

Iosif of Volokolamsk and Serapion of Novgorod in Conflict

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After enjoying success as a monastic founder and defender of traditional Orthodox doctrines and practices, Iosif of Volokolamsk (1439–1515) found himself excommunicated in 1509 by his ecclesiastical superior, Archbishop Serapion of Novgorod (d. 1516). Following an appeal to Metropolitan Simon and Grand Prince Vasiliï III Ivanovich, the decision was overturned and Archbishop Serapion was himself stripped of his office and sent to monastic confinement. Two years later, however, Iosif fell out of favor with Vasiliï III; Metropolitan Simon made peace with Serapion, by order of the grand prince. No such reconciliation of the two antagonists seems to have occurred, except in the imagination of their respective hagiographers. Indeed, Iosif resolutely resisted the efforts of his close friends to accept forgiveness from Serapion, a stance that significantly diminished Iosif's stature in church and society. Tensions between the church (including monasteries) and the grand prince of Moscow over land ownership, the subjugation of Novgorod to Muscovite control, the erosion of the appanage (*udel'nyi*) system to the benefit of the grand princes of Moscow, and the campaign to prevent the recrudescence of the dissident movement commonly known as the Judaizers are the broader context in which the conflict between Iosif and Serapion played out.¹ A. A. Zimin and A. I. Alekseev, among others, have examined the political and personal dimensions of the conflict.² This article proposes to analyze the conflict, especially its canonical aspects, from the perspectives of the principal participants and of those who some forty to fifty years later wrote about the conflict in the interest of the Church and its major institutions.

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¹There is extensive scholarship on the Judaizers. A useful study highlighting interpretive problems about the movement's genesis and the possible influence of Judaism on its development is offered by Andrei Pliguzov, "Archbishop Gennadiï and the Heresy of the Judaizers," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 16 (December 1992): 269–88.

²A. A. Zimin, *Krupnaia feodal'naia votchina i sotsial'no-politicheskaia bor'ba v Rossii (konets XV–XVI v.)* (Moscow, 1977), 75–100; A. I. Alekseev, *Sochineniia Iosifa Volotskogo v kontekste polemiki 1480–1540-kh gg.* (St. Petersburg, 2010), 33–37.

The conflict moved through three phases: the first concerns Iosif's decision to have his monastery transferred from the control of Prince Fedor Borisovich to Vasilii III, which led to Iosif's suspension from the clerical state and excommunication by Archbishop Serapion; the second is centred on Iosif's appeal and the canonical censures applied to Archbishop Serapion by the metropolitan's council; the third focuses on the issue of reconciliation. In each of the phases Iosif resorts to ecclesiastical law and tradition to press his case for justice. Before proceeding to an analysis of these dimensions of the conflict, I will look briefly at the sources and the personalities involved.

Several sources document the conflict, including letters written in self-defense by Iosif and Serapion, chronicle accounts, and three works of hagiography.³ None of them was written by a disinterested author, and, with the exception of the letters, none is contemporaneous with the conflict. The most valuable sources are the letters, even though neither Iosif nor Serapion provided neutral reports of the conflict in which they were involved.⁴ Serapion's letter to Metropolitan Simon was written in the summer of 1509 after his removal from office. In the letter, Serapion offers a spirited defense of his actions, raises strong objections against the trial proceedings which led to his demotion, and castigates Iosif for slanderous and unbecoming conduct, calling him "a second Judas," "a calumniator," "like that former one who previously was the daystar but now is cast down for his pride and is called darkness, that is, Satan."⁵ He cites or alludes to ecclesiastical canons and numerous scriptural passages to bolster his claims. Iosif also wrote to the metropolitan, but with an entirely different purpose. His letter was written after his excommunication and before Serapion's letter, and outlines his case against the archbishop.⁶ Iosif's letter to his friend

³Iosif's letters, "Poslanie Ivanu Ivanovichu Tret'iakovu" and "Poslanie Borisu Vasil'evichu Kutuzovu," are in *Poslaniia Iosifa Volotskogo (PIV)*, ed. A. A. Zimin and Ia. S. Lur'e (Moscow and Leningrad, 1959), 187–208 and 208–27, respectively. The letters provide the text or perhaps an abstract of the synodal condemnation of Serapion, couched in rhetorical flourishes typical of such ecclesiastical proceedings. Serapion's letter to Metropolitan Simon is an appendix to his vita, and can be found in G. N. Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoi Literatury (TODRL)* 21 (1965): 160–63. A slightly different redaction is in *PIV*, 331–33. Relatively similar accounts of the conflict are found in *Sofiiskaia vtoraiia letopis'*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL)* 6, vyp. 2:386–88; *Voskresenskaia letopis'*, *PSRL* 8:252; and *L'ovskaia letopis'*, *PSRL* 20/1:381–82. A somewhat fuller account is given in A. A. Zimin, ed., *Ioasafskaia letopis'* (Moscow, 1957), 155–56, which is biased in Iosif's favor. Two vitae were written for Iosif, one by Savva Chernyi, and an anonymous life now attributed to Lev Filolog. Savva Chernyi's "Life of Iosif" is found in codex GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 43r–103v; significant portions of that codex were published by Archbishop Pitirim ("Volokolamskii Paterik," *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 10 [1973]: 177–222). For an English translation see T. Allan Smith, *The Volokolamsk Paterikon: A Window on a Muscovite Monastery* (Toronto, 2008), 143–94. The anonymous vita was published by K. I. Nevostruev, "Zhitie Iosifa, sostavlennoe neizvestnym," *Chteniia: Moskovskoe obshchestvo liubitelei dukhovnogo prosveshcheniia (ChOLDP)* 2 (1865); and S. A. Belokurov, "Zhitie prepodobnogo Iosifa Volokolamskogo, sostavlennoe neizvestnym," *Chteniia v obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete (ChOIDR)* 2:3 (1903): 13–47. The sole vita for Archbishop Serapion was published by Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 147–65. For a discussion of the relationship of this life with the anonymous "Life of Iosif" and the question of authorship see Donald Ostrowski, "Direction of Borrowing between *Vitae*: The *Life of Iosif of Volokolamsk* by Lev Filolog and the *Life of Serapion, Archbishop of Novgorod*," *Palaeoslavica* 13:1 (2005): 109–41.

⁴The letters are burdened by invective and hyperbole, a not unusual rhetorical feature of the time, but nonetheless complicating subsequent interpretation. See David Goldfrank, "Litigious, Pedagogical, Redemptive, Lethal: Iosif Volotskii's Calculated Insults," *Russian Review* 75 (January 2016): 86–106.

⁵Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 160.

⁶*PIV*, 185–86.

Ivan Ivanovich Tret'iakov, likely written between December 1510 and January 1511, explains his refusal to be reconciled with Serapion.⁷ Sometime after this letter but before April 1511, when the metropolitan and Serapion made peace, Iosif wrote a letter to another friend, Boris Vasil'evich Kutuzov.⁸ In it, Iosif focused on his reasons for having his monastery transferred to the protection of the grand prince. The letters were used by the chroniclers and particularly by the hagiographers in their accounts of the conflict.⁹

Generally speaking, the chronicles offer laconic summaries of the first two phases of the conflict, and include some of the church canons which Iosif himself used in arguing his case. They do not mention the third, more personal and theological phase, Iosif's refusal to be reconciled with Serapion.

