

2. RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN RUSSIAN THOUGHT, 1520–1825

G. M. HAMBURG

In his landmark essay *On Liberty* (1859) John Stuart Mill described religious freedom as the foundation of liberty of thought, opinion, and sentiment and as “practically inseparable” from freedom of speech and freedom of the press. He asserted, “No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected is free, whatever may be its form of government.”¹ Like so many other nineteenth-century thinkers, Mill regarded religious freedom as the virtually exclusive product of Western civilization, even though he had the honesty to admit that intolerance “is so natural to mankind . . . that religious freedom has hardly anywhere been practically realized, except where religious indifference, which dislikes to have its peace disturbed by theological quarrels, has added its weight to the scale. In the minds of almost all religious persons, even in the most tolerant countries, the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserves.”²

Mill’s position on the foundational importance of religious toleration to the wider practice of civil liberties deserves careful consideration, as does his caveat about the “tacit reserves” often attached to toleration. But Mill’s assumption that religious toleration should be associated primarily with Western societies is almost certainly a major historical blunder. As Amartya Sen has contended in *The Argumentative Indian*, religious toleration in South Asia has roots in the third century BCE and took modern form in the sixteenth century under Emperor Akbar.³ Thus the South Asian record of tolerating, even celebrating, religious and intellectual diversity rivals or exceeds that of the West. Moreover, no historian can be insensible to the fact that in twentieth-century Europe, the supposed “home” of religious toleration, powerful political regimes committed themselves to the destruction of religious pluralism. Clearly, given the stakes for human liberty posed by religious toleration and the elementary misunderstandings surrounding the history of the phenomenon, it is urgent for scholars to analyze the development of toleration in Europe and elsewhere.

This chapter analyzes Russian thinking about religious toleration from the first quarter of the sixteenth century to 1825. The chapter offers a brief survey of the historiography on religious toleration in early modern Europe; a short analysis of Russian terms connoting toleration; a multipart analysis of tolerationist thinking from the early sixteenth century to 1825; and an

examination of the patterns of Russian tolerationist thinking with special reference to the European Enlightenment. The chief goal of the chapter is to juxtapose Russian toleration, in theory and practice, with the early modern and modern record in Western Europe: in this context, the impact of the European Enlightenment on Russian toleration will receive special attention. Since this chapter is a speculative piece designed to provoke informed discussion and further research, the reader should not expect monographic depth or strict proportionality in the treatment of subjects under scrutiny.

At the outset the reader should note that, in both Western Europe and Russia, the concept of religious toleration applied chiefly to groups rather than to individuals. It usually connoted freedom of religious practice for a religious minority or set of minorities but not necessarily for all minorities in a polity. Toleration did not generally entail freedom of preaching to members of other denominations, particularly to members of the established church, nor did it generally imply freedom of the press for the tolerated group. By definition, freedom of conscience denoted an individual right of religious belief and practice: it was therefore a more sweeping right than anything connected with toleration.

In historical literature religious toleration has sometimes been associated with the phenomenon of secularism, itself a multivalent concept. In certain contexts the adjective *secular* has been used by historians to distinguish any political measures not directly bearing on religion: the trouble with this usage, especially for pre-Petrine Russia, is that the Russian worldview was thoroughly religious, so for a Muscovite to imagine an act of state devoid of religious significance was difficult. Sometimes it has been said that Peter the Great secularized Russia, this description usually meaning that Peter bureaucratically subordinated the Church to the state or that he confiscated monastic lands, thereby breaking the economic power of the Church. Such usages have their appropriate contexts, but they should not be read more broadly as implying that Peter created a polity free of religious influence or that the Petrine elite itself was irreligious. These broader claims are deeply problematic—indeed, falsifiable. The term *secularism* has sometimes been employed to connote an irreligious ideological movement or a commitment to the proposition that reason refutes and crowds out religious belief. However, as Charles Taylor has argued in his magisterial book, *A Secular Age*, it probably makes more sense to think of toleration and modern secularism as connected elements in a centuries-long historical process whereby human beings “moved from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among many.” This kind of society, rather than its early

modern predecessors, can truly be called secular.⁴ This chapter, therefore, is not about the making of Russian secularity in Taylor's sense, nor is it about the emergence of a secularist sensibility. Rather it is about the emergence of tolerationist thought in a religiously divided part of Eastern Europe.

TOLERATION AND THE WESTERN ENLIGHTENMENT

Although in Western Europe the term "toleration" has had a long history, many modern historians of Europe have connected the concept with the Enlightenment.⁵ A vigorous assertion of the case for linking toleration with the Enlightenment and, in turn, with the making of modern secularism can be found in Jonathan Israel's synthesis, *Enlightenment Contested*.⁶ There Israel has pointed to the influence of three tolerationist doctrines: Baruch de Spinoza's defense of freedom of conscience in *Theological-Philosophical Treatise* (1670) and *Political Treatise* (1677); Pierre Bayle's fideistic notion of toleration in *Diverse Thoughts* (1683) and *Philosophical Commentary* (1686); and John Locke's cautious defense of freedom of worship in his three letters concerning toleration (1689–1692).⁷ Israel claims that in the short term Locke's "defective" and moderate theory of toleration had great appeal in those countries where the goal of thinkers was to prod monarchs toward incremental limitations of church authority; however, in the long term Spinoza's more radical theory, grounded in freedom of thought, "cleared a greater space for liberty and human rights than Locke and . . . cuts a historically more direct and, arguably, more important path toward modern Western individualism."⁸

Israel's synthesis is useful as a taxonomy of the early Enlightenment, but it understates the philosophes' own awareness of their debt to earlier thinkers. For example, Voltaire, writing in *Treatise on Tolerance* (1763), insisted that toleration had been the established practice of all ancient peoples. Of the Romans, whom he called "our legislators," he observed, "The Romans did not recognize all [religious] cults, nor did they grant them all public sanction; but they permitted all of them to exist."⁹ Edward Gibbon made a similar point in the first volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), where he contrasted early Roman imperial toleration with Christian "fanaticism."¹⁰ To make explicit the link between classical and Enlightenment toleration (while avoiding any positive reference to the Middle Ages), Peter Gay, in his own synthesis of the Enlightenment, referred to it as "the rise of modern paganism."¹¹

Indeed, *pace* Israel, the term *tolerantia* was used not only in classical Rome but also in medieval scholastic dialogues and in medieval defenses of prudential religious concord.¹² The word and concept therefore had a

continuous life for more than a millennium of West European history—a fact that should alert historians of Russian toleration to the possibility that Russian thinking about toleration might have roots elsewhere than in the Western Enlightenment.

A different order of criticism to the proposition that modern notions of toleration originated with the Enlightenment has come from social historians, who have argued that actual toleration in Europe emerged not from Enlightenment doctrines but from the determination of religious communities to bridge their differences in daily life. In Iberia from the seventh to the late fifteenth centuries Muslim–Christian *convivencia* thus had nothing to do with enlightened sensibilities and much to do with a mutual desire for harmony and prosperity in a common place of residence.¹³ Studies of the Dutch republic, the fabled “home of toleration” in early modern Europe, have shown that toleration was the result of arrangements made by numerous confessional groups to demarcate their own territories while granting to other confessions the right to worship—all in the interests of civil order.¹⁴ The most thoroughgoing case for understanding religious toleration not as intellectual process but as social practice can be found in Benjamin Kaplan’s *Divided by Faith*.¹⁵ There Kaplan sagely observed that in the early modern era toleration “was a pragmatic move, a grudging acceptance of unpleasant realities, not a positive virtue.” In his view, tolerance and intolerance “were not, in the ordinary sense, opposites” but were “dialectically and symbolically linked.”¹⁶ Kaplan also pointed out that toleration *among Christians* developed in inverse relationship to confessionalism: that is, toleration fell as confessionalism rose and rose again as confessionalism declined.¹⁷ The literature on the social history of toleration in Europe should alert historians of Russia to the possibilities that tolerationist ideas might appear not at moments of religious peace but at moments of social peril, and that tolerance as a practice might not be sustained in times of intense confessional self-assertion.

A final point to emerge in the historiography about toleration in Western Europe is the importance of state policy in shaping the scope of toleration. For example, although most Reformation-era states embraced one side or another in the religious disputes between Rome and Protestants, there was a strong irenic current at the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Austrian court, which for a time created in Habsburg lands a tolerationist alternative to religious strife.¹⁸ When the atmosphere changed in Vienna, the prospects for toleration quickly collapsed. Conversely, in the late eighteenth century toleration was reinstated in the Habsburg lands by Emperor Joseph II.¹⁹ The French crown also vacillated in its attitude toward

Protestants: the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 has even been seen as the event that gave rise to the French Enlightenment, because the decree aligned the French state with the established church and with its “superstitious” outlook in a fashion that many philosophes found objectionable.²⁰ Although state policy in Austria and France reflected changes in public mood and responded to social pressures from below, the state was also to some degree an independent agent. By the eighteenth century policies of toleration strongly appealed to those rulers who wished to advertise their politics as *bien policé*.

TOLERATION IN THE RUSSIAN LEXICON

The word *tolerantnost'*—the Russian cognate to the Latin *tolerantia*—has never been widely used in the literary language, perhaps because of its foreign sound to the Russian ear.²¹ The term most closely equivalent in meaning to West European cognates of *tolerantia* is *veroterpimost'*—a compound of *vera* (faith) and *terpimost'* (the abstract noun meaning “patience” or “tolerance” derived from the verb *terpet'*, whose basic meaning is “to endure”).²² According to the Academy of Sciences' dictionary of contemporary Russian, the word *veroterpimost'* entered the Russian language in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.²³ However, the verbal root *terpet'* derives from the Old Russian verb *t'rpēt'*, first attested in the *Sbornik* (Compendium) of 1076. Its abstract nominal form *t'rpenie* (basic meaning: “patience,” “endurance,” “forbearance”) was used in the fifteenth century to translate the Latin *tolerantia*.²⁴ By the fifteenth century a rough linguistic equivalent of the Latin *tolerantia* had thus appeared in Russia, and by the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century the word *veroterpimost'* had become an established term in Russian literary discourse. As shown below, the concept of religious toleration of “foreign” confessions was understood and discussed by Russian thinkers from the sixteenth century on.

