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Social Mobility and the Russian Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century marked a crucial new period in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. In Muscovy the church had been an institution of paramount importance: it possessed enormous wealth, exercised considerable influence on the theocratic politics of Muscovy, and held a virtual monopoly over culture and art. During the eighteenth century, however, this awesome power and wealth all but vanished. The secularized state wrought fundamental changes in the church: it replaced the patriarch with a more tractable Synod, gradually exploited and finally sequestered the church's lands and peasants, and in general transformed the church into an "integral part of the Russian state structure and administration."¹ The church's ascendancy was correspondingly weakened in both society and culture. The ecclesiastical leadership made little headway against the abiding problems of superstition and paganism, and it failed to stem the spread of the Old Belief and of secular culture throughout the population.

But the most significant changes took place at the very social foundations of the church—in the parish clergy, the primary corps of church servitors.² In the course of the eighteenth century the clergy acquired a new social profile and new service patterns; they experienced drastic changes in their juridical

1. P. V. Verkhovskoy, *Uchrezhdenie Dukhovnoi kollegii i Dukhovnyi reglament*, 2 vols. (Rostov-on-Don, 1916), 1:684.

2. The parish clergy (or "white clergy") were socially and juridically distinct from the other main category of church service people—the celibate monastic clergy (or "black clergy"). Strictly speaking, the term "parish clergy" (*prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo*) refers only to the clerics in a parish church, not to those serving in other kinds of churches—cathedrals (*sobory*), endowed churches (*rushnye tserkvi*), private chapels (*domovye*

The author wishes to thank the International Research and Exchanges Board, the Foreign Area Fellowship Program, and the Russian Research Center of Harvard University for support and assistance. Grateful acknowledgment is also due to the officers and staff of the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad (TsGIAL) and the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts (TsGADA) for their generous assistance in making available the archival materials used in this work. An earlier version of this paper was read at the annual convention of the AAASS in New York; the author is grateful to Professor Georges Florovsky for his comments and criticisms.

position, their relationship to church authorities, their economic condition, and their social status and role in the parish community. However, the most profound change of all was the recasting of the clergy into a closed hereditary estate (*zamknutoe dukhovnoe soslovie*).³ Other social categories were being regrouped into *sosloviia* at the same time, and the formation of the clerical estate was part of this general process. In some respects, however, the clerical estate was unique: this group was juridically “outside” secular society (belonging, instead, to the “Synodal command”),⁴ and it displayed an extraordinarily high degree of self-enclosure. Furthermore, the social patterns were accompanied by a growing cultural isolation, as the clergy became noticeably distinct from the secularizing culture and way of life. The social distance was very

tserkvi), or convent churches (*tserkvi pri devich'ikh monastyriakh*). However, all elements of the white clergy constituted a single social group, sharing a common juridical status and displaying internal mobility among the various kinds of churches. Especially in the provinces, the formally nonparish churches were often assigned some parishioners to supplement an inadequate economic base. Hence the discussion here will embrace all segments of the white or parish clergy.

The clergy of any given church, however, were divided into two main categories: the ordained clergy (*sviashchenno-sluzhiteli*) and the churchmen (*tserkovno-sluzhiteli* or *tserkovniki*). The upper stratum of ordained clergy consisted of the ranks of *protopop* or *protoierei* (archpriest), *pop* or *sviashchennik* or *icrei* (priest), and *diakon* (deacon). The lower churchman stratum embraced two ranks, *diachok* and *ponomar'*, who were responsible for guarding the church, ringing the bells, keeping the church clean, reading, and various menial chores. The two strata were sharply distinguished in spiritual and juridical status; the ordained clergy also received a much larger share of parish income and enjoyed greater esteem than the lowly churchman.

3. The term *dukhovnoe soslovie* (clerical estate) has been widely used in the historical literature; see, for example, V. O. Kliuchevsky, “Istoriia soslovii v Rossii,” *Sochineniia*, 8 vols. (Moscow, 1956–59), 6:276–466; M. F. Vladimirsky-Budanov, *Gosudarstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie v Rossii XVIII-go v.* (Iaroslavl, 1874), pp. 85 and passim; and N. Latkin, *Uchebnik istorii russkago prava perioda imperii (XVIII-XIX st.)*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp. 157–75. However, the term *soslovie* was not used in this sense of corporate estate in the eighteenth century, but gained currency only in the mid-nineteenth century; see N. Lazarevsky, “Sosloviia,” *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, 86 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1890–1907), 30:911–13. Both state and church documents in the eighteenth century refer to the exact rank, to the clergy (*dukhovenstvo*), or to the “clerical rank” (*dukhovnyi* or *sviashchennyi chin*); see, for example, TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 14, g. 1733, d. 181:3, and op. 51, g. 1770, d. 470:35 ob. Here we shall follow the conventional terminology and let the picture drawn by the data define the social meaning of “estate” or *soslovie*.

4. An important conception in eighteenth-century administration was that of the “Synodal” or “ecclesiastical command” (*Sinodal'naia* or *dukhovnaia komanda*) as separate from the “secular command” (*svetskaia komanda*). In administrative practice as well as theory the clergy belonged to the Synodal command, all the rest of society to the latter. This special status was noted by one traveler in the late eighteenth century, Tooke, who observed that the clergy, “as it is sometimes particularly mentioned in manifestoes and in several places, is distinct from other classes.” See William Tooke, *A View of the Russian Empire*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (London, 1800), 2:115.

great indeed; many observers were led to describe the clergy as a separate "caste," quite distinct in Russian society and culture. The gravity of this problem achieved full recognition in the nineteenth century. When a reform movement arose in the church in the 1860s, one of its key objectives was to dismantle the estate-caste structure of the clergy that had become so detrimental to the viability of the church in a modern society.⁵

Despite the importance of the clergy as a social group, the existing historiography is singularly weak, especially compared with the works available on other groups and classes. The only comprehensive study is the old monograph by P. V. Znamensky which surveys all areas of the empire from Peter to the Great Reforms. Though pioneering for its time and still a useful summary of the clergy's juridical position, the volume has limited value for a modern social historian. Sharing the assumptions of the prevailing juridical historiography, Znamensky relied mainly on legal sources and made no use of the Synodal or diocesan archives. Not surprisingly, his views on many issues stand in need of revision. For example, he argued that a major factor in consolidating a closed hereditary estate was a decline in the custom of the parishes' selecting their own priests, who instead were being chosen by assertive bishops. Yet Znamensky himself admitted a lack of documentation on the Great Russian provinces, and indeed his view on the decline of parish election of the priest was not correct.⁶ A few works have appeared since Znamensky's monograph, but none have made a significant conceptual contribution or introduced new sources.⁷

The present study, drawing upon previously unused Soviet archival materials and largely untapped printed sources,⁸ seeks to fill this gap in the

5. For a discussion of the reform movement in the 1860s see A. A. Papkov, *Tserkovno-obshchestvennye voprosy v epokhu Tsaria-Osvoboditelia* (St. Petersburg, 1902).

6. P. V. Znamensky, *Prihodskoe dukhovenstvo v Rossii so vremeni reformy Petra* (Kazan, 1873), pp. 19, 82. See my article, "The Disintegration of Traditional Communities: The Parish in Eighteenth-Century Russia," forthcoming in *Journal of Modern History*.

