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## DEBATE ON RUSSIAN SAINTS IN EUROPEAN NARRATIVES ABOUT SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MUSCOVY<sup>1</sup>

In the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, issues of endo- and exo-identity were closely related to religious affiliation. Description of the 'religion of Muscovites' played an important role in both Catholic and Protestant authors' works. This article examines the works of Jan Lasky, Johann Fabry, Matvey Mekhovskiy, Sigismund von Herberstein, Alexander Gvagnini and Heinrich Staden as well as Ivan the Terrible's dispute with Jan Rokita. The author draws attention to the different interest in various aspects of religion shown by Catholics and Protestants. The Orthodox Church treated the Protestants worse, which is paradoxical given that Protestants (Danes, at one time Swedes) were allies of Ivan the Terrible. In 1596, the Brest Union was signed, which seemed to alleviate confrontation between the churches in Eastern Europe but in fact aggravated the conflict.

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In the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, the issues of endo- and exo-identity were closely related to religious affiliation. Description of the 'religion of Muscovites' played an important role in both Catholic and Protestant authors' works. Their stories were not always considered historically accurate since the primary source of information about Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe was often the religious order in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was much more accessible for authors from Central Europe than the inaccessible lands of Muscovite Russia, and facts gleaned on the Orthodox Church of Kiev, Minsk, and Vilna were often extrapolated to Moscow.

European treatises have long been studied as a historical source on Russia, the tradition dating back to the famous book by V.O. Kliuchevskii.<sup>2</sup> The most thorough reviews are found in the works of Andreas Kappeler,<sup>3</sup> Stéphane Mund,<sup>4</sup> and Marshall T. Poe.<sup>5</sup> However, most works are too general in their character, doing little more than retelling the works of foreigners about Muscovy. The rest of these sources were mostly used as a resource by researchers to illustrate their conception of the oprichnina, the Livonian War, or to point out who was responsible for the death of Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich of Russia in 1581, etc.

The origin of individual narratives and, more importantly, the genetic analysis of the ideas and information contained in the European treatises has been de-emphasized. Here researchers waver between complete denial<sup>6</sup> of their reliability and absolute trust. However, when considering the testimonies of Europeans about Russian history, the opposition of 'reliable' vs. 'unreliable' is totally unproductive. Even in the case of obvious errors and distortions, it is very important to answer the question why they occurred, what ideas and motives the author was guided by. The most reliable here is a concept based on texts of a different period, the Enlightenment, which was formulated by Dieter Groh<sup>7</sup> and

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2 В. О. КЛЮЧЕВСКИЙ, Сказания иностранцев о Московском государстве (Москва: Прометей, 1991).

3 ANDREAS KAPPELER, *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des westlichen Russlandbildes* (Bern: Herbert Lann, 1972).

4 STÉPHANE MUND, *Orbis Russiarum: genèse et développement de la représentation du monde «russe» en Occident à la Renaissance* (Genève: Droz, 2003).

5 MARSHALL T. POE, *A People Born to Slavery. Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

6 Л. Е. МОРОЗОВА, *Иван Грозный глазами современников* (Москва: Кучково поле, 2022).

7 DIETER GROH, *Russland und Das Selbstverständnis Europas; Ein Beitrag Zur Europäischen Geistesgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Universität Heidelberg, 1961).

confirmed by Larry Wolfe,<sup>8</sup> that Europeans when writing about Muscovy/Russia mostly minded their own business. They tried to describe their problems and offer solutions through a story about a foreign country by using its historical narratives as instructive illustrations. In this regard, it is interesting to study the way European researchers expressed their views on the Russian Orthodox religion and characterized it in the age of European religious wars.

