

***Church, State and Nationalism  
in the Expansion of the Russian Empire  
into Muslim Central Asia, 1448 - 1917***

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## ***Introduction***

This study, as indicated by the title, is designed to elucidate church, state and nationalism in the Russian Tsarist Empire.' It is an important study of great interest in itself. Yet, ultimately, it is intended as a 'prolegomena' for understanding and interpreting the various policies and events of Russian imperialism and expansion into Central Asia (as well as Siberia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe) which yielded the 'Great Russian Empire' between the 16<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (in both its Tsarist and Leninist-Stalinist forms).

We have arranged the presentation according to the following outline of topics: 1) 'Holy Mother Russia', 2) The Rise of Moscow as 'The Third Rome', 3) The Patriarch Nikon, Old Believers and the Tsarist State, 4) Russia and the Russian People as 'A Holy Nation, A Chosen Race', and 5) An 'Emic' Kazakh Assessment of Russian Expansion into the Kazakh Steppe.

The work is thus capped off, rather appropriately in our eyes, with an insiders' view from the post-Soviet and independent world of the Kazakhs. In moving full-circle toward this finale, we may begin our narrative with an all-too-often repeated irony of history: namely, that before Cyril and Methodius came, "the Slavs in particular often bitterly resisted Christian advances, for they saw Christianity (not altogether erroneously) as the enticing trap of German imperialism."<sup>1</sup>

This in itself reveals a strong sense of ethnonational identity already existing among the Slavs (including the Russians) before their conversion to Christianity. We should likewise observe, at the other end of the Empire's history, the fact that Russian ethnocentrism (as manifested in 'Russification') continued in the (theoretically) post-Christian era of atheistic Soviet Russia. Not only so, but "one of the most important long-term consequences [of Russian expansion] was growing political discontent in many borderlands and minority regions. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, nationalism was espoused by these groups as an ideology of self-assertion and defense against Russian intervention." (Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 9). Among these groups it was Islam, not Christianity, which provided an important base for this nationalism. These three points together comprise important points which must be borne in mind in any attempt to understand what role Christianity itself played in Russian national imperialism throughout the Tsarist era.

### ***'Holy Mother Russia'***

Regardless, the Orthodox form of Christian faith, carried in from the Greek 'East', eventually took root in Russian heart and soil. Russian nationalism surely pre-dated the coming of that faith, but its arrival and its dynamic interpretation and expression in Russian culture had a definite impact on various ideas and emotions of the Russian soul and spirit, including the manner in which "the mention of ...Mother Russia could send essentially religious reverberations through [the] whole population..." (R. Nisbet in Eliade, 525)

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<sup>1</sup> James North, *A History of the Church: From Pentecost to the Present*, Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1983/97, 498-9. North describes this effort of the Germans as "lesser known mission ventures of the medieval period," placing it just beyond the work of Augustine in England in 597 and "Wilfred, Willibord, and Boniface" between the 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

The concept of ‘Mother Russia’ might also be expressed in the simpler and more common forms of ‘motherland’ or even ‘fatherland’ (though we do not hear of ‘Father Russia’, at least from our sources). ‘Fatherland’ was used of Russia, for example, by Russian Orthodox missionaries in describing their ventures to establish the Russian Empire, through the cooperative efforts of both church and state, in Central Asia in the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> It was likewise used by Joseph Stalin in the later communist era, for example, in sounding forth the call to the Russian diaspora to return to the ‘fatherland’ and help rebuild the nation after World War II.<sup>3</sup> All such usage is evidence of a patriotism directed toward the Russian ‘homeland’ which was (and remains) deeply knit with Russian ethnonational (i.e. ‘ethnic’, cf. ‘ethnos’) identity rooted in Russian culture and language.

All of these terms come to us from the later eras, i.e. the 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They represent more ‘secularized’ or politicized versions of the ‘post-Petrine’ period, i.e. the time of transition to and development of ‘civil religion’ when ‘Russian civilization’, particularly in its socio-political but also its ‘higher’ cultural dimensions, ultimately usurps the identity of ‘Christian (Orthodox) civilization’. There can be no doubt, however, that the terms are directly linked, both semantically and historically, with others of an earlier age.