7. Ioann Znamensky's work, *Polozhenie dukhovenstvo v tsarstvovanie Ekateriny II i Pavla I* (Kazan, 1880), is little more than a summary of the legislation in *Polnoe sobranie zakonov*. More important are the many diocesan and seminary histories, which often include valuable materials on the clergy; perhaps the most widely used monograph is the study of Moscow by N. Rozanov, *Istoriia Moskovskago eparkhial'nago upravleniia*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1869–71). The only previous work to make extensive use of the Synodal archive is V. E. Den's series of articles, "Podatnye elementy sredi dukhovenstva XVIII v.," *Izvestiia Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, 1918, nos. 5–7, 13–14. Znamensky's views and materials have been closely followed in two more recent accounts: Igor Smolitsch, *Geschichte der russischen Kirche, 1700–1917* (Leiden, 1964), and A. V. Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkvi*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1959).

8. The chief archival source is the Synodal archive in TsGIAL, fond 796. It contains

social history of the eighteenth century. The purpose here is not to review the familiar legislation but to determine the social processes behind the clergy's transformation into a closed estate and to determine the implications of this development for the clergy's social stability and service performance. Because of the marked regional variation in social patterns, it is necessary to limit this analysis to the central Great Russian provinces, where the closed clerical estate reached maximum development in the eighteenth century.⁹ Although archival and published sources have been used for all the central provinces, the present work will focus on Vladimir Province. This restricted scope allows a more systematic examination of the documents and data. Such an approach is particularly important when the historian goes beyond general legal documents to the highly particularistic materials of social history. Although any of the central provinces are suitable for this case study, Vladimir Province has been selected for several reasons. In the eighteenth century it was intersected by three dioceses (Pereslavl, Suzdal, and Vladimir); hence materials come from three administrations and are less likely to be distorted by the idiosyncrasies of a single bishop.¹⁰ Also, the pertinent archival and printed sources are exceptionally rich and varied, yielding data on most questions. The choice of a central province outside Moscow is especially desirable: Znamensky and others have used Rozanov's work on Moscow extensively and tend to generalize too readily about provincial dioceses on the Moscow case alone. Moscow was patently different in some respects; an analysis of Vladimir will balance

invaluable policy papers, census data, diocesan reports, seminary registers, and clergy petitions and judicial cases. The Synodal decrees are available for 1721–41 in *Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiashenii po vedomstvu pravoslavnago ispovedaniia*, 10 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1869–1916), hereafter *PSPR*; for 1741–62 in *PSPR. Tsarstvovanie Elizavety Petrovny*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1899–1911), hereafter *PSPREP*; for 1762–96 in *PSPR. Tsarstvovanie Ekateriny Alekseevny*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1910–15), hereafter *PSPREA*; and for 1796–1801 in *PSPR. Tsarstvovanie Pavla Petrovicha* (St. Petersburg, 1915), hereafter *PSPRPP*. Descriptions of approximately one-third of the eighteenth-century holdings of the archive are available in *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sv. Sinoda*, 31 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1869–1917), hereafter *ODDS*. Additional archival materials on the central provinces are preserved in the archive of the Moscow Synodal Chancellery in TsGADA, fond 1183.

9. For the very different development of the Ukraine see E. Kryzhanovskiy, "Ocherki byta iuzhno-russkago sel'skago dukhovenstva v XVIII v.," *Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastyrei*, 1861–64.

10. The history of ecclesiastical administration in Vladimir Province is very complicated. Until the 1740s only the Suzdal diocese existed, and the balance of the area belonged to the massive Synodal Region. To improve and strengthen church administration in the province, new dioceses were established in Vladimir and Pereslavl in 1744. Only in 1788, when the state decided to align eparchies with the boundaries of provinces, was a single Vladimir-Suzdal diocese established; it remained essentially unchanged in the nineteenth century. For pertinent legislation see *PSPREP*, 2:660, 692, 745; *PSPREA*, 3:1388, 1394. The standard work on ecclesiastical administration is still I. M. Pokrovskiy, *Russkie eparkhii v XVI–XVIII vv.*, 2 vols. (Kazan, 1913).

that historiographical bias. Finally, Vladimir is generally typical of a central province; though we will focus on the three dioceses of Vladimir Province, reference to other provinces must be made on important issues to determine this typicality of Vladimir.

Before the eighteenth century the clergy was still an open social group: individuals from other social groups entered church service, and the clergy's offspring departed for other ranks in society. To be sure, there was a natural tendency for sons to choose their father's trade, and church hierarchs were already beginning to denounce manifestations of a hereditary order.¹¹ But as yet there were no firm barriers to impede mobility into or out of the clergy. As Znamensky rightly pointed out: "For appointment to the clergy it was not necessary that a person have a clergyman as a father, but only that he have a high moral character and be literate, that is, know how to read and sing. A priest's son, if he did not know how to read, was removed from the clerical estate, whereas a bonded person [*smerd'*] who was literate freely entered the clergy."¹² Although there is some disagreement on just how easy access was for outsiders, it is generally accepted that the clergy was still an open social group.¹³

There were several reasons for this continuing openness. First, even though some legal barriers existed (for example, bonded persons were not supposed to be ordained), ecclesiastical administration was simply too inefficient and underdeveloped to enforce these rules. Even in Moscow, where the ordination procedure sought to establish whether a candidate was a free person, the administration had no local organs to conduct routine investigations, and relied wholly on the testimony of a single witness.¹⁴ And in the sprawling rural dioceses, where hundreds of parishes were dispersed across vast spaces, even this feeble measure was omitted.¹⁵ Second, there was great mobility in

11. See, for example, the oft-quoted prescriptions of the Stoglav of 1551 and the Sobor of 1667 in Znamensky, *Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo v Rossii*, pp. 6, 8–9.

12. P. V. Znamensky, *Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo na Rusi* (Moscow, 1867), p. 36.

13. Znamensky, while showing that access remained open, emphasized the hereditary patterns taking shape in the seventeenth century, but he had only scanty evidence for his view. He was sharply criticized for exaggerating this hereditary element in pre-Petrine Russia by Vladimirsky-Budanov, who argued that outsiders were still regularly entering the clergy (*Gosudarstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, p. 98). See the balanced assessment of this issue in E. E. Golubinsky, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1901–10), 2, pt. 2:83.

14. See the documents in N. A. Skvortsov, *Dukhovenstvo moskovskoi eparkhii v XVII v.* (Moscow, 1916), esp. p. 10.

15. In his instruction on ordination procedures a Riazan hierarch in the mid-seventeenth century made no mention of checking a candidate's social origin, but only sought to establish that he be of the minimum age, literate, and of good moral character. See P. Sladkopevtsev, "Preosviashchennyi Misail, arkhiepiskop riazanskii i muromskii," *Riazanskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1866, no. 13:385.

this traditional society: clergy frequently moved about, churches rose and fell suddenly, and youths usually did not succeed their fathers at a given parish.¹⁶ With all this movement, the rudiments of a firmly crystallized hereditary order were simply lacking. Third, entry into the clergy was not barred by special education available only to the clergy's children: standards were notoriously low, and the informal instruction at the parish church or under a local "master" was open to commoners as well.¹⁷ Finally, vast numbers of new churches were constructed throughout this period, and thus a constant opening of unencumbered positions created fresh opportunities for nonclerical youths.¹⁸ In short, outsiders easily gained access to the clergy, and clerical progeny were free to leave the group. This picture was to change dramatically in the eighteenth century.