The third group of sources are the two vitae for Iosif and one vita for Serapion. A saint's vita is a form of rhetorical writing governed by religious principles. It rests on evidence chosen and interpreted by the hagiographer and organized in narrative form to persuade readers that the protagonist led a praiseworthy life deserving of veneration and imitation. The religious purposes of vitae can vitiate their value as historical sources, but used carefully vitae provide valuable and reliable information for constructing a reasonable interpretation of a given moment in the past.¹⁰

Savva Chernyi offers a summary of the Iosif-Serapion conflict in his 1546 "Life of Iosif Volotskii."¹¹ The "Life" was commissioned by Metropolitan Makarii for inclusion in the *Great Menalogion* and as such represents the authoritative retelling of the conflict for the church. The well-written and straightforward vita ably fulfills its primary purpose of glorifying its protagonist as an exemplary Christian and monk. Savva's affection for his former religious superior is evident throughout the vita, which painstakingly chronicles the major events of Iosif's life, concentrating on his intellectual gifts and his many public accomplishments, including the establishment of a new community, his mediation in princely conflict and his generosity to famine-stricken peasants.¹² He shows Iosif engaged in a number of conflict situations which have secular and ecclesiastical political overtones, including the one under examination. As can be expected, Iosif emerges as an innocent

⁷*PIV*, 268.

⁸*PIV*, 276.

⁹Similarities between "Slovo 12" and "Poslanie Ivanu Ivanovichu Tret'iakovu" have long been noted. Iosif may have written "Slovo 12" to refute his own excommunication by Serapion (*PIV*, 270). Alekseev argues that "Poslanie Tret'iakovu" and "Poslanie Nifontu" derive from "Slovo 12" (*Sochineniia*, 262–72). See also A. I. Pliguzov, "'Kniga na eretikov' Iosifa Volotskogo," in *Istoriia i paleografiia* (Moscow, 1993), 123–28; and David Goldfrank, "The Anatomy of the Key Codices and the Ontogeny of *Prosvetitel'*," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 49:2–3 (2015): 169–70. For "Slovo 12" see Iosif Volotskii, *Prosvetitel'*, 4th ed. (Kazan', 1903), 465–74; translation and reorganization by argument in David Goldfrank, "Adversus Haereticos Novgorodensis: Iosif Volotskii's Rhetorical Syllogisms," in *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowskii*, ed. Brian J. Boeck et al. (Bloomington, IN, 2012), 254–74.

¹⁰A classic application in the Russian context is V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik*, (1871; reprint ed. Moscow, 2003).

¹¹The episode in question is found in Pitirim, "Volokolamskii Paterik," 203–6 (GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 72r–80v); and Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 167–75. In addition to Savva Chernyi, others connected to Iosif's monastery preserved key sources of the conflict in their *sborniki*, namely Nifont Kormilitsyn, Feodosii, Evfimii and Vassian Koshka (*PIV*, 101–14).

¹²The tone is set in the prologue. See Pitirim, "Volokolamskii Paterik," 192 (GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 44r–44v); and Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 145.

victim of Prince Fedor's machinations, and his patience and reasonableness triumph over the hasty but ultimately excusable actions of Serapion. The "Anonymous Life of Iosif," composed in the mid-sixteenth century, offers a summary of the conflict, preceded by a touching scene where Iosif offers Prince Fedor advice on the proper management of his lands and peasants, to forestall depredations of the monastery. The anonymous *vita* strikes a balanced, conciliatory tone toward all involved in the conflict. A third literary portrait of Iosif, the "Funeral Oration" written by his nephew Dosifei Toporkov, does not refer to the conflict, although it does draw attention to efforts to destroy Iosif's writings and otherwise defame him posthumously.¹³

Not surprisingly, the "Life of Archbishop Serapion" presents a very different interpretation of the conflict, decidedly pro-Serapion in its approach. Like Savva Chernyi, the author of Serapion's *vita* considers Prince Fedor Borisovich to have initiated the conflict at the stereotypical "instigation of the devil." As the *vita* unfolds, however, Iosif, convicted of disobedience to his ecclesiastical superior, is presented as a person who vengefully conspires against Serapion and brings about his demotion unjustly. No consensus exists on the date or authorship of Serapion's *vita*.¹⁴

Iosif was tonsured in the monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God, founded by Pafnutii Borovskii in 1444 in Serpukhov principality, held at the time by Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka. Pafnutii's affection for Shemiaka did not waver during the latter's struggle against Prince Vasilii II Vasil'evich for the grand princely throne, and after Shemiaka's demise Pafnutii commemorated him in the monastery, contrary to the orders of Metropolitan Iona.¹⁵ When Iosif arrived in Borovsk around 1459, Serpukhov had been incorporated into the domain of Vasilii II for three years.¹⁶

In 1477, at the insistence of Grand Prince Ivan III, Iosif became the hegumen of the Borovsk monastery; however, he abandoned this office in 1479 and took up residence in his home territory of Volok, where he would establish his own monastery. Volok was the patrimony of Prince Boris Vasil'evich, whose relationship with his older brother Ivan III

¹³The "Funeral Oration" (*Nadgrobnoe slovo*) is found in GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 119r–138r; and Nevostruev, *ChOLDR* 2 (1865): 153–84. For the English translation see Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 119–36.

¹⁴Ostrowski plausibly suggested 1559 as a possible composition date, connected with the transfer of Serapion's relics ("Direction of Borrowing," 133). For other suggestions see R. P. Dmitrieva, "Zhitie Serapiona, arkhiepiskopa Novgorodskogo," in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, vyp. 2, pt. 1, ed. D. S. Likhachev (Leningrad, 1988), 324–30; and Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 150.

¹⁵*PIV*, 270–71. There is no evidence that Pafnutii took sides in the civil war. His refusal to recognize Iona as metropolitan, whom Vasilii II appointed, may have caused some momentary difficulties in his otherwise cordial relations with the grand princely household. See "Otvēt na poslanie Iosifa Volotskogo Ivanu Ivanovichu Tret'iakovu" (*PIV*, 365–66).

¹⁶On the political and ecclesiastical situation in the mid-fifteenth century see Gustave Alef, *The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy: The Age of Ivan III* (Berlin, 1986), 42–46; Ia. S. Lur'e, *Dve istorii Rusi XV veka* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 93–108; A. I. Pliguzov, "Ot Florentiiskoi unii k avtokefalii russkoi tserkvi," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995): 513–30; Donald Ostrowski *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier* (Cambridge, England, 1998), 138–43; Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, England, 2007), 263–97; and O. A. Abelentseva, *Mitropolita Iona i ustanovlenie avtokefalii Russkoi Tserkvi* (Moscow-St. Petersburg, 2009), 193–96, 198–202.

was strained.¹⁷ In his letter to the monks of Pafnutii's monastery explaining his sudden departure, Iosif referred to a disagreement with Grand Prince Ivan III Vasil'evich concerning the proper treatment of peasant laborers.¹⁸ Prince Boris Vasil'evich actively supported Iosif in the establishment of his monastery and remained a lifelong patron.