For instance, Richard M. Price, in a fine piece of work on "The Holy Land in Old Russian Culture," notes that a “related expression ‘the bright Russian land’ (i.e. illuminated by the faith) occurs already in eleventh-century Russian literature.”<sup>4</sup> He further tells of the usage of phrases like ‘Holy Russia’ and ‘holy Russian land’ occurring from this time through the 19<sup>th</sup> century – though sometime after the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the particular phrase ‘Holy Russia’ is taken over (almost) exclusively by ‘Old Believers’ and rejected by the ‘modernizing’ Russian State (254, n13), presumably in connection with the schism between the ‘Old Believers’ and the patriarch Nikon and the ensuing church-state rivalry to which Peter the Great put a decisive end (see below).

Regardless, Price brings us priceless insight with the recognition that:

"This sense of a special closeness of the Holy Land to the Russian land found particular expression... in the oral tradition of ‘Spiritual Verses’. ...One of the most popular of these poems – the *Golubinaya Kniga* or *Book of the Dove* – celebrates... Holy Russia (Svyataya Rus) as “the mother of all countries because in her the crucified God is worshipped” and “All Orthodox Christians,” as we read in a variant version of the poem, “belong to the ‘holy Russian land’” (253).

That is, as he elsewhere makes plain, it is through the ritual ‘re-enactment’ of the historical events of Christ’s crucifixion *within the Orthodox churches on Russian soil* in celebration of the eucharist ‘sacrifice’ that the direct link between the Holy Land of Israel-Palestine and the ‘Holy

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<sup>2</sup> See Abdizhappar Adbakimuhli, *Kazakstan tarihi: erte dauirden buginge deiin* [‘A History of Kazakhstan: From Early Times to the Present’], Almaty, 1997, 113-4 (translated by the writer below in final section, pp 14-15), quoting I. Ostroumov.

<sup>3</sup> Observed in the foreign film *East-West* (in Russian and French, with English subtitles).

<sup>4</sup> In R.N. Swanson, 2000, *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, The Boydell Press, 2000, 254.

Land’ of Russia is formed (253-5). Likewise, pilgrimage to the Holy Land by devout Russian believers strengthens ‘the tie that binds’, so that “...a Russian pilgrim to the Holy Land was a privileged intercessor for the Russian nation...” (ibid, 251). And still more, various towns and their churches were calculated by no accident, as in a number of places in Europe, to imitate Jerusalem and other historical centers of the Gospel narratives and even take to themselves the very names of those places. For example:

...in 1658 at a spot thirty-five miles west of Moscow Patriarch Nikon of Moscow began the construction of the Church of the Resurrection in his new Voskresensky (or Resurrection) Monastery. In respect of its ground plan this building was a singularly exact copy of the Jerusalem Church of the Anastasis, complete with a replica of the Holy Sepulchre. The monastery itself was given the name ‘New Jerusalem’; a hill to the east was called the Mount of Olives, and the river Istra flowing alongside was renamed the Jordan (ibid, 258).

And so, ‘Mother Russia’ becomes the new ‘Holy Land’ with its (later) center in Moscow the ‘New Jerusalem’. This beckons us to review the ‘pilgrimage’ of Moscow in its rise to the status of ‘the third Rome’ as the religio-political focal point of the emerging Russian Empire.

***The Rise of Moscow as ‘The Third Rome’,  
i.e. ‘The Fourth Jerusalem’ and ‘New Israel’***

Daniel B. Rowland, in a rather enlightening article, poses the question: “Moscow – The Third Rome or the New Israel?” (in *Russian Review*, 55, 1996, pp. 591-614). He makes the point that the image of Moscow and Russia is not to be traced back to Western roots in Rome and its empire, but to Israel. He suggests...

...a complementary theme, a theme that is overwhelmingly better represented in the source base than the Third Rome idea, but that answers the same basic question about the self-image of the Muscovite state: the idea of Russia as a New Israel. Both themes were products of the Muscovite perception of history as a succession of chosen peoples: Israel to Roman Empire to Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) to Muscovy (591).

The evidence reviewed above as well as below would support this contention. Thus, we would agree that the expression ‘Third Rome’ is not altogether appropriate, as if Rome were the original prototype in a series of three cities and their empires – Rome, Constantinople and finally Moscow.<sup>5</sup> In this light, not only ‘New Israel’, but ‘the fourth Jerusalem’ would have been a more appropriate title, since (as Rowland himself alludes) Rome was the second and Constantinople the third ‘Jerusalem’ of sorts, each deriving their image and ultimate authority from the original ‘pristine’ source.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. the title of John Meyendorff’s work, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996; we have drawn in this study primarily from chapter 8, “Was There Ever a ‘Third Rome’? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia,” 131-47).

