

# **Anarchism and Orthodox Community: The Politics of Sobornost, the Ancient Ritual and the Destruction of Old Russia by the Petrine State**

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## **Introduction:**

### **Sobornost' as Orthodox Anarchism**

What is Sobornost'? It is nothing less than the politico-social theology of the Orthodox church, one deriving its substance from the life of the Old Testament, which, itself, is a largely political and ethical handbook of the Church, along with a few changes instituted by Christ Himself, though keeping the ethical teachings of the Old Testament intact. Christ quoted from the Old Testament on a regular basis, and sought to recreate Israel from the ashes of Pharaseism, which culminated in the Orthodox faith and tradition. It is a mentality rather than a set of well defined ideas, as well as a basis for social and economic organization.

The defenders of royalism, that is, of the sacerdotal, decentralized form that typified early Russia and Serbia, have refused, practically to this day, to formulate any sort of coherent theory where the ideas of social Orthodoxy can appeal to the masses of farmers and workers in the western world. This very brief paper will, it is hoped, be a beginning of some new ideas of royalist and neo-medievalist political thought to counter the empty slogans of the republicans and parliamentarians who insist that history has largely stopped with them.

Modern political thought is a void. Political theory in the academy is controlled by a handful of elite foundations who finance current journals and publications whereby these organizations decide on the "big names" in this field which provide, in turn, the acceptable "parameters" of "responsible debate."

As the western world begins to breath its last, drowning in debt, mental illness and a low birth rate, Orthodox strugglers must be prepared for the coming cataclysm with a coherent theory, or rather, a vision, of communal liberty, economic equality (as mandated in the Law of Moses) and neo-medieval sacerdotal monarchy to replace the dying "democratic oligarchy" that typifies the pageant of bankers and buccaneer capitalists which goes by the generic name of "American politics."

The question for all Orthodox people is not merely the notion of "church government," itself a cliché, but of the Orthodox way of life in respect to this government, that is, the notion of sobornost'. Administration never has autonomy in respect to what it administers; it is a slave to the tradition and mystic life of the church and its monastic core. The Orthodox, agrarian and ethnic tradition (actually, three sides of the same triangle) provide a means whereby society can be regenerated and restored, Christianity can return to its Orthodox roots, and the local can

prevail over the international and “papal.” Administration, if it takes a life beyond tradition and local custom, strangles the latter, demanding that everything be sublimated under the Procrustean bed of ideological fashion.

The idea of “national anarchy,” or even better, the Hegelian syndicate, is merely a restatement of the ideas of Johann Herder and Kostamarov. It is related to the notion of sobornost’ or the rule of the council, defined as ethno-religious particularity; its tradition and way of life, with respect to only its inner principle, i.e. the content, rather than its external coating, the “administration,” the realm of money and power. In ancient Israel, it is represented by the tribal organization of Shechem, and the existence of decentralized shrines, later to be abolished under the rule of the temple, and, in turn, the temple itself became paganized under Solomon the Apostate, in an almost mirror image of papism and its deification of “bureaucracy.”

In other words, when the local was overthrown in favor of the central, local tradition was lost, and the church, the people of Israel, became pawns in the power politics of Solomon. Thence, the power of the center became autonomous from the tradition (in Israel’s case, due to its involvement with the pagan Tyrian economy, itself a descendant of Nimrodian, Babylonian materialism, a mentality in complete power in the modern west as of this writing), took on a life of its own, and, as a result, was vulnerable to making itself part of “the world.”

Church and state are governed by the local sobor, in the broadest sense of that word, viz., the way of life of a local parish, skete or brotherhood. Doctrine is “put in motion” by the day to day lives of the faithful, animated itself by the local parish family and the local skete, each existing in a realm of equality. Without the local skete or hermitage, a perennial aspect of Orthodoxy in Europe, the parish ends up a rather mechanical and perfunctory set of rites rather away from the understanding of the faithful, and particularly a faithful in modern America who is more often than not dictated to by media and fashion. It is the life of the parish, the local tradition and the ethno-communal imperative that is at the root of church government, and is at the basis of law, justice and a future world order.

It is “anarchistic” in that it rejects a powerful central administration and defines justice as congruent with local Christian custom (about the last thing the black-clad collegiate, upper middle class “anarchist” would say); it is “reactionary” in that it is based on the traditional life of the village, skete and parish family, where political and economic decisions are made communally, a tradition as old as its fight against “civilization,” itself deified in the person of Janus, the two headed god of civilization, depicted as bringing the benighted herd into elite, high-tech civilization with its social science, control and regimentation of all aspects of life.

### **Sobornost, Hesychasm and National Anarchism**

“Anarchy,” in a certain atavistic way, merely refers to the absence of centralized structures of rule, or even better, the absence of administration, but an acceptance of authority; these of course, being two very different things. The patristic tradition realizes only the relation of bishop to congregation or monastery, not to distant patriarchs or synods. When the synod, in a narrow sense, begin to believe themselves to be above local custom and the very font of truth and justice, however, problems develop, and the church is vitiated, alienation is the result.

If law is based upon local tradition and ethnic custom, then law is a decentralized idea ipso facto. What rules is the ethnos, represented at the parish, village, region or monastic level, and, in fact, is a naturally developing synthesis of all of these, despite often serious outside shocks; in reality, the commune, in the broader sense meant by Kerevskii, is precisely a synthesis of the means and results of the community responding and adjusting to those outside shocks.

Without these, there is no Orthodoxy, but rather a set of abstract Christological statements without living tradition and the day to day devotion that is at the center of the church. This is the result of “Americanization” (a code word for not having to listen to anyone from the old country), leading to a perfunctory, theologically minimalist worship that lies at the heart of American vulgarity.

The relation of bishop to parish or monastery is a mystical one, one based on prayer and the shared ascetic struggle rather than of domination. There is not a separation in a modern, nominalist or bureaucratic sense; nor is there any kind of institutionalized authoritarianism. All other things being equal, is a structure and hierarchy based not on power, but on prayer and struggle, the life of the church and the reception of grace being a radically egalitarian venture (so to speak), with hierarchy being understood only relatively. Insofar as the confrontation of heresy is concerned, this is as much the concern of the laity and monastics, in correcting their bishop, as well as the reverse. Today, it is the bishops, by and large, who are the bought purveyors of heresy under the guise of being “relevant.”

Thus, the Sobornost' idea approaches Orthodoxy as a local affair, and approaches it as a decentralized group of dioceses and monasteries largely self-governing and dependent on the ancient tradition of the church as its constitution. Freedom, hence, is the freedom from internal passions (relevant to individuals as well as “institutions”), those passions, such as lust or greed, that enslave the individual as much as any external administration. Such passions can turn the relation between abbot and monk, pastor to parishioner, or bishop to priest as one of alienation and control, where the institution is seen as a foreign oppressor, or as a bind based on love and devotion to the common tradition. This is the idea of authority: authority over the passions and, hence, the development of the inner freedom absolutely necessary for the rational life.

The approach approximates that of the Russian non-possessors and Old Believers, those who believed in a monarchy that was sacerdotal rather than administrative, and the rule of the ancient canons and Russian tradition over any speculative system of theology, eventually vitiated by Peter. This mentality is also to be found, significantly, in the monastic structure of early medieval Ireland, prior to the Norman invasion which imposed the Roman, top down diocesan structure ultimately dependent on Rome and those who ruled her.

Rather than depending on a strict rule, monks approach their lives as the Athonite hesychasts do as well as the Irish Culdees: based on the individual hermit or skete, struggling through various individual- based ascetic practices under the guidance of an experienced elder. The tradition was local, and based on the lives of the saints who had gone before rather than on any formal rule or ideology of life strictly considered. Local Orthodox, within this tradition, meet on occasion to strengthen one another in the faith, abjure heresy and develop further the local Christian life.

