

University of North Carolina at Asheville

Shaving His Face is Easier than Changing His Faith:
The Religious Reforms of Peter the Great

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By
Eleanor S. Gibert

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"God willing, it is for me to reform the laity and the clergy, for them I am both master and patriarch". Any attempt to suggest to Russia's tsar, Peter I, that the late Patriarch Adrian should be replaced, was likely to elicit such a reply. Peter was a man of firm resolve, and any attempt to coerce him into doing something which he did not desire could lead to an angry reprisal. The Russian Holy Synod served as the ecumenical governing body, and was responsible for the election of a new head of the Russian Orthodox Church known as the Patriarch, and office to which Peter strongly objected to. During another meeting of the Synod, a signed entreaty to fill the empty patriarchal seat lead to Peter beating his breast, and yelling, "Here is your patriarch!" before storming out of the room.² Both of these responses make it quite clear what Peter's intentions regarding the patriarchate are. Yet there seemed to be an inherent contradiction between Peter's attempts at secularization, and his own apparent religiosity. Even on his death bed, Peter was debating scripture, and quoting various texts to those around him, and made great efforts to receive the last rites from his priests.³ When Peter I came to the throne in 1682 as co-ruler with his brother Ivan, his extensive travels through Europe had already helped him begin to formulate ideas about how he would transform Russia.

The Petrine reforms covered nearly every aspect of society, from the superficial to the more fundamental. In 1701, a royal decree was issued which dictated exactly what men and women of all levels of society should wear, getting as detailed as to what material their underwear should be made out of.⁴ A similar decree in 1705 declared that

¹ Evgenii Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 206.

² Ivan Antonovitch Tcherkassoff in Jakob von Staehlin, *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 183.

³ Feofan Prokopovich trans. By James Cracraft, *A Brief Relation of the Death of Peter the Great* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 261.

⁴ "Decree on Western Dress" in George Vernadsky, *A Source book for Russian History From Early Times to 7P/7* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 347.

men were not allowed to grow facial hair or a moustache without risking a fine of up to 100 rubles.³ Peter took the enforcement of these reforms to the extreme, often holding men down and shaving or cutting their beards himself. However, forcing a man to shave was much easier than attempting to force them to accept changes to centuries of church traditions. While these edicts were revolutionary in the sense that they removed many symbols of the traditional Muscovite society, they didn't do much to change the makeup of the government or church bureaucracy like some of the other reforms. When it came to the religious reforms, Peter was uprooting many centuries' old traditions and transforming the very nature of the church. It is a common argument that Peter did not necessarily reform the church, but instead formed the basis for the modern Russian Orthodox Church, as he removed the difference between church and state and merged them into one.⁶ The religious reforms were essentially the culmination of an entire plan of reform which was aimed at the subordination of Russian society, a process of subordination which had been begun decades earlier. The pattern of church reform had been set by past tsars, especially his own father, Alexei Mikhailovich, and his sister, Sophia Alekseyevna, and Peter's actions were largely a continuation and extension of their policies. The category of religious reforms is misleading, when the goal of the reforms was not so much to reform Russian Orthodoxy as a faith, but instead to reform the attitudes which people held towards it, but more importantly, to reform the role which religion played within the government. While the main goal of the Petrine reforms was the subordination of nearly every aspect of society to the state, and thus to Peter, none were as controversial as the religious reforms when it came to the impact on the common

⁵ Peter Aleksevich "Decree on "German" dress 1701" in Vernadsky, 347.

⁶ A. Zernov. "The Establishment of the Russian Church" in Peter *The Great: Reformer or Revolutionaiy?* Ed. Marc Raeff (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co, 1963), 97.

man. It was this final move towards state supremacy in all matters which changed the nature of the church from the equal of the tsar, to a secondary entity, a change which placed Russia in the same category as most other European nations.

Overall, the historiography on the subject of Peter the Great is immense. The three hundred years since his death have given historians ample opportunity to develop theories and interpretations of his rule. His reign was so influential and controversial that every Russian history book written since the early 18th century has included a section on Peter the Great and his reforms. The length of time which has passed has allowed for many different interpretations and theories to have developed regarding both his reign in general, and the religious reforms specifically.

Many historians, such as Robert Massie and Lindsey Hughes have taken the more biographical approach, while Evgenii Anisimov and James Cracraft go for an analysis of the reforms themselves, and what led Peter to them. Both methods try to form a correlation between the man himself and the reforms which he implemented, yet the biographical approach spends more time on the external influences during his lifetime, while the more general focuses more on the actions of men and women before his time. Massie's biography of Peter covers his entire life, which is helpful when seeking to understand his motivations as a grown man and tsar. He devotes a large portion of his book to looking at Peter's actions in Europe, including his Grand Embassy, a voyage proved to be the source of much influence in his reign.⁷

Nicholas Riasanovsky, James Cracraft, and Evgenii Anisimov have all written what would be considered more general works on Russian history, not necessarily a text on Peter himself. These works rely on similar sources to their biographical counterparts,

⁷ Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 156.

but instead of using the primary sources to develop a timeline of a man's life and political career, they use the documents to try and understand the development and impact of these ideas, particularly in the long run of Russian history. Riasanovsky's *History of Russia* is considered one of the authoritative texts on Russian history in general, and includes a large section on Peter the Great.

