

# SLAVOPHILE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND THE DILEMMA OF RUSSIAN MODERNITY, 1830–1860\*

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*Russian public opinion in the first half of the nineteenth century was buffeted by a complex of cultural, psychological, and historiosophical dilemmas that destabilized many conventions about Russia's place in universal history. This article examines one response to these dilemmas: the Slavophile reconfiguration of Eastern Christianity as a modern religion of theocentric freedom and moral progress. Drawing upon methods of contextual analysis, the article challenges the usual scholarly treatment of Slavophile religious thought as a vehicle to address extrahistorical concerns by placing the writings of A. S. Khomiakov and I. V. Kireevskii in the discursive and ideological framework in which they originated and operated. As such, the article considers the atheistic revolution in consciousness advocated by Russian Hegelians, the Schellingian proposition that human freedom and moral advancement were dependent upon the living God, P. Ia. Chaadaev's contention that a people's religious orientation determined its historical potential, and the Slavophile appropriation of Russia's dominant confession to resolve the problem of having attained historical consciousness in an age of historical stasis.*

## I

This article offers a contextual rereading of familiar texts in Russian intellectual history to explain how a particular strand of Slavophile thought, which recommended Eastern Christianity as the best means to safeguard and direct Russia's entry into a modern age of freedom and progress, originated and operated in the mid-nineteenth century. The fact that the first generation of Slavophiles, namely Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov (1804–60) and Ivan Vasil'evich Kireevskii (1806–56), appropriated the tenets of Russia's dominant confession to resolve cultural, psychological, and historiosophical dilemmas engendered by events of

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the day was well known to contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> Yet most scholars do not examine the Slavophile reconfiguration of Orthodoxy from that perspective.<sup>2</sup> They tend, rather, to employ a proleptic approach to the study of Slavophile religious thought (an approach that often elides the discontinuity between the historically contingent meaning of a text and the dehistoricized interpretation elicited from that same text by present-day readers) to determine its relevance to a variety of extrahistorical questions.<sup>3</sup> The religious writings of Khomiakov and Kireevskii are commonly marshaled to illuminate some distinctive trait of the Russian mind and thus explain Slavophilism's unique but incomplete contribution to the history of philosophy;<sup>4</sup> argue for Slavophilism's "universal significance" to today's spiritual needs;<sup>5</sup> or help to determine the reason why Slavophilism terminated in reactionary statism, theocratic messianism, xenophobic racism, or totalitarian nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

The broadest effect of this approach on scholarship is to read all of Slavophilism as a "strongly utopian variety of conservatism" and a "sociological determined system of values," which in its collectivistic and irrational "thought-style" could neither comprehend nor resolve the problems confronting imperial Russia. In regard to Slavophile religious thought, Khomiakov's "conception of faith" is considered to be "anti-intellectual," hampered by "ecclesiological immanentism," and premised on the need "to vanquish the temporal world through inner integration and spiritual contemplation." Kireevskii's understanding of religion

<sup>1</sup> Iu. F. Samarin, "Predislovie k pervomu izdaniuu," in A. S. Khomiakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii Alekseia Stepanovicha Khomiakova*, 8 vols. (Moscow, 1900–11), 2: i–xxxvi (hereafter PSS *Khomiakova*); Pavel Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade: Literary Memoirs*, ed. Arthur P. Mendel, trans. Irwin R. Titunik (Ann Arbor, MI, 1968), 94 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For some notable exceptions, see M. O. Gershenzon, *Istoricheskie zapiski (o russkom obshchestve)* (Moscow, 1910), 3–40; Eberhard Müller, *Russischer Intellekt in europäischer Krise. Ivan Kireevskij (1806–1856)* (Köln–Graz, 1966), 397–413; Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca, NY, 2009), chaps. 4–5 (I am grateful to Professor Engelstein for sharing uncorrected proofs of her book before its publication date).

<sup>3</sup> On the "mythology of prolepsis" see Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8/1 (1969), 22–4.

<sup>4</sup> Sergei Horujy, "Slavophiles, Westernizers, and the Birth of Russian Philosophical Humanism," trans. Patrick Michelson, in G. M. Hamburg and Randall Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, 2010), 27–51.

<sup>5</sup> Boris Jakim and Robert Bird, eds. and trans., *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader* (Hudson, NY, 1998), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Riasanovsky, "Khomiakov on *Sobornost'*," *Collected Writings, 1947–1994* (Los Angeles, 1993), 59–71; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 266–7. This narrative likely originated with Pavel Miliukov, "Razlozhenie slavianofil'stva (Danilevskii, Leont'ev, Vl. Solov'ev)," *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii* 4/3 (1893), 46–96.

is reduced to a type of “social mysticism” endemic to “almost all the aristocratic, antimodern ideologies of early nineteenth-century Europe,” and his personal commitment to Orthodoxy is diagnosed as a “neurotic symptom and the usual companion of a deep fear of social change.”<sup>7</sup>

Recent reevaluations of Slavophile sociopolitical thought have complicated these depictions of Slavophilism as a mystical renunciation of the secular or a class-based desire to retreat to some golden age. Despite the real ambivalence that many Slavophiles felt toward political and legal authority, a close reading of relevant texts demonstrates that Khomiakov, Kireevskii, and their confrères often claimed a pragmatic role for state institutions, especially in legislating the end of serfdom and protecting social order against centrifugal forces.<sup>8</sup> A study that locates Slavophilism in the post-1789 current of “cultural nationalism” suggests that it is best understood as a practical project for the depoliticized enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*) of educated society and the people (*narod*), which was to be achieved with the actualization of Russia’s popular culture and its pedagogical contribution to *Universalgeschichte*.<sup>9</sup>

A contextual analysis of Slavophile religious thought complements and substantiates this reassessment of Slavophilism as a creative, if uneven and illiberal, engagement with modernity,<sup>10</sup> particularly those cultural, institutional, and epistemological transformations that expressed the “gradual internalization of authority.”<sup>11</sup> Modernity in this sense partly manifested itself in historical

<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (South Bend, IN, 1989), 1–9, 132–4, 188–200, 453–5; Abbott Gleason, *European and Muscovite: Ivan Kireevsky and the Origins of Slavophilism* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), x, 4–5, 151–2, 292–3.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Hughes, “State and Society in the Political Thought of the Moscow Slavophiles,” *Studies in East European Thought* 52 (2000), 159–83; *idem*, “‘Independent Gentlemen’: The Social Position of the Moscow Slavophiles and Its Impact on Their Political Thought,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 71/1 (1993), 66–88; Nikolai Tsimbaev, *Istoriiosofia na razvalinakh imperii* (Moscow, 2007), 256–346.

<sup>9</sup> Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (Albany, NY, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire*, 10, *passim*. For a study in comparative theology see Paul Valliere, “The Modernity of Khomiakov,” in Vladimir Tsurikov, ed., *A. S. Khomiakov: Poet, Philosopher, Theologian* (Jordanville, NY, 2004), 129–44. It is important to note that the term ‘modernity’ can be deployed in multiple, even disparate, ways, and its application is often hampered by all sorts of problems of taxonomy emanating from its normative claims and Eurocentric historicism. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), chap. 5 (this work was suggested to me by one of the anonymous referees.)

<sup>11</sup> Yanni Kotsonis, “Introduction: A Modern Paradox—Subject and Citizen in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Russia,” in David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (New York, 2000), 1–2, 13 n. 2.

consciousness, i.e. in the awareness of one's situatedness in history's progressive movement from lower to higher stages of development. Such a manifestation began to take shape in Russia in the 1820s, as public commentators and scholars adopted aspects of Schellingian idealism to formulate philosophical notions of nationality (*narodnost'*) that gave the *narod* some degree of agency in the unfolding course of Russian and world history.<sup>12</sup> The various historiosophical projects to arise from this type of consciousness generally sought to identify and activate the authentic stimulus to Russia's historical advancement; establish discrete, inviolable spheres in social reality in which the genuine agent of history could freely mature and self-consciously act; and remove psychological and sociopolitical barriers that encumbered personal and collective perfectibility.

By establishing the "historicity of the question" that occupied the early Slavophiles and the "historicity of the answer" that they proposed,<sup>13</sup> this essay demonstrates that Khomiakov's and Kireevskii's appropriation of Eastern Christianity should be seen as an engaged response to the dilemma of having attained historical consciousness in an age perceived to be historically static. The ability to overcome this conundrum was generally thought to be dependent upon finding answers to a set of historically specific questions: was the law-governed process of historical development (*zakonomernost'*) immanent in nature or transcendent in God, and what role, if any, did free will play in its realization; was personhood (*lichnost'*) exclusively rooted in the material world or partly grounded in the divine;<sup>14</sup> what were the causes of Russia's cultural, psychological, and historiosophical disorders; and how could these disorders be alleviated to further Russia's course along the path of universal history?

Khomiakov and Kireevskii were well placed in Russian society to address these questions and shape the contours and content of public opinion.<sup>15</sup> Because of their social and genealogical status as part of the pre-Petrine landed nobility, they were in a position to appeal to those members of the gentry who disdained the institutions and values of officialdom but who felt great loyalty to tsar and

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<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Knight, "Ethnicity, Nationality, and the Masses: *Narodnost'* and Modernity in Imperial Russia," in Hoffmann and Kotsonis, *Russian Modernity*, 41–2, 52–4.