Nonetheless and with the foregoing in mind, ‘the third Rome’ theme, as Rowland acknowledges, did find expression among the Russians themselves and, so, secures its proper place in our study. In consideration of this topic, it might be worth noting first that Church and State have a long history of illustrious relations in ‘the land of the Rus’, going all the way back to the “conversions of Olga (957) and, later, her grandson, Vladimir (988-9),” which secured ‘official’ status for the Orthodox faith in the ‘motherland’.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding the importance of the long interval, our attention is properly directed to the year 1448, when the Russian Orthodox Church cut the umbilical cord from Constantinople and became “administratively independent under a ‘metropolitan of all Russia,’ residing in Moscow.”<sup>7</sup> It was only a few years later of course, in 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks. This opened the way for the confident declaration of the monk Philotheus of Pskov in 1510 to the then reigning tsar (cf. ‘*Cesar*’) Vasily III: “‘Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and a fourth there will not be.’ The meaning of the sentence was that the first Rome was heretical, the second – Byzantium – was under Turkish control, and the third was Moscow” (Website). This sealed at least the spiritual independence and supremacy of the newly founded ‘Third Rome’.

Almost parallel with these fortuitous and momentous events, and under inspiration of its century earlier short-lived and partial victory at ‘the battle of Kulikovo’, in which St. Sergius played a major role (Spinka, 91-3), Moscow was able to at last lay hold on political independence by breaking the yoke of the Tatars<sup>8</sup>, who were reigning over them as heirs of the Mongol domination commenced from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. And similar to the service of St. Sergius, it is important to note that throughout Moscow’s long struggle for political liberation “the Russian metropolitans faithfully and efficiently cooperated with the state authorities in supporting the grand princes [of the city] in their efforts at consolidating the state. ...Moscow gained its pre-eminence with the efficient aid of the Church” (Spinka, 93).

This sets us just beyond the threshold of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, at which point Michael Khodarkovsky informs us:

...the expansion [of the Muscovite state] was slowly acquiring the features of political theology as a result of a gradual rise of Moscow’s self-consciousness as the only sovereign Orthodox

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<sup>6</sup> Quote taken from Meyendorff, 131.

<sup>7</sup> Website. Interestingly, the home of ‘Russian-Greek’ Orthodoxy was originally centered in the city of Kiev. A read through Matthew Spinka, “The Russian Church and the Rise of Moscow,” (in Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Impact of the Church Upon Its Culture: Reappraisals of the History of Christianity*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp 67-93) reveals that it is a somewhat complicated history of how the metropolitanate and ultimately the patriarchate ended up in Moscow. In brief summary, the transition seems to be located in a series of events commencing in 1299, when “the Mongols again frightfully plundered Kiev” and Maxim, the metropolitan of ‘all Russia’ at the time, “decided to leave Kiev permanently” (81). This set in motion events running through about 1400 (i.e. an approximately 100 year period) during which the establishment of a second metropolitanate and three leading figures – Peter, Theognast and Alexis – eventually brought the metropolitanate of Kiev to Moscow, the Kievan metropolitanate having been re-established at an earlier point as the sole metropolitanate of ‘all Russia’, making Moscow the new sole claimant to the seat (81-89).

<sup>8</sup> Spinka (91-3) speaks of the ‘Tatars’, which is surely the name of the distinct ethnonational people group who came to inhabit southern central Russia just north of Kazakhstan (and Bashkortostan). However, the term ‘Tatars’ was also used as a (derogatory) name for most all Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Central Asia, including the Mongols (cf. Abdakimuhli, 94).

