

## HOW THE RUSSIAN CHURCH BECAME PATRIARCHAL

“After the horrors of the reign of Ivan IV,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “a complete contrast is represented by the soft, kind rule of his son, Theodore Ivanovich. In Russia there suddenly came as it were complete silence... However, the silence of the reign of Theodore Ivanovich was external and deceptive; it could more accurately be called merely a lull before a new storm. For that which had taken place during the oprichnina could not simply disappear: it was bound to have the most terrible consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

But this lull contained some very important events. One was the crowning of Theodore according to the full Byzantine rite, followed by his communion in both kinds in the altar. This further enhanced the status of the Russian State, which now, as in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, was closely linked to the status of the Church of Moscow...

As A.P. Dobroklonsky writes, “the Moscow metropolitan see stood very tall. Its riches and the riches of the Moscow State stimulated the Eastern Patriarchs – not excluding the Patriarch of Constantinople himself – to appeal to it for alms. The boundaries of the Moscow metropolitanate were broader than the restricted boundaries of any of the Eastern Patriarchates (if we exclude from the Constantinopolitan the Russian metropolitan see, which was part of it); the court of the Moscow metropolitan was just as great as that of the sovereign. The Moscow metropolitan was freer in the manifestation of his ecclesiastical rights than the Patriarchs of the East, who were restricted at every step. Under the protection of the Orthodox sovereigns the metropolitan see in Moscow stood more firmly and securely than the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, which had become a plaything in the hands of the sultan or vizier. The power of the Moscow metropolitan was in reality not a whit less than that of the patriarchate: he ruled the bishops, called himself their ‘father, pastor, comforter and head, under the power and in the will of whom they are the Vladykas of the whole Russian land’. Already in the 15th century, with the agreement of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, he had been elected in Rus’ without the knowledge or blessing of the Patriarch; the Russian metropolia had already ceased hierarchical relations with the patriarchal see. If there remained any dependence of the Moscow metropolitan on the patriarch, it was only nominal, since the Russian metropolia was still counted as belonging to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate...”<sup>2</sup>

Not only was the Moscow metropolia a de facto patriarchate already: its exaltation would simultaneously raise the status of the Russian Autocracy, whose prosperity was vital for the survival, not only of Russian Orthodoxy, but of Greek, Balkan, Middle Eastern and Georgian Orthodoxy, too.

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<sup>1</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, pp. 280-281.

In 1586 talks began with Patriarch Joachim of Antioch, who had arrived in Moscow. He promised to discuss the question of the status of the Russian Church with his fellow patriarchs. In 1588, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II (Trallas) came to Moscow on an alms-raising trip.<sup>3</sup> Then he went on an important tour of the beleaguered Orthodox in the Western Russian lands, ordaining bishops and blessing the lay brotherhoods.

It was the desperate situation of the Orthodox in Western Russia (see chapter 30) that made the exaltation of the Muscovite see particularly timely. In 1582 the Pope had introduced the Gregorian calendar, whose aim was to divide the Orthodox liturgically; and in 1596 the Orthodox hierarchs in the region signed the unia of Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholics. It was now obvious that Divine Providence had singled out the Church and State in Muscovy, which remained faithful to Orthodoxy, rather than the Church and State in Poland-Lithuania, which had apostasized to Catholicism, as the centre and stronghold of Russian Orthodoxy as a whole, and this needed to be emphasized in the eyes of all the Orthodox.

Patriarch Jeremiah understood this. So first, in 1583, he convened a Pan-Orthodox Council of the Eastern Patriarchs that anathematized the Gregorian calendar. The seventh point of the Council declared: "That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow, but in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion and Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by the Fathers, let him be anathema and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful..."

Then, in January, 1589 Patriarch Jeremiah and Tsar Theodore Ivanovich presided over a "Holy Synod of the Great Russian Empire and of the Greek Empire" which sanctioned the creation of an autocephalous Russian patriarchate, a decision published in a *gramota* by the tsar in May of the same year. The act was confirmed in a highly unusual and even, strictly speaking, uncanonical manner: the new Russian patriarch, Job, was given a second (or even a third) consecration by Patriarch Jeremiah.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See A.V. Kartashev, *Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi* (Sketches in the History of the Russian Church), Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, pp. 10-46, Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), 1988, pp. 152-156, Dobroklonsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-285; and the life of St. Job, first patriarch of Moscow, in *Moskovskij Paterik* (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: Stolitsa, 1991, pp. 110-113.

<sup>4</sup> Mureşan, "Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593", [file:///localhost/Users/anthonymoss/Documents/Rome%20he%CC%81re%CC%81tique%20%20%20Sur%20les%20de%CC%81cisions%20des%20conciles%20de%20Moscou%20et%20de%20Constantinople%20\(1589,%201590%20et%201593\).html](file:///localhost/Users/anthonymoss/Documents/Rome%20he%CC%81re%CC%81tique%20%20%20Sur%20les%20de%CC%81cisions%20des%20conciles%20de%20Moscou%20et%20de%20Constantinople%20(1589,%201590%20et%201593).html).

V.M. Lourié writes: "The case of the raising to the patriarchy of Job, who was already Metropolitan of Moscow by that time, was strangely dual. The first Episcopal consecration was carried out on Job already in 1581, when he became Bishop of Kolomna, and the second in 1587, when he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow. Now, with his raising to the rank of Patriarch of Moscow, a third Episcopal ordination was carried out on him

The decision was confirmed by two Pan-Orthodox Councils in Constantinople in 1590 and 1593, which also confirmed the anathema on the Gregorian calendar. In the later Council the Russian Church was assigned the fifth place among the patriarchates, and the Pope's introduction of the Gregorian calendar was anathematized. As Dan Mureşan has argued, these two last acts were closely linked. Up to this period, Rome, though in heresy, was considered still belong to the pentarchy of patriarchs, without whose combined presence no Ecumenical Council could be convened. But the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 had so appalled the Orthodox that the pretense of a pentarchy including Rome was finally abandoned. So the Council of 1590 was called "ecumenical", although it was convened without Rome, and the Russian Church took the place of Rome, thereby recreating the pentarchy to reflect present realities.