<sup>13</sup> I borrow this terminology from John Dunn, *Political Obligation in Its Historical Context: Essays in Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> For concise statements on the interaction between *zakonomernost'* and *lichnost'* see David McDonald, "Introduction," in Leopold Haimson, *Russia's Revolutionary Experience, 1905–1917: Two Essays* (New York, 2005), ix–x; Jochen Hellbeck, "Introduction" and "Russian Autobiographical Practice," in Hellbeck and Klaus Heller, eds., *Autobiographical Practices in Russia—Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland* (Göttingen, 2004), 13–14, 280–85.

<sup>15</sup> Most of the following biographical information comes from Peter Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism*, vols. 1 and 2 (The Hague, 1961–72).

homeland. Like Aleksandr Ivanovich Koshelev (1806–83) and Petr Vasil'evich Kireevskii (1808–56), both of whom played significant roles in the formation of early Slavophilism, Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevskii were able to relate to those educated Russians born in the decade before the Patriotic War of 1812. Napoleon's occupation of Moscow and Russia's subsequent triumph over France grounded them in a collective childhood memory of the Russian nation acting in common purpose and shared sacrifice to defeat a foreign enemy, reconstitute the sovereignty of the state, and defend the Russian way of life. During different periods of their adult lives, Khomiakov and Kireevskii participated in important philosophical circles and literary salons. It was at these gatherings that they first befriended leading figures in state and society over conversations about the effects of European civilization on Russian culture and, consequently, the relationship between Russia and Europe in the realization of world history.<sup>16</sup> And in the course of their intermittent journalistic careers, both men published, edited, and/or contributed to several journals, including *The European*, *Moscow Herald*, *The Muscovite*, *Moscow Miscellany*, and *Russian Colloquium*, which allowed them to reach their intended audience in a public, if circumscribed, manner.

Yet the type of Russian who found the early Slavophile vision most appealing did not belong to that pre-1812 generation. The group principally attracted to Khomiakov and Kireevskii was a collection of young men, born sometime after Napoleon's defeat, who generally believed that religion was "the source of all enlightenment" and, as such, the determinant of a people's moral and historical potential.<sup>17</sup> These second-generation Slavophiles, including K. S. Aksakov, I. S. Aksakov, A. N. Popov, V. A. Panov, A. F. Gil'ferding, D. A. Valuev, Iu. F. Samarin, and N. P. Giliarov-Platonov, were intellectually defined by the fact that they had been reared in a milieu shaped by European science and philosophy but still found ultimate meaning in their native culture and its Orthodox heritage.<sup>18</sup> Khomiakov's and Kireevskii's influence on this group was partly based on the ease with which they operated in the seemingly antagonistic worlds of faith and reason. They comfortably spoke in the languages of German Idealism and Romanticism, two important modes of discourse in Russian society and in certain high-ranking offices of state.<sup>19</sup> Khomiakov, for example, was thought by some to possess

<sup>16</sup> Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1929).

<sup>17</sup> This is how one opponent of the Slavophiles described "their theory." B. N. Chicherin, *Vospominaniia. Moskva sorokovykh godov* (Moscow, 1929), 223–4.

<sup>18</sup> For anecdotal accounts of this group see *ibid.*, 236–78; S. M. Solov'ev, *Moi zapiski dlia detei moikh, a esli mozhno, i dlia drugikh* (Petrograd, 1915), 98–108.

<sup>19</sup> Andrei Zorin, *Kormia dvuglavogo orla. Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII–pervoi treti XIX veka* (Moscow, 2001), 352 ff.

an understanding of Hegel's philosophy that equaled, if not surpassed, that of Russian Hegelians (*gegel'ianty*).<sup>20</sup> Kireevskii studied with those he called the "first-class minds of Europe," including Schleiermacher, Savigny, Gans, Schelling, and Hegel, the last of whom twice invited the impressionable student from Russia to his private residence.<sup>21</sup> But they also conversed in the language of Orthodox dogma, ecclesiastical history, and the Church Fathers. Khomiakov in particular found lifelong sustenance in the spirituality, ritualism, and piety of the Russian Church,<sup>22</sup> even as he abhorred its reliance on civil authority to enforce canon law. And around the same time that he was composing two of his most notable essays, one on how different cultural stimuli generated different national trajectories and another on the need to overcome philosophical rationalism and religious fundamentalism,<sup>23</sup> Kireevskii sought personal betterment in the practices of Orthodox asceticism, which necessitated material privation and spiritual counseling from a monastic elder, and coordinated with members of the Optina hermitage and the Moscow Spiritual Academy to translate patristic and Byzantine writings into the Russian vernacular.<sup>24</sup>

It was this ability to render faith in innovative terms—"to reconcile modernity with the sacred tradition,"<sup>25</sup> as one scholar has described Khomiakov's aesthetic vision—and apply it to historiosophical problems that mainly distinguished early Slavophiles from their intellectual adversaries.<sup>26</sup> Whereas many *gegel'ianty* or Westernizers (*zapadniki*) sought to do away with speculation about transcendental reality or belief in a personal God as primitive, outdated modes of consciousness that hindered humanity's advancement toward higher stages of being, Khomiakov and Kireevskii made religion the cornerstone of their historiosophy. They did so not by uncritically reclaiming pre-Petrine Orthodoxy or naively championing the state-sponsored Church of their day. As we shall see below, Khomiakov and Kireevskii altered the anthropological and ecclesiastical

<sup>20</sup> A. I. Gertsen, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, 30 vols. (Moscow, 1954–66), 9: 157 (hereafter SS); *idem*, SS, 10: 190.

<sup>21</sup> Kireevskii's letters in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii I. V. Kireevskogo v dvukh tomakh*, ed. M. O. Gershenzon, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1911), 1: 23–43 (hereafter PSS Kireevskogo).

<sup>22</sup> Archimandrite Luke (Murianka), "Aleksi Khomiakov: A Study of the Interplay of Piety and Theology," in Tsurikov, *Khomiakov*, 21–37.

<sup>23</sup> Kireevskii, "O kharaktere prosveshcheniia Evropy i o ego otnoshenii k prosveshcheniiu Rossii (Pis'mo k gr. E. E. Komarovskomu)" and "O neobkhodimosti i vozmozhnosti novykh nachal dlia filosofii," PSS Kireevskogo, 1: 174–222, 223–64.

<sup>24</sup> Eberhard Müller, "Das Tagebuch Ivan Vasil'evič Kireevskijs, 1852–1854," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 14/2 (1966), 167–94.

<sup>25</sup> Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> A. I. Koshelev, *Zapiski Aleksandra Ivanovicha Kosheleva* (Berlin, 1884), 76–8; Gertsen, SS, 9: 133.

doctrines of Eastern Christianity in response to the challenges of Russian Hegelianism and in accordance with categories mainly derived from Schelling and Petr Iakovlevich Chaadaev (1794–1856), with the intent of making Orthodoxy meaningful to those members of educated society tempered by advances in the natural and social sciences and dissatisfied with the existing Church. In this reformulation of Russia's historical faith, God's will and His divine attributes, once believed to be inaccessible and external to man (*chelovek*), were partly internalized in the very structure of human nature, and the Orthodox Church was cast as a theonomous institution that lovingly guided the faithful in their communion with God and their willful actualization of Providence.<sup>27</sup>

Placing Slavophile religious thought in its formative and operational context, therefore, has implications beyond revising the standard, proleptic approach to the study of Slavophilism. An analysis of Khomiakov's and Kireevskii's writings that is contextually sensitive to its subject matter provides evidence to support claims about the resiliency, even centrality, of faith in the modern era, not as its antonym but as a vital, if sometimes dialectical, component of its realization.<sup>28</sup> Much of the reassessment of religion's relationship with modernity has occurred in scholarship on the Enlightenment and the variety of responses to it.<sup>29</sup> In this historiographical development, the foundations of "modern culture" are not exclusively secular but "decidedly religious," and the Enlightenment itself is historically retrieved as a multifarious phenomenon that "made possible new iterations of faith."<sup>30</sup> Recent reevaluations of Idealism, Romanticism, and French liberalism have similarly identified currents of thought that not only were informed by religious concerns, but in many cases sought to renovate religion by establishing new modes of comprehending God and articulating His Plan.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> On the concept of theonomy as it is employed in this article see V. V. Zen'kovskii, "Avtonomiia i teonomiia," *Put'* 3 (1926), 46–64.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Michael Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ, 2008); J. G. A. Pocock, "Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of Their History," *Modern Intellectual History* 5/1 (2008), 83–96; Frederick Beiser, "Berlin and the German Counter-Enlightenment," in Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2003), 105–16.

<sup>30</sup> Sorkin, *Religious Enlightenment*, 3, 20–21.

<sup>31</sup> Laurence Dickey, "Constant on Religion: 'Theism Descends from Heaven to Earth,'" in Helena Rosenblatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Constant* (Cambridge, 2009), 313–48; Peter Hodgson, "Hegel's Philosophy of Religion," in Frederick Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2008), 230–52; Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), chap. 10.

