

## **THE MOSCOW COUNCILS OF 1447 TO 1589 AND THE CONCILIAR PERIOD IN RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HISTORY**

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The years 1447 to 1589 were notable for church councils in the Russian Orthodox Church. To the extent they were significant, one can justifiably refer to this time as the conciliar period in the history of the church. In approximately the same period, councils were also prominent in the Western Church, such as the councils of Constance (1414–1418), Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439), Worms (1520), and Trent (1542–1563).

Conciliar activities in the Western Church and in the Rus' Church were galvanized by reaction to a combination of internal and external challenges. In Muscovy, the initial challenge came from the proposed Union of Florence (1439) and the subsequent arrival in Moscow of the Uniate Metropolitan Isidor (1441), appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. This appointment was unacceptable to the Muscovite ecclesiastical and secular leaders and, combined with the events surrounding the impending fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks, led the Rus' bishops to take action. In two councils—one in December 1447, the other in December 1448—the prelates took the steps necessary for choosing and consecrating their own metropolitan. Until then, the metropolitan of Rus' could be consecrated only after receiving the sanction

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period, besides choosing metropolitans, were convoked to investigate heretics (1480s–1550s), to implement internal church reform (1500s–1560s), to resolve ongoing disputes with the state over both the acquisition of *votchiny* (patrimones) by monasteries and on *tarkhan* (free man) immunities (1551–1584), and finally, to elevate the metropolitan to patriarchal status (1589).

The timespan from 1447, when the Rus' bishops received approval from Grand Prince Vasili II to choose their own metropolitan, to 1589, when the patriarchate of Moscow was established, was a formative age in Russian Orthodox Church history and is a well-defined period for us to discuss the role and significance of autonomous metropolitan councils. In the process we see a church and a state that for the most part, despite some differences, cooperated with one another to the mutual benefit of both. We also find a church that, despite going its own way within the Eastern Church community, still accepted the authority of Byzantine canon law and deferred to the Greek Church regarding the proper observance of rituals and practices.

Although a significant amount of work has been done on specific councils, such as those of 1503, 1504, 1551, and 1666–1667, very little has been written about the importance of councils in the history of the Russian Church in general and on the councils of this period as a group in particular. A work published by N. P. Turchaninov in 1829 provided a brief summary of a few of the church councils that occurred in Rus' lands between 988 and 1551.<sup>1</sup> In 1906, two works came out on the topic of Moscow Church councils in the 16th and 17th centuries: I. Likhmitskii published a four-part article in the journal *Khristianskoe chtenie*;<sup>2</sup> and N. F. Kapterev published a three-part article in the journal *Bogoslavskii vestnik*.<sup>3</sup> Neither of these articles attempted any kind of systematic survey.

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<sup>1</sup> Turchaninov, *O soborakh*.

<sup>2</sup> Likhmitskii, "Osviashchennyi sobor."

<sup>3</sup> Kapterev, "Tsar'i tserkovnye moskovskie sobory." Emil Herman refers to a third monographic treatment, published in 1906, by D. Malinovskii titled *Osviashchennyi sobor XVI–XVII vv.* (St. Petersburg), but I was unable to locate this work.

## THE MOSCOW COUNCILS OF 1447 TO 1589

In 1936, Emil Herman, S. J., published a survey of church councils in Russia to 1918. For the period from 1274 to 1690, he provides brief descriptions of 64 councils, but not all his information is accurate.<sup>4</sup> In 2002, Archimandrite Makarii provided a systematic overview of church councils during the time of Metropolitan Makarii (1542–1563).<sup>5</sup> He treats every mention of the council as a genuine meeting of all the members—for example, in counting the appointments of all archbishops and bishops as requiring a formal session. Thus, he adduces 69 councils during that 21-year period, but does not consider the logistical problems involved in getting all the council members to Moscow so frequently (see below). Histories of the church that cover this period, even extensive histories, such as those of Makarii (Bulgakov) and Golubinskii, discuss only major church councils and do not mention, or mention only in passing, those that seem to be less significant.<sup>6</sup> The present survey seeks to lay the foundation for a more systematic study of Russian Church councils during this period.

In order to understand the role of church councils in Rus', we should have some comprehension of the role of church councils in the early Christian Church and in Eastern Christianity. A church council is an assembly of prelates that could also include other ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical representatives, such as monks, priests, deacons, or laymen. It formally deliberates over questions of discipline, doctrine, and ecclesiastical appointments. There are four types of councils; (1) ecumenical; (2) patriarchal; (3) metropolitan; and (4) episcopal.<sup>7</sup> As the names of the last three

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<sup>4</sup> Herman, *De Fontibus iuris ecclesiastici russorum*, 42–65. For example, he considered the 1441 council to be genuine (46) whereas the mention of such a council's having met in that year dates to the 1460s and was probably an attempt to legitimize an earlier date for the election of Iona as metropolitan; Herman provided three chronicle references for a council in 1500, but none of them is correct (48); he assigns councils to 1520 and some other undetermined year during the metropolitanate of Varlaam (1511–1521), not on the basis of any primary source but on that of a historian, either Makarii or Golubinskii, who suggested there might have been such a council (49).

<sup>5</sup> Makarii, "Sobory russkoi tserkvi," 9–33.

<sup>6</sup> Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, vols. 6, 7, and 8; and Golubinskii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 2, pt. 1:469–875, 884–895.

<sup>7</sup> For this division, see A[r]isteides] P[apadakis] and A[n]thony] C[utler], "Councils," in *ODB*, 1:540–543.

types of councils indicate, the jurisdiction of the prelate under whose guidance the council occurs defines its role. The ruler, whether emperor of Byzantium or the grand prince or tsar of Muscovy, could, and, on occasion, did, call a church council, and co-presided with the head of the church over all councils except those that dealt exclusively with matters of dogma.

The term “metropolitan” derives from the Greek *μετροπολις* (*metropolis*), the capital of a province where the head of the episcopate resides. Our first evidence of this term’s being used to designate a churchman’s rank was in the Council of Nicaea (325) decision, which declared (canon 4; cf. canon 6) the right of the metropolitan to confirm episcopal appointments within his jurisdiction. Nicaea also ordered that councils be convoked by the metropolitan two times a year (canon 5). Canon 19 of Chalcedon confirmed this stipulation. Later, however, canon 8 of Trullo and canon 6 of Second Nicaea changed the frequency to at least once a year. In the *Authentic or New Constitutions of the Emperor Justinian*, the stipulation is “once or twice every year.”<sup>8</sup> In Muscovy, convening councils that frequently may not have been logistically feasible, and for most years we do not have any record of a council’s being held at all. Table 1 presents the number of Muscovite Church councils for which we have reliable evidence broken down according to 50-year periods from 1401 to 1600.

**Table 1: Muscovite Church Councils according to 50-Year Periods, 1401–1600**

1401–1450	1451–1500	1501–1550	1551–1600
6	12	12	20

It is possible these numbers are more representative of the meagerness of our evidence than of the non-occurrence of councils. The church historian Makarii (Bulgakov) asserted that an attempt was made in the Rus’ Church to have at least one council per year, sometimes more, in which the prelates might sit with brief interruptions through a series of councils.<sup>9</sup> Some of these

<sup>8</sup> Justinian, *Corpus juris civilis*, 7 (17):87–88.

<sup>9</sup> Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 8:171–172; cf. Golubinskii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 2, pt. 2:19. In support of his claim, Makarii cited the report of Hans Kobenzl (Koblentz), envoy of the Emperor Maximilian II to Muscovy in

councils may not have had any “business” as such, and no decision was required of them. According to earliest church terminology, these gatherings would have been called a “synod” (σύνοδοι, *synodoi*) in contrast to a council (συμβούλιο, *symbolio*) for deliberation of an issue or problem. Very early in the church’s history, however, that terminological distinction was lost.

