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**THE ISSUE OF ANTITRINITARIANISM IN THE FIFTEENTH-
CENTURY NOVGOROD-MOSCOW MOVEMENT:
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Oleg Zhigankov
December 2000

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ABSTRACT

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by

Oleg Zhigankov

Adviser: Miroslav M. Kiš

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Title: THE ISSUE OF ANTITRINITARIANISM IN THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY NOVGOROD-MOSCOW MOVEMENT: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

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Date completed: December 2000

This study attempts to examine the trinitarian beliefs of the fifteenth-century Novgorod-Moscow movement, analyzing both their own writings and the polemical writings of those who considered their teaching antitrinitarian.

The main objective of the present research is to contribute to the restoration of the authentic theological identity of this movement. Chapter 1 defines the problem, which has already been raised by some nineteenth-century scholars who have pointed out that the allegedly antitrinitarian character of the Subbotniks' movement must be open for further discussion. It also shows that no systematic research on Subbotniks' theology has ever been produced.

The second chapter of this historical-theological study surveys the historical background of the Novgorod-Moscow movement and briefly analyzes the religious, political, and cultural context of fifteenth-century Russia. It demonstrates that the struggle surrounding this movement was motivated not only theologically, but also politically and culturally.

Chapter 3 analyzes the polemical documents, giving priority to the primary sources contemporary to the Novgorod-Moscow movement, such as Archbishop Gennadii's letters and Iosif of Volotsk's *Instructor*. In general, the documents presented in this chapter differ in their charges of antitrinitarianism against the Subbotniks.

Chapter 4 analyzes the Subbotniks' sources, which include all the passages directly or indirectly dealing with their trinitarian views. The writings of the Subbotniks in general represent the trends common for European reform movements of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The study of the Subbotniks' literature shows that the antitrinitarian character of this movement cannot be confirmed by the writings of the Subbotniks themselves.

Chapter 5 presents a systematic-analytical and historical evaluation of the question of the trinitarian status of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. The present research found no traces of antitrinitarianism in the Subbotniks' movement.

**To my dear wife Elena
and my children
Akim and Sasha**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many people have contributed to the emergence of this work that I hardly know where to begin with thanks.

I am greatly indebted to the libraries in which I have been privileged to work: former Lenin Library, the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library, Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow. I feel indebted also to the libraries of the University of California, Chicago University, Princeton Theological Seminary, University of Notre Dame, Harvard University, and Yale University for allowing me to use some of their books which I needed for this investigation. I feel especially indebted to James White Library on the campus of Andrews University for assistance in securing crucial reference material. I also thank Zaoksky Theological Seminary for assistance not directly related to this project, but of real benefit to it.

I am grateful for the stimulus as well as inspiration that I received from Dr. Miroslav Kiš, who guided me throughout my entire project. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Denis Fortin for his thoughtful suggestions that led to substantial improvements from earlier drafts. I owe a special debt to Dr. Jerry Moon for providing valuable insights at certain points, and for his dedication to make this work sound English.

Among the many others whom I should properly thank, I can mention my former students at Zaoksky Theological Seminary, Vera Lordkipanidze and Inna Phokina, who

have been my eyes and ears in Russia while I was doing my research in the USA. They promptly provided me with the copies of manuscripts that could be obtained only in Russia. I thank Dr. Leona Running for taking a part in editing this work. I owe a real debt to my friend Kenneth Jorgenson who spent countless hours improving my linguistics. Bonnie Proctor gave many hours to correcting my typing. I am grateful to Dr. Mirna Grant of Wheaton College for inspiring me to be a writer.

None of these people should suffer any measure of guilt by association with the imperfections of this work.

I owe a special debt to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, for its opportune financial support and for the environment disposing to the research. I am also grateful to the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, through Dr. Humberto Rasi, for its financial assistance. I deeply appreciate the encouragement and support I have received through Dr. Najeeb Nakhle. I also thank all our friends residing in Berrien Springs, MI, for their genuine interest in my work, and for their constant encouragement.

I owe much to the countless historians and other researchers who have provided important guidelines for me as I have attempted to organize the complicated and oftentimes puzzling historical material.

I am grateful to Professor Paul Meyendorff for the genuine interest in this research.

I must thank my beloved family: my wife and companion Elena, and my children and successors Akim and Sasha. I also thank my dear parents Alexander and Galina

Zhigankov for their ceaseless prayers. Above all human beings I should thank three eternal divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To God be the glory!

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period from the late 1470s to 1505 occupies a special place in the history of the social, political, and religious thought of Russia. The movement that came to be called the *Novgorod-Moscow* or *Judaizers*' heresy in Russian literature from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has remained enigmatic for historians, theologians, and philosophers.¹ The very name assigned to this movement implies a dramatic break with traditional Christian dogma and customs. This research attempts to unveil the mystery and to reconstruct the theological teaching of this movement. This introductory chapter will define the problem, purpose, justification, delimitation, methodology, terminology, and sources used, and outline possible steps toward its solution.

Background of the Problem

A typical comment of the established church contemporary to the Novgorod-Moscow movement refers to it as a "heretical storm," which threatened to become "the

¹Since such names as "the Novgorod-Moscow movement" and "Judaizers' movement" are used interchangeably in historic literature, I will use them as synonyms. I will also employ the term *Subbotniks* (Sabbath-keepers), because Sabbath keeping, according to the *Sentence* of the 1490 Council, was the only belief shared by all Novgorod-Moscow believers. See *Sentence of the Council*, Manuscript BIL, Museum's Collection, #3271, 11-15 (*Соборный приговор, рукопись БИЛ, Музейное собрание, #3271, 11-15*).

doom for all Orthodox Christianity from heretical teachings.”¹ The end of the fifteenth century in Russian church history was characterized by an attempted ecclesiastical reform that was not merely popular, but was accepted by the Russian royal family, many of the nobility and intellectuals, as well as many members of the lower and middle classes.

Nikolai K. Gudzy observes that the partisans of the heresy were the lower and middle clergy.² The largest group within the new ecclesiastical movement consisted of “artisans, merchants, townspeople in general, also rural and urban clergy, finally, landed gentry”³—the most progressive sections of the population of that time.

¹Iosif of Volotsk, “The Letter of Elder Iosif to the Great Prince Vasiliï,” GIM, Synod’s Archive, # 791, 4, 1. 20 (Волоцкий, “Послание старца Иосифа к великому князю Василию на еретики,” ГИМ, Синодальный архив, # 791, 4, серия XVI в., 1. 20). The text of this letter was also published in N. A. Kazakova and Y. S. Lur’e, *Anti-Feudal Heretical Movements in Russia (AED)* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1955), 519-522 (Н. А. Казакова и Я. С. Лурье, *Антифеодальные еретические движения на Руси* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1955], 519-522). The style used here for Russian bibliography is the one prescribed by the Andrews University *Standards for Written Work*, 9th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999). In matters of form not specified in the *Standards*, I have used Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). In order to preserve the titles of books the way they appear in the Russian bibliography, I chose not to capitalize the words in the Cyrillic titles, unless they are proper nouns. In referring to the manuscripts I use, whenever it is possible, the codes that are assigned to these sources in Russian historiography. All translations from Russian are my own.

²N. K. Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 236.

³A. I. Klibanov, *The Books of Ivan Chernij* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1958), 224 (А. И. Клибанов, *Книги Ивана Черного* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1958], 224).

Iosif of Volotsk¹ (Sanin) (1440-1515) denounced the teaching, calling it “the newly arisen heresy of the Novgorod heretics,” but did not use the term “zhidovstvujushie” (Judaizers).² However, the name “Judaizers” eventually became firmly rooted in Russian literature due to some of the teachings of this movement, especially Sabbath observance. Many scholars believe that the movement was rooted in the religious and social development of fifteenth-century Russia.³ Why did the Protestant churches “forget” this episode in Russian Church history? Why do Seventh-day Adventists within the former USSR, who keep the seventh day as the Sabbath, accept conditional immortality of the soul, and share other teachings of this fifteenth-century movement, hardly ever refer to it? The answer to these questions is found in a conviction that the core of this fifteenth-century movement was composed of a characteristic Judaic theology with its corresponding denial of distinctive Christian doctrines such as the Second Coming

¹The abbot of Volokolamsk monastery, Iosif was a social activist and proponent of a strong centralized Moscow realm. The real acknowledgment he received, however, was as an opponent of the Novgorod-Moscow movement and the author of the polemical book *Просветитель* (The Instructor).

²Iosif of Volotsk, *The Instructor* (Moscow: Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, 1993), 19 (Иосиф Волоцкий, *Просветитель* [Москва: Издание Спасо-Преображенского Валаамского монастыря, 1993], 19).

³A. I. Servitskii, “Conclusion on the Research About the Heretics or the ‘Judaizers’ of Novgorod,” *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* 7 (1862): vi-viii (А. И. Сервицкий, “Опыт исследования новгородских еретиков или ‘жидовствующих,’” *Православное Оboзрение*, 7 [1862]: vi-viii); A. I. Nikitskii and E. E. Zamislovskii, “Essay on the Church History of Novgorod the Great,” *Journal of the Ministry of Education* 1 (1879): 213-222 (А. И. Никитский и Е. Е. Замысловский, “Очерк внутренней истории церкви в Великом Новгороде,” *Журнал Министерства народного просвещения* [ЖМНП] 1 [1879]: 213-222); I. Panov, “The Judaizers’ Heresy,” *Journal of the Ministry of Education* 1 (1877): 12-32 (И. Панов, “Ересь жидовствующих,” *ЖМНП* 1 [1877]: 12-32).

of Jesus Christ and, most importantly, the Trinity.

Historians and theologians commonly believe that the Novgorod-Moscow movement of the fifteenth century was antitrinitarian.¹ Louis Greenberg emphatically describes the fifteenth-century Russian dissidents as those who confessed “Judaic doctrines.”² This subject, however, has not been critically investigated; most criticism originated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during the period of the controversy between the dissidents and the established church. Only at the end of the nineteenth century was this subject again brought to the attention of certain Orthodox scholars. The traditional understanding of this movement was then reevaluated.³ Some of these scholars pointed out that the allegedly antitrinitarian character of the reform movement must be

¹See A. A. Zimin, *Russian Writings from the End of the Fifteenth to the Beginning of the Seventeenth Centuries* (Moscow: Political Literature, 1959), 22 (А. А. Зимин, *Русская публицистика конца пятнадцатого начала шестнадцатого веков* [Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1959], 22); V. N. Peretz, *New Works on the 'Judaizers' and Their Literature at the End of the Fifteenth Century* (Kiev, 1908) (В. Н. Перец, *Новые труды о "Жидовствующих" пятнадцатого века и их литературе* [Киев, 1908]); N. Streshnev, *Jewish Captivity*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Soikin's Publishing House, 1905), 1:17 (Н. Стрешнев, *Жидовское пленение*, 2 т. [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Сойкина, 1905], 1:17); M. Bulgakov, *The History of the Russian Church*, 12 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Patriarchate's Publishing House, 1857-1883), 4:82 (Макарий Булгаков, *История Русской Церкви*, 12 т. [Санкт-Петербург: Патриаршая типография, 1857-1883], 4:82).

²L. Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia*, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 1:5-7.

³Panov, 12-32; A. Pavlov, *The Question of the Judaizers' Heresy at the Fourth Archeological Assembly* (Moscow: Moscow University, 1884) (А. Павлов, *Вопрос о ереси жидовствующих на шестом археологическом съезде* [Москва: Московский университет, 1884]).

opened for further discussions.¹ Unfortunately, this has never been done until the present investigation.

Since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, religious groups in Russia have suffered massive losses in clergy, property, literature, and freedom—a situation not favorable for analyzing religious topics. It was during this period, however, that the most significant works on the Novgorod-Moscow movement were written by Soviet and Western authors, though predominately colored by atheistic and humanistic opinions. This is especially true regarding their evaluation of the dissidents' trinitarian views. Natalia A. Kazakova and Yakov S. Lur'e praise heretics for their supposed critique of the “especially weak sides of Christian dogmatics . . . notably the trinitarian dogma, a dogma that inevitably confuses the plain human mind and is incongruous with logic—God who is one and at the same time three, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”²

Russia introduced religious liberty a decade ago. This new situation has brought about a “war for souls” in Russia. John Witte, Jr., remarks that “in part, this is a theological war—as the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church has sought to reestablish itself as the spiritual leader of the Russian people, and as rival religious

¹In the last century Nilolaj A. Rudnev raised a question that has not yet been adequately answered: “What kind of heresy was it?” He observes: “This question is especially important, because it was left unnoticed.” N. A. Rudnev, *Discourse on Heresies and Schisms* (Moscow: Synod's Publishing House, 1838), 102-103 (Н. А. Руднев, *Рассуждения о ересях и расколах* [Москва: Синодальная Типография, 1838], 102-103). Rudnev was among the first to doubt that this heresy had to do with Judaism. In his research, however, he, as well as the other Orthodox scholars, could not renounce the authority of Iosif of Volotsk, who was proclaimed by the Russian Orthodox Church as a *prepodobniy*—an honor almost equal to that of a saint.

²Kazakova and Lur'e, *AED*, 119.

communities from Russia and abroad have begun actively to defame and demonize each other.”¹ It seems clear that under these circumstances the Russian Orthodox Church is not interested in reawakening the five-hundred-year-old controversy. Nevertheless, the questions that were raised more than a hundred years ago about the Novgorod-Moscow movement remain both relevant and unanswered.

Statement of the Problem

The five-hundred-year-old evaluation of the fifteenth-century Russian reform movement has remained unchallenged by scholars. I believe that a critical analysis of primary sources yields a different result from the common allegations that the heretics rejected orthodox trinitarianism, and that they held other heretical doctrines.

Purpose and Justification of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the trinitarian beliefs of the fifteenth-century Novgorod-Moscow movement, analyzing both their own writings and the polemical writings of those who considered their teaching antitrinitarian.

A main objective of the present research is to restore the authentic theological identity of this movement—now lost due to centuries of questionable propaganda. The essential theological benefits derived from a serious analysis of the Novgorod-Moscow movement cannot be ignored. Contemporary polemics still assert the antitrinitarian

¹John Witte, Jr., “Introduction,” in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia*, ed. John Witte, Jr., and Michael Bourdeaux (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 1.

character to the Novgorod-Moscow movement.¹ This seems understandable since so far no scholarly evaluation of the trinitarian views has challenged the traditional view.

The analysis of the theology of this movement will also shed light on an important chapter in Russian ecclesiastical history. In view of traditional Russian thinking it seems important to understand the religious situation throughout the course of Russian history. The stereotyped belief in a monolithic, undisturbed church history strongly affects current attitudes. Harold J. Berman, in his article “Freedom of Religion in Russia” justifies the Patriarchate’s attempts to suppress all foreign evangelistic endeavors by referring to the presumably monolithic Orthodox historical roots of the Russian people. His article expresses the view of the majority of the Russian Orthodox clergy.² The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia may benefit from the present study since the Novgorod-Moscow believers played an important and positive role in Russian history³ and

¹For example, in his recent article Firuz Kazemzadeh writes about certain Novgorodian priests (participants of the Novgorod-Moscow movement) “who formed a sect that denied the Trinity, the Incarnation, the sacraments, and the Church hierarchy.” F. Kazemzadeh, “Reflection on Church and State in Russian History,” in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia*, 230.

²See Harold J. Berman, “Freedom of Religion in Russia,” in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy*, 265-283.

³Historians indicate the positive influence of this movement on the intellectual, cultural, economic, and political development of the Russian state. See A. I. Klibanov, *Reform Movements of the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1960), 7-8 (А. И. Клибанов, *Реформационные движения в России XIV–первой половине XVI веков* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1960], 7-8); V. I. Buganov and A. P. Bogdanov, *Rebels and Truth-Seekers in the Russian Orthodox Church* (Moscow: Political Literature, 1991), 40-41 (В. И. Буганов и А. П. Богданов, *Бунтари и правдоискатели в Русской Православной церкви* [Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1991], 40-41).

proclaimed a theological message similar to that of Seventh-day Adventism.¹

Viability of the Research

While it is impossible to restore in detail all aspects of the Novgorod-Moscow movement, there is sufficient material to document its beliefs and theological thought. The polemical literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries clearly reflects the arguments of the official church against the Subbotniks. This corpus is well preserved and has repeatedly been republished. It reflects hostile attitudes and contains accusations against the dissidents. A detailed analysis of these arguments and their development outlines the nature of the problem and sheds light on the trinitarian views of the Russian nonconformists. Fortunately, a substantial amount of writings by the participants in the Novgorod-Moscow movement is well preserved.

Other available sources include: fifteenth-century sources, such as Chronicles, Annals,² historical literature, and other miscellaneous historically oriented writings such as essays and scholarly studies on this subject written in the last two centuries. These sources provide sufficient information for a critical and comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the topic of this dissertation.

¹For a review of the doctrines of the SDA church see G. P. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988).

²G. Vernadskii, ed., *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 215-241.

Scope/Delimitations

This study will: (1) focus on the mainstream Novgorod-Moscow movement, with the well-known Moscow and Novgorod group of leaders, excluding other contemporary sectarian movements; (2) study only those teachings of the Russian nonconformists relevant to their trinitarian (or antitrinitarian) beliefs; and (3) analyze the ensuing accusations against the dissidents' allegedly antitrinitarian views.

Methodology

The second chapter of this historical-theological study surveys the historical background of the Novgorod-Moscow movement and briefly examines the religious, political, and cultural context of fifteenth-century Russia. It shows that the struggle surrounding this movement was motivated not only theologically, but also politically and culturally. The third chapter analyzes the polemical documents, giving priority to the primary sources contemporary to the Novgorod-Moscow movement, such as Archbishop Gennadii's letters and Iosif of Volotsk' *Instructor*.

The fourth chapter analyzes the Subbotniks' sources, which include all the passages directly or indirectly dealing with their trinitarian views, in order to better understand how the accusations of antitrinitarianism were shaped. Contemporary documents to the Russian fifteenth-century dissidents are also studied.¹ To complete the

¹Among these sources are *Russian Feudal Archives of the Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Moscow: Institut Prava, 1951) (*Русские феодальные архивы четырнадцатого-пятнадцатого веков* [Москва: Издательство Института Права, 1951]); *One-Hundred-Chapters [Council]* (Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1863) (*Стоглав* [Санкт-Петербург: Типография Императорской академии наук, 1863]); L. N. Pushkarev, "Historical Documents of the Fifteenth to Seventeenth

study, findings are evaluated and conclusions drawn in the fifth chapter.

Primary Sources

The primary sources for this research can be divided into two major categories:

(1) works opposing the Novgorod-Moscow movement; and (2) works from within the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

Works Opposing the Novgorod-Moscow Movement

Polemical literature on the Novgorod-Moscow movement appeared over a period of about twenty-five years. Scholars unanimously agree on the list of sources belonging to this category. These include the following sources.

Letters of Archbishop Gennadii (Gonozov) and Related Sources

1. 1487—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Prohor Sarskii*.¹ This letter was preserved in several manuscripts. I will use the manuscript of the GPB, Q. XVII. 64. This manuscript was studied by F. Tolstoy² and Il'ja Hrushev³ and published by

Centuries," in *Historical Materials of the USSR*, 2 vols., ed. D. S. Lihachev (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1963), 1:115-326 (Л. Н. Пушкарев, "Документы по истории пятнадцатого-семнадцатого веков," в *Материалы по истории СССР*, 2 т., ред. Д. С. Лихачев [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1963], 1:115-326)].

¹Archbishop Gennadii (Gonozov), "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Prohor Sarskii," Manuscript GPB, Q. XVII. 64, F. A. Tolstoy's Collection, II, #68 (Гонозов, "Послание епископу Прохору Сарскому," Manuscript ГПБ, Q. XVII. 64, собрание Федора Толстого, II, #68).

²К. Kalejdovich and P. Stroev, *A Detailed Description of the Russian-Slavic Manuscripts by F. A. Tolstoy* (Moscow: Selivansky, 1825) (К. Калайдович и П. Строев, *Обстоятельное описание славяно-российских рукописей Ф. А. Толстого* [Москва:

Kazakova and Lur'e in the appendix of their book.¹

2. January 1488—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal.*² This manuscript was published in AED.³

3. February 1489—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to Ioasaf, the Former Bishop of Rostov.*⁴ This manuscript was published in AED.⁵

4. October 1490—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow.*⁶ This manuscript was published in AED.⁷

5. October 1490—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to the*

Тип. С. Селивановского, 1825]).

¹I. Hrushev, *Studies of Iosif Sanin's Writings* (Saint Petersburg, 1868) (И. Хрущев, *Исследования о сочинениях Иосифа Санина* [Санкт-Петербург, 1868]).

¹AED, 309-312.

²Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal," Manuscript GPB, Q.XVII.50, F. A. Tolstoy's Collection, II, #341 (Гонозов, "Послание епископу Нифонту Суздальскому," Манускрипт ГПБ, Q.XVII.50, собрание Федора Толстого, II, #341).

³AED, 312-313.

⁴Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to Ioasaf, the Former Bishop of Rostov," Manuscript BIL, Troizkiy's Collection, #730 (Гонозов, "Послание Иоасафу, бывшему архиепископу Ростовскому," Манускрипт БИЛ, собрание Троицкого, #730).

⁵Ibid., 315-320.

⁶Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow," Manuscript GPB, Q.XVII.15, F. A. Tolstoy's Collection, II, #254, 372-377 (Гонозов, "Послание митрополиту Зосиме," Манускрипт ГПБ, Q.XVII.15, собрание Федора Толстого, II, #254, 372-377).

⁷AED, 374-379.

Council of Bishops.¹ This manuscript was published in AED.²

6. After September 1, 1492—*The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to the Unknown*.³ This manuscript was published in AED.⁴

Another document that should be studied in connection with Archbishop Gennadii's letters is *The Letter of the Great Prince Ivan III and Metropolitan Gerontii to Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod*.⁵ The manuscript was published in AED.⁶

Writings of Iosif of Volotsk

Another body of literature was produced by Iosif of Volotsk, who became the most prolific opponent of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. His anti-judaizing letters from 1479 to 1503 form the main body of his *Instructor, or Demunciation of Judaizers*'

¹Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to the Council of Bishops," Manuscript GPB, QXVII.15, F. A. Tolstoy's Collection, 2:254, 377-380 (Гонозов, "Послание собору епископов," Манускрипт ГПБ, QXVII.15, собрание Федора Толстого, 2:254, 377-380).

²AED, 379-382.

³Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to the Unknown," Manuscript BIL, Museum's Collection, #3271, 5 (Гонозов, "Послание неизвестному," Манускрипт БИЛ, Музейное собрание, #3271, 5).

⁴AED, 390-391.

⁵"The Letter of the Great Prince Ivan III and Metropolitan Gerontii to Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod," Manuscript GPB, Q.XVII.50, F. Tolstoy's Collection, II, #341, 167-170 ("Грамота великого князя Ивана Третьего и митрополита Геронтия архиепископу Геннадию Новгородскому," Манускрипт ГПБ, Q.XVII.50, собрание Федора Толстого, II, #341, 167-170).

⁶AED, 313-315.

Heresy.¹ I will analyze the text of the *Instructor* using the historical-critical method.

Penitence by the Heretic Denis

The short fragment, *Penitence*, by a Novgorod heretic Denis has also been preserved.² This manuscript was published in AED.³

Sentence of the 1490 Council

Another important body of antiheretical writings is the official material of the Council of 1490—the *Sentence*.⁴ Sergey Dolgov studied this manuscript.⁵

Voskresensk Chronicle of 1492

The *Voskresensk Chronicle* of A.D. 1492 presents another set of accusations against the Judaizers.⁶

¹Iosif of Volotsk, *The Instructor*.

²Denis, “Penitence,” Manuscript BAN 4.3.15 (Денис, “Покаяние,” Манускрипт БАН 4.3.15).

³AED, 388.

⁴*Sentence of the Council*, 11-15.

⁵S. O. Dolgov, “Moscow’s 1490 Council Against Judaizers,” in *New Materials on the Judaizers’ Heresy*, ed. S. A. Belokurov (Moscow: Moscow University, 1902), 113-125 (С. О. Долгов, “Московский собор 1490 года против жидовствующих,” в *Новые материалы о ереси жидовствующих*, ред. С. А. Белокуров [Москва: Московский университет, 1902], 113-125).

⁶*Complete Collection of the Russian Chronicles (PSRL)* (Saint Petersburg: Edward Praz’ Publishing House, 1853) (*Полное собрание русских рукописей* [Санкт-Петербург: Типография Эдуарда Праца, 1853], 8:220-224).

Letter of Monk Savva

The *Letter of Monk Savva* is mostly a compilation of different patristic sources and reflects Savva's understanding of the Judaizers' heresy.¹ In his detailed analysis of this document, Belokurov evaluates the sources used in this letter.²

Works from within the Novgorod-Moscow Movement

The writings traditionally associated with the Novgorod-Moscow movement can be divided into two categories: (1) writings of ancient theologians, historians, and philosophers found among the Subbotniks; and (2) manuscripts written by the Subbotniks themselves.

Books Found Among the Subbotniks

Letters of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod contain a list of books found among the Subbotniks. Before the first council against the heretics in 1490 Gennadii sent this list to Paisy Jaroslavov, Nil Sorsky, and others. Gennadii also cited these books in his *Letter to Ioasaf, the Former Archbishop of Rostov*.

The discussion concerned some biblical books (the Prophets, Genesis, Kings, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes); and works of a theological, didactic, and ecclesiastical-polemical nature (*Sylvester—Pope of Rome; Athanasius of Alexandria;*

¹*Letter of Monk Savva* was published by S. Belokurov. See S. Belokurov, "Letter of Monk Savva," in *About the Judaizers' Heresy*, ed. S. Belokurov (Moscow: Moscow University, 1902), i-12 (С. Белокуров, "Послание инока Саввы," в *О ереси жидовствующих*, ред. С. Белокуров [Москва: Московский университет, 1902], i-12).

²*Ibid.*, vii.

Discourse Against the Recent Heresy, Bogomilism, by Priest Kozma; Letter of Patriarch Photios to Boris, Prince of Bulgaria; Dionysios the Areopagite). Only two works mentioned on the list were of a different kind: *Menander* (sayings of the classical playwright Menander) and the anonymous *Logic*.¹ These books and their relationship to the Novgorod-Moscow believers will be studied in the fourth chapter of this study.

Books Written by the Subbotniks

Although significant works of the Subbotniks were destroyed during the years of the controversy, the few that have survived represent reliable sources for the study of this movement. These are the writings of Fedor Kuritsin, Ivan Kuritsin, and Ivan Chernij. Since the book of the so-called *Judaizers' Psalms* by Fedor the Jew is usually ascribed to the activity of Russian Subbotniks, it will also be studied.

Writings of Fedor Kuritsin

1. *Laodicean Letter*.² AED has published several manuscripts of this letter.³

2. *Cryptogram In Squares*, an appendix to *Laodicean Letter*, follows

¹AED, 320. The *Logic* mentioned by Gennadii is usually identified with the *Logic of Maimonides al-Ghazali*, translated in Western Russia and preserved in sixteenth-century Russian manuscripts.

²Fedor Kuritsin, "Laodicean Letter," Manuscript BAN, 4.3.15, BIL, Undolsky's Collection, #53 (Федор Курицин, "Лаодекийское послание," Манускрипт БАН 4.3.15, БИЛ, собрание Ундольского, #53).

³AED, 256-265.

immediately after the *Laodicean Letter* and is found in the same manuscripts.¹

3. *Commentary* is usually found in the manuscripts containing Kuritsin's *Laodicean Letter*.² Both the style and the purpose of this document suggest that its author is Fedor Kuritsin.

4. *Story of Dracula*—a book of political satire.³

Writings of Ivan Volk Kuritsin

The *Rudder* appears together with *The Rightful Measure*.⁴ Although the *Rudder* has to a large degree been ignored by those studying the Subbotniks, its analysis is essential, because it reflects the views of the leading theologian of the Subbotniks group, Ivan Volk Kuritsin. Ivan Kuritsin is the only theologian of the Novgorod-Moscow movement

¹Fedor Kuritsin, "Cryptogram In Squares," Manuscript BAN, 4.3.15, ВП, Undolsky's Collection, #53 (Федор Курицин, "Литорея в квадратах," Манускрипт БАН, 4.3.15, БИЛ, собрание Ундольского, #53).

²Fedor Kuritsin, "Commentary," Manuscript BAN, 4.3.15, ВП, Undolsky's Collection, #53 (Федор Курицин, "Толкование," Манускрипт БАН, 4.3.15, БИЛ, собрание Ундольского, #53).

³Fedor Kuritsin, "The Tale of Dracula," in *Collection*, ed. L. F. Dmitriev and D. S. Lihachev (Moscow: Fiction Literature, 1969), 432-445 (Федор Курицин, "Сказание о Дракуле," in *Изборник*, ред. Л. Ф. Дмитриев и Д. С. Лихачев [Москва: Художественная литература, 1969], 432-445).

⁴Ivan Volk Kuritsin, *The Rightful Measure, or the Rudder*, Manuscript MDA, #187 (Иван Волк Курицин, *Мерило праведное, или Кормчая*, Рукопись МДА, #187). Also Y. K. Begunov, "Rudder by Ivan Volk Kuritsin," *TODRL* 12 (n.d.): 141-159 (Ю. К. Бегунов, "Кормчая Ивана Волка Курицина," *Труды отдела древней русской литературы* 12 [n.d.]: 141-159).

who was executed and whose writings have been preserved.¹

Writings of Ivan Chernij

Scholars unanimously attribute the following books to Chernij:

1. Ivan Chernij copied the *Hellenistic Chronograph*.² A detailed description of this manuscript is found in the work of Alexander E. Viktorov.³

2. *Biblical Collection*.⁴ The notes made by Chernij on the margins of *Biblical Collection* are listed in *AED* together with the passages from the manuscript itself.⁵

3. *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies*.⁶

¹The fact that these manuscripts survived the time of harsh persecutions is probably to be explained by Kuritsin's use of a cryptogram in place of a signature. In fact, all the preserved manuscripts by Subbotniks, including those by Fedor Kuritsin and Ivan Chernij, contain cryptograms concealing either their names, or some of their dissenting ideas.

²Ivan Chernij, *Hellenistic Chronograph*, Manuscript ВЛ, Museum's Collection, #597 (Иван Черный, *Еллинский летоисец*, Манускрипт БИЛ, Музейное собрание, #597).

³A. E. Viktorov, *The Catalog of Slavic-Russian Manuscripts from the Collection of D. V. Piskarev* (Moscow: Public and Rumjanzev Museums of Moscow, 1871) (A. E. Викторов, *Каталог славяно-русских рукописей Д. В. Пискарева* (Москва: Издательство Московского Публичного и Румянцевского музеев, 1871). The notes made by Ivan Chernij on the margins of this manuscript are listed in *AED* (280-285) together with the passages from this manuscript.

⁴Ivan Chernij, "Biblical Collection," Manuscript ВЛ, Undolsky's Collection, #1; Museum's Collection, #547 (Иван Черный, "Библиейский сборник," Манускрипт БИЛ, собрание Ундольского, #1; Музейное собрание, #547).

⁵*AED*, 285-299.

⁶Ivan Chernij, *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies*, Manuscript of Saint Petersburg Public Library (Saltikov-Shedrin's library), #F.I.3 (Иван Черный, "Книга ветхозаветних пророчеств," Манускрипт библиотеки Салтыкова-Щедрина, #F.I.3).

Writings of Fedor the Jew

1. The authorship of *Judaizers' Psalms* is usually ascribed to Fedor the Jew.¹
2. Another document written by the same author is the *Letter of Fedor the Jew*.²

Secondary Works of the Later Historians and Theologians (before 1917)

Although many Russian historians mentioned the Novgorod-Moscow movement in succeeding centuries, Nicholay Rudnev, a student of Moscow Theological Seminary who later became an archpriest, was the first historian to find this movement worthy of special attention. Rudnev, in his *Discussion of the Heresies and Schisms*, faithfully followed the traditional interpretation of Iosif of Volotsk. He probably introduced the term “the Judaizers’ heresy” (*ересь жидовствующих*) into Russian historical literature. Rudnev apparently accepted Iosif’s version, but hesitated to recognize Iosif’s total evaluation of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. Rudnev came to the surprising conclusion that “little judaizing is found” in this heresy.³

The next scholar who analyzed this movement was Ilj’a Hrushev. Although he approached the Subbotniks’ movement from the perspective of Iosif’s *Instructor*, he

¹Fedor the Jew, *Judaizers' Psalms*, Kirillov Monastery’s Collection, #6/1083 (Федор Еврей, “Псалтирь жидовствующих,” собрание Кирилловского монастыря, #6/1083).

²Fedor the Jew, “The Letter of Fedor the Jew,” Undolsky’s Collection, #1254 (Федор Еврей, “Послание Федора Еврея,” собрание Ундольского, #1254).

³Rudnev, 118.

made an early attempt to delineate the dynamics of the *Instructor*. This endeavor met with severe criticism.¹

The famous Russian historians Sergej M. Solovjov and Nikolaj I. Kostomarov touched only slightly on the subject of the Subbotniks' movement.² They viewed this movement as a blend of Judaism and Christianity.

The traditional historians of that period shared the opinion of Iosif of Volotsk, and thus described the Subbotniks' movement as being entirely judaizing in its nature. Among these scholars were the well-known historians: Metropolitan Makary,³ Yevgeny E. Golubinsky,⁴ and Aleksey S. Pavlov.⁵

These scholars were opposed by the more progressive historians. Kljuchevskii, one of Russia's most distinguished historians, departed from his earlier views. The

¹K. I. Nevostruev, *Review of the Book by I. Hrushev* (Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1870), 103 (К. И. Невоструев, *Рассмотрение книги И. Хрущева* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Императорской Академии Наук, 1870], 103).

²See S. M. Solovjov, *The History of Russia*, 29 vols. (Moscow: Got'e, 1851-1879), 5:251-266, 453 (С. М. Соловьев, *История России с древнейших времен*, 29 т. [Москва: Типография В. Готье, 1851-1879], 5:251-266, 453); N. I. Kostomarov, *Russian History in Biographies of Its Most Important Leaders*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Stasilevich, 1873-76), 2:319-339 (Н. И. Костомаров, *Русская история в жизнеописаниях ее главнейших деятелей*, 2 т. [Санкт-Петербург: Типография Стасюлевича, 1873-76], 2:319-339).

³Bulgakov, *History of the Russian Church*, 6:82-86.

⁴Y. E. Golubinsky, *History of the Russian Church*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Moscow University, 1900), 2:560-607 (Е. Е. Голубинский, *История Русской Церкви*, 2 т. [Москва: Московский университет, 1900], 2:560-607).

⁵Pavlov, *The Question of the Judaizers' Heresy at the Fourth Archeological Assembly*.

predominant traditional interpretation introduced by Iosif of Volotsk was exchanged for a more balanced view of the Subbotniks. Kljuchevskii suggested that a more extensive study of the sources is necessary to understand the nature of this heresy.¹ Since Kljuchevskii never found opportunity to make this research, the challenge was left for later scholars. Dmitrii Ilovajsky undertook a further research which opposed Pavlov's by presenting the Judaizers' heresy as having only a "pseudo-judaizing" character.²

Alexander Servitskii approached this "heresy" as "a mixture of many trends," the most important of which was "religious indifference," and not as a single unified confessional profession.³ Ilij'a Panov saw in the heresy "the product of mutual agreement between not strictly consistent, not entirely extreme Christian rationalism and the liberal philosophic trend in Judaism."⁴ In general, both Servitskii and Panov were influenced by the views of Rudnev. However, Panov went further than any of his predecessors: he attempted to correlate the general characteristics of the movement given by Iosif's *Instructor* with the historical evolution and the origin of this document.⁵ Panov, on the

¹V. O. Kljuchevskii, "On the Heresy of Judaizers," Manuscript of the Museum of History of Religion and Atheism, К. О/р #1, #52, 2-13 (В. О. Ключевский, "О ереси жидовствующих," Рукописный отдел Музея истории религии и атеизма, К. О/р #1, #52, 2-13).

²D. Ilovajsky, *History of Russia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Kushnerev's Publishing House, 1884), 2:508-514, 571, 580-581 (Д. Иловайский, *История России*, 2 т. [Москва: Тип. И. Н. Кушнера, 1884], 2:508-514, 571, 580-581).

³Servitskii, vi-viii.

⁴Panov, 2.

⁵*Ibid.*, 32.

other hand, was unwilling to recognize the biases of Iosif of Volotsk and tried to explain controversial points of the *Instructor* exclusively by Iosif's lack of information.¹

One of the most valuable studies of the Subbotniks' movement was made by Alexej I. Nikitskii of the University of Warsaw. He was the first to critically examine Iosif's *Instructor*. He does not speak openly of the biases of the author of the *Instructor* yet, but he seriously doubts the validity of Iosif's argument. Nikitskii rejected the judaizing notion of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents, insisting that it was a product of Russian Christian thought.² Nikitskii's work was received with enthusiasm by many outstanding Russian historians of the nineteenth century.

Fedor I. Il'insky, who also rejected any notion of judaizing in the Novgorod-Moscow movement, insisted on a close relation between Russian heretics and Bulgarian Bogomils.³ Unfortunately, the author does not document his theory.

¹Ibid., 23-24.

²Nikitskii and Zamislovskii, 75.

³F. I. Il'insky, "Russian Fifteenth-Century Bogomils," *Theological Review* (7) 1905: 436-459 (Ф. И. Ильинский, "Русские богомилы пятнадцатого века," *Богословский Вестник* 7 [1905]: 436-459); idem, "Metropolitan Zosima and Kuritsin," *Theological Review* 10 (1905): x ("Митрополит Зосима и дьяк Курицин," *Богословский Вестник* 10 (1905): x). A dualist and docetist sect that arose and flourished in mediæval Bulgaria, the Bogomils derive their name from their founder, the priest Bogomil (Theophilus) and their teachings from the Paulicans, a Manichæan group that settled in Thrace in the late eighth century. The Bogomils believed that Christ had only the semblance of a human body, and they reject the Eucharist and other sacraments, as well as relics and the use of material items in worship. The Bogomils were as ascetical as the Cathars and also rejected marriage and the eating of animal products. Although the group saw the authority of the established hierarchy as invalid, they set up a separate hierarchy. On the history of Bogomils see Alfred J. Bannan and Achilles Edelenyi, eds., *Documentary History of Eastern Europe* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970).

Vladimir F. Botsianovskii insists on the relationship between the Novgorod-Moscow movement and the Hussite movement in what is now the Czech Republic.¹ Although Botsianovskii rejects any idea of Judaism traditionally ascribed to the Subbotniks' movement, he does not solidify this position with serious research.

In the beginning of the twentieth century a special interest in the historiography of the Novgorod-Moscow movement emerged. This new interest eventually transformed the study of this movement from speculative discussions to a level of more systematic academic research. Alexander I. Sobolevskii was the first to pay serious attention to previously unresearched sources concerning the movement.² He did, however, help following generations of scholars to overcome the traditional tendency to base the evaluation of this movement only on Iosif's writings. Sobolevskii assumed the judaizing character of this movement; this in turn directed his attempts to discover new sources among the manuscripts of Jewish origin produced in Western Russia. He ascribed these sources to the Novgorod-Moscow movement, without proving the supposed existing relationship between these documents and the Russian dissidents. His uncritical approach toward the "new" sources ignited a whole generation of scholars who understood the movement in judaizing terms. Sergej Belokurov, Michail Sokolov, and Sergej Dolgov

¹V. F. Botsianovskii, *God-Seekers* (Saint Petersburg: M. O. Volf, 1911), 1-21 (В. Ф. Боцяновский, *Богоискатели* [Санкт-Петербург: Т-во М. О. Вольф, 1911], 1-21).

²A. I. Sobolevskii, *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia in the Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries* (Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1903), 396-428 (А. И. Соболевский, *Переводная литература Московской Руси XVI-XVII веков* [Санкт-Петербург: Императорская Академия Наук, 1903], 396-428).

uncritically adopted the position of Sobolevskii and Evseev and thus revived the faded notion that the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents were essentially Judaizers. The same kind of thinking is found in Michael N. Speranskii's writings¹ and other historians.²

The inconsistency of this approach was already noticed by Vladimir N. Peretz in 1908. Peretz suggested that the attempt to ascribe certain Western Russian fifteenth-century literature to the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents was totally groundless. The idea about a relationship between the Subbotniks and Jewish theology appeared to him as problematic.³ In the introduction to his book, A. E. Presnjakov supported Peretz's position and indicated that Sobolevskii's approach to historical materials "transformed the data of primary sources into a series of illustrations of a ready-made scheme, which was not drawn from the data."⁴ In the same way, L. Bedrzhitsky recognized the fallacy of

¹M. N. Speranskii, *Psalter of the Judaizers in the Translation of Fedor the Jew* (Moscow: Moscow University, 1907) (М. Н. Сперанский, *Псалтырь жидовствующих в переводе Федора Еврея* [Москва: Московский университет, 1907]).

²See N. S. Tihonravov, *Writings*, 3 vols. (Moscow: A. I. Mamontov's Publishing Company, 1898), 1:150 (Н. С. Тихонравов, *Сочинения*, 3 т. [Москва: Товарищество типографии А. И. Мамонтова, 1898], 1:150); V. Iconnikov, *Collection of Writings*, 2 vols. (Kiev: Saint Vladimir University, 1915), 1:26-31 (В. Иконников, *Собрание трудов*, 2 т. [Киев: тип. Императорского Университета св. Владимира, 1915], 1:26-31).

³V. N. Peretz, "To the Question of Jewish-Russian Literary Conversation," *Slavia* 5 (1926-27): 268 (В. Н. Перетц, "К вопросу о еврейско-русском литературном общении," *Славия* 5 [1926-27]: 268). The author insists that "we should discern between the pseudo-Judaic influence and the factual one; among the first category is the so-called heresy of Judaizers."

⁴A. E. Presnjakov, *The Formation of the Great Russian Commonwealth* (Saint Petersburg: Ninth State Publishing House, 1920), v (А. Е. Пресняков, *Образование Великорусского Государства* [Петроград: Девятая государственная типография, 1920], v), quoted in Y. S. Lur'e, "Problems of Source Criticism (with Reference to

uncritically adding Jewish sources to the “literature of Judaizers,” insisting that the list consists of “only those writings that are obviously ascribed to the ‘heresy’ by the manuscripts themselves,”¹ pointing to the already-mentioned letters of Archbishop Gennadii.

Studies During the Soviet Period (after 1917)

The topic of the Novgorod-Moscow movement came to the surface several times during the Soviet period in connection with disciplines such as: works on late fifteenth-century Church history;² studies of Russian literature,³ history of the literature,⁴ science,⁵

Medieval Russian Documents),” *Slavic Review* 28 (1968): 3.

¹L. Bedrzhitsky, “Literary Activity of the Judaizers,” *The Journal of the Ministry of Education* 32 (1912): 113 (Л. Бедржицкий, “Литературная деятельность жиждовствующих,” *ЖМНП* 32 [1912]: 113).

²N. M. Nikolskii, *History of the Russian Church* (Moscow: Political Literature, 1983), 79-100 (Н. М. Никольский, *История Русской Церкви* [Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1983], 79-100); A. D. Dmitrev, *The Church and the Idea of Monarchy in Russia* (Moscow: Atheist, 1930) (А. Д. Дмитриев, *Церковь и идея самодержавия в России* [Москва: Атеист, 1930]); D. S. Lihachev, ed. *Historical Materials of USSR* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1963), 115-326 (Д. С. Лихачев, *Материалы по истории СССР* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1963], 115-326).

³A. S. Orlov, *Ancient Russian Literature of the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Centuries* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1939) (А. С. Орлов, *Древняя Русская литература XI–XVII веков* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1939]).

⁴I. U. Budovnicz, *Russian Sixteenth-Century Literature* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1947), 1:64 (И. У. Будовниц, *Русская публицистика XVI века* [Москва: Академии Наук СССР, 1947], 1:64); A. A. Zimin, *Russia in the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Moscow: Political Literature, 1982), 76-92, 197-232 (А. А. Зимин, *Россия на рубеже XV–XVI столетий* [Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1982], 76-92, 197-232).

⁵T. Rajnov, *Science in Eleventh- Through Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1940) (Т. Райнов, *Наука в России XI–XVII ст.* [Москва:

philosophy,¹ and the history of Novgorod.² Starting in the middle of the 1930s, Soviet scholars began viewing the Novgorod-Moscow movement from an entirely new perspective. Their approach was clothed with a new ideological partiality. The movement was now presented as “the protest against feudalism,” humanism, and even atheism.³ A. Dmitrev considered this heresy as “a broad antiecclesiastical movement” that had as its foundation “the interests of the emerging commercial activity that could hardly fit into the borders of feudal regulations.”⁴ I. U. Budov niz characterized the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents as a “broad reform movement similar to those of Western European movements” and having its motivation and inspiration “in the ruling social relationships and conflicts.”⁵ It should be noted that most of the research on this movement was done during the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin (1879–1953). Stalin’s interest in the Novgorod-Moscow movement can easily be explained by the Subbotniks’ positive attitude toward

Академия наук СССР, 1940]).

¹R. A. Simonov and N. I. Stjzhkin, “Historical and Logical Review of the Ancient Russian Texts,” *Philosophical Sciences* 5 (1977): 132-143 (Р. А. Симонов и Н. И. Стяжкин, “Историко-логический обзор древнерусских текстов,” *Философские науки* 5 [1977]: 132-143).

²N. G. Porfiridov, *Ancient Novgorod* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1947), 295-310 (Н. Г. Порфиридов, *Древний Новгород* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1947], 295-310).

