill. Those who commented on its denial of freedom of conscience, its violation of human rights, or the conflict with the Russian constitution were dismissed by the Church hierarchy.

While the 1990 law provided an opportunity for Church–state separation, the new law placed religion under the regulation of the state, or, as Derek Davis pointed out, a “perpetuation [of the] tyranny over religion”.¹⁷ The preamble states:

Confirming the right of each to freedom of conscience and freedom of creed, and also to equality before the law regardless of his attitudes to religion and his convictions: basing itself on the fact that the Russian Federation is a secular state; recognising the special contribution of

¹⁶Peter Ford, “Kremlin backs new bill to curb church activities in Russia” *Christian Science Monitor*, 89, Issue 208 (September 22, 1997): 6.

¹⁷ Davis, Derek, 661.

Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture. ...respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions and creeds, which constitute an inseparable part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples; considering it important to promote the achievement of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect in questions of freedom of conscience and freedom of creed; hereby adopts this law.¹⁸

Within the law there are three tiers of privilege: one for the Russian Orthodox Church, which holds the majority of followers and has the ability to influence, a second tier for the other "established" religions (Judaism, Buddhism, Islam), and finally, the bottom tier for newcomers. The legislation denies newer Churches tax exemptions, it prohibits publications and the import or distribution of religious literature by these Churches, new Churches cannot organize educational activities for children, and there is a 15-year waiting period from registration before any new group achieves any legal rights.¹⁹ In order to be considered a traditional or "established" religion in 1997 a Church must have been registered prior to 1982, which of course, under the freeze of Brezhnev, would have been nearly impossible. Therefore, many new Churches in Russia lost their standing and the rights granted under the 1990 law. In addition to not having tax exemptions or permission for the dissemination of material, non-established Churches cannot own property, hire halls, or invite foreign guests, although this was not always followed in practice.²⁰

¹⁸Quoted in Michael Bourdeaux, "Religion Revives in all its Varieties: Russia's Regions Today" *Religion, State & Society*, 28, no.1(2000): 10 - 11.

¹⁹ Ford, 6.

²⁰ Davis, Derek, 662.

Some of the pre-Revolutionary Churches even fell under the '15-year rule' because they were abolished under the Soviets and only resurfaced after 1990. The law has been implemented in ways that further undermined the pluralistic ideal of religious tolerance that many countries seek to achieve. Additionally, local governments take complaints regarding unpopular minority faiths to the local Russian Orthodox priest. This further substantiates the role of the Russian Orthodox Church by the side of the state.

Not all clergy supported this new law. Father Gleb Yakunin, for example, spoke out against legislation that was restrictive and felt that the new law fell short of its purpose, which was to limit the influx and impact of foreign religions, and return the Church back under the thumb of the state. Yakunin, along with others who were opposed to the legislation, "favoured an emphasis on ecumenism and interconfessional dialogue"²¹ something that they felt was eliminated by the law in 1997.²²

It would seem that given these restrictions present in the 1997 law, which were absent in the 1990 law, that Russia was not ready for the freedom of conscience established in the 1990 version. The 1997 law was a step away from religious pluralism in Russia and a step in the direction of the Russian Orthodox Church becoming a state Church, or at least a state-favoured Church, in the Russian Federation.

²¹ Zoe Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges to the Moscow Patriarchate, 1991-2001" *Religion, State & Society*, 32, no. 2 (2004): 107

²² Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges", 107.

Winds of Change Blow Again

By the late 1990s, Russia was starting to pull back within itself. The promises of the West proved to give fewer results than was hoped, positive change was not as quick as initially thought and Russian society was becoming disillusioned with the dreams of the early 1990s. This shift was due to many different struggles that were faced by Russia, many of which were carried on the back of society.

Russian sentiment towards the West, and particularly the U.S., was starting to swing back towards the negative. This swing had been because of the poor returns of market reform, or it may have begun in 1994 with Russia's involvement with NATO in the Balkans. In February 1994 the Russian government "unilaterally countered a NATO ultimatum to Serbia, to withdraw heavy artillery units from around Sarajevo or face heavy bombing, with a guarantee to be enforced by Russian peacekeeping units on the spot".²³ The result of this stand was the formation of the Contact Group in April 1994 which consisted of Russia, the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and later, Italy. Russia's involvement in this group was important as it ensured that Russia would be a part of decisions made. Russia wanted to ensure that there was a voice at the table for Serbians and that the Muslims and Croats were not treated and portrayed as innocent victims under the thumb of the domineering Serbians. A

²³Allen C. Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy" *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, no. 1 (2001): 14.

voice for Serbians was especially a concern for the Russian state as Serbians were part of the Orthodox tradition, whereas Croatians were Catholic. The position that Russia took in this matter caused the state to perform quite a balancing act between appeasing the West and serving interests at home. However, when NATO began its bombing campaign after a Serbian bombing of a marketplace in August 1995, Russia was relegated to the sidelines to quietly criticize and comment. Russia participated with the Contact Group until NATO began bombing Serbia in March 1999.²⁴

In August 1998 Russia was hit with a decimating collapse of its economy. The collapse was caused by Russia defaulting on its loan obligations to its foreign debtors and by the earlier crisis in emerging markets in Asia. The government deployed emergency measures to prevent a complete disaster, but those measures did little to prevent the crisis. The next day the value of the rouble plummeted, prices for goods increased dramatically, banks closed, and the stock exchange became non-existent. All Russians felt the collapse, and many felt that it was caused by an imperfect Western system of capitalism and the market economy – a system that did not seem compatible with a Russia way of life. The response of Yeltsin was to fire then Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko and put in place a new government headed by Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

²⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

Unfortunately, that government had no more luck than the other at preventing Russia's economic crash.²⁵

Such developments led the Russian public to question and criticize Russia's relationship with the West. Terms such as "aggression, barbaric, undisguised genocide, criminal, Natocolonialism"²⁶ were used regularly by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and Russian nationalism gained public support. The increase in anti-Western sentiment was certainly of benefit to the Russian Orthodox Church as the Moscow Patriarchate continued to toe the traditionalist line. Not only was Russian society becoming increasingly anti-West, but the state was also.

In December 1999 Yeltsin announced his resignation from the presidency and Vladimir Putin became the acting president. In January 2000 Putin enjoyed popularity among the people which he capitalized on in the election in March. At that time Putin became the next president of the Russian Federation.

WITHIN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

If one had to describe the spiritual condition of Russia in one word, that word would be "schism", a deep inner schism of Russian society, one that pierces every Russian who has lost his identity.

- Veniamin Novik, Orthodox Priest, 1991²⁷

²⁵Michael McFaul, "The Perils of a Protracted Transition" *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 10, no. 2 (1999): 4-18.

²⁶ Lynch, 19.

²⁷ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 101.

By 1992 the Church had affirmed that it did not support the idea of a state Church and believed that the best relationship for the Church and the state was one of 'free co-operation'. The destinies of the two were different, and mutual assistance – without pressure on one another, without replacing one another, without red tape, without attempts to limit the freedom of the Church, the state, society, or the individual,"²⁸ was an equitable agreement. The Church supported only those initiatives of Yeltsin that furthered the interests of the Church.

The Russian Orthodox Church had in fact become more politically conservative and insular since 1991. The Church was failing to reach many Russian youth who were ready to enter the new Western-influenced modern age. Alexander Agadjanian notes that the Russian Orthodox Church was going through a period of "institutional self-isolation" with the dominant strategy of the Church to be the "protection of traditional identity through resistance to global liberal secularism," which included insulating itself from some external (outside of Russia) influences.²⁹ As well, the alliance of the Church with more right-wing groups put it out of touch with Russians. Specifically, the perceived fear of the Church of ideas outside of itself and especially, outside of Russia, put the Church out of touch with youth. As Dunlop described, "The conjoining of *sergianstvo* (servitude to the state) and *iosiflianstvo* (an excessive emphasis on externals, external to the Church) would ineluctably serve to discredit the

²⁸Vsevolod Chaplin, "The Church and Politics in Contemporary Russia" in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, 95 – 112 (USA, M.E. Sharpe, 1995):108.

²⁹ Agadjanian, 334, 339.

Church in the eyes of the populace."³⁰ When the Soviet Union collapsed the people lost sympathy for the Church, especially as rumours circulated about collaboration with the KGB.

In late 1991 and into 1992, in response to the August 1991 putsch, the KGB archives were temporarily opened and the Supreme Soviet Commission to Investigate the Causes and Circumstances of the August 1991 Putsch was organized. A special section of the Commission, led by Lev Ponomarev and Father Gleb Yakunin, was set to look specifically at the use of Churchmen in KGB investigations.

The special committee believed that the KGB used all religions similarly, but the investigation was closed by the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov. Father Yakunin argued that their inability to continue their study of the files was not beneficial for the Russia Orthodox Church. The research conducted focussed only on the Russian Orthodox Church and would lead one to think that no other faith had collaborated with the KGB. Father Yakunin went on to state that the reports did not say what the various agents did and there was suspicion by those investigating the files that, since the investigators were not able to look freely, certain files were given to them and may have been selected to specifically discredit the Church.