The income-expense (*prikhodo-raskhodnye*) books of monasteries need to be examined on a systematic basis to see whether hegumens and archimandrites traveled to Moscow during years when we do not have other evidence for a council’s having been convened. There are other exceptions, as in September 1472, when the metropolitan as well as the bishops of Sarai and of Perm’ with “all the sacred council” gathered for the funeral of Prince Iurii Vasil’evich, the grand prince’s brother.<sup>10</sup> But this seems to have been a purely ceremonial occasion, when no business was conducted and no deliberation was required. Therefore, I have excluded such gatherings from the count. Besides, it is not clear if “all the sacred council” indeed means all the bishops, especially when, as in this case, only two are mentioned. In addition, it is unlikely that a formal meeting of all council members needed to take place each time a new prelate had to be appointed. Such appointments could occur as the result of consultation between the grand prince and metropolitan, who would be acting in the name of “all the sacred council.” The selection of a metropolitan, however, would most likely have required a formal session, if only to agree on nominees to offer the grand prince. Thus, while I include deliberations over metropolitan nominees as formal councils, I exclude appointments of archbishops and bishops done in the name of the council.

The time of the year when full Muscovite councils were held seems to have been related to the duties of the bishops in their own districts and to the weather. Jack E. Kollmann, Jr. analyzed the months when the Muscovite Church councils of the 16th century met. He pointed out the grouping of a number of councils that

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1575: “This Metropolitan holds a synod every year and all the bishops and other prelates take part in it.” Mitchell and Zguta, “Sixteenth-Century ‘Account,’” 405.

<sup>10</sup> *PSRL*, 8: 175; 12: 150; 25: 298; 27: 304; 28: 134, 304; and *loasafovskaia letopis'*, 82.

had meetings in January and February (9) and in July (5) and explains that frequency as the result of two circumstances: “the roads were more passable at those times of the year, and the liturgical responsibilities of the prelates were relatively light then.”<sup>11</sup>

Kollmann’s analysis is valuable, but we can refine and supplement the information on which his conclusions are based. First, there was no church council in January 1581. A document originally dated by its scribe to January 1581 is the same as the decision for the January 1580 Council, but does not represent a new gathering to confirm that decision, as some have proposed. Instead, the date “1581” is the result of a scribal error in the manuscript copies.<sup>12</sup> Second, the idea that the 1503 Council met in July, August, and September requires some clarification. We have two sets of decisions from that council: one set is dated 6 August; the other, 1 September. If we extrapolate backwards from the 1 September date we can say that the council members continued meeting in August after making the first set of decisions (instead of dispersing and then reconvening). The only agenda for the meeting in September seems to have been to sign the final version of the second set of decisions. Likewise, we can extrapolate from the 6 August date backwards to suggest that the council members began meeting in July because 6 August represents only the date when they signed the final version of the first set of decisions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kollmann, “Moscow *Stoglav*,” 133.

<sup>12</sup> Ostrowski, “Did a Church Council Meet in 1581?,” 258–265.

<sup>13</sup> Pliguzov rejected the 6 August date traditionally associated with the *Council Decision concerning Fees*. He points out that 6 August was a holy day, the Transfiguration (Preobrazhenie) of Jesus Christ. Therefore, according to Pliguzov, the date in some copies of the *Council Decision concerning Fees* of 6 August is “improbable” (*neveroiatna*) since prelates had duties to perform in churches and could not be making council decisions. He takes as authoritative the testimony of some copies of the *Decision concerning Fees* that the decision was issued on 1 September. Pliguzov, “Sobornyi otvet,” 754–755; and Pliguzov, *Polemika v russkoi tserkvi*, 334–335. As the result of a textual analysis of the copies of the *Council Decision* available to me, I found that I had to disagree with my learned colleague on this point. Three of the manuscript copies of the *Decision concerning Fees* that contain the 6 August date—RNB, Solovetskoe sobranie (hereafter, Solov.), No. 1054/1194, RNB, No. F.II.80, and RNB, Pogodinskoe sobranie (hereafter, Pogodin), No. 1572—are closer

Likhnitskii analyzed the duration of councils during the 16th and 17th centuries. He pointed out that it was possible for a council to have only one session as the Council of 1625 did (26 March), but he also claimed that councils could last many months. He cited the Council of 1553/54, which, according to him, lasted from October 1553 to June 1554.<sup>14</sup> But such a continuous sitting for one council or even a series of councils in Moscow is unlikely. In this case, it would require prelates' attendance during the Easter season, a very busy time on the church calendar. Likhnitskii is referring to the heresy trials of Ivan Viskovatyi, Matvei Bashkin, Hegumen Artemii of the Troitse-Sergiev Monastery, Ivan Timofeevich Borisov, Grigorii Timofeevich Borisov, and others, which most likely occurred at two church councils—one that sat from 25 October 1553 through 15 January 1554, and the other in June 1554. Even the Stoglav Council, which passed judgment on a codification of all previous rules, regulations, and decisions, met for only two months, as Kollmann has convincingly argued.<sup>15</sup>

Given that it took about three weeks (6 August to 1 September) for the prelates to reach the second set of decisions in 1503, we can tentatively propose that ordinary councils lasted a few weeks at most. The difference between decision dates of the 1503 Council helps us set a provisional date of three weeks earlier for the first session of that council—that is, sometime in mid-July. Kollmann's list may be supplemented with councils that met

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than other copies to the archetype of the text. The two copies on which Pliguzov based his 1 September date—GIM, Sinodal'noe sobranie (hereafter Sinod.) No. 183 and RNB, Pogodin, No. 1568—derive from later protographs. Moreover, Pogodin, No. 1568 itself derives from Sinod., No. 183. For text-critical reasons, the date 6 August is preferable. It is unlikely a copyist would have changed an original "1 September" date to "6 August," especially since 6 August is a holiday. It is more likely the "6 August" date was changed to "1 September" to harmonize with the date of the second *Council Decision*, concerning widower priests. Finally, if the prelates were in Moscow for the council on 6 August, they could not perform their usual duties in their home cathedrals. Whatever duties they had to perform in Moscow to mark the holiday would not have consumed their time, and so the *Council Decision* could have been, and probably was, signed on 6 August. The decision itself most likely occurred earlier, allowing time for the copying into document form to be signed by the prelates.

<sup>14</sup> Likhnitskii, "Osviashchennyi sobor" (May 1906): 723.

<sup>15</sup> Kollmann, "Moscow *Stoglav*," 131–160.

to choose a new metropolitan (although the timing of some of these councils was determined more by the death or resignation of the previous metropolitan), which adds another 10 councils for the 16th century alone. Finally, the council that Kollmann indicates as meeting in October 1573 actually met in October 1572 (7081). Thus, we obtain the results found in Table 2. Kollmann's preliminary results, nonetheless, hold up since we see the months most frequently entertaining councils as February (8) and July (7), followed by October and December (5) and January, May, and June (4 each). Thus, councils met most frequently at two times of year: late autumn through early winter (October–February), and late spring through early summer (May–July).

As in Byzantium, where the emperor and patriarch presided jointly over councils that dealt with external church matters, so too, in Muscovy, the grand prince and metropolitan presided together in such cases. The presence of the secular ruler was not required, however, when purely internal church matters, such as questions of dogma and the investigation and trial of heretics, were being discussed. For purposes of discussion of particular 15th- and 16th-century councils, one can sort them into five categories according to the types of issues that were decided: (1) choosing of metropolitans; (2) identification of heretics; (3) ecclesiastical discipline and reforms; (4) monastic acquisition of *votchiny* and disposition of *tarkhan*; and (5) establishment of the Moscow patriarchate.

