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## THE MUSCOVITE PRINCE AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE LAW IN HAGIOGRAPHIC AND NARRATIVE SOURCES OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup>–16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES<sup>1</sup>

Medieval Muscovite texts legitimate the wars and conquests of the Moscow grand princes as a fight against sin. Moscow was a realm under the protection of God and, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, its ruler was at last a Christian emperor. Therefore, Russia was not a conqueror but only on a mission to promote the truth of God and defend true Christianity. This kind of wording was used in diplomatic correspondence, administrative letters, chronicles and hagiographies about the wars against Poland, Lithuania, Novgorod, Sweden, the Teutonic Knights, and the Tatar Horde. The enemies were the foreign threat, sinners, pagans, non-Christians, and heretics who were trying to destroy the eternal entity of Rus' and to force Russians to abandon true Christianity. The first task of the Tatars was naturally not to collect wealth but to destroy Christianity in its entirety, and they also had Christian allies who were traitors and incarnations of the New Testament Judas. From this perspective the rhetoric used in the Muscovite texts did not make a big distinction between Moslem Tatars and Roman Catholics. As well as serving the mission of the Devil, the reason for the devastation wrought by the godless enemies was "our abandonment of the law of God", i.e., the sins the Russians had committed themselves and for which God was punishing them. This is, of course, rather typical medieval political rhetoric, but the historical core and point is, however, that this pattern is still typical of the serious, modern Russian war rhetoric of President Putin and Patriarch Kirill of All Russia. This makes a huge difference to how Russians view the rational western explanations for the war and therefore makes it difficult for us to understand the Russian reality. It is still a strong historical social and mental structure in Russian culture.

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## THE SIN

The princes of Moscow allowed their chroniclers to describe them as a new Vladimir (978–1015), the baptizer of Rus' (988) (conceived of therefore as a new Constantine the Great), a new Iaroslav the Wise (1016–1054), and a new Aleksandr Nevskii – epithets that all stressed the sacral position of the ruler. The holy princes Boris and Gleb (d. 1015) protected their war operations as commanders of the heavenly host in icons and hagiographies.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, some opponents of Dmitrii Donskoi, Grand Prince of Moscow (1359–1389), were called a new Sviatopolk *Okaiannyi* (i.e., the Damned) in a reference to the eldest son of St. Vladimir. Sviatopolk had become the arch traitor of Rus' and the representative of the Devil because hagiographers described him as the murderer of his brothers, Boris and Gleb, and a conspirator with the Poles.<sup>3</sup>

The original Prince Vladimir reigned in Kiev from 978 to 1015 and made an alliance with the Byzantine emperor, who allowed the establishment of a metropolitan seat in Kiev, which the chronicle describes as the Baptism of Rus'. After a feud, Iaroslav succeeded his father Vladimir, stabilized the realm of Rus' and connected his family with European princely families. The story about the feud after Vladimir's death, the treason of Sviatopolk and the martyrdom of Boris and Gleb was fabricated under his successors for the legitimation of Iaroslav's usurpation.<sup>4</sup>

Aleksandr Nevskii ruled as grand prince in the city of Vladimir on the Kliazma river in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hagiographies describe him as the protector of Russia against western crusaders and as an opponent

2 JUKKA KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle – Prince Vladimir Svjatoslavič of Kiev, His Posthumous Life, and the Religious Legitimization of the Russian Great Power*. Veröffentlichungen des Osteuropa-Institutes München, Reihe: Geschichte, 67 (Stuttgart: Harrassowitz, 2001), 173–210.

3 E.g., «Летописная повесть о Куликовской битве», в *Библиотека литературы Древней Руси*, Том 6 (Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2005), 124; JUKKA KORPELA, “Svjatopolk Kirottu”, *Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran vuosikirja*, no. 82–83 (1992–1993) (1995): 27–39.

4 Н. Н. Ильин, *Летописная статья 6523 года и ее источник (Опыт анализа)* (Москва: Наука, 1957), 100, 161–169, passim; KORPELA, “Svjatopolk Kirottu”, 31–33. «Новгородская первая летопись. Старшего и младшего изводов», в *Полное собрание русских летописей*, Том 3 (Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2002), (ml.) 6748 (1240), 6750 (1242), (st, ml.) 6765 (1257); «Новгородская четвертая летопись», в *Полное собрание русских летописей*, Том 4 (Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000), 6765 (1257); JUKKA KORPELA, “Święty Aleksander Newski i jego zwycięstwa nad Newą (1240 r.) oraz na jeziorze Pejpus (1242 r.)”, in JAN M. PISKORSKI (ed.), *Wizerunek bohatera widzianego przez pryzmat polityki. Wojna, pamięć, tożsamość. O bitwach i mitach bitewnych*, (Warszawa: Bellona, 2012), 248–271

of pagan Mongols. In fact, the battles against the Swedes and the Teutonic Order were of minor importance, and Aleksandr was a vassal of the khan, who conquered Novgorod and forced the population to pay taxes to the Mongols in 1257.

Because Muscovite princes assumed the role of the protector of true Christianity, their enemies were considered the enemies of Jesus Christ after the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Moscow itself was conceived of in holy texts as a city protected by the Mother of God, which means that Moscow was conceived of as the earthly image of Heavenly Rome. The ruler of Moscow was thus justified in conquering the ancient Kievan lands as the only heir of the Kievan princes.<sup>5</sup> He subsumed the Kievan ruler's position as defender of the faith and guarantor of God's law on earth.

What is the connection between law and sin from the perspective of the formation of the Muscovite ruler's position in the perception of narrative sources? Theologically, sin is something that separates Man from God, but here the issue was nothing like adultery or theft, as the law was not a legal order of the prince. The question is the abandonment of the law of God as the Old Testament describes it. From this perspective, sin is an element in the eternal battle between God and the Devil.

Western rationalism took shape in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as the idea of natural law was introduced into Western legal thinking. Jurists adopted the methods of philosophy, and a genuine legal science based on Roman law was separated from theology.<sup>6</sup> The Muscovite concept of law (*zakon*), which lacked the foundation of rationalism, differed from that in the West, and the law remained as it had been before.<sup>7</sup> *Zakon* was the secret plan of

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5 KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle*, 189–195, 202–203, 207–208.