The first such treatise was “On Russian Peoples and Their Wrong Beliefs” (“De rutenorum nationibus earumque erroribus”) by Archbishop Jan Laski of Gniezno. It was read at the ninth session of the Fifth Lateran Council on April 5, 1514. Issues of the purity of faith were discussed at the sessions of the council held on December 8-19, 1513. They were devoted to the condemnation of every proposition contrary to the truth of the enlightened Christian faith. The Congress discussed how “Consequently, since in our days (which we endure with sorrow) the sower of cockle, the ancient enemy of the human race, has dared to scatter and multiply in the Lord’s field some extremely pernicious errors, which have always been rejected by the faithful.”<sup>9</sup>

The Catholic bishop listed the main wrongdoings of the Orthodox by pointing to the following facts: they “...deny that St. Peter is the true father and true High Priest of the Holy See, the only head of the militant Church, they claim that he has not received full authority from Christ; they consider him the successor of every Roman priest and say that he is equal to other priests. They also deny that the Roman Church is the head of all the Churches, the primary ruler and instructor... They also claim that all adherents of the Roman faith are not true Christians and will not be saved because they have fallen away from the Original Church; they admit that they alone are the only Christians, followers of Christ and the Apostles, and thus are among those to be saved. They say that the Pope, together with the Church of Rome, is a heretic of the Arian heresy...” (*hereinafter my translation – A.F.*)<sup>10</sup> The same applied to the cult of the saints, “They also blaspheme and condemn the Saints of the Church of

8 LARRY WOLFF, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994).

9 *Fifth Council of the Lateran*, [http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0067/\\_P9.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0067/_P9.HTM) (Accessed: June 28, 2023).

10 “De Ruthenorum nationibus earumque erroribus scriptum Johannis de Lasco Archiepiscopi Gnesnensis in concilio Lateranensi anno MDXIV productum”, in *Historica Russiae Monumenta*, 1 (Petropoli: Typus Eduardi Pratzii, 1841), 124.

God of the Catholic Roman faith and of the Roman declaration of faith and subjection. They also shun images of the work and art of Catholics, and dishonor, however many they may be, and even burn crucifixes of the Savior and images of His Saints.”

In fact, Jan Laski’s real and only claim was that the Orthodox are not Catholics. Since they were different and alien, they were inherently considered heretics mired in their delusions. Since this was not enough (accusing a representative of another denomination of being different is hardly a strong argument), the archbishop made several exotic accusations depicting Orthodox priests as barbarians. For example, Jan Laski argued that a Russian priest should kiss the grave after the funeral rite. According to him, “They also say that their priests stumble when they kill a sparrow or any bird, and they do not gain back their righteousness until this bird rots completely under their arms. This is their punishment which is not so severe as when one kills a Christian.”<sup>11</sup>

The Polish Catholic historian Maciej Miechowita, author of the treatise ‘On the Two Sarmatias’ (1517) paid little attention to Orthodox Christianity. He stressed the crimes of the Muscovites by making up the murder of Metropolitan Isidor in 1441. “...having achieved union with the Roman Church, he returned to Russia, but when he began to preach submission to Rome, the Muscovites deprived him of his ministry and killed him.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, Isidor safely escaped from prison, became bishop of Nicosia in 1456-1463, and died in Rome in 1463. That said, Miechowita described the Russian church rather correctly, albeit briefly. He noted that the most revered saint was St. Nicholas, “There are many churches of different saints there (in Novgorod - *A.F.*), and there are churches of St. Nicholas, the most revered saint among the Russians, as many as there are days in a year.”<sup>13</sup> In Miechowita’s paper more attention is paid to geographical and ethnographic description than to religious differences. To him, these are obvious, yet not very important. As a Catholic, he is opposed to the Orthodox Christianity, but it does not interest him much.

Thus, Jan Laski’s goal was simple and obvious. He meant to denounce schismatics as heretics. On the other hand, another treatise writer, the Catholic Johann Faber, had a more complicated goal. In 1525, in

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11 De Ruthenorum nationibus, 126.

12 М. МЕХОВСКИЙ, Тракта́т о двух Сарматиях (Москва; Ленинград: Академия наук СССР, 1936), 98.

