Chapter 12

Religion and Culture, 1533 –1689

In the late Muscovite era, three factors were especially important regarding religion and culture. The first was Moscow's emphasis on itself as the center of true Christian civilization. The second was the attempt of the state and the church hierarchy to tighten their control over religion and culture throughout Muscovy. And the third was the growth of foreign influences, mainly in the seventeenth century.

Foreign influences, particularly in the religious sphere, came primarily through more westernized Ukrainian lands and accelerated as Moscow heightened its efforts to acquire Ukrainian territory. Partly because some Ukrainian Orthodox practices differed from Russian ones and were closer to those of other Orthodox believers, Patriarch Nikon decided to bring Russian practices more in line with those of the Ukrainians. But the Ukrainian impact, sometimes transmitting Polish Western influences, extended into other religious and cultural areas as well.

Muscovy's wars with Poland and Sweden and these foreigners' intervention during the Time of Troubles also increased Western contacts. So too did Muscovy's expanded Western trade, diplomatic dealings, and desire for military and technological improvements. As Kliuchevsky noted long ago, adopting Western techniques did not necessarily mean adopting Western cultural values. Yet it was almost impossible to separate the two completely.

Intensified Western and foreign Orthodox contacts and influences, however, inevitably clashed with the prevalent Muscovite Orthodox belief in its own religious-cultural superiority. The Polish and Swedish intervention in the Time of Troubles led to a growing mistrust of foreigners, especially of Polish Catholics. The former Polish captive Patriarch Filaret particularly disliked Catholicism. It was no accident that when foreigners were recruited during and after his sway they were overwhelmingly Protestant and that no Catholic church was allowed in Moscow until Peter the Great's reign.

One of the few prominent Catholics in Russia was the Scottish officer Patrick Gordon. In 1661, he commented on "strangers being looked upon by the best sort as scarcely Christians, and by the plebeians as mere pagans." In 1688, after he had become a general in the Russian army, he noted that the Russian patriarch stated that the army could not prosper with a heretic commanding its elite troops.

As Gordon suggests, however, it was not only Catholics and Catholicism that were distrusted. Protestant, Jewish, and secular scientific thought were also suspect and to a lesser extent even certain foreign Orthodox practices. Kliuchevsky illustrated the distrust of foreign secular learning then prevalent by quoting from books that recommended against studying philosophy. One stated: "Impious before God is everyone who loves geometry, and a sin it is to study astronomy." Instead, Orthodox believers were told to love "simplicity more than wisdom" and not to seek that which was above them.

Besides religious-cultural grounds for being wary of foreigners, there were also other reasons. For example, Russian merchants resented Western merchant privileges, and provincial noble officers and others resented Western officers like Gordon. Olearius noted that after the creation of the Foreign Suburb, Russians sometimes obscenely referred to it as "Pricktown." On one occasion vandals attacked Protestant churches there because of rumors that a foreign colonel's wife had thrown Russian icons into a fire. Resentment against foreign influences also played a major part in the Church Schism of 1666–1667.

Early in his reign, Alexei made some concessions to anti-Western sentiments. W. Bruce Lincoln went so far as to state that the young Alexei and Patriarch Joseph "railed against all foreigners and their culture as instruments of Satan" and that Alexei "sought to spark a xenophobic upsurge."[1]

Although Alexei never had the mind and heart of a xenophobe, he was devoutly Orthodox. Scarred by rebellions in 1648 and 1650, and soon afterwards about to go to war with Catholic Poland, he was then attentive to conservative Orthodox public opinion. As his reign and confidence progressed, he moved further away from the old Muscovy wariness of the West. His second marriage, to Natalia Naryshkina in 1671, after the death of the pious and conservative Maria, was symbolic of his evolution. Although there is some dispute among scholars as to her exact upbringing, there is general agreement that she was much more exposed to Western ways and learning than was Maria.

Yet Alexei was also no radical westernizer. He remained a devout Orthodox believer and continued to pay some heed to the sensibilities of his people. Kliuchevsky pictured Russia under Alexei at the crossroads, between the old Orthodox culture and the new westernized Russian one that his son Peter the Great would champion. He depicted Alexei as a man who had one foot firmly planted on Orthodox ground and who had raised the other to step over the boundary dividing the old from the new—but instead remained frozen in that position.

RELIGION

By 1533, the great age of Russian monasticism was over. As the sixteenth century progressed, monastic influence waned, and the Russian people, church, and government combined to popularize miracle cults. These cults often centered around particular holy shrines and stressed the miraculous powers of relics and icons in aiding communities or individuals in warfare or in peacetime.

[1]*The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias* (New York, 1981), p. 86.