³⁰John Dunlop, "The Russian Orthodox Church as an "Empire-Saving" Institution in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux, 15 - 40 (USA, M.E. Sharpe, 1995): 35.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, four of the six permanent members of the Moscow Patriarchate Holy Synod were named as active KGB agents: Patriarch Aleksii II, Metropolitan Iuvenalii of Krutitsy, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk. In February 1992 Father Gleb Yakunin was publicly attacked in *Pravda* for figuring out the agents' names and "defacto revealing names of agents".³¹ In June 1992, in a closed session of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Viktor Barannikov, chairman of the Russian Ministry for State Security accused Father Yakunin and Lev Ponomarev of treason. On July 26, legal action was taken against the duo by the Russian Procurator's office. These charges were later reversed in December and Father Yakunin and Ponomarev were not put on trial. However, the damage to the Church had already been done. (The Church had been so infiltrated by the KGB that some jokingly referred to the Moscow Patriarchate as the *Mitropolitbiuro* (metropolitan/Politburo).³² Zoia Krakhmal'nikova, a religious rights activist and former political prisoner stated:

It is a catastrophe. A national moral catastrophe... This is a spiritual Chernobyl, an infection with the sin of Judas. The Lord said concerning Christians that they are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. And if we Christians behave ourselves so shamefully, so immorally that our clergymen collaborate with the secret police, that our hierarchs turn out to be agents of the KGB, then what can we expect from our people, of whom we are a part?... [A] patriarch who has turned out to be a KGB agent cannot repent only before God. He must repent [publicly] before the Church people.³³

³¹ *Pravda*, 14 February, 1992, p. 6 as quoted in Dunlop, 30.

³² Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 102.

³³ Dunlop, 31-32.

Patriarch Aleksii did in fact kneel down before his congregation and ask not only forgiveness of his sins, but for those of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviet Union. However, some clergymen felt that it was not enough to repent; Father Yakunin sent an open letter to the patriarch:

Is it not time for all archbishops and priests who cooperated with the secret police to reveal to the people of the Church the truth about our Church's tragic history, and to put it to that same Church to judge whether it has any further use for hierarchs who are CPSU and KGB collaborators, or whether the time has finally come for them to step down and for the people of the Church to exercise their right to choose their own pastors freely?³⁴

Yet Patriarch Aleksii wanted to reassert hierarchical authority over the Church. In mid - 1992, he made a statement asserting the position of the Russian Orthodox Church in regards to the split of the Soviet Union and how it should pertain to the Church:

The canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate includes not only Russia, but Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the countries of the Baltic, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia. It would be wrong automatically to transfer the causes for the division of the USSR to the Church sphere. One cannot form fifteen local Orthodox Churches in a country that has been divided into fifteen sovereign states.³⁵

It was thought by those whom Stephen Shenfield labelled as the 'neo-Soviets', that if the Church was able to maintain its influence throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union, then there was still hope in rebuilding the USSR.³⁶

By the end of 1992 right-wing groups were gaining popularity as the "democratic" reforms put more burdens on Russians, and the corruption within

³⁴ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 103.

³⁵ Dunlop, 21.

³⁶ Dunlop, 21.

the government added to their disillusionment. On the other side, the media, which was primarily controlled by Westernists, was highly critical of the Russian Orthodox Church. There was a fear among Westernists of a renewal of the traditionally close relationship between Church and state and Westernists therefore, emphasized the past corroboration of the Church with the KGB. Most of the media preferred the splinter groups of the Orthodox Church, Catholics, and Protestant movements. They saw Western Churches as levers for democracy and social welfare. By this time the Free Russian Orthodox Church (the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in Russia) was moving towards allying with Vasil'ev's Pamyat and used Pamyat's "thugs" to get Churches from the Moscow Patriarchate. The Free Russian Orthodox Church later lost support among democrats, especially after siding with the "Red-Browns".³⁷

Some of the more conservative groups within Russia were beginning to align themselves with the Russian Orthodox Church. One of these groups was the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, described by Pospelovsky as a neo-Nazi organization that campaigned against the best-educated clergy, accusing them of disseminating Judaic ideology. The list of the accused drawn by the Brotherhood differentiated in age, pro/anti-West sentiment, and liberal/conservative political views. The only things these particular clergy had in common were that they were all high profile, popular clergy who were successful in their ministry and missionary achievements. The reputed leader of the clergy group singled out by

³⁷ Dunlop, 32.

the Brotherhood was Father Aleksandr Men, who had been murdered in 1990.³⁸ John Dunlop identifies a possible affiliation between Deacon Andrei Kuraev, former associate of Patriarch Aleksii, and the Brotherhood:

The nationalistic ideology of the Union of Brotherhoods had come to dominate the ecclesiastical life of the capital. Kuraev defined that ideology as revolving around two obsessive themes: the imminence of the Anti-Christ and the greatness of Russia. A hunt for heretics was said to be another key aspect of the ideology.³⁹

The Church itself argued that it did not support nationalism, but patriotism, and that it was not allied with any nationalist movement. But despite these assertions, the Church still relied strongly on its ties to culture to claim the hearts of Russians and defend a preferential position alongside the state.

The year of 1993 brought about many changes for Russia. Within the Church, it was also the year that ultra-conservative rightists within the group became more vocal. One such orator was Metropolitan Ioann of Petersburg and Ladoga, who was also a permanent member of the Moscow Patriarchate Holy Synod. Ioann was openly anti-Semitic, a sentiment that was believed to have influenced his followers, and argued on the believed Jewish conspiracy of the "Elders of Zion." He played on the increase in anti-Western sentiments, touted the United States as a source of world evil, and promoted hatred against the U.S. As well, Ioann labelled President Yeltsin and the other pro-democrats of Russia as another point of world evil, and he encouraged followers to vote against

³⁸ Pospelovsky, 52.

³⁹ Dunlop, 34-5.

Yeltsin and his social and economic policies during the April 1993 referendum, which was part of the showdown between Yeltsin and Parliament. The Patriarch remained neutral during this referendum.⁴⁰

Within the Church, there was a call from liberal voices who wanted the extremists removed from leadership positions and an official condemnation from the Church of Metropolitan Ioann and the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods. The Church, however, remained relatively silent, even after Metropolitan Ioann claimed the Patriarch agreed with his arguments of anti-Semitism and ultra-conservative ideas. This silence would be maintained for over a year.

Despite conservative movements gaining ground within the Church, the Church was trying to make some changes. The year 1992 saw open dialogue at the general Council of Bishops. Discussion was held on the internal strife of the Church, including a critique of the bishops and some Church policies. The Church and the Patriarch, however, refrained from speaking out against ultra-conservative voices from within the Church – namely, Metropolitan Ioann and the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods.⁴¹ This could have been a continuation of Patriarch Aleksii's need to show the world outside that the Church was a solid unit without any divisions of ideology or belief. However, the silence in these matters did nothing to boost the public's perception of the Church as a modern

⁴⁰ Dunlop, 33.

⁴¹ Dunlop, 35.

institution, especially as the Church spoke out about more conservative state policies regarding freedom of conscience.

The Church's affiliation with non-Western and non-liberal ideas surfaced again and again. In August 1993, for example, Archbishop Viacheslav Polosin, chairman of the Committee on Freedom of Conscience of the Russian Supreme Soviet started discussions regarding his hopes for a "Eurasian Orthodox-Muslim Union" that would supersede the Russian Federation. In an article in the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* an expert, Vladlen Sirotkin, for the Committee on Freedom of Conscience of the Russian Supreme Soviet, (which was chaired by Archpriest Viacheslav Polosin) discussed this idea. It was based on the writings of Sirotkin, who had based his writings on the ideas of the "interwar émigré known as the Eurasians" who believed that Russia should be named "Eurasia" because it was so separate from other cultures and had ties to the nineteenth century idea of a "Turanian" East, as well as to other Slavs.⁴² The "Eurasians" were opposed to Western democracy, and supported instead an authoritarian rule, "the Eurasians believed that Russians were constitutionally incapable of participating in Western culture"⁴³ and considered themselves the "empire-savers" of Russia. The plan outlined by Sirotkin was not just to rebuild the USSR but also to rebuild Byzantium. He believed that the people would rally around the plan if put forward by the Russian Orthodox and Muslim clergy:

⁴² Dunlop, 17.

⁴³ Dunlop, 17.

If anyone is still respected it is the Church clergy... And, after all, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church have had the political experience – both positive and negative – of direct participation in mass socioreligious movements.⁴⁴

On 26-29 May 1993 the 1st All-World Russian Assembly took place at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. The Assembly was a collection of conservative, nationalist organizations; the Moscow Patriarchate played a dominant role. The Assembly was addressed and given a blessing by Patriarch Aleksii and some felt that “the Assembly was not only sanctified by the presence of the Patriarch of All Russias, Aleksii II, but it conducted its work under the protection of the Church”.⁴⁵ The Church gave its response through Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk:

The Assembly did not take place under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church but with its spiritual participation ... If the Assembly had been conceived as a political event, then the Russian Church would never have taken part in it.⁴⁶

Despite the Metropolitan’s disagreement, the Assembly did seem to be a political event. At the Assembly political formulations were agreed upon, such as who were considered to be ethnic Russians (Great Russians, Little Russians (Ukrainians), Belarussians and those who converted to Orthodoxy) and a re-creation of the USSR was supported. In addition, the Assembly asserted that:

the democratic concept of “the separation of powers” was a Western invention unsuitable for Russia. “The idea of the separation of powers,” the Assembly decided, “will never take hold on Russian Orthodox soil,

⁴⁴ Vladlen Sirtokin, as quoted in Dunlop, 18.

⁴⁵ Dunlop, 15.

