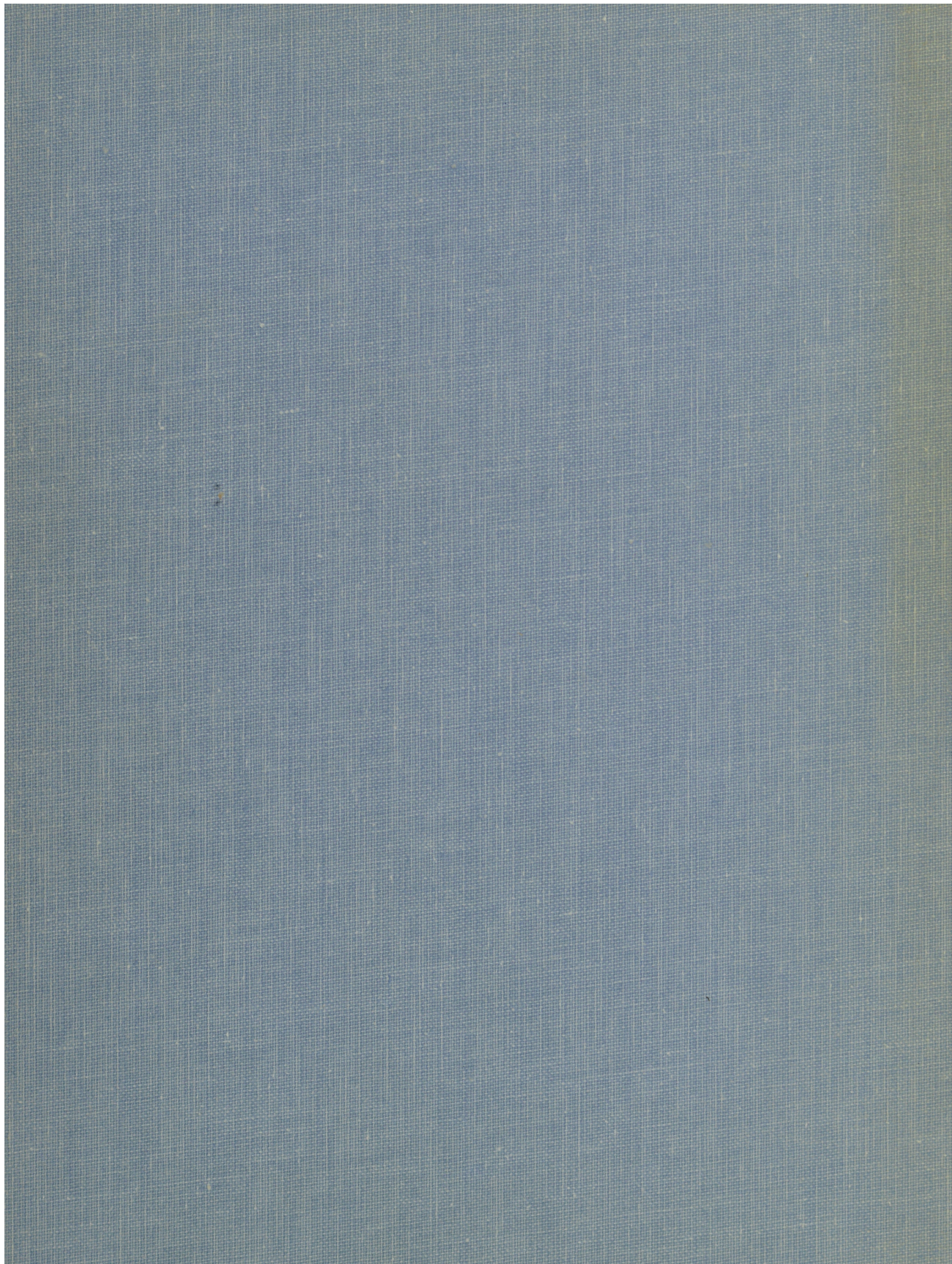






THE REFORMATION OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

by

ROBERT LEWIS NICHOLS

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INTRODUCTION

In 1905-06, at a time when Russian society was undergoing a radical transformation, the Russian Orthodox Church attempted its own reformation. The attempt failed, but the undertaking had significance nonetheless. It was the first time since Peter the Great's own "reformation" of the church that the Russian church was permitted to discuss a reorganization which would benefit Orthodox religion. The forum for discussion was the Preconciliar Commission, called during those revolutionary years.

The new movement for reformation sharpened the old conflict between the established church hierarchy and the lower clergy, laity, and to a considerable extent, Orthodox theologians. Beginning with the struggle of Nil of the Sora, or Nil Sorsky, with Joseph of Volokolamsk and the church hierarchy, the challenge to hierarchical authority had never been entirely crushed. In the 1840's, over three hundred years later, the Slavophiles, led by Aleksei Khomiakov, revived this challenge and from then until 1917 (or more accurately, until the late 1920's) the battle was joined. Khomiakov armed his supporters and ideological descendants with the concept of sobornost' or conciliarity. The church was to be run by councils with the equal participation of all the members of the church. The bishops countered this challenge on the canonical ground that

all power and authority emanated from the bishops alone. How this conflict was resolved in the Preconciliar Commission is the subject of this paper. In 1906 the conflict ended in compromise--on paper at least--while in 1917 it did not. Much of the explanation for the internal difficulties of the church after 1917 can be found in an analysis of this conflict in the previous two decades.

The protocols of the Preconciliar Commission were originally published monthly in the official church journal Tserkovnyia vedomosti (Church News). Later these protocols were collected in a four volume set. Finally, an offset in two volumes was made from the four volume set. No complete set of the protocols exists in the United States. However, by good fortune I was able to get the first volume of the two volume set and volumes three and four of the four volume set from different universities. Therefore, in the notes volume 1 actually refers to volumes one and two and this explains why volume two is not mentioned either in the text or in the notes.

CHAPTER I

Orthodox worship is a great buried treasure and our people suffer from great spiritual hunger.... We must make our people realize... that public worship must be... a source of inspiration satisfying the deepest spiritual longing of man for communion with his creator.

---Bishop of Samara, 1905¹

The bishop of Samara, like many other Russians inside and outside the church, felt that the Russian Orthodox Church should be reformed. There were many abuses within the church which weakened its influence over Orthodox Russians. The parish had lost its vitality and by 1905 no longer served as either a social or spiritual force in the community. Instead the parishes were frequently used as a means of state control in the villages and

...on the priest they... laid obligations of a purely police nature, forcing him unconditionally to support and defend the existing order, to keep watch for persons and manifestations dangerous to it, and inform the authorities about them--which of course deeply undermines the moral authority of the pastor of the church and compels his parish to look upon him as a state official with whom it does no harm to be more careful.²

The duty of village spy was often cheerfully and willingly shouldered by many parish priests. One priest in Khar'kov revelled in the fact that thanks to his confession

I know what is going on around me in the village, and can firmly protect the autocracy and the social order; indeed to deprive me of this trust among my parishioners would automatically destroy a protection for the throne and the Fatherland, which support, although not great, is far from insignificant....³

Nor was this poor condition of the parish and disreputable character of the parish priest particularly new in Russia. Archbishop Ambrose, writing to his consistory in 1786, described his impressions of the Moscow priests he had seen in front of the Church in the name of Our Saviour. "The richer one," he wrote,

shamelessly bargain among themselves and defame on another and in place of the reverence due to the priestly office they speak in the foulest manner and occasionally fall to scuffling. After the service, because they have no particular home or refuge they spend their time in the pot-houses and taverns. Having drunk themselves into a stupor they wander aimlessly in the streets.⁴

The picture painted by contemporaries of the higher church administration are just as grim. Bishop Lavrenty of Tula described the highest church organ, the Holy Synod, as being

...least of all like... a holy church council. The Synod is a governmental institution: when you enter a concierge with a mace greets you; then footmen with gold and silver medals, and farther on officials, officials, officials without end... and among them four or five old bishops, who in summer put in an appearance once a week, and in winter, twice a week, for two hours at a time. They are offered various matters to be voted on, sometimes merely the least important ones.⁵

Besides being dominated by the state the church

experienced internal discord. There was a constant tension between the higher clergy (or black clergy, so called because of the color of their frocks) and the lower clergy (or white clergy). One source of this friction was the domination of the black clergy over all the higher church administrative positions. From these offices the white clergy were completely excluded. Some members of the upper clergy lacked any respect for the lower clergy subordinated to them. One priest complained that his bishop

receives all the priests in the hall, near the coat rack and the galoshes--receives them all simultaneous and in public; and if anyone is abashed, or presents his petition at all timidly, he holds that priest up to ridicule; so that many lovers of comic scenes take pains to come at reception hours, to be amused in seeing how this Bishop or Archpastor makes fun of his priests.⁶

Another factor which contributed to the friction between the upper and lower clergies was the arbitrariness with which the bishops could execute church law. A village priest near Lake Baikal complained that the lower clergy had no legal existence. All that was necessary was "one unfavorable report, a single denunciation and without any trial or hearing, by one resolution of the bishop, a priest can lose his position and thereby his means of livelihood."⁷

Such criticisms of the existing church order increased and sharpened in the first decades of this century. The newspapers almost daily featured articles deriding the "bureaucratic" church.⁸ Church journals, especially Tserkovnii

Vestnik, a publication of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, were extremely blunt in condemning the malpractices of the church. The general aim of these criticisms was to persuade the government to convene a sobor, or church council, of the entire Russian church. Most vocal were the "32" priests of St. Petersburg who, on the 17th of March, 1905, presented Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg with an address "On the necessity of change in the Russian church administration." They demanded that the church be rebuilt on the basis of "conciliarity" and asserted that the "bishop must be elected by the clergy and the laymen of the local church and serve as the fulcrum and model of the pastorship entrusted to him."⁹

The weakness in the spiritual life of the church and the abuses within it are traceable partly to the political role played by the church in the preceding centuries and partly to the decline of the parish as a viable and active religious institution.

