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Introduction

THE HOLY ALLIANCE QUESTION

The masters of the world had united against the future.

—MAZZINI, "TOWARD A HOLY ALLIANCE OF THE PEOPLES"[1]

THE HOLY ALLIANCE was an idea of progress. This idea was linked to an eighteenth-century vision of an end to destructive rivalries among European states and empires: a vision associated with the thought of a celebrated Enlightenment figure, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai. The Holy Alliance was also a label for reaction. In the nineteenth century, this label became a rhetorical weapon aimed against entrenched barriers to the assertion of collective agency: it was used to condemn the obsolete legacies of past conflicts that were no longer capable of meeting present or future needs. The Holy Alliance, finally, was a political intervention. It was a treaty, announced in 1815 by the emperor of Russia, Alexander I, aiming to build a durable new order by transforming a victorious military alliance against an aggressor into a reconciled community of nations. It became an important reference point during later moments of systemic change: "new holy alliances" were frequently identified throughout the twentieth century, from the founding of the League of Nations through the Cold War. The Holy Alliance is still worth revisiting in the twenty-first century because of how it gave rise to both the expectation of progress and the experience of reaction. Asking why it

1. Giuseppe Mazzini, "Toward a Holy Alliance of the Peoples," in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, ed. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 117.

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gave rise to both reveals the complexity of the underlying problems that the political intervention was originally supposed to address. The world of the Holy Alliance is not so distant as it might seem. The persistence of the problems it was supposed to address is a prompt to reconsider the expectations and experiences attached to many other "new holy alliances"—past and present.

At the end of March 1814, just two years after the burning of Moscow and Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Russia, Alexander peacefully entered Paris and proclaimed himself the "friend of the French people." The massive Russian army accompanying him conferred the power as well as the moral authority to herald the resolution of decades of conflict within and among European states following the French Revolution of 1789. A year later, negotiations toward a comprehensive postwar settlement at the Congress of Vienna were interrupted by Napoleon's sudden return from exile. His final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815 was followed by a second occupation of Paris, this time spearheaded by a Prussian army, which promptly tried (but failed) to blow up the bridge over the Seine commemorating Napoleon's victory at Jena in 1806. The treaty of the Holy Alliance was a bid to reclaim the role that Alexander had assumed in 1814. It was privately signed in Paris on September 14/26, 1815, shortly before Alexander's return to Russia, by two of his wartime allies—the emperor of Austria and the king of Prussia—who were joined in November by the newly restored king of France. The prince regent of Great Britain did not formally sign it, on constitutional grounds, but instead circulated a private letter declaring his "entire concurrence in the principles" of the treaty.[2] Alexander then published the treaty together with a public manifesto issued in Saint Petersburg on Christmas of 1815. Read together, the texts of the treaty and manifesto jointly announced the beginning of a new era defined by the application of Christian moral principles to politics. According to these principles, the peoples of Europe, together with their governments, were to consider themselves members of "one Christian nation" that had "no other sovereign" but God; all states that accepted these principles were invited to accede to the alliance.[3]

2. "Letter of the Prince Regent to the Emperor of Russia, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia," October 6, 1815, in Werner Näf, *Zur Geschichte der Heiligen Allianz* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1928), 41.

3. "Sainte Alliance entre LL.MM. l'Empereur de toutes les Russies, l'Empereur d'Autriche et le Roi de Prusse, signé à Paris le 14/26 septembre 1815," in Näf, *Zur Geschichte der Heiligen Allianz*, 31–34.

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When it first appeared, a British political dictionary of the 1840s recalled, "many liberal politicians throughout Europe, especially in Germany, looked to the Holy Alliance with most sanguine expectations of its happy results."[4] In 1816, and again in 1823, the Holy Alliance was declared to be "the most liberal of all ideas" by a former professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg: not Immanuel Kant, the renowned philosopher who had died in 1804, but his immediate successor, the self-proclaimed liberal Wilhelm Traugott Krug.[5] Krug was joined by a wide variety of others—not only in Germany but also in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, and even New England—who saw the Holy Alliance as the dawning of a peaceful and prosperous age of progress. From their perspective, the purpose of the Holy Alliance was to avert the dismal specter of modern Europe's decline and fall, of national hatred, class warfare, financial collapse, and demographic catastrophe. The Holy Alliance would supply a definitive resolution to the Anglo-French imperial rivalry whose effects had been felt around the world. It would stabilize the European balance of power and inaugurate a more robust legal order that provided for collective security as well as national autonomy. It would give rise to representative institutions throughout Europe, together with a federal constitution: structures within which atavistic fetters on social and economic progress could gradually be eliminated, placing political authority under the guidance of public opinion without repeatedly unleashing the volatile dynamics of revolution and reaction. The ecumenical form of Christianity espoused by the Holy Alliance would foster the formation of a robust pan-European civic culture, marked by religious toleration, the peaceful coexistence of diverse nationalities, and the responsible exercise of expanding liberties. Finally, the Holy Alliance would advance the cause of liberty globally: not only by emancipating Greece from Ottoman rule but also by transforming the economy of the Atlantic world. There, in addition to universalizing the abolition of the slave trade and guaranteeing the independence of Haiti, it would help reverse the global expansion of extractive systems powered by unfree labor.