³A. S. Orlov, *Lectures on Ancient Russian Literature* (Leningrad, 1939) (А. С. Орлов, *Курс лекций по древне-русской литературе* [Ленинград, 1939]); Porfiridov, *Ancient Novgorod*.

⁴A. D. Dmitriev, *Inquisition in Russia* (Moscow: Polygraph Book, 1937), 24-25 (А. Д. Дмитриев, *Инквизиция в России* [Москва: Полиграфкнига, 1937], 24-25).

⁵Budov niz, 64.

the centralized policy of Moscow's tsar. It is of little wonder that both Ivan III (1440-1505) and Ivan IV, the Terrible, (1530-1584) were among the favorite historical heroes of Stalin. While much research was undertaken in Stalin's time to make this movement known among Russians, virtually no emphasis was given to its theological aspects. Understandably, Soviet rulers wanted to minimize the religious aspects of the Subbotniks.

Recent Studies

The pinnacle of research on the Subbotniks' movement was reached with the work of N. A. Kazakova and Y. S. Lur'e, who gathered and investigated the relevant sources.¹ Another vital analysis of available literature was made by Alexander I. Klibanov.² These two fundamental studies, together with the primary sources, are the literary source material on which the present dissertation is based.

Scholars of the later half of the twentieth century were especially interested in the ideological struggles of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Some primary sources for the history of the Subbotniks were published during this period.³ Important works were written by Alexandr A. Zimin, A I. Klibanov, and Jakov S. Lur'e.⁴ Other

¹The *Appendix* to their book provides most of the sources on the study of Subbotniks' movement, including the writings of both accusers and dissidents. In the research I refer to this *Appendix* as *AED*.

²Klibanov, *Reform Movements*; also Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*.

³A. A. Zimin and Y. S. Lur'e, eds., *The Writings of Iosif of Volotsk* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1959) (А. А. Зимин и Я. С. Лурье, ред. *Послания Иосифа Волоцкого* [Москва: Академия наук СССР, 1959]).

⁴See A. A. Zimin, "On the Political Doctrine of Iosif of Volotsk," *Studies of the Department of the Ancient Russian Literature (TODRL)* 9 (1953): 159-177 (A. A.

pertinent works were written during this time of revived interest in the dissidents.¹

Development and Usage of the Term “Judaizers”

In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russian historical literature the Novgorod-Moscow movement came to be called the “Judaizers’ heresy.” This label, which cannot be found in the five-hundred-year-old primary sources, quickly became firmly rooted in the modern historiography.²

The Russian word *jidowstwujushhije* (Judaizers), as well as its variants, comes from the word *jid* (Jew). The root of the Latin term *judaizare* (to judaize) can be found in

Зимин, “О политической доктрине Иосифа Волоцкого,” *ТОДРЛ* 9 [1953]: 159-177; Y. S. Lur’e, *Ideological Controversy in Fifteenth- to Sixteenth-Century Russian Literature* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1960) (Я. С. Лурье, *Идеологическая борьба в русской публицистике конца XV начала XVI века* [Москва: Академия Наук СССР, 1960]).

¹For a survey of the literature on the heretical movements for the period up to 1970, see E. Hösch, “Sowjetische Forschungen zur Häresiegeschichte Altrusslands: Methodische Bemerkungen,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 18 (1970): 279-312. Other articles indirectly touching upon the problem of the heresy should be noted as well: H. Birnbaum, “On Some Evidence of Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia,” *Viator* 4 (1973): 225-255; C. J. Halperin, “Judaizers and the Image of the Jew in Medieval Russia,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 9 (1975): 141-155; J. Allerhand, “Die Judaisierenden in Russland,” *Kairos* 21 (1979): 264-272; and J. Juszczak, “O badaniach nad Judaizantyzmem,” *Kwartalnik historyczny* 76 (1969): 111-151. Some recent works by Moshe Taube should also be cited: “The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers,” in *Jews and Slavs*, 3 vols., ed. W. Moskovich (Jerusalem: Hebrew University), 3:168-98; idem, “The Spiritual Circle in the Secret of Secrets,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18 (1994): 342-355. For a more detailed discussion on the problems of sources on the medieval Russian documents in general and on the Subbotniks’ movement in particular, see an article by Lur’e that was translated and published in English (Y. S. Lur’e, “Problems of Source Criticism”).

²Even though the noun forms “Judaizers” does not occur in the primary sources, the verbal form “judaizing” was often applied to the Novgorod-Moscow movement by its early opponents.

all three so-called sacred languages—Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. In Esth 8:17 the Hebrew phrase *mithyahadhim* (many became Jews) refers to the action of non-Jews who, led by various political and social reasons, joined the Jewish people and adopted their faith. This term has a positive connotation. The Septuagint equivalent of the word is Greek *ioudaizein*, with the same semantic content as the original Hebrew. It also occurs in Gal 2:14. Paul blames Peter for forcing pagans converted to Christianity to live according to Jewish rites—*ioudaizein*. Relating to this incident Paul says: “I said unto Peter before them all: If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as Jews?” (KJV).

The Latin translation of the term *ioudaizein* (to judaize) also went through a transformation. Gradually the term became an instrument for accusing Christians who legalistically deviated from the standpoint of the mainstream church. Thus, the meaning of this word varied with different historical circumstances.

For instance, the synod of Laodicea (A.D. 364) took the celebration of the Sabbath (Saturday) for a heresy of judaizers. According to John Chrysostom, Christians who observe certain Old Testament holidays are judaizing Christians.¹ In this context the word *judaizantes* does not necessarily include antitrinitarianism. Many authors during the Middle Ages, both Russians and Europeans, were alert to various manifestations of judaizing. It is interesting to note that the renowned monk Nikifor, in one of his letters,

¹John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1977), 80.

refers to Catholicism as judaizing because of their liturgical use of unleavened bread.¹ Bernard de Clairvaux felt ashamed for some of his Christian brethren who practiced judaizing by lending money at a usurious rate of interest.² Luther accused Sebastian Munster of judaizing because he appended postcanonical biblical Jewish commentaries in his Bible edition. Similarly, Luther regarded the Roman Catholic Church and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists of Moravia as judaizing.³ The Roman Catholic Church accused Wycliffe, Reuchlin, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin of being Judaizers.⁴

There are many examples of non-Jewish orthodox Christians being accused of judaizing.⁵ Robert Dan notes the condition in the sixteenth century: “Yielding to the dictates of the general practice, the local representatives of the various Christian trends mutually regarded each other as ‘judaizantes’.”⁶ As a matter of fact, most of those accused did not want to be associated with Jews; they wanted to follow Christian orthodoxy including the adoption of specific legitimate Old Testament teachings in harmony with the

¹Nikifor, “Letter of Metropolitan Nikifor to Vladimir Monomach,” Manuscript 496, Synod’s Collection, 339-346 (Никифор, “Послание митрополита Никифора к Владимиру Мономаху,” Синодальная рукопись 496, 339-346).

²A. Robertson, *The Origin of Christianity* (London, 1962), 218.

³M. L. Kroker, *Martin Luter: Tischreden in der Matheischen Sammlung* (Leipzig, 1905), 588; W. De Wette, *Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken* (Berlin, 1827), 254.

⁴L. I. Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 2.

⁵L. Geiger, *Das Studium der hebraeischen Sprache in Deutschland vom Ende des 15ten bis zur Mitte des 16ten Jahrh* (Breslau, 1870), 48.

⁶Robert Dan, “‘Judaizare’—the Career of a Term,” in *Antitrinitarianism in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Robert Dan and Antal Pirnat (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1982), 29.

New Testament. In many cases this term was attributed to those who rejected Jesus' divinity, but this was only one of many general uses of the term "Judaizers."

Summary

This introductory chapter defines the problem which was already raised by some nineteenth-century scholars who pointed out that the allegedly antitrinitarian character of the Subbotniks' movement must be open for further discussion. The predominant understanding of this movement has been gradually moving away from the traditional one. Despite this change, no systematic research on Subbotniks' theology has yet been produced. The traditional understanding of the Novgorod-Moscow movement, claiming that it teaches a distinctly Judaic theology, including a denial of characteristic Christian dogmas, such as the Trinity, needs renewed attention.

The chapter also outlined possible steps toward the solution of this problem. These steps include first the analysis and evaluation of the polemical documents against the Subbotniks, and then a similar treatment of the Subbotniks' sources. The preserved sources are sufficient to accomplish such a task. Meanwhile, to prepare the way for the analysis of primary sources, it is necessary to explore the political, social, and religious background which played an important role in the rise and fall of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVGOROD-MOSCOW MOVEMENT IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The rise, spread, and defeat of the Novgorod-Moscow movement correlates to the political, social, and religious situation in medieval Russia. Even the first accusations of judaizing, as they appear in the polemical literature, were associated with certain political and social developments. Thus, the study of the Novgorod-Moscow movement in its historical perspective is essential for understanding both the theology and the very nature of this movement.

The heyday for the Novgorod-Moscow movement coincided with the era of the famous unification of Russian lands by the last great prince and the first tsar of Russia, Ivan III (1440-1505). Some historians of the Soviet period suggest that this movement was both inspired and supported by Ivan III who, by means of this movement, was trying to achieve certain goals of his ecclesiastical policy.¹ Iosif of Volotsk constantly complained that all those close to the prince were led astray by the heresy. Iosif specifically names the clerk heading the government, Fedor Kuritsin, whose brother Ivan Volk became a ringleader of the “heretics.” Even the daughter-in-law of Ivan III, Elena

¹Kazakova and Lur'e, 79-116. Also Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 217-220.

Stepanovna, and her son, Dmitrii, accepted the Subbotniks' teaching. Iosif also announced that the heretical Metropolitan Zosima was installed upon "the place of the great Moscow sainted-hierarchs Peter, Aleksey, and Jona."¹ While it is probably preposterous to attempt to calculate to what extent was Ivan III interested in promoting the Novgorod-Moscow movement, the defeat of this movement chronologically corresponds with changes in Russian politics, as we shall see below.² Thus it is important to take a brief look at the era of Ivan III and the variety of views that emerged as a result of his social and political activity.

Social and Political Background

The descendants of Rurik (830-880), the founder of the Russian ruling dynasty, did not aim to rule all of Russia, neither did they come as close to achieving this as Ivan III would do.³ His ultimate goal was the unification of Russia as a centralized state under the independent leadership of the Great Prince of Moscow.

Internal Affairs of Moscow

Ivan's unifying policy created both supporters and antagonists. The most serious opposition to the Great Prince came from his brothers and close relatives. The reason for this opinion was Ivan's continual belittling of the most important principle behind the

¹*Instructor*, 22-27.

²G. Vernadskii, "The Heresy of the Judaizers and the Policies of Ivan III of Moscow," *Speculum* 8 (1933): 436-454. See also Buganov and Bogdanov, 62-65.

³Ian Grey, *Ivan III and the Unification of Russia* (London: English Universities Press, 1964), 10-15.

traditional rulership of Russian princes.¹ Dissatisfied with the mere role of an elder brother, Ivan sought a status previously foreign to Russian society—the tsar of Russia. As James Billington puts it, Ivan III was “the first great duke of Muscovy to call himself tsar (Caesar), he also became the first of several imperial conquerors of modern Russia to be known as ‘the Great’.”² The opposition to Ivan’s policy understandably came from his close relatives, whose positions in the emerging centralized Russia looked very uncertain.³

J. Fennell states that

campaigns, annexations, marriages, embassies, executions, reforms—all occur as if by some preconceived plan. The purpose of each event becomes clear when viewed in perspective from the end of the reign. Nothing seems to have been accidental, carelessly planned or even mistimed. And all events appear to point in one direction. The numerous minor campaigns, the countless attempts to form friendships in the east and in the west, the disgraces at home, the intrusions in Church affairs—all these were by no means haphazard occurrences caused by the whim of a despot. They were rather steps in the path of a statesman of vision and above all of astounding singlemindedness.⁴

As the creator of an empire, Ivan rose to the same level as Charlemagne in Europe and Tamerlane in Asia. Fennell continues:

His cold reasoning told him just how far he could abuse the freedom of his subjects and tamper with the sanctity of religious institutions. . . . His land reforms, his Church policy, his attitude towards his Council and the close circle of his family and

¹According to the ancient tradition, the sons of the great prince shared the land after his death. The elder son received the capital city and the authority of the first among equals.

²J. H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 17.

³J. L. Fennell, *Ivan the Great of Moscow* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 1-18.

⁴*Ibid.*, 17-18.

relatives, all were motivated by his over-riding purpose. Indeed, many of the actions of Ivan affecting his subjects alone can be understood only if studied in conjunction with his foreign policy.¹

Foreign Policy

Ivan's foreign policies have made a lasting impression on the Russian empire.

When a domestic situation came out of control, Ivan almost always made it into the status of a foreign affair.² In the following analysis I will review only those affairs of Moscow that impacted the religious situation in Russia, particularly the growth and decline of the Subbotniks' movement. Some of the issues related to the trinitarian status of the Subbotniks cannot be solved without considering this historical background.

The Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman Empire was the only political power that could compete with Russia at the end of fifteenth century. The relation between Moscow and the Holy Roman Empire was limited by the great plans, most of which were never fulfilled.³ Fedor Kuritsin, one of the most prominent leaders of the Subbotniks' movement, was in charge of diplomatic relations with the Holy Roman Empire during this time. From the ambitious

¹Ibid.

²V. O. Kljuchevskii, *A History of Russia*, 5 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), 2:1-16.

³P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège* (Paris, 1886), 41-52; also P. Snesaverskii, *Collapse of the Vatican's Aggressive Diplomacy in Fifteenth- to Sixteenth-Century Russia* (Moscow: Ministry of Education, 1951) (П. Снесаревский, *Крах агрессивной политики Ватикана в России, XV-XVI вв.* [Москва: Министерство Просвещения РСФСР, 1951]).

dialog with Rome, he was able to achieve some positive results in favor of Russia. Many great architects, engineers, craftsmen, artists, and scientists, who changed the image of Moscow forever, came to Russia as a direct result of Kuritsin's negotiations between Russia and the Holy Roman Empire. Among them are Aristotle Fioravanti of Bologna and Pietro Antonio Solari of Milan.¹

The Holy Roman Empire had played an important, although indirect, role in the defeat of the Novgorod-Moscow movement through the so-called "dynastic" crisis.² The second wife of Ivan III, Zoe Palaeologus (Sofia), who was the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, received her education in Rome under the supervision of Pope Sixtus IV and Cardinal Bessarion. It was the initiative of the Holy Roman Empire, especially the Holy See, that arranged for her marriage to Ivan III. Sofia eventually came to play a major role in the "dynastic" crisis and the defeat of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

Moldavia

Ivan III's most fruitful Western alliance was with Moldavia. This country was ruled by one of the greatest Moldavian rulers of all time, Stephan IV the Great, who was a "man of rare insight and courage and who managed not only to stand up to his more powerful Christian neighbours but to keep the Moslems at bay for nigh on half a century."³ Fedor Kuritsin served as ambassador to Moldavia for a while and at least once visited the

¹Ivar Spector, *An Introduction to Russian History and Culture* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1954), 31.

²A detailed analysis of the "dynastic" crisis follows at the end of this chapter.

³Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 107.

court of Stephan.¹ The alliance was strengthened by the arrangement of a royal marriage between Ivan III's son and heir, Ivan Ivanovich, and the daughter of Stephan, Elena Stephanovna in January 1484.² "Strangely enough," notes Fennell, "it was not as a strengthening bond between the two principalities that Elena became known to her contemporaries and to posterity, but as a truly remarkable center of religious heresy and court intrigue."³ Elena Stephanovna and her son Dmitrii, the rightful heir of the Russian crown, became the major supporters of the Subbotniks' movement. The core of the political struggle that accompanied the defeat of the Subbotniks was centered around two royal women carrying opposite religious ideologies—Sofia Palaeologus with her Roman Catholic/Byzantine orientation, and Elena Stepanovna with her sympathies toward the Reform movement. The defeat of the Subbotniks' movement and the probable violent death of Elena Stephanovna and her son Dmitrii paralyzed for centuries the relationships between the two countries.

Lithuania

After the union of Poland and Lithuania in 1386 all Lithuanians were "converted" to Catholicism; they were even forbidden to marry Russians unless the latter accepted their

¹See Ivan's message to his ambassador in the Crimea, Vasilii Nosdrovaty, and his request to Mengli Girey. *Collection of the Imperial Russian Historical Society (SRIO)* (Saint Petersburg, 1867-1916) 41, No. 11, pp. 41-4 (*Сборник Императорского русского исторического общества* [Санкт-Петербург, 1867-1916] том 41, N. 11, стр. 41-4).

²*PSRL*, VI/234-5; XX/349-50.

³Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 109.

new faith.¹ In 1447 Casimir was elected king by the Polish diet, thus uniting Poland and Lithuania under a single crown which remained in effect until Casimir's death in 1492.

Both the Russian tsar and the Lithuanian great prince claimed the land west and south of Novgorod to be under their lawful jurisdiction. Several areas of Western Russia were peacefully incorporated into the Lithuanian state during the years of the Tatars' dominion over Russia. The inhabitants of these areas enjoyed freedom of religion under the protection of Lithuania, and were altogether comfortable with their situation.² Consequently, Ivan's strategy of unifying Russia could not be reconciled with this state of affairs. Thus, war with Lithuania seemed inevitable. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to determine an exact date for the beginning of the Russian-Lithuanian war. For years Russia instigated limited military campaigns on the Lithuanian border. War was proclaimed openly in 1492. This war became the culmination of Ivan's whole foreign policy and the war was initiated only when he believed Moscow's other frontiers were safe. The war deeply impacted the internal politics of the Russian tsar.

Both the supporters and enemies of the Novgorod-Moscow movement tried to discredit each other by reciprocal accusations of cooperation with the Lithuanian side. For example, the "heretical" Metropolitan Zosima accused Gennadii of cooperation with

¹A. Barbashev, *Vitovt: The Last Twenty Years of Reign, 1410-1430* (Saint Petersburg: I. N. Skorohodov's Publishing House, 1891), 12-17 (А. Барбашев, *Витовт: последние двадцать лет княжения, 1410-1430* [Санкт-Петербург: тип. И. Н. Скороходова, 1891], 12-17).

²O. P. Backus, *Motives of West Russian Nobles in Deserting Lithuania for Moscow, 1377-1514* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1957).

the Lithuanian authorities.¹ Gennadii, in his turn, writes that the new “heresy” is the fruit of the “Lithuanian cursed schemes in the Russian land.”² At the time of hostilities between Lithuania and Russia, statements like these had polemical rather than historical value.

Tatars

Beside challenges in the West, Moscow also faced problems in the East and in the South. Around 1300 the mighty Empire of Mongols, known to the Russians as Tatars, extended from China to Poland, occupying the whole of Asia except India, Burma, and Cambodia. Russian history from 1200 to 1500 is best understood in the Mongol context. For about two and a half centuries the Mongol dominion utterly destroyed Russian political might. While by the middle of the fifteenth century the power of the Mongols had significantly decreased, the Tatars of the *khanates* of the Golden Horde, Kazan, and Crimea continued to harass their Russian neighbors throughout much of Ivan’s reign, resulting in considerable military and diplomatic losses to the Russians.³ Regardless of whether tribute was regularly paid to the Khan of the Golden Horde or not, the prince of Moscow was still, in name at least, a vassal of the Tatars’ khan.⁴ In the second half of the fifteenth century, the *khanates* of Kazan and Crimea achieved a certain degree of

¹See Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow,” *AED*, 375.

²*Ibid.*

³Nicolas Brian-Chaninov, *The Russian Church* (London: Burns Oates, 1931), 112.

⁴Francis House notes that “the country was only finally delivered from Tatar rule in 1481, a hundred years after the battle of Kulikovo.” F. House, *Millennium of Faith* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 14.

independence from the Golden Horde. This created a situation where well-coordinated diplomatic maneuvering was able to accomplish more than mere military superiority. Moscow was able to play a skillful political game with the Tatars. Two Tatar princes (*tsarevishi*), Kasim and Yakub, rebelled against their brother Mahmudek, a khan of the Golden Horde, resulting in an alliance with Moscow. They came to serve Moscow faithfully, since this was the only way for them to preserve their independence.

In dealing with the period of Russian history prior to the sixteenth century, it should be remembered that the lack of historical documents can be largely explained by the Tatars' recurring vandalistic invasions and their tendency to torch whatever could be consumed by fire. Only a few documents have survived the fights and fires of that time.

The Tatar occupation also affected the clergy and the Church. The Tatar princes supported its authority. Albert Heard indicates: "The monasteries and religious bodies, exempted from taxation and protected from spoliation, had grown rich and prosperous amid the general ruin. . . . Nearly all the great religious institutions of Russia arose during this period of the Tatar conquest."¹ Thus, politically and economically the Church came out of the Tatar occupation stronger than ever before, well able to combat any nonconformism. The standards of morality and literacy among the clergy, however, were proportionally lowered.² These features certainly left a mark on the character of the fight of the Church against the Subbotniks.

¹A. F. Heard, *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887), 40.

²*Ibid.*, 41.

Republic of Novgorod

The independent city-state of Novgorod provides insights into Ivan's western policy. The mercantile city of Novgorod, according to some estimates, was the richest city of Eastern Europe. Consequently, according to Fennell: "Throughout the first three-quarters of the fifteenth century Novgorod was one of the main bones of contention between Lithuania and Moscow."¹ Marfa Boretskaya, a remarkable woman who headed the *boyar* (hereditary nobility) party which sought alliance with Casimir of Lithuania, worked hard to throw off the restraints imposed by the Great Prince of Moscow. Novgorod had enjoyed its autonomy and prosperity since the end of the twelfth century.² *Lord Novgorod the Great*, as the republic was respectfully known, was the center of commerce between East and West, overshadowing Moscow in many ways. Nicholas Zernov notes that "it was the last outpost into the Western world left to the Russian people."³ The people of Novgorod treasured their freedom and autonomy. Their constitution was republican in nature and to a certain degree democratic. The *veche* (popular assembly) in which every citizen—at least in theory—had the right to cast his vote on the affairs of the republic, made sure that decisions from the outside would not overrule the will of the people of Novgorod. The senior administrative, ecclesiastical, and military officials were all elected by and from among the Novgorodians. Even the prince

¹Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 32.

²Michael Florinsky, *Russia, A History and an Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 1:114-117.

³N. Zernov, *The Russians and Their Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 48.

was invited to Novgorod by the *veche*; his power was restricted as merely being “a mercenary, hired to carry out the tiresome job of protecting Novgorod from her aggressive neighbors.”¹

Novgorod enjoyed abundant business ties with the West, East, and South, but was spiritually and culturally tied to the East only. The arts in all their disciplines bore the unmistakable stamp of Moscow. In exchange Novgorod influenced the social, cultural, and political life of its eastern neighbor.² Many Muscovites desired Novgorod to be the future pattern for social and political life in Russia. Other Muscovites were scared by the dangerous example of freedom in Novgorod. Nevertheless, all hoped to profit in some way or another from the riches of this city.

Novgorod was destined to play an important role in the origins and development of the Subbotniks' movement. In fact, many historians, following the statement of the two major accusers of the Subbotniks, Iosif of Volotsk and Archbishop Gennadii, believe that Novgorod was the cradle for this movement. According to this view, it then spread to Moscow, and then to other cities and towns.³ Archbishop Gennadii's and Iosif of Volotsk's account on the beginning of the Novgorod-Moscow movement should be further investigated.

¹Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 30.

²Kljuchevskii, *A History of Russia*, 1:319-341.

³Certain Western European cities, such as Strasbourg, for example, enjoyed similar semi-autonomy as city-states, and became nurturing places for other dissident groups and reform movements.

Beginning of the Novgorod-Moscow Movement

There is no certainty about the very beginning of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. For centuries the only information available on this issue was a brief “account” of the heresy written by Iosif of Volotsk and some merge information found in Gennadii’s letters. The immense authority Iosif of Volotsk enjoyed in the Russian Orthodox Church constrained any serious critical investigation of the origin of the Subbotniks’ movement.¹

Beginning According to Archbishop Gennadii

The “discovery” of the dissident movement was made by Archbishop Gennadii, who was appointed Archbishop of Novgorod in January of 1485. The first indication of his encounter with the “judaizing heretics” comes from the *Chronicles* which refers to “lists of Archbishop Gennadii” and a certain *Notebook*² taken from the “heretics,” that Archbishop Gennadii sent at the same time to the great prince and the metropolitan.³ Although the first Archbishop Gennadii’s letter was not preserved, its content can almost

¹For example, when Ilj’a Hrushev published his *Study on Iosif Sanin’s (Iosif of Volotsk) Writings* in 1868, he included several slightly critical remarks concerning Iosif’s writings. Professor Konstantin Nevostruev in his official evaluation of this study insisted on the removal of these comments and threatened Hrushev with a recall of “the Uvarov’s award”—the honorary bonus Hrushev was about to receive for his research. See Nevostruev, 84.

²In one of his other letters, Gennadii indicates that this *Notebook* was used by the heretics as a prayer book, where all the prayers and psalms were perverted in the Jewish way. See Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Prohor Sarskii,” *AED*, 309-12.

³*PSRL*, 4:159 and 6:38.

with certainty be restored, because Gennadii soon wrote some other letters of similar content.¹ Since the great prince and the metropolitan responded to Gennadii's letter,² the content of Gennadii's letter can be surmised from their answers, and it does not significantly differ from his following letters.

Archbishop Gennadii's addressee, Metropolitan Gerontii, indicates that he received Gennadii's letter which explained "why the search has started on those who speak blasphemy against the Son of God and His holy Mother, and profane the holy icons, and honor the Jewish faith, while swearing fidelity to the Orthodox faith."³ Gerontii replies that the great prince and himself, together with the whole Orthodox council, had already resolved this case. Three persons were declared guilty of heresy: Gregorii and Erasim, two priests, and Samson, a clerk and son of Gregorii. These three were executed as criminals in Moscow. Gerontii, from Moscow, gives Gennadii in Novgorod instructions to continue his investigation, but directs him to do it in partnership with two brothers: Jakov and Jurii Koshkin—the envoys of the great prince in Novgorod.⁴

¹Moscow first ignored Gennadii's letter. It was understandable—the Great Prince himself was favorable toward the "heretics." Annoyed with Moscow's silence, Gennadii wrote again, this time to Prohor Sarskii and Nifont, the bishop of Suzdal, asking them to influence somehow the Great Prince, in order "to continue this affair, because now the search is not firm enough." Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Prohor Sarskii," *AED*, 312. These letters, one can presume, contain the same information as the one that was sent to Moscow.

²"Letter of Great Prince Ivan III and Metropolitan Gerontii to Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod" (February 1488) *GPB*, Q.XVII.50; also *AED*, 313-315.

³Hrushev, 111.

⁴*AED*, 315. The *Chronicles of Novgorod* speak about the famous cruelty of these two, that even led to the rebellion of the Novgorod people and eventually to another wave

According to Archbishop Gennadii's writings, it was not until 1487 that he learned about the "heretics."¹ However, Aleksey and Denis, two prominent advocates of this "heresy," were invited by the great prince to Moscow seven years prior to this (i.e., 1480), where they openly shared their beliefs. They had probably done this in Novgorod as well.² Long before Gennadii was appointed to his position, a great religious awakening took place in Novgorod. The spiritual leaders felt incapable of giving satisfactory answers to the many questions asked by the laymen. Archbishop Feofil (1481-1483), one of Gennadii's predecessors, had to humbly resign from his position, confessing that due to "rudeness and the lack of reason . . . I could not take care of and restrain my spiritual ships."³ His successor, Archbishop Sergij of Novgorod, announced in 1484 that he, Sergy, could no longer be called an archbishop, because of his incompetence.⁴ Gennadii, in contrast to the previous church leaders, had much more confidence in himself and in his calling. Instead of a soft, conciliatory approach to the problem, Archbishop Gennadii

of terror. Persecuting heretics was a profitable business at this time. The property of the heretics was confiscated by the archbishop. Those who discovered the "heresy" were often entitled to a significant share of what was taken from the accused. Gennadii was ejected from his position of archbishop in 1503 due to allegations of graft.

¹Gennadii himself mentions it in his letter to Zosima.

²In the *Instructor* Iosif consistently calls them "the originators of the heresy," the ones who learned it from Skharija the Jew. *Instructor*, 23, 24, 27, 31.

³Ibid., 747.

⁴Ibid., 750.

began a ruthless elimination of the dissidents.¹

A relevant question is: How are we to understand the apparent delay of the “discovery” of the heresy? One suggestion is that during the first few years as an Archbishop, Gennadii was primarily concerned with the strengthening of his position. Another suggestion is that he could not start his inquiry without having somebody who would testify against the “heretics.” Such a person was found in 1487. Priest Naum, who proclaimed himself to be a repentant “ex-heretic,” informed Gennadii of certain “heretics.” He later testified against them.² It was from Naum that Archbishop Gennadii received the notebook with the *Judaizers’ Psalms*.³

Archbishop Gennadii’s letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii is the first of the preserved

¹During the last decade of the fifteenth century the Croatian Dominican monk Benjamin stayed at the court of Saint Sophia—Novgorod’s famous cathedral—where he worked on *The Short Word* (Слово кратко) at the request of Archbishop Gennadii. This document reflected Gennadii’s admiration for the working of the Spanish Inquisition, whose methods he tried to apply to the Subbotniks. See A. S. Sedelnikov, “The Study of ‘The Short Word’ and the Activity of the Dominican Benjamin,” *The Works of the Committee of the Academy of Sciences on Ancient Russian Literature* 1 (1932): 33-57 (A. С. Седельников, “К изучению ‘Слова кратка’ и деятельности доминиканца Вениамина,” *Труды комиссии по древне-русской литературе Академии наук* 1 [1932]: 33-57). Archbishop of Novgorod Gennadii wrote admiringly to the Metropolitan of Moscow in 1490 about Ferdinand of Spain: “Look at the firmness which the Latins display. The ambassador of Caesar has told me about the way in which the king of Spain cleansed his land. I have sent you a memorandum of these conversations.” *AED*, 378. It was the beginning of the Russian fascination with and imitation of the Spanish Inquisition. E. Denisoff indicates that the subsequent purge of Subbotniks was undertaken “not on the model of the Second Rome, but of the First.” E. Denisoff, “Aux Origines de l’Église russe autocéphale,” *RES* 23 (1947), cited in Billington, 70.

²Archbishop Gennadii, “Letter to Ioasaf,” *AED*, 316 (Гонозов, “Послание к Иоасафу,” *AED*, 316); idem, “Letter to Prohor Sarskii,” *AED*, 319 (“Послание Прохору Сарскому,” *AED*, 310).

³Archbishop Gennadii, “Letter to Prohor Sarskii,” *AED*, 310.

documents written against the heretics (1487).¹ In this document Gennadii complains against those who “dishonored our Lord Jesus Christ and contaminated the image of our most pure Mother of God, the judaizing heretics of Novgorod, who are smart-alecky in a judaizing manner” (*жидовски мудрствующих*).²

Iosif of Volotsk on the Origin of the Subbotniks

In his early letters Archbishop Gennadii did not discuss the origin of the heresy. However, in his letter to Zosima (Oct. 1490) he says that “when the prince Mikhail Olel’kovich was in Novgorod, there was a certain heretical Jew, and from that Jew the heresy spread in Novgorod land, although those who confessed it did so in secret; however, later on, being drunk, they started to argue about the faith.”³

Iosif of Volotsk, who became a major opponent of the movement, must have obtained information about the origin of the Subbotniks’ movement from Archbishop Gennadii. Iosif’s account became known as the official theory of the beginning of the Subbotniks’ movement. Here is Iosif’s account of the origin of the Novgorod-Moscow movement:

At that time there lived in the city of Kiev a certain Jew, Skharija by name, who was the weapon of the devil himself—he was taught in all kinds of wicked inventions: black magic, wizardry, and astrology. He was known by Prince Mikhail, the son of

¹This letter was preserved in the following collections: (1) GPB, Q. XVII. 64, F. Tolstoy’s Collection, II, #68; (2) BIL, Museum’s Collection, #3271; 4; 3; (3) GIM, Synod’s Collection, #562, 4.

²*AED*, 310.

³Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow,” *AED*, 375.

Alexander, the grandson of Volgird, a real Christian, having a Christian mindset. This Prince Mikhail in the year 6979,¹ during the days of the Great Prince Ivan Vasiljevich, came to Novgorod the Great, and the Jew Skharija came with him. The Jew first of all seduced the priest Denis and converted him to Judaism; and Denis brought to him the archpriest Aleksey, who was serving at that time on Mihajlovskaya Street; he also was an apostate from the unsullied, true Christian faith.²

After Denis and Aleksey were proselytized, more Jews came from Lithuania to aid the two apostates in converting other “priests and deacons and common people.”³ Iosif accuses them of what were to his mind the most heinous offenses: denial of the divinity of Christ, rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, attacks on monasticism, and reviling of icons. The heretics adopted certain Jewish practices, but were warned, Iosif said, by the Jews themselves not to be circumcised, for “should the Christians find out and wish to see, then you will be caught.”⁴

Iosif insists that by playing upon the inadequacies of faith and learning on the part of certain of the clergy, Skharija and his accomplices sowed a distrust of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In addition, they influenced many to revolt against the spiritual authorities and proposed the idea of “self-authority” (i.e., a personal capricious self-determination of the individual in matters of faith and salvation). Those who allegedly gave in to this kind of influence moved toward a full break with the Orthodox Church. They despised holy icons and repudiated veneration of the saints—both fundamentals of the Orthodox popular

¹The year A.D. 1470. The official Russian Calendar started with the presumed year of the creation.

²*Instructor*, 23.

³*Ibid.*, 27.

⁴*Ibid.*, 23-24.

religiosity. Ultimately, the religiously blind and deluded, according to their opponents, were led to a denial of the fundamental dogmas of Orthodoxy: the saving Sacramental-Mysteries; the Most Holy Trinity; and the Incarnation of the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

After this brief survey of the search for the beginning of the Subbotniks' movement it is appropriate to look at the closing chapter of this movement.

History and Causes of the Defeat of the Subbotniks

By the end of the fifteenth century the Novgorod-Moscow movement had spread throughout Russia on a large scale; its presence in every social class was obvious. The fact that even some of the tsar's family accepted the teaching of this movement really disturbed many supporters of the old political and ecclesiastical systems. The church saw clearly that the threat of losing its power was very real and imminent, and in order to save its position of authority it needed to act without delay.

The defeat of the Novgorod-Moscow movement is closely related to the so-called "dynastic" crisis of 1497-99 in which all political and ideological institutions took an active part. The "dynastic" conflict of 1458 occurred when Ivan III had a son born of his first wife, Maria, the daughter of a Russian nobleman. This son, who became the heir to the throne in Moscow, was named Ivan after his father, and became known to historians as Ivan the Young. In 1482 he married Elena Stephanovna (?-1505), the daughter of Moldavia's King Stephan IV (1435-1504), called the Great.¹ The union of Ivan the

¹King Stephan IV won European renown for his long resistance to the Ottoman Turks and was acclaimed by Pope Sixtus IV as the "Athlete of Christ." See Milton G.

Young and Elena gave birth to Dmitrii (1484-1505). Meanwhile, Maria, the wife of the tsar, had died in 1467, causing Ivan III to look for a new wife. After some time he married Princess Sophia (Zoe) Palaeologus, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor.

Sophia Palaeologus

Sophia Paleologus played an important role in the defeat of the Subbotniks' movement. Billington remarks that "the persecution of the Judaizers was a cooperative effort on the part of Sophia (and the court supporters of her son Vasilii's claim to the succession) and the leaders of the Novgorod hierarch."¹ Thus, in analyzing the causes for the demise of the Subbotniks' movement it is appropriate to consider the personality of Sophia and the role she played in Russian ecclesiastical history.

The Palaeologian dynasty began in Constantinople in 1261. Sophia's uncle, Constantine XI Palaeologus (reigned 1449-1453), was the last Byzantine Emperor.² He struggled to the end against the Turks but could not hold Constantinople, the capital of the once-powerful Eastern Roman Empire. Mahmud II took the city on Tuesday, May 29, 1453, and sounded the name of Allah in Hagia Sofia, the greatest Christian cathedral at

Lehrer, *Transylvania: History and Reality* (Silver Spring, MD: Bartleby Press, 1986), 208.

¹Billington, 85.

²*Byzantium* is the name given to both the state and the culture of the Eastern Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. Both the state and the inhabitants always called themselves *Roman*, as did most of their neighbors. Western Europeans, who had their own *Roman Empire* called them *Oriental*s or *Greeks*, and later *Byzantines* after the former name of the Empire's capital city, Constantinople. It was, without any doubt, the continuation of the Roman state, and until the seventh century, preserved the basic structures of Late Roman Mediterranean civic culture.

the time. It was the end of the Byzantine Empire and the emperor's brothers and relatives fled to other parts of the world.

Thomas Palaeologus, Sophia's father, was one of the royal brothers and the despot of Morea until 1460. He fled to Rome where Pope Pius II was granting asylum to all the kings, princes, and other rulers who lost their dominion. Thomas too was given a place to live in Saxony but soon died (1465). His children, including Sophia, moved to Rome where she was "reared as a Catholic princess under the auspices of the Holy See."¹ Cardinal Bessarion took a personal interest in Sophia's education.

Cardinal Bessarion

Relevant to this study is the identification of Cardinal Bessarion. Bessarion (1403-1472) played an important role in Catholicism and in Russian history. Coming from a simple Greek family, he entered the monastic life and was ordained a deacon in the Orthodox Church in 1426. He continued to live in Constantinople until 1431 when he was ordained a priest. After that he studied Platonic philosophy for five years. Bessarion rose to prominence through his talents and diplomatic skills, becoming an associate of the Paleologus brothers during his stay in Mystra; this gave him political experience and helped him to foresee the coming destruction of the Empire. Meanwhile, he came to the conclusion that the only way to save the Empire was to realign its political direction with the West.

In 1437, Bessarion was appointed a member of the Orthodox committee by the

¹Helene Iswolsky, *Christ in Russia* (Kingswood: World's Work, 1962), 72.

Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI. The committee's task was to discuss the possible unification of the Orthodox churches with the Roman Catholic church. Initially Bessarion followed the doctrines of the Orthodox Church, but gradually came to agree with Roman Catholic beliefs. In 1439, while still in Italy, Pope Eugenius IV elevated him to the rank of Cardinal.

Bessarion became the crucial figure at the Ferrara-Florence Council in 1438-1445 when the Latin and Greek churches tried to reach an agreement and end the schism between them. Initially agreeing with the Roman Catholic requirements, the Eastern Orthodox churches later repudiated the agreement. After this repudiation Bessarion returned to Italy where a number of titles and positions were bestowed upon him by the Pope, such as the Protector of the monks of St. Basil in Italy, Abbot of the monastery of Kryptoferris (Grottaferrata), Bishop of Sabina, Archbishop of Tuslka, and finally (Latin) Patriarch of Constantinople. In the years 1455 and 1471 he was considered one of the strongest candidates to Peter's chair. However, he was bypassed by some of the conservative Cardinals, who were concerned about his Eastern origins. For many years he influenced the Vatican policies, and was probably more than anyone else responsible for the foreign affairs of the Church. As a patron of Greek learning, Bessarion put his mark on Sophia's education.

Royal Marriage

By arranging Sophia's marriage to Ivan III, Bessarion hoped to accomplish what he had failed to achieve by theological discussions. He hoped to see Eastern Orthodoxy in

Byzantium and even Russia become Roman Catholic, or at least remain under the influence of Rome.¹ Bessarion understood that Ivan III would not resist the temptation to become related by marriage to an imperial family. It is possible that Bessarion desired to liberate Greece with Russia's help and subject a humiliated Byzantine Empire and a war-weakened Russia to Catholic control.² Additionally, Bessarion had his representatives in Moscow. Ivan Fiazin, who had access to Ivan III, was Bessarion's man.³ Hence, Fiazin proposed Sophia to Ivan III and very soon, in March 1469, he was on his way to see her in Italy.⁴

The details of the royal marriage were discussed in 1472. The Catholic side insisted that the wedding should be conducted in Rome with the accompanied Roman

¹J. Billington observes: "Sophia came to Russia after long residence in Italy as the personal ward of the Roman pontiff and a vehicle for bringing the 'widowed' Russian Church into communion with Rome." Billington, 85. In the same manner A. Heard remarks that this alliance "was favored by Rome in the hope that, educated in the Catholic Church, this princess would induce her husband to acknowledge the act of union decreed by the Council of Florence." Heard, 42.

²Among those who share such an opinion are Grey, 33; and Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 316-317.

³Fryazin's real name was John Battist de la Volpe. He was from a renowned German and Venetian family of advocates and military commanders. Even though he was rich and had everything, he loved adventure. It is not clear why he went to the Tatars in 1455 but very soon he found himself at the court of Ivan III and held the position of the monetary administrator. Later he became renowned for having unprecedented favor before Ivan III. He was a Catholic in Rome and an Orthodox in Moscow. Hreptovich-Butenev, *Florence and Rome in Their Connection With Two Events in Fifteenth-Century Russian History* (Moscow: Snegirev's Publishing House, 1909) (Хрептович-Бутенев, *Флоренция и Рим в связи с двумя событиями из русской истории пятнадцатого века* [Москва: Печатня А. Снегиревой, 1909]).

⁴L. N. Pushkarev, 1:313.

Catholic rites. Understandably, this was too much for Ivan III to take. Both sides eventually agreed on two weddings: one in Rome, and one in Moscow. Friazin substituted for Ivan III as the bridegroom at the wedding in Rome. After this the new Russian empress left for Russia.

Her voyage was sponsored by Rome and had the character of undisguised Catholic propaganda. A Roman Catholic priest was at the head of the procession, carrying a massive Catholic cross—*krjazh*. The Roman Catholic clergy constituted a large portion of Sophia's companions. They were disappointed, however, when upon arrival at the gates of Moscow a special envoy from Ivan III required them to hide their Catholic symbols in order to get permission to enter. The Russian people, Ivan's messengers claimed, would not tolerate the triumphant march of the Roman Catholic procession through the streets of Moscow. This was the first sign that Bessarion's ambitious plans were harder to achieve than anticipated.

At the Russian court Sophia soon realized the great gap between Russia and the West. This probably caused her to worry more about her own position, and less about Bessarion's schemes.¹ With Sophia in Russia came a stream of other Byzantine and Greek Orthodox personalities. The Russian Orthodox Church, which did not feel at ease during the Tartar-Mongol domination, now felt a new fusion of Orthodox vigor.

In order to assert his status of sovereign Ivan III adopted Byzantine symbols, such as the two-headed eagle, the tsar's throne, and other symbolic attributes of the tsar's power. He proclaimed Russia the Third Rome, as the new true Christian Empire

¹See Heard, 42. Bessarion died soon after Sophia married Ivan III.

succeeding the conquered Byzantine Empire.

Beginning of the Conflict

Moscow, Novgorod, and other cities had been involved in a religious upheaval and power struggle at the court of Ivan III by the time Sophia arrived in Russia. The tsar himself was somewhat heretical in his beliefs. In addition, his daughter-in-law Elena and his grandson Dmitrii sympathized with the Subbotniks. The religious convictions of the heir to the Russian throne, Ivan the Young, are hard to determine. In 1490 he became sick, was treated by Sophia's private physician, and died.¹ Apparently, that same year was the starting point of the official ecclesiastical inquisitional process against the Novgorod-Moscow movement—the Church Council anathemized it.

Initially, these decrees of the Council had little if any effect, the movement continued to grow in strength. After the tragic death of his son Ivan the Young, Ivan III demonstratively showed his favor to his grandson, prince Dmitrii, the next rightful heir to the throne. Nothing like this had been done for Sofia's three sons.² It became clear that if Sophia wanted to see her son Vasilii (1479-1533) on the throne she would have to eliminate Prince Dmitrii, who was supported by the Subbotniks, whose views he shared.

In 1497 Vasilii gathered some troops and openly rebelled against his father Ivan III, aiming to take over the throne. The rebellion was suppressed. The very fact that

¹Some historians suggest that he was poisoned by direct order of Sophia. Although this information could not be verified, the fact is that the physician who treated Ivan's simple disease in a barbaric way was executed shortly after the death of his patient.

²See Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 324-325.

Vasilii was left alive shows Sophia's influence on Ivan III. To avoid future problems Ivan III inaugurated Prince Dmitrii to the throne of Russia.¹ The royal soap-opera, however, would enter into a new chapter.

Resolution of the Conflict

Various historical sources testify that through bribes, plots, conspiracy, and slander, Sophia successfully alienated Ivan's heart from Prince Dmitrii in 1502, and also succeeded in bringing ill favor to the other "heretics." In that year Vasilii was declared the heir to the throne.

Iosif personally influenced Ivan III, who had not been inclined to punish heretics with death.² Richard Omark notes: "By rigorously supporting the Grand Duke's policies, they [Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk] were able to make him see the advantages of a 'dedicated' clergy" over the dissident group.³ Thus, with governmental support to the official church, the dissident movement was effectively silenced; the Josephites (followers of Iosif of Volotsk) achieved a complete victory over their adversaries. Ivan Volk Kuritsin, Dmitrii Konopliov, Ivan Maksimov, and others were burned in wooden cages. Old Ivan III, his son Vasilii, Metropolitan Simon, other bishops,

¹It was the very first inauguration of a Russian sovereign. This inauguration took place in the Dormition Cathedral, built by the Italian architect Aristotele Fioravanti. From this time forward, every Russian sovereign was crowned in this cathedral.

²G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 314.