According to his vita, Serapion came from Pekhorok, an unremarkable village near Moscow. After some basic education, during which he developed a love for spiritual things, Serapion was forced into marriage by his parents, and a short time later he was ordained to the priesthood. When his wife and both parents had died, Serapion entered the monastery of the Dormition in Dubenko, which had been founded by Sergii of Radonezh. His devotion to monastic life so impressed his fellow monks that he eventually became their hegumen. Like Iosif, Serapion resigned from this position, though not to found a monastery himself. Rather, he moved to the monastery of the Holy Trinity, also founded by Sergii of Radonezh. When its hegumen Simon was raised to the metropolitan's throne, Serapion succeeded him as hegumen. The vita shows Serapion successfully interceding on behalf of some boyars whom Grand Prince Ivan III Vasil'evich planned to execute and earning the grand prince's admiration as a result. The vita reports that Serapion along with other leading religious figures were summoned to a council in Moscow to deal with a question about monastic landholdings.¹⁹ Serapion is shown listening to both sides of the argument without taking sides.²⁰ On January 15, 1506, Serapion was installed as archbishop of Novgorod and Pskov. The vita stresses Serapion's great humility and generosity, and records three miracles he performed during his lifetime. He was admired by poor and powerful alike.

Throughout his adult life, Iosif had a complicated relationship with authority. His confrontation with Grand Prince Ivan III mentioned above is an early example. In a letter traditionally attributed to him, Iosif hinted at Ivan III's complicity in the death of his brother Prince Andrei Vasil'evich the Elder, who died under mysterious circumstances in Uglich on

¹⁷On the tensions between them and the gradual devolution of the Voloč principality to the grand prince see Alef, *Origins of Muscovite Autocracy*, 163–76. When Boris Vasil'evich's son and heir Ivan died childless in 1503, the Ruza half of the *udel* passed to Ivan III; the Voloč half went to Vasili III in 1515 when Fedor Borisovich also died childless.

¹⁸Having referred to his initial unsuccessful effort to secure fair treatment of the monastery orphans, Iosif wrote, "I sent brethren to petition, but he did not suffer them in the least. I myself went and petitioned, and he retorted that he did not want me to be concerned with the monastery orphans, whereas to me it seemed to be something for my office of hegumen. I grew fearful of the one who said: 'their blood I shall require from your hand.' So because of this I left the hegumenate, and I departed from the monastery for this reason" ("Poslanie monakham Pafnut'eva monastyria," *PIV*, 144).

¹⁹Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 155–56: "Not much later there was an order of the autocrat Ivan, who held the sceptre of the Rus' kingdom, for consecrated men with the archbishop to assemble in the capital city Moscow and consider the question whether it was not suitable for monasteries to have villages and ploughlands." The Council of 1503 has been the subject of much controversy particularly with respect to the topic of monastic and ecclesiastical landholdings. Representing the opinion that the topic was not raised is Donald Ostrowski in numerous publications, beginning with "A 'Fontological' Investigation of the Muscovite Church Council of 1503" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1977). See also idem, "500 let spustia: Tserkovnyi Sobor 1503 g.," *Palaeoslavica* 11 (2003): 214–39. Representative of the opposing view is A. I. Alekseev, *Pod znakom kontsa vremen: Ocherki russkoi religioznosti kontsa XIV–nachala XVI vv.* (St. Petersburg, 2002), 284–300.

²⁰Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 157: "In these discussions hegumen Serapion of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery reasonably and well distributed the better things to the better, looking at both sides and finding profit."

November 6, 1493.²¹ Historians of medieval Rus' are familiar with his strong criticism of Ivan III and irritation with Vasili III for their laxity with regard to the Judaizers. Bishops were not exempt from Iosif's criticisms. In his "Letter to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal" Iosif laments the failure of bishops to defend orthodox doctrine and appeals to Nifont to assume leadership.²² He then attacks Metropolitan Zosima, complaining:

where the divine bishops and wonderworkers Peter and Aleksei and many other great and orthodox bishops were seated, on this very throne now sits a nasty, malicious wolf, cloaked in a shepherd's clothing, who in rank is a bishop, but in will is Judas the traitor and a companion of devils, who has sullied even the great episcopal throne, teaching Judaism, and others he corrupts with sodomite filth; a baneful serpent, the desolation of abomination is in the holy place, an apostate from Christ.²³

These harsh accusations were part of an ultimately successful attempt to have Zosima removed from office and may be regarded as a prelude to Iosif's conflict with Archbishop Serapion, although admittedly the circumstances differ considerably.

Iosif had a relatively good relationship with Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod. According to the "Life" attributed to Lev Filolog, Gennadii named Iosif his vicar and gave the monastery some of the income from church taxes and fees.²⁴ Iosif allied himself with Gennadii in the campaign against the Novgorod heretics and highly praised Gennadii's efforts to extirpate them from Novgorod; but when Gennadii was himself deposed in 1504 for simony, Iosif remained silent.²⁵

Phase one of the conflict saw Iosif and his territorial lord, Prince Fedor, at odds over the precise rights and obligations of the latter with respect to Iosif's monastery. The facts as Iosif saw them are conveyed in his letters to Tret'iakov and Kutuzov. Before he became the reigning prince in Volok, Fedor seems to have had cordial relations with Iosif, who acted as an advisor and advocate. But this changed once Fedor's mother and brother died.²⁶

²¹See "Poslanie vel'mozhe Ioannu o smerti kniazia," *PIV*, 154–60, with commentary, 248–51. While it seems likely that Iosif was the author of this letter, L. E. Morozova and A. I. Pliguzov offer strong arguments for dating the letter's composition to sometime after December 1537 and before the end of the 1540s. See A. I. Pliguzov, "O khronologii poslanii Iosifa Volotskogo," *Russkii feodal'nyi arkhiv* 5 (Moscow, 1992): 1044–46.

²²"Poslanie Episkopu Nifontu Suzdal'skomu," *PIV*, 160–68, 168–72. In one passage Iosif writes: "And now, my lord, there is no one to become firm about this except you, our lord, if you strive to become firm for Christ and for the most pure Theotokos and all Orthodox Christendom. Many take profit from you my lord and all are fortified on your account; for you are the head of all and we all look to you, through you the Lord God will purify his church and all Orthodox Christendom of the Jewish and perniciously filthy heresy" (*PIV*, 161).

²³*PIV*, 160–61.

²⁴"Zhitie prep. Iosifa Volokolamskogo sostavlennoe neizvestnym," *ChOIDR* 2:3 (1903): 32.

²⁵See "Skazanie o novoiaivvsheisia eresi ...," in N. A. Kazakova and Ia. S. Lur'e, *Anti-feodal'nye ereticheskie dvizheniia na Rusi XIV–nachala XVI veka (AFED)* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1955), 271–72. The silence may have been a tactical manoeuvre on Iosif's part, since he was on the verge of having his plans for an anti-heresy synod realized. Thomas Seebohm obliquely criticizes Iosif's failure to use his newly acquired influence to assist Gennadii, and notes that despite their past collaboration it was bishop Nifont of Suzdal', not Gennadii, whom Iosif identified as the leader of Orthodoxy in the wake of Zosima's apostasy (as Iosif saw it). Thomas Seebohm, *Ratio und Charism. Ansätze und Ausbildung eines philosophischen und wissenschaftlichen Weltverständnisses im Moskauer Russland* (Bonn, 1977), 298.

