

NORTHERN RUSSIAN MONASTIC CULTURE

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The breakup of the Soviet Union awoke a renewed fascination in Russian Orthodoxy that reanimated interest in monasticism and its cultural impact on Russian history. Yet the modern period had produced little rigorous research into early Russian Orthodox monasticism as a spiritual way of life. Among other things, the organic quality of Orthodox monastic life requires a discussion of monasteries' regional contexts and the role of the leader/teacher. Regional context and spiritual leadership reveal differences among similar types of communities (such as differences among various cenobias, or among various sketes) in social make-up, economic function, and even pious forms. Another important direction to pursue is to move away from a focus on one type of text toward the integration of the variety of sources contained in monastic libraries and archives.

Introduction

Monastic life aids the search for a spiritual ideal.¹ Christian cenobitic monasticism structures a religious life for the purpose of

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following Christ and attaining perfect love of, and union with, God.² The monastic life helps those who desire this end to engage in pious acts such as prayer and other labors that will lead them to deeper spiritual understanding. The monastic life of pre-Petrine Russia grew out of the traditions of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, specifically the Byzantine models that evolved from earlier monastic communities of North Africa and Palestine. The monastic tradition enjoined its adherents to live lives of poverty, chastity, humility, and obedience in thought and deed. These remained ideals that in many cases were imperfectly carried out despite the genuine piety of a religious community or its adherents. Therefore, the rules adopted by monasteries accounted for the

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² According to two authors, St. Basil the Great taught that the aim of the Christian life was "union with God by love": Murphy, "St. Basil and Monasticism," 79. See also Morison, *St. Basil*, 22. Rousseau indicates that central to Basil's thought was to "preserve the perfection of love for God." Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 196. St. John Climacus writes that the goal of the monastic life is "to attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Climacus, *Ladder*, 266. St. Gregory of Palamas represents a branch of Christian monasticism that perceived the goal of the monastic life to be the transformation of the heart, which is the receptacle of grace. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, 3 ("Introduction" by John Meyendorff).

frailty of human nature by instructing leaders in the proper methods to admonish, punish, or uplift erring brothers.

Cloisters were havens for spiritual seekers and the world's discarded souls: not just widows and widowers, but also the sick, the elderly, and even imprisoned troublemakers. Both lay and religious groups of pre-Petrine Orthodox society accepted the spiritual and religious superiority of cloistered life; yet to a great extent, the monks of northern Russia interacted with the secular world and carried its customs and concerns into the monastery as often as they carried monastic and Christian ideals into the surrounding communities.

Muscovy's northern territories spread beyond the lands previously held by Great Novgorod before it was absorbed into Moscow's grand principality. They included the Obonezh "Fifth" and the region farther north and east that is dominated by Lake Onega, the White Lake, and the White Sea. Monasteries clustered along the lakes and rivers that converged on the White Sea like spokes toward the center of a wheel. These areas encompassed the Kargopol' region along the Onega River, the Primor'e (along the southwest littoral of the White Sea), the Dvina region running along the Northern Dvina River, the Pinega and Mezen' River regions, and the northern shore of the sea from the Kandalaksha Gulf to the east of the Uмба River.

The North, peopled by Finno-Ugric tribes, differed significantly from the Slavic agricultural society around Moscow. Monks introduced the ritualized, otherworldly culture and traditions of 14th-century Orthodoxy into the rugged and independent northern society, causing the vital, energetic renaissance of Russian monasticism to incubate in the northern marches of the Riurikid princes.

As the two cultures interacted in this harsh environment of bogs, swamps, ocean storms, dangerous ice floes in winter, and thick forests overrun with wild beasts, the marriage of the strict ascetic monastic regimen with the rough-and-tumble northern population created a vibrant and aggressive mix of trading monasteries that became missionary centers, economic centers, charitable organizations, and outposts for the crown. In the North, especially after 1478, no strong, local political or social elite existed other than the wealthy traders, trappers, and woodsmen, all of whom might engage in the exchange of commercial goods from the region's cities, the catch from fishing, pelts from trapping, and forest products. In the absence of a social or political elite, the

monasteries largely dictated spiritual, economic, and social life in a way that was not possible in urban centers or the more strictly controlled central regions around Moscow. Yet, the story of northern monasticism as a way of life, as a haven for the northern population, and as a network of trading centers with close ties to the northern trappers, traders, and fishermen, has yet to be told in a comprehensive manner.

Some of Russia's most influential cloisters were founded in the North, notably the Dormition Monastery on the White Lake (Kirillov, 1397), the Transfiguration Monastery (Solovki) in the middle of the White Sea (1429–1436), and the monasteries of Ferapontov (1398), Trinity Alexandro-Svirsk (1506), Antonievo-Siisk (1520), as well as others.³ In time, the founders and a number of the brothers of these cloisters became important pan-Russian saints, and many of their leaders rose to prominence in the church. Yet, despite its impressive list of Orthodox leaders, northern monastic culture also produced many of the *beglo-monakhi* (fleeing monks) who founded and fueled opposition communities in the second half of the 17th century.⁴

The monastic communities of pre-Petrine Russia fell into three main categories: eremitic, skete, and semi-cenobitic. All three forms were important in the North during the pre-Petrine era and often grew from one another in an organic process. The foundation of many monastic communities followed a familiar pattern: an individual searching for a more ascetic spiritual life ventured alone into the wilderness to lead a hermit's life (eremitic). Eventually joined by others who were impressed by the hermit's spirituality and pious deeds, the hermitage might become a skete in which a few pupils lived together with their spiritual father, often raising a church. If more followers gathered and were accepted, the small community might eventually evolve into a large cenobitic monastery with many churches in which monks had individual or shared cells and lived within, or surrounding, a main compound. A monk within such a cloister searching for a life of stillness and greater asceticism might leave the cenobium and venture into the world, potentially starting the process of foundation all over again. Most large monasteries in Russia developed variations of cenobitic life in which a separate cell life was combined with communal eating, labor, and living conditions. Monks who reached a

³ Overviews of the cloisters and their architectural and administrative histories may be found in Denisov, *Pravoslavnye monastyri*.

⁴ See the work of Robert Crumney in this volume.

high level of asceticism and spirituality might receive permission to live apart from the cloister, although under its supervision; such arrangements helped maintain the ideal of the eremitic life while upholding the importance of the cloister.

Monasticism has long been acknowledged as a major influence on Russian culture and society. It contributed to both the mission work of the Orthodox Church and the East Slavic colonization of the North. Monasteries became centers of pilgrimage and local authority. They were repositories of texts, produced leaders of the church, and were economically important. They remained spiritually significant despite attempts to reduce their influence in the 18th century when many religious communities were closed. Spiritual eldering and saints' shrines remained important among the Orthodox faithful and experienced a resurgence in the 19th century. Yet, for the pre-Petrine period, historiography has tended to place more emphasis on the political and economic roles of cloisters than on daily monastic life or on the role of monastic spirituality.