Christian state. The confrontation between Muscovy and various Muslim peoples began increasingly to be seen on both sides as a religious war. ...[It was] a government imbued with an overpowering sense of manifest religious destiny, Moscow's own version of *non plus ultra*. Thus, Moscow's [later] conquests of Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556 were not mere military victories. These conquests were first and foremost a manifestation of the political and ideological supremacy of Orthodox Muscovy over its former Muslim overlords. A new missionary spirit was forcefully expressed by the triumphant Russian tsar, Ivan IV. ...."<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, it was so “forcely expressed” that Ivan's conquests not only involved 30,000 soldiers, but resulted in the slaughter of multitudes of Muslim Tatar men, prohibitions against reproduction to drive down their population and the destruction of 418 of the 536 mosques of Kazan and many in Astrakhan and the rebuilding or renovation of them into Orthodox church buildings. “This is counted by the Tatars as the most mournful day of their history.”<sup>10</sup>

The initial expansion mentioned in the quote above took place under Vasily III, who then handed the baton to Ivan IV. And just as the monk Philotheus stood by Vasily, so Russian church and state continued their mutual support of one another under Ivan. His religious angle on the subjugation of Kazan and Astrakhan were only ‘natural’, for just prior to those events he had been

crowned emperor, according to the Byzantine ceremonial, by the metropolitan of Moscow, Makary, on January 16, 1547. In 1551 he solemnly presided in Moscow over a great council of Russian bishops, the Stoglav (‘Council of 100 Chapters’), in which various issues of discipline and liturgy were settled and numerous Russian saints were canonized. ... (Website).

Yet, as the website history goes on to tell us, such “obvious efforts to live up to the title of the ‘third Rome’ lacked one final sanction: the head of the Russian Church was lacking the title of ‘patriarch’. ...[Then,] in 1589....the patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremias II, was on a fund-raising tour of Russia. He could not resist the pressure of his hosts and established the metropolitan Job as ‘patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.’” Immediately following from this, in 1590 Moscow was officially recognized as a Patriarchate of the Eastern Orthodox churches and was included in the list along with Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. It was admitted to the list (apparently) in place of Rome by the Patriarch of Constantinople and a council of the other Patriarchs. This essentially sealed, at least in the eyes of Orthodox Russians, Moscow's claim to be the ‘Third Rome’, the ‘New (fourth) Jerusalem’ for ‘God's holy and chosen people’, and only served to strengthen grounds for the cooperation of Church and State in the expanding Russian Empire.

Shortly thereafter, the death of Tsar Fedor in 1598, who died childless, threw Russia and the Orthodox Church into an era of unrest known as ‘the Time of Trouble’ which centered around a dispute over who would succeed him. Church and State came under Polish and Jesuit,

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<sup>9</sup> In Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, 120.

<sup>10</sup> See esp. Murtaza Bulutai, *Atababa Dini: Turkiler nege Musilman boldi?* [*The Religion of the Fathers: Why Did the Turks Become Muslims?*], Almaty: Bilim, 2000, 151. Cf. Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 120-2, 127, 133, 136, 279-82 and Latourette, 906.

i.e. Roman Catholic, influence. “Under these trying circumstances the Orthodox Church provided leadership and a rallying centre for the Russian spirit against the foreigner and against Rome. ...A combination of patriotic forces took Moscow, expelled the Poles, and called a representative assembly to put the country in order. This assembly, or *Zemsky Sobor*, elected (1613) as tsar a sixteen-year-old noble, Michael Romanov... thus founding a dynasty which was to last until 1917. The ‘Time of Trouble’ was at an end and Orthodoxy and nationalism, aiding each other, had triumphed.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Patriarch Nikon, Old Believers and the Tsarist State***

The historical sketch would take us from here to the Patriarch Nikon, who in the mid-1600s entertained “the dream of making the Russian Church, led by the Patriarch, dominant in the life of the nation” (Latourette, 914). In general terms, the church of course was already “dominant in the life of the nation.” What Nikon had in mind, however, was the uncontested claim to being the highest recognized authority in that nation, making the state subject to the church.

Price paints the background scene to this development, noting that:

Many Russian churchmen of Nikon’s day despised the Greeks for their subjection to the Turks and betrayal of their faith at the Council of Florence, and made no secret of their conviction that the historic cities of the Greek East were now surpassed by Moscow, as the real capital of the Orthodox world. Nikon was more discreet, and won the favour of the Greeks through his deference in his liturgical reforms toward current Greek practice. But it is agreed that his long-term goal was the primacy of Moscow (258-9).

The “deference in his liturgical reforms” which Price speaks of refers to Nikon’s apparently drastic revision of the Russian liturgy, which over the centuries had suffered from manuscript corruptions as well as stagnated in the face of cultural change. “Nikon's solution was to order the exact compliance of all the Russian practices with the contemporary Greek equivalents” (Website).