Most of the authors agree on Peter's motivations for the creation of the Petrine Reform program, and the religious reforms more specifically. Nearly all of the historians agree that Peter's motives were not coming from a desire to reform the Russian Orthodox faith itself, but instead to try and develop it in such a way that it would be beneficial to the state. Hughes and Cracraft both agree that there was a certain element of selfishness to the reforms as well, and that while he was attempting to modernize Russia, he was also concerned with maintaining and increasing his own power. Riasanovsky agreed that there was more political motivation than religious, but did not agree that these motivations were motivated by a desire for power and prestige.⁸ One of his Peter specific works, *The Images of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* traces the development of study regarding Peter the Great through various major periods in Russian history, including the Enlightenment, Romantic era, and the Soviet period.

James Billington's *The Icon and the Axe*, a work on the role of religion in Russian society, is an interesting text in the study of Russian religious history. Billington helps to define the relationship between the religious reforms of Alexei Mikhailovich (Peter's father) and those of his son. While Billington largely agrees that Peter's reforms were important, he seeks to endorse his actions as ones which were following in a pattern

which had been occurring to some degree throughout Russia's history.⁹ While this book does not fall precisely under the category of Petrine historiography, it certainly is applicable and useful to the study of any religious subject in Russian history.

In Cracraft's main text, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, his main thesis is that the dissolution of the patriarchate and the development of the Holy Synod completed a longer running program which aimed to absorb the church into the state¹⁰. This argument is similar to the one made by his colleagues, but Cracraft also supports the idea that Peter was following the same trends as the rest of Europe, and was not setting any sort of precedent, except for the fact that he was doing it in a country with a very conservative religious tradition.¹¹ This theory is contrary to that of Cynthia Whittaker, whose essay "The Reforming Tsar" is predicated on the theory that Peter was not only setting about changing the structure of government, but also to develop a new role for the tsar.¹² She thought it was clear that his actions were setting the stage for a change in the role a ruler played in the government.

Historians have developed many theories about the development of the Holy Synod and its replacement of the office of patriarch, and the impact this had on the development of religion in Russia's subsequent history. Most of these historians agree that the Petrine reforms were not entirely a unique idea, and were largely based on the idea of others. This paper will seek to look at the manner in which the religious reforms were intended to subordinate society. The Petrine reforms were controversial, and

⁹ James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 163.

¹⁰ James Cracraft *The Religious Reforms of Peter the Great* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 100.

¹¹ James Cracraft, *The Religious Reforms of Peter the Great* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1971 viii.

¹² Cynthia Whittaker, "The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth Century Russia," *The Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (spring 1992): 78.

largely based upon Peter's own desire to control all aspect of his kingdom, even attempting to dictate what role the church will play. The following pages will attempt to place the religious reforms into the context of a program of subordination, as opposed to looking purely at the political ramifications. Peter was largely concerned with ensuring that all facets of society served the state, and not just their own individual purposes.

While Russian opinion on the Petrine reform program might have been mixed, it often received positive reviews from non-Russians. As the reforms were an attempt to bring Russia into the context of modern Europe, it is understandable that other Europeans were likely to approve. Charles Whitworth, the British envoy from 1704-1710 said about the tsar, "He is extremely curious, and has farther improved upon his Empire in ten years, than any other ever was in ten times the space; and which is more surprising, without any education, without any foreign help, contrary to the intention of his people, clergy, and chief ministers.. ,".¹³ As envoy, Whitworth had many dealings, both formal and informal, with Peter. His account reveals Peter to be a man of determination and political genius. He obviously revered Peter and respected his attempts to reform Russia. He observed that Peter had made many of his changes knowing full well that his advisors and people are against them, and yet as tsar he sees them as important, so he does them anyway.¹⁴

Peter's ideas about the role while religion should play within the state were not unique to Russia. While Peter certainly was responsible for giving Russia a mighty shove towards modernization, not all of the credit can be placed on his shoulders. He simply used his status as emperor to accelerate certain trends which had been carried over from Europe. Peter the Great was an impressive man, both physically at 6'7", and his

¹¹ Charles Whitworth in Vernadsky, 316.