Historically, the terms *terpimost'* and *veroterpimost'* have connoted toleration of heterodox groups—that is, members of the non-Orthodox confessions (*inovertsy*) and members of Orthodox “sects” such as the Old Believers. The terms have also usually connoted the celebration of religious rites without state interference but not necessarily freedom of conscience. Thus the dictionary compiled by Vladimir Dal' defined *veroterpimost'* as “freedom for the heterodox [*inovertsy*] to confess their faith.” His definition of the related construct *veroterpimoe gosudarstvo* (tolerant state) was “a state or government not restricting the heterodox in the conduct of their religious rites” (*ne stesniaiushchee inovertsev v otpravlenii obriadov*).²⁵ These definitions mirrored political circumstances in late imperial Russia,

where Orthodox subjects enjoyed the legal privileges of belonging to an established church but where their heterodox counterparts could generally conduct their religious rites without interference. Dal' was careful not to mention in his definition either freedom of preaching or freedom of conscience, neither of which was fully protected under Russian law; indeed, for *inovertsy* freedom of preaching was positively prohibited. Very occasionally, however, *terpimost'* and *veroterpimost'* have been applied both to groups and individuals, with the broader implication that toleration entails freedom of conscience.²⁶

TOLERATION AND TOLERANTISM IN MUSCOVY

In a famous passage at the end of volume 10 of his *History of the Russian State* Nikolai Karamzin argued that religious toleration (*terpimost'*) had been characteristic of Russians “from the time of Oleg’s children to the time of Fedor’s children.” He maintained that this toleration could not unconditionally be ascribed to enlightenment, “of which we had none”; nor to a true knowledge of faith, for the theologians quarreled about that; nor to the natural reason of the ancient princes. Whatever the source of toleration, Karamzin declared it “an advantage for Russia that had facilitated our conquests and our successes in domestic politics, for it required us to entice the non-Orthodox [*inovertsy*] to join us and to assist our great cause.”²⁷ The immediate context for these remarks was the state-encouraged *convivencia* between the Orthodox and Muslims in Kazan and Astrakhan after the conquest of those territories and the agreement of Ivan IV to permit Westerners in the city of Moscow to practice their faith, albeit without the construction of “foreign” churches. In 1582, in discussion with the Jesuit Antonio Possevino, Ivan asserted: “Every man praises his own faith, and no one loves to be contradicted. Argument leads to quarreling, but I desire tranquillity and love.”²⁸ He went on, “Catholics are free in Russia to observe their own faith, without reproach or disgrace.”²⁹ Karamzin was also mindful of Boris Godunov’s policy that “every faith is tolerated” in Russia, but that neither Catholics nor Lutherans nor any other non-Orthodox confessional community should be permitted to build churches there.³⁰ Boris broadened Russia’s connection with foreign confessions by sending eighteen young boyars to study in Europe, by taking preliminary steps toward the establishment of a university in Moscow, by meeting routinely with foreign doctors, and by inviting them to pray for him in their sacred services.³¹

Toleration in Muscovy in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the practical toleration necessitated by the conquest of Muslim territories and by the imperatives of diplomatic relations with Western powers—

that is, it was linked neither to European-style confessional struggles nor to the organic emergence from below of socially sanctioned toleration but was rather the result of conscious political calculation. As we would expect, practical toleration in Muscovy was circumstantial, varied according to the needs of the crown, and was limited in scope and subject to sudden reversal. In the sixteenth century the spirit of toleration did not extend to those Orthodox people suspected of heresy, as the trials of Maksim Grek (1525, 1531) and Matvei Bashkin (1553) illustrated. In the seventeenth century Orthodox toleration for the heterodox suddenly evaporated when the First False Dmitrii and his Polish allies provocatively insisted on permitting celebration of the Catholic mass in Kremlin churches. In the mid- and late seventeenth century, official toleration protected foreigners in the German settlement of Moscow, and Muslims in the Kazan and Astrakhan regions, but neither Muslims on the militarily active southern periphery nor sectarian Old Believers suspected of conspiracy against the Nikonian Church.³² Karamzin had hinted that toleration in Muscovy was a “political virtue,” and if this description is accurate, it was a virtue honored as often in the breach as in the observance.³³

Perhaps because the issue of religious toleration was so politically sensitive, few sixteenth-century writers addressed the issue at all. The early parameters of what discussion there was were indicated by the polemic between Maksim Grek and Nikolai Nemchin (also called Nikolai Bulev) over the Orthodox attitude toward the Latin Church.³⁴ Maksim defended Orthodox teaching on the Trinity against Nemchin’s “Latin” argument that the Eastern and Latin faiths were “one and the same” in so far as both faiths saw Christ as God’s son and as truly God, both recognized the same baptism, and both were inherited from the apostles and church fathers. In this polemic Maksim accused Nemchin of grave theological errors. Maksim asserted that “disunion [of the two faiths] is better than a union apart from God.”³⁵ For his part, Nemchin advocated an ecumenical solution to the church schism that would have bridged differences over ritual by pointing to commonly held dogmas, rather than differences over Trinitarian theology. It may be that Nemchin wrote under the inspiration of Nicolas of Cusa’s *On the Peace of Faith* (1453), which explored the main dogmatic agreements between Eastern and Western Christianity.³⁶

Yet in another context Maksim himself pleaded for a certain measure of understanding between the Latin and Orthodox faiths, as he demonstrated in his “Terrible and Portentous Tale” about the virtues of Western monasticism.³⁷ The centerpiece of Maksim’s story was an account of the martyrdom of the Italian moralist Girolamo Savonarola at the hands of Roman church

authorities. Maksim credited Savonarola with “steadfast and salutary teaching”: Savonarola’s sermons, beloved by many Florentines, led “each of them to desist from long-established evil habits and deception, and, in the place of gluttony, greed, and fleshly impurity, to adhere to wisdom and purity.”³⁸ According to Maksim, official accusations of heresy filled the Florentine preacher “with still greater godly fervor,” and he called the Roman church council’s decision against Savonarola “unrighteous and unpleasing to God.”³⁹ Maksim told his readers, “I do not write this to show that the Latin faith is pure, perfect and in all respects correct—may such insanity never affect me!—but to demonstrate to the Orthodox that even the incorrectly reasoning Latins manifest care and zeal in their faith in Christ.”⁴⁰

Maksim’s tale pointed toward the possibility not of ecclesiastical union but of a wary *détente* between Latins and Orthodox. Without surrendering their theological beliefs, he thought, the Orthodox could profit from pondering aspects of Latin practice. Maksim also hinted that the Orthodox should learn a negative lesson from the Savonarola affair—not to resort to accusations of heresy against critics of the Church’s worldliness and corruption. Maksim’s position cannot be understood without reference to his own circumstances: he was a foreign-born monk who for a time had adhered to the Latin faith and was therefore suspected by the Russian monastic elite of spiritual impurity; he was also a powerful critic of Orthodox monastic practice in Russia and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Both his plea for co-existence between the churches and his Orthodox rigorism reflected these circumstances.

According to Aleksandr Sergeevich Lappo-Danilevskii, the first sweeping defenses of religious toleration in the Russian language surfaced not in Muscovy but in the Polish-Lithuanian state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One very assertive Orthodox advocate of toleration was Chrystophor Philaleth [also known as Christopher Philalethes], whose tract *Apokrisis* (1597) appeared after the Brest Convocation.⁴¹ Philaleth argued that violence done in religion’s name is a “violation of the law of God and of natural law.” He claimed that the unity of the Polish-Lithuanian state depended on a legal contract, the declaration of the 1569 Lublin Diet that spelled out the “fundamental rights” of the nobility and of citizens. He saw any infringement of these political rights as a threat to the unity of the realm. He took the violation of the freedom of religious practice to be the most harmful of all rights violations: “In general, the worst form of coercion is coercion over faith; and its results are the most destructive. Nor can this species of coercion achieve the desired results, for it is pointless to use coercion against a free people: and even if other forms of coercion can succeed,

how can it be effective in matters of religion, which is a subject of the heart and the mind?"⁴²

In 1633 an anonymous treatise discussed the papacy's influence on religious rights in Lithuania. The author, who identified himself as "a Russian," argued that the Polish crown should be independent of Rome in political matters, and that this independence should extend to the right to protect Orthodox subjects from papal religious coercion. Indeed, the treatise claimed that maintaining the integrity of the Polish state required protection of the Orthodox.⁴³

These defenses of religious toleration by Russian Orthodox thinkers outside Muscovy were prompted by the contest for religious mastery in Lithuania, a contest in which the Orthodox could best secure protection by appealing to Polish statutory law, to customary religious freedoms, or to an abstractly desirable division between the powers of the Church and the state. Most of these arguments made in seventeenth-century Lithuania by representatives of the Russian Orthodox minority were not applicable to Muscovy, where Orthodoxy was the established religion and where members of other confessions found themselves petitioning the crown for protection of their rituals. However, it is worth noting that Philaleth's plea for toleration rested in part on natural law and on the principled conviction that religious coercion can never be effective since faith is "a subject of the heart and the mind." This argument for toleration was not historically contingent, and since it was framed in terms of human nature, it *would* have applied in Muscovy as well as in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Yet at this juncture the natural law tradition of thinking about religious rights was little developed in Muscovy. Exploring just how Philaleth's ideas were regarded by Muscovite church circles is a question that merits future investigation.

In Muscovy the mid- and late seventeenth-century religious climate was marked by the schism between Nikonians and Old Believers. In 1666 monks at the Solovetskii Monastery resisted the imposition of the Nikonian reforms, deposed their abbot, and in 1667 declared themselves willing to die rather than to accept the "new rituals." In 1682 the regent Sophia ordered the arrest of a leading opponent of the church reforms, Nikita Pustosviat, and decreed his beheading. In 1684 she commanded government agents to hunt down all opponents of the new rituals.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, many Old Believers accepted martyrdom rather than live in the world of the Antichrist. In 1688 as many as fifteen hundred Old Believers died in the raid on the Paleostrovskii Monastery in the White Sea region.⁴⁵ As Nikolai Pokrovskii has shown, among Old Believers apocalyptic thinking persisted through the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, alongside the conviction that the state Church

had committed apostasy in implementing the liturgical reforms.⁴⁶

The antagonism between the Nikonian Church and the Old Believers left little room for a spirit of toleration between them, yet even so there were some possibilities for a tentative accord. In 1655 the Greek Patriarch Paisii had advised Nikon that a schism in Muscovy could be averted if Moscow's ecclesiastical authorities would only avoid classifying their critics as schismatics. "If one Church happens to differ from another in a few unimportant and inessential rites," Paisii had written, "that does not indicate any division [between them] so long as the faith has been immutably preserved."⁴⁷ In the event, this observation did not prevent Nikon from carrying through the liturgical reforms or from demanding their adoption by all Orthodox communities. However, the distinguished church historian Nikolai Kapterev has argued that Paisii's letter "should have restrained Nikon from a too swift, categorical, and relatively minor change in church ritual that, at the same time, was dangerous to church unity." Kapterev speculated that if Nikon had been less proud and determined, a peaceful way forward might have been discovered for the two church factions.⁴⁸

That a tolerationist or accommodationist policy on the part of the Nikonians might at one point have elicited a positive reception from the Old Believers is suggested by a passage in Archpriest Avvakum's *Life*, where he exclaimed: "It is amazing that they [the Nikonians] do not want to embrace this wisdom. They want to affirm the faith by fire, the knout, and the hangman's rope! Who among the apostles taught them this?—I don't know. My Christ did not command the apostles to instruct their followers to impose the faith by fire, the knout, and the noose." Avvakum maintained, "Those teachers are openly minions of the Antichrist who preach the faith but subject [others] to punishments and death."⁴⁹ Of course, Avvakum's strictures against religious violence from the state Church did not prevent Avvakum himself in other writings from comparing Nikon to the early Christian theologian Arius (250/256–336 CE), whose Christology was deemed heretical at the First Council of Nicea, nor from demanding that Aleksei Mikhailovich "draw and quarter Nikon, the dog, and then all the Nikonians."⁵⁰

Avvakum's vacillation between conciliatory and unconciliatory impulses was uncommon neither in Muscovy nor in Orthodox church history: in fact, these impulses represented the warring inclusivist and exclusivist tendencies that had marked Christianity from the second century onward. What is interesting from our perspective is that in seventeenth-century Muscovy, at a moment of confessional divergence within Orthodoxy, both rigorist and tolerationist possibilities simultaneously surfaced. This development, however paradoxical at first blush, was precisely what should have been expected

in view of the West European historical record, in which confessional divergence sometimes sparked efforts to build toleration but also made those efforts unlikely to succeed.