⁴⁶ Dunlop, 15.

because as the Lord said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation...' (Matthew 12:25)."⁴⁷

If the Church's anti-Western profile was not enough, it also engaged in spiritual protectionism, attempting to limit Christian competition. On 28 April 1993 Patriarch Aleksii sent letters to the Ministry of Justice proposing

a joint commission of state officials and representatives of religious organizations... and that that commission be granted powers for a period of five to seven years to veto the licensing and activities of foreign religious organizations.⁴⁸

Further to that request, the Moscow Patriarchate led a campaign to monitor, and in some cases outlaw, the evangelism and proselytism of foreign missionaries. In an address in Kostroma Patriarch Aleksii stated:

The work of the Russian Church for the rebirth of society is threatened by the expansion of foreign missions in Russia. Hundreds of thousands of very different preachers have invaded Russia. There is great tension in our country owing to divisions between people on political and nationalistic issues. There is a danger of similar divisions between people on political and nationalistic grounds, the Patriarchate wants to prevent this and to help our society to be stable. So the Patriarchate has suggested to parliament that it pass a law proclaiming a moratorium on religious propaganda from outside.⁴⁹

Ironically, that same day as the request for the joint commissions the Patriarch began his non-political profile of the Church, declaring that the Church should stay out of politics, that clergy should refuse to be parliamentary candidates stating "we should not join any political parties or movements and be equally

⁴⁷ Stated by the Assembly, cited by Dunlop, 16.

⁴⁸ Pospelovsky, 63.

⁴⁹ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 92.

fair to our parishioners whatever their political views".⁵⁰ Patriarch Aleksii avoided direct confrontation with any extremists and preached about morality, moderation and tolerance to the nation and its leaders.

On July 14, 1993 amendments to the 1990 Law on the Freedom of Conscience were adopted by the Supreme Soviet. These amendments included the creation of a parliamentary liaison commission, which consisted of members of the Committee on the Freedom of Conscience and representatives of registered religions in Russia. Further, the amendments denied the preaching and missionary activities of foreigners unless they were requested by a local religious organization – and in this case they still needed a license from the Committee. The amendments further outlined that the four traditional religions were Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. These amendments were vetoed by Yeltsin on principle as violations of religious freedom.

Since 1991 the Church had not proved itself to be a clear supporter of democracy, pluralism or private ownership. The Church opposed some of Yeltsin's ideas and favoured a religious quasi-monopoly with strict limits to foreign Churches. Conservative Orthodox believers tended to be conservative in their political views: they were more favourable to harsher methods of instilling law and order and less concerned about the infringement on individual rights; they believed children should be taught to respect authority; they were positive towards Nicholas II and Stalin; wanted to ban "harmful" books; supported the

⁵⁰ Pospelovsky, 65.

isolation of people with AIDS; and were less supportive of multi-party politics and the market economy. Some conservative believers did support an Orthodox state.⁵¹

In April 1994, after the political dust had settled and Yeltsin's pro-Western vision had emerged victorious over Rutskoi's Eurasianist, Soviet, great state coalition, Patriarch Aleksii finally took a stand against the right wing groups who had been making inroads into the Church, especially Metropolitan Ioann and the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods. The Patriarch outlined that Ioann did not speak for the Russian Orthodox Church. He distanced himself from Ioann and described the Russian Orthodox Church as being "free of racial prejudice. To whom is it not clear that to incite interethnic discord in our difficult time is madness? The opinion of one hierarch is, I repeat, not the opinion of the Church."⁵² Patriarch Aleksii further rejected Ioann's "call for a religious war against Jews and for the expulsion of unbaptized Jews from Russian soil: We categorically deny the inevitability of religious wars between any confessions".⁵³ He also went on to condemn the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods of national chauvinism, which was a defilement of "truly Christian patriotism". What was the cause of the sudden break in silence? One reason was that Ioann and his supporters had been openly condemning Patriarch Aleksii for being philo-Semitic. Another reason was that Aleksii was giving his support to the "civic

⁵¹ White, 359 – 372.

⁵² Dunlop, 35.

⁵³ Dunlop, 35-36.

concord" of Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin, whereas Ioann as supporting General Rutskoi, who was opposed to it. However, the seeming 'change in heart' of Patriarch Aleksii only pertained to the Church's domestic policy. In terms of foreign policy the Church assumed the anti-Western stance of the neo-Soviets. Why? It seemed that the conservative opinion of the Church was more acceptable once the platform of the state had been secured. With Yeltsin securely heading the state, the Church could now take its position on foreign policy, as well as other matters.⁵⁴

These external factors also impacted the Church internally. In November 1993 there was a debate within the Church after a resolution from the Holy Synod regarding the involvement of clergy in politics. The Holy Synod determined that priests would not be permitted to stand for political office. This decision was initiated after priests elected to the Congress of People's Deputies ended up on opposite sides of the barricades during the October crisis. In December of that year the patriarch gave the four elected priests, one of whom was Father Gleb Yakunin, the option to resign from their elected position or be defrocked. Father Gleb Yakunin was the only priest to make the decision to be defrocked.⁵⁵

One of the issues splitting the Church into reformers and traditionalists was the request for reforms to the Church itself. For example, reformers wanted

⁵⁴ Dunlop, 35-36.

⁵⁵ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 105.

to change the language of the liturgy from Old Church Slavonic to the vernacular Russian. Father Yakunin took the belief in the need for reformation so much to heart that in 2000 he established the Orthodox Church of the Resurrection in cooperation with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kiev Patriarchate and the True Orthodox Church. His initiatives were considered to be heretical by conservative members of the Russian Orthodox Church clergy as they included "making fasting voluntary, replacing Old Church Slavonic [with the language of the congregation] and reducing the length of services. A greater level of accountability was guaranteed by Yakunin's decision to make the financial records of the Church readily available."⁵⁶ Yakunin later 'canonised' Father Men.

The schisms in the Church were regrettable to everyone, but unavoidable.

In 1998, the reality of the schisms came to the forefront when

Books by Orthodox theologians, among them Aleksandr Men', were burned by order of the local hierarch at a local theological seminary in Yekaterinburg. The books were denounced as 'heretical'. One commentator concluded: 'Now the appalling philosophy of schism within Orthodoxy is upon us and is taking hold in parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church... . Active efforts are under way to divide members of the Orthodox community into "clean" and "unclean".'⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 104.

⁵⁷ Knox, 105.

BISHOPS COUNCIL 2000

In light of the many political and social changes in Russia, a Bishops Council was convened in 2000 in order to outline the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in relation to the state as well as society. From August 13 – 16, 2000 there was a convention of the Jubilee Bishops Council of the Church in Moscow. The theme of the Council was the “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”. Out of that Council came a document of that name outlining the Church’s positions and roles about various social issues. In this document, the Church acknowledged in the contemporary world that the word “nation” could refer to either the ethnic community or the citizens of the state. The relationship between the Church and state must take both of these meanings into account. The Church acknowledged that relations between Church and state had changed over time, and outlined how the state “orders worldly life”. Yet the Church, it was noted, was “not submissive to the elements of the world”. Therefore, the state had no grounds, in the eyes of the Church, for a dominant role in the relationship between the Church and state. The Church would respect the state and obey the state, but the Church would only really answer to God.⁵⁸

The support of the Church for the state was a matter of choice. This idea is problematic, since by acknowledging that it would obey the state, the Church by implication recognized its possible subservience to the state. The Church also

⁵⁸ Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13 – 16, 2000. “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”, Moscow

acknowledged that the state is “blessed” by God and that the Church supports the state as well as encourages individual submission to the state because the state is needed in order to prevent anarchy. The state is absolute, but only in temporal affairs. Since the Church is founded by God, the state must also respect the Church. The Church’s goal is “the eternal salvation of people while the goal of the state is their well being on earth.”⁵⁹ The Church recognizes that the state is secular; however that recognition does not condone the removal of religion from the public sphere. Instead, there is an expectation of cooperation in areas that are relevant to the Church. In the relationship between Church and state, the Church should not assume state powers or initiatives, but should exercise influence on state decisions. The state should not interfere with the Church; that is to say, the state should not interfere with the Russian Orthodox Church in particular.

Full cooperation between Church and state, however, could only exist in an Orthodox state. Through this assertion, the Bishops’ Council expresses its recognition of the basis for *symphonia*. Symphony is “essentially cooperation, mutual support and mutual responsibility without one’s side intruding into the exclusive domain of the other”⁶⁰ and requires two partners only – the state and the Russian Orthodox Church.

⁵⁹ Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13 – 16, 2000. “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”, Moscow

⁶⁰ Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13 – 16, 2000. “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”, Moscow

The greatest blessings granted to human beings by God's ultimate grace are priesthood and kingdom, the former (priesthood, Church authority) taking care of divine affairs, while the latter (kingdom, government) guiding and taking care of human affairs, and both, come from the same source, embellishing human life.⁶¹

Symphony, the Council argued, did not exist in Byzantium in a pure form as the Church was subject to claims from the head of the state. Within Russia, the relationship between Church and state has been more harmonious, with a few deviations (Ivan the Terrible, Tsar Alexis and Patriarch Nikon). The Local Council⁶² made the declaration that in the years of 1917-18, while the empire was collapsing, "the demand to separate Church and state was likened to the wish that the sun should not shine and fire should not warm up." Currently, despite the belief that the "symphonic norm" has been distorted, the Church still aims to solidify its relationship with the state.

In the resolution of the Council in the legal status of the Orthodox Church of Russia, the state is called upon to accept, in particular, these provisions: the Russian Orthodox Church, being part of the one Universal Church of Christ, shall have the pre-eminent public and legal status among other confessions in the Russian State, which befits her as the great shrine for the overwhelming majority of the population and a great historical force that built the Russian State... As soon as they are made public, decrees and statutes issued by the Orthodox Church for herself in the order established by herself, as well as deeds of the Church government and court shall be recognised by the state as legally valid and important unless they violate state laws... State laws concerning the Orthodox Church shall be issued only with the consent of the Church authorities.⁶³

⁶¹ Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13 - 16, 2000. "Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", Moscow.