¹⁴ Charles Whitworth in Vernadsky, 316.

achievements in Russia left him with a legacy to fit his impressive physical demeanor¹³. After his return from his Grand Embassy throughout Europe, Peter was determined not to follow the pattern of piecemeal reforms which had come before, but instead to create a broad, sweeping program which would encompass all levels of society, whether they were wanted or not.¹⁶ His journey throughout Europe taught Peter little about diplomacy and statesmanship, but instead merely convinced him that he would have to provide the impetus for the reforms, through any means necessary.¹⁷

The rulers immediately preceding Peter had an undeniable impact on Peter's policies. Upon the death of their brother Fyodor Aleksevich in 1682, Peter's elder half sister Sophia Alekseyevna came to the throne as regent for Peter and his brother Ivan V. Despite Sophia's appearance of power, the country was essentially ruled by Prince V.V. Golitsyn, an ambitious man with his own ideas for reform, and a strong penchant for the

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Western way of life. In fact, many of Peter's reforms came from the ideas of Golitsyn, the main difference being the scope and magnitude.¹⁹ Sophia was little more than a pawn for the ambitious Miloslavsky family, and it was because of their influence that Ivan V was named first co-ruler, and ten year old Peter was declared the lesser monarch. By the time Peter was teenager, his family, the Naryshkin's demanded that Sophia step down and allow Peter to take the throne. Sophia did not do this, and instead attempted to crown herself tsarina in her own right, and attempted to induce the streltsy (the Russian guardsmen who traditionally supported the tsar) into rising against Peter and the

⁵ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities* (Boston: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75.

⁶ Melvin C. Wren, *The Western Impact Upon Tsarist Russia* (Huntington: Robert E. Kreiger, 1976), 26.

¹⁷ Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1980), 233.

⁸ V. O. Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 379.

⁹ Anisimov, 216.

Naryshkin family. The plan backfired however when the majority of the streltsy and the nobility sided with Peter. The Patriarch was allied with Sophia and went to Peter to induce him to come share the Kremlin with her, but the offer was vehemently denied, and Sophia was banished to a monastery. A letter written after her overthrow in 1689 shows Peter's disdain at Sophia being allowed to have shared his throne for so long, despite the fact that she was a woman. A decade later the streltsy, which had initially supported Sophia, attempted a military coup to overthrow Peter, now tsar in his own right. However the attempt was brutally put down and Sophia was forced to live the rest of her life exiled to a convent.

The relationship between the reforming tsar and the church had been and important one in the reign of his father, Alexei Mikhailovich. During his reign, Tsar Alexei and Patriarch Nikon began reforming many aspects of the divine service, a right which they gave themselves in the Russian lawcode of 1649, known as the Sobornoye Ulozhenie.²² Many of the more arbitrary reforms, such as the number of fingers used to cross oneself, and the number of alleluias which were to be said date to these reforms. Both the majority of the clergy and the majority of the people objected to these reforms, especially after it became more clear that they were not due to any desire to follow God's will, but instead to centralize the church and increase the power of the Patriarch. By 1666-67, the council of church bishops known as the sobor had characterized the Old Believers as heretics, and punished them as such. The divisions which occurred during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon became known as the Raskol, or

⁹⁰ Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia: Regent of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 99.

²¹ Johan Georg Korb *Diary of an Austrian Secretary of Legation at the Court of Czar Peter the Great* trans. Count MacDonnell (London: 1863), vol. 2, 75.

~~ Author Unknown, ed. and trans, by Richard Hellie *The Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649* (Irvine: Charles Schlacks Jr. Publisher, 1988), 1.

Russian Great Schism. By the time Peter ascended to the throne, the more radical of these groups had gone into a recession, as it became more and more clear that Nikon's reforms were permanent. Peter's actions actually lessened the suffering of the Old Believers, and eased their persecution, but they did not remain completely unpunished.²⁴

The programs of religious reforms which had been undertaken by his predecessors showed Peter that there was a distinct need to control the people through state regulations. Peter himself was most assuredly convinced that what he was doing was the best thing for Russia, and that his actions were promoting Russia to a higher status in the world. Peter Henry Bruce, a Scotsman serving in both the Russian and Prussian army, recorded a speech given by Peter in which he said that if things went well, "...in that case be persuaded you may happen, even in your own lifetime, to put other civilizations to the blush, and raise the glory of the Russian name to the highest pitch."²³ He seemed to be more concerned with the affairs of the army than the reforms which Peter was undertaking. Bruce did comment on the fact that in Peter's speech to the senators they all promised to follow his example and obey his orders, although Bruce seemed to have his doubts about whether or not they were lying.²⁶ While it might appear that Bruce was simply being observant, it was likely quite obvious to the men in charge that to remain in power they must at least maintain the appearance of supporting the various reforms.

Peter had no illusions that his program would be completely well received. He knew that his reforms, particularly the religious ones, had an impact for nearly every

²³ Billington, 120.

²⁴ Lindsey Hughes *Sophia*, 124.

²⁵ Peter Henry Bruce Esq. in Vernadsky, 323.

²⁶ Bruce in Vernadsky, 324.

member of society. Thus, he instituted several edicts which would help him maintain control over society, particularly the nobles. In the past, nobles who disagreed with the tsar's religious policies had proved powerful political opponents. On September 26, 1714, he declared that, "...they themselves, and their relatives between the ages often and thirty must appear at [the office] established here in Moscow by the senate for registration in the course of the coming winter."²⁷ This order clearly showed that Peter wanted to know exactly who was in his court, down even to the last male child. There were undoubtedly more secular concerns behind this order, but they had a distinct religious connotation as well, in that it was another building block in his plan for state control. In order to fully place the state under his control and use it how he saw fit, it was imperative that he knew who was who and who was where. Knowing the status and whereabouts of all his nobles would decrease the likelihood of a revolt, as it religious reforms would keep the nobles under his watchful eye, and it would also allow him to keep a watchful eye on religious dissenters.