On occasion a cult developed as a result of belief in the miracle-working powers of the relics of an unknown corpse, and after an investigation of such claims the church hierarchy sometimes proclaimed the unknown person a saint. In such cases a name was often given the saint based on the testimony of a believer who claimed the saint revealed it in a vision.

During this era the state gave increasing support to the church hierarchy's attempts to curb pagan magical practices, which documents such as proceedings of the 1551 church council (the Council of a Hundred Chapters) and the *Domostroi* indicate were still widespread. As earlier, "the laity did not distinguish magic from religion, but neither did many of their clergy."[2] One reason for the government's concern was that hostile magic might be used to further treasonous activities, which also helps to explain the state' s increasing persecution of sorcery and witches. Most tsars in this era, charged at least some of their political opponents with sorcery.

In the Volga region and Siberia, the government supported the conversion of non-Christian peoples brought into the empire during this period. Where possible, however, inducements were used as opposed to force, which might awaken rebellion, and considerations connected with paying tribute and the gathering of furs prevented any mass conversion efforts (see Chapter 10). Those that did occur had mixed results; and as Christians and non-Christians mixed together in new parts of the empire, it occasionally happened that a Christian was won over to Islam or some other non-Christian belief. The state also encouraged conversion to Orthodoxy of those of other faiths including Western non-Orthodox Christians who were captured in war. Not only could they win release from prison by converting, but they could also gain other rewards.

In church councils of 1547, 1549, and 1551 and in writings such as the *Great Menology*, the *Book of Degrees of the Imperial Genealogy*, and the *Tale of the Princes of Vladimir*, Metropolitan Makari and his associates centralized Moscow's church control and bolstered the prestige and claims of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Muscovite tsar. The latter they perceived as the last great Christian monarch. They furthered myths claiming that Ivan IV could trace his genealogy back to the Roman emperors and that a Byzantine emperor had bestowed a crown upon the Kievan ruler Vladimir Monomakh. They also stressed that the Muscovite tsar was the legitimate successor to the former lands of Kievan Rus.

The upgrading of the Russian church by granting it a patriarch in 1589 furthered this sense of religious-cultural superiority. So too did the Constantinople patriarch's declaration to Tsar Fedor: "Your great Russian Tsardom, the third Rome, surpasses all in piety; you alone in all the universe are referred to as the Christian Tsar."

Even though late Muscovite tsars and patriarchs agreed on Russia's superiority, the touchy question of the relative powers of tsar and patriarch remained. The ordaining of Filaret as patriarch in 1619 created a special situation, for the new patriarch was also Tsar Mikhail's father. Until his death in 1633, Patriarch Filaret,

[2] Eve Levin, "Supplicatory Prayers as a Source for Popular Religious Culture in Muscovite Russia," in *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine*, eds. Samuel H. Baron and Nancy Shields Kollmann (Dekalb, 1997), p. 108.

who was also co-Great Sovereign, dominated his more passive son. By strengthening the power of the patriarchy over the clergy and over still extensive church lands, he also temporarily halted the growth of state authority over church matters. His example would not be lost on the most dynamic of his successors—Nikon.

Meanwhile, however, following Filaret's death, the government strengthened its powers over the church. For example, the 1649 Law Code forbade sermons to offend the honor of any boyar or official, created a Monastery Bureau (*prikaz*) to oversee litigation against church people, and confiscated church lands located in the cities.

Evidence for the common people's willingness to follow the lead of church authorities is mixed. As we have seen (see Chapter 11), many people did follow Orthodox Church teachings in regard to various aspects of family life. On the other hand, Georg Michels maintains that during most of the seventeenth century church attendance was low and that many people failed to have their children baptized. Furthermore, the outbreak of a major schism in the latter part of the century indicates a further willingness to defy church authority. Michels writes that "if the dissenters . . . had one character trait in common, it was their utter lack of respect for church officials."[3]

Reforms, Old Believers, and Schism

As the state strengthened its controls, two overlapping reform movements occurred within the church. The first was championed by a group, mainly priests, called the Zealots of Piety. While believing in the superiority of Russian Orthodoxy, these men also thought a moral revival was necessary. They attempted to curb drunkenness, smoking, pagan practices and entertainments, adultery, and disrespect of proper liturgical practices. (For their unflinching criticism of their parishioners' moral failings, they were sometimes beaten by those opposed to being so chastised.) The "zealots" also emphasized the Christian's duty to help the poor and needy.

One of their leaders, Stefan Vonifatiev, became Alexei's confessor in the late 1640s, and another, Nikon, became patriarch in 1652. Some of Alexei's early policies were influenced by the group. In 1648, he outlawed *skomorokhi* (minstrels or buffoons), associated by the zealots with paganism. In 1652, besides quarantining Westerners—distrusted by the zealots—in their own suburb, he also enacted an ineffective reform aimed at curbing drunkenness.