6 *Divi Thomae Aquinatis, doctoris Angelici, ordinis praedicatorum, Opere juxta editionem Venetam MDCCCLV* - - - Editio I, accedunt FR. JOANNIS FRANCISCI BERNADRI MARIAE DE RUBEIS - - - Tomus tertius, complectens scriptum in Tertium Sententiarum Librum - - - Ex typographia Viduae Elisaei Sanchez: Matriti, MDCCCLXIX, Liber Tertius Sententiarum, Distinctio 23, Questio 2, Solutio 3 (p. 255); ANDREAS SPEER, "Naturgesetz und Dekalog bei Thomas von Aquin", in ANDREAS SPEER, GUY GULDENTOPS (eds.), *Das Gesetz – The Law – La Loi*. *Miscellanea Medievalia* 38 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 350–370; ISABELLA MANDRELLA, "Encountering Others in Medieval Ethics: The Case of Thomas Aquinas", in *Encountering Others, Understanding Ourselves in Medieval and Early Modern Thought*. Helsinki Yearbook of Intellectual History. Volume 3 ed. NICOLAS FAUCHER, VIRPI MÄKINEN (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 231–244; NICOLAS FAUCHER, "Introspection and Other Faiths in the Medieval Latin Tradition", in NICOLAS FAUCHER, VIRPI MÄKINEN, *Encountering Others*, 133–150.

7 The presentations of old Russian laws (like DANIEL KAISER, *The Growth of the Law in Medieval Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)) systematize laws according to the Western legal pattern, which distorts the situation. There exist other systems of

God to save mankind. The task of the ruler was to transmit the law of God (= truth) through grace to his subjects, who should follow this without criticism. Any attempt to change or interpret the law would be a sin.<sup>8</sup>

## THE ROAD WHICH LED MUSCOVITE PRINCES TO BEING THE PROTECTORS OF THE LAW OF GOD (ZAKON)

How did Muscovite princes become the protectors of the law of God (*zakon*)? Christian religion did not play as decisive a role in political speech in early Rus' as it would later in Muscovy. When Prince Andrei Bogoliubskii established his realm in Vladimir on the Kliazma river in the 1160s instead of in Kiev, he broke off relations with Byzantium and did not found an episcopal see. The metropolitan remained in Kiev, although the city lost its status after Andrei sacked it in 1169. The metropolitan of Kiev moved to Vladimir in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (1299) and soon afterwards to Moscow in the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (1326),<sup>9</sup> although the church leaders kept calling themselves "Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus'."

Moscow was originally a small principality held by the youngest son of Aleksandr Nevskii (d. 1263), Daniil Moskovskii (d. 1303), in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The descendants of Daniil, however, formed a new mighty branch of the Rurikid dynasty, the Daniilovichi, because of Ivan Daniilovich Kalita's successful cooperation (d. 1340) with the Mongols. Khan Özbek (d. 1341) had reorganized the Golden Horde by revoking existing rules of inheritance, opening up thereby the opportunity for the Daniilovichi to rise up the social ladder through links to mightier Mongol families. As a consequence, his relative, Ivan Kalita became his tax collector and ally, and was also granted the title Grand Prince of Vladimir. Moscow's rise began, and

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laws in the world: cf. FERNANDA PIRIE, *The Rule of Laws: A 4,000-Year Quest to Order the World*, (London: Profile Books, 2022), *passim*.

- 8 JUKKA KORPELA, "Law without Reason: The Use of Medieval Facts as Justification for Politics in Modern Russia", in NICOLAS FAUCHER, VIRPI MÄKINEN, *Encountering Others*, 73–92, *passim* JUKKA KORPELA, *Muinais-Venäjän myytti: Kiovan Rus, Ukraina ja vanhan Venäjän historia* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2023), 117–119.
- 9 SIMON FRANKLIN, "Diplomacy and Ideology: Byzantium and the Russian church in the mid twelfth century", in *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Cambridge, March 1990, Variorum. ed. JONATHAN SHEPARD and SIMON FRANKLIN (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), 145–150; JANET MARTIN, *Medieval Russia 980 – 1584*. Second edition. Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 122–131; KORPELA, *Muinais-Venäjän myytti*, 115–117.

the prince regarded himself as the only true heir of the Kievan Rurikid princes. The transfer of the metropolitan see in 1326 was decisive for Moscow's ideological role because Muscovy built its legitimation on the legacy of the Orthodox Church. This suited the Tatars too, as they did not involve themselves in religious matters.<sup>10</sup>

A bit earlier, Lithuania and Cracow had unified scattered centres under a central power in the areas of modern Poland, western Belarus and western Ukraine. The Lithuanian Grand Prince Gediminas (d. 1341) conquered Kiev in 1323 and declared the reunification of Kievan Rus'. This situation led to a conflict between Lithuania and Muscovy. Western sources called Gediminas "King of the Lithuanians and Ruthenians" (*rex Letviorum Ruthenorumque*), and despite his Paganism, "by the grace of God, King of the Lithuanians and many Ruthenians" (*Dei gratia Letwinorum et multorum Ruthenorum rex*). Later in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the King of Poland called himself *Dei gratia rex Poloniae et Russiae*. Muscovite diplomatic correspondence recognized the title of "Grand Prince of Russians" (*velikii kniaz' Ruskii*) for the King of Poland in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (Polish Kings were automatically also grand princes of Lithuania from 1505 onwards), which indicates that the core juxtaposition was not ethnic but religious.<sup>11</sup>

A late medieval *vita* of St. Aleksandr Nevskii describes the Swedish naval raid on the area of the river Neva, and how "the Roman king from the land of the midnight sun" (*korol' chasti Rim'sky ot polunoshch'nyia strany*) decided to attack Aleksandr in July 1240. He summoned a huge number of troops from Sweden, Norway, Sum and Iem (= Finland), made raids along the Neva and tried to conquer Ladoga and Novgorod. Having received an ultimatum from the king, Aleksandr prayed to God in the cathedral of St. Sofia, and Archbishop Spiridon blessed Aleksandr's war for the truth of God (*pravda*). The heavenly host, headed by St. Vladimir of Kiev and his sons St. Boris and St. Gleb, came to his aid. The battle was a holy fight against Catholic crusading heretics, who had bishops and priests in their