The first of the which sought to reorganize society was the reestablishment of the monastery prikaz. The monastery prikaz was initially developed as an administrative body to handle all legal action taken against the church, and was reinstated according to the same standards as its original incarnation in the Ulozhenie, or Russian law code of 1649 , changing only that it was now under the control of the secular government, as opposed to the Patriarch. While it had been abolished not long before, it was stronger

²⁷ "Registration of Nobles" in Vernadsky, 329.

²⁸ Ulozhenie of 1649, 95.

than ever under Count Ivan Musin-Pushkin, a nobleman who was devoted to Peter and his reforms.²⁹

. It would be incorrect to say that Peter's attempts at secularization stemmed from a lack of religious belief. Certainly, Peter spoke out against parts of the church which offended him, which was considered blasphemous by many, but he was also a very religious man who enjoyed going to services, often reading the epistle lesson himself.³⁰ In many ways, Peter's religious reforms were an attempt to turn the Russian Orthodox faith into something which went beyond its superstitious world image. This including numerous things, including the limitation of the number of saints. When he came to the throne, the Russian Orthodox Church had canonized 250 saints, and during Peter's tenure in office this number remained the same. The drastic number and reliance upon saints was likely one of the reasons that foreign dignitaries would cite for a low opinion of men and women of the Russian Orthodox faith. The opinion of the Prussian legate J.G. Vockerdt that "...wherever his is not shackled by the prejudices of his country or of his religion, the Russian is usually endowed with very sound natural intelligence and clear judgment..."³² is full of European judgment for the more conservative Orthodox religion, but still shows the magnitude with which the common man regarded religion. Peter himself would have taken pride in his ability to have sound judgment, even when it came to religion, yet he had little faith in his peoples ability to do the same, and would likely have agreed with Vockerdt. There was obviously some sentiment that despite his natural

²⁹ Peter Alexseyvich "The Decree Reestablishing the Monastery Prikaz, January 24, 1701" in Vernadsky^{Jo} Nicholas Riasanovsky *Russian Identities* (Boston: Oxford University Press, 2005), 81. ³¹ Billington, 49. J.G. Vockerdt in Vernadsky, 325.

intelligence, if it came between intelligence and his religion, the average man would choose religion.

The main religious reforms were compiled in the so called "Spiritual Regulation", which was written by Feofan Prokopovich, the archbishop of Novgorod, and signed by Peter the Great in 1720. The "Spiritual Regulation" was a collection of documents pertaining to the religious reforms, including the oath of office for members of the Spiritual College, and the Holy Synod, as well as detailed descriptions of the roles that various members of the clergy were expected to play within Russian society. Since Prokopovich was responsible for these texts, as well as several others, he is largely responsible for the development of the body which took the place of the patriarchate, known as the Holy Synod. The Holy Synod, a representative body of ten select bishops, eventually twelve clerics, united under an ober-procurator, a group which turned the church hierarchy into government bureaucracy.

While he was the author, and likely a major force behind its development, the Regulation and its tenets would not exist without the approval of Peter I, and many of his ideas about the subordination of church to state can be found in the writings of Prokopovich. The text is actually a series of documents outlining both the duties of the members of the Spiritual College, as well as the actions of many different levels of the church hierarchy, as well as some aspects of the laity. The most major political reform was the elimination of the boyar дума of the past. The boyar дума was a representative body consisting of nobles and princes, who served to advise the tsar.³⁴ The дума, and its lesser form consisting of nobles, peasants, and religious officials known as the zemskii

" Riasanovsky *Russian Identities*, 81. ¹⁴
Riasanovsky, *A History*, 54.

sobor were both seen as useless to the ambitious tsar.³³ Peter's reforms, as well as military affairs caused chaos in the administrative sphere, and the absence of the *duma* did little to alleviate this stress.

Many of the political reforms made during the same time, while not obviously related to religion, but did fit the overall pattern of placing the tsar as head of everything. While the *duma* died a natural death during his reign, Peter did little to resurrect it, and instead opted to try and create a new type of administrative body. Peter had little use for either the boyar *duma* or the *zemskii sobor*, which gave him little incentive to keep it.³⁶ The 1711 Governing Senate was an attempt to fill the void left in the *duma's* wake, but despite the hype, the list of its duties reads remarkably similar to the administrative bodies of the past³⁷. Many of the new administrative bodies were combined in order to fill both political and religious administrative duties, in order to further eliminate the difference between church and state.