Part I: Historiography

The large cenobitic monasteries of the North, Solovki and Kirillov, created monastic rules that continued to influence Orthodox monastic liturgy and administration into the 19th century.⁵ Because they had large libraries and archives that were preserved in Moscow and Leningrad/St. Petersburg after 1917, they have received the bulk of scholarly attention. Their stories have overshadowed those of smaller cloisters such as Ferapontov Monastery, Antonii Siiskii's Trinity and Transfiguration Monastery, and the Trinity Monastery popularly known as Aleksandro-Svirsk, which were closer to the norm in Russia, and themselves quite influential.⁶ As provincial archives become more accessible and their tremendous value is recognized, more work on the smaller cloisters becomes

⁵ New rules that continued to combine elements of earlier Russian monastic rules were created in the 19th century for Orthodox and Old Belief monasteries. See, for example, Ohio State University, Hilandar Research Library, Coll. MGU Nizhegorodskaia, No. 72, ff. 1v–89v.

⁶ Hieromonk Ioan, a pupil of Alexander of Svira (d. 1533) and so from a smaller cloister, became the teacher and spiritual father of Metropolitan Filipp II (Kolychev, 1507–1569) at Solovki. Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 346–347. As another example, Patriarch Nikon (1652–1666) began his monastic career at Trinity Anzersk, a skete that became a daughter house of Solovki.

possible. The story of the sketes and middle-sized cenobia must be told before a comprehensive history of northern Russian monasticism can be written. Until then, work done to date on the large religious communities provides initial insights into the monastic life of northern Russia.

The major cloisters of northern Russia sprang up during a renaissance of monasticism from the middle of the 14th to the middle of the 16th centuries. As each community became institutionalized, it exerted religious, spiritual, economic, and occasionally political influence in its region. The economic and political roles of Russia's monasteries have received the bulk of the attention that serious historians have turned on these communities.⁷ More recently, the study of religious issues has been not only allowed but encouraged in Russia, but the results have been spotty, with the publication of many idealized or sentimental versions of saints' lives and monastic histories interspersed with serious scholarly work that became possible in the new research environment. In the past, scholarly studies of the religious aspects of monasticism focused on the creation of rules, the lives of head administrators, or interaction with the church hierarchy.⁸ Where spiritual issues have been raised, they have often been given a political tinge.⁹

⁷ Works that reflect this tendency are: Nikoľskii, *Kirillo-Belozerskii monastyr'*; Savich, *Solovetskaia votchina*; Zimin, *Krupnaia feodal'naia votchina*; and Gonneau, *La Maison de la sainte Trinité*.

⁸ Suzdal'tseva's recent reworking of Bishop Amvrosii's (Ornatskii, 1778–1827) compiled monastic rules and Goldfrank's annotated translation of Joseph of Volokolamsk's (1439/40–1515) monastic writings are examples of the focus on rules. Golubinskii's and Metropolitan Makarii's histories of the Russian Church are two of the best known institutional histories. Syrtsov's and more recently Michels' examinations of Solovki's role during the *raskol* are scholarly works that have focused on northern monasteries' struggles with the Russian Church.

⁹ The historiographical construct of a "possessor" vs. "non-possessor" conflict in and between monasteries served to bolster scholarly arguments regarding the stance of the Russian Church and the crown on the subject of monastic landholding. Focus on this construct has resulted in a number of misconceptions. Two of Russia's largest landholding monasteries, Solovki and Kirillov, have been labeled "non-possessor" largely, it would seem, because some alleged proponents of the "non-possessor" camp came from these cloisters. Scholarship of the past fifty years has questioned the nature of such a debate in the early 16th century (see, in particular, Lur'e, *Ideologicheskaiia bor'ba*; and Pliuzov, *Polemika*) and even whether such parties existed at all (see Ostrowski, "Church Polemics" and Ostrowski, "Loving Silence").

The issues of monastic landholding and monastic conflicts with peasants have taken precedence over questions such as spiritual leadership, the proper administration of a cloister, moral issues, and the role of monasticism in society.

Another major area of study involving northern monasticism is the examination of saints' lives (hagiographic works, *zhitiia*) and miracle tales. The hagiography of Russia's monastic saints received much attention, primarily for its linguistic and literary contributions.¹⁰ Kliuchevskii, Iakhontov, and Fedotov used northern saints' lives and miracles to glean information regarding monasticism and northern society. Kliuchevskii concluded that hagiography was not significantly helpful in shedding light on the colonization of the North while Iakhontov believed saints' lives were useful within limits. Fedotov was closest to the mark when he suggested that miracles do not give factual evidence so much as they illuminate the concerns and beliefs of the period in which they were produced.¹¹ More recently, a few scholars have contributed to our understanding of religion and society in Russia by employing the form critical method to analyze texts.¹²

The listing of major trends in the study of the monastic record does not mean that other issues have not been addressed by serious scholars. Yet, there remains a need for an integrated approach to monasticism: one which will use economic, liturgical, pious, and judicial texts; crown papers; pictorial sources; and material artifacts to untangle and re-weave the story of monasticism in pre-Petrine Russia. The perspective of the monks and their society has often been lost in the drive to frame monastic communities as just another category of gentry landowners, or mere

¹⁰ The late D.S. Likhachev contributed greatly to the study of medieval Russian texts. Relating more specifically to this article, L. A. Dmitriev has explored the northern *zhitiia* as literary monuments (Dmitriev, *Zhitiinye povest'i*). R. P. Dmitrieva examined the saints' lives of Solovki Monastery (Dmitrieva, "Znachenie zhitiia").

¹¹ Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiia*, 435–438; Iakhontov, *Zhitiia*, 4; Fedotov, *Sviatyie*, 54.

¹² Theissen, *Miracle Stories*; Ebbinghaus, *Marienkonen-Legenden*; and Seemann, *Die altrussische Wallfahrtsliteratur*. Isolde Thyrêt examined many northern Russian saints' miracle cycles, Thyrêt, "Perceptions of the Female"; and Gail Lenhoff examined the social context of religious texts in *Early Russian Hagiography and Martyred Princes*. To see how this method aids the study of northern Russian monasticism specifically see Part II, chs. 5–7 of Spock, "Solovki Monastery."

extensions of a hierarchical church. Monasticism struck a deep chord in the Orthodox population so that despite the closure of many communities in the 18th century, pilgrimages to saints' cults remained an important part of Russian piety, and a fascination with monastic spiritual fathers continued to meet the needs of a population surrounded by change and upheaval. More work is needed to create a rounded view of specific monasteries so that they may then be fit together to form a whole picture of the role of ascetic life in Russian Orthodox society.¹³

On the positive side, the studies of northern monasticism that have been published so far have greatly aided our understanding of Russian monasticism in general and the socio-economic environment of Russia's North. They are useful since the northern reaches, after the fall of Novgorod in 1478, have received relatively little attention.