13 Ibid. 108.

Tubingen, Johann Faber, the coadjutor of the Viennese archbishop and personal confessor of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, met with Prince Ivan Zasekin-Yaroslavsky and clerk Semyon Trofimov, the ambassadors from Muscovy. Faber asked them about the church of the Muscovites. His interest was rooted in his position as a Catholic, an opponent of the Protestant heresy (Faber is known as an ardent opponent of Luther, author of the treatise 'Hammer against Lutheran Heresy', 1524).<sup>14</sup> Interested in various heresies, Faber hoped to gather material on the ways Christianity had developed. When analyzing the Muscovite church, he actually made invectives against Protestantism. The first edition of the treatise was published in 1526 in Basel.<sup>15</sup> It was entitled *The Church of the Muscovites Dwelling by the Arctic Sea* (in Latin original: *Moscouitarum iuxta mare glaciale religio*).

Faber was interested in the Russian religion as a stable faith capable of coping with heresies, unlike the Catholics who gave ground for Luther to appear: "...with more stability of soul than many of ours, they stand firm in their first faith perceived from the Apostle Andrew, his successors and the holy fathers, and absorbed by them like their mother's milk. They do not in any way allow any splits into various heresies to occur in their midst (how they are cured of heresies). If any misunderstanding should occur in the faith or in the rites of worship, they turn only to the spiritual [authority] of the archbishop and other bishops to resolve it all, leaving nothing to the fickle and inconsistent [reasoning] of the people."<sup>16</sup>

Faber particularly emphasizes Muscovites' respect for monasticism and canonized monks. He offers the Trinity-Sergius Lavra and St. Sergius of Radonezh as an example: "Not far from Moscow there is a monastery, famous for the miracles of St. Sergius where up to three hundred brethren live permanently in compliance with the charter of Basil the Great. There is a burial place of the hegumen Saint Sergius people come to worship even from very distant lands for it is glorified by many miracles worthy of the great wonder of Christians. One of the most remarkable which occurred a few years ago is giving sight to two blind men. For when the hegumen was still alive, people believed and were quite convinced that his saintliness allowed him through his prayers to ask for and obtain

14 О. Ф. Кудрявцев, Россия в первой половине XVI века: Взгляд из Европы (Москва: Информационно-издательское агентство «Русский мир», 1997), 135–140.

15 JOHANN FABER, *Ad Serenissimum principem Ferdinandum Archiducem Austriae, Moscovitarum iuxta mare glaciale religio* (Basileae: Io. Bebelius, 1526).

16 О. Ф. Кудрявцев, Россия в первой половине, 181.

much from God for mere mortals. Therefore, with unusual piety they visit his tomb in his honor.”<sup>17</sup>

Faber particularly emphasizes the role of the cult of saints in the Orthodox church in contrast to the denial of the role of saints for Protestants. He enthusiastically describes the Russian ambassador’s mobile shrine, which he saw in Tübingen, “Once, when I entered the chamber of the Blessed Franciscan brothers with the bedchamber of the head of the embassy, I saw the most beautiful image of the Blessed Virgin similar to that once made by St. Luke and, as the ambassadors said, kept in Moscow. There was also an image of the Incarnation of Our Lord, an image of Simeon holding Him carefully in his hands, an image of the Flight into Egypt; images of the Passion, the Resurrection, and the victorious ascension of the Lord into Heaven. There was another image with wonderfully depicted sorrows and joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Finally, there was an image of the apostles and their names.”<sup>18</sup> It is surprising that Faber, a Catholic, considered Muscovites more worthy Christians than the German Protestants, “When we heard about this (piety of the Muscovites - A.F.) we were so shocked and seized with joy that we seemed devoid of mind because in matters relating to the Christian Church our Christians bear no comparison with them.”<sup>19</sup> Faber’s description of the Muscovite church is not devoid of mistakes. For example, he thought that the Orthodox Church believed in purgatory. Apparently, this belief was rooted in a desire to portray a better picture of the Muscovites, to set the ‘right’ Russians against the ‘wrong’ German Protestants.

Since Herberstein’s goal was to expose the tyranny of Muscovite rulers and the vicious and deceitful nature of their power, he made his account of the Russian Church a listing of their unrighteous deeds and transgressions. According to him, Russian tyranny was manifested through the fact that they considered the words of their ruler equal to those of the prophets, “They consider all the sovereign himself believes to be right and immutable for all.”<sup>20</sup> Russians are liars as they believe that Christianity in the Russian land should be associated with Apostle Andrew who “...came from Greece to the mouth of the Borysfen, sailed up

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17 Ibid. 184.