⁶² "Local Council" is the term used in the "Bases of the Social Concept" document.

⁶³ Jubilee Bishops Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, August 13 - 16, 2000. "Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", Moscow.

This statement seems to contradict the previous on obeying the state. It would seem that while the Church chose to tread carefully during this Council, trying not to offend the state, the Bishops still wanted to get their point across that the Church is not under the control of the state, and may obey but only under conditions agreed to by the Church authorities. This position certainly gives the Russian Orthodox Church privilege among the other faiths of Russia. Different interpretations of this statement give the example that if the state decided to pass a law that made it impossible for anything but pluralism of faiths, the Russian Orthodox Church could step in to influence that – as was done during the drafting of the 1997 Freedom of Conscience Law.

In Chapter One the “two swords” theory of power is discussed. The Council defines this theory as the power of Church and state being separate but still going back to the Bishops of Rome (as the theory was applied in medieval western Europe). The Council’s own interpretation of this analogy is that the Church is separate from state in regards to doctrine and teachings, which, the Council argues, cannot be changed regardless of the wishes of the state. The Council vows that the Church will not denounce the state, even under persecution, and that while the Church may obey the state, loyalty to God will always come first. The Council further discusses that if they find it is impossible to obey the state, the Church may enter dialogue with other parties to institute change. Four possible options of these possible dialogues are listed: dialogue with the authority; dialogue with the people in order to change the legislation

through the democratic process; dialogue with international bodies and world opinion; or encouraging believers to peaceful disobedience.⁶⁴ This statement almost reads as a bit of threat to the state, as it outlines each of the avenues the Church has in order to make change in order to better suit the Church. This request for the state to uphold the position of the Church is further outlined in the request that other religions should be considered by taking into account the factors of numbers, historical relevance, and links to culture.

In a manner that seems consistent with other Church discussions on the state and the historical evidence of the Church being slow to align itself with any system of government, the Council states that it does not give preference to any system of government. The Church would only like to cooperate in areas that benefit the Church, individuals, and society. The Council goes so far as to list the areas where the Church wants to cooperate, and where they do not.

Table 2: Parameters of Cooperation/No Cooperation in Church-state Relations in Russia⁶⁵

Cooperation:

- Peacemaking on international, inter-ethnic and civic levels and promoting mutual understanding and cooperation among people, nations and states
- Concern for the preservation of morality in society
- Spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and formation
- Charity and the development of joint social programs

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

- Preservation, restoration and development of the historical and cultural heritage, including concern for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments
- Dialogue with governmental bodies of all branches and levels *on issues important for the Church* (emphasis added) and society, including the development of appropriate laws, by-laws, instructions and decisions
- Care of the military and law-enforcement workers and their spiritual and moral education
- Efforts to prevent crime and care of prisoners
- Science and research
- Culture and arts
- Healthcare
- Work of ecclesiastical and secular mass media
- Preservation of the environment
- Economic activity for the benefit of the Church, state and society
- Support for the institution of family, for motherhood and childhood
- Opposition to the work of pseudo-religious structures presenting a threat to the individual and society

No Cooperation:

- Political struggle, election agitation, campaigns in support of particular political parties and public and political leaders
- Waging civil war or aggressive external war
- Direct participation in intelligence or any other activity that demands secrecy by law even in making one's confession or reporting to the Church authorities

The Church shows, through this list, that the sphere of its influence is envisioned as quite large, and open to much interpretation as noted by the italicized "*on issues important for the Church*". The Church continues by outlining its relationship with the division of state powers at all levels, those levels being national, regional and local. In relation to the legislative bodies, the Church requests dialogue on those laws that impact the life of the Church, Church-state relations and the spheres of the Church's social concerns. Dialogue with the

executive power remains the same as that with the legislative bodies with the addition that the "Church maintains contacts on the respective level with central and local executive power bodies". Finally, in regards to judicial bodies, the Church only seeks involvement in regards to representation of Church interests in court. Yet, secular courts, the Church holds, have no place in internal Church disputes.

For the most part, contact or cooperation with the state is only done through the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, or by representation with permission in writing (which is all done from level to level). The canons of the Russian Orthodox Church prohibit clergy from participating in affairs of the state government, including representative bodies of power. However, the clergy should vote and are welcome to voice their stand on social issues, but only through the Councils, Church authorities and those empowered by them.

Overall the document *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* leaves many vague and grey areas to be open to interpretation. This has no doubt been done on purpose in order to allow for different interpretations as are needed for a situation and/or defence. For example, the wording "maintain contacts" discussed in the previous paragraph leaves much open – does contact refer to influence? What are the parameters of that contact? As well, Church cooperation is poorly defined. Does it imply exclusive cooperation, or in collaboration with other confessions? The end result is that the document is both overt and covert in that it easily reads as what the Church actually believes, but

there are undercurrents of broad interpretation that can be used if needed. It is very much a 'have your cake and eat it too' scenario. As per Stephen Shenfield's analysis, the Church wants the best of both worlds, the tsarist and the Soviet.

CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS UNDER PUTIN

In 2000, Putin followed in Yeltsin's legacy and immediately sought the support of the Russian Orthodox Church. Putin was very attentive to the hierarchy of the Church and continued meetings with the Patriarch. The Church was hoping the state would return the remainder of its assets and for Orthodox education to be introduced into the schools. The Patriarch's strategy with the state was "one that [was] intended to preserve the Orthodox Church's dominant position, but one that [was] far less politically based and more open to Church-state separation than many would expect".⁶⁶ After all, the Church may be separate from the state, but not from society and it needed to maintain a voice in some situations, as will be noted by the two case studies on education and freedom of expression. These situations, the Church asserted, were limited to those involving social and economic issues, public morality and international relations. The Church viewed its most important role as one of "safeguarding civil peace and accord in society".⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Davis, Derek, 664.

⁶⁷ Davis, Derek, 665.

To its own end, the Church wanted to impress on the state that Russian identity was based in Orthodoxy and therefore there was a need to limit foreign influence on Russians, especially in religious terms. The Patriarch was seeking a preferred status for the Church, which would ultimately become the guardian of the nation with the creation of unity through religious nationalism. As already discussed, the Church released the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000, which outlined the need for mutual independence of the Church and the state, but allowed for the cooperation of the two in some civic matters. The Church wanted its place in society secured, in which the Church was free to do what it pleased while being allowed to influence the state on issues that the Church felt were relevant.

The 'cooperation' of the Church became apparent in March 2000 when some members of the Church equated state initiatives with the work of the Anti-Christ. For example, a huge uproar was heard when the new individual taxpayers' numbers (INN) included the number '666'. The Holy Synod stepped in and while it supported the introduction of the system, requested understanding of those individuals who were more superstitious and "to introduce neither more nor less than a system of bar codes different from that in use in the whole of the rest of the world".⁶⁸ The Church wanted society to take Russian Orthodox faith into account as much as possible. The changing of the

⁶⁸ Aleksandr Verkhovsky, "The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Nationalist, Xenophobic and Antiwestern Tendencies in Russia Today: Not Nationalism, but Fundamentalism" *Religion, State & Society*, 30, no. 4(2002): 338.

INN system was due solely to the outcries of the Church, which created a relationship based less on 'cooperation' and more on 'interference' and influence. The Holy Synod's anti-globalist tendencies gave more freedom to the fundamentalists, as discussed earlier, which led anti-globalists to think that the "Russian Orthodox Church and the state are the main obstacles in the path of aspirations for the world domination".⁶⁹

On 5 June 2001 a draft Concept of state policy in the religious sphere, partially authored by the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation for Moscow, was published and advertised. The Concept proposed to legalize and regulate the privileges of 'traditional' religions and sorted religions by 3 criteria: number of followers, historical contribution, and activities as a unifying source in Russian society. In November 2001 the Moscow Patriarchate and the Central Muslim Spiritual Directorate petitioned to have the 1997 law amended to add clauses of privilege for 'traditional' religious organizations. The Concept from June 2001 had been aimed at changes to the 1997 law but it faced opposition from liberal government officials. Duma deputy Aleksandr Chuyev recommended that a 'traditional' religious organization be defined by those which have been in existence for at least 85 years in Russia and that these 'traditional' religious organizations receive privileges such as free television time and be allowed to teach in schools.⁷⁰ Some within the Church

⁶⁹ Verkhovsky, 342.

⁷⁰ Verkhovsky, 337.

hierarchy did not feel that definition and the outlining of privileges was enough, while others argued that 85 years was not long enough to be considered 'traditional' and that bureaucrats had no place deciding what was 'traditional' or not: "the ROC had certain natural privileges which this proposal would sideline".⁷¹

In 2002, further legislation was brought in to offer preferential treatment for the Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodox priests were invited to teach religion in schools (after regular school hours), state money was given for charitable work, media services and education efforts. Zoe Knox further notes that the Church received economic favours from the state as well as tax exemptions on items such as imported tobacco for sale by the Church.⁷²

PUTIN'S 'MANAGED DEMOCRACY'

As mentioned in the discussion on the state in this chapter, Putin inherited a disjointed and confused Russia from Yeltsin and his 'ten year revolution'. Putin set to work immediately to re-centralize the government and to establish more strength in the state. The result of Putin's initiative was what scholars call a

⁷¹ Verkhovsky, 337.

⁷² Knox, "Postsoviet Challenges," 87 – 113. These privileges were the source of some rumours and assertions of corruption within in the Church hierarchy as well as collaborators with Russian organized crime. ("Russian Church Linked to Crime, Corruption" *The Vancouver Sun* (June 30, 2000); "More on Russian Orthodox Finances" *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 9 (Fall 2001): 10.)