Early Slavophilism, of course, was not identical to these events in European intellectual history. It expressed some of the paradoxical lineaments embedded in the conventions of Russian political culture and discourse. Khomiakov and Kireevskii advocated spiritual freedom and ecclesiastical independence as inviolable norms, yet they never formulated concrete plans to guarantee the sanctity of these spheres in law; nor did they envision a legally organized civil society that might be built upon the foundations of religious liberty.<sup>32</sup> They extolled the simple faith of the *narod* as an untarnished demonstration of authentic Orthodoxy, even as they rearticulated their confession in a sophisticated, idiosyncratic idiom that was indecipherable to the Orthodox masses. They appropriated Eastern Christianity to address contemporary problems, despite their own conviction that the official Russian Church was partly responsible for these very same problems. And they privileged the tsarist monarchy as a genuine expression of Russian history and culture, while diminishing the actual value of the state by locating historiosophical authority in the living God, who resided in the true Orthodox Church and its members. Despite these disjunctions, it was their reconfiguration of Eastern Christianity as a dynamic religion of theocentric freedom and moral progress that made Khomiakov and Kireevskii proponents of a project parallel to currents in contemporary European thought. For their renovation of faith was not a return to idyll. It was conceived as a return to the spiritual traditions of personal creativity and institutional theonomy, the two elements that the early Slavophiles innovatively located in Orthodoxy to resolve the historiosophical dilemma of Russian modernity.

## II

One of the central questions to engage European thinkers after the French Revolution in political sovereignty, the Kantian revolution in philosophy, and similar moments of intellectual and sociopolitical rupture at the time was how best to alleviate the sense of personal alienation and spiritual disjointedness that resulted from the weakening and, in some cases, out-right destruction of traditional institutions and value systems. An array of antagonistic answers was

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<sup>32</sup> For Kireevskii, the political intent in removing secular authority from matters of faith was to infuse autocratic governance with Christian principles. Such a transformation, he believed, would produce two results. It would establish a more harmonious relationship between ruler and ruled in that the tsar and his government would once again express popular religious values, and it would put a check on the prerogatives of state without having to place constitutional limits on the sovereign's authority. See Kireevskii's letters to Koshelev in N. P. Koliupanov, *Biografiia Aleksandra Ivanovicha Kosheleva*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1892), Appendix 8, 94, 98–9.



offered in response to this question, especially in regard to the role of religion in fostering Europe's post-revolutionary recovery. The contours of this debate over religion were generally expressed in three broad programs: the reinstatement of conventional forms of Christian obedience, embodied most clearly in the Holy Alliance and the Prussian state's propagation of pietistic fundamentalism;<sup>33</sup> the annihilation of supernatural and transcendental modes of cognition, considered by atheists of various ideological persuasions to be the primary barrier to humanity's immanent advancement toward rational, secular autonomy;<sup>34</sup> or the renewal of Christianity through speculative philosophy and other forms of critical inquiry to make it meaningful to the present age.<sup>35</sup>

A similar question about the role of religion occupied educated Russia in the first third of the nineteenth century. In response to the upheavals that had unsettled the Continent for twenty-five years (1789–1815), leading figures in Russian government, court, church, and public opinion sought to strengthen the established order through the imposition of traditional Orthodoxy or, in some cases, the introduction of alternative types of Christian faith, as the tenets of enlightened absolutism had been weakened in their conceptual association with the ideological foundations of Revolutionary France. The offices of the Russian Church and the Most Holy Synod, the Russian Bible Society, the short-lived "Dual Ministry" of Spiritual Affairs and Popular Enlightenment, and various mystical groups inspired by the German Awakening used elements of Christianity to try to restore the integrity of Russian society. They did so by emphasizing spiritual renewal over institutional reform, bridling individual passion with barracks-style symmetry and spiritual hygiene, or directing social behavior toward normative truths found in Scripture.<sup>36</sup>

These efforts to deploy religion to buttress the status quo were not entirely successful, as domestic episodes undermined the imperial regime's claims to legitimacy and, consequently, compelled elements of society to alter the conventional understanding and application of faith in Russia. One of the main

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815–1848* (Berkeley, CA, 1972), 136 ff.; Maurice Bourquin, *Histoire de la Sainte Alliance* (Geneva, 1954), chap. 8.

<sup>34</sup> John Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Humanism* (Cambridge, 1980), chaps. 8–10; Gareth Stedman Jones, "Introduction," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York, 2002), 74–98.

<sup>35</sup> Laurence Dickey, "Hegel on Philosophy and Religion," in Frederick Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge, 1993), 301–47; Toews, *Hegelianism*, chaps. 2–3.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, IL, 1997); Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ, 1995), chap. 8.

propositions of autocracy, fully articulated during the Catherinian era, was that only the state could guide and direct Russia's imperial mission, as it alone stood above the petty, willy-nilly interests of the empire's disparate social groups.<sup>37</sup> The validity of this universalist claim further eroded in the last decade of Alexander I's life (d. 1825) as a result of growing administrative caprice (*proizvol*) and, paradoxically, Russia's military success in the "people's war" against Napoleon.<sup>38</sup> Frustration with arbitrary authority soon took institutional and ideological form with the establishment of clandestine groups like the Union of Salvation (1816), renamed the Society of True and Loyal Sons of the Fatherland (1817), and the Union of Prosperity (1818–21).

Discontent finally erupted in December 1825, when members of the secret Northern and Southern societies, several of whom were veterans of the Patriotic War of 1812, and regiments under their command violently repudiated autocracy, an event that both expressed and accelerated antipathy toward Russia's existing political system and culture. In response to the Decembrist revolt, Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) established the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery to spy on political suspects, including Khomiakov and Kireevskii, both of whom ran afoul of the government's surveillance apparatus and censorship regime. And in an attempt in the early 1830s to bring about much-needed institutional reform, while maintaining political stability following revolutions abroad and misguided social engineering at home, the minister of popular enlightenment, Count S. S. Uvarov, deployed Orthodoxy as one of two expressions of *narodnost'*, the other being autocracy, in a strategy to further the development of what he called the "state structure."<sup>39</sup> These and other measures started to convince some members of literate Russia, especially those who embraced various philosophies of history and religion then circulating in Europe, that the autocracy was no longer an agent of orderly progress but, rather, a major impediment to Russian history.

The sense of inertia that began to infuse educated society's historical consciousness helped to generate one of the most provocative symbols of the Nicholaevan era: Russian backwardness. In this conceptualization, which directly entered public discourse in the fall of 1836 with the publication of the first of Petr

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<sup>37</sup> David McDonald, "Domestic Conjunctures, the Russian State, and the World Outside, 1700–2006," in Robert Legvold, ed., *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Shadow of the Past* (New York, 2007), 156 ff.; Cynthia Hyla Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy: Eighteenth-Century Rulers and Writers in Political Dialogue* (DeKalb, IL, 2003), chap. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Martin, *Romantics*, chap. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Zorin, *Kormia dvuglavogo orla*, 339–44, 362–3.

Chaadaev's so-called *lettres philosophiques adressées à une dame*,<sup>40</sup> Russia lagged far behind its European counterparts because of unfavorable cultural and spiritual conditions that long ago separated it from the genuine source of world-historical advancement.<sup>41</sup> As such, Russia was incapable of pursuing the necessary course toward universal concord, however defined, since it lacked access to the proper stimuli available to other historically oriented peoples. The search soon was on to unravel this dilemma, a search that, beginning around 1838–42, elicited two broad responses in capital-city salons, circles, journalism, and scholarship: the Slavophile renovation of Eastern Christianity as a modern religion of freedom and progress, and the Russian Hegelian repudiation of religious consciousness as one of the main obstacles to historical development.

### III

Scholars of European intellectual history long ago identified two forms of agency, each seemingly antagonistic toward the other, in Hegel's philosophy of history. The agent of progress identified in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* was man himself, willfully and actively participating in the process by which Reason gradually emerged from, and then definitively established itself in, history. The agent of history principally outlined in *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* was Reason alone, which, in its absolute movement toward actualization, dialectically used humanity as an instrument to realize itself in historical time.<sup>42</sup> These divergent historiosophical categories helped to mold the language, symbols, and experiential self-interpretation of "young Russia" during the 1830s,<sup>43</sup> a group to which Kireevskii and Khomiakov initially belonged, as it sought to challenge the autocracy's claim to universality and historical agency,

<sup>40</sup> For the complete French-language letters, several of which will be discussed below, see Raymond T. McNally, ed. and trans., "Chaadaev's Philosophical Letters and His Apologia of a Madman," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 11 (1966), 34–117 (hereafter cited as Chaadaev, "Letters," to indicate authorship). The first letter was initially published in a Russian-language translation in the journal *Teleskop*, a facsimile of which can be found in P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis'ma*, vol. 1, ed. Z. A. Kamenskii (Moscow, 1991), 641–76.

<sup>41</sup> The contention that Russia lagged behind Europe, of course, pre-dates the Nicholaevan era. See, for example, N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, vol. 5 (St Petersburg, 1892; first published 1818), 226–8.

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (South Bend, IN, 1967), 154–5.

