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**Russian Orthodoxy and the Politics of National Identity
in Early Twentieth Century**

It is an established historical fact that before the revolution the nationalistic and monarchist right had persistently courted the Russian Orthodox Church and its clergy. The church had traditionally been seen as the repository of Russian national culture, and its clergy was regarded as a natural ally for entrenching a conservative political order to counter the upsurge of revolution that eventually erupted in 1905. That year, when the first rightist parties began appearing in Russia, the nationalistic among them appealed to the clergy for support¹. Historians have long assumed that nationalists received a positive response from the near totality of the Orthodox clergy. Russia's priests, minimally educated and devoted to a reactionary view of the world, are assumed to have embraced the nationalistic "patriotic unions" as a matter of natural attraction, and with enthusiasm². Such historiographical assumptions have viewed the clergy's response to the right *in vacuo*, not really explaining or trying to explain what was *some* Orthodox clergymen's attraction to the radical right. The need for a proper *historical* explanation was obfuscated by the implicit and *a priori* anti-clericalist *ideological* assumption that all clergy, Russian or Western, Orthodox or other, have a *core conservative political inclination*, and that conservatism is the "primordial" political conscience of cassocked men, which can be altered only by a special set of circumstances, such as heavy doses of humanistic, "enlightened" education. Additionally, the Russian clergy was assumed to

1. For accounts of the political right, see Aleksandr Bokhanov, "Hopeless Symbiosis: Power and Right-Wing Radicalism at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century", *Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917*, ed. by Anna Geifman (Oxford 1999); Don C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905*, Cambridge 1995; and Hans Rogger, "Russia", *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, ed. by Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (Berkeley 1965).

2. See, for instance, two studies from the Soviet period by E. F. Grekulov, *Tserkov', Samoderzhavie, Narod (2-ia polovina XIX –nachalo XX v.)*, (Nauka: Moscow, 1962) and L. I. Emeliakh, *Krest'iane i tserkov' nakanune oktabria* (Nauka: Leningrad, 1976).

have heeded the call of the monarchist right out of *loyalism* inculcated in them through centuries of association of Orthodoxy with the political system of “empire”.

The present discussion aims not at revising the facts about rightist clergy but at suggesting new interpretations of rightist activity and success that *explain* the clergy’s participation in that activity in a *historical* rather than *ideological* context. This paper aims at greatly sophisticating the established simplistic view of the Orthodox clergy’s motivation for participating in nationalist political activity. Specifically, the discussion will highlight two sets of motivation in addition to the established assumption of the clergy’s inherent socio-political conservatism:

a) What concerned mostly Church leaders was the need to defend the Church’s own (*not the autocracy’s*) institutional interests, including its traditional privileges (especially the exclusivity of missionary activity), and to create a new blend of Russian nationalism that would be resistant to the atheism and anticlericalism of modernist identities that had been eroding Orthodoxy’s influence since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and

b) the rank-and-file clergy in the late imperial period was gripped by an increasing angst about the clerical estate’s sinking social status and falling material standards.

Starting with the pre-revolutionary era, liberal St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy professor and future Renovatianist Boris Titlinov (1879-1928) and the conservative intellectual Vasilii Rozanov (1856-1919) posited that support for the right was strongest among Orthodox hierarchy while the middle and lower clergy were indifferent or even hostile to the right³. Historians John Shelton Curtiss and Mikhail Agursky shared this judgment⁴. Still, these historians exemplified the assumption that the hierarchy’s attraction to the monarchist right was a

3. See Boris Titlinov’s two books *Pravoslavie na sluzhbe samoderzhaviia* (Leningrad 1924), and *Tserkov’ vo vremia revoliutsii* (Petrograd 1924). Vasilii Rozanov criticized the Orthodox Church for this and other reasons in his *The Apocalypse of Our Time, and Other Writings*, ed. and transl. by Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff (New York: Praeger, 1977) and in his *Religiia i kul’tura*, ed. by E. V. Barabanov (Moscow: Pravda, 1990).

4. See John Shelton Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire, 1900-1917*, New York 1965, and Mikhail Agursky, “Caught in a Crossfire: The Russian Church Between Holy Synod and Radical Right (1905-1908)”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 59, n. 1 (1984) 163-196.

reflexive, unmediated response motivated by the Church's subjection to the power of the autocracy and the latter's need for popular support in that crucial period.

To be sure, the Holy Synod condemned all unlawful activity and challenges to the Tsar's authority when the 1905 uprisings started. However, the Synod gave no clear directives as to how Church officials should respond to such revolutionary activity. Some clergymen directly intervened in incendiary situations to calm restive crowds, and were decorated for such actions⁵. Soviet historiography considered these interventions as the docile clergy's execution of its "policing" duties. However, in many cases, such as in Father Ioann's Kronstadt parish, it is clear that the clergy were not motivated by loyalist docility, but by the same revulsion to and fear of the bloodshed and chaos that led to the emergence of "law and order" parties in the Black Earth provinces (esp. Tula, Kursk, Orel) in the spring, summer, and fall of 1905⁶. Additionally, the number of clergymen who attempted to quell disturbances has traditionally been grossly exaggerated⁷.