³Richard Omark, "The Decline of Russian Religious Power—Church and State, 1439-1503," *Social Compass* 21 (1974): 212.

and the entire Church Council accused them of judaizing and sentenced them to death. On December 27, 1504, the population of Moscow saw the first inquisitional burning stakes in Russia. In the same winter Ivan Rukavov, Archimandrite Kassian, Gridia Kvashnia, Dmitrii Pustoselov, and other less-known heretics were burned at the stake because of their presumed judaizing. Those people who had participated in the inauguration of Dmitrii as the rightful tsar were now condemned as criminals because of their beliefs.¹

The Political and Religious Outcome of the Crisis

Despite the heavy loss in the upper classes, the Subbotniks' movement for awhile remained popular with the lower classes. In 1511 Iosif of Volotsk demanded from Tsar Vasillii new persecutions of the heretics so that they would not destroy Orthodox Christianity in Russia. Understandably, Vasillii did not hesitate to do so. In fact, Vasillii became so involved in the affairs of the church, that even the Russian Orthodox scholar who supported the "friendly collaboration of princes with the Church"² had to recognize that Vasillii "upset the balance within the Christian community and violated its freedom, the relations between Church and State deteriorated and the nation was brought to the verge of collapse."³

Thus, the Subbotniks were swept out of the Kremlin, Sophia's party triumphed,

¹*Russian Feudal Archives of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 327-328. In the text of the first manuscript of Sofia Cathedral the heretics were called *lihie liudi*, the term used for criminals. Renown Russian artist G. N. Gorelov turns to these events in his painting "Execution of the Heretics in 1504."

²Zernov, 55.

³Ibid.

Ivan III lived his last days and died, Vasiliï came to the throne of Russia, and the Russian people and their life went on its usual way. Even though the Russian inquisition did not reach the same proportions as it did in Catholic countries, the burning of heretics became a common procedure under Archbishop Gennadiï's leadership.¹

The reign of Vasiliï (1505-1533) was characterized by cruelty and a return to ignorance. His only accomplishment was his subduing of all the Russian lands under the absolute rule of Moscow. Vasiliï's personal life was not so fortunate. He divorced his first wife because she could not give him an heir.² Even with the new wife it took years before a son and heir was born to Vasiliï. In history he became known as Ivan IV (1531-1584), or the Terrible—a bloody ruler and the founder of state-sponsored terrorism in Russia. During the reign of Ivan IV there were still people in Russia who kept the seventh-day as the Sabbath. The "One-Hundred- Chapters" Church Council, called in 1551 during the reign of Ivan IV, adopted a resolution which until today has not been annulled by the Russian Orthodox Church. It stated that the people, beside worshipping on Sunday, could also worship on Saturday in the confines of the Russian Orthodox

¹Dmitriev, *Inquisition in Russia*.

²This divorce worsened an already unhealthy situation in the Russian Church. The Metropolitan Varlaam (1511-21), who leaned towards the Non-Possessors (a movement that denied the right of the Church to own the land), refused to sanction this divorce. On the other hand, the Possessors (those who were in favor of Church land ownership) declared that the future of the monarchy was of greater importance than the fate of a woman. Thus, to obtain sanction for the divorce, the metropolitan was changed, and the Church was in complete submission to the State.

Church—a statement which was recognized by the Church Council as authorized by the Apostles Peter and Paul.¹

Summary

Based on the available historical records it is clear that a theological system of beliefs existed among the Subbotniks during the years of Metropolitan Phillip of Moscow (c. 1470). We have seen that the most likely center for the development of the Subbotniks' theology was the city of Novgorod—the most tolerant and most free city in all of Russia. The republic-style city government had close relations with the West as well as with other parts of Russia.²

The rise, spread, and defeat of the Subbotniks' movement closely correlates with processes that brought medieval Russian society into a new period of development. Politics, which was inseparable from religion, was used both to advance and later to annihilate the Subbotniks' movement. Billington seems to be right when he notes that “Muscovy was more a religious civilization than a political order.”³ The Subbotniks' movement was not strong enough to overcome the Byzantine traditions reinforced with the arrival of Sophia as wife of Ivan III. The Byzantine form of religion which arrived in Russia with Sophia, came, as Frere puts it, “as a formulated and completed whole,

¹*One-Hundred-Chapters*, 270-271.

²V. L. Iarin, *The Rulers of Novgorod* (Moscow: Moscow State University, 1962), 387 (В. Л. Ианин, *Новгородские посадники* [Москва: Московский Государственный Университет, 1962], 387).

³Billington, 73.

together with the implications that this and this only is Orthodoxy; and woe to the man who swerves from it!"¹ Chapter 3 presents the reaction of the official church to the attempts of Novgorod-Moscow dissidents to reform Russian religious life.

¹W. H. Frere, *Russian Church History* (London: Faith Press, 1918), 32.

CHAPTER III

POLEMICAL LITERATURE: ARCHBISHOP GENNADII (GONOV), IOSIF OF VOLOTSK, AND SECONDARY SOURCES

This chapter deals with the charges against the Novgorod-Moscow movement generated by its first two opponents, Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk, and by their less renowned contemporaries.

Archbishop Gennadii and the Accusations of Judaizing

The first accusations of judaizing were issued by Gennadii, the archbishop of Novgorod, and “discoverer” of the dissident movement. More particularly, Gennadii’s letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii (1487) is the first of the preserved documents written against the “heretics.”¹ This letter contains all of Archbishop Gennadii’s charges against the Subbotniks with implications of heretical judaizing features.

In his letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii, Archbishop Gennadii argues against those who “dishonored our Lord Jesus Christ and contaminated the image of our most pure Mother of God, the judaizing heretics of Novgorod, who are smart-aleck in a judaizing

¹This letter was preserved in the following collections: (1) ГПБ, Q. XVII. 64, F. Tolstoy’s Collection, II, #68; (2) БИЛ, Museum’s Collection #3271; 4; (3) ГИМ, Synod’s collection #562, 4; (4) ЗГАДА, Mazurin’s Collection, f. 196, #1054, 8.

manner.”¹ This is probably the first time the term “judaizing” is mentioned explicitly in connection with the Novgorod dissidents. Next followed the accusations of Marcellianism and Messalianism.²

Archbishop Gennadii asserts in the same document that the heretics “prayed in a judaizing manner” and that he had sent their *Notebook* with the *Judaizers’ Psalms* to the Metropolitan.³ Another “judaizing” phrase in this letter is found in connection with heretics who were keeping the Ten Commandments by which they allegedly “confused people.”⁴

Finally, Gennadii elaborates on the dissidents’ disagreement with the official date of Christ’s Second Coming, comparing them once again with the Jews.

¹*Жидовски мудрствующих, AED, 310.*

²*Ibid.* Marcellianism was founded in the middle of the fourth century A.D. by Marcellus, the Bishop of Ankyra, whose unorthodox theology regarding the unity between God the Son and God the Father bordered on complete amalgamation. The Son was always in the Father as His eternal wisdom and had no being separate from the Father. “The Son shared the Father’s characteristics because he was Word, Wisdom and Power of the Father, and thus existed in the Father’s one Being (substance, hypostasis) from eternity. The notion that there were three distinct hypostases in or of God was quite unacceptable.” Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 127. Messalianism was another well-known heresy in Eastern Christianity, especially within Greek monasticism. “The Messalians or Euchites (‘Praying ones’) tried to pray continuously, believed in absolute dependence on God, studiously took no thought for the morrow, and lived roughly in streets and byways on what people gave them.” *Ibid.*, 179. Messalians promoted dualism and proclaimed the material world as evil—similarly to ancient Gnosticism. At Ephesus in 431 Messalianism was explicitly condemned on doctrinal grounds.

³*AED, 310.*

⁴*Ibid.*

Rejection of Icons

In his letter to Prohor Archbishop Gennadii describes the heretics as having “dishonored our Lord Jesus Christ and contaminated the image of our most pure Mother of God.”¹ This charge is not found in Gennadii’s letter to Ioasaf. A similar accusation as the one in the letter to Prohor is found in Gennadii’s letter to Nifont of Suzdal.² This letter describes the nature of this “contamination.” Gennadii encourages Nifont to be jealous “for Christ and His most pure Mother” against the heretics who “dishonor Christianity—they tied up the crosses on ravens and crows. Many saw it: the raven flies and carries a wooden cross.”³ Thus, the first accusation of “dishonoring Christianity” is associated with the Subbotniks’ iconoclasm.

Although Gennadii many times mentions that the heretics had contaminated the icons, his letter to the Bishop of Suzdal Nifont (January 1488) contains the only description of an act of sacrilege actually documented by Gennadii himself. Gennadii reports the location and name of the icon, as well as the damage that was presumably done to it: In the Novgorod church *Savior-on-Il’inka* (*Спаса-на-Ильинке*) he saw the icon called *Transfiguration With the Action* damaged, presumably, by the heretics. While visiting this church, Gennadii noticed the “blasphemy” both in the image and in the cynical inscription found in the lower right corner of this icon. Gennadii writes: “there is Basil of

¹*AED*, 310.

²Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal,” 4; also *AED*, 312.

³*Ibid.*

Caesarea standing, and he cut up the hands and the feet of our Saviour, and there is also an inscription: the circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹ Gennadii explains such an unusual, and from his point of view, blasphemous image, as a sacrilegious act presumably done to this icon. He concludes that the icon had been mutilated by the judaizing heretics. In fact, this icon had not been mutilated: its unique portrayal was the work of the original (Orthodox) artist.²

Charges of Marcellianism and Messalianism

In the same letter Archbishop Gennadii mentions that “the heretics swore with false vows, just as messalians and marcellians did.”³ This is apparently the only similarity Gennadii finds between the ancient and the contemporary heretics. Two years after his initial attack on the Novgorod-Moscow movement, Gennadii, in his letter to Ioasaf (1489), repeats his analogy of the Novgorod dissidents with Marcellians and Messallians in regard to swearing falsely.⁴ Following Archbishop Gennadii’s impression, Iosif emphatically ascribes the ancient heresies to the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents.⁵

¹Ibid.

²This is discussed in more detail below, pp. 192-193.

³Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to the Bishop of Novgorod Prohor Sarskii,” *AED*, 310.

⁴Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to Ioasaf, the Former Bishop of Rostov,” *AED*, 316.

⁵*Instructor*, 31.

Judaizers' Psalms

Archbishop Gennadii writes in his letter to Ioasaf: "I learned about them [the heretics] from their comrade, priest Naum. He also brought me some Psalms, which they used in a judaizing manner. And when these heretics were brought before us, they rejected all the accusations, swore fearlessly, and called themselves Orthodox Christians."¹ Succeeding historians have continually referred to Gennadii's finding of the *Judaizers' Psalms* as an explicit proof of the judaizing character of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. Makary formulated this common viewpoint in the following words: "Who would need to translate these Psalms to Russian and to cover them with the name of King David, if not Jews, the first preachers of the judaizing heresy among the Russian Orthodox?"²

The *Book of Psalms* will be evaluated in chapter 4 of this study, together with the other writings of Subbotniks.

The Decalogue

The fourth charge of judaizing, according to Archbishop Gennadii's letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii, denounces the Novgorod heretics for confusing "people with the Jewish [judaizing] Decalogue."³ Thus, Gennadii felt justified in stating that the heretics

¹*AED*, 316.

²Bulgakov, 7:186.

³*AED*, 310.

were “smart-alecky in a judaizing manner” (*жидовски мудрствующие*).¹

Eschatological Disagreements

In his letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii, Archbishop Gennadii elaborates on the Subbotniks’ disagreement with the “official” date of Christ’s Second Coming. According to Eastern Orthodox tradition, this event was just five years ahead of them—in 1492. The year 1492 was understood as the end of the 7,000 years since creation and the end of the world according to ancient tradition. This tradition was so strong in Eastern Christianity that the official calendars for calculating the Passover dates, both in the Greek and the Russian Orthodox churches, ended with the year 1492.² The reason for this was obvious—after the Last Judgment there will be no need to celebrate Passover anymore. One of the calendars said about the year 7000 (i.e., 1492): “Here is fear, here is terror . . . this year we expect Your universal coming.”³

Gennadii, moreover, argues against an alternative chronology found in the *Six Wings*—a book on astronomy translated from Hebrew, which contains calculations of the exact time of solar and lunar eclipses.⁴ Gennadii complains that the *Six Wings* “is taken

¹Ibid.

²“Solovetz’ Calendar” (Соловецкая Пасхалия), quoted in A. F. Zamaleev and E. A. Ovchinnikova, *The Heretics and the Orthodox* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1991), 69 (А. Ф. Замалеев и Е. А. Овчинникова, *Еретики и ортодоксы* [Ленинград: Лениздат, 1991], 69).

³Ibid.

⁴The text of this book has been preserved. Dmitrii O. Svjatskii gives a detailed analysis of *Shestokrīl*. See D. Svjatskii, “Astronomical Book ‘Six Wings’ in Fifteenth-Century Russia,” *Miroved* 16 (1927): 1-35 (Д. О. Святский, “Астрономическая книга

from astronomy as a drop of water is taken from the sea.”¹ Some scholars believe that Gennadii here argues against astronomical and chronological ideas with a Jewish origin and adopted by the Russian Subbotniks.²

Gennadii attempts to prove that the traditional Orthodox chronological system is correct. Counting from the beginning of the world (5508 B.C. according to Orthodox belief), Gennadii once again comes to the year 1492 as the last year of the seventh millennium.³ According to the Jewish calendar, which was known in Russia at that time,⁴ the world was created in 3761 B.C. Thus, more than 1500 years had to be added in order to reach to the end of the seventh millennium. The later date seemed a serious heresy to Gennadii. When consulting his Latin friends he discovered that according to the Roman

‘Шестокрыл’ на Руси XV века,” *Мироед* 16 [1927]: 1-35). The entire text of this book was published by A. I. Sobolevskii in *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia*.

¹*AED*, 311. It is interesting that in 1492, after the appointed day of the Last Judgment, Gennadii returns to the subject of astronomy, but this time no negative connotation is found in his writing. See Archbishop Gennadii, “Letter to the Unknown,” *AED*, 289-291 (Гонозов, “Послание к неизвестному,” *AED*, 289-291). He continues to complain that the heretics “stole some years” from the Orthodox and remarks that the “astronomy is one for all,” meaning that his calculation of the actual time of this world is right. However, he fails to explain why the Last Judgment had not come yet. Although the manner of his letter is as confident as usual, it is obvious that Gennadii himself is puzzled by what is happening. Gennadii is unwilling to talk about this subject any more and he concludes his letter with the words from Amos: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord to come! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” *Ibid*.

²Sobolevskii, *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia*, 415-417.

³The same calculation is found in Iosif’s *Instructor*.

⁴*Studies of the Department of the Ancient Russian Literature* (Moscow, 1932), 1:34-35 (*Труды отдела древней русской литературы* [Москва, 1932], 1:34-35); Kazakova and Lur’e, 135.

Catholic Church the end of the seven thousand years was expected to take place in A.D. 1500.¹ The Roman Catholic church, however, did not expect anything extraordinarily dramatic to happen that year. In Gennadii's passionate search for support he requested the opinion of the famous Greek Orthodox theologian of that time, Dmitrii Trahaniot. Trahaniot responded that Orthodox chronology was absolutely right, but that Christ would come in the year 7007, on the seventh month, on the seventh day.² Although Gennadii seemed totally confused with all these calculations, he retained his original opinion. Attacking the Catholics, Archbishop Gennadii insisted that "at one time the heretics must have stolen years from us, because the Latin calendar has eight years more than ours."³ Gennadii's initial charges of heresy eventually came to include the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, it is incorrect to subscribe his entire discussion about Jews, Latins, and Tatars to the Novgorod dissidents alone. Moreover, it is unclear from his letter whether the heretics actually shared the Jewish chronology or were just skeptical about any fixed date for Christ's Second Coming.⁴

Writings of Iosif of Volotsk

Although Archbishop Gennadii operated in Novgorod, had "discovered the heresy," and seemed likely to become its most enthusiastic antagonist because of his

¹Kazakova and Lur'e, 135.

²Ibid.

³AED, 319.

⁴Ibid.

firsthand information about the movement, it was left to Iosif of Volotsk to become the major and most active opponent of the Subbotniks.¹

Biography of Iosif of Volotsk

Ivan Sanin, who later was called as Iosif of Volotsk, was born Nov 14, 1440, in the village of Yazvisch-Pokrov, not far from the city of Volokolamsk. At the age of seven, he was given over to the elder of the Exaltation of the Cross (Крестовоздвиженский) monastery for education. Ivan became a reader and singer in the monastery church.²

At twenty years of age Ivan chose the path of monastic striving, leaving his parental home to go into the wilderness near the Tver Savvin Monastery, where the renowned elder and strict ascetic Varsonophy resided. On Feb. 13, 1460, Varsonophy tonsured Ivan into monasticism as the initiate monk Iosif. He spent the following seventeen years in the monastery of the monk Paphnuty. Toward the end of Paphnuty's life (1477), monk Iosif was ordained a priest. In accord with the final wishes of Paphnuty, he was appointed Father-Superior of the Borovsk monastery.³

¹The relationship between Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk started even before Gennadii's "discovery." For a long time Gennadii was a benefactor for Iosif's monastery. In addition to the large village contributed by Gennadii to Iosif there are plenty of other gifts that, according to Iosif himself, "cannot be even counted." See Хрушев, 43, 104. It was also Gennadii who made Iosif a district supervisor of all the monasteries. Thus, the appointment of Gennadii as an archbishop of Novgorod was very beneficial for Iosif.

²Fedotov, 302.

³Hrushev, 51.

Iosif's vision for Borovsk was to transform its monastic life along strictly coenobitic (life-in-common) principles. The strong opposition from a majority of the brethren inspired him to establish a new monastery with strict coenobitic rules. He set off with seven like-minded monks to Volokolamsk, his native region. The prince residing there at that time was the brother of Great Prince Ivan III, Boris Vasil'evich. Prince Boris allowed Iosif to settle on the outskirts of his principality, at the confluence of the Struga and Sestra rivers. Here Iosif constructed a wooden church in honor of the Dormition of the Mother of God in June, 1479.¹

Central to Iosif's religious convictions was a life of total noncovetousness, full surrender of one's own will to elders, and ongoing work. The brethren possessed everything in common: clothing, footwear, food, etc. Without the blessing of the *hegumen*, none of the brethren could take anything into their cells—not even a book or an icon. The members of the monastery were occupied with copying and collecting transcriptions of Divine-service books and patristic literature. Their book collection soon became one of the finest among Russian monastic libraries.²

Iosif became active in social issues and a strong proponent of centralized power of the Moscovite dominion. He was one of the theoretical founders of the Third Rome—the claim that the Russian Church is the authentic recipient and bearer of ancient

¹Ibid., 52.

²Ibid., 60.

Ecumenical piety.¹ This theory was articulated by elder Philophei of the Pskov Spaso-Eleazarov monastery: “For two Romes are fallen (i.e. Rome and Constantinople), and the third doth stand (i.e. Russian Orthodox tsardom), and a fourth there shalt not be.”²

It is interesting that shortly after Gennadii was dismissed from his position of archbishop of Novgorod, to whose diocese Volokolamsk belonged, Iosif was excommunicated by Gennadii’s successor for the “uncanonical transfer of his monastery to the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Moscow.”³

Iosif’s recognition was due to his *Instructor*—a denunciation of the Judaizers and a compilation of the first codex of Russian Orthodox theology.

Iosif’s Instructor

Iosif’s most significant work is the *Instructor*, or *Demunciation of Judaizers’ Heresy*.⁴ It is a collection of different articles framed by an anti-judaizing polemic. Its

¹About the concept of the Third Rome see V. Malinin, *Elder Philofeus of Spaso-Eleazer Monastery and His Letter* (Kiev, 1901) (В. Малинин, *Старец Елеазарова монастыря Филофей и его послание* [Киев, 1901]).

²S. F. Platonov, *History of Russia* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 116. The Russians believed that the Church and the Empire were both instituted by God and were indispensable for the maintenance of true religion. With the fall of Constantinople, a feeling of doom spread throughout the Christian East. As a reaction, the hope grew that Russia was chosen by God to resume the work which the Emperors of Rome and Constantinople failed to accomplish. Zernov, 49-52.

³Fedotov, 314. The authority of Iosif in Moscow, however, was so profound that the archbishop was deposed by a synod in Moscow and confined in the Holy Trinity monastery. Ibid.

⁴*Просветитель* (Prosvetitel) is the Russian translation of the Latin word *Lucidarius*, *Elucidarium* (Enlightener, Illuminator), and has the meaning of Teacher or Instructor. This name was not given to the collection of articles by Iosif until the middle of

original form, completed during the 1503-1504 Councils, included eleven sections. Lur'e suggests the *Instructor* originally was intended for the Council of 1504 as a documentation for indictment.¹ Its final edition, which was compiled after Iosif's death and involved a tremendous quantity of scrolls, is in sixteen sections beginning by way of an introduction with *An Account of the Newly Appeared Heresies of Archpriest Aleksy, and Priest Denis, and Fedor Kuritsin, and Others*.

The subsequent sixteen *Words* (or chapters) deal with the "heretics." The sixteen chapters were composed by Iosif at different periods of time and reflect a chronological order of their origination.²

Several manuscripts of the *Instructor* may be close to the time of Iosif of Volotsk; some scholars believe that one of them is an autograph. The difference between these manuscripts is insignificant. The first edition seems to have been compiled around 1503—its introduction makes no reference to the Council of 1504. It contains information on the heresy of Elena Stepanovna, the tzar's daughter-in-law, who was arrested in 1502. The *Instructor* was published and republished several times after 1857.³

the sixteenth century. The word *Elucidarium* was used in some Russian sources, even when the rest of the work was published in Russian, without translation. In Western literature this word usually indicated a collection of articles solving some astrological or other complicated issues.

¹Lur'e, *Ideological Controversy*, 100-105.

²Panov, 23.

³A detailed description of all the manuscripts and publications is found in Hrushev, *Studies of Iosif Sanin's Writings*.

Outline of the *Instructor*

The *Introduction* presents Iosif's views on the origin of the heresy, gives an outline of the subsequent chapters, and presents the accusations.

Chapter 1 expounds the Church's teaching on the Most Holy Trinity.

Chapters 2–3 discuss the nature of Jesus Christ, the True Messiah, and the significance of the Old Testament prophecies for the Church.

Chapter 4 deals with the incarnation and the atonement.

Chapters 5–7 advocate icon veneration.

Chapters 8–10 expound Iosif's views on Christian eschatology.

Chapter 11 is devoted to monasticism.

Chapter 12 deals with the ineffectiveness of the anathemas and sanctions imposed by the heretics.

Chapters 13–16 consider methods to oppose and eradicate the “heretics.”

Introduction to the *Instructor*

The “Introduction” was written about 1503, after the completion of the entire corpus of the *Instructor*. This section contains a history of the heresy, an outline of the entire book, and a summary of Iosif's accusations.

Iosif begins with the story of the conversion of Russia by prince Vladimir. Iosif insists that “nobody had ever seen a heretic or an apostate for 409 years” in Russia.¹ He goes on to describe what kind of “plots the devil designs; the devil, who hates what is

¹*Instructor*, 23.

good, who helps the wicked ones, those who are the enemies of God.”¹

Iosif then presents his view on the origin of the Subbotniks’ movement—a story already dealt with in the second chapter. Iosif’s next step is to confront his readers with what he regards as the nature of the heresy:

1. “They denoted as false the eternal delivery of Christ from the Father and mocked His incarnation for the sake of our salvation by saying that God Almighty has neither the Son, nor the Holy Spirit, who would be of the same nature and of the same dignity as Him; they also said that there is no Holy Trinity.”²

2. “They said a lot of blasphemous things against the divine Church and against the holy icons, saying that one should not worship the creation of human hands, and that one should not portray the Holy Trinity on the holy icons, because Abraham had seen God with two angels, and not the Trinity.”³

3. “At that time it was the end of the seventh millennium since the creation. But the heretics said: seven thousand years passed by, and the *Pashalia* is over, but there is no second coming of Christ; which means that the writings of the Church fathers are false and they should be burned up. They also profaned the writings of the Church fathers, and the writings of the apostles by saying: Why is there no second coming of Christ?”⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 24.

³Ibid., 25.

⁴Ibid.

4. “They profaned the Holy Mary herself, the great John the Baptist, the holy apostles, [and] the Church fathers.”¹

5. “Before his death, he [Aleksey] bewitched the Great Prince who appointed the devil’s wicked assistant to sit on the great sacerdotal throne: the one who was drunk from the evil poison of judaizing, unclean Zosima. Soon, September 26 of the year 6999, Zosima became Metropolitan.”²

These are some of the accusations found in Iosif’s *Introduction*. The next section is filled with praise for Archbishop Gennadii, whose greatest virtue was that he had been “slashing and tearing to pieces these dogs heading to hell, these sons of perdition.”³ After praising the most cruel and bloody executions of the Subbotniks by Archbishop Gennadii, Iosif concludes his introduction with an outline of the sixteen chapters of his book.

Chapter 1: Total Anti-Jewish Character

The first chapter of Iosif’s *Instructor* is a later edition of his letter to Vassian.⁴ This letter is considered by some scholars as Iosif’s first writing on the Judaizers.⁵

¹Ibid., 26.

²Ibid., 28. According to the modern calendar, year 1491.

³Ibid., 30.

⁴The *Letter to Vassian* was written before 1479, while the first chapter of the *Instructor* was written after the “discovery” of the dissidents’ movement by Archbishop Gennadii in 1487. Another name for this letter is the *Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity*.

⁵The view that the letter to Vassian is the most ancient polemic against the Judaizers is shared by Kazakova and Lur’e. See Kazakova and Lur’e, 305.

Hrushev, however, acknowledges that in this letter Iosif “had no argument in his mind, focusing, instead, on his points. This made his discourse warmer and simpler.”¹ It seems that this letter originally had nothing to do with the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. Hrushev concludes that at the time the letter was written Iosif had no knowledge of any antitrinitarian heretical movement in Russia. The letter was written in response to a request by a certain archimandrite Vassian to explain the way the Trinitarian concept is present in the Old Testament. The fact that this document was not designed against the heretics is obvious already from Iosif’s reluctant attitude in writing this response:

Why, my lord, do you call me a scholar while I am dull and just a pupil, and why do you ask me to write to you about the mystery of the Holy Trinity? This matter is above my understanding. It is for you, my lord, whose head is brightened, appropriate to teach the mysteries of both Old and New Testaments, because it is you, lords, who are the pastors.²

Iosif also expressed doubt that anyone at all should study the ancient traditions: “The apostle commands us to forget those things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before.”³ The fact that the original letter lacks any accusations against heretics—which permeate Iosif’s polemical writings—strongly suggests that it was not directed against any particular heresy.

In the first chapter of the *Instructor*, however, Iosif expands the text of his letter to Vassian. This time Iosif supplies it with the names of the most prominent leaders of the Subbotniks, such as “the cursed priest Aleksey, who is a molester of souls, the firstborn of

¹Hrushev, 146.

²*AED*, 306.

³*Ibid.*

Satan; and Denis, the pope of the antichrist; and Fedor Kuritsin.”¹ From this chapter it is obvious that by the time it was written Iosif had a minimal amount of information on the Subbotniks. Apart from a few names and the idea of the totally judaizing character of the “heresy,” he, seemingly, knows little about this movement. He repeatedly calls his opponents Jews² and builds all arguments as if he were dealing with a group of Jews. He mentions examples of some Jews being converted to Christianity, citing Philo as the authoritative example of such conversion. He constantly uses such phrases as: “That is what we shall answer to a Jew (*жидовин*).”³ Iosif continues to enlarge the body of his letter by referring to further proofs of the trinitarian nature of the Godhead. The scope of his proofs is broader than in his original letter to Vassian. In addition to the story of the Angel’s appearance to Hagar, and the appearance of God in Three Persons to Abraham—Iosif’s major argument—reference is made to the proofs found in the Psalms of David, in the books of Solomon, and in the prophets. Although Iosif refers to a certain New Testament passage at the very beginning of this chapter,⁴ the remaining part has almost no references to the New Testament. Here is the list of the biblical quotations in the same order as Iosif uses them in this chapter:

Gen 1:26; Isa 9:6, Exod 7:1; Ps 82:6; Isa 9:6; Gen 1:27, Job 38:7; Gen 3: 22; 1:27; 11:7; 18:1-3; 19:24; Exod 33:19; 34: 5-6, 8-9; Isa 45: 14-15; Pss 50:7, 9, 13-15, 110:3-4; Heb

¹*Instructor*, 40-41.

²*Ibid.*, 43, 44, 47, 48, etc.

³*Ibid.*, 42, 43, 44, 48, etc.

⁴1 Cor 8:5-6.

7: 24; 9:11; Dan 7:13-14; Isa 6:1-3; Num 24:17; Deut 4:5; 18: 9, 15,19; Ps 102:20-22; John 17:6; Pss 144:5; 79:2-3; 118:26-27; John 5:43; Pss 72:6-7, 17; 50:7; 8:3; John 12:13; Pss 119:89; 2:7-8; 109:9; Prov 8:24-25; Isa 7:14; 35: 4-5; etc.

Except for the special cases of the Epistle to Hebrews and the Gospel of John, Iosif avoids any references to the New Testament. The chapters written later reflect Iosif's further knowledge of the movement. In the last chapters of the *Instructor* the proportion of quotes from the Old Testament versus the New Testament is reversed. Here is the list of references for chapter 11, written years later: 2 Cor 3:6; Mark 8: 34; Luke 14:33, 26; Matt 10:37; 6:25, 33; 10:9-10; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Matt 8:20; 19:12; 1 Cor 7:7-8, 32-33, 38, 28-29; 9:5; 1:21; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; Eph 4:13; Matt 19:28; 9:12; etc.

Additionally, there are about thirty references to the Church fathers in chapter 11. As for the Old Testament verses, there are only four of them found in that chapter. One may argue that such a shift should be explained by the expediency of Iosif's narrative. However, this is not the case. In the first chapter, which is almost entirely built on references to the Old Testament, Iosif presents the Trinitarian proofs—something which would be much easier to do with the help of the New Testament. Iosif hardly refers to the New Testament because he then considered the Novgorod-Moscow movement to be totally Jewish. Though he never reverses his accusation of judaizing, it is obvious from the next chapters that his views and tactics are evolving.

**Chapters 2-3: Jesus Christ, the True Messiah
and the Significance of the Old Testament
Prophecies Within the Church**

These chapters contain the statement of Orthodox dogma related to Jesus Christ and an anathema pronounced against the heretics and their alleged teachings. Iosif outlines the contents of chapter 2 in a following way: “First we will speak of His divine birth from the virgin Mary, then of His crucifixion, and resurrection, and ascending to heaven, and of the second coming.”¹ The first part of this chapter is the largest one, and deals with the birth of the Messiah. The rest of the chapter consists of the different Old Testament texts concerning the prophecies about the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The charges appears in the very beginning of this chapter. Iosif states that the heretics teach that

Christ has not been born yet; the time when He will be born has not come yet. As for the one whom the Christians honor as Christ God, these heretics say that He was just an ordinary man, but not God; that He was crucified by the Jews and His body decayed in the tomb, just as that of any other man; that He was not resurrected and did not ascend to heaven and will not come to judge people.²

Iosif consults the commentaries of John Chrysostom in an attempt to prove from prophecy that Jerusalem will never be rebuilt; the Jews should therefore abandon their pretext for continuing their rituals and their hope that they will someday regain their city.³

¹*Instructor*, 66.

²*Ibid.*, 65.

³Iosif refers to John Chrysostom and his discourse on the abandonment of Jerusalem (*Instructor*, 89). The discussion on this subject can be found in Chrysostom’s *Sermon V* of his *Homilies Against the Jews*. See Mervyn Maxwell, “Chrysostom’s Homilies Against the Jews: An English Translation” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1966), 108-158.

Iosif followed Chrysostom when he argued that the Christian sacrifice replaced the old Jewish sacrifice, and that the new worship would be universal and not localized in Jerusalem.¹ Iosif concludes the third chapter with the following words: “It is enough for us, what we just heard, to conclude that they will never get back either their city, or their temple.”² I am not aware of any statements of the Subbotniks concerning the Jewish temple and/or its re-building in Jerusalem. Neither am I aware of any attempt to restore the old Jewish sacrifice. It seems that in this chapter Iosif once more attempts to ascribe to the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents a traditional Jewish theology.

Chapter 4: the Incarnation of God and the Atonement

Iosif formulates in this chapter his accusations in the following way:

They [the heretics] say: “Could not God save Adam and his descendants? Could not He send His heavenly legions, prophets, righteous men, to fulfill His will? Why did He have to come down to the earth as a poor man? Why did He have to suffer in order to triumph over Satan? God should not act this way.”³

The words that Iosif ascribes to the dissidents are clouded in disbelief. They

¹Compare the passage from *Sermon V* by Chrysostom (161-166) with Iosif’s discourse about the abandonment of Jewish sacrifices (89-94). Iosif’s reference to Chrysostom is very characteristic for the Russian ecclesiastic mentality. Regarding the Russian ecclesiastical stereotypes Billington remarks: “From the beginning there was a special preference not for the great theologians and lawmakers of Byzantium, but for its preachers, like John Chrysostom” (Billington, 8). Additionally, the anti-Judaic messages that are found in abundance in the writings of John Chrysostom may have helped to lay the basis for the “fanaticism and for much of the anti-Jewish cruelty which characterized the Middle Ages” (Maxwell, xlix).

²*Instructor*, 94.

³*Ibid.*, 101.

sound like a rejection of the literal first coming of Jesus Christ. One may conclude that this is exactly what Iosif is trying to say. However, Iosif himself is not explicit in his charge. He does not say that the heretics reject the historicity of the first coming of Jesus Christ; what he does say is that their view on the meaning of this event is different. Instead of discussing the historicity of Christ's first advent, Iosif restricts his discussion to an explanation of the view which he believed expressed an Orthodox position on the meaning of Christ's death, or the Atonement. In the following statement Iosif argues with the dissidents' view on the Atonement:

The heretics say: "God achieves everything by means of His wisdom and not through fraud. It is not appropriate for Him to overcome the devil by means of fraud, and by the same means to save Adam and his descendants. Could not God act according to His almighty power, without fraud?"

Let us answer to the heretic: Think, fool, what you are speaking about! You think that God could not by His almighty will act as He wants, that He should not overcome the devil by fraud?¹

Iosif, who adheres to the early Church Fathers' view on the atonement, argues with the Subbotniks, who apparently disagreed with this view.² Iosif goes on to elaborate on the issue of God's fraud:

There are many stories of God's slyness and fraud in the Holy Scripture. Also God's holy men by His commandment did what looked like something bad, but that was good and just for God. . . .

When God does something or commands to do something—accept it with faith and do not try to understand it, because to look for a reason, and to argue is

¹Ibid.

²On the history of the doctrine of atonement see R. Seebert, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: n.p., 1958); also H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

something that the sick, foolish and corrupt soul does, in the same way as the followers of Simon the Magician and Manes did.¹

Iosif next refers to John Chrysostom, who, according to Iosif attributes the following words onto the God the Father as He addresses them to Jesus Christ: “As the devil deceived the men, so You should deceive the devil by Your wisdom.”²

Now Iosif is ready to expound his view of the Atonement:

The devil was bemused and bewildered seeing Him [Jesus] bearing the flesh, just as man does, and performing miracles, as God does; because the Lord Jesus Christ has hidden Himself from the devil, by His unspoken will, in order for the devil (instead of running away from Him) to confront Jesus just as he confronts other men. That is why our Savior had to hide His deity in the depth of His soul. So, seeing Him enlightening and teaching people, saving them from their evil ways and directing them on the path of eternal life, the devil became furious and fought Jesus just as he fought other saints—he fought Him as a mere man. He taught the high priest and the pharisees, and they condemned Him to death. He was killed unjustly, and His soul, which was the hiding place of His divinity, just as a bait on the fisherman’s rod that hides a fishhook, went to hell to confront the devil and death. And when the devil was ready to consume His soul, the way he consumes the souls of just and righteous men, both devil and death were pierced by the lightning of His deity! That is when Jesus revealed to them His deity, deafening them as with thunder with these terrifying words: “I am the eternal God from God, who came down from heaven and became a man. Show me my sin for which you have killed me and have sent my soul to hell!”³

Iosif concludes: “Since Christ was sinless and since He was killed unjustly, He has overcome the devil by His deity. By doing this He freed Adam from death, which was justly given to him as a sinner.”⁴

It is from the perspective of this position that Iosif denounces the beliefs of the

¹*Instructor*, 103.

²*Ibid.*, 106.

³*Ibid.*, 108.

⁴*Ibid.*, 108.

dissidents. It is obvious from this chapter that the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents were in some kind of disagreement with Iosif's view of the atonement. The reasons for this we can only speculate about. Today few Christians would agree with Iosif's theology of the atonement.

Chapters 5-7: Icon Veneration

These three chapters are united by one common subject—icon veneration. The discourses in these three chapters existed apart from the *Instructor* in a number of letters on icon veneration appended to the *Letter to the Icon Painter*.¹ A comparison of the texts added to the *Letter to the Icon Painter* with the texts in the *Instructor* reveals that of the two former were the original.²

The addressee of the *Letter to the Icon Painter* and the other three letters was supposedly Feodosy Ikonnik or his father, the renowned icon-painter Dionisy.³ Written before the first edition of the *Instructor*, these documents were included as a late addition to the different parts of Iosif's book. The content of these documents was mostly left unchanged. In contrast with the letter to Vassian which was written by Iosif prior to the context of the Orthodox polemic and later on included in the text of the *Instructor*, all the

¹Iosif of Volotsk, "Letter to the Icon Painter," Manuscript GPB, Sof., #1474; 4; GPB, O.I.65; 8; BAN, 21.2.18;8 (Волоцкий, "Послание иконописцу," рукопись ГПБ, Соф., #1474; 4; ГПБ, O.I.65; 8; БАН, 21.2.18;8). In all the manuscripts these letters are joined together.

²Kazakova and Lur'e, 320-373; Lur'e, *Ideological Controversy*, 112-114.

³About Dionisy see W. Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell* (New York: Viking, 1998), 40.

letters that formed the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapter of the *Instructor* were originally designed for the denunciation of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents.

One typical example from Iosif's apologetic argumentation is his attempt to link icon veneration to a certain tradition which depicts Luke as the first icon painter. Iosif claims that the "apostle Luke had painted the first of all the icons with the image of our Lord Jesus Christ and his blessed Mother, and then he painted the images of the holy apostles and the prophets on the icon."¹

Iosif is not willing to recant his original views on the judaizing character of this "heresy." He once more deals with the appearance of the Holy Trinity to Abraham. Since Abraham could see the Holy Trinity, Iosif argues this time, it is proper for Christians to paint and worship it. Although dealing with the dissidents' iconoclasm in general, Iosif attempts to use this background for his customary accusation of antitrinitarianism.

Iosif starts his *Letter* legitimizing painted icons depicting the Trinity. By doing this he, apparently, attempts to transplant his accusations onto a new ground. This approach creates a new set of accusations related to the icons, adopted by the Moscow Council of 1503.

It is clear that Iosif had only a minimum amount of information about his opponents when these letters were written.² Nevertheless, the emphasis on the judaizing

¹*Instructor*, 163.

²For example, in the original *Letter to the Icon Painter* (published in *AED*, 323-373) the author accuses of heresy specifically one person—Aleksy. In the text of the *Instructor* the names of Denis and Fedor Kuritsin were also included, which indicates an accumulation of information by the author.

character of the heresy remarkably fades. *Sayings About the Worshiping Icons* seems to deal with a heresy—or a number of heresies—which do not fit into the picture drawn by Iosif in his previous chapters. Iosif states his beliefs and argues with those who: are skeptical concerning the icons and relics; who question the sacrament of the mass;¹ who imitate Latin tradition; who believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both God the Father and God the Son.² It is not clear what religious teaching, if any, could correspond to this unusual combination of beliefs. It is obvious, however, that by the time these letters were written, Iosif had better focused picture of the Subbotniks than a few years before. He implies that the heresy he is fighting is more than “Judaism.”

Panov concludes after having examined the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the *Instructor* that “the heretics’ rejection of the church rites was not a categorical one, and it did not follow from the rejection of the basic doctrines of Christianity.”³

Chapters 8-10: Eschatological Disagreement

The Eastern Orthodox Church was deeply convinced that the world would come

¹*AED*, 335-337, 338-339, and 392.

²*Ibid.*, 348. The Latin term *filioque* is translated as “and (from) the Son” supplementing the traditional Orthodox description of the Holy Spirit as “proceeding from the Father.” In contemporary Orthodoxy there are, in fact, two approaches to the filioque question. Some theologians admit that the Latin doctrine of the Double Procession may be accepted as a theological opinion. Others regard filioque as a heresy that produces a fatal distortion of the Trinity. On the issues related to filioque see S. M. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984); also V. Losskii, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976).

³Panov, 27.

to an end with the advent of the Eighth Millennium in the year 7000. By Byzantine reckoning, the world had been created 5,508 years before Christ; thus the year 7000 would begin on September 1, 1492.¹ Archbishop Gennadii wrote about the dissidents' reaction on the expected Eighth Millennium in 1489: "Three years will go by, the seventh millenium comes to an end and then indeed it will be our turn."² The Subbotniks disagreed with the setting of a specific time for the Second Coming. The month of September 1492, with no Second Coming taking place, marked a victory of the "heretics'" opinion over the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church. This issue was very delicate and boiled down to an open conflict between the patristic writers and the authority of the Bible. As the expectations of the Second Coming filled the air, everything looked simple for the official church: either people believed in Christ's Second Coming on September 1, 1492, or they did not believe in it at all.

Immediately following September 1492, the Russian Orthodox Church desperately scrambled to explain the failed Second Coming. Something was needed to reconcile an old position with the new realities. It was in this context that Iosif wrote his *Word About the Seventh Millennium*. He provided the answer with a document that was later included as chapter eight in the *Instructor*.

The *Word About the Seventh Millennium*, as it appears in Iosif's *Instructor*, is a

¹"Ancient Russian Passover Calendars on the Eighth Millennium from the Creation of the World," *Orthodox Interlocutor* 11 (1860): 333-334 ("Древние русские пасхалии на осьмью тысячу лет от сотворения мира," *Православный собеседник* 11 [1860]: 333-334).

²Kazakova and Lur'e, 134.

creative and deliberate reconstruction of the original *Word About the Seventh Millennium*—an anonymous fifteenth-century document. The anonymous *Word About the Seventh Millennium*, for example, does not mention the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. The polemic of this early document, contrary to how it appears in Iosif's edition, never advances into aggressive or offensive language. Iosif, however, revised it into a radical statement against the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. He accomplished it at the expense of historical accuracy. For example, Iosif ascribes to Aleksey the following words: “Seven thousand years passed by, but there is no second coming of Christ.”¹ These words would not have been pronounced prior to 1492. At the same time both Iosif of Volotsk and Archbishop Gennadii stated that Aleksey died before 1490.²

Iosif made another unexpected move when he claimed that it was “the heretics, who are smart-alecky in a judaizing manner—archpriest Aleksey, priest Denis, and all who think and talk in the same way,”³ who declared that the end of the Seventh Millennium should signify the end of the world.⁴ They did this, according to Iosif, in order to nullify the authority of the holy Fathers, to whom they ascribed this view.

Iosif then reworked the patristic tradition on the seven thousand years. He insisted that the holy Fathers were speaking of

¹*Instructor*, 221.

²*AED*, 376, 390, 472, 481.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

the seven *veks*¹ of the present state of things, but not of the seven thousand years; in the same way they spoke about the future as of the eighth *vek* and not as the *eighth millennium*. . . . When you hear “*vek*” do not think that you know the length of the *vek*. For the word “*vek*” has many meanings: it is the time of man’s life; and the eternal future life after the resurrection is also referred to as a “*vek*.” So, if the eternal life after the resurrection is also called a “*vek*,” how can we refer to one thousand years as a “*vek*”?²

Iosif insists that a *vek* is an uncertain period of time; only God knows its beginning and its end.³ Iosif’s reinterpretation was the first step in the formation of a postmillennial eschatological approach in the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴ Only postmillennialism, with a focus on the earthly and visible kingdom of God, could measure up to the new evolving theory of the Third Rome.

Govosov had passionately insisted only five years earlier, that the only reliable calendar was the one used by the Orthodox church. Iosif shows total indifference regarding chronological dates. He now assaults the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents by using an entirely new approach.

In the eighth chapter Iosif accuses the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents for

¹The word “*vek*” that Iosif employs here, in Russian could have several meanings. One of the meanings of this word is “century.” However, this word could also denote various lengths of time, similar to the ambiguity of the English word “age,” which can mean virtually any length of time from the “age” of a child (perhaps a few months) to an “era”—the Renaissance “age” (*vek*), for example.

²Ibid., 223-224. Iosif here plays with the Russian word *vek* (век) that has the meaning of both “century” and “age.” For example, one may refer both to the twentieth century and to the short life of a child as a *vek* (век). One may also refer to a thousand years of history as a *vek* (век).

³Ibid., 226.

⁴Lincoln, 40-48.

discarding the authority of the Fathers. However, as we will see later from the writings of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents, their critical attitudes toward the patristics have always been conditioned. They argued that tradition must be governed by the authority of the Holy Scripture.¹ Iosif's next step was to show that the heretics rejected the authority of the Holy Scriptures. This he does in the next Word of the *Instructor*.