A key figure in laying out the official response to the Old Belief and in thinking through the prospects for religious toleration in the last third of the seventeenth century was Simeon Polotskii.⁵¹ In 1666, acting on instructions of the church council, he wrote an attack on the Old Belief under the title *Scepter of Governance*.⁵² The book combined unyielding hostility to the Old Believers' position with an attempt to persuade them of their folly. Simeon took as his premise the two functions of church leadership: first, guiding the "good sheep" who upheld the virtues of steadfastness, long-suffering, honesty, hope, and piety; and second, correcting the "bad sheep" who refused to submit to Christ's words. Simeon fully supported punishment of errant Christians ("evil and cruelly mistaken sheep") and of their leaders ("the wolves who prey on these sheep") by the rod of correction.⁵³ Simeon did not envision the possibility that the state Church would make concessions to the Old Believers; instead, any movement to bridge the incipient schism would have to come from the Old Believers and their leaders—that is, from the "bad sheep" and "preying wolves" who led them. In effect, Simeon's exhortation was both an invitation to Old Believers to engage the state Church in dialogue and a declaration that any genuine dialogue, short of capitulation, was impossible.

It is difficult to read through Simeon's text to his intentions. He may privately have preferred a dialogue with the Old Believers before the Church wielded the "rod of correction" against them. Yet there are also good reasons to suppose that he believed a solution of the incipient schism to be urgent for reasons of state. His 1673 play *On King Nebuchadnezzar*, inspired by fear of a Turkish invasion, preached popular resistance to "godless" magistrates—a message aimed at mobilizing Russians, especially in the south, to fight the "heathen Turks."⁵⁴ Simeon did not relish facing a Muslim invasion at a moment of religious division in Muscovy. Wanting to heal the church schism before the wound had time to fester, he probably did not wish to risk tolerating the Old Belief.

Before the reign of Peter the Great the concept of religious toleration was thus known to the Russian Orthodox, was occasionally discussed by them, and from time to time was made an element of state policy. But the practice of toleration remained fitful. After the schism between the Old Belief and the established church, leaders of the two rival tendencies piously wished for a climate of toleration, but only on terms favoring their own group.

TOLERATION IN PETRINE AND POST-PETRINE POLICY AND THOUGHT

In his *History of the Russian Empire under Peter the Great* (1763), Voltaire depicted early eighteenth-century Russia as a multiconfessional state where relations among religions were largely pacific. He described the five churches for foreigners in eighteenth-century Petersburg as “five temples raised to tolerance and as examples given to other nations.”⁵⁵ He characterized Russia as “the only large Christian state where religion had not provoked civil wars but only minor tumults.”⁵⁶ Voltaire claimed that Peter regarded the various Christian rites—Greek, Latin, Lutheran, Calvinist—with indifference: “He [Peter] let [his subjects] each serve God according to conscience, so long as they served the state well.”⁵⁷ Voltaire’s benign picture of the Russian Empire and of Peter as its “great lawgiver” was presented as an effort to counteract the tendency of competing historians “to traffic insolently in falsehood” concerning Russia’s alleged despotism, but Voltaire’s interpretation of Russia’s religious climate was so simplistic as to verge on deliberate mendacity.⁵⁸

In fact, Peter’s religious policies mixed limited toleration of major Christian denominations with impatience at church rituals and with contempt toward ecclesiastical hierarchy, as his carnivalesque ridicule of the pope and of bishops in the All-Drunken Assembly demonstrated.⁵⁹ Peter was distrustful of the Jesuit order, which he expelled from Russia in 1689 and again in 1718 (after readmitting it in 1701). He politely but firmly rejected the Catholic initiative for church reunification in 1717–1718. Peter’s ban on beards at court (1698) and his tax on beards (1705) aimed to penalize the “superstitious” elements in Orthodoxy but also his presumed opponents among Old Believers. In 1716 Peter imposed a double tax on Old Believers, and in 1718 he issued a decree demanding that Orthodox priests identify Old Believers in their parishes, on pain of defrocking and criminal prosecution. The church reforms of 1721–1722 reinforced these anti-Old Believer policies by instituting the office of inquisitors, whose purpose was to oversee enforcement of church discipline and to impose on Old Believers the requirement to wear identifying clothing. Some historians have described these discriminatory policies as a form of “grudging tolerance” toward the Old Belief, a label that makes sense only if we think of militant persecution as the only alternative.⁶⁰ Alongside these circumscribed elements of “toleration,” Peter showed “no love for Jews or Muslims.” His foreign policy aimed at subduing and converting Russia’s Muslim enemies, and within the empire he strove to destroy “pagan” temples and to convert his “heathen” subjects.⁶¹ As far as Orthodoxy itself was concerned, Peter was a self-styled modernizer, impatient with the Church’s insularity, hostile to its “supersti-

tious” practices, and determined to eliminate the social “parasitism” of contemplative monasticism. Thus the religious climate of Petrine Russia did not resemble the happy pluralism described by Voltaire: instead, it was marked by tension or open struggle between Peter’s band of statist modernizers and religious traditionalists of every sort.

In Russian political thought of the Petrine era, there were very few concessions to the desirability of religious toleration. For example, the choleric Ivan Pososhkov’s three letters to Stefan Iavorskyi between 1703 and 1710 were vitriolic attacks on the Old Believers, whom Pososhkov described as “schismatics corrupting Christ’s body.”⁶² Pososhkov warned Iavorskyi that Russian schismatics, if left unchecked, would grow in number as Lutheranism and Calvinism had grown in the German lands, so that eventually “there will not be a single person holding to [true] piety [in Russia].”⁶³ To prevent this result, Pososhkov called on Orthodox priests to enter data in seven books on births, baptisms, confessions, communions, marriages, burials, and household residences. These books, held in each parish, would be used to monitor the religious observances of Orthodox parishioners and to ensure that no schismatics could live unnoticed in a rural village.⁶⁴ If, for example, the child of a schismatic couple should be baptized but avoid participation in communion services and that child should die, then, according to Pososhkov, Orthodox priests “should absolutely refuse to bury the body.”⁶⁵ If a Christian, on taking ill, should avoid the last rites, then priests should, according to Pososhkov, “not take the body to the local cemetery but should expose it to the birds and to the wild dogs.”⁶⁶ Such tactics, Pososhkov thought, would place schismatics under “great pressure” to conform to Orthodoxy: “Little by little, moved either by persuasion or by the force of prohibition, or by fear, they will join the Holy Church, and whether they like it or not, they will be saved.”⁶⁷ One cannot help but note that Pososhkov’s logic directly negated the position of Philaleth, who argued that religious coercion “can never achieve the desired results.” However, even Pososhkov had to make a minor concession to non-Orthodox Christians. He realized that the key to creating a religiously disciplined Orthodox community was the training of literate, theologically competent priests. He also understood that there did not yet exist in Russia a sufficient cadre of seminary teachers to provide this training. Therefore, in his second letter to Iavorskyi he conceded that “teachers of the Lutheran faith should be hired [in seminaries], if needed,” although he cautioned they should be “supervised carefully so that no heresy insinuate itself in their teaching.”⁶⁸

The addressee of Pososhkov’s letters, Metropolitan Stefan Iavorskyi, was another uncompromising opponent of “heresy.” In his 1713 manuscript

Rock of Faith Iavorskyi endorsed the energetic suppression of heresy as a necessity of Orthodox policy.⁶⁹ According to Iavorskyi, heretics “rightly and justly are subject to anathema; they deserve to be put to death. Once in the power of evil and loyal to Satan, they may endure any physical torment.” Iavorskyi claimed: “For heretics there is no cure but death. Heretics laugh at the prospect of damnation and to speak to them is ‘thunder without lightning’; they do not fear deprivation of their property . . . so the only cure for them is death.” Furthermore, he wrote: “For heretics themselves to die is useful, and they sometimes regard death as a blessing. If they remain alive, they will induce others to sin, they will tempt others, they will corrupt others; by this means others will fall under condemnation and will suffer eternal punishment. All this their death, imposed righteously, will avert.”⁷⁰ After the promulgation of the *Spiritual Regulation* in 1721, Iavorskyi wrote an attack on the newly created synodal church, *Apology or Verbal Defense*, in which he suggested that the Synod be placed under the jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch. He believed that the defenders of an autonomous synodal Church were “heretics, like the schismatics.”⁷¹

However, even the rigorist Iavorskyi made a small concession to the fact that Petrine Russia was a multireligious polity. In *Rock of Faith* he noted that “tsars in Christian states rule over Christians not as Christians but as individuals, and in this way they may also rule over Jews, Muslims, and others.”⁷² This view implied that even in Russia there had to be a clearer delineation between faith and secular authority. Iavorskyi admitted, “The power of tsars extends to their subjects’ bodies rather than to their souls; the spiritual power applies to souls rather than to the bodies they inhabit.”⁷³ If this concession to Russian reality had been made the main principle of Iavorskyi’s religious system, he might have built on it a pluralist rather than a monolithic understanding of religious politics and would almost certainly have been logically compelled to endorse religious toleration in the empire. But Iavorskyi was more committed to the logic of the inquisitor than to that of religious pluralism.

