

**Vasyl DEBENKO**

**FEATURES OF THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND  
ITS FUNCTIONAL PREROGATIVE IN NOVHOROD  
REPUBLIC IN XII-XIV century**

*In this article the author considers the structural and organizational principles of medieval church institution „The Republic of Saint Sophia” from the point of view of its authoritative powers. In addition, the author highlights and describes the features of the Novhorod Church hierarchy during XII-XIV centuries and he also analyses the relationship between temporality and religious authorities in the light of their political, economical and social priorities.*

**Keywords:** *Novhorod Church, the Novhorod Republic, Novhorod archbishops, church institutions, clergy, priesthood, monkhood.*

**Василь ДЕБЕНКО**

**ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ЦЕРКОВНОЇ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ  
ТА ЇЇ ФУНКЦІОНАЛЬНІ ПРЕРОГАТИВИ У  
НОВГОРОДСЬКІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ В XII-XIV ст.**

*У статті автор розглядає структурно-організаційні засади середньовічної церковної інституції „Республіки Святої Софії” з точки зору її владних прерогатив. Крім того, автор висвітлює та характеризує особливості ієрархії Новгородської Церкви протягом XII-XIV ст., а також аналізує взаємовідносини між світською й релігійною владою крізь призму їхніх політичних, економічних і соціальних пріоритетів.*

**Ключові слова:** *Новгородська Церква, Новгородська республіка, архієпископи Новгородські, церковні інституції, клір, духовенство, чернецтво.*

**Василий ДЕБЕНКО**

**ОСОБЕННОСТИ ЦЕРКОВНОЙ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ  
И ЕЕ ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ПРЕРОГАТИВЫ В  
НОВГОРОДСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКЕ В XII-XIV вв.**

*В статье автор рассматривает структурно-организационные принципы средневековой церковной институции „Республики Святой Софии” с точки зрения ее властных прерогатив. Кроме того, автор освещает*

*и характеризует особенности иерархии Новгородской Церкви на протяжении XII-XIV вв., а также анализирует взаимоотношения между светской и религиозной властью сквозь призму их политических, экономических и социальных приоритетов.*

***Ключевые слова:** Новгородская Церковь, Новгородская республика, архиепископы Новгородские, церковные институции, клир, духовенство, монашество.*

The problems connected with explanation and analysis of peculiarities of the church organization of Veliky Novhorod and with the description of its functional prerogatives from the point of view of its authoritative powers in Medieval period, are still actual in current times because the spiritual and worldview role of Orthodox Church at political, economical, social, cultural and domestic level during XII-XIV centuries was dominant due to lots of signs [16, c. 8].

Mental and ethical principles of the medieval Novhorod society were based on church and religious ground. ‘Novhorod Orthodoxy’ had Byzantine form, dogmatics and spiritual practices, and being in capacity as official state religion, it had clear structure and hierarchy, its clergy participated actively in political life of the Novhorod Republic [9, c. 94-95]. In the definite context it is necessary to point out that the main special feature of activity of government institutions in medieval Novhorod was special legislative and regulatory „synthesis,, whose aim was to bring together and combine state civil service (secular component) with representatives of local clergy (religious component) [12, c. 101].

Thus, on the one hand civilian population and bureaucracy took great part in church decision making processes, on the other hand – Novhorod clergy joined secular authoritative powers too and maintained direct control over some large territory administration units of Novhorod Land even. At the head of the Novhorod Church was an archbishop (till 1165 – a bishop). A bishop’s office or position determined their high position in society. For example, neighbouring eparchies and cathedras were run only by bishops. Moreover, the archbishop ran not just the Church, but also he was the head of the Novhorod state [10, c. 157]. So far as republican civil servants were

elective, archbishop's position became elective too. If during Kievan Rus - times (to the end of XI cent.) bishops for Novhorod were appointed by the metropolitan of Kiev and soon of Moscow. Later on, in 1156 Novhorodians chose Arcadius as their pastor. Since then and till elimination of the Novhorod Republic the election of the chief bishops were carried out after archbishop's death or his dismissal from the position at the Viche. This special feature distinguishes Velikiy Novhorod from other Old Russian eparchies, where bishops were appointed only by the metropolitan [15, c. 44].