Establishment “anarchism” is a fraud in that it provides an outlet and justification for individual passions, somehow themselves to find a home in the “collective,” which is always a vague, ideological term with, at root, nothing to hold it together. The addition of the word “national” or “ethno-” to anarchism is precisely to provide that root, that of the ethnos, local tradition and local democratic life, or more precisely, the notion of representation, where local ethnic custom is the basis for law and inspiration. It is never an invitation to heresy, but it must be borne in mind that the Orthodox dogma which we follow is derived from the collective tradition of the Orthodox people and their local traditions, brought together in the ecumenical synods. Nothing that did not agree with this local “sobor” was ever accepted as authoritative, and what was considered authoritative was not so much what bishops voted on, but rather what

the tradition of the church had ratified over time. The local sobor, referring to a way of life rather than an administrative structure, is the cell, the “individual” of the Orthodox church, and it itself is responsible for the confrontation of heresy and schism. It was these cells who came together to destroy Arianism or monophysitism, not the emperor or the patriarch.

The local parish, the ethnic tradition, the skete or hermitage; this is the basis of Orthodox tradition and local rule, it is even the basis of the ecumenical mindset of the church, and can be reduced no further than this. Only when the state and church become centralized, such as the Israelites under Solomon, Russia under Peter, or Ireland under the later Normans does heresy and the worldliness of “administration” find a doorway to invade the church, the rites become sterile and perfunctory, and the church becomes a department of state, a pleasant set of rituals that connect the individual in a sentimental way, to their ancestors. What is more interesting is that the Nimrodian mentality of the ancient world is at the origin of this idea: the ideas of “civilization” and “enlightenment.”

The ancient hesychast tradition is based on local hermitages, bound together not by formal ties, but by tradition and the methods of prayer: interior silence, the Jesus prayer and the liturgy. It does not point to the “right synod” to belong to, but rather to the joy of Orthodox life, Christ and his peace. Vassian, the Russian non-possessor, says this:

Where in the tradition of the Gospels, Apostles, and Fathers are monks ordered to acquire populous villages and enslave peasants to the brotherhood? ... We look into the hands of the rich, fawn slavishly, flatter them to get out of them some little village. ... We wrong and rob and sell Christians, our brothers. We torture them with scourges like wild beasts.

The state and the economy are at best necessary evils, at worst objects that will distract us from the love of the Trinity and the mystical life. The mystical life by definition does not require the formal power of the state or even of the synod, but a truly Orthodox approach to God through prayer and struggle. It took SCOBA to convince us all that such things were not necessary.

Archimandrite Gregorii of Athos says:

The roots of neptic life and of hesychia in accordance with God are found in the Old Testament. The Prophet Moses received experience and knowledge of God on Mount Horeb, when faced by the strange sight of the blazing bush, which did not burn, he was initiated into rejecting every worldly belief, reflected in the removal of his sandals, and to contemplate in reflection and riddle the mystery of the divine Incarnation. . .The holy Apostles worked exclusively in the world and in the midst of distractions, noise and danger, but deep inside they remained hesychasts and workers of nepsis and prayer. Their apostolic work was not a social reform program, but the rebirth of souls through Christ.

And St. Gregory Palamas writes the following:

It is for this reason then, that the lover of perfect communion with God avoids the technologically assisted life, and chooses the monastic and un-structured state, and he eagerly offers himself to the sanctuary of stillness, without the obligations or worries of life, relieved from all other (worldly) relationships. Thus, having released his soul from every material bond, to the extent that this is attainable, he attaches his nous to the unceasing prayer to God, and having, through it, concentrated the nous entirely into himself, he finds a new and secret ascent to the heavens, the intangible

obscurity of the apocryphal stillness, as one would say. And having precisely concentrated his nous into himself with secret bliss, in a state of utterly simple but perfect and sweet tranquility, and in genuine silence and speechlessness, he flies above all creation. And thus, having been removed from himself and become entirely God's, he sees the glory of God and contemplates divine light.

Even more telling, St. Basil writes:

Because I propose a perfect community of life, where the attribute of ownership takes place automatically, the community is freed from opposition, and every turbulence, squabble and quarrel end with the stomping of a foot; everything is owned in common, souls, opinions, bodies and all those by whom the bodies are fed and healed; God is in common, reverence is in common, salvation is in common, contests are in common, sufferings are in common, and so are the rewards, which are received by many; and no one is left alone, as he is always with the others. What else could equal such a state? Is there anything more blessed?"

The basis of the Orthodox life then is the mystical contemplation of God, hence all Orthodox people, regardless of their state, are required to take on the discipline of monastics according to their strength, and build their homes into small monasteries. It might be worth noting that the Russian *Domostroi*, the ancient Russian rule for home life, insisted that the head of the family recite Matins, Vespers and the Midnight service every day with the family, and this at a very minimum.

For the Sobornost' mentality, the church, its teachings and traditions as manifest in the day to day life of the people are the basis of law and grace. The state provides an artificial border, one that is not co-determinous with the ethnic or religious tradition of the Orthodox people. The Orthodox are loyal to the tradition of the church or to the Slavic, Greek or western medieval tradition that embodied the life of the saints, and the communities of struggle.

### **Sobornost' and Economic Reality: Alexis, Nikon and Peter the Apostate**

The Moscow synod of 1666 in Moscow was a farce: roughly half the bishops at this synod were Greeks, all subjects and agents of the Turkish empire, most of whom bought their sees at a high price from the Sultan and local Greek elites, and then taxed their subjects heavily to repay back their elite patrons. Under no circumstances can there be "bishops" in such a case, and, especially in Serbia, many families who remained behind from the migration to Hungary lived a "priestless" existence, worshiping as best they could without clergy, with the head of the *zadruga* as the head of the local church, and the central yearly service was the *slava*.

This writer submits that these extended families had a healthier Orthodox life than the endlessly corrupt Phanar and its wealthy "old men" who controlled the policies of the Greek millet. Nevertheless, the bishops who came to Moscow not only were simoniacs and pro-Turkish, but were also highly involved with international trade, specifically using their position and pull with the Turkish state to engage in lucrative trade with Russia and Ukraine via the important Black Sea ports. Hence, the bishops who arrived in Moscow ready to condemn both Nikon and the Old Rite were highly compromised figures, all of whom had both political and mercenary axes to grind.

There are two recent publications that have received little attention, but shed light on the economic factors behind the sorry 1666 synod and its Petrine aftermath. These are both located in the excellent (2001) collection *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretive Essays* edited by I.S. Koropeckyj and Published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. The two pieces are called “Trade and Muscovite Policy Towards Ukraine” (172-185) by Carol Stevens, and “Petrine Mercantilist Policies Towards Ukraine” (186-209) by Bohdan Krawchenko. Taken together, these two pieces bring many new insights onto the economic issues brought to bear both by the Nikonian schism and its political counterpart in the Petrine revolution. They speak volumes concerning the rapid economic rationale behind both the adoption of the New Russian Rite as well as Petrine colonial policies towards the extreme southern parts of Russia and the Hetmanate in Ukraine. The destruction of these areas economically was part of a predatory Petrine plan that explains the revolt of Mazepa, the importance of the Old Rite merchant communities and the eventual risings of Bolotnikov and later, Pugachev.

It should be mentioned right here that these economic relationships are not completely adequate to explain the various policies of the southerners (south Russians and Ukrainians), or of the Petrine state, or for that matter, the adoption of the New Rite, which filtered in through Ukraine from the areas controlled by the Phanar and its church organization in the Balkans. The economy is but one variable, albeit an important one. However, it should be stated that the influence of the forces for the New Rite mirror exactly the flow of trade from the Crimea and the Black Sea through Ukraine and into Muscovy, and this cannot be ignored.