Part II: Orthodox Monastic Culture

Muscovite Russia inherited its monastic forms from Byzantium. Eastern Orthodoxy has a long tradition of eremitic fathers inspiring others to embrace the ascetic life. The cenobitic monastic culture as it was practiced in cities or in rural areas was an outgrowth of Basilian monasticism which brought "athletes" (*athelos*—a hermit engaged in harsh physical discipline) back under the wing of the church and made possible the concept of a communal ascetic life lived in obedience and humility.¹⁴ Aristocrats in Byzantium often founded and funded monastic communities on their estates. However, it was not unusual during the Byzantine period for monks to travel far in search of an isolated setting in which to practice prayer and fasting. It was this type of spiritual father that brought Russian Orthodoxy into the "desert" of the northern forests.¹⁵

¹³ Recent examples of scholarly attempts to understand the spiritual and pious life of pre-Petrine monasticism are: Goldfrank, *Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotsky*; and Romanenko, *Povsednevnaia zhizn'*. Robert Romanchuk has produced a detailed study of the textual life of Kirillov Monastery: *Hermeneutics and Pedagogy*. A few works have attempted to understand monastic spiritual life and integrate it into the social and/or economic life of specific cloisters: Spock, "Solovki Monastery"; Dykstra, *Russian Monastic Culture*; and Miller, *Saint Sergius*."

¹⁴ For an excellent review of the social role of the early Christian ascetic tradition, see Brown, "Holy Man."

¹⁵ On Byzantine monastic forms and founders see: Angold, *Church and Society*; Hussey, *Orthodox Church*; and Morris, *Monks and Laymen*. The

Individuals became monks for various reasons. Foremost was a genuine desire to live a spiritual and pious life in service to God. In this category might be included monastic servants who opted to become monks rather than return to the world.¹⁶ Some monks retired to cloisters to serve God in old age at the end of their careers. Other motivations for tonsure emanated from upheavals such as illness or the death of a spouse. Additionally, the tsar used forced tonsure as punishment. Those who opted for tonsure after a personal crisis have occasionally been portrayed as opportunists looking for three square meals and a secure life. The opposite was closer to the truth, however, for monastic life was demanding, adding responsibilities and labor to lives that were already difficult.¹⁷ Tonsure in such cases was indicative of a realization of mortality and a belief that the religious life was an aid to salvation—yet, a percentage of souls probably regretted their decision. According to their circumstances, it was inevitable that some monks were more committed to the spiritual life than others. Thus, many religious communities housed a mix of social classes and a mix of levels of dedication to the calling.

A new supplicant donated a gift of goods or cash, and then lived in the cloister for a period of time under the instruction of a spiritual father. If the novice was accepted as a monk, he received a new baptismal name and remained under the tutelage of an elder, continuing to fulfill the tasks and deeds expected of a brother. On occasion, the period of the novitiate was truncated or ignored and the new member of the community could make a donation to the cloister, acquire a space in a cell, and receive

classic works on the “colonization” of the north by Russian monastics are Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie Zhitiia*, and Iakhontov, *Zhitiia*.

¹⁶ In Russia, child oblates were discouraged. However, children could be “donated” to a monastery as servants. These individuals were free to leave the cloister if they chose to do so upon the attainment of their majority or at the end of the original agreement of service.

¹⁷ Spock, “Solovki Monastery,” 253. Many who were already cared for by the monastery and eligible to receive prayers after death by virtue of their status as servants or workers at Solovki nonetheless chose to take the habit. It is clear that the monastic life itself was deemed important, not merely the prospect of a secure future. In some circumstances, a life of relative ease resulted, but cloisters removed freedom, and were therefore potentially stifling. In a society conversant with monastic expectations, vows were not taken lightly. For an alternate view, see Michels, “Solovki Uprising.”

tonsure.¹⁸ There was no set sum for tonsure, and one did not have to turn over all of one's goods to the cloister. As in the Byzantine tradition, it was possible to receive the income from one's land or holdings until death, at which time the property reverted to the monastery. Much of the literature on pre-Petrine history suggests that many joined monasteries in order to preserve their patrimonies during the violent *oprichnina* period from 1565–1572 under the reign of Ivan IV. However, tonsure was more effective for preserving one's life than one's patrimony since the lands ultimately went to the monastery.¹⁹

Monks were not the only inhabitants of a cloister. Large communities had servants' quarters and many of those servants were fulfilling specific terms of service.²⁰ Cloisters contained workshops employing not only servants, but free artisans who worked for payment. Workers and servants participated in the life of the monastery, eating in the refectory and observing customary prayers. *Strel'sy* (musketeers) were garrisoned outside some cloisters, living beyond the walls but involved in their defense.

In Orthodoxy, monastic leaders such as fathers superior or abbots (*hegumens*) and archimandrites were expected to ensure that their communities followed accepted tradition. Correct practice could be determined from a variety of sources, and some monastic leaders wrote new guidelines for their flocks incorporating

¹⁸ A swift path to the monastic rank occurred most often in the case of old age, illness, or enforced tonsure. Donations for tonsure could range from two rubles to two hundred. A cell space might cost three rubles for one quarter of a small room which was shared with others. Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 192–195.

¹⁹ Emchenko, *Stoglav*, 377. Land once given to a monastery was not returned to the former owners. Although property might later be confiscated by the tsars as they secularized certain lands, the *Stoglav* dictated that monasteries were to take particular care of lands donated for commemoration.

²⁰ Miracle stories of saints tell of both reverent and wayward servants. One of the best miracle cycles for the life and concerns of a cloister is the cycle of Saints Zosima (d. 1478) and Savatii (d. 1435), founders of Solovki (a miracle cycle for the saints that extends beyond 1645 can be found in RNB, OR Fond 717, No. 955/1065). Many of their miracles deal with the concerns and/or misbehavior of monks and servants. In the miracle cycle of St. Irinarkh (d. 1628), six out of twelve tales deal with the failings and faith of one of the monastery's blacksmiths (see for example RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 238/238).

customs, rules, and precepts from a broad base of Orthodox texts and practices. The term *ustav* (rule) could mean any prescriptive text for a cloister, but was usually used in one of two ways: as a liturgical rule, for which the Greek term *typikon* (Russian—*tipik*) was often substituted, or as a daily rule for the routines and expected behavior of the monks.²¹ The word “rule” can be misleading. It has been the translation of choice for terms such as *ustav* (rule), *pravila* (regulations), and even *obikhod* (book of habits), all of which may have varying purposes. “Rule” has been used interpretively to describe “testament” in the case of Theodore of Studios (d. 826) and Iosif Volotskii. In fact, far more than a single rule was needed for the proper administration of an Orthodox monastery and the spiritual growth of its inhabitants.

