How can I lament now?
My great God, King of Kings, be my Defender!
The Purest Lady, Mother of God,
do not abandon me or forget me in the days of my grief.
When Dmitry Ivanovich, prince of the Russian land,
commenced his eternal rest
the air became troubled,
the earth began to shake
and the people became sorrowful.
What can I call this day?
This day of sadness and grief,
of tears and sighs,
of great misery and misfortune?...

To whom may I compare Grand Prince Dmitry Ivanovich,
Tsar of the Russian land, Ruler of a Grand Principality, Unifier
of Christians? Come, my beloved friends of the Church, praise
with words, praise dutifully the lord of the Russian land.

(Here is omitted a praise that follows the one in Epiphanius
the Wise’s Panegyric to St. Stephen of Perm [see Selection 44]
and ends Prince Dmitry’s vita.)

50. THE TALE OF THE WHITE COWL

The Tale of the White Cowl, which was to become the cornerstone
of Russian medieval ideology, was written toward the end
of the fifteenth century in Novgorod, apparently by Archbishop
Cenady and his co-worker and interpreter, Dmitry Gerasimov.
The tale was conceived with the purpose of defending the
sovereignty of the Novgorodian Church, in particular, and the
Russian Church, in general, from encroachment by the Grand
Duke of Muscovy, but it developed into an ideological work
that glorified the prestige of Russian Orthodox Christianity.
Later, in the sixteenth century, after the rise of Moscow to a
position of power, there developed from this work the theory of
Moscow being the Third Rome, which theory was clearly and
concisely formulated by Monk Philotheus (circa 1510-1540)
when he wrote: “All Christian realms will come to an end and
will unite into the one single realm of our sovereign, that is, into
the Russian realm, according to the prophetic books. Both
Romes fell, the third endures, and a fourth there will never be.”

This theory defined Moscow as the sole staunch defender of the
Eastern Orthodox Faith, which, in the minds of Greeks, Russians,
Southern Slavs, and other Eastern Europeans, was the
only true Christian doctrine.

The background of this concept is a rather eclectic one, and
can be traced to the Book of Daniel (7:27), in which the
prophet announced that the final kingdom of the one true faith
will come about and will never be destroyed. This concept of
Daniel’s was taken up by the Chiliasmists (from the Greek, chiltid,
meaning “a thousand”), who proclaimed the forthcoming King-
dom of Christ that would last a thousand years.

In the Middle Ages the Irish philosopher John Scottus Eriigena
(ninth century) and the Italian theologian Joachim de Fiore
(twelfth century) modified Daniel’s original concept into the
theory of the “three kingdoms,” that is, the Kingdom of the
Father who gave the Law (Old Testament), the Kingdom of

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1 The best discussion of the works of Monk Philotheus can be
found in V. Malinin’s Starits Eleazarova Monastyrja Filosey i ego
Polania, Kiev, 1901. This quotation is to be found on page 45 in the
appendix of Malinin’s work.
the Son who brought Grace, and the final Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, of which the Apostles said: "Where there is the spirit of God, there is freedom." The theory of the final Kingdom of the Holy Spirit became known in Russia, and later formed the basis for both the Tale of the White Cowl and the Third Rome theory.

In the eyes of Archbishop Genady and Dmitry Gerasimov, Russia was destined by God to be revealed as this last kingdom, the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, which will endure until the Last Judgment. The authors of the Tale of the White Cowl combined this theocratic, utopian tenet with the Roman Catholic legend of the gift of the city of Rome to Pope Sylvester by Emperor Constantine (Emperor of Rome, 306–337). This legend laid the foundation for the secular power of the Pope of Rome and also for the independence of the pope from the emperor.

The Tale of the White Cowl underwent many revisions and is extant in several versions; however, its central theme remains the same in all: the White Cowl, the symbol of the radiant Resurrection and Orthodox Christianity, remained in Rome as long as the popes preserved the original teachings of Christ. But when the popes broke with the Eastern Church and developed their "Latin heresies," the divine power gave the White Cowl to the patriarch of Constantinople, which the Greeks of that time called the "Second Rome." When the Greeks began to "multiply their sins" and even began negotiating with the Pope of Rome, God punished them by letting their land be overrun by Turks. The tale states that a century before the fall of Constantinople, God, who had predestined the last Orthodox nation, after the fall of Byzantium, to be Russia, commanded that the White Cowl be taken to the Archbishop of Novgorod, Vasily.


Since the translation given here is not the complete tale, it is essential to present a synopsis of the narrative up to the point where the translation begins.

2 The Byzantines, and later the Russians, called the teachings of the Western Church "Latin heresies," since Rome proclaimed the primacy of the pope and used the Latin tongue exclusively for liturgical purposes.

3 The actual conquest of Constantinople by the Turks took place in 1453, some thirty or forty years before the Tale of the White Cowl was written in Novgorod.

SYNOPSIS

The Tale of the White Cowl opens with the story of Emperor Constantine's illness, which could be cured neither by physicians nor by magicians. One such magician, who was violently opposed to Christianity, advised the emperor that in order to be cured he must bathe in the blood of three thousand infants killed expressly for that purpose. However, at the last minute Emperor Constantine, moved by the tears and wailings of the mothers of the children who were to be slain, canceled his plan, preferring to die rather than to kill children in order to restore his health. That very night the emperor had a vision of the Apostles Peter and Paul, who told him that Pope Sylvester, who was in hiding from his persecutors at that time, could show him a font of salvation, bathing wherein would cure him of this affliction. In recompense, the emperor was to grant new rights to the Christian Church and to support it as the national religion.

The tale continues that the emperor was cured, ended the persecutions of Christians, and even wished to grant the imperial crown to the pope. The pope most humbly refused to accept it. So the emperor gave him a white cowl, the symbol of the primacy of spiritual power over secular power and of the Resurrection, the color white representing the radiance of the Resurrection of Christ. Having given the supreme power in the city of Rome to the pope, Emperor Constantine then left the Eternal City and went to the ancient city of Byzantium, which was later renamed the "city of Constantine," or Constantinople. Thus did the Eastern, or Byzantine, Roman Empire come into being.

After the death of Pope Sylvester, the tale goes on to say, the White Cowl was highly revered by the popes of Rome. However, in the ninth century, when the West was ruled by Emperor Charlemagne and the papal see was ruled by Pope Formosus, a schism arose between the Eastern and Western Churches. The Western Church, under the leadership of the pope, developed new teachings and doctrines that the Eastern Church considered to be "Latin heresies," particularly the doctrine of the primacy of the Pope of Rome over the entire Church. From that time on the popes ceased to revere the White Cowl, and finally decided to profane and destroy it. However, a miraculous power saved the White Cowl, and the pope was forced to send it to the Patriarch of Constantinople, the capital of the still-extant Eastern Roman Empire, or, as it is more often called, Byzantium.

4 Pope Formosus reigned from 891 to 896. During his reign there began the first conflicts between Rome and Constantinople over the jurisdiction of the two branches of the Church.
The translation begins at this point in the tale—that is, with the arrival of the White Cowl in Constantinople.

At that time the Patriarch of Constantinople was Philotheos, who was distinguished by his strict fasting and his virtuous ways. Once, he had a vision in the night of a youth from whom emanated light and who told him:

"Blessed teacher, in the olden times the Roman Emperor, Constantine, who, through the vision of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, was enlightened by God, decided to give blessed Pope Sylvester the White Cowl to glorify the Holy Apostolic Church. Later, the unfaithful popes of the Latin heresies wanted to profane and destroy this cowl, but I appeared to the evil pope, and now this cowl has sent this cowl to you. When the messengers arrive with it, you must accept it with all honors. Then send the White Cowl to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great with your written blessing. And there this cowl will be worn on the head of Vasily, Archbishop of Novgorod, so that he may glorify the Holy Apostolic Cathedral of Holy Sophia and laud the Orthodox Faith. There, in that land, the faith of Christ is verily glorified. And the popes, because of their shamelessness, will receive the vengeance of God. And having spoken these words, the youth became invisible.