II

The controversy between the church and the state in the sixteenth century over the question of church property had been temporarily settled by the alliance of the Josephites with the state. This alliance gave the state the religious sanction of the church and the church was allowed to maintain its independent control over church administration. The peace was an uneasy one. After several indecisive encounters, notably Patriarch Nikon's attempt to establish the primacy of the church over the

state, the state gained the upper hand during the reign of Peter I. Peter's "reform" of the church made the Tsar, not the Patriarch, the "head" of the church. The fundamental laws later interpreted this to mean that the Emperor was "the supreme defender and protector of the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, the guardian of Orthodoxy, and all good order in the Holy Church."¹⁰ When Peter left the office of Patriarch unfilled and established the Holy Synod in 1721, he destroyed the last vestiges of church autonomy. By establishing the Holy Synod he placed the church administration under a governmental institution. Peter also appointed a representative of the government to act as an observer (Over Procurator) of the debate in the Synod. The next two hundred years, because of the domination of the affairs of the church by the Synod, became known as the Synodal period. The affairs of the church during this period were increasingly brought under the control of the Over Procurator, who became more and more a Minister of Religion. This was the position of the church at the end of the nineteenth century. The church was legally under the control of the Tsar and its administration controlled by the state through the office of the Over Procurator.

At the same time the state took control of the church the parish began to lose its importance in the religious life of Orthodox Russians. The reasons for this decline are not clear. One explanation is that the state assault on the church destroyed the religious ardor of the parishioners. Peter, leader of the assault, "drastically curtailed the autonomy of the

parishes,... and tried to undermine the confidence of the people in their clergy."¹¹ Another explanation, given by Professor Miliukov, is that the parishioners simply lacked any interest in parish matters and that the true faith of the Russian people had always stood outside the walls of the church.¹² Whatever the explanation it is clear that one very important link between the parish priest and his parishioners--the election of the priest by his congregation--was broken either by the state or through the parishioners' own indifference.

Descriptions of the parish in the nineteenth century continued to point out its low level of religious life. Prince S. P. Gagarin in the 1860's described the clergy in this way:

Our clergy are uncultured, uncouth, and needy, yet because of their origin and mode of life they stand quite apart from the people and exert no influence upon them. The performance of the priestly duties is marked by strict formalism. The priest officiates mechanically at the Te Deum, the requiem, and other church rituals, and there his pastoral duties end. The Orthodox clergy never deliver sermons, never give instruction on faith or enlightenment of the first principles of true worship, therefore, the people remain ignorant of religion.¹³

Still more proof that the life and conduct of the parish clergy was not all that it might have been was revealed by the investigations of the Budget Commission of the Duma. Characteristically enough for a budget commission, it stated that the problem lay in the manner in which the white clergy were forced to maintain themselves. Basically the parish priest had three sources of income: donations made by parishioners, payments

made by parishioners for the religious ceremonies carried out by the priest, and finally, the revenues he received from his land. However, by the turn of the twentieth century revenues from the land and donations given by the parishioners began to decrease and as a result many of the parish clergy raised the price they charged for ministration of their duties. The reporter of the Budget Commission stated that many of the priests could be called

...money grubbers who take high payments for religious ceremonies, using the device that several of them are necessary for the parishioner and in such cases the collection for the ceremonies lays a heavy burden on the parishioners.¹⁴

During the stormy years of 1905 and 1906 members of both the higher and lower clergy demanded the return of the church administration to the hands of the church and called for the complete renovation of the parish. They also demanded that the government call an All-Russian Church Council. At one stage in the revolution of 1905 the government felt sufficiently unsure of itself to create a commission (Predsobornoe Pristutstvie) to prepare the agenda and reach tentative conclusions for such a church council.

It was very easy to point out the difficulties plaguing the church but inventing cures now had to be seriously undertaken. The importance of the commission created in 1906 is that it represents the first attempt to refurbish the Russian Orthodox Church in order to meet the pressures of a rapidly changing Russian society. Professor Florovsky has written of the clergy

in the Petrine epoch as a "frightened class."

On the surface there was an ambivalent silence. The best people withdrew to the "internal hermitages" of their hearts and internal purification, for in the 18th century it was not permissible to withdraw to the external hermitages. The fear on the part of the "clerical rank" [chin] is one of the most lasting legacies of the Petrine Reforms. For a long time in the future the Russian Church conscience labored under double restraint--administrative decree and internal fear.¹⁵

This same description could be applied equally well to the tenure of the last Over Procurator of the Holy Synod, K. P. Pobedonostsev (1880-1905). The work of the Preconciliar Commission, as the committee created in 1906 was called, signified a radical departure from the previous attitude of the state toward the church. This paper will trace the events that led up to the calling of the Preconciliar Commission and analyze the proposals it made. The adoption of these proposals by the church might have brought to an end the restraints placed on it by the state and brought the church back into closer contact with Russian society.

The first attempt by the government to come to grips with the problems besetting the Orthodox Church came shortly after the government announced a policy of general religious toleration. The Imperial decree of December 12, 1904 "to strengthen the foundations of religious toleration" removed most of the legal restrictions on non-Orthodox religions but left the

position of the Orthodox Church untouched.¹⁶ Count S. Iu. Vitte, chairman of the State Council, stated that the removal of legal restrictions against non-Orthodox religions gave them an unfair advantage over Orthodoxy. To remedy this he urged that the government also remove its control over the Orthodox Church.¹⁷

At the same time Vitte made these remarks in the State Council he approached Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg for help in outlining plans for reforming the church. In February of 1905 Metropolitan Antony discussed various reform proposals with the professors of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, where the Metropolitan had been rector twenty years earlier.¹⁸ The result of their collaboration was a report in the form of "Questions on the desirability of reforming our Orthodox Church." These "questions" were presented to a Special Commission of the State Council that same month. The tone of the note was cautious and Metropolitan Antony was quick to point out the advantages to the state in church reform. "By granting the Orthodox Church greater freedom to administer its internal affairs," he argued,

the church would then be guided by the church canons and the moral and religious needs of its members. Freed from direct state or political missions, the Church could then, through its revived moral authority, be a steadfast pillar of the Orthodox state.¹⁹

The suggestions of Metropolitan Antony were too cautious and vague to satisfy the energetic Vitte. Later in February Vitte submitted to the Tsar a more formal note, "On the present position of the Orthodox Church," which was designed to enlarge

and clarify Antony's suggestions. Vitte covered topics ranging from restoration of church autonomy to the defects in church schools. However, he concentrated his discussion on two points. The first concerned the administration of the higher church organs. He called for the administration of the church on the principle of "conciliarity" (sobornost'), that is, by periodic church councils. "The religious principle," he stated,

is a social principle: it expands and is strengthened wherever social life is given a certain amount of liberty. It is natural, therefore, that the conciliar principle should be the foundation of ecclesiastical government. From the Christian communities of apostolic times, with their elders and brotherhood, down to the Byzantine patriarchs surrounded by their staff of court officials, the principle of government by means of councils was maintained without a break in the canons of the Church.²⁰

In order to introduce conciliar government into the life of the church, Vitte argued, the Synodal administration had to be removed. The Holy Synod was "collegial" therefore secular and non-canonical.

The second point Vitte elaborated was the renovation of the parish. In contrast to the lifeless contemporary parish which no longer took any interest in its own affairs, the Russian parish of the 17th century

was distinguished by great animation.... The village itself constructed its own church, and elected a priest and other church servants. The church treasury at that time had wider uses. They supported and maintained with it not only the church and homes for the priests but schools with teachers and a whole series of charitable organizations. The parish community itself

judged its members and had the right of very extensive interference in their family affairs.... Of this living and active community at the present time remains only the name.²¹

To revitalize the parish Vitte thought that insuring the material position of the clergy was essential. This would absolve them of the need to charge a fee for the celebration of the sacraments. "This could be most conveniently," suggested Vitte,

by restoring to the ecclesiastical community its autonomy. In order to secure a revival of parish life it is necessary to give back to the ecclesiastical community the right from which it has been deprived, of participating in the management of the financial affairs of the Church and the right of electing, or at least taking part in the election, of members of the clerical staff....²²

Vitte's own motives for reforming the church were not guided by any undue amount of zeal for Orthodox religion, but rather as a means for stabilizing Russian society. "In view of the present unmistakable symptoms of internal vacillation," he wrote to the Tsar,

both in society and in the mass of the people, it would be dangerous to wait any longer [to reform the church]. Religion constitutes the main groundwork of the soul of the nation; by it the Russian nation has hitherto stood firm and strong; and only by the help of this force can the Russian people come safely out of the heavy year of trial. And nothing could well be more injurious to the State than to check the expansion and free manifestation of this natural force by an attempt such as is now being made to confine it within a framework of dry bureaucratic principles.²³

These steps toward church reform were taken without the knowledge or consent of the Over Procurator of the Holy Synod,

K. P. Pobedonostsev, who had been ill since the beginning of December, 1904. Learning of Vitte's moves, he hastened to counter them. On March 12, 1905, Pobedonostsev also presented a note to the Tsar which he entitled "Reflections on the desirability of reform of our Orthodox Church." The note was more devoted to the task of "correcting" the mistakes made by Vitte than to the exposition of Pobedonostsev's own views on church reform. He refuted Vitte's argument that the Holy Synod was non-canonical by describing it as a "continuous" sobor or council which served the church much better than the former yearly council.²⁴ As for the degenerate state of the parish, he pointed out that the ideal picture drawn by Vitte had never been beheld by Russians. He suggested that Vitte read the proceedings of the Stoglav Church Council of 1551 which was called to eradicate the evils of the church.

Pobedonostsev's strongest objection to Vitte's plans (which he did not elaborate in his note to the Tsar) was that they attacked the foundations of his views on church-state relations. For him the church and the state had an organic relationship which could not be separated. "...The Church, as a community of believers," he said,

cannot and must not detach itself from the State, as a society united by a civil bond. Whatever perfection theories based on the separation of church and state may attain in the minds of logicians, they do not satisfy the simple sentiments of the mass of believers.²⁵

He maintained that the state was the depository or the holder

of the right to appoint priests and bishops. But he was fully aware of the implications in the idea of separation of church and state for his own doctrine:

If... the State shall abdicate its right of appointing ministers of the Church and shall repudiate its responsibilities for their maintenance [then] the State... is bound to restore to the proper parties the right to elect priests and bishops.²⁶

To avoid such a catastrophe Pobedonostsev convinced the Tsar that all discussion on church reform should be transferred to the Holy Synod. Once the matter became the business of the Holy Synod Pobedonostsev tried to suppress it. Because only the Over Procurator had the right to bring the affairs of the church to the Tsar's attention, Pobedonostsev could simply ignore the matter and it would remain a dead letter. However, he again became ill and could not attend the sessions of the Synod. The bishops of the Synod, emboldened by his absence, after three sessions on the fifteenth, eighteenth, and twenty-second of March, produced a report requesting the Tsar to call a sobor of the Russian church. The sobor would then be entrusted with the business of the church and with the election of a patriarch.