'managed democracy',⁷³ or a combination of democracy and authoritarianism. McFaul describes it as a "system that is far more 'managed' than democratic" in which Putin has not fought for human rights and has eroded already weak democratic institutions, but is far too modern to revert to the dictatorship of the Soviet Union.⁷⁴ Daniel Kimmage aptly describes 'managed democracy' as follows:

Managed "democracy" is what happens when a ruling elite feels obligated to hold elections but does everything in its power to control their outcome. In the post-Soviet world, managed democracy is the brainchild of a political elite that grudgingly accepts elections as a precondition for legitimacy, yet retains a Soviet understanding of politics as a dark art of manipulation. The practice of managed democracy amounts to a grab-bag of dirty tricks and a playing field that is anything but level -- state-controlled media serve up puff pieces to promote favoured candidates and smear campaigns to denigrate undesirable ones, election commissions ignore gross violations and punish minor ones, duplicate candidates confuse voters. The list is long and sordid. But its purpose is short and sweet -- to reduce the necessary evil of elections to a predictable exercise that allows elites to devote the bulk of their time to more pressing pursuits, mainly the exploitation of public office for private gain.⁷⁵

William Clark states further that,

Managed democracy ... means a combination of democratic institutions and authoritarian institutions. Of course, it's clear. Russia now is in the process ... not from communist dictatorship, but from the stage of Yeltsin anarchy and chaos to the functioning democratic institutions. And in this way, to make [the] situation stable, [the] Kremlin had to use both democratic and not democratic methods. It's just [the] rule of nature.⁷⁶

⁷³ This term has had its conception attributed to Michael McFaul in his article "Ten Years After the Soviet Breakup: A Mixed Record, An Uncertain Future" in the *Journal of Democracy*, 12, 4 (October 2001): 87 - 94.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Daniel Kimmage, "Kyrgyzstan: The Failure Of Managed Democracy" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (12 April 2005), <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/4/D99CFEFE-BA22-41A9-AF8B-A8BE178D80BC.html>

⁷⁶ William A. Clark "Russia at the Polls: Potemkin Democracy" *Problems of Post Communism* (March/April 2004): 23.

Over the time that Putin has been president, he has successfully created a parliament with little or no objection to his actions or the Kremlin's. In the Duma elections in 2003, under the restrictions imposed on those who could claim seats, the United Party, supporters of Putin, gained a majority of the seats and control of the Duma committees as well as the Duma Council, which is responsible for running the Duma. Grigorii Yavlinskii of the party Yabloko stated: "Russia has no independent parliament anymore".⁷⁷ Not only did the Duma elections secure support for Putin, but the Duma was considered a very 'grey' parliament, which leaned in the direction it was told to. Clark argues that during Putin's current term the cycle in Russian political sentiment may lead more towards the 'managed' than the 'democracy' in order to further strengthen the powers of the Kremlin and bring some sort of stabilisation to the country.

Putin is a strong partner for the Russian Orthodox Church due to his more conservative nature and his ambivalence towards democracy and human rights (e.g. Chechen War). As well, Putin is a traditionalist, which is also of benefit to the Church. Despite Putin's acknowledgement of the need to have some sort of a relationship with the West, he remains cautious and wary of Western pressures. Religious pluralism would be difficult to support as a policy under a political sphere of managed democracy. While pluralism is not contrary to managed democracy, pluralism is more of an attribute of liberal democracy and civil

⁷⁷ Clark, 26.

society, which does not coincide with Putin's idea of a managed democracy. The two schools of thought represent different ideologies - managed democracy maintains a strong level of control over the determinations of democratic processes. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is more supportive of managed democracy as it also supports a tighter control over society and institutions. Orthodoxy is in harmony with tradition and strong leadership.

Chapter Five

Case Studies in Church-State Relations

Up until now, the discussion has focussed on the theoretical foundations of the relationship between Church and state and the changes that have taken place in Church-state relations over time. What follows is an examination of two different cases in which the Church exerted influence over the state. The first case study gives an idea of the relations between the Church and state from a very early period in the post-Soviet era and of how the Church exerted its influence on state policy. The second case study will discuss Church influence over the right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression in contemporary Moscow.

EDUCATION

In 1992 three Russian delegates from the Ministry of Education went to the United States to talk to some Christian teachers about how the Russians could include Christian values in Russian schools.¹ The Ministry of Education felt that a void had been left in the education of morality with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The inspiration for religious morality in schools came from the pre-Soviet traditions and the return of religion into people's lives. The 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations ended the ban on religious

¹ Perry Glanzer, "Teaching Christian Ethics in Russian Public Schools: The Testing of Russia's Church - State Boundaries" *Journal of Church and State*, 41, no.2 (Spring, 1999): 285 - 306. Much of the information that follows is taken from the work done by Perry Glanzer.

education, ended the official funding of atheistic propaganda, returned legal standing to religious organizations and allowed religious leaders to engage in religious instruction, charitable activities and publishing. However, religious education itself had been essentially ignored to this point. But the events that led up to this meeting in 1992 actually began in 1990.

In defence of allowing Christian ethics to be taught in schools, Evgeny Kurkin, the Russian Deputy Minister of Education, stated that: "seventy years ago, we closed God out of our country, and it has caused so many problems in our society we cannot count them... We must put God back into our country, and we must begin with our children."² The impetus for this move towards Christian morality was the desire to replace communist morality education. Kurkin was less worried about where the offer of this training in morality originated. In this case it was offered by American evangelists.

In 1990, a viewing of the film JESUS was given to a group of Communist officials, including either the minister or deputy minister of education from almost every republic. In January 1991, a group of American Christians with the JESUS Film Project, led by Paul Eshleman, and a division of Campus Crusade for Christ, circulated 66,000 free copies of the JESUS video to Russian schools. American teachers were offered by the JESUS Film Project to be sent to train Russian teachers in a course on Christian ethics and morality. The division of the JESUS project spearheading this endeavour was the International School Project

² Glanzer, 290.

(ISP). The ISP had the task of writing the curriculum, but it faced problems with the Church-state relations that then existed in Russia, especially since those writing the curriculum believed that in order to lead a moral life an individual needed to have a relationship with Christ. The Ministry of Education insisted that the curriculum adhere to Russian Church-state laws, which outlined that the curriculum had to be educational, not evangelical. However, Eschleman had another point of view:

The biggest lie in the whole world today is the separation of Church and state. It is absolutely the most devastating, wrong thing ever perpetrated on mankind. The very first thing we ought to do is develop our whole educational system around the Scriptures. It's (sic) the principles for how to live life.³

Eshleman had no problem using the government to exclude other religions from being brought into the educational system: "Should it be open for every other religion in the world? No, I don't think it should be. That's because I'm a follower of God and His Word. And that's why I think the Bible ought to be taught in the public school system."⁴ However, the writers of the curriculum wanted to ensure that they did not support a state-imposed Christianity, or an American ideology of pluralism on the Russian people. Their aim was to encourage a "voluntarism", or a "Principle of Voluntary Commitment" to Jesus.

In May 1991 250 Soviet teachers and principals gathered in the Moscow suburb of Perova to take the ISP curriculum. There were three parts to the

³ Glanzer, 292.

⁴ Glanzer, 293.

curriculum in order to balance the educational aspect as well as the evangelical. The curriculum made a strong argument for Christianity and participants were given the opportunity to receive Christ after watching the film JESUS at the end of the meeting.

On December 25, 1991, the USSR ceased to exist. The new Russian Ministry of Education wanted to continue the partnership with ISP. The ISP was able to avoid the vague laws governing Church-state relations by proselytizing and evangelizing through voluntary supplementary classes to individuals who were interested in converting.

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, two other American Christian organizations partnered to form the CoMission - the Association of Christian Schools International and Walk Thru the Bible. The CoMission started Bible studies with Russian converts and those who were considering converting. The mission statement of this organization declared, "the purpose was to start a local Church within walking distance of everybody".⁵

While ISP leaders faced the difficulty of including enough educational content to downplay its evangelistic elements, the CoMission's attempt to form small-group Bible studies for converted teachers or those considering Christianity further weakened their educational front and clearly exposed their evangelistic and Church-planting intentions.⁶

Kenneth Woodward of *Newsweek* further wrote:

In theory, the visiting Americans are supposed to train Russian teachers in teaching Christian ethics, not doctrine. To the Russians, this means

⁵ Glanzer, 296.

⁶ Glanzer, 296.

demonstrating how the values Jesus taught, such as forgiveness, can benefit secular society. But in fact, the CoMission's teaching manuals say very little about the ethics Jesus taught: the Sermon on the Mount, for example, is ignored. Instead the manual's entire thrust is to lead students step by step toward making a "voluntary" commitment to Jesus as "Saviour and Lord". In short, to act like Jesus, students must first have faith in him. Moreover, the American evangelists are not supposed to teach the students themselves.⁷

The CoMission was criticized by the ISP for not respecting the laws of Church-state relations and Western Christian organizations as a rule raised concerns among other foreign missions in Russia for the CoMission's perceived lack of respect for Russian Church-state relations. Walter Sawatsky, a scholar of Protestantism in the former Soviet Union outlined that:

Most Western missions...show minimal interest in Church and state questions, the social role of Soviet Christians, or their potential contribution to economics and national education. Yet the capacity of Soviet evangelicals to respond to such issues will determine whether they will be a serious factor in Soviet society, or whether they will become increasingly irrelevant.⁸

Despite these concerns, the state allowed voluntary religious education. In the meantime, both the ISP and The CoMission worked to develop a relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. Father Ioann Ekonometsev, the Chairman of the Department of Religious Education of the Moscow Patriarchate, was invited to an ISP session. He, in turn, sent three representatives who reported favourably on the curriculum. By 1993 there were continued discussions with Ekonometsev and agreements were made for the Campus Crusade for Christ and

⁷ Kenneth L. Woodward, "Iisus Kristus Loves You" *Newsweek*, 121, Issue 1 (January 4, 1993):45.

