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**INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN NOVGOROD  
AND FORMATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
THE NOVGOROD BISHOPRIC AND SECULAR  
POWER IN THE LATE X-XI CENTURIES**

*In the article, the author examines the reasons, preconditions and peculiarities of the introduction of Christianity in Novgorod at the end of the X century, which replaced the unsuccessful „pagan” reform implemented in 980 by Kyiv Prince Volodymyr the Great on the entire territory of Kyiv Rus, as well as analyzes and characterizes the formation of the relationship between the Novgorod bishop’s throne and secular (princely) power at the beginning of the XI century. In addition, the author highlights aspects related to the activity of the first Novgorod rulers, aimed at the autonomy of the Sophia throne from both the Kyiv Metropolia and the „Grand Prince” protectorate.*

**Keywords:** *Novgorod lands, Novgorod bishopric, Novgorod rulers, St. Sophia’s throne, „The House of St. Sophia”, Joachim Korsunyan, Luka Zidyata.*

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**ВВЕДЕННЯ ХРИСТІЯНСТВА У НОВГОРОДІ  
Й ФОРМУВАННЯ ВЗАЄМВІДНОСИН МІЖ  
НОВГОРОДСЬКОЮ ЄПІСКОПІЄЮ ТА  
СВІТСЬКОЮ ВЛАДОЮ В КІНЦІ X-XI ст.**

*У статті автор розглядає причини, передумови та особливості введення християнства у Новгороді наприкінці X ст., яке замінило невдалу „язичницьку” реформу, реалізовану 980 р. Київським князем Володимиром Великим на всьому терені Київської Русі, а також аналізує та характеризує формування взаємовідносин між Новгородською єпископською кафедрою й світською (княжою) владою на початку XI ст. Крім того, автор висвітлює аспекти, пов’язані з діяльністю перших Новгородських владик, спрямованою на автономізацію Софійського престолу як від Київської митрополії, так і від „великокняжого” протекторату.*

**Ключові слова:** *Новгородські землі, Новгородська єпископія, Новгородські владика, Софійський престол, „Дім Святої Софії”, Іоаким Корсунянин, Лука Жидята.*

**Илья ТИМЧУК**

**ВВЕДЕНИЕ ХРИСТИАНСТВА В НОВГОРОДЕ И  
ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ВЗАИМООТНОШЕНИЙ МЕЖДУ  
НОВОГОРОДСКОЙ ЕПИСКОПИЕЙ И СВЕТСКОЙ  
ВЛАСТЬЮ В КОНЦЕ X-XI ВВ.**

*В статье автор рассматривает причины, предпосылки и особенности введения христианства в Новгороде в конце X в., которое заменило неудачную „языческую” реформу, реализованную 980 г. киевским князем Владимиром Великим на всем поприще Киевской Руси, а также анализирует и характеризует формирование взаимоотношений между Новгородской епископской кафедрой и светской (княжеской) властью в начале XI в. Кроме того, автор освещает аспекты, связанные с деятельностью первых Новгородских владык, направленной на автономизации Софийского престола как от Киевской митрополии, так и от „великокняжеского” протектората.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Новгородские земли, Новгородская епископия, Новгородские владыки, Софийский престол, „Дом Святой Софии”, Иоаким Корсунянин, Лука Жидята.*

The problem of Christianization of the Novgorod lands in line with new interpretative models and concepts remains a relevant scientific topic, promising for further development, even at the beginning of the XXI century, since a number of key issues have not been sufficiently studied and analyzed, on the one hand – due to the low information level of available written sources, in particular, the Novgorod chronicles and the West European chronicles, on the other hand – in connection with the absence of appropriate archaeological artifacts (real patterns from the sphere of that time religious ritual practice) and tangible materials that would allow making a comprehensive large-scale reconstruction of church and religious realities inherent to Novgorod on the verge of X-XI centuries, that is in the age when entering a new monotheistic religion also formed a fundamentally new relationship between the prerogatives of the Christian bishop and pagan prince authorities.