Iosif's ninth chapter is written

against the heresy of the Novgorod heretics who say: 'Why is it that the Second Coming of Christ has not happened? The apostles wrote that Christ was born in the last times. Fifteen hundred years passed, and still there is no Second Coming of Christ. Thus, the apostolic writings are false.'²

This is all Iosif has to say concerning the presumed views of the heretics on Christ's Second Coming and the Holy Scriptures. Iosif dedicates the rest of the chapter to the issues of disappointment and misunderstanding. He addresses the believers who in vain expected Christ's Second Coming in 1492 by referring to the Lord's mysterious and uncomprehensible ways. He insists that one should not even try to comprehend God's plans. Obviously, Iosif had little information concerning the reasons why the heretics rejected a particular time setting for the second coming.

Chapter 11: Monasticism

This section of the *Instructor* reassures us that the Subbotniks never rejected the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Iosif starts this section with the following introduction:

¹The evidences of such an approach are found, for example, in the writings of Ivan Chernij and Ivan Kuritsin. Detailed analyses of their views are presented in chapter 4.

²*Ibid.*, 233.

Chapter eleven, written against the heresy of the Novgorod heretics who cursed monastic life and said that monks transgress God's commandments and substitute their own speculations for the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, saying that the monks themselves invented the monastic life, holding the human tradition. Others say that if the monastic life were pleasing to God, then Jesus Christ himself, and also his apostles, would be in monastic rank, but we see that both Christ and his holy apostles are portrayed as laymen, not as monks. Some also say that the type of monastic clothes was given to Pahomiy not by a holy angel: if it had been an angel of the Lord, he would have appeared in light, and not in a black image—which is the sign of satanic action.

Some pervert the words of the holy apostle Paul, which he wrote to Timothy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." The heretics say that the holy apostle Paul has foretold this concerning the monks: it is they who forbid one to get married and require people to abstain from food. It is about them, the heretics say, that it is written: "Cursed be everyone who will not restore the seed to Israel." Here are the words of the Holy Scripture that repudiate all these heretical sayings.¹

This time Iosif had to acknowledge that the heretics both recognized the authority of the Holy Scripture and used it for evaluating Tradition. The entire section testifies that by the time it was written Iosif of Volotsk had accumulated a considerable amount of information on the Novgorod-Moscow movement.²

Iosif is far from withdrawing his original accusation of Judaism. He finishes this

¹Ibid., 265.

²By attacking monasticism, the Subbotniks attacked both the religious and economic aspects of this institution. By the end of the fifteenth century land ownership by the monasteries reached its highest level: about one third of all the land was owned by the monks. (On land-ownership by the church see J. Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church* [London: Longman, 1995], 205-218.) Understandably, in their fighting against the land-ownership by the church, the heretics found support from Ivan III, who felt that land-ownership should be the exclusive prerogative of the state. See Heard, 44.

section, rather unexpectedly, with references to the “obvious Jews,”¹ who alone, in his understanding, could reject monasticism. Nevertheless, he was forced to face the fact that their arguments were absolutely incompatible with any notions of Judaism.

Sentence of the 1490 Council

Other important antiheretical documents include the official materials of the Council of 1490: *Sentence of the Council*² and *Instruction Against the Heretics*.³ Both manuscripts were published by S. O. Dolgov.⁴

The Council was convened in Moscow on October 17, 1490. Along with Metropolitan Zosima, the archbishops of Suzdal, Sara, Tver, Perm, and Rjazan were present too. Archbishop Gennadii was forbidden by Ivan III to come.⁵

The section dealing with history in *Instruction Against the Heretics* covers both the events preceding and following this Council, as well as information about the Council itself. It also contains an interdict—the standard record of excommunication.

¹*Instructor*, 305.

²*Sentence of the Council*, 11-15 (*Соборный приговор*, рукопись БИЛ, Музейное собрание, #3271, 11-15).

³*Instruction Against the Heretics*, Manuscript GIM, Chudovskaja Collection, #246, XVI, 754-55 (*Поучение против еретиков*, рукопись ГИМ, Чудовское собрание, #246, XVI, 754-55).

⁴Dolgov, “Moscow’s 1490 Council Against Judaizers.”

⁵Although Archbishop Gennadii was desperate and even threatened the Council that without him their decisions would be unlawful, Ivan III, alarmed by Gennadii’s radicalism, did not allow him to come. Buganov and Bogdanov, 57. Nevertheless, Gennadii sent to Moscow certain manuscripts “about the Spanish king and the way he cleansed his land” from the heretics using the help of the Inquisition. *Ibid.*, 59.

The *Sentence of the Council* states all the “crimes” committed by the heretics.

The closing part of the document is of special interest to this study:

Many of you [heretics] dishonored the image of Christ, and the image of His Blessed Mother, painted on the icons, and *some of you* dishonored the cross of Christ, and *some of you* said blasphemy against many holy icons, and *some of you* cut the holy icons and burned them with fire, and *some of you* bit the cross with your teeth, and *some of you* threw the holy icons and the crosses on the ground and threw dirt on them, and *some of you* threw the holy icons into the trash, and a lot of other contamination was committed on the holy images painted on the icons. And *some of you* spoke blasphemy against our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and against His Blessed Mother, and *some of you* did not honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and *some of you* spoke blasphemy on the great holy fathers and miracle workers, and about many saints, and *some of you* profaned all the seven Councils of the holy fathers, and *some of you* ate meat, and cheese, and eggs, and drank milk during the fast on Wednesday and Friday. And *you have all* honored the Sabbath more than the *Voskresenije*¹ of Christ. And *some of you* do not believe in the *Voskresenije* of Christ and in His Holy Ascension.²

The *Sentence* makes a clear distinction between “some” and “all.” Most of the accusations were addressed not to “all,” but to “some” heretics. However, not all historians are willing to recognize this. Sergey Dolgov, for example, writes that “according to this *Sentence* we can conclude that the following anti-Christian acts were performed by the heretics: they did not honor Jesus Christ as the Son of God, rejected entirely His divinity, spoke blasphemy against Him and His Blessed Mother, and rejected the honoring of the saints.”³

¹The first day of the week in Russian is named after Christ’s resurrection—*Voskresenie* (Resurrection).

²Kazakova and Lur’e, 383. Emphasis is mine.

³S. O. Dolgov, *About the Heresy of Judaizers* (Moscow: Moscow University, 1902), 125 (С. О. Долгов, *О ереси жидовствующих* [Москва: Московский университет, 1902], 125).

Another scholar, Peretz, who sees the clear distinction between “all” and “some,” is not willing either to dismiss the accusation of antitrinitarianism:

Of special importance is the indication in the Sentence that absolutely all Novgorod’s heretics honored the Old Testament Sabbath “more than the *Voskresenije* of Christ,” and that *they do not believe* either in the resurrection or the ascension of Christ. These specific teachings of our heretics directly indicate their abandonment of Christianity for the sake of a “judaizing tradition,” and our fathers were right, when they called their actions in their *Sentence* “judaizing,” and called the heretics themselves as “infidels and apostates of Christian faith.”¹

It is interesting to notice that Sabbath keeping, according to the official documents, was the only belief shared by all these heretics. This was later interpreted by scholars as a proof that all the heretics shared unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Flier believes “that the author (writing on behalf of Metropolitan Zosima) accuses the heretics not of honoring Saturday more than Sunday but of judaizing by honoring the Sabbath more than the Resurrection of Christ.”² On the other hand, Buganov and Bogdanov agree that the *Sentence* does not even “mention their antitrinitarianism.”³

In order to understand correctly the meaning of the phrase “honored the Sabbath more than the *Voskresenije*,” one should analyze it in its historical context.

The problem of interpreting this phrase is caused by the evolution of the word *Voskresenije*, or rather from the transformation of its meaning from “Resurrection” to

¹Peretz, *New Works on the 'Judaizers' and Their Literature at the End of the Fifteenth Century*, 20. Emphasis is mine.

²Michael S. Flier, “Sunday in Medieval Russian Culture,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. H. Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 118.

³Buganov and Bogdanov, 61.

“Resurrection-Sunday” and finally to “Sunday.” Thus, the word *Voskresenije* had different meanings in different historical periods. A brief history of the evolution of the term is in order here..

The most popular sermon collections used by the official Church at the time of the controversy with the Subbotniks were *The Golden Tongue* and *The Precious Stone*. These two documents contain numerous sermons related to the End of the World, and many of them placed emphasis on a special veneration of Sunday as the Day of the Resurrection. The week was treated as a metaphor for the seven millennia; and *Voskresenije* was characterized in eschatological terms as the Eighth Day, or the Eighth Millennium that will have no end.¹

The end of the fifteenth century was a crucial time for the evolution of the word *Voskresenije*. In his detailed research on this subject Flier concludes:

Once 1492 had passed, the original motivation for the Resurrection Cycle was obscured. The innovation V/R was dissociated from the specifically human orientation of the Cycle—Palm Sunday and the promise of the general resurrection—and was extended instead from Easter, the Bright Resurrection of Christ, to all Sundays of the year as a mark of their special status as Days of the Resurrection, Resurrection-Sundays (V/RS).²

By 1526, maybe even earlier, the second meaning of the word *Voskresenije* had obviously overtaken the first one. One of the Russian Chronicles reads: “In the year 1526, on January 21, on *Voskresenije*, Great Prince Vasilii Ivanovich has given a great ceremony

¹Flier, 142.

²Ibid., 145. V/R is an abbreviation of *Voskresenije*/Resurrection; V/RS stands for *Voskresenije*/Resurrection Sunday.

for this, the great prince's, wedding."¹

Beginning with the seventeenth century, the term *Voskresenije* as applied to the first day of the week lost its original spiritual meaning.² But at the time of the Synod of 1490 it still had a combined meaning: the first day of the week and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.³ The keeping of the seventh day Sabbath as a holy day was perceived as a rejection of the special role of Sunday. This in turn provided a rich soil for accusations in a rejection of the general resurrection, the resurrection of Christ, and the divinity of Christ. In the 1490 verdict there are two possible charges: one for honoring the Sabbath, and another, an indirect charge, drawn from the first one, for rejecting Christ's resurrection.

Nevertheless, there was a distinct line between the spiritual meaning of the word *Voskresenije* and the same word in its meaning of the first day of the week. Some fifteenth-century sermons, for example, strongly condemn a cult of Sunday, and make a forceful attempt to distinguish between the Resurrection of Christ and the first day of the week: "And if they do something evil on other days, then . . . arriving at the church, they

¹"Second Wedding of Vasilii Ivanovich," 1526, MS 1624 ("Свадьба вторая Васи́лия Иоановича," 1526, MS 1624). See N. Saharov, *The Sayings of the Russian People*, 8 vols. (Saint Petersburg, 1849), 6:38 (Н. Сахаров, *Сказания русского народа*, 8 т. [Санкт-Петербург, 1849], 6:38).

²*Ibid.*, 145-145.

³The fact that the text of the Synod refers to the first day of the week is obvious already from comparing *Subbota* (Sabbath, Saturday) and *Voskresenije* and from presenting them as opposites. It may be interesting to notice that although the campaign to rename *Nedelja* (the first day of the week) to *Voskresenije* (Resurrection, Resurrection Sunday, Sunday) was significant even before the Synod of 1490, it seems that only after this Synod and especially after the disappointment of the year 1492 did this tendency prevail (Flier, 105-149). However, even today in some regions of Russia, in the entire Ukraine, and in many Slavic languages the first day of the week is still called *Nedelja*.

should pray for their sins, asking forgiveness of the Lord and worshipping the Resurrection of Christ and not the day *Nedelja*.”¹ In his *Rudder*, Ivan Kuritsin refers to the first day of the week as *Nedelja*.² In other passages he mentions the joy of remembering the resurrection of Christ on *Nedelja*.³ Finally, he calls the first day of the week the “resurrection day.”⁴ Thus, the heretics made a distinction between the meaning of the word *Voskresenije* and the newly adopted name for the first day of the week.

Voskresensk Chronicle on the Treatment of Novgorod Dissidents, 1492

The *Voskresensk Chronicle* (1492) is another source on the history of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.⁵ This document contains historical data and presents the accusations the Subbotniks had to face:

The same autumn (1492), on the seventeenth day of October, by the order of the pious and Christ-loving great prince Ivan (III) Vasilievich, sovereign and autocrat of all Russia, in the Metropolitan’s court assembled the most holy lord Metropolitan Zosima of all Russia, Archbishop Tikhon of Rostov, Bishops Nifont of Suzdal, Semion of Riazan, Vassian of Tver, Prokhor of Sarai (an office which by this time was located in the Moscow suburb of Krutitsy), and Filofei of Perm, and the archimandrites, the abbots (igumeni), the priests (sviashchennitsi), the elder monks

¹“The Word About a Day Called *Nedelja*,” Païisy’s Collection, f. 47 v (“Слово о дни рекомом неделе,” *Паусеев сборник*, f. 47 v), quoted in N. Galkovsky, *The Struggle of Christianity with the Remains of Paganism in Russia* (Moscow, 1913), 78 (Н. Гальковский, *Борьба христианства с остатками язычества в древней Руси* [Москва, 1913], 78).

²Kuritsin, *Rudder*, 190.

³*Ibid.*, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199.

⁴*Ibid.*, 200.

⁵*PSRL*, 8:220.

(starts), and the whole holy council of the Russian Metropolitanate to deal with the corrupters of the Christian faith: the Novgorodian archpriest Gavril; the monk Zakharii; the priest Denis, of the Church of the Archangel; the priest Maxim, of Saint Ivan's Church; the priest Vasilii, of the Pokrov church; the deacon Makar, of the church of Saint Nicholas; the sexton Gridia, of the church of Saints Boris and Gleb; Vasiuk, the son-in-law of Denis; Samukha, the sexton of the church of Saint Nicholas; and others of the same mind, intent on corrupting the true and immaculate faith in Christ our God, glorified in the Trinity, and on destroying Christ's flock, Orthodox Christendom. Yet this they could not do; they themselves were defeated and their wisdom was swallowed up.¹

The document then explains in what way the heretics were corrupting the faith:

Because they did not venerate the human image of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of God, painted on the icons, nor the image of the blessed Virgin, nor the images of the saints, but in a reviling and abusive way they said: "These are made by the hand of man; they have mouths but do not talk, and so on; those who made them and who set their hope on them shall become like them." And the divine service they performed in an unseemly manner, having eaten and drunk, and the body of Christ they set at naught, (regarding it) as plain bread, and the blood of Christ as plain wine and water; they committed many other heresies which cannot be recorded in writing and are contrary to the teachings of the holy apostles and the holy fathers; they have seduced many simple folk with their heresies. And in the council, before the great prince, the Metropolitan, the bishops, and the whole holy council they denied their heresies.²

Once again a charge of blaspheming the "faith in Christ our God, glorified in the Trinity" is rooted in dissidents' iconoclasm. The way the dissidents viewed the eucharist, which was typical for the later mainstream Protestant movements in Europe, provoked their accusers to pronounce them as dishonoring faith in Jesus Christ.

Letter of Monk Savva

One of the monks of the Troitse-Sergiev monastery authored another document

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

related to the study of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.¹ Savva addresses his letter to Dmitrii Shein who conducted the political and commercial negotiations with Zakharija Skharija of Taiman. Shein was sent on his diplomatic mission on October 29, 1487, and returned to Moscow before September 1489. Savva admonished the Russian ambassador to be faithful to the Orthodox faith. Savva's concern is expressed by the following statement: "And you, Lord Dmitrii, if while being an ambassador you talked to that Jew Zakharija Skhara, so, I beseech you, that if you heard from him some good words, or some bad words, put them aside, out of your heart and out of your lips."² Savva then develops his argument against Jews and heretics, mostly based on different patristic sources. His discussion is similar to that found in the first chapter of Iosif's *Instructor*. According to Belokurov, the letter "contains little historical data . . . concerning the teaching of the Judaizers."³ In his detailed analysis of this document Belokurov displays all the sources that are used in Savva's letter. Like Iosif of Volotsk, Savva is trying to give an adequate rebuttal to the Jewish attempts to convert Christians to Judaism. Savva hastened to warn Dmitrii Shein, who, as Savva believed, was exposed to the influence of Skharija the Jew.

Penitence of Denis

The short fragment of the *Penitence* by the Novgorod heretic Denis can be

¹This document was published by S. A. Belokurov as "Letter of Monk Savva."

²Belokurov, 1. Although it is not likely that Shein was influenced by Judaism, the letter that he received was apparently sent to ensure his Orthodoxy.

³*Ibid.*, vii.

classified in a separate category.¹

Here is the entire text of this short document:

To the shepherd of the spiritual sheep, holy Archbishop Zosima, chosen in the Holy Spirit, from Denisjeshe, who prostrates himself before you with bitter tears. What kind of man am I? I am so lost—like an animal I could not control my sinful tongue. Please, show me, my lord, the right way, teach me, my lord, to do God's will.

Internal factors imply that the author of this letter is a person of high rank.

Although the tone of this letter is penitential, and Zosima is addressed in the most respectful way, one might suggest that the author is close to the Metropolitan and that there is some bond of solidarity between them. It is almost certain that this letter was written by the famous priest Denis,² who was invited by Ivan III to Moscow from Novgorod and who for years was the archpriest of the Archangelsky cathedral in the Kremlin, Moscow—probably the most prestigious auditorium in the entire Russia.

He was dismissed from his position in October 1490 when the archbishops who gathered in Moscow to conduct the Council against the heretics chose to worship in the Archangelsky cathedral. They announced to Denis that he was “unworthy to worship with the holy bishops. There are some bad speeches that we heard about you even at the time of Gerontii, Metropolitan of the entire Rus, and not only about yourself. Also the description of what you have done and the letters of Gennadii, the archbishop of

¹This manuscript was preserved as a part of BAN Collection 4.3.15 (БАН собрание 4.3.15). The manuscript was published in *AED*, 388.

²The name *Denisjeshe* by which the author identifies himself in this letter is a belittling variant of *Denis*. The author, filled with self-hatred for some wrongdoing contrives the nickname to show the depth of his repentance.

Novgorod, came against you.”¹ In an attempt to defend himself, Denis “said bad things about Gennadii,”² but the archbishops would not listen to him. The next day, Denis and some other heretics were arrested.

What was the subject of his penitence? What sins did Denis confess? The only sin Denis mentioned in his letter was that he could not control his tongue. Obviously, he said something that he wished he had never said. The circumstances of his penitence remain unclear. However, the time when this document was written³ suggests that for some reason Denis said something that under normal circumstances he would not say. It could be that he betrayed his comrades, or had to make a false statement, confessing something that he had never done.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the charges of antitrinitarianism that were generated by Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk, and those that are found in the *Sentence of the 1490 Council*, *Voskresensk Chronicle* of the year 1492, the *Letter of Monk Savva*, and the *Penitence of Denis*. The original basis for bringing up the charges of judaizing were the following: ascribing to the heretics some “judaizing” psalms; their keeping of the Ten Commandments; their iconoclasm; their presumed following of Marcellianism and Messalianism; and their eschatological disagreements with the official Church. It seems

¹Buganov and Bogdanov, 58.

²Ibid.

³It was most probably written in 1490, the year of Denis’s arrest and execution. See Kazakova and Lur’e, 131.

that in his zealous attempt to defend Orthodoxy, Iosif stretched the information he obtained from Archbishop Gennadii in the direction that his letter seemed to indicate—Judaism. Thus, Iosif’s first response was a long discussion of the dangers of Judaism in general and of antitrinitarianism in particular.

However, due to its polemical nature, the *Instructor* also exposes factual information on the Subbotniks. It reflects the evolution of Iosif’s understanding of the dissidents. One of the most militant and radical promoters of Iosif’s ideas, Servitskii attempts to reconcile the obvious discrepancies in Iosif’s writings by declaring that Iosif is probably dealing in his later chapters with the different branches of the heresy.¹

The Sentence of the 1490 Council addresses the accusation of antitrinitarianism and many other charges only to “some,” not to “all” dissidents. Sabbath-keeping, according to the official document was the only belief shared by all heretics. In general, the documents presented in this chapter differ in their charges of antitrinitarianism against the Subbotniks. Although these documents were issued during a period of intense fight against the Subbotniks, and are strongly colored with polemics, they still reflect some light on the nature of the Subbotniks’ theology. However, in order to have a clear picture of the Subbotniks’ theology, regardless of the strength of the reflected light from their antagonists, we must turn to the writings of Subbotniks themselves.

¹Servitskii, 317-320.

CHAPTER IV

SUBBOTNIKS' WRITINGS

The Subbotniks' own works are certainly more promising for the study of their views than the works of their opponents. This chapter deals with the trinitarian issues as they are exposed in the writings of the Subbotniks. Understandably, not all of these writings deal with the trinitarian issues. In fact, very few medieval Russian manuscripts deal with this subject at all. The most likely explanation of this could be that this issue was settled for the Russian theologians. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Iosif of Volotsk himself, before he learned about the Subbotniks, was reluctant to write about the Trinity: "Why, my lord . . . do you ask me to write to you about the mystery of the Holy Trinity?"¹ Thus, the absence of trinitarian formulations is not yet an indicator of antitrinitarianism. If it were, few Russian ecclesiastical works by prominent theologians of that time would receive the mark of orthodoxy. On the other hand, we expect to find treatment of trinitarian issues in manuscripts that specifically deal with systematic theology and dogmatics of the Russian Orthodox Church. This kind of literature is not as abundant as the letters on particular subjects, such as moral and pastoral issues, or general historical and patristic literature. There are, however, a number of manuscripts dealing specifically

¹*AED*, 306.

with doctrinal issues, the doctrine of the Trinity included. Fortunately, there is a substantial corpus of this kind written by the Subbotniks.

Since it is easy to become confused with all the literature not directly connected with the authentic works of the Novgorod-Moscow heretics of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it is necessary to limit the sources.

Limiting the Number of Sources

One problem related to a study of the Subbotniks, and the cause of much confusion, is the “apocryphal” sources wrongly ascribed to this movement by some scholars.¹ Lur’e refers to the attempts of some scholars to ascribe these “sources” as the

logically vicious circle . . . that can be found in the works of A. I. Sobolevskii and other authors who introduced so-called Judaizers’ literature as a scientific term referring to translations of Jewish works that had currency in Russian literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; investigators viewed these works as new and authentic sources for the history of the Russian “Judaizers’ heresy.” All these translations, however, were done in Western Rus, and their connection with the Novgorod-Moscow heresy of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was assumed solely on the basis of the fact that the heretics were condemned for “judaizing.”²

One example of ascribing foreign sources to the Subbotniks is a book by the recent scholar Russell Zguta, in which he declares *Secreta Secretorum* (often called *Aristotle's Gates* [Аристотелевы врата] in the historical literature) to be “a monument to

¹See Sobolevskii, *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia*, 409-413, 419-423, 423-428.

²Y. S. Lur’e, “Unresolved Issues,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. H. Birnbaum and M. S. Flier (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 151.

the Judaizers' political ideology."¹ *Secreta Secretorum* was not even mentioned in the list of books which "the heretics possess" (у еретиков все есть), cited by Archbishop Gennadii in his 1489 letters.²

It is correct that Archbishop Gennadii's list may not be exhaustive, as Zguta indicates,³ but the list cited by Gennadii gives us some directions for deciding what types of books the heretics possessed. From this list, which may already have been corrupted by Archbishop Gennadii, it can be assumed that Gennadii did not have in mind literature such as *Secreta Secretorum* or most fifteenth- and sixteenth-century translations of Jewish religious writings.

Recently Moshe Taube attempted to find a link that "would validate Sobolevskii's characterization of the corpus of late fifteenth century Ruthenian translation from Hebrew as the 'Literature of the Judaizers'."⁴ Taube believes that the philosophical

¹R. Zguta, "The 'Aristotelevy Vrata' [Aristotle's Gates] as a Reflection of Judaizer Political Ideology," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 26 (1978): 1-10. Concerning *Secreta Secretorum*, see Sobolevskii, *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia*, 419-428; also M. Speranskii, *The History of Some Banished Books: Aristotle's Gates or Secret of Secrets* (Saint Petersburg: Alexandrov's Publishing House, 1908) (М. Сперанский, *Из истории отреченных книг: Аристотелевы врата или Тайна тайных* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. М. А. Александрова, 1908]).

²*AED*, 320.

³Zguta, 6-10.

⁴Taube, "The Spiritual Circle in the Secret of Secrets," 347.

part of the *Laodecian Letter* was originally part of the Ruthenian version of the *Secret of Secrets*.¹ Although it is not entirely impossible that the philosophical part of the *Laodecian Letter* was instigated by some Slavic translations of the *Secret of Secrets*, Taube's proposal still remains only a hypothesis. No Hebrew text of the *Laodecian Letter* or texts similar to the *Laodecian Letter* documents are extant. In addition, the philosophical emphasis of the *Laodecian Letter* and the *Secret of Secrets* are diametrical opposites.²

The chief argument for assigning additional works to the literature of the heretics is apparently the representation of the heresy as having a judaizing character. Such an attitude is found, for instance, in a translation and study by G. M. Prohorov of the *Dialogue* by Gregorii Palamas with the Chions and the Turks. The *Dialogue* contains the account of a dispute (1354) between Archbishop Palamas and Turks, by whom he had been taken captive, and certain *Chions*. This latter term has been variously explained as referring to Turkish sailor-preachers, Muslim apologists, and finally Judaizers. Prohorov defends *Chion* as *Karaite*, or Judaizers. For Prohorov, the existence of this work in Russia is evidence that the late fifteenth-century Novgorod-Moscow heretics were Judaizers. But even if one accepts the proposition that the *Chions* were Judaizers, the fact still remains that the *Dialogue* had already been translated into Russian in the fourteenth

¹Ibid.; also see idem, "The 'Poem on the Soul' in the Laodicean Epistle," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995): 677.

²For further discussion on this subject see pp. 123-125, below.

century.¹ Lur'e observes:

It obviously follows from this that it [the *Dialog*] cannot serve as a reliable source for the history of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century religious movement and in no way supports the biased and nonauthentic testimony of the *Enlightener* and other denunciatory works on the nature of the heresy. . . . The testimonies of the denouncers themselves provide no basis for ascribing to the heretics any works connected with Judaism.²

Hösch dismisses the attempts to ascribe any Jewish sources to the literature of Judaizers as artificial.³

Books Found Among the Subbotniks

Archbishop Gennadii, as already mentioned, sent a list of books owned by the heretics to Paisy Jaroslavov, Nil Sorsky, and to some other officials in the late 1480s. Since these books were not in circulation among the heretics only, but also among the most conservative Orthodox,⁴ I will summarize them briefly, and classify them into three general categories.

Biblical Books

Gennadii mentioned a handful of biblical books found among the Subbotniks: the

¹G. M. Prohorov, "Palama's Reasoning with Chions and Turks and the Problem of Judaizers," *TODRL* 27 (1972): 438 (Г. М. Прохоров, "Прение Паламы 'с ксионны и турки' и проблема жидовски мудрствующих," *Труды отдела древне-русской литературы* 27 [1972]: 438).

²Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 154.

³Hösch, 298.

⁴Archbishop Gennadii, who probably himself did not have an adequate knowledge of these works, is asking Bishop Ioasaf if he has them. It is possible that Gennadii never read these books and wanted to borrow them from Ioasaf (*AED*, 320).

Prophets, Genesis, Kings, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Gennadii mentioned also the book of *Sirach*; although an extra-canonical book, it still enjoyed great respect in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is possible that Gennadii, who was far inferior in erudition compared to Iosif, was suspicious of the Old Testament books in general. He, like many other Orthodox believers, may have associated all of the Old Testament with Judaism. That Gennadii lists only Old Testament books does not mean that the heretics did not possess any New Testament books. The writings of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents show beyond doubt that they made use of the New Testament. Archbishop Gennadii refused to include New Testament books on his list for tactical reasons—it would only weaken his case. However, a probability that Gennadii simply would not mention any New Testament books in association with the heretics cannot be ruled out entirely.

Works of a Theological, Didactic, and Ecclesiastical-Polemic Nature

Archbishop Gennadii mentions the following books owned by the heretics: *The Saying About Sylvester, Pope of Rome*; some writings by Athanasius of Alexandria; *the Word of Cosmas the Priest Against the Newly Appearing Heresy of Bogomils*; *the Letter of Patriarch Photios to Boris, Prince of Bulgaria*; *Dionysius the Areopagite*.

The Saying About Sylvester, Pope of Rome

The Saying About Sylvester is the first nonbiblical book mentioned by Archbishop Gennadii to be found among the dissidents. It is not altogether clear what book he has in mind. Petrov suggests that the *Saying About Sylvester* is the legend about the Donation of

Constantine,¹ and since this legend is ascribed to the time of Pope Sylvester, Petrov reasons, the *Saying About Sylvester* should reflect this motif. Since the subject of the Donation of Constantine is elaborated in the *Tale of the White Hat*, Petrov believes the heretics possessed this book.

Kazakova and Lur'e, however, suggest that Archbishop Gennadii had in mind the so-called *Acts of Sylvester* when he listed the *Saying About Sylvester*. The *Acts of Sylvester* later became part of the popular collection of theological works—the *Great Monthly Readings (Великие Минеи Четьи)*.² This latter suggestion seems to be correct. *The Acts of Sylvester* describes in detail the pope's struggle with pagans and Jews. The book is strictly Orthodox: Sylvester's polemic against the Jews is taken exclusively from the Old Testament.³

Writings of Athanasius of Alexandria

It is not certain what work of Athanasius of Alexandria was found among the Subbotniks—Gennadii does not give us any hint. Athanasius, the champion of orthodoxy

¹N. I. Petrov, "About the Fate of Constantine the Great's Headgear," *The Works of Kiev Theological Seminary* 12 (1865): 492-493 ("Н. И. Петров, "О судьбе вена Константина Великого," *Труды Киевской духовной академии* 12 [1865]: 492-493). The story about the Donation of Constantine was used by Archbishop Gennadii in the *Tale of the White Cowl*—a collection issued under his supervision.

²*Great Monthly Readings* (Moscow: Imperial Archeological Committee, 1910), book 1, January 1-6 (*Великие Минеи Четьи* [Москва: Издание Императорской Археографической комиссии, 1910], Тетрадь 1, Январь, дни 1-6). *Great Mounthly Readings* is a twelve-volume liturgical work with hymns for each of the 366 days of the calendar year. Every day of the calendar is covered and almost every saint depicted in this encyclopedia of holy readings.

³*Ibid.*

during the Arian crisis in the fourth century, is probably the most glorified trinitarian theologian in the Eastern Church. His entire theological activity was focused on the different aspects of trinitarian theology. The very appearance of his book on Gennadii's list should be taken as another proof of the orthodoxy of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. Allegations that the writings of Athanasius were used by the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents to better equip themselves to meet and attack the Orthodox position are groundless.

The Word of Cosmas the Priest Against the Newly Appearing Heresy of Bogomils

The Word of Cosmas the Priest Against the Newly Appearing Heresy of Bogomils has been preserved and is found today in the *Great Monthly Readings*.¹ Cosmas the Priest confronts the Bogomils, who, like the ancient gnostics, believed that the body of Christ was an illusion, and denied the Orthodox doctrine of a bodily resurrection.² The book is written in the traditional medieval manner, where opponents are presented as "straw-men."³ If someone assumed that the Subbotniks for some reason were sympathetic to Bogomils, whose doctrine is foreign to Judaism, their position would be extremely vulnerable.

¹Silvester—January 2, Athanasius—January 18 and May 2, Cosmas the Priest—August 31.

²D. Obolenskii, *The Bogomils* (Cambridge, 1948); see also H. C. Puech and A. Vaillant, *Le Traité contre les Bogomils de Dosmas le Prêtre* (Paris, 1945).

³Y. K. Begunov, *Kozma the Priest in the Slavic Literature* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1973), 320-321 (Ю. К. Бегунов, *Козма пресвитер в славянских литературах* [София: Болгарская Академия наук, 1973], 320-321).

If the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents hypothetically needed heretical literature, they would have no problem finding it. Instead of consulting *The Word of Cosmas the Priest Against the Newly Appeared Heresy of Bogomils*, they could, with great “benefits,” read the *Secret Book* (Тайная книга) of *Bogomils*. This book was easily accessible in Russia.¹ The so-called “spiritual verses,” allegedly composed by the Bogomils, were also very popular in Russia²—but they were not found among the Subbotniks.

Letter of Patriarch Photius to Boris of Bulgaria

The Letter of Patriarch Photius to Boris of Bulgaria is the only book in this section that is not included in the most popular collection of the *Great Monthly Readings*, although the character of this book is thoroughly Orthodox. Bulgaria, a newly converted country, was ecclesiastically torn between Rome and Constantinople.³ Under pressure from Rome, Bulgaria had to accept the *Filioque* addition—the doctrine that was considered by Patriarch Photius as the most serious heresy. In his letter to Boris of

¹Y. Ivanov, *The Bogomils' Books and Legends* (Sofia, 1925), 64 (Ю. Иванов, *Богомольские книги и легенды* [София, 1925], 64).

²See V. N. Mochulskii, *Historical-Literary Analysis of the “Dove's Book”* (Warsaw: Zemkevich's Publishing House, 1887) (В. Н. Мочульский, *Историко-литературный анализ стиха о “Голубиной книге”* [Варшава: Тип. М. Земкевича, 1887]); D. L. Mordovzev, *Wandering Minstrels* (Saint Petersburg: Lebedev's Publishing House, 1888), 398-99 (Д. Л. Мордовцев, *Калики переходящие* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Н. А. Лебедева 1888], 398-99); V. Kalugin, *Singing Strings* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1989), 301-404 (В. Калугин, *Струны рокотаху* [Москва: Современник, 1989], 301-404).

³Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1975), 92-107.

Bulgaria,¹ Photius advocates the traditional teaching of the Eastern Orthodox Church on the procession of the Holy Spirit.² The works of Photius on pneumatology even today are considered standard teachings in the Eastern Orthodox Church.³

Works of a Philosophical Character

Among the works of a philosophical character are *Menander* (or *Sayings* of the classical playwright Menander), the anonymous *Logic*, and *Dionisius the Areopagite*.

Menander

This book has been known in Russia since the end of the fourteenth century. It is even interpolated in one manuscript of the Old Testament books.⁴ The *Sayings* of Menander is a collection of passages taken from different plays written by the Attic poet Menander (343/342—292/291 B.C.). When exposed to Stoic philosophy, Menander chose to be a playwright, not a philosopher. He wrote more than one hundred plays in

¹King Boris of Bulgaria (852-889) and his closest associates were baptized in 864. Bulgaria was to become a Christian state. Boris I did not hesitate in forcing his people to give up pagan rites and adopt Christianity.

²For more than a thousand years the *filioque* has separated the Orthodox Church and the Christian West. Eastern Christianity almost universally declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, while the West, at least since the tenth-eleventh centuries, has argued that the Third Person issues from the Father and the Son. The Orthodox Church is opposed to the Western doctrine of the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit.

³Saint Photios, *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (N.p.: Studion Publishers, 1983); also see S. Bulgakov, *The Comforter* (Paris: 1937), 17 (С. Булгаков, *Параklet* [Париж: 1936], 17).

⁴ВАН 24.4.28 (БАН 24.4.28).

about thirty-three years.¹ F. Allinson notes:

Down to the fourth or fifth century of our era Menander was read in the Nile valley and, in fact, throughout the Roman world. That he formed part of the standard literature in western Europe we know from Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Auvergne, 472 A.D., who draws a comparison between the *Epitrepontes* of Menander and the *Hecyra* of Terence.²

Menander's popularity gradually disappeared in Western Europe, while his complete plays were extant in the East at least as late as the eleventh century.³ It is not known whether Menander's plays, or any parts of them, were used by heretical movements. The appearance of this book among the Russian dissidents signifies their interest in classical writings—an unmistakable intellectual sign of the Reform movement.

Logic

Scholars believe that the *Logic* Gennadii refers to is the same book that was preserved under the name *The Book Called Logic* in many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Russian manuscripts.⁴ This book is a compilation ascribed to the well-known twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Moses ben Maimon⁵ (1135-1204) and the Arab scholar Al-

¹Francis G. Allinson, trans. *Menander, the Principal Fragments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), xiv.

²Ibid., xi.

³Ibid.

⁴See A. I. Sobolevskii, "*The Logic*" of Judaizers and "*Secret of Secrets*" (Saint Petersburg: Balishev's Publishing House, 1899) (А. И. Соболевский, "*Логика*" жидовствующих и "*Тайная тайных*" [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. В. С. Балышев, 1899]); Kazakova and Lur'e, 144.

⁵Moses ben Maimon is usually known for one of the best mediaeval combinations of philosophy and religion. Like Thomas Aquinas, he was trying to "reconcile reason and

Hazal. The book, which was translated in Western Russia,¹ presents the theoretical problems of mathematics (e.g., line and flatness, indivisibility and infinity). *Logic* was popular in Western Russia and was usually accompanied by another book on logic by John of Damascus, a well-known and respected Orthodox monk. Through these books the philosophical thought of the great thinkers was available. In the same way that the Latin church discovered Aristotle through the works of Medieval Arab and Jewish philosophers, Russians derived much of their intellectual knowledge from Jewish sources. Fred Bratton observes:

When the Near East became Moslem, the Syrians became the chief transmitters of Greek learning, translating Hippocrates, Galen, Euclid, Archimedes, and Aristotle into Arabic. In Mesopotamia the Arabs had developed schools of philosophy and medicine and later brought their knowledge to western Europe. Thus it came about that Jewish scholars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were heirs to this body of Greek and Arabic learning.²

Although there were no Arab settlements in Russia, many Jews lived in western and southern Russia. These regions became intellectual centers where secular books of antiquity were translated. The presence of these books, however, had no direct correlation with Judaism. Furthermore, only one book of Jewish origin—*Logic*—was found among those who were later called Judaizers. The appearance of this book is a sign

revelation” (Iosif Sarachek, “The Doctrine of Messiah,” in *Eschatology in Maimonidean Thought*, ed. Jacob I. Dienstag [New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982], 12). Maimon was one of the best interpreters of Aristotelian philosophy (Fred Gladstone Bratton, *Maimonides* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1967], 10-11, 86).

¹It is in Western Rus, especially in Kiev, that many books on science, such as mathematics and astronomy, first appeared in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. Only a few of them were available in other regions of Russia.

²Bratton, 9-10.

of humanistic rather than heretical tendencies.¹

Dionysius the Areopagite

Although it is not certain which particular work of Pseudo-Dionysius was found among the Subbotniks, it is probably that it was one of many writings by Dionysius preserved by the end of sixteenth century which later became part of the required reading for all priests and monks in the Russian Orthodox Church.² The works which for centuries were attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian who was converted to Christianity by the apostle Paul according to Acts 17, were actually written some five hundred years posthumously.

The Areopagitical Corpus consists of *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and *The Letters*.³ These writings have exercised an enormous influence on Christian thought, both in the East and in the West, yet they did not become popular in Russia before the sixteenth century. Dionysius's writings are Christian, monastic, liturgical, with an alert sense of the celestial realm of the angels. They reveal his vision of the beauty of God's world and his revelation, and a profound awareness of the ultimate mystery of the unknowable God who utterly transcends all beings. His theology combines God's revelation with the categories of

¹Kazakova and Lur'e directly connect the humanistic inclinations of the Subbotniks with their reading of Menander.

²Kazakova and Lur'e, 140.

³For commentaries on the texts of Pseudo-Dionysius see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

pagan philosophy, especially Neoplatonism.¹ Concerning Dionysius's Neoplatonism, Louth observes: "Like Proclus, Denys' vision of reality abounds in triads: from the Trinity itself, through the ranks of the angels, arranged three by three, down to the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons."² Thus, his theology emphasized trinitarianism with an attempt to reinforce it with philosophical categories.

Books Written by Subbotniks

Although the most significant works of the Subbotniks, as scholars suggests,³ were destroyed during the years of the controversy, those few that survived represent the most reliable sources for the study of this movement. These are the writings of Fedor Kuritsin, his brother Ivan Kuritsin, Ivan Chernij, and Fedor the Jew.

Life and Writings of Fedor Kuritsin

Fennell characterizes Fedor Kuritsin as "one of the most distinguished and outstanding civil servants" of Ivan III⁴ and the leader of the heretics in Moscow.⁵ George Vernadskii, commenting on the political and diplomatic history of that time, states: "Ivan

¹Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1989), 14.

²Ibid.

³Golubinsky, 2:605; also V. S. Ikonnikov, *Study on Byzantine Cultural Influence on the Russian Church* (Kiev, 1869), 421 (В. С. Иконников, *Опыт исследования о культурном значении Византии в Русской Церкви* [Киев: 1869], 421)

⁴Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 112.

⁵Ibid., 330.

was fortunate enough to enjoy the cooperation of so able a diplomat as his Secretary of State Fedor Kuritsyn.”¹

In 1482 Kuritsin was sent as an ambassador to the Hungarian king Matthias with proposals for a treaty between the two countries.² Kuritsin left Moscow that year with a party of *Fryazove* [Italians]—probably Italian artisans, architects, and technicians, whom Kuritsin had recruited during his previous trips abroad.³ Kuritsin remained in Hungary for more than a year and collected a great deal of information on Central European and Balkan affairs. On his way back he met with Stephan of Moldova. In the fall of 1484 he set out for the Crimea, but due to the tense relations between the Turks and the Hungarians, the Turks arrested and kept him imprisoned in Akkerman for more than two years.⁴ During these years Kuritsin succeeded in inaugurating unofficial negotiations with the Turks. Vernadskii suggests that “it was probably during this trip that he came into contact with some Jewish leaders.”⁵

¹G. Vernadskii, *Political and Diplomatic History of Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 149.

²*PSRL* VIII/214.

³*SRIO*, vol. 41, no. 13, p. 47.

⁴G. Vernadskii, *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 79.

⁵Vernadskii, *Political and Diplomatic History of Russia*, 149. After the destruction of the Italian colonies in the Crimea by the Turks in 1475, the Crimean trade was controlled by the Turks and wealthy Jews. Muscovite merchants profited much by the Crimean commerce, in which they took an active part. Maintaining good relations with the Crimea was one of Kuritsin’s responsibilities.

Kuritsin maintained diplomatic relations with the Crimean Khan Mengly-Girey, who was in rebellion against the Golden Horde. Mengly-Girey became a valuable ally for Ivan III who used him against both Lithuania and the Golden Horde.

An important motivation of the Crimean politics of Ivan III was the cultivation of friendly relations with a number of influential Jews.¹ Vernadskii notes that “he [Kuritsin] also used the Jews as agents of Moscow’s policy in Lithuania, in the Crimea and the Near East at large.”² Kuritsin, who was also in charge of other diplomatic missions, was probably the first Russian to gain a considerable experience in European diplomacy.

Fedor Kuritsin was not brought to trial in 1490 in spite of the fact that Archbishop Gennadii had informed Zosima and the bishops of his heresy. He remained in Moscow throughout the 1490s, playing an important role in Russian politics. He appeared often as Ivan’s spokesman in negotiations with foreign diplomats, traveled extensively on different diplomatic missions, and enjoyed the complete confidence of Ivan III, who, according to Iosif, “hearkened to him in all things.”³ Together with his brother, Ivan Volk (“the Wolf”), Fedor Kuritsin succeeded in appointing their comrade Kassian, who shared their theological views, as archimandrite of the Yur’ev monastery in the heart of Archbishop Gennadii’s diocese. Kassian, according to Iosif, had no fear of Gennadii, “for he had Fedor Kuritsin as his helper.”⁴

¹About the presence and influence of Jews in this region see Greenberg, 1:1-5.

²Vernadskii, *Political and Diplomatic History of Russia*, 149.

³Kazakova and Lur’e, 155.

⁴Ibid.

In the spring of 1494 Fedor Kuritsin was attached to the Lithuania mission headed by V. I. Patrikeev¹ and S. I. Ryapolovsky to sign the peace treaty and to negotiate the details of the marriage between Alexander of Lithuania and Elena, the daughter of Ivan III. During the year 1500 Kuritsin was carrying out negotiations with the Lithuanian ambassador Petrjaschkevich. This is the last time Kuritsin's name is found in historical sources.

Nothing is known about the death of Fedor Kuritsin. He probably died in the first years of the sixteenth century and did not see the gruesome execution of his close friends and his brother Ivan in 1504.

Laodicean Letter

The *Laodicean Letter* was probably written by Fedor Kuritsin and belongs to the group of works usually associated with the late-fifteenth-century Russian heretics.²

Klibanov notes: "Published already in the last century, the *Laodicean Letter*, as a matter of fact, was left unread in prerevolutionary historiography, although N. Tihonravov, V. Ikonnikov, and F. Uspenskii were interested in this unusual writing."³

¹A very close relative of Ivan III, Prince Vasilii Patrikeev was later forced to leave politics and to take monastic vows. Vasilii Patrikeev (or Vassian, as he was known after his profession) became one of the most brilliant and well-known leaders of Russian monasticism. He headed the movement of Non-Possessors and became the major opponent of Iosif after the defeat of the Subbotniks.

²*AED*, 256-65. The *Laodicean Letter* (Лаодекийское послание) is found in manuscript БАН, 4.3.15, БИЛ, Undolsky's Collection, #53. Many other manuscripts containing this document have also been preserved. Kazakova and Lur'e published several manuscripts of this document.

³Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 7.

This letter is divided into three parts: (1) philosophical sayings composed in such a way that each section begins with the same word that ends the previous one, making up some ten lines of verse; (2) *Cryptogram in Squares* (Литгоря в квадратах)—tables consisting of forty squares, each containing two letters of the alphabet, including a grammatical commentary on them; and (3) Kuritsin's signature, encoded in numbers (which apparently explains why the manuscript has survived).¹ Only one fragment of this book was preserved in the late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century manuscript. It contains not only a philosophical section but a grammatical one as well, and is actually linked with the leader of the Moscow heretics Fedor Kuritsin.²

Philosophical part of the *Laodicean Letter*

Here is the entire text of the philosophical sayings of this document:

The soul is self-governing. Faith is its fence. Faith is conveyed by the prophet. The prophet, the elder, is confirmed by miracles. The gift of miracles is strengthened by wisdom. Wisdom is power, pharisaism is life. The prophet is its science. It is a blessed science. By this one comes to the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of righteousness. By this the soul is armed.³

What kind of information concerning the nature of the Subbotniks' movement can be drawn from this brief work? Since the early 1950s, the first two sentences of this

¹Kazakova and Lur'e, 265-276.