In the late 14th century there were three well-known “rules” in the libraries of northern Russia to which abbots could refer for guidance: the rules of St. Sabas of Jerusalem (d. 532), St. Basil the Great (ca. 330–379), and St. Theodore of Studios.²² By the middle of the 16th century, the rules of Kirill Belozerskii (d. 1427), Iosif Volotskii, and Kornilii Komel’skii (d. 1537/1538) were influencing cloisters throughout the realm.²³ Solovki also had a new rule

²¹ A brief overview of terminology and the purpose of such texts can be found in Spock, “Administering a Right Life,” 254–259. For a discussion of the historical development of Russian Orthodox liturgical rules see Skabalanovich, *Tolkovyj tipikon*. The instructions and testaments of Byzantine monastic founders are translated in Thomas and Hero, *Foundation Documents*. For an English discussion of the creation of an *ustav* (in this case a testament and a discourse) and of the traditions of Russian monasticism in general, see Goldfrank, *Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotsky*. A number of Russian *ustavy* or their descriptions were published in the 19th century. See, for example, a recent reprint: Amvrosii, *Drevnerusskie inocheskie ustavy*; and Romanenko has a general chapter on liturgical experience in large Russian cloisters, *Povsednevnaia zhizn’*, 147–226.

²² The rule of St. Sabas has 64 chapters detailing the daily routine and daily liturgical functions of the cloister followed by a full *typikon* for the liturgical year. It did not include the explanations for its daily codes, and in this it is quite different from the short and long rules of St. Basil, which explain the purpose of each regulation. The revised rule of Theodore of Studios went into detail regarding the daily functions of a very large urban cloister. For the original testament of Theodore and the revised rule of Studios, see Thomas and Hero, *Foundation Documents*, 67–119.

²³ These lists contain only the most well-known of the pre-Petrine Orthodox monastic rules. Other writings that could be called rules were known to pre-Petrine monks, and some of these may be found in Amvrosii, *Drevnerusskie inocheskie ustavy*. Kirill’s and Kornilii’s rules have no known ex-

in place by the early 17th century, portions of which became templates for larger monastic houses.²⁴

Based upon the holdings of the monastic libraries, it is impossible to tell if an abbot followed a specific rule or if he adopted a mixture. From the evidence provided by the “Testament” of Iosif Volotskii, it appears that Russian abbots drew on a wide variety of Orthodox religious and pious texts including hagiography to regulate their communities. While they probably tried to adhere to custom, they freely changed it when it did not accord with their visions of pious behavior. Iosif defended the creation of new instructions using the models of Russia’s great saints.²⁵ The Orthodox concept of *oikonomia* (economy) demands adherence to the spirit of Orthodoxy, not just to its traditions, and thus allows the interpretation of texts.²⁶ In Orthodoxy, therefore, a monk referred issues and questions to knowledgeable elders that were conversant with all forms of Orthodox authority. The role of elders was essential to Russian cenobitic monasticism, which had potential for ongoing reform under charismatic leaders and teachers.

The life of the cell was one of contemplation, prayer, instruction, and learning. Most monasteries had set times when the brothers repaired to their cells and attended to prayers. A monk needed several guides to the spiritual life of the cell. The “rule” of a monastery was different from texts which outlined cell activity: *inocheskii ustav* (monastic rule), *keleinyi ustav* (cell rule) and *keleinoe pravilo* (cell law) could be different texts or merely inter-

tant manuscript copies, although Kornilii’s rule was published by Bishop Amvrosii and is discussed in Lur’e, “Ustav Korniliiia Komel’skogo.” There is no evidence that Kirill’s “rule” was ever set in writing. Iosif Volotskii’s writings on the monastic life contain references to the manner of life adopted at Kirillov using language that implies Kirill created a conscious structure that may have been based on a written rule. Later 19th-century rules refer to the Kirillov *ustav* but it is not stated that the intended text emanated from Kirill himself.

²⁴ The *Tipik Solovetskago* is housed in RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 1059/1168. One example of its influence on later observances is the *panagiia* ritual, which in the 19th century was primarily based on the elaborate Solovki version of this ceremony (ff. 42v–48). One can compare the Solovki *tipikon* with the *panagiia* ritual as it is described in Skaballanovich, *Tolkovyi tipikon*, 51–56; Spock “Administering a Right Life.” 259–263.

²⁵ Goldfrank, *Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotsky*, 227, 229, 238–239.

²⁶ *Oikonomia* (economy) is the concept that the spirit of Orthodoxy may take precedence over the written law of Orthodoxy.

changeable titles. Customary cell prayers were laid out in one text, perhaps entitled *keleinyi ustav*, while prayers of penance or prayers to ward off demons were in another text, possibly using the same title, or perhaps called the *keleinoe pravilo*. These guides could be found in miscellanies such as psalters, menologies or books of Hours, any of which might contain a mixture of texts for individual pious instruction, the administration of the monastery, the directions for church services, and sermons.²⁷ These instructions for proper behavior and activities were either read by literate monks, or memorized by rote under the guidance of spiritual fathers.

Often, although not always, a spiritual father resided with a few pupils in a cell within or near the monastery compound. Occasionally, three or four elders shared a cell together. Monks could retain personal texts or borrow them from the library. It is clear from the construction of many miscellanies that monks were expected to read or listen to the texts and to understand them. Often, psalters began with a prayer that asked for help in understanding and concentration or with instructions for how best to prepare for the reading of Psalms. Texts could not be understood without faith, and faith could not be deepened without an understanding of texts.²⁸

All monks labored. Prayer and the observance of church services were considered labor for God. Monks and clergy celebrated the daily hours, served the liturgy, and observed more elaborate rites on high holidays or major feasts. They cared for the dead with daily services and yearly commemorations in addition to occasional expensive memorial feasts.²⁹ Manual labor such as work

²⁷ For discussions of the monastic use and construction of miscellany see: Veder, "Literature as Kaleidoscope"; and Romanchuk, *Hermeneutics and Pedagogy*.

²⁸ Monks developed different interpretive skills from reading alone in cells than they did from listening to a text read aloud, for example, in the refectory during meals, or during the liturgy. Romanchuk, "Textual Community," ix–x, 24–25, 35–36; see also Romanchuk, *Hermeneutics and Pedagogy*.