The other reform tendency was more of the head than the heart. It attempted to shore up the intellectual defenses of Russian Orthodoxy against other faiths and beliefs. It also aimed at bringing Russian church practices more in line with the rest of the Orthodox world.

Although many zealots also supported the early (and more moderate) efforts of this reform movement, it depended more strongly on Ukrainian churchmen. As part of the Orthodox renewal in Ukraine, the archimandrite of the Kievan Cave

[3]Georg B. Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1999), pp. 188, 224.

Monastery (and subsequently metropolitan of Kiev), Peter Mogila (Mohyla), had founded a Kievan academy in the early 1630s. Ironically, Mogila had studied in Paris and was influenced by Polish Jesuit and other Catholic schools in establishing his new academy. He now adopted some of their educational methods to compete against them better. Most instruction was in Latin, but Greek and Church Slavonic were also studied. So too were theology, philosophy, music, and the natural sciences, often with the help of Western, especially Catholic, writings. In the next several decades, Mogila and his followers produced learned theological works and translations.

By 1652, Kievan monks and writings had made their way to Moscow. Along with other outside Orthodox clergy, they began to help reinvigorate Russian Orthodoxy and champion it in polemics against Catholics and Protestants.

Nikon's appointment as patriarch in 1652 and his radicalization of this second reform movement soon led to a break with many zealots. Well over six feet tall, Nikon was a strong-willed monk of peasant background who earlier had been not only a Zealot of Piety, but also metropolitan of Novgorod. When several zealots objected too vigorously to his 1653 mandating of changes such as the use of three fingers instead of two in making the sign of the cross, he had them exiled.

In the next several years, the uproar continued as Nikon, with the help of church councils and Orthodox from Ukraine and elsewhere, crusaded to bring Russian Orthodox writings and rituals into conformity with those of other Orthodox. He became an enthusiast for Byzantine ways even in church architecture and constructed some new churches in the Byzantine style. To many he seemed to be turning his back on the traditional holy ways of Muscovy. That his reforming activities preceded and coincided with the great plague of 1654–1657 did not help him, for some began saying that the plague was God's punishment for Nikon's deviations from true Christian ways.

For six years, Alexei backed Nikon despite all the turmoil he was creating. In 1658, however, a boyar insulted the dignity of the patriarchal office, and Alexei ignored Nikon's appeal to reprimand the boyar—Nikon, who came from a peasant background, was generally unpopular with the boyars. Nikon then abandoned his position and left Moscow, apparently hoping Alexei would recall him and make amends. Alexei never did. The deeper reason for their split was differences over their respective powers. Probably influenced by Western papal thinking, Nikon resisted state infringement over his spiritual authority.

In 1666–1667, the tsar presided over a church council in which the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch participated. While retaining most of Nikon's reforms, it formally deposed and banished him to a northern monastery. It also excommunicated those refusing to go along with such changes as the three-fingered sign of the cross. Furthermore, Alexei made it a crime to continue professing the traditional practices. Thus, the Old Believers (or more accurately, but less commonly, Old Ritualists) became schismatics.

Causes and Effects of Religious Dissent and Schism

Although the Old Believers are sometimes perceived as foolish traditionalists, they were often intelligent by the standards of the time, and many of their leaders

had once been among society's religious and lay elite. One of them was the archpriest Avvakum, whose autobiography (see below in this chapter) was one of the highest quality writings of the century. Like Nikon, he had been a member of the Zealots of Piety. He told the visiting patriarchs at the church council of 1666–1667:

> Among you Orthodoxy has become corrupted by Turkish Mohammedan coercion . . . you have become feeble. Henceforth, come to us to learn: among us, by God's grace, is autocracy. Among us, prior to Nikon, the apostate, the Orthodoxy of our princes and tsars was always pure and unblemished.

While Nikon and Alexei championed conformity with the rest of the Orthodox world, the Old Believers clung to the old Muscovite religious culture. Alexei sanctioned changes partly because he wished to expand Moscow's authority over non-Russian Orthodox in Ukraine and Belorussia and perhaps even beyond to those under Turkish control. But the Old Believers were more isolationists than expansionists. Even within the old Muscovite state, they were wary of Moscow's expanding centralization, whether ecclesiastical or governmental. Moreover, in the new practices, some saw not only the influence of an impure Byzantine Orthodoxy, but also of Roman Catholicism. During a bewildering era of war, plague, foreign influences, and rebellions, they wished to maintain the rock of their traditional beliefs.