The first point that needs to be made is that a large and brisk trade existed prior to the Moscow synod of 1666 between Ukraine and Russia. All major agricultural and textile goods, as well as metals exchanged hands between merchants attached to the Hetmanate and the merchants attached to Moscow. But the more important element is that after 1635, the Russian state, began to fortify its southern border substantially, creating new markets with thousands of new noble servitors and their forces being sent to pacify the southern border with Ukraine and Poland.

Though this had the effect of harming trade between the two areas (and possibly alarming the Greeks), it was necessary to the Muscovite mind from a military point of view. The two major issues both with the Greeks and the Ukrainians were the question of vodka and tobacco. Both the Greeks though the Black Sea (and not excluding many bishops of the Phanar), were desperate to open Russia up for tobacco imports. The Greeks were dispatched to Moscow to begin to lobby for a Muscovite “openness” to both tobacco (illegal in Moscow) and Ukrainian brewed vodka, which was also a problem since the Muscovite policy was one of strict monopoly over distilling rights.

Therefore, given the Black Sea connection and the never ending search for money from the Phanar based bishops, there is every reason to believe that a joint Greek-Ukrainian movement to open Moscow up for vodka and tobacco was underway just prior to the 1666 synod. However, the movement of Russian military forces to the border soon was to put a stop to this, and hence, other ways needed to be found. It might also be noted that by 1650, the Cossacks under Khmelnytsky were in regular negotiations with the Ottomans and Greek merchants, and many Muscovites thought war with both powers was imminent.

The new servitors loyal to Moscow needed their own markets, and they drove the price of Ukrainian grain through the roof. This assisted both the development of noble based production as well as the Ukrainian staple: the yeoman, the small landowner. Precisely one year before the 1666 synod, attended by dozens of Phanar and merchant based Greeks, a trade ban was proclaimed from Tsar Alexei between Moscow and Ukraine. This was partially motivated by the

fact that the tremendous production of Ukrainian grain to meet demand was forcing many northern Russians out of business, most of whom were incapable of producing enough for market in that harsh climate, and certainly was not able to match southern growing seasons and the sheer volume of arable land. But even more than this, it was also clear that the Ukrainians maintained a brisk trade not merely with Moscow, but also with Germany, Poland and the Hansa, leading to a prosperous and powerful Orthodox Hetmanate, soon to be openly dedicated to the Old Rite and hence hostile to Moscow.

Despite all this, by the time of Alexis' death, Ukraine was feeding Moscow, and the Ukrainian vodka distillers were coming out with a product superior to the Muscovite version. Hence, Ukraine seemed to be winning on all fronts: first, she had a strong and prosperous peasantry, largely small holders with a substantial amount of increasingly agrarian Cossack aristocracy. Second, her vodka was challenging the Russian vodka monopoly and worse, her grain was driving Russian grain off the market both in terms of price and quality. The military servitors of Moscow on the Ukrainian border was forcing more and more production of grain, making higher and higher profits for the landed classes in the Hetmanate, noble and non-noble. The policy of the Russian government from 1667 onward was to supply the soldiers at the border with cash to buy Ukrainian grain. Ukrainian merchants, however, were also supplying forces of Poland, Austria, Prussia and Turkey, and hence, the Ukrainian prices were not coming down.

But what is the connection here? First of all, there seems to be an open policy early on to integrate Ukraine with Moscow in a trading bloc where Moscow would get all the benefits and Ukraine do all the work. Under Russian control, the Ukrainian bread basket would be shifted from northern and western trade (where she enjoyed an excellent reputation) and moved strictly northward to Russia. It seems then that there is an economic element to the Russian new liturgical rite in that it sought to conform to Greek/Ukrainian practice and hence, facilitate this integration of the two peoples. Further, as mentioned already, the Greek interest in a strong Black Sea, Ukrainian and Russian/Muscovite trade was also very important, as the Greek bishops, always in debt having to pay the Turks often outrageous sums for their sees, were always looking for ways to make money.

Therefore, both Moscow and the Phanar were quite interested in an economic integration of the east Slavic space, especially after the Serbian migration to Austria depopulated the Balkans to a great extent. Ukrainian relations with the Hansa or Austria did not benefit the Phanar, but trade northward would, since it would activate the centrality of Black Sea trade and the Greek merchant interest in grain speculation. Add to this the more obvious demand of the Greek bishops at the 1666 synod for Russian direct financial assistance, and it becomes clear that the Greeks clearly had an economic motivation for creating and justifying the new rite and eliminating all opposition, including the haughty and arrogant Nikon himself, who could not be trusted. After he did his part, he was cast aside as an unruly, "peasant upstart."

Making matters even more complex was the dominance of the Genoese over Black Sea trade. Greek merchants were long allies of the Italians, and millions of Greeks benefited in Italy by this trade. It was the Greco-Italian alliance that first, printed the books that were to be used by Nikon, but these were the same financial adventurers who manipulated and speculated upon the Black Sea trade; a trade that could only be profitable if Ukraine and Russia were a single integrated unit. This unit would be integrated by local and foreign merchants first, the new rite second, and the Petrine state third.

Once the Spanish crown defaulted on its debts, the Italians in Genoa sought to recoup these losses by exploiting Ukrainian and Russian grain competition. Much of the liquidity that

eventually came to undergird and finance these ventures came from Genoa – of both Greek and Italian background. While not entirely successful from an Italian point of view, it remains the case that elite opinion in the Genoese state held that Black Sea ventures were the republic's last attempt to remain dominant after the Spanish debacle(s).

But by the time of the sobor, Russia controlled the two river routes to the Black Sea, the Don and the Dnieper. As far as Peter is concerned, there can be no doubt that his view of Ukraine was one of colonial master to one of colonial servant. Peter did not consider Ukrainians Russians, but a vague “other,” an “old ritualist” and Cossack holdout that must have its trade privileges taken at any cost. But this was easy after the Mazepa disaster, and Peter merely tortured his Cossack and Old Rite opponents to death in the south, and installed his own favorites in positions of landed power in right bank Ukraine.

The fact that the Hetmanate was wealthy through a strong international trade as well as basically Old Rite in religious sympathies, Peter viewed them as doubly threatening. The Phanar supported Peter's southern drive so as to link up Jewish and Greek trading interests at the beginning of the 18th century with the large and increasingly cosmopolitan Muscovite markets.

When, in 1701, Peter abolished the patriarchate and took over all its prerogatives and incomes, the Greeks immediately endorsed this outrageous and uncanonical move. It might be speculated that Masonic activity among Greek and Jewish merchant groups around Odessa and elsewhere on the Black Sea saw a “brother” member in Peter and hence, sought to support his policies, as well as needing Russian cash, motivated their sycophantic behavior towards Peter. When earlier, Peter began to imprison and torture to death bishops and abbots in his purge of the church, not a peep of protest could be heard from the Phanar. But Mazepa was a gift to Peter: in Mazepa's ill-advised support of Charles of Sweden, Peter was able to put the brakes on Ukrainian trade, and, given Mazepa's “treason,” the kept Senate in Petrograd finally had a legal excuse to take all that cash and finally give the Greeks what they wanted: a Russia on the Black Sea. For his part, Johann Ostermann had advised Peter to flood Ukraine with debased copper coinage to destroy its economic infrastructure and thus re-flood the country with Russian currency. Peter began to place restriction upon restriction on Ukrainian trade, almost in an identical pattern to British restrictions on Irish trade at roughly the same time. All trade needed to go through Russia, no matter the goods' final destination. Russian merchants approved by Peter flooded into the country, since Ukrainian and many Old Rite merchants were banned from trading in Ukrainian goods.

The very fact that millions of Old Believers fled to the south, into Ukraine, at the time made Peter's policy doubly effective: it tried to break the back of the Old Rite merchant communities (the Old Faith's life blood, financially speaking) and at the same time, destroy the Ukrainian economy so that henceforth, Ukrainian grain and other products will be at the mercy of Russian demands. Most of the great Ukrainian products became Russian state monopolies, and hence, thousands of Ukrainian and Old Rite merchants were destroyed. Even more, Ukrainian farmers were forced to sell their products only to Moscow at low prices, and occasionally, at not price at all. Lenin's grain requisitioning, like everything he did, had its beginnings in the Petrine era.