The report, together with an address to the Tsar, was entrusted to the Metropolitans Antony of St. Petersburg, Vladimir of Moscow, and Flavian of Kiev. To gain an audience with the Tsar and avoid the Over Procurator the Metropolitans used the pretext of presenting the Tsar with an icon to give him their petition. On March 31, Nicholas II stated his agreement with the Synod's suggestions but preferred to postpone the date for the

calling of a sobor. "I must state," Nicholas replied,

that in the turbulent times through which we are now living it is impossible to accomplish such an important matter as the calling of a local sobor which demands calm and deliberation. I will allow it when a more propitious time avails itself; then according to the ancient example of the Orthodox Emperors I will give impetus to this great matter and convene a sobor of the All Russian Church for a canonical discussion on the subject of belief and church government.²⁷

In the meantime the Holy Synod had, with the consent of the Assistant Over Procurator V. K. Sabler, decided to distribute a questionnaire among all the Russian bishops on the question of church reform. The bishops responded almost unanimously in favor of calling a sobor and electing a patriarch.

Throughout the summer of 1905 debate on church reforms was lively. Part of the discussion was touched off because the laymen and the lower clergy had been excluded from participation in the sobor in the plans submitted by the three Metropolitans to the Tsar. An editorial in the newspaper Tserkovnyi golos denounced this membership, saying:

We believe in the infallibility of the church, but we do not believe in the infallibility of the episcopate.... The episcopate is not the church, but rather a part of it.... Its desires to usurp in the Sobor the place of the whole church... is sinful because it is egotistical.²⁸

Another reason for this animation was the participation of the laymen, clergy, and bishops in diocesan congresses called to discuss church reform.

The reports of the bishops were presented to the Holy Synod at the end of 1905 and were subsequently published. On

January 14 of the following year the Tsar requested that Metropolitan Antony arrange a time for convening a Preconciliar Commission which would prepare the agenda for the forthcoming sobor. Antony was appointed chairman of this commission. The membership was chosen secretly by the government thus avoiding debate over the commission's composition. Besides Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg, there were several representatives of the higher clergy present such as the Metropolitans Flavian, of Kiev and Vladimir of Moscow; the Archbishops Dimitry of Kherson, Nikandr of Lithuania (not to be confused with the theologian Nikanor, 1827-90), Iakov of Iaroslav, and Sergei of Finland; the bishops Antony of Volynia, Arsenii of Pskov, Stephan of Mogilev. The Over Procurator Prince Obolensky (who had replaced Pobedonostsev at the time the October Manifesto was published) and his assistant were requested to attend. There were also several lay members of the church present. Among these were Prince Evgenii Trubetskoi, A. Samarin, the future Over Procurator of the Holy Synod in 1915, and N. D. Kuznetsov, who was to play an important part in opposing the reestablishment of the patriarchate.

Many protests were raised against the inclusion of laymen and lower clergy in the council. Bishop Antony (in this same year Archbishop) of Volynia was the leading critic. He stated that he was "...grieved about the composition of the priestly and professorial parts of the commission," and then stated his objections to the membership:

- 1) Why are not erudite monastics such as Archbishop Mikhail included in it?
- 2) There are some pure atheists (Kliuchevsky, Mashanov) in it, Protestantizers (Golubinsky, Svetlov, Rozhdestvenskii) many fools and very many very bitter drunkards (Kliuchevsky, Mashanov, Ivanov, Chistiakov, Zaozersky, Golubinsky, Golubev, Butkevich) but most important:
- 3) All of them, liberal or conservative, are the sons of priests [kuteiniki].

The term kuteiniki was meant to imply the class character and outlook of these men and their probable hostility to the upper clergy. Antony concluded his remarks saying, "This is not a conciliar commission but a class commission."²⁹

Bishop Antony also had several disparaging remarks to make about the chairman of the commission, Metropolitan Antony,

who has never had any strong convictions, but such vacillation, duplicity, and readiness to offer up Orthodoxy for the joy of personal satisfaction was more than I expected even from him. He has proposed to place the church in the laps of the drunken sexton-nihilists who make themselves out to be academy members.³⁰

Against this background of government hesitancy, bickering and debate among the clergy, and general dissatisfaction with the condition of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Preconciliar Commission began its work on March 8, 1906.

Notes to Chapter I

¹Otzyvy eparkhial'nykh arkhireev po voprosu o tserkovnoi reforme, as cited in Nicolas Zernov, The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century (New York, 1963), p. 78.

²V. K. Sokolov, "Predstoiashchii vserossiskii tserkovnyi sobor," Bogoslovskii Vestnik, May, 1906, p. 42, as cited in John Shelton Curtiss, Church and State in Russia, (New York, 1940), pp. 85-86.

³M. N. Pokrovskii, ed., 1905-Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v otdel'nykh ocherkakh (Moscow, 1925-26), Vol. I, pp. 319-20, as cited in Curtiss, op. cit., pp. 249-50.

⁴A. V. Kartashev, Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkvi (Paris, 1959), Vol. II, p. 537.

⁵Otzyvy eparkhial'nykh arkhireev, op. cit., III, p. 382, as cited in Curtiss, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

⁶V. V. Rozanov, Okolo tserkovnykh sten (St. Petersburg, 1906), Vol. II, p. 196.

⁷Zabaikal'e (No. 101-543 and 102-544), as cited in Preobrazhenskii, Tserkovnaia reforma: sbornik statei dukhovnoi i svetskoi periodicheskoi pechati po voprosu o reforme (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. 524.

⁸Most of the newspaper articles both for and against church reform are collected in Preobrazhenskii, op. cit.

⁹Tserkovnyi Vestnik, No. 11, March 17, 1905, as cited in Preobrazhenskii, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁰Michael Karpovich, "Church and State in Russian History," Russian Review, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 16-17. Karpovich maintains that this definition did not give the Tsars the right to interfere in the dogmas and rituals of the church. This, he says, proves that there was no "caesaropapism" in the Russian church. No doubt he is right but it seems to me that this analysis does not lay the emphasis in the right place. It was not that the Fundamental Laws restrained the Tsars from interfering in the dogmas, but rather that the Tsars--especially Peter I and Alexander I--were indifferent to them. Without challenging the dogmas of the Orthodox dogmas both Peter and Alexander were able to encourage the rapid growth of Protestant influence in Russia. Their aim was not to use the dogmas of the church, but to supplant them. (See Prot. Georgii Florovsky, Puti russkogo bogosloviiia (Paris, 1937), Chapters IV and V and p. 87 where

Florovsky quotes Yuri Samarin's appraisal of Peter's conception: "He did not understand the church, nor could he envision it and therefore acted as though it did not exist."

¹¹Zernov, op. cit., p. 39.

¹²Paul Miliukov, Outlines of Russian Culture (Philadelphia, 1942), Vol. 1, pp. 122-3.

¹³Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁴Gosudarstvennaia дума. Stenograficheskie otchety, III Duma, Part 3, cols. 1059-60.

¹⁵Georges Florovsky, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁶The manifesto of December 12, 1904 stated that the government wished "to guard by the Fundamental Laws of the Empire the sanctity of toleration in matters of belief and to submit to a reexamination the laws concerning the rights of the Schismatics and similar persons who belong to non-Orthodox and heterodox creeds; in addition to bring about in the present administrative order corresponding measures to eliminate in their religious life every hindrance which is not directly eliminated by this law." Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiskoi imperii (St. Petersburg, 1905), XXIV, Part I, p. 1197.

¹⁷One of the members of the State Council made this point plainer. "...The Dissenters are not handicapped by the State and our Church is. They choose their priests and bishops from among the worthiest; we have ours selected for us by the laymen who also appoints the Mohammedan muftis.... It [the Orthodox church] would lose the last traces of its influence over the people if the Dissident Churches were allowed to compete with it on equal terms. Heretofore the restrictive laws against them have prevented that. Yet now we are asked to repeal these laws. If we do so, Orthodoxy is foredoomed." Quoted from Laicus, "Church Reform in Russia," Contemporary Review, Vol. 87, 1905, pp. 712-13.

¹⁸Alexander Vasilievich Vadkovsky (later Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg) deserves better treatment than he has received from historians. John S. Curtiss portrays him as some sort of pseudo-liberal, who, when the chips are down, really turns out to be a reactionary. On one page Curtiss says, "As far as can be determined, Metropolitan Antonii was for a time an isolated upholder of mild liberalism among an exceedingly conservative upper clergy." Curtiss, op. cit., p. 210. A little later Curtiss abandons this appraisal. "During the revolutionary upheaval the upper clergy also displayed their conservatism. Even Metropolitan Antonii of St. Petersburg who was attacked for his 'liberalism' by the reactionaries, turned out to be no

liberal at all, but a pillar of conservatism...." Ibid., p. 243. This description is unjust. An excellent administrator and an ardent church reformer, Metropolitan Antony attempted to carry on the tradition of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow. Like Filaret he attempted to bring about reform and at the same time keep those reforms from being discredited either by the revolutionaries or by extreme right. The part he played in arranging the Preconciliar Commission demonstrates his dedication to church reform. (A brief biographical sketch of Metropolitan Antony may be found in Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar' (St. Petersburg, 1911-1912), Vol. 3, pp. 66-7.

¹⁹Metropolitan Antony, "Po voprosu o zhelatel'nykh preobrazovaniakh v postanovke u nas Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," as reproduced in full in N. D. Kuznetsov, Preobrazovaniia v russkoi tserkvi (Moscow, 1906), p. 9.

²⁰S. Iu. Vitte, "O sovremennoi polozenii Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," reproduced in full in Kuznetsov, op. cit., p. 27.

²¹Ibid., p. 30

²²Ibid., p. 32.

²³Ibid., p. 36.

²⁴K. P. Pobedonostsev, "Soobrazheniia o zhelatel'nykh preobrazovaniakh v postanovke u nas Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi," as cited in Kuznetsov, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁵K. P. Pobedonostsev, Reflections of a Russian Statesman (London, 1898), Trans. by Robert C. Long, p. 2.

²⁶Ibid., p. 9.

²⁷"Materialy dlia kharakteristiki kontr-revoliutsii 1905 g.," Byloe, XXI (1923), p. 172, note 5.

²⁸To get a real flavor for church events in this turbulent period see Metropolitan Evlogii, Put' moei zhizni (Paris, 1947), chapters 11-12.

²⁹"V tserkovnykh krugakh pered revoliutsiei," Krasnyi arkhiv, XXXI (1928), p. 209.

³⁰"Materialy dlia kharakteristiki," op. cit., p. 170.

CHAPTER II

And her prophets have daubed her with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and delivering lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when he hath not spoken.