The patriarch awaked filled with awe and joy, and was unable to sleep throughout the remainder of the night. And he contemplated this vision. In the morning he ordered that the bells should sound the matins, and when day came he summoned the Church council and revealed his vision. And all praised God, perceiving that a holy angel had appeared to the patriarch. Yet they did not fully understand the meaning of the message. When they were still in council, and were filled with awe due to their great joy, there arrived a servant of the patriarch, and he announced to them that messengers had arrived from the Pope of Rome. The patriarch ordered that they be brought before him. The messengers came, bowed lowly to the patriarch, and gave him the message. The patriarch read the message and pondered it, praising God. He announced its contents to Emperor John who was reigning at that time and whose name was Kantakuzen. And then he went with the entire council to meet the bringers of the divine treasure which lay in an ark. He accepted it with all honors, broke the seal, and took from the ark the holy White Cowl. He kissed it with reverence, and looked upon it with wonderment both for its creation and for the wonderful fragrance that emanated from it.

At that time the patriarch had diseased eyes and constant headaches, but when he placed the White Cowl upon his head, these afflictions immediately ceased to be. And he rejoiced with great joy and rendered glory to Christ, Our Lord, to Constantinople's blessed memory for his creating this wonderful cowl for blessed Pope Sylvester. And he put the holy cowl on the golden salver that was also sent by the pope. He placed them in the great church in an honorable place until he could make a decision with the emperor's counseling.

After the White Cowl was sent from Rome, the evil pope, who was counseled by heretics, became angered against the Christian faith and was driven to a frenzy, extremely regretting his allowing the White Cowl to be sent to Constantinople. And he wrote an evil letter to the patriarch, in which he demanded the return of the White Cowl on the golden salver. The patriarch read this letter and, understanding the pope's evil and cunning design, sent him a letter in return that was based on Holy Scripture, and in it he called the pope both evil and godless, the apostate and precursor of the Antichrist. And the patriarch cursed the pope in the name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the holy Apostles, and the Church Fathers. And this letter came to the pope.

When the pope had read the letter and learned that the patriarch intended to send the White Cowl with great honor to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great, he uttered a roar. And his face changed and he fell ill, for he, the infidel, disliked the Russian land and could not even hear of this land where the Christian faith was professed.

Patriarch Philotheos, having seen that the White Cowl was illumined with grace, began to ponder how he might keep it in Constantinople and wear it on his own head. He consulted with the emperor about the matter several times, and wanted to write to the other patriarchs and metropolitans to summon them to a council. After matins one Sunday, the patriarch returned to his chambers and, after the usual prayers, lay down to rest. But

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5 Philotheos was patriarch of Constantinople from 1353 to 1355, and from 1364-1376.

6 Vasily was archbishop of Novgorod from 1330 to 1342. In 1946 his grave was discovered and opened. In it were found both the White Cowl and the vestments embrodered with crosses that are mentioned in this tale.

7 John VI Kantakuzen (or Cantacuzene) was Emperor of Byzantium from 1347 to 1354.
he slept but lightly, and in this sleep he saw that two men, who were unknown to him, came through the door. And from them there emanated light. One of them was armed as a warrior and had an imperial crown upon his head. The other wore a bishop’s vestments and was distinguished by his venerable white hair.

The latter spoke to the patriarch, saying: 'Patriarch! Stop pondering your wearing of the White Cowl on your own head. If this were to be, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, would have so predestined it from the founding of this city. And for a long time did divine enlightenment come from heaven, and then God’s voice came to me and I learned that Rome had to betray God and embrace their Latin heresies. That is the reason I did not wish to wear this cowl upon my head, and thus I instructed other prelates not to do so. And this imperial city of Constantinople will be taken by the sons of Hagar because of its sins, and all holy shrines will be defiled and destroyed. Thus has it been predestined since the founding of this city.

The ancient city of Rome has broken away from the glory and faith of Christ because of its pride and ambition. In the new Rome, which has been the city of Constantinople, the Christian faith will also perish through the violence of the sons of Hagar. In the third Rome, which will be the land of Russia, the Grace of the Holy Spirit will be revealed. Know then, Philotheos, that all Christians will finally unite into one Russian nation because of its Orthodoxy. Since ancient times and by the will of Constantine, Emperor of the Earth, the imperial crown of the imperial city is predestined to be given to the Russian tsar. But the White Cowl, by the will of the King of Heaven, Jesus Christ, will be given to the Archbishop of Novgorod the Great. And this White Cowl is more honorable than the crown of the tsar, for it is an imperial crown of the archangelic spiritual order. Thus, you must send this holy White Cowl to the Russian land, to the city of Novgorod the Great, as you were told to do in the vision of the angel. You should believe and trust in what I say. And when you send it to the Russian land, the Orthodox Faith will be glorified and the cowl will be safe from seizure by the infidel sons of Hagar and from the intended profanation by the Latin pope. And the grace, glory, and honor which were

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5 Both the Byzantines and the Russians called all nomads, whether they were Turks, Mongols, or Arabs, the sons of Hagar. “Hagar” refers to the handmaid of the biblical patriarch Abraham.

9 The Russians of that time used only one word, “tsar,” for the English words “king,” “King of Heaven,” “emperor,” and even “khan.” Equally, the word “tsarstvo” was used to mean “realm,” “empire,” “tsardom,” and the “Kingdom of God.”

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taken from Rome, as well as the Grace of the Holy Spirit, will be removed from the imperial city of Constantinople after its capture by the sons of Hagar. And all holy relics will be given to the Russian land in the predestined moment. And the Russian tsar will be elevated by God above other nations, and under his sway will be many heathen kings. And the power of the patriarch of this imperial ruling city will pass to the Russian land in the predestined hour. And that land will be called Radiant Russia, which, by the Grace of God, will be glorified with blessings. And its majesty will be strengthened by its Orthodoxy, and it will become more honorable than the two Rome which preceded it.”

And saying this, the man of the vision who was dressed in a bishop’s vestment wished to leave, but the patriarch, seized by great awe, fell before the bishop and said: “Who are you, my lord? Your vision has seized me with great awe; my heart has been frightened by your words, and I tremble to my very bones.”

The man in the bishop’s vestments answered: “Don’t you know who I am? I am Pope Sylvester, and I came to you because I was ordered by God to reveal to you the great mystery which will come to pass in the predestined time.” Then, pointing to the other man in the vision, he added: “This is blessed Emperor Constantine of Rome to whom I gave rebirth in the holy font and whom I won over to the faith of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. He was the first Christian emperor, my child in Christ, who created and gave me the White Cowl in place of the imperial crown.” And saying this, he blessed the patriarch, and became invisible.

Waking up, the patriarch was seized with awe, remembering the words about the White Cowl and the conquest of Constantinople by the pagan sons of Hagar. And he wept for a long time. When the hour of the divine Mass arrived, the patriarch went to the church, fell before the icon of the Holy Mother of God, and remained lying there for some time. Then he arose, took the White Cowl with great reverence, kissed it piously, placed it upon his head, and then put it to his eyes and his heart. And his adoration for this cowl increased even more. And doing this, he wept. His clerics, who were around him and saw that he wept inconsolably, did not dare to inquire as to why he was weeping. Finally the patriarch ceased crying and told his clerics in detail of the vision of Pope Sylvester and Emperor Constantine. Having heard these words, the clerics wept sorrowfully, and exclaimed, “Thy will be done!”