10 MARIE FAVEREAU, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 217–231, *passim*.

11 STEVEN C. ROWELL, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62–64, 84–87, 94–111; KORPELA, *Muinais-Venäjän myytti*, 111–136; KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle*, 139–172; «Послание польскому королю Стефану Баторию в 1579 году», в *Библиотека литературы Древней Руси*, Том 11 (Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2005), 164; cf. CHARLES J. HALPERIN, "Varieties of Otherness in Ivan IV's Muscovy: Relativity, Multiplicity, and Ambiguity", in *Images of Otherness in Russia, 1547 – 1917* ed. KATI PARPPEI and BULAT RAKHIMZIANOV (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023), 34–54.

troops. Aleksandr's victory was thus a successful defence of true Christianity. The description of his battle on the ice of Lake Peipus/Chudskoe against the Teutonic Knights, which took place two years after his victory over the Swedes, told the same story.<sup>12</sup>

An image in the illuminated manuscript of Aleksandr's *vita* from the 16<sup>th</sup> century depicts the Christ child in the arms of the Mother of God blessing Aleksandr's troops in 1240. This image appears to be a variant of the holy icon of the Vladimir Mother of God, which became the *palladium* of Muscovy from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, producing a rich hagiographic literature during the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Later, the text of the *vita* describes the angels' attack on the Swedish troops on the river Izhora, paraphrasing a similar story in the Book of Malachi (4. Rg 19:35–37) with the words “they [the angels] attacked the troops of King Sennacherib of Assyria, when he besieged Jerusalem.” The Swedes retreated, and Aleksandr praised the Holy Trinity.<sup>13</sup>

When Aleksandr moved against the Teutonic Knights, he prayed that God's judgment be on his side against “this unrighteous (*nepravednyi*) people” and “help him as he did Moses against the Amalekites” and his ancestor Iaroslav against the “damned” (*okaiannyi*) Sviatopolk. The heavenly host fought on Aleksandr's side, beat the “knights” (*rytsary*) and gave the enemies into their hands in the same way the Lord gave Jericho to the Israelis according to the Book of Joshua (Jesus Navin; Ios. 6:20). When Aleksandr's troops arrived in Pskov, the priests of the city and the people praised God and sang: “O Lord, Thou who hast helped the meek David to overcome the Philistines [aliens], and our prince through the weapon of faith to free the town of Pskov from pagans (*inoiazychniki*) by the hand of Aleksandr.”<sup>14</sup>

According to the 15<sup>th</sup> century MS of the *Tale of Dovmont*, Prince Dovmont/ Daumantas (d. 1299) fled from Lithuania to Pskov, where he was baptised with the name Timofei, and launched a raid against the heathen Lithuanians. Soon, Timofei was at war against the “godless Germans” (*bezbozhnye nemtsi*) and the “heathen Latins” (*poganye latiniane*), given that “the master of the land of Riga” (*magistr zemli Rizhskoi*), i.e., the head

12 «Новгородская первая летопись. Старшего и младшего изводов», в *Полное собрание*, Том 3, (мл.) 6748 (1240), 6750 (1242); JUKKA KORPELA, “Święty Aleksander Newski”, 248–271; MARI ISOANO, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy in Medieval Russia: Warrior and Saint*. The Northern World, Volume 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 61–65, 185–193, 198–201, *passim*.

13 *Житие Александра Невского. Текст и миниатюры Лицевого летописного свода XVI века* (Санкт-Петербург: Издательство Аврора, 1990), 906об., 913об.–914об.; *Повесть о житии и о храбрости благоверного и великого князя Александра*

14 *Повесть о житии и о храбрости*

of the Teutonic Order, who raided with the “godless” against Pskov, and the “pagan Latins” together constituted a constant enemy and threat to the city. Although Daumantas/Timofei was able to beat the raiders with the help of Lord, the “godless Latins” continued their raiding and killed priests. The story of Daumantas/Timofei resembles that of Aleksandr and crystallizes the mission of holy Rus’ian rulers fighting for true Christianity against western aggressors, who were “without understanding and without God” (*bez uma – bez boga*) but whom he, nevertheless, could beat with the “power of God” (*Bozhieiu siloiu pobedi*).<sup>15</sup>

Texts about the battle of *Kulikovo pole* (*pole*: meadow) of 1380 and the victory of the Moscow Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi over Khan Mamai repeat the same idea. Prince Oleg of Riazan, dubbed “Soul destroyer” (*du-shegubivyi*) started the evil by sending Epifanii Koreev, “the precursor of Anti-Christ”, to Khan Mamai and Prince Jogailo of Lithuania (and later King of Poland) and inviting them to raid “Russian land.” The “damned” (*okaiannyi*) Mamai aimed to conquer “the Russian land” (*zemlia Ruskaiia*), to ravage Christianity, to burn down the churches, to shed Christian blood and to destroy “their law of God” (*a zakony ikh*). Grand Prince Dmitrii saw that the attack was an “unlawful act” (*bezzakonie*). So, Rus’ian princes went against the “damned, godless, dishonourable, gloomy barbarian (literally: ‘cheese-eater’)” (*protivu sego okaiannago i bezbozhnago i nechestivago i temnago syroiadtsa*) Mamai for the sake of “the true Christian faith” (*za pravovernuiu veru khristianskuiu*). The Khan’s troops consisted of Muslims (*besermyi*), Armenians, Italians (*friazi*), Cherkessians, Iasens (medieval tribes) and Burtassians (another medieval tribe). Prince Jogailo, with his Lithuanian and Polish troops, and Prince Oleg of Riazan supported Mamai with “the same mind and spirit” (*v edinoi mysli i v edinoi dume*). However, “due to the prayers of the Mother of God, Man-loving God wanted to save mankind from the robberies of the Ishmaelites, of the pagan Mamai, of the dishonourable Jogailo and of the evil Oleg, who did not respect his Christian faith” (*ne snabdevshemu svoego khristianstva*).<sup>16</sup>

Mamai is “damned” but also “godless” (*bezbozhnyi*) and dishonourable (*nechestivyi*). Jogailo is also “dishonourable.” Oleg Ivanovich is “Satanic” (*s’tonshchik*), an “adviser of the Devil” (*diavolyi s’vetni*), “one who has abandoned the Son of God” (*otluchennyi Syna Bozhia*), a “renegade,” “the

15 «Сказание о Довмонте», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 56–62.