This aspect, thus, quite objectively determines the modern research perspectives generated by historiographical motivation. In addition, the consideration of the role of the church (episcopal) factor in the Novgorodian society before the republican era within the retrospect reasonably allows to understand the specifics of both the spiritual and political components of social processes that generally took place in the isolated historical period on the territory of the Novgorod state. At the same time, during the last 30 years the issues of political and religious history of Novgorod continued to be actively studied by specialists in connection with the constant replenishment of the source base—both traditional sources (act materials) and archaeological (birch-bark manuscripts, seals). This tendency gave an opportunity to further elucidate the evolution of state institutions represented by two branches of power interconnected in Novgorod – church and secular.

The greatest difficulty in the terms of analysis is, as it is known, the initial period in the history of the „House of St. Sophia” – the times of „pagan reform”, the process of Christianization and the establishment of local representation in the Novgorod prelate throne. In the 70s – 80s of X century. Novgorod land has already been a politically and economically important center of the north-western region of Kievan Rus [16, c. 14-15]. That is why from 980 the Kievan Prince Volodymyr the Great consistently implementing his national „pagan reform” (its ultimate goal – the unification of the entire Eastern Slavic pantheon of gods headed by Perun), paid „religious” attention to Novgorodians as well. According to the Novgorod Chronicle Volodymyr sent Dobrynya with the corresponding „mission” to Novgorod. The latter, according to a source, „put the idol of Perun over the Volkhov river” [16, c. 15].

In the context of this significant „chronicle” event, one needs to draw attention to yet another symptomatic tendency: even then, during the Grand Prince experiment, it was clearly outlined and manifested – by many accompanying features – the confrontation between the „capital” prince and the „peripheral” Novgorod; it is proved by the location of the „Perun” religious center outside the city territory, in the grove Peryn near the upper Volkhov. By contrast, the old „interethnic” pagan temple of „regional significance” continued to function in the Novgorod Detynets (the administrative core of the entire Northwest).

O.Khoroshev states „the opposition of the city cemetery and the Grand-Prince religious center explicitly emphasizes the extrinsic nature of the latter, symbolizing the overall foreign policy reform of 980” [21, c. 34].

The researcher summarizes then: „The introduction of the cults of the pagan gods on the platform of the creation of a united ancient religion failed. The failure was logical. The pagan religion did not fulfill its main task – to support the young Russian statehood in the era of rapid development of feudalism. The Slavic paganism of the IX-X centuries, which represented a complex conglomerate of democratic remnants of antiquity with new social forms of religious representations, failed to coexist with feudal principles. However, the pagan reform of 980 paradoxically prepared the ground for the introduction and establishment of Christianity. Naturally, during the reorganization the Grand Prince’s administration did not make such far-reaching plans. Nevertheless, having broken up the tribal religious beliefs by the reform, the Perun cult gradually prepared a rapid spread of Christianity, which soon replaced the pagan national ideology” [21, c. 35].

Indeed, the introduction of a new unified, ideologically unified ideology has largely played an organizing and cementing role in the management of the ancient Rus state. In the context of transformational processes, from the first years of its existence on the territory of Kievan Rus the Institute of the Orthodox Church began to struggle with paganism and tribal isolation. Of course, the lands of Novgorod did not become an exception in this nationwide „program”. The act of baptism, realized by Volodymyr Svyatoslavych, is known to mark the entry of Rus in the European civilization space. The second stage was associated with the confirmation of the „faith of Christ” at the local level [18, c. 45-46].