### **Councils on Choosing of Metropolitans**

For the purposes of this article, I am dating the beginning of the autonomous standing of the Rus' Church to 15 December 1447, when a council of Rus' bishops reached an agreement with Vasili II.<sup>16</sup> In return for their support against his cousin Dmitrii She-miaka, Vasili II agreed to have the bishops choose and consecrate a metropolitan without seeking the approval of the patriarch of Constantinople. No one had occupied the position of metropolitan of Rus' since Isidor was ousted in 1441.<sup>17</sup> Between then and the

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<sup>16</sup> *AI*, 1:75–83.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of these events, see Alef, "Muscovy and the Council of Florence," 389–401. Cf. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, 138–141.



## THE MOSCOW COUNCILS OF 1447 TO 1589

Moscow Church Council of 1448, the Rus' Church operated without a chief prelate and in an indeterminate relationship to the patriarch in Constantinople. The Council of 1448 chose Iona, the bishop of Riazan', as metropolitan,<sup>18</sup> and he remained in that position until his death in 1461.

**Table 2: Meetings of 15th- and 16th-Century Moscow Church Councils (by Month)**

Month	Year of Church Council
January	1547, 1554a (to 15 January), 1580, 1589
February	1488, 1522 1539, 1547, 1549, 1555, 1564, 1581
March	1417, 1542, 1592
April	1461, 1525, 1572a
May	1525, 1531, 1572a, 1589
June	1473, 1511, 1554b, 1594
July	1401, 1503, 1509, 1551, 1566, 1570, 1584
August	1503
September	1490, 1495, 1503 (1 September only)
October	1464, 1490, 1533, 1553 (25–31 October), 1572b
November	1553, 1568
December	1447, 1448, 1504, 1553, 1586

With the choice of Iona as the metropolitan of Rus' with or without the approval of the patriarch, the bishops of the Rus' Church had embarked on their own course, yet without making a final break with the Byzantine Church. In a letter that can be dated to July 1451, Vasiliï II wrote to the Emperor Constantine XI, informing him of the decision of the Council of 1448 and asking for the emperor's "good will" as well as the "blessing" of the patriarch.<sup>19</sup> Neither the emperor nor the patriarch was in a position to respond to Vasiliï's missive because Constantinople was under immediate threat from the Ottoman Turks at the time. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, there was no longer a Christian emperor in Constantinople to send a response, and the patriarch was pre-occupied with his own position. By the end of the 15th century,

<sup>18</sup> *RIB*, 2nd ed., 6: cols. 539–542, 555–564; *PSRL*, 21:470; and *AI*, 1:86–87.

<sup>19</sup> *AI*, 1:83–85; *RIB*, 6: cols. 575–586; and *RFA*, 1:88–91. I am accepting Pliguzov's dating of this letter in *RFA*, 4:913.

Table 3: Muscovite Church Councils that Chose Metropolitan 1448–1586

<i>Council</i>	<i>Chose (Consecrated)</i>	<i>Previous Metropolitan</i>	<i>Time Lapsed</i>
1448 (December 15)	Iona	Isidor (imprisoned spring 1441)	7 years
1461 (April)*	Feodosii (May 9)	Iona (died March 31, 1461)	1 month
1464 (October)*	Filipp (November 11)	Feodosii (resigned September 13, 1464)	1 month
1473 (June 4)	Gerontii (June 29)	Filipp (died April 5, 1473)	2 months
1490 (September 12)	Zosima (September 26)	Gerontii (died May 28, 1489)	16 months
1495 (September 6)	Simon (September 20)	Zosima (resigned May 7, 1494)	16 months
1511 (June 27)	Varlaam (August 11)	Simon (died April 29/30, 1511)	2 months
1522 (February)*	Daniil (February 27)	Varlaam (resigned December 17, 1521)	2 months
1539 (February 5)	Ioasaf (February 9)	Daniil (deposed February 2, 1539)	3 days
1542 (March)*	Makarîi (March 19)	Ioasaf (imprisoned January 3, 1542)	2 months
1564 (February 24)	Afanasii (March 5)	Makarîi (died December 31, 1563)	>2 months
1566 (July 20)	Filipp (July 25)	Afanasii (resigned May 19, 1566)	2 months
1568 (November 11)	Kirill	Filipp (deposed November 4, 1568)	7 days
1572 (April)	Antonii	Kirill (died February 8, 1572)	2 months
1581 (February)	Dionisii	Antonii (died beginning of 1581)	1 month
1586 (December 11)	Iov	Dionisii (deposed after October 13, 1586)	>2 months

\*When the exact date of election is not known, I have calculated two to five weeks before the date of consecration.

the Rus' Church reestablished intermittent contact with the patriarch, but no concomitant patriarchal confirmation of the Rus' metropolitan ensued.

In Table 3, I present information about Muscovite Church councils that chose metropolitans during this period. In each case, I indicate the year and, where available, the month of the council, whom the council chose, what happened to the previous metropolitan, and the amount of time between the end of the tenure of the previous metropolitan and the selection of the new one. The consecration of the new metropolitan generally took place two to five weeks after election.

Apparently, the usual practice was for a council to be convened to choose another metropolitan within a month or two after the previous metropolitan either died or resigned. A council that deposed a metropolitan (an event that occurred three times during this period) immediately chose his replacement. This usual practice makes all the more unusual the councils of 1490 and 1495, which chose replacements for the previous metropolitans only after 16 months had elapsed.

### **Councils on Heretics**

The issue of heretics and heretical beliefs dominated the councils, at least in terms of numbers of councils devoted to this issue. The identification and disciplining of heretics began in 1487 with Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod, who questioned the monk Zakhar of the Nemchinov Monastery about complaints from some of the other monks. Zakhar acknowledged that he was suspicious of the church prelates because they had paid a fee (*mzda*) to be installed.<sup>20</sup> Gennadii recognized this criticism as one made by the Strigol'niks, heretics of the 14th century,<sup>21</sup> and began a campaign to search out other heretics in the Novgorod archiepiscopal see. He then identified the heretics with Judaizers—in other words, Christians who focused unduly on the Jewish elements in Christianity, such as placing the Old Testament above the New Testament in importance, celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday, and learning

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<sup>20</sup> *AFED*, 380.

<sup>21</sup> For available evidence on the Strigol'niks, see Fedotov, *Russian Religious Mind*, 113–148.

Hebrew. Contrary to a commonly mistaken notion, this movement has nothing to do in the Christian context with being Jewish or trying to convert Christians to Judaism.<sup>22</sup> According to Steven B. Bowman, Byzantine Church writers commonly referred to heretics as “Jews” and “Judaizers” whether or not Jewish influence was involved.<sup>23</sup> One of Gennadii’s concerns was books the heretics were reading, some of which turned out to be books of the Old Testament—Genesis, 1 and 2 Samuel, Kings, Joshua, and the Wisdom of Menander—but also included the *Life of Pope Sylvester*, the *Life of Athanasius of Alexandria*, the *Sermon of Cosmas the Presbyter*, and a letter of Patriarch Photios to Prince Boris of Bulgaria. Gennadii’s letter in 1489 to Ioasaf, the former archbishop of Rostov, may have been either an “interlibrary loan” request asking if any of the major monasteries in his jurisdiction had these works or an offer to send if they did not have them.<sup>24</sup> The mix of distinctly Christian and Old Testament works would tend to support the view that the heretics were Judaizing Christians rather than proselytizing Jews.