18 Ibid. 195-196.

19 Ibid. 194.

20 С. ГЕРБЕРШТЕЙН, Записки о Московии, 1 (Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 2008), 213.

the river to the mountains, where Kiev is now, and there he blessed and baptized the whole land. He erected his cross and predicted that in that place there would be great grace of God and many Christian temples.”<sup>21</sup> The Russian despot, he wrote, humiliated and persecuted the righteous clergy in every possible way. Maximus the Greek, who denounced to the tsar the ‘wrongness’ of the Orthodox sacred books compared to Greek primary sources, was drowned. In fact, this never happened.<sup>22</sup> Only liars and hypocrites survived at the court of the Moscow sovereign. For example, Metropolitan Daniel who was obese, but treated his face with smoke in order to appear pale and exhausted by prayer and fasting.<sup>23</sup>

Russian clergymen, he reported, are totally dependent on the secular authorities and accept any arbitrariness and reprisals, up to and including corporal punishment, “We have seen the way drunken priests were publicly scourged in Moscow; at the same time the only thing they complained about was that they were punished by slaves, and not by boyars.”<sup>24</sup> In his description of the rites of the Orthodox Church, Herberstein emphasizes the condemnation of the Latins and the difference between the Orthodoxy and Catholicism on the example of the denial of purgatory. Herberstein pays attention to schisms between the churches, pointing to their common roots: “In their hagiographies a few popes are honored among the saints; others, who lived after the famous schism, are cursed because they have departed from the rules of the Apostles, the Holy Fathers and the Seven Councils and call them heretics and schismatics, hating them more than even the Mohammedans.”<sup>25</sup>

In Herberstein’s paper, a separate section is devoted to Russian saints. He notes that Olga, the first Russian Christian, was the first Russian saint canonized by Holy Prince Vladimir,<sup>26</sup> and that she was also canonized and venerated along with the apostles.<sup>27</sup> Boris and Gleb are also mentioned as saints.<sup>28</sup> The story of Basil II mentions the ‘monastery of St. Sergius’ considered him one of the most revered saints.<sup>29</sup> Herberstein calls

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21 Ibid. 147

22 Ibid. 213.

23 Ibid. 151.

24 Ibid. 155.

25 Ibid. 161.

26 Ibid. 49.

27 Ibid. 60.

28 Ibid. 61.

29 Ibid. 217.

St. Nicholas of Myra the most venerated saint both among Russians and Mohammedan Tatars.<sup>30</sup>

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to the Catholic view of Russian religion and saints, European writings also give the Protestant view. In 1570, the Czech preacher Jan Rokita arrived in Moscow as part of Jan Krotovsky's Polish diplomatic mission. As Andrei Ivanov noted, Rokita did not do this spontaneously, but on behalf of the Calvinist-Czech synod in Bykhov which entrusted him to spread Protestantism in Muscovy.<sup>31</sup> According to Rokita, his goal was as follows, "...there is no doubt that the kingdom of Christ will spread everywhere in the world. Up to now, the North has been plunged into the deepest darkness, but if it should please the Lord to kindle there a light and spread the Kingdom of Christ, I would willingly devote my whole life to it."<sup>32</sup> Jan Rokita allegedly succeeded in attending a meeting with the Russian tsar, Ivan the Terrible, and told him about the foundations of the Protestantism.

How did the dispute go? Historians uncritically accept the view that there was a public dispute, and this is based on an account of the publication of the Confession of Faith, in fact on a script of Rokita's speech by Jan Lasicki in 1582 and an account by the German pastor Paul Oderborn published in 1585. According to these sources, the tsar listened to Rokita's lengthy speeches, asked for them to be written down, and then handed over his answer in written form. The discussion was public, and Rokita won this intellectual confrontation.

As N. Marchalis rightly notes, "...we are dealing with various Protestant sources repeating the same thing, and no information from Russian sources. The situation suggests that the whole story is a myth created by historiographers being far from impartial."<sup>33</sup> The only fact that can be reliably stated is that Jan Rokita and Ivan the Terrible really did meet. Marchalis believes they met on not only one occasion, but at least two, and that there was a certain exchange of texts.