---Ezekiel 22:28

Ecclesia = Popular Assembly (The Greek-Russian Dictionary)
Ecclesia = The Church (Canon Law)

The Preconciliar Commission held its meetings behind the long low walls of the spacious Alexander Nevsky Monastery in St. Petersburg. It was only appropriate, if somewhat ironic, that the Commission should deliberate on the legality of the church structure which Peter I had worked so hard to construct in a monastery built by Peter's own command.

After the opening address by the chairman of the Commission, Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg, and an enthusiastic, if non-committal speech by the Over Procurator of the Holy Synod, Prince Obolensky, the members decided to divide the Commission into seven sections. Each section was to take up one or more aspects of church reform. The First Section dealt with the renovation of the central church administration. The Second Section, under the chairmanship of Archbishop Nikandr, handled the higher church administration--the metropolitan and diocesan administrations. Organization of church courts and reexamination of marriage laws were the problems faced by the Third

Section. Metropolitan Antony instructed Bishop Stefan to form a Fourth Section to draw up plans for reorganizing the parishes and the church schools. The Fifth Section was entrusted with the reform of the theological seminaries and the Sixth Section, guided by Archbishop Antony of Volynia, wrestled with matters of faith and in particular the touchy question of the dissenters and Old Believers. Finally, the Seventh Section was to suggest ways to guard against heresy and incorrect teachings, since the government two years earlier had renounced this duty itself.¹

In this chapter I will deal only with the First, Second, and Fourth Sections. These were the most important from the point of view of institutional change. In theory the various sections were to submit their proposals to the general assembly of the Commission for full discussion. Of the three sections I have dealt with, only two actually did so. The First Section's proposals were never incorporated into the general proposals of the Commission and those of the Second Section were partially latered in the general debate.

The First Section had to grapple with the central church administration: the Holy Synod, the Sobor or Council, and the Patriarchate. The chairman of the First Section was Archbishop Dimitry of Kherson and Odessa and under his guidance the First Section took up several complicated and polemical questions.

An undercurrent of the entire debate in the First Section was the question of church canons. Were the canons to be strictly adhered to or could they be at least partially dis-

regarded? The majority of the section maintained that the canons were absolute and immutable. Archbishop Antony of Volynia had taken this position earlier and found many supporters in the First Section. A small minority argued that the canons were not immutable and that the history of the Russian church proved that reforms had often come as the result of outside forces which disregarded canonical niceties. Peter the Great's "reform" of the church, they said, was a good example. They also pointed out the necessity of the Russian Orthodox Church to adapt to changing political and social conditions. Professor N. D. Kuznetsov, one of the most active members of the Preconciliar Commission, supported this view by citing Professor V. V. Bolotov, an eminent canonist. Bolotov, the embodiment of pragmatism, had said that "that reform which answers to the demands of a given moment and justifies itself in fact by its good results is a true canonical reform even though it has no precedent."² Kuznetsov went on to say that it was the spirit, not the letter, of the canons that was important.

When the composition of the forthcoming sobor was discussed, this difference became especially important. Strict interpreters of the canons claimed that neither laymen nor lower clergy should be allowed to attend the sobor as members. However, those who adhered to Archbishop Antony's views were, on this particular question, in a minority. Most of the members of the First Section favored the participation of the laymen and lower clergy in the sobor with an "advisory" voice. Such an

arrangement, they said, had precedent both in canon law and in church history. An active minority favored the inclusion of the laymen and clergy in the sobor with a "deciding voice" (reshaiush-chii golos). The laymen and the clergy were to be allowed to participate equally with the bishops in deciding church matters. "The future central church administration," argued Kuznetsov,

should belong to the council of the entire church....
At the council besides all of the bishops and their
representatives, the clergy and the laymen should be
represented.³

This plan, it was admitted, was outside canon law.

Another essential difference that divided the members of the First Section was their opposing concepts of "conciliarity" (sobornost'). The word "conciliarity," as used in discussion in the First Section, referred to the institutional organization of the church. It meant simply that the church was to be governed by councils (sobory).

Unfortunately this simple description was complicated by two assumptions made by the higher clergy and its supporters. First, the bishops assumed that rule by council meant rule by a council of bishops. From amongst themselves they would choose one who would act as "head" of the council. The head of the central church administration was to be the Patriarch. At the lower levels the Metropolitan would personally preside over his regional council of bishops, and the bishops would direct their own diocesan congresses. They further assumed that in each

council the "head" was to have firm control over its proceedings.

Those opposed to the centralization of power in the hands of the bishops drew upon another interpretation of the term "conciliarity," namely that originally expounded by Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov. Khomiakov had held that the church, founded on conciliarity, was an organic unity and every member of the church was a part of it. For the "true" church no head was needed.

"The Orthodox Church," writes Nicholas Riasanovsky in summarizing Khomiakov's view of the church, "knew no Pope in any form, but only Jesus Christ. There was no excessive differentiation between the clergy and the laity, no assertion that the hierarchy had exclusive rights of teaching, while the masses were entitled to the passive reactions of listening and following."⁴ Although Khomiakov's preoccupation with the term "conciliarity" was primarily theological, his writings were useful material for countering the strict canonical claims of the bishops.

Thus, the conflicting parties in the First Section (and the entire Commission) drew on two different traditions within the church. The one drew on the church canons to prove that the bishops were the guiding spirit of the church and the sole interpreters of dogma. The other based its arguments on the more recent tradition begun by Khomiakov and the Slavophiles.

This conflict of ideas was the underlying feature of the debate in the First Section on reforming the central church administration. For example, all the members agreed that the church should be governed by council. Professor Kuznetsov stated that

one of the main goals [of reform] is the introduction of the conciliar principle into all spheres of church life and... the organs of the central church administration should serve as its basis.... At present the introduction of the conciliar principle is above all linked to the unification of the bishops, clergy, and laymen and increasing the active service of all the members in the church.⁵

Kuznetsov's proposal, a paraphrasing of Khomiakov's doctrine, was rejected by Archbishop Dimitry. "As long as our church is Orthodox it will be episcopal..., " he stated. This meant that all the decisions in the sobor would be made by the bishops. Each bishop would carry out these decisions within his diocese and in doing so he was to enjoy full administrative and judicial rights.

Creation of the Patriarchate was another part of this same controversy. On canonical grounds there could be no doubt that the office of patriarch was legal. The Russian Orthodox Church had, in fact, been ruled by a patriarch until the reign of Peter I. However, those who wished to restore the patriarch were thrown into a quandary. The idea of creating a powerful patriarch, even though controlled by periodic sobory, frightened many members of the Commission. To avoid the encroachments of such a dignity several members, notably Professor Berdnikov, suggested that the patriarchate be strictly an honorific office. The patriarch would be primus inter pares of the other bishops. "His only power would be to speak the first word in the Synod," stated Berdnikov. In this he had the strong support of Professors Ostroumov and Zaozersky who advocated the strict subordination of the patriarch to periodic sobory.⁶

Several of the members of the First Section favored a more powerful patriarchal office. Professor Almazov and I. I. Sokolov, professor of Greek and Eastern Church history at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, under the influence of Archbishop Antony of Volynia, favored a patriarch with more unlimited powers. "A string leader," they urged, "is especially necessary at the present time for struggle for faith and for elimination of religious apathy. Struggle is impossible without a leader (vozhd'). A leader is what we need."⁷

Lev Tikhomirov, editor of the conservative newspaper Moskovskii Vedomosti, and Professor Kuznetsov opposed the restoration of the patriarch, fearing a return of authoritarian rule to the church. Such a development, they argued, was not in keeping with the times. Russia was changing, and representative government was playing a greater part in society. The church had to keep in step with these changes or be discredited. Father Titov objected to the

creation of the office of Patriarch with such wide and powerful rights as the First Section wishes to grant to the Patriarch. This would mean reviving the Russian Patriarch and church order of the seventeenth century when the Patriarch was the autocratic administrator and director of the Russian church.⁸

The final decision of the First Section favored the creation of a patriarch who would be primus inter pares, although his duties were to be somewhat broader than those advocated by the proponents of a weak patriarch.⁹

Reform of the central church administration had received

great attention both by churchmen and the secular press prior to the calling of the Preconciliar Commission. In the period 1904-07 there was a proliferation of pamphlets and brochures arguing the merits and demerits of the patriarchate, separation of church and state, and elimination of the Holy Synod. Yet proposals for reform of central church administration were not worked out in great detail by the First Section, and there was no final formulation of its proposals by the Preconciliar Commission as a whole.

Part of this failure is attributable to the fluctuating attitude of the government. After Pobedonostsev had been forced into retirement in 1905, the government had no consistent policy toward the church. This was reflected in the office of the Over Procurator, which changed hands three times during the single year 1906. On April 26, 1906, Prince A. D. Obolensky, who had been present at the beginning of the Commission's work, was removed. He was replaced by Prince A. A. Shirinsky-Shikhmatov. After a very brief period Shirinsky-Shikhmatov gave up the office to P. P. Izvol'sky.¹⁰ Moreover, when the Preconciliar Commission reconvened in November after a short recess, the Holy Synod instructed the Commission to bring its work to a close no later than December 15. The Holy Synod gave further instructions on what should be discussed in which no mention of the central church administration was made.¹¹

The importance of the discussion in the First Section was that all the members advocated some kind of change. Whether this change meant the restoration of a patriarchate or rule by a

sobor is not of fundamental importance. What is important is that they all wanted self-rule for the church. The state, if these plans were realized, would give up control over one more part of society.

Higher Church Administration

The task of remodeling the higher church administration was handed to the Second Section of the Preconciliar Commission. Not only did the members of the Second Section have to suggest ways to reform old institutions, but they had to face the problem of creating new ones as well. One of these new institutions was the metropolitan district (okrug).

Although the office of metropolitan had existed from Kievan times onward in the Russian church, it had always lacked territorial expression. The metropolitan was an honored bishop whose seat was in a large city. He had no "diocese." Metropolitan districts had existed in the Greek church but had never taken root in Russian soil. Earlier attempts to have the institution adopted had failed. The Eastern Patriarchs, who had been invited to Moscow for the Sobor of 1682, had suggested its introduction but the Russian bishops had rejected the idea. Their reasons for doing so are not entirely clear. Perhaps it was because "...the low educational and intellectual level of the Russian clergy... made them suspicious of any innovation, and they looked askance at the invasion of the sacred field of religious practices by men of learning...."¹² The Russian bishops did give

one reason for their action. They were afraid that the elevation of some bishops to the office of metropolitan with territorial jurisdiction would lead to a division in the upper clergy into a few powerful bishops and many lesser bishops who would become dependent on them. This, they felt, would be a breach of "conciliarity" and a departure from the "true" and sacred organization of the church.