4. "Holy Alliance," in *Political Dictionary: Forming a Work of Universal Reference, Both Constitutional and Legal: And Embracing the Terms of Civil Administration, of Political Economy and Social Relations, and of All the More Important Statistical Departments of Finance and Commerce* (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1845), 2:92.

5. In 1816, it was "die liberalste aller Ideen," in 1823, "die allerliberalste." Wilhelm Traugott Krug, *La sainte alliance: Oder Denkmal des von Oestreich, Preußen und Rußland geschloßnen heiligen Bundes* (Leipzig: H. A. Koechly, 1816), 42–43; Wilhelm Traugott Krug, *Geschichtliche Darstellung des Liberalismus alter und neuer Zeit: Ein historischer Versuch* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1823), 149.

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The pathologies that had given rise to these systems would be displaced by a new collective imperial project. Under the aegis of the Holy Alliance, Europe would take its place in a new global economy, freed from the distortions caused by the militarism of Europe's feudal past and anchored in the continental expanses of the Russian Empire as well as the Americas.

These expectations have long been overwritten by subsequent developments. In the 1820s, the Holy Alliance came to be associated with the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, which cracked down on the press and universities throughout Germany. The Holy Alliance also came to be associated with the expansive right to international intervention asserted by Russia, Austria, and Prussia in 1820. In 1821, Austria invaded Naples to suppress the liberal constitution that the king had granted there under pressure; in 1823, France invaded Spain in similar circumstances. Many liberals feared further interventions against the independence of Spain's former American colonies; these did not occur, but neither did the intervention many liberals did want, in support of the Greek Revolution of 1821. Looking back after the revolutions of 1848, the exiled Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini declared that "the masters of the world had united against the future." According to Mazzini, the Holy Alliance had come to encompass all who had joined the Russian emperor in his efforts "to prevent progress and protect the oppressors" restored to power after the defeat of Napoleon. Sooner or later, Mazzini promised, this reactionary conspiracy would fall, and the future would belong to the democratic nation-state.[6] Mazzini's words still resonate. The Holy Alliance is still remembered as "inaugurating a period of reaction disastrous for liberal principles," whereas Anglo-American resistance to the Holy Alliance "saved the spirit of republicanism" and "kept the principle of democratic nationalism alive at a time when it was being repressed in Europe itself."[7] Meanwhile, the erosion of the nation-state as a site of political agency, and the persistence of structures less responsive to democratic action, like the European Union, can still be attributed to an "unholy alliance against sovereignty."[8]

In the first instance, this book sets out to render intelligible a set of political judgments that are missing from Mazzini's story and that still

6. Mazzini, "Toward a Holy Alliance of Peoples," 117–18.

7. Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 67; Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 9.

8. Christopher J. Bickerton, Philip Cunliffe, and Alexander Gourevitch, eds., *Politics without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations* (Abingdon: University College London Press, 2007), 2.

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seem wildly implausible in hindsight: why Krug and others initially welcomed the proclamation of the Holy Alliance in 1815 as an emancipatory project. They could do so because the Holy Alliance initially registered as an implementation of eighteenth-century ideas about constitutional reform, prosperity, and peace. Liberal hopes could be invested in the Holy Alliance because of arguments made by a series of eighteenth-century writers, most prominently François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, about the rise of Russia. These writers had identified a historical process that was turning Russia into a force for universal emancipation, capable of fundamentally transforming the behavior of European states and empires. In eighteenth-century terms, they had fashioned Russia into an *ami des hommes* or "friend of mankind": a state capable of assuming responsibility for collective security and prosperity. This role, which went on to become a recurring if indistinctly named fixture of European and indeed global politics, was originally defined in opposition to imperial consolidation on the one hand and an ideal world of self-sufficiently sovereign states on the other. The liberal idea of the Holy Alliance linked this federative strategy for bringing about "perpetual peace" to a version of Christianity that resonated across the Protestant world, including in circles associated with the emerging Anglo-American movements to abolish slavery and war.