²⁶"When after Prince Boris Vasil'evich Prince Fedor wanted to divide the patrimony with his brother, not a single boyar or clerk wanted to serve him, apart from Kur and Rtishch. And he began to come to us in the

As Zimin observed, when Fedor's younger brother Ivan Borisovich died in 1503, Iosif helped to have Ivan's domain pass to Grand Prince Ivan III Vasil'evich rather than to Fedor. Over the next six years, Fedor did not donate property to Iosif's monastery, and the Vozmitskii monastery became the court monastery of the Vokok princes.²⁷ Iosif accused Prince Fedor of abandoning his parents' charitable practices and indulging in rapacious extortion throughout the principality. After Prince Boris Vasil'evich and his wife had died, Iosif complained that "Prince Fedor Borisovich meddled in everything."

What God sends us, he does not grant, and one thing he asks for free, another he takes at half-value. And if we do not obey him, he beats the monks with the knout, and he litigates against me. Sire, we feared him and so gave to him; he took what he wanted from what was given to the monastery—horses, arms, clothing. Then, sire, he began wanting money and other things, and he started to send to us to demand money, sire, and we sent him 600 rubles and after this he still sent for money, and we sent him, sire, 40 rubles, and he has had that money for 10 years already. We sent to demand the money back, but he wanted to beat the monk Gerasim Chernyi with a knout, and he gave no money.²⁸

The rest of the principality fared even worse:

Sire, Prince Fedor Borisovich neither fears God nor is ashamed before people. After his father Prince Boris Vasil'evich, he laid the beginning for his reign. First, he began to plunder all his monasteries. In Vozmishche whatever money was in the treasury he took all of it; secondly, he sent for money, and although there were only 30 altyns in the treasury, he took this too. The startets of Levkei had not yet died, and he sent Mikula Voronin, and in the treasury there were only 14 rubles, and these too he took. In Selizharov there were two silver cups, and he took them. And the grand prince sent ten rubles to Selizharov in memory of his brother Prince Ivan and forty rubles to Selizharov to pay the monastic debt on behalf of Prince Ivan, but Prince Fedor took the money away for himself and barred (him) from the monastery. ... They brought his mother to Vozmishche to bury her and she was covered with a fur, and he entered the monastery and ordered the fur be taken and brought away to him. And already 10 years have passed since he began to reign, and he pillages the monasteries in this way for everything.²⁹

monastery to petition and lament over this, that I might win the boyars and clerks back to him: 'I am your man so long as I am alive, I am happy to share my livestock with you. And may the Most Pure be my witness for you in this. But if you do not have [boyars and clerks] take up residence in the patrimony, it must perish.' And that was half a year ago, and sometimes he came himself, lamenting, other times he sent Kur or Rtishch with the same words and tears. And we, according to our sins, believed him and won back boyars and clerks (to him). And as he obtained the patrimony with these people, he was patient a while, and then he began to pillage the monasteries and the peasantry, but he still did not pillage us, for the sake of his mother and brother. And when God took his mother and brother he forgot his oath and wanted to pillage our monastery more than all monasteries. All the laity and monks began to tremble at such a merciless and rapacious lord, and they were on their guard for thievery and torture. But as we were not about to give him (anything), he began to scream and say: 'I shall defend myself against this riffraff.' And he thought with the archimandrite and Bolotov and Koptev to destroy the monastery through such treachery" (*PIV*, 215).

²⁷Zimin, *Krupnaia*, 75–77.

²⁸*PIV*, 210. According to Iosif, Fedor also took a precious pearl valued at 150 rubles and two vestments of patterned silk cloth, albs, stoles, cuffs, and a silver thurible, among other items (*PIV*, 211).

²⁹*PIV*, 212.

As the editors of the letter point out, Iosif is stretching the truth here.³⁰ What he may be describing, albeit in a very negative, exaggerated form, are the patronal rights that Fedor felt were his. Prince Fedor was the heir of the co-founder of the Dormition monastery in Volokolamsk, and would have enjoyed certain privileges with respect to the maintenance of the monastery and a share of its income; unfortunately, the precise nature of his patronal rights and obligations are difficult to determine. It is clear, however, that Iosif did not share Fedor's understanding.³¹ It is unfortunate for posterity that Iosif does not clarify his own understanding in more temperate language. Neither does he refer to any canons or even ecclesiastical customs that might corroborate his understanding of founder rights.

Iosif's efforts to contact Archbishop Serapion for assistance were thwarted by a travel ban imposed because of plague in Novgorod.³² In any event, Iosif did not expect much from the archbishop, whose own officials suffered the same ill-treatment from Prince Fedor.³³ In light of the strained relations between the archbishop and the prince, Iosif's subsequent claims that the two conspired to have Iosif removed seem dubious.

In addition to what he felt was the outright thievery of Prince Fedor, Iosif raised another matter that would lead him to take the momentous decision to seek the protection of the grand prince. He claimed that Archimandrite Aleksei Piliemov of the Vozmitskii monastery, motivated by envy, persuaded the prince to drive Iosif and his monks out of their monastery and then plunder it unopposed.³⁴ Faced either with abandoning the monastery or resisting Fedor's actions, Iosif sought protection from the grand prince. Iosif's petition to the metropolitan and grand prince was successful, and for the next two years normal relations with the archbishop prevailed.³⁵ Iosif justified his decision by referring primarily to similar instances from church history where a victim of injustice at the hands of a lesser official appealed to a higher official for redress; canon law *per se* is not the basis of his argument at this point.³⁶

Phase two of the conflict followed swiftly. During Lent of 1509, Archbishop Serapion had a letter delivered to Iosif announcing his suspension and excommunication. While confined to bed because of illness, Iosif wrote a complaint to Metropolitan Simon and

³⁰*PIV*, 277.

³¹A. I. Pliguzov claimed that Prince Fedor did not inherit the full rights of a founder. See Pliguzov, *Polemika v russkoi tserkvi pervoi tret'i XVI stoletia* (Moscow, 2002), 296–97. Tom Dykstra suggested that Fedor's actions fell within the customary parameters of a founder, who regarded the monastery as his property to be disposed of as he saw fit (Dykstra, *Russian Monastic Culture: "Josephism" and the Iosifo-Volokolamsk Monastery, 1479–1607* [Munich, 2006], 24). Analogous issues concerning the rights of lay founders of monasteries and churches in the Byzantine Empire are discussed in John Philip Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, 1987).

³²*PIV*, 194. Savva Chernyi includes this detail in his account (Pitirim, "Volokolamskii Paterik," 204 [GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 74v]; Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 170). The plague lasted from 1507 until the end of 1509 (*PSRL* 4:186).