Given, however, the high esteem afforded Moscow and *Russian* Orthodoxy by this time over the Greek traditions of Constantinople, it is only to be expected that this produced a major schism in the church. Thus arose what became known as the ‘Old Believers’, those calling for faithful adherence to the traditional Russian Orthodox liturgy untainted by foreign and ‘inferior’ elements.

This split between Nikon and the ‘Old Believers’ proved to be, rather ironically for Nikon, opportune to the Russian state in the struggle which Nikon was waging. After Nikon was successfully deposed and rid of, it opened the way for the state to later adopt Nikon’s revisions as the official state-endorsed form of Russian Orthodoxy, thus achieving a ‘separation of

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, 1958/75, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2, Prince Publishers, 1997, 909-10. On ‘the time of trouble’, see also North, 459-60. Cp. the problems of England under Henry VIII and succeeding generations.

(popular) church and state’ and enabling the state to ultimately control the church. This came to full fruition under Peter the Great (1682-1725), for:

The son of Tsar Alexis, Peter the Great, changed the historical fate of Russia by radically turning away from the Byzantine heritage [of patriarchs] and reforming the state according to the model of Protestant Europe. Humiliated by his father's temporary submission to Patriarch Nikon, Peter prevented new patriarchal elections after the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700. After a long vacancy of the see, he abolished the patriarchate altogether (1721) and transformed the central administration of the church into a department of the state, which adopted the title of ‘Holy Governing Synod’. ...With the actions of Peter, the Church of Russia entered a new period of its history that lasted until 1917.” (Website; cf. Latourette, 1214).

Yet, in spite of the rift which occurred between Nikon and the ‘Old Believers’ and the tension between the ‘new’ Orthodox church and the state, Nikon as well as many of the ‘new’ Russian Orthodox, both political and ‘peasant’, were in the final analysis just as Russian as the ‘Old Believers’ and there remained a strong sense of (healthy and unhealthy) Russian nationalism in all these groups. As the ensuing history bears out, ‘Slavophiles’ and their ‘Russianness’ were to be found (quite naturally, in varying degrees of intensity,) among a large number of Russians in the Empire. This was true not only in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of Russian Orthodoxy, but in the Russian State and even other branches of non-Orthodox *Russian* Christianity, including Protestant. And all of these intersected and interacted with one another in various ways.<sup>12</sup>

In the end, we may suggest the recognition of at least five main dynamic sectors of Russian society involved in the complex and reflexive development of the Russian nation and empire: 1) the predominant Russian State, 2) its official Russian Orthodoxy comprised of both state church leaders (i.e. essentially government employees) and common Russian ‘peasants’, 3) the large ‘minority’ of ‘Old Orthodox Believers’, 4) non-Orthodox forms of Russian Christianity, and 5) pro-Western modernist figures or groups (which might form a separate group or be found as a minority among some of the others). Perhaps one can see the complex interplay of some of these forces in the life of the nation, for example, when the infantry unit of the Russian State in Moscow, known as the *Streltzy*, rose up to defend the ‘Old Believers’ in the midst of a certain struggle (see Latourette, 916). Regardless, all of these ‘internal’ groups within ‘Russian-dom’ were interacting and mutually affecting the ‘external others’ throughout the process of Russia’s expansion into *their* domains.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. North, 465-6: “Another element which had great significance was the ongoing struggle in the Russian Church [and nation] between the ‘Westernizers’ and the ‘Slavophiles.’ On the one hand were those influenced by the social developments and democracy of Protestant Europe. On the other hand were those committed to retaining their own inner resources in Orthodoxy, particularly within the history and development of Slavic Orthodoxy. This struggle had more than simply religious connotations, for much of the Russian leadership felt the same pull. Basically, the Slavophiles were the more dominant party.” This is very helpful, but still seems too simple and distinct a division of the various groups.