The point of reconstructing these ideas here is not to call into question the reactionary outcome of the Holy Alliance. Nor is it to tell a predictably tragic story about how the Holy Alliance ultimately failed to live up to its ideals—or to tell a similarly predictable story about how those ideals might be fulfilled by others.[9] Instead, this book begins by asking how anyone could possibly have formed a liberal idea of the Holy Alliance in the first place. From Mazzini's perspective, the Holy Alliance had always been dedicated to stifling aspirations to democracy and national self-determination throughout Europe, and perhaps in the Americas too. From the opposing perspective, meanwhile, the Holy Alliance was nothing more than an inconsequential diplomatic anomaly: it had briefly surfaced in 1815 due to the influence of the Livonian religious figure Juliane von Krüdener, whom the Russian emperor saw regularly in Paris. According to the British foreign secretary, Lord Castlereagh, the resulting treaty was "a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense"; according to his Austrian counterpart, Clemens

9. On the underlying determinism of such approaches, see Samuel Moyn, "On the Nonglobalization of Ideas," in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 187–204; Adom Getachew, "Universalism after the Post-Colonial Turn: Interpreting the Haitian Revolution," *Political Theory* 44, no. 6 (2016): 821–45.

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von Metternich, it was "a loud-sounding nothing."[10] These pronouncements are still frequently cited out of context when in fact, as we shall see, Castlereagh and Metternich were actively working to redefine Alexander's treaty as an awkward expression of his personal religious sentiments. Rather than reproducing any of these verdicts, this book investigates the liberal idea of the Holy Alliance by setting out from the assessments of Alexander's treaty developed by two less familiar but well-connected figures: Frédéric-César de la Harpe and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Both had long-standing ties to Russia as well as revolutionary backgrounds that had integrated them into prominent international networks: La Harpe was a former Swiss revolutionary who had served as Alexander's tutor; Czartoryski was a former Polish revolutionary who had become his foreign minister. Each navigated great power diplomacy with the close attention of those whose countries are especially exposed to its outcomes.

Both La Harpe and Czartoryski were highly critical of the Holy Alliance itself. But at the end of the 1820s, unlike fellow liberals who condemned it as the essence of reactionary politics, both still asserted the emancipatory purpose of what La Harpe called the "initial conception" of the Holy Alliance, as opposed to its "subsequent development."[11] La Harpe and Czartoryski still recognized the Holy Alliance as an unsuccessful version of a familiar process of legal and political change: a process to which both had dedicated themselves following the disappointment of their respective efforts to liberate their own countries through direct revolutionary action and wars of national liberation. Unlike Czartoryski, whose efforts to liberate Poland through Russian intervention came to a calamitous end in 1830, La Harpe continued to regard his parallel efforts to liberate Switzerland as a success: "English diplomacy never intervened in Switzerland except to restore the patricians of the old regime," he wrote. "The Swiss people owes it to Russia alone that the federal pact contains the seeds of liberalism."[12] Behind these divergent outcomes was a widely shared set of expectations. La Harpe's efforts show why the proclamation of the Holy Alliance could be recognized as a performance of Enlighten-

10. Castlereagh to Liverpool, September 28, 1815, in Charles K. Webster, *British Diplomacy, 1813–1815: Select Documents Dealing with the Reconstruction of Europe* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1921), 383; Clemens Wenzel Lothar Metternich, *Aus Metternich's nachgelassenen papieren*, vol. 1 (Wien: W. Braumüller, 1880), 216.

11. Frédéric-César de la Harpe, "Aux Rédacteurs du Globe," *Le Globe*, August 15, 1829, 517.

12. *Correspondance de Frédéric-César de La Harpe et Alexandre Ier: Suivie de la correspondance de F.-C. de La Harpe avec les membres de la famille impériale de Russie*, ed. Jean Charles Biaudet and Françoise Nicod (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1978), 3:409.

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ment politics: a politics premised on the communication of private understandings, which were expected to issue in public actions. And Czartoryski's efforts show why the Holy Alliance could be recognized as a stage in a legislative process: as a form of constitutional politics formally theorized by eighteenth-century authorities on the law of nations as well as the public law of the Holy Roman Empire. The liberal idea of the Holy Alliance articulated by Krug and others represents the merger of these political arguments with a further set of claims about progress and religion.