<sup>43</sup> N. V. Stankevich, "Opyt o filosofii Gegelia. (Perevod)," in *idem, Stikhotvoreniia. Tragediia. Proza*, ed. Aleksei Stankevich (Moscow, 1890), 183–238; Gertsen, *SS*, 9: 18–23. The phrase "young Russia" belongs to M. O. Gershenzon, *Istoriia molodoi Rossii* (Moscow and Petrograd, 1923).

recalibrate Russia's historical trajectory, and, in some cases, liberate itself from conventional gender and generational roles.<sup>44</sup>

Alienated from the dominant public structures of Nicholaevan Russia—an era commonly described by literary figures and cultural critics, including Kireevskii, for its spiritual frailty, moral decadence, intellectual atrophy, social vacuity, and psychological deficiency<sup>45</sup>—Russian Hegelians initially adopted a deterministic understanding of historical progress in which *lichnost'* was a vessel through which *zakonomernost'* rationally and inexorably worked itself out. Young men like N. V. Stankevich, M. A. Bakunin, and V. G. Belinskii initially assumed that the end of history would come into being through non-volitional forces that dialectically propelled humanity toward its optimistic end. It was man, as P. V. Annenkov later recalled, who constituted the “arena within which the rite of self-determination and the ultimate manifestation of the ‘Creative Idea’ is performed.”<sup>46</sup> The notion that Reason or Spirit emerged in human consciousness through an impersonal, immanent process that was external to the self precluded the possibility of personal initiative. From this perspective, human freedom could not vitiate or alter the course of history, and stages in historical development could not be circumvented or accelerated. What was required of the self-conscious individual was to align his will (*volia*) with the “eternal laws of Reason” (*vechnye zakony razumeniia*), laws that simultaneously justified the existing order of things, however exigent, and ineluctably led to the establishment of a rational world order based on love.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* (New York, 1965), chap. 10; Ana Siljak, “Between East and West: Hegel and the Origins of the Russian Dilemma,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62/2 (2001), 335–58; John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca, NY, 2007), chap. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Here I have in mind the works of Griboedov, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol'. For contemporary criticism see Kireevskii, *PSS Kireevskogo*, 2: 58–61; M. A. Bakunin, “Gimnazicheskie rechi Gegelia. Predislovie perevodchika,” *Moskovskii nabliudatel'* 16 (1838), 5–21; N. A. Polevoi, “Neskol'ko slov o sovremennoi russkoi literature,” *Literaturnaia kritika. Stat'i i retsenzii, 1824–1842* (Leningrad, 1990), 326–35; V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1953–9), 4: 193–270 (hereafter *PSS*).

<sup>46</sup> Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade*, 20, 27–8 (I have slightly amended Titunik's translation based on P. V. Annenkov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia*, ed. B. M. Eikhenbaum (Leningrad, 1928)).

<sup>47</sup> Stankevich, “Moia metafizika,” in *idem, Stikhotvoreniia. Tragediia. Proza*, 149–55, esp. 152 (although the word *razumenie* is more commonly translated as ‘understanding’, Stankevich used *razumenie* as an appositive to and synonym for *Razum* (‘Reason’) throughout his essay). See also Stankevich's letters to Bakunin in *Perepiska Nikolaia Vladimirovicha Stankevicha. 1830–1840*, ed. Aleksei Stankevich (Moscow, 1914), 592, 650–52; Bakunin's letters to Aleksandra and Natalia Beyer in Bakunin, *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem, 1828–1876*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1934), *passim*; Belinskii, *PSS*, 3: 325–56, 385–419. Stankevich's

Due to a variety of personal experiences and ideological influences, Belinskii and A. I. Herzen soon inverted those Hegelian concepts that they found to be overly deterministic to formulate a conception of *lichnost'* according to which the human person freely participated in the aesthetic and pedagogical act of making Reason conscious in the world. The result of such action was twofold: it would emancipate the embryonic Russian nation from political absolutism, i.e. from the principal institutional barrier to world-historical progress, and embed Russia's national development in the unfolding process of universal history. Although still understood in teleological terms, history was no longer thought to advance along the "path of perfection" in accordance with the impersonal dictates of some "natural, fated, and inevitably progressive scheme." Instead, the course of world history was contingent upon "phenomenal, chance protests" of self-conscious individuals who revolted against the impediments of Reason, a historiosophical assertion that not only accommodated free will but necessarily required its active intervention to fulfill the *telos* of history. Human freedom, or the "fullness of spiritual and material existence," was understood to be both the active means and the preordained end of history.<sup>48</sup>

Central to this Hegel *à la russe*, especially in its more volitional orientation, were the materialistic and atheistic tenets of Left Hegelianism,<sup>49</sup> concepts that around 1840 began to alter the discursive framework of Russian intellectual history by embedding an array of new categories in public opinion, which, to borrow the language of John Toews, anthropocentrically reduced the "actualization of the absolute" to the "self-actualization of man."<sup>50</sup> Viewed through the interpretative lenses of David Strauss, August Cieszkowski, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer,<sup>51</sup> Hegel's philosophies of history and religion were construed to mean that the procession of history, which was activated and guided by revolutionary *praxis*, perpetually negated the structure of the present, and that the dialectical progression of consciousness in world history had already moved beyond the psychological need for God.<sup>52</sup> History, therefore, became dependent upon the godless individual willfully acting in accordance

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and Bakunin's initial readings of Hegel favorably interpreted Christianity as a rational religion of love that was in the process of realizing and purifying itself over time.

<sup>48</sup> Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade*, 90, 220 (I once again have slightly altered Titunik's translation); Gertsen, *SS*, 9: 151; Belinskii, *PSS*, 6: 582; 8: 272, 276.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksandr Kornilov, *Kurs istorii Rossii XIX veka*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1912), 91 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Toews, *Hegelianism*, 1–3. Boris Jakowenko, *Geschichte des Hegelianismus in Russland* (Prague, 1938), chap. 3, charts this alteration in Russian Hegelianism.

<sup>51</sup> Gertsen, *SS*, 22: 38, 307; 9: 19, 27; Belinskii, *PSS*, 11: 484–5. Cf. André Liebich, *Between Ideology and Utopia: The Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski* (Boston, 1979), 59, 337 n. 114.

<sup>52</sup> Malia, *Herzen*, 225 ff.

with the laws of development and consciously committing himself to the necessity of humanity's immanent and natural self-redemption.<sup>53</sup> Religious faith and metaphysical speculation, what Herzen derisively labeled "scholasticism" and "mysticism," stood as outdated modes of consciousness that had to be surmounted in Russia, as they already had been in the political, literary, and philosophical centers of Europe.<sup>54</sup>

Scientific empiricism offered the only avenue toward truth, progress, and thus "salvation for modern man."<sup>55</sup> The human person was to orient himself not toward a supernatural or transcendental authority, i.e. the illusory product of what Herzen called "non-science" (*ne-nauka*), but toward an anthropological ideal of "rational man" and "purified personality."<sup>56</sup> Humanity could attain authentic freedom only after man became conscious of the world-historical fact that he was his own supreme being. Faith, therefore, had to be replaced by science if man was to become his higher self. Consequently, God and His earthly institution, the Church, were understood to be obstacles in the actualization of the unfettered personality and the advancement of history. It was Hegel's "algebra of revolution," Herzen insisted, that postulated the inevitable destruction of the "Christian world, the world of tradition that has outlived itself."<sup>57</sup> Russia's and the world's deliverance necessitated the end of religion. As such, Eastern Christianity had to be overcome by the willful actions of the autonomous *lichnost'* and the rational course of historical advancement, forces that would rectify the fallacy of the biblical God, secularize and ethicize the Beatitudes, break the ecclesiastical shackles that chained the human spirit to corrupt clerics, and emancipate the Russian people from supernatural and terrestrial slavery.<sup>58</sup>

#### IV

The principal philosophical challenge to the Hegelian revolution in Russian thought came from those members of educated society who found lasting resonance in the writings of Schelling,<sup>59</sup> including Kireevskii, who as early as

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<sup>53</sup> Vera Ammer, *Gottmenschentum und Menschgottum: Zur Auseinandersetzung von Christentum und Atheismus im russischen Denken* (Munich, 1988), 89–99.

<sup>54</sup> Gertsen, *SS*, 9: 24; V. P. Botkin's letter to Belinskii in Belinskii, *Pis'ma*, vol. 2, ed. E. A. Liatskii (St Petersburg, 1914), 418.

<sup>55</sup> Gertsen, *SS*, 8: 114.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 158; Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade*, 58–9; Belinskii, *PSS*, 6: 93.

<sup>57</sup> Gertsen, *SS*, 9: 23.

<sup>58</sup> Belinskii, "Letter to N. V. Gogol," in *idem, Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow, 1948), 503–12.

<sup>59</sup> B. F. Egorov, "Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul'tury XIX veka," in A. D. Koshelev and B. F. Egorov, eds., *Iz istorii russkoi kul'tury*, vol. 5 (Moscow, 1996), 171–84; Z. A. Kamenskii,

1832 advocated Schelling's work as an antidote to materialistic, rationalistic, and atheistic currents in European philosophy.<sup>60</sup> Kireevskii and his good friend Aleksandr Koshelev initially encountered Schelling's philosophical system in Lovers of Wisdom (*liubomudry*), a clandestine society organized in the mid-1820s by Prince V. F. Odoevskii and D. V. Venevitinov.<sup>61</sup> The group's unofficial journal, *Mnemosyne*, broadly promoted Schelling's contention that human freedom was grounded not in the immanent unfolding of empirical reality but in the eternal sphere of transcendental reality. In an aphorism about the history of philosophy and the limits of epistemology, for example, Odoevskii explained that in his quest for ultimate knowledge man existed in between two worlds, the conditional realm of matter and the absolute realm of the transcendent. If the human person remained cognitively trapped in the deterministic confines of nature, he could not advance to higher stages of existence. Yet, because he was created as a rational being, and as such reflected the very essence of the unconditional, man possessed the ability to leap out of the world of sensory perception and freely aspire "toward supreme, authentic knowledge," which resided in an otherworldly domain governed by the principles of infiniteness and freedom.<sup>62</sup>

This attempt to resolve the problem of freedom and necessity by locating human nature in an indeterminate Absolute was not uncommon in the wake of the Kantian revolution in ethics and anthropology.<sup>63</sup> What mainly distinguished Schelling's conceptualization of man's ultimate *Grund* from the general orientation of German Idealism—a distinction that helped to shape early Slavophilism's commitment to religious consciousness as the means to

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*Russkaia filosofiia nachala XIX veka i Shelling* (Moscow, 1980); Malia, *Herzen*, chap. 5. Herzen, Bakunin, and Belinskii went through Schellingian phases before their turn to Hegel and Left Hegelianism.