²⁹ For a discussion of commemoration gifts in Russian monasticism and northern society see Spock, "Solovki Monastery," especially chapters one to four; and Spock, "Community Building." There are many good works that investigate the meaning of commemoration in the history of Christianity and in Russia in particular. See McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, for the rise of commemoration and its meaning in the west. For Orthodox

in the fields or fishing was also an important part of life. Labor might entail the production of necessities such as shoes or salt-boiling kettles, or the supervision of skilled labor. Monks also fulfilled administrative positions such as the “waker” (*budil’nik*) or the cellarer, or they worked outside the monastery collecting rents, carrying messages, and running errands that occasionally included delivering donations from other individuals. In the North, tasks often carried monks far beyond the cloister’s walls for extended periods as they engaged in fishing or trade, maintained warehouses in major cities, and supervised monastery production sites. Even on production sites, monastic discipline was observed, yet it is indisputable that these cloistered men were, by the very nature of their daily labors, often far afield and in contact with the secular world.³⁰

The temptation to over-compartmentalize monastic life into liturgical, cell, and work life in order to make sense of it must be avoided, for in doing so we separate text, individual spiritual experience, and community interactions—something no spiritually inclined monk could do. Each portion of the monastic life was integral to the whole. Each individual provided an important element of the monastic calling, but they worked together to build a comprehensive integrated life of worship, contemplation, and physical, charitable, and prayerful work. There were no set forms for how a cloister was to interact with the surrounding community. Russia’s northern houses developed a dance that was not always choreographed in which sometimes the monks, sometimes the church, and sometimes the surrounding peasantry took the lead regarding the popularity of cults, the social make-up of the monastery, and the extent to which a cloister became involved with lay society.³¹

Russia see Steindorff, *Memoria*, and his “Commemoration.” For the social meaning of commemoration see Steindorff, *Memoria*, Martin, “Gifts,” and Miller, “Motives.” A good discussion of the care of the dead in pre-Petrine Russia can be found in Kaiser, “Death and Dying.”

³⁰ For additional examples and commentary on monastic business relations with the outside world see Dykstra, *Russian Monastic Culture*, 181–185, and Spock “Giving Voice,” 29–41.

³¹ Much of the information for Part III and Part IV is culled from this author’s previous works which are cited in the footnotes. These works are founded on a broad variety of sources from Solovki Monastery and other cloisters housed in archives or special collections mentioned in note 1. The sources from the 15th century through the mid-17th include, but are not limited to, land deeds, wills and testaments, deeded gifts, petitions granted by or

Part III: Northern Society

The indigenous population of the White Sea region was made up of Finno-Ugric tribes. Few of the inhabitants were Slavic in the early 15th century, so the region did not have strong cultural or political ties to Novgorod or Moscow. The secular community was composed of fishermen, trappers, traders, and producers such as artisans and salt-works owners. Before 1478 some of the northern peasants acknowledged the overlordship of the Novgorod elite who controlled much of the northern territory. However, elite control was lax since landowners lived far from their outlying possessions.

Beyond the lands of the Obonezh Fifth, there had been little centralized control before 1478 and after 1478 there was no local aristocracy to create a rigid social hierarchy. Ivan III turned much of the former Novgorod territory into “black lands” where there were few *pomest’e* (service tenure holdings), but instead, holdings of free peasants who paid taxes to Moscow’s rulers for their land or water usage rights.³² Kargopol’ was the only large city north of Novgorod until Archangel was founded in 1584. Therefore, the North did not revolve around politically important urban centers so much as it relied on a network of routes between market-center towns. Since the future cloisters were founded in areas without a local landowning elite and far from urban centers, and since most of the monks came from among the local inhabitants, the monasteries replaced secular landlords and became centers of political, social, and economic power. They provided the defensive bastions and the judicial authorities of the region in contrast to the center around Moscow, where cities and princes (or tsars) held regional sway.

The northern inhabitants were accustomed to a harsh life in the elements, long journeys, little restriction of their movements,

decrees of the crown, commemorative donation books, income and disbursement books of the monastery treasury, inventory books, liturgical texts, psalters and other pious literature such as hagiography and miracle tales, homiletic works, and prayers.

³² On the northwestern territories from the 14th to the 17th centuries, see the volumes edited by A. L. Shapiro: *Agramnaia istoriia...vtoraia polovina XV–nachalo XVI*; *Agramnaia istoriia...XVI veka (Naselenie, zemlevladenie, zemlepol’zovanie)*; *Agramnaia istoriia...XVI veka: Novgorodskie piatiny*; and *Agramnaia istoriia...XVI veka. Sever. Pskov; Agramnaia istoriia... XVII veka*. See also Kopanev, *Krest’ianstvo ...v XVI v.* and *Krest’ianstvo... XVII v.*

and infrequent tax collection. “Peasant”³³ income in the North was surprisingly high.³⁴ Most families engaged in some farming and almost all engaged in fishing and trapping, salt-production, and trade in forest products or other goods. Fishing and salt-making could be lucrative so that coins as well as furs, horses, boats, boat tackle, and bolts of cloth show up frequently on lists of donations to monasteries.

One Novgorod ruble was comparable to the cost of keeping a family of five fed for a year (117–156 *den’gi*), according to Shapiro. It was worth 198 *den’gi*, almost twice the value of a Moscow ruble (100 *den’gi*).³⁵ Ultimately, after the acceptance of Orthodoxy and monasticism in the North, many peasants donated large sums to monasteries in this doubly valuable Novgorod measure and the resulting figures do not take into account the large number of gifts of land or land and water rights that were also donated to northern monasteries.³⁶ The northern population was by no means

³³ It is difficult to find an appropriate word to describe the northern inhabitants. Agriculture and taxes played a role in their lives, but the economy of the north was focused on trapping and trading and was generally free of restraint. “Forest people” might be appropriate but even that terminology poses problems considering the extensive trade networks developed by the population including interaction with Novgorod, Moscow and foreign merchants. Russian and Soviet historians refer to the population in general as peasants, and so this author has chosen to do the same until a more appropriate term is found.

³⁴ Shapiro, *Agramaia istoriia...vtoraia polovina XV–nachalo XVI*, 181. Shapiro estimated that two thirds of northern peasants had 100 to 200 Novgorod *den’gi* in reserve and were therefore well off. However, in other places Shapiro’s estimates of peasant income do not include fishing or forest income, which can only be surmised at best. *Agramaia istoriia...vtoraia polovina XV–nachalo XVI*, 367. For a discussion of the range of items donated to Solovki, see Spock, “Community Building,” esp. 541–545, 552, 554, 555, 563–565.

³⁵ Shapiro, *Agramaia istoriia...vtoraia polovina XV–nachalo XVI*, 50–51, 335. Shapiro estimated that additional income might boost a family’s consumption to 165–200 *den’gi* per year. At the end of the 15th century, a war horse cost two to four Moscow rubles, or 200–400 *den’gi* in Novgorod. Even into the 17th century, the value of these recorded rubles as they were calculated in the treasury and donation books of Solovki monastery was the value of a Novgorod ruble: 198 *den’gi* (6 *den’gi* per *altyn* and 33 *altyn* in a ruble). See Spock, “Solovki Monastery,” chs. 1–4 regarding donations and Spock, “Community Building.” Solovki donation books (*vkładnye knigi*) are in IRI, Coll. 2, Nos. 125 and 152.