Considering the Holy Alliance in this way turns a minor diplomatic anomaly into a central episode in a broader picture of the history of political thought. It also shows that an episode usually dismissed as a fleeting "retrogression to antiquated forms" in the history of international law actually points toward the construction of new roles for public opinion and constitutional politics in shaping the structure and practice of relations among European states and empires.[13] La Harpe and Czartoryski were deeply embedded in overlapping intellectual networks emanating from Paris and London, which they repeatedly mobilized in support of their respective campaigns to liberate Switzerland and Poland (and by extension, transform European politics and the Atlantic economy) via Russia. Tracing these international networks introduces a whole new cast of characters into the intellectual history of the Holy Alliance: figures such as the English abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, the radical poet Helen Maria Williams, and the legal reformer Jeremy Bentham; the French republican political economist Jean-Baptiste Say; and the American statesman Thomas Jefferson. This approach makes it possible to take advantage of the substantial theoretical content of the correspondence and journals and treatises that were implicated in the campaigns waged by La Harpe and Czartoryski: sources that can help explain the reasons why these Swiss and Polish revolutionary patriots, followed by Krug and a variety of other contemporary liberals, came to think that Russia could play the emancipatory role they had assigned it—and how they thought it might do so—with far greater precision than the diplomatic record can supply on its own.

These reasons turn out not only to be intelligible but to overlap in significant ways (both historically and conceptually) with other expressions of liberalism, including more familiar ones. This overlap presents a challenge to standard typologies that are often applied not only to the Holy

13. Wilhelm G. Grewe, *The Epochs of International Law*, trans. Michael Byers (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 361. On Grewe, see Matthew Specter, *The Atlantic Realists: Empire and International Political Thought between Germany and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022), chap. 4.

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Alliance but also to the broader landscape of nineteenth-century political history and intellectual life (such as liberalism and reaction, democracy and monarchy, new and old world). It also opens up a challenging new comparative perspective. The absence of any enduring political identity built around the Holy Alliance as the fulfillment of a liberal ideal helps make it a promising historical site for investigating a revealing disjuncture between expectation and experience. Recovering liberal expectations of what the Holy Alliance was supposed to become is a way of developing a new understanding of what liberals experienced: an approach that avoids either conflating expectations with experience or lapsing into a potentially arbitrary substitution of one retrospective representation of the past for another.[14] The various hopes and fears projected onto Russia after 1815, and aroused by it in turn, may be unedifying as sources of information about Russia itself. But such projections, then as now, can reveal a great deal about the projectors, about what they believe as well as what they prefer to hear: at home as well as abroad. As Friedrich Engels once observed about European views of Russia after 1815, "Once again Europe was befooled in an incredible fashion. To the Princes and the Reactionaries, Tsardom preached Legitimacy and the maintaining of the *status quo*; to the Liberal Philistine, the deliverance of oppressed nations—and both believed it."[15]

There is no reason to suppose that the liberal ideas attached to the Holy Alliance were somehow less liberal than other more familiar versions of liberalism. The first history of liberalism was published by Krug in 1823, and the importance of his inaugural contribution to that genre is still acknowledged—even though Krug's canonization of the Holy Alliance as "the most liberal of all ideas" has gone missing from accounts of the history of liberalism.[16] Yet it would be arbitrary to exclude Krug or his arguments from a canon that recognizes his Swiss contemporary Benjamin Constant—a thinker whom Krug praised and whose ideas were so closely related to Krug's—as the "founding father of modern liberalism."[17] Krug's

14. For an illuminating discussion of such concerns, see Martin Jay, "Intention and Irony: The Missed Encounter between Hayden White and Quentin Skinner," *History and Theory* 52, no. 1 (2013): 32–48.

15. Frederick Engels, "The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom," *Time*, May 1890, 526–27.

16. Krug's own endorsement of the Holy Alliance has also gone missing: "Krug's history of liberalism was quite obviously a rejoinder to the pretensions of the so-called Holy Alliance." Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 79.

17. Helena Rosenblatt, *Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

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history began with Socrates, celebrated Fénelon, and culminated with the Holy Alliance. It anticipated by a century a development discerned by Duncan Bell in Anglophone writing about liberalism: in the shadow of World War I, and then in tandem with the emergence of the idea of "totalitarianism," "liberalism" was introduced as a concept or tradition serving as a repository for the defining values of Western civilization.[18] The problem with such canonizing efforts is that the strong assumptions they require tend to resolve political complexity into reductively moralized categories. A variety of ideas, including incompatible ones, have become liberal in different ways under different circumstances. The Holy Alliance has been invoked as a threat to national sovereignty by Mazzini and others seeking to define a liberal idea of the state; but it has also been invoked as an ideal by those seeking to define liberalism in opposition to the state. In fact, the liberal ideas of the Holy Alliance discussed in this book were not defined in opposition to the state: they were premised on the emancipatory exercise of state power. Instead of serving to define either a liberal idea of the state or a liberal alternative to the state, the history of the Holy Alliance shows how such efforts to deploy or confine state power rely on a strategy for harmonizing the state's internal and external relations—and on an assessment of the social conditions capable of sustaining this alignment. The history of the Holy Alliance also shows how such political strategies can come to be identified with and redefined by divergent views of progress and religion. The Holy Alliance was seen as a religious barrier to liberal progress; but it was also identified with liberal progress by those who located the moral foundations of liberalism in religion. Some of those who embraced the values enshrined in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" of 1789 recoiled from the religious content of the Holy Alliance; but others welcomed it as the articulation of a new religious consensus around those values. From both perspectives, the Holy Alliance also represented an attempt to revive the emancipatory promise of Enlightenment politics in response to the perceived failures of the French Revolution. "I am still the same," La Harpe complained in 1822, "and will never be diverted from my old path," despite "having been successively designated as sans-culotte, democrat, terrorist, Jacobin, Bonapartist, liberal"; now that he found himself called a "carbonario," he could only surmise that "good sense, justice and reason rank among the elements of carbonarism."[19]