By 1905 the bishops had changed their minds. In their reports to the Holy Synod in 1905 the bishops overwhelmingly supported the idea of creating metropolitan districts, chiefly for two reasons. First, the introduction of these districts would bring the entire structure of the church more into conformity with the church canons. Second, such an institution would have the beneficial effect of bringing the members of the higher church administration closer to their flocks and make them more aware of local problems. (See especially the report of the Bishop of Kursk.)

This second reason was reiterated in the Preconciliar Commission by the Russian church historian E. E. Golubinsky. "The canonical order of the church," he stated,

should be such that the bishop of each provincial capital will stand at the head of the bishops of the district [uezd] cities of his region [okrug].... For the attainment of the goals of the pastorship such an arrangement is necessary, as the present hierarchs, in view of the size of their dioceses, cannot know their flocks nor administer them.¹³

All the members of the Second Section agreed that such an

undertaking would be worthwhile and beneficial.

After agreeing that metropolitan regions should be created and the number of metropolitans increased from seven to ten, disagreements arose over the role the metropolitan was to play in these new regions. Was the metropolitan to have only a honorific distinction from the other bishops or was he to have strong juridical and administrative rights as well? Professor Suvorov maintained that

honorific primacy belongs to the metropolitan but beyond this a primacy of power also belongs to him. He has the power to call a regional sobor and be its chairman.¹⁴

This power, however, was reckoned by the members of the Second Section to be not a very great one. Of more gravity were questions regarding the right of the metropolitans to confirm bishops or merely ordain them, the position of the metropolitan in relation to his regional sobor, and finally the relationship of the metropolitan to the state.

The first of these questions--the confirmation of bishops--was basically a legal one and presented problems not only for the church hierarchy but involved church-state relations as well. The members of the Section were nearly evenly divided on the question and pointed to the same evidence to prove opposite conclusions. According to Professor Zaozersky, the fourth rule of the first ecumenical council "conferred on the metropolitan the right to ordain the elected bishops and not to confirm them."¹⁵ On the other hand Professor stated that the fourth rule of the first ecumenical council and the ninth rule of the

Antioch council "were concerned not only with the imposition of the hands but with the confirmation of the elected bishops by the metropolitan."¹⁶

This disagreement was not hair-splitting. The right of confirmation would have given the metropolitan firm control over his region. From the point of view of church politics he would be able to choose those bishops who most closely shared his own views. Within the metropolitan region he would be his own master. (The term edinolichnoe upravlenie which was used to describe this type of metropolitan administration is not readily translatable into English. Economists use the term to mean "one-bossism" which might not be a bad description of this type of administrative system.) Imposition of the hands implied only a narrow honorific right while still maintaining the unbrokenness of Apostolic succession. Those who opposed increasing the metropolitan's powers wished to see the regional council the center of administration.

The controversy over personal (edinolichnii) versus conciliar primacy was crucial to the debate on the rights of the metropolitan in relation to the regional councils. Professor Brilliantov opposed reviving "the metropolitan system of antiquity with its central administration of power. We should create the conditions which would be more favorable to conciliarity."¹⁷ Professor Berdnikov, who frequently found himself in the middle between two diametrically opposed programs, favored creating metropolitan regions but wished to curb the powers of the metropolitans within them. "Where irreconcilable differences

occur [in the regional council] or the opinion of the metropolitan differs from that of the council, the entire matter should be handed over for decision to a higher institution [the Holy Synod] or to a council to which bishops from the neighboring regions are invited."¹⁸ The metropolitan would not be master in his own house and would not have a decisive voice in the council's deliberations.

The best expression of the view favoring personal exercise of power by the metropolitan was given by A. A. Dimitrievsky. "The metropolitan should," he said,

take a lively and direct part in the selection and ordination of the bishops subordinated to him. A metropolitan can never refuse this prerogative, for it is the source of his moral authority. He should choose without any contradiction those bishops who share his thoughts and are pleasing to him.... Only when the metropolitan appears at the council with hierarchs who share his views... will unanimity be reached.¹⁹

The decision finally taken by the Second Section was essentially a compromise between the two contending views on church reform. Those who favored rule by council rather than rule by the metropolitan succeeded in making the metropolitan responsible to the directives of the council. The metropolitan was, however, to have more than an honorific distinction from the other bishops. He was to be given the right to examine candidates to the episcopate for their qualifications and he was also to serve as the intermediary between the church in his region and the secular authorities.

During the last few sessions of the Second Session its members gingerly picked up the issue of the state's right to confirm the metropolitan in his office. This right the members clearly realized extended to all other offices of the church as well. Professors Zavitnevich and Zaozersky admitted that the state had such a right but linked this with the pious hope "that the guardianship of the state should not infringe on the internal freedom of the church."²⁰ E. E. Golubinsky declared emphatically that "ours is a state church. If it is to enjoy the future patronage of the Tsar Emperor then, of course, he has the right to confirm bishops."²¹ Golubinsky stood alone in this unequivocal position. The chairman of the committee, Bishop Nikandr, cautiously expressed the thought that in such matters the "agreement, not the confirmation, of the state was needed."²² Finally, Professor Berdnikov hoped that the state would pass a

general law for all religions so that the Orthodox Church would not be placed in a worse position than other religions. For in relation to the Catholics the state enjoys only the right of challenging the candidates to the episcopacy but it does not have the right to confirm them.²³

Significantly, no one suggested that the state had no right to interfere with the confirmation of church hierarchs.

The Second Section had narrow views on church-state relations and several members expressed their distrust of the new trends in the church. "The convocation of strong metropolitan council," said one member

is extremely important in the near future for the Moscow metropolitan. In Moscow there are numerous circles which demand the separation of church and state and generally introduce a new basis into the life of the church. The battle with these anti-church tendencies must be joined.²⁴

After making proposals for creating the new metropolitan regions, the members of the Second Section turned to revamping the diocesan administration. Two major problems confronted them. The first was defining the powers of the bishops and their position within the diocesan administration. The second, an extension of the first, was the role of the consistory in the newly reformed administration.

Diocesan reform had long been discussed both in church circles and in the government. Metropolitan Filaret in the 1840's had urged such a reform. Earnest debate, however, got under way during the reign of Alexander II in the 1860's and 1870's. One of the central points in the debate of this period was the role the bishops were to play in the renovated church if there was to be one. If the church, as another product of the Great Reforms, was to play an independent role in the new society should it not be reorganized on a new basis? Amfian Stepanovich Lebedev, writing in Russkii Vestnik for 1873, suggested that the church return to the ancient Orthodox elective principle in church administration. "Should our church," he asked, "remain behind [the Western churches] in the restoration of this principle which is the direct heritage of ancient

ecumenical Orthodoxy? The restoration of this principle is in keeping with the developments in our own social milieu."²⁵ This renovation, he suggested, necessitated the election of bishops by the clergy and laymen.

The most important church matter is unquestionably the election of bishops. Without the participation of the people the administration of the church in a conciliar manner would not be possible.²⁶

Aside from this general discussion and a council set up by the government in 1861 to examine the condition of the parish priests, no further action was taken to reform the church. This is not to say that church reform was forgotten. A highly controversial extension of Lebedev's arguments was made by Archpriest A. M. Ivantsov-Platonov in the newspaper Rus' in 1882 which was reprinted in 1898 and served as the basis for several of the reports made by the bishops in 1905 to the Holy Synod.²⁷

After the turn of the century lay philosophical and theological thought began to revive and flourish. In the leading Russian centers, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev, religious-philosophical societies sprang up. One of the most articulate members of this new school was V. V. Rozanov. Rozanov, like earlier advocates of church reform, felt that the role of the bishops in the renovated church was crucial. The bishops, he said, should be the representatives of the people and elected by them. The church was a community of believers. To rhetorical question "where is the church in Vilna?" he stated, "the diocesan hierarch could hardly answer 'I am the church'... he

would more likely say, leading the inquirer to the window and pointing to the passers-by in front of the cathedral, 'Here is the Orthodox Church these believers'."28 To the pastorage, Rozanov maintained, "the bishops should be the trumpet of its soul." Moreover, "'ejection from office' or 'excommunication' threatens every bishop who would be sent to his pastorage rather than called by it. The bishop is entrusted to the people to live in love and unity."29

The Russian church historian E. E. Golubinsky insisted that the only way to eliminate the animosity between the bishops, laymen and clergy "who froth at the mouth when discussing the bishops" lay in the substitution of a collegial or conciliar form of administration for the personal rule of the bishops. "The hierarchs will continue to rule," he said, "for better or for worse but the responsibility will not be on them alone but on the white clergy and their representatives who will participate in church administration."30

The opposing view, held by most of the upper clergy, was that the bishop was the sole source of power in the life of the church. The laity and the elective principle were distrusted. "The former method of election," stated Archbishop Antony of Volynia, referring to the practice, theoretically at least, prior to the reforms of Peter I,

is not suitable at the present time. Formerly in each diocese there were many well-known believers who were worthy of election to the episcopate, but now God only knows where to find them.

"Representation of the clergy and laymen in the election of bishops," he added, "is a game of republicanism."³¹

In the Preconciliar Commission, and especially in its general assembly, the question of election of bishops produced very heated debate. The question not only involved the participation of the lower clergy and laymen in the election of bishops, but several members advocated that they also be eligible for election to the episcopate.

The suggestion that the lower clergy be allowed to enter the hierarchy brought down a show of abuse from several bishops in the Commission. Bishop Dimitry stated that in each city where the elections were to take place the local church would disintegrate into parties. "How great the intrigue will be," he warned,

how hot the struggle will be among the parties which will frequently stray from moral church grounds to the political and material arena so alien to the affairs of the church! The result will not be unity but anarchy. Party-mindedness will forever poison the life of the church....³²

This question had been aired earlier in the Second Section of the Commission where it was decided that the bishops should be elected with the participation of the laymen and the clergy. Professor Berdnikov, favoring this arrangement, said, "No one is suggesting that the restoration of the ancient custom of electing bishops will be easy. But on the other hand it is impossible to ignore the desires expressed everywhere by the people and the clergy."³³ The Second Section proposed that

within each diocese an assembly of monks, white clergy, and laymen should be held in which candidates for the episcopate from all of these groups would be selected. Professor Berdnikov, the architect of this plan, was willing, however, to compromise with the bishops on this matter of election. "It is possible," he said, "to introduce several limitations. If the candidate is unacceptable or the assembly fails to make a selection, then the council of bishops itself should elect a candidate."³⁴ Lev Tikhomirov was prepared to go a step farther. He suggested that prior to the calling of a council of bishops to choose candidates several members of the clergy and private persons should be allowed to send notes with suggested names of candidates to the bishops. The bishops could then either use them or ignore them. "By this means," Tikhomirov added, "it will be possible to avoid the dangers of complex popular elections and party discord."³⁵

The member of the council who most persistently and uncompromisingly supported the right of the lower clergy and laymen to participate in the election of bishops was Professor N. D. Kuznetsov. In a separate statement in the journals of the Commission he pointed out the necessity of their inclusion. He began by noting that the bishops in the previous year had often stated that the "Bishops alone without the participation of the clergy and laymen of their diocese cannot, at the sobor, be the expression of church consciousness, the lips of their faithful pastorage."³⁶ More important, the division between the upper clergy and society had become almost unbridgeable.