At the same time, roughly from 1717-1719, not only were exports abroad prohibited, but there was also a list of goods that could not be imported into Ukraine either, in the hopes of destabilizing the Ukrainian economy to such an extent that it would have no choice but to conform with Russian demands of an economic, ecclesiastical and political nature.

Ukraine and the far south of Russia was a haven for the Old Rite and dissenters of all



kinds, including the freedom loving Cossacks whose bravery was matched by their skill in overseas trade. The Greeks and Muscovites conspired, with occasional help from Genoa early on, to integrate the littoral of the Black Sea under Muscovite dominance. This would eliminate any possible defection from Ukraine as well as crush the witness of the Old Rite, powerful and large in Ukraine and far south Russia. Since so many of the merchants were bishops or sponsored by bishops, the ecclesiastical and economic questions were always intertwined. But we should also note that the Nikon/Alexis and Petrine revolutions were all of a single kind, and came from a single source: to capture the trade of southern Russia, and in so doing, have the material base to create a secular, European empire.

The New Rite, to simplify, was both an economic and ecclesiastical way to increase Greek power over Russia. With the Old Rite firmly in place, the Greeks would remain in their second place position as slaves to the Turks and the “old men” at the Phanar. But the new rite placed Greeks as arbiters of the Russian rite and Russian tradition, now, Greek merchants will take advantage of this ecclesiastical and political centralization to being making profits off Ukrainian trade, safely in Muscovite and new rite hands.

In Russia, the Petrine mission is an arcane and occult experiment to vitiate the ancient tradition of Orthodoxy by bringing the Russian tradition, represented by the trans-Volga elders, sketes and the caves, under the control of Janus, or the initiator into “civilization” and “social management.” The basis of Peter and Petrinism is an arcane one, one that is secret, but one that reaches into the very depths of ancient, post-Edenic and post-Noachide life.

Peter’s crimes against the Orthodox church are as horrifying as the Bolsheviks. Establishment historians have erroneously claimed that Tsar Ivan IV was the manifestation of evil, while often giving Peter a pass in the name of “Enlightenment.” However, the Nimrodian ideology behind Peter’s agenda, and even the very name of Petrograd, deserve attention.

Dmitri Pospelovsky, in his *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, might be read as the official OCA version of Russian church history. It is that. But it is skillful in bringing out the criminal nature of Peter’s system, especially chapter 6. The abolition of the patriarchate, taken by itself, is proof of the totalitarian tendencies of the Petrine agenda, one where, like Janus, Peter becomes lord of heaven and earth, dictating to the now headless church his modernizing and Enlightenment agenda.

In 1691, one of the best educated Orthodox apologists in Russia, Fr. Sylvester (Medvedev) was executed, because he had been confessor to Sophia, Peter’s half sister and one-time rival for power in Muscovy. Abbot Abraham was tortured and murdered by Peter’s agents in 1697 because he had written a tract criticizing Peter’s lack of respect for human life. Peter secularized dozens of monasteries, and converted others to hospitals and barracks.

Peter forced bishops to swear that he, not Christ, was their “ultimate judge.” The monastic population declined from 25,000 to 14,000 by 1738 due to forcible secularization of certain monastic houses. The Petrine agent, Theophan Prokopovic, saw to it that six bishops were tortured for criticizing Peter’s abolition of the patriarchate, among other crimes of conscience. Peter’s successors, including Anna, began a major program of secularizing monasteries and confiscating their incomes.

Peter made it his business to forcibly bring Russia “Enlightenment.” Thousands were killed in forced labor projects, especially the creation of Petrograd, where the city, designed to be a monument of Peter “conquering nature,” was literally built on the thousands of bodies of Cossacks who had frozen to death in its construction (most of whom were Old Believers) as a symbol of his triumph. Quite literally, the corpses of the Orthodox traditionalists were the very

“fertilizer” of Peter’s vision.

### **Petrinism and the Occult: Petrograd as the New Atlantis**

The word “Peter,” here referring to the city of Petrograd, or the “City of Peter,” is of ancient origin, and is a generic name for all the gods of pagan antiquity, from Mesopotamia to Rome. In other words, Peter did not name his city in some sort of egocentric fit, but as a message to those similarly initiated. In the Lucilli Fragments, it is clear that Pater, or Peter, was the generic name for the chief god of the city, whose rites were sometimes carried out by the familial patriarch, leading to a confusion of pater as father, and peter as city god. Most commonly, Peter referred to the chief god of the city, and referred to a father only in a derivative sense. Hence the chief god of the Romans was Ju-peter, or Zeus-Peter, the chief and father of the gods of the city, the city itself being a microcosm of the Promethean drive to conquer nature in the name of the human will, which, more specifically, means the will of the elite who have the wherewithal to impose their views on the society at large.

The Peter was also a name given to all phallic symbols, specifically the symbol of the stone pillar, something conspicuous in Peter’s “neo-classical” architectural program, which included many of these pillars in his vulgar neo-classical tastes in his city, as well as the many statues of Roman gods he included as part of this architecture, a symbol of Peter’s own tastes.

The name Petrograd, or St. Petersburg, has an arcane meaning. The temple of Apollo in Turkey is referred to as the “Pataras,” and the oracle of Apollo there referred to as the Pataraus. Apollo is the god of science and enlightenment, which provides much light on the purpose of the city and its true meaning in Russian history. But the notion of “bringing civilization” to Old Russia is older even than the temple of Apollo.

Since all the gods of the ancient pagan pantheon were related and in fact, interchangeable, paganism as a system of thought can be traced to Nimrod, the Hunter, himself. The first mention of Peter as a name for the phallic god is in Mesopotamia. In the book of Exodus, Baalam, the chief of the pagans, is referred to as the Pethor of Mesopotamia (Deut. 23:4). He is called this because he “sits on the chair” of Nimrod as a “successor.” Baalam and Nimrod are the same name, meaning “conqueror of a people.” In Greek, the name is Nicklaus. The name of Baalam’s “ecclesiastical center” is the Peter, or the house of the stone phallic pillar, on the Euphrates (cf. The excellent article by Ernst L. Martin, “Simon Peter versus Simon Magnus”). Hence, Petrograd, or Peter’s Peter on the Neva. The agenda was identical: social control, regimentation and “rationalization.” Nimrod himself was said to have brought reason and proper government to his people very soon after the flood waters had abated. Pushkin seems also to have made this connection in an arcane sense in his “Bronze Horseman.”

Yet, Apollo too, was a hunter, and yet another example of the identical phenomenon: civilization as crashing upon a formerly free, communal, mobile and god-fearing people. Hugh Nibley, in his excellent, “The Hierocentric State” writes, “This is the old story of Nimrod, who revolted against God, ‘and became a hunter of men’ who founded that abominable state from which all kings of the earth take their authority. Even Apollo was in the beginning a deadly hunter who came from the steppes of Asia and slew the great serpent that guarded the holy spring of Delphi, so that he could gain control of the spot to which all Greeks brought their tribute, and thereby become their ruler.”

Janus, mentioned already, is yet another manifestation of this same mentality, manifest identically from Prometheus, Tammuz, Nimrod and Apollo, the god of civilization and

“Enlightenment.” The technology that will create a “deified humanity” completely triumphant over material nature is the nature of this “Enlightenment.” Janus, according to Plutarch, was the first to bring civilization to earth after the flood, build cities, and introduced the “life of reason” to “savage humanity.” After his death and subsequent deification, he was referred to as Pator. He is the father of the Babylonian, banking- based system of rule specifically, and of paganism in general. But Janus has two other attributes that place him close to Peter the Great. Firstly, he has control over the calendar, as Peter changed the calendar later, from the ancient calculation of the age of the earth to one based on western models, based on the birth of Christ. According to Ovid, Janus/Pator also held “the keys” to heaven and earth, and was lord over both, just as Peter sought to secularize the church, making himself lord of the sacraments as well as politics. He was the “keeper of the keys” into the pagan promised land, that of a completely automated and “rationalized” society.