In the work of Feofan Prokopovich there is also little evidence of an interest in religious toleration. Although Feofan had the benefit of an education in Jesuit schools in Poland and of theological training in Rome at the College of St. Athanasius, he bitterly repudiated Roman Catholicism. In his course on rhetoric taught at the Kievan Academy in 1706, Feofan apparently went out of his way to describe Jesuits and Catholic monks as “asses” and “Epicurean swine,” respectively.⁷⁴ In courses on sacred theology, taught from 1712 to 1716, he attacked the Catholic theologians Aquinas and Robert Bellarmine as “asses,” “dunces,” and “witchdoctors.” He dismissed them as

blind worshippers of authority—ironically, a charge that would one day be leveled against him—and called their scholastic method of inquiry “charlatanry” and “superciliousness,” nothing but terminological “pettifoggery” (*scholarum quisquiliae*).⁷⁵ In Feofan’s theory, non-Orthodox Christians and non-Christians existed to test true believers or to punish them for clerical corruption, impiety, superstitious credulity, or pride. He thought of Western nations as legitimate targets of Russian arms, since those nations had surrendered to false, diabolical faiths. In his panegyric to Peter after the Russian victory over the Lutheran Swedes at Poltava, Feofan called Peter’s triumph a victory for the “adamantine shields of the fatherland and for Orthodoxy.” He predicted future victories over the Uniate Church in Ukraine and over the Ottoman Turks, who had intervened in favor of Charles XII: “The damnable Uniate Church that has intruded itself into our country will be extirpated from its nest, and the universal-Orthodox faith will expel from Ukraine these diabolical slaves [i.e., Muslims] and will extend [Orthodoxy’s] sway into other lands.”⁷⁶

Feofan was clearly no friend of pluralism or toleration, yet he was also a loyal supporter of Peter the Great and was therefore committed to restraining overzealous Orthodox bishops from arresting “heretics” in their diocese. In the *Spiritual Regulation* he directed bishops not to excommunicate Christians except in extreme cases, “for it is not suitable to pronounce anathema simply for sin, but [only] for open contempt toward God’s judgment and toward church authority.” Even then a bishop was obliged to seek written permission from the Holy Synod before pronouncing anathema.⁷⁷ That said, Feofan called on Russian priests to enforce the Orthodox belief system by fighting superstition and “wailing women” (*klikushki*), by suppressing news of “false miracles [supposedly] worked by icons” and so on.⁷⁸ Essentially, Feofan’s plan was to do battle against “heresy” by educating priests and the public against “superstition”: he was a religious modernizer, but his modernizing did not extend as far as principled religious toleration.

Between 1730 and 1740 Russian thinkers produced two important defenses of religious toleration: Vasilii Tatishchev’s “Dialogue of Two Friends on the Utility of Science and Schools” (1730–1733), and Artemii Volynskoi’s *General Project* (1734–1739). Tatishchev’s “Dialogue” was a Platonic conversation focusing on the question of whether Russian noble families should send their children abroad to be educated but expanding to include ruminations on justice, human nature, true religion, natural and biblical law, heresy, the proper organization of the state, the Russian language, and the defects of the Russian school system. For our purposes, four points in Tatishchev’s “Dialogue” deserve special attention. First, he argued, human

beings have an innate sense of virtue. We possess intelligence and will; we understand the difference between right and wrong; the concepts of virtue and vice “have been implanted in our hearts since the creation of Adam.” This innate sense of virtue Tatishchev called the “natural law.” He said it was “inculcated in us by God,” and since it came from God, it was perfectly consistent with religious law as recorded in the Bible.⁷⁹ Although Tatishchev did not say so explicitly, this same natural law must govern the consciences of all human beings, including non-Orthodox people of every sort, even if the sacred books of those non-Orthodox communities differed in fundamental respects from the Christian scriptures.

Second, Tatishchev asserted, it is the duty of all people to train themselves in the ways of virtue. This duty meant that educated people must study philosophy written by both pagan and non-Orthodox authors. To the objection that the study of non-Orthodox texts might open the way to agnosticism or atheism, Tatishchev replied that “necessary philosophy is not sinful; only philosophy that repels us from God is harmful and destructive to the soul.”⁸⁰ To stop studying philosophy for fear of its consequences was to put oneself in the power of “malicious churchmen,” who will force the ignorant “to submit blindly and slavishly to their orders and commands.” Among such malicious churchmen Tatishchev numbered not only the popes but also Patriarch Nikon, who tried to subordinate Tsar Aleksei to the Church’s dictates. Furthermore, Tatishchev warned, the failure to study non-Orthodox texts would actually leave Russia exposed to inroads from papism and from heresy. In Tatishchev’s opinion, the correct policy for a secular state was to do as Peter the Great had done: vigorously to promote learning of all sorts, including philosophical inquiry. The failure to advance true learning would lead only to heresy’s triumph.⁸¹ In so many words Tatishchev called for an educational curriculum that would incorporate pagan and non-Orthodox texts as key elements: this was an unmistakable step toward toleration of the faith systems that had generated those heretofore forbidden texts.

Third, Tatishchev described Russia as a religiously pluralistic society in which pluralism served as a check against rebellion based on popular superstition. According to the “Dialogue,” rebellion often stems from groundless religious fanaticism. In sixteenth-century Central Europe, the Anabaptists at Münster had used rumors and false reports of miracles to incite the “stupid mob” to revolt. In seventeenth-century England the “famous thief and rebel leader Cromwell had by hypocritical piety and prayer, sophistry, and spurious interpretation [of the Bible] led the simple people to believe literally that he was Lord and Protector of English liberty.” Not infrequently, in the

Ottoman Empire, “where the people have no access to education at all and are sunk in superstition,” clever leaders had used the pretext of defending the faith to fan rebellions. Even Russia had not escaped this phenomenon, as Stenka Razin’s success in fanning popular superstition had demonstrated.⁸² However, according to Tatishchev, the danger of schism and rebellion is most acute in those states where two faiths are of equal strength. “But where there are three or more faiths, then that danger does not exist, and this is particularly true in a state with good laws which do not permit religious disputes to become inflamed. . . . Among monarchies we see several, including our Russia, which have harbored not only different Christian confessions but also a large number of Muslims and pagans and where, thanks to several hundred years of good and careful government, the differences among these faiths have done no harm.”⁸³ Tatishchev added that during the Razin uprising Russia’s tradition of religious toleration had kept the rebellion from getting out of hand.

Fourth, Tatishchev proposed a theory of the Russian language according to which this Slavic tongue had from the first incorporated non-Slavic words, thus changing and enriching itself in response to external influences. Tatishchev pointed out that the openness of the Russian language to outside words gave the lie to “irrational and contemptuous, sanctimonious hypocrites” who regarded Russian as a sacred language of faith and who believed it justified to burn books written in other tongues. According to Tatishchev, to “study and speak foreign languages is not offensive but pleasing to God.”⁸⁴ He recommended that every priest be compelled to study Hebrew, Greek, and Latin as well as Church Slavonic. He called on civil officials to learn the foreign language appropriate to their station. All Russian nobles should learn German; officials living in the southern periphery should study Turkish, Farsi, or Chinese; those on the northern border should learn Finnish. In general, Tatishchev argued, the Russian language had always been a crazy complex, dynamic instrument of communication. It should in future be recognized as the key medium in a pluralistic empire. The multiple borrowings from foreign tongues could now be reclassified as evidence of Russia’s polyglot nature and of its openness to or toleration of other peoples.

Thus in the “Dialogue” Tatishchev formulated a theory of cultural toleration based on natural law, openness to pagan and non-Orthodox learning, religious pluralism as a safeguard against domestic rebellion, and the openness of the Russian language to external influences. Yet he remained in some respects a typical practitioner of Orthodoxy and a patriot willing to shed blood for the sake of the empire. As we know, he was involved in the Orenburg military expedition from 1737 to 1739 and the Kalmyk expedition

in 1741. From 1741 to 1746 he served as governor of Astrakhan, a position that required him to take an active role in the suppression of indigenous dissent to Russian power, including religious dissent. In practice Tatishchev did not allow his support for toleration and linguistic pluralism to interfere with the sanguinary work of expanding imperial borders and subjugating unruly peoples.⁸⁵ During the five years from 1735 to 1740 government estimates placed the number of Bashkir casualties at over 28,500—nearly 17,000 of these killed by regular army units.⁸⁶ If Tatishchev was a pioneer in developing a broad theory of Russian religious toleration, he was from the actual perspective of the conquered peoples a tormentor and an executioner (*muchitel' i palach*).

Between 1727 and 1739 Tatishchev used his spare time to write a long version of his *Russian History*. In March 1739, during a visit to Petersburg, he read passages from this book to the circle of Artemii Volynskoi. Although Volynskoi was a high official in Anna Ioannovna's government and a protégé of Ernst Johann von Bühren, he enjoyed a reputation as a man of broad political discernment. His main work, the book-length *General Project*, was burned in Easter Week of 1740, when Volynskoi learned he would probably be arrested on suspicion of political crimes. What we know of the memorandum or book has been reconstructed by Dmitrii Korsakov from the transcripts of Volynskoi's interrogation by Anna's Secret Chancellery.⁸⁷

Intellectually, Volynskoi was an admirer of the Roman aristocratic historian Tacitus and of the late sixteenth-century European commentator on Tacitus, Iustus Lipsius. He rejected political despotism, as Tacitus had famously done in the *Annals*, and he may also have accepted Lipsius's teaching on the proper role of religion in government: that only one Church be established by a given state but that nonconformists be tolerated so long as they practice their faith quietly. Lipsius believed that a prince should exercise no authority over doctrinal matters but should take care to preserve church unity. Volynskoi's interest in religious toleration, however limited, and his advocacy of a circumscribed role for the prince in religious affairs may explain his reputation for being a freethinker.⁸⁸ From what we know of his theory of toleration itself, Volynskoi's contribution to Russian thought must be described as modest: after all, the writ of Roman toleration was such as to have accommodated the religious persecution of Christians—a fact that could not have escaped Volynskoi's attention.⁸⁹

Although Mikhail Lomonosov was the most learned Russian of the eighteenth century, he was neither a systematic political thinker nor an engaged advocate of religious toleration. As an adolescent he may have fallen briefly under the influence of the priestless Old Believers in the Russian north, but

as a mature intellectual he was nevertheless inclined to call the Old Believers “schismatics” and to associate them with rebellion against the crown. Thus in his *Short Russian Chronicle* (1760) Lomonosov mentioned “the obstacles, disappointments, and dangers” encountered by Peter the Great “from the *streltsy*, *raskol’niki*, and other detractors.”⁹⁰ In general, as a historian Lomonosov favored a strong autocratic state and national unity. He treated Russian Christianity as a contribution to national unity and was therefore little disposed to sympathize with religious minorities.