³⁶ Spock, “Solovki Monastery,” 131. The income books and donation books of Solovki Monastery show that the average gift from a peasant of the

destitute or downtrodden. Moreover, since serfdom did not take hold in the North to the extent that it did in the central and agricultural regions, many northern peasants remained free, working for monasteries as paid laborers or renting land from them.

The local population was also literate to some extent. In the 16th century, peasants in outlying areas of the White Sea region were able to sign their names to contracts. In Solovki's record books and archives, virtually every land deed from the period has three to six signatures of local witnesses on the reverse. The level of literacy is not surprising when one considers the importance of trade in the regional economy.

Part IV: Northern Russian Monastic Culture

The massive white walls of Kirillov soar above the shore of the White Lake. The thick granite and brick walls of Solovki appear to rise from the middle of the White Sea as boats approach from the west. Ferapontov sits high on a hill commanding a view of the lakes below. These are only three of the many influential cenobitic-communal monasteries founded in the pre-Petrine period by men who, seeking quietude or stillness (*hesychia*) and an ascetic life devoted to God and Christ, entered the forests and became spiritual beacons.³⁷ They brought with them the learning and culture of the Russian Orthodox Church and in some cases, such as with Kirill, Russia's secular knowledge as well.³⁸

These athletes attracted followers, formed small communities of worship and labor, and received land grants from their bishops. Most grew in size, in wealth, and in influence as a result of both royal and elite patronage, and local reverence. At first they built churches and cells of wood and then rebuilt them in stone, adding walls either to remain detached from the world beyond or, as in the case of Solovki and Kirillov, to help the tsars to defend the realm and, therefore, Orthodoxy itself. Yet in Russia's north-western territories, distance, local society, the regional economy,

Suma River region was ten to twelve rubles, almost double the norm for the north which was five to seven rubles. Even that lower sum was a substantial amount by Moscow standards.

³⁷ For a concise overview of hesychasm and its translation into pre-Petrine Russian monasticism see Bushkovitch, "Limits of Hesychasm."

³⁸ For the role of secular texts at Kirillov see Romanchuk, *Hermeneutics and Pedagogy*. For a comparison of Solovki and Kirillov communities, see Spock, "Monasticism in Russia's Far North."

and a rugged independence gave spiritual life a slightly different bent after Orthodoxy was firmly rooted in the soil.

The advent of small monastic groups in the North was not viewed with complacency by the northern population. Hagiography indicates that both peasants and elite were hostile in the early stages of the process. If the saints' lives of founders reflect the concerns of the periods in which they were written, antagonism from local inhabitants led to violent and acrimonious conflicts. The life of St. Stephen of Perm' (d. 1396), written long after his death, indicates strong local antagonism, especially from shamans. The life of St. Kirill recounts attacks from a "robber" boyar. The lives of SS Zosima and Savatii of Solovki recount the hostility of both local peasants and their overlord, Marfa Boretskaia of Novgorod fame. The "Karelian"³⁹ peasants around Solovki reportedly bewailed the loss of their patrimony to the monks, indicating some anger over encroachment upon land and fishing rights. Although the hagiography was partly written to win over hardened hearts, that such tales were necessary gives them a ring of truth. These conflicts are portrayed as partly economic—disputes over land rights—and partly spiritual—disbelief in the faith of the monks.

Before the 15th century, most of the population continued to worship powers of nature as they slowly turned toward Orthodoxy. For some time, *dvoeverie* (dual belief) caused the church hierarchy increasing concern. Although the inhabitants had long been exposed to Orthodoxy, they were not necessarily attracted to it at first.⁴⁰ As noted above, monastic communities infringed on old fishing and land usage rights, and instruction in Orthodox faith and practice helped eliminate antagonisms over time.

³⁹ For disputes and compromises between the northern population and cloisters, see Spock "Giving Voice" 32–35 and Spock, "Monasticism in Russia's Far North," 293–294. "Karelian" was used by Russian colonizers to describe the local indigenous population. It did not refer to any specific tribe, nor did it accurately reflect a geographical region.

⁴⁰ Gadziatskii, *Karely i Kareliia*, 16, 42–44, 160. The north has received some attention from ethnographers. Gadziatskii strove to prove that the culture of the northern Finno-Ugric peoples had a strong relationship to that of the Slavic Russians. Among other examples, the monastery of Valaam was founded in present-day Finland well before the 14th century, by which time it had become a major spiritual center. However, as late as the 16th century, conversion miracles continued to be written into the miracle cycles of northern hagiographic lives, and documents occasionally referred to the "unbaptized" inhabitants of the region. On *dvoeverie* see for example Rock, *Popular Religion in Russia*.

Thus, the monks who intended to retire from the world and seek solitude often ended up working as missionaries and spending much of their time teaching others. These hermits were unlike the desert fathers of early Christianity for they brought a complex liturgical tradition, which could not be learned quickly. Miracle tales from northern cycles tell of Orthodox believers who were only partially cognizant of correct practice. One representative miracle from the life of St. Zosima tells of a group of traders who had taken part in the liturgy but treated the *prosfora* incorrectly by placing it in their pockets.⁴¹ There were other tales of traders or peasants needing instruction in the proper reverence for icons. The issue of a population constantly consulting “magicians” to cure their ills speaks of a common problem in missionary work. In the Russian North, however, some of the competition was with other Orthodox saints.

Monasteries championed local saints in attempts to nourish their own cults. Life around the White Sea was focused on the waterways as both fishermen and traders relied heavily on sailing and rowboats to survive. Storms and shipwrecks were constant concerns. Many miracle stories for the North relate to incidents in which monks, traders, fishermen, or pilgrims were endangered on the water or stranded by ice. The miracle cycles of Ioann (XVI century d. before 1533/34) and Login (XVI century) of Iarenga, St. Irinarkh of Solovki, and saints Savatii and Zosima, paint incidents of danger and rescue on the water. Zosima and Savatii, local northern saints, became the patrons of sailors, traders, and fishermen of the White Sea region. Their miracle cycle indicates some competition with cults of St. Nicholas, the Byzantine Orthodox patron of fishermen and another popular saint in the North. In the cycle of Zosima and Savatii, there are five tales that tell how someone associated with a church of St. Nicholas, or searching for a cure from St. Nicholas, had to turn to Savatii or Zosima to find

⁴¹ “Zhitie i podvizi,” 528–529. Spock, “Solovki Monastery,” 134. In Russian Orthodoxy the Eucharist (sacrifice) is performed with leavened loaves that have been blessed by the priest and are called *prosfora*. The sacrifice comes from pieces cut from a cross that is formed in the center of the loaves and is called the Lamb (*agnits*). The entire loaf is blessed before the liturgy, and that part not used for the sacrifice (also called *prosfora*) is distributed to the congregation after the service.