It seems clear, from Nimrod to Xerxes to Solomon to Peter, that centralization is the promotion of the Will, whether that of an initiated monarch, or that of the techno-elite in modern America, over that of Divinity, and man’s relationship to him and his Creation. Hence, the most strict of the Orthodox tradition, the hesychasts, Old Ritualists, skete dwellers, Irish Culdees, the Northern Hermits of Russia, and many others, all demand local control, local communalism and the worship of the tiny community or skete. Centralization means mechanization, bureaucratization and rule of law rather than the Rule of Law; it is the rule of man, and hence, that of money, man’s great motivator according to modern, western ideology. In his excellent history of the Old Testament, Bernhard Anderson writes of the ancient Israelite organization prior to Solomon: “The twelve tribes were bound together not by a centralized government, but by a common devotion to Yahweh, the God of the Covenant, and by common religious and legal responsibilities. The Confederacy by its very nature encouraged a high degree of tribal independence. God alone was ruler of the Israelite tribes.”

In the Old Testament, this rebellion against Solomon and his apostate successors was found in the smaller sects of the desert openly praised by the prophets and later church fathers. The Rechabites refused to accept the innovations of the centralizers and syncretists of the House of Achab (cf. Jer. 35), and hence became communalists of the desert, living the wilderness ideal, as many hermits in the Christian era imitated. The Rechabite connection to later “desert-skete” movements has not, to my knowledge ever been studied, yet the connection is glaring, particularly in the writings of St. John Cassian.

The Rechabites were a reaction to Caananite “civilization” and its obsession with honors, centralization and technology, synthesized in human sacrifice to the various Baals in exchange for worldly success. Their ritual was strictly Yahwehist, with little by way of ornamentation and pomp. They refused to drink alcohol, which they correctly associated with decadence and the worship of wealth, power and the leisure it afforded. They connected civilization with all the vices the Covenant Community (which Orthodoxy is the sole and only descendant) were required to condemn and violently destroy, the very vices of Nimrod, having found their expression at the time in Tyre and other pagan civilizations of Caanan. The Rechabites are mentioned by St. John Chrysostom (Ep. 52-3) very favorably, and it has been said that when the Jews were stoning the Apostles, specifically James, the Rechabites attempted to intervene and stop the execution.

The Rechabite/skete ideal is connected both with the positive affirmation of the non-civilizational desert ideal which all Orthodox are required to imitate according to their strength, as well as the negative reaction to centralization and civilization, which, by its very nature, create

classes, one-dimensional men, and bureaucracy, leading in turn, to a group of parasitical elements in society such as bankers and lawyers, who manipulate the culture for their own ends. Centralization is pagan at its core, in that it requires continual human sacrifice in terms of warfare and the continuing building of cities and dams, as well as high taxes and the rapacious nature of the wealthy classes who depend on the structured existence of the city for their power. St. John Chrysostom's high regard for the Rechabites is immediately connected to his contempt for the Byzantine/Greek upper classes and the (pagan) system they had erected to promote and protect their agenda.

Following the tradition of the Old Testament, the Orthodox reaction to centralization and civilization is to reject the strictures of power that permit a tiny, billionaire elite to create, control and administer the "culture" of the modern west. Anyone who attempts to criticize the monstrous nature of western culture while refusing (often out of fear) to deal with those who control it end up as sterile, cliché-ridden rants against "porn" or "bad manners." All those who are part of SCOBA, the Phanar-based liberal and ecumenist movement in Orthodoxy demand strict "obedience" to their bishops and the erection of a wealthy, centralized structure of "seminaries" and programs to more easily facilitate liberal control and the creation of non-spiritual "priests" who thus oversee the hierarchical control over religious life at the local level. The fact that the OCA was financed by the YMCA in Geneva and the Archer-Daniels-Midland Corporation of Kansas City (which finances and partially controls the World and National Council of Churches, along with the Rockefeller Foundation and the various fronts for Sorosian interests) underscore the dependence of ecumenism on corporate capital and the structures of bogus legality to protect their interests.

There is an immediate connection between the ideology of Nimrod, manifest in both Tyre and Solomon's peculiar brand of ecumenism, and the modern pantheon of "celebrities" so vigorously promoted by the wealthy, who serve to legitimize and mentally institutionalize corporate liberalism among the sheep-like, massified American public. When Metropolitan Phillip of the Antiochian Orthodox Church demands Orthodoxy (or what he imagines Orthodoxy to be) become part of "American life," as he so often intones in the pages of the execrable *Word* magazine, what aspects of American life does he have in mind? Since all American "culture" partakes of the Sorosian corporate liberal and fashion elite, to submerge Orthodoxy into American life is somewhat akin to mixing whiskey and grape juice. He and his ilk desire complete control, hence, he must destroy the monastic and sobornost' idea in Orthodoxy.

Civilization demands mechanization, bureaucratization and a faux-legality which rests on the former, so as to justify and protect the interests of those who have the power to erect and administer such a structure. This is urbanism and the obsession/fetishization with mind/will, which in turn leads to the control over nature of the sort found in the Enlightenment idea of science (both natural and social) leading to complete social regimentation, ironically in the name of freedom and progress. The mind/will mentioned can only be that of a tiny elite, who civilization and the state serve to protect. When the Regime speaks of individuality and "freedom of choice" the question rests in the reserve of the manipulator. When it is seen in its proper, concrete and contextualized form, one sees that "freedom of choice" only has social and political import when it is that of the wealthy. The poor cannot demand freedom of choice for themselves and reserve it from everyone else. "Freedom," in the vulgar, American, utilitarian sense, can only mean freedom for the wealthy to dominate all else, since the freedom of the poor means little, since they do not have the ability to dominate anything, but only to swim in the fishpond dug by the elite. The individualism of liberalism and its synonym, democracy, is precisely the freedom

of the elite to mold the culture as they see fit. This elite can be political, economic, media or ecclesiastical, often working in some sort of coalition, as can be found formally and informally in the WCC, SCOBA, the Trilaterals, Bildebergs, Open Society Institute or Bohemian Grove.

### **The State, the Ethnos and the Community: Authority vs Power**

The state is an object of concern for all Orthodox. It's role in salvation history, at best, is a highly mixed record. It has oppressed the Orthodox community as much as it has helped it. Furthermore, Orthodox groups throughout history have fought the state in the name of liberty and the faith, such as the Cossacks, the Serbian Haiduks, the Montenegrin clans and the Old Believers, all of which have rejected the modern state. More often than not, the state has been an enemy of the nation, as well as the Orthodox faith.

As I have written elsewhere, the distinction between the nation/ethnos and the state is as following: The state is a hierarchic and bureaucratic organization that thrives on threats and open coercion. On the other hand, the ethnos is an organic reality, an extended family of persons bound together by a common tradition. Such commonalities, such traditions, are the reaction to periods of suffering. Hence, ethnic tradition exists because they are structures that have come into existence as a reaction to terror, genocide, occupation, colonialism and other dangers and evils. From this derives the moral importance of ethnic and religious tradition. They are not arbitrary statues or ideas, but are structures of survival that have developed in order to provide cohesiveness under a reign of suffering. Unfortunately, this kind of suffering, from Solomon to Peter I, has often come from the "Orthodox" state itself.