The closing of the clergy was not due to any changes in the formal process of selection, for the methods of choosing and ordaining candidates remained virtually unaltered in the eighteenth century. As before, the aspirant first had to obtain a formal election by parishioners and then holy ordination by the bishop. The traditional right of parish election was based not on canon law but sheer necessity: the hierarchs simply lacked the administrative apparatus and pool of preferred candidates to do anything other than rely on the parishioners to select literate and honorable candidates. As the church acquired an improved administration and seminaries in the eighteenth century, a few bishops did attempt to assert greater control over appointments; however, such efforts to violate parish autonomy usually failed, and the right of parish election remained unshaken throughout the century.¹⁹ After the parish had chosen a candidate and given him a signed election certificate, he then journeyed to the diocesan authorities for ordination. If he passed the moral and literacy

16. Seventeenth-century materials on the general region around Moscow show that although a priest often had his sons serve as churchmen, there usually was no clear line of hereditary succession of priests in a given church (see G. Kholmogorov and V. Kholmogorov, *Istoricheskie materialy dlia sostavleniia tserkovnykh letopisei moskovskoi eparkhii*, 11 vols. (Moscow, 1881–1911)).

17. See M. F. Vladimirsky-Budanov, "Gosudarstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie v Rossii s XVII veka do uchrezhdeniia ministerstv," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosvetshcheniia*, 169 (October 1873): 165–220, and 170 (November 1873): 36–70.

18. Although no data are available for Vladimir Province, there is some material on nearby areas to indicate how rapidly churches were proliferating. In the Ruzskaia desiatina of Moscow Province the number of churches increased from eight to thirty-five between 1600 and 1700 (Kholmogorov, *Istoricheskie materialy*, 1:255–56). In the Kolomna diocese (which embraced the area south of Moscow) the number of churches grew at the rate of 27 percent in 1674–1700 (from 500 to 636 churches); see Pokrovsky, *Russkie eparkhii*, 2:28–29.

19. The archives abound with references to election certificates, and a report showing that they were routine in the Vladimir diocese is in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 44, g. 1763, d. 79:1-1 ob.

examination, he was then sent for instruction in his sacred duties, given the rites of ordination, and issued an ordination certificate.²⁰

Even though the process of selection was the same, would outsiders still *want* to enter the clergy in the eighteenth century? The Russian gentry (as in the past) had very little inclination to do so: the parish clergy was a lower social status, which did not promise even eventual rise to a respectable position in the hierarchy (reserved for the monastic clergy alone).²¹ However, the townsmen and peasants, who continued to enter the clergy in the early eighteenth century, were clearly attracted to church service. The priest was a respected figure, enjoyed a superior judicial status, and came to share some privileges in common with the nobility (such as exemption from the poll tax, quartering, recruit levies, and even corporal punishment). Furthermore, as contemporaries often noted, the impoverished townspeople and land-hungry peasants needed an outlet. Though many parish churches were indeed poor, others were quite prosperous, and elsewhere the clergy had an adequate land allotment and income. Thus, for the mass of the population subject to the poll tax, the clergy held out the prospect of upward social mobility. Nevertheless, entrance by outsiders declined sharply in the eighteenth century, primarily as a result of three processes: (1) the clergy's own efforts to reserve positions for their relatives, (2) the establishment of new educational requirements which only clerical children could fulfill, and (3) the new restrictions imposed by the state through its poll-tax registry.

The clergy themselves became a key force in closing the group, as they sought to keep church positions for their own relatives and to exclude outsiders (whether of lay or clerical origin). In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church with its requirement of celibacy, the Russian Orthodox Church required marriage before ordination into the priesthood. The consequence was a large clerical estate, consisting not only of the clerics themselves but also of a large population of wives, children, and sundry relatives. It was indeed a large mass of dependents; in the Vladimir diocese, for example, the clerics themselves constituted only 22 percent of the entire estate in the early 1780s—after nearly a century of state efforts to prune away the number of dependents.²² They

20. For a convenient published description of the ordination process see Rozanov, *Istoriia MEU*, 2, pt. 1:102–7 and pt. 2:133–45.

21. Monastic domination was challenged in the eighteenth century by an influential Moscow archpriest, Petr Alekseev. He argued that a widowed priest should be allowed to become a hierarch without tonsure and that “monasticism is not a prerequisite for the hierarchical rank but even forms a hindrance.” See P. Alekseev, “Rassuzhdeniia na vopros: Mozhno li dostoinomu sviashchenniku, minovav monashestvo, proizvedenu byt' vo episkopa?” *Chteniia O IDR*, 1867, 3, pt. 5:25.

22. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 63, g. 1782, d. 543:3 ob.–12.

had a strong vested interest in erecting firm hereditary claims to parishes and positions.

Why did the clergy become so zealous in seeking to exclude outsiders? One important motive was simple economic interest: the appointment of a son or relative increased the family's share of land and income in the parish. Though the exact amount varied (depending on the kind of parish staff), the priest in Vladimir Province received an additional 25 percent (sometimes more) of the parish land and income if his son became a churchman; if an outsider received the appointment, however, all of this was forfeited.²³ Moreover, following a Synodal decree of 1770, preference in priestly appointments was to be given to lower-ranking clerics of the same parish.²⁴ Similarly, diocesan charters of installation for churchmen exhorted them to serve zealously: "so that you will be worthy of advancement into the ranks of the ordained clergy."²⁵ To guarantee a son's advancement to his position a priest thus had to prevent the appointment of outsiders to the staff. Finally, a cleric had to find a successor who was willing to support him in retirement, and this motive was candidly expressed in the clergy's petitions to church authorities.²⁶

A second motive was the genuine parental concern of the clergy to provide clerical positions for their sons. Reports of supernumerary clergy began to circulate in the seventeenth century, and obtaining a clerical position became increasingly difficult. The problem became critical in the eighteenth century, as the state set precise limits on the permissible number of clergy per church and drafted the excess into the army, peasantry, and factories. During the late 1730s, for example, 12 percent of all clerical sons and churchmen in the Suzdal diocese were drafted into the army. Even more rapacious conscriptions were carried out by later rulers, especially Catherine and Paul. A priest, understandably eager to protect his sons from the state, thus sought to reserve a position for them at his own church.²⁷

The third motive for barring outsiders was rather less respectable: clergy feared the presence of outsiders who would inform the authorities of their various misdeeds. This passion for insularity grew markedly in the eighteenth century, as the authorities increased both their service demands and routine supervision over the clergy. The seventeenth-century priest was often safely removed from his bishop by hundreds of versts of impassable roads, bogs, and

23. *Ibid.*, op. 70, g. 1789, d. 40:1–39.

24. *PSPREA*, 1:653.

25. *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 65, g. 1784, d. 274:38. See also op. 79, g. 1798, d. 428:3–3 ob.

26. *TsGADA*, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1737, d. 117:2–2 ob.; *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 195:21–21 ob., 38, 39–40 (separate cases).