However, Lomonosov strongly opposed efforts by Orthodox traditionalists to institute heresy trials of religious dissenters. In the early 1740s Bishop Amvrosii (Iuskevich) proposed to root out foreign “superstition” and to put an end to foreigners’ “diabolical cleverness” in Russia by acting on the basis of Iavorskyi’s *Rock of Faith*. Lomonosov challenged this religious zealotry by recalling the tale of Job. In his “Ode Drawn from Job” (1751) he demanded that human beings patiently accept their lot and recognize God’s sovereign power “to punish and reward whom He pleases.”⁹¹ Iurii Lotman has interpreted the “Ode Drawn from Job” as a programmatic break from Orthodox clerics who wished to use coercion to extirpate evil from the world. In Lotman’s accounting, Lomonosov was a quietist and rationalist who stood against the arbitrariness of traditionalist religion, with its view of a broken world subject to “demonic insanity.”⁹² It is not improbable that Lomonosov’s patient quietism was linked to his acceptance of Leibniz’s theory of evil, which posited that evil lacks substantial reality.

We should also mention that, as a scientist, Lomonosov was a Copernican who accepted the possibility of multiple worlds in the cosmos.⁹³ From the pluralism of worlds he did not draw the conclusion that many true religions may exist, but he did reach the more limited conclusion that present theology had yet to assimilate the “grandeur and power” of God’s creation. Thus, while not a principled champion of religious toleration, Lomonosov preached a modern version of Christian humility and patience insisting on the relaxation of religious exclusivism. Lomonosov apparently did not see any contradiction between his outlook as a scientist and his perspective as a historian, which emphasized the need to suppress religious schismatics and other rebels against the crown.

Religious thinkers under Peter generally opposed broad-based religious toleration, although here and there they conceded its practical necessity within tight limits. Only in the post-Petrine period, in unpublished works by Tatishchev and Volynskoi, do we encounter principled defenses of toleration, but these tolerationist works did not attain wide circulation among the reading public. Although one might have expected Lomonosov to advocate

toleration, he did not do so in spite of his dislike of heresy trials and his distrust of the traditionalist bishops in the Orthodox hierarchy.

TOLERATION IN CATHERINIAN RUSSIA

The notion that the Russian imperial government in the late eighteenth century was committed to religious toleration has a genuine plausibility. After all, Catherine was an admiring correspondent of Voltaire who prided herself on being “neither a persecutor nor a fanatic.”⁹⁴ One of her earliest domestic policies was the secularization of the land held by the Orthodox Church, a move that she advertised as helpfully “freeing” the Church from earthly cares but which actually increased its material dependence on the state, thus making it difficult for the Church forcefully to oppose state toleration of other churches and religions.⁹⁵ Early in her reign Catherine tried to find a *modus vivendi* with the Old Believers.⁹⁶ By the early 1770s the priestless Old Believers had managed to found a new hospital and cemetery in Moscow, the so-called Preobrazhenskoe kladbishche.⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the first decades of her reign Catherine created a civil framework in which Jews were recognized as subjects of the crown meriting the protection of Russian laws. Isabel de Madariaga has described the decree of 7 May 1786 as “the first official statement of the civil equality of Jews in Europe.”⁹⁸ Also among Catherine’s most significant decrees on religion was the law of 23 June 1794 authorizing Jewish residence in the so-called Pale of Settlement. Finally, Catherine tried hard to purchase civil peace with Russia’s Muslims, especially those in the Orenburg territory. She invited Muslim delegates to participate in the 1767 Legislative Commission, and in 1773 she abandoned active persecution of Muslims in favor of a policy of “passive toleration,” leading by 1788–1789 to a government-authorized Muslim Spiritual Assembly in Orenburg.⁹⁹

Each of these steps was historically significant, but Catherinian toleration was in certain respects short-lived and in others hedged about with restrictions. Although the empress decreed in 1782 that Old Believers were no longer to be called schismatics (*raskol'niki*), and although she refused to enforce Peter the Great’s prohibition on the wearing of beards (which remained part of the legal code), she did not approve the Old Believers’ petition to be placed under the jurisdiction of a sympathetic bishop. In 1764 she sent twenty thousand Old Believers to Siberia for failing to comply with her “voluntary” resettlement plan of 1762. After the Pugachev rebellion in 1773–1774 she tended to regard the Old Believers with grave suspicion as potential political subversives.

Catherine’s policy toward Catholics was contradictory. While permitting the free practice of Catholic rites in Moscow and elsewhere and allow-

ing the Jesuit order to operate in Russia even though it had been suppressed elsewhere in Europe, Catherine strictly regulated the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Belorussia and the western periphery by ordering the election of Catholic bishops to proceed under government supervision, by demanding that Catholic monks swear oaths of allegiance to the Russian crown, and by refusing to promulgate papal bulls unless they had received prior approval from the Imperial Senate. De Madariaga has noted that so-called toleration of Catholics came at the price to Russian Catholics of government control over priests, bishops, and church property.¹⁰⁰

Imperial toleration of Jews was, of course, notoriously two-sided, since the Pale of Settlement was simultaneously a protected settlement zone and a legally mandated reservation for Jews. Moreover, by the law of 23 June 1794 Jews in a given social estate (*soslovie*) were required to pay double the taxes paid by Christians in the same social stratum.¹⁰¹ Toleration toward Muslims was more extensive, as Robert Crews has argued, but it entailed indirect state control over Islamic jurisprudence and cooptation of the Muslim elites; moreover, state toleration of Muslims did not preclude the government from suppressing popular forms of Islam, such as the preaching manifested in the Sheikh Mansur rebellion.¹⁰² Not every influential Muslim accepted the Faustian bargain of “toleration” by St. Petersburg: as Crews himself admits, dozens of itinerant Sufi preachers and Muslim holy women, for example, taught their versions of Islam outside the oversight of officially sanctioned Russian institutions. It therefore seems more accurate to describe Catherinian toleration not as the heart of imperial domestic policy but rather as one among many tactics adopted by the government to regulate and control the religious lives of its subjects.

Catherine’s theoretical views on religious toleration were first articulated in her Instruction to the Commission for Composition of a New Law Code (1767). Since the Academy of Sciences edition of the Instruction (1907), historians have known that Catherine borrowed from other sources, often verbatim, no fewer than 469 of the 655 articles in the document.¹⁰³ The differences among her sources and her own inconsistent impulses help explain the lack of clarity in her views on religious toleration as articulated in the Instruction. From the beginning of the text, Catherine presented herself as a faithful Christian. The Instruction commenced with a prayer for wisdom, “so that I may judge Your people according to Your law in a spirit of true justice.” Its first article declared, “Christian law teaches us to do good to one another insofar as possible.”¹⁰⁴ Articles 348–55 dealt with the education of the populace. According to Catherine, moral instruction by heads of household was to be grounded on the principles of Orthodox Christianity: “Each

[head of household] is obliged to teach his children the fear of God as the source of all wisdom, and to inculcate in them all the duties that God demands of us in the Ten Commandments, and through our Orthodox Greek faith in its institutions and traditions.”¹⁰⁵

If one were to read no further in the Instruction, one might think that the empress had forgotten Russia’s multiconfessional religious composition, but in chapter 20 she recognized that fact by describing Russia as a vast empire of diverse peoples. She warned against the “vice of forbidding or hindering their different religions” and noted that granting non-Orthodox communities permission to follow their creeds “softens even the cruelest hearts, draws them out of inveterate obstinacy, and quiets their disputes, which are antipathetic to the state’s tranquillity and to the unity of citizens.” Yet Catherine did not propose to permit diverse religious practices to continue indefinitely. She claimed, “There is no truer means than wise toleration, permitted by our Orthodox faith and polity, through which one can lead all these lost sheep into the true flock.”¹⁰⁶ Hence Catherine treated religious toleration as a politically expedient measure necessary to pacify the empire’s religiously diverse peoples until such time as the Orthodox faithful had succeeded in converting the “lost sheep” to the “true flock.” Implicit in her views was the willingness to abolish measures of toleration if they did not mitigate her subjects’ “cruelty of heart,” “inveterate obstinacy,” or disputatiousness.

Also relevant to Catherine’s idea of toleration was her discussion of punishments for crime in articles 61–96. In article 74, she asserted that “crimes against faith,” including blasphemy, should be dealt with by the Church through excommunication or shunning. She mentioned in the article neither the multiconfessional status of the empire nor the principle of religious toleration—significant evasions. In discussing so-called crimes against mores, Catherine prescribed punishments mostly of a moral sort: the exclusion of deviants from the community they had offended, shunning, shame, and dishonor. The only material punishment she mentioned was the imposition of monetary fines, but she did not specify whether the fines were to be imposed by the state or by private associations. Her general rule was to regard crimes against mores as minor violations from the state’s perspective.¹⁰⁷ It may well be that Catherine hoped to make a *de facto* distinction between state and church, in which religious and customary breaches of confessional rules would be punished by religious communities without state involvement.

According to the empress, the government’s interest in prosecuting crimes begins at the point where social tranquillity is violated. In such cases

the government may punish violators by imposing on them “exile, [penal] correction, and other punishments capable of returning restive spirits onto the right path and restoring them to their places in the established order.”¹⁰⁸ The trouble with Catherine’s approach to punishing violations of public law was that the distinction between religious crimes and dangerous statutory offenses was clearer in theory than in practice. Under Russian law, blasphemy remained a serious criminal offense, whatever Catherine’s sentiments in the Instruction.

Later in her reign Catherine seemed intent on further circumscribing the application of the idea of toleration she had defended in 1767. For example, her *Notes concerning Russian History* (written in the 1780s, unfinished) seemed to link Orthodox piety with political wisdom in the chapter on Prince Vladimir’s conversion to Christianity.¹⁰⁹ In her discussion of the Tatar Yoke, Catherine complained that the invaders had done “much evil to Christians [and] to the Russian land.”¹¹⁰ She praised Russian opponents of the Tatars in religious terms, citing, for example, the “Christian stoutness” of Mikhail of Chernigov.¹¹¹ The religious-political synthesis in Catherine’s *Notes concerning Russian History* fit her traditionalist patriotic mood in the 1780s—a moment when Russian foreign policy was characterized by zealous defense of the realm against its long-standing religious adversaries.

Finally, we must note that starting in 1780 Catherine launched a public relations offensive against Freemasonry. The offensive initially took the form of a pamphlet ridiculing Masonic initiation rites and Masonic secrecy.¹¹² Catherine surely felt that ridicule of Freemasonry did not violate her commitment to religious toleration, since she thought it permissible simultaneously to tolerate an “absurd” religion while criticizing it as superstition. Indeed, that peculiar notion of “freedom of criticism” resembled Voltaire’s attitude toward those religious groups he wished to discourage through satire. Note that Catherine published her satire against Freemasonry anonymously, so that she could preserve the fiction that it did not come freighted with the weight of imperial sanction. However, as we know from the history of Catherine’s subsequent policies toward Freemasonry, her satiric disapproval turned by 1785 into harassment of Russia’s leading Mason, Nikolai Novikov, and led to his arrest in 1792.