This was not the only major administrative change, as there was also a change in the nature of the tsar's role, both in action and in title. This change in title was not officially a religious reform, but in a time when religion was changing in front of peoples eyes, it was one more item which could have potentially caused unrest. Peter used to opportunity to play to the religious men in his court, and In the Proclamation of October 22, 1721, Peter was officially invited to take the title of Emperor, thus beginning Russia's Imperial Age, which lasted until the 1917 Revolutions. In this document, Count Golovkin says that Peter has "...taken us from the darkness of ignorance onto the stage of glory before the whole world, and, so to speak, out of nonbeing into being, and has

³⁵ Kliuchevsky, 203.

³⁶ Nicholas Riasanovsky *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 137.

³⁷ "Peter's new title", October - November 1721 in Vernadsky, 336.

brought us into the society of political nations."³⁸ Peter then replies with a speech relying heavily on God saying also that, "We must work for the welfare and the profit of the whole community, both inside and outside, as God lays it before our eyes; this will bring relief to the people."³⁹ The text makes it sound almost as if Peter is trying to say both that God told the Ecclesiastical Synod that he should be proclaimed Emperor as thanks for all that he has done for Russia, as well as letting people know that the reforms will continue, and that God wants them too, as it will make Russia better.

While not directly a religious reform, the change in the tsar's title was one more move towards westernization which fueled the fire of religious dissent. No matter what Peter's beliefs were about God's intentions, not everyone was happy at the tsar's acceptance of his new title. Both Old Believers and peasants saw the title of emperor as a belonging to the Catholic pope and Roman Catholicism, a relationship which was seen as offensive. There was also a belief among the more superstitious that the letters in the word 'imperator' added up to 666, or the devil's number⁴⁰.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Peter I was so set against a strong patriarch had to do with his experiences early in his reign, while still a young joint monarch with his half brother Ivan. The Patriarch at the time, Joachim, was a domineering man who attempted to control the young monarchs. His conservative views on religion and the west were likely grating for the young reformer. In the testimony of Patriarch Joachim from March 17, 1690, it can be observed how polite, yet pushy, these men could be. Joachim was very against the idea of foreign influence of any type, and thought that any man who had

³⁸ "Senate Proclamation of October 22, 1721" in Vernadsky, 343.

³⁹ Ibid., 343.

⁴⁰ De Madariaga, Isabel, 38.

influence in Russia should be Orthodox. The text itself, while polite, was condescending, and could easily have been taken as someone telling the young monarchs what to do. It was more of a religious diatribe aimed at Ivan and Peter, warning them to prevent any outside influence from entering Russia and corrupting the morals and piety of the Russian Orthodox faith.⁴² Joachim seemed to think that anything other than Russian Orthodox does not even count as Christian, and all outside influences would do nothing except hold Russia back, and turn her good Orthodox men into heathens.⁴³ He even frowned upon traveling to non Orthodox countries, especially when those same men are in the government, or serve in the kings councils. For a young man like Peter, who greatly admired the rest of Europe, to be told to turn inward and retain the insular Muscovite traditions, the advice likely did not sit well.

Because of past negative interactions with the Patriarch, Peter looked for an opportunity to eliminate the post altogether. His opportunity came October 16, 1700, with the death of Patriarch Adrian. Peter used this opportunity to appoint Stefan lavorsky locum tenens, or temporary Patriarch, a temporary post which he would hold for nearly two decades.⁴⁴ The tsar moved quickly to try and develop a system of church government to take the Patriarch's place. This included the dissolution of the patriarchal court in January 1701, less than a year after the Patriarch's death. The role of the patriarchal court would be taken by the monastery prikaz, and the duties of Patriarch would lie with lavorsky.

⁴ "The Testament of Patriarch Joachim", March 17, 1690 in Vernadsky, 362.

⁴² Patriarch Joachim in Vernadsky, 362.

⁴³ Patriarch Joachim in Vernadsky, 363. ⁴⁴ Lindsey Hughes *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 337.

Peter understood that there was a need for priests and churches, and that he couldn't simply do away with them altogether.⁴⁵ Because they were such a necessary evil, the tsar simply found a more secular (and in his eyes more useful) purpose for them, particularly those residing in the country or in monasteries. Priests were assigned a variety of bureaucratic duties, such as finding tax evaders and reporting them to the police. They also began to be held responsible for keeping records of births, deaths, and marriages in their respective parishes.⁴⁶ Many of the ideas which he introduced were intended to maximize state revenues by keeping more men in the pool to be used as soldiers and tax payers, roles which a priest could not fulfill.

Despite the efforts to reform the role the Russian Orthodox Church played in his country, Peter was quite tolerant of other religions. His reign offered an unprecedented level of toleration for Roman Catholics, a religion which previously had been persecuted and reviled⁴⁷. Despite past conflicts with the Old Believer's, Peter was initially quite tolerant of their involvement in society. The Old Believer's, a group which traced its beginnings to the Raskol, had fought bitterly against the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, and as a consequence had been harshly persecuted during his sister's regency, albeit through

little fault of her own. It was not until they began actively working against and denouncing his reforms that he began to impose restrictions and higher taxes on them.⁴⁹

Peter was even reasonably tolerant towards the Jews, although the extent of this toleration was to simply not encourage pogroms against them. During his residence in Holland, the Jews of Amsterdam sought to use his good temper to open the doors of migration into

⁴ Cracraft, viii.