The Russian people and society have ceased to hear from the mouths of the bishops a single word about life which is adapted to their needs and situation. This failing along with many others naturally forced many to satisfy their religious interests without the influence of the clergy or else it facilitated the spread of religious indifference. How many, for example, different sects have been formed in Russia and how many people follow them! How far has the Russian intelligentsia drifted from the church and how diligently has it sought for itself various ideals of life other than its own treasure--the Orthodox Church!³⁷

Finally, Kuznetsov emphasized the importance for the church of the changes in the state structure. "It should not be forgotten," he warned,

that at the present time the state structure has been sharply altered and this cannot but be reflected in the form of church-state relations. If the tie between them is not to be broken then naturally the new state structure should influence the structure of the church administration. In view of the calling of the people to administer the government, for the good of the church the same development should occur to the same extent in the church If it should happen that the state became separated from the church in Russia then the close participation of the people will be even more essential in church affairs.³⁸

The formula worked out by the Commission was a compromise solution. The bishops were given the right to elect members to the episcopate, but the clergy and laymen were to participate in the selection of candidates.³⁹

The second major task of the Second Section was to refurbish the consistory. Consistorial administration was the real center of power in the diocese. It was divided into two parts: the religious consistory made up of four or five priests

and a consistorial chancery dominated by lay bureaucrats and headed by a consistory secretary. The lay chancery was not directly responsible to the bishop but rather to the Holy Synod and specifically to the Over Procurator. All of the affairs of the diocese were under the direct supervision of the secretary and he served as the only contact between the bishop and the diocesan administration.

In their reports to the Holy Synod in 1905, all of the bishops pointed out the failings of the consistory. The most frequent complaint was that the consistory was bogged down in paperwork and dominated by a strict formalism which eliminated any contact between the bishop and the members of his diocese. Another complaint was that the church courts functioned as part of the consistorial administration giving the secretary legal as well as administrative power over the members of the diocese. Bribe-taking by overworked and underpaid consistory employees, the near autocratic power of the consistory secretary, and the amalgamation of legal and administrative powers within the consistory combined to make the consistory easily the most important part of the diocesan administration. It is not surprising then that the bishops were anxious to reform the consistory.

Plans to reform the consistory were not, however, drawn up solely by the bishops. Many of the lower clergy and laity were eager to propose changes but they were not anxious to have the bishop replace the consistory secretary as the dominant force in the church administration. Like the conflict over electing bishops, the opposing proposals for consistorial reform ended

in compromise.

For those who favored the centralization of authority in the hands of the bishops the problems of the consistories could be most easily handled by transferring to the bishops all of the former powers held by the secretary. This did not require the elimination of the consistory secretary. He would become the appointed representative of the bishop and would be responsible to him alone, and not the Holy Synod or the state.

Professor Kuznetsov opposed this plan, urging instead that the bishop govern the diocese with the help of the lower clergy and laymen. He wished to combine the secular chancery and the religious consistory to form a council (prisutstvie) which, on equal footing with the bishop, would conduct the business of the diocese.⁴⁰

The only aspects of consistory reform that were agreed to by both sides were changing the name from consistory to diocesan board (pravlenie) and to separate the church courts from the administration. To resolve the conflict and reconcile the two opposing views the Commission gave the bishops the right to appoint the consistory secretary subject to the confirmation of the Holy Synod. At the same time, while rejecting the inclusion of laymen on the diocesan board, the Commission limited the powers of the bishop. The bishop was to appoint only half of the members of the diocesan board (three members), while the other half was to be elected by a diocesan congress. Both groups would be subject to the bishop's approval. Although the powers

of the new diocesan board were to be no greater than those of the old consistory, it represented a departure from the old form of church organization. The Holy Synod was no longer to exercise direct control over it. The Over Procurator considered this a dangerous proposal. "Would it not be better," he asked, "to allow the Over Procurator to select the secretary with the agreement of the bishop and the confirmation of the Holy Synod?"⁴¹ This problem, like the sticky problem of reforming the Holy Synod itself, was avoided by the Commission.

Parish Reform

Introduction of the conciliar principle into the life of the parish was immediately proposed in the Fourth Section. Debate centered mainly on the election of priests but the proponents of conciliar life also wished to involve the parishioners in all aspects of parish life. The Holy Synod had, in the previous year, 1905, taken some steps in broadening this participation by allowing individual parishes to form parish councils (sovety) or vestries of twelve men who "may be asked by the clergy and the parish elders to participate in the handling of the church finances."⁴² This move was made on October 18, 1905. The following month the Holy Synod permitted the parishioners to form parish assemblies "to cooperate with the clergy for the fulfillment of the pastoral duties which lay before them."⁴³ Both of these moves were ill-defined and the Synod did not try actively to implement either measure prior to the calling of the Preconciliar Commission. A second problem, in addition to the

election of priests, was granting the parishioners a greater control over church finances. If the parish was to handle its own finances and have the right to buy and sell property, etc., then it would in effect become an independent, self-governing unit and separated from direct control of the diocesan administration.

All of these proposals were to be closely examined in the Fourth Section of the Preconciliar Commission. The Fourth Section was divided into three groups on the question of reforming the parishes. One group could see no need at all for parish reform. Archbishop Dimitry, the best representative of this group, could find no need for such "renovations." "I do not see," he said,

in what way our parish life is dead.... I see that they [the liberals or radicals] do not wish to revive it but to transform it; to change it along democratic lines or on a 'new basis'.⁴⁴

"I submit," he added, "that no regeneration is necessary but only correction or perfection, for the life of the church is not entirely improper--the church is not becoming decrepit or dying."⁴⁵ Archbishop Dimitry was afraid that the revolutionary movement was trying to gain control of the church. He met any proposal that would grant greater participation to the laymen with hostility. The council itself was, in his eyes, sharply divided

between conservatives, who believe in continuous development of the life of the church on its firm

ancient foundation, and liberals, who... are trying to reform our church--we don't need to hide it--on the basis of the Constitutional Democratic (K.D.) freedom and secular renovation.⁴⁶

Moreover, the entire debate on parish reform was a smokescreen the revolutionaries were creating while attempting to usurp the wealth of the church. "I have often been tempted to suggest," the Archbishop went on,

that the... question of renovating the parish in the discussion of the Commission has not been devoted to the religious aspect of the matter. Today the secret has been revealed to me. When the debate turned to church monies the debate suddenly became lively and even bordered on passion. Here is the central nerve in the revival and renovation of the parish.⁴⁷

A more moderate group supported parish reform but did not wish to see the laymen take control in the handling of parish affairs. Professor Berdnikov viewed the parish, not as a living organism (the metaphor is Dimitry Khomiakov's), but as a component part of the diocese which "receives its life only from the bishop."⁴⁸ To make the priest the elected representative of the parishioners, Berdnikov felt, would lower the priest's status in the community. "The parish priest," he said,

is the priest of the parishioners, head of the parish, and through his office in the hierarchy, is an example of proper living for his parishioners. To lower him to the position of a mere elected representative of the parish community and chairman of the parish assembly is completely inappropriate.⁴⁹

He suggested that if the parishioners wished to choose their own priest they could do so only by petitioning their bishop. The

bishop would then publish a list of candidates from which the parishioners could choose. This system would not infringe on the power of the bishops nor give the parishioners control of affairs in their parish.

Two other professors warmly supported Professor Berdnikov's suggestions. The first was Alexander Ivanovich Almazov, a professor of canon law at the New Russian University in Odessa. He also did not wish to see the laymen dominate the parish. He feared that the parish assembly and the parish council proposed by the Holy Synod the year before would become the legislative and executive organs of the parish controlled by the laymen and leaving the parish priest to officiate only as a figurehead.⁵⁰ The other supporter of Professor Berdnikov was Mikhail Andreevich Ostroumov, a professor of canon law at the Moscow Theological Academy, and editor of the official church journal Tserkovnyia Vedomosti and the newspaper Prikhodskii Listok. Ostroumov maintained that true religious spirit could come only from the institutional church, from the priests and the bishops. The inclusion of the laymen in the conduct of church affairs would not regenerate the parish but destroy it. "Doctors, doctor's assistants, midwives, statisticians, agronomists, veterinarians, clerks, secretaries, druggists, and even barmen in the wineshops," he said,

compose the army of the intelligentsia which inevitably influences the changing views of the village dwellers... the circles of agitators, peasant unions, sectarians, and newspapers--they all have destructive influences on the village.... In the village we also find parties,

strife and struggle. Is it possible to ask in any positive way if all these elements can be gathered into a parish community which is given the right to a legal person and called upon to dispose of church property and maintain church order? Will it be possible in this way to "regenerate" the church? I doubt it.⁵¹

The third group saw the parish as the primary unit and foundation of the church. It was, to use their phrase, a "little church." The parish was a living community of parishioners with their priest (here it is possible to detect Rozanov's influence). The leading exponent of this view was N. D. Kuznetsov. In his view the participation of the laymen in parish administration was crucial. "If we do not allow the people to transform themselves into active members of the parish," he argued,

if we do not try to combine into one church the clergy and laymen in order to save their ties with the bishops, then all other church reforms based on conciliarity will have no basis in reality.⁵²

The parish should not be subordinated to the power of the bishops but should be self-administering and cooperate with the bishop in diocesan matters. "The union of the parish with the bishop....," suggested Kuznetsov,

should be arranged through the future diocesan administration. By this means the bishop would have the opportunity to hear directly the voice of the parish concerning parish needs and be counseled by the representatives of the parish on proposals concerning them.⁵³

At each step of the way in discussing parish reform these divergent views led to sharp disagreement. When the question of creating parish councils or vestries was brought up in the

general assembly Archbishop Dimitry flatly denounced them as "Finnish abortions." (The parish councils were supposedly patterned on those of the Orthodox parishes in Finland. This suggested to Archbishop Dimitry the creeping danger of local autonomy and self rule in the parishes.) He objected to the councils for they were to be allowed to regulate themselves and initiate parish programs under only the general guidance of the bishop. The councils, he feared, would be the representatives of the parishioners and not the agents of episcopal power.