Some hierarchs sympathized with or even participated in radical-Right activities, as well. Like several prelates, Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskii) of Moscow accepted an honorary membership to the Union of Russian Men (*Soiuz Russkikh Liudei*). During the December 1905 uprising in Moscow, Vladimir delivered a sermon on the necessity

5. See the case of three priests from the same church on Kronstadt, decorated with pectoral crosses for holding a procession and giving calming speeches during the mutiny of sailors there in October 1905 in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (henceforth RGIA), fond 796, opis' 186 (1905), delo 172, listi 1-5. Similarly, see the case of a village priest from Penza diocese whose speech persuaded troops rioting at a station of the Syzran'-Viaz'ma Railway to return to order in *ibid.*, d. 191, ll. 2-5.

6. See Don C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 76-90.

7. In the final chapter of her *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), Glennys Young uses the occasional decoration of priests for quelling riots and other disturbances as proof of the clergy's support for the autocracy. However, my own research in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) has discovered that there were only 43 such cases of decoration for this reason by the Holy Synod in the entire 1905 (RGIA, f. 796, o. 186, otel 2, stola 2 and 3). Although some of the files referred to more than one clergyman, the total number of clerics decorated for quelling disturbances in the whole empire did not exceed a few tens, out of a total of almost forty thousand priests and even more deacons and sacristans. Quantitatively, then, this example can hardly serve as evidence of the clergy's overwhelming loyalist feelings.

of defending the Church against would-be defilers. His sermon was so inflammatory that the Holy Synod censured Vladimir⁸. Still, Vladimir delivered the invocation at the second All-Russian Congress of Russian People (of monarchist organizations) held in Moscow in April 1906 — the first real attempt to coordinate the activities of the various rightist parties on a national scale. Metropolitan Flavian of Kiev also addressed “patriotic” congresses and was considered a supporter of rightist causes. Still, both Metropolitans as most other prelates were repelled by the violent methods and unsavory personalities of more extremist organizations, such as the Union of the Russian People (*Soiuz Russkogo Naroda*). When the latter’s leader, Dr. Dubrovin, invited Metropolitans of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev, to attend a rally at the Mikhailovsky Riding Hall on 26 November 1906, none of the three appeared⁹.

As a result, the Orthodox hierarchy’s participation in rightist activities was solely a matter of individuals, not of the Church as an institution. In fact, Church support for the extremist parties could not be taken for granted. The Orthodox Church had traditionally abstained, if not from political activity, then from overt partisan struggle. This was due to the tradition of Constantinism, i.e. the model of church-state relations established by Emperor Constantine, whereby the state protected the church from all external and internal enemies. Already in the 4th century, Constantine’s contemporary, founder of Church history and bishop of Caesarea Eusebius, encapsulated his vision of interdependent temporal and religious authorities in the words: “And thus, by the express appointment of the same God, two roots of blessing, the Roman empire and the doctrine of Christian piety, sprang up together for the benefit of men”¹⁰. Two centuries later, Emperor Justinian elevated Eusebius’ “symphony” between empire and faith to doctrine of church-state relations, ushering in what would become a long history of Orthodoxy’s tight bond with the political institution of the empire — whether Byzantine or Russian tsarist. Muscovite Great princes and

8. John Shelton Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia*, pp. 259-260; Levitskii, “Pravye partii”, in *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii s nachala XX veka*, ed. by L. Martov, P. Maslov and A. Potresov (St. Petersburg 1914), p. 385.

9. Don C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 64-65.

10. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Tridecennial Oration*, cited in Harry J. Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity: Emperor, Church and the West*, Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1970, p. 1.

Russian tsars from Vladimir to Alexei Mikhailovich to Alexander III had emulated the model of the Apostle-Like Emperor Constantine, by protecting the Church from foreign Churches and domestic schismatics, and by promoting its missionary activities. The Orthodox Church had, in turn, eulogized Russian monarchs for this support¹¹. As long as the Tsar acted *ex officio* as the defender of the Orthodox faith, the clergy had little reason to become involved in politics and parties. Constantinism rendered unnecessary clericalism itself, i.e. the translation of the Church's social-spiritual influence into specific political party structures, a phenomenon induced in the West because of the separation of Church and State in the aftermath of the French revolution. So, the Orthodox clergy's participation in rightist parties at the beginning of the twentieth century was anything but a foregone conclusion.

Additionally, the unsavory tactics of extremist groups repelled humanistic clergy who took Orthodox theology seriously —especially the episcopate. The Orthodox Church regarded itself as a “universal church” (*vselenskaia tserkov*) that did not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, in accord with Saint Paul's claim that “there is no longer Greek or Jew” (Colossians 3:11). For Orthodox as for other Christian theologians, the Church was the “new Israel” (*novyi Izrail*), concerned with establishing brotherly unity among the multi-ethnic populations of the empire¹².

On the contrary, the ideology of most radical rightist parties in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution gravitated toward an ethnic, not civic sense of nationalism¹³. Civic nationalists, inspired by the ideals of the

11. E. N., *O sviatom ravnoapostol'nom tsare Konstantine velikom i o tsarkoi vlasti*, Orel 1899², pp. 37-38.

12. For the new Israel metaphor in Orthodox ecclesiology, see G. S. Debolskii, *Ustanovleniia vetkhovavetnoi tserkvi i khristianskoi*, St. Petersburg 1894², 7, cited in John D. Strickland, “Converting the Nationalists: The Orthodox Church and Patriotic Unions in Russia, 1905-1914”, paper delivered at 31st National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, St. Louis, November 1999.