³³"Whether it was possible for him to defend us from Prince Fedor or not, he could not defend his tithe collectors and frequently he sent concerning them, and Prince Fedor did not look at his charters, and sometimes he ordered to beat them, other times to abuse priests and not to pay the duties. And there was always immeasurable animosity between them" ("Poslanie Ivanu Ivanovichu Tret'iakovu," *PIV*, 194).

³⁴*PIV*, 215.

³⁵"Poslanie Ivanu Ivanovichu Tret'iakovu," *PIV*, 194. See also "Poslanie Borisu Vasil'evichu Kutuzovu," *PIV*, 220.

³⁶*PIV*, 217–19.

Grand Prince Vasilii III Ivanovich, who convened a synod of hierarchs and monastic superiors to examine the case.³⁷ Serapion was summoned to appear. The grand prince is thought to have presided, the archbishop of Rostov, Iosif's brother Vassian, was named chief interrogator. He was assisted by Hegumen Nil Grek of Bogoiavlenskii monastery.³⁸ The trial proceeded as follows according to Savva's narrative, which is a much abbreviated version of Iosif's account in his letter to Kutuzov:³⁹

The sovereign commanded his father Metropolitan Simon to have Vassian, the archbishop of Rostov, interrogate Archbishop Serapion. "Tell us," he said, "why did you excommunicate Hegumen Iosif? What was his crime in your view and on which canons did you base your excommunication?" They set before him the Divine Canons. He told the sovereign, "I did not petition you to send me to Novgorod as archbishop, but I do have power over my own monk, to bind and to loose." They questioned him a second time. "Tell us what Hegumen Iosif's sin was and on account of what sin you excommunicated him and according to which canons?" The archbishop remained silent. They asked him again a third time but he said nothing in reply, nor did he speak to this matter again. The sovereign and the most holy Simon, metropolitan of all Russia, and the entire council saw how Serapion held his ground and would not answer anything. In the Divine Canons of the Holy Fathers of the Council of Carthage, canon 134, it is written that "If a bishop deprives some person of communion who has not been convicted of some sin, then let the bishop himself be excommunicated." On the basis of the Divine Canons and all the Sacred Councils, they released and reinstated Hegumen Iosif who, contrary to the Canons and through no fault of his own, had been dismissed and excommunicated. But the one who had bound Iosif, Archbishop Serapion, they deposed and handed over to excommunication. After a little time had passed, Archbishop Serapion and Hegumen Iosif accepted mutual forgiveness. Hegumen Iosif breathed freely from the whole great misfortune and he gave glory to God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

Savva omits an important fact from his narrative, which incidentally is also absent from the chronicle accounts of the trial. According to Iosif, Archbishop Serapion's letter removing him from office contained the following statement: "You have delivered your monastery over into the grand principality, you have departed from the heavenly and gone to the earthly [kingdom]."⁴¹ Iosif claims that this statement was read aloud at the trial, as further proof of Serapion's temerity.⁴² If an authentic utterance of Serapion, it would certainly

³⁷"Poslanie mitropolitu Simonu," *PIV*, 185–86.

³⁸*PIV*, 222.

³⁹"Poslanie Borisu Vasil'evichu Kutuzovu," *PIV*, 222–26. This lengthy passage includes the condemnation of Serapion, the metropolitan's letter lifting the excommunication from Iosif, and the interrogation of the co-conspirators Piliemov and Krivoborskii. Iosif offers a still briefer version in his letter to Tret'iakov (*PIV*, 192–93).

⁴⁰Pitirim, "Volokolamskii Paterik," 206 (GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 79v–80v); Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 174–75. Similar summary accounts of the trial are given in *PSRL* 6, vyp. 2:col. 387–88; *PSRL* 22:382; and *Ioasafskaia Letopis'*, 155–56.

⁴¹*PIV*, 221. Iosif helpfully interprets this statement to identify Prince Fedor as the heavenly ruler, the grand prince as the earthly ruler.

⁴²*PIV*, 222–23.

have jeopardized his chances for a fair hearing. Expunging it from the record, however, removed an embarrassing political stain on Serapion's character, important in light of his later canonization.

All accounts of the trial do agree that the metropolitan and the assembled hierarchs accepted Iosif's arguments on Serapion's negligence and unwarranted imposition of such severe censures, and they also agree that the canonical basis for the decision to depose Serapion was canon 134 of the Council of Carthage. Iosif himself relied on that canon as he elaborated his self-defense to Kutuzov, but he also drew on a number of other non-judicial precedents.



Serapion's Ouster from the Archiepiscopal See of Novgorod, *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod* 18:152. Reproduced by permission of Akteon Publishers.

A problem arises, however, with the text of the canon itself, which in an early Slavic collection reads: "As long as his own bishop will not communicate with the one [uncanonically] excommunicated, the other bishops should have no communion with that bishop, so that the bishop may be more careful not to charge anyone with what he cannot

prove by documentary evidence to others.”⁴³ Iosif’s version reads: “If any bishop excommunicates his cleric, who has not been accused of sin, but condemns him only by his own conscience (*no tokmo ot svoeia sovesti*)—he who deprived communion with him shall be excommunicated by the other bishops, so that it is maintained that he cannot quickly speak in any way to accuse him.”⁴⁴ He cited the canon a number of times, and the chronicles which report the trial cited a version of canon 134 similar to Iosif’s.⁴⁵ As is evident, the phrase “*no tokmo ot svoeia sovesti*” is an interpolation. It is possible that Iosif himself is responsible, since it represents his opinion about Serapion’s actions against him; however, it also respects the intention of the canon, which forbids bishops from making accusations without evidence, willfully. Another, longer insertion occurs in the canon quoted in the letter to Kutuzov: “if a bishop, *not in accordance with a divine canon, nor the law, but rather unreasonably, led by bitterness and pusillanimity*, dismisses anyone from holy orders with a condemnation and excommunication, let the senior hierarch make for that very bishop a sharing in the suffering and let him forgive and bless the condemned and excommunicated one, since he was judged unjustly.”⁴⁶ It is important to note that this version of the canon is contained in the metropolitan’s charter releasing Iosif and his monks from the excommunication, which Iosif records in full, and presumably originates in the metropolitan’s court. It is also this version, with some minor textual variants, that entered the chronicles. It is unlikely that Iosif altered the metropolitan’s text—he is after all trying to establish his own innocence—in his letter to Kutuzov. If that is true, then the briefer version of canon 134 in his letter to Tret’iakov and “Slovo 12” of *Prosvetitel’* is just that—an abbreviated version of the metropolitan’s formulation of the canon. Savva’s version is even more succinct.⁴⁷ In prosecuting his case, Iosif weaves either direct quotations or paraphrases of the canons into his argument. This makes identifying his sources difficult but also speaks to his mastery of those same canonical texts.

Serapion’s letter to Metropolitan Simon permits a comparison with Iosif. Serapion charges Iosif with disobedience for having his monastery transferred to the grand prince without permission; further, he has instigated a schism in the archdiocese of Novgorod and spread lies about Serapion and others that led to incarceration for some and confiscation of property; and, finally, Iosif transgressed canon 16 of the council of Carthage, canon 16 of the council of Laodicea, and canon 12 of the Holy Apostles.⁴⁸ The charge of disobedience does not hold up to scrutiny: Serapion makes no mention of Iosif’s attempts to contact him

⁴³V. N. Beneshevich, *Drevne-slavianskaia kormchaia xiv titulov bez tolkovanii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1906), 434–35.