Gennadii managed to convince Ivan III (1462–1505) and Metropolitan Gerontii (1473–1489) to convene a council in 1488, which tried four of those accused and found three guilty, who were then remanded to the civil authorities for punishment.<sup>25</sup> In 1490 a number of those he accused of heresy were tried. Of those found guilty of heresy, the judgment was not to execute them as Gennadii wanted, but to exile some, excommunicate others, and im-

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<sup>22</sup> Dán, “Judaizare,” 25–34. If so-called Judaizers had been Christians who had converted to Judaism and were seeking to convert others, they should have been more properly called “apostates,” not “heretics.” In a few places, Iosif Volotskii, who wrote an anti-heretic diatribe, the *Enlightener (Prosvetitel’)*, does refer to them as apostates, but apostasy is not what they were tried and punished for.

<sup>23</sup> Bowman, *Jews of Byzantium*, 29–30.

<sup>24</sup> *AFED*, 320. Such a question on the part of a Rus’ prelate about books of the Bible should not arouse surprise because at that time no complete version of the Bible existed in East Slavic territory. Until the late 15th century only lectionaries, the book of Psalms, Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles were used. Gennadii’s realization of the woeful state of Rus’ Church knowledge when faced with the heretics’ reading matter may have been what prompted him to sponsor the translation of the first complete Bible in Rus’ in 1499. On the Gennadii Bible, see Thomson, “Slavonic Translation,” 655–665; and Cooper, *Slavic Scriptures*, 127–134.

<sup>25</sup> *AFED*, 313–315.

prison still others.<sup>26</sup> A few were sent back to Gennadii, who humiliated them in public.

By 1504 when the next heresy trial was conducted, Iosif Volotskii (1462–1515; founder of the Volokolamsk Monastery) had advanced to the fore in the fight against heresy. This time the most prominent among the heretics were executed by burning<sup>27</sup>—the first instance of formal execution of heretics in Rus'.<sup>28</sup> Ivan III had previously protected those involved with the heresy in Moscow, at least until the spring of 1502, when he agreed to their prosecution.<sup>29</sup>

Subsequent heresy trials and investigations involving meetings of church councils did not focus on any one type of heresy as did the councils of 1488, 1490, and 1504. Instead, the accusations of what particular heresy the accused person might be guilty differ in each case, and in some cases the exact nature of the heresy purportedly committed by the accused is unclear.

In 1525 Maksim Grek ("the Greek," 1475–1556) was brought to trial on both civil and ecclesiastical charges.<sup>30</sup> He was a monk who had been sent to Moscow in 1518 by the patriarch of Constantinople, Theoleptos I (1513–1522), in response to a request from Vasillii III (1505–1533) to the patriarch for someone to help with the translation of Greek books into Russian.<sup>31</sup> In the translation project, which involved not only Maksim Grek, but also Vlas and Dmitrii Gerasimov, Maksim translated from Greek into Latin and then Gerasimov and Vlas rendered Maksim's Latin into Russian.<sup>32</sup> The council accused Maksim of mistranslations into Russian, but, as he wrote later, Gerasimov and Vlas should have been the ones tried

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<sup>26</sup> *AFED*, 382–386. Ivan III showed up at the end of the proceedings while the council was still in session and asked that Metropolitan Zosima examine the canon laws in regard to punishing heretics. *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>27</sup> *PSRL*, 6, pt. 2 (2001): cols. 371–372; 8:244; 12: 258; 27:337.

<sup>28</sup> The *Novgorod IV Chronicle* reports in the entry for 1375 that three Strigol'niks were killed by being thrown off the bridge in Novgorod into the Volkhov River. *PSRL* 4, pt. 1 (2000): 305. But there is no indication in the *Chronicle* that their deaths were an official execution.

<sup>29</sup> *PIV*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> Pokrovskii, *Sudnye spiski*, 90–96, 140–146, 160–166.

<sup>31</sup> "Akty, kasaiushchiesia do priezda," 31–33.

<sup>32</sup> See Gerasimov's letter to Misiur' Munekhin in Gorskii, "Maksim Grek Sviatogorets," 190. Cf. Maksim Grek, *Sochineniia*, 1:32; and 2:316.

for what appeared in the Russian translation.<sup>33</sup> He was also accused of *lèse majesté* on account of remarks he had made and contacts he had, and charged with other crimes such as sorcery.

One of the accusations concerned Maksim's having questioned the consecration of the Rus' metropolitan without the approval of the patriarch, which indeed Maksim considered to be uncanonical.<sup>34</sup> Another accusation concerned a letter Maksim wrote to Vasilii III questioning his actions at the time of the Crimean Tatar siege of Moscow in 1521. Thus, Maksim seems to have been found guilty of being disagreeable and not recanting his own opinions rather than of any doctrinal heterodoxy. As a result of this first trial, he was imprisoned in the Volokolamsk Monastery and in 1531 was again brought to trial with many of the same charges lodged against him.<sup>35</sup> He was again found guilty and sentenced this time to imprisonment in the Tver' Otroch Monastery. Maksim's second trial may have been a prelude and lead-in to the trial of another target—the former boyar Vassian Patrikeev (fl. 1493–1531).<sup>36</sup>

Our only source for the trial of Vassian Patrikeev at the 1531 Council is an incomplete report by Metropolitan Daniil (1522–1539) on the investigation of Vassian for heresy.<sup>37</sup> Since the last part of the trial record is missing, we do not know of what he was found guilty. We do know the outcome, however, meant imprisonment for him in the Volokolamsk Monastery. Since subsequent sources do not refer to Vassian Patrikeev, we may conclude he died there soon after the trial. In the trial record, Daniil asks Vassian: whether he believes certain individuals were miracle workers (Vassian replies he does not know); whether he referred to certain “miracle workers” (*chudotvortsy*) as “trouble makers” (*smutotvortsy*) because their monasteries had villages and people (Vassian replies that the Gospels do not authorize monasteries' keeping villages)<sup>38</sup>;

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<sup>33</sup> Maksim Grek, *Sochineniia*, 1:32.

<sup>34</sup> Maksim Grek, *Sochineniia*, 3:126.

<sup>35</sup> Pokrovskii, *Sudnye spiski*, 96–125, 146–159, 166–180.

<sup>36</sup> On this point, see Haney, *From Italy*, 84.

<sup>37</sup> “Predanie Daniila,” 1–28; and Kazakova, *Vassian Patrikeev*, 215–318.

<sup>38</sup> In his *Slovo otvetno*, Vassian expresses the view that the bishops should be in charge of managing the lands of the monasteries. Nowhere in any of the writings reliably attributed to him does he argue that monasteries should give up their landholdings altogether or that lands should be taken

and whether he attempted to combine “Hellenic teaching” with the “holy rules” (Vassian replies he does not know to what Daniil is referring). None of these implied accusations represents a heresy as such. Daniil then launches into a monologue on heresies concerning Corpus Christi, during which our only copy of the trial record breaks off.

So our best guess is that Vassian may have been found guilty of some nonconformist belief concerning the relationship of the human to the divine natures of Christ, but a more likely explanation is he was imprisoned for the same reason as Maksim Grek—for expressing his own opinions and for not recanting those views when asked about them.