16 «Летописная повесть о Куликовской битве», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 120, 122, 535.

new Judas,” “the new Sviatopolk,” a “darkened, gloomy sinner” (*pomrache-nyi tmoi grekhovnik*) and “a henchman of Muslims.”<sup>17</sup>

The battle descriptions stress the historical counterposition of the sides. Prince Dmitrii, the other Rus’ian princes and all Orthodox Christian Rus’ were descendants of Japheth, the son of Noah, while the pagan Tatars and Muslims were descendants of Shem, another son of Noah. Therefore, the Rus’ians were fighting “for the land, the Russian land and for the Christian faith” (*za zemliu za ruskuiu i za veru khristiiian’skuiu*), while their enemies were renegades, godless, pagans and Muslims, who were not aware of the Law [of God] (*bezzakonnii agariane*). The heavenly host under the command of Archangel Michael, supported by the holy ancestors of the Moscow prince, primarily Sts. Boris and Gleb, fought on the side of Moscow.

The text of *Zadonshchina* (*On the Don*), which also depicts the Kulikovo victory, stresses even more clearly the inheritance of Kiev and the support of St. Vladimir and Iaroslav the Wise for the Muscovite forces.

According to the *Skazanie o mamaevom poboishche* (*The Tale of Mamai’s Defeat*), another literary interpretation of the Kulikovo battle, the war started because of “our sins” (*za grekhi nasha*). Guided by the Devil (*ot navozhdenia diavola*) Prince Mamai raided from the East: he was a “pagan, idolater, iconoclast and an evil opponent of Christians” (*ellen syi veroiu, idolozhrets, ikonoborets, zlyi khrist’anskyi ykoritel*). This godless (*bezbozhnyi*) Mamai wanted to destroy Christianity. The text continues with Biblical parables of wars between the people of God and heathens. The Church of Moscow is present in the figures of Metropolitans Petr (d. 1326) and Kiprian (d. 1406), and Hegumen Sergii Radonezhskii (d. 1392). The troops and the princes also pray to the Mother of God to support them in the fight against the “godless Pechenegs and pagan Tatars” (*protivu bezbozhnykh pecheneg’ i poganykh tatar*). Grand Prince Dmitrii invoked his Kievan ancestors, and the enemies, too, were connected with the Kievan past: they were not only renegades and enemies of Christ but also the reincarnations of the “damned” Prince Sviatopolk.<sup>18</sup>

The battle Dmitrii fought on the bank of the River Don is compared with the victorious fight of his ancestor, Aleksandr Nevskii, on the bank

17 «Летописная повесть о Куликовской битве», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 120, 122, 124.

18 «Летописная повесть о Куликовской битве», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 130; «Задонщина», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 104, 106, 108. «Сказание о Мамаевом побоище», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 138, 140, 152, 154, 158, 160, 164, 166, 172, 174, 176, 178.

of the Neva against the King of Sweden.<sup>19</sup> The religious fanaticism of the text blooms in the description of “the godless Mamai” as he realizes his defeat: Mamai calls for help from “his gods Perun [an ancient Slavic god of the Kievans], Salavat [a Turkic goddess or the invocation of God’s blessing upon the Prophet Muhammad], Raklii [the goddess Rak or a distorted form of the ancient god Heracles], Gurs [Hors, an ancient Slavic god of the Kievans] and [the prophet] Muhammad.” This list encapsulates the author’s religious disdain for Mamai.<sup>20</sup>

The *vita* of Dmitrii Donskoi describes him as a pious ruler of the “Russian realm” (*d’rzhava zemlia Ruskia*) and a successor of St. Vladimir, the new Constantine the Great, and of Sts. Boris and Gleb. Dmitrii’s power was sacral and he represented the power of God. At the core is the issue of true Christianity and its pious defence against enemies. His enemy was the “dishonourable” Mamai, “the second Sviatopolk,” who tried to destroy Christianity and churches, and introduce Islam in Rus’. Therefore, Dmitrii summoned his nobles to a war “for the true Christian faith” (*za pravovernuiu veru khristianskuiu*). The nobles were already calling Dmitrii “emperor” (*Gospodine ruskyi tsar’*) and regarded the blood that was shed as a second baptism of Rus’.<sup>21</sup>

Again, there is a reference to “our sins” (*grekh radi nashikh / za grekhi*) leading to the German destruction of Pskov in 1299. Likewise, in the 1390s God allowed the attack of Timur Lenk /Tamerlane against Rus’ due to “our sins.”<sup>22</sup> However, when Timur started his conquest of the “Russian land” (*Ruskaa zemlia*) and the destruction of Christians, the pious and Christ-loving Prince Vasilii Dmitrievich (Vasilii I 1389-1425) turned to God and asked Metropolitan Kiprian to conduct divine services and to transport the holy icon of the Vladimir Mother of God to Moscow (according to the legend of Temir-Aksak). Timur retreated and Moscow was saved.<sup>23</sup> These texts incorporate the theological idea of sin, which destroys the holy unity of Rus’ians, and invites foreign heretic aggressors – and the ancient Prince Sviatopolk was its incarnation.

19 «Сказание о Мамаевом побоище», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 166, 172

20 «Сказание о Мамаевом побоище», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 180.

21 «Слово о житии великого князя Дмитрия Ивановича», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 206, 208, 210, cf. also 206–226.

22 «Сказание о Довмонте», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 60, «Повесть о нашествии Тохтамышша», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 6, 200, «Повесть о Темир-Аксаке», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 6, 234.

23 «Повесть о Темир-Аксаке», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 6, 234, 236, 238.

## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC/ “LATIN” WORLD EXPANDS EASTWARD AFTER THE 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY<sup>24</sup>

The expansion of the Roman Catholic Church resulted in a confrontation among the Orthodox Christians in the East Slavic lands as Poland, Lithuania, and Novgorod did not accept the jurisdiction of a metropolitan whose residence was in Vladimir (after 1299) or in Moscow (after 1326). Constantinople, however, tried to keep the metropolitan see united. When Muscovite pressure increased in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Poland, Lithuania and Novgorod demanded their own metropolitan, or they would turn to Rome. Thus, Constantinople had to bless Grigorii Tsamblak as metropolitan of Kiev on the banks of the Dniepr in 1415.<sup>25</sup> His enthronement is described in a synodal letter (*sobornaia gramota*) by the Lithuanian bishops dated November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1415. Many West-Rus’ian bishops were present and the grand prince of Lithuania (*gosudar litovskago i mnogoykh russkikh zeml’*) supported the action in a public letter which announced the separation of the Kievan see from the Moscow metropolitan see. Disappointed, Metropolitan Fotii of Moscow sent a long letter to the bishops of Lithuania, all the priests, princes and people. Using passages taken from holy scripture and the decisions of synods, he argued that the decision was against the law of God (*zakon*) and the Bible, and it would cause chaos (*miatezh*). Fotii accused the Pskovians of being bribed by the Latins.<sup>26</sup>

Two decades later Constantinople started an active union process with the Roman Catholic Church under the Ottoman pressure. The Moscow metropolitan, Isidor, who was of Byzantine origin, travelled to the council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439) where the union was adopted, returning to Moscow only in 1441.<sup>27</sup> Isidor, an ardent supporter of the Union of Florence, proclaimed the union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches after his re-

24 KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle*, 148–172.

25 DIMITRI OBOLENSKY, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe. 500 – 1453* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminar Press, 1982), 338–345; JOHN MEYENDORFF, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminar Press, 1989), 245–269; KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle*, 173–174, 192–195; STEVEN C. ROWELL, *Lithuania Ascending*, 312–314 (Appendix 2).

26 *Акты, относящиеся к истории западной России, собранные и изданные археографическою комиссиею*, Том 1. 1340–1506 (Санкт-Петербург: Императорская академия наук, 1846), [n:o] 24 (15.11.1415), [n:o] 25 (after 15.11.1415). *Акты исторические, собранные и изданные Археографическою комиссиею*, Том 1. 1334–1598 (Санкт-Петербург: Императорская академия наук, 1841), пос. 19, 35.

27 «Хождение на Флорентийский собор», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 6, 464–486.

turn: Grand Prince Vasilii II (1425–1453), his nobles and the Moscow church were so furious that the metropolitan was imprisoned in a monastery. Eventually Isidor was allowed to escape: he escaped, as it was described, “to the Devil” (*k diavolu*), i.e., to the pope, to Rome.<sup>28</sup>

In 1441 Grand Prince of Moscow Vasilii II wrote a letter to Patriarch Mitrofan of Constantinople explaining the events of 1441, starting with the baptism of his ancestor St. Vladimir, who had brought Christianity to Russia. This letter repeated the narrative in the Russian Primary Chronicle: according to this Vladimir had sent delegations to the Romans, Jews, Armenians, Muslims and Greeks to learn about their religions. Finally, he decided to accept Orthodox Christianity from Constantinople, and rejected the others. This tie was maintained until the reign of Grand Prince Vasilii’s father, Vasilii I, and Metropolitan Fotii. The letter pointed out that the metropolitans of Russia had always been appointed by the patriarchs of Constantinople, and never from the West: “neither from Rome, nor from the Pope, nor from Latins” (*ne ot Rima, ni ot Papy, ni ot latyny*). Prince Vasilii II proposed that Iona of Riazan be the new metropolitan in 1437. The patriarch, however, had appointed Isidor, who eventually brought in the Latin faith, because he was a legate of the pope and representative of the Germans and Lithuanians. In this situation Vasilii II demanded that a new Russian metropolitan be nominated in Isidor’s place.<sup>29</sup>

His request was not fulfilled, but the appointment of a metropolitan became crucial for Vasilii II later because he needed the support of the church in a dynastic war against a rival who had previously captured and blinded him in 1446. Therefore, Vasilii II returned to the matter in 1448 in his letter to Emperor Constantinus Palaeologus, not to the patriarch. He informed the emperor of a *fait accompli*, that Iona of Riazan had been installed as head of the metropolitan see instead of Isidor, with the concurrence of the Russian bishops. The Moscow chronicle describes how Bishops Efrem of Rostov, Varlaam of Kolomna and Pitirim of Perm conducted the ceremony, and how Archbishop of Novgorod Eufimii and the Bishop of Tver sent a supporting letter.<sup>30</sup> Although the authority of the patriarch of Constan-

28 «Московский летописный свод конца XV века», в *Полное собрание русских летописей*, Том 25 (Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2004), 1440 (6948).

29 Акты исторические, по. 39; JANET MARTIN, “The Emergence of Moscow”, in MAUREEN PERRIE (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russia. Volume I. From Early Rus’ to 1689* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2006), 183–184.

30 Акты исторические, по. 41; «Московский летописный свод конца XV века», *Полное собрание*, Том 25, 1449 (6957).

tinople was breached with the act of free election as he had the right to appoint/corroborate the metropolitan, and the Russian Church became *de facto* autocephalous after 1448, the consequences of the decision of 1448 became apparent only after 1453 when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks: it seems that before that date the breach with Constantinople was not taken as a final one. This was not the end of the story, however.