The patriarch, mourning the forthcoming misfortunes of the
city of Constantinople and fearing to trespass the Divine Will, told them that he must fulfill the will of the Lord and do with the White Cowl as he was commanded to do. After having deliberated with blessed Emperor John, he took the White Cowl and the golden salver, put them in the aforementioned ark, sealed it with his seal, and, as he was commanded by the holy angel and blessed Pope Sylvester, put in his epistle with his blessings, and in it he commanded Archbishop Vasily and all other bishops who would follow Vasily to wear the White Cowl upon their heads. He added many other honorable and marvelous gifts from his clergy for the bishopric of Novgorod the Great. And he also sent vestments with their embroidered crosses for the glorification of the Holy Apostolic Church. And all this was placed in another ark. And he gave these arks to a bishop named Eunomius, and sent him forth with both joy and sorrow.

In the bishopric of the city of Novgorod the Great was Archbishop Vasily who distinguished himself by his fasting and virtuous ways. Once, in the night, he prayed to God and then lay down to rest, but he slept but lightly, and had a dream in which he saw the angel of God. This angel of God, who had a handsome appearance and radiant face, appeared before him in the garb of a monk and with the White Cowl upon his head. With his finger he pointed to his head and in a low voice announced: “Vasily! This White Cowl which you see on my head is from Rome. In olden times the Christian Emperor Constantine created it in honor of Sylvester, Pope of Rome. He gave it to this pope to wear upon his head. But God Almighty did not permit the White Cowl to remain there because of their Latin heresies. Tomorrow morning you must go from the city with your clergymen and meet the bishop and messengers sent by the patriarch. And they will bring an ark, and in this ark you will find the White Cowl upon a golden salver. Accept it with all honors, for this White Cowl symbolizes the radiant Resurrection which came to pass on the third day. And from now, you and all other archbishops of this city will wear it on your heads. And I have come to you to assure you beforehand that all is as God wills it and to assure you doubts you may have.” And saying this, the angel became invisible.

Waking up, Archbishop Vasily was seized with awe and joy, pondering the meaning of the vision. The next morning he sent his clerics outside the city, to the crossroads, to see whether the messengers really would appear. In the vicinity of

the city the envoys of Archbishop Vasily met a Greek bishop who was unknown to them and who traveled to the city of Novgorod. They made a low obeisance and returned to the archbishop and told him all they had seen. The bishop then sent his preacher into the city to summon the clerics and the entire population. And he ordered the tolling of the bells, and both he and his clerics donned their vestments.

The procession had not gone far from the Cathedral of Holy Sophia when they met the aforementioned bishop, sent by the patriarch and bearing the ark that had been sealed by the patriarch, and contained the venerable gifts. He came to Archbishop Vasily, made a low obeisance before him, and gave him the epistles of the patriarch. They blessed and greeted each other in Christ’s name. Archbishop Vasily accepted the epistles of the patriarch and the ark bearing the venerable gifts. And he went with them to the Cathedral of Holy Sophia, the Wisdom of God. There he put them in the middle of the church in an honorable place, and ordered that the patriarchal epistles be read aloud. When the Orthodox people, who were in the cathedral, heard these writings read aloud, they rendered glory to God and rejoiced with great joy. Archbishop Vasily opened one of the arks and removed the cover. And a wonderful fragrance and miraculous radiance spread throughout the church. Archbishop Vasily and all present were in wonderment, witnessing these happenings. And Bishop Eunomius, who was sent by the patriarch, wondered about these blessed deeds of God that he had witnessed. And they all rendered glory to God, and celebrated the service of thanksgiving.

Archbishop Vasily took the White Cowl from the ark and saw that it appeared exactly like the one he had seen on the angel’s head in his vision. And he kissed it with reverence. At that same moment there came a sonorous voice from the icon of the Lord, which was in the cupola of the church, saying: “Holy, holy.” And after a moment of silence there came the same voice, which thrice announced: “Ispola eis despota.” And when the archbishop and all those present heard these voices, they were seized with awe and joy. And they said: “The Lord have mercy upon us!” And the archbishop then ordered that all present in the church be silent, and he revealed to them his vision of the angel and his words concerning the White Cowl.

11 “Ispola eis despota” is Greek for “Many years to the lord,” or, more loosely translated, “Long live the bishop.” The Russians used this expression during the Church service, and it was always pronounced in Greek.
D. TRAVELERS’ ACCOUNTS

51. AFANASY NIKITIN’S JOURNEY ACROSS THREE SEAS

At the beginning of the year 1469 Afanasy Nikitin, a merchant from the city of Tver, undertook a long business trip. Interested in trade with the Middle East, he wanted to explore such a venture personally. Sailing down the Volga, Nikitin soon reached the Caspian Sea on his way to Persia, from where he unexpectedly decided to go to India through the Indian Ocean. The first European ever to explore this country, Nikitin remained there for one and a half years out of his six years of travel, at the end of which he returned to Russia by way of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Armenia, and the Black Sea. Fate did not intend him to return to his native Tver; however, for he died in Smolensk, leaving there his apparently uncompleted and unedited manuscript with the account of his travels.

Nikitin’s Journey Across Three Seas—the Caspian, Indian, and Black—belongs to a well-known type of Russian literature, the travel description; however, where earlier accounts all dealt with pilgrimages to the Holy Land, this one is devoted to a business journey and exploration. Still, in many places Nikitin’s report is imbued with genuine religious feeling, reflected in a number of lyric and pathetic digressions.

Exotic India obviously struck Nikitin’s imagination. Although he spent only one-quarter of the six years of his travel there, he devoted three-fourths of his work to it. It seems that he wrote his notes while traveling from country to country and probably for this reason his observations are couched in a brief, sober, and documentary style. There are few elements of the fantastic, so characteristic of other European travel memoirs of the time, but personal experiences and impressions are given at greater length.

Three different levels can be discerned in Nikitin’s work. First, descriptions of the lands he has seen and his adventures in them. He often writes in direct speech, a technique presently known in Russian criticism as “skaz,” which is often used for narrative. Sometimes he even seems to answer the questions of an imaginary interlocutor.

Second, probably for the benefit of later travelers to India, brief and condensed information is given, such as distances
52. THE STORY OF STEPHEN BATHORY'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST PSKOV

For almost two centuries the primary objective of Muscovite Russia's foreign policy was to gain free access to the Baltic Sea in order to establish direct contact with the West and put an end to Russia's political and cultural isolation. On many occasions Russian armies had tried to capture the Baltic shores, which had been in the hands of the Teutonic Knights of the Livonian Order since the thirteenth century. In 1558 Ivan IV began a military campaign against this Order, and at first he was successful. When Sweden and the Polish-Lithuanian Empire came to the help of the Livonian Order, however, the Russian advance lost momentum. The war then became an exhausting, indecisive undertaking that lasted some twenty-five years. In its final stages Russia had to face the powerful coalition of Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary, the last three countries being united under the scepter of the energetic Prince of Transylvania, Stephen Bathory. After 1578 Russia lost most of the lands she had conquered earlier, and by 1581 King Stephen Bathory was able to begin an invasion of Russian territory. Polish, Lithuanian, and Hungarian troops, supported by some German mercenaries, invaded Russia and advanced on the city of Pskov, Russia's principal stronghold in the northwest. After a long siege and many attempts to subdue the city, King Stephen Bathory was forced to abandon his plans for conquest, for the heroic defense of Pskov and his failure to take the city had undermined both the strength and morale of his Polish-Lithuanian forces.