<sup>60</sup> Kireevskii, "Deviatnadtsatyi vek," *PSS Kireevskogo*, 1: 92–3; *idem*, "Rech' Shellinga," *PSS Kireevskogo*, 2: 92–103; *idem*, "Obozrenie sovremennogo sostoiianii literatury," *PSS Kireevskogo*, 1: 127 ff.; *idem*, "O neobkhozdimosti," 257 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Koshelev, *Zapiski*, 12–13; Z. A. Kamenskii, *Moskovskii kruzhok liubomudrov* (Moscow, 1980).

<sup>62</sup> Prince V. F. Odoevskii, "Aforizmy iz razlichnykh pisatelei, po chasti sovremennogo germanskogo liubomudriia," *Mnemoszina* 2 (1824), 83–4. Cf. π. π. [M. G. Pavlov], "O sposobakh issledovaniia prirody," *Mnemoszina* 4 (1825), 20 ff.

<sup>63</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York, 1973), chap. 4; Toews, *Hegelianism*, 32–7. The remainder of this section is informed by Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2005), 382–90; Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge, 2002), 172–98, 317–32; Warren Breckman, *Marx, The Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge, 1999), 54–62; Werner Marx, *The Philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling: History, System, and Freedom*, trans. Thomas Nenon (Bloomington, IN, 1984).

engender self-determination, self-consciousness, and thus Russia's advancement into the modern age<sup>64</sup>—resided in Schelling's insistence, which was picked up by Kireevskii, that human freedom emanated not just from an abstract notion of God but from a God who, although inaccessible to rational cognition, was real and actual.<sup>65</sup> The divine gift of free will, which constituted the organizing principle of human decision-making and action, came not from an impersonal God of the dead but from a willful God of the living.<sup>66</sup> And it was solely because of God's incarnational intervention in the course of man's temporal existence that the "melancholy monotony" of coming-to-be and passing-away had been disrupted, a gratuitous act of love from above that gave postlapsarian man the capacity to escape material annihilation.<sup>67</sup> Man's highest goal in this formulation was to act in accordance with the divine will of the living God.<sup>68</sup>

This "metaphysics of agency," to use Terry Pinkard's terminology,<sup>69</sup> was based on what Schelling called "the concept of derivative absoluteness or divinity," i.e. the postulation that God would only reveal Himself to a creature that was similar to Him, namely a free being that in its humility to and dependence upon God was self-determining. In this sense, man's finite, conditional freedom emanated from God's infinite, unconditional freedom. This similitude to God meant that man must be "just as" free as his Creator, a religious conceptualization of will and conduct that made the freedom to choose sacred, absolute, and divine. Although liberated from materialistic determinism by its derivation from God's freedom, human action did not lose its providential orientation, as free will was grounded in divine will, the locus in which absolute freedom and absolute necessity found complete harmony.<sup>70</sup> Revelation of this "double life," in which man participated both in the universal life of God and in the unique life that belonged exclusively to him, imparted soul-saving knowledge,<sup>71</sup> whereby man

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<sup>64</sup> Nicolai von Bubnoff, "Begleitwort," in *idem*, ed., *Russische religionsphilosophen Dokumente* (Heidelberg, 1956), 10; Wsewolod Setschkareff, *Schellings Einfluß in der russischen Literatur der 20-er und 30-er Jahre des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1939), 1.

<sup>65</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14 vols., ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856–61), vol. 7, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*: 358; Kireevskii, "Rech' Shellinga," 92–4, 100.

<sup>66</sup> Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 346.

<sup>67</sup> The phrase "melancholy monotony" belongs to Schelling. See Emil Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity*, ed. John Burbridge (Toronto, 1996), 104.

<sup>68</sup> Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 1, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*: 562.

<sup>69</sup> Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 325.

<sup>70</sup> Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 352.

<sup>71</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 25, ed. Jürgen Gebhardt and Thomas Hollweck (Columbia, MO, 1999), 193–242.



became aware of the fact that he possessed a spiritual personhood (*Selbstheit* or *Persönlichkeit*) that necessarily but freely drew him back up to God.<sup>72</sup> Translated into the historiosophical idiom of contemporary Russia, *zakonomernost'* was not world-immanent and rigidly deterministic but world-transcendent and creatively actualized by *lichnost'*. As we shall see below, it was this conceptualization that Petr Chaadaev offered to educated society circa 1829–36 as an explanation for Russian backwardness—the same milieu and timeframe in which the early Slavophiles, who frequently encountered Chaadaev in Moscow salons, including one hosted by Kireevskii's mother, A. P. Elagina, first became aware of Russia's historiosophical predicament.

## V

In the spring of 1842 Petr Chaadaev sent a letter to Schelling decrying the impact that the Hegelian revolution in historiosophy, “which teaches the dynamic advancement of humanity's spirit and reduces the role of the individual spirit to nothing,” was having on Russian and European thought. “I must tell you,” Chaadaev declared,

that we find ourselves in a kind of intellectual crisis, which will probably determine the future of our civilization, a home-grown reaction that preys upon us, a natural consequence of the foreign influences that are still among us to this day. Each event in the advancement of the human spirit has for us, therefore, the greatest significance. And that philosophy, which reigned supreme in Berlin before your arrival there, having penetrated Russia and placed faddish ideas in several of our young minds, threatens completely to distort our national sentiment. Its prodigious elasticity, which can be used for all sorts of applications, has cultivated among us a plethora of bizarre ideas about our history. Its fatalistic logic, which has nearly eliminated free will [*le libre arbitre*] and which finds inexorable necessity lurking everywhere . . . is prepared to reduce all of our history to an arrogant apotheosis of ourselves.

The only recourse to save Russia and Europe from the rigid determinism, ideological deformation, and cultural self-destruction that seemingly emanated from the system of Hegel was to ground man's conditional freedom in the necessity of the living God, who revealed man's destiny by implanting transcendental concepts—to be realized in historical time and social reality—in the soul of each person. Chaadaev hoped that Schelling's lecture series at the University of Berlin would facilitate this counterattack by eradicating

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<sup>72</sup> Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 346–7; *idem*, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 3, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*: 582; Kireevskii, “Rech' Shellinga,” 95–6.

the destructive tendencies that continued “to flourish in [Europe’s] academic capital.”<sup>73</sup>

Nearly six years before Schelling received this letter from his Russian admirer, Nicholas I had ordered Chaadaev’s house arrest for the publication of an epistolary essay in which the former imperial aide-de-camp condemned his own homeland for its spiritually induced backwardness. Chaadaev’s philosophical letter, as well as the seven other unpublished letters that had been circulating in manuscript form in Moscow’s salon society, has long been considered a “point of departure” in the course and structure of Russian intellectual history and, as such, has received much scholarly attention.<sup>74</sup> Often underappreciated in studies of Chaadaev’s contribution to Russian thought is the fact that his letters laid the rhetorical and conceptual foundation for all subsequent philosophies of history in Russia, including the historiosophy of early Slavophilism, that made religion and religious consciousness the *sine qua non* of moral and historical progress.<sup>75</sup>

In Chaadaev’s philosophy of history, Orthodoxy offered no stimulative hope for Russia’s historical stasis. The fateful decision made in tenth-century Kievan Rus’ to adopt Byzantine Orthodoxy, Chaadaev insisted, had isolated Russia from “the general law of humanity,” as the spiritual tradition it appropriated was confined to the inert asceticism and introverted mysticism of Eastern Christianity. Because of its religious isolation and peculiarity, Russia was closed off from the vigorous doctrines that for nearly two millennia had propelled the Roman Catholic world toward the Kingdom of God. Instead of embracing the social ideas of Western Christendom that had produced Europe’s progressive value system, i.e. “the ideas of duty, justice, law, and order,” the Russian people confessed and practiced aspects of the Christian faith that made them “individualistic, volatile, and incomplete.” Most disastrously, the servility and docility of Orthodoxy, which permeated Russian culture, separated its followers from the universal course of providential history, which necessitated an active, free, and outwardly oriented religiosity to build God’s “perfect order” on earth.<sup>76</sup>

Central to Chaadaev’s critique of contemporary Russian society and its cultural heritage, and what constituted the lynchpin of his historiosophy, were two

<sup>73</sup> Jean Gagarin, ed., *Oeuvres choisies de Pierre Tchadaïef* (Paris, 1862), 203–6.

<sup>74</sup> Gertsen, “Ot izdatelei,” *Poliarnaia zvezda* (1861), 141. On the centrality of Chaadaev’s letters to Russian intellectual and cultural history see, most recently, S. D. Gurvich-Lishchiner, *P. Ia. Chaadaev v russkoi kul’ture dvukh vekov* (St Petersburg, 2006).