⁴⁴“Slovo 12,” *Prosvetitel’*, 466. The text is clearer than in the letter to Tret’iakov.

⁴⁵In the letter to Tret’iakov (*PIV*, 189), to Kutuzov (*PIV*, 226), and in “Slovo 12” (*Prosvetitel’*, 466). The chronicles’ version of the canon closely resembles that found in the letter to Kutuzov (*Ioasafskaia letopis’*, 156; *L’vovskaia letopis’*, 382; and *Sofiiskaia vioraia letopis’*, col. 388). Note that Iosif identifies the canon as 134 from the council of Carthage, whereas the chronicles do not.

⁴⁶*PIV*, 226.

⁴⁷It corresponds roughly to an ancient epitome of the canon. “If a bishop deprives of communion an unconvicted man, he shall likewise be deprived of communion with his fellows.” See *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF)*, second series, vol. 14 (Peabody MA, 1995), 506. All volumes of this series (part of the Early Church Fathers series) are available at www.ccel.org/fathers.html (last accessed January 1, 2017).

⁴⁸Moiseeva, “Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona,” 160–61.

before Iosif turned to the metropolitan. The accusation of fomenting schism stretches the limits of plausibility, given everything known about Iosif's loyalty to ecclesiastical order. Iosif himself responds to this accusation in his letter to Kutuzov, referring to his refusal to allow Aleksei Piliemov to celebrate liturgical services because Piliemov was under Serapion's ban.⁴⁹ That Iosif's words brought about incarceration and seizure of property for some may be a reference to his anti-Judaizer crusade; Serapion's confinement to the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery was a direct consequence of Iosif's complaint to the metropolitan and grand prince. The purported canonical transgressions are more serious, but they too are unconvincing. Serapion's version of canon 16 of the Council of Carthage reads:

If a priest is removed by his bishop, let him not be impeded from appealing to the metropolitan and bishops of that domain. But if he does not appeal to them, is not reconciled, but instigates a schism, and becoming proud should offer the sacred things of God, that is if he begins to celebrate, let him be accursed.⁵⁰

It appears, however, that Serapion is referring to canon 11 of the Council of Carthage, which actually reads:

All the bishops said: If any presbyter shall have been corrected by his superior, he should ask the neighboring bishops that his cause be heard by them and that through them he may be reconciled to his bishop; but if he shall not have done this, but, puffed up with pride, (which God forbid!) he shall have thought it proper to separate himself from the communion of his bishop, and separately shall have offered the sacrifice to God, and made a schism with certain accomplices, let him be anathema, and let him lose his place; and if the complaint which he brought against the bishop shall (not) have been found to be well founded, an enquiry should be instituted.⁵¹

What Serapion claimed was canon 16 of Laodicea does not, in fact, correspond to any canon from that council.⁵² Still, the spurious canon receives a sound interpretation, which Serapion then equates with canon 12 of the Apostles. He writes: "if a bishop receives a priest or a deacon or some other cleric, knowing that he has been deprived of communion by his bishop, and gives communion to him, that is orders him to celebrate with him, such a one is not without guilt, but both he and the one he receives shall be deprived, as the

⁴⁹*PIV*, 222.

⁵⁰Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 160. This is not in the edition of the letter in *PIV*.

⁵¹*NPNF*, second series, 14:447–48. Cf. Beneshevich, *Drevne-slavianskaia kormchaia*, 317–18, which is similar in meaning though not identical. For Canon 16, see *ibid.*, 321–22.

⁵²"If a priest or a deacon or anyone from the clerical rank shall be without communion from his bishop and flees to another bishop who knows and the one knowing he has been expelled from communion by his own bishop, it is not suitable for a bishop to grant him communion thereby causing his brother an affront. But if he dares to do this, let it be known that he has placed the guilt on himself with his answer to the assembled bishops" (Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 161). Canon 16 of Laodicea reads: "The Gospels are to be read on the Sabbath with the other Scriptures" (Beneshevich, *Drevne-slavianskaia kormchaia*, 270; *NPNF*, second series, 14:133).

12th canon of the holy apostles ordains.”⁵³ This may have been intended by Serapion to address Iosif’s restoration to ecclesiastical and monastic office, but it seems wide of the mark and gives credence to Iosif’s charge that Serapion was seriously negligent in his reading of the canons. Indeed, Serapion uses his canonical arsenal to attack Iosif for doing what the canons authorize, namely, appealing to a higher ecclesiastical instance. At the same time, like Iosif, Serapion makes ample use of the canons without slavishly tying himself to literal repetition of the text, with the overarching aim being to undermine Iosif’s defense on canonical grounds, just as Iosif had done to Serapion.

The final phase in this conflict concerns the matter of forgiveness. As an excommunicated and deposed bishop, Serapion was forbidden to exercise priestly authority, particularly, to perform any sacraments. That meant that he could not forgive Iosif, and any attempt by Iosif to seek forgiveness from him was pointless. Still, some senior monks and close lay friends urged Iosif to do just that.⁵⁴ Savva records Iosif’s response:

An archbishop or a bishop who excommunicates someone contrary to the canons shall himself be excommunicated. And now there is no use for me to seek to be forgiven, for he is himself bound. How can he forgive me? He disdained the Divine Canons without having examined the Divine Canons. There is no use for me in his pardon, since he has trampled on the Divine Canons.⁵⁵

Savva here summarizes Iosif’s own argument from the letter to Tret’iakov, which reads:

But my lord, the sacred canons do not permit the seeking of forgiveness (*proshchatis’*) from that bishop who has been excommunicated and anathematized and defrocked by the elder archpriest and chief hierarch and all bishops and the whole sacred council, in keeping with the witness of the sacred canons. For the sacred canons put it this way: ‘Let the bishop or priest who has been excommunicated and defrocked in keeping with the witness of the sacred canons perform none of the sacraments but let him stand in the place for laymen.’ Both the Apostolic Canons and the Canons of the Fathers bear witness to this, as will be spoken to later. And if he is forbidden to exercise any priestly functions and must stand in the place for the laity, how is it possible for him to forgive (*prostiti*) or bless anyone? Can a man who is himself bound release others?⁵⁶

As this text makes clear, Iosif understands the words *proshchatisia/prostiti* to refer to the Sacrament of Penance and not to the non-sacramental forgiveness expected of

⁵³Moiseeva, “Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona,” 161). Beneshevich, *Drevne-slavianskaia kormchaia*, 64, reads: “If any cleric is excommunicated, that is, not received, has gone to a city and shall be received without the commendatory letters, both the one received and the one receiving shall be excommunicated.” See also *NPNF*, second series, 14:594.

⁵⁴Ivan Ivanovich Tret’iakov, Boris Vasil’evich Kutuzov, and Ivan Ivanovich Golovin-Skriaba and his father, Ivan Vladimirovich Golovin. See *PIV*, 270; and Ia. S. Lur’e, *Ideologicheskaiia bor’ba v russkoi publitsistike kontsa XV–nachala XVI veka* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1960), 432.