18. Duncan Bell, "What Is Liberalism?" *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014): 682–715.

19. Frédéric-César de la Harpe to Heinrich Zschokke, October 12, 1822, in *Lettres inédites de Frédéric-César de La Harpe à Etienne Dumont et à la famille Duval (1822 à 1831)*, ed. Jean Martin (Lausanne: s.n., 1929), 42–43.

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This book is an attempt to capture the complexity of the conceptual resources available for navigating the postrevolutionary ferment of early nineteenth-century Europe: to show how they were incorporated into theories of progress while being deployed for new political purposes via new forms of communication. Approached in this way, the Holy Alliance reveals the kind of disjuncture between expectation and experience extensively analyzed by Reinhart Koselleck, which in his view began to assume a form characteristic of modern politics in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century.[20] Unlike Koselleck's approach to "conceptual history," however, the story told in this book is not predicated on an effort to deduce "metahistorical" categories of experience and expectation. Instead, it is firmly focused on the immediate questions that the Holy Alliance posed for contemporaries, together with the questions that it was supposed by them to answer: questions in the sense of dense aggregations of interrelated problems to be solved (such as, for example, "The Social Question" or "The Jewish Question"), articulated through public debate in a range of registers, all in the sense that Holly Case has described as characteristic of the "Age of Questions."[21] In short, the history told in this book is a history of what might have been (but was not, at least until now) called "The Holy Alliance Question." Underlying the initial responses to the Holy Alliance was a question about federative politics: to what extent was it possible to legalize the external as well as internal relations of the state, to make international politics constitutional? What sort of European, or global, economy did such a politics presuppose, and what endowed Russia and its emperor with the capacity as well as the commitment to achieve it? In France, as is well known, the restoration of the monarchy after 1814 could be welcomed as the elimination of a revolutionary aberration, or opposed as a regression to a reactionary past; but it could also be perceived as an initial stage in the emergence of a liberal future. The Holy Alliance

20. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). For a helpful recent discussion, see Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Introduction: Translating Koselleck," in *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories*, by Reinhart Koselleck (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), ix–xxxi. Liberal expectations of the Holy Alliance can also be described as a variant of the kind of historical analysis and speculation whose history has been told by Catherine Gallagher. See Catherine Gallagher, *Telling It like It Wasn't: The Counterfactual Imagination in History and Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

21. Holly Case, *The Age of Questions, or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). For Case's perceptive comments on Koselleck, see 14, 228–29.

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projected these possibilities onto a supranational stage and gave them a federal shape. Could federative politics serve as a strategy for liberal progress, or was it a pathway to reaction? Had the postwar settlement merely replaced one form of domination with another? Did it portend the long-awaited decline and fall of European civilization, collapsing through internal divisions only to be overrun by Russian armies? Or did the appearance of the Holy Alliance present an opportunity for emancipation and reconciliation, and perhaps the birth of a federal Europe?

By 1848, for Mazzini and many of his contemporaries, these questions had acquired definitive answers. For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Holy Alliance represented a broad consensus against revolutionary change. This consensus extended from conservatives like Metternich to liberals like the French historian and politician François Guizot. All were aligned against the "specter" that, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, was "haunting Europe": "All the powers of old Europe have entered into a *holy alliance* to exorcise this specter: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies."[22] Understanding why a holy alliance could be seen as both emancipatory and reactionary in the first place calls for a new history of the liberal idea of the Holy Alliance: a history of utilitarians and evangelicals, political economists and abolitionists, French—and English—radicals and German philosophers. This is a history that begins in the Enlightenment and points ahead to the "new holy alliances" identified during the systemic changes of the twentieth century. Its discomfiting but also potentially empowering conclusion is that neither the advocates of emancipatory holy alliances nor the critics of reactionary ones have definitively addressed the kinds of problems that the Holy Alliance was originally supposed to solve. From this perspective, the liberal idea of the nation-state associated with Mazzini does not represent an escape from these problems but their development in a new form. Reopening "The Holy Alliance Question" is a way of exposing some of the strong assumptions that have come to shape perceptions of past and present politics—and may also inhibit the invention of new political possibilities.[23]

22. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Penguin, 2002), 218. "Holy alliance" appears in the English translation authorized by Engels; the German original referred to a "heilige Hetzjagd," which the initial English translation had rendered as a "holy crusade." On the original phrase, see Terrell Carver, "Translating Marx," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 22, no. 2 (1997): 195–97.