The Story of Stephen Bathory's Campaign Against Pskov was written in the form of an epic in the late sixteenth century by a talented and erudite anonymous writer who displays an excellent command of the traditional, ornamental stylicstics of his time. His account is at once dramatic and ironic, picturesque, and varied. His metaphors and literary devices ideally serve his purpose to present a solemn account of the heroism of the Russian soldiers. With considerable mastery and pointed irony,

1 Stephen Bathory was also elected King of Poland and Lithuania in 1575. His wife was Anna, the last princess of the Polish dynasty of Jagellons. The author of this tale refers to Stephen as "King of Lithuania," although Poland and Lithuania were united under his scepter.

the author describes King Stephen Bathory's campaign, his courageous, boastful courtiers and knights who, long before the final outcome of the battle was in sight, bragged that they would capture Princes Vasiliy and Ivan Shuisky, the valiant defenders of Pskov. This tale betrays the strong national fervor of the writer, who was firmly convinced that God would help the "only truly Christian" Russian army, and grant it final victory over the "infidel" invaders.

The excerpts that follow were taken from the early seventeenth-century Russian text published by V. I. Malyshch in Povest o prikhozhdeni Stepana Batorya na grad Pskov, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Moscow and Leningrad, 1952, pages 56, 57, 59, 60, and 65-78.

... Dreadful and cruel times have come. The Polish and Lithuanian king, Stephen Bathory, approached the borders of the Russian land with numerous forces. The rumor has spread to Pskov that this Lithuanian king has already invaded the land of Pskov and has occupied the city of Voronoch, located sixty miles from the city of Pskov.

Similar to insatiable hell which opens its jaws to swallow its victim, so also did the Polish-Lithuanian king prepare to take the city of Pskov in the pincers of his regiments. Always livelier and swifter, this king's army, like an ominous and great serpent wriggling from its cave, moved in columns to Pskov, and threatened the Russians with its campfires, guns, and smoke. The Lithuanian king boasted that he would swallow Pskov, even before he reached it. He boasted that he would satiate all the reptiles, snakes, and scorpions of his army with the rest of the booty. This ominous serpent leaped at Pskov, wanting to hurl it to the earth with its wings and to sting the Pskovian men to death with its stinger. He boasted that he would plunder all the spoils of Pskov and take them to Lithuania and that he would swallow up the Pskovian land, dragging on its tail all those who remained alive to the Lithuanian land. The serpent already flattened itself with thoughts of victory over Pskov. ...
At six o'clock of this same day they heard a noise comparable to that of approaching gigantic waves or of powerful thunder. And the entire enemy army howled and ran to the breaches in the fortress wall, covering themselves with their shields, rifles, muskets, lances, and other weapons, and thus appearing to be under a roof. The tsar's boys and voevodas appealed to God for help, encouraged the Russian warriors with their battle cries, and began fighting the enemies on the fortress wall. The innumerable Lithuanian troops rushed to the fortress wall like a rampaging stream. But our Christian warriors remained as firm as the stars in the sky, and did not permit the enemy to scale the walls. Like powerful thundering, there arose a din of shouts, noises of the shooting of artillery and gunfire, and battle cries of the great multitude of warriors from both armies.

The Pskovian army barred the way of the Lithuanian army, but these lawless Lithuanian warriors fiercely and daringly scaled the wall. The enemy artillery made such large breaches in the wall that even the cavalry could go through them. And at the Virgin's Veil and the Hog Towers there was not a single place safe from the enemy's artillery and guns. The Russians had begun building new wooden walls of many stories for artillery, but they could not complete them because of the heavy enemy artillery barrage. And only their foundations were completed. Thus many enemy warriors were able to climb the city walls. Many of their captains and gaidukas scaled the Virgin's Veil and Hog Towers with their banners, shooting at our defenders from the tower windows and from behind their shields. The first to scale the wall and to remain on it were the enemy's veteran soldiers who were clad in steel armor and armed with the best of weapons. The tsar's boys and voevodas and the entire Orthodox army resisted them firmly and unbendingly, fighting bravely and skillfully, and not letting the enemy into the city.

When the most glorified King Stephen saw that his choicest storm troops were on the walls of the city, that his captains and gaidukas had unfurled the banners of the Lithuanian army over the Virgin's Veil and Hog Towers, and that they opened fire against the city and against the Russian artillery to open the way.
for the taking of the city, his heart was filled with indescribable joy. And he looked hopefully forward to the taking of the fortress. He moved his headquarters closer to the city, into the church of Christ's great martyr, Nikita, which was situated one-half mile from the wall of Pskov.

His retinue, councillors, and beloved noblest aristocrats approached the king and spoke words of hope and praise to him: "Our lord and sovereign, you have done it. You are the conqueror and victorious ruler of the city of Pskov. Glory be to you. We beg you, extend your kindness to us and allow us to proceed to the fortress of Pskov, so that not only your captains and gaidukas will know the glory of having taken Pskov."

When the king heard how joyfully his noblemen and councillors expressed their readiness to fulfill his plans, joy overcame him. With a gay face and happy heart he told them, as if they were his brothers: "Well, my friends, if you show such intentions to fight, I shall also go with you and not stay behind, my friends."

But they answered: "O our sovereign, King Stephen! You will make your triumphant and glorious entry into this great city of Pskov, in the same way as the great king, Alexander the Great, made his glorious and triumphant entry into the city of Rome. And in the same way as Alexander's courtiers met him in the city, so also shall we, your servants, meet you in the city of Pskov with a hymn of glory. And we will prepare for you the spoils of the city. And we will meet you with the Russian commanders of Pskov, whom we shall capture! And for a particularly cherished treasure, we shall meet you with the two captured boyars and voevodas: the first commander of Pskov, Prince Vasily Shuisky, and the glorious, strong, invincible, great, and courageous second commander, Prince Ivan Shuisky. And we shall put them both in irons before you. And you, our sovereign, will do what you please with them in order that they be punished for their unruly resistance to you."

Hearing this, the king permitted them to go to the walls of the fortress of Pskov with joy, telling them the following: "I know, friends, that it always would happen as you used to predict, and so it will happen now. And you will accomplish what you intend to, for no one can resist you and your brilliant mind." And two thousand selected storm troops and personal guards of the king began the assault of the Hog Tower, which was already destroyed on their side, and they began shooting through the windows of the wall at the Christian people and at the Russian militia. Their bullets fell like drops of rain from a storm cloud, and flooded the Russian warriors. These bullets were killing the Christian people as if they were the stings of serpents. Other enemy troops stormed through the breach in the Virgin's Veil Tower, and cleared the tower of Russian warriors, preparing the way for the final taking of the city.

The Russian voevodas, their soldiers, and the Pskovian militia firmly and courageously stood their ground. Some waited for the enemy with lances at the foot of the wall. The streltsy shot at the Poles with their muskets. Some of the noblemen shot with their bows, while still others hurled rocks or defended the city of Pskov in other ways. The Poles' artillery shot at the Russian army from the walls and the towers and, relieving tired troops with fresh ones, they shot incessantly and shouted, "Let's take the city of Pskov!"

The king often sent his messenger to them, inquiring whether the city had been taken, and ordered the commanders, captains, and the entire army to speed the taking of the city.

In the God-protected city of Pskov the voevodas and boyars of the tsar, with kindness and tears, urged their Christian warriors to fight heartily, and they, themselves, fought unyieldingly at the side of their troops. It was sad to see the heads of the Christian warriors falling to the earth like the ears of wheat torn from the ground and lying in one heap. Many soldiers fell from the many wounds inflicted by the enemy's weapons, from exhaustion, and from the incessant fighting. During the day it was extremely hot because of the burning sun. Only faith in God's protection and deliverance gave strength to the warriors.

