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Sebastian Rimestad

Russian Orthodox Approaches to Secularity in the Petrine Reforms of the Early Eighteenth Century

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Leipzig University
CASHSS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"
Nikolaistraße 8–10
04109 Leipzig
Germany

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Contents

1 Introduction ... 3
2 The Multiple Secularities Approach and Eastern Orthodox Christianity ... 5
3 Christianity and Secularity ... 6
4 Russia and Christianity ... 11
5 A Russian Tradition of Church-State Relations? ... 15
6 Peter and the Westernising Reforms 1694–1725 ... 22
7 Sermon on the Dignity and Power of the Sovereign ... 26
8 The "Spiritual Regulation" ... 29
9 The Afterlife of the Petrine Reforms ... 34
10 Platon Levshin – a Bishop of the Russian Enlightenment ... 36
11 Iurii Samarin – a Critical Voice in a New Century ... 38
12 A New Reform for the Church in Turbulent Times? ... 41
13 Assessing the Petrine Reforms in Exile – Anton Kartashev and Georges Florovsky ... 43
14 The Petrine Reforms and the 'Discovery' of the Secular ... 46
15 Russian Eighteenth-Century 'Secularity' and the Multiple Secularities Approach ... 49
16 Bibliography ... 52

Russian Orthodox Approaches to Secularity in the Petrine Reforms of the Early Eighteenth Century

1 Introduction

Since the tenth century, the main religious force in Russia has been Orthodox Christianity. This branch of the Christian Church developed differently from its Western counterpart, Latin Christianity, after the geopolitical paths of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires diverged following the Migration Period in Late Antiquity. The different developments in the Christian East and West also led to distinct path dependencies, which informed the conceptualisation of the boundaries between the religious and the secular spheres. This working paper probes these differences, via an analysis of two important texts from early modern Russia: Feofan Prokopovich's 1718 Palm Sunday sermon about "The Dignity and Power of the Sovereign," and his 1721 "Spiritual Regulation."

Russia arguably started to enter the orbit of the 'Western' world in the late seventeenth century. In most societal spheres, it followed a specifically Russian path in doing so. The sweeping political reforms of Tsar Peter the Great (ruled 1694–1725) and his successors slowly transformed Russia into a polity, akin to the early modern states in Western and Central Europe. The cultural and judicial reforms often confirmed developments that had already been seeping into Russian society for decades through increasing contact with its western neighbours. For this text, however, focus is on religious reforms. The key author of these reforms, Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich (1681–1736), clearly modelled them on Western ideas. However, their implementation showed a desire to both keep Orthodox traditions, and align with modern developments.

It was traditionally assumed that the Petrine reforms of the early eighteenth century 'secularised' Russian society. Recently, however, scholars have criticised this assumption as being informed more by nineteenth-century historiography than by the reforms themselves.[1] The present

1 For criticism of the traditional assumption, see Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 13–15; Olga Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform

paper therefore takes the "Spiritual Regulation" of 1721, the foundational text of this church reform, as its reference point. I discuss whether one can identify a specifically Russian or Orthodox version of secularity therein. "Secularity" is here understood to mean "institutionally as well as symbolically embedded forms and arrangements for distinguishing between religion and other societal areas."[2] As such, this is not an account of the developments within the Russian Orthodox Church as such, but rather an analysis of how Feofan Prokopovich, the most influential actor within the church in Russia in the early eighteenth century, conceptualised the idea of a secular sphere, and how later analysts commented on his views. How did they understand the symbolic distinction underlying the functional differentiation between religion and other societal spheres?

This paper cannot provide a full examination of secularity in Russia, but does offer insights that may lead to further studies. By focusing on just two documents, whose conceptual foundations arguably shaped the structure of the Russian church for two centuries, the paper provides a first glimpse into the official discourse of religion and its discontents in early eighteenth-century Russia. While a broader focus would have allowed for more thorough insights, it is unlikely that the main lines of argument would have differed significantly.

The paper is divided into four parts. I first provide a broad overview of conceptualisations of secularity in the Christian West and in Russia leading up to the reforms in the eighteenth century. This includes a general summary of state-church relations and the development of 'the secular' from the Middle Ages until the tumultuous and complex developments in

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and Constructing the Orthodox Tradition of Church-State Relations in Russia," in *The State in Early Modern Russia: New Directions*, ed. Paul Bushkovitch (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2019); Lorenz Erren, "Orthodoxer Aufklärer oder zynischer Protestant? Feofan Prokopovič im Urteil der deutschen und der russischen Geschichtsschreibung," in *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa: Erinnerung und Religion,* vol. 23, *Religion und Erinnerung,* ed. Dagmar Freist, and Matthias Weber (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2015). See also Igor Fedyukin, *The Enterprisers: The Politics of School in Early Modern Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

2 Christoph Kleine, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Preliminary Findings and Outlook of the CASHSS 'Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities'," *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 22, Leipzig University, 2020, 13.

Russian religious history in the seventeenth century. The second section discusses the Petrine reforms, focusing on the two documents by Feofan Prokopovich. The third section explores later interpretations of the reforms and their efforts towards 'secularisation'. For example, I analyse the Slavophile reception of the reforms in the nineteenth century, and their interpretation within the twentieth-century exile community. Finally, I draw a conclusion, linking the subject at hand to various theoretical approaches to secularity.

The paper can also be divided into three broad time periods. The first spans from the fifth-century collapse of the Western Roman Empire to 1694, when Tsar Peter the Great fully gained power upon the death of his mother, Natalia Naryshkina. He had formally become tsar in 1682, but, being a 10-year-old child at the time, actual power was wielded by his mother, who acted as his regent. The second period spans from 1694 to the end of Peter's reign in 1725. For the first two years of this period, though he exercised *de facto* control, Peter still formally shared the throne with his half-brother, the physically and mentally impaired Ivan V, who died in 1696. From then on, the energetic and inquisitive Peter was the *de jure* sole ruler of the vast Russian Empire and focussed his efforts on modernising his country by applying the insights and ideas he had gathered during his travels in Western Europe. Peter died in 1725 but the reforms he had set in motion continued to transform life in the Russian Empire. The third period thus encompasses the subsequent impact and analysis of the reforms.

2 The Multiple Secularities Approach and Eastern Orthodox Christianity

The Multiple Secularities project assumes that it is possible to consider secularity as an analytical concept, separate from its connotations linked to developments specifically within the Christian world(view). Defining secularity as distinctions and differentiations separating religion from other social spheres, the researchers within this paradigm seek to weaken the Christian bias in discussions of the concept, making it also applicable to non-Christian contexts. They accomplish this by identifying patterns of functional differentiation and conceptual distinction between religious and non-religious activities and functions in pre-modern, non-Christian settings. The primary goal here is to enable explanation of present-day differences in the conceptualisation of the division between the religious and the secular in various cultural and political environments.

The projects within this paradigm have a wide variety of geographical foci and theoretical approaches, leading to innovative insights and connections. However, there has thus far been a dearth of projects dealing with Eastern Orthodox Christian settings, despite Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr's assertion that "Orthodox eastern Europe also serves as a 'laboratory' for studying divergent developments of secularity."[3] Several difficulties arise when discussing the historical development of secularity within a religious context like Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which is not radically different from Western Christianity. The most significant challenge is that the putative 'norm' that Western developments of secularity represent loses much of its analytical distinctiveness when juxtaposed with an approach that is different, yet still Christian. Even when maintaining that the concept of secularity is constructed as an ideal-type "inevitably associated with a rather vague prototype formed by Western notions of secularism,"[4] it requires some further clarification when analysed in relation to Orthodox Christianity. Therefore, I begin with a short section on early and medieval Christianity and secularity, to set the scene for the Russian Orthodox case study that follows.

3 Christianity and Secularity

The notion of religion and its other as two distinct conceptual spheres was built into the Christian faith from its very beginning, with numerous passages in the Bible attesting to such a view. The most famous of these is Jesus' injunction to "render […] unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Such passages have engendered numerous interpretations, but they attest to a basic distinction between "the things that are Caesar's" and "the things that are God's"[5]. Throughout Christian history, this distinction between the heavenly (divine) and the earthly (mundane) has given rise to further distinctions, such as those between body (physical) and mind (spiritual),

3 Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Preliminary Findings," 35.

4 Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Comparative Secularities: Tracing Social and Epistemic Structures Beyond the Modern West," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, no. 1 (2020): 7.

5 On the ambiguity of this scriptural evidence, see John A. McGuckin, "The Legacy of the 13th Apostle: Origins of the East Christian Conceptions of Church and State Relation," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 3–4 (2003): 253–58.

or between church (ecclesiastical) and state (civil). The division between the religious and the secular is another such distinction, though it is more fundamental and comprehensive, as it does not primarily apply to specific objects or attributes, but encompasses the entirety of human life in society.

Augustine of Hippo, the early fifth-century North African theologian, provided one of the most lasting theoretical foundations for the conceptual distinction between the religious sphere and its other in his conceptualisation of the *civitas dei*, the City of God, contrasted against the *civitas terrena*, the Earthly City. For Augustine, the City of God was characterised by renunciation and asceticism, whereas the Earthly City emphasised the pleasures of the present, transient world. In this way, Augustine set good – aligned with God and the Catholic Church – against evil – aligned with the devil. This dichotomy accompanied the rise of the Christian Church in the following centuries, becoming the main backdrop to all social interaction in the Christian world.[6] At the time of Augustine's writings, Christianity was still only one of many possible worldviews found within the borders of the Roman Empire, though influential and growing, and it took another few centuries for Christianity to achieve the dominance that it is often assumed to have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. Robert A. Markus outlines the changes that took place in the region between the fourth and the sixth century: "not only [had] the world […] changed [i.e. the Western Roman Empire had collapsed] – but also the framework of thought, imagination and discourse within which it could be interpreted."[7] Markus calls this the "retreat of the 'secular'" – a process by which everything that had previously been deemed "secular" was gradually incorporated into the Christian worldview, leading to "a society defined by […] contours largely religious in nature."[8] For Peter Brown, this process is linked not only to the downfall of the Western Roman Empire, but also to the concomitant increase in the number of wealthy Christians. Thereby, "the wealth of the church, the care of the poor, and the fate of the soul

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6 Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

7 Markus, *The End*, 15–16.

8 Markus, *The End*, 227.

[were linked together, and] became fixed in the minds of the population of western, Catholic Europe."[9]

In this sense, the creation of the category of "secular" in the Western world is essentially linked to the Christian Church. However, the Christian Church was not confined to the Western Roman Empire. A large portion of it remained firmly linked to the political order of the Eastern Roman Empire, now conventionally termed the Byzantine Empire. Not only was the East subject to vastly different political developments, but there were also major theological differences between the two regions. For one, Augustine, who was paramount to the reconceptualisation of the relationship between wealth and the Christian Church in the West, was hardly noticed in the East.[10] This was partly because he wrote in Latin, not in Greek. Moreover, the theologians of the Eastern Roman Empire (the church fathers) had always been more concerned with theological questions than with their relationship to the actual world.[11] Eastern Christianity focused more on the experience of the Christian faith than on rationally and systematically defining its contents vis-à-vis other phenomena.

In the fourth century, the imperial court moved east to Constantinople, and Emperor Constantine and his successors re-evaluated Christianity, radically changing the relationship between Christianity and its environment in the Eastern Roman Empire. As Hans-Georg Beck contends, the theological plurality that had characterised earlier Christianity gave way to a narrower conception of Orthodoxy, an Orthodoxy that was to be defended by the emperor himself: "the theologian was no longer called to continually reinterpret the Christian faith, but to repeat fixed dogma and vehemently defend it."[12] The resulting amalgamation of religious and secular power was of a different character to that in the Latin West, where religion could be said to have 'domesticated' the secular. In the Byzantine East, it was a much more

9 Brown, *Through the Eye*, 527. See also Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, ed. Michael Senellart (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), esp. 147–90.

10 George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolou, "Augustine and the Orthodox: 'The West' in the East," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. George Demacopoulos, and Aristotle Papanikolou (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008).

11 See, however, McGuckin, "The Legacy," 279–80.

12 Hans-Georg Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend* (München: C. H. Beck, 1977), 103.

organic process, in which both sides accepted the other as an inalienable part of reality. There were certainly numerous conflicts over the religious-secular divide, and multiple differentiations were made. However, the divide did not become the subject of systematic rational debate.