<sup>75</sup> For notable exceptions see Pavel Miliukov, *Glavnye techeniia russkoi istoricheskoi mysli*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1898), 380–82; Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli. Individualizm i meshchanstvo v russkoi literature i zhizni XIX v.*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg, 1911), 328–31; M. O. Gershenzon, *P. Ia. Chaadaev. Zhizn’ i myshlenie* (St Petersburg, 1908), 76–82.

<sup>76</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 38, 40–41.

interrelated concepts mainly derived from Schelling: a “two-world theory” of human perfectibility, and the notion that it was religious ideas, not material interests or natural causation, that initiated and guided humanity’s advancement toward higher stages of being.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the stimulus to moral and historical progress was world-transcendent, not world-immanent. Although man physically lived in the mundane world, another world existed outside the realm of empirical reality. Because he was created by God and, therefore, in possession of divine characteristics, man was capable of relating to this transcendental reality. In fact, failure to orient one’s soul to the Divine caused psychological damage, as the soul, much like the body, required its own regimen, which could only be derived from the supernatural realm from which it had originated.<sup>78</sup> It was the subordination of the self to the transcendent that initiated the procedure by which the human person, in his innate quest for “unending perfectibility,” morally ascended to God and engendered the process by which His Kingdom was eschatologically actualized in social reality and historical time.<sup>79</sup>

Chaadaev’s two-world theory, which made the synonymous movements of individual perfectibility and collective advancement contingent upon man’s moral assimilation to the living God, challenged materialist philosophies of history that grounded the processes of historical progress in the natural sequence of human consciousness, i.e. the notion that human nature ascended to higher stages of being on its own accord.<sup>80</sup> According to Chaadaev, the structure of the material world was deterministic and, as such, entirely static, a closed cycle of finite physical existence and eternal spiritual death. It could not provide man dynamic principles with which to leap out of his limited, temporal existence. Moral progress was not immanent in nature, society, or the human mind unaided by revelation. Rather, it required the vertical intrusion of transcendental categories, of truths not made by human hands, into the horizontal realm of human existence. Any attempt to act in this world in accordance with a historiosophy exclusively organized around “the meaningless system of mechanical perfection” would lead that person or community down

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<sup>77</sup> Alexandre Koyré, *Etudes sur l’histoire de la pensée philosophique en Russie* (Paris, 1950), 54–89; Charles Quénet, *Tchaadaev et les lettres philosophiques: Contribution à l’étude de mouvement des idées en Russie* (Paris, 1931), 180–87. I borrow, and slightly amend, the “two-world theory” from Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1 (New York, 1978), 23–6.

<sup>78</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 35.

<sup>79</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 82.

<sup>80</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 80, 84.

the slippery slope toward “imaginary perfectibility” and “infinite degradation.”<sup>81</sup> The only truths that resided in human consciousness were the ones primordially deposited there by God.<sup>82</sup>

In this formulation of how divine gifts vitiated material causation, Chaadaev made religious ideas the impetus to historical development.<sup>83</sup> Actual progress and genuine ascent in the natural world were ultimately dependent upon revelation. God propelled history forward by creating a “moral sphere,” independent of human reason, out of which arose “modes of existence.” All social and cultural manifestations, e.g. values, mores, interests, even political and legal institutions, were the ever-unfolding epiphenomena of religious ideas that had been adopted at the beginning of a people’s historical existence.<sup>84</sup> Different stages in history were engendered not by changes in economic behavior but by spiritual advances initiated by revelation, the only force capable of stimulating moral and historical progress. Religion constituted the “invigorating principle” of history as well as the “soul of social existence” that shaped human behavior. Religious consciousness properly ordered, therefore, was not some archaic form of “fanaticism and superstition” but an invaluable type of non-rational cognition that allowed the religious person, who was attuned to the supernatural, to ascertain and participate in God’s revealed plan.<sup>85</sup>

By postulating the existence of transcendental reality and by locating the stimulus of moral and historical progress in God, Chaadaev helped to establish the notion in Russian discourse that the historiosophical problem of freedom and necessity could only be resolved in the maintenance and cultivation of religious consciousness. Awareness and acceptance of divine revelation liberated man from the dead necessity of matter, by making the pursuit of unending moral perfection a free choice that, although God-given, was the responsibility of each person. The living necessity of Providence required free will to actualize God’s plan, a concept embodied in the Incarnation, which expressed and symbolized the eternal harmony of absolute freedom and absolute necessity. The Word had become flesh in order “to lead man to his destiny, without limiting his freedom or suppressing any of the forces that are inherent to him.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 42, 83–4.

<sup>82</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 77.

<sup>83</sup> Chaadaev’s views in this regard were not entirely consistent. In *Apologie d’un Fou* (1837), Chaadaev made Peter I, not religious concepts and their actualization, the agent of historical change in Russia.

<sup>84</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 43–4, 77–8.

<sup>85</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 43–4, 84.

<sup>86</sup> Chaadaev, “Letters,” 44.

## VI

It was within this broad context—delineated by the imperial regime's appropriation of religion for matters of state, by the historiosophical revolutions in consciousness advocated by Russian Hegelians, by the Schellingian proposition that the empirical world was animated by and dependent upon the free creativity of the living God, and by Chaadaev's assertions that a people's historical potential resulted from the religiosity it originally embraced and that the fulfillment of Providence could only be achieved voluntarily—that Khomiakov and Kireevskii recast Orthodoxy as a religion of theocentric freedom and moral progress. To operate effectively in this discursive and ideological framework the early Slavophiles could not violate the established lexicon of educated society. Since at least the reign of Catherine the Great, philosophical and scientific terminology broadly determined the appropriate manner in which literate Russia, including elements of officialdom, spoke about itself and examined its country's needs and goals.<sup>87</sup> Khomiakov and Kireevskii were no exception. They never abandoned scientific and philosophical modes of discourse, even when they employed the language of faith, as such an abandonment would have placed their arguments outside the linguistic contours of their day. Instead, Khomiakov and Kireevskii sought to align philosophy and science with their own spiritual autobiographies, which were imbued with religious experiences shaped by Orthodoxy and from which they extrapolated signs and symbols to resolve the historiosophical dilemma engendered by historical consciousness in an age perceived to be historically stagnant.

One of the first steps that the early Slavophiles took to make Orthodox Christianity relevant to the concerns of educated society was to appropriate elements of Chaadaev's historiosophical scheme. This reconfiguration mainly occurred in Khomiakov's *Semiramida* or *Notes on Universal History*, a draft of which was composed in the late 1830s in response to Chaadaev's first philosophical letter.<sup>88</sup> In this massive work, Khomiakov posited the notion that history operated according to two antagonistic religious principles that

<sup>87</sup> W. Gareth Jones, "The Spirit of the *Nakaz*: Catherine II's Literary Debt to Montesquieu," *Slavonic and East European Review* 76/4 (1998), 658–71; Alexander Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture: A History to 1860* (Stanford, CA, 1963); I. Ia. Shchipanov, ed., *Russkie prosvetiteli (ot Radishcheva do dekabristov). Sbornie proizvedenii v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow, 1966).

<sup>88</sup> See the commentary in Khomiakov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 1, ed. E. V. Kharitonov (Moscow, 1994), 535–41. Excerpts from *Semiramida*, which began circulating among friends around 1840, were first published in Khomiakov, "Otryvok iz Zapisok o Vsemirnoi Istorii," *Russkaia beseda* 20 (1860), 107–79. Khomiakov's initial response to Chaadaev's letter occurred in late 1836. In that essay, which was excised from *Moscow Observer* on the general orders of Count Uvarov, Khomiakov defended Orthodoxy as an indigenous source of

engendered either a teleology of rigid determinism or an eschatology of personal creativity. This formulation of religious antinomies, expressed by competing notions of the Divine,<sup>89</sup> helped to introduce educated society to an array of binary categories—free will versus necessity (*neobkhdimost'*), conditional freedom grounded in the living God versus radical autonomy located in the atheistic self, theonomous obedience to God versus coerced obedience to institutional heteronomy—that Khomiakov contended were individually operative in each nation's historical experience and tangibly articulated in its social production of culture.<sup>90</sup> A *narod* that adopted religious principles organized around the idea of materiality (*materializm* or *veshchestvennost'*) and symbolized by a divinity that took the form of impersonal necessity inexorably manifested a political culture disposed to conquest, *étatisme*, and aristocracy, and it produced types of cognition inclined toward logical analysis, rationalism, and empiricism. The volitional religious current, on the other hand, which was organized around the concept of spirituality (*dukhovnost'*) and a God symbolically represented by a freely creating personality, gave rise in Khomiakov's estimation to a political culture of communal harmony in which moral and historical development was continuously stimulated and the human person maintained his distinct rights (*prava*) as a child of the living God, and it engendered modes of consciousness that sought synthesis, reconciliation, and transcendence.<sup>91</sup>

In Kireevskii's historiosophical narrative, the principle of *dukhovnost'*, perfected in time by Incarnation, Resurrection, and the Body of Christ, entered Russian history at the moment of its conversion to Eastern Christianity.<sup>92</sup> Interacting with Russia's indigenous cultural norms and social values, the religion of free spirituality, expressed in the doctrines of the authentic, uncorrupted Church, revealed itself in a variety of unique ways: the peasant commune, which embodied the religiosity of conditional freedom and equality before God in socioeconomic terms; "believing reason," the integrity of the human person (*tsel'nost' lichnosti*), and the compatibility of faith and reason, which expressed the wholeness of man's dual nature in epistemological and ontological terms; and catholicity (*sobornost'* or *kafolichnost'*), which manifested the synergetic mystery

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Russian "enlightenment." See Richard Tempest, "Neizdannaia stat'ia A. S. Khomiakova," *Simvol* 16 (1986), 121–34.