13. For studies of nationalism in Russia, see Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, Cambridge, Mass.: 1997; Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*, DeKalb, Ill. 1996; Edward C. Thaden, *Conservative Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, Seattle 1964; and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855*, Berkeley 1959.

Great Reforms and sympathetic to liberal ideology, developed a relatively pluralistic vision of the nation. Ethnic nationalists emphasized Russian-ness of language and culture as the exclusionary, defining characteristics of the nation. The Slavophile tradition had inspired in proponents of the Russian right an amalgam of (conflicting) isolationism and expansionism, a keen sense of the superiority of Orthodox faith and Russian stock, and a "pagan-like deification of authority"¹⁴. The nationalism of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Konstanin Leont'ev and of others who predated the religious revival of the early twentieth century by taking to monasteries, where they were influenced by Orthodox mysticism and asceticism, was benign, aesthetic and visceral. The less erudite breed of nationalists they helped to inspire after 1905 used Orthodoxy as a lure and had little concern for the spiritual welfare of their followers. They also mixed into this superficial reverence of Orthodoxy the resurgent anti-Semitism of the late nineteenth century, a reaction towards the modern phenomena of industrialization and urbanization, and violent methods. Consequently, judged against the course of European nationalist politics, the Russian radical right of the era has tempted historians to call it "(proto-)fascist"¹⁵. The Church's Constantinian instincts and the clergy's Christian education hardly made them natural allies of this ethnic nationalism of the "patriotic unions". Their eventual attraction to the right was induced by concern about the erosion of Orthodox confessional unity in late imperial Russia. The clergymen who joined rightist organizations did so not in order to become blind followers but ideological mentors. They wished to use the energy of the rightist movement to defend the Church's privileges, while tempering the rightists' pagan nationalism.

Ironically, some of the first concessions that the autocracy made to society in the wake of the 1905 revolution spelled a negative change in the status of Orthodox Church and clergy and became the beginning of

14. Alexander Yanov, *The Russian Challenge and the Year 2000*, transl. by Iden J. Rosenthal, New York, Basil Blackwell, 1987, p. 47.

15. See G. Bruun and V. S. Mamatey, *The World in the 20th Century*, Boston 1962⁴, p. 891; V. N. Zalezshkii, *Monarkhisty*, Khar'kov 1930², p. 30; S. B. Liubosh, *Russkii fashist Vladimir Purishkevich*, Leningrad 1925, p. 29; V. A. Maevskii, *Revoliutsioner-monarkhist: Pamiati L'va Tikhomirova*, Novi Sad 1934, pp. 74 and 81; A. Levin, *The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment*, New Haven 1940, p. 27; cited in Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1986, p. 213.

the end for the tense bond between Russia's synodal Church and the autocracy. In April 1905, by issuing the edict on religious toleration, Nicholas II divested his office's ancient responsibility to defend the Church from heretics and schismatics. A few months later, liberal and socialist parties started to form in the open to compete for elective office in the representative, legislative assembly the Tsar promised in the October 17 Manifesto. Within six months, the clergy had both lost the tsar's protection and was attacked by hostile political parties that made no secret of their anticlericalism in their rhetoric.

Above all, the edict on religious toleration and the October Manifesto severely challenged missionary activities. Orthodox missionary leaders feared a reduction of state financial support for missionary activities and the prospect of missionary campaigns by non-Orthodox Churches aiming at re-claiming populations that were converted to Orthodoxy in the 18th and 19th centuries¹⁶. By 1905 the church had been conducting an ambitious missionary movement for over a generation. With the reforms of the 1860s, the Church had mounted a huge effort to re-educate its clergy and turn priests into true pastors of their parishes. Its goal was to keep Orthodoxy relevant to a new generation of Russians whose faith was challenged daily by the erosive pressures of modernity, such as country-to-city migration, industrialization, urban squalor and rural impoverishment, propaganda of atheistic socialist agitators, and growing social inequality¹⁷. By 1897, the first national census had greatly distressed Orthodox Church leaders by recording over thirty-six million non-Orthodox subjects or thirty percent of the empire's population¹⁸. To resist what seemed as a reduction of its numbers

16. For an account of the mission's financial affairs after 1905, see N. A. Smimov, "Missionerskaia deiatelnost tserkvi (Vtoraia polovina XX v.-1917 g.)", in *Russkoe pravoslavie: Vekhi istorii*, ed. by A. I. Klibanov, Moscow 1989, pp. 438-462.

17. For the results of the Church reforms of the 1860s and the new generation of socially-active priests they produced, see Jennifer E. Hedda, "Good Shepherds: The St. Petersburg Pastorate and the Emergence of Social Activism in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1855-1917", Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998. For the most prominent example of this generation of clergymen, see Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

18. Tsentral'nyi statisticheskii komitet, *Raspredeleniia naseleniia imperii po glavnym veroispovedeniiam*, St. Petersburg 1901, pp. 2-4.