Being an ethno-anarchist is not a rejection of authority or order, but a rejection of the modern state and, more specifically, the rejection of the state as defined as a series of bureaucracies, interlocking, that live, parasitically, off of the accumulated tradition of a people, both religious and ethnic. If the state derives its legitimacy as the defense against internal enemies, Russian historians might do well to ask what protects the people from the state, which has been as violent towards its own people as have foreign invaders. The ethnos functions as a family does.

As the family is a natural institution, existing prior to civilization, so is the ethnos, and they function in an analogous fashion. The state, however, represents the worst of civilization: the crystallization of elite authority and tradition into a series of coercive agencies. Tradition, religion and the ethnos exist not as the motive force for state action, but as excuses for state coercion. "Political theory" deals with various excuses for state power, rather than ideals to be realized in struggle.

As far as Russian history is concerned, the state has, with few exceptions, been the enemy of Orthodoxy. From Peter I on, the state has sought to control and dominate Orthodoxy, and destroy its monastic core. While there were substantial improvements after the reign of Nicholas I, the Orthodox church, as the hierarchic level, was distant and reserved. The Old Faith, as well as the Cossack host, alone, sought to preserve the medieval, communal and decentralized tradition represented by the notion of sobornost'. If the Roman-style monarchy is Orthodox, so is the free commune of Pugachev, or the krug of the Cossack Host. Thinking synodically is the diametric opposite of republicanism, which in reality is the rule of the wealthy under the appearance of "universal" values.

Old Russia was and is represented by the Old Faith and the Cossack uprisings under Bulavin and Pugachev. In short, their programs were identical: a popular monarchy, the free

peasant commune and the Old Faith: the three ancient pillars of justice. In opposition is the “Egyptian” rule of technology, centralization and oligarchy, the three pillars of injustice. Such a view is echoed in early medieval Ireland and medieval Serbia. Society was divided up into self-governing communes, who elected their clergy and were loyal to local custom. Local monastics offered spiritual guidance and sainthood, not to mention education and social welfare. The state, if it can be called such, was represented by a monarch with a tiny retinue of supporters. His role was purely to defend the faith from outside influences, as he had little role in the functioning of the commune.

As an example, here is the largest statement of Pugachev’s program that had been preserved:

By this decree, with sovereign and paternal mercy, we grant to all hitherto in serfdom and subjection to the landowners the right to be faithful subjects of our crown, and we award them the villages, the old cross and prayers, heads and beards, liberty and freedom, always to be Cossacks, without recurring levies, soul tax or other money taxes, with possession of the land, the woods, the hay meadows, the fishing grounds, the salt lakes, without payment or rent, and we free all those peasants and other folk hitherto oppressed by the malefactor gentry and the bribe takers and judges of the towns from the dues and burdens placed upon them. We wish you the salvation of your souls and a peaceful life here on earth, for we too have tasted and suffered from the malefactor gentry much torture and hardship. Those were gentry in their lands and estates, those opponents of our rule and disturbers of the empire and ruiners of the peasants—seize them, punish them, hang them, treat them in the same way as they, having no Christian feeling, oppressed you, the peasants. With the extermination of these enemies, the malefactor gentry, everyone will be able to enjoy a quiet and peaceful life, which will continue for evermore. (July, 1774).

Had the Russian crown gradually brought this agenda to reality, the monarchy could have been saved. It is the difference between a bureaucratic and a popular monarchy. There is no biblical code that permits the slavery of one Israelite by another, and hence, the landlords were not members of the church, but schismatics. This quote from Pugachev is an excellent example of national, and Orthodox anarchism, and is the very statement of the Russian Idea on these matters. The Enlightenment brought Russia the bureaucratic state, serfdom and landlordism. Sobornost’ was eliminated from the church hierarchy, which itself was dominated by the state, the procurator and by the dominant urban hierarchs. To save medieval Russia, rebellion was the only option.

From the Sechem covenant in the Old Testament to modern ethnic populism, this is the model for Orthodox organization. It is as the center of the Ukrainian idea of sobornopravnist,’ as well as the Cossack krug. It will resurface again among the Cetniks and Haiduks of Serbia and in the mentality of some Eurasianists and the Irish organization Republican Sinn Fein. There is nothing new, therefore, about the nation, or the religio-ethnic idea, rejecting the state as such and opting for the rule of the people in the best sense, that of the rule of the faith and custom, the crystallized experience of the people.

There is certainly nothing contradictory in nationalism and populism, properly considered. It rests on the distinction between state and nation, with the latter as the origin, the

former as the parasite. In eastern Europe, as well as in Celtic Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, the idea of ethnic and religious belonging certainly predated the modern state. In Ireland, the state did not exist, but the Law did, under the Brehon code. How few political scientists have analyzed the notion that Law can exist without the state, and be fully accepted by all, but it was the case in Ireland and England, as well as in Serbia. The medieval idea is best represented by the free commune governed by experience, that is, custom.

The Old Believers, as well as the Cossacks, who often fought together in the unfortunate 18th century under the pseudo-tsars of the era, represented the highest development of paleo-nationalism and ethnic/national populism. As the Russian state began to take European forms, such as the domination of technology, coercion and violence as a regular way of dealing with problems and a captive and frightened church, rebellion was imminent. The notion of a popular Tsar, a tsar who ruled in the medieval form as the icon of piety and the defender of the church rather than as the task-master and tax-master.

The Old Faith realized their life was dying, the life of sobornost' and the common mind (represented by common movements during church services) and thus sought the protection of the forests and bogs (as did the Gaelic Irish), to preserve what was left of Old Russia. Old Russia died with Peter I, and was only revived, to a limited extent, under St. Nikolai the Martyr Tsar, who did not have time to fulfill his mandate.

Order exists through tradition and paternal authority. Decisions were taken by the sobor, where all needed to agree on a course of action. Mutual aid was at the center of the Old Rite, based on asceticism and the limitation of wants. Bothering with technology and money was viewed as involving the Orthodox faithful in the world of Satan, who, according to the Scriptures, controls all the states of the world. The Old Faith never had a modern state, nor do the Hasidic Jews or Amish in America, and yet order was maintained and a certain degree of prosperity and open displays of happiness were regular features of such communal lives. In addition, despite small numbers, the above groups all had an influence on their respective communal lives far out of proportion to any kind of traditional state power.

As the Orthodox faith exists outside of episcopal control, so does order and law outside of state systems, who, as always, are a law unto themselves. Traditionally, in the Orthodox faith, both east and west, bishops were servants, rather than masters of the Orthodox church, officially defined as the entire body of faithful struggling to live the monastic life dependent on their surroundings. The skete and hermitage was the spiritual center of the society, and, specifically in Ireland, the bishop was under the authority of the abbot, and existed solely to ordain priests, etc. There is certainly nothing sacred or "traditional" about bishops as dominating parishes and monastics, and certainly nothing sacred about the centralized state, something explicitly condemned in the Law of Moses.

As far as the nature of the state is concerned, here are a few quotes from an anonymous tract on Satan and the state:

The satanic nexus with "The State" is also described or implied in Daniel 10:13, Ezekiel 28:12-19, and Revelation 17:1-7. In these passages, Satan is called "the prince of kingdom of Persia" and the "King of Tyre". Plus, the "kings of the Earth" are described as having an intimate and illicit relationship with Satan by way of his "scarlet beast" and the "woman" who is carried by it. So once again we find a direct link between Satan and the earthly rulers that God ordains. The devil certainly controlled these kings, assuming they were historical figures.

Perhaps he even possessed them. Hence, we have more evidence to suggest that “The State” may credibly be considered part of the kingdom of Satan, and only ordained by God in the sense that the devil himself is ordained by God – to fulfill His purposes and to glorify Him.