Councils of bishops, officially summoned and presided over by the Byzantine emperor, primarily discussed questions of Orthodoxy, and condemned practices that were deemed non-conformist.[13] When, in the eighth century, the question arose as to whether holy images – icons – were to be venerated or prohibited, the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 787 decided in favour of veneration, for the icon becomes venerable through that which is depicted on it.[14] The fine theological boundary between the image as something profane, and the sacred reality which it depicts, became a matter of interpretation, but one that was fixed by the council: "It would appear that the iconodule[15] victory after 787 was unproblematic on the theoretical and theological levels."[16] A brief return of iconoclastic[17] views in the following century did not alter the official view that icon veneration was a legitimate practice in the church, a view that was further promoted as a means of distinguishing the Byzantine Church from the Franks in the west. Consequently, there was little discussion in terms of a religious-secular divide, with the focus rather being on whether the icon represented a dead object, or was a legitimate path to the holy realm.[18]

Moreover, compared to Western Latin Christianity, Byzantine Orthodox Christianity was less interested in forcing conformity to the Christian social framework, making this a much slower process in the East than it was in the West.[19] Unhappiness with the Christian Church's 'worldliness' was a greater motivating factor towards monasticism in the East than it was in the West, but Eastern monks did not openly theologise about this

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13 Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, 267–68; McGuckin, "The Legacy," 280–81.

14 Georg Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (München: C.H. Beck, 1980 [1965]), 143.

15 "Iconodulism" is the term for the position in favour of the veneration of holy icons.

16 Alexander Avenarius, *The Byzantine Struggle over the Icon* (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2005), 77.

17 "Iconoclasm" was the position seeking to ban icons from Christian worship.

18 A comprehensive overview of this debate is provided in Avenarius, *The Byzantine Struggle*, 49–94.

19 Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, 257–89.

phenomenon, instead practising total renunciation.[20] The official church doctrine rejected dualism, the idea that the principles of good and evil are eternal, which consequently delayed the development of a systematic theoretical distinction between the religious and the secular.

In short, by the early Middle Ages, the Christian Church had a different political weight in the East compared to the West. The fall of the Western Roman Empire at the end of Late Antiquity left "a political power vacuum, which was only partly filled during the Carolingian Empire in the 9th century, before it returned. The Bishop of Rome therefore became the symbol of unity in the West."[21] For Detlef Pollack, this ambiguous role of the Roman pontiff, and especially his consolidation and systematisation efforts in the twelfth century following the Investiture Controversy, were paramount in furthering the functional differentiation between religion and politics in Western Europe.[22]

Though Pollack's narrative can be criticised on numerous grounds,[23] it highlights that the church took a different trajectory in the West than it did in the Eastern Roman Empire, where there were fewer systematic attempts at functional differentiation between emperor and patriarch. Unlike the Roman pope, who claimed to represent the entire church, the Eastern patriarchs essentially remained diocesan bishops with additional supra-diocesan privileges. The question of legally grounding the state and the church as functionally separate entities[24] did not arise in the East until many centuries later. Instead, the ideal of a *symphonia* of powers, whereby ecclesiastical and imperial competencies and exercise of power co-existed

20 Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, 283.

21 Detlef Pollack, "Die Genese der westlichen Moderne: Religiöse Bedingungen der Emergenz funktionaler Differenzierung im Mittelalter," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 47, no. 1 (2013): 294–95.

22 This is not a novel idea, continuing a long tradition of scholarship, especially in the German-speaking world. See, e.g., Friedrich Heer, *Aufgang Europas: Eine Studie zu den Zusammenhängen zwischen politischer Religiosität, Frömmigkeitsstil und dem Werden Europas im 12. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1949); Günther Stökl, "Die politische Religiosität des Mittelalters und die Entstehung des Moskauer Staates," *saeculum* 2 (1951).

23 See, e.g., Sita Steckel, "Differenzierung jenseits der Moderne: Eine Debatte zu mittelalterlicher Religion und moderner Differenzierungstheorie," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 47, no. 1 (2013).

24 See Pollack, "Die Genese," 288–89. See also Detlef Pollack, *Religion und gesellschaftliche Differenzierung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 120–44.

in a God-given harmony, dominated social consciousness.[25] Even though this ideal was hardly ever achieved in reality, it guided the discourse, precluding any systematic attempts to distinguish between religion and other societal fields. Michael Cherniavsky argues that the West had learnt "to distinguish between the king as man, mortal and sinful, and the king as King, the anointed of God, who was to be regarded and obeyed as was God"; a distinction that "would be meaningless in Russia."[26] This is not to say that it was impossible to distinguish religious activity from other activities, just that they were not systematically cordoned off as something different.

In the eleventh century, European Christianity was still officially unified, and consolidated within universal Christendom. However, as has repeatedly been pointed out, the theological and ecclesiological developments in the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire had already started to diverge. As a result of their cultural and theological differences, the two strands of Christianity developed separately, gradually growing apart as a result, until a series of misguided activities and failed unification attempts between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries cemented their separation.[27] The different paths of Western and Eastern Christianity clearly had an impact on the development of secularity in the two regions. The line dividing the religious and the secular was conceptualised differently in East and West, as the following section on Russia illustrates.

4 Russia and Christianity

According to the chronicles, Russia was Christianised in the year 988, when Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev ordered his subjects to be baptised in the river Dnieper. The chronicles report at length on how the Grand Prince was given the choice between Islam, Latin Christianity, Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity. He sent emissaries to witness the different faith

25 See Alfons Brüning, "*Symphonia*, kosmische Harmonie, Moral: Moskauer Diskurse über gerechte Herrschaft im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," in *Gerechtigkeit und gerechte Herrschaft vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Stefan Plaggenborg (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2020); McGuckin, "The Legacy," 278–85.

26 Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myth* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), 29.

27 Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church; From Apostolic times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

communities, and, upon their return, favoured Orthodox Christianity, because "God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations."[28] The final impetus to receive baptism came when Vladimir decided to marry the sister of the Byzantine emperor, and was told that she would only marry a baptised Christian.

Regardless of whether this description of the Christianisation of the Kievan Rus' is accurate or a mythological narrative with later additions, it marks the entry of the Kievan Rus' into the fold of medieval Christian nations, via the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire.[29] This was before the official schism between Eastern and Western Christianity in the eleventh century, and around the same time as the Christianisation of Scandinavia,[30] but the Christianity practised by the Kievan Rus' undoubtedly grew into Eastern Orthodox Christianity after the schism. It saw political and religious activity as unequivocally two sides of one coin, without the need to theorise a separation between the two. Additionally, for the Rus', Christianity was a foreign faith, one they had adopted wholesale from the Byzantine Empire. Boris Uspenskii argues that, upon their Christianisation, the Kievan Rus' were so eager to emulate the Byzantines that cultural practices and traditions historically rooted in the (Eastern) Roman Empire were unconditionally accepted into the Russian cultural canon, where they took on a life of their own.[31] Legal historian Shershneva-Tsitulskaia maintains that, by the tenth century, the concept of a *symphonia of powers* had become thoroughly internalised in Byzantine legal and political culture, whereas it was adopted in Russia

28 *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*, trans. and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross, and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), 111.

29 See Jonathan Shepard, "The Coming of Christianity to Rus: Authorized and Unauthorized Versions," in *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age,* ed. Calvin B. Kendall et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, 2009).

30 On the links between the Rus' and Scandinavia, see, e.g., Sverrir Jakobsson, *The Varangians in God's Holy Fire* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

31 Boris A. Uspenskii, *Царь и патриарх. Харизма власти в России* [Tsar and Patriarch: The Charism of Power in Russia] (Moscow: Shkola 'iazyki russkoi kul'tury,' 1998), 6–7. See also John Meyendorff, "Two Visions of the Church: East and West on the Eve of Modern Times," in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies*, ed. John Meyendorff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).

primarily through the written legal sources: "The changes in the doctrine of 'symphonia of power' since Emperor Justinian, strengthening secular power over religious power in the Byzantine Empire, had not been fixed in normative legal acts, but existed only in the form of legal habit. This key fact had definite consequences for the future of Russian society. After all, the principles of interaction between the emperor and the patriarch, so clear to Byzantine society, were completely unknown to a wide circle of people outside of the imperial centre."[32]

As a result of this emphasis on full-scale adoption on the one hand, and ignorance of the legal habits on the other, the concept of *symphonia of power* was understood quite differently in the Russian case than in the Byzantine Empire.[33] Additionally, as Cherniavsky points out, "the very concept of State was introduced into Russia as part of the Christian ethos. In other words, there was no concept of a secular state in Russia, no concept outside Christianity and its purposes; Kievan Russia received and assimilated Christianity but not the ancient concept of secular society and state that antedated the new religion."[34] As a result, it is difficult to speak of any relationship between church and state in the Russian realm until Moscow became a *de facto* independent metropolis in 1448.

Until this point, the emperor and patriarch in Constantinople were also considered the supreme authorities in the Russian principalities, however little they wielded this authority in reality. The extent of actual political and ecclesiastical dependence on the Byzantine Empire is a contested issue, as there are no direct sources available. However, the identifiable hierarchy of power was headed by the Byzantine emperor, followed by the

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32 I. I. Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина «симфонии властей» в истории российских государственно-церковных отношений X–XVI вв" [The Political-Legal Doctrine of "Symphonia of Powers" in the History of Russian State-Church Relations from the 10th to the 15th Century], *Studia Historica Europae Orientalis* 7 (2014): 94. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from foreign language sources are my own.

33 Georgii V. Bezhanidze, "Преамбула шестой новелли св. Юстниниана Великого в русской письменной традиции" [The Preamble to the 6th Novella of St. Justinian the Great in the Russian Written Tradition], *Vestnik PSTGU* 80 (2018), 30; "Две версии средневековой модели «симфонии» церковно-государственных отношений" [Two Versions of the Medieval Model of "Symphonia" of Church-State Relations], *Vestnik PSTGU* 97 (2020).

34 Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 33.

Patriarch of Constantinople, then the Metropolitan of Kiev, and finally the local Russian prince (княз).[35] Until the Russian church achieved *de jure* independence from Constantinople in 1589, there was no formal authority in Russia that could select and ordain new bishops – the church remained formally outside the jurisdiction of local authorities, even if these often sought to assert their power. The local princes inscribed their authority into a framework they had no control over.

In this configuration, society was viewed as an organically unified whole, of which religion was an inalienable part that could not be differentiated from the other areas of societal life. The structure of the Christian message meant that there nonetheless was some differentiation between secular and religious matters, but unlike Western Europe, where this differentiation had become politically significant by the Middle Ages, it did not appear as an issue in the Russian Orthodox sphere until the sixteenth century. Even then, because the Byzantine written legal texts defining the symphonic relationship between religion and politics were regarded as 'sacred', the relationship was not questioned outright, and politics remained eminently religious.

This is not to say that everything was deemed to fall within religion. However, the main distinction that was made was the one between true and false religion, not between religion and the secular. This can be seen in at least three arenas; the way political actors approached the church, the question of punishments for heretics, and the conflict within the church over the issue of monastic wealth. For the first, a quote from Tsar Ivan's opening statement to the 1551 *Council of a Hundred Chapters* might suffice:

> Educate and enlighten me, your son, in piety, so that I can be a pious tsar according to the just commandments that prescribe how the tsar shall rule and live in Orthodoxy and purity. May you carefully also strengthen my brothers, the boyars, and all the princes, as well as all Orthodox Christianity. Strengthen them in insights, and enlighten and educate them to safeguard our unchanging, true Christian faith.[36]

35 Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина," 92–93.

36 Стоглав [Hundred Chapters], ed. D. E. Kožančikov (Orig. St. Petersburg, 1863; photomechanic reprint Düsseldorf: Brücken-Verlag 1969), 32–33. Citations refer to the 1969 edition.

For the Tsar, it was a matter of course that the church leadership was responsible for the moral integrity of society.[37] Those who were knowledgeable in the Christian faith had an important role to play in society at large, without being institutionally differentiated from it.