In abridged form the introduction of „Byzantine Orthodoxy” in Novgorod is mentioned only in one chronicle – Ioakimovsky. Its authors emphasize that the arrival (for the second time) of the „apostolic mission” of Dobrynya and Putyat baptized Novgorod people with „fire and sword” [24, c. 129]. In Novgorod’s First Chronicle bloody „constituents” of population conversion are not described. Another „peaceful” episode appears in the text: „Joachim Korsunyan destroyed

both heathen temples and chopped Perun and ordered to pull [an idol] to the Volkhov, and throw it [in the river] ...” [2, c. 151]. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that in the thematic historiography, especially in the post-war Soviet one, the process of baptism of the population of Kievan Rus in general, and Novgorod – in particular, is presented and interpreted mainly as a „triumphal procession” – according to the figurative statement of M.Tikhomirov [20, c. 241].

In the early 80s of the last century O.Khoroshev who supported and developed his weakly argued position, noted: „In our opinion, the „peaceful procession” of Christianity around Kievan Rus is explained by a combination of several circumstances, the most important of which are the following: firstly, undermining of the local traditions and beliefs through the pagan reform of 980. The Perun cult was unusual for the pagan mass of the majority of the population of Eastern Europe ... Secondly, a sufficiently important factor of the tolerable attitude of the pagan masses to the introduction of Christianity was purely formal making of external (ritual) act that symbolized the adoption of a new faith, that is, water baptism ... The tasks of genuine Christianization (the renunciation of the old ritual and the introduction of the Orthodox forms of worship instead of it) could only be solved by the long-term work of missionaries for centuries” [21, c. 39].

In our opinion this is a hypothetical concept, deprived of a proper evidence base, actually remains a priori affirmation. Almost all old Rus chroniclers did not disclose the facts of forceful „scenarios” of the conversion of the local population to Christianity by the Grand Prince’s power and this may be explained by the political and ideological doctrines of that time, the prevailing state interests, moral postulates and spiritual and ethical landmarks, the carriers and „models” of which were chronicles monks in the XII-XIV centuries. Consequently, the authors of the ancient chronicles as zealous representatives of the virtues and advantages of Byzantine Christianity (i.e. Orthodoxy), mixed on the ground of the canonically proclaimed „comprehensive mercy”, of course, refused to reflect the complex and controversial church-religious phenomena in the entire unbounded fullness, and as a consequence (at the level of mental and essential priorities), – ignored the realities that did not „fit” into the „pre-determined” secular

government (taking into account the state-political conjuncture of the era), the historical canvas of facts and events [9, c. 105-106].

Based on the foregoing, it can be stated: Novgorod missionary „incident” demonstrated the origin of the preconditions for the emergence and further development (until the middle of the XI century) of the elements and practices of the two-faiths (a peculiar cult and ritual „synthesis” of Christianity and paganism on a philosophical basis). The proof is the separation (autonomy) of the urban Christian center from the pagan one. This situation arose in Novgorod with the appearance of Joachim Korsunyan in 992 [3, c. 212]. From the very beginning, Joachim, as a representative of the Church, took a seat (chose a place) in the center of the Novgorod City Federation, that is, on the territory of the Kremlin. This fact symbolized the transition of the Novgorod lands to the Christian spiritual and ideological basis and at the same time „the transition of power in the fortress from the hands of pagan priests to the hands of the Christian preacher, transformation of the pagan temple to the residence of the Novgorod sanctifier” [3, c. 217].

It is in the territory of the Kremlin that Joachim erects the first temple for his flock – the thirteen-headed wooden church of St. Sophia, which was replaced by the stone St. Sophia Cathedral in 1050 [8, c. 336]. Two years later, being already a bishop, Joachim builds the first stone Akimonian temple in the city, which served as a church center of Novgorod before the cathedral appeared [8, c. 336-337]. At the same time, brevity and conciseness of the chronicle information during the office of the first Novgorod ruler who died in 1030 [15, c. 80] does not allow to describe his activities in greater detail.