and to stem the wave of modern atheism that turned the educated élites ever more anticlericalist, missionary leaders had already tried to harness popular nationalism in order to strengthen loyalty to the Church. Conservative missionaries had begun stressing the exclusive features of Russian national character, such as language and Orthodoxy, and celebrating medieval Rus' in particular as the model of an ideal brotherly community where nationality and confessionality could be intimately linked. From the 1870s to 1905, missionaries who led the Orthodox Church's "internal mission" (*vnutrenniaia missiia*) strove increasingly not only to convert non-Orthodox populations, but also to sing the praises of "Holy Rus'" (*sviataia Rus'*) among the Orthodox faithful. Church leaders such as the missionary archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, scholars such as Ecclesiastical Academy professor E. E. Golubinsky, and church publicists N. V. Rozhdestvensky and Mikhail Skvortsov took advantage of festivities such as the 900th baptism anniversary (1888), the 500th anniversary of the death of national Saint Sergei of Radonezh (1892), and the building of Saint Vladimir's Cathedral in Kiev (1896) to emphasize the Russian national character of Orthodox saints and the Orthodox faith of Russian national heroes. They also sponsored themes from the history of medieval Rus' and Muscovy in music (including opera), secular and icon-painting, they promoted a return to medieval style in liturgical music and urged and celebrated the building of tens of new churches in the so-called neo-Russian, medieval-looking style all over Russia¹⁹. After the shock of 1905, the same Orthodox leaders extended this semi-religious, semi-secular missionary activity to the patriotic unions²⁰.

One of these leaders, Antonii (Khrapovitskii), tonsured during Alexander III's counter-reform (1885), was raised to the rank of bishop in 1900, and appointed first in the diocese of Ufa, where he had been active in the mission to the Old Believers. In 1902 he was transferred to Volynia diocese, where he would remain for twelve years. Synodal officials felt that his forceful and energetic personality and erudition, coupled with his connections to St. Petersburg officialdom and aristo-

19. See the excellent pioneering study of this activity by John D. Strickland, "Remembering Rus in Modern Russia: The Orthodox Church and Its Cultural Mission Before the Revolution", *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, v. 14/15 (1998/1999).

20. See John D. Strickland, "Converting the Nationalists", *op.cit.*

cracy (his noble origin made Khrapovitskii an extreme rarity in Orthodox hierarchy), were needed to counter Uniate influence in this Ukrainian province. He also sat intermittently on the Holy Synod in the first years of the 20th century. It is not then accidental, that Antonii took a keen interest in the rightist parties and the helping hand they offered to the Church. At a congress of missionaries held in Kiev in July 1908 and chaired by Antonii, a resolution was passed encouraging missionaries to turn to local patriotic societies if they encountered any opposition in their work²¹. Since 1905, Antonii had been trying to convert the nationalist rightists to the Church's goal and ethos. He called upon the patriotic unions to subject nationalist feeling to the Church's universalist teaching, and tried to re-define Russian nationalism as a feeling based on religion, not ethnicity and language: "But what is our people in its history and in its present circumstances? Is it an ethnic community?... No. Russians define themselves before all else as a religious community, as a confessional community, which includes even Georgians and Greeks who are unable even to speak the Russian language"²².

It is not accidental that another Church leader with long service as an Orthodox missionary was equally interested in mentoring the rightist movement about what was correct nationalism for the Church. Ioann Vostorgov was a Moscow archpriest and "synodal missionary" who had served the mission in Siberia and the Caucasus. At the beginning of the 20th century, he edited the conservative church publishing house *Vernost'*. In the pamphlet "The State Duma and the Russian Orthodox Church," written after the dissolution of the radical first Duma in the spring of 1906, Vostorgov exemplified the essence of the rightist allure for Orthodox missionaries first and foremost. He noted that the edict on religious toleration had raised the expectations of leftist parties that were now seeking "complete freedom of atheism". Vostorgov expressed the fears of many clergymen when he predicted that, in the midst of a revolutionary situation, "the Duma project will produce not freedom of

21. Evlogii, *Put' moei zhizni*, Paris 1947, pp. 163-164; Sh. Levin, "Materialy dlia kharakteristiki kontr-revoliutsii 1905 g. Iz perepiski Borisa Nikol'skogo s Antoniem Volynskim", *Byloe* 21 (1923) 170; Levitskii, "Pravye partii", pp. 351-374.

22. Arkhiepiskop Antonii, "O svobode veroispovedanii", *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, St. Petersburg 1911², vol. 3, pp. 442-447.

conscience but the destruction of Orthodoxy in Russia”²³.

As leftist parties were fueling such fears in Orthodox leaders, nationalist parties called for the recovery of the Church’s traditional privileges. Alexander Dubrovin, chairman of the Union of the Russian People, wrote regular letters to the Synod expressing his opposition to the terms of the edict on religious toleration. In one of these he complained that the Duma’s “extravagant and undeserved sympathy towards the enemies of Orthodoxy serves as a signal for sectarians to rebel”²⁴. The nationalistic Union of the Archangel Michael called in its charter for a “political struggle” against leftist parties and the restoration of a polity organized “upon an Orthodox basis”²⁵. Vostorgov reciprocated the rightists’ flattering support by praising the members of the Union of the Russian People and the Union of the Archangel Michael “the guardians of the religiosity and patriotism of the Russian people”, in several addresses to these unions²⁶. Antonii, Vostorgov, and other church conservatives saw in the rightist political support an opportunity to fill the gap left by Nicholas II’s abandonment of his Constantinian duty towards Orthodoxy. Encouraged by rightist flattery, Antonii, Vostorgov, and the lay editor of the leading missionary journal *Missionary Review* (*Missionerskoe obozrenie*) and church newspaper *Kolokol*, Mikhail Skvortsov, accepted honorary membership in the Union of the Russian People²⁷.