23. On "inventiveness" in politics, see Raymond Geuss, "What Is Political Judgement?" in *Political Judgement*, ed. Richard Bourke and Raymond Geuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29–46.

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The first chapter of this book introduces the Holy Alliance through a survey of contemporary images depicting the Holy Alliance and the consequences of Russian intervention in European politics. The dense, historically specific meanings of these images dispel long entrenched interpretations of the Holy Alliance as either the reactionary foil for the emergence of liberalism or an ephemeral expression of religious romanticism without real political consequence. Unfamiliar contemporary images of the Holy Alliance resist such polarized narratives. They challenge deceptively reductive approaches to questions of progress and reaction by opening up much broader contexts for the religious and political content of the Holy Alliance. They reveal divergences among expectations as well as experiences of the Holy Alliance—and make it possible to explore the legal and economic as well as moral and religious reasons why it generated expectations of liberal progress. From this perspective, the "holy" in the Holy Alliance signaled a form of Christianity embraced by many liberals (some of whom identified it with Fénelon) and closely connected to the Protestant narratives of redemption associated with contemporary Anglo-American efforts to abolish slavery and war; the "alliance" signaled a constitutional transition to a federative form of politics that promised to establish and maintain the material conditions for fulfilling such emancipatory ideals. The four central chapters of the book that follow examine how the Holy Alliance became a site for fusing federative politics with liberal narratives of progress—and demonstrate the complexity of evaluating federative politics more generally.

Chapter 2 shows how the emancipatory role assigned to Russia and associated with the Holy Alliance was forged at the intersection of two prolific Enlightenment debates, which were shaped by Fénelon's moral vision and whose participants included Voltaire. One of these was about "perpetual peace," the subject of a large literature addressing the problem of escalating competition among European states. When the Seven Years War dashed Voltaire's hopes that a stabilized balance of power between Britain and France could become the core of a new federal system, Voltaire helped inaugurate a second debate about the implications of Russia's rapid expansion and development for the progress of what now began to be called "civilization." The confluence of these two debates produced the idea of Russia acting the part of an *ami des hommes* or "friend of mankind." The moral attributes of this eighteenth-century figure have been associated with the emergence of a cosmopolitan sensibility as well as the rise of national citizenship, but it also came to signify a state's capacity to take individual responsibility for collective security and prosperity. Very

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different understandings of the qualities and course of action that would enable the Russian Empire to assume such a role were advanced by writers on Russia ranging from the Anglican cleric John Brown to the French philosophe Denis Diderot: their contrasting positions on the relationship between the moral and material aspects of the progress of civilization stand behind the later divergence of liberal reactions to the religious content of the Holy Alliance. These eighteenth-century questions about Russia's potential to serve as an *ami des hommes*, solving Europe's problems from the outside, were posed with renewed urgency after the defeat of Napoleon in Russia in 1812, and in light of Alexander's entry into Paris in 1814. To Germaine de Staël and other contemporary liberals, Alexander's association with Krüdener in 1815 and her apparent influence on the religious content of the Holy Alliance looked very different than they did to diplomats like Castlereagh and Metternich. For Staël, the appearance of the Holy Alliance confirmed that Alexander was indeed acting as an agent of universal reconciliation, and that Krüdener had in fact helped him summon a form of Christianity that could serve as the indispensable moral foundation for liberal politics.

The third and fourth chapters of this book connect Enlightenment debates about Russia and perpetual peace to the Holy Alliance by examining the careers of La Harpe and Czartoryski. Following the failure of their respective revolutionary efforts in the 1790s, each set out to channel Russian power into an instrument for transforming European politics. Chapter 3 focuses on La Harpe's efforts, richly documented in his extensive correspondence with Alexander (which he later annotated). La Harpe's campaign had already begun to take shape in the early 1790s, while he was still serving as Alexander's tutor in the court of Catherine II; it resumed after Alexander came to power in 1801, when La Harpe revisited Saint Petersburg, having been ousted as director of the revolutionary Helvetic Republic. Through his correspondence, La Harpe fashioned Alexander into an *ami des hommes*. Following in the footsteps of the eighteenth-century Parisian literary establishment, and using the rhetorical strategies of sentimental literature, La Harpe circulated his testimony of Alexander's private republican sentiments across the international networks he accessed through the Parisian salon of Helen Maria Williams: networks that enabled La Harpe to instigate a private correspondence between Alexander and the newly elected president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. In a variation on a classic Enlightenment script, La Harpe expected these private understandings to issue in transformative public actions. Alexander's allies would help supply the Russian Empire