²Y. S. Lur'e, "Zur Zusammensetzung des 'Laodicenischen Sendschreibens'," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 17 (1969): 161-169.

³Душа самовластна. Заграда ей вера. Вера наказание ставится пророком. Пророк старейшина исправляется чудотворением. Чудотворения дар мудростью усилет. Мудрости сила фарисейство жительство. Пророк ему наука. Наука преблаженная. Сею приходит в страх Божий. Страх Божий начало добродетели. Сим вооружается душа.

letter have been presented as a maxim of Russian humanism. A number of humanist-oriented scholars suggested that Kuritsin approaches faith as a barrier, or as a yoke of the soul.¹ However, the text as a whole conveys different interpretation. Kuritsin presents faith as a safeguard of the soul. The Russian word *zagrada* (заграда), translated usually as *fence* or *enclosure*, has a meaning of not only limiting, but also of protection. *Zagradit* means to protect, to save. Thus, a humanistic interpretation of this passage does not seem to fit here.²

Moshe Taube, who believes that the *Laodicean Letter* has a Jewish origin,³ suggests an alternative translation of the first verse of this letter: “The soul is a separate substance whose constraint is religion.”⁴ This translation is based on the presupposition

¹See Tihonravov, 1:226; V. Iconnikov translates this phrase as: “Man’s soul is free, but faith is its obstacle.” Iconnikov, *Collection of Writings*, 2:403. F. Uspenskii also agrees with this interpretation. F. I. Uspenskii, *Essays on the History of Byzantine Education* (Saint Petersburg: Balashev’s Publishing House, 1891), 386 (Ф. И. Успенский, *Очерки по истории Византийской образованности* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. В. С. Балашева, 1891], 386).

²To some degree it is possible to agree with the statement that the Novgorod-Moscow movement shared some of the ideas of the Western Renaissance. However, the Novgorod-Moscow movement emphasized a different set of primary objectives. The Renaissance uplifted Humanism and consequently placed man and his rationalism above everything else, while the Russian reformers had a central principle in their lives that made them different in their final quest. The safeguard was defined by Fedor Kuritsin. “The soul is self-governing. Faith is its fence.” Thus, instead of relying completely on their human knowledge, the Subbotniks relied on God and the Scriptures for the last word and the final examination of their ideas.

³Taube, “The ‘Poem on the Soul’ in the Laodicean Epistle,” 677.

⁴Taube, “The Spiritual Circle in the Secret of Secrets,” 346.

that the *Laodicean Letter* should reflect tendencies found in the *Secret of Secrets*.¹ However, this translation does not harmonize with the Russian text of the *Laodicean Letter*. It is more likely that the philosophical part of the *Laodicean Letter* is in harmony with its immediate context—the *Cryptogram in Squares*. *Cryptogram in Squares*, on the other hand, makes a strong emphasis on the unity of body and soul, which dismisses the dualistic meaning found in the *Secret of Secrets*.² It is hardly possible then that the philosophical part of the *Laodicean Letter* is a censored translation of the missing “spiritual circle” of the *Secret of Secrets*.³ Regardless of exegesis, both the theological and the philosophical accents in these two works are different, which secures to *Laodicean Letter* an independent character.

In recent years the *Laodicean Letter* has attracted the attention of several Western scholars. In an analysis of the philosophical part of the work, J. Fine and J. Maier see traces of Judaism in it.⁴ D. Freydank and J. Haney, on the contrary, connect this work with the Greco-Byzantine tradition. Freydank sees this connection first of all in

¹Taube, “The ‘Poem on the Soul’ in the Laodicean Epistle,” 676.

²Taube refers to certain passages from the *Secret of Secrets* that have an explicit dualistic character. He ascribes the same dualistic character to the philosophical part of the *Laodicean Letter*. Ibid.

³Taube, “The Spiritual Circle in the Secret of Secrets,” 346.

⁴J. Fine, “Fedor Kuritsin’s ‘Laodikijskoe Poslanie’ and the Heresy of the Judaizers,” *Speculum* 41 (1966): 500-504; J. Maier, “Zum jüdischen Hintergrund des sogenannten ‘Laodicenischen Sendschreibens,’” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osreuropas* 17 (1969): 1-12.

the *Cryptogram in Squares*, the grammatical part of the *Laodicean Letter*.¹ Haney sees the influence of Plato and Neoplatonism in the philosophical part of this document.²

In recent years the German scholar F. V. Lilienfeld has written several works on the *Laodicean Letter* as a source for the history of late fifteenth-century social thought.³ Lilienfeld begins her analysis with the *Cryptogram in Squares*, which she views as a proof of the author's cabalistic interests. However, Lilienfeld does not rule out that this "cabala" may be Christian motivated.

Cryptogram in Squares

Cryptogram in Squares follows immediately after the *Laodicean Letter* and is found in the same manuscripts. *Cryptogram in Squares* consists of forty squares, each containing two letters of the alphabet with grammatical commentaries attached to them. Once again, it was in the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox theologians to compose

¹D. Freydank, "Der 'Laodicenerbrief' (Laodikijskoe poslanie): Ein Beitrag zur Interpretation eines altrussischen humanistischen Textes," *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 11 (1966): 355-370.

²J. V. Haney, "The Laodicean Letter: Some Possible Sources," *Slavic Review* 30 (1971): 832-842.

³F. Lilienfeld, "Ivan the Third and Fedor Kuritsin," in *Cultural Heritage of the Ancient Russia: Origins, Developments, Tradition*, ed. V. G. Bazanov (Moscow: Science, 1976), 116-123 (Ф. Лилиенфельд, "Иоанн Третий и Федор Курицын [о некоторых чертах раннего Ренессанса на Руси и в Германии]," в *Культурное наследие древней Руси. Истоки. Становление. Традиции*, ред. В. Г. Базанов [Москва: Наука, 1976], 116-123; see also idem, "Das 'Laodikijskoe poslanie' des grossfürstlichen D'jaken Fedor Kuritsin," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 24 (1976): 1-22; idem, "Über einige Züge des Frühhumanismus und der Renaissance in Russland und Deutschland: Johannes Trithemius und Fjodor Kuritsin," *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 36 (1976): 23-35.

grammatical articles like these. Jagich notes: “Starting with the sixteenth century we meet more and more short articles on grammar.”¹ Maxim Grek, a famous Greek Orthodox theologian who worked in Russia in the sixteenth century, used one such table for his grammatical research.

Cryptogram in Squares constitutes the second part of the *Laodicean Letter* and is mostly a collection of grammatical rules. The individual squares are designated for each letter of the alphabet and contain different characteristics of this letter. There are records on vowels and consonant sounds, feminine, masculine, and neuter gender, stress-marks, diacritical marks, etc. Instead of the names for the vowels and consonants accepted in Russian grammar, *Cryptogram in Squares* suggests the new names: *soul* for vowels, and *body* for consonants.

Although originally designed for some phonetic and grammatical reasons, grammatical tables often convey an ideology. The *Cryptogram in Squares* is no exception—it presents the anthropological views of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. The anthropological views determine the entire gamut of doctrinal affirmation of the Novgorod-Moscow movement. In contrast to Medieval Platonic and Aristotelian theology, the Subbotniks certainly approached man as having a psychosomatic unity of

¹I. V. Yagich, *Discussion on the Ecclesiastic Slavic Language* (Saint Petersburg, 1895), 634 (И. В. Ягич, *Рассуждения старины о церковно-славянском языке* [Санкт-Петербург, 1895], 634).

body and soul. Kuritsin compares consonant letters with the body and vowel sounds with the soul. Only their union, he insists, gives life to words and sentences.¹

Commentary

The *Cryptogram in Squares* was designed for the advanced, or professional, writers and scribes. It could not be used as an elementary manual for studying grammar. To use this document requires an initiated guide. Such was the *Commentary* (*Толкование*)—a document usually found in the manuscripts containing the *Laodicean Letter*. This document explains the terminology used in *Cryptogram in Squares*. The author of the *Commentary* says that his book was written for those who inquire “why the letters are called bodies and souls, and what is the difference between them.”² The objective of this book, according to its author, is to help “to write the divine books in a direct and a smooth way.”³

Both style and purpose of this document suggest that its author is Fedor Kuritsin. Klibanov has no doubts about the authorship of this document: “Who else if not the author of the grammatical table could explain his table? We also have some direct proofs of Fedor Kuritsin’s authorship of the *Commentary*.”⁴ Klibanov compares the phonetics and styles of both documents and concludes that they are written by the same person. Even

¹*AED*, 266-270.

²Fedor Kuritsin, “Commentary,” quoted by Yagich, 701.

³“Commentary,” quoted by Klibanov, *Reform Movements*.

⁴*Ibid.*, 79.

the last words of the *Laodicean Letter* are the very words that express the aim of the *Commentary*: “Those reading this letter will realize its interpretation, and how to write the divine books in a direct and smooth way.”¹

Both documents share the same philosophical thrust. The author of the *Commentary* says: “As well as the soul is unknown without the body, in the same way the body is unconscious without the soul. The body is preparation, and the soul is realization, and they both are obtaining an intellect.”²

The phonetic system suggested in Kuritsin’s work did not become very popular in Russia. Klibanov observes that

the church could not accept the phonetic classification of the *Laodicean Letter* since this classification was imbued with a philosophical tendency alien to the church. The church could agree, that “the body is unconscious without the soul,” but it could never agree that “the soul is unknown without the body.”³

Tale of Dracula

Most scholars agree on Fedor Kuritsin’s authorship of the famous *Tale of Dracula*—a book of political satire.⁴ This book is about Dracula, Governor of Wallachia,

¹*AED*, 270.

²Yagich, 702.

³Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 80.

⁴Kuritsin, in fact, was acquainted with a figure of Vlad III (Drakulea)—the legendary hero of mysterious and fascinating stories. For discussion on the authorship of this work see Gudzy, 274-275. The manuscript was studied by a number of scholars. See A. H. Vostokov, *Description of Rumjanzev Museum’s Manuscripts* (Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1842), 511-512 (A. X. Востоков, *Описание рукописей Румянцевского музея* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Императорской Академии Наук, 1842], 511-512); Solovjov, 1:1578; L. V. Cherepnin, *Russian Feudal Archives*, 2 vols.

a “Christian of the Greek faith” who had the reputation for being an unusually cruel man. The tale lists a succession of incidents personifying a perverted severity that often had no practical justification. The detailed description of most of these stories in English is found in Gudzy’s “History of Early Russian Literature.”¹

The way this book was approached by scholars of the Soviet period once again exemplifies their generic predisposition. By introducing the *Tale of Dracula* to a broad audience, according to the common position of Soviet historians, Kuritsin was trying to justify his conviction that a totalitarian regimen with an iron fist was the best possible form of government. It is, however, a very naive and biased judgment reflecting a recent example of the intentional misreading of the Subbotniks’ texts. Most of the works on this topic were written during the Stalin period of Soviet history. There is no need to describe the extreme cruelty of Stalin’s regime. What is less known is Stalin’s fascination with Russian history, especially the period when the centralized authority in Moscow was becoming dominant over a vast territory, having jurisdiction over Poland in the West, the Black Sea in the South, and Siberia in the East. Stalin’s favorite autocrat was Tsar Ivan IV, also known as the Terrible. It was during Stalin’s years that the acclaimed movie *Ivan the Terrible* (Иван Грозный) was produced by Sergey Eisenshtein.² In an outstanding

(Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1951), 2:311-312 (Л. В. Черепнин, *Русские феодальные архивы*, 2 т. [Москва: Академии Наук СССР, 1951], 2:311-312); Kazakova and Lur’e, 180-181.

¹Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, 269-275.

²Sergey Eisenshtein, *Ivan the Terrible* (1943) (Сергей Эйзенштейн, *Иван Грозный* [1943]). The attraction of the sixteenth-century Tsar Ivan was that he was a founding father of the unified central Russian state, who did what had to be done to unify

manner Eisenshtein presents a historical portrait of Ivan III as both an extremely cruel individual and a most attractive character. The attempt to picture Dracula in the same manner was less successful. Nevertheless, for decades Kuritsin's manuscript was perceived as written in support of the powerful, although cruel, regime.

It is clear that the *Tale of Dracula* is a sharp political satire on totalitarian regime, and rather than glorifying it, seeks to prevent the establishment of this kind of rulership in Russia. Kuritsin himself expresses his attitude toward the "hero" of his *Tale* when he explains that Dracula's name means *Devil*; or when he speaks of "the Devil his namesake," who alone may know of his "deviltry" with respect to the murdered workmen.

Writings of Ivan Chernij

Ivan Chernij is known because of his work as the tsar's scribe—a position resembling that of the modern Secretary of State. Little is known of his life, except that he was like-minded and close friends with Fedor Kuritsin. Archbishop Gennadii complained in one of his letters that: "Clerk Kuritsin had often been visited by . . . Ivashco (Ivan) Chernij, the one who writes books, and they studied together against the Orthodox

the state and defend it from its enemies (both within—the nobility, the *Boyars*, and the Church, and without—the Poles, Germans, and Tatars). A vital element in consolidation of central power around the Tsar was the formation of the *Oprichniki* (secret police who formed a virtual state within a state) which Ivan used to eliminate his enemies and bind others to his cause. The parallels to Stalin during the Second World War are clear. For the first part director, the two main stars, the cameramen, and composer received the highest honors (*Stalin's Prize*) for their work. Unfortunately, the second part was rejected by the Artistic Council of the Ministry of Cinematography because (to paraphrase the evaluation of the critics) the director of this movie displayed ignorance of historic facts by showing Ivan the Terrible's progressive army of *oprichniks* as a band of degenerates in the style of the American Ku Klux Klan, and Ivan, a man of great willpower and strong character, as a weak and feeble being, a sort of Hamlet.

people.”¹ In an October 1490 *Letter to Zosima*, Archbishop Gennadii asks Zosima to excommunicate and curse Ivan Chernij together with other heretics.² The date of Chernij’s death is uncertain. It is known, however, that before 1490, with the help of the wealthy Moscow merchant Ignat Zubov, Ivan had escaped abroad.³ Only a few of Chernij’s writings have been preserved. These manuscripts adequately reflect the views of Chernij, who had followed the example of many ancient scribes who used the margins of the manuscripts for their own short comments. The objective behind this medieval way of conveying knowledge was not to bring forth something new, but rather to preserve and more fully reveal an ancient knowledge. Even those prolific writers who appear to be the most eloquent during that period of time pretended to be either translators or, at most, the interpreters of some great men of the past.

By using glosses in the margins, much the same way we mark our books today, Chernij expressed his attitude toward certain ideas of this book, and thus attracted the attention of his readers to these ideas. The first one exposed to Chernij’s glosses was Ivan III. Additionally, Chernij authored some of the passages and commentaries. Some of Chernij’s writings appear in commanding, prescribing tones. Here is, for example, the text of the second part of the epilogue where Chernij uses the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 15:12, Gal 5:14) in an authoritative, imposing way:

¹*RIB*, vii, Saint Petersburg, 1908, p. 781 (РИБ VII, Санкт-Петербург, 1908, стр. 781), quoted in Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 198.

²Archbishop Gennadii, “The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow,” *AED*, 376.

³*AED*, 376, 489.

Those who love their neighbors, thus love themselves, because it is love that gives us the heritage of eternal blessings. Blessed are those who love God with all their hearts, and also their neighbor, because they shall obtain mercy. Listen to this commandment: love each other. Because in these words is the entire Law; if you do love God and your neighbor—you fulfill the entire Law. And if one is obstinate, let him come to his senses and not jump into the friction, so he could not be wounded.¹

Klibanov notes that the authoritative style of this epilogue indicates close relationship between Chernij and Ivan III. Klibanov adds that “these words are a warning addressed by Ivan Chernij to the militant clericals; a warning that could not escape the attention of the great prince.”²

Chernij usually used the letters of the so-called “Perm’s alphabet” for his notes—an ancient Russian alphabet which never became popular or widespread in Russia. Many linguists believe that Chernij used cryptography in order to conceal his ideas from his potential antagonists. Speranskii says that Perm’s alphabet “was not broadly accepted and already in the fifteenth century was used as cryptography because of its very rare practical use.”³ G. S. Litkin, a specialist in Perm’s alphabet, also shares this opinion.⁴

A relevant question is: Why would someone attempting to share his views try to hide them with cryptography? After all, Chernij’s cryptic writings could hardly protect

¹Chernij, *Hellenistic Chronograph*, #597, 420.

²Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 216.

³M. N. Speranskii, *Cryptographs in the South-Slavic and Russian Sources* (Leningrad: Academy of Sciences, 1929), 259 (Сперанский, *Тайнотись в юго-славянских и русских памятниках тисьма* [Ленинград: Академии Наук СССР, 1929], 259).

⁴G. S. Litkin, *The Language of Ancient Perm* (Moscow, 1952), 75 (Г. С. Литкин, *Древнепермский язык* [Москва, 1952], 75).

him from charges, since many educated people of his time knew how to decode this type of language. Nor was this device aimed to conceal certain ideas from the common people—only a few of them could read books.

Many fifteenth-century writers made use of Perm's letters with a variety of degrees.¹ The use of Perm's alphabet in these books demonstrates, in a sophisticated way, the mastery of scholastic writing. Cryptography may also have served Chernij as a literary device to draw a certain line between the text of the manuscripts and his own comments.

Whatever the reason may have been, Chernij chose to use this rare alphabet to convey his message. Three remarks are typical throughout all of Chernij's works: "look, notice" (*зри, зри*); "convenient, good" (*удобно, удобно*); and "amazing" (*дивно, дивно*). By using these remarks he easily expressed his own attitude to the text and attracted the reader's attention to particular ideas.

These remarks are also helpful in understanding the books copied by Chernij. Scholars unanimously attribute the following books to Chernij: *Hellenistic Chronograph* (*Еллинский летоисец*), *Biblical Collection* (*Библейский сборник*), and *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies* (*Книга Ветхозаветних пророчеств*). All these late books have comments in the margins written with Perm's alphabet. Moreover, all of them share a typical common trust with the beliefs of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. Furthermore, some of them even have the autographical signature of Ivan Chernij. These books provide a substantial resource for the study of the Subbotniks' beliefs.

¹Speranskii, *Cryptographs in the South-Slavic and Russian Sources*, 75-78.

Hellenistic Chronograph

The manuscript of the *Hellenistic Chronograph* is signed by Ivan Chernij himself.¹ It is very likely that this manuscript was one of the sources the dissidents utilized to support their views. In this regard it is significant that the official church considered the *Hellenistic Chronograph* as an influential and authoritative book. Thus, instead of creating their own collection of books, dissidents used the collection of the Orthodox Church to refute the mistakes and abuses of the official Church. The *Hellenistic Chronograph*, with Chernij's remarks, is therefore not a neutral document vis-à-vis the official Church. The way that parts of it were accentuated discloses the theology of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

Theological Tendencies in *Hellenistic Chronograph*

On page 91 Chernij makes a gloss with “look” (*zri*) beside the story of Josiah, the king of Judah. The reign of Josiah is remembered for its attempt to reform religious life. Josiah inaugurated the reform in Judah and Jerusalem by eradicating carved and molten images in high places. He broke down the altars of Baal and all the images and idols associated with idolatry. “That is how he became pure before the Lord,” declares the *Hellenistic Chronograph*.² By images and idols Russian dissidents traditionally meant icons and relics. The gloss “look” (*zri*) directed its readers to the obvious link between

¹Manuscript 597, Museum's Collection, BIL. A detailed study of the *Hellenistic Chronograph* manuscript is found in the work of A. E. Viktorov. See Viktorov, *The Catalog of Slavic-Russian Manuscripts*. The notes made by Chernij in the margins together with the texts they expound are listed in *AED*, 280-285.

²*Ibid.*, 91.

the nation's prosperity and the right way of worshipping. Chernij marks many other passages dealing with idols and those serving them.

Another typical example on how he used the marks can be found on page 250, where Chernij's glosses are found in connection with the article on Apollony magi. This article could potentially be used against the structure of church hierarchy. The article concludes that many in high positions, or even performing miracles, were in fact false prophets who "tempted those who were speaking the truth."¹

The story of the treason is also marked. During Titus's siege of Jerusalem, a Jewish priest revealed many important secrets to the enemies of Jerusalem.² In the context of the political events in the 1480s, when many church leaders were actively involved in political plots, this gloss sent a forceful reproof message.

Hellenistic Chronograph and Accusations of Deviations from Christianity

On page 233 Chernij makes a gloss with the mark "look" (*zri*) to the story of James, Jesus' brother. Since the Orthodox tradition insists that Jesus had only stepbrothers, Chernij's gloss may reflect an attempt to get across that Jesus actually had a human brother. By theological implication this may convey the equation of Jesus with an ordinary man. Moreover, the ecclesiastical glorification of celibacy, so common in Medieval Russian Orthodox tradition, may indirectly have been challenged by Chernij's gloss—if James shared the same mother with Jesus, Mary did not remain a virgin.

¹Ibid., 250.

²Ibid., 247.

Klibanov sees another possible break with Orthodoxy in Chernij's failing to denounce the activity of Petr Belilnik. Klibanov pays special attention to the story of Belilnik because in one of the later editions of the *Hellenistic Chronograph* this story was supplied with the following gloss: "The evil thing is written here: the heretic is praised as Orthodox, and the Orthodox are treated as heretics."¹ As Klibanov correctly points out, Chernij does not denounce the condemned Eutychian heretic. Together with other Eutychians, Petr Knafej (another name of Petr Belilnik) believed that Christ had only a divine nature.² Klibanov comes to the conclusion that Chernij was sympathetic to Eutychianism.

Biblical Collection

Another book copied by Chernij is the *Biblical Collection*.³ All the glosses of Chernij in the margins of this manuscript are listed in *AED* together with the passages from the manuscript itself.⁴

General Tendencies

Scholars are unanimous in connecting the *Biblical Collection* with the

¹*PSRL* XXII, quoted in Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 213.

²Stuart Hall describes the nature of the heresy of Eutyches as the following: "Two natures he acknowledged before the union, but one after. The flesh of Christ was not consubstantial with ours, but with God the Word." Hall, 226.

³Manuscript #547 from the Museum's collection of BIL; also found in Undolsky's collection, #1. In this research I will refer to the Manuscript from the Museum's collection of BIL.

⁴*AED*, 285-299.

Subbotniks' movement.¹ Although this book is written anonymously, scholars acknowledge that it was Chernij who copied it.² Klibanov notes that this book is characterized by "a strict and solicitous attitude toward the biblical texts—a distinctive characteristic of the reformers."³ He also notes that "in this manuscript we have fewer mistakes, omissions and perversions in the biblical text than in Gennadii's collection which is almost contemporary with it."⁴ The renowned Russian historian Vasilii Ključevskii gives the following peculiarity to Chernij's collection: "In the comparatively small group of books of the Holy Scripture in Undolsky's Collection there is a solid treasure—a fifteenth-century collection of all Old Testament books, with the exception of the prophetic ones and those translated from Latin."⁵ Ključevskii distinguishes this collection as the oldest one among the ancient Russian Old Testament collections. He, moreover, notes that this manuscript is more accurate than the contemporary Synodal text.⁶

The second page of this manuscript contains a miniature which has no equal in Russian iconography. This miniature was probably created to explain the origins of the biblical books. It pictures the archangel Gabriel transmitting a revelation to Moses from

¹Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 220.

²*Ibid.*, 221-224.

³*Ibid.*, 221.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵V. O. Ključevskii, *Reactions and Responses* (Prague: Committee of Education, 1918), 107 (В. О. Ключевский, *Отзывы и ответы* [Прага: Издательство отдела Комитета Народного Просвещения, 1918] 107).

⁶*Ibid.*, 108.

God. Moses is holding his left hand against his heart while his head and his right hand are turned toward Gabriel. Moses stands firmly on the ground, while Gabriel only slightly touches it. The manuscript in Gabriel's hand almost touches the head of Moses, which is crowned with a nimbus. Moses and the angel almost form a unity. The blessing hand of God above them completes the picture. There is also an inscription: "This is God's delegate who has received the grace into his heart to write in this book God's narration of the genesis of the heaven and the earth and of all living beings, of everything that God has created."

This manuscript includes, together with the biblical books, additional historical books, in conformity with ancient Russian custom. The *Biblical Collection* includes the story of four great empires—Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. It also includes the history of Egypt, the history of Constantine the Great, and a number of stories of other Christian kings. There are many similarities between the *Biblical Collection* and the *Hellenistic Chronograph*. Among them are the theological emphases of both manuscripts. For instance, the author marks with his glosses such biblical texts as Exod 20:2-4; 23:13; 24:17-18; Deut 5:7-9, and others dealing with idolatry. Both the *Hellenistic Chronograph* and the *Biblical Collection* stress their negative attitudes toward the false prophets, magicians, and those consulting spirits. Chernij consistently adds glosses to the biblical stories condemning superstition. In light of the Orthodox Church's adoration and superstitious beliefs in the miracles performed by the saints, Chernij's particular emphasis may easily have been perceived among his contemporaries as a call for reformation.

In addition to these common trends in the collections are criticism of the prayers for the dead, and condemnation of idolatry. Chernij's accents are consistently made with the same marks: "look" (*zri*) and "amazing" (*divno*).

The *Biblical Collection* and Possible Deviations from Basic Christianity

At this juncture it is appropriate to address potential deviations from Christianity in this collection. Klibanov sees only one departure from basic Christianity in this document. He believes that the dissidents' attitude to Mary reveals this deviation. The list of prophetesses on page 472 appears to Klibanov as a proof of Chernij's rejection of the divinity of Christ.¹ The text says: "And these are the prophetesses: (1) Sara, (2) Rebecca, (3) Deborah, (4) Adah, (5) Anna, the mother of Samuel, (6) Judith, (7) Miriam, (8) Elisabeth, the mother of John, (9) Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, (10) Mary, the Mother of God."

In approaching this text Klibanov follows the logic of the first opponents of the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents by stating that:

It is known from the *Instructor* and from the sentence of the Council of 1471 on heretics that they [the Subbotniks] did not accept the Church's teaching on the Mother of God, which came as a result of their rejection of the divine origin of Christ. In this passage Mary, the Mother of God, is the last one in the list of the prophetesses. That is exactly what we expect from those honoring Christ only as a prophet.²

¹Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 218.

²Ibid.

Other Significant Tendencies

According to the *Biblical Collection*, it is clear that one of Chernij's main concerns is Sabbath-keeping. The *Biblical Collection* turns the reader's attention toward the Sabbath-related texts. Chernij annotates Exod 20:11 with "look" (*zri*), and Num 15:32-35 with both "look" (*zri*) and "amazing" (*divno*).

Iosif, as has already been stated, insisted that the heretics' Sabbath-keeping was an indication of their rejection of the divine nature and resurrection of Jesus Christ—an argument that left a deep mark on the documents of the Council of 1490. Scholars of the Soviet period questioned the correctness of this charge. Klibanov reasons that "refusal to celebrate Sunday—which is the day of Resurrection—is not by itself a reason for the keeping of Sabbath."¹

Soviet scholars explained this Sabbath-keeping practice mostly as socially motivated. Klibanov articulates this perspective when he states that:

In the religion of ancient Israel the Sabbath was the center of the social legislation: Sabbath was the day of rest for everybody, including dependent people. In the *Sabbath year* there were special privileges for slaves; finally, in the "Sabbath Jubilee" (every fiftieth year) freedom was given to many slaves. From the religion of ancient Israel the Sabbath in its social context was adopted and broadly interpreted by the predecessors of Christianity.²

Klibanov adds to this:

Of course, in fifteenth-century Russia the celebration of the Sabbath could not have the same solid social demands toward the ruling social class as in ancient Israel before the advent of Christianity. Nevertheless, it could have a symbolic meaning, such as reminding a ruling class of lawful rights of those exploited. Such supposition does

¹Ibid., 225.

²Ibid.

not make Novgorod-Moscow heretics some historical exception, but on the contrary, harmonizes them with the general tendencies of the reform movements in other countries.¹

The social motives of the Novgorod-Moscow movement can be detected from Chernij's remarks. He associates, among others, such texts as Prov 13:2; 8-9, 24; 14:31; and 21:13, to the issues of justice and freedom. However, Chernij's interest in social justice cannot be separated from religious matters. Texts, such as Num 14:18 and Lev. 26:13, demonstrate that the profound motivation for a social concern was found in God's commandments. Thus, God's Law inspired and motivated Chernij and like-minded men and women to keep the Sabbath according to the Bible references in the *Biblical Collection*.

In an article (page 461) in the *Biblical Collection* on the institution of monasticism, Chernij charges monks with following Messalianism. The Novgorod-Moscow believers had also been accused by Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Messalianism, although the former group had more reasons to denounce the latter on this point, especially monasticism with its glorification of Christian Platonic dualism, which theologically is very close to Messalianism. Chernij then attacks those who "forbid the lawful marriage and blame those who eat and drink, according to the law, and they also shun the little children."² Chernij addressed the Orthodox monks with the words of Paul in 1 Tim 4:1-5.

¹Ibid., 226.

²Chernij, "Biblical Collection," 461.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Another concern of Chernij was the liturgy of the church. While copying the story of the patriarchal inauguration of Basil of Caesarea, Chernij adds in the margin this comment:

Since that time, that is since Basil of Caesarea, there was the beginning of the liturgy. Before this time it used to be a communion, the breaking of bread according to apostolic tradition, just as the Gospel teaches. Since Christ's ascension and till that time the service was performed according to the apostles.¹

This remark was important to Chernij, since it was signified with “amazing” (*divno*). Chernij tries to reform liturgy instead of discarding it. The Eastern Orthodox liturgical tradition has a very complicated form. By emphasizing that liturgy has its beginning with Basil of Caesarea—not with Christ—Chernij insinuates the human—not divine—tradition. The idea behind this remark is clear: human regulations could not substitute for God's decrees. Chernij's remark, unfortunately, does not give us enough information to restore the details of the Subbotniks' liturgy. It is clear to him, however, that the liturgy of the official Church had deviated from the New Testament paradigm.²

¹Manuscript #147/1224, Kirillo-Belozerskoe's collection, GPB, 28-29.

²Another remark by Chernij on a similar subject is found on page 301 of the same book. Chernij writes with cinnabar (red) in the margins beside the subtitle “Concerning the Inauguration of John Chrysostom”: “Since that time there was a liturgy of John Chrysostom.” And next with regular ink he continues: “He added his own rite to the liturgy of Basil; he also included some other traditions.”

Moreover, it is clear from Chernij's remarks that the New Testament is the ultimate authority. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Chernij's reference to "Christ's ascension" is antithetical to Iosif's charge that the heretics rejected the resurrection and the ascension of Christ.¹

Another example of Chernij's critical attitude toward traditions is his interest in the genesis of *kutia* (i.e., tradition of eating boiled rice with raisins and honey at funerals and in memory for the dead).² In the Eastern Orthodox Church the practice of *kutia* expressed the belief in communication between the dead and the living. Incorporated into this belief is the intercession of the living ones for the dead including the notion of saving the sinner from hell by intercessory prayers. Services performed for the dead still remain one of the major sources of income for the Russian Orthodox Church. It is well known that the exploitative nature of antecedent teaching and practice contributed to the Continental Reformation in the sixteenth century. It is worth noting that Ivan Chernij criticized this tradition thirty years before Luther, although he did it with a softer articulation than his German counterpart. Chernij refers to this tradition as a human invention lacking God's authorization that materialized purely out of respect to Clement, the martyr and disciple of the apostle Peter.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 227.

Book of the Old Testament Prophecies

The remarks found in *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies*¹ reflect the same tendencies as those studied above.

1. Iconoclasm (Hab 2:18-19; Isa 43:13-16)
2. Condemnation of superstition (Isa 44: 24-25; 47:12-14)
3. Condemnation of the monastic vow of celibacy (Isa 31:9)
4. Approval of Sabbath keeping (Ezek 20:12-13; 23:28)
5. Understanding of religion as the relationship between God and mankind rather than the religion of forms and traditions (Ezek 11:19-20; 36:25-26).

I am not aware of any scholarly analysis which associates *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies* with even hints of antitrinitarianism. After having studied it carefully, it is clear that this topic is not touched upon in this document.

Writing About the Mental Paradise

Though it is argued that the *Writing About the Mental Paradise*² belongs to the literature of the Subbotniks, a few features indicate that it does. Klibanov studied this manuscript with the assumption that it was a Subbotniks' source.³ This justifies a short evaluation of it in this study. This originally Greek document, but well known in Russia,

¹Chernij, *The Book of the Old Testament Prophecies*, Manuscript of Saint Petersburg Public Library (Saltikov-Shedrin's library), #F.I.3 (Иван Черный, "Книга ветхозаветних пророчеств," Манускрипт библиотеки Салтыкова-Щедрина, #F.I.3).

²*Writing About the Mental Paradise*, Manuscript #1, Undolsky's Collection ("Сочинение о мысленном рае," Рукопись #1 из собрания Ундольского).

³Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 52.

deals with the actual location of Paradise.¹ Two opinions are considered: (1) Paradise is in heaven; (2) the lost Paradise is somewhere on Earth, supposedly behind Tibet's mountains. The Russian translation which is associated with the Subbotniks "approaches the original Greek manuscript with a certain freedom. First, it does not use the whole text of the Greek document, and second, about one fifth of the Russian manuscript—the last part of it—is totally independent of the Greek source."² "Thus," concludes Klibanov, "the *Writing about the Mental Paradise* from the collection of Undolsky #1 has a stamp of the creative mastering of the original. This fact may well explain the absence of the name of Nikita Stiphat [the author of the *Writing about the Mental Paradise*] in this manuscript."³ Klibanov suggests that such a creative adaptation of the *Writing about the Mental Paradise* was performed by the Subbotniks in order to express their own views.

The manuscript begins with an analogy: "The tree of life is the Holy Spirit who dwells in the faithful man, just as the apostle Paul wrote: 'Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'"

Next follows a discussion of man as a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues to dwell in fallen human beings, causing them, if they are willing, to repent and to act in accordance to God's will. The Holy Spirit works in humans; He gives men and women the understanding of both "human things" and "God's mysteries." He gives man

¹The traditional edition of the Russian translation of this document is found in Undolsky's collection, #0. 1. 274.

²Klibanov, *The Reform Movements*, 52.

³Ibid.

the ability to perceive spiritual realities. Despite the creative transformation of the original text, the Orthodoxy of this document is not questioned by scholars. The Holy Spirit is pictured as the divine Spirit, co-equal with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Writings of Fedor the Jew

Little is known about Fedor the Jew. Michail Sokolov suggests that probably Fedor the Jew, the author of the *Letter of Fedor the Jew*, had nothing to do with the *Judaizers' Psalms*.¹ He further believes that Stroev² attributed the authorship of the *Psalms* to Fedor the Jew because of some notions of Judaism in the *Judaizers' Psalms*. Sokolov is not aware of any manuscript of *Psalms* that would mention the name of Fedor the Jew, so he suggests that the information Stroev provides—the time when the translation of the *Judaizers' Psalms* was done (1464-1473), the reason for translation,³ and the name of the translator (Fedor the Jew)—is just his guess.⁴ Golubinsky arrives at

¹M. Sokolov, "Letter of Fedor the Jew," in *About the Judaizers' Heresy*, ed. S. A. Belokurov (Moscow: Moscow University, 1902), 98-99 (М. Соколов, "Послание Федора Жидовина," в *О ереси жидовствующих*, ред. С. А. Белокуров [Москва, Московский университет, 1902], 98-99).

²P. M. Stroev, "Chronological Index to the Materials of the National History," *Journal of the Ministry of Education* 2 (1831):162 (П. М. Строев, "Хронологический указатель материалов отечественной истории," *ЖМНП* 2 [1831]: 162).

³Stroev indicates that the translation was done at the request of Metropolitan Philip himself.

⁴Sokolov, 98.

the same conclusion.¹ A few years later, however, Stroeve's manuscript² was found and published by M. N. Speranskii.³ The name of Fedor the Jew is found in the introduction to the *Psalms*. According to the postscript: "by God's mercy . . . with the blessing of Saint Metropolitan of the whole Rus Philip I finished this writing." It is clear that Fedor the Jew was an author of at least two manuscripts: the *Judaizers' Psalms* and the *Letter of Fedor the Jew*.

Judaizers' Psalms

Scholars believe that *Notebook with Jewish Psalms*, mentioned by Archbishop Gennadii, is the same work now known under the title *Judaizers' Psalms*. In his *History of the Russian Church*, Makary Bulgakov states that the *Judaizers' Psalms* should be ascribed to the Novgorod heretics.⁴ Pavlov agrees with Makary. Illovajsky, on the other hand, doubts that this book has anything to do with the Subbotniks' movement. Other historians believe, without much evidence, that this book was used by the Subbotniks in their worship services.⁵

¹Golubinsky, 2:886.

²Manuscript #6/1083, Kirillov Monastery's Collection (Манускрипт #6/1083, собрание Кирилловского монастыря).

³Speranskii, *Psalter of the Judaizers in the Translation of Fedor the Jew*.

⁴Bulgakov, *The History of the Russian Church*, 7:186.

⁵Tihonravov, 1:227-228. This argument is purely speculative, because nothing is known of the characteristics of the Subbotniks' worship services. Additionally, the translation of these Psalms that was done by Fedor the Jew was not of high literary quality and it is very doubtful it could be used for worship services.

The translation of medieval Jewish Psalms was commissioned by Metropolitan Philip (1464-1473) and done by a certain Fedor the Jew in the West Russian language.¹ Tihonravov argues that Fedor the Jew had never been truly converted to Christianity but only pretended, in order to spread Judaism among Russians. This is far from certain since at this historical period the Jews paid little, if any, attention to missionary activity. On the other hand, the new and growing Russian state was expanding toward the South, where a substantial portion of trade was in the hands of native Jews. Ivan III had business relationships with Jews and was eager to convert them to Christianity. Both the origins and the content of this translation rule out the theories ascribing the edition of this book to Jewish propaganda. On the contrary, this book could be addressed to Russian-speaking Jews who had lived for several generations in different regions of the country that by the end of the fifteenth century was on its way to unification. It is likely that Fedor the Jew, prompted by a sense of mission, addressed this book to his fellow Jews in order to come as close as possible to Jewish sentiments, while at the same time remaining a Christian. The choice of this particular book can easily be explained. The book has until recent times been used as a prayer book in the synagogue service by Polish Jews. Thus, it was an authoritative source for the Jews and could easily be used for missionary work. Although the words of the Psalms are not verbatim copies of the canonical Psalms of the Bible, they are all based on the Psalms of thanksgiving, such as Pss 9-10, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 92, 103, 107, 116, and others. The fact that this Book of Psalms initially was used in synagogues

¹Speranskii, *Psalter of the Judaizers in the Translation of Fedor the Jew*, 41.

does not undermine its value for containing hymns of thanksgiving. Christians ever since the Apostle Paul have used the Psalms as hymns and prayers.¹

Letter of Fedor the Jew

The document signed by Fedor the Jew² is addressed to “my fellow-tribes and to my comrades and to Israel, to your comrades and the entire Jewish clan.”³ It is estimated that this letter was written between 1448 and 1461.⁴ In it Fedor informs Jews that after wandering forty years in the darkness of Judaism he finally found the “true way.” Obviously, his letter is a response to those of his fellow Jews who rebuked him after hearing about his new faith. Through the Scripture, Fedor attempts to show the authenticity of Christianity. Fedor ends his letter by stating that he wishes to see his fellow tribes become Christians.

Writings of Ivan Volk Kuritsin

The literature of the Subbotniks does not contain trinitarian polemics in general. This lack of literature dedicated specifically to the trinitarian issues may be explained by the fact that all extant sources composed by the Subbotniks are older than the initial

¹See, for example, Rom 4:7-8; 15:11; 2 Cor 9:9; Heb 1:10-12; 2: 6-8; 3: 7-11; 10: 5-7; 1 Pet 3:10-12, etc. H. O. Old, an American Protestant clergyman, notes: “Synagogue prayers . . . have been models for my Prayers of Thanksgiving.” Hughes Oliphant Old, *Leading in Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 298.

²Manuscript #1254, Undolsky’s Collection (собрание Ундольского).

³Ibid., 59. This manuscript was dated between the years 1448 and 1461—the same period of time when the book of *Judaizers’ Psalms* was translated.

⁴Sokolov, 97.

accusation of judaizing in 1487. Literature they produced after 1487 was, apparently, systematically destroyed by their opponents. Golubinsky notes: "We can hardly expect that these writings could somehow be preserved and could someday be discovered."¹

Ikonnikov speaks about the elimination of "all" of the dissidents' books during the years of the persecution.² The political situation after the defeat of the heretics accelerated the hostility toward the polemical literature of the Subbotniks, because of their refusal to support the accession of Vasiliï to the throne.³ Twenty-eight years of his reign (1505-1533) was a period long enough to get rid of all the literature challenging his authority.

However, the lack of sources affirming the trinitarian views of the Subbotniks is not so deficient as has traditionally been claimed. The writings of Ivan Volk Kuritsin, the leading theologian of the Subbotniks' movement, are an unimpeachable testimony to this.

Biography of Ivan Volk Kuritsin

Ambassadorial clerk Ivan Volk Kuritsin, a participant of the Moscow group of reformers, reached his high position due to his various talents.⁴ He was among the ambassadors sent to Emperor Maximilian I in 1492-1493.⁵ In 1495 he was among the

¹Golubinsky, 2:605.

²Ikonnikov, 421.

³See pp. 53-57 of this work.

⁴N. P. Lihachev, *Governmental Officials of the Sixteenth Century* (Saint Petersburg, 1888), 87 (Н. П. Лихачев, *Разрядные дьяки XVI века* [Санкт-Петербург, 1888], 87).

⁵*PSRL*, IV, 161; VI, 39, 240; VIII, 224, 227.

tsar's advisers in Novgorod;¹ in 1497 he negotiated with Livonian Germans;² in the same year he was sent as an ambassador to Litvonian Great Prince Alexander.³ One of his duties was to supply Ivan III with information on the political situation in Austria, Hungary, Italy, the Balkans, France, and Brittany.⁴ Commissioned by Ivan III himself, Ivan Kuritsin negotiated with the well-known publisher Bartholomew Gotan.⁵ According to Iosif, who mentions Ivan Kuritsin in the fifteenth chapter of the *Instructor*, the two brothers, Fedor and Ivan Kuritsin, influenced the tsar in designating their comrade Kassian the archimandrite of Jur'evsky Monastery, the largest and most influential in Novgorod. Ivan Kuritsin was burned at the stake in a wooden cage together with his friends Dmitrii Conoplev, Ivan Maksimov, and other "heretics" in Moscow on December 27, 1504.⁶

¹P. N. Miljukov, *The Official Edition of the Most Ancient Classifying Book* (Moscow, 1901), 19-20 (П. Н. Милюков, *Древнейшая разрядная книга официальной редакции* [Москва, 1901], 19-20).

²*Ibid.*, 24. Livonia was a province both of the pope and of the Germans. It was made up of what today are Latvia and Estonia. This Livonia was composed of small feudal states headed by various religious leaders and the Teutonic Knights. It came into existence during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and lasted until the middle of the sixteenth century.

³*PSRL*, VI, 42, 241; VIII, 233.

⁴Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 128-129.

⁵"Diplomatic Relationships of Ancient Russia With the Foreign States" (Saint Petersburg, 1851), 87-88, 104-106 ("Памятники дипломатических сношений древней России с державами иностранными" [Санкт-Петербург, 1851], 87-88, 104-106).

⁶Buganov and Bogdanov, 64.

The Rudder

Ivan Kuritsin's *Rudder*¹ is of unique and significant importance to the present study, because Kuritsin's manuscript is the only theological document depicting in detail the views of Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. Although the works of Fedor Kuritsin and Ivan Chernij shed some light on the theology of the Russian reformers in general, they were not intended as statements of beliefs. The works of Fedor Kuritsin are mostly of a grammatical and philosophical character. The notes of Ivan Chernij are just an insightful commentary. The writings of Ivan Kuritsin, on the other hand, represent particular facets of the reformers' theology articulated in a systematic way. N. V. Kalachov,² E. E. Golubinsky,³ B. P. Ljubimov,⁴ and M. N. Tihomirov⁵ all disregard this document, except for briefly mentioning some general characteristics. The only serious analysis of this manuscript was made by Jurij Begunov, who presents a brilliant comparison of Kuritsin's *Rudder* with other contemporary collections of rules.⁶ However, Begunov recognizes that

¹Kormchaja (*Кормчая*).

²N. V. Kalachev, *The Archive of Historical and Judicial Data Related to Russia* (Moscow: 1850), 1:36-37 (Н. В. Калачев, *Архив историко-юридических сведений, относящихся к России* [Москва: 1850], 1:36-37).

³Golubinsky, 2:880-881.

⁴V. P. Ljubimov, "The Manuscripts of the Russian Truth," in *Russian Truth*, 2 vols., ed. B. D. Grekov (Moscow, 1940), 1:99-100 (В. П. Любимов, "Списки Русской Правды," в *Правда Русская*, 2 т., ред. Б. Д. Греков [Москва, 1940], 1:99-100).

⁵M. N. Tihomirov, *The Study of the Russian Truth* (Moscow, 1941), 97-99 (М. Н. Тихомиров, *Исследование о Русской Правде* [Москва, 1941], 97-99).