Alexei dealt harshly with prominent Old Believers. In his autobiography, Avvakum recounts how some of them had their tongues, fingers, or hands cut off and how others were buried alive, hanged, or burned at the stake—as Avvakum himself eventually was. Among the Old Believers were many women, none more significant than the Boyarina Morozova, the sister-in-law of Alexei's former tutor and adviser, Boris Morozov. In a scene immortalized by the nineteenth-century painter Vasili Surikov, she was bound with chains and taken away to prison in 1671, where she was condemned to die of starvation four years later. Despite such punishments, many Russians still resisted. The longest-lasting active resistance came from the monks and their supporters at the Solovetskii Monastery, located on an island in the White Sea. With their ninety canon and sturdy walls, the monastery held out against the new teachings from 1668 to 1676.

Even before the church council had excommunicated the Old Believers as schismatics in 1667, a few members of the hierarchy had accused others of being schismatics for refusing to obey church authority. Michels has documented that most religious dissenters before 1667 did not consider themselves Old Believers and that their dissent sprang from numerous personal and local grievances. This dissent reflected a general resistance to the hierarchy's attempts to strengthen its control and regulation of Muscovite religious life. Rebellion against church authority came from sources as different as individuals in Suzdal upset at the hierarchy attempting to curtail their worship at graves of old Suzdalian princes to some of Moscow's population enraged when they heard rumors that Nikon was going to destroy certain icons (see below, for Nikon and icons). Only after the government and hierarchy declared the Old Believers as schismatics in 1667 and similarly classified large numbers of other dissenters did many of the latter join in the Old Believer criticism of the changes brought about by Nikon. As Crummey has noted,

adherents of "movements of regional opposition or social and political unrest . . . found the defense of the Old Faith a useful rallying cry."[4] Nevertheless, for the remainder of the century those considered schismatic remained very fragmented and often on the move to prevent government persecution. Itinerant monks, priests, and nuns who for various reasons found themselves alienated from the official church often helped spread opposition to the Nikonian changes. Only in the early eighteenth century, however, with the rise of several centers of Old Believers and the widespread efforts of Old Believer preachers, did the schismatics coalesce into distinct major groups.

Avvakum and many other Old Believers regarded their opponents as the forces of the anti-Christ that were prophesied to come at the end of history. The year 1666 had special significance for Old Believers because the New Testament's Book of Revelations had ascribed the number 666 to the anti-Christ. During the next two decades, thousands of schismatics—sometimes convinced that the end of the world was at hand and the reign of the anti-Christ underway—gathered together, for example in churches, and set themselves on fire, believing that the flames would help purify them for the afterlife.[5] Musorgsky would later end his famous opera *Khovanshchina* with such a scene. Michels, however, suggests that in Muscovy's patriarchal society not all such deaths, especially of women and children, were voluntary.

The schism's long-term effects were similar to those of religious wars in Europe: They weakened the power of religion and strengthened both state authority over it and secular forces in general. The loss of many ardent believers sapped Orthodox vitality for centuries to come. Alexei now appointed a new, more subservient patriarch and increased his control over the church. His son Peter the Great later took even more advantage of a weakened Russian Orthodox Church. The state, however, also lost something: the heartfelt allegiance of many who once thought the tsar a symbol of true Christian authority. Finally, the reduction of church influence weakened the defenses of those opposed to foreign ways. It was no accident that westernization accelerated following the schism.

POPULAR CULTURE

Although much of Muscovite popular culture involved Christianity, some of its manifestations were pagan or secular. Popular leisure activities in this era can be divided into two categories: those for regular days and those for special days, such as religious holidays, pagan festive days, and weddings.

Activities of the first type included conversation, story-telling, drinking,

[4]"Elite and Popular Religion in 17th-century Russia: Observations," The Proceedings of the 3rd Conference in Memory of A. A. Zimin" Moscow, 2000, available at <http://www.rsuh.ru/conference/cru.htm>.

[5]Such dark, apocalyptic thinking was less typical of Orthodox believers, but the extent of their Christian optimism or pessimism has been debated by historians. See, for example, Valerie A. Kivelson ,"'The Souls of the Righteous in a Bright Place': Landscape and Orthodoxy in Seventeenth-Century Russian Maps," RR 58 (January 1999): 1–25, where she presents some evidence of Orthodox optimism among government clerks.

smoking, and game-playing as well as seasonal activities such as skating, skiing, sleighing, boating, and swimming. Hunting, although indeed common, could be considered a "leisure" activity only for the wealthy. Among popular games, chess was a favorite, and cards and dice were also played, often for money. People also liked to swing and see-saw. Rougher types of activities were wrestling, fist-fighting, and staged bear fights. One of Muscovites' favorite activities was going to the steam bathhouses. Olearius was especially amazed to see both men and women come out of them naked and rub themselves with snow.

On religious holidays, there were colorful processions. And activities such as drinking and gaming usually became more intensive on these and other special days. Alexei's doctor, Samuel Collins, noted: "In the carnival before the Lent they [the Russians] give themselves over to all manner of debauchery and luxury, and in the last week they drink as if they were never to drink more." Olearius mentioned a primitive type of ferris wheel that was often set up on holidays.