***Russia and the Russian People as  
'A Holy Nation, A Chosen Race'***

With this, then, we come to what we described earlier as the more 'secularized' or politicized versions of 'Mother Russia' in the 'post-Petrine' period, i.e. the time of transition to and development of 'civil religion' when 'Russian civilization', particularly in its socio-political but also its 'higher' cultural dimensions, ultimately usurps the identity of 'Christian (Orthodox) civilization' while still embracing the latter and employing it in its cause. This would include the participation of those genuine Orthodox believers whose motives and aspirations were not necessarily political, yet had no other alternative than to live and 'work within the system', though 'when all is said and done' it remains "characteristic of Russian missions, almost without exception, that the connection between Church and state has been so close that it is almost impossible to separate the work into its constituent elements."<sup>13</sup> Regardless, by the time of Peter the Great, in "the late seventeenth century, the idea of Russia's destiny as a Christian state at the forefront of the struggle with the Islamic world had further crystalized..." (Khodarkovsky, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 127).

This did not always mean that 'Mother Russia' sought to Christianize those it 'took under its wings'. During the mid to later 18<sup>th</sup> century in the reign of Catherine II, for example, and the span between 1905 - 1917, policies of 'religious toleration' were enacted and Russian Orthodox missions were curbed (Geraci and Khodarkovsky 4, 6, 116). But in general, in spite of the fact that the state never adopted the terminology of 'Holy Russia', a conception of 'Russianness' as cultural (or 'civilizational') 'holiness' pervaded the empire and its primary Russian constituents.

This may be duly illustrated by an extended quote covering the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century era, but broadly applicable to the whole 'post-Petrine' period up to and even beyond into the age of the Soviets (though with respect to the latter in clearly modified and curtailed fashion). Here we are told:

"...the doctrine of Official Nationality... largely defined the organization of the Russian empire from the 1830s to 1917. ...It was a defining feature of Russian identity (and hence a key component of assimilation into the Russian empire), yet would ultimately serve the spread of a more broadly conceived (that is, in political and cultural as well as religious terms) Russianness throughout the empire. If the doctrine prescribed a substantive, not just nominal, identity to all subjects of the empire, then it stood to reason that religious conversion should prepare its subjects for all facets of this identity. The missionaries' task in the nineteenth century was to promote the transformation of erstwhile foreigners into Russians in every way possible. ....

...cultural Russification was viewed as the inevitable, manifest destiny of all peoples in the Russian empire. On the basis of nineteenth-century popular historiography and its portrayal of Russia's eastward expansion, one historian has argued that 'educated Russians of the nineteenth century, both within the regime and without, perceived the state of which they were subjects not at all as a multinational empire consisting of a metropolis and various colonial dependencies, but rather as a nation-state in the process of formation, following a course marked out by countries like England and France centuries earlier'...

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, revised for the 2d ed. by Owen Chadwick, Penguin Books, 1964/86, 182, ref. in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 3.

...Russians thought that their country's expansion would be accompanied, and facilitated, by the gradual assimilation of all border peoples into the Russian national culture. Indeed, Russian expansion was thought to have always had this cultural (as opposed to purely administrative) meaning, though before the nineteenth century it had been unplanned and unconscious."<sup>14</sup>

In topping off this section then, which carries us through the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, perhaps it is North who most concisely captures the spirit of the age when he says: "throughout the nineteenth century there was a combination of both political and religious conservatism in Russia. ...Even in World War I Russian troops carried icons into battle" (466). But this will only be true if "conservatism" is read as 'Russian nationalism'.

### *Ideal and Reality in Critical Reflection*

At this juncture, we may pause for an interlude comprised of various quotes compiled from our sources which reflect on the ideal verses the reality of Russia and the Russian people as 'a holy nation, a chosen race' in the expansion of church and state into Central Asia. For, "in theory, Russians were supposed to complement the missions' work by setting proper examples of Christian, civilized, and Russian national values, and by participating directly in baptized Kazakhs' acculturation on a day-to-day basis." (Geraci, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 295)

"To be sure, throughout the tsarist period many secular and ecclesiastical officials held to a utopian vision of universal conversion to Orthodoxy by the empire's diverse subjects. But this vision usually fell victim to more practical, realistic considerations prevailing at particular moments." (Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 338)

"Even conservatives (lay or clerical) who embraced an ideology of far-reaching religious and cultural homogenization of the empire's peoples were often reluctant to pursue it at a given moment on the grounds that it would provoke widespread opposition, threatening law and order." (Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 6-7)