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with the capital, expertise, and population growth it needed in order to assume a course of development similar to the one Jefferson and others envisaged for the United States of America. In enhancing the capacities of the Russian state in this way, Alexander's allies would also be assuming the function of international public opinion: authorizing and guiding him to deploy Russian prestige and power against the recalcitrant political establishments governing European states and empires. In 1814, Alexander transposed his former teacher's script into his own campaign of public diplomacy during his stays in Paris and London; in 1815 he pursued it again in promulgating his treaty of the Holy Alliance. Alexander now deployed a religious idiom that La Harpe (and Jefferson) found distasteful, but was greeted enthusiastically by many others. In place of La Harpe, it was now a different set of actors—not only Krüdener but also leading reformers in London, like Thomas Clarkson—who circulated their testimony of their private understandings with Alexander. As before, such testimony served to authenticate Alexander's capacity to serve as an *ami des hommes*, guiding the projection of Russian power while also enlisting liberals in developing and populating the Russian Empire. Notably, Clarkson's testimony circulated as far as Haiti, where it was recognized and acted upon by King Henri Christophe and his court in a bid to guarantee Haitian independence from the threat of another French invasion.

The fourth chapter of this book links Czartoryski's efforts to secure Poland's future to a series of debates about federal constitutionalism that played out in eighteenth-century literature on the law of nations and public law. As a teenage visitor to Paris and London in the late 1780s, Czartoryski had encountered two influential international networks, one connected to the French philosopher the Marquis de Condorcet and the other to the former British prime minister, the Earl of Shelburne. Both were associated with advocacy for American independence and its benefits for Europe; both were aligned with hopes that the reconciliation of Britain and France could inaugurate a new legal order whose structure would emerge through the promulgation of treaties enshrining free trade. This approach was defined against the idea of consolidating Europe under a supranational authority (as an earlier French writer, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, had famously proposed in his plan for perpetual peace). It was also defined against the alternative of relying on a system of sovereign states to learn how to align their particular interests (an ideal most closely associated with the Swiss jurist Emer de Vattel). Instead, this approach displaced responsibility for collective security and prosperity onto the internal constitutions and capacities of the state or states legislating the new treaty

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system. Czartoryski tried twice to revive this approach and initiate it from Russia by reactivating the connections he had made in Paris and London in the 1780s: first in 1803–5, at the outset of Alexander's reign, and again in 1814–15, when he expected Alexander to appoint him to govern Poland as part of the postwar settlement. On the former occasion, Czartoryski's key collaborator was his own former tutor in Paris, Scipione Piattoli: a well-connected Florentine who had played a key role in promulgating the Polish Constitution of 1791, and who is best known as the inspiration for the Abbé Morio (a character in Leo Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*). In 1814, Czartoryski's collaborator was the English jurist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham: before the English utilitarians of the nineteenth century famously came to regard colonial India as their best opportunity to put their theories into practice, Bentham (together with his entrepreneurial brother Samuel) had looked to the Russian Empire. Though neither of these collaborations achieved its goals, Czartoryski remained committed to the approach he had encountered in the 1780s and reasserted it in a treatise he composed in the 1820s: a treatise that recognized the Holy Alliance as another unsuccessful version of this approach to federalism. This history of Czartoryski's efforts connects the Holy Alliance to a liberal constitutionalism that was defined by its critics as a plot to suppress national sovereignty, but could also be understood as reviving the federal ideals of the 1780s. The persistence of this understanding explains why the French socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon—a critic of Mazzini's ideal of the nation-state—could later describe the Holy Alliance as an important stage in the development of a federal Europe.