relief. As recorders of these tales, the monks cultivated competition and regionalism.⁴²

One might attempt to understand events such as competition with St. Nicholas or the creation of new Russian saints in terms of national cults, as Fedotov argues throughout his work on Russia's saints. However, other evidence shows a sense of regionalism rather than national feeling. Bushkovitch examines the hypothesis that to some extent, the church hierarchy in Moscow supported the rise of local cults in order to placate and strengthen ties with the northern region.⁴³ Zosima and Savatii, who came from northern cities and monasteries, were far more popular within the Solovki Monastery than Solovki's own long-time abbot and the Metropolitan of all Russia, Filipp II. St. Filipp had lived at Solovki for over ten years before becoming abbot in 1546. He led the cloister for 20 years, during which time Solovki expanded and replaced its wooden structures with stone. Filipp became Metropolitan of Russia in 1566 but after a few years he was imprisoned and then executed by order of Ivan IV. His body was first interred in Tver' and then transferred to Solovki in the late 17th century by which time the monastery had developed a new custom of collecting cash offerings at saints' shrines.

Beginning in 1579, coin offerings for prayer could be deposited in vessels atop the tombs of Zosima and Savatii. A similar pitcher was placed upon Filipp's tomb after his relics were translated to Solovki, but despite his great service and leadership at Solovki, he was not a popular figure in that region. Fifty years after the transfer of his relics to Solovki and almost 80 years after his death, in a treasury income book that contained two annual entries from November 1644 to November 1645, only 22 rubles total were left as gifts at Filipp's tomb over two full pilgrimage seasons, while 1,558 rubles were deposited at the tombs of Zosima and

⁴² Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 400–402. For the specific tales, see "Zhitie i podvizi," 579–581, and RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 955/1065, ff. 281–286, 289–294, 295–299, 299–302v.

⁴³ Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*, 81, 88–89; Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 71–72. Bushkovitch noted the preponderance of northern saints who were recognized by the church council of 1547. There are other factors that might affect the decision to honor northern saints, notably Metropolitan Makarii's former position as Archbishop of Novgorod, and the political events of the mid-16th and early 17th centuries.

Savatii in the same period.⁴⁴ Filipp, a major figure of Russian Orthodoxy who had attempted to oppose the power of the center (according to the hagiography of the time), could not compete in his own monastery with its local saintly founders, who were perceived as the protectors of the local population. The North maintained strong regional ties in many of its manifestations of Orthodox practice.

The majority of monks in the northern monasteries were non-elite northern inhabitants.⁴⁵ Child oblates were not allowed in Russian Orthodoxy, and so it was unusual for a young person to be tonsured.⁴⁶ Most monks had reached maturity when they donned a frock so they brought a trade or skill to the community as well as the bad habits of a lifetime. Certainly most individuals who accepted tonsure understood its pious and spiritual value and probably tried very hard to live a correct life. However, there were enough older men who entered the brotherhood after the death of a spouse or after an illness to make up a sizeable number and the change in behavioral expectations would have been considerable. A large group of mature pre-Petrine trappers and traders from the rough northern towns and villages could hardly have been demure, retiring, sophisticated men who could resolve all their issues and disputes through discourse without physical or verbal confrontations, whatever their acquired ideals might be. The habits of a lifetime must have been hard to break. Nevertheless, these men benefitted the cloisters because their skills and experience fit the needs of Solovki, Kirillov, or other monasteries as they strove to grow and prosper.

⁴⁴ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 174–175, 344, and Appendix B, which shows the figures for multiple years of donations at the tombs of the saints (pp. 448–450). See pages 344–357 for Filipp's relationship with Solovki and attempts to found a cult for him there. The figures for donations at the tombs can be found in the monastery's income books located in RGADA, Fond 1201, opis' 1, starting in 1579. For the years 1644–1645 specifically the entries are in No. 242: see for example ff. 2v–3.

⁴⁵ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 181–182.

⁴⁶ One little-known saint's life from Solovki reads as a report on the death of a hermit, Nikifor (d. 1615). Nikifor had been a servant at the cloister in his youth but was refused tonsure on account of his young age. He ran away from the cloister to live alone in the woods on the island. Despite many hardships, he eventually made the transition to a proper hermit. He was tonsured by the monastery a few years before his death. Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 357–365.

Because agriculture was less productive in the White Sea region, northern Russian monasteries also became centers of trade. This does not merely mean that the local population came to the monastery to sell its grain and goods. Solovki, Kirillov, Alexandro-Svirsk, and other monasteries maintained warehouses in major cities such as Moscow, Archangel, and Kargopol'. Here they sold the fish and salt that had been produced at monastery production sites (*sluzhby*). They then bought and sold other goods for the purpose not only of maintaining their communities, but also of profit, which would benefit both the treasury and charitable activities.

The monasteries provided prominent and permanent structures for the exchange of goods and they were desirable trading partners. A cloister fed many mouths and so needed to buy agricultural products that they could not necessarily produce in adequate quantities in the far north.⁴⁷ Moreover, large, established monasteries did not die out. They did not move or go bankrupt. Although they occasionally were at the mercy of the Swedish armies that swept through the region, in general their storehouses were safe and their businesses protected by powerful patron saints. The trading and production economy of the northern cloisters provided dependable centers for exchange and lending within northern socio-economic conditions. Many monks and servants who directed these trade and production centers were themselves accomplished fishermen, salt-boilers and traders who had long maintained their families at these occupations before receiving tonsure. This probably accounts for the unusual custom at Solovki that allowed monks to keep some of their personal cash and other belongings in their cells.⁴⁸ The monasteries gained their economic and spiritual strength directly from the local peasantry.

The economic patterns of the North were altered by the growth of large monastic production, trapping, and trading entities. Cloisters and peasants (often relatives or personal acquaintances of the monks) frequently resolved land or tax disputes through

⁴⁷ One exception to this northern problem of poor agricultural return for labor was along the lower reaches of the Northern Dvina River where a milder climate and good soil provided relatively rich harvests.

⁴⁸ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 187–188, 198–199. The monastery's prescriptive arrangements for the disbursement of cash and other personal property of a deceased monk for the purpose of commemorative prayers are in RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 1059/1168 (*Tipik Solovetskago*), ff. 94–95.

compromises that split responsibility. It was not unusual for monasteries to pay obligations to local communities or to the tsar. One way of resolving land disputes was for the cloisters to pay part of the tax on the portions where they received their catch and thus avoid conflicts over remote fishing areas.⁴⁹ Disputes with monasteries often involved their peasants over land or water usage rights.