Professor Serdnikov, however, favored the creation of the parish councils, as they would be "very useful for the priests and would give him an opportunity to maintain the bond between himself and his flock in all parish affairs."⁵⁴ The parish council was to be under the close supervision of the parish priest. According to his plan the parish council was to consist of members of the priestly offices (priests, deacons, and psalmists) and three elected members of the parish assembly; in those parishes where there were two priests the number of members would be doubled.⁵⁵ The council was to meet continuously throughout the year and prepare the agenda for the parish assemblies. It was to be the administrative arm of the priest rather than of the parishioners.

Professor Kuznetsov argued that the parish council should be an administrative body responsible to the parish assembly. "The priest," he said, "as a person completely dependent on the diocesan hierarch, unwillingly might have to act according to the hierarch's wishes, although they may not coincide with the

needs of the parish."⁵⁶ The parish priest A. A. Papkov supported Kuznetsov saying that the parish priest is not an expert on all matters (especially financial and economic matters) and that the parishioners should be given greater control.⁵⁷ Both Kuznetsov and Papkov favored the creation of parish assemblies to handle the parish finances. The priest would not be the chairman of the parish assembly. Instead the assembly would choose its own chairman (it could of course choose the priest to be chairman). The parish assembly would then elect a parish council whose chairman would be the parish priest.

A majority of the members in the Fourth Section wished to leave the ultimate selection of the parish priest up to the bishop. However, as Professor Berdnikov pointed out earlier, the parish assembly could convene and petition the bishop to appoint a person they considered acceptable. If the parishioners' suggested candidate did not meet the approval of the bishop the parish assembly would be presented with a list from which to choose a priest subject to the consent of the bishop.⁵⁸

A compromise was reached over the formation of parish assemblies. The chairman of the assembly, contrary to Professor Kuznetsov's suggestion, was to be the priest. His assistant could be a layman elected by the assembly. As a limitation on the powers of the priests and the bishop, disagreements between the assembly and the priest would not be sent directly to the diocesan council but would first be examined by the parish council. Finally, the members of the councils were to be half

elective. Six of the twelve members were to be elected by the parish assembly. The other six positions were to be filled by the members of the priesthood and by the church elders (starosty). The priest was to be chairman.

Thus in the Fourth Section the conflict between those who favored complete parish autonomy and those who favored close supervision of the parish first by the parish priest and ultimately by the diocesan bishop ended in compromise. Essentially it was a division on principles of church organization, a conflict between the elective principle and the doctrine of conciliarity formulated by Khomiakov on the one hand and on the other the belief that church affairs should be closely supervised by the appointed representatives of a higher power--the bishops.

After resolving the question of parish administration the Fourth Section had to face the problem of supporting parish priests. No other single complaint was raised against the parish priest than that he often exacted high payments from the peasantry for the administration of ceremonies such as blessing fields at sowing time.

The government itself had in the past grappled with the problem but without success. In 1830, Nicholas I had created a council to find means for supporting the village clergy. Little came of this committee and in 1861, as part of the Great Reforms, a new council was formed to decide if it was not possible to make the clergy secure by other means than treasury support.

The council considered the problem for 23 years and thought of one way to secure the clergy--reduce the number of parishes and then reduce the number of clergy in order to provide the remaining clergy with greater means. Needless to say this measure was not in the interest of the clergy or the church.... the Over Procurator of the Holy Synod Pobedonostsev stated, 'This measure will lead to many sad results and at the same time strengthen the raskol!' ⁵⁹

In 1893, the Imperial Government passed a law which again stated the need for support of the village clergy. For the purpose of this law the parishes were divided into three categories: the very poorest parishes which needed immediate assistance, the parishes which were insufficient but could "wait a little longer," and finally, those parishes which were more or less self-sufficient.⁶⁰ This law was never implemented, and the matter lapsed until the government again revived the question in the Imperial Manifesto of February 26, 1903. However, "no systematic betterment or measures directed toward the betterment of the existing position of the clergy followed from this manifesto."⁶¹

The Duma also tried to lessen the strain between the clergy and the parishioners by granting the clergy direct assistance from the treasury and by creating a pension program for parish priests. Basically, the Budget Commission adopted the proposals of the Holy Synod which were first to

allot from the state treasury, beginning in the year 1908, for the maintenance of the city and village clergy, the sum of 400,000 rubles a year in addition to the sum which had been assigned in the inventory for the same purpose in 1906.⁶²

Second, this money was to be disbursed among the various parishes of the diocese "by district and diocesan congresses of the clergy."⁶³ The Over Procurator of the Holy Synod P. P. Izvol'sky stated that such support was necessary "in order that it [the clergy], not being reduced to extortion, can fulfill its pastoral function."⁶⁴

State support for the clergy presented the members of the Preconciliar Commission with a dilemma. Most members realized that the economic position of the clergy was extremely bad. Perhaps only in the western parts of the country, particularly Kholm diocese, were conditions for parish priests tolerable. But acceptance of state aid meant continued state control--at least of finances. The problem of state support rapidly became a problem of church-state relations.

Lev Tikhomirov, editor of the conservative newspaper Moskovskiiia Vedomosti, who also had participated in the Second Section, joined the issues of church finances and church-state relations early in the debate of the Fourth Section. "The support of the clergy should not be charged to the state treasury," he argued, "as the church will be placed in complete dependence on the state."⁶⁵ He suggested that the clergy be maintained by the diocesan treasury. N. P. Aksakov feared that "any clergyman who accepts a state salary will become a state civil servant [chinovnik] dependent upon the government."⁶⁶ Aksakov had a more devious plan for gaining funds to support the clergy. Since the parishes could not support their priests the

church, he argued, should ask the state for increased funds for church schools. "There is an advantage in this, namely that the government can be asked to support the church schools while the funds of the Holy Synod used for this purpose can be diverted from the church schools to the support of the clergy."⁶⁷

Most members of the Fourth Section did not feel that complete separation from the state was necessary or desirable. The priest's influence, they argued, would not be lowered by the receipt of state salaries but

on the contrary will be heightened. The priest will perform the ceremonies with singular zeal without making any distinction between rich and poor. For religious feeling dependence on the state is not nearly as bad as dependence on the parishioners....⁶⁸

Professor Brechkevitch argued that the period preceding the Great Reforms when the priest received no support from the treasury was "horrible: the priest was a serf just like the parishioners and in the fulfillment of his duties he was completely dependent on the land owner."⁶⁹

The Fourth Section decided, "in view of the special historical position of the Orthodox Church in Russia," that the priests should enjoy state support. It is significant that none of the members of the Preconciliar Commission could suggest ways for the church to finance its clergy. The dioceses were inadequate to the task and devious plans as those advocated by N. D. Aksakov were of doubtful value. The solution they eventually turned to was state support. This solution, in view of the

economic difficulties of the state, was no solution at all. Moreover, this solution is another piece of evidence that even if an All Russian Sobor had been called in 1907 the church would not have been "emancipated" from the state but would have occupied some sort of semi-autonomous role within it.

All three sections of the Commission, and the entire church for that matter, were divided by two opposing principles of church organization. One concept was rooted in the narrow interpretation of the church canons: it was the concept of hierarchical obedience. Authority and power belonged entirely to the bishops and authority emanated from them throughout the church hierarchy. The other, inspired by the theology of Aleksei Khomiakov, stressed the unity of the church and government of the church by all its members, beginning at the lowest level--the parish--and ascending to all parts of the church administration. The members of the Preconciliar Commission did the best they could to compromise these two opposing principles.

Notes to Chapter II

¹See page 8 and note 1⁶ for Chapter I.

²Zhurnaly i protokoly zasedanii vysochaishe uchreshdennago predsobornago prisutstviia (St. Petersburg, 1906), Vol. 1, p. 140, col. 2.

³Ibid., pp. 142-3, cols. 1-2.

⁴Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "Khomiako^v on Sobornost'," E. J. Simmons, Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, p. 185.

⁵Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 1, p. 145, col. 1.

⁶Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 150, col. 2.

⁷Bishop Nikon (Rklitskii), Zhizneopisanie blazhenneishago antoniia, metropolita kievskago i galitskago (New York, 1958), Vol. 3, p. 146.

⁸Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 1, p. 279, col. 1.

⁹A complete listing of the Patriarch's powers may be found in ibid., pp. 279-80, cols. 2-1.

¹⁰P. P. Izvol'sky should not be confused with his brother, Foreign Minister A. P. Izvol'sky. Such confusion can be found in Curtiss, op. cit., p. 293, and index p. 434.

¹¹Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 3, pp. 1-3.

¹²Michael T. Florinsky, Russia: A History and an Interpretation (New York, 1947), Vol. 1, p. 287.

¹³Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 1, p. 386, col. 1.

¹⁴Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 388, col. 2.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 408, col. 1.

¹⁶Idem., cols. 1-2.

¹⁷Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 9, col. 1.

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 417, col. 1.

¹⁹Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 19-20, cols. 1-2, and 2-1.

²⁰Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 417, col. 1.

- ²¹Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 417, col. 2.
- ²²Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 418, col. 1.
- ²³Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 417, col. 2.
- ²⁴Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 425, col. 2.
- ²⁵A. S. Lebedev, "Ob izbranii v episkopskii san v drevnei vselenskoï i russkoï tserkvi," Russkii Vestnik (Sept.-Oct.), 1873, p. 70.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 54.
- ²⁷Protoierei A. M. Ivantsov-Platonov, "O Russkom tserkovnom upravlenii," Rus', 1882, nos. 1-16.
- ²⁸V. V. Rozanov, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 233.
- ²⁹Ibid., pp. 233-234.
- ³⁰E. E. Golubinskii, "O reforme v byte russkoï tserkvi," Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiskikh (Moscow, 1913), Book 3, p. 117.
- ³¹Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 3, p. 75, col. 2.
- ³²Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 75, col. 2.
- ³³Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 76, col. 1.
- ³⁴Idem.
- ³⁵Idem., col. 2.
- ³⁶Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 425, cols. 1-2.
- ³⁷Idem.
- ³⁸Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 429, cols. 1-2.
- ³⁹See the official proposals of the Commission in ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 384-86.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 153-55.
- ⁴¹Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 140, col. 1.
- ⁴²Tserkovnyiia vedomosti, November 26, 1905, Official Part, pp. 523-25, as cited in Curtiss, op. cit., p. 220.
- ⁴³Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 3, p. 393, col. 2.