Catherine’s attempt in 1767 to make a *de facto* distinction between church and state had been abandoned by the mid-1780s with respect to those religions she considered to be “absurd,” “superstitious,” and dangerous to the state. Her idea of toleration, from the outset riddled with contradictions, was meant either as temporary political window dressing or as an aspiration toward which benighted Russians might strive over decades.

In either case, it was not a consistent, principled foundation for Russian domestic policy.

Catherine's target, Nikolai Novikov, had used satirical journals early in his career to attack vice in court circles and to criticize the excesses of the serf system. His polemics against social injustice rested on the premises of human perfectibility and human spiritual dignity, premises that would also have supported advocacy of religious toleration. However, Novikov seemed loath to declare himself vigorously in favor of religious toleration until after becoming a Freemason in 1775. His Masonic journals—*Utrennii svet*, *Moskovskoe ezheimesiachnoe izdanie*, and *Pokoishchiiasia trudoliubets*—all defended a rationalist conception of virtue and of human dignity that Novikov advertised as consistent with Russian Orthodoxy and the welfare of the state but also with other religious creeds. In his signature essay “On Human Dignity in Relation to God and the World” (1777) he celebrated the creation of human beings in God's image and likeness as the foundation of human dignity and equality. On this assumption he built a case for human interdependence and mutual respect as the foundations for social conduct.¹¹³ In “On Virtue” (1780) Novikov ruled out the use of coercion in matters of ethics and morals. He contended that virtue is connected with the inclination to do good rather than with the ability to force one's adversaries into submission. He compared those statesmen resorting to force against the religiously heterodox to parasitic insects.¹¹⁴ The Italian expert on Masonry Raffaella Faggionato has suggested that after 1779 Novikov became increasingly interested in the Rosicrucian variant of Masonry, which sought to institute religious toleration in European states, among other goals.¹¹⁵ Thus Novikov's tolerationism arose both from his reading of Scripture and from the Rosicrucian Enlightenment. From the perspective of Russian thought it is an oddity that Novikov seemed to grow more interested in religious toleration just as the empress energetically distanced herself from it.

Unlike Novikov, Aleksandr Radishchev—whose passionate denunciations of serfdom, autocracy, and censorship were the most radical to appear during the Russian Enlightenment—wrote little about the problem of religious toleration. Radishchev's long poem “Liberty,” composed in the 1780s, argued for a state based on a social contract specifying the government's purposes as follows: “To uphold equality in society, to give alms to widows and orphans, to keep the innocent from misfortune; to be a loving father to the innocent but an irreconcilable foe to vice, to falsehood, and to slander; to bestow honor for good service, to give warning of evil, to preserve moral standards in all their purity.”¹¹⁶ In the poem Radishchev criticized estab-

lished religious groups for preaching “blind belief.” In stanza 10 he evoked the specter of Petrine Russia, a country “where stands the dark throne of slavery. There the secular powers tranquilly see in the tsar the image of God. The tsar’s power preserves the faith, and the faith confirms the tsar’s power; together they corrupt society.”¹¹⁷ In *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1789) Radishchev attacked religious censorship as an enterprise instituted by Christian monks to shore up their own control over society by keeping learning out of laymen’s hands.¹¹⁸ His fictional traveler implored readers not to worry about the dangers of irreligious books: “If a fool not only thinks but says aloud ‘there is no God,’ in the ears there will resound the echo: ‘there is no God, there is no God.’ But so what? The echo is a sound; it strikes the air, lingers for a moment, then it dissipates. It will only rarely affect the reason, and then but weakly; it will never affect the heart. God will always be God, whose presence is felt even by unbelievers.” The traveler claimed that empty words were impotent: “Words are not always acts, thinking is not a crime.”¹¹⁹

Radishchev’s advocacy of untrammelled free religious speech was important for two reasons: first, it criticized the established church from the perspective of a social contract theory borrowed from Locke and Rousseau; and second, it linked religious toleration firmly to freedom of the press and freedom of conscience. Radishchev’s idea of religious toleration went beyond Spinoza (who was willing to countenance an established church so long as the code of public laws provided dissenters freedom to worship) and Locke (whose case for toleration did not extend to Catholics or atheists). Radishchev probably found his inspiration in Voltaire’s many defenses of toleration, especially *Philosophical Letters* (1734) and *Treatise on Tolerance*, in the latitudinarian tendencies of the English, and in American law. Unfortunately, because of Russian censorship, Radishchev’s major works remained almost unknown until Herzen published them in London in the 1850s.

Mikhail Shcherbatov and Nikolai Karamzin have usually been classified as conservative thinkers, defenders of the Russian monarchy and of Orthodoxy as the established church. Yet both men were also cosmopolitans strongly influenced by the Enlightenment. Shcherbatov, for example, was a lifelong student of Voltaire, a close reader and critic of Rousseau, and an admirer of David Hume. The early Karamzin respected Voltaire and idolized Rousseau. His *History of the Russian State* showed the influence of Voltaire’s *Essay on Morals and Customs* (1745–1746) and of Hume’s *History of Great Britain* (1754–1762). In spite of their political conservatism, both Shcherbatov and Karamzin strongly defended religious toleration.

Shcherbatov's early views on religious toleration can be found in private commentaries he recorded on Catherine's Instruction in 1767. In them he accepted the validity of Catherine's description of Christian moral teaching as "perfect." In his opinion, other religions "provide rules of virtuous moral conduct, but only Christian law teaches us to love our enemies."¹²⁰ Although in principle Shcherbatov granted that moral laws should be the same everywhere, he conceded that statutory laws must differ according to popular customs, climatic differences, and local political circumstances. He evidently thought that laws written for the European parts of Russia should not necessarily be extended to the "Asiatic" parts, especially the Muslim regions of Astrakhan and Orenburg.¹²¹ Shcherbatov thought it possible for the Russian monarchy to rule the empire in harmony with the Orthodox Church, but only if the Church adopted an enlightened view of religion. He was very skeptical concerning the capacity of Islam to adopt an enlightened outlook.¹²² At the same time, he declared himself firmly opposed to inquisitorial attempts to use the Christian religion to eliminate moral corruption in Russia. He asked: "Five years after the publication of this Instruction, will the government really manage to eliminate vice and uphold virtue? Will our morals really be improved?"¹²³ Thus early in his career Shcherbatov accepted the necessity of practical toleration, especially given the presence of "backward" Muslims in "Asiatic" Russia, yet he still accepted the notion of the perfection of Christian moral teaching and of the theoretical compatibility of Christianity and enlightenment.

Shcherbatov's *Russian History* (written 1768–1790) treated Orthodoxy as the "true Christian faith" but also criticized its proponents for encouraging superstition and a "monkish spirit" among princes.¹²⁴ Shcherbatov's ideal seemed to be a rationalistic or virtue-oriented Christianity quite alien to Orthodox practice. In his unpublished essay "Reflections on Legislation in General" (1785) he spelled out a method for transforming Catherinian despotism into a constitutional regime. Key planks of his program were the retention of Orthodoxy as the state religion and the granting to other confessions of formal legal recognition and toleration.¹²⁵ In his utopian tract "Journey to the Land of Ophir" Shcherbatov imagined a regime in which a network of priests supported by the state supervises morals and conducts religious rites devoted to worship of the Supreme Being. Shcherbatov seemed to have in mind a belief system similar to French deism, and simple rituals patterned on Rousseau's system of civic religion in *The Social Contract*.¹²⁶ Shcherbatov's mature religious ideal uneasily combined Russian traditionalism (Orthodoxy as the established church), enlightened tolerantism, and deism. It should be noted that Shcherbatov's scheme of

toleration and of civic religion was not published until the late 1890s, a century after his death.

Karamzin's thinking about toleration can be found in the forceful passages of his *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (written 1789–1791, published as a volume in 1797), where his unnamed traveler praises the advocates of toleration, criticizes its enemies, and points to the baneful consequences of intolerance. In letter 75, reporting a visit to Voltaire's estate at Ferney, the traveler lauded Voltaire for exposing "scandalous superstition" and for disseminating the "mutual tolerance in religious matters that became the disposition of our age."¹²⁷ In letter 15 he pilloried the German rationalist Friedrich Nicolai for suggesting that a cabal of "secret Jesuits" was trying to control Europe. Apropos Nicolai's theory, the traveler observed: "My heart could not condone the tone in which the men of Berlin are writing. Where can we seek tolerance if the very philosophers—the very enlighteners, as they call themselves—demonstrate such hatred toward all those who do not think as they do?"¹²⁸ In letter 42 he reproved the municipality of Frankfurt for banning Protestants from civic life. He also attacked Frankfurt for confining seven thousand Jews to a filthy ghetto. The traveler's picture of Sabbath services at the local synagogue was heartrending, for there "despondency, sadness, terror were etched on the faces of the supplicants."¹²⁹

In letter 139 about England the traveler listened to the boast of a local citizen who claimed, "Here [in England] we tolerate every image of faith." The traveler asked rhetorically, "Is there in Europe even one Christian sect which has not been in England?"¹³⁰ In letter 145 the traveler described the electoral process in Winchester, noting that local voters approved of sensible candidates over those who were selfish and religiously intolerant.¹³¹ Perhaps the boldest moment in the entire oeuvre came in letter 127, where the traveler alluded to a session of the French National Assembly in which Mirabeau passionately defended religious toleration against members of the clergy who wanted to codify Catholicism as the single religion in France.¹³²

Although we must remember that Karamzin's traveler was a fictional character whose views did not necessarily represent those of the author, there is no reason to suppose that the traveler's opinion of religious toleration diverged from Karamzin's own. The passages on toleration in Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*, quoted above, showed that Karamzin regarded toleration as an appealing feature of the Russian character and as a singular political virtue. *Letters of a Russian Traveler* suggested that one source of Karamzin's tolerantism was Voltaire, who was praised by name in letter 75, but also invoked indirectly in letter 140—the traveler's description of the London stock exchange. (Karamzin was referring to Voltaire's

description of toleration as the key to commerce in *Philosophical Letters*.) *Letters of a Russian Traveler* implicitly criticized Catherine II for continuing to uphold Orthodoxy as a state religion: this was the political point behind the reference to Mirabeau's speech. The critique of Nicolai in letter 15 was an original contribution to Russian thinking about toleration in that it underlined the intolerant spirit driving certain advocates of tolerance. Karamzin reserved his approval for political moderation, or rather for a certain intellectual equipoise in matters of faith. Letter 8, which recounted a conversation between the traveler and Immanuel Kant, underlined the difficulty of achieving certitude about faith. In this exchange, according to Karamzin, Kant mentioned the satisfaction he had always felt after acting in accordance with the moral law, his hope for the afterlife, his postulate of a Universal Creative Reason, but also his realization that in matters such as the afterlife we necessarily operate "in dark ignorance." Karamzin accepted Kant's lack of certitude as his own.