<sup>89</sup> Khomiakov, *PSS Khomiakova*, 3 (1871): 188–96.

<sup>90</sup> Khomiakov, *PSS Khomiakova*, 3 (1871): 22, 148 ff., *passim*.

<sup>91</sup> The Russian terms belong to Khomiakov. See "Otryvok iz Zapisok," 112–13; and Tat'iana Blagova, *Rodonachal'niki slavianofil'stva: A. S. Khomiakov i I. V. Kireevskii* (Moscow, 1995), 53, 59–60. Cf. V. I. Kerimov, "Filosofia istorii A. S. Khomiakova. (Po stranitsam odnoi poluzabytoi raboty)," *Voprosy filosofii* 3 (1988), 98; V. A. Koshelev, "Paradoksy Khomiakova," in Khomiakov, *Sochineniia*, 10–11.

<sup>92</sup> Kireevskii, "O kharaktere prosveshcheniia," 202.

of God's unconditional love for His children and man's voluntary assimilation to his Creator in ecclesiastical terms.<sup>93</sup> The religiosity that Russia initially confessed and historically practiced, in other words, shaped and animated its original institutional mores and social practices, as well as the psychological disposition of its people.<sup>94</sup>

Since Russia's foundational religious principle was theocentric freedom and ecclesiastical theonomy or, as another Slavophile would later call it, "free obedience to God and the truth in his Church,"<sup>95</sup> its historical destiny could only be realized in that same spirit. Any deviation from or violation of this mode of existence, in which the human person voluntarily aspired to fulfill God's will, would foment tremendous cultural, psychological, and historiosophical turmoil, as it would mean that Russia was no longer acting or developing in accordance with its own spiritual substructure. Throughout the course of Russian history the threat against this spiritual foundation was real and perennial in the form of the expansionist, imperialistic state.<sup>96</sup> The "religion of material or logical necessity" that generated this type of despotic authority and the physical and ontological violence endemic to it constantly sought to annihilate the religion of personal creativity by undermining its sacred categories and destroying its visible manifestations.<sup>97</sup> The bureaucratic state, as a worldly mechanism derived from the principle of materiality, continually branded its sword against the true Church, which was not of this world. If political absolutism surmounted and dominated this divine institution, whose only means of defense was the Word of God, then its actions would produce one of two types of ersatz religion: an official, heteronomous religion from which "nihilism" and "immanence" dialectically arose in revolt or a popular, retrograde faith from which a "fetishism" of rituals decadently flourished.<sup>98</sup> As such, the religious principles that generated harmony, reconciliation, and moral perfectibility had to be defended as inviolable against its enemies, imperialism, atheism, and sectarianism.

Embedded in this historiosophy was a two-world theory, similar to the one offered by Schelling and Chaadaev, that posited the existence of a permanent

<sup>93</sup> Kireevskii, "V otvet A. S. Khomiakovu," *PSS Kireevskogo*, 1: 114 ff.; Müller, *Russischer Intellekt*, 318–28; Albert Alyoshin, "The Slavophile Lexicon of *Personality*," *Studies in East European Thought* 61/2–3 (2009), 77–88; Kerimov, "Filosofia istorii," 96–100; Blagova, *Rodonachal'niki*, 67–8, 77; Christoff, *Slavophilism*, 1: chap. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Kireevskii "Otryvki," *PSS Kireevskogo*, 1: 270–72.

<sup>95</sup> I. S. Aksakov, *Sochineniia I. S. Aksakova*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1886), 107.

<sup>96</sup> Kireevskii's letter to Koshelev in Koliupanov, *Biografiia*, Appendix 8, 84.

<sup>97</sup> Iu. F. Samarin, "Ot redaktsii," *Russkaia beseda* 20 (1860), 105; Khomiakov, *PSS Khomiakova*, 3 (1871): 315–20.

<sup>98</sup> Khomiakov, "David," *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow, 1910), 132–3; Samarin, "Ot redaktsii," 105; Koshelev, "Paradoksy Khomiakova," 12.

realm of being grounded in the transcendent and a transient realm of appearance located in nature.<sup>99</sup> Although man lived in both realms, he was predisposed, as a divinely created being, to orient himself to the Creator's higher truths, to things unseen, from which he acquired moral freedom and personal dignity. Because divine truth "resided outside" the confines of physical reality, the ways of God were inscrutable and inaccessible to the "dialectical process" of human reason.<sup>100</sup> Rational cognition acted as a guide for man in the material world, a realm for which it was properly suited, but it could not cross over boundaries that definitively separated revelation and Providence from postlapsarian thought.<sup>101</sup>

The only mode of cognition that could open the human person to the transcendent was religious consciousness, which constituted a higher type of comprehension than empiricism, as it employed all of man's cognitive faculties, including, but not limited to, reason.<sup>102</sup> Faith, which Khomiakov described as a gracious gift from heaven, granted man epistemological access to the "inner mysteries of God," which, once humbly received, enveloped the faithful in the "spirit of divine wisdom."<sup>103</sup> The human person was capable of attaining such knowledge through the faculty of religious consciousness because he was created in the image and likeness of God, which meant that he passively possessed certain divine-like qualities that, once recovered and made operable, actively obligated him to assimilate to God. Reason, although flawed and limited, could become conscious of its "essential relationship to God" because the Creator had implanted the possibility of similitude in the very structure of human nature.<sup>104</sup> In fact, it was man's movement toward the Divine that constituted his free destiny and the process by which history was realized in social reality, as God lovingly imposed upon each person the obligation not to be satisfied with approximate perfection but to strive continuously and vigorously toward absolute perfection in this world.<sup>105</sup>

In the Slavophile reading of Orthodox anthropology, God's plan could not be realized by external force, as coercion was anathema to the Lord and interrupted the synergetic tension between God's gracious descent to His children and man's free but ordered ascent to his Creator. Each person must willfully submit to the

<sup>99</sup> Khomiakov, "Vtoroe pis'mo o filosofii k Iu. F. Samarinu," *PSS Khomiakova*, 1 (1861): 321–48.

<sup>100</sup> Kireevskii, "O kharaktere prosveshcheniia," 178, 186; Khomiakov, "Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia ucheniia o tserkvi," *PSS Khomiakova*, 2 (1900): 10, 12; Khomiakoff, *L'église latine et le protestantisme au point de vue de l'église d'Orient* (Lausanne and Vevey, 1872), 185–6.

<sup>101</sup> Kireevskii, "O neobkhodimosti," 240, 247, 248.

<sup>102</sup> Kireevskii, "O neobkhodimosti," 250, 257.

<sup>103</sup> Khomiakov, "Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia," 11–12, 18; *idem*, *L'église latine*, 265–6.

<sup>104</sup> Kireevskii, "O neobkhodimosti," 261; *idem*, "Otryvki," 274–5.

<sup>105</sup> Khomiakoff, *L'église latine*, 269–70.



divine vocation embedded in him. The assimilative process of moral progress toward God necessitated free will. Once man became cognizant of this “vital relationship” between Providence and freedom, he gained awareness of the “moral world order” that mysteriously resided in the transcendent, but was made accessible to him through religious consciousness and his voluntary participation in God’s will.<sup>106</sup> It was this consciousness of moral freedom, of the freedom to choose between the love of God and the pride of *egoizm*, that definitively established the way in which man’s finite reason related “to God, the eternal source of reason.”<sup>107</sup>

Yet the human person could not accomplish his free destiny in the solitude of “individual religiosity.” Because of moral imperfections that could never fully be overcome, every person, including the faithful, was “blind” and in perpetual revolt against God. For faith to be active and objective, Khomiakov declared and Kireevskii generally concurred, the individual must freely join the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which alone on earth preserved God’s revealed truth, provided a loving sanctuary for the soul’s salvation, and facilitated the gradual process by which man morally aspired to God’s perfection.<sup>108</sup> The Orthodox Church, therefore, constituted a unique institution in the world of sin. Unlike man-made organizations, legal systems, or forms of government, all of which emanated from the natural world and thus expressed man’s fallen state, the Church was governed by God’s gracious, unconditional love. This authentic *ekklesia*, analogous to God’s love and Christ’s redemption, was not an external authority (*avtoritet*) to be imposed upon man. It was an embodiment of truth that sought free believers who longed to fulfill the divinely ordained goal of Providence. Membership, therefore, could never be compelled. The human person voluntarily entered the Body of Christ and, once inside, willfully subordinated himself to its doctrines, a concept of indoctrination that Khomiakov exclusively assigned to Orthodox ecclesiology.<sup>109</sup> In this manner, conscience was not enslaved to heteronomous dogma. Rather, it was liberated from the anthropocentric shackles of material existence by “illuminated grace” and lifted to “those inaccessible heights where Divinity manifests itself.”<sup>110</sup> Fully grounded in the freedom of Christ, whose divine life and redemptive death were manifest in the theonomous Church, man once again was psychologically disposed to

<sup>106</sup> Kireevskii, “O neobkhodimosti,” 231; *idem*, “Otryvki,” 281.