⁴⁶ Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* 345.

⁴⁷ Billington, 184.

⁴⁸ Kliuchevsky, 382.

⁴⁹ Riasanovsky, *A History* 258.

Russia. The Jews of Amsterdam thought that Peter was working to develop a new Russia, and asked permission to be allowed to return to Russia.⁵⁰ Peter did not deny the advantage to having Jews in his society, but appeared worried that they would be persecuted and abused by the Russians, and thus denied them entry into the country⁵¹. His tolerance for Jesuits, however, was minimal, largely due to the fact that they possessed much land and wealth, and yet declined to help him in his war with the Turks.⁵² Peter's aversion to superstition and miracles within his own faith did lead to restrictions against the canonization of saints.

One of the most important religious reforms, after the absolution of the role of the patriarchate, was the development of the Holy Synod, a collaboration between Peter the Great and his advisors, including Feofan Prokopovich. The Manifesto on the establishment of the Holy Synod begins, "Having looked into the situation of the clerical estate, we found it full of disorder, and lacking in direction...fear, lest we appear ungrateful to the Almighty, if after receiving so much help from him in reforming both our military and our civil orders we were to neglect to do the same for the clerical estate...".³³ First known as the Dukhovnaia Kollegiia (Ecclesiastical College), the synod became the chief administrative organ of the church until the restoration of the patriarchate in 1917. Efforts were made in order to ensure that this latest college was seen as more than just another government prikaz, and the name was changed to "Most Holy Governing Synod".⁵⁴ The synod brought the church more directly under Peter's control and helped eliminate some of the fear that a powerful church leader would

⁵⁰ M. Rosy in Jakob von Staehlin, *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 42.

⁵¹ Hosi in von Staehlin, 44.

⁵² Wesselosky in von Staehlin, 46.

⁵³ Prokopovich, *The Manifesto on the Holy Synod* in Vernadsky, 370.

⁵⁴ James Cracraft *Peter the Great Transforms Russia* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1991), 161.

emerge and oppose him. Both were written by Feofan Prokopovich, archbishop of Novgorod, who would later become a major player in both religion and government.

One of the first documents within the Regulation is the Oath of the Members of the Spiritual College (also known as the Holy Synod). The oath, which was to be taken by every member of the Spiritual College contains vows of allegiance to God and to always seek the truth. What is interesting to note, is that within the first few lines of the Oath, the members are to say that they vow to act in accordance with the will and actions which were "...made by the concurrence of this spiritual administration and the consent of His Tsarist Majesty."⁵⁵ While it is assumed that the members would be required to swear to uphold the will of God, it seems almost of more importance that the members realize that they should uphold the will of the Synod and the tsar above all else. The phrasing of the sentence is also telling, as it illustrates the dual nature of the two entities, and their almost symbiotic relationship. The oath makes it clear that all decisions made by the Synod were supported by the tsar, and vice versa. The last several passages within the oath do not mention God at all, or even really anything pertaining to religion and simply begin delving into the glory and good of the tsar. The oath turns from an avowal to support the religious good of the country to instead swearing allegiance to the tsar and his personal desires. This is emblematic of the nature of the Synod as a political body. While it was created to help benefit the country as a whole, it is clearly under the control of the tsar, and any man who was not willing to do the will of the tsar would take issue with the swearing of this oath as well, and would be reluctant to serve as a member, helping to eliminate opposition.

⁵⁵ Feofan Prokopovich, *The Oath of the Members of the Spiritual College*, trans. Alexander Muller (Seattle: University of Washington Press 1972), 5.

⁵⁶ Prokopovich, *The Oath*, 6.

The Regulation or Statute of the Spiritual College is another document with clear political aims. The first line of text explicitly states that the Synod is a permanent entity, eliminating any thought that there might be a new patriarch in the future.⁵⁷ This section of the Regulation also devotes a section towards its own specific validation. Prokopovich writes that the Holy Synod is valid only because it is under a sovereign ruler, and thus is obviously not under the control of a secret force desiring to follow their own aims and goals.⁵⁸ The document states that because of this same reason, it should be obvious that it was created for the common good.⁵⁹ The bias of this reasoning is obvious, due to the fact that the entire document was written under the eyes of the tsar, and is thus it would be impossible to say anything bad about its ruler's intentions.

Peter and Prokopovich were entirely aware that they were making an unprecedented move, one which would likely cause confusion and social unrest, so in the "Regulation" they sought to justify the existence of the Holy Synod. The main justification for the Synod appears to be the idea that somehow the possibility of corruption and bias are removed when decisions are being made by a large group of people, or as Prokopovich states "...partiality, insidiousness, and corrupt judgment."⁶⁰ While it is likely that the chance of corruption is lessened when there are more people within a governing body, it is far more likely that the decision was based upon the idea that a college could eliminate the threat of a single powerful man. Peter I was fully aware that if a patriarch were to cultivate the affection and respect of the people, then it would be very easy for the allegiance of the common man could be swayed to obey the Patriarch,

⁵⁷ Prokopovich, *The Regulation or Statute of the Spiritual College* trans. Alexander Muller (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 8.