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30 Ibid. 209.

31 ANDREI V. IVANOV, "Reformation and the Muscovite Czar: Anti-Protestant Polemic in the Writings of Ivan the Terrible", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2009): 1114. See also: JAROSLAV BIDLO, "Br. Jan Rokyta u cara Ivana Hrozného", *Český časopis historický*, no. 9 (1903): 1-32.

32 Cit. ex Д. ЦВЕТАЕВ, *Протестантство и протестанты в России до эпохи преобразований* (Москва: Университетская типография, 1890), 546.

33 Н. МАРЧАЛИС, *Люторь иже луть. Прение о вере царя Ивана Грозного с пастором Рокитой* (Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2009), 32-33.



The nature of the sources suggests Oderborn's view of the situation was inconsistent with the realities of the Rzeczpospolita's ambassadorial mission. Jan Rokita's *Confession of Faith* was originally published in 1582 by Jan Lasicki.<sup>34</sup> It includes 10 questions from Ivan IV and 10 short answers by Rokita. The tsar's questions are based on Rokita's answers, i.e. there is a written dialogue between them. P. L. Ruschinsky and D. Tsvetaev have suggested that the text was constructed by Lasicki on the basis of fuller transcripts of Rokita's speeches. Tsvetaev considers Oderborn's speech the more reliable.<sup>35</sup> Marchalis argues that the transcript had been made earlier, at least in 1572.<sup>36</sup> There is also a Polish edition of Jan Rokita's *Confession of Faith*, "Odpowiedz na pythanie Wielkiego Hospodara Moskowskiego na pismie podana" published in 1971 by V. Tumins.<sup>37</sup> Y. Bidło and V. Tumins consider this manuscript to have been penned by Rokita himself, whereas Marchalis doubts this and thinks that it is a copy made from Rokita's original text.

One way or another, there must have been a protograph, a text given to the tsar as *A Confession of Faith* by Jan Rokita. How did the communication go? Was it a kind of public dispute? Marchalis's view of the situation is perhaps the most reasonable of all: "Unfortunately, we will never know how the text given to Ivan Vasilievich by Rokita and the 'speech' taken from it and published by Oderborn were related. Yet there is no doubt that the text the pastor gave to the tsar must have included all the passages quoted by Ivan the Terrible which were missing in Oderborn's story. Consequently, it must have included much of the textual material from Rokita's *Odpowiedz* as we know it now. Later, Rokita 'recreated' the dispute in the way he would have liked it to be in reality and included ten questions that had never been passed to him in writing. He also divided the narrative into ten parts and added introductory formulas for his answers."<sup>38</sup> The revised and edited version was published by Lasicki in 1582.

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34 J. LASICKI, "Colloquium de religione Magni Ducis Moschorum cum Rohita ministro Ecclesiastratum Bohemorum, quos mali Picardos vocant", in *De Russorum, Moscovitarum et Tartarorum religione, sacrificiis, nuptiarum funerum ritu: e diversis scriptoribus, quorum nomina versa pagina indicat* (Spirae Nemetum: ex officina typographica Bernardi Albinii), 1-10.

35 П. Л. РУЩИНСКИЙ, Религиозный быт русских по сведениям иностранных писателей XVI и XVII веков (Москва: Общество истории и древностей российских при Московском университете, 1871), 332-333; Д. ЦВЕТАЕВ, *Op. cit.*, 551.

36 H. МАРЧАЛИС, *Op. cit.*, 46-48.

37 V. TUMINS, *Tsar Ivan IV's Reply to Jan Rokita* (Paris: Mouton, 1971).

38 H. МАРЧАЛИС, *Op. cit.*, 49-50.

*A Confession of Faith* had an enclosure in the form of Ivan the Terrible's reply in five Slavonic manuscripts and two translations.<sup>39</sup> As early as 1582, Lasicki published the tsar's polemical speech with polemical comments translated into Latin.<sup>40</sup> The researchers paid much closer attention to the tsar's reply than the texts of Rokita himself. On the basis of this, Ivan the Terrible's religious views, the peculiarities of his literary manner, etc. were reconstructed. Apparently, the tsar replied to Rokita not orally, but in writing.