This is explained further:

The Scriptures indicate that “The State” is often a “minister” of judgment ordained by God ( cf. Isaiah 3:4-5, 12-15 ). To varying degrees, in each judgment situation, “The State” becomes “the rod” of God’s “anger” and “the staff” of His “indignation” ( Isaiah 10:5 ). It receives a “charge” from God to punish the people who are objects of His terrestrial “wrath” ( Isaiah 10:6 ). The Bible says that Lord himself brings “calamity” on people (Isaiah 45:7 ). “The State” is often a judgment against the people over which it rules (particularly outside of the theocracy of Judah ), although God has also used “The State” to judge foreigners during the Old Testament theocratic kingdom. Yet “The States” that serve God in this way are often at least as wicked as the ones they judge, showing that not all of God’s ordained servants ( cf. Romans 13.4 ) are upright in character. Casting aside popular myths to the contrary, “The State’s” evil nature and bad character are realities to be expected.

The church is governed not by synods, but by tradition and former examples of holiness. There is no synodal decision that can ever be considered valid that had not already existed in the hearts of the simple faithful. As a result, one is on solid ground in condemning Nikon (though not his followers), because, given the size of the rebellion against his reforms, his reforms were merely top-down commands, rather than part of the natural development of the Orthodox faith incarnated in the people via the Holy Spirit. At the same time, society is also so governed, as a family, through patriarchal authority that seeks to rule by example and exhortation rather than violence.

As Solomon takes the reins of Israel, he immediately uses his power to import foreign gods, multiply wives and engage in international alliances that also serve as examples of illegitimate ecumenism. It might be noted that the above three items are all the same. Making alliances with pagan states means taking some of their women as “wives.” At the same time, these women are permitted to bring their own gods to the temple, and hence, Solomon is expected to at least give some veneration to these pagan entities. Hence, Solomon died in heresy, and is the ultimate example of a heretical and illegitimate king, regardless of his other talents. Similarly, Peter I of Russia, upon taking power, confirms all the fears of the anti-Nikon resistance. He introduces extreme methods of tax collection, forced labor projects and an all out assault on religion and tradition. Peter I is in no manner distinct from the USSR, and serves to prefigure it. Tens of thousands died in Peter’s forced labor camps in order to build his new capital and other industrial projects throughout Russia. Once he ties serfdom to industrialization, the demonic nature of the Russian tsardom in the 18th century is clear. While serfdom is an evil, it is not nearly as bad as the modern commentators claim. On the other hand, the rule of Mammon is made clear when Peter I decided to engage in the forcible enserfment of peasants and then attach them to modern industrial enterprises under appalling conditions. Old Russia rose against him in the revolt of Bulavin.



The uprisings of Razin, Bulavin and Pugachev were aimed at restoring an ethno-anarchist model of life, albeit in rather inarticulate ways. One element revolved around the organic nature of the Old Faith as opposed to the purely hierarchic model of Nikonian Orthodoxy. Another centered around the ethnic commune and Russian tradition over the cosmopolitan coercion of Peter, Anne (I and II) and Catherine (I and II). It centered around rural communalism and decentralization rather than the urban centralization of capital and foreign/heterodox control. It stood of happiness over utility. It stood for Russia over the west.

When Bulavin and Pugachev were defeated, the Cossack autonomy was eliminated and the Old Faith butchered with even greater ferocity. Russia became a top-down coercive monarchy, rather than the New Israel. It became pagan rather than Christian for power was pursued for the sake of wealth and control, and the new, often non-Russian service class tormented their peasants to afford the latest European fads such as new carriages and their developing roulette addiction.

Romantic nationalism, in an ethno-communal sense, stands for the organic over the artificial. If this is true, than the abstract individual and untrammled desires are the most modern and fraudulent of all. What is natural, what exists prior to civilization is the family, the ethnos and the proper worship of God in spirit and truth. Civilization does not need to exist for all three of these things to function. God is revealed in the symbols of nature, but is obscured in modern times where nature is merely raw material. The veneration of the ever perishing natural world is itself a product of the Enlightenment.

Culture is the humanization of nature, bringing it into the symbolic world of belonging. Trees are not merely trees but symbols of a higher reality, as evidenced by the Russian veneration of the birch, and the Celtic veneration of the oak. Natural objects become sacramental objects in the Old Faith, they become markers of identity, as the Cossack sees the steppe, and the Montenegrin militiaman sees the mountains and crags. Nature itself becomes part of the language of life. Modernity sees it as either raw material to be exploited, or the suburban, tree-hugging sentimentality of fashionable environmentalism.

Herder and Rousseau show man living in accordance with nature and the tradition that such interaction helps to create. It is Hegel and Locke that sees rationality and utility over organic connection. Without the connection of community to nature and to custom (certainly no contradiction), alienation, ill-health and mental illness result. These are the result, not of biological processes, but of alienation; the masks that modern civilization forces people to wear given their various social roles. They are an exploited, subject people dominated by the whims of fashion and media control, from which their identity, clothing and even language derive. The ultimate reality of natural and organic living is the sobor, the peasant commune and the love of tradition. State/episcopal power exists not to guard tradition but to manipulate it according to the interests of power and utility. As James Billington writes in reference to the development of the Old Belief:

The defenders of the Muscovite ideal of an organic, religious civilization were being confronted in their own land with a sovereign secular state similar to those of western Europe. The year 1667 accelerated this trend through the formal transfer of Kiev from long years of Polish overlordship to Muscovite control and the promulgation of new decree insuring national control over all foreign trade. The process of freeing autocratic authority from any affective restraint by local or conciliar bodies had already been accomplished in the early years of Alexis' reign

by the crushing of town revolts and the abolition of the zemsky soborny. (Icon, 145).

A Dutch witness to Russian life under Alexis writes, (quoted in Averich's Russian Rebels), that commoners petitioned the tsar

concerning the intolerable great taxes and contributions, whereby they were overburdened for some years. . . .so with their wives and children they were thereby ruined; besides which the great oppressions which the boyars did daily lay upon them and that they were not able to hold out any longer. Yea, they desired rather with their wives and children to undergo a present death than to suffer any longer in such transcendent oppression. (57)

And Paul Averich writes, dealing with Bulavin and the Old Rite,

They saw the deeds of Antichrist not only in Peter's irreverent mockery of religious worship but also in the ruthless accumulation of power at the expense of the people. For them the centralized state was an artificial body forcibly grafted upon Russian society, an alien growth weighing heavily upon the poor and responsible for their suffering. . . .They [rebels] were particularly numerous among the Cossacks and streltsy, semi-autonomous groups which, threatened with the loss of traditional privileges and status, expressed their social grievances in religious dissent. The Old belief, paradoxically [sic] was a deeply conservative movement that simultaneously became a restless and even revolutionary force in Russian life.

And Nickolas Lupinin writes in his Religious Revolt in the 16th Century:

What the council of 1682 actually did was to structure a system of repression against the Old Believers. It was the first time in Russian history, as Kartashev notes, that the spirit of the western inquisition had been manifested. Over a half a century of continuous foreign influences had helped to foment the notion of counteracting any opposition.

The Old Faith, the Cossack krug and the medieval communal tradition rests on three ideas, that of the popular monarchy, the free commune and the ancient Faith. Each exists for the other, and none can exist without the other. There is no right action outside of right belief, and all right action depend on correct ideas of God and his relation to man.

### **The Old Testament and Orthodox Political Philosophy**

The popular monarch is an icon of the Trinity, his job is to defend the Orthodox people from the heretics and schismatics from within and without. As God says to Moses concerning political virtue, "Thou shall not receive the voice of a lie; neither thou shalt bear false witness to the wicked. Thou shall not follow the multitude to do evil; neither thou shalt yield in judgment, to the majority opinion, that stray from the truth (Ex. 23:1-2). And again, in chapter 18: Be thou to the people in those things that pertain to God, to bring their words to him, and show

the people the ceremonies and manner of worship, and the right way to walk in God, and the work that they shall do. And to provide for all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice and appoint them rulers over thousands, hundreds fifties and tens.