The question of punishment for heretics had become a significant topic by the end of the fifteenth century, when several councils decided that the church's authority only extended to excommunicating and anathematising heretics, whereas their physical punishment was left for the Grand Prince to decide.[38] However, the church still wanted to have a say in what kind of punishment was adequate, revealing the impracticability of separating the tasks of church and state, a problem that also played a role in the Petrine church reforms.

The conflict over monastic wealth was the result of the growth of Russian monasteries since the fifteenth century. By the mid-sixteenth century, "the monasteries were very rich, owning perhaps one third of the populated land in the state."[39] This led to a conflict between those who regarded monastery wealth as necessary and legitimate and those seeing it as a transgression of the monastic vows of poverty. This conflict, which lasted until well into the seventeenth century, prompted the state to impose restrictions on monastic landholding and discipline.[40] This development became crucial in the crisis of the mid-seventeenth century described below.

5 A Russian Tradition of Church-State Relations?

The period spanning from 1448 to 1589 was a formative one for the Russian tradition of state-church relations.[41] In 1448, Iona was named Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus', without the consent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, marking the *de facto* independence of the Russian church. In 1589, the Patriarchate of Constantinople formally elevated the Metropolitanate of Moscow to an independent Patriarchate, officially

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37 See Brüning, "*Symphonia*."

38 Fairy von Lilienfeld, *Nil Sorskij und seine Schriften: Die Krise der Tradition im Russland Ivans III* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 67.

39 Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 14.

40 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 15–21.

41 Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 36–43; Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина," 96. See, however, Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 308.

emancipating the Russian church and state from Byzantine tutelage. The period surrounding 1448 was characterised by geopolitical and ecclesiastical upheavals. For one, it signalled the coming end of the Mongol invasions of the previous centuries, which had prompted the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus' to take up residence in Moscow, even further from Constantinople. For the first time, the Muscovy Principality considered itself independent from both the Byzantine Empire and the Mongols. Second, the Byzantine Empire's days were numbered, as Muslim Ottomans closed in on its capital, which was to fall in 1453. On the ecclesiastical scene, the council of Ferrara-Florence, convened by the Roman Pope in 1431, had negotiated a union between the Western and Eastern churches, which was not accepted by the majority of Eastern Orthodoxy. The perceived betrayal of Orthodoxy by the Church of Constantinople was used as a direct pretext for the Russian unilateral declaration of independence.

1448 thus provided a starting point for the Russian polity to establish its own cultural and religious sphere. According to Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, the subsequent period saw the establishment of three interconnected grand theories that informed the way Russia perceived its role in the world.[42] First, the concept of autocracy – the idea that the Grand Prince of Moscow was not accountable to any other sovereign. This concept came with the linguistic baggage of a sense of continuity from the Byzantine Empire, where the Emperor also bore the title 'autokrator', prompting the Russian Grand Princes to take up the title 'tsar', from the Latin 'caesar'. The second guiding idea was the conception of Moscow as the Third Rome. This was never a fully-fledged political doctrine, but nonetheless had a considerable hold on the Russian collective conscious. The first Rome had fallen, as had Constantinople as New Rome, leaving Moscow, the last bastion of Orthodox Christianity in the world, Third Rome.

The final guiding principle in the establishment of the new Russian self-understanding was the symphonic ideal, understood in its scriptural form. As Grigorii Bezhanidze points out, the preamble to Emperor Justinian's sixth novella from 535, where the concept of *symphonia* was first mentioned, was translated into Church Slavonic in two different ways, with

42 Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина," 96–100.

a significant difference between them.[43] The original Greek preamble does not mention the church at all, but talks about how "the priesthood and the Empire are the two greatest gifts God […] has bestowed upon mortals." It then states that the priesthood and the empire should remain in harmony so that "general good [symphonia of good] will result."[44] In the translation that eventually became dominant in Russia, a semantic shift results in the priesthood and the empire both being conceptualised as power structures, thus obfuscating their distinction.[45]

Together, the three guiding ideas inevitably led to the conceptualisation of the Russian Tsar as wielding divinely sanctioned power. This redefinition of the relationship between church and state in Russia was solidified at the so-called Council of a Hundred Chapters (*Stoglav* Council) of 1551, convened to clarify a number of fundamental and disciplinary questions about the rights and duties of the church vis-à-vis the state.[46] This is the earliest systematic discussion of differentiation between religion and politics in Russia, functionally equivalent to the early clashes between the two spheres in the ninth-century Carolingian Empire in the West.[47]

During the *Stoglav* Council, Tsar Ivan IV[48] asked the council several questions pertaining to the differentiation between secular and religious spheres, particularly the struggle over monastic wealth and landownership. Moreover, the *Stoglav* confirmed the adoption of the concept of *symphonia* in the new Russian context. The text was imbued with exhortations to keep the organic unity between secular and religious power, exemplified in the Tsar himself.[49] There were also no signs of any collective identity being

43 Bezhanidze, "Преамбула," 29–30.

44 English translation from Frederick Lauritzen, "Symphonia in the Byzantine Empire: An Ecclesiastical Problem," in *Évangile, moralité et lois civiles: Gospel, Morality, and Civil Law,* ed. Joseph Famérée, Pierre Gisel, and Hervé Legrand (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2016), 104.

45 Bezhanidze, "Преамбула," 30–32.

46 Стоглав; Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 22; Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина," 100–101.

47 Gerd Althoff, "Differenzierung zwischen Kirche und Königtum im Mittelalter: Ein Kommentar zum Beitrag Detlef Pollacks," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 47, no. 1 (2013): 353–67.

48 Ivan IV is more famously known as Ivan the Terrible. He was the first to take the title "Tsar of all Rus'."

49 Стоглав; Shershneva-Tsitulskaia, "Политико-правовая доктрина," 100.

assigned to either the religious or the non-religious professions of the Tsar's realm. These professions were referred to with a multitude of titles.[50]

The development took on a new character four decades later, with the official elevation of the Metropolitan of Kiev to the Patriarch of Moscow in 1589. The creation of an officially sanctioned independent leader of the Russian church inaugurated a new level of state-church relations. The relationship between the Tsar and the Patriarch was marred by conflicts throughout the seventeenth century, despite their officially aspiring to the symphonic ideal of a harmonious and organic unity. The climax of the conflict came in the middle of the century under Patriarch Nikon, who attempted to strengthen the role of the patriarchal office. His attempts failed, partly because another project of his, updating the service books with reference to the original Greek sources, led to massive social unrest and a religious schism in Russia.

It is impossible to understand the developments of the seventeenth century without taking their contextual backdrop into account. Alongside the significant increase in Russian sovereignty and statehood in this period, the relevant historical context primarily relates to an ever-deepening entanglement between Russian society and Western Europe. This was largely mediated by Ukraine, which was part of the predominantly Roman Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[51] Whereas intellectuals of foreign origin or with a Western education had been sparse in Russia until the seventeenth century, this period saw their increasing presence in almost all fields. As a result, developments in Russia started to align with those in Western Europe, including a general re-appraisal of religious identity in the wake of the Reformation.

The increasing contact between a Western culture that had learned to distinguish between church and state on the one hand, and the religiously imbued Russian society on the other, influenced the latter in at least three arenas. First, there was a weakening of Russian religious and cultural self-sufficiency, present since the end of the Mongol dominance in the

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50 Eugene Lyutko, "Возникновение клерикальной корпорации на Западе XI-XIII вв. и в России XVII-XVIII вв." [Emergence of a Clerical Corporation in Western Europe (11th–13th Centuries) and in Russia (17th–18th Centuries)], *Sotsiologicheskie obozrenie* 19, no. 3 (2020): 305.

51 Brüning, "*Symphonia*," 46–47.

fifteenth century. As a result of this weakening, Russia increasingly came to be seen as part of the Christian world, albeit having an ambiguous relationship with the rest of it. The majority of the Orthodox Christians in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had entered into a union with the Roman Catholic Church, in the 1596 Union of Brest. The Roman Catholic Church saw this, and similar regional unions in the centuries to follow, as a step towards a full reunion with the Orthodox Church, which found itself on the defensive. On the other hand, a steady stream of Ukrainian intellectuals, educated in Polish Jesuit schools or even in Rome, left the Catholic Church and came to Moscow to make a living, thereby diversifying Russian theological discourse. Some of these Ukrainians, such as Stefan Iavorskii and Feofan Prokopovich, later played a crucial role in developing and implementing the Petrine reforms.

The second development was a renewed emphasis on religious purity. Following the Reformation in Central Europe, which was understood theologically as the purification of a degenerate religious culture, similar ideas also began to appear in Russia. In fact, the previous century had already seen the Greek monk Maksim being sent to Russia to help correct liturgical books in 1518, marking an earlier starting point to this trend.[52] Maksim Grek ("the Greek"), as he was called in Russia, is hailed as one of the first named authors of Russian literature. Though Maksim is thus now seen as an important figure, his contemporaries were less unanimous in their approval, and he was twice tried for and convicted of heresy, in 1525 and 1531.[53] A century later, the same tendency to aspire to religious purity drove Patriarch Nikon of Moscow's campaign to reform church rituals.

Patriarch Nikon was elected in 1652, and immediately stirred controversy with his admonitions to the clergy to perform religious rituals in a certain way. According to Karl Christian Felmy, Nikon's view of liturgical reform differed from that of many of his contemporaries, as he saw the Greek sources alone as being authoritative, disregarding centuries of Slavic tradition.[54] His reforms, more sweeping and less carefully presented than

52 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 16–17.

53 Karl Christian Felmy, *Die Deutung der Göttlichen Liturgie in der russischen Theologie: Wege und Wandlungen russischer Liturgie-Auslegung* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 1984), 80.

54 Felmy, *Die Deutung*, 81–82. See also Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 59–61.

earlier ones, were met with fierce resistance from a large part of the Russian population, a portion of which even regarded him as the Antichrist.

The third crucial area of historical context for the crisis of the mid-seventeenth century was an increasing prevalence of apocalyptic and chiliastic thought in Russia, just as in other Christian regions in a time of crisis.[55] The imminent end of the world was the subject of vivid discussion. At the same time, there was an increase in literacy, leading to an increase in privately published pamphlets, spreading these apocalyptic discourses to an unprecedented degree. In this climate, when Patriarch Nikon proposed his controversial reforms, some of which even directly contradicted the decisions of the Council of a Hundred Chapters, opposition was fierce and unrelenting. According to Gabriele Scheidegger, the religious upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century in Russia were just as much the result of apocalyptic thought in general as of concrete opposition to the reforms of Patriarch Nikon.[56]

The resulting schism between the patriarchal church and a collection of disparate groupings later labelled Old Believers was deep and lasting. According to Alfons Brüning, the schism shows the difficulty of applying a modern, Western view of secularism to Russian society in the seventeenth century:

> In a society that posited the participation of every individual in a divine arrangement that was only partly accessible through rational arguments, there was no room to discuss the arrangement itself, only one's degree of participation in it, and the respective moral qualities. […] Even in the extreme case, fundamental opposition – such as at the time of schism – remained within the religious frame of reference, devising eschatological scenarios and decrying the Tsar, once the representative of Christ the ruler of the world, as Antichrist. […] In this situation, secularity[57] acquired a radical character, which did not even exist as such in the West. The idea that a secular state, even secular human rights, can co-exist with religious convictions, or even act as their foundation, has remained a difficult concept for large parts of Russian society up until today.[58]

55 Gabriele Scheidegger, *Endzeit: Russland am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).
56 Scheidegger, *Endzeit*, 9–13.
57 "Secularity" is used here with a normative definition, which is referred to as "secularism" in the Multiple Secularities approach.
58 Brüning, "*Symphonia*," 50–51.

Again, the main distinction was not one between the religious and the secular, but between true and false religion. The idea of a realm outside of religion was openly rejected.