- ⁴⁴Ibid., vol. 3, p. 335, col. 1.
- ⁴⁵Idem., col. 2.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., Vol. 3, pp. 334-5, cols. 2-1.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 336, col. 1.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 288, col. 1.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 393, col. 2.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 368, col. 2.
- ⁵¹Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 362, col. 1.
- ⁵²Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 296, col. 1.
- ⁵³Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 121, col. 1.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 390, col. 1.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 408, col. 1.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 70, col. 1.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 73, col. 2.
- ⁵⁸Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 86, cols. 1-2.
- ⁵⁹Gosudarstvennaia дума. Stenograficheskie otchety, III Duma (St. Petersburg, 1908-1912), Vol. 3, cols. 1060-61.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., col. 1061.
- ⁶¹Ibid., col. 1062.
- ⁶²Ibid., cols. 1062-63.
- ⁶³Ibid., cols. 1063-64.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., col. 1064.
- ⁶⁵Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 4, p. 16, col. 1.
- ⁶⁶Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 24, col. 1.
- ⁶⁷Idem.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 21, col. 1.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 28, col. 1.

CHAPTER III

When the Preconciliar Commission reconvened for its winter session on November 2, 1906, the new Over Procurator of the Holy Synod, P. P. Izvol'sky, gave every indication that the government intended to call a sobor. The previous week the Holy Synod passed a resolution urging the Preconciliar Commission to conclude its debates and submit its proposals to the Synod. In his opening address to the reconvened Commission Izvol'sky stated that the Commission's work would "clear the way for the joyous festivity of the Orthodox Church--the Sobor in its full traditional meaning and splendor."¹ Only a moment after this optimistic forecast he abruptly informed the Commission that it would have to terminate its work by December 15, less than a month and a half away. The members of the Commission received this news with surprise. It appeared that the Preconciliar Commission was to suffer the same fate as the First Duma.

Over Procurator Izvol'sky probably had little to do with the decision to dismiss the Commission. Poorly informed on church matters, he had no vision of remodeling the church in his own image as Pobedonostsev had done during his reign. In fact his appointment to the office was apparently quite casual. Vitte, in his memoirs, states that Stolypin, who chose Izvol'sky

for the office, had actually wished to reappoint Prince Obolensky. The Tsar would not approve Obolensky's appointment (probably because of his close association with Vitte) and Stolypin had no one else in mind for the post. In one session of the council of ministers Stolypin mentioned this dilemma and A. P. Izvol'sky, then Foreign Minister, replied, "appoint my brother," which Stolypin did.²

There is no direct evidence to suggest why the Tsar dismissed the Commission and failed to call an All Russian Sobor. Professor Curtiss speculates that "reform was no longer in the air and, as the government was doubtless suspicious of representative assemblies, was in no hurry to call the Sobor."³ The change in the government's attitude closely coincides with the eclipse of Vitte and the rise of Stolypin. Stolypin seems to have had his own plans for reorganizing the church which did not include emancipation from the state. However, according to Professor Zenkovsky, from whose notes come all we know of Stolypin's organizing plans, Stolypin did not formulate these ideas until the fall of 1911.⁴

Whatever reasons Nicholas II had for his actions he kept to himself. He merely said, that "in the turbulent times through which we are now living" it is impossible to convene a sobor. The turbulent times passed but the sobor was not called. Little was done to improve the position of the church and in 1915 the Budget Commission of the Duma declared that

A study of the reports of the Synod reveals recurring instances which show that no reforms have been realized, even those approved by the legislative institutions, by the Preconciliar Commission, and in parts by the Synod itself. The ecclesiastical administration remains as archaic as before and the general condition of the church continues to be exceedingly unsatisfactory and even hopeless.⁵

The work of the Preconciliar Commission was shelved but not forgotten. In 1912, the three hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, the Over Procurator V. K. Sabler announced that a second preconciliar council would be convened. Hope revived that a sobor might still be called. The 1912 council relied heavily on the work of the 1906 Commission and in many ways was merely a repetition of it. It succeeded only in adding "five more volumes to the work already done" but was not followed by a sobor.⁶ Both conferences had apparently labored in vain.

When the monarchy collapsed in 1917, the Provisional Government gave its approval and at long last a sobor was called to undertake the reform of the Russian Orthodox Church. But the members already knew the general outline of the problems they had to face due to the labors of the Preconciliar Commission of 1906. Viewing the results of the 1917 sobor in light of the Preconciliar Commission, the proposals of both councils are amazingly similar. Professor Kartashev has stated that "the only thing that was uncertain [at the beginning of the 1917 sobor] was the final result: which of two tendencies--conservative or liberal--was to come out on top."⁷ The final result, however, gave neither side predominance and the final result appears much more

like a compromise than a victory for one side over the other.⁸ Several examples will demonstrate this compromise.

Bishops who wished to see the patriarchate restored with wide powers and authority were frustrated. But so were those who wished to see the church run solely by periodic councils. The patriarch was to be elected but was made responsible to the sobor and was to be only first among equals to the other bishops. Proponents of conciliar action were successful in including lower clergy and laymen in the sobor, but only with an advisory voice.⁹

The Holy Synod was the embodiment of compromise within the Central Church Administration between those who wished to broaden the administrative base of the church and those who favored the exclusiveness of the bishops. After being revamped by the sobor, the old Holy Synod was divided into two parts, both under the chairmanship of the patriarch. One half retained the title of Holy Synod while the other half was called the Higher Church Council (soviet). The Synod was made up only of bishops (12), who were to handle all matters of religious instruction, holy service, education, administration, and discipline. A mixture of lower clergy and laymen made up the Higher Church Council. Five members were to be lower clergy, one was to be a monk, and six others were to be laymen. Their job was mainly a technical one: to draw up the church budget and keep church accounts, but they were also given charge of the official church journal Tserkovnyia vedomosti (Church News). Both of these responsibilities gave the Higher Church Council a con-

siderable voice in church affairs.¹⁰

Diocesan election of bishops was to be carried out with the participation of the lower clergy and the laymen.¹¹ This represented a significant step toward democratization of the diocesan administration. The bishops also gave up much of their control over parish affairs. On April 8, 1918 the Sobor published a "Parish Statute" (ustav) which granted self-government to the parish, a point for which a few members of the Preconciliar Commission had fought diligently but unsuccessfully.

Thus the reforms adopted by the All Russian Sobor in 1917-18 were very similar in nature, if not in exact detail, to those made by the Preconciliar Commission in 1906. In 1906 the bishops were able to keep more control of the church in their own hands, but they had given in on points to those like Professor Kuznetsov who favored broader participation in church affairs. No doubt by 1917, under the pressure of revolutionary events, the bishops were forced to concede more to their opponents than they might have done otherwise. The course outlined in 1917-18 gave the lower clergy and the laity strong control over the parish and a considerable voice in diocesan administration, while the bishops were able to preserve their control (with a few concessions) in the higher and central church administration.

While the Sobor was called after the fall of the Russian monarchy, the Preconciliar Commission had to operate within the context of the Imperial regime. Many of the restraints

placed on the Preconciliar Commission in 1906 no longer existed in 1917. In 1917 the church was separated from the state with state encouragement. The most that the members of the Commission in 1906 felt was possible to attain was some kind of autonomy. In 1906 the church wished to have control of its affairs in its own hands and at the same time retain some of its legal advantages over the other religions and sects.¹² The proposals of the Preconciliar Commission would have given the church such control. Like the judiciary and zemstvo self-government the church would have become another institution operating outside the direct control of the autocracy.

Notes to Chapter III

¹Zhurnaly i protokoly, Vol. 3, p. 3, col. 2.

²S. Iu. Vitte, Vospominaniia (Berlin, 1922), Vol. 2, p. 321.

³Curtiss, op. cit., p. 287.

⁴Aleksandr V. Zenkovskii, Pravda o Stolypine (New York, 1956), pp. 81-84.

⁵Report of the Budget Commission of the Fourth Duma, No. 4, p. 8 et. seq., as cited in Zernov, op. cit., p. 84.

⁶A. V. Kartashev, "Revoliutsiia i sobor, 1917-18 g.," Bogoslovskaiia Mysl', (Paris, 1942), No. XVI, p. 75.

⁷Ibid., pp. 75-76.

⁸The terms liberal and conservative used here by Kartashev and also other writers, notably J. S. Curtiss, tend to confuse the real issues at stake. Certainly the manifold ideas within the church at this time (which, paradoxically, is often described as a stagnant period for the church) are covered up by these labels. A good example is Archbishop Antony of Volynia. Almost any book which mentions his name links it to the narrowest form of political conservatism and reaction. This may have been the case politically, but as a church theologian he may well be regarded as a liberal or radical. He wished to revive the Monophysite doctrines for the Orthodox Church and the students who rallied around him considered him one of the most revolutionary Orthodox thinkers. As Lara says in Doctor Zhivago, "It's only in mediocre books that people are divided into two camps and have nothing to do with each other. In real life everything gets mixed up! Don't you think you would have to be a hopeless nonentity to play one role all your life, to have only one place in society, always to stand for the same thing?..."

⁹Ibid., pp. 94-95.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 97.

¹¹In the Preconciliar Commission of 1906 there had been a great deal of debate over what type of electoral system would be used to elect bishops. Metropolitan Antony of St. Petersburg favored a "three step system" of election. By this system at each level of lower administration (the parish, district council, and diocesan congress) a candidate would be selected. These three candidates would be subject to the approval of the

bishop who would make his final choice from one of them. The majority of the Commission favored another plan. Each district within the diocese was to choose its own candidate. In each diocese there were approximately thirty districts which would give the bishop thirty candidates from which to choose instead of only three. "The huge difference between these two systems is obvious," concluded Lev Tikhomirov. L. Tikhomirov, K reforme obnovlennoi Rossii (Moskva, 1912), pp. 338-39. I have not seen anywhere which of these two systems was adopted by the Sobor in 1917.

¹²By using the phrase "legal advantages" I do not wish to be construed as saying the Russian Orthodox Church, because it was an established church, received many benefits from the Russian state. Without much hesitation it can be said that the alliance of the church with the state (if it was an alliance) was a disaster for the church. In fact, in several reigns the Orthodox Church was openly persecuted, particularly during the reign of Alexander I.

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