TOLERANTISM FROM SPERANSKII TO THE DECEMBRISTS

The surfacing of religious tolerance as a matter for public discussion early in Catherine II's reign and its importance in the work of Karamzin, the best Russian writer of the Catherinian era, might lead one to expect that in the reign of her grandson Alexander I toleration would be regarded as a central political objective. Yet this proved not to be the case, largely because neither high officials nor most Russian social thinkers willingly accepted the practical effects of universal toleration.

Mikhail Speranskii's draft memorandum "Introduction to a Code of State Laws" (1809) argued that Russia "is headed toward liberty."¹³³ He maintained that Russia's future laws would have to recognize the existence of civil and political rights, among which he included freedom from punishment without a trial, freedom from personal servitude, and freedom from "material service" (payment of taxes) except as specified by law. Speranskii did not mention freedom of conscience as a civil right. His draft did recognize that Russia was a multiconfessional state, and it called for a department of government where "spiritual affairs of the various confessions should be administered."¹³⁴ This was at best a backhanded acknowledgment of the need for an even-handed religious policy: in fact, the memorandum did not advance the cause of toleration one iota. We know from Speranskii's subsequent tenure as an administrator in Siberia that he sought to regularize the legal status of non-Russian peoples and to guarantee them freedom of religious practice consistent with existing positive law. He opposed forced conversions of Siberian peoples to Christianity.¹³⁵ However, Speranskii's

long-term goal was the Christianization of the Russian Empire and of politics generally. He hoped each Russian citizen would identify himself with God, the source of reason and order in the universe. His plan for the empire involved the promotion of the Christian conception of human dignity through educational institutions and thus the *voluntary* conversion of the heterodox to Orthodoxy. Speranskii therefore saw no contradiction between short-term toleration of the non-Orthodox and the long-term process of their absorption into the established church.¹³⁶ The intellectual roots of Speranskii's idea of "toleration" probably extended back to his seminary days, when he read Locke, Montesquieu, and Diderot, but his mature views represented a compromise between the political necessity of toleration and his fervent Orthodox religious outlook.

Whereas Speranskii's 1809 memorandum was one of the most important monuments of Alexander's early reign, Nikolai Novosil'tsov's State Charter of the Russian Empire (written 1818–1819) represented the tsar's post-1815 "constitutionalist" thinking. It sought to protect civil liberty defined as freedom of the press, immunity from arbitrary arrest, and the rule of habeus corpus. Article 78 of the State Charter insisted, "The Orthodox Greek–Russian faith shall always be the dominant faith of the empire, as well as of the emperor and of the whole imperial family." It specified that the government should manifest "special solicitude" toward Orthodoxy, but it added that this solicitude should be demonstrated "without the other creeds being suppressed." The article specified that "membership in different Christian denominations should not entail any distinctions in civil and political rights" of subjects. Yet article 167 declared, "Jews, even those who are enrolled in guilds and who own real estate, may not participate in municipal assemblies." At the regional level the charter's operation would likely have been weighted in favor of ethnic Russians and thus in favor of members of the Orthodox Church, in spite of Novosil'tsov's declared intention to avoid "distinctions in civil and political rights."¹³⁷

Novosil'tsov may have developed his brand of toleration during his years in France and England (before 1801), from which he emerged as an admirer of English liberty. However, his views were moderated by experience in the Unofficial Committee early in Alexander's reign and by Russia's wars with Napoleon. Novosil'tsov's mature political posture combined willingness to experiment with political instrumentalities like a state charter with a dirigiste approach to government.

In the event, Alexander decided to reject both Speranskii's and Novosil'tsov's solutions to Russian problems, perhaps out of the fear that even a limited guarantee of civil rights and religious toleration would prove

troublesome to administer. Thus even their selective visions of toleration remained a dead letter.

Among the government's post-1815 critics leaders of the Decembrist movement gave the most serious attention to toleration. In the first draft of the so-called constitution that Nikita Murav'ev wrote for the Northern Society between the fall of 1821 and mid-1822 he spelled out the "rights of citizens" under a proposed constitutional monarch.¹³⁸ These rights included, in article 3, freedom from servile bondage, freedom of thought and of the press, freedom of travel, freedom from arbitrary arrest and from detention without legal writ, the rights to post bail and to have a jury trial in criminal cases. Under article 5 Murav'ev proposed to give citizens the right to participate in elections through various social mechanisms. Article 12 guaranteed that the national legislature could not infringe on book publication or religious belief—a provision that seemed to promise disestablishment of the Orthodox Church and to underwrite individual freedom of conscience. However, Murav'ev's idea of liberty was actually not so robust. He held under article 2 that citizenship in the empire should require mastery of the Russian language—a proviso that would have ruled out citizen status for many non-Russians. Article 3 ruled out citizenship for nomadic peoples (on the ground that they did not possess fixed property). Article 8 restricted the right of Jews to move from one region to another and gave regional governments (*derzhavy*) the prerogative to deny citizenship to Jews who had so moved. It appears that Murav'ev was conflicted over religious toleration: in theory he favored toleration and even freedom of conscience, but he subjected those preferences to caveats that would have excluded many heterodox people from full citizenship and would have perpetuated legal segregation of the Jews. Murav'ev's doubts about universal toleration probably sprang from his own commitment to Russian Orthodoxy, which he characterized in the constitution as "our holy faith" and, ironically in view of these caveats, as the "Christian faith, according to which all persons are *brothers*."¹³⁹

The second variant of Murav'ev's constitution (probably written 1823–1824, first published 1906) promised, "No one may be hindered in the exercise of his religion according to conscience and convictions unless he has violated the laws of nature and of morality."¹⁴⁰ This apparently sweeping declaration of freedom of conscience was qualified as follows: "The *veche* [Murav'ev's proposed legislative assembly] has no authority to establish or prohibit any confession or schismatic group. The faith, conscience, and opinions of citizens, so long as they do not manifest themselves in illegal acts, are outside the *veche*'s purview. But a schismatic group based on morally corrupt principles [*na razvrate*] or on unnatural acts, may be prohibit-

ed by judicial authorities on the basis of general regulations.”¹⁴¹ Murav’ev’s guarantee of toleration seemed to go beyond anything contemplated by eighteenth-century Russians—indeed, beyond the limits on toleration set by Locke and Montesquieu—except that, in practice, Murav’ev’s grant of toleration would have turned on juridical interpretations of the phrases “illegal acts” and “unnatural acts.”

Murav’ev’s thinking on constitutional matters was influenced by his reading of leading philosophers (Montesquieu), of constitutionalist literature (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson on the US Constitution, Christian Julius Steltzer on universalist jurisprudence), French liberal tracts (especially Benjamin Constant’s essays), and Russian reformist projects (he saw manuscript versions of Speranskii’s 1809 memorandum and of Novosil’tsov’s State Charter).¹⁴²

The most influential figure in the Southern Society, Pavel Pestel’, adopted a complicated, perhaps even self-contradictory perspective on religious toleration. His “Note concerning National Government” (written 1816–1819, published 1958) assumed that natural law and divine law are identical in supporting civil rights. At the same time, the note called for the creation of secret police operatives to investigate citizens suspected of disseminating ideas opposing the laws or the common faith.¹⁴³ In January 1823 at a meeting of the Southern Society, its leaders, including Pestel’, unanimously adopted a resolution supporting Orthodoxy as the empire’s established religion rather than an alternative resolution identically protecting all faiths.¹⁴⁴ The second variant of *Russian Justice*, the programmatic document produced by Pestel’, proposed a centralized Russian state in which Roman Catholicism, the Uniate confession, and Islam would all be tolerated. However, he demanded that among the Tatars Russians use “every occasion by friendliness and persuasion to incline them to accept Holy Baptism.” He also called for a ban on polygamy among Muslims and a ban on forced seclusion of Muslim women. He was willing to grant Muslims civil rights but not full political rights. In the Caucasus he advocated conquest of rebellious Muslims and their “resettlement to the interior of Russia, breaking them up into small groups”; meanwhile, ethnic Russians would be transported to the Caucasus to take the Muslims’ places.¹⁴⁵ Pestel’ regarded the Jews as a backward, unenlightened people who “must always live under the power of superstitions.” He accused Jews of dishonest commerce with their Christian neighbors and of constituting a “state within the state . . . with greater rights than Christians [possess].” His solution to the Jewish problem was to warn rabbis “not to put themselves in inimical relations with Christians.” He did not rule out “helping the Jews

to establish a special state somewhere in Asia Minor” outside the Russian Empire. He anticipated the government would have to set up a collection point (*sbornyi punkt*) for Jews; he then supposed the army would escort them to the border. He was aware the latter proposal would entail moving two million Russian and Polish Jews and would require “special conditions and true ingenuity.” He wrote of the undertaking “only as a hint of what might be accomplished.”¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Pestel’ proposed the sedentarization of nomadic peoples and casting on them the “light of the Orthodox faith and the rays of true enlightenment.”¹⁴⁷ His ultimate ambition was “for all tribes in Russia to be Russified” (*vse razlichnye plemena v Rossii . . . obruseiut*).¹⁴⁸

The Southern Society under Pestel’ therefore combined a very circumscribed toleration, probably inspired by historical precedents as well as by his reading of enlightened philosophers (Locke, Montesquieu, Mably, Smith, and Filangieri among them), with a truly frightening program of military conquest in the Caucasus, religious proscriptions (against “unnatural” practices by Muslims), and religious discrimination (against Jews). The Caucasus resettlement plan proposed a form of ethnic cleansing later practiced in the region toward the end of the Caucasus War. The policy of collecting and expelling Jews, though it purported to be a voluntary program, anticipated elements of the Armenian genocide (escorting populations with troops) and Nazi-era Jewish resettlements (witness the plans developed by Adolf Eichmann and others before 1941). Post-Soviet Russian scholarship on Pestel’ has emphasized certain disagreeable sides of his political persona: for example, his involvement in espionage against the Greek independence movement, his hypocritical support for republicanism and for regicide.¹⁴⁹ However, neither Soviet nor post-Soviet scholars have fully confronted the menace of his intolerant tolerantism.