The *skomorokhi* also became more active on these special days. Some of these entertainers resided permanently in one place (increasingly in the cities) and were considered respectable citizens, sometimes even being permanently employed by a tsar or prominent noble. Less respectable was the reputation of the wandering *skomorokhi*, who were poorer, usually traveled in groups, and were sometimes accused of being thieves.

Although many *skomorokhi* were multitalented, they gradually became more specialized. Their skills included singing, dancing, and playing various musical instruments—flutes, horns, drums, fiddles, and especially the *gusli*, a small harp or zither-like instrument. They were often accompanied by trained bears and staged puppet and dramatic performances, often with masks.

They were much in demand at pagan festivals, which, despite church and state pressures, continued to be celebrated. A church council of 1551 lamented the presence of *skomorokhi* at weddings, probably because it viewed them not only as entertainers, but also as practitioners of lingering pagan wedding rituals and thus as rivals to priests.

It was not just the church's fear of pagan remnants that led to its criticism of the *skomorokhi* and much of popular culture; it was also a distrust of entertainment itself. The church advised even laypersons to avoid games and laughter—in one seventeenth-century work, *The Life of Yuliania Lazarevsky*, a son relates how his holy mother refrained from games, laughter, and frivolous songs, even when she was a child. Such frivolity was often associated with the devil, who tried to lead Christians away from the serious business of living a good Christian life.

The state had additional fears about popular culture and the *skomorokhi*, especially after the 1648 urban riots. It associated festivals and celebrations with drinking and lawlessness. Samuel Collins observed that the pre-Lenten "drinking bouts are commonly attended with quarrels, fightings, and murders." Gambling could lead to robbery to recoup losses.

Besides their association with such holidays, *skomorokhi* were sometimes irreverent toward authority. These factors, plus the scare of the 1648 riots and the young Alexei's willingness to go along with the church's moral reformers, help explain his decrees of December 1648 banning the *skomorokhi*. In them, Alexei noted how the *skomorokhi* and drunkenness were diverting people from the

churches on Sundays and holy days. He also criticized certain pagan holiday activities. He forbade not only *skomorokhi* entertainments, but also all musical instruments associated with them; various pagan rituals; and games such as boxing, cards, chess, and dice. Violators were to be lashed and, after a third violation, exiled.

Although Alexei's decrees were certainly violated after 1648, the *skomorokhi* did decline significantly. By 1800, they seem to have disappeared. No doubt their decline was also caused by changing cultural conditions, including the acceleration of Western influences. Yet, as Russell Zguta and others have pointed out, they left a permanent legacy in such areas as music, dance, and comic and puppet theater.

LEARNING, MORALITY, AND LITERATURE

By 1689, despite growing literacy, few could read, even at a fairly basic level, except government scribes, clergy, and some nobles and merchants.[6] Although the dramatic increase in the printing of primers during the late seventeenth century points to a heightened teaching of reading, no formal educational system existed. Even many priests, who were supposed to demonstrate their literacy before being ordained, did not possess the equivalent of an elementary school education. The embryonic beginning of Muscovite formal education occurred only under Alexei and was influenced by the Kievan Academy founded earlier in the century.

One of the era's most influential educators was the monk Simeon Polotsky (1629–1680). He was a Belorussian who had studied at the Kievan Academy and later at a Jesuit college in Wilno (Vilna or Vilnius). After such exposure to Western influences, and the didacticism that was part of it, he later came to Moscow in 1663. A few years later, he became the director and a teacher of Latin at a short-lived school for government clerks. Following the 1666–1667 church council, he became more influential at court. He tutored three of the tsar's children—Tsarevich Alexei (who died in 1670), Fedor, and Sophia. Latin, Polish, theology, and literature were his specialties, and he was familiar with ancient classical times. He was also a prolific writer, especially of poetry and theological works.

Among his theological writings were two volumes of sermons, which were published shortly after his death, spreading his ideas as far as Siberia. He had apparently first preached most of his sermons at court or at a Moscow monastery where he usually resided. According to Bushkovitch, these sermons, with their emphasis on humility and generosity, were indicative of a new religious trend among the clerical and lay elite. It was a trend away from a public and collective emphasis on liturgy and miracle cults toward a more personal religion stressing morality. Polotsky believed that the elite's Orthodoxy should be grounded on

[6]James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery* (Chicago, 1997), p. 27, estimates that by 1700 "no more than 2 percent of the total Russian population could read," as compared to "29 percent of all French people in 1690." For fascinating speculation on some of the cultural and social implications of Russia's low rate of literacy, see Richard Hellie, "Late Medieval and Early Modern Russian Civilization and Modern Neuroscience,"in C&I, pp. 146–165.

knowledge and learning, including such distrusted subjects as philosophy. By expressing such ideas, he inadvertently helped serve as a bridge between the old religious teachings, suspicious of secular learning, and Peter the Great's emphasis on secular ethics.