In the city itself and in the Cathedral of the Life-Giving Trinity the clergy incessantly prayed with tears and moaning for deliverance of the city. When the clergy of the cathedral learned the news that the Lithuanians were already on the walls and in the towers, and that they had unfurled their banners and were shooting from the walls into the city, preparing their way, then Tikhon, the abbot of the Crypt Monastery, and Archpriest Luka, and all the deacons of the city began to weep with loud voices, extending their arms to the most holy icon. They fell to their knees. Like the streams of many rivers their tears covered the marble steps of the altar, and they began to pray with more fervor, asking the Holy Virgin to protect the city and its inhabitants. The noble ladies, who had gathered in the cathedral for the service, beat their breasts and prayed to God and the most Pure Virgin; they fell on the floor, beating the ground

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9 Either the Polish nobles erred in their speeches or the author of this tale did, for Alexander the Great certainly was never at war with Rome.
with their heads and crying for divine help. And in every house
of the great and God-protected city of Pskov the women, in-
fants, and children who remained at home fervently cried and
prayed before the holy icons, beating their breasts and asking
the Holy Virgin and all saints for help, and begging God for the
forgiveness of their sins and deliverance of the city. And in all
the streets of the city there was crying, moaning, and indescrib-
able wailing.

The enemy troops were incessantly and steadily advancing.
"Forward, friends!" shouted their officers. "Let us slay all
the people of Pskov for their unsubmitiveness. Not even a memory
of the Christian inhabitants of Pskov will remain. The shadow
death will engulf them, and nothing will be able to aid them
in escaping from our hands."

But who can speak of the power of God? Who can praise
his glory?
Blessed are those that fear God and follow his righteous ways,
and who honestly enjoy the fruits of their labors.
Listen, all people of the universe.
Listen all sons of man.
Listen all rich and poor.
Come all saints of Russia to the Christian land to aid the city
of Pskov.
You have prayed for us and have helped us through your
prayers to God.
You protected the city of Pskov,
which verily I say unto you is the God-protected city.
Let us glorify and declare together the power of the Holy
Trinity.
God is our protection and power; God is our aid in the sorrow
befallen us.
Therefore, I verily say unto you,
that we have no fear, as the voice of the prophet an-
nounced it.
Great is God and greatly is he glorified in this city of God.
We recognise God, who is on his holy mountain,
when we are in misfortune and when he intercedes for us.
For our humility God did not forsake us
when the kings of the earth gathered to march on Pskov,
saying:
"God has abandoned that city. Let us hurry and take it."

O Stephen Bathory, commander of the accused, haughty,
and evil Lithuanian nation,
and of all thy insane army!
How can you say that no one will deliver this city?
The power of God is with us!
Our Protector is the God of Jacob, the God of the Clarified
Trinity,
the One God who has three names, but whom we worship as
One,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
We place our hope in him and we rely upon him.
But you, Bathory, do not know him with your lawless Latv
heresies.
And you, Bathory, who place your own majesty before that
of heaven,
hope to conquer the city of Pskov, relying on your multitude
of forces.
Wait, accursed one! You will see what happens to your forces!
You will see whether there is One who can deliver us!
And what is the worth of all your proud bragging about the
taking of Pskov?
Because of your pride, you will now experience humiliation.
And from the heights of arrogance, you will descend to the
hell of shame.
And so will it happen to your army,
for the Lord has remembered us for our humility
and has delivered us from our enemies.
And the Lord has heard the prayers of his servants
and through the miracle of his unfathomable compassion,
his mercy was revealed,
and he delivered his people and showed clemency to his
servants.

A bomb from the great gun called the Leopard, which was
placed upon the Praise Bastion, hit the Hog Tower squarely.
And the bomb killed a great many Polish and Lithuanian war-
rriors. At about the same time, the tsar’s boyars and voevodas
ordered the exploding of a large quantity of black powder under
this Hog Tower. And the overproud knights, courtiers, and
nobles of the king, who had begged their king for permission
to take the city of Pskov and bring in the Russian boyars and
voevodas in irons, as it was previously mentioned, were blasted
into the air according to God’s design, and were thus slain by
these Russian boyars and voevodas. And the corpses were so
numerous that another tower might have been built with them.
And the best of the royal nobles, who had boasted that they
would bring the imprisoned Russian commanders to their king.
remained under the ruins of the Hog Tower, prisoners of death until the Last Judgment. And the deep Pskovian moat was overflowing with their bodies.

The king learned this, when he asked: "Are my noblemen already in the castle?"

And his courtiers told him: "No, sire, they are under the walls of the castle."

And then the king asked: "Do my nobles fight behind the walls of the city and destroy the Russian forces?"

And they answered: "Sire, all your nobles have been killed in the Hog Tower or lie burned in the moat."

And the king was so bereaved that he wanted to run on his sword, as the pagans used to do, for his heart was bursting with sorrow. And he became wroth, and ordered his captains and storm troops who were fighting at the Virgin's Veil Tower to stand firm and take by any and all means the city of Pskov.

The tsar's boyars and voevodas, seeing the heavy and uninterrupted bombardment, the incessant storming, and realizing that many of their warriors had been killed or wounded, relied only upon the help of God. They sent for the holy and miracle-working icons and for the miracle-working relics of the faithful and great Prince Gabriel ⁶ who had once delivered the city of Pskov from the enemy. And they ordered that the icons be brought to the breach which had been made in the wall by the Poles. Once the holy icon of the Holy Virgin of Vladimir had protected the city of Moscow at the time of Tamerlane's invasion. Now another icon was brought to Pskov because of the invasion of King Stephen Bathory. While the icon of the Virgin protected the city of Moscow from the infamous lame man [Tamerlane], now another icon of the Virgin, which had been brought from the Crypt Monastery, helped and protected Pskov. At that time the holy icon of Vladimir was brought to Moscow on the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, and Tamerlane was defeated because he became afraid of this icon of the Pure Virgin, and fled with all his army from Moscow and

from Russia. This time the miracle happened in the glorious city of Pskov, on the very day of the venerable and glorious holy day of her birth.

When the holy, miracle-working icon of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin of the Crypt Monastery was brought from the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity with other icons, relics of Prince Gabriel, and other holy relics, divine protection invisibly appeared over the breach in the wall.

The Poles and Lithuanians were fiercely fighting against the Russians in the breaches of the wall and in the Virgin's Veil Tower. Together with the warriors, the Russian officers and commanders were fighting, preventing the enemy from breaking through into Pskov. And when the church procession moved from the cathedral with the icons, at the head of the procession, black-robed heralds rushed on their steeds; they were not soldiers, but the warriors of Christ. Among them were the cellarer of the Crypt Monastery, whose name was Arseny Khvostov; the treasurer of the Monastery of the Birth of the Holy Virgin in Snetegorok, Jonah Naumov; and the abbot, Mantir, who was known to everyone in Pskov. All three of these monks were aristocrats by birth and, before becoming monks, had been great warriors. Seeing the bloody battle, they rushed to the breach and, for the sake of God and their holy faith, called out in strong voices. And it seemed as if these voices were coming from the icons. They called to the commanders and to the whole Christian army: "Be not afraid. Let us stand firm. Let us charge against the Polish and Lithuanian forces. The Holy Virgin has come to our aid with all her mercy and protection, and with all the saints."

As soon as the words were heard that the Holy Virgin had come with all the saints to help the Russian commanders and warriors, the Russians felt that the Holy Virgin really gave them her blessing and protection, and thus their weakening hearts became firm and they became ready for heroic deeds. In their hearts they accepted the aid of the Holy Virgin, and all commanders, warriors, and the aforementioned monks cried out in unison: "O friends, let us die this day at the hands of the Lithuanians for the sake of Christ's faith and for our Orthodox tsar, Ivan of all the Russia! Let us not surrender to the Polish king, Stephen!"

And they appealed also for the intercession of the holy protectors of Pskov, late Prince Gabriel, late Prince Dovmont, and Nicholas, the fool in Christ. And in their hearts they accepted their help, and the entire Russian Christian army stormed the enemy together, and they were fighting in the breach of the wall.

Thus, with God's and the Holy Virgin's help, and with the

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⁶ Prince Gabriel, as well as Prince Dovmont, mentioned in the following paragraph, were rulers of Pskov in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and became known for their courageous defense of Pskov against the German Knights of the Livonian Order and Baltic tribes. See Selection 40, footnote 5.