In February 1549, a council tried Isak Sobaka for heresy.<sup>39</sup> Isak had been formally charged and found guilty in 1531 in connection with the trials of Maksim and Vassian and excommunicated. Metropolitan Ioasaf (1539–1542) lifted the excommunication and appointed him first hegumen of the Simonov Monastery, then archimandrite of the Chudov Monastery. The same charges that had been raised in 1531 were leveled against him in 1549. Ultimately he was found guilty, not of heresy, but of illegally rising through the ecclesiastical ranks, since his excommunication in 1531 had not been officially rescinded by a church council. He was sent for punishment to the Nil Sorskii Pustyn' near Beloozero.

In November 1553, the state secretary Ivan Viskovatyi (?–1570) was found guilty of challenging the changes in icon painting that Metropolitan Makarii (1542–1563) had introduced<sup>40</sup> and that Viskovatyi deemed uncanonical. On 15 January 1554, after the decision of the council went against him, he withdrew his criticism. Apparently because he was willing to recant, he was not imprisoned. In December 1553, Artemii, the former hegumen of the Troitse-Sergiev Monastery (1551–1552), was found guilty of holding unspecified “Lutheran schismatic views,”<sup>41</sup> of demeaning the miracle-workers and their miracles, and of questioning the decisions of

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away from them by the secular authorities. On this point, see Ostrowski, “Church Polemics,” 363. See also Pliguzov, “Vstuplenie Vassiana Patrikeva,” 41–42; and Pliguzov, *Polemika v russkoi tserkvi*, 139.

<sup>39</sup> Pokrovskii, *Sudnye spiski*, 125–139.

<sup>40</sup> Bodianskii, “Rozyisk,” 37–40; and *AI*, 1:246–248.

<sup>41</sup> *AI*, 1:248–256.

the ecumenical councils.<sup>42</sup> He was imprisoned in Solovki Monastery, from where he escaped to Lithuania. In June 1554, Matvei Bashkin, Ivan Timofeevich Borisov, Grigorii Timofeevich Borisov, and others were found guilty of heresy.<sup>43</sup> They were accused, among other transgressions, of denying the divinity of Christ and were imprisoned. From other writings we know that Matvei was an abolitionist in regard to slavery, and such views may have sufficed to get him accused of heresy. These councils contribute nothing to Eastern Christian theological doctrine on heresies, but they do tell us a great deal about how Muscovite churchmen viewed the relationship of the ecclesiastical authority to the secular ruling authority—as co-partners in governing the realm.

### **Councils on Ecclesiastical Discipline and Reforms**

The only council to address the issue of a prelate who was neither a metropolitan nor charged with heresy was the Council of 1509. The problem concerned the transfer by Iosif as hegumen of the Volokolamsk Monastery from the jurisdiction of the local prince, Fedor Borisovich (1476–1513), to Fedor’s cousin, Grand Prince Vasiliï III. Fedor had inherited the surrounding lands from his father, Boris Vasil’evich, co-founder and patron of the Iosifo-Volokolamsk Monastery. Although no canon law existed justifying the right of the patron to consider such a monastery his property, it was not uncommon for a lord to do so. Iosif sought relief from Fedor’s demands for portions of the monastery’s movable property and revenues by asking Vasiliï III to take over the patronage of the cloister, and Vasiliï agreed. This move, however, aroused the ire of Serapion, the archbishop of Novgorod (1506–1509), because Volokolamsk rested within his jurisdiction and he was not consulted about the change so Serapion excommunicated Iosif. Metropolitan Simon (1495–1511) convoked a council to discuss the issue and declared that Serapion was in violation of canon law, deposed him from his see, voided the excommunication of Iosif, and excommunicated Serapion in turn.<sup>44</sup> Besides rejecting the

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<sup>42</sup> *PSRL*, 13:233.

<sup>43</sup> *PSRL*, 13:232; and Bodianskii, “Moskovskie sobory,” 1–2.

<sup>44</sup> *AI*, 1:529–530, no. 290; *loasafovskaiia letopis'*, 155–156; and *PIV*, 224–226, 329.



principle of a local lord's ownership of a monastery, the Council of 1509 was noteworthy for a number of reasons, including the invocation of the principle that a ruler's decision not be condemned publicly (apparently Serapion had delivered sermons denouncing Vasilii's decision) and a pre-1547 use of the term *tsar'* (from the Latin 'caesar') to apply to the Muscovite grand prince.

The two main church councils that made decisions on matters of ecclesiastical reforms and procedure during this period were the Council of 1503 and the Stoglav Council of 1551, although other councils dealt with specific questions of practice. The 1503 Council's decisions included forbidding the payment of fees for the placement of priests and deacons, establishing the minimum age for clerics, prohibiting a priest from celebrating mass while drunk or on the day after being drunk, stipulating that widowed priests must enter a monastery, and forbidding monks and nuns from living in the same monastery.<sup>45</sup> The prohibition against taking fees for clerical placement appears to have been in response to heretics' claims that fees were uncanonical.

The stipulation of a specific fee for placement was common practice in both the Eastern and Western churches and justified by both civil and ecclesiastical laws.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, the council decision against continuing to take them was used to depose Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod in 1504.<sup>47</sup> Although Gennadii signed the council decision, he may still have considered the criticism of taking fees to be a sign of heresy. Soon after, however, this decision was dropped. The Stoglav, for example, does not mention this particular decision although it incorporates the other decisions of the 1503 Council.<sup>48</sup>

The issue of secularization of church and monastic lands has been traditionally associated with the 1503 Council, but that association is based on faulty and unreliable polemical sources of the mid-16th century. There is no contemporary or reliable evidence

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<sup>45</sup> *AAE*, 1:484–487, nos. 382 and 383a; Ostrowski, "'Fontological' Investigation," 517–547; and *RFA*, 3:658–662.

<sup>46</sup> Macrides, "Simony," 1901–1902. See also Pliguzov, "Archbishop Gennadii," 283 n. 6.

<sup>47</sup> *PSRL* 6, part 2: col. 371; 8:244; 12:258; 27:337; and *loasafovskaia letopis'*, 146.

<sup>48</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 385–390, chaps. 80, 82, and 83.

that discusses such an occurrence at the council. And there is no clear or reliable evidence that Ivan III planned in any way to extend his extensive confiscation of church and monastic lands in Novgorod to the rest of Muscovy.<sup>49</sup> The idea of attaching the secularization question to the Council of 1503 may have derived from the Stoglav itself. In chapter 100 of that council's decision (written in 1551), former Metropolitan Ioasaf (1539–1542) tells Ivan IV to ask the older boyars who were present at the widower priests' council who else was also present at that council besides Iosif Volotskii. Although Ioasaf was clearly referring to the 1503 Council, he was not referring to the church and monastic lands issue. Nonetheless, it took only one short step to connect that issue, which was discussed at the 1551 Council, with the 1503 Council, where it probably had not been discussed, and to make Iosif Volotskii the defender of church and monastic landholding, although we have nothing that he wrote on the subject.

During January and February 1551, Metropolitan Makarii presided with Ivan over the Stoglav Church Council, which codified the regulations of the church. The decisions covered a wide range of topics, including attempts to make uniform ritual practices as well as income of monasteries and secular clergy, prescriptions to raise the educational and moral level of the clergy, and stipulations that church authorities control the work performed by scribes, icon painters, and others in the service of the church.<sup>50</sup> This ecclesiastical codification was similar to the codification of government laws in the *Sudebnik* the previous year.<sup>51</sup> Because some of the decisions of the Stoglav were not completely in accordance with Eastern Church canon laws, a number of historians have seen the Stoglav decisions as representing a break with the Byzantine Church.<sup>52</sup> Yet, as Jack Kollmann concludes, “the *Stoglav* fathers

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<sup>49</sup> See Ostrowski, “‘Fontological’ Investigation”; and Ostrowski, “500 let spustia,” 211–236.