⁶Begunov, "Rudder by Ivan Volk Kuritsin."

more research on this manuscript is needed in order to determine its ideological thrust.¹

The Unique Character of the *Rudder*

Kuritsin's *Rudder* represents a collection of Church regulations. Its principal difference from other collections is its systematic, rather than chronological, presentation of patristic rules. Kuritsin's predecessors always arranged these rules in their chronological order. Further, Kuritsin's work is more complete than other collections. For example, in the official *Rudder*, fourteen chapters of Photius's *Nomokanon* are mentioned only by their titles. In Kuritsin's *Rudder* the rules actually follow the titles in their systematic order.²

The first attempt to collect Church rules and regulations in one book was made in the fourteenth century. At the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, the copy of the first *Rudder* belonged to the archbishop of Rostov, Vassian Sanin, the brother of Iosif of Volotsk. Vassian Patrikeev used it in 1517-19 when he wrote his *Rudder*.

The indisputable canonical origin of the official *Books of Rules* was a presentation of rules and articles in chronological order, as they were issued by the

¹Ibid., 143. Although this dissertation approaches this manuscript solely from the perspective of its ideological importance, a series of studies is needed in order to adequately appreciate such a massive manuscript as Kuritsin's *Rudder*.

²After being written by Constantinople Patriarch Photius in 883, these rules were arranged by an unknown tenth-century author according to the short summary that Photius himself provides for his manuscript (Begunov, 144). The first Russian translation of this work was made in the fourteenth century (Vassian Patrikeev, "Rudder," Manuscript F. II. 74, GPB, 447 [Вассиан Патрикеев, "Кормчая," рукопись F. II. 74, ГПБ, 447]).

Ecumenical Councils. The *Rudder* of Metropolitan Daniil, issued in 1522 and presenting the strictly traditional organization, was a response to the new tendency of systematization.¹ Kuritsin's *Rudder* is the oldest systematic book on Church rules among a number of known Russian *Books of Rules*.

The Contents of the *Rudder*

Rudder,² or *The Rightful Measure* (another name of this manuscript), by Ivan Kuritsin consists of 342 sheets. The first page contains the table of contents of 62 chapters. It begins with the words: "This book is the rightful measure . . ." On 6 unnumbered and 43 numbered sheets the text of the thirteenth-century *The Rightful Measure* is presented. There is a collection of Church rules on the rest of the sheets—analogue to a modern Church manual.

The rest of the manuscript consists of: *Sayings* about the Councils (43-58); *Photius' Nomocanon* in its systematic order (58-182); *Apostle*, the life of apostles Peter and Paul; also some rules of the Councils (182-204); *The Discourse of Saint Diodochus in*

¹This *Rudder* reflects the traditional way of presenting Ecclesiastic Rules—after fourteen titles of Photius's *Nomocanon*, with two introductions, there usually follow the canonical parts of the *Rudder*: (1) Apostolic Rules (Metropolitan Daniil, "Rudder," Manuscript #28, Voskresensky's Collection, GIM, 59-95 [Митрополит Даниил, "Кормчая," рукопись #28, Воскресенское собрание, ГИМ, 59-95]); (2) Doctrines of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and Nine local Councils (ibid., 95-274); (3) Rules and Articles of Basil the Great (ibid., 274-307); (4) Domestic Articles (ibid., 307-331); (5) *Rightful Measure* of the second edition (ibid., 331-399, 418-527). The official *Rudder* is usually closed by *The Word of 165 Fathers Against Those Who Offended the Holy Church*.

²Ivan Volk Kuritsin, *The Rightful Measure, or the Rudder*, Manuscript MDA, 187 (Иван Волк Курицин, *Мерило праведное, или Кормчая*, рукопись МДА, 187).

Questions and Answers (204-212); a collection of articles by Church fathers against heresies (212-286); juridical articles: *Russian Truth*,¹ *Regulations* of Vladimir and Yaroslav, the Decalogue and some Old Testament passages (286-308); and a collection of brief articles including *The Regulations Concerning the Designation of the Bishop* (308-336).

There is an afterword at the end of the manuscript (sheet 336): “Christ is the beginning and the end to each good thing. All this was written by me, and you are the one who told me to do so. Please, be kind to me. And if there is something that I have missed, or something extra that I have put in, you can correct it yourself.” Next follows a cryptograph written in the same handwriting. The cryptograph is made of numbers and hides the name of the writer: *Ivan Volk Kuritsin*.

In his work Kuritsin used either the Greek manuscript of the *Rudder*, or its fourteenth-century Russian translation and another *Rudder* of the traditional Russian edition. He also included a collection called *The Rightful Measure*. *The Rudder* by Vassian Patrikeev belongs to the same systematized type as Kuritsin’s *Rudder*.² Four *Rudders* written by Vassian Patrikeev are known to be extant. The fact that both Kuritsin and Patrikeev consciously broke with the tradition of chronological presentation signifies their desire to present their own understanding of theology. Any new approach was

¹The *Russian Truth* is the earliest comprehensive document of Russian jurisprudence. It contains a section issued by Yaroslav the Wise (1019-54) and a supplement approved by his sons. In later centuries these two parts were supplemented by some other juridical directives of the Russian princes.

²Dolgov, *About the Heresy of Judaizers*, 145.

considered outrageous by the Russian religious establishment which reasoned that everything valuable has already been written by the apostles and Church fathers and thus the task of the theologian is only to preserve and reproduce these writings. The dissidents were skeptical of the Church. They believed the contemporary Church had perverted the teachings of the great men of old; therefore the ancient rules and traditions must be restored.

The first part of Kuritsin's *Rudder—The Rightful Measure*—is identical to the oldest manuscript of this work.¹ In the middle part of the article *On the Improvement of the Judgment* the text is interrupted by the following comment: while judging one must “fear God and be a virtuous person.”

The oldest manuscript of the *Rightful Measure* (thirteenth century) contains secular decrees of the Byzantine empire. Kuritsin chose not to include them in his collection. Articles concerning church jurisprudence were also excluded, evidently because Kuritsin saw them as presenting a compromise between Church and State—which was not uncommon in the Byzantine Christianity during the Middle Ages. Kuritsin excludes, furthermore, the new regulations Iosif was trying to introduce into Russia in order to empower the State to persecute heretics.²

¹Manuscript #145/1222, GPB, Kirillo-Belooserskoe Collection, 148-171 (рукопись #145/1222, Кирило-Белозерское собрание, 148-171).

²Iosif makes a constant appeal to the so-called “State Law” (градской закон) that is merely a collection of different decrees issued at various times by Byzantine emperors and later on by Russian princes, such as the Decrees of Justinian, the New Rule of Alexios Comnenos, Vladimir's Decree on the Church People and Judgments and Offerings and State Law, and others decrees of the same kind. In the thirteenth Word of his *Instructor* he elevates state law concerning the heretics to the level of the prophetic, apostolic, and

Begunov seems to be right when he concludes that these decrees were unacceptable to Ivan Kuritsin due to his view on the separation between State and Church.¹ There is in Kuritsin's exclusion of all these regulations—which Iosif and some other clerics honored almost equally with the “prophetic, apostolic, and the holy Fathers’ writings”²—an indicator of the significant amount of freedom Kuritsin exercised while composing his *Rudder*. Gudzi indicates that

the Iosifites [supporters of Iosif of Volotsk] were so uncritical in their attitude toward “Writ” as to consider that any document had authority if only it accorded in some degree with their interests. (This was very characteristic of them even later on, in the sixteenth century.) Often they did not distinguish the canonical books from the apocryphal, nor did they have the faculty of systematic argument which results from a critical attitude toward material.³

The fact that Ivan Kuritsin broke with this tradition in his *Rudder* once again confirms that, in expressing his views, he followed no conventional ecclesiastical pattern.

Kuritsin begins the *Rudder* with the introductory words from the *Rightful Measure*, placing the articles of the “rightful judgment” before the actual text of the *Rudder*. Ivan Kuritsin demands the rightful judgment of rich and poor, nobility and peasants, merchants and widows.⁴

patristic heritage.

¹Begunov, 155.

²*Instructor*, 253.

³Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, 237.

⁴There are some other concepts in Kuritsin's *Rudder* that could be of a special interest to modern scholars in general and theologians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. His *Rudder* discloses some of the most remarkable anthropological statements found in the medieval literature—either Russian or European.

No other *Rudder* carries the *Rightful Measure*, which in Kuritsin's edition precedes the *Rudder*. In all other editions, the passages from *This Book Is the Rightful Measure* are located after all apostolic and patristic rules and decrees of the Councils, in between the articles on heretics and the *State law*.¹ J. Begunov indicates:

The use of *This Book Is the Rightful Measure* by government official Ivan Volk Kuritsin as an introduction to the collection of ecclesiastic laws has no precedents in the literature. Ivan Volk Kuritsin writes the *Rightful Measure* in the environment of a common interest during 1470-90 toward the systematization of the legal proceedings.²

Kuritsin's *Rudder* does not include the usual juridical articles written in support of State interference in doctrinal affairs. Such a significant omission did not happen accidentally. Vassian Patrikeyev, who makes the same omission in his *Rudder*, is very explicit concerning the reasons for this omission in his private correspondence: It is a total separation between the State and the affairs of the monks—these “unburied cadavers.”³

Both Kuritsin's and Patrikeyev's *Books of Rules* lack *The Word of 165 Fathers Against Those Who Offended the Holy Church*—a letter that completed all the official editions of the *Books of Rules* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Archbishop

¹This particular order, for example, is found in Chudovskaja Rudder, Manuscript GIM #167, Chudovskaja Collection (Чудовская Кормчая, рукопись ГИМ #167, Чудовское собрание); Metropolitan Daniil, *Rudder*; Kirillo-Belozerskaja Rudder, Manuscript GPB #1/1079 (Кирило-Белозерская Кормчая, рукопись ГПБ #1/1079).

²Begunov, 158.

³Zamaleev and Ovchinnikova, 95.

Gennadii and Iosif used this *Word* at the Council of 1503 in defense of monasteries' right to own an abundant amount of land.

Again, both Kuritsin's and Patrikeyev's *Rudders* lack most of the domestic articles used by Iosif to support the cooperation between State and Church in persecuting the heretics. Of all the thirty-three traditional domestic articles, Kuritsin's *Rudder* contains only three: *Russian Truth*, and *Regulations* by Vladimir and Yaroslav. The reason is obvious and explained by Patrikeev, who ends his *Rudder* with the following note: "There are some things in the holy rules that are against the holy Gospels and Apostles and all holy Fathers."¹

General Tendencies

Although Ivan Kuritsin was expressly against heresies, he is not inclined to the repressive methods suggested by Iosif of Volotsk in his *Instructor*. Moreover, he supported the rights of laymen to teach God's Word. Unlike Iosif, who so altered a clear apostolic rule as to make it unrecognizable, Ivan Kuritsin cites it unedited: "As for the teacher, even if he is a layman, but able and competent in teaching the Word and pure in heart, let him teach. So everybody, as it is written, will be taught by God."² Thus, instead of using force to eradicate heresy, Ivan Kuritsin trusts the Word of God to accomplish the work. He sees laymen as promoters of this task. Surely, this was not appreciated by the official Church.

¹Manuscript F. II, GPB, 447.

²*Rudder*, 184.

Another rule Ivan Kuritsin quotes, not found in other Russian *Rudders*, states:

The bishops and the priests should not force any to bring to the church communion bread, other gifts, or to do some work, by threatening with excommunicating, or anathematizing, or refusing communion service or baptizing children. Those who violate this commandment should be removed from their position in the Church.¹

The official *Rudders* usually deal only with such issues as simony and the unrestrained power of the local bishops. From the above rule it is clear that the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents did not reject the hierarchical structure of the Church *per se*. They rather opposed the abuses by the hierarchical Church.

Another rule missing in all other *Books of Rules*, except in Kuritsin's work, is rule that says: "By free choice one shall be ruled in choosing temperance. Interpretation: by his own will each man shall do the good things, without being forced. That is why nobody should force somebody to Christian temperance, but each man should do it when moved by his conviction and free will and desire."² This was a radically new concept for the Russian state. The notion that nobody should be forced to be a Christian was to Iosif equivalent to total renunciation of Christianity. What do people do if they are not forced into Christianity? According to Iosif, they go to Judaism, the religion of the devil.³

Trinitarian Trends in *Rudder*

A striking similarity between Kuritsin's and Patrikeev's *Books of Rules* is their

¹Ibid., 203.

²Ibid., 97.

³*Instructor*, 329.

special respect for the writings of Basil the Great. The reason for Patrikeev's extensive use of Basil the Great is evident—the ascetic ideas of Basil are in complete harmony with the Non-Possessors' views on monasticism.¹ But what did Ivan Kuritsin, who hardly had any sympathies with monasticism, find attractive in the works of Basil? Basil the Great, beyond doubt one of the finest Orthodox theologians, was called Great not for his monastic writings, but first and foremost because of his outstanding contribution to trinitarian theology. It can hardly be refuted that if Ivan Kuritsin indeed was an antitrinitarian, his admiration for Basil the Great would be hard to explain.

Ivan Kuritsin included all the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, including dozens of those presenting the Orthodox position on trinitarianism, without any alterations or interpolations. It is extremely unlikely that an antitrinitarian, judaizing theologian would do that. Ivan Kuritsin does not bypass or change *any* of the decrees concerning the Trinity—this irrefutable fact cannot be overemphasized. Nor is there any hint of a negative or skeptical attitude toward them. The only decree Kuritsin felt needed to be modified is the eighty-second decree of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. This decree is quoted in Kuritsin's work:

You shall not draw unto yourself a lamb in the image of Christ, nor Christ himself. Explanation: the Lamb was given in the image of the true Christ, our God, so one can not honor the image more than the truth, by drawing the Lamb revealed by Predtecha [John the Baptist] on the rightful icons, nor [even] Christ himself, our God.²

¹The monastic rule of Basil the Great is used by all monks and nuns of the Eastern Churches, and influenced St. Benedict in the West.

²Kuritsin, *Rudder*, 190.

In Patrikeev's *Rudder*, as well as in the official *Rudders*, this decree explicitly endorses icon adoration: ". . . one shall not honor the image more than the true, and to draw a lamb revealed by John the Baptist on the rightful icons, but [one should draw] Christ himself, our God."¹

Another surprise to those charging Ivan Kuritsin and his associates with antitrinitarianism comes from the section in his *Rudder* dealing with different heresies. This section occupies roughly one-fourth of the entire volume (sheets 212-286). The main part of this section includes the *Panarion* by Epiphanius of Cyprus, containing a brief history and the chief teachings of the heretics. Epiphanius suggests answers the faithful can give to the heretics.² Epiphanius was consistently in harmony with Nicene Orthodoxy and termed all the opponents of trinitarian theology "poisonous snakes."³ Although the same articles of Epiphanius's *Panarion* are found in a shorter version in some traditional *Books of Rules*,⁴ they are not included in the official *Book of Rules*. These articles are omitted in Patrikeev's *Book of Rules*. Thus there were no external factors compelling or even obliging Kuritsin to include these antiheretical articles in his collection. The only

¹Patrikeev, *Rudder*, 51.

²The entire text of the *Panarion* has been translated into English. See Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1987).

³*Ibid.*, xi.

⁴Rjazanskaja *Rudder* (1282), Manuscript GPB I, #311, Tolstoy's Collection, 358-398 (Рязанская Кормчая (1282), рукопись ГПБ, I, #311, 358-398, собрание Толстого); Chudovskaja *Rudder*.

reason these articles were included is Kuritsin's intention to have them in his book. Ivan Kuritsin does not change the text of this antiheretical document, nor does he express a negative attitude toward it.

The *Panarion* covers such topics as the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation and Resurrection, and the Trinity. All these subjects are faithfully preserved by Ivan Kuritsin in his *Rudder*. No remarks or hints that could potentially undermine the authority of Epiphanius's writings are found in the *Rudder*.

The same spirit of orthodoxy is found in Ivan Kuritsin's presentation of the apostolic rules. Of special interest to this study is a rule found exclusively in Ivan Kuritsin's *Book of Rules*. On page 153, in the section covering the apostolic rules against heretics, Ivan Kuritsin writes: "Those who pray with the Jews should be excommunicated." Neither Patrikeev's *Book of Rule* nor even Iosif's writings include such a strict prohibition. Thus, in his repudiation of judaizing, Ivan Kuritsin goes beyond the official sources. Begunov suggests that by this act Ivan Kuritsin "denied any relations with those who at that time were accused of judaizing heresy."¹ However, Ivan Kuritsin's profound role in the Novgorod-Moscow movement as a leading theologian is undeniable. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Kuritsin ever retracted or regretted the composition of his *Rudder*, despite the fact that it indirectly exceeds the official church's promotion of trinitarianism.

¹Begunov, 149.

Summary

The writings of the Subbotniks closely resemble the thrust of the European reform movements from Wycliff to Calvin:

1. The Holy Scripture is the highest authority for the believer, surpassing the traditions of the Church.
2. Monasticism, icons, holy relics, and other traditions not found in the Bible should not be honored.
3. Christians should pray directly to God without human mediators such as priests or saints.
4. All are free to believe and practice according to their conscience.

Additionally, the writings of Subbotniks uphold the following teachings:

1. Believers should keep all of God's Law, including the seventh-day Sabbath.
2. There is a union between the soul and the body.

Most of the books found among the heretics eventually became required reading for all priests and monks in the Russian Orthodox Church. Some of these books are arch-orthodox as they relate to the trinitarian doctrine. Sobolevskii, who believes that the Novgorod-Moscow believers were antitrinitarians, comes to the surprising conclusion that the Subbotniks used these books in their "polemic against Jews."¹ *Sobolevskii does not think it is possible to use these books against the Orthodox position.* In the light of the rapid growth of the fifteenth-century Russian State toward the South and West (especially Lithuania and Poland, where many Jews resided), Sobolevskii's suggestion does not seem

¹Sobolevskii, *Translated Literature of Moscovite Russia*, 399.

impossible. The international politics of Ivan III and his confidants employed religion to advance, expand, and unite the territory of the Russian commonwealth. If this proposition is true, the predominant theory of the Jewish influence on the Orthodox believers should be reversed. Rather, these works were written by Orthodox to convert Jews. Thus, the *Psalms* and the *Letter of Fedor the Jew* were addressed to native Jews admonishing them to accept the Christian faith and the Orthodox teaching on the Trinity.

Ivan Chernij, who wrote all his works before 1487, does not question the trinitarian dogma, nor does he seem interested in the subject. This indicates that the accusation of judaizing had not yet taken place.¹

The writings of Fedor Kuritsin are more concerned with anthropology than with trinitarianism. His attitude toward Orthodoxy is expressed in his *Tale of Drakula*. Kazakova and Lur'e remark that Kuritsin "considered himself holding 'our Orthodox faith,' the way he understood it."² However, it is very unlikely that Kuritsin understood Orthodoxy in antitrinitarian terms, since the very name of the Orthodox Church originated as a defense of the trinitarian position.

Fedor's brother, Ivan Kuritsin, deviates from the official Eastern Orthodox tradition on practices such as icon veneration and the role of laymen. In regard to the trinitarian doctrine, however, his *Rudder* is an explicitly Orthodox document. This paragraph, that precedes his *Rudder*, shows beyond question that Ivan Kuritsin was not merely compiling and organizing the Orthodox documents that he reproduced in his book:

¹See p. 61, above.

²Kazakova and Lur'e, 181.

but with this sentence he certified that he truly believed these documents set forth divine truth to be believed by all faithful Christians:

This book is the rightful measure—the true source, the illuminator of the mind, the eye to the word, the mirror for the consciousness, the light to the darkness, the guide to the blind, the reason to the foolish, precious wisdom, blessed thought, shepherd to the flock, captain to the ship, hunter to the wolves, dog to the thieves, eagle to the crows, sun to the owls, balsam to the eyes, salt to the worms.¹

Summing up this chapter, it is clear that the allegedly antitrinitarian character of the Subbotniks' movement cannot be confirmed by their own writings. The evidence clearly goes in the other direction, especially visible in the *Letter of Fedor the Jew* and Ivan Kuritsin's *Rudder*.

¹Kuritsin, *Rudder*, 1.

CHAPTER V

**EVALUATIONS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The need to analyze critically and evaluate the traditional view on the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents as “judaizing” was expressed by some nineteenth-century scholars. They proposed that the traditional interpretation of the Subbotniks’ movement as distinctly Judaic, including a denial of characteristic Christian dogmas, must be open for further discussions. However, no scholarly evaluation of the Subbotniks’ trinitarian views has yet been produced.

This closing chapter presents an attempt to critically evaluate the documents studied in the previous chapters. Its structure is shaped by the pattern of the previous chapters and serves to summarize the findings made in the body of this study, and answer the questions raised by the analysis of the primary sources. Additional historical data will be applied according to need.

Origin of the Subbotniks’ Movement

The need for a critical evaluation of the traditional theory regarding the genesis of the Subbotniks’ movement is dictated already by the fact that both Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk show serious signs of bias. Iosif confesses that in his struggle with

the Judaizers he did not hesitate to use a “godly deception.”¹ Alexander Zimin, a famous Russian historian, notes that the writings of Iosif “have some of the most distorted information about the heretics and their teachings . . . [and were] written by a very determined enemy employing every kind of wild fantasy.”² Klibanov warns us concerning the writings of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk: “The testimony of these two prominent agents of the militant church must be verified with the help of all possible means.”³ The following analysis and evaluation of data supplement the facts reviewed in the previous chapters.

Roots of the Subbotniks

Even though it is obvious that Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk present the Novgorod-Moscow movement as a new development, there are indications that the “heresy” has deeper roots than suggested by the writings of these two clergymen.⁴ The hypothesis that the “heretical” movement has historical roots prior to 1470 is shared by

¹*AED*, 498.

²Zimin, *Russian Writings from the End of the Fifteenth to the Beginning of the Seventeenth Centuries*, 22. See also Peretz, *New Works on the ‘Judaizers’ and Their Literature at the End of the Fifteenth Century*, 2. To identify the beginning of the Subbotniks’ movement with a Jew in a country where anti-Semitic feelings are prominent seems to have worked in favor of the opponents of the movement. The tremendous impact of Iosif’s “innovations” is easily traced from the number of Russian folk stories and novels written centuries later in which Skharija the Jew sometimes embodies the darkest and the most evil features.

³Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 179.

⁴About the official theory see pp. 41-47, above.

many scholars.¹ It is difficult to pinpoint the exact beginning of the Subbotniks' movement in Russia because the time of the Tatar-Mongol domination has left very few surviving historical writings due to the conquerors' ravages.² The fog that surrounded Russian history for more than two hundred years started to lift with the reign of Ivan III at the end of the fifteenth century.³ What is evident from the surviving manuscripts, however, is that the Subbotniks' movement, and the struggle around it, is a principal topic of most sources at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Although little was said about the movement in the preceding decades, the Subbotniks appeared in the 1470s as a mature, organized movement. Under the ecclesiastical policy of Ivan III this movement skillfully competed with the Byzantine forms of the ruling Church.

It is possible that Russia's first encounter with Christianity was not through Byzantium, but through Bulgaria.⁴ According to a growing number of Russian historians,

¹See Servitskii, 302-304; A. I. Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia (1860-1917)*, ed. S. P. Dunn (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 38-40; Panov, 58-60; Nikitskii, 74; Il'insky, "Mitropolitan Zosima and D'jak Kuritsin," *Theological Review* 10 (1905): 212-235 (Ильинский, "Митрополит Зосима и дьяк Курицин," *Богословский Вестник* 10 [1905]: 212-235); Botsianovskii, *God-Seekers*, 15-18.

²Hans Von Eckardt, *Russia, Past and Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 20-24.

³G. Vernadskii, *The Mongols and Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

⁴For the discussion of this position see A. V. Bushuev and G. E. Mironov, *History of the Russian State* (Moscow: Knizhnaja Palata, 1991), 80-94 (С. В. Бушуев и Г. Е. Миронов, *История государства Российского* [Москва: Книжная палата, 1991], 80-94).

it was through a painful process of transformation that the Byzantine form of Christianity became the dominant one in Russia.¹ Liturgical language, church music, grammar, the alphabet, and even the first missionaries and church leaders—all came from Bulgaria. It is interesting to note that the Bulgarians were not certain about which day of the week they should keep sacred. In a letter to Pope Nicholas I, Bulgarian Christians asked whether they should stop their work on the Sabbath or not.² This letter, written at the same time Christianity entered Russia, indicates that the Sabbath was a controversial issue in the Bulgarian church.

Although the issue of Bulgarian influences on the origin of Russian Christianity remains uncertain, it is obvious that Bulgaria played an important role in shaping Russian spirituality. It is possible that certain “judaizing” teachings, such as Sabbath-keeping, could have been present in Russia from the very beginning of its Christian history. The fact that the Sabbath retained substantial importance in the Russian church for centuries indicates the deep roots of this tradition.

It is, moreover, possible that the teachings of the Subbotniks at the end of the fifteenth century were influenced by the Strigolniks, a Protestant-like Russian lay

¹M. D. Priselkov, *History of the Russian Chronicles in Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries* (Leningrad: Leningrad State University, 1940), 139-169 (М. Д. Приселков, *История русского летописания XI-XIV веков* [Ленинград: Ленинградский гос. Университет, 1940], 139-169). The Byzantine form of religion which Russia received, as Frere says, came in “crystallized forms, and was prone to believe them to be far more ancient and more inherently immutable than they were.” Frere, 34.

²Having been converted by Greek missionaries, in August 863 Bulgaria sent diplomats to the pope with 106 questions on the teaching and discipline of the Church. Nicholas answered these inquiries in the celebrated “*Responsa Nicolai ad consulta Bulgarum*” (Mansi, “*Coll. Conc.*,” XV, 401 sqq.).

movement that struggled for church reforms.¹ A comparison between the teachings of the Strigolniks and the Subbotniks reveals significant similarities. The principal difference between these two movements is that the former primarily called for social changes while the latter embodied a radical theological reform.²

A study of the Scriptures led certain priests in the fourteenth century to preach at Pskov and afterwards in Novgorod, where crowds gathered at the fair.³ The development of Bible-based teachings in Novgorod was a direct result of independent study of the Scriptures. Although the Strigolniks did not have a certain set of beliefs, Il'ja Panov notes that

the negative disposition and logical incompleteness of the Strigolniks' movement did not allow it to remain in the same form in which it originally appeared. Instead, it

¹Buganov and Bogdanov, 19-31. The word *striga* (noun), or *strig* (verb) which is the root of the name *strigolnik*, means respectively “barber” or “to cut someone’s hair.” There are two hypotheses about the etymology of the name *strigolniks*. According to one of them, this movement was named after the professional occupation of one of its founders, a barber from the city of Pskov by the name Karp (d. 1375). According to the second assumption, the movement gained this name because its most prominent leaders were former monks who abandoned their monastic vows—defrocked monks. Strigolniks claimed that since the priests of the Orthodox Church did not receive the Holy Spirit at their ordination, there was therefore no value in the sacraments they administered. Furthermore, they argued that a church is an assembly of true Christians who can choose their own elders, that the members may take the Lord’s Supper among themselves and baptize, and that every Christian may preach the gospel. One of the “heretical” documents of the fourteenth century called *A Word Against False Teachers* (*Слово о лживых учителях*) says: “When the shepherds become wolves, the sheep themselves must shepherd the sheep.” Buganov and Bogdanov, 25. For a detailed study on Strigolniki see Klibanov, *Reform Movements*.

²Buganov and Bogdanov, 19-65.

³*Ibid.*, 23-24. As far back as the eleventh century, parts of the Bible had been translated into the common language of the people. See E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim’s Church* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1955), 323.

confronted the heretics with the necessity to choose: either to extend the repudiation to the end and then, instead of criticizing the old system, to create a new positive religious system, or to reconcile themselves with the one-sidedness and shortcomings of the existing religious system, and to merge into the dominant church again.¹

Klibanov contends that the Strigolniks eventually came to practice their beliefs openly, which resulted in an increase of their adherents. The movement thus received new impulses, which led to a sharpened theological position.² Pipin recognizes that “there is little doubt that the fifteenth-century Judaizers’ heresy is an echo of the Strigolniks’ movement; this echo, however, was complicated by new circumstances.”³ He sees the activity of the mystical Skharija the Jew as the transition link and main source of inspiration in transforming the Strigolniks into Judaizers.⁴ Rudnev, however, assesses the theory of Skharija the Jew as a legend.⁵ A number of other scholars agree with Rudnev’s scepticism.⁶

Mystery of the Identity of Skharija the Jew

Since the mysterious Skharija the Jew has always been in the center of the official theory of the Subbotniks’ origins, his identity needs our attention.

¹Panov, 41-42.

²Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 167-176.

³A. N. Pipin, *History of Russian Literature*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg: Stasjulevich’s Publishing House, 1898), 2:94 (А. Н. Пыпин, *История русской литературы*, 2 vols. [Санкт-Петербург: Стасилевич, 1898], 2:94).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Rudnev, 68-91.

⁶Kazakova and Lur’e, 74-91; Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 292.

Zakharija ben-Aron Ga-Kohen of Kiev

Lilienfeld proposes Zakharija ben-Aron Ga-Kohen of Kiev, who in 1468 copied the astronomical manuscript of Al-Fergan translated by Jakov Anatoli, as one of the candidates to be identified as the heretic Skharija.¹ Lur'e, however, argues that Zakharija of Kiev was not as famous as the enigmatic Skharija the Jew and could hardly fit into the Lithuanian surroundings of Mikhail Olel'kovich.² Even if such a "rare and endangered species at that time and place"³ as the Kievan humanist Zakharija had really affected the views of the Novgorod-Moscow movement, his influence was of a humanistic rather than of a religious character. In any case, we know too little about Zakharija ben-Aron Ga-Kohen of Kiev to trace his possible role in the transformation of a religious situation in Russia.

Zakharija Skhara of Taman

A number of scholars turn to Zakharija Skhara of Taman, with whom Ivan III conducted negotiations with the aim of securing Zakharija's arrival in Russia, as the

¹F. Lilienfeld, "Die 'Hairesie' des Fedor Kuritsin," *Forschungen zur osteuropaischen Geschichte* 24 (1978): 59. Moshe Taube proposes that it is the personality of Kievan Jew Zakharija that later found its reflection in Iosif's writings. See Taube, "The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers," 3:168-198. For discussion on the identification of Ga-Kohen with Zakharija Shara-Gujgursis, see Lilienfeld, "Die 'Hairesie' des Fedor Kuritsin," 39-64.

²Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 162. About the Prince Mikhail Olelkovich's possible relation to the Jew Zakjarija, see pp. 45-46, above.

³Taube, "The 'Poem on the Soul' in the Laodicean Epistle," 682.

legendary Skharija in Iosif's *Instructor*.¹ In the correspondence with Ivan III, Zakharija Skhara of Taman was called *knjaz Tamanskij* (Prince of Taman).² Apparently, it is the same Zakharija Skhara of Taman that Monk Savva is dealing with in his letter to Dmitrii Shein. It is known, moreover, that between 1487 and 1489 Dmitrii Shein conducted political and commercial negotiations with Zakharija Skhara of Taman.

Modern scholars entirely reject the theory that Zakharija Skhara of Taman was a Jew. At the same time, some scholars are still trying to reconcile Iosif's report with the recent findings. Prohorov, for example, believes that Zakharija was of Khazar origin.³ Arthur Koestler speculates about some dynasty of Jewish princes that ruled in Crimea in the fifteenth century under the tutelage of the Genovese Republic, and later of the Crimean Tatars.⁴ Koestler says in this connection: "The last of them, Prince Zakharia, conducted

¹Golubinsky, 2:889; F. Brun and G. Karpov, "Memorial of Diplomatic Relationship Between Muscovite State and Nogaj Hoards," in *Collection of Russian Historical Society*, XLI, 76-77 (Ф. Брун и Г. Ф. Карпов, "Памятник дипломатическим сношениям Московского государства с ногайскими ордами," *Сборник Русского исторического общества*, 1 гл. XLI, 76-77), as quoted in E. S. Zevakina and N. A. Penchko, "Essays on the History of Genoa's Colonies in Western Caucasus," in *Sketches in History*, 3 vols., ed. B. D. Grekov (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1938), 3:80 (Е. С. Зевакина и Н. А. Пенчко, "Очерки по истории Генуэзских колоний на западном Кавказе," в *Исторические Записки*, 3 т., ред. Б. Д. Греков [Москва: Академия Наук СССР, 1938], 3:80).

²Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 162.

³Prohorov, 353-354. Khazars is a national group of general Turkish type, that held the status of an independent state in Eastern Europe between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. During part of this time some Khazars professed Judaism.

⁴Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: the Khazar Empire and Its Heritage* (London: Pan Books, 1977).

negotiations with the Prince of Muscovi, who invited Zakharia to come to Russia and let himself be baptized in exchange for receiving the privileges of a Russian nobleman. Zakharia refused.”¹

Between the seventh and tenth centuries the Khazar Empire played an important role in Eastern European politics. However, in 965 Khazaria was the object of a great Russian attack, which it never fully recovered from.² “We must therefore see the Khazar state,” Slutskii notes, “as having subsisted until the second half of the tenth century, or the eleventh century at most.”³ Little is known about the Khazars after the fall of their kingdom. It is possible that some of the Khazars settled in Crimea. However, there is no evidence of the existence of any historical documents or correspondence that would confirm the hypothesis that Zakharija Skhara of Taman was a Jewish Prince. The Khazars seem to have had little or no contact with Jews in other countries, nor were they interested in promoting Judaism. Slutskii notices concerning the extent of Khazar Judaism that it “was never very strong.” L. I. Lavrov, a specialist in the ethnography of the Black Sea region, who shared Iosif’s theory of the Judaizers’ origin and believed that Zakharija of Taman and Zakharija the Jew were the same person, could not find any evidence of a connection with Judaism on the part of the Crimean nobility.⁴ Even though Ivan III in his

¹Ibid.

²M. I. Artamonov, *Khazar History* (Leningrad, 1962) (М. И. Артамонов, *История Хазар* [Ленинград, 1962]).

³Yehuda Slutskii, “Khazars,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971), 10:950.

⁴L. I. Lavrov, *The History of Russian-Caucasian Relationships in the Fifteenth Century*, 22 (Л. И. Лавров, *К истории русско-кавказских отношений*, 22), as quoted

correspondence urged Zakharija Skharija to be baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church, it is still unclear what other faith Zakharija professed.

Documentary evidence attests that Zakharija Skhara-Guigursis (Gvisolfi) of Taman was an Italian Catholic.¹ Zakharija's father belonged to an ancient aristocratic Genoan family who had ruled over Taman since the thirteenth century, while his mother was from Iveria (modern Georgia, Caucasus). The marriage of Zakharija's parents took place in 1448, thus, as Prohorov recognizes, Zakharija would be about twenty years old when he allegedly converted the Novgorod priesthood to Judaism.² Moreover, as Prohorov again has to recognize, by that time Zakharija would have had to know at least seven languages (Russian, Iverian, Italian, Latin, Tatar, Polish, Jewish, and maybe Litvonian). To complicate matters even further, if Zakharija left Novgorod with Mikhail Olel'kovich, he had only a few weeks to preach his Judaic doctrines, which is hardly enough time to convert the most experienced and articulate priests.³

It is unlikely that a young man of twenty years, a prince of Taman, would live in Kiev and travel through the country to Novgorod to seduce Orthodox

in Lur'e, *Ideological Controversy*, 133.

¹Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 162. See also F. Brun, *Black Sea Region: Collection of Research Articles* (Odessa, 1879), 214-216.

²Prohorov, 353.

³Iosif names priests Aleksey and Denis who, allegedly, were converted as a result of Zakharija's agitation (*Instructor*, 40-41). These two priests were prominent enough for Ivan III to invite them to Moscow to serve as masters over the Archangelsky and Uspenskii cathedrals in the Kremlin—the two most prestigious churches in Russia.

priests. It took Ivan III many years to persuade Zakharija Skharija to come to Moscow from Taman. Even when Zakharija finally agreed, he did not do so for a number of reasons. As a matter of fact, sixteen years of negotiations (1484-1500) and mutual agreement could not induce Zakharija to travel from Crimea to Moscow.

Moreover, documents contemporary to Zakharija Skharija unmistakably prove that he was a Christian.¹ Brutskus, thus, advises to “return Zakharija back to the Catholic faith, and to Italian nationality, to which his family belonged for at least two centuries.”² Needless to say, it is highly unlikely that the Italian Catholic prince Zakharija Skhara Gvisolfi of Taman was interested in promoting Judaism in Russia.

The question, however, remains: Is Zakharija Skhara of Taman the same Zakharija Skhara that Iosif referred to? The letter of Savva answers this question positively. Savva clearly associates Zakharija Skhara of Taman with Judaism.

Was Savva the first to associate the name of Zakharija the Jew with the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents? Belokurov believes that Savva wrote his letter in 1496—years after Iosif’s first repudiation of the heretics.³ Belokurov claims that the letter of Savva could not have been written prior to Iosif’s epistle. However, the year

¹Deamony, “Letter to Directors of San-Georgio Bank,” 1482, Atti, IV, 257-258, as quoted in Zevakina and Penchko, 81.

²Brutskus, *Zakharija, Prince of Taman*, 12 (Ю. Брутскус, *Захария, Князь Таманский*, 12), as quoted in Y. S. Lur’e, *Ideological Controversy*, 132.

³Belokurov, vii.

found in Savva's letter authentically written by the same hand that wrote the letter unmistakably points to the year 6996, which is, by standard calculation, 1488! Zimin and Lur'e agree that "without any doubts, it was written in 1488."¹

What implication does this historical revision of ten years have for the study of the Novgorod-Moscow movement? First, it shows that Savva wrote his letter before Iosif's initial polemic writings. Second, this letter is the first ever, as far as can be documented, to associate a Jew with the Russian heretics.² It is probable that Iosif relied on Savva's letter when he dealt with the beginning of the Subbotniks' movement. After receiving Gennadii's letter attributing the heresy to the nameless Jew, Iosif, it seems, linked the nameless Jew with Zakharija Skhara of Savva's letter. It is obvious that Savva was fighting only an imaginary enemy.

What made Savva believe that Zakharija Skhara of Taman was a Jew? Brun makes an interesting observation when he notices a striking similarity between the words "evrejanin," and "iverijanin."³ The word "evrejanin" means "Jew," while the word "iverijanin" means "Iverian." Zakharija, whose mother was Iverian, was twice mistakenly

¹Zimin and Lur'e, "Archeological Review," in *The Writings of Iosif of Volotsk*, 44.

²Archbishop Gennadii mentions a certain Jew in association with the Russian dissidents only in his letter to Zosima (Oct. 1490) where he says that "when the prince Mikhail Olel'kovich was in Novgorod, there was a certain heretic Jew, and from that Jew the heresy spread in Novgorod land, although those who confessed it did so in secret; however, later on, being drunk, they started to argue about the faith." Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii to Zosima the Metropolitan of Moscow," *AED*, 375.

³Евреянин и иверианин. See F. Brun, *Black Sea Region: Collection of Research Articles* (Odessa, 1879), 216.

addressed in the letters from Ivan III as “evrejanin.” However, Ivan hastened to correct this mistake, and after 1488 Zakharija was always addressed as “friazin” (Italian), “cherkasin” (another word for “iverijanin”), and Prince of Taman. Apparently, this correction took place after Shein’s trip to Crimea (1488). Savva, who wrote his letter in 1488, prior to Shein’s return, was obviously confused by the word “evrejanin” and tried to persuade Shein to stand firm against the “Jew.” It is not clear whether Shein was ever exposed to any Judaic propaganda. Savva, when he wrote his letter, did not know if Shein met Zakharija. Savva’s uncertainty is expressed already in his letter: “And you, Lord Dmitrii, if while being an ambassador you talked to that Jew Zakharija Skhara, so, I beseech you, that if you heard from him some good words, or some bad words, put them aside, out of your heart and out of your lips.”¹ It is possible that Savva eventually learned about the real ethnicity and religion of Zakharija Skhara of Taman. It may explain the fact that during the subsequent quarter of a century no historical document ever evoked the name of Zakharia the Jew, until the name was resurrected by Iosif in the early sixteenth century.

Zakhar Strigolnik

Archbishop Gennadii writes about the “new heresy” as a continuation of the Strigolniks movement.² He mentions that a certain Jew, whom Gennadii does not name, was responsible for spreading judaizing ideas in Novgorod. Gennadii, moreover, mentions

¹Belokurov, “The Letter of Monk Savva,” 1.

²Kazakova and Lur’e, 116-26.

Zakhar, a monk with whom he was in a continual conflict and whom he called a Strigolnik.¹ The nature of this conflict is partly explained by Archbishop Gennadii's unpopular taxation policy,² which Gennadii initiated on becoming archbishop.³ The *Chronicle* describes it in the following disapproving words:

Archbishop Gennadii sent to Pskov his official Bezson and also the Father-superior Eufimy, who previously was a tax-collector in Pskov and, being in that position, did a lot of evil things to the people And he (Gennadii) ordered him to make a list of all the churches and monasteries in Pskov; and also the total number of priests and monks.⁴

Monk Zakhar openly opposed the simony promoted by Archbishop Gennadii. He sent a number of letters accusing the archbishop of profit-seeking. Because Zakhar refused to participate in the Eucharist served by priests who had received their positions on the basis of simony, Archbishop Gennadii banished him to a monastery prison. He was shortly released due to the intervention of Ivan III. The letter Archbishop Gennadii received from Ivan III ordered him to send Zakhar back to his monastery;⁵ Gennadii had no choice but to obey. Instead of going back to his monastery, however, Zakhar went to

¹Hrushev, 118-23. Gennadii writes that he banished Zakhar, but through the intervention of the Metropolitan and the tsar himself he was released and went to Moscow, where he was under protection of the Judaizers.

²Archbishop Gennadii established open simony in Novgorod and Pskov; thus, the only way to get a priestly position or a promotion was to pay him a certain amount of money.

³Buganov and Bogdanov (45) indicate that for this position Gennadii paid about two thousand rubles—an enormously large amount of money for that time.

⁴*PSRL*, 28: 337, quoted in Buganov and Bogdanov, 45-46.

⁵Hrushev, 119.

Moscow where he accused Gennadii of heresy. Hrushev indicates that this provoked Gennadii to begin his fight against Zakhar, in particular, and the Novgorod heretics, in general.¹

Archbishop Gennadii never mentions the name of Zakharia Skharija the Jew, although he was the first who brought the alleged story of the activity of a certain Jew in Novgorod. It seems obvious that if he knew the name of this Jew, he would certainly have mentioned it. Where did Iosif find the name of Skharija the Jew? One possibility is that, while revising his manuscripts for the Council of 1504, Iosif found Gennadii's letter of complaint against Zakhar, which additionally contained some obscure notions of judaizing. On the basis of this letter Iosif adopted the name of Skharija in his writings.² Another possibility is that Iosif was familiar with the letter of Savva, where the name of Zakharia Skharija in association with a certain Jew was first found. A third possibility is that Iosif blended the name of the Russian heretic Zakhar with Zakharia Skharija of Savva's letter.

Whether the opposing monk Zakhar was transformed through the writings of Iosif into the mysterious Jew Skharija or not, his relation to the Russian dissident movement is obvious. Panov says that in the writings of Archbishop Gennadii we find

¹Ibid.

²Note the stunning similarity of the two names—Zakhar (or Zakharija—a full name) and Skharija (more officially—also Zakharija). Officially it was the same name. In the attempt to identify the person of Zakharija the Jew, the scholars traditionally were looking for a Zakharia of the Jewish ethnicity. The Russian Zakharia, the notable opponent of Archbishop Gennadii during a number of years, was outside the focus of their search.

indications of “the hereditary connection of the Judaizers with the heresy of Strigolniks.”¹ Kazakova and Lur’e note that the “muddled and controversial story of the Moscow heretical circle by Iosif is explained by the general tendencies of his work: at any price he needed to picture the heretical movement as coming out of Novgorod and having its roots in ‘Skharija the Jew’.”²

The accounts of both Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk may contain some truth. Archbishop Gennadii, followed by Iosif, may have combined the historical account of Prince Michael’s visit to Novgorod with his own theory of the origin of the Judaizers’ movement. One possible explanation of why this particular visit of Prince Michael coincides, according to Archbishop Gennadii, with the origin of the Judaizers’ movement relates to the political setting.

Political Developments in Novgorod

There are four verifiable facts mentioned in Iosif’s report: time, 1470; place, Novgorod; real prince, Michail Ol’kovich; and the names of the “heretics,” first of all Aleksey and Denis.³ If we assume that Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif were using the political connotation to compromise the heresy, they could not find a better place or time than Novgorod in November 1470. The death of Archbishop Iona (November 1470) raised the question of where the new archbishop-elect Feofil should be consecrated: in

¹Panov, 11.

²Kazakova and Lur’e, 147.

³See pp. 40-47, above.

Moscow or in Kiev.¹ The clergy traditionally looked to the east; from the beginning of the fourteenth century the Metropolitan had resided in Vladimir or Moscow, not in Kiev.² There were some attempts by Lithuania to establish an independent Metropolitan of Kiev and of all Russia. Fennell calls this attempt “a necessity if Novgorod was to be brought into the Lithuanian fold.”³ The people’s assembly in Novgorod voted in favor of entering into negotiations with Poland-Lithuania. Furthermore, an embassy was dispatched to Casimir, king of Poland and Lithuania, asking him to be “sovereign and master” of Novgorod the Great, to order the consecration of the archbishop by the Metropolitan of Kiev, and to send a prince.⁴

As a result of this petition Prince Mikhail Olel’kovich, whose father and grandfather had been princes of Kiev and who thus represented many Russians living under Lithuanian rule, arrived in Novgorod from Lithuania on November 8. He was asked by the pro-Lithuanian party to govern Novgorod. He arrived, however, without an army

¹The archbishop, whose role in state affairs was often decisive, was also chosen from candidates put forward to the *veche* (forum), but, according to canon law, his status had to be confirmed by the Metropolitan.