In agreeing to the tsar's request for a patriarchate of Moscow, Patriarch Jeremiah showed that he understood that in having a Patriarch at his side, the status of the Tsar, too, would be exalted: "In truth, pious tsar, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and this thought is from God, and will be realized by you. For the Old Rome fell to the Apollinarian heresy, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, is in the possession of the grandsons of the Hagarenes, the godless Turks: but your great Russian kingdom, the Third Rome, has exceeded all in piety. And all the pious kingdoms have been gathered into your kingdom, and you alone under the heavens are named the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians."<sup>5</sup>

The Patriarch's language here (if it is truly his) is very reminiscent of that of the famous prophecy of Elder Philotheus of Pskov in 1511. In particular, the Patriarch follows the elder in ascribing the fall of Old Rome to "the Apollinarian heresy". Now the Apollinarian heresy rarely, if ever, figures in lists of the western heresies. And yet the patriarch here indicates that it is the heresy as a result of which the First Rome fell. Some have understood it to mean the Latin practice of using wafers made from unleavened bread in the Eucharist. For the Orthodox criticised this practice as seeming to imply that Christian had no human soul (symbolized by leaven), as was the teaching of Apollinarius. As Patriarch Peter of Antioch said at the time of the schism between Rome and the East in the eleventh century: "Whoever partakes of unleavened bread unwittingly runs the risk of falling into the heresy of Apollinarius. For the latter dared to say that the Son and Word of God

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(Uspensky, 1998)." This uncanonical custom appears to have originated with Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, when he transferred St. Alexis from Vladimir to Moscow (<http://hgr.livejournal.com/1099886.html>, June 1, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 156. This thought was echoed by the patriarch of Alexandria, who wrote to the "most Orthodox" tsar in 1592: "The four patriarchates of the Orthodox speak of your rule as that of another, new Constantine the Great... and say that if there were no help from your rule, then Orthodoxy would be in extreme danger." (van den Bercken, *op. cit.*, p. 160).

received only a soul-less and mindless Body from the Holy Virgin, saying that the Godhead took the place of the mind and soul.”<sup>6</sup>

Another interpretation suggests another parallel between Papism and Apollinarianism: just as the Divine Logos replaces the human mind in the heretical Apollinarian Christology, so a quasi-Divine, infallible Pope replaces the fully human, and therefore at all times fallible episcopate in the heretical papist ecclesiology. The root heresy of the West therefore consists in the unlawful exaltation of the mind of the Pope over the other minds of the Church, both clerical and lay, and its quasi-deification to a level equal to that of Christ Himself. From this root heresy proceed all the heresies of the West.

Thus the Filioque with its implicit demotion of the Holy Spirit to a level below that of the Father and the Son becomes necessary insofar as the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth Who constantly leads the Church into all truth has now become unnecessary - the Divine Mind of the Pope is quite capable of fulfilling His function. Similarly, the epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts, is also unnecessary - if Christ, the Great High Priest, sanctified the Holy Gifts by His word alone, then His Divine Vicar on earth is surely able to do the same without invoking any other Divinity, especially a merely subordinate one such as the Holy Spirit.

The exaltation of the Russian Church and State to patriarchal and “Third Rome” status respectively shows that, not only in her own eyes, but in the eyes of the whole Orthodox world, Russia was now the chief bastion of the Truth of Christ against the heresies of the West. Russia had been born as a Christian state just as the West was falling away from grace into papism in the eleventh century. Now, in the sixteenth century, as Western papism received a bastard child in the Protestant Reformation, and a second wind in the Counter-Reformation, Russia was ready to take up leadership of the struggle against both heresies as a fully mature Orthodox nation.

However, as we have seen, at the Pan-Orthodox Council convened by Jeremiah on his return to Constantinople, the Eastern Patriarchs, while confirming the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate, made it only the fifth in seniority, after the four Greek patriarchates. This meant that the relationship between Church and State in the Third Rome still did not quite correspond to that between Church and State in the Second Rome. For whereas in the latter the Emperor’s partner was the first see in Orthodoxy (at least after the fall of the papacy), the Emperor’s partner in the Third Rome was only number five in the list of patriarchs. Nevertheless, this was probably in accordance with Divine Providence; for in the decades that immediately followed the prestige of the “Third Rome” was severely dented when the Poles briefly conquered Moscow during the “Time of Troubles”, necessitating the continued supervision of the Western and Southern Russian Orthodox by Constantinople. And by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Russian

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<sup>6</sup> Peter, cited (with some alterations) in Mahlon Smith III, *And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyme Controversy*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, p. 58, note 80.

patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great and replaced - with the blessing of the Eastern Patriarchs - by a "Holy Governing Synod".

On the other hand, the elevation of the head of the Russian Church to the rank of patriarch was to prove beneficial now, in the early seventeenth century, when the Autocracy in Russia had been shaken to its foundations and the patriarchs had taken the place of the tsars as the leaders of the Russian nation. We witness a similar phenomenon in 1917, when the restoration of the Russian patriarchate to some degree compensated for the fall of the tsardom. In both cases, the patriarchate both filled the gap left by the fall of the state (up to a point), and kept alive the ideals of true Orthodox statehood, waiting for the time when it could restore political power into the hands of the anointed tsars.