The next bishop of Novgorod was put on the prelate throne only five years later. The explanation for such a long absence of a priest in Novgorod is in the chronicler’s account of the death of Joachim: „The first bishop Joachim of Novgorod passed away, being 42 years at the bishopric, his pupil Ephraim came to his place; and was blessed to be a bishop Joachim; ... this [Ephraim] taught people for 5 years, but did not have a blessing of sanctification (consecration - I.T.)” [5, c. 63]. This passage makes it clear that the pastoral activities did not cease in the city all five years, until the office of Luka Zidyata. It was performed by not ordained bishop Ephraim, blessed to rule by

Joachim. However, in 1035 the arrival of Luka Zidyata ordained to the bishop's throne in Novgorod was not caused by the death of Ephraim; the chronicler could not but mention such a circumstance. What explains the „resignation” of Ephraim? Was this episode the first harbinger of the „liberation” of the Novgorod throne from the power of the Kyivan Metropolia, or is it accidental and beyond the autocephalous aspirations of the „House of St. Sophia”, which are characteristic of the further Novgorod policy of the XII-XIV centuries? This can only be explained by reference to the history of the hierarchical church organization in Kievan Rus, which was based on the Byzantine model of the Cesaropapist movement [27, c. 51-52].

An authoritative Russian pre-revolutionary researcher E. Golubinsky inclined to the idea that from the very beginning of its existence the Rus (Kyiv) church organization was autocephalous from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In this case, the scientist refers to the precedent that took place with the Bulgarian Church: it received autocephaly in exchange for political yielding to the Byzantine Empire. The restoration of political domination (as a result of incorporation) of Byzantium over the Bulgarian kingdom led to the elimination of ecclesiastical independence. In particular, E. Golubinsky writes: „Likewise, they (the Byzantines) could do with us: during the first foundation of a church administration, when Volodymyr held talks with them to take Korsun from them, and when they sought his military assistance, they gave us autocephalous archbishop, and then immediately or soon they tried to lower the archbishop in an ordinary metropolitan” [8, c. 288]. The scientist dates back this „lowering” to 1037.

M. Priselkov, another, not less authoritative Russian pre-revolutionary historian of the Church, tried to prove on a more solid system of evidence that Prince Volodymyr the Great received a church hierarchy from Bulgaria, from the Ohrid Archbishopric. Further, in 1014 after the conquest of Byzantine Empire by the Bulgarian state, a number of subsequent fateful events in the international (Central European) political arena conditioned the entry of the Rus (Kyiv) Church into the Constantinople Patriarchate, which eventually „initiated” Metropolia in Kyiv. It is worth emphasizing: both concepts in terms of convincing arguments lack the necessary facts; the

scientists build many of their conclusions on logical assumptions and hypothetical constructions [14, c. 49].

However, their main disadvantage lies in the fact that researchers reject, as I. Budovnits writes, evidence of the late chronicles of the existence of the first Rus Metropolitan Michael and two of his successors – Leontius and John [22, c. 75], although the mentioned references are devoid of any particular historical attachment. Confirmed documentary evidence was preserved only for the Metropolitan of Theopempt, which was most likely the first Rus metropolitan; This is also indicated by his personal seal, attributed to him in due time and described by V. Yanin [25, c. 79-80]. The same I. Budovnits objectively generalizes: it is unknown under what conditions the metropolia foundation in Kyiv was established, the question remains open and only generates new historiographical „guesses” [25, c. 80]. In practice, the course of events unambiguously demonstrated a remarkable interest of both Constantinople and Kyiv in carrying out this church reform. The first party associated with it its geopolitical prospects and the second one strived to the rise of the Rus church organization.

Throwing light on the peculiarities of the relations of the Novgorod Church (as an institution) and secular (princely) power, one can note the following. The two trends are most clearly traced in the history of the Novgorod prelate throne during the XI century: the full dependence of the Novgorod bishops on the Kyiv metropolia and the permanent active resistance of the townspeople, aimed at ending the process of a rather rapid strengthening of the power positions of the new religion. The first tendency is sufficiently reflected in the texts of the chronicles. In 1055 the chronicler reports on the imprisonment of Luka Zidyat by Metropolitan Ephraim by the „libel” of the archbishop’s servant [19, c. 127]. The Novgorod parish was without its bishop for three subsequent years.