Alongside this religious schism, the break between Tsar Aleksei and Patriarch Nikon from 1658 also merits attention in the analysis of secularity. The exact reason for the clash between the two powerful men is not entirely clear, but, for whatever reason, Nikon laid down the patriarchal vestments and retired to a monastery in July 1658, apparently in protest against the Tsar. According to Paul Bushkovitch, "Aleksei imposed a previously existing control over the church, while Nikon reacted on the basis of ideas on the patriarchal throne that were new."[59] Just as in the Investiture Controversy in the West five centuries earlier, the balance between religious and secular powers had reached a breaking point in Russia. Obviously, the underlying context was entirely different, but from that moment on, the relationship between secular and religious powers became a systemic issue, where the differentiation had previously been ad hoc and shifting. Until this point, "the Muscovites had not questioned the system."[60]

Nikon's refusal to return to his position prompted two councils in 1660 to look to rule on his fate, but they were both inconclusive. Even though a decision was reached that a new patriarch could be chosen, the stalemate continued, as no successor was found.[61] Nikon continued to claim he was the rightful patriarch, and argued that the Tsar had unlawfully infringed upon the administration of the church by establishing a chancellery for religious affairs, the *Monastery Prikaz*. Another six years of negotiation passed, including consultations with the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, until a council formally deposed Nikon in 1666.[62] At the same council, the leaders of the Old Believer movement were likewise tried

59 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 65. See also Lyutko, "Возникновение," 305–6; James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 97–111; Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 65–66. According to Bezhanidze, it was the "erroneous" translation of Justinian's novella that prompted Nikon to assume a position equal to the tsar. Bezhanidze, "Преамбула," 32–33.

60 Brüning, "*Symphonia*," 24. See also 29.

61 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 65–66.

62 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 67–68; Lyutko, "Возникновение," 306.

and condemned, though this did not put an end to the movement, which continued to cause trouble throughout Russia until the end of the century.[63]

The pressing need to reform the church in Russia to counter both non-conformists and unwanted popular religion dominated religious discourse in the second half of the seventeenth century. At the same time, the tsars had become suspicious of the patriarchal office, and sought to bring the church more tightly under secular control.[64] It was against this background that Tsar Peter the Great came to power in 1694.

6 Peter and the Westernising Reforms 1694–1725

The reforms enacted during the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, covering all areas of society, are usually given the epithet 'Westernising', to account for his fascination with the West following his two Great Tours through Western Europe. While this characterisation can be criticised with regard to most of the reforms, which were neither exclusively Peter's ideas, nor even systematic reform projects consciously modelled on the West,[65] it has some merit in its application to the church reform of 1721. As Richard Cracraft pointed out, Tsar Peter had an ambiguous relationship with religion. From an early age, he ridiculed the church in private, organising a "most drunken council" that satirised the leading organ of the Russian church, the most holy council.[66] At the same time, he held the Christian faith in high regard, following its rules and rituals.[67]

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63 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 71–72; Scheidegger, *Endzeit*; Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 64–78.

64 Cherniavsky argues that the ecclesiastical supporters of Patriarch Nikon only argued theoretically for church independence, while they did not touch the concept of the divinely anointed and pious tsar. Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 67.

65 Igor Fedyukin argues for a dismantling of the idea of an "activist absolute monarchy purposefully building a 'well-ordered police state,'" even in the case of France under Louis XIV. Fedyukin, *The Enterprisers*, 6. See also Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform."

66 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 11–13. See also Pavel V. Verkhovskoi, *Учреждение духовной коллегии и Духовный Регламент* (Rostov on Don: 1916), 1:83n1. Such a satirical view of the religious institution was not particularly scandalous or unusual for this time period, however.

67 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 21. Cracraft argues that it would have been impossible for him not to appear pious. He might not display the piousness of his predecessors, but he was eagerly participating in disputes on religious matters, a point that was not lost on his non-Orthodox interlocutors, who often sought to win him over. See also Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 14; Cherniavsky,

A sign that Peter took particular interest in reforming the church can be seen in the attention he paid to ecclesiastical matters during his visits to Western Europe. In 1698, he passed through England on his Grand Embassy, becoming acquainted with the Anglican Bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnet. Two decades later, in 1717, his journeys led him to Paris, where he had a long discussion with a group of Catholic scholars at the Sorbonne. Cracraft devotes more than twenty pages of his book to these two encounters, underlining their importance in shaping Peter's ideas about the state-church relationship.[68]

During the first encounter, Peter was interested in understanding the way the Anglican Church was subordinated to the English state, an arrangement he was visibly excited about. In the words of Cracraft: "Peter had received from Burnet, in short, an intensive course in the political ideas of the Early Enlightenment."[69] The second encounter, with the Catholics in Paris, happened much later in Peter's reign, and centred around a Sorbonne memoir proposing a union between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church – a prospect Peter had no intention of honouring. According to Cracraft, he used the Russian church's reaction to the memoir as grounds to select Bishop Feofan Prokopovich of Pskov as the chief architect of the church reforms he was planning to implement in Russia over the following years.

These two episodes serve as markers for the two stages of Peter's church reform. The first stage, following the Anglican encounter, spanned the first two decades of the eighteenth century, while the second stage started with the Sorbonne memoir. In concrete terms, the first stage was a continuation of the policies of Peter's predecessors, who sought to increase control over the church's financial assets and revenues, whilst the second stage marked a more radical programme. The first stage began with his refusal to call a council following the death of Patriarch Adrian in October 1700.[70] Instead of organising the election of a successor, the patriarchal office was left

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Tsar and People, 72–74; Andrey V. Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution: The Impact of Reformation and Enlightenment in Orthodox Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 27. On the piousness of his predecessors, see Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 61–71.

68 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 28–49.

69 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 37. See also Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 325.

70 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 113–20.

vacant, and its duties divided between Bishop Stefan Iavorskii of Riazan and Murom, and the re-established *Monastery Prikaz* (chancellery for religious affairs) headed by a lay functionary. Whereas the former oversaw issues of faith, heresy, and schism, the latter took care of finances, clergy, and monastery affairs.

Stefan Iavorskii, a Ukrainian intellectual migrant, remained the temporary head of the Russian Orthodox Church until his death in 1722, even though he did not originally aspire to the episcopal role.[71] According to Cracraft, he was "bookish, sickly, indecisive, a Latinizer," who was "perhaps without ever realizing it, […] doomed to failure from the outset of his long career as temporary head of the church. He had proved unsuited to the rigours of the politics of church reform under Peter."[72] Igor Fedyukin argues that public figures of eighteenth-century Russia need to be seen as "enterprisers," who "had to develop new technologies of power, administrative processes, and political links in order to survive in a competitive environment."[73] Iavorskii had caught the Tsar's eye during a sermon at a funeral, but he did not manage to fulfil this enterprising role. This was primarily because he did not fully share the Tsar's ideas of church reform, which were partly inspired by the latter's encounter with Bishop Burnet in England. Moreover, as mentioned above, Iavorskii did not intend to administer as a bishop, but wished instead to stay within the theological domain. He tried at least once to resign from his charge, but the resignation was denied.

Another Ukrainian intellectual migrant rose in the Tsar's favour for the second stage of church reform. Feofan Prokopovich became bishop in 1718, despite Iavorskii's protest. He had impressed Tsar Peter in sermons since 1706, becoming his court preacher in 1716.[74] In Prokopovich, Peter had found "a senior cleric whose sympathies (or antipathies) closely corresponded

71 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 124.
72 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 164. The idea of Iavorskii as a "Latiniser" (i.e. having Roman Catholic leanings) is a nineteenth-century simplification. Even though he clearly preferred the Catholic approach to the Protestant one, even openly calling his enemies "Protestants," the issue is more complicated than that. See Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 312–13, 325; Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 31–40.
73 Fedyukin, *The Enterprisers*, 10.
74 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 52–62; Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 41–55.

to his own."[75] Iavorskii characterised Prokopovich as an "iconoclast," an early modern Russian epithet for Protestants. This characterisation is over-simplistic, although it is clear that Prokopovich preferred Protestant over Catholic theology.[76] Prokopovich was an "enterpriser" that succeeded in promoting his ideas and influencing Tsar Peter's directives regarding the future of the Russian church.

The second stage of church reform began when Peter announced the decision to abolish the office of the patriarchate, and reconfigure the church leadership. The decision came after both Iavorskii and Prokopovich had each penned a response to the Sorbonne memoir about a prospective church union. Peter clearly favoured Prokopovich's text, which was "polite, but vague and uncompromising."[77] He therefore tasked Prokopovich with authoring a new statute for the Russian Orthodox Church, which was for the first time seen in institutional terms. The resulting "Spiritual Regulation" of 1721 constituted the core of Peter's church reform, which foresaw an ecclesiastical college – immediately renamed Most Holy Governing Synod – at the head of the Russian church. Its first President was Stefan Iavorskii, but the bishops Feofan Prokopovich and Theodosius Ianovskii, both in the "Protestant" camp, dominated its early activities as vice presidents. When Iavorskii died a year later, his place was not filled before Tsar Peter's death in 1725.

Seeing Feofan Prokopovich as the main architect, or "enterpriser," behind the Russian church reforms of the early eighteenth century means that we can turn to his writings as the starting point of our search for traces of distinctions and differentiations, hinting at a Russian Orthodox secularity. The remainder of this section analyses two of his programmatic texts, to assess the extent to which Prokopovich considered religion and the secular to be separate domains, and how he drew the boundary between them. The texts in question are a sermon about "The Dignity and Power of the Sovereign," delivered on Palm Sunday, 1718, and the "Spiritual Regulation," from 1721.[78]

75 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 56. Ivanov agrees: "Protestant theology shaped most of Feofan's doctrinal worldview, but he embraced those positions because he believed that Protestant formulations were cognitively effective weapons in cleansing the church from the 'Papist' influence of the prior century." Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 51

76 See Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 321–22.

77 Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 48.

78 The two texts are among the most well-known of Prokopovich's writings. For

7 Sermon on the Dignity and Power of the Sovereign

The 1718 Palm Sunday sermon was an obvious display of deference to Tsar Peter the Great. Prokopovich openly praises Peter as the best possible ruler Russia could have in these troubled times.[79] The sermon as a whole focuses on the relationship between earthly and heavenly power, more precisely on the power to depose a ruler. This discussion had a long tradition in Russia, where secular rulers had long been considered Christ-like figures.[80] The sermon includes references to the debate about natural law that were common at the time,[81] as well as numerous quotations from both scripture and the church fathers, to underpin Prokopovich's assertion that the tsar is instituted by God and ought to be obeyed by all, including the clergy. Using rhetorical elements and powerful quotations, Prokopovich calls on his audience to heed his words, to be seen as the truth about the Christian teaching on worldly power.

According to Hans-Joachim Härtel, the sermon is as Byzantine as it gets, refusing to acknowledge the church having any separate power over the worldly tsar. At the same time, however, the ideas expressed do not differ markedly from the idea of absolutist monarchy that arose in the West.[82] In both cases, the divine origin of the monarch's power is stressed, using the same Bible verses to support their absolute power.

Looking at the sermon in detail, there are three passages that are of particular relevance to the present discussion. In general, Prokopovich avoids speaking about the church as anything other than an integral part of society at large, as can be seen in his explanation of natural law:

> Supreme power comes from nature, and, being from nature, it originates in God himself, who created nature. It is true that the primary power principle

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the Palm Sunday sermon, I refer to the edition printed in Feofan Prokopovich, *Сочинения* [Works], ed. N. P. Eremin (Moscow: Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1961), 76–93. For the *Spiritual Regulation*, I use *Регламент духовный* [Spiritual Regulation] (Moscow: Synod. Tipogr., 1904).

79 On the opposition to Tsar Peter, see Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 75–77.

80 Cherniavsky, *Tsar and Church*.

81 See Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 320–21; Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 58.

82 Hans-Joachim Härtel, *Byzantinisches Erbe und Orthodoxie bei Feofan Prokopovič* (Würzburg: Augustinus, 1970), 70–72; Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 59.