Thinking similarly, many Orthodox clergymen subsequently became members or even chairmen of branches of the Union of the Russian People and other rightist groups. However, most of their activities that we know were devoted to countering the anticlerical hostility of the oppositionist parties and to promoting the interests (including the mis-

23. Ioann Vostorgov, *Gosudarstvennaia Duma i pravoslavno-russkaia tserkov'*, Moscow 1906.

24. RGIA f. 796, op. 197, ot. 6, st. 3, d. 323; and *ibid.*, op. 188, ot. 6, st. 3, d. 7771.

25. *V Sviateishii Pravitel'stvuiushchii Sinod*, St. Petersburg 1909.

26. Ioann Vostorgov, “Duma i dukhoventsvo”, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Moscow 1914, vol. 4, pp. 389-408.

27. They were hardly alone. The Synod issued a statement endorsing the Union of the Russian People in 1908, in which Orthodox priests were encouraged to join. Again, however, the statement was conditional; unions were legitimate only “as long as they remain in conformity with the rules of the Orthodox church”. For the statement, see John S. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia*, New York 1940, pp. 271-272.

sionary prerogatives) of the Orthodox Church, rather than other aspects of rightist platforms. Abbott Arsenii Minin, a former missionary and Athonite monk, was a member of the council of Alexander Nevsky district branch of the Union of the Russian People. In September 1908, with the support of leading branch members B. A. Vasil'ev and Nikolai Zhedenov, he also opened the Ioannite Brotherhood (*Ioannovoe Bratstvo*). Arsenii used both the meetings of the branch and of the Brotherhood almost exclusively in order to preach antisectarian sermons in which he attacked Baptists, Pashkovites, and the contemporary religious writer Frederic William Farrar²⁸.

Another important reason why many Russian clergymen, especially priests, joined rightist organizations has largely escaped attention. This was not the inherent conservatism of the clerical profession or estate, but the strong appeal that the right made to the Orthodox clergy's long-standing social and material concerns. Rightist rhetoric flattered the clergy by advocating a return to the traditional authority enjoyed by the Church in the golden age of the Kievan and Muscovite Rus', before "foreign" influences came to dominate Russian social and political life. The author of a radical rightist pamphlet characteristically wrote that the Black Hundreds "preach that the Orthodox Church, the preserver of Divine revelation ... is the foundation of Russian national life and of the Russian government". In his view it was the Orthodox Church which had given the Russian people political freedom, and therefore the Church should be the one to give the country its "civil liberty and the basis of the structure of its civil life". Under an evident Slavophile influence, the author asserted that Orthodoxy and autocracy were the last remnants of authentic, autonomous (*samobytnaia*) Russian life and therefore they should stand together in the struggle against "cosmopolitan" ideas²⁹. To clergy who had resented for two centuries Peter the Great's synodal administrative system such nostalgic declarations were quite seductive.

The right did not stop at flattering proclamations. At a time when oppositionist parties ignored the Church and even moderate rightists from the propertied classes often treated the clergy with contempt, the

28. Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint*, p. 229.

29. A. A. Maikov, *Revoliutsionery i Chemosotentsy*, St. Petersburg 1907, pp. 24-25,

program of the Union of Russian Men, founded in March of 1905 by Count Pavel Sheremetev and other scions of illustrious noble families, made extensive references to the need for Church reforms³⁰. The movement for church reform had been growing for years before the outbreak of the revolution, spearheaded mainly by a new generation of socially active priests like Ioann of Kronstadt, Grigorii Petrov, Nikolai Ognev, Georgii Gapon, and others³¹. To the demands of the priests, the episcopate was increasingly adding its own clamor for the revision of church-state relations in the direction of restoring a truly “symphonic” symbiosis that would free the Church from the asphyxiating control of a government of lay bureaucrats³². It is noteworthy then, that the program of the Union of Russian Men proposed some of the same measures and steps that the diocesan congresses of clergy and the reports to the Council of Ministers by leading hierarchs such as St. Petersburg Metropolitan Antonii (Vadkovskii) and Finland Archbishop Sergii (Stragorodskii) asked for during 1905. These were the introduction of the elective principle in the selection of Church officers; the reorganization of parish life to guarantee influence of the clergy on civil and state life; the convening of a Church *Sobor* (All-Russian Church Council); the restoration of the Patriarchate; clerical representation in a *Zemskii Sobor* that most rightist organizations advocated in lieu of a representative, legislative Duma; and the retaining by the Orthodox Church of its exclusive right of proselytism and missionary activity³³. Similarly, the charter of the Union of the Russian People granted the Church “precedence within the state structure”³⁴. These points were either similar or identical to the main demands that both the Church hierarchy and even some of the more radical representatives of the pro-

30. On the emergence and development of the Union of Russian Men, see Don C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 34-45.

31. For the social activities of St. Petersburg elite of priesthood, see Jennifer E. Hedda, “Good Shepherds: The St. Petersburg Pastorate and the Emergence of Social Activism in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1855-1917”, Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1998.

32. For the church reform movement, see James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Revival in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981).

33. Levitskii, “Pravye partii”, pp. 367-368.

34. John Bohon, “Reactionary Politics in Russia”, Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1967, pp. 77-79.

reform parish clergy (such as the movement of the “Thirty-Two Priests of St. Petersburg”) were expressing at the same time³⁵. Against this obliging attentiveness of the radical right to clerical concerns, the program of the Kadets, who were a leading force in the first Duma, could not juxtapose a single word on the Church. As their leader professor Pavel Miliukov admitted when this was pointed out to him, “Oh, we have completely forgotten about the Church!”³⁶.