⁷ The Crypt Monastery mentioned here is west of the city of Pskov, and has preserved to the present its fortifications built by Ivan IV. The name of the monastery was apparently taken from the Kievan Cave (or Crypt) Monastery.
intercession of the holy miracle workers, the Russians expelled the Polish-Lithuanian forces from the breach and, where recently stood the feet of the enemy, now stood the firm feet of the Christian warriors. And they continued to defeat the enemy, going beyond the walls of the city, while others fought with the Lithuanian troops who remained in the Virgin's Veil Tower.

When the Lord demonstrated the Christian victory over Pole and Lithuanian, and when the Russian troops repulsed the Lithuanian warriors, captains, and gaiduks from the breach in the wall, this news of the blessing of Christ spread throughout the entire city of Pskov, and reached the women who had been left at home. And the word that the enemy had been stopped through divine help spread from house to house. And the women were ordered to go take the Lithuanian artillery and the remnants of the Lithuanian and Polish weapons that remained in the city, and then to gather at the breach. And all the women of Pskov, who had remained in their homes in great sorrow, were seized with joy, forgot their womanly weaknesses, and gained the strength of men, hurried to the breach, and took from their homes weapons according to their strengths. Even before, at the beginning of the assault, some strong young women had been fighting against the enemy with arms. Now all, the young, the strong, and the weak, were running with ropes to pull the artillery pieces left by the enemy into the city. All of them rushed to the breach. And each woman wanted to surpass the others in her speed. A multitude of women gathered at the breach, and they were great help for the Christian warriors. Some of them, as I mentioned above, who were young and strong, fought with masculine courage against the Polish and Lithuanian forces, demonstrating their superiority over them. The others brought rocks so that the soldiers might hurl them at the Lithuanians both within and outside of the fortress. Others helped the warriors, and brought them water to quench their thirst, thus bringing back courage to their brave hearts.

This happened on Friday, on the Holy Day of the Holy Virgin's Birth. It was already evening, but the Polish and Lithuanians were still fighting in the Virgin's Veil Tower and were shooting against the Christian warriors in the city. Then the tsar's boyars and voevodas appealed to God for succor, called their troops together, and began the storming of the Virgin's Veil Tower. Men and women hurled themselves against the remaining enemy troops in the tower, fighting with all the arms given to them by God. Some shot muskets, while others were trying to smoke out the enemy from their hiding places. Others threw rocks at the Poles and Lithuanians, while still others poured boiling water upon them. Finally they put black powder under this tower also, and with God's help they blasted the remaining Lithuanians and Poles from the Virgin's Veil Tower. In this way, with the Grace of Christ, the stone wall of Pskov was cleansed of the evil Lithuanian feet. When night came, God sent light, and the remainder of the enemy was driven out from under the walls.

And then the Lithuanians and Poles began to flee from the fortress back to their camps. The Christian Russian warriors made sorties from the fortress, pursued them, cut them to pieces, and chased the others away. Those who remained in the most were destroyed. Many were taken prisoner and brought back to the city, to the tsar's boyars and voevodas to be interrogated. Many enemy warriors were taken with banners, drums, and weapons. And many Russians returned to the city uninjured, and brought back with them enemy arms, special muskets, guns, and endless booty.

Thus, with God's blessing, through the infinite mercy of the Divine Trinity, and the prayers and intercession of the Holy Virgin, and in honor of her glorious birth, and for the sake of the holy, great miracle workers, the great city of Pskov was delivered from the Poles and Lithuanians. And at three o'clock in the night the Lord gave a great victory to the Christian army over the proud and lawless enemy.

[The final part of this work describes the fighting around Pskov until February 4th, 1582, the day when King Stephen Bathory lifted the siege of this fiercely embattled Russian fortress.]
F. EPISTOLARY POLEMICS

53. PRINCE ANDREW KURBSKY: FIRST EPISTLE WRITTEN TO THE TSAR AND GRAND PRINCE OF MOSCOW IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS FIERCE PERSECUTION

Prince Andrey Kurbysky’s first epistle to Ivan IV is a strong protest against Tsar Ivan’s autocratic rule. Wishing to destroy the old feudal system of Russia, by which the princes were practically independent rulers of their appanages, Ivan IV began a systematic purge of the aristocracy in the late 1550s and many nobles died on the scaffold or in prison.

An outstanding statesman and military leader, Prince Kurysky was a close friend and adviser of Tsar Ivan IV until the latter began his cruel struggle against the Russian feudal aristocracy. Kurysky then broke with the tsar and fled to Lithuania, where he settled for the rest of his life. Kurysky had belonged to the intellectual elite of sixteenth-century Moscow and had been a pupil and friend of the famous and erudite scholar-monk, Maxim Trivoli, called Maxim the Greek, who had come to Russia in the early years of the sixteenth century. Living in Lithuania, Andrew Kurysky became a writer and translator and participated in the revival of Russian Orthodox literature in the Russian parts of Poland and Lithuania. His best-known work is his correspondence with Ivan IV, in which he sharply criticized the tsar’s autocratic policies and his persecution of the aristocracy.

This translation of the letter was made by J. L. I. Fennell and was published in The Correspondence Between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, 1554–1579, Cambridge University Press, 1955, pages 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11.

To the tsar, exalted above all by God, who appeared [formerly] most illustrious, particularly in the Orthodox Faith, but who has now, in consequence of our sins, been found to be the contrary of this. If you have understanding, may you understand this with your leprous conscience—such a conscience as cannot be found even amongst the godless peoples. And I have not let my tongue say more than this on all these matters in turn; but because of the bitterest persecution from your power, with much sorrow in my heart will I hasten to inform you of a little.

Wherefore, O tsar, have you destroyed the strong in Israel and subjected to various forms of death the voecodas given to you by God? And wherefore have you spilled their victorious, holy blood in the churches of God during sacredal ceremonies, and stained the thresholds of the churches with their blood of martyrs? And why have you conceived against your well-wishers and against those who lay down their lives for you unheard-of torments and persecutions and death, falsely accusing the Orthodox of treachery and magic and other abuses, and endeavoring with zeal to turn light into darkness and to call sweet bitter? What guilt did they commit before you, O tsar, and in what way did they, the champions of Christianity, anger you? Have they not destroyed proud kingdoms and by their heroic bravery made subject to you in all things those in whose servitude our forefathers formerly were? Was it not through the keenness of their understanding that the strong German towns were given to you by God? Thus have you remunerated us, [your] poor [servants], destroying us by whole families? Think you yourself immortal, O tsar? Or have you been enticed into unheard-of heresy, as one no longer wishing to stand before the impartial judge, Jesus, begotten of God, who will judge according to the universe and especially the vainglorious tormentors, and who unhesitatingly will question them “right to the hairs [roots?] of their sins,” as the saying goes? He is my Christ who sitteth on the throne of the Cherubim at the right hand of the power of the Almighty in the highest—the judge between you and me.

What evil and persecution have I not suffered from you! What ills and misfortunes have you not brought upon me! And what iniquitous tissues of lies have you not woven against me! But I cannot now recount the various misfortunes at your hands which have beset me owing to their multitude and since I am still

1 The expression “the strong in Israel” echoes the current panegyric political literature of the sixteenth century, extolling the absolutism of the grand prince and the supremacy of Moscow, “the Third Rome,” “the new Israel.”

2 A reference to the first wave of Ivan’s persecutions which, according to Kurbysky (Skazania Kn. A. M. Kurbyskogo, ed. N. Usralov [St. Petersburg, 1842], “Istoria . . .” Chapter VI, page 90), began “shortly after the death of Alexis Adashev and the banishment of Priest Sylvester,” i.e., in 1560.