⁵⁸ Feofan Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 12

⁵⁹ Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 10.

⁶⁰ Feofan Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 11.

even if it meant going against the tsar. Peter knew from history that rebellion and revolts could be a serious problem, and sought to eliminate all possibility of an outbreak. There was also some concern that if a single individual were placed in control of the church then the common people would have a problem discerning between the head of state and the head of the church, thus causing a strong likelihood that the common man would choose what he saw as more important - his faith. It is apparent why Peter I saw it as one of the most important things that he could do to subordinate the church to the state. The church could prove to be strong opposition to his reforming program, so his options were either to placate it, or firmly place it under his thumb.

Peter I not only desired to control the major decisions regarding the church, but the daily ones as well. He requested that Prokopovich include several doctrinal reforms in the Regulation as well. One of his main concerns was removing any falsifications regarding saints and their relics, including a close examination of the "Lives of the Saints".⁶¹ Peter was worried about the dissemination of false tales, as "...such blatantly false tales are contrary to sound teachings."⁶² The theory behind this was similar to that behind many of his other religious decisions. Peter I knew that if he desired to control society, he needed to eliminate any possible source of opposition. False relics or stories of saints could promote what was seen as essentially superstition. Any superstition could allow for a deviation from the standard dogma, which could easily slip into a break from the state as well, something which Peter I fought against. However, the Regulation did not state this as the reason for eliminating superstition, but instead focused more on the fact that a deviation from Orthodox doctrine would do nothing but move people in the

⁶¹ This was not an intellectual text per se, but a collection of stories about many popular saints. More folk tale than authoritative text.

Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 8.

opposite direction of salvation.⁶³ Prokopovich and Peter the Great were smart men, and realized that their true reasons could not be revealed, and that it was more expedient to promote the reforms as a way of cleansing the church of anti-Orthodox sentiment.

The Regulation also spends a significant portion of time giving explicit instruction about how certain aspects of society concerning religion should operate. Many of the regulations involving the bishops consist of dictating situations in which the bishop must appeal to the Holy Synod, as well as how long they can spend away from their bishopric.⁶⁴ There are regulations which specifically dictate the educational standards for those in the official academy, and what they should learn and how. It is apparent that Peter I was aware that in order to ensure that his reforms would have longevity he must educate the next generation to automatically follow his directives. In the portion of the Regulation regarding teachers and students, the author laments the fact that when the military was uneducated and lacking in the proper training, it could not perform its duties very well.⁶⁵ The "Regulation" is primarily a text full of religious reforms, and yet Peter's priorities are obvious. While it would improve society as a whole to make education a priority of the Holy Synod, it was also important militaristically, a group which was very important to Peter I.

The reign of Peter the Great was certainly a contentious one. Opinions were varied on whether or not his reforms were either practical, or even good for Russia. He undoubtedly was responsible for putting Russia onto a path of modernization which would embroil them in much of the European politics which they had avoided in the past. Peter's ecclesiastical reforms allowed for secularism to spread throughout a country

⁶³ Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 9.

⁶⁴ Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 29.

⁶⁵ Prokopovich, *The Regulation*, 33.

which had previously been dominated by religion.⁶⁶ Many of the reforms, such as the abolition of the patriarchate, would remain in effect until the Russian Revolution of 1917, with a Holy Synod ruling in its place for the interim 200 years.⁶⁷ The precedent he set for autocratic rulers would be carried out for the duration of Russia's life as a monarchy, carried to the extreme by such rulers as his fellow 'Great', Catherine II, who completed his goal of total secularization of Russia, working to turn every facet of Russian society into an organ of the state.⁶⁸ While religion was at the heart of the Muscovite culture, and Peter did his best to remove the emblems of that same culture, it is difficult to know if he succeeded in changing the religious mindset, or if he simply forced his people into putting on a good show. Despite the broad scope and far reach of his reforms, Peter's religious reforms did not have the same clearly visible impact as some of the others. Peter's religious reforms, despite their controversy, largely succeeded in placing Russia into the European context which he preferred, a fact which is proved in Catherine II's "Nakaz", or instruction to the Legislative commission wherein she enumerates every aspect of Russian culture which make it such.⁶⁹ All in all, it is much easier to change men's beards than to change their faith.

⁶⁶ Riasanovsky *Identities*, 81.

⁶⁷ Hughes, *Peter the Great*, 245.

Paul Dukes, *The Making of Russian Absolutism*, (New York: Longman Inc., 1982), 97. ⁶⁹ "Catherine II Nakaz to the Legislative Commission" in Basil Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia: A Sourcebook* (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990), 80.

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Primary:

Author unknown, trans. Hellie, Richard. *The Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649*, Irvine: Charles Schlacks Jr, 1988.