And for kings who overstep their bounds and begin to worship their own power, God says to Jeroboam through Ahias, “For as much as I exalted thee among the people and made thee prince over Israel, and rent the kingdom away from David and gave it to thee, and thou has not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed them with his whole heart, but thou has done evil in my sight, and has made strange gods to provoke my anger.” (3 Kings 14:7-9).

The monarchy is a symbol of Gods power, and the unity of the law. He does not dominate, as the Orthodox life knows no such institution, but acts in a mystic capacity rather than in a bureaucratic one. He is a living icon rather than a politician, a charismatic personality rather than a tax collector. His job is to defend the faith and oversee the communes. Ecclesiasticus writes, “Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up: be among them as one of them.”

The free peasant commune was always at the forefront of the Old Faith and the rebellions against bureaucratism under Bulavin and Razin. The free commune, as is traditional, should elect its leaders and law enforcers, all should be represented in the capacity of heads of households, for the economy is based on the natural institution of the extended family, of which both the parish, commune, ethnos and labor association is a natural outgrowth. This was largely the case in medieval Serbia, Ireland and the Cossack host, and remains part of their nationalist heritage even until today. Kingship and commune and based on law, which itself is based on custom, ethnic tradition and the canon laws of the church, all of which are, in turn, based on experience, survival and suffering. The commune (or labor association/artel in a more industrial capacity) should exist in coordination with the local parish and monastery for instruction and social welfare measures. Forming a web of institutions that serve both for the worship of God and for the fulfilling of natural needs.

Heresy exists due to the ego. God made it very clear to Moses that there was an immediate unity between justice and truth, between believing rightly and thus behaving rightly. Wants are not needs, and as the capitalist economy is drawing in debt and more and more people reject the system, the system of wants must be transformed into the system of needs. As capitalism functions by provoking wants into needs, wants that did not even exist yesterday, but are demanded today, as Ecclesiasticus says, “Watching for riches consumeth the flesh, and the thought thereof driveth away sleep. . . He that loves gold shall not be justified, and he that followeth after corruption shall be filled with it.”

There is no love of gold without corruption, it is one and the same thing. And the prophet Jeremiah says, “If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith Jehovah, if thou wilt return unto me, and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight; then shalt thou not be removed; 4:2 and thou shalt swear, As Jehovah liveth, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.” (4:2). And again in chapter 7, “For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own heart; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.”

And again, “Hear ye the word which Jehovah speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: thus

saith Jehovah, Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the nations are dismayed at them.” And again, Jeremiah is commanded to say to the king,

Thus said Jehovah: Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, And say, Hear the word of Jehovah, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates. Thus saith Jehovah: Execute ye justice and righteousness, and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence, to the sojourner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith Jehovah, that this house shall become a desolation” (22:1-5).

Economic production, worship and ethnic belonging all belong to the order of the permanent synodia, the connection of one man to another, and one family to another as being one in the Old Faith. All is to be decided by the synodal system, from agricultural duties to the ruling of a local parish or dioceses.

Nothing should be done by episcopal authority that is not already part of the local parish and monastic tradition. Such a vision, in the thought of the sobor, is applicable in the economic realm as the family as in the ethnos. Such a vision, however, is foreign to the modern, bureaucratic state. Rousseau is the center of synodal thinking, though not a believer in Christ himself. It is striking to what extent his famous idea of the General Will is similar to the idea of the synod. He writes, “There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills: but take away from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences.”

God commanded to Moses that all the first fruits of one’s labor be dedicated to God. In other words, all labor, whether in the fields or factories, is Eucharistic and partakes of grace so long as it is done within the order of the synod. And hence, all social relations are brought under the concept of sobornost’ in the sense that all derive from the natural, extended family structure. For the corporate worship of God is familial in the parish organism, and is analogously related to the monastic synodia, as well as the council of the parish and the council of the diocese, as for the producer’s and farmer’s associations. All partake of the synodal structure, and this is stated by Moses, “All the children of Israel shall camp with their troops, ensigns and standards, and the houses of their kindreds, round about the tabernacle” (Numbers 2:2).

For the poor Moses is commanded, “If thy brother be constrained by poverty, sell himself to thee, he shall work with thee until the year of the jubilee, and afterwards he shall go out with his kindred and return to them and their possessions. For they are my servants, and I brought them out of the land of Egypt, let them not be sold.” Hence, the economics of the Orthodox church. Debts may not be accumulated for more than seven years, as all the extended families of Israel are equal.

No one has the right to accumulate riches on the backs of others. Serfdom is condemned so long as it is more than seven years, where, according to God, all debts and profits are to be returned to their original owners. Land bought via speculation is to be returned and any serf is to

be freed. Hence, the rebellions of Pugachev had the Law of Moses on its side, for the concept of the jubilee, central to Israelite economics, was forgotten and fellow Israelites were oppressed. Poverty is unavoidable, as is profits. But the Law makes it clear that such fruits are temporary, and are to be returned to the original family synodia after six years of enjoyment. As a result, no aristocracy or oligarchy can be formed according to law.

According to Moses speaking in Leviticus, there is to be little work done every seventh year, as the land, as well as laboring families, need rest. This is a time for prayer and service to the poor and to the ethnic community (ch. 25). Whatever grows in the fields should be donated to the poor, as should anything left over, left in the fields, since the last harvest. Every fiftieth year all economic relations should be “reset,” according to the Law, and each family again starts out with what was theirs at the beginning. Exploitation, by state or by private actors, is explicitly rejected by the Old Testament. All that has been sold can be redeemed (cf. verse 29).

Hence, the remnant of Israel, the True Orthodox, in order to live proper lives, must form economic and social synodia, pooling resources to the extent each family can allow, and organize themselves in separate communities from the corrupt “Egyptian” society around us. The home should be a small monastery, as St. Nikolai Velimirovic states, tightly connected with the agricultural commune or labor association, seeking spiritual assistance as well as occasional financial assistance from the local monastery. This is the natural economy, the social life based on the cell of the extended family, and extending itself perfectly into the labor association, parish, and diocese, each under an elected synod, with elections based on holiness and truthfulness. Media and entertainments should also be based on such institutions, thus relieving Orthodox families from depending on the corrupt and oligarchic media system of the Regime.

As the capitalist system shows tremendous structural weaknesses, such as debt, and contradictions, such as the frantic extension of credit to move inventory, shocks to the system may well bring its collapse. In such a case, a “plan” of sorts should be in place so that Orthodox people can live rational and holy lives outside of the mainstream society. Social Nationalism stands for the building of alternative sub-cultural communities that slowly but surely develop in such a way that the state is rendered irrelevant. It stands for statelessness, but also for community, and a community governed by tradition and canon law, which is merely a crystallization of tradition and the experience of Orthodox generations throughout history.

The institutions of such a society are not “revolutionary” in the sense that they are something new, but precisely in the sense that those, such as Razin, the Cossacks or the Irish Republicans, are reaching to reestablish something that had existed before. In medieval Ireland, Serbia, within the Cossack host, the Haiduks and the Old Believer communities, such an ethno-anarchist model has been in existence for centuries. Reestablishing it, based on the Law of the Old Testament, is a necessity for the creation of rational structures in an irrational world.

As far as Putin’s Russia is concerned, the state has an important role. While far from ideal, the Russian state under Putin and his successor is important to destroy the power of the western-supported oligarchical and American/Israeli based Mafia. Decentralization makes little sense if such a procedure will merely give power back to organized crime groups. Hence, such power, preferably led by a popular militia such as the one led by Kuzma Minin during the Time of Troubles, is needed to cleanse Russia from its criminal element. Once that is done, and a popular and local Cossack-style militia is created, decentralization and re-ruralization can take place in a context of security. Thus, the Russian state is necessary to cleanse Russia from elements that the System of power in the west has helped to create. Any movement for

decentralization and sustainable living needs to go through phases, with the cleansing phase the first.