To a social-professional group that had suffered for centuries a social and legal position beneath its history and expectations, rightist agitation provided a new source of authority and—at least the illusion of—power and importance. Some rural parish priests and monks (like the notorious Iliodor Trufanov), seeing their speeches met with wild enthusiasm by the same congregations which had until recently received their sermons with apathy, could easily delude themselves into attributing this reaction to a spiritual revival and a new appreciation of the clergy’s value rather than to vulgar nationalism, which was particularly strong in the southwestern borderlands³⁷. Participation in rightist political activities seemed to give a long-ignored clergy the podium of free expression they had craved. At the same time, the more representative decision-making that the political reforms of 1905 introduced had made that expression of the clerical point of view and interests both easier and more necessary than ever.

The clergy who were elected to the Duma took advantage indeed of

35. For Antonii’s 1904 memorandum to Chairman of the Council of Ministers Count S. Witte, see “Dokladnaia zapiska v Komitete Ministrov vysokopreosviashchennago mitropolita Antonia: Voprosy o zhelatel’nykh preobrazovaniakh v postanovke u nas pravoslavnoi tserkvi”, in *Tserkovnaia reforma. Sbornik statei dukhovnoi i svetskoi periodicheskoi pechati po voprosu o reforme*, ed. by I.V. Preobrazhenskii (St. Petersburg 1905) pp. 133–136. See Archbishop Sergii’s subsequent memorandum to Witte in *Slovo*, 28 March 1905. For the development and the positions of the Group of Thirty-Priests and the akin group that later inspired the Renovationist movement, see Gruppya peterburgskikh sviashchennikov, *K tserkovnomu soboru* (St. Petersburg, 1906), “Zapiska gruppy iz 32-kh stolichnykh sviashchennikov: o neobkhodimosti peremen v russkom tserkovnom upravlenii”, *Tserkovnyi vestnik*, 17 March 1905, and “Soiuz tserkovnogo obnoveniia v Peterburge”, *Tserkovno-obshchestvennaia zhizn’*, 1906, n. 5, pp. 185–186.

36. Pospelovskiy, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press: Crestwood, New York 1998), p. 196.

37. On Iliodor’s rhetorical skills and demagogic antics see “Pokhozhdeniia Iliodora”, *Byloe* 24 (1924) 200–206. In 1918, Iliodor published his memoirs after he emigrated to the West in *The Mad Monk of Russia, Iliodor: Life, Memoirs, and Confessions of Sergei Mikhailovich Trufanoff*, The Century Co.: New York 1918.

the ability to express their opinions in that forum. Almost all the clergymen elected to the first and second Duma belonged to the reformist movement and they became fervent defenders of pro-people measures. Priests like Fedor Tikhvinskii, Grigorii Petrov, and Nikolai Ognev, who aligned with oppositionist parties such as the Trudoviki and Kadets, became notorious for castigating the abuses of the bureaucracy from their new pulpit in the Duma³⁸. Whereas the clergy of the third and fourth Duma were overwhelmingly conservative and were elected in the wake of Peter Stolypin's new electoral law, they, too, did not abstain from voicing criticism of certain unpopular government measures and even voted down government bills that would make the autocratic state even more religiously-neutral³⁹. Despite their loyalist credentials, fourth-Duma clergy, just like their predecessors in the third Duma, had come to the assembly to promote mainly their own profession's interests—not the Tsar's. As late as August 1915, they protested, in a joint declaration, their dependence on emoluments. "So long as the present system of abnormal and humiliating form of support for the clergy exists, the clergy's authority in the eyes of the people will not be raised", they complained. Their deference of their bishop-colleagues in the Duma notwithstanding, clerical deputies made no secret of their resentment of the hierarchy's attitude to parish clergy: "The clergy do not see paternal leadership on the part of the prelates; instead, one finds a cold, often

38. For Fedor Tikhvinskii's and Grigorii Petrov's role in the second Duma see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*; Vol. 2, *Authority Restored* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 332-335. For biographical information on Nikolai Ognev and his political activity, see M. S. Sudovikov, "N.V. Ognev -sviashchennik, politik, chelovek", in *Religiia i tserkov' v kul'turno-istoricheskoi razvitii russkogo severa. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Kirov: Nauchnyi sovet RAN "Rol' religii v istorii," Departament Kul'tury i Iskusstva, Administratsiia Kirovskoi Oblasti & Viatskii Gos. Pedagogicheskii Universitet, 1996) II, pp. 313-318.

39. For instance, third-Duma clergy came into conflict with the government, when Chairman of the Council of Ministers Petr Stolypin submitted his bills on religious affairs. The first bill would have made it possible to convert out of Orthodoxy, even into non-Christian religions, without legal consequences. Another would have allowed the opening of Old-Believer communities without the previously required official permission, in which the Orthodox Church had a decisive say. Finally, a bill vetoed by Nicholas II would have abolished all legal restrictions for people who left the Orthodox clergy. See Sergei L. Firsov, *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i gosudarstvo v poslednee desiatiletie sushchestvovaniia samoderzhavii v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo humanitarnogo instituta, 1996), p. 345.

bureaucratic relationship based largely on paper”⁴⁰. Contrary to historiographical assumptions, the rightist clergy had gone to the Duma primarily to defend clerical interests, not to rubberstamp the decisions of the autocratic bureaucracy. Participation on the ballots of rightist groups became a springboard from which the clergy catapulted itself in the center of the country’s debates with its own political voice⁴¹.