27. The impact of a conscription could vary considerably: whereas only 6 percent of the churchmen and clerical youths were drafted in Riazan, a devastating 25 percent were taken in the Rostov diocese. *ODDS*, 19: Prilozhenie 1.

forests. The man holding his position a century later was apt to be subject to much more intensive and efficient administrative control. The priest also had to bear many new and onerous responsibilities which often cast him into direct opposition to the parish. He was, for example, expected to expose Old Believers, inform against peasants concealed from the poll-tax registry, dissuade unruly serfs from revolt, and in countless ways act as a government and church agent within the parish. Dependent on the parish for voluntary economic support, the priest thus faced a cruel dilemma—to obey the bishop or heed the demands of his parishioners. The ideal solution was to keep the parish free of outsiders: the clerical staff was responsible for each member's conduct, and an outsider was more likely than a kinsman to report some transgression, either from fear or greed.²⁸ Even clergy who fulfilled the demands of their superiors had good reason to loathe outsiders; their mere presence tended to breed conflicts and false accusations, often over income-sharing or promotion. Given the vagaries of consistory justice, such accusations guaranteed certain hardship and could easily end in disaster. An unproved charge made the cleric susceptible to state conscriptions that routinely drafted clergy with tainted records. For example, several churchmen complained to the Synod in 1784 that they had been drafted on the basis of uninvestigated accusations; nevertheless, the Synod declined to review their cases, explaining that the conscription was over and there was no shortage of churchmen.²⁹ Or, as A. T. Bolotov showed in the account of his local priest, the interminable litigation and conflict could be economically ruinous, even without the catastrophe of conscription.³⁰ The authorities were well aware of the clergy's outlook. The Supplement to the Ecclesiastical Regulation, for instance, warned bishops to break up hereditary enclaves, which enabled clergy to commit offenses or disregard orders without fear of exposure.³¹ Likewise, the bishop of Suzdal in 1781 attributed the clergy's zeal for hereditary parishes mainly to a desire to conceal their crimes and misbehavior.³²

Motivated by these considerations, the clergy used several devices to

28. For exposing a priest for some misdeed, an informer often hoped to receive the position of the guilty cleric as a reward; see, for example, the petition of a *diachok* who makes such a request in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 55, g. 1774, d. 131:2, 32 ob. A good lesson on the dangers of collective responsibility is given in the case of a Pereslavl churchman: for failing to inform on his priest (who neglected to give church services on mandatory state holidays), the churchman received a severe thrashing along with the priest. See N. Malitsky, *Istoriia pereslavl'skoi eparkhii*, 2 vols. (Vladimir, 1905–18), 1:91–92.

29. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 65, g. 1784, d. 274:11-11 ob., 16, 29, 31, 60–61 ob., 192 ob., 200–200 ob.; see also d. 237:1–12.

30. A. T. Bolotov, *Zapiski*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1871–73), 1:149 and 2:794.

31. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii*, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830), 6:4022; hereafter *PSZ*.

32. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 195:63–64.

ensure an heir's appointment. The most direct and effective means was to solicit the support of the parish, which still retained the right to select clerical candidates. Ordinarily, the parishioners respected such entreaties: they knew the candidate well and preferred to avoid the inevitable feuding endemic to parishes with multiple clerical families. A rarer second device was to encumber a parish (mainly an urban one) with property ties: the clerics built private homes on parish land, and a newcomer was expected to purchase them. Since the value of the buildings and position sometimes reached several hundred rubles, such property claims effectively functioned to assure the position to an heir while rebuffing ambitious outsiders. Property claims were pressed hard in Moscow, where land was scarce and valuable.³³ Though some cases occurred in Vladimir Province, they were uncommon; property values were rather low.³⁴ In rural parishes such property ties were of little consequence, given the availability of land. As another device, a member of the clergy might feign infirmity and persuade the bishop to appoint his son as an assistant (and implicitly heir), even in violation of the laws limiting allowable clergy at a parish. Though the authorities outlawed such measures, the practice persisted.³⁵ In 1781, for example, the bishop of the Suzdal diocese was rebuked by the Synod for carelessly declaring "infirm" a priest who was in perfect health.³⁶ Finally, as the new seminaries began to grow (especially in the 1780s and 1790s), bishops often appointed students as nominal holders of minor churchmen positions; in Vladimir 3 percent of the seminarians held such positions, and in some provinces the practice was more common.³⁷ Such appointments, whether at the home church or elsewhere, functioned to exclude outsiders and thus diminished the chances of their entry into the clergy.

Both the state and church authorities condemned the hereditary pattern, issuing specific prohibitions against hereditary ties in parish churches.³⁸ The clerical instruction manuals of the late eighteenth century vainly protested: "The priest, deacon, or churchman cannot put his son or relative in his own place, for these [positions] are sacred; it is wrong to treat them in accordance

33. For a picture of the pattern in Moscow see the following: *PSPREA*, 1:403; Rozanov, *Istoriia MEU*, 2, pt. 2:33–34, 69, and 3, pt. 1:23; and N. A. Skvortsov, *Materialy po Moskve i moskovskoi eparkhii za XVIII vek*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1911–14), 1:78, 100; 2:499.

34. See the cases in Suzdal in 1728 (*ODDS*, 8:106) and Pereslavl in 1756 (TsGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1756, d. 176:1–26).

35. *PSZ*, 20:14807.

36. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 51:22–23 ob.

37. The Vladimir seminary was comparable to Riazan and the Moscow Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy (2 to 3 percent), but higher frequency is to be found in the Kolonna seminary (13 percent) and Rostov (15 percent). TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 71, g. 1790, d. 417:87–152, 385–454; d. 418:486–590; op. 74, g. 1793, d. 94:349–421.

38. *PSZ*, 6:4022; see also *PSPR*, 1:109, 3:1090.

with human passions or to subject the divine church to hereditary ownership.”³⁹ Yet the authorities were unable to sever the ever-multiplying family bonds. As long as the candidate satisfied the educational and moral requirements, the bishops gave due (if reluctant) respect to the parishioners’ choice. And even when the parish sent an unqualified candidate, the bishops proceeded with surprising caution in challenging the parish decision. The bishops were more concerned about completely insular hereditary enclaves; however, they launched a direct assault only when some clerical misdeed provided a convenient pretext. Thus, even though hereditary ties had long existed in one parish, it was only the revelation of a crime that gave the Suzdal authorities an opportunity in 1758 to relocate a priest on the grounds of “excessive kinship ties.”⁴⁰ But most important of all, their compassion led the bishops to become unwitting supporters of the hereditary estate: they routinely disposed of “family property” in order to provide material support for widows and orphans. The Synod itself usually approved widows’ petitions to hire a temporary priest, who shared the income with the widow and eventually had to relinquish the position to her son.⁴¹ The Moscow Synodal Chancellery in another case ruled that “although clerical positions are not subject to inheritance, it is nevertheless proper to appoint a son-in-law who will support the orphans.”⁴² The bishop of Suzdal, explaining his difficulties in redistributing excess clerics, provided this revealing insight: “Before me appear the children and relatives of deceased, disabled, and infirm registered clergy (including some sons who attended or graduated from the seminary) . . . [and] they all request appointment to some position, arguing that these aged and infirm clergy, or the families of deceased clergy with young children, cannot be left without adequate support or charity.”⁴³ Thus within the clergy itself strong hereditary bonds were formed which effectively closed the group to outsiders.

The second factor restricting mobility into the clergy was wholly new in the eighteenth century: educational barriers. Previously candidates had needed to satisfy only the most rudimentary requirements: the church had no formal schools, examinations were perfunctory, and an outsider had no difficulty in meeting the low educational standards. With some hyperbole, Novikov referred ironically to “those golden days when people became priests without knowing how to read and write.”⁴⁴ The church hierarchy repeatedly denounced the

39. *Katekhizis sokrashchennyi dlia sviashchenno- i tserkovno-sluzhitelei* (Moscow, 1798), p. 19.

40. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 42, g. 1761, d. 65:19-19 ob.

41. *PSPR*, 10:3217; *PSPREA*, 1:403, 3:1499.

42. *ODDS*, 21:37.

43. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 195:47.

44. *Zhivopisets*, 1772 (2nd ed.; St. Petersburg, 1773), *chas'* 1, *list* 3, p. 15.

clergy's ignorance but never went beyond these verbal complaints and exhortations.