> proceeds from human society and agreement. However, since natural law, written in the human heart by God, requires a powerful defender which conscience (being the divine seed) searches for, we cannot avoid naming God himself as the originator of ruling power.[83]

There is no place for any power outside of the one originating in God. Even the natural law discourse, which seemingly postulates power originating in human society, does not, in Prokopovich's view, contradict this. There is an indirect reference to Thomas Hobbes' idea of the natural condition in this passage, which is clearly refuted. For Prokopovich, the idea that society consists of free-willed individuals in a contractual relationship with the sovereign is clearly erroneous.[84]

The second reference that has an implication for secularity comes immediately after the mandatory rhetorical insistence that time is up, and the orator is nearing the end of their talk. With one third of the sermon still remaining, however, Prokopovich criticises what he terms the "papist spirit":

> It is possible to think (and many do think) that not all people are under this obligation [to obey the emperor], but that certain are exempt, especially the clergy and the monastics. This thorn, or better say sting, for this sting is of the serpent – is the papist spirit, but we do not recognise how it is manipulating and influencing us: clergy have a specific task, another order or rank of the people, and not a separate state.
>
> There is one group of tasks for the army, another for civil administration, another for doctors, another for various artists, however they all subordinate themselves to the supreme power; likewise pastors, teachers, and all clergy also have their own tasks, which is to proclaim God's glory and administer his sacraments. However, they are equally subject to the ruling power, in order that they should remain steadfast in their vocation and fulfil the obligations they have in common with the rest of the people.[85]

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83 Prokopovich, *Сочинения*, 82. See also Härtel, *Byzantinisches Erbe,* 66–67; Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 58.

84 Grigorii V. Bezhanidze and Anna O. Titova, "Парадигма церковно-государственных отношений у архиепископа Феофана (Прокоповича): от Средневековья к Новому времени" [Archbishop Feofan (Prokopovich)'s Paradigm of Church-State Relations: From the Middle Ages to a New Time], *Khristianskoe Chtenie* 6 (2020): 37, 43.

85 Prokopovich, *Сочинения*, 88. The translation is partly taken from Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 59.

The "papist spirit" is thus the belief that the church is something separate from society, with its own rules. For Prokopovich, the clergy is part of the organic whole of society, united under the divinely anointed tsar. Religion cannot assume a separate state, but is just as important to society as the army, civil administration, medicine, or art. The differentiation that this list enumerates is only functional.

Towards the true end of the sermon, Prokopovich turns to current Russian affairs, which he criticises as being chaotic and not always conducive to the common good. If it were not for Tsar Peter, he claims, Russian society would be doomed to failure. Given that there is a Christian imperative to obey even a tyrannical king, how much more obedience should be accorded to a just and enlightened ruler like Peter?:

> When God teaches us thus about the supreme power, then he who dares to oppose the ruler has no excuse! And if opposition to an evil and ungodly ruler means opposing God himself, then what to say about opposition to the Orthodox ruler, who has so benefited Russia that from the beginning of the all-Russian state historians cannot point to one equal to him? Because all power depends on two factors, the civil and the military, and who among us ever knew both so well, as this ruler? He has renewed, yes even given Russia a new birth; but what is his reward from us?[86]

For Cracraft, it is this passage that made Peter fully trust in Prokopovich's abilities, and led to his being put in charge of the church reforms. There is no hint of an opposition between religious and secular matters in this sermon. The idea of such a separation is harshly criticised and called irrational. Prokopovich tries to maintain the trope of the religious nature of Russian society, which should not succumb to the snares of a secular worldview, either in the guise of natural law without divine origin (Protestants) or the idea that the church constitutes a separate state (Catholics). Moreover, he tries to enlist Tsar Peter to help prevent any such secular differentiation.

Thus, the framing of secularity in early eighteenth-century Russia was shaped in confrontation with Western discourses. The Orthodox Church in Russia was not ready to embrace the idea that the church or the

86 Prokopovich, *Сочинения*, 91. The translation is partly taken from Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 59.

religious sphere was a distinct part of social and political life. At the same time, Christian theological heritage provided easy means to distinguish between heavenly and worldly power, or between religious specialists and other "orders or ranks of the people."[87] The conception of being part of the Christian world, albeit without the developments that had influenced the discourses in the West, translated into an ambiguous relationship with these discourses. Russian Orthodox intellectuals, such as Prokopovich, refused to fully adopt Western ideas, even though these ideas clearly influenced their thinking. This led to the perception of a need to refute the conceptualisation of an independent secular realm, even though this development was openly taking place in Russian society, too.

To see how this ambiguity was translated into concrete policy proposals, one can examine the "Spiritual Regulation," the 1721 document drafted by Prokopovich to reorganise the Russian church under the new political circumstances.[88]

8 The "Spiritual Regulation"

The "Spiritual Regulation" is of an entirely different character than Prokopovich's religiously imbued and rhetorically refined sermons, being instead a legal document, designed to establish a collegiate form of ecclesiastical government. It is clearly a secular document, which, whilst making numerous references to the Bible and other religious foundations, nonetheless conceives of the Orthodox Church as one structure among others in the secular world.[89] Moreover, it is much more structured than earlier documents of similar scope, like the *Stoglav* from 1551, which is only a collection of conciliar canons placed in an unclear order. The "Regulation" bears the mark of modernity in its rational structure, although it does also contain redundancies and eclectic passages.

In relation to the subject at hand, there is an entire passage, the introduction to section II.b.iv, devoted to the question of what is meant by the word "worldly" (мирский, миряне – often translated as "lay" or

87 The Russian scheme of differentiating between people's occupation employ the word "чин," meaning order or rank.
88 See Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 157–61.
89 See Lyutko, "Возникновение," 311–12; Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 69–75.

"secular"[90]). The section discusses the tasks of laypeople that are subjected to spiritual regulations.[91] According to Prokopovich, there are three meanings of "world" (мир) that could serve as explanation: the world as the inhabited earth, the world as the totality of humans, or the world as the negative aspects of human behaviour. The word "worldly" exists because

> it is necessary for some to educate and administer the church as bishops and priests. These servants of God have accepted, in terms of honour, the spiritual rank (чин). Likewise are those who administer the bloodless offering [of Christ in the Eucharist] preferably called ministers (Священницы). And the others, who are only their listeners and disciples, are simply called worldly.

Question: from which of the above-named meanings of the word "world" does the name "worldly" then come?

> It is from the second meaning, since both priests and non-priests are worldly, that is, humans. But the non-priests are expressly called worldly, as they do not participate in the spiritual education and service, but are simply the audience.[92]

This passage shows how Prokopovich attempted to avoid the distinction between "religious" and "secular," just as in his sermon. Of course, he accepted that there is a difference between the two, but argued that they do not exclude, or even complement, each other. Rather, they are interwoven and indivisible: the religious is secular and vice versa. There ought to be no

90 Olga Tsapina notes how the Latin word "secular" never took hold in Russian, where the root "world-" was preferred, possibly through Polish influence: Olga Tsapina, "Поп и пресвитер: Равенство священства. Апостольская преемственность и идентичность российского православного духовенства XVIII века" [Pop and Presbyter: Parity of Ministers, Apostolic Succession and Orthodox Ecclesiastical Identity in 18th-Century Russia], in *Вера и личность в меняющемся обществе. Автобиографика и православие в России конца XVII – начала XX века* [Faith and Individuality in a Changing Society: Autobiography and Orthodoxy in Russia from the End of the 17th to the Early 20th Century], edited by Denis Sdvizhkov and Laurie Manchester (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2019), 111.

91 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 70–73.

92 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 72–73. See also Iurii F. Samarin, *Сочинения* [Works], vol. 5, *Стефан Яворский и Феофан Прокопович* [Stefan Iavorskii and Feofan Prokopovich] (Moscow: D. Samarin, 1880), 297.

institutionalised differentiation between those who belong to either sphere, only an *ad hoc* distinction based on their role in the current interaction.

Of course, there is a distinction visible in the document. This is especially clear in the preface, which might be attributed as much to Tsar Peter as to Prokopovich. The preface explains why the "Regulation" is necessary:

> When We [Peter] cast Our eyes on the spiritual rank (духовный чин) We see much disorder and numerous defects in the execution of its tasks, leading Us to fear that We might displease the Highest Power after having brought order to both the military and the civil ranks (воинский и гражданский чин).[93]

For Peter, and subsequently also for Prokopovich, it was clear that the clergy constituted one rank (чин)[94] among many, and was just as much in need of structuring as the military and civil administration. The distinction that is made is not one of religion versus the secular, but of religion as one of the ranks of public administration. Eugene Lyutko sees the "Regulation" as having been a first step in the development of clerical corporation in Russia. In the years that followed, the word "clergy" (духовенство) appeared as a corporate notion for all those in full-time church service, and it has been used in this way ever since.[95]

A similar argument is made in section II.b.ii, on the schools to be set up in every bishop's house. This was to be done so as to raise the orderliness of the religious rank, for, "as long as there is no light of learning, the church cannot be properly led, and it is impossible to avoid disorder, laughable superstition, and even schism and foolish heresies."[96] The section continues with a philosophical argument over good and bad learning, trying to regulate the roles of the teachers, the pupils, and others in these schools to be established. Prokopovich was of the view that the spiritual rank should be responsible for teaching.[97] According to Igor Fedyukin, however, Tsar

93 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 5. See also Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 149–53.
94 The word "чин" carries much more weight than the English "rank," denoting "the eternal and unchanging order of Creation." Tsapina, "Поп и пресвитер," 109.
95 Lyutko, "Возникновение," 306; Tsapina, "Поп и пресвитер," 109–10.
96 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 47. See also Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 174.
97 See also Daniel Haas, Eugene Lyutko, and Sebastian Rimestad, "'God prepares the way for his light to enter into the terrible darkness of Muscovy': Exchange and mobility between Halle Pietism and Russian Orthodox clergy in the 18th century,"

Peter "did not necessarily share [the Regulation's] educational sensibilities, let alone made efforts to implement it. […] Nor was there any concerted effort to implement the *Ecclesiastical Regulation's* educational program across the realm."[98] This was therefore Prokopovich's own hobby horse, and was slow to be implemented. Only the most learned bishops opened schools in their sees, although by the end of the eighteenth century, most bishops in Russia had an academic education.[99]

In these schools, secular subjects, such as arithmetic, grammar, or geography, were also taught, though the education ended with two years of theology, following a year reading Pufendorf's "Politics."[100] Prokopovich modelled this curriculum on schools found elsewhere in Europe, especially in the Jesuit schools of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Ukraine, where he had received his own education. The schools were not to be pure "church schools," but rather "institutions of general education. At the date of their introduction in Russia, they were 'advanced' in that they corresponded to the official schooling of the West."[101] There is no differentiation between religious and secular subjects in the "Regulation," as "a good and rigorous education is useful for many purposes, for the fatherland as well as for the church; it is a root, a seed, a foundation."[102]

The document is, in general, imbued with a secular spirit, for example when it explains why an ecclesiastical collegium is better suited to rule the church than an individual (the Patriarch). Prokopovich lists nine reasons, all of which are purely secular in nature. Except for the beginning of the section, which lists biblical and historical precedents, the reasons pertain to purely human factors, such as the advantage of multiple minds and mutual checks and balances.[103] The section on sermons, too, reads more

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Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa 68, no. 1 (2023).

98 Fedyukin, *The Enterprisers*, 52. See also Lyutko, "Возникновение," 308.

99 Eugene Lyutko, "Роль Митрополита Платона (Левшина) в остановлнии церковной корпоративности (рубеж XVIII-XIX вв.)" [The Role of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) in the Emergence of Church Corporative Identity (On the Boundary of the 18th and 19th Centuries)], *Vestnik EDS* 25 (2019).

100 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 56–57. On the role of Pufendorf in early 18th century Russia (and Europe), see Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 320–21.

101 Max J. Okenfuss, "The Jesuit Origins of Petrine Education," in *The Eighteenth Century in Russia,* ed. J. G. Garrard (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 129.

102 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 49.

103 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 13–19. See also Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 148–

like a Pietist manual of emotional restraint than a document on religious expression, as Prokopovich admonishes the priests not to gesticulate (шататься вельми) or to refer to real people in their sermon, and to refrain from seeking praise for it afterwards.[104]

As with the previously discussed sermon, the "Regulation" is a document that tries to justify the secularisation of society in Petrine Russia without openly acknowledging it. Instead of clearly defining the church's role in opposition to the secular realm, the document lists the duties of the church and its actors as an integral part of society, keeping a distance from developments in the Western confessions. This is especially clear regarding the Roman Catholic Church, when Prokopovich argues that a collegial organ at the head of the church would prevent rebellion and confusion (мятежей и смущенія)[105]:

> Let us investigate the history of Constantinople since Justinian's time, and we shall discover much of this [i.e. self-opinionated church leaders]. Indeed the Pope by this very means achieved so great a pre-eminence, and not only completely disrupted the Roman Empire, while usurping a great part of it for himself, but more than once has profoundly shaken other states and almost completely destroyed them. Let us not recall similar threats which have occured among us.[106]

The "Regulation" was designed to "regulate how the church shall conduct its business" while "the foundations of this regulation […] are not touched upon here."[107] It is thus a secular document, avoiding the religious arguments behind administrative decisions. Moreover, it evades the distinction between church and state, or between the religious and the secular. Instead, it dwells at length on the definitions of true and false religion, and of good and bad teachers and students. It was not in the interest of Tsar Peter to

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57; Samarin, *Сочинения*, 290; Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 73–74.