⁵⁵Pitirim, “Volokolamskii Paterik,” 205–6 (GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 78v); Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 173 (altered). Savva has drawn on Iosif’s letter to Tret’iakov for this information (*PIV*, 187).

⁵⁶*PIV*, 187–88. Which canon Iosif cites here is not clear; it resembles canon 28 of the Apostles, which he quotes more accurately further on in the letter (*PIV*, 204): “If a bishop or a priest or a deacon is justly demoted on account of his manifest sins and dares to approach the ministry previously entrusted to him—this one will be removed from the church completely” (Beneshevich, *Drevne-slavianskaia kormchaia*, 67).

Christians in their everyday dealings. Had Iosif sought sacramental reconciliation and reinstatement into the priestly rank from a hierarch under canonical censure, he would have brought upon himself the same ecclesiastical censures from which the metropolitan had just released him.

Pastoral obligations also prohibited Iosif from yielding to requests to seek forgiveness from Serapion. In the letter to Tret'iakov, Iosif writes:

And if, my lord, I must now make obeisance and seek forgiveness and call myself guilty even before Archbishop Serapion—then I must dishonor and reduce to naught the sacred canons and the whole divine writings and the judgment of tsar and episcopacy, since, my lord, a layman is judged one way, a priest in another way. Although I am unworthy, my lord, nonetheless I have received the laying on of hands for the priesthood and hegumenate, I have under me brethren for all of whom I am the spiritual father, and I am spiritual father to many princes and boyars and ordinary people. And if I, the spiritual father, am defrocked and excommunicated, what hope of salvation will there be for my children?⁵⁷

In other words, Iosif places the welfare of his monks and numerous spiritual children above his own reputation. Behind his resolve is a firm, religious conviction that human authority and expectations must yield to the demands of divine law.⁵⁸

Still, it might be objected, Iosif could have bowed to pressure and publicly sought forgiveness from Serapion in a nonsacramental sense, especially after having been vindicated by the metropolitan's court. The "Answer to Iosif's missive to Ivan Ivanovich Tret'iakov," written perhaps by the patrician-monk Vassian Patrikeev between 1511 and 1512, raises this very point.⁵⁹ After reprimanding Iosif for injuring the innocent and righteous Serapion, the author quotes Matthew 5:21–25 and then challenges Iosif in the following terms:

For you know about this more than anyone, my lord perspicacious Elder. In all the Lord's commands in the evangelical Good News, and in the prophetic sermons and in the apostolic letters, and by the martyrs' confessions, it is revealed: higher than any gift and greater than any sort of offering are peace and love. There is praise for brothers who live together. He commands "love one another," and do not quarrel with anyone, and endure offense, and do not become angry with anyone at all, and do not repay evil for evil, and humble yourself before everyone, and at no time take what belongs to another, but he does not command one to stand for one's own interests.⁶⁰

⁵⁷*PIV*, 190.

⁵⁸In his letter to Boris Vasil'evich Kutuzov, Iosif writes, "They say that it would have been better for Iosif to leave his monastery and go somewhere else than to petition the grand prince, but Sire, you more than many people know whom it is fitting to obey, the divine writings or a man" (*PIV*, 209).

⁵⁹*PIV*, 336–66. The editors consider that the anonymous letter was written prior to April 1511 when Serapion made peace with Metropolitan Simeon and Grand Prince Vasili III Ivanovich; the text survives only in a seventeenth-century manuscript, GIM, Bars. 1475 (*PIV*, 294–95). In their comments on Iosif's letter to I. I. Tret'iakov, however, the editors suggest that Vassian Patrikeev may be the author, based on the erudite content, style, and general line of attack (*PIV*, 272–74).

⁶⁰*PIV*, 339.

The author quotes Iosif's own words of self-defense—"it is not fitting for an ordained (*blagoslovennomu*) person to seek forgiveness from a suspended person (*neblagoslovennago*)"—in order to accuse him of pride: "And who, my lord, is not startled by such magniloquent praises, and who has uttered such impious rodomontade, and who will praise such incongruous thought, and who, my lord, among mortals dares so to boast before God that he has a righteous heart, or sets his hope on his being clean of sin? The righteous Pharisee, having boasted, was condemned."⁶¹ But, unsurprisingly even these acerbic words had no effect. Since he was personally convinced of his rectitude and vindicated in this conviction by the highest court in Moscow, what reason would there be for him to relent? Iosif had been reflecting on the precise meaning of sacramental forgiveness for some time in connection with his anti-Judaizer campaign; his stance here is of a piece with his thinking there.⁶² His friends and detractors alike seem not to have grasped Iosif's fine but crucial distinction between ordinary and sacramental forgiveness.

Although from a canonical perspective, Iosif's stance is defensible, it would collapse into nothing more than the irritable obstinacy of a bedridden old man had Serapion actually regained clerical status after his reconciliation with Metropolitan Simon in April 1511. The *vita* merely reports that Serapion exerted himself "with great labors and ascetic feats, with fasting, prayers and even more with humility and patience." In other words, Serapion is described as a simple monk. It is true that at the end of his life, Serapion "called to himself hegumen Iakov and the brothers and giving forgiveness (*proshchenie*) to all, he himself received forgiveness (*proshchenie*) from all," but this is a standard deathbed scene in monastic *vitae* and need not imply any sacramental action on his part.⁶³

Iosif's final years were anything but peaceful. Sometime around 1510, Vassian Patrikeev, who had been disgraced and exiled to the St. Kirill Belozerskii monastery in 1499 for his close connection to central figures in the dynastic crisis concerning Ivan III's successor, gained favor at the grand-princely court.⁶⁴ Vassian's return to Moscow marked a turning point in Iosif's standing with Vasili III. Vassian was permitted to vilify Iosif publicly, whereas Iosif was forbidden to defend himself.⁶⁵ N. A. Kazakova suggested that Iosif's intervention on behalf of Prince Iurii Ivanovich of Dmitrov was partly to blame for the reversal of fortunes.⁶⁶ Publicly defamed by Vassian Patrikeev, Iosif found himself at odds with his friends and his monastery's protector, Vasili III. For his remaining supporters

⁶¹*PIV*, 343.

⁶²See the passage in "Slovo 16," *Prosvetitel'*, 529–30. Since the heretics repented under duress (*nevoleiui*) Iosif doubted the sincerity of their act, and supposed that their repentance was motivated by a desire to escape death, not to renounce their sin. He advised lifelong imprisonment for the heretics and apostates, for if they wished to repent they would have plenty of time to do so in prison (*ibid.*, 536). Convinced that the Novgorod heretics represented a unique instance of heresy and were thus not covered by existing canons, Iosif urged ecclesiastical and state authorities to seek divine insight to find their way to his solution of the problem. The date of "Slovo 16" is disputed. Alekseev argues for an early date, 1505/1506, Lur'e for ca. 1511, and Pliguzov opts for later than 1511 but before 1515 (Alekseev, *Sochineniia*, 314; Lur'e, *AFED*, 442–44; Pliguzov, "Kniga na eretikov," 131–35).