Oderborn, on the other hand, depicts a completely different version of the discussion. First, Ivan the Terrible allegedly makes a long speech criticizing Lutheranism. Then Oderborn puts in lengthy speeches by Rokita, that is, *A Confession of Faith* itself, but not in the form of ten questions and answers, but as a continuous text manifesting and glorifying Protestantism. The tsar's answer is never mentioned. According to Oderborn, "Rokita eagerly explained everything and triumphantly defended the truth." Tsar Ivan "...showed how pleasant this man's speech seemed to him demonstrating signs of unusual mercy, and even ordered everything they discussed during their lengthy dispute to be written down... Rokita was incredibly pleased, for he had succeeded in besetting a Muscovite, a sovereign [who had] enormous power, by persuading him with the most solid arguments of the Holy Scriptures, so that he rejected his former religious conceptions and was forced to remain silent."<sup>41</sup> (1. 105–106).

The pastor refers to the fact that he had received the script, or rather an outline of this speech, from Nikolai Talvash, who was present at the debate and wrote it down. However, Oderborn's whole scheme contradicts what we know of this debate from extant manuscripts and publications. Until Talvash's manuscript is found, the most reasonable point of view is that the debate took place in written form and proceeded according to the scenario described by N. Marchalis. Rokita handed the tsar some text along with diplomatic papers from J. Krotovsky's mission. Sometime later, he received a manuscript with a response from the tsar which he took to Europe. There it was widely discussed as a primary source on Muscovy religious views. Apparently, Rokita himself revised the original of *A Confession of Faith*, breaking it into 10 questions and answers taking

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39 See review in Н. МАРЧАЛИС, *Op. cit.*, 51; see also bibliography and review of publications.

40 J. LASICKI, *Op. cit.*, 11-169.

41 PAUL ODERBORN, *Ioannis Basilidis magni Moscoviae ducis vita* (Witebergae: Excudebant haeredes Ioannis Cratonis, 1585), Liber I, H3 v.

into account the tsar's statements, and this very version was published by Lasicki in 1582. Oderborn constructed Rokita's speeches based on Lasicki's edition and, perhaps – we cannot rule this out for sure – some notes by Talvash. Since it was important for him not to show the polemic, but to declare the principles of Protestantism and demonstrate its triumph, Oderborn completely omitted the tsar's answer. In fact, Rokita did not – and could not – convince the tsar. Andrei Ivanov emphasized that Ivan the Terrible simply declared the Czech preacher a deceiver ('a manipulator'), something obvious in the tsar's answer.<sup>42</sup>

One of the issues the Protestants paid particular attention to in their polemics with the Orthodox was the problem of saint veneration. According to Paul Oderborn, Jan Rokita explains why the problem of saint worship was so important to the Reformation: "Since, as the Lord says in the Book of Isaiah, "He has not given His glory to another god" (Isaiah 48:11), we do not therefore pray to saints accepted into Heaven and enjoying the sweetest contemplation of the great Father himself, nor do we call on them when in distress. For we know well that there is no explicit evidence of such a thing in the Scriptures. Thus, there is no covenant or promise from God by which we can honestly defend this superstition of calling upon and worshipping the saints which is very common. For the saints know not of our vows, and the Lord will not give them his glory. Is there anyone among the saints who could do such things?"<sup>43</sup>

This idea gave rise to rejecting the images of saints, both iconic and sculptural. Hence the riots and attacks on churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, by Protestants, "For idolatry, that is, veneration of statues, is a most terrible crime which was long ago condemned by the authority of the Council of Africa, where it was decided that there should be nothing in churches and nothing read in churches except the Canonical Scriptures...<sup>44</sup> Is it not strange for a Christian to be so stupid that he could not contemplate God except through an image, if it is at all possible to draw an image of God? A false image deceives... Through you the knowledge of work of God has been taken away from simple souls and from people who, being abundant with love, anxiously long to see God.

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42 ANDREI IVANOV, *Op.cit.*, 1116.