In the eighteenth century, when state and church authorities began to establish seminaries and compel attendance, this picture changed markedly, and special education gradually became a prerequisite for clerical service. Before the reign of Catherine the Great, to be sure, the new formal schools were of limited significance. The seminary in Suzdal, for example, had only 109 students in 1723-26 and then shut its doors. After it reopened in 1736 the enrollment started with 78 and declined to a mere 28 students in 1744, when it again closed until 1755. Moreover, most of the diocese was completely unaffected by the new school. In 1736, for instance, 88 percent of the students came from the city of Suzdal and surrounding uezd.⁴⁵ After new seminaries were established in Trinity-Sergius Monastery, in Pereslavl, and in Vladimir, the total number of seminarians for the province increased somewhat; nevertheless, all of the seminaries had extremely small enrollments and produced far more turmoil than learning.⁴⁶ The clergy firmly resisted the new educational requirements, and the consistory archives are filled with cases of fugitive students or obstinate clergy who refused to surrender their sons to diocesan bailiffs.⁴⁷

Yet even in this transitional period educational barriers were becoming evident. In 1738 Anna ordered that all candidates be retained for three months at a diocesan monastery and subjected to intensive study and training, and elaborate rules were prescribed for weekly instruction and examination.⁴⁸ The Moscow Synodal Chancellery, responsible for the central provinces, exerted considerable pressure on the bishops to implement the decree, and the intensive training schools did appear in the general Moscow region.⁴⁹ Recognizing that formal education was a heavy financial burden for the parish clergy, many hierarchs also took steps to establish improved methods of informal instruction. In Pereslavl the bishop ordered special Sunday afternoon sessions for teaching the catechism; numerous copies of the catechism (published specifically as a teaching aid for the rural clergy) were distributed in Vladimir

45. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 18, g. 1737, d. 32, *chas'* 1:197-211, *chas'* 2:148-51 ob.; *chas'* 3:86-90 ob.; TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 25, g. 1744, d. 134:49-51 ob.; N. Malitsky, *Istoriia suzda'skoi dukhovnoi seminarii (1723-1788 gg.)* (Vladimir, 1905), pp. 5-7.

46. The seminary at Trinity-Sergius Monastery had ninety-two students in 1742 (the year it opened) and 151 students in 1763. See S. K. Smirnov, *Istoriia troitsko-lavrskoi seminarii* (Moscow, 1867), pp. 26, 238. In Vladimir the new seminary, after opening in 1750, still had only sixty-eight students in 1755. See N. Malitsky, *Istoriia vladimirskoi dukhovnoi seminarii*, 3 vols. (Vladimir, 1900-1902), 3:1-5.

47. See, for example, the cases in TsGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1738, d. 14:14 ob. and g. 1755, d. 401:1-16.

48. *PSZ*, 10:7734.

49. TsGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1739, d. 38:6 ob.-7, 11-11 ob.

Province in the 1740s; and the metropolitan of Rostov even prepared a special manual for candidates to study and learn.⁵⁰ What makes these measures so important is that they were consistently aimed *only* at the clergy's children. With few exceptions, outsiders rarely enrolled in the new schools or received the informal instruction. The list of seminarians in Suzdal for 1736 shows that one student was of peasant origin and another was the son of a lay monastery employee, but the remaining seventy-six were all the children of clergy. Similarly, the list for Vladimir seminary in 1755 includes only sons of clergy, and this pattern holds true for most other seminaries in central provinces.⁵¹ Thus, preparation was now essential: after major improvements in diocesan administration, the examination of candidates became rigorous and systematic, and the ill-prepared who were just barely literate could no longer slip through.

The last quarter of the century witnessed a sharp increase in the social importance of formal seminary education, which now became a *sine qua non* for clerical appointment. The enrollments in church schools increased dramatically. Between the 1730s and 1792, total enrollment in Vladimir Province climbed from a few score to 1,320 students.⁵² Furthermore, students now came from all corners of the diocese. And it is significant that, as the seminary lists of the 1790s show, the students were almost exclusively of clerical origin.⁵³ The social implications of this change were spelled out in the early 1780s, when the bishops replied to a Synodal query about the need of accepting candidates for the clergy from groups outside the clerical estate. The bishops of the Suzdal

50. N. Malitsky, "Obuchenie pereiaslavskikh sviashchenno-tserkovno-sluzhitelei katekhizisu," *Vladimirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1905, no. 5:136. *PSPREP*, 1:128, 377; K. Nadezhdin, "Ocherki istorii vladimirskoi seminarii," *Vladimirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1865, no. 1:63, n. 1. V. Lestvitsyn, "Stavlenicheskaia tetrad'ka vremeni mitropolita Arseniia Matseevicha," *Iaroslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1881, no. 13:97-102 and no. 14:106-9.

51. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 18, g. 1737, d. 32, *chast'* 2:148-51 ob.; Malitsky, *Istoriia vladimirskoi dukhovnoi seminarii*, 3:1-5. For similar data on Kolomna, Rostov, Riazan, and Nizhny Novgorod see TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 18, g. 1737, d. 32, *chast'* 2:110-11 ob., 324-60 ob., 641-50 ob.; *chast'* 3:73-84. Somewhat exceptional, however, were those seminaries closely associated with a monastery: Trinity-Sergius and Aleksandro-Nevisky Seminaries consistently enrolled a number of children of lay monastery employees. On Trinity-Sergius Seminary see Smirnov, *Istoriia troitsko-lavrskoi seminarii*, p. 26, and the list in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 25, g. 1744, d. 134:107-21; on Aleksandro-Nevisky Seminary see I. Chistovich, *Istoriia S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (St. Petersburg, 1857), pp. 7, 11, 45. By far the most heterogeneous school was the Moscow Academy, where clerical children were only 32 percent of the student population in 1728 (*ODDS*, 9:571); however, here also the number of outsiders gradually declined, and by 1744 the sons of clergy were 88 percent of the students (TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 24, g. 1743, d. 496, *chast'* 2:124-34 ob.).

52. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 74, g. 1793, d. 94:349-421.

53. *Ibid.*, op. 71, g. 1790, d. 417:87-152, 385-454; d. 418:486-590; op. 74, g. 1793, d. 94:349-421.

and Pereslavl dioceses reported that they had an ample number of candidates in the seminaries and saw no need of accepting outsiders. Indeed, as several bishops from other provinces pointed out, there were already many unappointed clerical youths, even without the competition of outsiders.⁵⁴ Thus professional education, available exclusively to the clergy's children, became a new and effective barrier for aspirants from lower social groups.

The third obstacle for the son of a townsman or peasant was the poll-tax registry introduced by Peter the Great. After some initial confusion, the state finally exempted the entire clergy from the poll tax; this concession marked a significant victory for the Synod.⁵⁵ However, it raised the question whether poll-tax registrants could be admitted into the clergy.⁵⁶ For its part, the Synod argued that clerical vacancies in many regions could be filled only if poll-tax registrants were admitted. The Senate, however, opposed any loss of revenues and feared undue delays and confusion in its tax collection.⁵⁷ Eventually the two sides reached a compromise in 1727–28: a landlord could release a peasant for church service but had to pay the poll tax for him.⁵⁸

These regulations surely discouraged the selection of poll-tax registrants, but did not completely exclude them. Naturally, few parishes were eager to ransom a cleric: they were already burdened with their own poll tax and could usually choose from a plethora of candidates. Nevertheless, legal access to the clergy was not fully closed. Some candidates paid their own way: contrary to law, they remained responsible for their own poll tax after ordination, although the parish nominally paid the tax. Often a bribe was also involved; in 1775, for example, several churchmen explained their release by a "big pay-off to the landlords and responsible state officials."⁵⁹ Some parishes, however, were willing to pay the price, especially when candidates were too few or their master prevailed upon them to do so. As a result, a significant number of poll-tax registrants still found their way into the clergy. In the Suzdal diocese 7.7 percent of the clergy in 1739 had once been inscribed in the poll-tax registry.⁶⁰ Since many clerics were already appointed before the establishment of the poll-tax system, clergy coming from the rolls of the poll

54. *Ibid.*, op. 64, g. 1783, d. 217:65–66 ob.; d. 566:1-1 ob. See also Den, "Podatnye elementy," no. 14:1524–34.