104 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 66–70. See also Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 149–50.

105 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 16. See also Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 327–30; Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 153–54. Cracraft translates the two words with "sedition and disorder."

106 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 17, translation in Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 154. See also Härtel, *Byzantinisches Erbe*, 78–79 for another use of this rhetoric by Prokopovich.

107 Prokopovich, *Регламент*, 11.

distinguish explicitly between religion and the secular realm, since doing so could have diminished his status as divinely anointed autocrat of the Russian Empire.[108]

9 The Afterlife of the Petrine Reforms

The Most Holy Governing Synod, established by the "Spiritual Regulation," started its work in February 1721, and remained the highest organ of the Russian Orthodox Church until 1917. It was finally abolished when a Great Local Council, the "Moscow *Sobor*" (Собор), reinstated the Patriarchate, electing Tikhon Bellavin as the first Patriarch of Moscow in more than two centuries.[109] Throughout these two centuries, there was very little criticism of the "Spiritual Regulation," and, for the most part, no serious attempts to rescind or amend it surfaced before the radically changed circumstances of the twentieth century.[110] The reforms had initiated a new *status quo*, which was not openly questioned.

This is not to say that the arrangement was not commented upon or remained entirely unchanged, as transformations in the political context impacted the way the regulation was assessed and executed. The original idea of the Synod having equal status to that of the Senate (the college of

108 See Härtel, *Byzantinisches Erbe*, 91–94. Lyutko, analysing Prokopovich's theological system, mentions his distinction between "rational" and "mundane" (обыденный) theology, which is to be understood diachronically: the "mundane" discourse of the church fathers is progressively improved through a "rational" approach to theology. Eugene Lyutko, "Становление конфессионального богословия в России XVIII-XIX вв." [The Emergence of Confessional Theology in Russia (18th–19th Centuries)], *Vestnik PSTGU* 78 (2017), 51–52. This distinction is not reflected in the texts analysed here, though. Instead, the text is reminiscent of Protestant *Kirchenordnungen*, where the emperor is assigned the role of "Summus Episcopus," the highest bishop of the church, responsible for exercising its secular power. As Ivanov argues: "There was hardly anything more sacred for Feofan than secular authority." Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 79.

109 Sergei Firsov, *Русская Церковь накануне перемен (конец 1890-х - 1918 гг.)* [The Russian Church at the Eve of Change (End of 1890s–1918)] (Moscow: Kruglyi stol po religioznomu obrazovanie i diakonii, 2002); Günter Schulz, Gisela-A. Schröder, and Timm C. Richter, *Bolschewistische Herrschaft und Orthodoxe Kirche in Rußland: Das Landeskonzil 1917/1918* (Münster: LIT, 2005).

110 This was not the case in the first years after Peter's death, however, which were characterised by a strong reactionary movement, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 89–107.

political affairs) soon faltered, as it became clear that Peter and the members of the Senate were unwilling to accommodate this notion.[111] Instead, the office of synodal chief procurator (Оберпрокурор) was created in 1722, as a lay functionary who should "observe that the Synod fulfils its duties, and that all matters submitted for the Synod's consideration are dispatched truthfully, zealously, promptly, and in an orderly way."[112] In short, he was to ensure that the Synod did not oppose the will of the tsar and the Senate. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the chief procurator became notorious for his power over the church, which was demoted to a "handmaiden of the state,"[113] just another department of the imperial administration.

In order to analyse how the reforms were considered in the following centuries, I now turn to assessments by later theologians and intellectuals, from four different subsequent periods of Russian history. First, I discuss the views of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin)[114] from the end of the eighteenth century. Second, I turn to the Slavophile Iurii Samarin, who, in the 1840s, wrote his dissertation on Feofan Prokopovich and Stefan Iavorskii. Third, I investigate the discussions of the early twentieth century, over whether to reinstate the Patriarchate. Finally, I finish with the mid-twentieth-century writings of some great Russian theologians in exile. These four assessments

111 See Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 71,

112 Instructions for the first chief procurator, quoted in Cracraft, *The Church Reforms*, 175.

113 The quote is from Gregory Freeze, who himself criticised this perception, arguing that the church had more creative power than the phrase suggests. See Gregory Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1986): 399–416. For the changing role of the chief procurator, see Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 236–42. The most well-known chief procurator was Konstantin Pobedonostsev (served from 1880–1905), who had a considerable impact. See Gerhard Simon, *Konstantin Petrović Pobedonoscev und die Kirchenpolitik des Heiligen Sinod 1880–1905* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969); Aleksander Iu. Polunov, *Под властью обер-прокурора: Государство и церковь в эпоху Александра III* [Under the Power of the Chief Procurator: State and Church in the Epoch of Alexander III] (Moscow: Seriia 'Pervaia Monografiia', 1996).

114 During the Petrine period, a new convention for surnames emerged in Russia. Whereas earlier, surnames had been a prerogative of the few, now every Russian was required to have one. As a corollary, it was decreed that monks (and, consequently bishops) were to write their surnames in brackets after their monastic name, which was the primary one. Therefore, in this text, Feofan Prokopovich is referred to as Prokopovich, whereas Platon (Levshin) is shortened to Platon.

shed new light on the Petrine reforms, illuminating the way the boundary between religion and its other was negotiated and contested within the Russian Orthodox Church throughout history.

10 Platon Levshin – a Bishop of the Russian Enlightenment

Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) of Moscow (1737-1812) was the most prominent and industrious enlightenment theologian in the Russian Orthodox Church. He wrote innumerable public sermons and other works that testify to his profound faith and attachment to the Orthodox Church, while also placing him firmly in the context of the eighteenth-century Russian Enlightenment.[115] When looking at Platon's life, it becomes clear that he did not see the situation of the church following the Petrine reforms as a problem. His *Short History of the Russian church* from 1805, for example, ends with the last Patriarch of Moscow in 1700:

> As to the reasons for the abolition of the Patriarchate, they are explained in the Spiritual Regulation, which is not necessary to describe here […]

> At the beginning of the 18th century in Russia, the year was counted no longer from the first of September […] but from the first of January, a premonition that, in the 18th century, every activity in Russia would take on a new look. Therefore, for the beginning of a new era, also for the activities of the church [...], I will leave the writing of history to others, to someone for whom a continuation is more comfortable, as all the events are already held up as memory and the written sources are plenty.[116]

115 There have been several important works on Metropolitan Platon published in English over the last decade: Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia: The Teachings of Metropolitan Platon* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013); "Church Intellectuals in Enlightenment Russia: The Theotokos Sermons of Metropolitan Platon (Levshin)," in *Church and Society in Modern Russia: Essays in Honour of Gregory L. Freeze,* ed. Manfred Hildermeier, and Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015); Gary Marker, "Between Enlightenment and Orthodoxy: The Primers of Platon (Levshin) and the Ascent of Secular Russian in the Late Eighteenth Century," *History of Education and Children's Literature* 9, no. 2 (2014); Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 176–82.

116 Platon (Levshin), *Краткая церковная российская история* [Short Russian Church History] (Moscow: Synodalnaia Tipografiia, 1805), 2:275–76. See also Verkhovskoi, *Учреждение*, 58.

But the fact of writing such a history at all, even though it does not cover the eighteenth century, attests to Metropolitan Platon's fundamental acceptance of the distinction between religion and the secular as the framework within which intellectual life in Russia took place.[117] Feofan Prokopovich had already ventured into this framework at the beginning of the century, whereas Platon seems to have completely internalised it. This is easy to see in Platon's views on education, for example. For Platon, the basic tenets of the Orthodox faith were central to education, but, unlike his predecessors, he did not insist on keeping them in the outdated ecclesiastical language and script. Instead, he composed a catechism written in the new, secular Russian language, and ensured that it was the single most used primary school textbook throughout Russia.[118] In this way, he opened the Orthodox Church up to a new mode of secularity, not least through the consistent use of the new civil orthography and vocabulary.

Platon's "secularisation" of the church is found not only in primary education, but also in his sermons, where he spoke "in a language that spoke to eighteenth-century concerns, both clerical and lay, and that even today remains appealing to a modern (or post-modern) reader."[119] Platon lived and worked in the secular environment of the late eighteenth century, without feeling constrained by it. All the while, he was able to incorporate Orthodox Christian teaching into his sermons and speeches, which were critical of concepts and trends originating from the Western secular context. Wirtschafter identifies two of these as being the pursuit of happiness outside of a religious framework and morality as a feature of the individual as a human being. For Platon, though, "it [was] virtually impossible to identify a single area of Russian life where religious teachings and beliefs did not play a meaningful role."[120] Even though he lived and worked in a secular environment, he was not ready to accept a conceptual distinction between a secular and a religious reality. However, he did distinguish between "two different intellectual communities: the secular

117 For more on the framework and innovative character of Platon's history of the Russian church, see Lyutko, "Роль Митрополита Платона," 119–21.

118 See Marker, "Between Enlightenment and Orthodoxy"; Lyutko, "Роль Митрополита Платона," 125–26.

119 Wirtschafter, "Church Intellectuals," 19. See also Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 196–98.

120 Wirtschafter, "Church Intellectuals," 33–34.

[светский] and the religious [духовный], and the boundary between them runs along not only the topics covered, but also their methods (or 'sageness' [мудрования])."[121] His *Short History of the Russian church* was an example of this religious intellectuality within the secular endeavour of historiography.

11 Iurii Samarin – a Critical Voice in a New Century

1825 marked a watershed in Russian intellectual (and political) history, seeing "the curtain of Russia's Orthodox Reform and Enlightenment [closing] with the coronation of Nicholas I and the ascendancy of the military-bureaucratic reaction in the post-1825 empire: from then on, a new story of Russia's counter-reform begins."[122] One of the signs of this counter-reform was the rise of national romantic currents, such as the Slavophile movement.[123] This movement never completely dominated the intellectual discussions of the nineteenth century, but it has nonetheless had an immense impact on cultural discussions since this time. It was a movement of the 'intelligentsia', a class of landed gentry with philosophical ambitions, who sought answers to the cultural questions of the day – specifically the differences in civilisational development between Russia and the West.[124]

Among the most active Slavophiles was Iurii Samarin (1819-1876), a theologian, social reformer, and political thinker, who eschewed the dichotomous choice between reaction and revolution, opting instead for reform.[125] Samarin wrote his *Magister* dissertation on Feofan Prokopovich and Stefan Iavorskii, a dissertation he struggled with considerably in the early 1840s, and defended in 1844.[126] In a way, this work continues Platon's history of the church. The dissertation, though, has a different character

121 Lyutko, "Роль Митрополита Платона," 121.

122 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 16. See also 229–35.

123 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 222–25.

124 Gerda Hucke, *Jurij Fedorovič Samarin: Seine geistesgeschichtliche Position und politische Bedeutung* (München: Otto Sagner, 1970), 13–14; Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1979), 106–11.

125 Hucke, *Jurij Fedorovič Samarin*, 15. Samarin became famous in the West for his involvement in a dispute over the role of the Baltic Germans in Russia's Baltic Provinces in the 1860s.