THE HEAVENLY CITY AND ITS SPECTRAL SHADOWS

If we review Russian thinking about religious toleration from the sixteenth century to 1825, we discover the following patterns. First, before the mid-eighteenth century Russian thinking about toleration owed little or nothing to the West European Enlightenment. The early sixteenth-century dispute between Maksim Grek and Nikolai Nemchin focused on the advisability of church unity and confessional coexistence. Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Russian Orthodox pleas for toleration hinged on conditions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that did not obtain in Muscovy. The tolerationist moments in the Muscovite religious schism of the seventeenth century were grounded in political calculations about reli-

gious peace (Paisii's letter of advice to Patriarch Nikon) and on the Gospel (Avvakum's assertion that faith cannot be spread by "fire, the knout, and the noose"). From the late seventeenth century to the Petrine church reform there were few concessions to toleration: Simeon Polotskii's call for dialogue with the Old Believers was really a demand that they capitulate to the established church; Pososhkov's letters to Stefan Iavorskyi admitted the temporary necessity of permitting Lutherans to teach Orthodox seminarians, but the context of his religious thinking was otherwise strictly monoconfessional; Iavorskyi's admission that the Orthodox tsar may rule non-Orthodox subjects neither led Iavorskyi toward religious pluralism nor diminished his zealous confessional spirit; Feofan Prokopovich's willingness to restrain diocesan heresy trials and to review diocesan excommunications sprang not from a plan for religious toleration but from a determination to control religious practice from the Synod. Even the tolerationist thinkers of the mid-eighteenth century owed little to the European Enlightenment: Tatishchev's remarkable dialogue on education and toleration drew on Grotius's doctrine of natural rights but not on Locke, Bayle, or Spinoza; Volynskoi's *General Project* was inspired by Tacitus and Lipsius (and perhaps by Tatishchev) but not by the philosophes. Lomonosov's opposition to heresy trials was underpinned by his scientific outlook and by Leibniz's moral theory, so he can be said to have operated under the influence of the Western Enlightenment; however, his religious views did not otherwise depart from Orthodox traditionalism.

From Catherine II to the Decembrists all major Russian thinkers who addressed religious toleration were influenced by enlightened Westerners. Usually, Russian tolerationists were stimulated not by Spinoza or Bayle but rather by Locke, Voltaire, and/or Montesquieu—that is, by the moderate variant of European tolerationism. Thus Catherine, Shcherbatov, Karamzin, Speranskii, Murav'ev, and Pestel' had all read the moderate European philosophes and, in Murav'ev's case, their North American successors (Adams and Jefferson). Certain Russian thinkers were aware of more radical approaches to the problem of toleration: Novikov drew on the German Rosicrucians' general tolerationism; Shcherbatov on Rousseau's doctrine of civic religion; Karamzin was aware of Rousseau's teaching and cited Rousseau's "pupil" Mirabeau with approval. Pestel' read the moderate philosophes (Locke, Montesquieu, and company) and some of their liberal followers (Constant) but seemed not to have shared their moderate spirit.

Still, most Russians influenced by European tolerationists focused not on the abstract, theoretical justifications for toleration but on its practical advantages. This was true in spades of Catherine but also true of Shcherba-

tov, Karamzin, Speranskii, Novosil'tsov, Murav'ev, and Pestel': all saw toleration as a morally desirable goal that had to be reconciled with Russian historical realities—first and foremost, with the existence of the established church but also with the circumstances of the heterodox. For Karamzin, Novosil'tsov, and Pestel' relations between the Orthodox state and the Muslims were a stumbling block to the mandating of universal toleration. For Speranskii, Novosil'tsov, and Pestel' the nomadic tribes of Siberia could not be accommodated under a decree of blanket toleration. For Catherine and Pestel' the Jews constituted a challenge that could be met only by legalized segregation from Christian populations (in the Pale of Settlement), by limitations on Jewish movement within the empire, or, as Pestel' supposed, by “voluntary” resettlement of the Jews outside the empire. Only Novikov, Radishchev, Shcherbatov, and Murav'ev defended something like a general writ of toleration. Novikov, Radishchev, and Shcherbatov thought toleration was both a political and a moral virtue, but two of them (Novikov and Shcherbatov) still advertised its consistency with the established church. Radishchev and Murav'ev linked toleration with freedom of conscience and individual rights—Radishchev being more logically consistent in this respect than was Murav'ev.

Second, as the entire discussion has demonstrated, Russian thinking on religious toleration was, from beginning to end, hedged with qualifications about the desirable limits of toleration. There was in this respect continuity across the Muscovite and early imperial periods. True, Enlightenment influences tended to widen the parameters of discourse about toleration in Russia by facilitating broader claims about its desirability or applicability, yet substantively speaking none of the imperial theorists of toleration advanced much beyond Philaleth's pre-Enlightenment advocacy of toleration based on freedom of conscience and natural rights. Rather, the effect of Enlightenment tolerationism was to encourage Russian thinkers to root toleration in theories about civil and political rights or to ground it in natural virtue—that is, to do what Radishchev, Speranskii, Novosil'tsov, and Murav'ev accomplished in their theories. But except in Radishchev's case, the theory of toleration was always subordinated to practice.

Third, Russian thinking on toleration constituted a response to local religious and political circumstances and, after 1740, to the West European Enlightenment, but it did not constitute a national discourse or sustained, diachronic dialogue on the subject. In the pre-Petrine period writing on toleration had little resonance: Maksim Grek's polemics with Nikolai Nemchin were known only in high clerical and court circles; Philaleth and the Russian tolerationists in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth may not

have been known in Muscovy; Avvakum's autobiography containing his tolerationist plea circulated in manuscript among Old Believers, not among Nikonians. The best eighteenth-century works on toleration—Tatishchev's dialogue, Radishchev's poetry and his *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, Shcherbatov's utopian "Journey to the Land of Ophir"—were either written "for the drawer" or were suppressed shortly after publication. None of the early nineteenth-century thinkers on toleration (Karamzin being the exception) were published. Novosil'tsov must have known of Speranskii's 1809 memorandum, Murav'ev knew of Speranskii's memorandum and Novosil'tsov's State Charter, but tolerationist writings of the period did not reach the public at large until decades later. The great exceptions to this pattern of limited circulation were Catherine's Instruction (printed in French, in a large edition), Novikov's essays (published in subscription-based Masonic journals), and Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveler* and *History of the Russian State*. Paradoxically, although Karamzin was not the most radical tolerationist to appear in Russia before 1825, his views on the subject probably had the largest long-term readership and the biggest influence. His teaching treated toleration as a national virtue and as the wise result of political calculation about the need to accommodate the heterodox in a growing empire. His flattery of the educated public and of the crown was conducive to his ideas' favorable reception.

Fourth, Russian thinking about toleration, with all its limitations and peculiarities, illuminates certain elements in the broader historiography of the Enlightenment. The Russian case shows that tolerationist thinking predated the West European Enlightenment; that for most thinkers social imperatives (the need for ethnic Russians to come to terms with their Tatar neighbors and with other Muslim groups, for example) and state interests in domestic tranquillity outweighed moral justifications for toleration; and that in certain respects moderate Enlightenment-era tolerantism did not represent a fundamental break with pre-Enlightenment thinking on the subject. Nor can it be said that most Russian advocates of toleration were pure secularists, the Russian pattern after 1740 being to combine secularist and religious impulses. Usually, the secular component of tolerationist thinking was presented as consistent with the established church, but secularist arrangements were not infrequently accompanied by open avowals of religious belief. Thus it is a serious mistake to treat the Russian Enlightenment (or Petrine-Catherinian "modernization" of the empire, for that matter) as a purely secularist enterprise. In this respect the Russian Enlightenment resembled more the German-Austrian model, not the French or British Enlightenment. It is a cliché among historians of the eighteenth

century that there was not one but many enlightenments. The Russian case confirms this proposition clearly.

The thorniest theoretical problem raised by Russian thinking on toleration bears on the proposition that the so-called enlightenment project was repressive rather than emancipatory. This proposition has been defended by various scholars: notably by the founders of the Frankfurt school of critical theory Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944–1947); by their epigone Herbert Marcuse in *Repressive Tolerance* (1965); by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975); and by Barrington Moore in *Moral Purity and Persecution in History* (2000).¹⁵⁰ It must be said that very little of the theoretical criticism of the West European Enlightenment is helpful in understanding Russian tolerantism. Horkheimer and Adorno were mostly interested in explaining social conformism of industrial capitalist societies, the destructive myth of rationalism, and the deceptiveness of capitalist art; their discussion of the link between the Enlightenment and antisemitism aimed to explain Nazi racial antisemitism, not antisemitism generally. Marcuse sought to expose nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberalism's repressiveness. Foucault postulated a sharp epistemic break in Europe between classical modes of understanding the world and the modern social-scientific understanding of it, especially the social-scientific mania for objectification of reality and social control. Moore's idiosyncratic book was a philippic against Western monotheism that touched only briefly on the dangers of Enlightenment-revolutionary purism. For eighteenth-century Russia, where industrial capitalism had a mere toehold, where liberalism had not yet developed, where the social sciences had not taken root (and, it should be noted, the classical worldview described by Foucault also had little purchase), where Western-inspired Enlightenment ideas were not universally embraced even by the educated elite, and where the French Revolution found almost no would-be emulators, the twentieth-century critique of the Enlightenment seems misdirected.

However, two aspects of Russian tolerantism *are* illuminated by the critics of the Enlightenment. First, the selective religious toleration advocated in Russia logically entailed selective intolerance as the other side of the medal and therefore opened the door to schemes of surveillance and control of the state's purported religious enemies. Thus Russian tolerantism was simultaneously emancipatory and repressive. This dialectic was perhaps clearest in Catherine's Instruction, but it operated in the work of other thinkers too, except for Novikov and Radishchev. Second, in the Decembrists Murav'ev and Pestel' we see elements of a certain epistemic shift in discourse concern-

ing toleration. Murav'ev called for freedom of conscience to be extended to all groups except those engaging in unnatural acts or whose practices were based on unnatural principles. We can only guess what he meant, but here the proscription of Muslim polygamy and forced segregation of women advocated by Pestel' may be examples of what Murav'ev had in mind; so might an aversion to Russian castrati (*skoptsy*). Evidently, Murav'ev sought to ban religious practices that were, from an Western enlightened perspective, "irrational." The rationalist prejudices expressed by Pestel' against traditionalist Islam, against nomadism, and especially against "unenlightenable" Jews also instantiated an epistemic shift connected with Enlightenment intolerance. His surveillance scheme involving clandestine secret policemen in "Note concerning National Government" eerily evoked the unseen but all-seeing eye of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon.

The fifth pattern in Russian thinking about toleration was that certain aspects of tolerantism—its selectivity and enlightened rationality—had worrying implications for those standing outside toleration's emancipatory writ. The negative features of Russia's Enlightenment project should not be absolutized, as articles by Robert Wokler and Elise Wirtschafter rightly insist.¹⁵¹ But to pretend that bright lights throw no shadows or that promises of a radiant future are necessarily salubrious would be unworthy of the Enlightenment and of us.¹⁵²