"On the official level, Russian nationalism of the late tsarist period leaned more often to extreme inclusivity than exclusivity; it is rare to find racial prejudice used as an argument against exploiting opportunities for Russification. Among peasant folk, however (whose views are often less conspicuous in available sources) there was considerable resistance to the ideal of the unlimited assimilation of outsiders. For every Russian who aided the missions by showing the presumed superiority of Russian ways and teaching them to the Kazakhs, there were others who abused the Kazakhs, insisted they could never become true Christians, and talked them out of plans to be baptized." (Geraci, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 304)

"S. Rybakov, a sympathizer of the missions who made ethnographic observations in the Kazakh settlements of Orenburg diocese in 1896, was disappointed by the condition of the

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<sup>14</sup> Geraci, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 278-80; see also 282-3 as well as Latourette, 1016, 1214-6 and Price, 254, who notes how, "in the work of the poet Tyutchev (1803 - 73), 'Holy Russia' emerges again as the centre of a great empire..."

Russian settlers there. Comparing his impressions of a Russian woman and a Kazakh woman, he wrote:

‘It saddened me to think of the Russian woman, a representative of that dominant nation that wishes to bring enlightenment to the *inorodtsy* [‘non-Russians’]. Although she acknowledged ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ and belonged to a higher religion..., there was hardly any noticeable difference between the two with regard to intellectual and moral condition: both were equally ignorant and helpless.

“The thought came to mind: can this dominant nation bring enlightenment to the *inorodtsy* when they themselves are so ignorant and impoverished in their development? And do they deserve the prestige they enjoy? They themselves need to be educated and to educate themselves.” (Geraci, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 298, citing Rybakov, “Otchet,” 216-7)

”Famous as an outstanding intellectual and deeply religious soul... was Vladimir S. Soloviev (1853-1900). ...In his youthful hopefulness he believed in the possibility of all mankind becoming a redeemed society ruled by a theocracy through love. For a time he seemed to side with the Slavophiles, for he hoped that the Slavs and especially the Russians... would lead mankind in the formation of a universal free theocracy.

“In Soloviev’s later years came disillusionment and despair, both for the Slavophiles and for the realization within history of the theocracy of which he had dreamed. He was made unhappy by the policy of forcible russification which was being pursued by the tsarist regime and regarded the Slavophiles as having succumbed to nationalist egoism.” (Latourette, 1219-20).

“...what is there to say of the ‘Asians,’ the common name for which in the mouths of the peasants is no more than ‘dog’? What haven’t they endured, what haven’t they seen! ...It isn’t surprising, after what’s been said, if the suggestion of a missionary to become Orthodox is taken by many of the Kazakhs as a joke. As is well known, to a non-Russian, to be ‘Orthodox’ is the same as to be ‘Russian’.” (Geraci, in Geraci and Khodarkovsky, 306, quoting Borisov, 1894)

### *An ‘Emic’ Kazakh Assessment of Russian Expansion into the Kazakh Steppe*

The dynamics of church, state and nationalism in the expansion of the Russian Empire were complex and varied. Yet a steady stream of those dynamics can be discerned from beginning to end in that expansion, and may even be glimpsed before and after in the ‘Kievan Rus’ and Russian Communist eras. Indeed, revivals of Russian nationalism are being seen in the post-Soviet age as well (cf. Brym, 391).

But our primary concern has been with church, state and nationalism in the period of the Tsarist Empire between 1448 - 1917. Apart from passing references, we have to this point attempted to elucidate those components and their mutual interplay only in relation to the ‘internal’ world of the Russians and their church and state. Our corollary concern of how all this was viewed by and impacted the ‘outer’ world of ‘others’, especially those of Central Asia in our case, who were the objects of imperial expansion, has not been directly and extensively addressed as of yet.

We have mentioned of course the destruction of mosques in Kazan and Astrakhan above. We might also add how, in 1864-5,

Russian imperial forces seized Turkistan, firing eleven cannonballs into the most sacred Muslim site of western Central Asia, the Mausoleum of Ahmet Yasawi. Tashkent (in modern Uzbekistan) fell the next year led by Russian Orthodox priests carrying crosses. Army garrisons were stationed in all the Syr Darya cities. The Yasawi Shrine in Turkistan was turned into an armory for storing ammunition and a Russian Orthodox church, attended only by Russians, was later built near the shrine.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps though it is best to end the study with, not our own observations, but the assessment of a Central Asian writer looking back upon the whole period of Russian conquest and domination of his homeland. This may leave us feeling somewhat uneasy. But perhaps that is best, if we are to ever understand the 'emic' heart and seek to respond appropriately. We are left, then, with the following extended quote from Abdizhapar Abdakimuhli, translated from the original Kazakh by the writer. He tells how, between 1867-68 in Zhetisu, Sirdaria, Orinbor and Western Siberia, which cover most of the territory of modern Kazakhstan (and beyond),

legal rights were given like smoke into the hands of the Russians who were carrying out – with respect to government, military, economy, and religion – the entire matter of oppressive lordship over the traditional [Kazakh] system of oversight. These legal rights put the Kazakhs in bondage and were nothing-less-than a turn in the direction of intending to Russify *and* Christianize<sup>16</sup> them.

