

Klemens von Metternich, "Political Creed," 1820

Metternich was an Austrian statesman and leading figure in European politics, helping forge an alliance system among European states after the rise of Napoleon. This is his response to a letter from his personal secretary that reported on attempts to install constitutional monarchies, 1820

It is in the midst of the French Revolution that religion and all that she holds sacred, that morality and authority, and all connected with them, have been attacked with a steady and systematic animosity... Drag through the mud the name of God and the powers instituted by His divine decrees, and the revolution will be prepared! Speak of a social contract, and the revolution is accomplished!... The scenes of horror which accompanied the first phases of the French Revolution prevented the rapid propagation [spread] of its subversive [disruptive] principles beyond the frontiers of France...

We consider it a fundamental truth that for every evil there is a remedy... and there are many whom evil leads astray in an even more dangerous way because of its flattering and often brilliant exterior... It is principally the middle classes of society who have been infected by this moral gangrene [decay]...

... The people know that the best thing for them is to be able to count on tomorrow, for it is not until tomorrow that they will be paid for the toil [work] of the previous day. The laws which guarantee a reasonable protection for safety of individuals and their families and of property are in their essence simple. The people fear change, which harms industry and brings in its wake a constant stream of new burdens for them...

Men from the upper classes of society who throw themselves into the tide of revolution are those who disguise their [true] ambition... Union between the monarchs is the basis of the policy which must now be followed to save society from total ruin.... To every great State determined to survive the storm there still remain many chances of salvation, and a strong union between the States on the principles we have announced will overcome the storm itself... In short, let the great monarchs strengthen their union, and prove to the world that if it [monarchy] exists, it is beneficent, and ensures the political peace of Europe: that it is powerful only for the maintenance of tranquility at a time when so many attacks are directed against it... Let them be just, but strong; beneficent, but strict.

Edmund Burke, Excerpts from Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790

Burke was an Irish statesman and journalist who supported Irish independence yet fiercely opposed the French Revolution.

Government is not made in virtue of natural rights... Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants... Among these wants is... a sufficient restraint upon their passions. Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection.

We [British] can never become the converts of Rousseau or the disciples of Voltaire. Atheists are not our preachers and madmen are not our lawgivers. . . . In England, we preserve our native traditions entirely. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings, with affection to parliaments, with duty to magistrates, with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when we think about the goodness of these traditions, it is natural to feel protective of them. Far from liberating us, turning away from our institutions would render us unfit for true liberty and would turn us into an immoral, insolent mob.... WE KNOW that religion is the basis of civil society and the source of all good and of all comfort... that atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts... SOCIETY is indeed a contract... But the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved at any moment... [France] found their punishment: laws overturned; tribunals subverted... the revenue unpaid, the people impoverished; a church pillaged, civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom...

... The fresh ruins of France, which shock our feelings wherever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel [advice]... in authorizing treasons, robberies, rapes, assassinations, slaughters, and burnings throughout their harassed land.