The true causes of Luka’s imprisonment become clear in the context of his coming to the throne. As already mentioned, Luke was extolled by the convocation of the Rus bishops by the proposal of Prince Yaroslav the Wise. The name of this Kiev ruler is also associated with the nomination of the „Rusyn Illarion” to the Metropolitan throne. This circumstance was interpreted by many historians of the second



half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century as a kind of the prince's „movement” to autocephaly from Constantinople; M. Priselkov defended such a point of view in the most active way [16, c. 33-34]. Not waiting for the replacement of the vacant metropolitan throne by the Byzantine apostate, the Russian cleric persuaded Prince Yaroslav that the Russian Church needs a „true shepherd and feeder” [16, c. 34]. Illarion was recognized as such a spiritual leader. Luka Zidyata was undoubtedly among the members of the convocation; it is not reasonable to doubt in his support of the prince's activity – the Novgorod bishop himself was extolled in the same way. However, Yaroslav the Wise did not get the recognition of Illarion from the Patriarch of Constantinople [16, c. 37].

After the death of the Grand Prince, in the conditions of the refusal of the princely court from the support of the Russian clergy, a new Metropolitan Greek Ephraim arrives in Kyiv. Such a turn of events, probably and completely expected, was not supported by the Novgorod ruler; the latter defended the right of the Synod of the Metropolia to elect and ordain a metropolitan of his own eparchy [21, c. 45-46]. The payment for such unacceptable „liberties” did not delay. The persecution of Ephraim in relation to the bishop of Novgorod is likely not limited to imprisonment. Luka left Kyiv in 1060 and died (for unknown reasons) on the way to Novgorod, „on Kopyts” [21, c. 46]. The next „opposition” bishops had the same fate: in 1068 „Bishop Stefan goes to Kiev and there his slaves strangled him”; the mysterious death of Novgorod bishop Herman was recorded by the chronicler in 1095 in the same city of Kyiv [21, c. 48].

The deaths of these Novgorod rulers are associated with the metropolitan residence by the chronicler's direct and sometimes indirect indications, and such a sad „tendency” convincingly suggests the successful application of Byzantine „behind-the-scene” methods of „governance”, the purpose of which was to get rid of undesirable individuals by radical means: imprisonment, murder, poisoning. Of course, carriers of such traditions were not only Byzantines: any medieval feudal court with its seignior or crowned ruler usually did not refuse to use supremacy and domination of the arsenal of „murdering techniques” in the struggle for power.

Summarizing the material described, it is necessary to note the following. The whole body of available written sources is extremely brief and partly highlights the church and religious life of Novgorod and Novgorod lands in the XI century. Such informational „conciseness” of chronicle reports concerning the activities of the first seven Novgorod rulers, namely, Joachim Korsunyan (989-1030), Ephraim (1030-1035), Luka Zidyata (1035-1059), Stefan (1060-1068), Theodore (1069 -1078), Herman (1078-1096) and Nikita (1096-1107), – does not allow to properly analyze and characterize a certain epoch in its dominant clerical-political manifestations.

There is no additional evidence in the life (hagiographic) literature, which arose after the canonization of Luka, Herman, and Nikita, since this genre does not traditionally envisage widespread use of biographical data of a particular person sanctified by the Church. However, in the history of the Novgorod throne the turbulent XI century became decisive and fatal, since it was in this difficult epoch that the conditions of the future political power and the church independence of the Novgorod republic, the „House of St. Sophia”, were being matured and formed. The cardinal changes and further rise of the Novgorod lands began from the time of the throne office of Bishops Ioann Popyan (1108-1130) and Nifont (1131-1156), which initiated extensive church building and chronicle writing in the state.

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