The fifth chapter of this book shows how, in the early 1820s, the Holy Alliance was integrated into a variety of narratives of progress, including Krug's inaugural history of liberalism. Krug's philosophy of history drew on Kant's approach to the history of religion as well as his theory of the state. The history of liberalism Krug published in 1823 identified the Holy Alliance with Kant's ideal of an ethical community whose universality transcended the necessarily pluralistic world of politics. According to others in the 1820s, however—most importantly, the Danish German banker Conrad Friedrich von Schmidt-Phiseldek, the exiled Danish geographer Conrad Malte-Brun, and the French philosopher Henri de Saint-Simon—the same historical process that had produced the Holy Alliance also pointed ahead to the political unification of the "Christian nation" in a federal state with a liberal constitution and a collective imperial mission. This historical process was theorized in aesthetic, economic, and legal terms that collectively amounted to a new iteration of earlier debates

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about the moral and material progress of civilization—and that provoked a sharp response from the Catholic writers Joseph de Maistre and Félicité de Lamennais, as well as the philosopher Auguste Comte. Finally, the Holy Alliance was also integrated into theories of progress by prominent Anglo-American reformers, including James Stephen, a member of the "Clapham Sect" of British abolitionists. For Stephen, as for Noah Worcester (the founder of the Massachusetts Peace Society), the Holy Alliance was the product of a providential process leading to the redemption of the Atlantic world from the sins of slavery and war. These expectations were challenged by Alexander Hill Everett, an American man of letters and diplomat stationed in Europe during the 1820s. Everett drew on the thought of the English political economist Thomas Malthus to integrate the Holy Alliance into a history of European unification through a very different kind of providential process. Everett wrote primarily for an American audience but was also translated and debated in Europe. His analysis creates an opportunity to place the liberal idea of the Holy Alliance in a new comparative perspective with schemes to reform the British Empire as well as the two other great federal projects of the 1820s that Everett also wrote about: the United States of America and Gran Colombia. From this perspective, it was no accident that the constitutional challenges confronting the United States of America in the 1820s, such as the crisis provoked by the admission of Missouri to the federal union, prompted some commentators to invoke analogies to the Holy Alliance.

The continuing proliferation of such historical analogies can serve as a map for tracking how some of the problems raised by the Holy Alliance continued to reappear in new forms under new circumstances. This map reveals some less-familiar trails through the twentieth century. From World War I through the end of the Cold War, attempts to assess the possibilities of postwar politics repeatedly appealed to precedents defined by the post-Napoleonic settlement of 1815. In this context, "new holy alliances" were frequently invoked, most often and most colorfully by critics of the League of Nations and of Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalism. However, they were also invoked by advocates for new systems of international legal arbitration; by those mobilizing collective resistance to fascism; and by those envisaging reconciliation after its defeat, particularly in the form of Christian Democratic politics. It was in a different spirit, however, that the French historian Guillaume Bertier de Sauvigny published an anthology of sources on the Holy Alliance in 1972. Compiled in the wake of the student protests of 1968, Bertier de Sauvigny's anthology was designed to enable students to immerse themselves in

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contemporary judgments as well as historiographical assessments of the Holy Alliance. Doing so, Bertier de Sauvigny explained, would teach them to draw historical analogies in ways that resisted "hasty conclusions and peremptory judgments," but instead helped cultivate a critical perspective on modern history that would equip them to exercise finer political judgment.[24] Instead of rehearsing old slogans about conspiracies against peoples, Bertier de Sauvigny suggested that his readers connect Alexander's proclamation of the Holy Alliance in 1815 to Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric about the League of Nations in 1919, as well as Harry S. Truman's declaration in 1946 that "we shall establish an enduring peace only if we build it upon Christian principles."[25] In the same fashion, Britain's decision not to accede to the Holy Alliance was to be considered together with the decision of the United States Senate to reject the League of Nations; and the Austrian intervention in Naples in 1821 was to be considered together with the Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968.

In revisiting the Holy Alliance in the twenty-first century, this book also declines to rehearse old slogans. It is an exercise in critical rather than monumental history. Its aim is not to derive a definitive set of moral or political lessons from the history of the Holy Alliance, but to expose the constricting effects that such derivations can have on political thinking, particularly during moments of potential systemic change.

24. Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Sainte-Alliance*, Collection U2 206 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), 7.

25. Ibid., 5–6. Truman's remark had previously been highlighted by a 1948 study of the Holy Alliance under the banner of Christian Democracy: Maurice de La Fuye and Émile Albert Babeau, *La Sainte-Alliance, 1815–1848* (Paris: Denoël, 1948). Reinforcing the analogy: Truman's remark appeared in the context of political and diplomatic maneuvers involving a controversial religious figure, Pope Pius XII. Truman repeated the remark in a correspondence, published in 1947, between the self-described "chosen leader" of "a Christian nation" and the pope. See Harry S. Truman, "Statement by the President upon Reappointing Myron Taylor as His Personal Representative at the Vatican, 3 May 1946," in *Harry S. Truman: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1946*, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 232; "Exchange of Letters between Truman and Pope," *New York Times*, August 29, 1947. On the religious, political, and diplomatic context, see John S. Conway, "Myron C. Taylor's Mission to the Vatican, 1940–1950," *Church History* 44, no. 1 (1975): 85–99.

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