This spiritual colonization, or enslavement, [was] their primary aim. The roots of this politic had gone deep so that, *winnowing out the uniqueness of every ethnic group*, [it] was carried out with skill and 'tending care'. The issue lies in the execution of the policy of Russification, which was [carried out] through Christianizing in combination with the forced change to the Cyrillic from the traditional script. [But] Let us speak simply-[and]-straightforwardly with respect to the truth: it is known that, in the view of Christians and those adhering to other religions, at one time the Arabs also in the days of their warring raids held to exactly this kind of political policy. Thus, it is right to understand this political policy of Tsarism as [one for which they found support through] their leaning upon the practical experience [of the Arab Muslims who went] before them. For the political policy of Christianization and Russification, which found [a niche for itself and] was continued for centuries, came to serve the causes of the Dvoryans and Pomeshtshiks of the Tsar's empire, and later of the bourgeoisie [i.e. Soviets] who were coming to be awakened. ....

In 1868 the founding of the “Nomadic Committee” (“Perselencheskii Committee”) opened the way for the intensifying of missionary service [among the nomads]. This kind of occasion had already taken place in the USA before that. There, in 1824, a bureau for those coming from abroad [i.e. ‘missionaries’] was founded. It, too, calls to mind the Nomadic Committee named [just] above. The Nomadic Committee carried out the policy of Russification by combining it with what they called the “Palace (‘Palata’) of Russification.”

One [point of] interest [is that] the understanding of the terminology of what they call “the mixing together of the ethn and tribes,” which they went about saying happened at a later

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<sup>15</sup> This quotation provided by an anonymous source.

<sup>16</sup> Lit. ‘shokindiru’, which means ‘the making of one to peck at himself like a bird’, i.e. ‘the causing of one to make the sign of the cross over himself’; it is also used for ‘baptizing’.

[time], is met with in the writings of the missionaries of that period. For example, the well-known missionary, Professor Ostroimov, simply speaking within [the framework of] his understanding, said that: “Our fatherland has made the effort to Russianize the other ethn... the one purpose of the present [effort] is the uniting of Kirgiz together with the Russians as one into a [single] political state organism.”<sup>17</sup> See where the roots of the political policy of Stalin, Suslov, Krushev, and Brezhnev lie? They carefully put their efforts into mixing together the ethn, and [their] languages and cultures, [as] quickly [as possible].

Banishing the ethn from their past, cutting them off from their [traditional] historical view, annihilating their language, religion, customs-and-traditions, and literature-and-art – [these] are the most severe forms of war. In the secret instructions of the Ministry of Education of the [Tsarist] Empire it is written in clear [view] that: “Mission is one form of spiritual war, therefore the patrons of making war never place their plans [on the table], spreading [them] out” [before everyone in public]. Because of this, all of the many [people of our nation] must not continue experiencing in the same [way]<sup>18</sup> the ill-effects of mission upon the future of Kazakhstan.

In this respect, it will not be too much to present some examples [of our national heroes before] going on. S[hokan] Ualihanov, understanding the depths to which the roots of mission had gone, directed [himself] against it. I[brahim] Altinsarin was in close relationship with those [espousing the] ideologies of missionary politics; while he understood the roots of this practice, he knew how to profitably use certain of these patrons for his own educational service. Abai [our great poet], although [he] had a sense of the aim of mission, never fully understood it. [And] A. Baitursinov fought mercilessly against ‘the new missionaries of the [19]20s’ (113-4).

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<sup>17</sup> I. Ostroimov. *Turkestanskoi uchitel'skoi seminarii 25 let ee sushchestvovaniia*. Tashkent. 1904. p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> The sense seems best understood as: ‘we must bring to an end’.

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