3 The “proud kingdoms” destroyed by the “strong in Israel” in the fifties of the sixteenth century were the Tatar Khanates of Kazan (captured in 1552) and Astrakhan (captured in 1556). The “strong German towns” are the Baltic towns captured during the first three years of the Livonian War (1558–1560): Narva, Neuhauen, and Dorpat (1558); Marienburg, Erme, and Fellin (1560).
filled with the grief of my soul. But, to conclude, I can summarize them all [thus]: of everything I have been deprived; I have been driven from the land of God without guilt [lit. in vain], hounded by you. I did not ask [for aught] with humble words, nor did I beseech you with tearful plaint; nor yet did I win from you any mercy through the intercession of the hierarchy. You have recompensed me with evil for good and for my love with implacable hatred. My blood, spilled like water for you, cries out against you to my Lord. God sees into [men's] hearts—in my mind have I ardently reflected and my conscience have I placed as a witness [against myself], and I have sought and pried within my thoughts, and, examining myself [lit. turning myself around], I know not now—nor have I ever found—my guilt in aught before you. In front of your army have I marched—and marched again; and no dishonor have I brought upon you; but only brilliant victories, with the help of the angel of the Lord, have I won for your glory, and never have I turned the back of your regiments to the foe. But far more, I have achieved most glorious conquests to increase your renown. And this, not in one year, nor yet in two—but throughout many years have I toiled with much sweat and patience; and always have I been separated from my fatherland, and little have I seen my parents, and my wife have I not known; but always in far distant towns have I stood in arms against your foes and I have suffered many wants and natural illnesses, of which my Lord Jesus Christ is witness. Still more, I was visited with wounds inflicted by barbarian hands in various battles and all my body is already afflicted with sores. But to you, O tsar, was all this as naught; rather do you show us your intolerable wrath and bitterness of heart, and, furthermore, burning stoves.  

And I wanted to relate all my military deeds in turn which I have accomplished for your glory by the strength of my Christ, but I have not recounted them for this reason, that God knows better than man. For he is the recompenser for all these things, and not only for them, but also for a cup of cold water; and I know that you yourself are not unaware of them. And furthermore may this be made known to you, O tsar; you will, I think, no longer see my face in this world until the glorious coming of

my Christ. Think not that concerning these things I will remain silent before you; to my end will I incessantly cry out with tears against you to the Everlasting Trinity, in which I believe; and I call to my aid the Mother of the Lord of the Cherubim, my hope and protectress, Our Lady, the Mother of God, and all the saints, the elect of God, and my master and forefather, Prince Fedor Rostislavitch, whose corpse remains imperishable, preserved throughout the ages, and emits from the grave sweet odors, sweeter than aromatics, and, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, pours forth miraculous healing streams, as you, O tsar, know well.

Deem not, O tsar, and think not upon us with your sophistic thoughts, as though we had already perished, massacred [though we are] by you in our innocence and banished and driven out by you without justice; rejoice not in this, glorying, as it were, in a vain victory; those massacred by you, standing at the throne of Our Lord, ask vengeance against you; while we who have been banished and driven out by you without justice from the land cry out day and night to God, however much in your pride you may boast in this temporal, fleeting life, devising vessels of torture against the Christian race, yea, and abusing and trampling on the Angelic Form, with the approbation of your flatterers and comrades of the table, your quarrelsome boyars, the destroyers of your soul and body, who urge you on to erotic deeds and, together with their children, act more [viciously] than the priests of Cronus. So much for this. And this epistle, soaked in my tears, will I order to be put into my grave with me, when I [shall be about to] come with you before the judgment of my God, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Written in Wolmar, the town of my master, King Augustus Sigismond, from whom I hope to receive much reward and com-

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4 Evidently one of the commonest forms of torture employed by Ivan IV. Kurbsky speaks of Ivan’s torture in his History: “Are not the various instruments of torture of the ancient torturers the same as those used by our new torturer [i.e. Ivan]? Pans and stoves? Cruel flogging and sharp nails? Red-hot pincers for lacerating human bodies? Needles to drive under the fingernails...?” (p. 145)

5 Fedor Rostislavitch, prince of Yaroslavl, Andrew Kurbsky’s paternal grandfather to the ninth degree, ruled in Mozhaisk at the end of the thirteenth century. In 1294 he received the principality of Yaroslavl after marrying the daughter of Vasily Vsevolodovich, prince of Yaroslavl. He died in 1299 and was canonized in 1463.

6 The Russian expression “to accept the Angel’s form” is the equivalent of “to take monastic vows.” In certain copies of the text there exists the following marginal note: “That is to say, he abuses the Angelic Form when he flies into a rage with certain people and then forces them to accept the monastic tonsure together with their wives and children, and condemns them to everlasting imprisonment in strong monasteries and dark cells, making the holy places fortresses of hell with the approbation of certain accused and cunning monks.”
fort for all my sorrow, by his sovereign grace, and still more with God's help.
I have heard from sacred writings that a destroyer will be sent by the devil against the human race, a destroyer conceived in fornication, the Antichrist, hostile to God; and now I have seen a counselor, known to all, who was born in adultery and who today whispers falsehoods in the ears of the tsar and sheds Christian blood like water and has already destroyed the strong and noble in Israel, as one in agreement with the Antichrist in deed. It is not befitting, O tsar, to show indulgence to such men! In the first law of the Lord it is written: "A Moabite and an Ammonite and a bastard to the tenth generation shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord."

54. IVAN IV: EPISTLE OF THE TSAR AND SOVEREIGN TO ALL HIS RUSSIAN TSARDOM AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE BROKEN THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AGAINST PRINCE ANDREW KURBSKY AND HIS COMRADES, CONCERNING THEIR TREACHERIES

The epistle of Ivan IV, the Terrible, to Prince Andrew Kurbsky is one of the most impressive works defending the Byzantine-Russian concept of autocracy, which accepted the tsar as ruler by divine right. Ivan IV thus claimed the exclusive right to command the destinies of the state and his subjects, while considering himself responsible only to God for the fate of the state and its people. (Concerning Prince Andrew Kurbsky and the roots of this conflict, see the introduction to Prince Kurbsky's letter to Ivan.)

A dread tyrant who was merciless to his enemies, Ivan IV was at the same time a great ruler whose policies helped determine the future of Russia. By breaking the power of the aristocracy he ended the feudal system of medieval Russia and thus laid the foundation for a unified Russian state. His successes against the Tatars opened to Russia the nearly limitless territories of the Volga-Ural region and northern Asia, thus paving the way for future Russian expansion. Some one hundred and fifty years before Peter the Great, Ivan IV tried to open a window to

7 This is probably a reference to Fedor Alekseevich Basmanov, who was a favorite of Ivan's at that time. He was, indeed, renowned for his cruelty, and is alleged by Kurbsky to have murdered his father. There is, however, no confirmation of his illegitimacy.
8 See Deuteronomy, 23:2–3.
Europe and to end Russia's isolation by winning an area on the Baltic shore from the Order of Livonian Knights.

Ivan IV was very well educated, was a forceful polemicist and writer, and even composed music. His style of writing is not restrained, but fierce, stinging, and merciless, and he did not hesitate to insult his enemies.

These excerpts from Tsar Ivan's letter to Prince Kurbsky, which grew into a rather lengthy treatise, have been translated by Leo Wiener.