Generally speaking, in the North, at the time of tonsure a monk donated cash rather than land. Thus, the concept of receiving an income from landholdings gifted to the cloister does not appear to have been a common practice in the far North (although Kirillov, which had a larger proportion of elite tonsured, may have been an exception). The peasantry held much of its wealth in production and trapping rights and some in acreage. Land rights conferred permission to fish in certain waters or to produce (trap or make salt) on specific portions of land. Such donations were a show of faith for while few donors requested tonsure in return for land, about half the non-elite land donations contained requests for prayers.⁵⁰ Local inhabitants did embrace the practice of commemorative prayer and made substantial cash donations to northern cloisters for memorials. Five rubles from a peasant family was not unusual, and often much larger sums were disbursed.

Thanks to an increase in gifts and purchases of land which began in the 1570s and to the energetic efforts of northern monks, by the early 17th century Solovki, Kirillov, and other northern monasteries owned the majority of the salt-production sites in the North. They also owned extensive fishing rights, and even much arable land. This renders ludicrous a frequent assertion that the two cloisters belonged to a so-called non-possessor "camp" within the Russian Church (if such a camp existed). However, there is some validity in the argument that, despite their size, the two communities remained dedicated to the ascetic ideal. Many proponents of the eremitic discipline, most notably Nil Sorskii, came from large northern cloisters. In fact, the evidence would indicate

⁴⁹ Liberzon, *Akty...1479–1571*, 183–184. Liberzon, *Akty...1572–1584*, 139. For a discussion of such compromises see Spock, "Giving Voice," 32–35.

⁵⁰ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 113, 155, 233–236. Many gifts were for tonsure, the majority of which were cash. See also Spock, "Community Building," 549–553.

that rather than having an official stance on the subject of the proper structure of a monastic community, the great northern cloisters were split in their thinking on the issue.⁵¹

Obedience may have been a monastic virtue, but indications are that it often went by the wayside.⁵² It was not an easy task to control hundreds of monks and servants, some of whom were prisoners, some of whom had accepted tonsure in times of crisis, and most of whom had grown up in the forest culture. Abbot Irinarkh of Solovki despaired of bringing harmony to his flock and resigned, thus initiating a period of turmoil and a lengthy lacuna in the leadership of the cloister. The problem appears to have been a dispute over whether the leader of the community should be an ascetic or an administrator. The two candidates were Eleazar Anzerskii (d. 1656), an ascetic, and Makarii, an administrator. Practicality and administration won as Makarii was finally installed as hegumen, but the disagreement over the meaning and leadership of the monastic life was a protracted and fierce debate among the monks.⁵³ It is quite possible that such a debate raged over the ownership and administration of property, as those who were inclined to the eremitic life took issue with others who perceived their role as one of responsibility to the community to perform prayer, to administer properties given into their care, to provide charity, to provide a place for novitiates, and to maintain trade relations.⁵⁴

Internal disputes could explode in violence which was patently antithetical to the monastic calling.⁵⁵ And yet, if one considers the population that inhabited the cloisters, this is less shocking than at first glance. The northern trading and trapping society did not breed cultured individuals with highly ritualized manner-

⁵¹ See the discussion of Irinarkh's successor below. There is much more work to be done on the problem of leadership within the large Orthodox cloisters.

⁵² Michels, "Solovki Uprising," 7–9; Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 391–393.

⁵³ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 343, 367–373. See RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 238/238, *Zhitie...Irinarkha*; and Spock, "Administering a Right Life," 158–159.

⁵⁴ In addition to evidence from Solovki outlined above, Dykstra has found tensions between the spiritual and administrative life in the Joseph-Volokolamsk Monastery and disagreement on the level of charity owed to the surrounding community; *Russian Monastic Culture*, 220–227.

⁵⁵ Michels, "Solovki Uprising," 7–9.

isms. In a woodsman's world, the one who can carry the greatest weight is an important person. In the forest, a struggle against the elements, bandits, and wolves breeds a tough and rugged individual. As a contrast, Solovki, Kirillov, Ferapontov, and the other influential cloisters provided learning, liturgy, and role-modeling for the monks and servants in their care. However, many of their flock spent much time outside the cloister walls interacting with the roughened northern society. A belief in God and Christ remained paramount, but quick physical solutions to immediate problems must have been tempting in the life of a fisherman-trader-monk. The monastic life of contemplation was intertwined with a rugged individualism that aided survival in the elements. The ethereal beauty of the liturgy was a contrast to the stark wilderness, the dangerous labor, and the tough population. In such conditions, *oikonomia* was important for adapting Orthodox precepts to a broad range of temporal and spiritual problems.

Charity was an important role for all Christian monasteries. In the Russian North, charity for all—men or women, rich or poor—linked the needs of the secular community with its support of the cloister. As part of their charitable role, Russia's monasteries allowed women to enter for specific purposes. Miracle tales of Solovki's founders show that women were allowed into the monastic compound to visit the shrines, although all of the instances are specifically for healing.⁵⁶ Solovki had the wealth to offer more charity for commemorative prayer than many other cloisters. In addition to giving three free years of commemoration to all monks, it also granted the same gift to any lay person (*mirianin*)—servant, visitor, or pilgrim—who died while on the monastery's premises or landholdings ("where there is monastery service"). Thus monks who died in the monastery or servants or visitors who died at one of its salt production sites were equally eligible for three years of daily commemoration.⁵⁷ This provision of the *ustav* that was appended to the *Tipik Solovetskago* is perhaps one of the best

⁵⁶ Spock, "Solovki Monastery," 394–395, 401. This is true of other cloisters as well. The "Testament" of Iosif Volotskii revises the hegumen's earlier prescription against women in the monastery in favor of allowing them entry under special circumstances. Goldfrank, *Monastic Rule of Iosif Volotskii*, 160–161, 220–221, 292.

⁵⁷ RNB, OR, Fond 717, No. 1059/1168 *Tipik Solovetskago*, f. 94v. On the same folio is the instruction that if the deceased had given a gift, its value went toward additional prayers beyond the 3-year minimum.

examples of the confluence of the North's riches, its dangers, its relative social egalitarianism and its spirituality. It gave a person a place to die in peace with the knowledge that commemoration would be covered. The outlay of money for so many people was extraordinary, but it was supportable, and evidently desirable that servants and visitors be granted the same consideration in commemoration as the monks.

The northern cloisters were indeed wealthy landowners, traders, and producers, and occasionally hotbeds of controversy, but they were also repositories of spirituality and northern culture. Prayerful, practical, and pugnacious, many northern monks in the late 17th century were just as willing to oppose the lay and church elite of Moscow as they were to oppose one another. Their origins made them tough and adventurous; their faith made them zealous. The hardships of the monastic life were no more daunting than the rigors of survival in the northern wilderness. The cloisters tapped the wealth of the region's natural resources with the help of the population. Endangered by the complacency of wealth and success, Russia's northern monasteries nonetheless retained a commitment to the ascetic life and to the care of the community as individuals and as a group. For these reasons they remained lodestones for the Orthodox faithful, drawing pilgrims from all over the Orthodox world, despite their modest beginnings and humble occupants.

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