According to the king of Poland, Kazimir IV (1440/1447–1492), the metropolitan see of Kiev was the oldest in Rus', which meant that the metropolitan see of Grigorii Tsamblak, (re)founded in 1415, was the only canonically legal one. The patriarch of Constantinople settled the case (confirming the decision of 1415) with a permanent decision in 1458 appointing Isidor's pupil, Grigorii Bolharyn as metropolitan of Kiev. In this situation the Moscow metropolitan and the grand prince assured the bishops, Lithuanian magnates and Novgorod that the metropolitan of Kiev was an illegal (*nezakonnyi*) pupil of Isidor, "the apostate of Orthodoxy, the apostate of the piety of the Christian faith" (*otstupnik ot pravoslaviia; otstupnik ot blagochestiia khristian'skiia very*), appointed by Rome. These two were "false prophets and false teachers" (*lzheprorotsi i lzheuchiteli*). When the heretic Grigorii was enthroned "due to our sins, to the anger of God but also to his providence, and to the actions of the opponent of True Christianity and destroyer of our souls, the Devil" (*grekh radi nashikh i popushcheniu i po gnevu Bozhiiu i po deystvu obshchago supostata pravoslaviiu i gubitelia dusham nashim diavola*), the Holy Church of God, i.e., the Kievan metropolitan see, was divided. The Muscovites described Catholics, Armenians and Jews as representatives of "heresy" (*eres'*), in fact, not so different from Muslims, because the learning of "the damned Muhammad" was likewise a heresy with the epithet "bad" (*zlochestivyi*), literally meaning "bad faith".<sup>31</sup>

The key issue here was the legitimacy of the Church Union of Florence of 1439. For Muscovites, acceptance of Catholic dogmas and the primacy of the pope meant breaking the law of God, and therefore the union left Orthodox believers outside the jurisdiction of the Moscow metropolitan see and in the hands of heretics.<sup>32</sup> The document of the Russian church council (*Sobornaia gramota*) of 1458 and other letters sent to all the bishops under the Moscow metropolitan stressed that the events of 1458 were a

31 Акты исторические, nos. 39, 51, 42; «Памятники древнерусского канонического права», в *Русская историческая библиотека VI* (Санкт-Петербург, 1880), nos. 80–87, 95, 100; OBOLENSKY, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 346–350; MEYENDORFF, *Byzantium*, 251–269; ROWELL, *Lithuania Ascending*, 314.

32 Акты исторические, no. 47.

consequence of the anger of God, which in turn was provoked by their sins and the intrigues of the Devil. Isidor's pupil Grigorii, the new metropolitan of Kiev, an apostate of the true Christianity, was destroying true orthodox Christianity with the Latin heresy of Florence. Therefore, Iona was the only legal metropolitan, and the grand prince of Moscow supported him. In the same year Metropolitan Iona sent a letter to the bishop of Smolensk, Misael, demanding that he cut contacts with the papal "apostate of true Orthodoxy" (*otstupnik ot pravoslaviia*), Grigorii.<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, Muscovite texts explained Mehmet Fatih conquest of Constantinople in 1453 within this context. Moscow, they argued, had taken the position of the city of the Mother of God since the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, starting from the Temir-Aksak legend (cf. above), the tales about the battle of Kulikovo and the *vita* of Sergii Radonezhskii, written by the Serbian Pankhomii. The collapse of Constantinople, due to its sin (i.e. the union made with Catholics in 1439), sealed Moscow's claim, and God transferred the icon of His capital, the heavenly Jerusalem, from Constantinople to Moscow, which became the "new Rome."<sup>34</sup> The Moscow account of the conquest called Sultan Mehmet and the Turks "godless and damned" (*bezbozhnyi, okaiannyi*),<sup>35</sup> and declared that the people of Constantinople themselves saw the reason for the catastrophe in their own sins: "We, too, are damned, having shown our contempt by sinning and breaking the law of God (*my zhe, okaiannye, taia vsia prezrev, s'greshikhom i bezakonovakhom*), and therefore Mehmet acceded to the throne of the emperor.<sup>36</sup> According to the text even the patriarch admitted that God had given the city to their enemies due to their sins.

The mid-16<sup>th</sup>-century *Nikon Chronicle* developed the story even further. According to this text, there were "in the court of Emperor Constantine [XI Constantine Palaiologos – the last emperor] convicted criminals, thieves,

33 АКТЫ исторические, nos. [n:o] 61, 62; MARTIN, "The Emergence of Moscow", 183–185; MEYENDORFF, *Byzantium*, 251–269.

34 KORPELA, *Prince, Saint and Apostle*, 175–179, 190–194; MARTIN, "The Emergence of Moscow", 185–187; JUKKA KORPELA, "Vladimirin P. Jumalanäidin siunattu ryöstö 1155", *Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran vuosikirja*, no. 84–85 (1994–1995) (1996): 21–34; ALFONS BRÜNING, "The Tsarist System", in *Politics, Society and Culture in Orthodox Theology in a Global Age. Eastern Church Identities*, Volume 11, ed. HANS-PETER GROSSHANS, PANTELIS KALAITZIDIS (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 2–5.

35 «Повесть о взятии Царьграда турками в 1453 году», в *Библиотеке литературы древней Руси*, Том 7 (Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2005), 32, 36, 42, 56, 60, 62.

36 «Повесть о взятии Царьграда турками в 1453 году», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 32–34, 44, 68.

and liars”, and “God was angered by this criminality and distortion of the law of God” (*vsem tem Boga razgnevali nepravymi sudi svoimi*) and by the entanglement with the Latin religion. The elite of the city prayed for God’s forgiveness of their sins because of the attack of the godless Mehmet. The chronicle even praised Mehmet in comparison to Constantine [XI Palaiologos], and declared that the conquest of Constantinople was the reason why the grand prince of Moscow was now the emperor.<sup>37</sup>

Ivan Peresvetov, a mid-sixteenth-century writer, pondered the legitimacy of power. In his view the authority of the ruler depended on his providing justice because it was his duty to uphold the *harmony/truth/law/justice (pravda)* of God in his realm. The Greeks were living in sin without the truth of God, therefore people had an “emperor who had no authority” (*a tsar’skiia grozy k nim ne bylo*), while the Ottoman Sultans, called “emperors of our days,” by contrast “observe the rules of Mohamed, are revered with great authority and wisdom” (*Po ustavu Makhmetevu s velikoiu groznoiu mudrostiiu a nyneshnie tsari zhivut*).<sup>38</sup>

## SINFUL AND HERETICAL NOVGOROD

The position of the Novgorod trading realm was based on its network of connections around the Baltic rim. The Novgorodians addressed the prince of Lithuania as the ruler of “many Russian lands” (*gosudar’ mnogikh russkikh zeml’*), while the Muscovite princes called themselves “Grand Princes of Novgorod.” The Lithuanian princes had been involved in the defence of Novgorod since the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> When the Novgorodians elected as

37 «Повесть о взятии Царьграда турками в 1453 году», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 50, 64; «Московский летописный свод конца XV века», в *Полное собрание*, Том 25, 1452 (6960). «Патриаршая или Никоновская летопись», в *Полное собрание русских летописей*, Том 12 (Москва: Наука, 1965), 1453 (6961), especially p. 108.