This was a voice waiting to be heard for decades, if not since Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate in 1721. However, the episcopate never forgot the authority and input in state matters they enjoyed in earlier periods. For two hundred years, they could only envy their predecessors’ ability to speak out against the abuses of Russia’s monarchs, with candid words such as Moscow Metropolitan Filaret’s to Ivan IV: “I am a stranger upon the earth and I am ready to suffer for the truth. Where is my faith if I am silent?”⁴². Even middle clergy felt increasingly resentful of the marginal social position to which the challenges of modernity and the neglect of the imperial state was relegating the proud descendants of a caste-estate who had previously enjoyed a prominent role not only in strictly spiritual, but in all national matters. After the reforms of the 1860s and after the Theological Academies had produced at least a considerable priestly élite with superior education and a keen engagement in contemporary issues, the desire to be heard acquired not only a historical and moral, but also a logical justification. In fact, some clergymen felt that it was precisely the divisive socio-economic changes of the late 19th century that made Orthodox clergymen the most appropriate troubleshooters for this new era. The most popular clergyman of modern Russia, Father Ioann of Kronstadt exemplified this thinking throughout his life. The saint, who established or assisted in-

40. “Pechat’ i dukhovenstvo”, *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 1915, n. 11, pp. 286-298.

41. On Duma debates on Church issues, see Vladimir Rozhkov, *Tserkovnye Voprosy v gosudarstvennoi Dume* (Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum: Rome, 1975). One of the most important bills passed by the third Duma was on the separation of “parts of the Lublin and Sedlets province from the Polish Kingdom and their re-organization as a separate province”. The bill was inspired, lobbied and pushed through by third-Duma deputy and bishop of Kholm Evlogii to serve the interests of the local Orthodox brotherhoods and the mainly peasant Orthodox population versus those of the mainly Polish landowners. See A. Ia. Avrekh, *Stolypin i Tret’ia Duma* (Nauka: Moscow, 1968), pp. 108-150.

42. Quoted in Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, transl. by Lydia W. Kesich, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, p. 314.

numerable charities, believed that: "the priest must be higher than the lordly haughtiness of well-born and coddled and not cringe before or fawn upon the haughtiness; he must not lower himself, not be cowardly before the powerful of this world, but hold himself with an awareness of his clerical dignity, gravely, evenly, in a pastoral manner ... He must denounce caprices, lordly arrogance, and any coldness to matters concerning the faith"⁴³.

However, Russia's modern clergy could not possibly assume that lofty position of supreme social-moral critic as long as it was crushed by abject poverty, as Fathers Gagarin and Belliustin have so poignantly observed even earlier⁴⁴. The background of poverty continued to haunt even the élite of priesthood who eventually escaped it. Like most other priests, Father Ioann of Kronstadt felt his class anxieties before generals, high bureaucrats, wealthy entrepreneurs, well-dressed ladies, to be a disgrace and a sin. As long as the Orthodox clergy was condescended upon by the nobility and the secular intelligentsia, who demonstrably failed to kiss a priest's hand even when they engaged them in company, as long as the clergy felt compelled by material and other concerns to go to a christening at a wealthy house rather than to a peasant family, the clergy could not hope to have true effectiveness on the moral compass of modern Russian society.

The open invitation to public speech that rightist groups gave to collaborating clergy empowered the rank-and-file to voice their concerns and demands to audiences broader than ever before. Indeed, although priests were a very small percentage of the total membership of most rightist parties, they were very conspicuous, as they were those parties' chief orators⁴⁵. No other group's speeches could excite crowds and secure their vote as clergymen's did. The reward for the clergy's unparalleled

43. Nadieszda Kizenko, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 89-90.

44. See Father Gagarin, S.J., *The Russian Clergy*, transl. from the French by Ch. Du Gard Makepeace, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1970, and Ioann S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest*, ed. & transl. by G. L. Freeze, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.

45. According to *Letopis' Russkago sobraniia*, May 1901, 32-34 and January 1903, i-xlii, clerics never represented more than 1% of the membership of the Russian Assembly, for instance. Their percentages in other parties and unions were higher, but still lower than their perceived numbers. For the importance of clergy as rightist orators in the central, western, and southwestern borderlands, see Don C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 89, 92-95 and 105.

success as rightist agitators was not only flattery of their human vanity, hungry after decades of marginalization. Some rewards were more tangible and directly related to the clergy's low material standards. Many local branches of rightist parties sponsored their clerical members' petitions to the Holy Synod for promotion or decorations. Other branches published on their own expenses their clerical members' writings of spiritual, historical, ethnographic, or literary nature, something that could serve as a qualification for the aforementioned promotions. Some rightist branches secured the acquiescence of local village societies for higher service fees for their priests, or supported priests' control of local church boards (*popechitel'stva*) so the priests could profit from unobstructed control of church funds. Several such cases led to tensions that eventually exploded as local scandals that divided parishes and induced reciprocal accusations and petitions before the Holy Synod. To their credit, the Synod hierarchs and officials remained overwhelmingly unimpressed by petitions sponsored by rightist groups, and refused to water-down their strict educational and professional criteria to promote or decorate undeserving rightist clergymen⁴⁶.