55. The state originally exempted only the ordained clergy (priests and deacons), not the churchmen, from the poll-tax registration (*PSZ*, 6:3481, 3492). The Synod, however, vigorously opposed such a policy and eventually prevailed (*ODDS*, 1:275, and *Prilozhenie* 23; *PSZ*, 6:3901).

56. For a convenient summary of the legislation and data see Den, "Podatnye elementy," nos. 5–7, 13–14.

57. *PSPR*, 5:1661; *PSZ*, 7:4802.

58. *PSZ*, 7:5202; *PSPR*, 6:2098; *PSZ*, 8:5264.

59. *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 56, g. 1775, d. 142:1-1 ob.; see also d. 179:1-1 ob.

60. *Ibid.*, op. 20, g. 1739, d. 14:169; *ODDS*, 18: *Prilozhenie* 16.

tax must have constituted a high proportion of all *new* appointees. Though many of these former poll-tax registrants were clergy's sons who had been caught by an earlier Petrine draft, there were also certainly a number of genuine peasant and townsmen appointees as well.

This appointment of poll-tax registrants, however, was subjected to ever-tightening controls in the ensuing years. During the second *reviziia* in the 1740s the Senate noted with alarm that poll-tax registrants were escaping into the clergy, and promulgated stiff new regulations. It now declared that only noble landlords could release a peasant. Complaining that many clerics had been ordained without a formal release, the Senate even ordered the drafting of all churchmen who had been installed without this "mandatory written release." Finally, in 1746 the Senate categorically prohibited further appointments from the poll-tax population: "Henceforth, in accordance with the decree of November 12, 1725, persons previously in the poll-tax registry and in the current poll-tax registry are absolutely not to be ordained and appointed as priests and deacons or as churchmen [until the Senate and Synod reviews the matter]." ⁶¹ The Synod resisted, calling the decree "unacceptable." Citing data on the vast numbers of idle churches and vacant clerical positions, it argued that only by drawing upon the poll-tax population could these ranks be filled. ⁶² The exchanges continued for the remainder of Elizabeth's reign; policy was still ambiguous, and periodically the Synod gave formal approval for the appointment of poll-tax registrants to the clergy. ⁶³ Nevertheless, the more restrictive policy gradually took effect: for the period 1744–66, former poll-tax registrants now composed only 3 to 4 percent of the clergy in the dioceses of Vladimir and Pereslavl. Moreover, virtually all were originally clerical children or churchmen, who had been assigned to the poll-tax population but later worked their way back into the clergy. ⁶⁴

The state finally succeeded in terminating access for poll-tax registrants in the reign of Catherine II. The Synod, rapidly losing its erstwhile influence, could no longer withstand state demands to cease appointing the poll-tax registrants to the clergy. In 1774 the Synod ordered the bishops to expel all churchmen who had ever been in the poll-tax registry and strictly forbade any such appointments in the future. ⁶⁵ The Synod soon afterward attempted to soften this harsh measure, but the Senate reaffirmed the prohibition in

61. *PSPREP*, 1:278; *ODDS*, 23:23; *PSZ*, 12:8981; *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 27, g. 1746, d. 123:1–6.

62. *PSPREP*, 3:1000, 4:1400.

63. *Ibid.*, 4:1729.

64. *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 48, g. 1767, d. 547:454–66 (Pereslavl diocese); op. 46, g. 1765, d. 276:176–77 (Vladimir diocese).

65. *Ibid.*, op. 56, g. 1777, d. 119:1–1 ob.

1776.⁶⁶ In subsequent years the Synod scrupulously, if reluctantly, enforced this rule, and compelled its diocesan subordinates to do likewise; thereafter the Synod refused even to consider petitions of churchmen put into the poll-tax rolls.⁶⁷ Moreover, by the 1780s most hierarchs had come to regard such poll-tax registrants as unnecessary. The seminaries provided an ample number of candidates, and in most areas there were now few vacancies to be filled.⁶⁸ As a result, few poll-tax registrants were now ordained into the clergy. In the 1780s the Synod reported that only 0.79 percent of the clergy in the empire were of poll-tax origins, and equally insignificant proportions were reported by the diocesan authorities in Vladimir, Suzdal, and Pereslavl.⁶⁹

Thus mobility into the clergy all but vanished in the eighteenth century. In many parishes a clerical clan had struck its roots so deeply that access was securely closed to all outsiders, even those of clerical origin. Although some hereditary tendencies were evident in Muscovy, they turned into hard and fast lines only after Peter the Great—as the clergy desperately struggled to achieve economic security, protect their privileged status, and ward off the mounting pressures exerted by the state. Added to this were two barriers wholly new to the eighteenth century—the poll tax and specialized education. Even in a parish in which a clerical family was not firmly entrenched (such as a newly opened parish, or one in which a cleric was defrocked or died without issue), aspirants from other social groups found their way blocked by the poll tax and education. Hence the clergy, who had too little to offer the well-born, had become socially, legally, and culturally inaccessible to the lower status groups most likely to enter.

But what about social mobility out of the clerical estate? There was ample cause for voluntary transfer into other groups. For those already ordained as clerics the sources of discontent were manifold: abuse by authorities and landlords, impoverishment, and particularly the lingering practice of compulsory tonsure for widowed clergy. The most likely group to leave, however,

66. Catherine received a petition from sixteen churchmen in Vladimir Province and ordered the Synod “to try to appoint these poor people to vacant clerical positions” (*ibid.*, op. 56, g. 1775, d. 142:1). When the Synod attempted to apply this decree to other cases, the Senate objected that Catherine’s order had related to the special Vladimir case, hence the previous prohibitions must be enforced (*ibid.*, d. 119:147 and d. 179:1–96).

67. *Ibid.*, op. 58, g. 1777, d. 15:20–22; see also op. 62, g. 1781, d. 497:1–3.

68. Metropolitan Platon of Moscow wrote in February 1783 that “from the reports submitted during the current census of Moscow diocese, it is evident that there are a great many unappointed clerical children. . . . There is no need whatsoever to accept and install those coming from the poll-tax registry.” *TsGIAL*, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 585:385. See the similar reports from other dioceses in op. 64, g. 1783, d. 338:33–34 ob.; d. 566:1–1 ob.; d. 370:1–1 ob.

69. *Ibid.*, op. 65, g. 1784, d. 443:5; op. 63, g. 1782, d. 543:13–21 ob., 67–132; op. 64, g. 1783, d. 217:65–66 ob.

were the clergy's children. They were not inscribed in the poll-tax registry and usually had acquired some formal education or at least literacy,⁷⁰ and thus were potentially the most fluid element in Russian society. Furthermore, after Peter established the system of fixed quotas of clergy for each parish, youths encountered serious problems in finding suitable positions and lived in dread of a new *razbor* or conscription. It might therefore be expected that they would have left the clerical estate with much haste and little regret.