Our God, the Trinity, who has existed since eternity but now as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has neither beginning nor end; through him we live and move about, through him kings rule and the mighty write laws. By Our Lord Jesus Christ the victorious standard of God's only Word and the blessed Cross, which has never been vanquished, have been given to Emperor Constantine, first in piety, and to all the Orthodox tsars and protectors of Orthodoxy and, insofar as the Word of God has been fulfilled, they, in eagle's flight, have reached all the godly servants of God's Word; until a spark of piety has fallen upon the Russian realm. The autocracy, by God's will, had its origin in Grand Prince Vladimir, who had enlightened all Russia through the Holy Baptism, and the great Tsar Vladimir Monomakh, who had received memorable honors from the Greeks, and the valiant great Tsar Alexander Nevsky, who had obtained a great victory over the godless Germans, and the praiseworthy great Tsar Dmitry, who had obtained a great victory over the sons of Hagar beyond the Don, then it passed to the avenger of wrongs, our ancestor, the great Tsar Ivan, the gatherer of the Russian land from among the ancestral possessions, and to our father of blessed memory, the great Tsar Vasily until it reached us, the humble sceptor-bearer of the Russian empire.

But we praise God for the great favor he has shown me in not permitting my right hand to become stained by the blood of my race: for we have not snatched the realm from anyone, but

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1 Roman Emperor Constantine (306–337) granted the rights to the Christians, and summoned the first Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church, Prince Vladimir Christianized Russia in 988 or 989. Vladimir Monomakh was the last prince of Kiev (1112–1125) to be recognized as the real leader by all Russian princes of the Kievan era. Dmitry, Grand Prince of Muscovy, was the victor over the Tatars in 1380. The great "Tsar Ivan" is Ivan III, unifier of northern Russia (1462–1505) and grandfather of Ivan IV. Vasily—Vasily III (1505–1533)—was father to Ivan IV.

2 Leo III the Isaurian (717–741), Constantine V Kopronynos (741–755), and Leo V, the Armenian, were Byzantine emperors who supported the heresy of the Iconoclasts and were posthumously condemned by the Orthodox Church.

3 Vaska (Vasily) Shibanov, a faithful servant of Prince A. M. Kurbsky who delivered his master's letter to Ivan IV, and died after long tortures without betraying the prince.
the enemies of Christianity, and, not considering your wrath, you utter stupid words, hurling, as it were, stones at the sky.

We have never spilled blood in the churches. As for the victorious, saintly blood—there has none appeared in our land, as far as we know. The thresholds of the churches: as far as our means and intelligence permit and our subjects are eager to serve us, the churches of the Lord are resplendent with all kinds of adornments, and through the gifts which we have offered since your satanic domination, not only the thresholds and pavements, but even the antechambers shine with ornaments, so that all the strangers may see them. We do not stain the thresholds of the churches with any blood, and there are no martyrs of faith with us nowadays. . . . Tortures and persecutions and deaths in many forms we have devised against no one. As to treasons and magic, it is true, such dogs everywhere suffer capital punishment.

It had pleased God to take away our mother, the pious Tsarina Helen, from the earthly kingdom to the Kingdom of Heaven. My brother George, who now rests in heaven, and I were left orphans and, as we received no care from anyone, we laid our trust in the Holy Virgin, and in the prayers of all the saints, and in the blessing of our parents. When I was in my eighth year, our subjects acted according to their will, for they found the empire without a ruler, and did not deign to bestow their voluntary attention upon us, their master, but were bent on acquiring wealth and glory, and were quarreling with each other. And what have they not done! How many boyars, how many friends of our father and voevodas they have killed! And they seized the farms and villages and possessions of our uncles, and established themselves therein. The treasure of our mother they trod underfoot and pierced with sharp sticks, and transferred it to the great treasure, but some of it they grabbed themselves; and that was done by your grandfather Mikhaylo Tuchkov. The Princes Vasily and Ivan Shuysky took it upon themselves to have me in their keeping, and those who had been the chief traitors of our father and mother they let out of prison, and they made friends with them. Prince Vasily Shuysky with a Judas crowd fell in the court belonging to our uncle upon our father confessor Fedor Mishurin, and insulted him, and killed him; and they imprisoned Prince Ivan Fedorovich Byelsky and many others in various places, and armed themselves against the realm; they ousted Metropolitan Daniel from the metropolitan see and banished him; and thus they improved their opportunity, and began to rule themselves.

Me and my brother George, of blessed memory, they brought up like vagrants and children of the poorest. What have I not suffered for want of garments and food! And all that against my will and as did not become my extreme youth. I shall mention just one thing: once in my childhood we were playing, and Prince Ivan Vasilievich Shuysky was sitting on a bench, leaning with his elbow against our father's bed, and even putting his foot upon it; he treated us not as a parent, but as a master . . . who could bear such presumption? How can I recount all the miseries which I have suffered in my youth? Often did I dine late, against my will. What had become of the treasure left me by my father? They had carried everything away, under the cunning pretext that they had to pay the boyar children from it, but, in reality, they had kept it back from them, to their own advantage, and had not paid them off according to their deserts; and they had also held back an immense treasure of my grandfather and father, and made it into gold and silver vessels, inscribing thereupon the names of their parents, as if they had been their inheritance. . . . It is hardly necessary to mention what became of the treasure of our uncles: they appropriated it all to themselves! Then they attacked towns and villages, tortured the people most cruelly, brought much misery upon them, and mercilessly pillaged the possessions of the inhabitants.

When we reached the age of fifteen, we, inspired by God, undertook to rule our own realm and, with the aid of Almighty God, we ruled our realm in peace and undisturbed, according to our will. But it happened then that, on account of our sins, a fire having spread, by God's will, the royal city of Moscow was consumed. Our boyars, the traitors whom you call martyrs, whose names I shall purposely pass over in silence, made use of the favorable opportunity for their mean treachery, whispered into the ears of a stupid crowd that the mother of my mother, Princess Anna Glinsky, with all her children and household, was in the habit of extracting men's hearts, and that by a similar sorcery she had put Moscow on fire, and that we knew of her doings. By the instigation of these our traitors, a mass of insensate people, crying in the manner of the Jews, came to the apostolic cathedral of the holy martyr Dmitry of Saloniki, dragged out of it our boyar Yury Vasilievich Glinsky, pulled him inhumanly into the Cathedral of the Assumption, and killed the innocent man in the church, opposite the metropolitan's place.

*Princes Shuyskys were members of an influential and wealthy aristocratic family who actually ruled in Moscow during Ivan IV's childhood.
they stained the floor of the church with his blood, dragged his body through the front door, and exposed him on the marketplace as a criminal—everybody knows about this murder in the church. We were then living in the village of Vorobievce; the same traitors instigated the populace to kill us under the pretext, and you, dog, repeat the lie that we were hiding from them Prince Yury's mother, Princess Anna, and his brother, Prince Mikhail. How is one not to laugh at such stupidity? Why should we be incendiaries in our own empire? . . .

You say that your blood has been spilled in wars with foreigners, and you add, in your foolishness, that it cries to God against us. That is ridiculous! It has been spilled by one, and it cries out against another. If it is true that your blood has been spilled by the enemy, then you have done your duty to your country; if you had not done so, you would not have been a Christian but a barbarian—but that is not our affair. How much more ours, that has been spilled for you, cries out to the Lord against you! Not with wounds, nor drops of blood, but with much sweating and toiling have I been burdened by you unnecessarily and above my strength! Your many meannesses and persecutions have caused me, instead of blood, to shed many tears, and to utter sobs and have anguish of my soul. . . .

You say you want to put your letter in your grave: that shows that you have completely renounced your Christianity! For God has ordered not to resist evil, but you renounce the final pardon which is granted to the ignorant; therefore it is not even proper that any Mass shall be sung after you. In our patrimony, in the country of Livland, you name the city of Volmir as belonging to our enemy, King Sigismund: by this you only complete the treachery of a vicious dog! . . .

Written in our great Russia, in the famous, imperial, capital city of Moscow, on the steps of our imperial threshold, in the year from the creation of the world 7072 (1564), the 5th day of July.

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8 The city of Volmir, actually Volmar, was conquered by Ivan IV during the first phase of the Livonian War (see introduction to Selection 52, the Story of Stephen Bathory's Campaign Against Pskov), and later was claimed by the Polish King Sigismund.
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