43 ODERBORN, *Liber I*, G5 v.

44 The African ecclesiastical councils were meetings of bishops at Carthage in 251–525. In this case, Oderborn cites the 33<sup>rd</sup> Rule of the Council of Carthage in 419 which reads, "It is decreed also that nothing be read in the church under the name of the Holy Scriptures except the canonical Scriptures."

Your idols have ears but cannot hear, they have hands but cannot feel. They undermine faith and piety, they make souls blind and bring empty hopes and worries, clouding the clarity of mind so that one cannot see which way leads to immortality and the most pleasant contemplation of the heavenly deity.”<sup>45</sup>

Obviously, such propaganda by Jan Rokita could hardly touch Ivan the Terrible’s heart. After the Russian Orthodox Church gained autocephaly in 1448, the cults of Orthodox saints became a fundamentally important component of religious life. The more saints the Russian kingdom had, the more confident it felt globally. This was necessary for the world’s only sovereign Orthodox state as the Byzantium empire collapsed in 1453, Serbia and Bulgaria were conquered by Turks in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively, and the Georgian kingdoms of Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti and the principality of Samtskhe were too weak and dependent to have historical influence in Europe.<sup>46</sup> Not for nothing were the Orthodox councils (congresses of clergy) held in places where many local cults became nationally recognized during the reign of Ivan the Terrible in 1547 and 1549. In other words, the number of saints officially canonized by the entire nation increased dramatically.

It was issues of church practice, including veneration of saints, icons, and statues that proved to be the main stumbling block to attempts to spread Protestantism in Russia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Russian diplomacy was more successful politically in cooperating with Protestant countries. Denmark was the first and only European country that recognized Ivan the Terrible’s conquests in Livonia in 1562. In 1560–1568 an alliance between Ivan IV and the Swedish King Erik XIV was planned; Prince Magnus of Denmark was crowned King of Livonia in 1569–1578 at the will of Ivan the Terrible. Magnus’ army fought in Livonia together with the Russian army.

But at the same time, it was the Protestants and the ‘Lutheran heresy’ that Ivan the Terrible declared Russia’s primary enemy. In 1563, the main motivation for the campaign against Polotsk, a city in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with a mixed Orthodox-Catholic population, was the spread of ‘Lutheran heresy’ there. The Russian army went to liberate the city

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45 ODERBORN, Liber I, H and next.

46 The Orthodox faith had a great influence on the specify of nation-building in Eastern Europe, see: М. В. ДМИТРИЕВ, «Confessio vs natio. Византийская богословская традиция как прелона в формировании дискурсов этнонациональной идентичности средневековой Руси», *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, no. 1 (2022): 83–104.

from heretics and establish the triumph of Orthodoxy.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps such an acute reaction to the Reformation was caused by the fact that the 'Latins' (Catholics) were traditional, age-old and habitual opponents, while Lutheranism was perceived as a dangerous new heresy.

European Protestants, however, could not miss their chance to retaliate. While the Catholic Church considered a union on the model of the Florence Union of 1439 a solution to the problem of Orthodoxy, Protestants proposed much more radical scenarios. One example is Heinrich Staden from Germany who came up with the idea of some kind of an execution to denounce Orthodox saints. According to him, Ivan the Terrible and his son, Tsarevich Ivan, had to be captured in Moscow, then taken to the Alps, to the sources of the Rhine and the Elbe. Russian captives had to be brought there as well and killed in front of the tsar, then put on logs, tied by the ankles, 30-50 per log, and allowed to float down the rivers. The tsar would wail and pray, yet his pleading would not help. According to Staden, through this punishment, firstly, Ivan would be convinced that tyranny is bad ("then they should put the killed tied to logs into the water and let them float so that the Grand Prince could see that no one should rely on their own power"). Secondly, this action would symbolize the triumph of Protestantism over Orthodoxy ("...his prayer and worship is a sin, for the Grand Prince cries out to God through Nicholas and other deceased saints"). Having seen the shaming of Ivan's fruitless prayer to his saints, the Protestants, according to Staden, would be convinced of the rightness of their church, while the Orthodox would feel disappointed.<sup>48</sup>