⁸ Glanzer, 296-7.

the ISP to aid the Russian Orthodox Church in some of their projects. But this partnership was never put into action due to the growing concerns of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Meanwhile, The CoMission was sending out mixed messages to the American public and its partners in Russia regarding its work in Russia, despite requests by the ISP to maintain consistency in their messages. In a 1993 trip to the United States, Father Ekonometsev and Patriarch Aleksii II learned of the inconsistency through concerns raised by American Orthodox priests. The CoMission had not fully disclosed its intentions to start churches to any of their cohorts in Russia, but was pushing that mandate to the American public in order to gain American support for their mission. Father Ekonometsev met with the leaders of ISP and the Deputy Minister of Education upon his return to Russia. He discussed with them how The CoMission was starting churches in Russia through their Bible studies. The state sought assurance from The CoMission that they were not “Church-planting”, and that assurance was given by both the ISP and The CoMission. The CoMission itself had never been endorsed by the Russian Minister of Education, only the parallel Soviet ministry, creating a rather tenuous political partnership. The Russian Orthodox Church encouraged the cessation of this partnership.

In 1995 a Russian Orthodox priest in Nizhny Novgorod expressed concern to his Archbishop regarding local activities of a CoMission member. The CoMission's mandate had been to work only with teachers, but this particular

member had breached the agreement by working with students. Documents were found by the priest outlining The CoMission's goals as they were being told to Americans. According to these documents, The CoMission intended to have 12,000 missionaries sent to Russia over the next five years in order to start Bible studies that would later become churches. Photocopies of these documents were forwarded to the Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament and to Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister. From there the information was forwarded to the Minister of Education, Evgenii Tkachenko. The information sent included a letter from the Archbishop informing the Minister of the Protocol of Intention signed by the Deputy Minister of Education Asmolov. In the letter the Archbishop also claimed that

Russia is a mono-confessional state whose history is closely related to the Orthodox Church. Thus, the Ministry of Education should not associate with the missions' organizations flourishing in Russia. The Federation Council, as representatives of the history of Russia and the legislative body, cannot give a negative response to the stand of the Russian Orthodox Church.⁹

The Archbishop went on to request disciplinary action to be taken against Asmolov and that the relationship be severed with both the ISP and The CoMission. The Ministry of Education found that The CoMission had committed a legal violation and complied with the requests of the Archbishop. To the Russian Orthodox Church, it was a matter of fairness, or lack thereof, as the case

⁹ Minutes from meeting between Perry Glanzer and Alexei Brudnov, Tim Petty, and Elaine Griffith, trans. Vladimir Ilukhin, 14 February 1995 as cited in Glanzer, 303.

may be. According to Yelena Yaschenko Alexandrovich, a staff member of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church,

The result of the example in Nizhny Novgorod is that the Orthodox priests were kicked out from school. So The CoMission comes, and Orthodox priests are kicked out, and the Americans start to teach. This brings out a very negative reaction from our Church and from most of the population...Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad because there is no doubt that the schools do need help and Christian education, but this is all going like a competition when Americans force out Russia priests.¹⁰

The Russian Orthodox Church went on to argue that if there was to be an openness of religious beliefs, there needed to be a level playing field. The Russian Orthodox Church believed it did not have the ability, especially financially, to compete with the American missionaries.

If religious liberty for all religious groups was to exist, the Orthodox wanted it to be fairly granted. The Orthodox Church had good reason to distrust Western missionaries who were using government schools to further their evangelistic and Church planting aims without revealing this agenda.¹¹

Father Ekonometsev claimed:

We can't do as Americans do, because we can't have such sects equal to our traditional Orthodox Church. We need legal laws to prevent them from their activity.¹²

In Father Ekonometsev's eyes there could be no equal in Russia to the Russian Orthodox Church, either theologically or historically. The Russian Orthodox Church wanted to secure a place of privilege for themselves. "Orthodox leaders

¹⁰ From interview between Yelena Speranskaya and Perry Glanzer, 5 May 1995 as cited in Glanzer, 304.

¹¹ Glanzer, 305.

¹² From interview between Father Vladimir Yaschenko Alexandrovich and Perry Glanzer, 30 June 1995 as cited in Glanzer, 305.

believed the state should prohibit the access of Western missionaries to Russia in order to help the Orthodox Church recover its special place of privilege in Russian society.”¹³ In 1997 the Russian Orthodox Church received its wish as foreign missionary work was inhibited and access to public schools was prohibited. The patriarch applauded the decision as he argued that foreign religious groups were not only a danger to the Orthodox Church, but also to the unity of the state.

This case study shows the tenuous position of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s. The Church was relying on its partnership with the state in order to ward off foreign infringement on Russian Christian souls. The Church did not have the financial backing to compete with American missionaries. The only cards the Church had to play were its link to the state, history, and Russia itself. The accusation of the Church towards the activities of the CoMission was used to gain advantage and ground in the battle against foreign missionaries. The relationship between the Church and state that emerged set a dangerous precedent in Church influence over state initiatives.

THE ARTS

The extent to which the conservative tables have turned on Russian society and again, how the Church plays a role in substantiating the conservative tilt, can be seen in the case study to follow on the right to freedom of expression.

¹³ Glanzer, 305.

In January 2003, an exhibition at the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center created a controversy that further raised the issue of Church-state relations, and highlighted the imposing role that the Russian Orthodox Church had filled over time. The exhibit was called *Caution! Religion* and was a collection of paintings and works by 39 artists. One of the most controversial pieces was a painting of Jesus' face imposed on a Coca-Cola logo next to the words 'This is My Blood'. According to Yuri Samodurov, the director of the Sakharov Center, the intent of the exhibit was two-fold:

On one hand, it is an appeal to respect religion and believers. On the other hand, it is a warning about the dangers of any kind of religious fundamentalism, be it Orthodox or Muslim, and about the danger of fusing religion and the state into some sort of theocratic dictatorship.¹⁴

However, the exhibit was taken by religious conservatives as an insult to religion and to Orthodoxy in particular and was vandalized by a “group of young acolytes from the Russian Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas in Pyzhi.”¹⁵ The artwork was spray painted with graffiti by the Orthodox extremists. After being taken into custody, the group was later released because the court decided that the exhibit incited their actions. The Russian Orthodox Church was quick to come to their defence. Under the request of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian State Duma directed the Procurator General to investigate the organizers and the exhibit. After ten months of investigation, three of the five¹⁶ organizers

¹⁴ Vladimir Simonov, “Does Church threaten secular life in Russia?” *RIA Novosti* (7 June 2005)

¹⁵ Edward Kline, *Briefing Paper: Art of Trial: The Case of Samodurov, Vasilovskaya and Mikhalechuk*, (11 March 2005): 2 at www.russiaontrial.org/pdfs/Sakharov.Fdtn.pdf (August 5, 2005)

¹⁶ The other two organizers were Armenian and had left Moscow

of the event were taken into custody and charged under Article 282 of the Criminal Code for "inciting religious hatred and offending the feelings of religious believers".

The trial began in June 2004, but the judge presiding over the proceedings, Judge Natalia Larina, "criticized the indictment and returned the case to the procurator's office".¹⁷ The trial against the three remaining organizers – Yuri Samodurov (director), Ludmila Vasilovskaya (curator) and Anna Mikhalkhuk (artist) – reopened in September 2004 with Judge Vladimir Proshchenko presiding. The trial had come to represent much more than individuals being charged for inciting religious hatred, it had become a representation of the role of Russian Orthodox Church and its seemingly subtle shift in status as moral arbiter equal to that of the Communist Party under the Soviet regime. As well, it represented a reversion back to the days of the Soviet Union where artists and curators were persecuted for their opinions reflected either in their art or their exhibitions. On 13 August 2004, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Zinovy Zinik stated

An ominous court hearing is taking place in Moscow. It started last year with an ostensibly marginal show of conceptual art installations called *Beware, Religion!*, held in the Sakharov Human Rights Centre. Most of the exhibits were parodies, pop-art style, of the mass perception of religious doctrine and its iconography in contemporary Russia, where the influential Russian Orthodox Church has gradually replaced the old Communist Party of the USSR as moral arbiter and chief censor in matters spiritual and ideological.¹⁸

¹⁷ Kline, 2.

¹⁸ Kline, 2.

Earlier, in May 2003, an article entitled "Orthodox Bulldozer" in *ARTnews* by Konstantin Akinsha discussed the exhibit. The title of the article makes reference to the bulldozing of an exhibit by the KGB in 1974.

In his speech at the show's opening, curator Arutyun Zulumyan, who is now in hiding, called for a careful and respectful treatment of religion, but he also warned of the danger of religious fundamentalism, both Muslim and Russian Orthodox, and the identification of the state with religion.