126 Hucke, *Jurij Fedorovič Samarin*, 22, 29. The text is published in Samarin, *Сочинения*.

to Platon's writings, which were mostly concerned with structural changes and political connections.[127] For Samarin, the important thing was to discover the philosophical constructs that influenced his protagonists, both from within and outside of the Orthodox tradition. His main aim with the dissertation was to use the two churchmen to explain the specific Orthodox conception of the Christian Church, in contrast to Catholicism and Protestantism, which he regarded as two oppositional poles:

> Our church appeared to them [Catholics and Protestants] somehow incomplete. They saw in it a developmental stage preceding the one they had achieved, containing the seed of their own stage. It [our church] was situated in the sphere in-between, to which both of them indicated a claim, in their eyes a legitimate one.
>
> But the battle between Catholicism and Protestantism did not stop at the boundary of our church. It even continued within. Some of its members [the Orthodox] allowed influences from Western religious thought and repeated the struggle that happened outside of its boundaries also within.[128]

Samarin saw the Catholic Church as having forgotten that it was a living organism, instead turning it into a state. The Protestants then turned this misunderstanding on its head, by completely separating the church from politics and science. The Reformation had mounted a "challenge to the false claims of the church, [which] turned into a challenge to the church itself."[129] Samarin saw the distinction between religion and its other as being responsible for the 'erroneous' developments in the West. The Catholic Church claimed too much of this other for itself,[130] whilst

127 According to Eugene Lyutko, Platon had written his history with the goals of "1) providing an alternative to the secular historical works," and "2) demonstrat[ing] the importance of the Orthodox clergy in the emergence of Russian statehood along its entire history." Lyutko, "Роль Митрополита Платона," 119.

128 Samarin, *Сочинения*, 8. That this kind of view was not restricted to Samarin, but widely shared among Russian intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century, is confirmed by A. Ivantsov-Platonov in the foreword to the published dissertation: A. Ivantsov-Platonov, foreword to *Сочинения*, by Iurii F. Samarin. See also Verkhovskoi, *Учреждение*, 73–81; Hucke, *Jurij Fedorovič Samarin*, 49; Walicki, *A History*, 104–6.

129 Samarin, *Сочинения*, 6, 454.

130 "Science filled the gap between persons and the church, it was able to link

the Protestants separated the secular completely from the church. For Samarin and the Orthodox Christians, neither approach was legitimate, because there ought to be no conceptual distinction between religious and secular within the church, which is a living organism encompassing the entirety of human society.[131]

Samarin chose to focus on Iavorskii and Prokopovich, as these two "represented better than anybody else the religious mindset of their time. They were the heroes of this great battle."[132] Both of them held Russian Orthodox Christianity in high regard, and defended it against different foes: Iavorskii against the Protestants, and Prokopovich against the Catholics. The problem, as Samarin saw it, was the personality of Tsar Peter, who did not understand the Orthodox Church: "The necessary living connection, or linkage, within the entire church organism, its abstract side, the dogmas with rituals and moral development of the individuals, were all completely lost on Peter the Great."[133]

With the help of this trio of early eighteenth-century actors, Samarin was able to build up his fundamental criticism of religious developments in the West, as well as of the Petrine reforms, which he saw as overly "Protestant." Although he did not mention the distinction explicitly, it is clear that he positioned himself against an uncritical uptake of the 'Western' idea of the secular in Russia. The Russian Orthodox conception of the church was of a living organism, which cannot be distinguished, not even conceptually, from another, non-religious sphere. The fact that, since the reign of Peter the Great, Russia had also experienced a rise in secular rationality, science, and entertainment, just as in Western Europe, was a fundamental aberration to Samarin. For a Russian Orthodox thinker, the distinction between religious and secular ought not to make sense.

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these two separated sides. [...] It was called to unite the two authorities who considered each other mutually separate – the dogmas of the church and human thought. To show that the steps of logical conclusions would arrive at the eternal truths – that was its task." Samarin, *Сочинения*, 457, 331.

131 In his *defensio*, Samarin even argues that, in the Western confessions, "we see the killing of a living organism." Samarin, *Сочинения*, 453.

132 Samarin, *Сочинения*, 456. See also Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 31–69.

133 Samarin, *Сочинения*, 253–54. See also Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 27–29.

12 A New Reform for the Church in Turbulent Times?

In the following decades, this critical attitude toward the Petrine reforms took hold in Russia. This coincided with the chief procurator of the Most Holy Governing Synod – the lay functionary whose role it was to coordinate the Synod with the wishes of the emperors – taking an increasingly interfering role. Throughout the nineteenth century, his role became more controlling, even dictating the agenda and decisions of the Synod.[134] Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the chief procurator from 1880 to 1905, perfected this role, becoming *de facto* ruler of the Orthodox Church in Russia.[135] The question of church reform arose, with most commentators wanting to see the Patriarchate reinstated and the Petrine church reforms decried as having been too "Protestant."[136]

Among the most ardent critics of the Petrine reforms was the professor of canon law, Pavel V. Verkhovskoi (1879-1943), who published a massive two-volume compendium on the reforms in 1916. In it, he condemned the reforms "as a blatant violation of the norms of canon law perpetrated in a forceful effort to subjugate the church to the secular state."[137] The reforms had occurred after Peter had

> secularised the Russian state and turned it into a so-called 'police state', worrying about the 'common good'. Such a state would, in the mind of some philosophers from the school of natural law, inevitably come into a conflict with the church, where one or the other would have to give in. Ecclesiastical supremacy over the state was unthinkable – especially after Nikon's subversive machinations [замахов]. To separate church and state was not possible back then, which leaves the third option: subordinate the church to the state.[138]

For Verkhovskoi and his camp, the reforms had been premeditated by Tsar Peter, to take away the church's autonomy, and turn it into part of the bureaucratic machinery of the secular state. The only way to return the church to its religious purpose would be to reinstate the Patriarchate.

134 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 236–40.
135 Simon, *Konstantin Petrović Pobedonoscev*; Polunov, *Под властью*.
136 Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 321.
137 Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 308.
138 Verkhovskoi, *Учреждение*, 11.

This was clearly the most widespread opinion at the beginning of the twentieth century, but there were still those who opposed the idea. For example, the church historian Evgenii E. Golubinskii (1834-1912), argued "against the choir of voices giving a resolute affirmative answer," instead "raising [his] voice with a just as resolute negative answer."[139] For Golubinskii, the arguments made in the "Regulation" in favour of a collegiate church authority, still held. Moreover,

> even if it is the same Russian people today as before Peter, the intelligentsia is a wholly different one: not sharing the people's idea of the Patriarchate, they would make a mockery of him and his brilliance and magnificence, like a kind of Dalai-Lama. To those who say that this is a funny joke, we answer that under the expected freedom of press, which will include the scoffing of the boulevard press, this joke could lead to altogether unamusing temptation and harm.[140]

In Golubinskii's view, Russian society – at least the intellectuals – had embraced a secular worldview in the meantime, such that a "splendid and magnificent" Patriarch no longer commanded the awe he did in the seventeenth century.

The debate continued into 1917, when, between the February and the October revolutions, the opportunity arose to summon a Great Local Council of the entire church. This council, which included lay participants, met in August 1917 and managed to reinstate the Patriarchate of Moscow before the Bolsheviks took power and declared religion an enemy of the people.[141] The council made a number of other decisions, but none were implemented within the Soviet Union. Here, religion was persecuted and frowned upon. This was especially true of the Orthodox Church, which was seen as having been an upholder of the former political order.

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139 Evgenii Golubinskii, "Желательно ли упразднение Св. Синода и восстановление патриаршества?" [Is it Desirable to Abolish the Most Holy Synod and Reinstate the Patriarchate?], chapter 4 in *О реформе в быте Русской Церкви* [On the Reform in the Life of the Russian church], ed. Evgenii Golubinskii (Moscow: S. A. Belokurov, 1913), 85.

140 Golubinskii, "Желательно ли," 87.

141 Firsov, *Русская Церковь*; Schulz, Schröder, and Richter, *Bolschewistische Herrschaft*.

13 Assessing the Petrine Reforms in Exile – Anton Kartashev and Georges Florovsky

In the numerous exile communities outside the Soviet Union, however, religious actors attempted to implement the decisions of the Moscow *Sobor* as far as was possible in the new circumstances. The main group of émigré bishops, centred around Metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitskii) in Yugoslavia, held a conservative, monarchist outlook, wishing for a return to the situation under the Russian Tsar. A more 'progressive' group emerged around Metropolitan Evlogii (Georgievskii) in Paris, who propagated a rigorous implementation of the *Sobor* decisions, and a reinvention of the Orthodox Church in exile.[142] Several of the Orthodox theologians in Paris wrote assessments of the Petrine church reforms, none of which were favourable.

The church historian Anton V. Kartashev (1875-1960) had already intervened in debates in the critical camp prior to 1905, and became the last chief procurator of the Most Holy Synod on 25 July 1917. Within a week, the post was abolished at his command, and re-established as a minister of religious affairs. As such, he officially opened the discussions at the Moscow *Sobor*. After communist arrests, and a brief period as minister for the White Russian government in Estonia, he fled to France, where he continued his earlier job of teaching church history, at the newly established *Institut St Serge* in Paris.[143]

Kartashev was a modernist, arguing that "the Christians of the modern era do not fit the role of static conservators of Hellenistic forms of dogma."[144] His view of the Petrine reforms was most clearly formulated in his *Short Russian Church History*, where he emphasised that, when looking at Peter, "we step into a new period, a period of imperial Russia, with a Westernising, secular [секулярный], and anti-theocratic spirit of despotic domination of the state over the church."[145] This state of affairs, he believed, was the result of influences from the West, which had "overthrown the sacral primacy of

142 See Sebastian Rimestad, *Orthodox Christian Identity in Western Europe: Contesting Religious Authority* (London: Routledge, 2020), esp. 166–78.

143 Rimestad, *Orthodox Christian Identity*, 227.

144 Georgii Mitrofanov, "Антон Владимирович Карташев (1875–1960)" [Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev (1875–1960)], in *Преподоный Сергий в Париже* [The Venerable Sergii in Paris], ed. Boris Bobrinskoy (St. Petersburg: Rostok, 2010), 330.

145 Anton V. Kartashev, *Очерк по истории Русской Церкви* [Sketch on the History of the Russian Church] (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1959), 2:311–12.

church authority and replaced it with a secular (лаический) primacy of state authority and a common, secular (светская) culture. In the humanist atmosphere, human authority was emancipated from divine authority, establishing not only its independence, but also its primacy, and, moreover, its absolutism."[146] For Kartashev, this was a negative development, which had led to an unhealthy relationship between the church and the state in Russia, ultimately facilitating the communist takeover.

The developments in the West had been more organic, and resulted in a less rigorous subordination of church activity. The key to the Western development was that the church had acknowledged the changes in political society, and acted accordingly: "The sphere of church activities must change according to the visible evolution of the relationship between society and state."[147] Instead of the earlier idea that the state should act like a father to its citizens, the focus of the modern state is freedom: freedom of conscience, freedom of opinion, and freedom of social development. Once the church has understood this, it can act accordingly: "The church can begin to live the way society lives, occasionally even jostling with the state. […] The church ought to be upheld by its believers, the society of believers."[148] In relation to secularity, one could argue that Kartashev represents a generation of church actors that had embraced the distinction between religious and secular. For the church in Russia, however, this came too late, as the communists had already firmly imposed a different kind of secularism on society.

That such a view was not universally shared in the Russian émigré community can be seen in the work of Georges Florovsky (1893-1979). Florovsky was born in Russia, but fled to France shortly after graduating from university. After World War II, he went to America, where he taught at Harvard and Princeton. His preeminent work was "The Ways of Russian Theology," first published in 1937. It has since been translated into many languages, and still constitutes a cornerstone of Orthodox

146 Kartashev, *Очерк*, 314. Kartashev uses three different words for "secular," including the loanword laïcal (лаический), influenced by the French system of *laïcité*, under which he lived and worked.

147 Anton V. Kartashev, "Церковь и государство" [Church and State], *Vestnik RSXD* 6 (1931): 8.

148 Kartashev, "Церковь," 8.

theological polemics against the West.[149] Florovsky agreed with Kartashev in his assessment of the Petrine reforms, arguing that "what is innovative in this Petrine reform is not westernization but secularization. […] The state denied the independence of the church's rights and power, while the very thought of church autonomy was denounced and condemned as 'popery.'"[150] However, Florovsky's solution for the Orthodox Church was not to follow the Western path of embracing secularisation, but to effectuate a "return to the church fathers." He proposed re-reading the texts from the first centuries of Christian teaching, in order to rediscover true Christianity, untainted by Western theological errors. Florovsky disagreed that the church had to accommodate secular society and accept the primacy of secular reason.