<sup>50</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 232–416.

<sup>51</sup> *Sudebniki XV–XVI vekov*, 109–340.

<sup>52</sup> The latest restatement of this view can be found in Pavlov and Perrie, *Ivan the Terrible*, 68. The authors cite the decision in favor of two alleluias (instead of three) during the church service and of making the sign of the cross with two fingers (instead of three fingers), as practiced by the more “canonically correct” Novgorod Church.

did not definitively and fundamentally reassess canonical tradition—rather, they merely repeated currently preferred formulas from books at hand.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, their intent was not to overthrow or ignore the Byzantine Church canon, but to follow it.

Evidential support for Kollmann’s contention can be found in the Stoglav’s rationale for two, instead of three, alleluias. The Stoglav fathers say they reached their decision on the basis of the *Life of St. Efrosin of Pskov*, in which “the Immaculate Birth-Giver of God [Prechistiia Bogoroditsa] revealed her prohibition of the triple alleluia and ordered Orthodox Christians to say the double alleluia... .”<sup>54</sup> The *vita* they cite had been written only four years earlier about Efrosin’s revelation.<sup>55</sup> Rather than a flouting of the “correct” canons of Byzantium and Novgorod, we can imagine they thought they had received the latest “correct” word on the subject, and were not associating “incorrectness” with either Byzantium or Novgorod. After the Muscovite patriarchate was established in 1589, and learned Greeks from Constantinople came to instruct the Muscovite prelates on proper procedures, the triple alleluia was restored to church service books.<sup>56</sup> The Council of 1666–1667 officially confirmed the triple alleluia. Similarly, the decision in favor of the two-fingered sign of the cross was made on the basis of two works, the *Instruction (Nastavlenie) of Theodoret* (fl. sixth c.) and a *Tale concerning Meletius of Antioch* (fl. fourth c.).<sup>57</sup> Both works were found in two redactions, the earlier of which indicated three fingers and the later, two. The Stoglav participants thus had their choice of two apparently equal traditions and, as with the double alleluia, chose the more recent one. When the Muscovite prelates realized their decision was not in accordance with Byzantine canon, they reversed their stand and

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<sup>53</sup> Kollmann, “Moscow *Stoglav*,” 305.

<sup>54</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, chap. 42, p. 319.

<sup>55</sup> Makarii, *Istoriia russkogo raskola*, 32–37. The *Regulation or Statute of the Spiritual College* of 1721 cites this case as an example of faulty use of evidence. See *Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*, 13–14.

<sup>56</sup> See Makarii, *Istoriia russkogo raskola*, 55n109, for examples of church books that had restored the triple alleluia from as early as 1590.

<sup>57</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, chap. 31, pp. 290–293. For the identification of the *Instruction* and the *Tale*, see Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 8:94–124; and Makarii, *Istoriia russkogo raskola*, 25–30, 59–62. Cf. Golubinskii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 2, pt. 2:477–478.

at the Council of 1666–1667 opted for the three-fingered sign of the cross.

Kollmann has suggested that “[a] contributing cause of . . . [the Stoglav’s] ineffectiveness” in the decisions concerning such matters as the formulaic beginning of the divine liturgy, the restriction to one godparent, the setting of a minimum age for marriage, two alleluias, the two-fingered sign of the cross, and so forth indicated the inability of the council participants to determine “good translations” of service books—that is, those that were in accord with canon law.<sup>58</sup> Given diverse traditions and differing evidence on the same issue, the Rus’ Church leaders made the best decision they could in each case. Without access to Byzantine canon law as it existed in Constantinople at the time, they could not have been intentionally deciding in opposition to that canon law. Although they did have access to the compilations of canon law called *Kormchie knigi* (lit., *Pilot books*), these books either did not address the issues they were dealing with or provided ambiguous answers open to differing interpretations when confronting those concerns. While the Stoglav prelates were attempting to confirm Eastern Church canon law and previous council decisions, their knowledge of that canon law was limited and at times incorrect.

Other councils on ecclesiastical discipline and reform during this period dealt with matters of procedures and practices specific to the Rus’ Church rather than matters of canon law, which the councils of 1503 and 1551 engaged. The councils of 1547 and 1549 are regarded as having established a number of new Rus’ saints, but our sources for these councils are not in complete agreement.<sup>59</sup> The four known manuscript copies that provide a list of saints canonized at the 1547 Council are of metropolitan letters to various eparchies describing the decision of the council. Although a group of names is common to all four lists, none of the lists completely coincides with any of the others. Our evidence for a canonization council of 1549 is an oblique reference in Ivan IV’s questions to the Stoglav,<sup>60</sup> and this has led to the supposition that the

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<sup>58</sup> Kollmann, “Moscow *Stoglav*,” 305.

<sup>59</sup> Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 80–85.

<sup>60</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 250–253.

canonization council was the same one that tried Isak Sobaka in February of that year.<sup>61</sup>

The Council of 1555 established the archiepiscopal see of Kazan.<sup>62</sup> The Khanate of Kazan' had been taken by Muscovite forces two-and-a-half years earlier in 1552. The importance of this conquest is reflected in the special investiture of a new archbishop for Kazan', only the third in the Rus' Church, after Novgorod and Rostov, but ranked above Rostov. When the patriarchate of Moscow was established in 1589, the archbishop of Kazan' was elevated to metropolitan.

The Council of 1564, which was called to choose a successor to Metropolitan Makarii, also discussed other matters, including who among the prelates was allowed to wear the white cowl. According to Herberstein, only the Novgorod archbishop wore a white cowl in the first quarter of the 16th century.<sup>63</sup> The members of the 1564 Church Council declared nothing had been written concerning why the archbishops of Novgorod had worn a white cowl.<sup>64</sup> This declaration creates a problem for those scholars who believe the *Tale of the White Cowl*, which justifies the wearing of that cowl by Novgorod archbishops, was composed in the 1490s. The church historian Makarii described the problem of the date of the composition of the *Tale of the White Cowl*: "From this it is possible to conclude that either the tale of Dmitrii the Translator about the white cowl was merely unknown to the fathers of the council, although it existed, remaining from the time of Gennadii in the archive of the Novgorod archbishop, or it still did not exist at

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<sup>61</sup> See, e. g., Makarii, "Tserkovnyi sobor 1549 goda," 145; also in Makarii, *Zhizn' i trudy sviatitelia Makariiia*, 116. An interpolated list into the third redaction of the *Life of Iona* contains 16 "later new saints" (Lur'e, "Zhitie Iony," 273), leading scholars to assume these were the additional saints approved in 1549.

<sup>62</sup> *PSRL*, 13:249–251; cf. *AAE*, 1:257–262, no. 241.