Archbishop's elections were an important state act and were conducted in two „parts”. First at the regular place for the Viche, at Yaroslav's Court, where Novhorodians named three candidates for archbishop's position. Their names were recorded on pieces of vellum („a lot”) and sealed by the posadnik. After that city residents walked to the opposite bank of the Volkhov river the second round of elections was being conducted. The members of the Viche gathered at the walls of Saint Sophia Cathedral, where a liturgy took place [14, c. 240].

„Lots” during a church service were placed on the altar stone of the cathedral and after the end of the liturgy a blind man or a child took at random one of the „lots” from the altar and the name, written on it, was immediately announced in public. Suchwise archbishop's elections in Novhorod were held in a transparent and democratic way [15, c. 45].

In the first third of the XIV century the procedure of the election was somewhat changed. Citizens began to believe that the candidate, whose „lot” remained on the altar, pleased the Lord God more. Since 1337, already the archpriest of the St. Sophia Cathedral took from the altar one parchment „lot”, then the second one and read aloud the names recorded there. After that, the name of the new archbishop was solemnly announced, and he was immediately accompanied together with his suit to the ceremonial cathedral stairs. A week or two after the newly elected went to the Metropolitan to consecrate the archbishop (act of consecration) [8, c. 67-68]. Candidates for the archbishops of Novhorod were often the most authoritative people from the monastery's superiors or sometimes – representatives of the parish (mostly white) clergy. For example, Archbishop Vasiliy

Kalika (1331-1352) was, before his election, a priest of the Church of Cosmas and Damian on Holopskaya street of the Nerevsky End. At the same time, it should be noted that according to some sources there were cases when the elected archbishop did not even have the rank of presbyter. In the year 1359 Alexei, the key-keeper of the St. Sophia Cathedral, was proclaimed an archbishop. Before arriving at the Metropolitan of Moscow for a consecration, he had travelled to Tver, where the local bishop consecrated him initially a deacon, and three days later – a priest [5, c. 52].

Authority of archbishops among Novhorodians in the XIII-XIV centuries was extremely high. Since the middle of the fourteenth century all the agreements of Velikiy Novhorod with the Rus princes and foreign nations were concluded exclusively „according to the blessing of the archbishop”, whose name was placed in letters in the first place - that is, before the names of the posadnik and the tysiatskii. Numerous bloody conflicts between urban political groups and the boyars stopped only after the intervention of the archbishop. Our attention draws also the fact that the Novhorod bishops had a great authority not only among the population of the „Republic of Saint Sophia”, but also in other principalities. Their influence was also used for political purposes. Thus, in the year 1172, Archbishop Illia went to Volodymyr to prince Andrii Bogolyubsky and signed with him favorable for Novhorod peace agreement [2, c. 133].

On the other hand, the high religious and moral authority and social importance of the medieval Novhorod rulers of the XIII century intensified due to significant circumstances: they freely disposed of large material resources. In the first centuries after adoption of the Christianity a tenth of the profits of Novhorod princes came as a voluntary „gift” „in favor” of the episcope. From the last quarter of the XIII century the basis of material wealth of the Novhorod Church made up extensive land rewards (also as a „gift”) both from the republic, and from individuals. At the end of the fourteenth century the archbishop became the largest landowner of the Novhorod land. His „agrarian” resources according to the writing books consisted of 87 possessions, 5632 of them were peasant households [14, c. 241].