By the middle of the twentieth century, most Russian church intellectuals (in exile) agreed that the Petrine reforms had been an error, constituting a considerable divergence from legitimate Orthodox Christianity. Moreover, this development had happened because Peter wanted to emulate the West, and lacked the theological sensitivity to consider the consequences of his actions. Feofan Prokopovich, infatuated with anti-Catholic polemics, had erred too far on the side of Protestantism, supporting the unhealthy institutional secularisation of the Russian church. This arrangement, they argued, ultimately led to the decline of Russian religiosity, and rise of communism, culminating in the October Revolution and the Soviet Union.

This narrative was the result of several layers of scholarship, starting with the national romanticism of the mid-nineteenth-century Russian Slavophiles. Before that, the Petrine reforms were not fundamentally questioned or challenged, even though Kartashev claims that "in every generation of outstanding hierarchs, the memory was kept alive of the sighs and torments in the long wait for a release from the bonds of the synodal constitution."[151] The Russian theological community largely

149 Rimestad, *Orthodox Christian Identity*, 228–29.

150 Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part one*, vol. 5 of *Collected Works,* ed. Richard S. Haugh, and Paul Kachur, trans. Robert L. Nichols (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1979), 114–15.

151 Kartashev, *Очерк*, 315. Ivanov argues that there were "philo-Catholics" throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that criticised the "Protestant" theology of the mainstream Orthodox hierarchs, but does not mention any direct opposition to the institutional set-up of the church after

refused to accept the idea that the Petrine reforms were not primarily an attack on the Orthodox Church. Even now, three decades after the end of the Soviet Union, the general perception in Orthodox circles is primarily shaped by the negative narratives of the pre-revolutionary period.[152] However, the academic consensus is crumbling, as an overview from 2014 maintains: "The Petrine epoch gave the secularisation process in Russia a mighty push, without doubt, but to link the essence of the reforms to secularisation would not be correct."[153]

14 The Petrine Reforms and the 'Discovery' of the Secular

It is not easy to assess whether the Russian religious actors of the eighteenth century 'discovered' the secular through the Petrine reforms. For later commentators, especially following the national romantic turn of the mid-nineteenth century, this clearly had been the case, and it was a negatively connoted development. Subsequently, the entire eighteenth century was seen as an aberration that had deviated from the natural and organic Orthodox understanding of religiosity. These later layers of interpretation shroud the developments of the early eighteenth century in misunderstandings, assigning the reform actors a role that they did not envisage for themselves – that of destroying the Russian church.

Looking at the sources themselves, a more nuanced picture is revealed. A secular reality alongside the church had clearly been developing in Russia since the seventeenth century, but, as can be gleaned from the two contemporary sources analysed in this paper, the church was reluctant to wholeheartedly embrace this division. There were initial signs of acceptance of such a reality, but theologically speaking, Prokopovich did not fully support it, and tried to keep it out of his documents. For him,

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1730. Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 133–35, 222–29.

152 Aleksei O. Krylov, "Церковная реформа Петра I и теория секуляризации: от публицистики к историографии" [The Church Reforms of Peter I and Secularisation Theory: From Journalism to Historiography], *Vestnik Mosk. Universiteta,* 8, no. 3 (2021).

153 "Обзор исторических оценок реформы 1721 года" [Overview of Historical Assessments of the 1721 Reforms], *acathist.ru*, 28 October, 2014, http://acathist.ru/en/novosti/item/204-obzor-istoricheskikh-otsenok-reformy-1721-goda, accessed 19 March, 2021.

embracing secularisation was something that had happened in the Western confessions, but ought not to apply to Russian Orthodoxy.

That being said, my focus on only two sources from just one author is perhaps a rather weak basis on which to draw any firm conclusions, notwithstanding these documents' importance to the cultural history of the Russian church. A more thorough analysis of a variety of sources might yield a more differentiated view, though it is unlikely to reveal a fundamentally different reality. Andrey V. Ivanov has conducted a source-based analysis of the eighteenth century, albeit from a different vantage point, and argues that "the bishops who built the reformed and enlightened intellectual world of Russian Orthodoxy were not pawns of the monarch's whims but motivated agents who used state support to improve their church along the blueprints and formulas they discovered in the West."[154] Yet, it was still their church, and they did not accept Western distinctions wholesale.

Another, perhaps clearer, picture might emerge if one were to also examine secular writings. However, there were hardly any secular writings in Russia prior to the eighteenth-century Petrine reforms. That the Petrine reforms as a whole were important for the rise of a secular sphere is unambiguous, but the religious reforms in particular did not seem to corroborate this change. If anything, as Ivanov argues, they ensured that "the state became more sacred, while the church (and its purpose in society) far more secular than before." [155] The rise of a secular sphere distinct from the religious one, thus, encouraged further amalgamation of church and state instead of separation. This amalgamation was then criticised in the nineteenth century as unhealthy and un-Orthodox, leading to attempts to turn back time, and return to the relationship of the seventeenth century. Such a reversal was impossible, however, with the development of the church's secular role – including in education – in the meantime. In fact, the reaction arguably deepened the differentiation between religion and the secular, since it insisted on the two not being amalgamated the way they *de facto* had been.

Another question that must accompany this paper is that of whether the Russian development really was fundamentally different from that in the

154 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 240.
155 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 88.

West. There have been numerous attempts to portray Russian developments as trailing behind, but fundamentally mimicking, those of the West.[156] Regardless of the analytic value of such an approach, the accusation, which first appeared in the nineteenth century, of having attempted to emulate the West, has made an impartial analysis difficult. For Olga Tsapina, it is clear that the discussions of church elites in early eighteenth-century Russia centred around the same topics, with the same kinds of arguments, as those among Western religious intellectuals: "It seems then that the lines separating Western influences from the authentic Russian tradition of church-state relations are not as clear-cut as they are believed to be."[157]

The idea that there is a specific Russian Orthodox way of dealing with the relationship between church and state, a way that is based upon a continuity of the Byzantine legacy of symphonia, "appears to be a figure of speech resting on reductionist and anachronistic, and therefore unsustainable, categories."[158] The same can be said of the idea of the distinction between religion and its 'other'. Russians in the early eighteenth century did not 'discover' the secular, but rather tried to place Russian society and religious expressions in the framework of pan-Christian philosophy and theology, including its ideas of the secular, which were far from consolidated at that time.

Ivanov points to an important aspect of this development, when he argues that before 1825, there was no Orthodox consensus for Western ideas – be they Protestant or Catholic – to encounter.[159] Therefore, these Western ideas were able to enter the contested Russian ecclesiastical discourse without a formulated opposition. This was hardly unique in the European context, as Ivanov argues, citing the Reformation and the Enlightenment as general fields of contestation, where new ideas were hotly debated until a regional or confessional consensus emerged. This is precisely what happened to the idea that religion was a distinct sphere of human existence, that could be opposed to its 'other'. This idea was initially

156 See Manfred Hildermeier, "Beharrliche Rückständigkeit: Über den Umgang mit einer notwendigen Kategorie," in *Church and Society in Modern Russia: Essays in Honour of Gregory L. Freeze*, ed. Manfred Hildermeier, and Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015).

157 Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 331.

158 Tsapina, "The 1721 Church Reform," 334.

159 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 241.

hotly debated, leading to an eventual consensus that wished to reject it, thus pointing to a specificity of Russian approaches to secularity.

15 Russian Eighteenth-Century 'Secularity' and the Multiple Secularities Approach

The Multiple Secularities approach was originally devised to enable analysis of religious communities and civilisational entities that constituted 'others' to the 'Western', Christian experience. As such, it can effectively analyse pre-modern Muslim, Far Eastern, or Hindu religious realities from an innovative perspective. The approach also enables the discussion of contemporary variance in the legal and societal understanding of secularity, in terms of its path dependencies and guiding ideas that may or may not be traced back to pre-modern roots. The framework provides a fascinating avenue to analyse the transition to modernity in relation to the "soft other"[160] of Orthodox Christianity.

The Orthodox Church in Russia, as I have tried to show, did not consider itself to be outside of the theological framework of Western Christianity, at least not until the nineteenth century. At the same time, it had been shaped by a different historical trajectory and theological emphasis, which profoundly influenced its experience of the secular. The Petrine reforms of the early eighteenth century can be said to have provided the turning point, at which Russian Orthodox approaches to secularity started to interact with, and creatively adapt to, Western conceptualisations. The Russian Orthodox Church, as part of World Christianity, was, for the first time, openly confronted with the 'Western' idea of the secular – that there is a realm next to, and beyond the reach of, the church.

The primary mode of distinction in Russia before the Petrine reforms was that between true and false Christianity, just as the self-designation 'Orthodox' (Православие) suggests. This was a legacy from the Byzantine Empire, where the unity between priesthood and empire was seen as paramount to societal well-being. S. N. Balagangadhara has argued that the distinction between the religious and the secular is a corollary of the

160 For an analysis of Russian Orthodoxy as a "soft other" in a contemporary context, see Alexander Agadjanian, "Russian Orthodox Church in Europe: Soft Other with Four-Fold Identity," chap. 14 in *Turns of Faith, Search for Meaning: Orthodox Christianity and Post-Soviet Experience* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2014).

distinction between true and false religion.[161] Only that which is neither can be deemed to be secular. It seems that this third element of the triad was not theologically elaborated in Eastern Christianity in the medieval period, however. When Tsar Peter opened Russia up to Western modernity in the early eighteenth century, he included the idea of the secular as beyond church interests. The Petrine ecclesiastical reforms then illustrate the clumsiness of this encounter, one made with both fascination and reluctance.

Over the following centuries, especially after the national romantic revival of the nineteenth century, religiously inspired discourse in Russia more or less settled on an outright rejection of the perceived secularism of the West, including the Petrine church reforms themselves, which were seen as a foreign intrusion. Church actors and theologians were reluctant to openly accept the fact that the secular played an increasing role in Russian society. It is possible to argue that this blindness to the secular was a significant factor in the rise of the communist ideology in the late nineteenth century.

It is difficult to claim that eighteenth-century discussions regarding the relationship between church and state differed substantially from those in the West, at least regarding the framework, the guiding ideas, and the key areas of contestation. Olga Tsapina, for example, has argued that it is anachronistic to try to find "authentic Russianness" in the eighteenth-century discourses about the relationship between church, state, and society. The discussions themselves circled around the same topics, but the Russian discourse took a different direction, and thus had a different result. How much of that is attributable to specific Russian or Orthodox path dependencies, and not simply historical contingencies, is difficult to say.

A possible approach to this question is provided by Markus Dreßler's concept of "religio-secularisation."[162] For Dreßler, focusing on the modernising late Ottoman Empire, the term "religio-secularisation" denotes the allocation of concepts to either the religious or secular domains. While this has been an inherent feature of Christianity since its

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161 S. N. Balagangadhara, "On the Dark Side of the 'Secular': Is the Religious-Secular Distinction a Binary?" *NVMEN* 61, no. 1 (2014): 37. Balagangadhara refers to the scholar on early Christianity, Robert A. Markus, who was mentioned in the first chapter.

162 Markus Dreßler, "Modes of Religionization: A Constructivist Approach to Secularity," *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 7, Leipzig University, 2019.

inception,[163] it happened in the Ottoman Empire only in the late nineteenth century.[164] In Russia, the conceptual distinction between the secular and religious domains was already present as a legacy of Christian duality, but arguably, the eighteenth century saw an extension of religio-secularisation to different social domains. The sources considered in this paper do not allow for a thorough analysis of this process, but there are indications that further analysis would be fruitful. Ivanov notes, for example, that Prokopovich regarded monasticism as just "another form of secular vocation."[165] Just like Martin Luther, Prokopovich "secularised" the concept of "vocation." In turn, other concepts were "religionised," or sacralised; as was mentioned above, Prokopovich sacralised the state. In this sense, the eighteenth century was a formative period in the development of Russian secularity, even though the main texts do not necessarily reflect that.

163 Peter Brown argues that the sixth century in Latin Christianity was paramount in distinguishing clergy from the rest of the population, for example. Peter Brown, *Through the Eye*, 517–22.
164 Dreßler, "Modes of Religionization," 6–8.
165 Ivanov, *A Spiritual Revolution*, 80.

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