Polotsky's stress on humility and generosity was encouraged by Alexei, and these virtues had also been emphasized earlier by several other seventeenth-century clergymen and lay figures. Now that serfdom was firmly in place, all these individuals encouraged a sort of noblesse oblige toward serfs and other social inferiors. At least a few of the boyar elite who came into contact with preachers like Polotsky seem to have made special efforts to treat their serfs, and other social inferiors, with a spirit of generosity and compassion. Although Russian Orthodoxy was used to support Russia's exploitative sociopolitical order, it also exercised more positive influences, which were not completely ignored by Russia's political elite.

Several years after Polotsky's death in 1680, a conflict broke out over the nature of a new academy to be founded in Moscow. Initially the victory went to Patriarch Joachim, who disliked Western and Latin tendencies. In 1685, he helped establish a Helleno Greek Academy that he hoped would reflect more Greek Orthodox influences. His victory was short-lived, however. The best-educated nobles and the new tsar (after 1689), Peter I, looked not to the Orthodox East but to an increasingly secularized West. Although the academy continued—and indeed remained Moscow's leading educational establishment until 1755—it became more westernized and changed its name to the Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy.

By 1689, literature was also displaying more Western influence and becoming more secular, although still often concerned with morality. Because most printings were still controlled by the Orthodox Church—Muscovite presses printed less than ten secular works in the entire seventeenth century—the new trend was most evident in manuscript writings. A century and a half earlier, Muscovite literature was typified by the reworked religious writings in the *Great Menology* and the rewritten chronicle that appeared in the *Book of Degrees of the Imperial Genealogy*. Metropolitan Makari, who oversaw their compilation, attempted to glorify Moscow and its Orthodox tsar as symbols of the only true Christian state. Their style, an ornate one thought befitting Moscow's glory, was influenced by Epiphanius's wordy "word-weaving" of a century earlier. Just as Makari's belief in Russia's religious superiority was later undercut by a combination of foreign influences and internal developments, however, so too was the type of literature and language that he championed. Although incomplete by 1689, the transition between an old Muscovite literature dominated by religious and military works and chronicles and a newer, more secularized and Western-influenced literature, emphasizing new themes and formats, was well underway.

In seventeenth-century biography and autobiography, the transition is best exemplified in *The Life of Yuliania Lazarevsky*, by her son, and in Avvakum's autobiography. Although the first shares some characteristics of earlier saints' lives—for example, the occurrence of miracles—it also differs from them in many ways. Yuliania was neither a princess nor a nun, but a devout and compassionate provincial noblewoman, a wife (later a widow), and a mother. The work is written in a straightforward style, different from the ornate wordweaving previously used

for hagiography. The depiction of Yuliania is more realistic, more filled with commonplace details, and more psychologically complex and believable than earlier idealized saints' lives.

Avvakum's autobiography, written about a half-century later, is an even more striking departure. Whereas the language of Epiphanius and his followers was close to Old Church Slavonic, that of Avvakum is the everyday language of late seventeenth-century Russia. It realistically conveys both his personality and that of other individuals he meets. He depicts, in great detail, his struggles and hardships. No writing better captures the rough tenor of seventeenth-century Russian life, whether in Moscow, the provinces, or Siberia. It is a first-rate Russian work, perhaps the finest of the century.

The seventeenth century also witnessed the rise of Russian fiction. *The Tale of Sava Grudtsyn* uses Church Slavonic, depicts miracles, and has good triumph over evil—after making a pact with the devil, Sava later is redeemed and becomes a monk. This 1660s' work, however, also points toward the future in being fictional, in relating Sava's affair with a married woman, and in surrounding Sava with concrete details from merchant and military life.

Another fictional work, written a few decades later, is even further removed from the old literature. This is the *Tale of Frol Skobeev, the Rogue*. Written in everyday Russian, it depicts not the triumph of good over evil, but one might almost say the opposite. Frol forces a nobleman's daughter to have sex with him, then wins her love and her parents' begrudging acceptance of him as their son-in law. The father even gives him an estate, some money, and makes him his heir. This tale also is better constructed and displays a deeper understanding of fictional plotting than does the earlier *Tale of Sava Grudtsyn*.

A final fictional work worthy of mention is the *Tale of Shemiaka's Judgement*. It was written in the late seventeenth century and is an example of what the Russian scholar Dmitri Likhachev has called "democratic literature." It is illustrative of the increasing appearance of satirical tales—in this case directed against a corrupt judge. Although such satires were earlier popular in oral form, their appearance now in writing helped spur the development of fiction and more secularized literature in general.