38 «Большая челобитная. Сочинения Ивана Семеновича Пересветова», в *Памятники литературы Древней Руси. Конец XV – первая половина XVI века* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1984), 240, 602–624; JUKKA KORPELA, “Groza schafft consensus: Mit Schrecken und Drohungen zum Konsens”, in *Consensus. Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 43 ed. ANDREAS SPEER, THOMAS JESCHKE (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), 124; BRÜNING, “The Tsarist System”, 12–15.

39 *Акты, относящиеся к истории*, no. 39 (about 1440), no. 50 (31.8.1449); MARTIN, *Medieval Russia*, 275–281, 338–339; KORPELA, *Muinai-Venäjän myytti*, 140–145; JUKKA KORPELA, “The World of Ladoga – Society, Trade, Transformation and State Building in the Eastern Fennoscandian Boreal Forest Zone ca. 1000 – 1555,” *Nordische Geschichte*, 7, (Berlin: Lit. Verlag, 2008).

their prince the son of the prince of Kiev, Mikhail Olel'kovich, he arrived in Novgorod towards the end of 1470 but immediately had to flee from the city. Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan III (1462–1505) conquered Novgorod in 1471.<sup>40</sup>

The Novgorodian tale about the war of 1471 may originate from an eyewitness and is older than the Muscovite versions recounting the same event.<sup>41</sup> The former describes the Muscovite attack over the river Shelon supported by Tatar troops. In this situation the Novgorodians asked the Teutonic Knights and Lithuania for help, but in vain, and the grand prince conquered the city. He punished those who had turned to Lithuania and destroyed the land. Finally, Archbishop Feofil of Novgorod and the *posadniki* (political leaders) made peace with the grand prince. Novgorod paid 15,500 rubles in ransom and kissed the cross to affirm their guarantee that they would not seek a Western ruler. The tale concludes that “all evil had happened due to their sins, according to the will of God.”<sup>42</sup>

The Moscow story differs, but its main points had already been set forth in a contemporary letter from the Moscow Metropolitan Filip to the Novgorodians. The 16<sup>th</sup>-century tale describes how the assembly (*veche*) of Novgorod declared: “We do not want to have a Muscovite as [our] grand prince, nor to be called his patrimony! – But we want to have as [our] king, Kazimir, King of Poland and Grand Prince of Lithuania” (*ne khotim za velikogo kniazia moskovskogo, ni zvatsia votchinoiu ego! - - - No khotim za korolia polskogo i velikogo kniazia litovskogo za Kazimira*)! Some Novgorodians disagreed and said that Novgorod had belonged to Rus’ since the time of Prince Rurik and St. Vladimir, whose heir was Ivan III. However, most Novgorodians preferred to join the Latins and accept the new archbishop appointed by Metropolitan Grigorii, who was “Isidor’s pupil and a Catholic” (*uchenik to Isidorov sushchei latin*). King Kazimir sent Prince Mikhail from Kiev to rule Novgorod, and the Novgorodians expelled the representative of the grand prince of Moscow from the city.<sup>43</sup> Grand Prince Ivan III explained that the Novgorodians had belonged to his patrimony (*vochina*) since Rurik and St. Vladimir. They had never belonged to the grand prince

40 Р. Г. СКРЫННИКОВ, Третий Рим (Санкт-Петербург: Димитрий Буланин, 1994), 32–39; MARTIN, *Medieval Russia*, 280–281.

41 И. А. ЛУРЬЕ, «Комментарии», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 7, 529.

42 «Памятники древнерусского канонического права», в *Русская историческая библиотека* VI, no. 102; «Новгородская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотека литературы*, Том 7, 312, 314, 316.

43 «Московская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 286, 288, 290 (the entire story 286–311).

of Lithuania, but now “they want to abandon Christianity for Catholicism’s sake, and so break their cross-kissing” (i.e., their oath) (*a nynecha ot khris-tiian’stva otstupaete k latinstvu krestnoe tselovanie*).<sup>44</sup>

Those Novgorodians, says the text, who tried to observe tradition, were happy with the grand prince’s message [of the grand prince], but the renegades [did not like to hear these words,] stressed their autonomy, “calling Great Novgorod as their lord” (*ospodarem zoviakhu sebe Velikim Novgorodom*), causing a tumult (*v’zsmushchenie*) and crying in the assembly (*veche*): “We would like to have the king!”<sup>45</sup>

Ivan was disappointed, because the abandonment of Christianity for Catholicism would mean that Novgorodians were destroying the unity of Rus’ that Rurik and St. Vladimir had created, and over which the grand princes of Kiev and Vladimir had ruled since then. Ivan swore that he would put his hope in the hands of God, and told the metropolitan, his mother and his nobles that he would attack Novgorod. With home support and the blessing of the Church, Ivan was to move against the Novgorodians with the help of God, because of the “crimes and apostasy” of the Novgorodians (*za ikh neispravlenie i otstuplen’e*). The grand prince sent letters to various centres of Rus’ and asked for military help, because Novgorod had broken away from his realm and invited [the power of] the King and a Catholic Archbishop to take power. All Russian princes joined the holy war in a fraternal manner, according to the 16<sup>th</sup> century illustrated chronicle.<sup>46</sup>

Thereafter, the grand prince prayed to God in churches and monasteries, especially in the monastery of the church of Archangel Michael, the commander of heavenly host. Ivan prayed also at the Holy Icon of Vladimir Mother of God, and at the tombs of metropolitans and his ancestors. The Icon of the Vladimir Mother of God had been closely associated with the miracle that saved Moscow from the raid of Timur Lenk at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the reference to it equated Ivan’s war with the holy war of Vasilii I. Finally, Ivan asked for the metropolitan’s blessing for himself and his army, and the metropolitan “blessed him like Prophet Samuel blessed David against Goliath. Thus, pious prince Ivan went against the renegades

44 «Московская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 290.