<sup>107</sup> Khomiakov, *L’Église latine*, 259–60.

<sup>108</sup> Khomiakov, “Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia,” 10–12, 22; *idem*, *L’Église latine*, 265–6, 299; Kireevskii, “Otryvki,” 277.

<sup>109</sup> Khomiakov, “Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia,” 6–7, 17, 20; *idem*, *L’Église latine*, 269–71.

<sup>110</sup> Khomiakov, “Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia,” 4, 13; *idem*, *L’Église latine*, 39–40, 44–5, 58–9; Kireevskii, “Otryvki,” 279.

pursue “inner perfection” and “divine contemplation,”<sup>111</sup> the sacred means by which humans willfully achieved their moral and historical destiny of personal and communal wholeness.<sup>112</sup>

In the political and ideological context of Nicholaevan Russia, however, the Slavophile project for moral and historical progress was hemmed in by the competing forces of the bureaucratic autocracy, which included the state-sponsored Church, and elements of educated society who believed that religion was the principal psychological barrier to unfettered autonomy. If salvation was partly dependent upon sanctuary in a theonomous church, then all Orthodox subjects of the empire were condemned, at least temporarily, to a life of spiritual stagnation, as the Russian Church in its present manifestation was not free from state tutelage. It was perverted by civil authority, which reduced the Body of Christ to an intolerant instrument of state that persecuted believers and non-believers alike for its own ends.<sup>113</sup> As such, the Church could not perform its sacred mission of guiding the faithful toward their free destiny. And if salvation was partly dependent on religious consciousness, then the soul of every person was threatened with eternal damnation, as the atheistic, materialist members of “young Russia” and their European counterparts were systematically undermining Christianity, the Church, and God Himself. Providence and transcendental reality, the authentic sources of man’s freedom, dignity, and vocation, were being closed off by the hubris of godless man, who, having fled the debauched Church of the imperial era, imparted greater authority to his rational cognition than to the faith of his fathers.

Herein resides the principal critique of Slavophile religious thought. It was the absolutist state’s sustained assault against the Orthodox Church and the tenets of “free obedience” that had precipitated the collapse in Russia of the one institution that was intended to preserve God’s truth and thus direct both the individual *lichnost’* and the collective *narod* in their quests for forgiveness and salvation. The consequences for Russia’s moral and historical development were disastrous. Once the Russian Church began to rely on civil law to defend itself against heresy, dissent, and confessional competition, a turning point that Kireevskii dated back to Ivan IV’s *Hundred Chapters* (1551) and that Khomiakov located in Peter I’s *Spiritual Regulations* (1721), it had become a barrier to God’s revealed truths of similitude anthropology, theonomous sanctuary, and providential voluntarism, the complex of divine categories that guaranteed

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<sup>111</sup> Khomiakov, “Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia,” 18; *idem*, *L’eglise latine*, 302.

<sup>112</sup> Khomiakoff, *L’eglise latine*, 265.

<sup>113</sup> K. S. Aksakov, “Zapiska o vnutrennom sostoianii Rossii,” in S. F. Sharapov, ed., *Teoriia gosudarstva u slavianofilov. Sbornik statei* (St Petersburg, 1898), 40 ff.

freedom and stimulated history.<sup>114</sup> By subordinating the divine mission of the Orthodox Church to the “narrow goals of official conservatism,” as one of the second-generation Slavophiles noted, the autocracy had violated the synergetic relationship between God and man.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the Petrine state, now manifested in the Nicholaevan regime, and the Church hierarchy that acquiesced to the demands of empire, were responsible for annihilating the psychological and institutional foundations of religious consciousness, as evidenced by the advent of atheistic materialism and the spiritual disorder of contemporary society.<sup>116</sup> The only way to reestablish the foundations of faith—the conduit by which the person could morally progress and the Russian nation could advance to higher stages of historical being—was to remove secular authority from Church and conscience, as those two realms exclusively belonged to the living God, who freely called His children to return to Him in the providential course of history.

## VII

Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevskii survived most of their adversaries. Nicholas I died in February 1855 in the midst of a deteriorating war effort against major European powers. With the final collapse of the Russian military on the Crimean Peninsula a year later, a defeat that Khomiakov and others blamed on a spiritual crisis brought about by the autocracy’s intrusion into matters of faith,<sup>117</sup> the system of governance associated with the Nicholaevan regime lay in disrepute. Petr Chaadaev, whose writings on Russian backwardness and religious consciousness informed the Slavophile revision of Orthodoxy, died in April 1856 after two decades of public silence following the scandal of his philosophical letter. And a core group of *gegel’iantsy*, including Stankevich, Belinskii, Herzen, and Bakunin, had passed from the domestic scene because of death, imprisonment, or emigration.

The fact that Khomiakov and Kireevskii outlasted their antagonists did not mean that they immediately succeeded in altering social and political reality in Russia. Although some of their young confrères served in government or took leading roles in shaping public opinion during the reign of Alexander II (1855–81), Khomiakov and Kireevskii failed to offer a concrete program to bring about

<sup>114</sup> Kireevskii, “V otvet,” 119–20; Khomiakov, “Opyt katikhizicheskogo izlozheniia,” 18; Samarin, “Predislovie,” iii–viii, xxxi–xxxiv; Christoff, *Slavophilism*, 2: 301; Blagova, *Rodonachal’niki slavianofil’stva*, 71–2.

<sup>115</sup> Samarin, “Predislovie,” iii–iv.

<sup>116</sup> Kireevskii’s letter to Koshelev in Koliupanov, *Biografiia*, Appendix 8, 85.

<sup>117</sup> A. A. Papkov, *Tserkovno-obshchestvennye voprosy v epokhu Tsaria-Osvoboditelia* (St Petersburg, 1902), 1–12.

Russia's spiritual renewal and thus stimulate its historical development according to their terms. After the forced closure of his journal *The European* in 1832, Kireevskii fluctuated between extended periods of detachment and brief moments of intellectual productivity. Because of censorship, most of Khomiakov's writings on religion were either privately circulated in manuscript form or published abroad, usually in a language other than Russian.

The lack of a practical program among the early Slavophiles, of course, cannot be reduced solely to despondency or suppression. Their suspicion of constitutionalism, the rule of law, mass partisan politics, and bureaucratic autocracy meant that they had little recourse other than appealing to nostalgia and the tsar's Christian humility in their assertion that Church and personhood were inviolable, especially in a legal and political culture that had no tradition of rights or limits on the prerogatives of state.<sup>118</sup> The focus on spiritual renovation also meant that their overall project was concerned less with socioeconomic innovation—despite their abhorrence of serfdom, most Slavophiles still believed in the traditional stratification of the Russian population into estates—and more with changes in psychology and conduct engendered by the recovery of native cultural norms, as evidenced by their interest in publishing compilations of and studies about Russian folkways. A new Russia was not to be derived from a radical reorientation of its economic foundations or the leveling of society. It would come, rather, from the spiritualization of existing social and political relationships and the cultivation of supposedly authentic institutions.

Yet their effort to reconfigure Eastern Christianity as a modern religion of freedom and progress profoundly altered public discourse about Orthodoxy's role in the realization of Russian history,<sup>119</sup> an alteration that by early 1905 directly shaped the way in which S. Iu. Witte, in his capacity as chairman of the Committee of Ministers and one of the empire's leading statesmen, argued for the establishment of religious freedom.<sup>120</sup> For Khomiakov and Kireevskii grounded their vision of Orthodoxy in the linguistic and conceptual framework of modernity, which in turn affected the way modernity was articulated in its Russian

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<sup>118</sup> For an early appreciation of this aspect of Slavophilism and its long-term implications for Russian public opinion see Leopold Haimson, "The Parties and the State: The Evolution of Political Attitudes," in Michael Cherniavsky, ed., *The Structure of Russian History: Interpretive Essays* (New York, 1970), 309–40, esp. 313.

<sup>119</sup> Here I have in mind certain formulations by F. M. Dostoevskii, A. D. Gradovskii, V. S. Solov'ev, Metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitskii), M. A. Stakhovich, M. O. Gershenzon, S. N. Bulgakov, and D. N. Shipov. For a lesser known but equally provocative appropriation of Slavophile religious thought see M. Lebedev, *Vzaimnoe otnoshenie tserkvi i gosudarstva po vozzreniiam slavianofilov. Opyt opravdaniia sistemy otdeleniia tserkvi ot gosudarstva* (Kazan', 1908).

<sup>120</sup> S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1960), 361–6.

idiom until the end of the old regime. They accepted the premise that theirs was a paradoxical age of historical consciousness and historical stasis, a dilemma informed by a complex of antagonistic categories: free will versus necessity, transcendence versus immanence, spirituality versus materiality, inner renewal versus state-sponsored social engineering. In their creative reconfiguration of Russia's religious heritage, it was Orthodox anthropology that helped to resolve these antagonisms by partly grounding divine characteristics in human nature, an internalization of God's authority that established theocentric freedom, as opposed to unfettered autonomy, as the individual's proper historiosophical disposition. And it was Orthodox ecclesiology, in which the Church constituted a theonomous sanctuary assigned the sacred task of freely bringing about man's moral progress, that removed coercion from the law-governed process of history. Orthodoxy in this sense became the meaningful mode of thought and behavior to generate individual and collective advancement in historical time.