Surprisingly, however, voluntary transfer was very limited. In Pereslavl diocese only 2 percent of the clerics and their sons left the clerical estate in the period from 1744 to 1756; approximately the same rate was recorded in the subsequent decade.⁷¹ More revealing still are the results of the state conscriptions, which swept away the superfluous churchmen and idle youths. These campaigns invariably ensnared massive numbers of victims, even though false reports and the connivance of bishops assuredly saved many others.⁷² This stubborn refusal to leave proved self-destructive in later reigns: when the government magnanimously permitted draftees to choose their new social status, most declined to do so and continued their desperate search for a clerical vacancy.⁷³

There were a number of reasons for this remarkably low rate of outward social mobility from the clergy. First, Vladimir Province offered almost no attractive social outlets. Although a clerical youth occasionally chose to become a townsman or even serf, such cases were rare. Few willingly sought a plainly inferior status that also entailed inscription into the poll-tax registry. And, though there were some exceptions, few persons had sufficient capital to register in the merchant guilds.⁷⁴ The most inviting outlets were the bureau-

70. According to data from the 1730s, very high proportions of the clergy's sons were reported "to have studied" (meaning literacy): 69 percent of the youths in the Suzdal diocese, 88 percent in Vladimir uezd, and 94 percent in Pereslavl uezd (cities included). See TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 18, g. 1737, d. 253:66 ob.-67; *ODDS*, 18: Prilozhenie 15. However, a note of caution is in order: the sources do not explain how the information was compiled, whether from unreliable reports (*skazki*) or a real examination (*osmotr*).

71. In data filed on the Pereslavl diocese, the bishop reported a total of 4,278 clerics and sons in the second *reviziia* in the 1740s. From this group 730 had died, leaving a balance of 3,548. All were still in the clerical estate in 1756, with these exceptions: two transferred to Moscow University, one went to the Moscow typography, and forty-three ran away (total: 1.2 percent); another twenty were expelled from the clerical estate for various crimes (0.7 percent). TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 36, g. 1755, d. 344:380-403; see the similar data a decade later in op. 48, g. 1767, d. 547:452-52 ob.

72. For the 1769 *razbor* see *ibid.*, op. 58, g. 1777, d. 143:1; for the 1784 *razbor* see op. 65, g. 1784, d. 443:678-85; and for the 1788 *razbor* see op. 71, g. 1790, d. 55:1-156.

73. *PSPREP*, 3:1054.

74. See, for example, the cases in Kolomna in 1770 (*ODDS*, 50:418) and Tula in 1785 (TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 66, g. 1785, d. 441:1-12).

cracy and the professions, both of which demanded educated personnel; yet clerical youths encountered serious obstacles even there. The provincial bureaucracy drew primarily on the progeny of chancellery employees for new recruits and, in any event, could absorb only a fraction of the clerical children. In Vladimir Province the clerical youths numbered several thousand, and the provincial administration had only a few hundred employees.⁷⁵ Similarly, demands for professional people were still negligible, especially in Vladimir Province. Even those professions with shortages (notably, medicine) presupposed an advanced level of seminary education that only a tiny minority achieved. In the Vladimir seminary one-half of the graduating theology class in 1792 departed for a secular career, but those students who withdrew from the lower grades entered the clergy.⁷⁶ Hence upward mobility had the worst imaginable effect upon the church. The best-trained seminarians left the church for secular occupations, while the mass of poorly educated youths continued to accumulate.

A second restriction on social mobility was the establishment of tight controls regarding geographical movement. The Synod issued the regulations primarily to solve the problem of clerical vagrancy. In the seventeenth century and later, free-lance priests who gathered in Moscow and became notorious for their misconduct were a serious problem. Such ecclesiastical opposition to geographical movement accorded well with the state's desire to bind the population to a single locality and thus simplify its problems of law and order. The result was a stream of proclamations warning the clergy not to travel without passports and the laity not to accept such vagrants.⁷⁷ The very repetitiveness of the decrees suggests how difficult they were to enforce; yet the measures gradually took hold. A decisive incentive came in 1771, when some clerics were implicated in the disturbances that led to the murder of Metropolitan Amvrosii. The diocesan authorities began to prosecute vagrants

75. A recent study by S. M. Troitsky shows that in the 1750s the clergy's offspring rarely obtained administrative appointment—composing only 3.4 percent of the central officials and 6.0 percent of the provincial employees. Much more important in staffing the bureaucracy was the hereditary group of chancellery employees (*prikaznye liudi*). See S. M. Troitsky, "Sotsial'nyi sostav i chislennost' biurokratii v seredine XVIII v.," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 89 (1972): 295–352. On the development of this estate of *prikaznye liudi* see Vladimirsky-Budanov, *Gosudarstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, pp. 174–87. After the provincial reforms in 1775, however, the government sporadically engaged in active recruitment of personnel from the seminaries, and by the mid-nineteenth century officials of clerical origin became much more numerous, especially in Vladimir Province. See the data on Vladimir Province in Walter M. Pintner, "The Social Characteristics of the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Bureaucracy," *Slavic Review*, 29, no. 3 (September 1970): 435–36.

76. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 74, g. 1793, d. 94:349–421.

77. Among the innumerable decrees against unauthorized clergy movement were the following: *PSPR*, 1:116; *PSPREP*, 1:71; *PSPREA*, 1:266; *PSPRPP*, 182.

systematically and soon eliminated the problem of free-lance priests coming from the provinces.⁷⁸ Moreover, the improvements in state and church administration helped to stem the flow of clergy and their sons. And diocesan authorities sometimes added their own regulations against movement. Such controls, strictly enforced by the new network of local ecclesiastical superintendents (*blagochinnye*), slowed the movement of clergy considerably.⁷⁹ Regardless of intent, all these measures had serious consequences for the clerical estate. The restrictions aggravated the problem of staffing imbalances. Though some dioceses were plagued by a superabundance of clerical youths, others in the outlying provinces were desperately short of candidates. Moreover, the travel rules kept the clergy and their offspring locked in the clerical estate. Bound to a locality, they could not easily find positions in other areas.

The final and by far the most important obstacles were the church and the clergy themselves. The hierarchy, despite problems of overpopulation, desired the largest possible reservoir of potential candidates; and they especially resented the loss of well-educated seminarians. The Synod firmly opposed government attempts to enroll the sons of clergy in the Petrine cipher schools, and took a series of measures to compel these youths to attend only ecclesiastical schools.⁸⁰ In 1731–32 the Synod obtained a concession from the Senate that the chancelleries “are not to accept the children of priests, deacons, or churchmen, but these youths are to be sent to the [ecclesiastical] schools for the appropriate study.”⁸¹ The Synod also resisted demands by the medical college for seminarians. In a typical ruling of 1747 the Synod refused to release seminarians of clerical origin because “in accordance with the Ecclesiastical Regulation and decrees of Her Imperial Majesty, the sons of clergy are to study in preparation for ecclesiastical service and are to become clergy.”⁸² And even after the 1760s, when its influence waned, the Synod still sought to restrict exit from the seminaries and clerical estate. In 1767, for instance, the Synod decreed that the children of the clergy could enter only the army or the poll-tax population but could not transfer into other occupations.⁸³

At the diocesan level the bishops also opposed transfers into secular

78. See Rozanov, *Istoriia MEU*, 3, pt. 1:135–37 and n. 323.

79. For examples of conscientious enforcement of regulations by the diocesan authorities see TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 49, g. 1768, d. 81:1–1 ob.; TsGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1738, d. 181:4–4 ob. For a case in which the bishop of Vladimir issued supplementary restrictions see “Episkop vladimirskii Pavel,” *Vladimirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1910, no. 31:560.

80. *PSPR*, 1:120; *ODDS*, 2, pt. 1:378; *PSPR*, 2:850, 890, and 7:2488; *ODDS*, 10:378.