The rich treasury of Novhorod rulers, which was called

„Sophia” (it was stored at the choir loft of St. Sophia Cathedral), was many times used for national needs. For example, already mentioned Bishop Vasily built the first stone walls of the Novhorod Kremlin, erected stone fortifications of the Trade side, built a new bridge through the Volkhov for the money from „Sofia Treasury”. Money from the treasury was regularly spent on constructions of churches, payment of indemnities, military campaigns, payment for captured Novhorodians, maintenance of the archbishop’s court [13, c. 76].

Bishop’s yard occupied the north-western part of the Kremlin and consisted of many buildings, connected with each other through passages. The yard itself with the archbishopric palace was a kind of „fortress in the fortress”. There were four temples near the magnificent palace; the yard complex also included utility buildings, residential buildings for servicemen, clerical and security officials. The staff of the archbishop’s court was called by contemporaries „Sophians”. Apart from the clergy of a parish of St. Sophia Cathedral, it consisted of stolniks, utraquist, chamberlains, a cupbearer, a key-keeper, a sanctuary lamplighter, a secretary x13, c. 76-77].

At the disposal of the Archbishop were specially appointed for his needs artisans, jewelers, painters, copywriters, copyists, tailors, cooks, medovars. Bishop’s vicars ran Dvina land and the cities Ladoga and Torzhok in different historical periods. Governance also brought profits. It was obligatory to attach a seal of the bishop’s vicar to various land acts (notarial confirmation), and a separate tax was collected „into three squirrels” from each such certified acts. Profits also brought the court of justice, which analyzed the crimes of the townsmen against Christian morals, any kinds of violations committed by the clergy and all the crimes against the Novhorod Church [16, c. 140].

The clergy of the republic that was chaired by the archbishop and fully under his jurisdiction was divided into black monastic and white (usually married), parish clergy. Monastic inhabitants were headed by an archimandrite - the second most important empowered person after the bishop. The position of archimandrite, as well as of archbishop, was elective and also was chosen at Veche.

As the residence of the Archbishop of Novhorod served the oldest monastery in the state - the St. George's (Yuriiv) Monastery. The rest of abbots hold a rank of an hegumen [7, c. 210].

During the XII-XIII centuries there were founded in and around Novhorod 17 monasteries of men and women and their number grew rapidly in the future. At the beginning of the fifteenth century there were already 55. Some monasteries opened the princes (Yuryev, Neredytsky), others – boyars. For example, 1192 the boyar Oleksa Mikhalevits founded the Khutyn Monastery and was his abbot under the monastic name of Varlaam. Later on, Varlaam of Khutyn became a famous saint [8, c. 69-70].

The famous Novhorod boyar family Mishinich-Ontsyforovich built the Kolmiv Monastery. There were also monastic houses, founded by archbishops, among whom Moses distinguished himself as a special ktitor. He opened a number of well-known monasteries among the population - Desyatynny, Radokovytsky, Theological on Vitka, Lisitsky. No less glorified in the Middle Ages were the Ulychansky and Konchansky monasteries - the Peter and Paul Monastery on the Sinitska Hill, Varvarin, Arcachian, Savvino-Vyshersky, Spassky Verendovsky Monastery [8, c. 70].

The cloisters were provided by their ktitors with land property, the profit of which went to the maintenance of community, repairs of buildings and other household needs. The first princely charters in the XII century became already mentioned above Yuriiv Monastery and Panteleimon Monastery. The charters, which confirmed the rights of Antoniev and Khutyn Monasteries to land also in the XII century, were drafted by their founders - Anthony the Roman and Varlaam Khotinsky [9, c. 254].

To our knowledge, there was another common social practice: lots of Novhorodians in their old age found refuge in monasteries; following the established pious tradition, the inhabitants of Novhorod often took monastic vows at the end of their lives. For example, 1220 the landowner Tverdislav Mikhalkovich took monastic vows in the Arkazskii Monastery. According to sources, by the end of the fourteenth century 17 Novhorod vicars died „in the monastic rank” [5, c. 103]. Majority of monastery statutes in Novhorod during the Republican age were quite soft. Permanent

monk`s residence on the territory of their monasteries and visiting a general prayer twice a day (in the morning and in the evening) in a monastery church were the main demands. Only fifty years later, after the fall of Novgorod, in 1528 archbishop Makarii introduced the hostel (monk) statute for all monasteries [13, c. 81].