Although Russian poetry, both oral and written, had certainly appeared before Simeon Polotsky, he was the first major published poet. His poems included odes, occasional pieces, a verse rendition of the Book of Psalms, and satires. He wrote on many topics, including the glory of Russia, and he saw poetry primarily as a teaching tool. Although he wrote poems in a language close to the Old Church Slavonic, the syllabic form he wrote them in resulted from new Polish influences. This form, with each line containing a fixed number of syllables, was much more suitable for Polish than for Russian. This fact, plus his moralistic didacticism and paucity of poetic inspiration, prevents his poetry from having any more than historic interest.

The few dramas Polotsky wrote also have little significance except that they were part of a first wave of such works. Before his time, there had been some dramatic religious presentations in Orthodox churches and varied dramatic presentations by the *skomorokhi* but no real Russian theater. The stimulus now came from two Western sources: Poland via Kiev and Moscow's Foreign Suburb.

From the Autobiography of Avvakum

The following selection is translated from the first of three variants as found in *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma im samim napisannoe* (Petrograd, 1916), Cols. 10–11, 20–21. Translation, ellipses, and bracketed material are mine.

From a widow an official took away a daughter, and I implored him to return the orphan to her mother. But he disdained our plea and raised against me a storm, and to the church he brought a mob that almost beat me to death. And I lay lifeless for more than a half hour, but was then resuscitated by God's will. And he [the official], being frightened, gave up the girl to me. Then the devil advised him, and he therefore came to the church and beat me and dragged me by my legs on the ground in my vestments, while I said a prayer.

Another official, at another time, became furious with me—he came running to my house, beat me, and gnawed my fingers, like a dog, with his teeth.

*. . . There arrived in my village dancing bears with [*skomorokhi,*] tambourines and* domras *[stringed musical instruments]. And I, a sinner, but zealous for Christ, chased them away, and their masks and tambourines I smashed in an open field beyond the village, one against many, and two great bears I took away—one I stunned, but he revived, and the other I freed in the field.*

. . . Another edict arrived [in 1655] ordering me to go to Dauria, more than 20,000 versts [1 verst = 1.067 kilometers or 0.663 miles] from Moscow. They gave me over to the regiment of Afansi Pashkov—with him were 600 people. To repay me for my sins, he was a stern man: unceasingly he burned, tortured, and beat people. And I had often tried to persuade him [to act less harshly], but now I myself fell into his hands. From Nikon in Moscow, he was ordered to torment me.

When we had left Eniseisk [in Siberia], and were on the great Tuguska River, a storm completely swamped my raft: in the middle of the river it filled full of water, and its sails were torn to pieces—only the deck was above water, all else had gone into the water. My wife, though bareheaded [considered indecent for a married woman], somehow pulled the children out of the water onto the deck. But I, looking to heaven, cried out: "Lord, save us! Lord, help us!" And by God's will, the boat was thrown to shore.

At the Kievan Academy, where Polotsky had been educated, didactic religious dramas were enacted. In the Foreign Suburb, private plays had also been arranged.

In 1672, Alexei asked a German pastor to put on a play for him about the Biblical Esther at his Preobrazhenskoe estate. Before his death four years later, Alexei had other plays staged for him and his court, both at Preobrazhenskoe and in Moscow. Most dealt with Biblical themes, but they also presented various combinations of large casts and sets, sound effects, music, humor, love, and violence. At the time of Alexei's death in 1676, a much bawdier drama was being prepared, *The Comedy of Bacchus and Venus*, which listed among its roles drunkards, bears, and a brothelmaster. But the new tsar, Fedor, closed the theaters at Preobrazhenskoe and in Moscow, and later the regent Sophia apparently did not feel secure enough to alienate Patriarch Joachim by restoring them. Her half-brother Peter later proved more daring.

ARCHITECTURE AND PAINTING

The late Muscovite period is also an age of transition in architecture and painting. Most illustrative of the beginning of this period is the most famous church in Russia, Red Square's St. Basil the Blessed (see Figure 8.1). Like the literary compilations of Metropolitan Makari, who also suggested building this church, it aimed at glorifying Muscovy's Christian tsardom. The church (actually an ensemble of nine separate churches) was uniquely Russian. Its central tentlike tower was influenced by the Church of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe (see Figure 6.2) and the ensemble as a whole by various other sources including Russian wooden architecture. It was built under Ivan the Terrible in the decade after Russia's victory over the Tatars at Kazan (1552)—the separate churches of the ensemble each commemorating a feast day coinciding with victorious battle days over the Muslim Tatars. Its main church and the ensemble as a whole were originally dedicated to the Intercession of the Virgin, on whose feast day the final attack on Kazan had begun. Only later, after the crypt of the holy fool Basil (Vasili) and a small church to contain it were added to the ensemble in 1588, did people start referring to it as St. Basil's.