81. *PSZ*, 8:6066.

82. *PSPREP*, 3:1002.

83. TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 48, g. 1767, d. 547:14 ob.; see also *ODDS*, 50:69.

groups. Although the bishops of Vladimir evidently took no special measures, the hierarchs of other dioceses were sometimes more active in discouraging exit from the clerical estate. Platon of Moscow was especially hostile to requests to transfer, and indeed his diocese was plagued by an exceptionally high degree of loss. In 1771, when a student requested permission to transfer to Moscow University, Platon (who was then rector of Trinity-Sergius Seminary) refused: "He is to study in the seminary in hopes of entering the clergy—otherwise, the money spent on him by the school will have been wasted."⁸⁴ The bishop of Riazan included this order in his instructions for the management of the seminary: "It is necessary to impress upon the students that as clerical children they have the right to be in the service of the church; it must be shameful for them to desire to leave for other ranks and give the clerical positions to laymen."⁸⁵ He also compelled students in the advanced classes to promise that they would "never request permission to enter the lay ranks, under fear of being subjected to legal punishment."⁸⁶ The bishops also used moral suasion to discourage transfers, giving permission only with great reluctance.⁸⁷

Moreover, the clergy often opposed such exit by their own children. Each family sought to monopolize a parish and wanted at least one son to inherit the priestly position and property. Although direct evidence of family pressure is rare, some reflection of it is found in the appeals of clergy to recover sons lost during a conscription. In case after case the petitioners appealed for the return of their sons so that an heir would be available to provide for a cleric in retirement or for his widow and orphans.⁸⁸

Because of these obstacles the clergy and their children were hemmed in, unable to leave the clerical estate and transfer to another social group. At the same time, outsiders found entry into the clergy virtually impossible.

84. Smirnov, *Istoriia troitsko-lavrskoi seminarii*, p. 552. See the fascinating text of a public debate held at the seminary in 1781 on "what career one should choose." The text refutes arguments for selecting a lay profession instead of church service, with a special invective for bureaucratic careers (pp. 578–83). From the impressive data on the exit of seminarians from the clerical estate in Moscow Province in the 1780s it is clear why the ecclesiastical officials were so deeply troubled over such transfers (see the report on Moscow in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 62, g. 1781, d. 588:117–24 ob.).

85. "Po povodu pechataemago nizhe 'Uchrezhdeniia' Simona, episkopa riazanskago," *Riazanskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1866, no. 19:543–44.

86. A. Sokolov, "Simon Lagov," *ibid.*, 1884, no. 10:183.

87. For examples of the reluctance of bishops to release widowed clergy who applied for transfers to the lay command see the two Kolomna cases in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 64, g. 1783, d. 89:1–7 and d. 236:1–2 ob.

88. See the petition of a Vladimir priest, for example, in TsGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, g. 1737, d. 32:2–2 ob.

With social mobility so diminished, the clergy was becoming a sealed-off and encapsulated population. The implications of this social change were very far-reaching indeed.

One consequence was a serious demographic imbalance. With the service structure rigid and precisely defined, the growing clerical population simply could not place the numerous sons. This clerical overpopulation, in Vladimir and all the central provinces, put an enormous strain on the social stability of the parish clergy. It caused a serious drain on the meager resources available to support the swollen clerical estate, thus intensifying the traditional problem of clerical impoverishment. More serious still, the overpopulation inspired the state to conduct massive, ruthless conscriptions of "superfluous churchmen and clerical children." But these occasional raids were too sporadic and uneven to relieve the congestion. They served only to denigrate the status of the clergy and their progeny—who were unceremoniously consigned to the army, serfdom, and the factories. This overpopulation, moreover, was a vital ingredient in the proliferation of intraclerical brawls, feuds, and court cases that so demeaned the clergy in the eyes of the laity.⁸⁹

Furthermore, the formation of the clergy into a closed estate greatly reinforced the "functionary" role conception of the clergy, whereby the priest was not so much a religious figure as a functionary performing rites and duties for a fee. Increasingly the cleric inherited his position as a kind of patrimony and source of income; he did not select church service as a "calling" or claim a special religious inspiration.⁹⁰ It is revealing that in their diverse appeals for the bishops' mercy, the clergy did not rely on religious arguments. Rather, to acquire or regain their position they based their claims on genealogy (alluding to their "father's and forefather's position"), or, more often, they simply pleaded for mercy and charity.⁹¹ Though church manuals did attempt to impart a sense of the priest's special religious mission, the documents

89. Intraclerical disputes were so common that the bishop of Vladimir used this fact to justify the need for district ecclesiastical offices (TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 54, g. 1773, d. 140:241 ob.-242). That the Vladimir diocese was no exception is evident in the inventory of cases handled by the Riazan consistory at the end of the century (see G. Dobroliubov, "Ukazatel' materialov dlia istoriko-statisticheskogo opisaniia riazanskoï eparkhii," *Trudy Riazanskoï uchennoiï arkhivnoi komissii*, 17, pt. 2:107-8, 110, 114-16, 123).

90. For the classic denunciation of clerical motivation see Metropolitan Dmitrii's statements in I. A. Shliapkin, *Sv. Dmitrii Rostovskii* (St. Petersburg, 1891).

91. For example, one Suzdal petitioner claimed his "father's position" (*ottsovskoe mesto*) and declared it was in the family "from ancient times" (ODDS, 8:106); see a later example from the Vladimir diocese in TsGIAL, f. 796, op. 56, g. 1775, d. 142:1. Similar materials abound for all the other central provinces, and Vladimir is by no means unique; see, for example, op. 66, g. 1785, d. 236:3-37; d. 239:1-1 ob.; and d. 247:1-13. Typical of pleas for mercy and charity are the following cases: op. 42, g. 1761, d. 65:2-2 ob.; op. 56, g. 1775, d. 280:3; op. 62, g. 1781, d. 195:28-29 ob., 30 ob., 32 ob., 39-40.

convey little evidence that the clergy themselves had come to share this role conception.⁹²

Finally, the sharply drawn lines around the clergy increased significantly the isolation of the group from the rest of society. Juridically, the clergy were already “outside” society and in the separate Synodal command. This peculiar legal status was now complemented by a profound social distance as well: the clergy usually married within their own estate, had difficulty in establishing social intercourse with other groups, and appeared increasingly strange and alien within the emerging secular culture. Writing about the clergy in the nineteenth century, Znamensky drew this striking portrait of their isolation: “The clergy managed to form itself into an integrated and complete caste type, to construct itself into a completely isolated society, a special breed with which the other *sosloviia* have neither blood nor social ties, even being rather hostile toward the clergy.”⁹³

By the late eighteenth century the clergy had thus acquired one of its most essential characteristics: it was a fully enclosed hereditary estate, with virtually no mobility into or out of the group. Far more than any other category, the clergy approached closely in social reality the ideal type of hereditary *soslovie*. Unlike others, it was crushed by the results of this enclosure: demographic imbalance, endemic poverty, internal strife, and social isolation. The net result was a festering social problem which plagued the church in imperial Russia and sapped its strength to adjust to a postmedieval society and culture.

92. See *O dolzhnostiakh presviterov prikhodskikh ot slova bozhiia, sobrannykh pravil i uchitelei tserkvi sostavlennoe* (St. Petersburg, 1776), and Tikhon, *Nastavlenie o sobstvennykh vsiakago khristianina dolzhnostiakh* (St. Petersburg, 1791), p. 98 ob.

93. Znamensky, *Prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo v Rossii*, p. 120.