⁶³Moiseeva, "Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona," 164.

⁶⁴See N. A. Kazakova, *Vassian Patrikeev i ego sochineniia* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1960), 47–48.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 56–62; *PIV*, 228.

⁶⁶Kazakova, *Vassian Patrikeev*, 60.

these results were hardly welcome, and once the main protagonists had died, efforts would be taken to resolve what had not been possible earlier. Not long before his death in 1515, Iosif petitioned the grand prince to name his successor in keeping with the wishes of the monks.⁶⁷ In the “Life of Iosif” Savva explained how Daniil of Riazan' came to be Iosif's successor, approved by Vasilii III.⁶⁸ This allowed Savva to complete his peaceful resolution of the Iosif-Serapion affair with an image of perfect harmony existing between Grand Prince Vasilii III and hegumen Iosif. He had already commented on the reconciliation of Serapion and Iosif.⁶⁹

A similar conciliatory note is struck in the “Life of Serapion,” in which Serapion is said to have sensed Iosif's death:

Then in the hour in which Iosif departed from this life, Serapion spoke to those who were with him, having looked up and with his hand pointed in the direction of Volokolamsk. And he said: “Our brother Iosif has died. May God forgive him!” And looking at the icon of the Lord, he said: “Do not impute sins to him, O Lord.” For these things are proper to the venerable. If any difficulties happened to them, they trampled on their enmity to come to reconciliation—just as blessed John and Epiphanius, so too these fathers Serapion and Iosif. And after his death the great Serapion forgave Iosif.⁷⁰

It is worth lingering over this touching scene, undoubtedly intended to establish Serapion's sanctity. Two elements are crucial: the identity of John and Epiphanius, with whom Serapion and Iosif are compared, and that forgiveness is the proper behavior of holy people. In order for the comparison to have its effect, readers of the *vita* would have to be able to identify “blessed John and Epiphanius.” One possibility is that they were individuals known to the local monastic readership who had reconciled with each other after a serious altercation. But this seems unlikely, because the rhetorical effectiveness of the comparison would be meaningful to a limited readership. Another possibility is that the author is referring to John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, and Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis. According to the church historians Socrates and Sozomen, Epiphanius arrived in Constantinople in 402 and began stirring up trouble for Chrysostom over his generous treatment of some Origenist monks. Earlier, Epiphanius had ordained priests and officiated in churches under Chrysostom's jurisdiction without having gained prior approval. When Chrysostom pointed out these canonical transgressions, Epiphanius was unnerved and left the city. As he was departing, he reportedly said to Chrysostom “I hope that you will not die a bishop”; Chrysostom retorted, “Expect not to arrive at your own country.” Both prophecies came true—Epiphanius was lost at sea, and John was deposed.⁷¹ There is no

⁶⁷“Poslanie Vasilii III o preemnike,” *PIV*, 239–40.

⁶⁸Pitirim, “Volokolamskii Paterik,” 211 (GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 92r); Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 184.

⁶⁹“After a little time had passed, Archbishop Serapion and Hegumen Iosif accepted mutual forgiveness” (Pitirim, “Volokolamskii Paterik,” 206 [GIM Sinod. sobr. No. 927, 80v]; Smith, *Volokolamsk Paterikon*, 174–75).

⁷⁰Moiseeva, “Zhitie novgorodskogo arkhiepiskopa Serapiona,” 164.

⁷¹Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI. 14 (*NPNF*, second series, 2:148); Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, VIII. 15 (*NPNF*, second series, 2:409). Note that a Slavonic translation of the “Life of John Chrysostom” by

evidence that either Chrysostom or Epiphanius actually forgave the other, and yet both are revered as saints. However, forgiveness is the proper behavior of such venerable individuals, so the pious belief is that the two hierarchs were reconciled, with Chrysostom taking the initiative. The application to the case of Serapion and Iosif becomes clearer: both men were regarded as holy, but there is no evidence the two ever reconciled.⁷² Yet as saintly figures, reconciliation is appropriate. Therefore, the hagiographer shows Serapion praying that God will be merciful to Iosif. Note that the text says that Serapion forgave Iosif after the latter's death, thus respecting what could be historical fact.

Historians have remarked that even as a young monk Iosif of Volokolamsk enjoyed the reputation of possessing a keen theological mind.⁷³ As he matured, he developed his intellect in numerous anti-heretical writings, his monastic rule, and personal letters.⁷⁴ His sharp wit was matched by a combative personality. Despite sickness and old age Iosif remained a formidable opponent, as his conflict with Archbishop Serapion shows. Throughout, Iosif made creative use of ecclesiastical canons and tradition to contribute to the development of some useful principles of sacramental penance and discipline, but his stubborn refusal to make peace with Serapion complicated society's memory of him. In the liturgical office composed in his honor, the Russian Church remembered Iosif as "a most luminous lamp."⁷⁵ A burning flame, however, gives off both light and smoke, and depending on the combustible matter, the smoke can be fragrant or acrid. It is an apt symbol for Iosif's conduct in his conflict with Archbishop Serapion of Novgorod.

Georgios of Alexandria, who drew extensively on Socrates and Sozomen, circulated in Rus' and was incorporated in the *Velikie Minei Cher'i* of Makarii. See *Die Vita des Johannes Chrysostomos des Georgios von Alexandrien in kirchenslavischer Übersetzung*, ed. Ernst Hansack, vol. 1 (Würzburg, 1975), vols. 2–3 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1980, 1984). For the episode in question see vol. 3:248–51.

⁷²In his "Letter to Vasilii III concerning reconciliation with Serapion," Iosif makes a weak gesture to accede to the grand prince's firm request to make peace with Serapion, but together with the editors of the letters, I agree that Serapion and Iosif remained enemies until death (*PIV*, 229, for letter, 280 for commentary).

⁷³Iosif's treatise on the Trinity, "Poslanie arhimandritu Vassianu o Troitse" (*PIV*, 139–44), was earlier believed to date from 1477–78, while Iosif was still a monk in Pafnutii's monastery (*PIV*, 243), but Alekseev dates it to 1502–6 (*Sochineniia*, 235–42). Even so, the treatise demonstrates Iosif's aptitude for speculative theology, a theme developed by Fairy von Lilienfeld, "Das Problem der Ikonographie, der Ikonentheologie und der Ikonenverehrung bei Erzbischof Gennadij von Novgorod und Iosif von Volokolamsk vor 1490: Ein Beitrag zur Entwirrung des Rätsels um die sogenannte 'Haeresie' der 'Judaisierenden,'" *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 38 (1986): 118–22.

⁷⁴For the suggestion that Iosif's letters and other writings are valuable but underutilized sources for the history of Russian theology see N. N. Lisovoi, "Prepodobnyi Iosif Volotskii i ego vremia v istorii russkoi bogoslovskoi mysli," *Prepodobnyi Iosif Volotskii i ego obitel': Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 2008), 29–36.

⁷⁵"Sluzhba prepodobnago igumena Iosifa Volotskago, novago chudotvortsia," *Mineia Sentiabr'* (Moscow, 1978), 249. The phrase used is "svetil'niche presvetlyi."