²This transition is explained by the fact that, with the death of Monomach, the Southern Rus gradually turned into a state of decay. “A period of instability began, marked by a great migration from Kiev to Southwest Russia (Galicia-Volhynia) and to Northwest Russia (Novgorod).” John A. Harrison, *The Founding of the Russian Empire* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 37.

³Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 32.

⁴*PSRL*, VIII/160; XXV/285.

and was not able to defend Novgorod.¹ His presence was rather a symbolic gesture from Casimir, who wanted to add Novgorod to his jurisdiction but was afraid of the possible conflict with Moscow. This conflict soon became a reality. In the middle of November Ivan III began his preparations for a military campaign against Novgorod. In June of the following year three armies left Moscow for Novgorod and the rival city collapsed. Morfill nostalgically says: “Its chief citizens were carried off to Moscow, and with them went the bell, whose mutinous tongue had so often summoned them to their assembly.”² Novgorod was conquered by Moscow, but the conflict with Lithuania lasted for many years to come, providing a source for the major political and military conflicts of Ivan. It is possible that Iosif’s statement concerning the role of Mikhail Olel’kovich in the emerging “heresy” in Novgorod aimed to associate the Subbotniks’ movement with the Lithuanian party.³ Another possible reason for Iosif’s reference to Prince Mikhail is that the prince’s sister Evdokia was the wife of the Moldovian ruler, Stephan the Great, and the mother of Elena Stepanovna, who through the marriage to Ivan the Young became one of the most active supporters of the heretics in Moscow.

The fact that Iosif mentions the names of two heretics “converted” by Skharija (Aleksey and Denis—the names are not mentioned anywhere by Archbishop Gennadii)

¹About the same time Mikhail’s brother Semen, prince of Kiev, had died, so Mikhail Olel’kovich left Novgorod (which traditionally granted its ruler neither much respect nor much money) and set off to try his luck in Kiev.

²W. R. Morfill, *Russia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1890), 54.

³As already mentioned (48, above), both sides of this controversy were trying to label each other with the Lithuanian mark.

might have a very simple explanation. The two “heretical” priests from Novgorod were well-known as prominent adherents of the Protestant-like form of religion. In 1479, subsequent to one of his regular military appearances at Novgorod,¹ Ivan brought them to Moscow. Ivan made Aleksey and Denis archpriests, one at the Uspenskii cathedral, the other at the Arkhangel'skii cathedral of the Kremlin. By associating them with the Lithuanian party through Skharija, Iosif labeled them as betrayers in the eyes of the pro-Moscovite faction.

Extent of Possible Jewish Influence on the Origin of the Subbotniks' Movement

The Russian historian and monk, Makary Bulgakov, accepts the position that the genesis of the Judaizers' movement is rooted in Judaism. He reasons that since Iosif was a contemporary of the movement and his report contains a number of details, he had to be right.² This approach, however, raises some serious questions. One such question has already been asked by Panov: “How could the Russian people overnight break with their

¹Ivan's every visit was followed by many arrests of traitors and annexations of their lands and wealth. Fennell observes: “It is clear that Ivan by this operation greatly increased the amount of territory in the Novgorod district at his entire disposal.” Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 58. It is interesting to note that at his coming in 1480 Ivan III arrested Archbishop Feofil, who was suspected of being a sympathizer of the pro-Lithuanian party. Feofil was dispatched to Moscow and confined in the Chudov monastery, and Archbishop Gennadii, who was at that time the archimandrite of the Chudov monastery, was his jailor, and later became his successor in the archbishopric in Novgorod. Archbishop Gennadii would soon follow the example of Ivan III and constantly enlarge his wealth by taking the property from those suspected of heresy.

²Bulgakov, *The History of the Russian Church*, 4:82.

five-hundred-year Christian tradition and embrace Judaism?”¹—a despised religion everywhere in Europe, especially in Russia. It seems that Panov’s point is well taken; logically and practically this mass-proselytization could not have happened.

Even if the enigmatic Skharija the Jew had impacted Russian believers, his influence was not necessarily of a “judaizing” nature. The examples of Jewish, not judaizing, influence are found in all stages of church history. Louis I. Newman observes that

in almost every Christian Reform movement the leaders are sympathetic to Jews before their movement secures popular and official sanction. . . . The Sabbatarian movements in Christendom arose from forces within Christianity itself, yet in almost every instance, it happened that the leaders and members of the sects in question turned to Jewish literature in addition to the Bible.²

These contacts should by no means categorically be interpreted as signifying a turn to Judaism. Christian clergymen throughout church history turned to the Jews for different reasons.³ Newman notes, for example, that “there is unmistakable evidence that the Waldensians not only were familiar with the Jewish sources, but were also instructed both by Jews and Jewish Christians.”⁴

There is not enough evidence to conclude that the Russian Subbotniks were instructed by Jews or Jewish Christians. It seems, moreover, that the “heresy” began much earlier than Archbishop Gennadii’s and Iosif of Volotsk’s writings indicate. Some

¹Panov, 4.

²Newman, 20-21.

³Ibid., 21.

⁴Ibid., 68.

researchers, including most of the later ones, support the position that there is no clear beginning to the Subbotniks' movement. Servitskii writes that, "first of all, we tried to discover the beginning of this heresy. But, after careful examination of all the sources, we came to the conclusion that there is no specific starting point of the Judaizers' movement."¹ Servitskii explains his unusual statement by referring to the centuries of nonconformism in ecclesiastic Russian society. Another historian, Klibanov, wrote that the "heretics," whose teaching corresponds to the general ideas of the Judaizers, "appeared even before the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."² Panov concludes that the Judaizers' movement "was one of the first and the most important wakening moments of the creative Russian folk's spirit."³ The positions of Servitskii, Klibanov, and Panov seem to fit best into the true historical nature of the Judaizers' movement.

However, the possibility of external influence on the Russian dissidents may not be limited to domestic or Jewish influences. The end of the fifteenth century was a time when Russia was diplomatically and financially maturing and reaching to European powers. It may not be a coincidence that the most prominent Subbotniks' leaders—the brothers Kuritsin—were heavily engaged in diplomatic activities on behalf of the Russian State.

¹Servitskii, 303-304.

²Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia*, 39.

³Panov, 59.

Possible External Factors Influencing the Subbotniks' Movement

In the second half of the fifteenth century, Russia, which by then had become almost a centralized country, experienced a time of ever-increasing international recognition. The influence of the West on Russia was felt in the areas of architecture, skilled professions, reading of books, fashion, religious ideas, and intellectual freedom.

It is probable that the Hussite and Taborite movements of Bohemia, via Poland and Lithuania, influenced the Subbotniks. Poland and Bohemia had strong ties with each other because of the language and close relation between their peoples. Many Polish students, studying in Czech universities, brought new religious ideas back to Poland. Many Polish mercenaries actively participated in the Hussite wars on the Bohemian side, despite calls from the popes for Poland to crusade against Bohemia.¹ Hussite ideas were so strong in Poland at one time that an edict was promulgated against the Polish people ordering them to stop traveling to Bohemia and to give up reading Bohemian literature.² It is probable that Hussite ideas influenced the process of defining the Subbotniks' theology. For example, similarly to the Subbotniks, the Hussites recognized the supreme authority of the Scripture in matters of faith, denounced monasticism, and were against any kind of images in the church.³

Ilovajsky concludes that "our Judaizers, at least the majority of them, are the

¹Barbashev, 125-126.

²V. F. Botsianovskii, "Russian Free-Thinkers," *New Word* 12 (1896): 171 (B. Ф. Боцяновский, "Русские вольнодумцы," *Новое Слово* 12 [1896]: 171).

³Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967).

offspring of a Western European humanism. The fact that some of the most educated Russian people, secular as well as religious, not excluding Metropolitan Zosima, joined the heresy, strengthens our assumption.”¹

Botsianovskii suggests that the Judaizers’ movement originated as a result of Strigolniks’ impact on Russian society, and that “the relationship with the West continued to nurture this frame of mind.”² By “West” Botsianovskii means the influence of Hussites. This hypothesis seems in harmony with the historical evidence.

Another possible channel of ideological influence is through Moscow’s relations with Hungary. Moscow was trying to establish a good diplomatic relationship with Hungary in order to present a unified front against Poland and Lithuania. Due to some unfortunate circumstances, this alliance was restricted to “high-sounding phrases, to assurances of friendship and willingness to act in concert against the ‘common enemy’ and to expressions of esteem and brotherhood. But they led to no concerted action and can have been little more than frustrating essays in diplomacy for both sides.”³ It is possible, however, that this relation had a significant impact on the shaping of the theology of the Subbotniks. Ivan sent to the Hungarian court “one of his most distinguished and outstanding civil servants, Fedor Kuritsin,”⁴ who spent many active months in Hungary.

¹D. Plovajsky, “About Zosima,” *Contemporary News* 266 (1884): 4 (Д. Иловайский, “О Зосиме,” *Современные известия* 266 [1884]: 4).

²*Ibid.*, 161.

³Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 112.

⁴*Ibid.*, 112.

Fedor Kuritsin completed his first visit to Hungary in the summer of 1485. It is possible that Kuritsin's relation with Hungary, which was under a strong Hussite influence,¹ in turn enriched the theology of the Subbotniks to some extent.

The similarities between the teachings of Western and Russian reformers do not necessarily mean that the movements borrowed from each other. One significant common denominator between many of these groups was a deep respect for the teachings of the Bible and the rejection of tradition and church dogmas not based on Holy Scripture.

It is thus possible that the Russian Protestant-like movement could be a Russian phenomenon inspired by similar Reform movements of the West. Ilovajsky notes:

I believe that even though other, external influences impacted the origins of this heresy, this influence was limited. The essence of this movement was not borrowed from someone else's religion, but appears to be a fruit of a domestic free-thinking—the fruit of the same well-recognized unrest that in prior centuries was found in the Strigolnikis' heresy. Because of this I name it [the movement] totally nonjudaizing.²

Ilovajsky's comment seems to be well taken. Regardless of the influence of Western Protestant-like movements on Russian reformers, the Novgorod-Moscow movement was firmly grounded in centuries of Russian ecclesiastical nonconformism. Ilovajsky, furthermore, comments on the biases of the traditional approach toward the Novgorod-Moscow movement. These biases can be explained by rather artificial attempts

¹Botsianovskii, "Russian Free-Thinkers," 173. Botsianovskii also observes that the "intellectual ferment in this country found full sympathy and support of the king Matthias Corvinus, with whom the Russian clerk [Kuritsin] negotiated." Ibid.

²D. Ilovajsky, *More About the Judaizers' Heresy and Metropolitan Zosima* (Moscow: Kushnerev's Publishing House, 1884), 17 (Д. Иловайский, *Еще о ереси жидовствующих и митрополите Зосиме* [Москва: Тип. И. Н. Кушнера, 1884], 17).

to link Russian dissidents with Jewish tradition:

I give voice to the opinion that the name Judaizers given [to the movement] is not quite fair, but rather was given to the movement tendentiously. . . . In accusations against it, words like “judaizing” have constantly been heard; however, when one looks at the references to the teachings of the heresy itself, one finds only negation, that is, what the heretics did not believe in [icon veneration, monasticism, etc.].¹

A further analysis and evaluation of the accusations of judaizing which “have constantly been heard” in the writings of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk is needed.

Charges in Archbishop Gennadii’s Letters

There are few, if any, charges of antitrinitarianism or “judaizing” in Archbishop Gennadii’s letter. Since many scholars are hunting for hints of the “judaizing” character of the Novgorod-Moscow movement, all potential charges of deviations from the mainstream Christianity found in Gennadii’s letters should be analyzed.

Archbishop Gennadii presses five basic charges against the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents. All five are found in his letter to Bishop Prohor Sarskii:

1. In this letter Gennadii for the first time uses the term “judaizing.” This reference was done in connection with the issue of icon worship.
2. Charges of such heresies as Marcellianism and Messalianism can be perceived as indicating the dissidents’ extreme unorthodoxy.
3. The discovery of the book *Judaizers’ Psalms* is, perhaps, the most explicit argument in favor of the dissidents’ bent toward Judaism.

¹Ibid.

4. Another “judaizing” phrase in this letter is found in connection with heretics who were keeping the Ten Commandments by which they allegedly “confused people.”

5. The last charge in this letter is related to the date of Christ’s Second Coming.

Gennadii apparently believed that together these arguments indicated the judaizing character of the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

Icon Veneration

The first charge found in Archbishop Gennadii’s letter to Prohor Sarskii claims that the heretics “dishonored our Lord Jesus Christ and contaminated the image of our most pure Mother of God.”¹

Referring to the Subbotniks’ iconoclasm, Kazakova and Lur’e note:

Although the very fact of the heretics’ critical attitude toward the worshiping of “created things” (or, at least, some of them) seems to be quite possible, the cases of sacrilege that Gennadii brought up can hardly be considered trustworthy. In theory, of course, it is possible that after recognizing the icons as idols, the *novgorodzi* hurried to express disdain toward the fallen idols in the most radical and decisive ways. History knows plenty of examples of heretical or reform movements accompanied by iconoclasm. But more often we encounter in history another occurrence—a vulgar lie which is dispensed by the fanatical apologists of the official church in its attempt to strike the imagination of their flock with terrifying stories of the sacrilege.²

Peretz states with reference to the Judaizers’ movement:

¹*AED*, 310.

²Kazakova and Lur’e, 123. About other examples of iconoclasm within the Christian Church see Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V* (Louvain: Secretariat Corpus SCO, 1977); John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535-1660* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Leslie W. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

Every idea that becomes widespread inevitably ends up vulgarized, so the protest of those who rejected the rites could be expressed in the acts mentioned above which were profane from the perspective of the Orthodox believers. We meet this kind of “generalized way of thinking,” dealing with the “general” on the basis of the few observations, or, maybe, even only rumors.¹

The *Novgorod Chronicle* claims that the heretics “dishonored” the images because: “they [i.e., images] are made by the hands of the people, they don’t have a mouth, they are mute, and dumb, and likewise will be all who make them and who put their trust in them.”²

In the eighth century, Byzantine iconoclasts led a movement to reduce the power of monks and destroy the icons.³ Many radical reformers of the Western Reformation smashed altars and destroyed icons. Luther did not agree with this extremism.⁴ This kind of zealous outburst was rooted in the believers’ emotional and spiritual faculties rather than motivated by antitrinitarian convictions. Needless to say, the history of the church tells of many trinitarians who engaged in this type of reformatory activities.

The only allegedly documented act of sacrilege in Gennadii’s writings is found in his letter to the Bishop of Suzdal Nifont (January 1488) where Gennadii alleges damage

¹Peretz, *New Works on the ‘Judaizers’ and Their Literature at the End of the Fifteenth Century*, 4.

²*PSRL*, IV, 158. Note a similarity between the words that *Chronicle* attributes to the Russian reformers and the word of the prophet Habakkuk: “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols?” Hab 2:18 (NKJ).

³Byzantine iconoclasts were defeated at the second Council of Nicaea in 787.

⁴*Luther’s Works*, vol. 51, p. 76, quoted in L. Pinomaa, *Faith Victorious* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1963), 102.

done to the icon called *Transfiguration With the Action*.¹ Nicholay K. Golejzovsky doubts that any act of profanation had been done to this icon. He suggests that this icon was the “artistic interpretation of the so-called eucharistic miracle.”² The story of this miracle was well known in Russia and in the Western Christian world. It is found in the hagiography of Basil of Caesarea. A certain Jew, according to this hagiography, entered a church during mass and saw Basil the Great, who instead of cutting the eucharistic bread, was cutting pieces out of a newborn baby. As a result of this vision, the Jew believed in the eucharistic miracle and became a Christian. What the Jew purportedly saw represents the dogma of the real presence, that the bread was in actual substance the body of Christ, so in cutting the bread, the priest was actually cutting the Christ child. Golejzovsky suggests that the icon mentioned by Archbishop Gennadii depicted this legend. He believes no mutilation was done to this icon; it rather reveals an expression of the painter’s sincere orthodoxy. If Golejzovsky is right, the meaning of this icon seems to display a totally different dimension: instead of representing heresy, this icon was created to illustrate the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. It is even possible that the icon was intended to promote Eastern Orthodoxy among the Jews.³

¹See pp. 61-62, above.

²N. K. Golejzovsky, *Letter to the Icon Painter by Iosif of Volotsk and Its Addressee* (Moscow: Science, 1970), 7 (Н. К. Голейзовский, *Послание иконописцу Иосифа Волоцкого и его адресат* [Москва: Наука, 1970], 7).

³In the light of the expansion of the Russian State to the West, to Lithuania, this suggestion does not look totally impossible. Because the Jews played an important role in the economic life of Lithuania, their conversion to Orthodox Christianity—and there are some cases of conversion that can be historically documented—was of interest to the Russian State.

The attitude of mainstream Subbotniks toward icons, according to the writings of Ivan Chernij and Ivan Kuritsin, is much more reverent than what we find in contemporary European iconoclastic groups. The respectful—although disapproving—attitude toward images correlates with their belief in the divine nature of the Persons of the Godhead. Furthermore, there is no evidence that any profane acts were performed in Moscow where the leaders of this movement resided. It is true, however, that after Aleksey and Denis moved to Moscow, the radical reformers in Novgorod “started to do all kinds of wrong things: profaned the holy icons, and in a drunken state argued with each other.”¹ Even the *Sentence of the Council*, which took place on October 17, 1490, states that this kind of behavior was not a collective activity among the Subbotniks—only “some” or “many” participated.² Nikitskii suggests that the “defilement” of the icons and the crosses was done not by the founders of the heresy but by the crowd not under their control.³

The rationale of the Subbotniks’ rejection of the icons described in the *Chronicle* is not related to the alleged antitrinitarian character of this movement. Ivan Kuritsin, one of the prominent theologians of the Subbotniks, gives the following reason for his refusal to honor the icons:

You shall not draw unto yourself a lamb in the image of Christ, nor Christ himself.
Explanation: the Lamb was given in the image of the true Christ, our God, so one can

¹Dolgov, *About the Heresy of Judaizers*, 115.

²*Sentence of the Council*, 11-15. A detailed analysis of this document will be presented later in this chapter.

³Nikitskii and Zamislovskii, 166.

not honor the image more than the truth, by drawing the Lamb revealed by Predtecha [John the Baptist] on the rightful icons, nor Christ himself, our God.¹

Instead of rejecting the icons on antitrinitarian grounds, the heretics, according to the above statement, based their iconoclasm on the second commandment and on the doctrine of the divinity of “Christ our God.” In fact, Subbotniks employed the same arguments as the Byzantine iconoclasts—the well-known Eastern trinitarian movement which anticipated the Protestant Reformation.²

Marcellianism and Messalianism

Archbishop Gennadii does not elaborate when he explores the Subbotniks’ relationship to the two ancient heresies of Marcellianism and Messalianism except by the statement that the ancient heretics *also* “swore falsely.” Although it is the only “parallel” that Gennadii was able to draw between these teachings, he seems to mention Marcellianism and Messalianism for a more calculated reason.

It may seem strange that Gennadii accused the Subbotniks of following Messalian’s heresy. Gennadii’s logic is that both the Messalians and the Subbotniks

¹Kuritsin, *Rudder*, 190.

²The position of Byzantine iconoclasm is well formulated by Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin: “The divine nature is completely uncircumscribable and cannot be depicted or represented in any medium whatsoever. The word Christ means both God and Man, and an icon of Christ would therefore have to be an image of God in the flesh of the Son of God. But this is impossible. The artist would fall either into the heresy which claims that the divine and human natures of Christ are separate or into that which holds that there is only one nature of Christ.” A. Bryer and J. Herrin, *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1977), 184.

criticized the lavish ornamentation of the cathedrals. The Messalians, however, rejected the lavishness of the cathedrals' interiors and the extravagance of the worship service due to their gnostic dualism. The Novgorod-Moscow dissidents, on the other hand, never thought of the material world as evil; on the basis of their writings it is impossible to accuse them of dualism. Although they indeed questioned the legitimacy of the Church's extravagance and luxury, their hermeneutics and belief system were entirely different from those of the Messalians. The superficial similarity of opposition to church extravagance seems to have given Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk enough reason to connect the Messalian heresy with the Novgorod dissidents.

The same pattern of reasoning was used to identify the Novgorod dissidents with Marcellianism. The theology of the Marcellians rejected a human replica of God in the form of an image.¹ The Novgorod-Moscow believers rejected icons as well. Thus, Gennadii assumed that the heretics were also Marcellians. A thorough comparative analysis and evaluation of the two movements, separated by more than a thousand years, was apparently never undertaken. Panov makes the following remark:

The bookish man of that epoch both by the level and the character of his development was hardly able in his conclusions to proceed from particular to general, and to raise particular cases to general assumptions; he saw only one particular bare fact and evaluated it according to some routine measure; he had nothing to do with either causal relationship, or with the system; he recognized in the anti-eclesiastical movement contemporary to him something similar to Judaism, Marcellianism, Messalianism, even Sadduceism, and without much doubt he ascribed all of them to this movement; he did not care at all that these similarities can be only external, and that the elements of the heresy, reminding him of the ancient heresies, could flow

¹God the Son, according to Marcellus, cannot be differentiated from God the Father.

from entirely different sources than those heretical teachings whose titles he so easily assigned to them.¹

Judaizers' Psalms

The document which is widely believed to be the same *Judaizers' Psalms*, discovered by Archbishop Gennadii, is entirely Orthodox. There is considerable evidence that Fedor the Jew was converted to Christianity and was trying to share his new faith with other Russian-speaking Jews. The so-called *Judaizers' Psalms* begins with the following words:

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the life-giving and undividable Trinity, and His most holy mother, and all the saints. From Fedor, new-baptized, who discovered light, and not darkness, who experienced the holy baptism and the Orthodox Christian faith, who renewed the heart of the old Law of the Jewish faith.

Those are indeed strange words for a preacher of Judaism.

In his *Letter* Fedor the Jew is dealing primarily with the divinity of Jesus Christ. Fedor appeals to his fellow Jews to accept Christ as the true Messiah who was crucified by their fathers and who was raised on the third day. Then Fedor turns to Christ's ascension and to the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Next follows a defense of the trinitarian dogma with the traditional reference to God's appearance to Abraham in three persons:

And God appeared unto Abraham in Trinity in the plains of Mamre. And Abraham brought him some bread and he also slew a calf and baked it, and brought it to them; he also brought some water to wash their feet. Thus, the bread was signifying the eucharist, water to wash the feet—the holy baptism, and the calf that had been slain—Jesus Christ himself, who died to fulfill the prophecy and who was raised from

¹Panov, 6.

the dead on the third day. Thus, you are wrong when you say that three angels appeared to Abraham. It was God himself who appeared in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God would not send three messengers to one man, but he decided to reveal Himself to his saint as a three-faced Angel.¹

Thus, Fedor the Jew presents the same argument in support of trinitarian doctrine as found in Iosif's work.²

Decalogue

Archbishop Gennadii sees elements of judaizing in the heretics' keeping of the Ten Commandments. Church history shows, however, that keeping the Ten Commandments is not a unique sign of Judaism. Newman's comment is appropriate:

The numerous Sabbatarian movements in Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Russia and England . . . demanded Christian adherence to Mosaic precepts. . . . The attitude of the official Church has been, of course, to condemn these sectaries as heretical. Nevertheless their frequency, their number, and their persistence in Christianity from the earliest times to the present, have made them a formidable factor. The evidence concerning their doctrines, their mode of life, the extent of their influence and activities is abundant and fairly reliable. They constitute a unique and striking phenomenon in Christian annals, and indicate the significant influence which emanated from the Old Testament within the very heart of Christendom.³

Klibanov agrees that "the interest of the Russian reformers in the Old Testament does not point to their inclination toward Judaism."⁴

¹Fedor the Jew, *Letter*, 3.

²*Instructor*, 45-46.

³Newman, 15.

⁴Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 292.

Eschatological Disagreements

Archbishop Gennadii's initial charges of eschatological heresy came to include Catholics, Jews, Latins, and Tatars. Thus, it is evidently unjustified to ascribe his entire discussion on eschatology to the Novgorod dissidents alone. It is, moreover, not clear from his letter whether the heretics actually shared the Jewish chronology or were just skeptical about any fixed dates of Christ's Second Coming. Lur'e believes that Gennadii's statement on the Jewish chronology does not concern the Novgorod dissidents at all:

In his letter, the archbishop of Novgorod discusses a question of extreme importance for his contemporaries, namely, the impending End of the World (which was supposed to occur in the year 7000/1492, according to officially accepted opinion in the Greek Orthodox world), and in this connection he analyzes the chronological systems of different peoples—*zhidova*, *latyna*, *tatarove* (Jews, Latins, Tatars). His discussion concerns *nynesnie zhidova*, the actual Jews themselves (in Lithuania and other states) and the *ereticeskoe predanie* of Aquila, Symmachos, and Theodotion (second to third centuries A.D.), which had nothing whatsoever to do with the Novgorod heresy of the late fifteenth century.¹

Even if the Novgorod dissidents, in the process of proving that the End of the World would not occur in 1492, utilized argumentation from the Jewish calendar, this does not deny that they expected Christ's Second Coming one day. This is seen from Gennadii's letter where he attempts to prove that Christ could come only at the right time—the time estimated by the Eastern Orthodox Church. He came to the startling conclusion that instead of expecting the return of Christ, the heretics waited for the antichrist. There were similar accusations during the Great Schism of the Russian Orthodox Church (starting in 1652), when both sides, the Old- and the New-believers,

¹Y. S. Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 155.

accused each other of inability to discern the signs of the eschaton and confusing the antichrist with Christ.¹

Relevance of Archbishop Gennadii's Charges

The few occasions when Archbishop Gennadii's letter mentions the word "judaizing" should not automatically be considered as accusations, and much less a description of the Russian "heresy." "To judaize" was viewed almost as a synonym of "to teach a false doctrine." This type of ecclesiastic mentality was not limited to the Russian Orthodox Church. Daniel Augsburger, referring to Western ecclesiastical communities, observes: "The words 'Judaizer' and 'Judaizing' were used, it is true, very loosely—sometimes for very minor deviations from orthodoxy."²

One representative example of how uncritically this word has been used in the Russian Orthodox Church is found in the polemics of Old-believers and New-believers in the seventeenth century. When Patriarch Aphanasy of Constantinople and Patriarch Makary of Antioch came to Moscow in connection with the election of Nikon as the Patriarch of Russia, they discovered with horror that the Russian people cross themselves

¹Zamaleev and Ovchinnikova, 145. The main and tragic event of Church life in Russia in the seventeenth century was the great schism, the schism of the so-called Old-Believers, who seceded from the main Church in protest against the ecclesiastical reforms of Patriarch Nikon. A large number of clergy and laymen had refused to accept the reforms Nikon put into effect and separated themselves from the official Church, insisting that they alone were the true heirs of Orthodoxy. Millions seceded from the official church and were strongly persecuted by the state. The schism peaked in 1666, considered by Old-Believers to be the year of the Antichrist.

²D. Augsburger, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day During the Middle Ages," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. K. A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 190-214.

with only two fingers.¹ Immediately Nikon was accused of promoting the antitrinitarian heresy of the Armenian church: “You do not cross yourself with the sign of the Holy Trinity; instead, you cross yourself with two fingers and by doing this you hold to the heresy of the cursed Armenians.”² Although this accusation was obviously unfair,³ most radical steps were taken to eradicate this tradition. In fact, it became the reason for the Great Russian schism of the seventeenth century. People, filled with superstitious veneration for familiar forms, received these innovations with strong dislike, as an impious profanation of what they considered most sacred, and a very large body of the clergy shared this feeling. Many thousands of Russian believers died in the civil war that occurred as a result of changing this rite.⁴ All kinds of accusations of breaking the fundamental dogmas of Christianity—including accusations of antitrinitarianism and of worshiping the beast and false prophet of Revelation—were produced during that period.⁵

¹This tradition signified the unity of the two natures of Jesus Christ.

²Zamaleev and Ovchinnikova, 151.

³It was only after this accusation was issued that Nikon discovered, to his great surprise, that the Armenian merchants really do cross themselves with two fingers. However, the medieval Russian tradition of crossing with two fingers had nothing to do with the theology of the Armenian church. Both Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk were crossing themselves with only two fingers. Without doubt, had they lived in the seventeenth century their trinitarian orthodoxy would have been seriously questioned.

⁴Ibid., 151-175.

⁵V. A. Mjakotian, *Abbakum the Priest: His Life and Activities* (Saint Petersburg: Erlich's Publishing House, 1913), 97-100 (В. А. Мякотин, *Протопоп Аввакум. Его жизнь и деятельность* [Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Ю. Н. Эрлих, 1913], 97-100).

Referring to the methodology and the way of thinking of the first accusers,

Zhmakin notes:

The thinking was directed exclusively in the customary way of the ecclesiastical reasoning; the ecclesiastical book was the only source for not only religious and moral teaching, but also political and even secular knowledge; any other knowledge was considered as futile, and if it somehow differed from the authoritative, it was considered as evil, heretical, apostate, coming from the devil himself. . . . Any manifestation of free, analytical thought, or, as it was then called, "opinion," was considered as the "cursed one" and even heretical; an "opinion" was interpreted even as the source of all evil, as the second fall.¹

Due to this approach, church officials of the fifteenth century could hardly recognize the internal content behind the external appearance of the dissident movement. It seemed almost impossible for Gennadii, and people like him, to acknowledge the true character of this movement; to do so one must refer to the experiences of the past. Additionally, Gennadii was hesitant to enter any theological discussions. As he himself wrote prior to the Council of 1490, "It is better not to engage in debates about the faith. A Council is needed not for debates on the faith, but in order that heretics be judged, hanged and burned."²

Although the word "judaizing" is found in Gennadii's first letter on the heretics, it is hard to determine the credibility of this account, or even the motivation and intention of the author in accusing the heretics of judaizing. Moreover, the term "judaize" in its fifteenth-century context is complex, as Gudzy indicates: "It should be noted that the word

¹V. I. Zhmakin, *Metropolitan Daniil and His Writings* (Moscow: Moscow University, 1881), 13 (В. И. Жмакин, *Митрополит Даниил и его сочинения* [Москва: Московский Университет, 1881], 13).

²Archbishop Gennadii, "The Letter of Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to the Council of Bishops," cited in Billington, 83.

'judaize' at this period did not carry the opprobrium that later became attached to it as a result of its use in anti-Semitic, reactionary circles."¹ Zimin, referring to the letters of Archbishop Gennadii written before 1490, states that at that time the "archbishop of Novgorod was still far from that obvious falsification of the heretics' views that we found in the writings of Iosif of Volotsk. For example, he, Archbishop Gennadii, had no obsessive accusations of heretics for judaizing."²

Evaluation of the Issue of Antitrinitarianism in Iosif of Volotsk's Writings

Iosif, who became a major opponent of the Subbotniks' movement, obviously obtained information on the origin of this movement from Archbishop Gennadii. It is also clear that in his monastic seclusion he had never been an eyewitness of the dissidents' activity. He could rely only on secondhand knowledge and Archbishop Gennadii seems to be the major, if not the only, provider of this information. However, in his zealous desire to suppress the heresy, Iosif goes much further than Gennadii in his evaluation of the dissidents' teaching.³ Peretz indicates that Iosif's "embittered eloquence does not permit us to recognize this source as certainly pure and credible. . . . His letters lack objectivity

¹Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, 235.

²Zimin, *Russian Writings from the End of the Fifteenth, to the Beginning of the Seventeenth Centuries*, 7.

³See Y. S. Lur'e, "Sources on the Newly Arisen Heresy of the 'Novgorod Heretics'," in *Jews and Slavs*, 3 vols., ed. W. Moskovich (Jerusalem, 1995), 3:199-223 (Лурье, "Источники по истории 'Новоявившейся новгородской ереси'," in *Jews and Slavs*, 3 vols., ed. W. Moskovich [Jerusalem, 1995], 3:199-223).

concerning the history and the essence of the heresy.”¹ However, if we scrutinize the circumstances under which Iosif’s *Instructor* was written, it will help us to understand and evaluate this document.

Dynamics of Iosif’s *Instructor*

In order to evaluate the *Instructor* one should understand the dynamics of the book. It has already been mentioned that the first four chapters of the *Instructor* are a categorical attempt to deal with undiluted Judaism. These first chapters were written as an immediate response to Gennadii’s letter. It was not until 1493 that Iosif, who lived a hermitage life in a forest monastery,² received Gennadii’s letter. Iosif’s response reflects that he had received a minimum amount of information—the same amount as the others of Archbishop Gennadii’s addressees. It seems that in his zealous attempt to defend Orthodoxy, Iosif extended the amount of information he obtained from Gennadii in the direction that his letter seemed to indicate—Judaism. That is why Iosif’s first response was a long discussion on the dangers of Judaism in general and on antitrinitarianism in particular. The purpose of the response, in Iosif’s estimation, was to give an adequate rebuttal to the attempts of the Jews to convert Christians to Judaism. Iosif, who was a customary recipient of Gennadii’s generosity, reacted immediately, perhaps without much thinking, about the trustworthiness of some of Gennadii’s confusing expressions. All of a

¹Peretz, *New Works on the ‘Judaizers’ and Their Literature at the End of the Fifteenth Century*, 2.

²Hrushev indicates that Iosif did not leave his monastery until the Council of 1503. Hrushev, 99-100.

sudden he finds another, this time practical, use for his reluctant response to Vassian on the trinitarian issues.

As soon as his target—pure Judaism—was outlined by means of Gennadii’s vague phrases, Iosif became the most active fighter against the heresy, the nature of which, many scholars believe, was invented by Iosif himself. Panov carefully remarks: “It is obvious that the author [Iosif] was guided by the thought that by fighting Judaism he was fighting the new heresy.”¹ Indeed, the first four chapters of the *Instructor* present a rather systematic description of Judaism in general, rather than the description of any concrete situation. Iosif was, in fact, fighting the Jewish attitude toward the Trinity—or at least the way he understood it. Knowing little about the nature of the Novgorod heresy, Iosif attempted to build his defense of trinitarianism exclusively from the position of the Old Testament. The reason is clear: “Jews and heretics do not accept either the testimonies of the apostles, or the tradition, but only the prophetic testimonies.”² It was a premature judgment.

Panov comments that “those heretical teachings that are castigated in the first chapters of the *Instructor* do not have even the slightest logical connections with the teachings that are castigated in the following chapters.”³ Servitskii notes, referring to the later chapters of Iosif’s *Instructor*:

¹Panov, 24.

²*Instructor*, 42.

³Panov, 32.

The distinct rejection of the basic dogmas of Christianity had not been a characteristic of all the Judaizers, but only of a part of them, as is obvious from the *Instructor*. The others did not reject the trinitarian dogma directly, but only were not sure about it and were suspicious and critical of certain passages from the Scripture concerning the Trinity, saying that it is not proper to paint the Holy and life-bringing Trinity on the icons.¹

The following chapters of Iosif's *Instructor* reflect the gradual accumulation by Iosif of factual knowledge about the heretics. However, as was already mentioned, this knowledge was never a firsthand knowledge. Iosif did not leave his monastery until 1503, and his perspective was always distorted by the prisms of his informers.

Iosif and Stereotypes of Ecclesiastic Mentality

Dealing with the ecclesiastic mentality contemporary to Iosif in general, and the mentality of Iosif of Volotsk himself in particular, Panov observes that “the bookish man of that epoch . . . was hardly able in his conclusions to proceed from particular to general.”²

Iosif was a most typical representative of this kind of reasoning. He fearlessly writes to Ivan III: “Why do you disobey the Law of God, and do lawlessness? You apply the cursed razor to your beard, while confessing the Orthodox faith, you dishonor it by an evil faith, being smart-aleck in a Latin way.”³

¹Servitskii, 306.

²Panov, 6.

³*Memorials of the Canon Law*, 2 vols. (Petrograd: Archeological Committee, 1900), 1:880 (*Памятники канонического права*, 2 т. [Петроград: Издание археологической комиссии, 1900], 1:880).

While dealing with the Subbotniks, Iosif was even less meticulous in his wording. In addition to “various heresies” he had already attributed to the Novgorod-Moscow heretics, he claimed that they also held to “Sadduceeism and Messalianism, and also produced a lot of corruption.”¹ Here Iosif goes beyond Archbishop Gennadii’s list of heresies. Gennadii mentions only Marcellianism and Messalianism in connection with Novgorod dissidents, and, as already mentioned, this connection was so loose that one can seriously doubt whether Gennadii ever intended to accuse the Novgorod dissidents of these heresies. Zhmakin remarks: “During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many of the debates appeared to deal with the differences in certain rituals. In the fifteenth century these debates were led by the most prominent representatives of the Russian intelligentsia.”²

This was the common way of thinking, and it was perfectly suited for generating all kinds of accusations. The trinitarian issues were also brought to the surface again during the period of the controversy between Old- and New-Believers. Once again, the most profound accusations were built entirely upon external signs.

Iosif, who lived two centuries earlier, was even less scrupulous in issuing his accusations. Eremin writes:

He [Iosif], as few others in his time, could mask his polemical attack on the dissidents, his bias and antagonism, even his personal fight behind the high facade of “general” principles. By means of forgery, artificial aggravation, provocation,

¹*Instructor*, 31.

²Zhmakin, 13.

extreme exaggeration, he could ascribe to a given fact some far-reaching consequences.¹

In addition to being secondhand knowledge, the information Iosif obtained was further reshaped to fit the stereotypes of his medieval ecclesiastical mentality and his own goals and interests. Pipin notes:

If one wants to talk about the basis for the old Russian thought and life in general, that considered to be “the good old times” for some modern past-oriented dreamers, one should keep in mind the personality of Iosif who, better than any of the old writers of that epoch, announced his political, ecclesiastical, and social ideas. Their meaning is obvious: it is a total submission of both the society and the person to the certain tradition, which is built partly on the authentic, partly on the doubtful church authorities; submission that did not allow any new form of life nor new thought, submission that rejected them with the full power of fanaticism, submission threatening them with curses and executions, submission founding the moral life in a ritual righteousness, and education in the humble accepting of the tradition, in stubborn stagnation. It is this particular mind set that constructed those principles of persecution that in the West were entrusted to the Inquisition; it is this mind set that produced the idea of “godly deception,” i.e. deception, which allegedly was permitted and even given by God himself for the good aim of coping with heretics; an understanding that coincides with the well-known rule proclaiming that the end justifies the means.²

Goals of the *Instructor*

In its original form the *Instructor* was completed between the Councils of 1503 and 1504 as an accusation against the Subbotniks on the eve of the approaching Council of 1504.³ It is obvious that this time Iosif was determined to achieve more radical and

¹I. P. Eremin, “Iosif of Volotsk as an Author,” in *The Writings of Iosif of Volotsk*, ed. A. Zimin and S. Lur’e, 16 (И. П. Еремин, “Иосиф Волоцкий как писатель,” в *Послания Иосифа Волоцкого*, ред. Зимин и Лурье, 16).

²Pipin, 103-104.

³Lur’e, *Ideological Controversy*, 100-105, 421.

severe punishment for the heretics than what had already taken place in 1490 in Novgorod and in 1500-1502 in Moscow, when some dissidents were beaten, cursed, and banished.

At the same time, the systematic killing of heretics was previously unknown to the Russian Church.¹ It was against the ecclesiastical and civil tradition even to “pull out the eyes” of the heretics. The most severe punishment was cutting off the tongue—something that could no longer satisfy Iosif. He wanted a total eradication of the heretics.

The tactic of attributing to the rival religious group the attributes of Judaism seems to have been a common practice everywhere in Christendom. Newman observes:

It was a policy of the Church to attempt to discredit any heterodox tendency by giving it an opprobrious name and implication. It found it could best accomplish this purpose by seeking to classify any “heresy” as “Jewish.” . . . Thus it is clear that the accusation of “judaizing” oftentimes grew out of the irritation which the ruling religious party felt that its authority should be challenged by a new group.²

The writings of Iosif, which form the largest corpus of anti-Judaizers’ writings, clearly aimed to discredit and destroy the heretics by associating them with Jews. J. S.

Lur’e, referring to the writings of Iosif, states:

The extreme bias of the sources in the first category is obvious, since they were written with the primary aim of denouncing and destroying the heretics; while they are unquestionably important for studying the activity of the denouncers themselves, they shed very little light on the heretical teachings. One obviously cannot pick and choose, selecting the evidence that seems probable and rejecting that which seems less credible. One must proceed, instead, from some sort of general methodology for studying obviously and extremely biased sources (traces of actual polemics, evidence contradicting the general tendency of the work, etc.).³

¹Billington, 70.

²Newman, 2-3.

³Lur’e, “Unresolved Issues,” 151-152. About the problem of sources see also Lur’e, “Problems of Source Criticism,” 1-22; A. A. Zimin, “Some Complicated Questions

Iosif's attempts to find precedents of capital punishment of heretics in Byzantine civil law proved to be unsuccessful—the only precedents he was able to find were those associated with the Jews.¹ Thus, in order to insist on the capital punishment of the heretics, Iosif had to present them not only as heretics, but also as Judaizers, those who have abandoned Christianity, with its key doctrine of a Trinitarian God, and turned to monotheistic Judaism.

This fact can be observed, for example, in Iosif's *Letter on the Consummation of the Sentence of the 1504 Council*.² The author of this document answers some monks,³ who demanded a merciful treatment of the heretics and argued that capital punishment could not be legally applied to them. Iosif, however, claims “all this was written not about mere heretics, but about apostates who rejected Christ. The heretic is one who still believes that Christ is God, but holds some other heresy. . . . However all of these heretics

of the Methodology of Studying Ancient Russian Sources,” in *Study of Sources: Theoretical and Methodological Problems*, ed. I. K. Pantin (Moscow: Science, 1969) (A. А. Зимин, “Трудные вопросы методики источниковедения древней Руси,” в *Источниковедение. Теоретические и методические проблемы*, ред. И. К. Пантин [Москва: Наука, 1969]).

¹In his letters to Nifont and Mitrofan, Iosif refers to executions of Jews who refused to be baptized, as the precedent of capital punishment applied to heretics in the Eastern church. Iosif of Volotsk, “Letter to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal,” *AED* 427 (Волоцкий, “Послание епископу Нифонту Суздальскому,” *AED*, 427); idem, “Letter to Mitrofan,” *AED*, 437 (“Послание Митрофану,” *AED*, 437).

²Scholars have every reason to believe that Iosif himself was the author of this letter. This letter is included in the *Instructor* as chapter 15.

³Probably those who were associated with Nil Sorsky.

rejected Christ.”¹ Therefore, the tsar is obliged to send heretics into confinement or to deliver them up to cruel tortures.

Iosif was not trying to argue with the heretics, or to correct them. He quotes the words of John, Metropolitan of Nicea, who said about the Armenian believers: “We write it not because we want to correct them.”² Iosif is developing this thought and says that “Novgorod’s heretics are much worse than Armenians and all other ancient heretics: not even the angels are able to correct them.”³

His aim was physical eradication of the heretics. In order to do this he had to ascribe to them the worst heresies possible. After all, these people were for him “sons of perdition” who should be eradicated at any price.

The entire thirteenth chapter of his *Instructor* is dedicated to this subject. Although Iosif titles this chapter a refuting of “the heresy of the Novgorod heretics, who say that it is not proper to condemn either heretic, or apostate,”⁴ it is not only heretics who said so. Non-Possessors also strongly opposed Iosif’s violent attitude toward the heretics. For example, the so-called *Polemical ‘Word’ Against Iosif of Volotsk*⁵ is the

¹“The Letter on the Consummation of the Sentence of 1504 Council,” GPB, F. 1. 229, quoted in *AED*, 506 (“Послание о соблюдении соборного приговора 1504 года”).

²*Instructor*, 305.

³*Ibid.*, 306.

⁴*Ibid.*, 315.

⁵GPB, Sof. #1451, published in *AED*, 522-23.

direct antithesis of Iosif's thirteenth chapter. While imitating the genre and construction of Iosif, this document, however, conveys opposite ideas.¹

Ian Grey demonstrates the position of Non-Possessors by presenting the dispute between Iosif of Volotsk and Prince Vassian Patrikeev (monk Vassian) in the form of the following dialog:

Iosif: Moses destroyed the tables of the commandments with his hands and severely punished the transgressors of the Law.

Vassian: That is true, but when God would have destroyed Israel, after it had worshipped the golden calf, Moses argued with God and said, "If Thou destroyest them, then destroy me first," and God spared Israel.

Iosif: But even Peter punished Simon the Sorcerer through the power of his prayer, and it is the same to kill a heretic by prayer or by hand.

Vassian: There is a difference between you, Iosif, and Moses, Peter and Paul. Their prayers were heard by God and He fulfilled their petitions. But why do you not trust your own prayers? Ask God to punish the heretics, and the earth to swallow all the unworthy and sinners. Instead, you rely upon secular power, and try to use it for the punishment of your opponents.²

Iosif's opposition was strong; to overcome it he had to convince everyone of the exclusively vicious character of the heresy. No fabrication or deception would be inappropriate if it could serve the task of eradication of the heresy. He dedicates an entire

¹Together with the Subbotniks, Non-Possessors were trying to secularize the lands and the riches owned by the monasteries. One of the obvious goals of Iosif was an attempt to spare these lands that constituted one-third of all Russian lands at that time. The wealth of the monasteries could be compared only with the State itself (Pipin, 74). Ivan III was very interested in expropriating the monasteries' lands, and his patronage of the heretics could be at least partly explained by the fact that Subbotniks expressed a critical attitude toward monasticism.