The complete text of the Muscovite Law Code written under Peter the Great's father in 1649. Used to illustrate the nature of the monastery prikaz and its role as both law and social control.

Dmytryshyn, Basil. *Imperial Russia*, Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990.

A source book of texts from Russian history, in translation for the English speaking reader. The text of Catherine the Great's "Nakaz" was taken from this text. Most was outside the papers timeline, but this document was used to illustrate the lasting impact of Peter's social changes.

Korb, Johann Georg. *Diary of an Austrian Secretary of Legation at the Court of Czar Peter the Great* trans. Bradbury and Evans: London: 1863

A account of the Austrian Secretary of Legation and his experiences in the court of Peter the Great. Includes an account of the streltsy uprising towards the beginning of his reign, and the manner in which they were punished.

Prokopovich, Feofan. *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*, trans. Alexander Muller. Seattle: University of Washington Press 1972

A translation of one of the most important documents to the Petrine program of religious reform. Technically a compilation of several different documents, it contains a summation of many of the most important religious changes being made by Peter. Also includes a description of the Holy Synod in its original conception, which was used in my discussion of its conception and development.

Stahlin, Jakob. *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great*. New York: Arno Press, 1970.

A compilation of various anecdotes about Peter the Great, many of which concern his travels throughout Europe. Used in particular in a discussion of Peter's treatment of other religions, and his interactions with them throughout his travels, the Jews in particular.

Vernadsky, George .*A Sourcebook of Russian History from Early Times to 1917* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

Nearly all of my primary documents were taken from this sourcebook. A collection of a wide variety of sources, including letters, speeches, diary entries, legal documents, and the accounts of foreign dignitaries serving in Russia. Most documents were taken from this text, as it contained a large variety of sources in translation, something that was important to a non Russian speaker such as myself.

Secondary:

Anisimov, Evgenii. *The Reforms of Peter the Great* Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993.

An in depth work on the Petrine reforms. Used mainly as a historiographical background text to help me understand the general reforms as a whole, not necessarily the religious ones in particular.

Billington, James H. *The Icon and the Axe*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

A general text on the role of religion in Russia, and its relationship with the government. Used in support of my ideas regarding the relationship between the two.

Cracraft James. *The Religious Reforms of Peter the Great* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971.

Much more in depth analysis of the religious reforms than Anisimov, and was used mainly for back ground on the subject. Also helped to place the reform in the context of the bigger picture.

Cracraft, James. *Peter the Great Transforms Russia*. Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1991.

Another general text on Peter the Greats impact on Russia in all aspects, political, religious, and socially. Used for more background, and to gain historiographical insight.

Dukes, Paul. *The Making of Russian Absolutism*. New York: Longman Inc., 1982.

An interesting work which discusses the development of the role of the tsar from the Muscovite prince to the autocratic ruler whose image is all pervasive. Used to further illustrate the relationship between Peter's actions and the development of the autocratic ruler a la Catherine II.

Hughes, Lindsey. *Sophia: Regent of Russia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

A biography of Peter's sister, Sophia Alekseevna, and her role and impact on his reign. This paper used this text to look into the impact which Sophia and her major advisor Prince V.V. Golitsyn had on Peter's reign.

Hughes, Lindsey. *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

An analytical text of the nature of society throughout the reign of Peter the Great. Provided information on the way in which the religious reforms wrought changes on various aspects of society.

Kliuchevsky, V. O. *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968.

Massie, Robert K. *Peter the Great*. New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1980.

A biographical work which was useful when looking at earlier influences on Peter the Great, including the Grand Embassy which served as the journey which arguably made the largest impact on his reforming ideas.

Madariaga, Isabel. *Politics and Culture in Eighteenth Century Russia*. New York: Longman, 1998.

Another background text on the nature of Russian society. Again, many of the articles were outside of the appropriate timeline, but the editors article was useful in determining the nature of the religious reforms impact on society.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas. *Russian Identities*. Boston: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas. *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Both of the preceding Riasanovsky texts provided insight into the development of the Russian identity, something which was largely shaped by Peter's reforms. Used when looking at the nature of the changes which were seen by society. The latter is also interesting in its look at the changing nature of Petrine study in historiography.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas. *A History of Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Considered the authoritative text on Russian history, this provided a strong background both on Peter and the rulers who came before him. Also useful when defining certain terms.

Wren, Melvin C. *The Western Impact Upon Tsarist Russia*. Huntington: Robert E. Kreiger, 1976.

Not wholly relevant, but useful when looking at the nature of the West impact on Peter and its influence on his reforms, and used for such.

Zernov, A. "The Establishment of the Russian Church" in Peter *The Great: Reformer or Revolutionary?* Ed. Marc Raeff, Boston: D.C. Heath and Co, 1963

This text as a whole was debating the nature of Peter's reforms, so most were not useful to my purposes. However, this article within the book looked into the establishment of the Russian Orthodox church, and provided insight into the nature of the changes being wrought.