For such reasons, many priests accepted honorary memberships in local branches of rightist parties. Even though the leftist press made much out of these memberships, many of them remained nothing but nominal associations without any real participation of the clergymen in question in political activity. Father Ioann of Kronstadt himself exemplifies this. After 1900 conservative political organizations wrote to Ioann asking him whether he might agree to become an honorary member. These organizations that wished to support Orthodox and "patriotic" ideals sought out Ioann to serve as their symbol. From 1905 on, almost all the main rightist organizations enlisted Ioann as an honorary member but this meant practically nothing in terms of his personal involvement. Unlike Vostorgov and *ieromonakh* Iliodor, Ioann did not take part in any operations or strategic planning of demonstrations of the Union of the Russian People, he never became involved in the Duma, and he hardly could have: he was 77 years old in 1905. He simply

46. Such cases from different provinces of the empire can be found in RGIA, f.796, o.188, d.7058, l. 7; o.187, d.6584, l.1; o.187, d.6675, l.2; o.189, d.7482, l.1; o.188, d.7304, ll.2-4.

allowed the rightist groups to publish his sermons and essays, something that these groups did with the writings of far less renowned and gifted clergymen from across the empire.

That clerical participation in rightist activity was not always motivated by identification of the reactionary feelings of the landed nobility who primarily founded and headed the “patriotic unions” and parties is exemplified by another hierarch notorious for collaborating with the right. From 1905 on, bishop Germogen (Dolganov) of Saratov proposed the most overt alliance of the Orthodox Church with the local radical right. According to his colleague Evlogii (Georgievskii), Germogen possessed a fiery personality and was perhaps more comfortable before a rabid crowd than in sophisticated company⁴⁷. In June 1907 Germogen tried to take control of the Saratov branch of the Union of the Russian People. He was able to eject previous members of the council of the branch and replace them with several of his priests. Having achieved this, Germogen proposed that the Union of the Russian People be renamed the “All-Russian Orthodox Fraternal Union of the Russian People”. He explained the name change: “It is necessary to ensure that Orthodox Christians are given a preeminent position ... Our members will be not only those who have registered, but all Russian Orthodox people ... The name change is especially important because now all Orthodox priests will participate [in the Union]”⁴⁸. Germogen, who had been a defender of episcopal authority against the humiliations suffered by hierarchs in the hands of the bureaucracy, had aspirations for a national brotherhood in which diocesan bishops would also chair the local Union branches. What Germogen did was to try to realize in practice the conversion of extremist rightists to “Orthodox patriotism” that Antonii (Khrapovitskii), Vostorgov and Skvortsov had only advocated in articles and speeches. However, he was unable to implement the idea even in his native Saratov. The local rightist press protested the interference of clerics and their attempts to dominate local politics and civil life⁴⁹. As a result, Germogen ended his association with the Union of

47. Evlogii, *Put' moei zhizni* 198; P. P. Stremoukhov, “Moia bor'ba s episkopom Germogenom i Iliodorom”, *Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii* 16 (1925) 22.

48. B. V. Avgustovskii, “V Soiuzie russkago naroda”, *Sovremennyi Mir* 9 (1907) 68-70.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

the Russian People, though he maintained his connection to rightist politics and later mounted public criticism against the autocracy itself⁵⁰.

In the wake of the 1905 revolution *some* Orthodox Church leaders joined rightist politics in order to redefine nationalist tenets according to those of the Orthodox Church. They did so to substitute empowerment through rightist support for what they felt was abandonment by the autocratic state. Aside from the need to defend the Church's traditional privileges, the chance to escape inadequate material conditions through political alliances and sheer personal opportunism should be added to our understanding of clergymen's rightist activity. For many Orthodox clergymen, participation in such activity compensated for the contempt of Russia's educated élite towards the clergy's spiritual contribution and the negligence of the state towards the clergy's pressing material needs. Even though the clergy's affiliation with the right was much less widespread than assumed by historians, those influential Church leaders and the rank-and-file clergy who did collaborate exposed the entire Church to the divisions inherent in the bitter partisan politics of the period. They also diminished further Russian Orthodoxy's prestige not only with the liberal-minded intelligentsia but even with the more progressive members of the tsarist officialdom. Typically, a representative of that officialdom, governor of Bessarabia prince S. D. Urussov, commented in 1908: "Is it not more just to call those hate-envenomed sermons against the Jews, which the clerical authorities allow from the pulpits only because the civil authorities have likewise placed the Jews without the pale of the law, a decomposition of the Christian spirit?"⁵¹. Ultimately, even the clergy's partial association with the extreme right defeated all the reasons why this association was originally sought. Clerical rightist activists failed to make good Orthodox Christians out of the rightist extremists. In the long run, the clergy's rightist reputation also undermined the desired rise of the clergy's social influence and material standards.

50. For the details of Germogen's clash with the throne, see "Tserkov', religiia i politicheskaia kul'tura na zakate staroi Rossii", *Istoriia SSSR*, 1991, n. 2, pp. 107-119.

51. Prince Serge Dmitrievich Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, transl. from the Russian and ed. by Herman Rosenthal, Harper & Brothers: London and New York, 1908, p. 170.