Under Ivan the Terrible and his immediate successors, "holy Russia" was also glorified in icons and wall paintings One icon of this period, "the Blessed Host of the Heavenly Tsar" (later called the "Church Militant"), was hung in the Kremlin's Assumption Cathedral near the tsar's throne. It depicts Ivan, along with Mikhail the Archangel, leading his victorious troops back from a burning Kazan to the holy city of Moscow. Rowland has pointed out that the icon, plus wall paintings in

FIGURE 12.1. The tent church on the left is that of Saints Zosima and Savvatii at the St. Sergius Monastery, Sergiev Posad, 1635–1637.

other Kremlin buildings featuring Jewish victories over their foes, underlined the idea that Moscow was the new Israel (see Chapter 6). Under Ivan's two immediate successors, Fedor I and Boris Godunov, frescoes were painted in the Kremlin's Palace of Facets depicting what Makari and his associates had tried to demonstrate in their compilations: that the Riurikids were descendants of the Roman Augustus Caesar and that Vladimir Monomakh had received imperial regalia from the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomakh.

Just as in literature, so in art and architecture, foreign influences increasingly left their mark. In his attempt to reconcile Russian Church practices with those of the rest of the Orthodox world, Nikon called for a return to Byzantine architectural forms, for example, three-domed or five-domed churches. He also renounced the Russian pyramidal or tent roofs that had become popular. The five-domed Church of the Twelve Apostles, which he had constructed in the Kremlin, is more reminiscent of older churches such as the Assumption cathedrals in Vladimir or Moscow.

Nikon's zeal for Byzantine purity also led him to criticize recent Russian tendencies in icon painting. Here it was not native Russian traditions, however, but more recent Western influences on painting that were the subject of his wrath. He smashed some of the icons and ordered the gouging out of eyes and eventual burning of others. Avvakum was even more critical of the Western impact and stated:

> By God's will much unseemly foreign painting has spread over our Russian land. They paint the image of Our Saviour Emmanuel with a puffy face, and red lips, curly hair, fat arms and muscles, and stout legs and thighs. All this is done for carnal reasons, because the heretics love sensuality and do not care for higher things.[7]

But Avvakum was fighting a losing battle. In the icons of the late seventeenth century, more naturalistic faces and bodies, greater use of perspective, and more realistic and detailed backgrounds all reflected the Western impact. Some iconostases of the period, for example, that in the Novodevichii Convent's Cathedral of Our Lady of Smolensk, also display Western influences in their use of columns and decorative detail.

Within the Kremlin itself, in the Moscow Armoury, many Ukrainian and Belorussian artists and a handful of Western European painters worked along with Muscovites. Here the increasing westernizing tendencies of Alexei's reign were especially evidenced by the growth of secular artists. Lindsey Hughes has noted that whereas in 1675 the Armoury listed thirty icon painters and ten secular painters among its employees, by 1687–1688, it listed twenty-seven of the former and forty of the latter.

Especially indicative of this trend was the rise of portrait painting. Such portraits were evident in more westernized homes, such as that of Sophia's chief adviser, Vasili Golitsyn. Among his more than forty portraits were those of Russian and foreign rulers, one of himself, and ones of patriarchs Nikon and Joachim.

[7]Quoted in George Heard Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, 2d ed. (Harmondsworth, England, 1975), p. 170.

FIGURE 12.2. Church of the Twelve Apostles, Moscow, Kremlin, 1652–1656.

FIGURE 12.3. Church of the Transfiguration, Novodevichii Convent, 1687–1689.

The presence of the latter two was a bit ironic: By agreeing to the painting of their portraits, they were indirectly abetting the growth of that same Western secular artistic influence that they both opposed in other manifestations.

In architecture the new trends can best be seen in the proliferation of elaborate detail and ornamentation—sometimes referred to as the "Moscow Baroque." One example of it is Novodevichii's Church of the Transfiguration (1687–1689). The painted-on false "windows" of the domes and, below them, the shell motifs, richly decorated window surrounds, and Corinthian-type columns of the exterior all reflect new foreign influences (see Figure 12.3).

The estates of the tsars in the Moscow suburbs also took on a more Western appearance in the late seventeenth century. In the late 1660s, Alexei's new wooden palace at Kolomenskoe was constructed. Despite its reflection of many of the unique elements of Russian wooden architecture, the palace, especially its interior, also displayed more modern and Western influences. They could be seen in ornate window decorations, mirrors, imported mechanical devices, portraits of the likes of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, a fresco depicting the world as heliocentric, and a throne guarded by two mechanical lions that could be made to roar.

Thus, in art and architecture, as in so many other aspects of seventeenth-century Russian life, a gradual evolution was under way. Later, Peter the Great accelerated the process, changing an evolution into a revolution.

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