By the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the differences between Catholic and Protestant views of the Muscovite church had largely converged. In Polish King Stephen Báthory's campaigns against Russia (1579, 1580, 1581) Catholics and Protestants fought together. Báthory had an international army comprised of Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, and Germans from various lands of the Holy Roman Empire, Livonian and Courland contingents, mercenaries from Hungary, France, England, Scotland, and Italy, etc. In the north of Estland, Swedes fought against Russians. They were all interested in the characteristics of their enemy, the Muscovites, and the first among them was the church. In 1582, the German pastor Paul Oderborn published

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47 SERGEI BOGATYREV, "Battle for the Divine Sophia? Ivan IV's Campaigns against Polotsk and Novgorod", *The Military and Society in Russia, 1450-1917* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 325-363.

48 Г. ШТАДЕН, *Записки о Московии*, 1 (Москва: Древлехранилище, 2008), 317-319.

a book describing the Orthodox Church of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Tatars.<sup>49</sup> Oderborn's work was reprinted<sup>50</sup> several times and included in collections of essays on Muscovy combined with the works of other authors: David Chitray,<sup>51</sup> Alexander Gwagnini,<sup>52</sup> and Jan Lasicki.<sup>53</sup> Oderborn's treatise on the religion of the Ruthenians began to be included in the 'country studies' compilations on the lands of the future Eastern Europe. People read them in various countries, and they shaped the views of the Orthodox as schismatics 'fundamentally alien' to Europeans.

After the mission of the papal legate Antonio Possevino failed in 1581-1582, the Orthodox clergy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth headed by Michael Ragoza, Gedeon Baloban and Cyril Terletsky took up the idea of a union between the Orthodox and the Catholics. The priests of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Vatican had opposing views on the essence of this union. In 1596, the Brest Union was signed which seemed to alleviate confrontation between the churches in Eastern Europe but in fact aggravated the conflict. According to historian Mikhail Dmitriev, it even caused the religious wars in Eastern Europe in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> However, this is an issue to be studied separately.

49 PAUL ODERBORN, *De Rvssorum religione, ritibus nuptiarum, fvnerum, victu, vestitu, &c.: et de Tartarorum religione ac moribus* (Rostock: Excudebat Stephanus Myliander, 1582). For an incomplete review of editions see Н. А. Лукьяненко, «Издание сочинений Пауля Одерборна», Вестник Московского государственного областного университета. Серия: История и политические науки, no. 2 (2007): 153–155.

50 PAUL ODERBORN, *De Russorum religione, ritibus nuptiarum, funerum, victu, vestitu etc. et de Tartarorum religione ac moribus vera et luculenta narratio* (Lipsiae: Georgius Defnerus imprimebat, 1586).

51 DAVIDIS CHYTRAEI, *Oratio de statu ecclesiarum hoc tempore in Graecia, Asia, Boemia, &c. Epistolae Constantinopolitanae & aliae circiter XXX. Qvibus in hac editione aliquot epistolae Graecae ac Latinae, Confessio fidei a Gennadio Patr. Mahometi II. Imp. Turc. exhibita, De Russorum & Tartarorum religione ac moribus [auctore Paulo Oderbornio], & veterum Borussorum sacrificijs [auctore Io. Meletio], & alia accesserunt. Adiuncta item Epistola Constantinopolitanae Ecclesiae ad Boemos* (Francofurti: Haeredes Andreae Wecheli, 1583).

52 ALESSANDRO GUAGNINI, *Rerum Polonicarum Tomi tres Quorum Primus Omnium Poloniae Regum, A Lecho Primo Gentis Duce, Ad Stephanum Bathorem* (Francofurti: Excudebat Ioann. Wechelus: impensis Sigis. Feyerabendij, 1584).

53 *De russorum religione, ritibus nuptiarum, funerum, &c., et de tartarorum religione ac moribus* (Lipsiae, ex officina Abrahami Lambergi, 1589).

54 М. Д. ДМИТРИЕВ, «Религиозные войны в Речи Посполитой? К вопросу о последствиях Брестской унии 1596 года», *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, no. 1 (2008): 3–22.

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