<sup>63</sup> Herberstein, *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 7:235–236; Kostomarov, "Povest'," 301; Pavlov, "Podlozhnaia darstvennaia gramota," 49; Sedel'nikov, "Vasilij Kalika," 235n1; Stremoukhoff, "La tiare," 128; Lur'e, *Ideologicheskaiia bor'ba*, 230; Thomson, "Intellectual Difference," 80–81; and Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, 236. For the *Council Decision*, see *AI*, vol. 1, no. 173: 331–333; and *PSRL*, 13:378–380.

that time, but was composed by someone using the name Dmitrii after the council."<sup>65</sup> Although Makarii accepted an early date of composition of the *Tale*, he made no attempt to argue in favor of the ignorance of the prelates of an already existing text. Most scholars who believe in an early date for the composition of the *Tale* have tended to disregard the testimony of the church council decision.<sup>66</sup>

It is unlikely that all the church prelates who participated in the 1564 Church Council, including Pimen, the Archbishop of Novgorod (1551–1572), would not have known of the *Tale* if it already existed. It is also unlikely that the 16th-century Metropolitan Makarii, who had been archbishop of Novgorod, would have excluded the *Tale* from his compilation of the *Velikie Chet'i minei* (*Great Menology*) if it had been written by ca. 1550, the time when the expanded version was completed. While possible that the members of the Council of 1564 and Metropolitan Makarii overlooked an already existing written work on the white cowl, the likely explanation for their not mentioning it is that the *Tale* had not yet been written.<sup>67</sup>

The Council of 1564 also issued, on 20 February, rules and procedures regarding the consecration of a metropolitan.<sup>68</sup> In July 1570, a council met to depose Pimen, archbishop of Novgorod, at the behest of Ivan IV.<sup>69</sup> On 29 April 1572, the council that was called to choose Metropolitan Kirill's successor also approved the fourth marriage of Ivan IV.<sup>70</sup> The council had to provide its approval for the marriage to be considered legal, since there was no canon law regarding a fourth marriage, and there is some dispute

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<sup>65</sup> Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 7:236.

<sup>66</sup> Labunka mentions the council decision but adopts the position that the council members were unaware of the *Tale*'s existence. Labunka, *Legend* (1978), 128; Labunka, *Legend* (1998), 72. Ternovskii suggested that the council members were not ignorant of the *Tale* but thought it too questionable to acknowledge. Ternovskii, *Izuchenie*, 2: 172. Thomson argued, however, that it would have been equally as easy for the council members to condemn the work as to pretend it did not exist. Thomson, "Intellectual Difference," 81n121.

<sup>67</sup> Ostrowski, "Ironies," 43–44.

<sup>68</sup> *AAE*, 1:297–300.

<sup>69</sup> *DDG*, 483.

<sup>70</sup> *AAE*, 1:329–332.

concerning whether canon law even applies to a third marriage.<sup>71</sup> The council members apparently realized they were in canonically uncharted territory. In return for granting their approval, they placed a penance on Ivan for three years as a result of his “weakness for the passions.” The first year he was not allowed to take communion or enter the nave of any church, with both restrictions being reduced proportionately during the next two years.<sup>72</sup> This decision is one more example of the Rus’ Church prelates’ doing their best to reach decisions in conformity with Byzantine canon law, but not always succeeding. Rather than continue to act in opposition to that canon law, they changed their decisions to be in conformity. When canon law provided little or no guidance, they tried to make determinations in a procedurally correct way.

### **Councils on *Tarkhan* and Monastic Acquisition of *Votchiny***

The issue of monastic acquisition of *votchiny* (patrimony—sing. *votchina*) was discussed at three church councils: 1551, 1572, and 1580. At stake was the state’s regulation of monasteries. The Stoglav Council declared that:

a monastery’s treasury and all the material resources of monasteries will be under the authority of the tsar’s and grand prince’s majordomos (*dvoretskie*), who will be sent to the archimandrites, hegumens, priors, and council elders of each monastery to audit, to take inventory, and to make remittances according to the books.<sup>73</sup>

The *Judgment of 11 May 1551*, which was attached to the Stoglav decision, decreed the following:

- (1) the sale or donation of a *votchina* to a church or a monastery without a report (*doklad*) to the sovereign is forbidden, otherwise the *votchina* is subject to confiscation by the sovereign;
- (2) any *pomest’ie* or taxable lot that a bishop or monastery has acquired as the result of debts of the holder is to be returned, after due process, to its former holder;

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<sup>71</sup> Rudder, 836–837.

<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of this council’s decision, see Martin, *Tsar*, 138–139.

<sup>73</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 333, chapter 49. Translation based on Kolmann, “Moscow *Stoglav*,” 422.

(3) any village or arable land given by a boyar after the death of Vasiliï III (1533) is to be returned to its former holder;

(4) any *votchina* given for repose of the soul (*po dushu*) is to remain with the monastery except for those lands that had been forbidden under Vasiliï III, which are to revert to the sovereign.<sup>74</sup>

It seems as though the church and state authorities were trying to work out a formula such that church and monastic landholding and acquisitions were protected while also safeguarding the interests of the state.

On 9 October 1572, a council attended by prelates and boyars further stipulated restrictions and the conditions under which *votchiny* could be given to monasteries. A *votchina* that had been granted to a boyar by the sovereign could not be donated to a monastery. Council members also made the following determination: “*Votchiny* are not to be donated to large monasteries, which have many *votchiny*,” but they could be donated to small monasteries that had little land, as long as those donations were registered with the Pomestnyi Chancellery. A *votchina* that was to be otherwise bequeathed did not have to be registered in the Pomestnyi Chancellery as long as it went to “kith and kin” (*rodu i plemiani*) who could serve the tsar, “so that the land will not leave from service.”<sup>75</sup> This decision has generally been interpreted as the state’s limiting the monasteries’ acquisition of lands, but the careful wording of the document indicates a compromise arrived at by prelates and boyars that would both protect monastic land acquisitions and prevent the loss of *votchina* lands from providing support for military service.

The 1580 Council determined that *votchinniki* (patrimony owners) were not to give their *votchiny* to monasteries for repose of the soul (*po dushu*) but were to give money instead. Also the monasteries were not to acquire land through purchase or mortgage without the knowledge (*vedom*) of the sovereign.<sup>76</sup> The wording of the decision has led historians to conclude that this decision was intended to end monastic acquisition of lands altogether. The decision was, thus, seen as a “victory” of the state over the church because, presumably, that land would then be

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<sup>74</sup> Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 413–416.

<sup>75</sup> *AI*, 1:270.

<sup>76</sup> *SGGD*, 1:583–587; and *AAE*, 1:372–373 (incomplete).



available to the state. If that had been the case, then the continued increase in monastic landholding throughout the 1580s (although at a much lower rate than before)<sup>77</sup> seems to suggest the decision of this council was to a certain extent ignored.

A better explanation for the decision emerges when one realizes that the disagreement between the state and church during the preceding 30 years was not over whether churches and monasteries should have lands or even acquire lands but over registering these land acquisitions with the secular record-keeping administration and the secular authority's right to regulate which lands could be donated. The articulation by churchmen of the inalienability of church and monastic lands most likely arose as a reaction to attempts by the secular administration to monitor all land donations to monasteries. One of the earliest extant sources to this effect is a document dated 1535, which demands from the Glushitsa Monastery a list of all *votchiny* recently acquired and warns the monastery against acquiring any more lands without the knowledge of the grand prince (*bez nashego vedoma*).<sup>78</sup> But it is only in the Judgment of 11 May 1551 that we find the punitive stipulation of confiscation of *votchiny* that had been donated or sold to any monastery without a report (*doklad*) to the state. Subsequent acts in 1557, 1562, and 1572 further defined under what conditions, and in what districts, lands could and could not be legally acquired by monasteries.<sup>79</sup> It was exactly during this period—when the state was legalizing through statutes the right to confiscate monastic and church lands, the transfer of which had not been previously registered—that we find the compilation by churchmen of a package of precedents, including the *Donation of Constantine*, the *Statute (Ustav) of Vladimir*, and the spurious *Iarlyk of Khan Uzbek to Metropolitan Peter*, concerning the churches' and monasteries' right to keep their lands. Associated with the formulation of precedents were the compositions of the first sources to describe the proposal of secularization as having been brought

<sup>77</sup> Veselovskii, "Monastyrskoe zemlevladienie," 101. According to Veselovskii's figures, from 1552 to 1579, monasteries acquired an average of 21.6 landholdings a year. From 1580 to 1590, the average is 4.3 landholdings per year.