45 «Московская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 290.

46 «Московская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 290, 292; *Лицевой летописный свод XVI века. Русская летописная история*, книга 15, 1460–1474 гг. (Москва: Актеон, 2010), 185–190.

like his pious ancestor Dmitrii against the godless Mamai". Although the people of Novgorod called themselves Christians, they had abandoned the true faith when they moved to the side of the Catholics. "So the grand prince did not move against them as Christians but as pagans and apostates of Orthodoxy" (*poide na nikh kniaz' velikii ne iako na khristian, no iako na inoiazychnik" i na otstypnik" pravoslav'ia*).<sup>47</sup>

According to an earlier text, the Moscow chronicle from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the war was a holy war against the sin of apostasy.<sup>48</sup> The mid-16th-century *Illustrated Chronicle* reflects the expansion of this holy vision and the anger of Moscow. First, there were bad omens foretelling Novgorod's future chaos. Ivan tried to continue the old peaceful relations, but the Novgorodian "deceitful traitors" (*izmenniki*) followed the teachings of the Devil. They wanted a king, claiming that "they were free Novgorodians" (*volnye esmy liudi velikii nov'gorod*). Thus began a "great disorder" (*veliko neustroenie*).<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, the new archbishop of Novgorod was appointed by the "so-called metropolitan of Rus'" (*nazyvaiushchii mitropolit Rusi*), Grigorii, who was a Latin, the pupil of Isidor and a heretic. He, Grigorii, was the one who was spreading the teachings of "the Devil." When Ivan III received a message about the treason, he was angered because the Novgorodians had destroyed his patrimonial land (*otchina*) and the unity of Rus' created by his ancestors. The letter of the Moscow Metropolitan Filip to the Novgorodians warns them about "the destruction of the holy church of God" (*raskol sviatei Bozheii Tserkvi*) and the abandonment of true Christianity. According to the metropolitan the Novgorodians should be afraid of the anger of God, if they forget "the Law of God" (*zakon blagochestvia*) and "join the Latins" (*pristupiti k latynstvu*).<sup>50</sup> The text calls "Novgorodian *posadniks*, *tysiatsniks* (political and military leaders), boyars, merchants, craftsmen, timbermen, potters and all inhabitants of Novgorod damned, because they raised their hands against the grand prince." Later the text justifies the conquest because the Novgorodians were "damned traitors" (*okaiannye izmenitsy*). They faced the anger of God due to their "injustice" (*nepravda*), namely, because they "did abandon not only their master but

47 «Московская повесть о походе Ивана III Васильевича на Новгород», в *Библиотеке литературы*, Том 7, 294, 296; *Лицевой летописный свод*, книга 15, 192–200.

48 «Московский летописный свод конца XV века», в *Полное собрание*, Том 25, 6977 (1469, pp. 284–290); MARTIN, *Medieval Russia*, 288.

49 *Лицевой летописный свод*, книга 15, 156–167.

50 *Лицевой летописный свод*, книга 15, 168, 173, 175.

also the Lord God himself” (*otstuplenie ot svoego gosudaria no i ot samo-go gospoda Boga*).<sup>51</sup>

Novgorod was thus a nest of sinners, because Novgorodians were traitors: they had allied themselves with Lithuania and Poland and had been ready to accept Catholicism. Moscow had to act because its ruler was the true heir of Rurik and St. Vladimir. The fight against sin and for the Law of God was the eternal duty of the ruler of Muscovy. Interestingly, the second raid of Ivan against Novgorod in 1477 is not described in religious terms. The grand prince started the war only because he had to punish the Novgorodians for their crimes (*prestuplenie*). The crimes were internal issues such as rising against the Muscovite representatives and breaking their political oath.<sup>52</sup>

The religious purity of the Muscovite ruler is also stressed in the (in) famous ideas of the monastic elder (*starets*) Filofei dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, the ruler of Moscow is the “only true emperor of Christians on earth” (*edin ty vo vsei podnebesnoi khristianom tsar*). The emperor must live according to God’s order and justice, “because two Romes have already fallen, the third stands, but a fourth there will never be” (*iako dva Rima padosha, a tretei stoit, a chetvertomu ne byti*). If the realm of Muscovy falls, the apocalypse and the reign of Antichrist will follow. Despite the unclear dating of the letter, the core message is clear: the Muscovite ruler’s power depends upon true Christianity and its defence.<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the medieval context, *the just order of God*, encapsulated in the term *pravda*, was the foundation of the authority of the ruler of Moscow and had been an essential quality of Rus’ and its rulers since time immemorial. The Devil (*diavol*) tempted people to abandon *pravda* and commit themselves to sin (*grekh*), which caused rebellions and external threats. Thus, western

51 Лицевой летописный свод, книга 15, 192–202, 230, 235–282.

52 Лицевой летописный свод XVI века. Русская летописная история, книга 16, 1475–1482 гг. (Москва: Актеон, 2010), 6985 (1476), 128–140; 6986 (1477), 142.

53 «Послание к великому князю Василию, - - -. Послания старца Филофея», в Библиотека литературы древней Руси, Том 9 (Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2006), 300–305; NIKOLAY ANDREYEV, “Filofey and his Epistle to Ivan Vasil’yevich”, *The Slavonic and East European Journal* 38, no. 90 (1959): 3–10, 23–29; GEORGE P. MAJESKA, “The Moscow Coronation of 1498 Reconsidered”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 26, no. 3 (1978): 353–361; BRÜNING, “The Tsarist System”, 5–6.

heretics, eastern pagans and internal opponents were trying to destroy the true Christianity of Rus', while Rus' and its ruler had to be on guard constantly against sin and root it out wherever it appeared. Not surprisingly, many of Moscow's explanations for the present Ukrainian war echo these 15<sup>th</sup>-century phrases.

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