Political scientist Vladimir Pribylovsky, speaking to Radio Liberty, said that the growing support for 'nationalistic-conservative' ideals represents a turn away from the tolerance of the first Post-Soviet decade. 'Ten years ago it would have been unthinkable for Samodurov to be charged or for kids to be allowed to burn books on the street,' Pribylovsky said. 'Now it's allowed. It's the spirit of the times'.¹⁹

Kline argues that the trial of the exhibit organizers is in direct violation of several articles in Russia's Constitution, including Article 14: "The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be designated the official state religion or be made mandatory"; Article 29: "Censorship is prohibited"; and Article 44: "Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of literary, artistic, scientific, technical and other kinds of creative expression."²⁰

The trial has initiated dialogue concerning a topic of constant debate in all "free" societies: where is the line drawn between freedom of expression and incitement of hatred? However, despite this debate, most agree that criminal charges should not have been laid. Serge Schmemmann, editor of *The International*

¹⁹ Kline, 3

²⁰ Constitution of the Russian Federation, art. 14, 29, and 44, <http://www.constitution.ru/en>

Herald Tribune, and son of a Russian Orthodox theologian, wrote an article in the *New York Times* entitled "Balancing Art, the State and Religion Without Calling the Police":

My first reaction [to the indictment of Samodurov] was indignation and incredulity. The Russian Orthodox Church has become heavily identified with Russian nationalism and reaction, and some priests and believers have even found common cause with disgruntled old Communists. For someone who had spent a few years as a reporter in the old Soviet Union, the greater dismay came with seeing artists again treated as enemies of the state.

Art had been one of the major vehicles of resistance to the Soviet dictatorship: the closing of an exhibition of unofficial art in 1962 by Nikita Khrushchev and the bulldozing of an exhibition of unofficial art in 1974 were among the milestones of the dissident movement. Sadder still, religion had been one of the major targets of Soviet repression, especially public demonstrations of belief, or religious imagery in art or literature. No doubt these memories were in the minds of the 39 artists who raised their works in the Sakharov Museum to warn against the state that has enforced "scientific atheism" so recently now embracing a national Church with the same ardour.²¹

Whether or not the state is officially embracing the idea of a national Church is up for debate; however, it cannot be denied that the Church does try to influence the state in its decisions regarding art, education and public morality. In a letter to President Putin on 2 February 2003, Archpriest Alexander Shargunov of St. Nicholas of Pyzhi (the parish of the vandals of the exhibit), who is also the chair of a group calling itself the Public Committee for the Moral Revival of the Fatherland, stated:

²¹ Serge Schemann, "Balancing Art, the State and Religion Without Calling the Police" *New York Times*, February 23, 2004.

The Andrei Sakharov Public Center and Museum has functioned for several years in Moscow under the direction of Elena Bonner and Yuri Samodurov. For the entire period of its existence the Center has promoted anti-social values and defended bandits and criminals, especially Chechens. The Center's activities are clearly aimed at corrupting the morals of Russian society and the Russian army. The cunning use the slogan "Stop the War in Chechnya" for this purpose...

...We urge you, Mr. President, to take measures to close the Sakharov Center and Museum, particularly since this organization has forfeited the right to its connection with Andrei Sakharov. Sakharov, an atheist, defended the rights of persons persecuted for their religious beliefs and never had anything in common with blasphemous actions like the antireligious campaigns of the Soviet era.²²

The comments within this letter blur the line between Church and state on a number of different points. The Russian Orthodox Church, which claims to want to act as a peacekeeper and mediator in inter-ethnic conflict, has a clear opinion on the war in Chechnya, especially when grouping bandits, criminals and Chechens together. Further, if one were to consider that same war a civil war (since technically, Chechnya is still a part of the Russian Federation), then this letter also violates the assertion that the Church will not support the state in the case of an internal conflict. It is ironic that while the outcry from the artistic community and beyond is that the Russian Orthodox Church is encouraging persecution and repression, the Church is arguing the same case against the Sakharov Center.

On 28 March 2005, while the procurator had requested three years imprisonment for Samodurov, two years for Vasilovskaya, and two years for

²² Kline, 5.

Mikhalchuk, as well as a condition that none could ever hold a similar position in an organization again, the court found Samodurv and Vasilovskaya guilty of “carrying out actions aimed at inciting enmity, and humiliating the dignity of a group of people due to their nationality and their religious affiliation, carried out in public, and with the use of their official position” and fined 100,000 roubles each. Mikhalchuk was found not guilty on this count. The court explained that the lesser sentences were due to the fact that the defendants had good character and were active participants in public life.²³ The lesser sentence may also be credited to human rights organizations that spoke out about the persecution of the three individuals charged. While the three individuals did not receive the sentences that the procurator had requested, they were still found guilty. Not only did the Russian Orthodox Church show its clear voice by coming to the defence of the vandals rather than the artists and museum workers, it also presented the message that there are limits to freedom of expression in Russia. The Church thus escaped responsibility for violating the freedom of expression law and condoning, if not inciting, vandalism.²⁴

Church-state relations are as dynamic as ever. On one side the Church is separate from the state, but on the other side the Church wants the privilege of influencing the state and ‘cooperating’ in civic matters while at the same time inhibiting other confessions from doing the same. This chapter shows that the

²³ web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460102005?open&of=ENG-382

²⁴ Kline, 1.

relationship between Church and state is not as separate, nor as defined, as some would believe. In the time following the collapse of the Soviet Union the Church has turned to the state as a shield against the threats to traditionalism and nationality, namely foreign missionaries and splinter groups, while the state has turned to the Church for legitimacy and support. Further to that, as was seen in the case of the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center, the Church has gone from using the state as a shield to using the state as a sword in order to achieve the its own ends. What will that relationship between Church and state, embedded as it is in traditionalism and conservatism, have in store for the future of Russia? What will be the impact on the road to democracy?

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis has discussed the ever-changing relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state and the process through which the current relationship was developed. This final chapter will summarize the main themes of that process and how the process and the tension between the Church and state are inextricably linked. Throughout Russia's history many variables have impacted this relationship; including politics, ideology, leadership, foreign policy, and global pressure. The relationship is rooted in Russian history and tradition.

Enamul Choudhury argues that "religion claims to be a source of ultimate meaning, moral virtues and community identity".¹ This could be no more true than in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church, which claims that Russians draw so much of their identity through their belief in Orthodoxy. The Russian Orthodox Church was, and is, a "powerful symbol of Russian Statehood, tradition and culture".²

¹ Enamul H. Choudhury "Culture, Religion and Inclusive Public Discourse" *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* Vol.13, no.1 (2001):51.

² Zoe Knox "The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate's Post-Soviet Leadership" *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 55, No. 4 (2003): 575.

A SWINGING PENDULUM OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SENTIMENT

Church-state relations in Russia and later in the Soviet Union are not unlike a pendulum, swinging from one direction to another. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the three primary possibilities for Church-state relations are *symphonia*, *complete separation* and *weak establishment*. The relationship has changed from a time when the Russian Orthodox Church had a strong influence over a weak state to a totalitarian subservience to the state. Public perceptions and sentiments and the institutional interests of both Church and state have influenced this relationship in the past, and continue to shape it today. Although a symphonic ideal is part of Orthodox theology, the Russian Orthodox Church has not had a symphonic relationship with the Russian State since prior to Peter the Great. Peter's reforms placed the Church at varying degrees under the authority of the state, and the Church has never again enjoyed the full cooperation with the state that is the basis for a symphonic relationship. Throughout Russia's imperial history this relationship changed with the tsars as each tsar chose different dynamics within that relationship. This trend did not change when imperial Russia imploded and was replaced by the Soviet Union. Despite claims to the contrary, Russia has never been a secular nation in which the Church and the state were completely separate from each other.

Even under the Soviet regime, touted as an atheistic state, the Church was not separate. The Church was relegated to being under the thumb of the state and under the authority of the Council for Religious Affairs. The relationship

remained thus until 1988. Then, while still under the Council for Religious Affairs, the Church became an ally for Gorbachev and the relationship changed to one in which the Church again lent its support to the state, which the state accepted and rewarded. During this time many of the restrictions on the Church were relaxed and the Church saw an increase in its abilities to worship for the first time in decades.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, throughout much of post-communist Europe the relationship between the Church and the state, became one of a "partial establishment of religion"³ in which Churches are 'ranked' in accordance to their traditional and historical significance. This would be similar to a *weak establishment* of religion, as discussed in Chapter One. As the state has searched for opportunities to strengthen its legitimacy, the Church has been able to exercise greater influence. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought also a collapse of ideology that had been incorporated into the daily lives of the people for seven decades. The Church, with links to pre-Soviet history, culture and faith has, with some success, tried to fill this void left by the collapse of the Soviet ideology.

INTERNAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Within the Church there have been many divisions. These divisions have been primarily ideological, whether between Old Believers and reformists, or

³ Knox, "Symphonic Ideal," 579.

between conservatives and liberals. These divisions have impacted relations with the state, especially when the divisions were consequences of state policies. The relationship between Tsar Alexis and Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century created conflict. Nikon became more of a partner in the operations of the state, rather than just an advisor. The power that Nikon had enjoyed within the state allowed Nikon to institute his own reforms within Church ritual and tradition. These reforms divided followers into those who supported Nikon and those who did not.

Another example of the influence of state policy on the Church is the further division which erupted after the Bolsheviks came to power and Metropolitan Sergei pledged the Church's allegiance to the new state power. This division, moreso than any before, split the Church to such a degree that a new Church was developed – the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad – with its authority lying outside the boundaries of Russia and the Soviet Union. The relationship that the Church had with the Soviet state was one that would follow the Church throughout the 20th century. Divisions arose anew after the collapse of the Soviet Union – both within Russia and within the independent nations that arose out of the former Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine became an independent state. This independence spread throughout the population, including the Orthodox community. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was re-established and asserted its right to be independent of the Russian Orthodox Church in

Moscow. Furthermore, a Kiev Patriarchate was established, rejecting the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Kiev Patriarchate has not received canonical recognition from the other Orthodox Patriarchates.