<sup>78</sup> Amvrosii, *Istoriia*, 3:712–714.

<sup>79</sup> *AI*, 1:258–260 (1557); 1:268–270 (1562); and 1:270 (1572).

up and defeated at the 1503 Church Council. The state was pursuing administrative regulation of monastic land acquisition and instituting the penalty of confiscation for non-compliance, and churchmen were responding with arguments and precedents, some falsified, denying the state the right to confiscate any church or monastic lands.<sup>80</sup>

In the state sources, we find no indication of any plans to secularize church and monastic lands at all. Indeed, we continue to find throughout this period evidence of donations of land to the monasteries by the grand princes and the ruling family and the return to monasteries of lands confiscated by local officials. Such donations and returns make little sense if the ruler was planning to secularize those same lands later.

Thus, the decision of the 1580 Council should be seen as a compromise between the church leaders and the secular record-keepers. Such a conclusion is supported by the very wording of the reason given for the decision: "in order that the churches of God and holy places will be without turmoil, and that the military forces may be armed more strongly for the battle against the enemies of the cross of Christ."<sup>81</sup> The decision itself expressly allowed the churches and monasteries to keep all the lands they had as of 15 January 1580 (the day of the decision). Those lands were not subject to confiscation by the state authorities for any reason. Thus, the church removed those lands already acquired from jeopardy of confiscation. In return, the churches and monasteries agreed to register their land acquisitions from that day on and to abide by the limitation on acquisition of *votchiny*. The dispute was thereby resolved.

The Council of 1584 prohibited monasteries from receiving *tarkhan* immunities, which were exemptions from taxes.<sup>82</sup> Historians have tended to see this decision, too, as a limitation imposed by the state on the church. Yet, certain considerations speak against such an interpretation. First, the Judgment of 11 May 1551 had already banned the issuing of *tarkhan* to monasteries. So, the council decision of 1584 merely confirms what had become church law. Second, Metropolitan Makarii wrote in favor of prohibiting *tarkhan* in 1551. Third, there was no objection on the part of the

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<sup>80</sup> Ostrowski, "Church Polemics," 373–375.

<sup>81</sup> *SGGD*, 1:585.

<sup>82</sup> *SGGD*, 1:592–598, no. 202.

church to the prohibiting of *tarkhan* immunities being granted to monasteries either in 1551 or 1584. Finally, there may have been an advantage, as Kashtanov has suggested, for those who had received *tarkhan* immunities to be rid of them.<sup>83</sup> In the end, we do not know why the church was in favor of ending *tarkhan*, but clearly this decision was in no way disfavored or opposed by the church.

### **Council on the Establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate**

On 23 January 1589, a church council met to choose Moscow's first patriarch from a list of three candidates: Metropolitan Iov (1587–1589, then patriarch of Moscow to 1607), Archbishop Aleksandr of Novgorod (1576–1589, then metropolitan of Novgorod to 1591), and Archbishop Varlaam of Rostov (1586–1603).<sup>84</sup> The election was a formality because all the parties involved, including Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople, had already agreed upon Iov. The procedure, however, did follow Eastern Church practice of choosing a patriarch from among three candidates. For his part, Jeremiah had agreed only six days earlier to support the elevation of Iov following a proposal sent to him from Tsar Fedor (1584–1598).<sup>85</sup> Jeremiah and his entourage had been held virtual prisoners in Moscow since their arrival six months earlier on 13 July 1588. They had come seeking contributions from the Muscovite ruler; those around Tsar Fedor were willing to donate alms provided Jeremiah agreed to the creation of a patriarchate in Moscow. At first, Jeremiah had refused to sanction the elevation of the Moscow metropolitan to patriarch. Then the Muscovites suggested that Jeremiah stay as patriarch of Rus', to which Jeremiah initially agreed. But when he was told that he would have to reside in Vladimir, not Moscow, he declined. Pseudo-Dorotheos (most likely, the Metropolitan of Monemvasia), who accompanied Jeremiah and who wrote an account of the negotiations, considered the stipulation that Jeremiah reside in Vladimir to be a ploy pressuring Jeremiah to agree to a Rus' patriarch.<sup>86</sup> However, if Jeremiah had

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<sup>83</sup> Kashtanov, "Centralised State," 251.

<sup>84</sup> *SGGD*, 2:95–103.

<sup>85</sup> *Posol'skaia kniga*, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Sathas, *Viographikon schediasma*, Appendix, 21–22; and Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 261–262.

stayed in Muscovite lands as patriarch, his residence could not have been Moscow, at least officially, unless they were willing to depose Iov as metropolitan.

In the end, Jeremiah performed his role in the ritual elevating Iov, and he signed the decree creating the Moscow patriarchate without understanding what it said; it was written in Russian (a language neither he nor anyone in his entourage could read) and no Greek translation was made available to him.<sup>87</sup> The success in getting Jeremiah to agree to the creation of a Moscow patriarchate and the elevation of Metropolitan Iov to that position represented the ultimate justification of the path on which the Rus' bishops put their church in 1448 when they chose and consecrated their own metropolitan. It also represented the culminating point of church-state cooperation in Muscovy during the 15th and 16th centuries. Iov and the Holy Synod hardly could have coerced the patriarch of Constantinople into agreeing to the creation of a Moscow patriarch, but the state authorities could do so by the simple expedient of not allowing Jeremiah to leave until he did so. By supporting the council of Rus' bishops, the secular ruling elite acquired for Muscovy the prestige of having one of the five patriarchs of the Eastern Church and the only one not under Ottoman rule.

## Conclusion

The period from 1447 to 1589 stands as an important one for the genesis and development of an independent Russian Church and the role of the councils was immensely significant in guiding that development. At the beginning of this period, the Rus' bishops decided the Rus' Church had to go its own way after the ouster of the Constantinople-appointed Uniate metropolitan Isidor in 1441. In 1447, the bishops obtained the acquiescence of Grand Prince Vasili II to choose and consecrate their own metropolitan in return for their support of him in the succession struggle with his cousin Dmitrii Shemiaka. And in 1448, they chose one of their own, Iona, to be installed in that position. Subsequent councils dealt with problems of heretics, of internal ecclesiastical discipline, and of *votchina* donations to the monasteries.

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<sup>87</sup> Sathas, *Viographikon schediasma*, Appendix, 22; and Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform*, 262.

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Almost all the practices and formulations of the Russian Church during the 15th and 16th centuries, as declared by the councils, were firmly situated within the already well-accepted doctrines of the Eastern Church. Upon examining such issues as heresy, church factional struggles and polemics, the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, issues of iconography and church decoration, and the relationship of the Novgorod archiepiscopal see with the Moscow metropolitanate, one finds, instead of ad hoc doctrines and practices manufactured to address issues unique to Muscovy, an adoption, whenever possible, of pre-existing doctrines and practices that the Muscovite Church had inherited from the Greek Church. When the Rus' Church found itself out of step with the Greek Church, as in the case of prohibiting fees, handed down at the 1503 Church Council, the double alleluia, and two-fingered sign of the cross, it reversed itself to once again be in accord with Constantinople. In those cases where the Muscovite Church prelates were responding to issues that were indigenous to Rus' conditions, such as *votchina* donations, abolishing of *tar-khan*, and the autonomous standing of the Rus' Church, the Rus' bishops reached their decisions according to the procedures established by the Greek Church. Even the practice of trying someone for heresy where their only "crime" was expressing opinions opposed to secular government policy had its antecedents in Byzantium. Throughout this period, relations between the church and the state, while not always harmonious, were essentially cooperative and beneficial to both sides.

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