²As quoted by Grey, 40.

epistle, *The Word on the Godly and Wise Deception*,¹ to presenting a detailed description of certain methods that help to “find” all kinds of heresies. These methods the author himself characterizes as a godly and wise fraud, justifying fraud and tricks if they are made for a good cause. Without question, Iosif himself strongly believed in the good cause of his affair. Zimin observes:

Written in the environment of the closing stage of the battle with the heresy, *The Book on the Heretics [Instructor]* contains an extremely distorted version both of the history of the heretical movement and of the views of its ideologists. The book by Iosif is a kind of allegation for the case against the heretics presented in 1504 and composed by the most intolerant enemy of any kind of free thought.²

Kazakova and Lur’e observe that “in the first edition of Iosif’s book, created before the council of 1504 . . . all the adaptation of the previous material was made in such a way as, avoiding all formal barriers, to bring Iosif’s enemies to the stake.”³ Apparently, he succeeded in this task.⁴

Sentence of the 1490 Council

Along with the writings of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif, the *Sentence of the 1490 Council* is an important polemical document written against Novgorod-Moscow

¹*The Word on the Godly and Wise Deception* (Слово о благопремудростных коварствах), *AED*, 500-503. This epistle became a foundation of chapter 14 of Iosif’s *Instructor*.

²Zimin, *Russian Writings from the End of the Fifteenth, to the Beginning of the Seventeenth Centuries*, 22.

³Kazakova and Lur’e, 216.

⁴See pp. 54-55, above.

dissidents.¹ Sabbath keeping, according to the official documents, was the only belief shared by all the heretics: “And you have all honored the Sabbath more than the *Voskresenije*² of Christ. And some of you do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ and in His Holy Ascension.”³ This statement on the Sabbath keeping is also, in the belief of some scholars, the only reason that the Council of 1490 accused the heretics of unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁴

A close examination of the text of the verdict of the Council of 1490 reveals two probable reasons for the obscure formulation concerning the Subbotniks’ alleged rejection of the essential dogma of Christianity—namely, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is possible that this formulation was made to connect the fact that “all [the heretics] honored the Sabbath” with the attempted accusation that “some of you do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ.” Obviously, such a fragile accusation could be made only due to a lack of other evidences of the Subbotniks’ unbelief in the Resurrection.

Another possibility is that it was an attempt to send a message that the only “crime” of “all” the heretics was their Sabbath-keeping.⁵ In any case, this document is a

¹See pp. 95-100, above.

²The first day of the week in Russian is called after Christ’s resurrection—*Voskresenie* (Resurrection).

³Kazakova and Lur’e, 383.

⁴See pp. 94-100, above.

⁵Klibanov sees in the verdict of the Council only the accusation that the heretics have honored Saturday more than Sunday: “*чи субботу паче воскресения.*” Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 238.

reflection of the struggle that was going on in the course of the Council. Thus, although I agree with Kazakova and Lur'e who write that this document "is neither trustworthy nor unprejudiced,"¹ still it provides us with more than one-sided information on the subject. This could be partly explained by the fact that Metropolitan Zosima, whom Iosif also accused of "judaizing," somehow softened the accusations of Archbishop Gennadii's and Iosif's party.

Zosima, archimandrite of the Simonov monastery, was elected in place of Gerontii (d. 1489) as the new Metropolitan in September 1490. It is significant that Archbishop Gennadii was not allowed even to come to Zosima's inauguration. All he could do was to send a letter to Moscow expressing his agreement with the election of Zosima.²

Iosif, however, started a campaign against the new Metropolitan, of whose heretical views he was convinced. Writing to Nifont, bishop of Suzdal, he described Zosima as "a foul, evil wolf clothed in pastoral garments . . . who befouled the great throne of the bishops, teaching Judaism to some and defiling others with sodomy."³

There are two opposite views on the personality of Zosima. According to the first view, Zosima was a committed strong supporter of the Subbotniks. According to the second view, Zosima was a champion of strict Orthodoxy, but his weak personality made him vulnerable to pressures from prominent Subbotniks, and he failed to oppose them at

¹*AED*, 382.

²Buganov and Bogdanov, 56.

³Iosif of Volotsk, "Letter to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal," *AED*, 420-24.

the Council.¹ The first position is very old and the generally accepted one; the second one is relatively recent. Ilovajsky, who holds the old view, insists that Zosima was secretly “supporting the heretics and their actions. Due to certain circumstances he was raised to the Metropolitan’s position not in order to openly preach heresy, but in order to favor it, while keeping the appearance of the loyal archpastor.”² Ilovajsky argues against Zosima’s authorship of *The Sentence of the Council*, insisting that both of these documents were entirely the products of the Council.

On the other hand, Pavlov believes that the Council could not forge Zosima’s signature and that without the Metropolitan as the head of the Council the documents of the Council could hardly be issued at all.³ He also points out that there are some manuscripts of the *Instructor* where Zosima is not named as a heretic.⁴

In May 1494, during Kuritsin’s temporary absence from the country, Zosima was removed from the Metropolitanate. The *Chronicle of Novgorod*, written under Archbishop Gennadii’s supervision, attributed this removal to drunkenness and negligence: “Metropolitan Zosima left the Metropolitanate not of his own will, but because he was

¹J. L. Fennell, “The Attitude of the Josephians and the Trans-Volga Elders to the Heresy of the Judaizers,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 73 (June 1951): 493.

²Pavlov, *The Question of the Judaizers’ Heresy at the Fourth Archeological Assembly*, 3.

³Ibid.

⁴Manuscript #204, Rumanzev’s collection (Рукопись #204, собрание Румянцева); Manuscript #486, Uvarov’s collection (Рукопись #486, собрание Уварова)

addicted to excessive drinking and had no care for the Church of God.”¹ This formal reason for Zosima’s removal, as Fennell suggests, was made up “to distract attention from the scandalous facts”² of Zosima’s sympathy for the heretics.

It is impossible today to reconstruct the role that Zosima played in the fifteenth-century controversy. However, comparing the arguments of both sides, one may conclude that Metropolitan Zosima certainly did not share the hatred and bias of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk. It is likely that it is this attitude that provoked Iosif to identify Zosima with the heretics. Although, because of the strong opposition, Zosima was unable to guarantee a just sentence of the Council, it is possible that the ambiguity of the *Sentence* concerning the issue of Resurrection came as a result of his influence. Obviously, Zosima himself did not approach the Reform movement as having a non-Christian character.

The fact that the *Sentence* reflects more than the position of Archbishop Gennadii’s and Iosif of Volotsk’s party, such as a subtle attempt to present a position that opposes their categorical accusation, is confirmed by the historical destiny of this document. Although the *Sentence* was distributed in all the Russian eparchies, after a time these documents were taken away from the eparchial archives and destroyed.³

¹*PSRL*, IV/164, 268.

²Fennell, *Ivan the Great*, 332.

³Dolgov, “Moscow’s 1490 Council Against Judaizers,” 118.

***Voskresensk Chronicle on the Treatment of
Novgorodian Heretics, 1492***

The accusation of “corrupting the true and immaculate faith in Christ our God, glorified in the Trinity” is also rather subtle in the *Voskresensk Chronicle*.¹ The relatively mild formulations of this document show that subtle christological and trinitarian accusations had not been proven:

The pious and Christ-loving great prince Ivan Vasilievich of all Russia, true defender of the Orthodox faith, like a second pious Tsar Constantine, together with his father the most holy Metropolitan Zosima, and with the bishops, and with all the holy council of the Russian Metropolitanate, after investigating their vile heresies, decided, on the ground of the authentic record of Archbishop Gennadii [of Novgorod] and the testimony collected in Moscow, and according to the teaching of the holy apostles and the holy fathers, to excommunicate those heretics, the Novgorodian archpriest Gavril, and the monk Zakharij, with their companions and followers, from the holy ecumenical and apostolic church, to expel them from the clerical order, to call down malediction on them, to exile and incarcerate them, and to reaffirm the true and immaculate Orthodox faith.²

Letter of Monk Savva

Savva wrote his letter prior to Iosif’s initial polemic writings. Savva’s letter is the first document to associate a Jew with the Russian heretics. It is probable, furthermore, that Iosif relied on Savva’s letter when he dealt with the beginning and the nature of the Subbotniks’ movement. After receiving Gennadii’s letter attributing the heresy to a nameless Jew, Iosif had linked him with the Zakharija Skhara of Savva’s letter. The strong anti-Jewish emphasis of the *Letter of Monk Savva* and its numerous warnings

¹*PSRL*, 8:220-224. See pp. 99-100, above.

²*PSRL*, 8:224.

against judaizing could have provoked Iosif to set forth his own polemics. It is possible that Skharija the Jew of Savva's letter became a prototype of the more famous Skharija the Jew of Iosif's writings. This Skharija had never been in Novgorod, however. Also, as mentioned above, there are credible evidences that he was of Italian origin and of Catholic faith.

Penitence of Denis

The *Penitence* by the Novgorod heretic Denis is a very short document which mentions only one sin committed by Denis—his failure to control his “sinful tongue.”¹ Kazakova and Lur'e make an interesting parallel between the manuscript that contains Denis' *Penitence* and “similar by content and character . . . another interesting manuscript of the same period, Collection BIL, Muz. #3271, containing the story of the Spanish Inquisition.”² There is no doubt that the heretics have been tortured in the most inhuman way.³ It is possible that while being tortured Denis said something that his tormentors wanted him to say. The methods of the Russian Inquisition were as cruel as the methods of the Spanish Inquisition.⁴ The tactic was also the same: to torture the victim until he/she would confess whatever was required by the accusers. Obviously, both Archbishop

¹*AED*, 388. See pp. 102-104, above.

²*AED*, 386.

³Iosif triumphantly declares that after being tortured many heretics “confessed” their evil deeds (*Instructor*, 358).

⁴Writing about the Russian Inquisition, J. Billington observes that “the techniques of ritual investigation, flagellation, and burning of heretics” were “the weapons . . . of the Inquisition” (Billington, 70).

Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk were looking for confessions of judaizing. If Denis, under coercion, had pronounced a “confession” of this kind, then he certainly had something to feel sorry about. We know that although some of the heretics, after being tortured, “refused to confess,” others “wrote their deeds against themselves by their own hands.”¹ The *Penitence* of Denis does not express only penitence, but rather the sorrowful cry of a man, who for some reason was unable “to control a sinful tongue.” Kazakova and Lur’e call this *Penitence* a “strange one.”² It is really a very strange *Penitence*, if one considers it a penitence, because Denis does not apologize for his heresy. It is likely this document is a confession made to one who sympathizes with, or at least understands, the ideas that were shared by Denis himself. Perhaps it expresses his penitence, not for heresy, but for having uttered a false confession under inquisitional pressure. Regardless of what was included in the “sinful tongue” confession of Denis, there are no reasons to suspect him of antitrinitarianism. Otherwise, how do we explain the words of Denis himself: “To the shepherd of the spiritual sheep, holy Archbishop Zosima chosen in the Holy Spirit.” This is a strange statement for one denouncing the Trinity.

Subbotniks’ Literature

Generations of scholars have studied the writings of the Subbotniks looking for confirmation of the antitrinitarian character of this movement. Only a few were able to find these “confirmations.” These “findings” have been presented in the previous chapter. The

¹Buganov and Bogdanov, 50.

²*AED*, 386.

following evaluation summarizes the review of the Subbotniks' literature given in the previous chapter and clarifies the issue of trinitarianism in connection with the Novgorod-Moscow movement.

Books Found Among Subbotniks

Archbishop Gennadii does not mention any heretical books dealing with antitrinitarian issues found among the "heretics." If such books ever existed, they would certainly have been discovered by Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk, who desperately searched for proofs against Subbotniks. The discovery of any antitrinitarian book would literally turn the case. Such books have not been found—either by Iosif of Volotsk, or by succeeding generations of historians.

Writings of Fedor Kuritsin

Even though Iosif of Volotsk tried to ascribe the origin of the Subbotniks' heresy strictly to Novgorod, from the perspective of Archbishop Gennadii's writings it is clear that Kuritsin was not a convert of the Novgorod heretics. Gennadii contends that Kuritsin was introduced to his views in Hungary. In his letter to Zosima (1490) Gennadii explains his "revised" view of the origin of the Subbotniks' heresy: "Thus, my lord, the calamity struck since Kuritsin returned from the Hungarian land."¹ Iosif does not mention Kuritsin either in his list of "many souls contaminated by the judaizing" of Aleksey and Denis in Moscow. The name of Kuritsin is first mentioned in connection with his protecting of

¹*AED*, 377. Fedor Kuritsin completed his first visit to Hungary in the summer of 1485, two years prior to Gennadii's "discovery" of the heresy in Novgorod.

heretics who fled from Novgorod in 1488.¹ Thus it appears that there were alternative ways to become a Judaizer—other than through the propaganda of Skharija the Jew.

Laodicean Letter

In her recent work on the Novgorod-Moscow movement, Lilienfeld concludes that the *Laodicean Letter* does not diverge from the Orthodox Christian worldview.² Lilienfeld indicates that this work includes quotations from authors who were popular in the Russian monastic tradition.³

The mention of Pharisees in a positive context prompts Lilienfeld to suggest the possibility that the philosophical portion⁴ of the *Laodicean Letter* was a translation from Hebrew. The author admits, however, that a great number of issues remain unclear; she maintains that Jewish influence in this letter can hardly be proven.⁵ Lur'e observes:

If an interest in the Cabala is indeed possible for a man of the fifteenth century who was affected by the Renaissance, then his familiarity with Hebrew and European cabalistic literature would be extraordinary for a Muscovite Rus. The Old Russian translations from Hebrew that have come down to us bear West Russian features; apparently most of them were done in Western Rus.⁶

¹Ibid., 471.

²Lilienfeld, "Die 'Hairesie' des Fedor Kuritsin," 51.

³Ibid., 50.

⁴Most scholars attribute this part of Kuritsin's writing to Russian tradition. See Speranskii, *Cryptographs in the South-Slavic and Russian Sources*, 107.

⁵Lilienfeld, "Die 'Hairesie' des Fedor Kuritsin," 51.

⁶Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 159.

Lur'e states that the *Laodicean Letter* is "of an entirely different nature: there are no West Russian traits in it whatsoever, and if we are actually dealing with a translation from the Hebrew, then we must assume that it is a unique case of a translation done by a Muscovite."¹ In Old Russian translations from the Hebrew, such phrases as "pharisaism is life" are fairly common and can scarcely be considered as Hebraisms.²

Positive references to the Pharisees are found even in the writings of Archbishop Gennadii. When condemning the ancient Sadducees, he writes that "the Sadducees rejected the resurrection of the dead and had neither angel nor spirit; the Pharisees, however, confessed both."³

Ivan Chernij, another leader of the Moscow Subbotniks, seems to also have had a high estimation of the Pharisees. In his *Hellenistic Chronograph*, Chernij mentions Josephus's reference to the story of James, Jesus' brother (*Antiquities* 20. 9.1 199-203).⁴

¹Ibid., 160.

²For examples of Hebraisms in ancient Russian translations, see N. A. Mesherskii, *To the Question Concerning the Study of the Translated Literature of the Kiev Period* (Petrozavodsk: Karelo-Finnish Institute of Pedagogy, 1955), 209-210 (Н. А. Мещерский, *К вопросу об изучении переводной письменности Киевского периода* [Петрозаводск: Карело-Финский Педагогический институт, 1955], 209-210).

³A. S. Pavlov, *Memorials of the Ancient Russian Canon Law* (Saint Petersburg, 1908) (А. С. Павлов, ed. *Памятники древнерусского канонического права* [Санкт-Петербург, 1908]), quoted in Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 160-161. Another source that also mentions the Pharisees in a positive context is the medieval Russian translation of the Hamartolos Chronicle. See V. M. Istrin, *The Chronological and Historical Books of Georgy Mnih*, 3 vols. (Prague: Russian Academy of Sciences, 1920-1930), 1:233-234 (В. М. Истрин, *Книги временныя и образныя Георгия Мниха*, 3 т. [Прага: Российская Академия Наук, 1920-1930], 1:233-234).

⁴Chernij, *Hellenistic Chronograph*, 223.

Josephus's account is interesting in that it shows the Sadducees as enemies of James and the Christians, to the extent of seeking to execute them. The accusation against James is based on his transgression of the law of Moses. But he is defended by those "strict in the observance of the law," which is the way Josephus often refers to the Pharisees. It is interesting to see Pharisees defending James; some Pharisees are even shown in Acts 23:6-10 to belong to James's party. In Acts 5:34, Rabbi Gamaliel of the Pharisees similarly defends Peter and John.

Maier recognizes that the term "pharisaism" was almost unknown to Jews of the Middle Ages.¹ Furthermore, no known cabalistic manuscripts are analogous to this letter.² The very name of this manuscript is clearly associated with the Greek and Christian tradition.³ Klibanov notes that "both the name and the very spirit of this letter are characteristic of the Reform movements in both Eastern and Western Europe."⁴

Klibanov, who does not believe in any Judaic influence on the *Laodicean Letter*, suggests that the word "pharisaism" was used by Kuritsin to contrast the false wisdom of the Pharisees with the deep wisdom of faith.⁵ Klibanov concludes that this phrase has very

¹Maier, 7-8.

²Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 64-65.

³Cf. the apocryphal Pauline letter to the Laodiceans (Col 4:16) and the letter of John the Revelator to the Laodiceans (Rev 3:14-22).

⁴Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 65.

⁵Ibid., 68.

little to do with Judaism.¹ As for the connection with Hebrew cabalistic manuscripts, Lur'e notes that "there is no evidence that the heretics used this literature. A reexamination of this question seems premature at the present time."² Although Taube disagrees with Lur'e's conclusion, he recognizes that his own assumption concerning the Jewish origin of the *Laodicean Letter* "in no way precludes any of the overall interpretations of the 'heresy' or 'heresies' proposed for the Novgorodian and Muscovite movement(s), nor does it in itself exclude any of the proposed characterizations of their ideology, whether 'humanist,' 'reformatory,' 'anti-trinitarian,' 'non-possessor,' 'Hussite,' or 'Waldensian'."³

Cryptogram in Squares

Some of the most serious accusations of antitrinitarianism could have been awakened by the Subbotniks' specific understanding of anthropology. Klibanov suggests that their belief in a psychosomatic unity of body and soul provoked some Orthodox authors to suspect them of antitrinitarianism, in honoring two persons of the Godhead instead of the Trinity.⁴ Although the charges of honoring two instead of three persons of the Godhead were never addressed toward the Subbotniks, the logic of these accusations could be very significant. For example, after a long explanation of the Orthodox

¹Ibid.

² Lur'e, "Unresolved Issues," 163.

³Taube, "The "Poem on the Soul" in the Laodicean Epistle," 673.

⁴Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 77.

understanding of the mystery of the Trinity, the author of the *Discourse on the Science of Grammar* states: “The same should be seen in man as well—the image of the Holy, and Life-giving, and Indivisible Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. First—the soul, second—the mind, and third—the word; these cannot be separated.”¹

In another passage of the same book we read: “There never was, is, or will be a time to call the Most Holy Trinity a bi-unity (*dvoiza*),² because there is no Father and Son without the Holy Spirit, as there is no Holy Spirit without Father and Son.”³ We are not aware of statements made by any Russian heretics on a bi-unity (*dvoiza*). However, one can see that a threefold anthropology was considered as an allegorical reflection of the traditional trinitarian view of the nature of God as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In the understanding of the author of *Discourse on the Science of Grammar* it is the reason why human beings, created in God’s image, should also have a threefold nature. Consequently, the author presumed that those believing in the twofold nature of human beings also held a twofold view of God and thus rejected the Orthodox teaching on the Trinity. This argument, however, is neither solid enough, nor is there any evidence that it was ever explicitly applied to the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents.

¹Manuscript 628 from Undol’sky collection, 428; quoted in Klibanov, *Reform Movements*, 77.

²*Dvoiza* (двоица) is a term that was supposed to reflect a heretical view on the Godhead as having only two (*dve*) instead of three persons.

³Ibid.

Commentary

From the standpoint of the trinitarian doctrine, the *Commentary* is an entirely Orthodox document. Its author has no desire to question the traditional trinitarian views of the Russian Orthodox Church. It seems that if Kuritsin, who “in his essay combined the bold religious-philosophical question with the development of specific knowledge in the area of grammar,”¹ were indeed an antitrinitarian, he would certainly have found a way to convey that conviction in his grammatical essay.

The author mentions that his goal, which is to construct some adequate grammatical rules, could be reached only “by the mercy of the Holy Spirit.”² Thus, the author of this document seems to be Orthodox in his trinitarian beliefs. Probably this is the reason why this document is not usually studied along with the other sources on the Subbotniks’ heresy.

Tale of Dracula

There is not much theology found in the *Tale of Dracula*. Nevertheless, there are some indications that allow us to determine the trinitarian position of the author.

Kuritsin reserves his severest condemnation for Dracula’s apostasy from Orthodoxy to Catholicism:

Dracula preferred the pleasures of the temporal world to those of the eternal and everlasting, abjured Orthodoxy and renounced truth, abandoned the light and

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 79.

embraced darkness; he . . . doomed himself to everlasting torment, abandoned our Orthodox faith and embraced the Latin delusion.¹

These are strange words, indeed, for the one who, as Iosif insists, “said blasphemous words against our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and is awaiting destroyer-antichrist.”² Evgeny Petuhov even rejected the authorship of Fedor Kuritsin because, as he believed, such a “prominent participant of the Judaizers’ heresy” as Kuritsin could not condemn an abandonment of Orthodoxy by Dracula.³ However, such conceptualization is built on the presuppositions of Kuritsin’s Judaism and antitrinitarianism instead of the historical facts and literary sources. Kazakova and Lur’e remark that “Petuhov’s objections could hardly be acknowledged as serious.”⁴

Writings of Ivan Chernij

By providing short comments in the margins, Chernij attracted the attention of his readers and expressed his attitude to certain ideas that were presented in the previous chapter. The agreement of these comments to the trinitarian dogma has been questioned by Klibanov.

¹Fedor Kuritsin, “The Tale of Dracula” (Федор Курицын, “Повесть о Дракуле”), quoted by Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, 273.

²*Instructor*, 66.

³E. V. Petuhov, *Russian Literature* (Saint Petersburg: Suvorin’s Publishing House, 1916), 139 (Е. В. Петухов, *Русская литература* [Санкт-Петербург: Т-ва А. С. Суворина, 1916], 139).

⁴Kazakova and Lur’e, 181.

Hellenistic Chronograph and Possible Deviations from Christianity

There are three stories marked by Chernij that potentially could be considered as parting with Christianity.¹

The story of James, Jesus' brother

As already mentioned, the mark “look” (*zri*) on page 233—in the story of James, Jesus' brother—could be potentially viewed as an indirect proof of Chernij's antitrinitarianism. However, it is not likely that it is the nature of Christ that concerns Chernij in this story. The story that is marked in Chernij's book reads as follows: “Soon after His sufferings, Jerusalem was captured. Thus, Josephus [Flavius] says: ‘All this happened to Jews as a revenge for the righteous James, the brother of Jesus called Christ’.”² Klibanov rightly places this story in the group of narratives dealing with the persecutions of true believers and their courage and persistence.³ Chernij marks the stories of King Herod, Herodias, and some other enemies of God's people. In the context

¹See pp. 137-138 above.

²Josephus mentions the story of James, the brother of Jesus in *Antiquities* 20. 9.1, 199-203. There is no direct connection, however, between the murder of James and the destruction of Jerusalem in Josephus's writings. It is Eusebius who constantly points to the destruction of Jerusalem as a result of the Jews' rejection of the Messiah and their shedding the blood of the first Christians (see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*). Apparently, Chernij ascribes to Josephus some ideas found in Eusebius. However, the idea of shedding of innocent blood as a cause of the divine rejection of Jerusalem is also found in Josephus. For example, Josephus cites the murder of Jonathan, the high priest, in the Temple as one of the causes of God's abandoning Jerusalem and its people.

³Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 205.

of the present persecution his marks were used to encourage the believers to be faithful. It is also obvious that the stories of the persecutions of God's people had another intent: These stories emphasize that the persecution of the people who were faithful to God were always followed by national disasters. The message of his marks is clear: The peace, unity, and prosperity of the State depend on the right religion and on the respectful treatment of those preaching the gospel. One should not forget that Chernij addressed his book in the first place to the great prince. The argument that Chernij marks this story in order to testify to his christological beliefs is very unlikely.

Criticism of monkhood and celibacy

Chernij indicates with the mark "look" (*zri*) the passages on the necessity to "restore the seed in Israel."¹ This idea could be suspicious for those considering the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents as rejecting the resurrection—the fundamental belief of the Christian religion. However, nothing in these stories mentions rejection of the future life.² At the same time, antimonastic trends are found in every book of Chernij. This reference to "seed" is most likely a polemic in favor of child bearing and against monastic celibacy.

Another large group of stories marked with "look" (*zri*) and "convenient" (*udobno*) also reflects the life-asserting character of Chernij's views. This group includes, for instance, the story of the prophet Elisha who made the source of water clean. This

¹Chernij, *Hellenistic Chronograph*, #597, 412. In addition, on pages 412 and 414 Chernij marks the stories about the blessing of those who are fruitful.

²A strong emphasis on the resurrection of the dead is found in other dissidents' document—*Judaizers' Psalms*.

group reflects Chernij's concerns with the earthly life. However, by no means does it by itself eliminate the belief in the future life.

The story of Petr Belilnik

Klibanov notices that Chernij does not denounce Petr Belilnik, who was condemned for his Eutychianism.¹ Thus, Klibanov concludes, Chernij was sympathetic to Eutychianism, i.e., belief that Christ had only a divine nature. Klibanov's verdict regarding Chernij is not internally consistent. Two pages later Klibanov proclaims that "Ivan Chernij dismissed Christ's divine authority attributed to him by both the New Testament and the Church."² But Klibanov bases this conclusion not on his reading of Chernij's book, but on the writings of Chernij's opponents. Klibanov writes: "According to Iosif's *Instructor* and the documents of the Council of 1490, and according to some other Church documents, Christ was honored by the heretics neither as God, nor as the Son of God, but just as an ordinary man."³ This observation is clearly inconsistent with the charge of Eutychianism made only two pages earlier.

The fact that Chernij does not denounce the story of Petr Belilnik is hardly a proof of Chernij's sympathies with the ancient heretic. Although he does not reprove this story, he also does not highlight it with one of his marks. In addition, even if Chernij was

¹See p. 138 above.

²*Ibid.*, 215.

³*Ibid.*

indeed sympathetic to Eutychianism, this heresy (that Christ was wholly divine and not human) is even more inconsistent with Judaism than with Orthodox Christianity.

Biblical Collection and Possible Deviations from Christianity

Klibanov argues that Chernij undermines the authority of Mary by placing her in the last place in his list of the Old Testament prophetesses. Klibanov concludes that by doing this Chernij rejects Mary's authority as the Mother of God. This argument, however, is built on the presupposition that Chernij did not believe in the divine nature of Christ. However, if that is the case, why is it that Chernij did not follow one of the ancient heretical traditions referring to Mary as *Anthropotokos*—the mother of man, or *Christotokos*—the mother of Christ. Instead, Chernij always addresses Mary as *Bogorodiza*, or *Theotokos*—the mother of God.

Once the Nicene formula had been established in the fourth century, the opponents of Orthodoxy correctly saw the implications of the term *Theotokos*. Nestorius objected that it had not been used by the fathers and thus was an illegitimate term. He himself, due to his Christology, advocated the term *Christotokos*.

The earliest incontestable instance of the term *Theotokos* was in the encyclical of Alexander of Alexandria directed against Arianism in 324. Later in the fourth century, the emperor Julian, in his polemic against the *Galileans*, asked the Christians: "Why do you incessantly call Mary Theotokos?"¹ Jaroslav Pelikan observes:

¹Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 241.

In the conflicts with Gnosticism Mary had served as proof for the reality of the humanity of Jesus: he had truly been born of a human mother and therefore was a man. But as Christian piety and reflection sought to probe the deeper meaning of salvation, the parallel between Christ and Adam found its counterpart in the picture of Mary as the Second Eve, who by her obedience had undone the damage wrought by the disobedience of the mother of mankind. She was the mother of the man Christ Jesus, the mother of the Saviour; but to be the Saviour, he had to be God as well, and as his mother she had to be "Mother of God."¹

The text of Chernij's book, thus, refers to Mary as being the mother of God and a prophetess. Pelikan says that those who stood in the succession of Athanasius:

found in this title an apt formula for their belief that in the incarnation deity and humanity were united so closely that, by what came to be known as "the communication of properties," neither birth nor crucifixion nor salvation could be attributed to one nature without the other. It was a way of speaking about Christ at least as much as a way of speaking about Mary. Since it was permissible to speak of Christ as "the suffering God," as the piety and the proclamation of the church did, Alexandrian christology could also take advantage of the liturgical term Theotokos to support its emphasis on the unity of the person of Christ.²

It is true that Chernij never honored Mary as the Orthodox tradition does—as a mediator between God and the people. Nevertheless, he presents her as a prophetess and also the one who gave life to Jesus Christ—God in flesh.

As for the placement of Mary at the very end of this list, it is obvious that Chernij was trying to preserve a chronological order while mentioning the prophetesses. It would be rather strange to see Mary's name in the middle or at the beginning of this list. By putting the name of Mary after the names of Elisabeth and Anna, the author naturally grants her the most elevated place on this list. It should be noted that the text from Maxim the Greek, which Klibanov quotes as an apology for Mary, also places her at the very end

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

of the list: “Although there were some daughters of men who revealed great power, and virtue, and righteousness—such as Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Esther, Judith, Anna, Susanna, Jael, there is only one of them who is the most clean and holy virgin—the Mother of Emmanuel.”¹

Klibanov approaches this text as an apology against the Judaizers’ teaching. But this apology aims to protect only the traditional interceding status of Mary in Eastern Christianity. It is not an apology of the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Maxim the Greek does not even call Mary *Theotokos*, a fact that signifies that he either did not have in mind the views of the Judaizers at all, or did not approach the heretics’ views as a challenge to the teaching on the divine nature of Christ.

Rudder of Ivan Kuritsin

Ivan Kuritsin attempts the first systematic presentation of theology in the Russian Orthodox Church. One may theorize that since Kuritsin’s *Rudder* in its ultimate sense is not his original writing but just a systematic compilation of some other sources, it cannot adequately reflect his own theology. However, one can hardly find among medieval Russian sources any original works. Although many original works of secular character have been found—chronicles, tales, biographical literature, etc.—the situation with theological sources is different. Probably the only acceptable genre of theological writings was that of private letters.

¹Maxim the Greek, as quoted in Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 218.

This situation gradually changed in the first half of the sixteenth century with the arrival from Athos of Maxim the Greek (1480-1556), who was summoned to Moscow by Great Prince Vasili Ivanovich to make translations and to correct the books in his library. Soon, however, Maxim the Greek became involved in politico-ecclesiastical disputes and produced a large number of works—of dogmatic, polemic, and moralistic character.¹ He sided with Vassian Patrikeyev in his struggle against the Possessors and became a real innovator.² Vassian Patrikeyev, who worked almost a generation after the defeat of the Subbotniks, could not completely part with the Russian tradition of communicating ideology through copying of certain books. Just like Ivan Kuritsin, he was innovative in the way he presented Patristic literature in a systematic, rather than a chronological way. One should not underestimate such a bold move. The contemporaries of both Kuritsin and Vassian had entirely different perceptions of this subject. Vassian was severely persecuted by Metropolitan Daniil for his innovative edition of the *Rudder*. He was accused primarily for his attempt to present rules in their systematic order. When the Father-Superior of Iosifo-Volokolamskogo monastery, Nifont, used this edition for the writing of his *Rudder*, Metropolitan Makary reprimanded him for presenting “the holy rules not originally.” Such

¹N. K. Gudzy, *Early Russian Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 326-333.

²Although nothing heretical was found in Maxim’s works, his innovation cost him a lot: he was thrice condemned, and passed the years from 1521 to 1551 in imprisonment, first in the Volokolam Monastery, and then in the Page’s Monastery at Tver, from which he was released only five years before his death.

a way of presenting, according to Makary, was “invented by the heretics” with the aim to “lose” the rules that were troublesome for them.¹

The *Book of Rules* composed by Ivan Kuritsin was less traditional than those of his successors. Begunov notes that although the content of Kuritsin’s *Book of Rules*—with the exception of some regulations—is mostly identical to the content of the official *Books of Rules*, the order in which Kuritsin presents the articles is different and has no parallel in Russian literature.² Kuritsin’s writings were intended to express his “Reformation” theology in a tactful, but at the same time compelling, way.

To suggest that Ivan Kuritsin designed his *Rudder* with its emphasis on trinitarianism and repudiation of all forms of Christological and Trinitarian heresies in order to camouflage his antitrinitarianism is to deny universal fundamental laws of historical research, especially in light of the clearly dubious propositions of Iosif. Iosif’s speculations remain the only straw of concrete historical circumstantial evidence in favor of the theory of an antitrinitarian Subbotniks’ movement. It is astonishing that while completely rejecting the trustworthiness of Archbishop Gennadii’s and Iosif of Volotsk’s testimonies in practically all areas, scholars of the Soviet period were retaining Iosif’s dubious charges of antitrinitarianism. The best explanation of this is their ideological presuppositions: the desire to present the Novgorod-Moscow movement as atheistic as

¹A. S. Pavlov, *Lectures in Church Legislation* (Moscow: Sergiev Posad, 1902), 119-120 (A. С. Павлов, *Курс церковного права* [Москва: Сергиев посад, 1902], 119-120, 539).

²Begunov, “Rudder by Ivan Volk Kuritsin,” 155-156.

possible—even though such a portrayal was contrary to historical facts and violated common sense.

Summary

The historical part of this study did not, as the traditional view suggests, present the Subbotniks' movement as a new and sudden emergence in Russian ecclesiastical life. Furthermore, many indications show that it was not of Jewish origination, but rather of Russian, having domestic roots in centuries of ecclesiastic and civilian nonconformism. The possibility of certain foreign influences has been considered. The struggle surrounding the Subbotniks' movement has been shown to be connected with the political, social, and religious situation in medieval Russia.

The factual and imaginary charges of antitrinitarianism generated by Archbishop Gennadii, Iosif of Volotsk, and those found in the *Sentence of the 1490 Council*, the *Voskresensk Chronicle* of the year 1492, *The Letter of Monk Savva*, and *The Penitence of the Heretic Denis* were analyzed. It was shown that Archbishop Gennadii's writings could hardly be considered as containing accusations of antitrinitarianism, much less a description of the heresy. Iosif interpreted the information he obtained from Gennadii according to what it seemed to indicate—pure Judaism. This explains Iosif's first reaction which took the shape of a discussion on the Judaic teaching of God. *The Letter of Monk Savva* seems to be another example of similar circumstances—the author deals with a problem that was only imaginary. We might join Klibanov in his conclusion that “the

clergymen's accusation of the submission of the heretics to the propaganda of Skharija is false."¹

The limited information Iosif obtained from Archbishop Gennadii was readjusted to fit his stereotyped medieval ecclesiastical mentality. Under the influence of traditional medieval education, a certain mind-set emerged in Russian society. The most prominent feature of medieval Russian religious life was the development of religious-ecclesiastical formalism. Pipin observes: "Wide reading could not make him [Iosif] an educated theologian; he was far from being free from the average shortcomings of the bookish men of the past."² Even at the end of the nineteenth century, similar reasoning continued to be used. When Louis Conradi and Gerhard Perk, missionaries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, visited Russia in 1886, they were "imprisoned for teaching Jewish heresy."³

Even if Iosif of Volotsk and Archbishop Gennadii had been able to break away from this "exclusive circle of . . . old bookish views,"⁴ the legitimate question remains: Would they have been willing to do it? It has been shown that capital punishment for heretics applied only to Judaizers, or those who abandoned trinitarianism. In order to legitimize the use of this severe penalty, Iosif was ready to employ a "godly and wise deception." Around 1500, he recognized that in the struggle for survival the Church must

¹Klibanov, *Books of Ivan Chernij*, 225.

²Pipin, 101.

³R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1979), 218.

⁴Pipin, 103-104.

make use of forgery and deception; he even dedicated one chapter of his *Instructor* to justifying what he calls “the godly deception.” In other chapters he applies the method he advocates. Kazakova and Lur’e confirm that “in the first edition of Iosif’s book . . . all the adaptation of the previous material was made in such a way, as, avoiding all the formal barriers, to bring Iosif’s enemies to the stake.”¹

It cannot be denied, however, that the *Instructor* reflects certain factual information on the Subbotniks. This information is reflected in the polemical dynamic of his *Instructor*. Servitskii refers to the later chapters of Iosif’s *Instructor*:

The distinct rejection of the basic dogmas of Christianity had not been a characteristic of all the Judaizers, but only of a part of them, as is obvious from the *Instructor*. The others did not reject the trinitarian dogma directly, but only were not sure about it and were suspicious and critical of certain passages from the Scripture concerning the Trinity, saying that it is not proper to paint the Holy and life-bringing Trinity on the icons.²

The Sentence of the 1490 Council applies the accusation of antitrinitarianism and many other similar charges, only to “some,” not to “all” of the dissidents. Sabbath-keeping, according to the official documents, was the only belief shared by all heretics. The *Sentence* reflects more than the position of Archbishop Gennadii’s and Iosif of Volotsk’s party—it represents a subtle attempt to present a position opposing or at least moderating Iosif’s categorical accusations.

Although these documents materialized during a period of intense hostility

¹Kazakova and Lur’e, 216.

²Servitskii, 306.

against the Novgorod-Moscow movement, and are therefore strongly colored with polemics, they do not unequivocally charge the Subbotniks with antitrinitarianism.

The fact that neither Iosif of Volotsk nor Archbishop Gennadii was able or willing to change his attitude does not mean that others of their contemporaries had to follow their example. There were some who managed to raise themselves above the stereotypes of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk. A good example of this is the opposition to Iosif's ecclesiastical and especially monastic policy coming from the prominent monks, contemporaries of Iosif of Volotsk, Nil Sorsky, and Vassian Patrikeev. A more radical and forceful opposition was presented by the movement of the Russian Subbotniks.

Nevertheless, most of the Subbotniks' writings—at least those that have been preserved—are built on a conservative platform similar to the writings of their opponents. It is easy to sense the writers' great concern to be in harmony with the most prominent and respected church figures—the prophets and apostles, as well as the prominent Church fathers. The Subbotniks' writings are composed mostly from biblical texts and passages from the Church fathers.

There is no evidence that the books found among the heretics, or the books written by the Subbotniks themselves, question the trinitarian dogma. Many of these books are explicitly orthodox in their dealing with the trinitarian doctrine—a fact that is best illustrated by the expansion of Russian Orthodox Christianity to the West and the South, into the areas where Judaic influence was noticeable. The *Psalms* and the *Letter of Fedor the Jew*, addressed to the native Russian-speaking Jews with the admonition to

accept Christianity with its trinitarian teaching, are two examples of such activity.

Ivan Chernij's emphasis on social issues and consistent protest against "human traditions," such as icon worship and Sunday-keeping, resembles the beliefs and practices of some Continental Anabaptists.¹ Ivan Chernij does not question the trinitarian dogma, nor does he seem interested in this subject.

The attitude toward Orthodoxy of Fedor Kuritsin, another partisan of the Subbotniks, is expressed in his *Tale of Drakula* where he severely criticized Drakula for recanting Eastern Orthodoxy. His other writings deal with anthropology and have nothing to say in regard to trinitarian speculations.

The writings of his brother, Ivan Kuritsin, who was distinguished as probably the most prominent Subbotniks theologian, is explicitly trinitarian. A significant part of his book is dedicated to trinitarian issues, and the author himself expresses his entire support of the Orthodox position.

A study of the Subbotniks' literature clearly shows that their teachings parallel trends common to European reform movements of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: the supreme authority of the Scripture, abandonment of non-biblical human tradition (monasticism, icons, holy relics), the priesthood of all believers, and freedom of religion. The soundness of the trinitarian doctrine is defended and never questioned in their entire preserved corpus, which leads to the conclusion that the Subbotniks'

¹C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995); also Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant* (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Press, 1973).

movement was orthodox in its trinitarianism.

Conclusions

Due to the limited amount of information available, subjectivity, religious formalism, and a strong desire to eliminate the “heretics,” Church officials were not able nor perhaps willing to recognize the true core of the Subbotniks’ teachings. In the legend about the Greek robber Procruste, the owner of the famous bed would force travelers to lie in it, and if the traveler was too tall he would cut off his feet. Procruste would also stretch his guests if they were too short for his bed. Both Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif used the same procedure vis-à-vis the Subbotniks’ movement. Since the progressive Reform movement did not fit into the old Procrustean bed of Patristic tradition, it was painfully and intolerably forced there in such a way that in addition to its feet, its very head—its orthodox Christianity—was cut off.

Contrary to the five hundred year old prevailing popular and scholarly judgment, the present research found no hint of antitrinitarianism in the Subbotniks’ movement. On the basis of a systematic analytical and historical evaluation of the question of the trinitarian status of the Novgorod-Moscow movement, the so-called Judaizers’ movement is shown to be “totally nonjudaizing”¹ in its character, and that questioning of their trinitarian beliefs is unfounded.

Practical Implications

In view of current developments in Russia, such as the attempts to limit the

¹Ilovajsky, *More About the Judaizers’ Heresy and Metropolitan Zosima*, 17.

influence of Protestantism and the creation of a semiofficial Church, it seems important to understand the evolution of Christian beliefs throughout the course of Russian history. Unfortunately, objective historical research has often been neglected in favor of certain ideological currents: “Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.”¹ On September 26, 1997, former Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a new law “On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations.”² John Witte, Jr., comments: “This new law—passed after four years of open advocacy and four months of secret machinations by the Moscow Patriarchate and various nationalist groups within Russia—institutes a Soviet-style system of severe state registration and restrictions on religion.”³ This new law, however, appears not merely as an echo of the old Soviet attitude toward religion, but also as a symptom of a much older *modus operandi*, which is characterized in the form of an intolerant attitude to free thinking and an attempt to monopolize religion. These tendencies were to a large degree shaped in the course of the fifteenth-century controversy with the Subbotniks and were found already in Iosif’s *Instructor*. These intolerant propensities have always been destructive for society in general. Ian Grey observes:

Externally the Iosifians [the followers of Iosif of Volotsk] led at first both the country and the Church from one success to another, and before the end of the century the obscure principality of Moscow became a great Empire. Internally, however, they were undermining the spiritual vitality of the Russian nation, and prepared the ground

¹George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet, 1984), 204.

²Federal Law No. 125-FZ (September 26, 1997), trans. Lawrence A. Uzzell as Appendix A, *Emory International Law Review* 12 (1998): 657-680.

³Witte, 12.

for the great schism of the Russian Church in the seventeenth century, which eventually destroyed the Orthodox Tsardom of Moscow.¹

Russian society would be better off if it could approach fifteenth-century events as a valuable lesson of the importance of maintaining freedom of religion. The reform efforts presented by the Subbotniks' movement should be seen as a genuine attempt to reform the Russian Church from within (an attempt similar to that of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century). This makes Russia an active participant in the European reform trends during the European Renaissance. An examination of the extent and character of this fifteenth-century Protestant-style movement contradicts the attempts to present religious developments in Russia as the unshaken reign of a monolithic Church. The tendencies embodied in the Subbotniks' movement represent centuries of Russian religious search and in many respects are more ancient than some of the Byzantine features imported at the end of the fifteenth century by means of the controversial personality of Sophia Palaeologus. In view of the traditional Russian veneration of national history, Protestant communities in Russia should at least be aware of the Subbotniks' movement which caused such major and dramatic developments in Russian ecclesiastical history. It may give these communities the confidence that they are not intruders trespassing on alien territory (although this idea is being forcefully implanted into the mentality of many Russian Protestants), but co-heirs of the great national traditions, successors of distinguished men of the past who played a major constructive role in the formation of both the Russian State and culture. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in

¹Grey, 46.

Russia may especially benefit from a study of the Subbotniks due to the fact that the Novgorod-Moscow dissidents proclaimed a theological message similar to theirs.

Recommendations

Since the thesis of this study centers around only one issue—the trinitarian position of the Subbotniks—it does not exhaust all the controversial and unresolved issues in the history of the reform movement of the late fifteenth century. This study demonstrates that in analyzing the theology of such a complex phenomenon as the Novgorod-Moscow movement, the investigator must overcome the peculiar phantoms of historiography: the views of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians, often mere speculations, that unfortunately too often became accepted historiographical dogmas. Researchers, no matter what aspects of this movement they deal with, need to continually remind their readers that for many commonly entertained notions, there is no evidence in the sources.

One of the topics that should be addressed in a subsequent study of the Subbotniks' movement is a further analysis of the origin of this movement, including its relation to both domestic and Western Protestant-like dissident movements. The information obtained from the writings of Archbishop Gennadii and Iosif of Volotsk is too limited to be satisfactory for any comprehensive modern research. Another important topic that should be addressed is the systematic analysis of the theology of the Subbotniks in general. Moreover, a comprehensive historical study on the impact of the Subbotniks' movement on Russian culture, economy and history would be very helpful. A focused

study of the two distinct features of this movement—Sabbath-keeping and the belief in the union between soul and body—could become the subject for a comprehensive research in the area of systematic theology. Finally, the literary works of the Subbotniks should be translated into modern Russian, published, and supplied with commentary.

It seems that the study of the Subbotniks could generate a genuine interest in both Western and Russian scholarly communities. The recent attention paid to some of the Subbotniks' works by scholars from different countries must be viewed as a sign of this interest.

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