Within the Moscow Patriarchate, divisions were bubbling to the surface as more knowledge surfaced regarding the collaboration of clergymen with the KGB. Some high standing clergymen, including the current Patriarch, were agents of the KGB and collaborated with the state in order to further the state's agenda.

The level of outcry due to the KGB collaboration diminished from a call demanding the complete removal of key collaborators (which would have included six standing members of the Holy Synod) to silent acceptance of the compromises made in the name of survival. The division within the Church between the reformers and the conservatives has continued into the 21st century.

Father Gleb Yakunin was one of the most vocal of clergy against the KGB collaboration. He also argued for reforms within the Church in both ritual and practice and fought to remain politically active, even after such activity was disallowed by the Church hierarchy, and was rewarded by being defrocked by the Church. Father Yakunin was not the only dissident within the Church who argued for reforms.

MUTUAL BENEFITS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

At various times throughout Russia's history, the state has used the Church to further its agenda, whether in policy or to strengthen the state's legitimacy. Stalin used the Church to rally the people during World War II. Gorbachev later extended an olive branch to the Church in order to further his agenda for *glasnost* and *perestroika*. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin furthered the relationship with the Church in order to have support for the new government's legitimacy. Putin has also pursued this path.

That is not to say that the relationship between the Church and the state is one-sided. The Church has also used the state in order to achieve its own goals. Two recent examples are the case studies included in Chapter Five discussing the actions of the Church regarding the work of the CoMission within public education and the art exhibit at the Sakharov Museum. In the first case the Church sought to promote Orthodoxy (not just Christian values) in public education and in the second case, the Church disliked the content of the exhibit and used its influence with the state to encourage the prosecution of both the organizers and the artists of the show.

TENSIONS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

Despite the on-again, off-again relationship between the Church and the state in Russia, there are tensions that arise when the opinion of the Church clashes with the popular opinion of the day. An example of this is the cycle in sentiment

towards the West. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was excitement in Russia about the Iron Curtain opening and tolerance of Western influence within Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, which is relatively isolationist, did not support the opening up to the West, especially when it enabled the influx of foreign missionaries. Support for the Church decreased at this time, due in part to its anti-West sentiment. As the tide changed and sentiment towards the West became more negative, the Church again increased in popularity, or more accurately, the faith that the Church represented became more popular. As cycles are continuous, it is likely that sentiment for the West will again become popular, and the Church will once again be found battling social forces for change.

The Church and state have also differed on issues of foreign policy, especially those regarding the Catholic Church in Ukraine. While the Church does not want concessions made to the Catholic Church, the state conceded some of its positions towards the Catholic Church in order to have a better relationship with the Vatican and to satisfy the West's appeal for freedom of conscience in Russia. This is likely to cause tension between Church and state for some time. The Church holds strict views of other religions, especially those it considers being from the "outside", and demands a privileged position. The state however, feels pressure from the Western world to endorse religious pluralism and to allow complete freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. The state has made some concessions towards the Russian Orthodox Church, the 1997

Freedom of Conscience law being an example, but the state must walk a fine balance between appeasing the Church and not alienating the West, or alternatively, appeasing the West and alienating the Church.

CURRENT SITUATION OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

The relationship between the Church and state in Russia today is one of *weak establishment*. The Russian Orthodox Church does hold a position of privilege above other religions in Russia, even the other 'traditional' religions of Judaism, Buddhism and Islam. The Church does exert influence over the state and uses the state in order to further its own agenda. However, the Church also walks a fine line between the balance of cooperation and subservience. To be linked too closely to the state may lead the Church back down the path of being just another branch of state bureaucracy, but to distance itself too far from the state would be to lose its influence on matters with which the Church is concerned. This relationship is not likely to change too much in the near future. Given the three main models, *weak establishment* is probably the one model that makes the most sense for contemporary Russia. The Church and the state need to find a balance between *symphonia* and *complete separation*, and not fall into the historical trap in which one, either the Church or the state, overpowers the other. Such a situation is not conducive to the ideals upholding democracy as the tables would turn to either theocracy or dictatorship.

While travelling in Russia, especially in the rural areas, it is easy to see that the Russian Orthodox Church is still alive and well and shaping the faith of many people throughout the country. Monasteries are being rebuilt, individuals are again giving their lives to the work of the Russian Orthodox Church and churches are being restored. The efforts for restoration are more common in the larger centres such as Moscow and the capitals of republics, while the rural areas wait for churches to be restored or, in many cases, rebuilt. Within the larger centres however, there is a palpable feeling of pluralism. Upon speaking with one young man, I was told that the Russian Orthodox Church was for "old people" whereas the Western religions were more popular among the younger generation. He, himself, attended a Gospel Church. This dichotomy between the urban centres and the rural communities may not last long as foreign missionaries are taking their teachings into the far outreaches of Russia, even into the Arctic tundra.

The division between the Moscow Patriarchate and Ukraine is also not likely to be resolved as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kiev Patriarchate is considering merging with the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church and severing its ties completely with Moscow. This would be a great loss to the Russian Orthodox Church in terms of numbers of followers as well as a loss in property. The state fears that if the Russian Orthodox Church loses its authority over Orthodoxy in Ukraine, it will be the final severing of Ukraine from Russia.

Church-state relations in Russia cannot be compared to those in most Western countries. No Church in the west exerts the influence over the state that the Russian Orthodox Church does. The history of close ties between the Church and the state is much more rooted in Russia than in Western countries. The state is aware of the cultural role that the Russian Orthodox Church plays in national identity and that while people may not completely support the institution, they support the faith that the institution represents. This relationship holds some consequences to the furthering of pluralism in Russia. Pluralism, in which all religions are equal under the law, will never take hold in Russia while the Russian Orthodox Church maintains a position of privilege. The opportunity for change arose when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Western world, with its promises of freedom and liberal ideas, was opened up to Russians. But when the opportunities of the West did not provide immediate solutions for the quandaries of Russian society, people became disillusioned in the promises of the West and the Church once again regained some authority among Russians.

With the 1997 law still in place, there is a legislated limitation on foreign missionaries to spread their word to the Russian people. This law has been maintained despite its conflict with the constitution adopted in 1993. While this legislation is not supportive of religious pluralism, the relationship it does support, based on *weak establishment*, will work in Russia, since it has been said: "the effort to banish moral and religious argument from the public realm for the sake of political agreement may end by impoverishing political discourse and

eroding the moral and civic resources necessary to self-government"⁴. Perhaps the most that can be asked of a country that has spent most of the 20th century under atheistic totalitarianism is for one religion to rise above others. While this may offend the sensibilities of pluralists everywhere, it is likely the most realistic response to the challenges of post-Soviet Russia.

What are the consequences of a relationship between Church and state rooted in *weak establishment*? *Weak establishment* can be supportive of pluralism, if so inclined, and if there are defined limits of the privileges extended to the majority religion. However, is it possible for a state to maintain equality between the faiths under *weak establishment*? In Russia, religious liberty for minority religions has not yet blossomed, and is constrained by the application of existing laws and by the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The present model theoretically allows for the religious beliefs of politicians to influence political decisions, something that might also further erode the equality of faiths. But such influence is also found in stable democratic countries in the world.⁵ The *weak establishment* of the Orthodox Church allows the political benefits of legitimacy and identity that the Church has to offer both state and society, and yet at the same time, constrains the influence of the Church in the interests of pluralism.

⁴ Choudhury, 54.

⁵ In the U.S., for example, a constitutionalized secular state, personal religious beliefs of elected political leaders commonly impact public decision making (i.e. abortion, euthanasia).

The alternatives to *weak establishment* are less attractive. Neither *symphonia* nor *secularization* are void of weaknesses. While *symphonia* allows for a strong focus on tradition, acknowledges the role religion plays in the development of society, and cultivates a strong foundation for unity and identity, it is not supportive of pluralism. It also silences the voice of the secular, further bureaucratizes both the state and the Church while allowing interference of one in the other, and finally, has managed only marginal support for an individual's right to choose his or her faith. Within such a system, state laws can be based on religious texts, and individual rights are devalued by society.

Secularization, on the other hand, disallows both interference of the state in the Church, and religious interference in state affairs. While *secularization* is very supportive of both individual rights and religious pluralism, it excludes the voice of religion from the public sphere and undermines the positive role the Church might play in Russia's link with its past. While the Soviet Union was not a truly secularized state, religion of God was replaced with the religion of state, which left people with a void when the state collapsed.

In Russia, both the Russian Orthodox Church and the state appear willing to embrace the weaknesses of *weak establishment* in order to benefit from the strengths of that model. However, there is no commitment to *weak establishment*. The present relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state could just be another point along the pendulum swing through political and religious relations. The Russian Orthodox Church might desire greater

commitment from the government of the day and it is difficult at this stage to suggest that existing tensions will not provide impetus for further movement or redefinition of the relationship. The Russian Orthodox Church supports a strong state, as long as the Church can exert some influence and maintain some measure of privilege. The reality that "no other nation needed a strong state to sustain its mere survival in this world so much as Russia did"⁶ is as true in Russia's history as it is today. The two swords of power in Russia continue to work to give honour to the Motherland. Russia is still in a position of disempowerment due to its lack of financial resources and stable economy. A strong state, defined through Putin's 'managed democracy' seems to be what is needed in order to stabilize the country. The Church, for its part, is continuing to be supportive of this role for the state and supports initiatives as long as the influence of the Church is maintained. While predictions as to the future of Church and state relations in Russia are difficult, it is likely that the cycle will continue. However, what direction the pendulum swings next, and at what pace it travels along the arc, is still uncertain.

⁶ Hugh Ragsdale *The Russian Tragedy: The Burden of History* (USA: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), 48.

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