Novhorod chronicles state that during the last years of Saint Sophia Republic many local monasteries owned vast lands. According to the calculations of the Soviet researcher A. Khoroshev, Yuriiv monastery at the end of XIV century owned lands with 1131 peasant yards, Khutyn monastery – 976 yards, Arkazskii monastery – 632 yards, Antoniev monastery – 297 yards, Nerevsk`s end Nikolskii monastery – 336 yards, Viazhyshy monastery – 408 yards [13, c. 81-82].

Monasteries founded by city communities were also appearing in the Novhorod Land in the second half of the 8th century. Their main purpose was to serve as a shelter for old and sick members of the community, who often couldn`t pay the necessary „thinning contribution”. Conchan monasteries were mostly playing a role of such shelter-monasteries in the 14th century [11, c. 15].

Similar to the Novgorod monasteries, parish churches were built at the expense of various customers. At the early stage of Novgorod history (the end of 11th and 12th centuries), these customers, in most cases, were princes, who built St. Sophia, St. George and St. Nicholas Cathedrals, Blahovishennia Church, Ivan on Opoks Church, Uspinnia on Torg Church, Spas on Neredytsia Church. According to the chronicles, numerous temples were built by archbishops. However, boyars and communities of different city streets were mostly involved in construction of churches [11, c. 15-16].

The chronicles contain the following messages: in 1306 governor Semen Klymovych „built a stone church on the Prussia Street gates”; in 1323 „colonel Petro built a temple on Desiatynna Street”; in 1360 boyar Semen Andriiovych „with his God-loving mother built the Feodor Stratilat`s Church on Potichok” [1, c. 165]. The Spasa Preobrazhennia Temple on Illia Street was painted by famous iconographer Feofan the Greek „according to the order of the noble and God-loving Boyar Vasyl Danylovych together with the residents of Illia Street.” [1, c. 168]. The clergy of parish churches

lived not far from their temples. Unlike other North-West Rus cities the white clergy in Novhorod used to be elective. Priest and the priesthood were elected by community. This tradition existed up until the 15th century. Eighty-two great temples were situated in Velykyi Novhorod at the end of the 14th century, apart from numerous churches and local monasteries. However, not all the city churches had a regular clergy for proper liturgy. Daily liturgy was taking place only in 44 temples of the Republican capital [1, c. 174].

The St. Sophia Cathedral had a largest staff. It consisted of priests, deacons, clerks, affiliates, aklofs, ponomaries, readers, prostrates. The poorest churches clergy consisted of only a presbyter, a ponomar and a prostrate. At the end of the 14th century Novhorod parish churches were uniting in the seven-cathedral sections led by cathedral churches. Particularly, on the Sophia side there were five cathedrals: St. Sophia, Michael the Archangel on Prussia Street, Vlasii on Volosova Street, The Forty Martyrs on Shcherkova Street and St. Yakiv on Yakovlenska Street. In the same time on the Torg side there were two cathedrals: Ivan Predtecha on Opok and Uspinnia Bohorodytsi on Illia Street. In the Novhorod Republic the maintenance of parish churches, like in the case of monasteries was commonly provided with land grants. Only 36 large churches-landowners, which were situated in Novhorod and the Novhorod Land are mentioned in the scribe books. Collectively they owned 831 peasant yards or four times less, than Khutyn monastery [2, c. 98].

For people of Novhorod, faith was an essential part of life and lifestyle. So, it's no wonder that for the first time in Rus, heretical movement appeared in Novhorod in the middle of the 14th century and existed for almost 100 years. This heretical movement members were named Strygolnyks. They denied the church hierarchy and the traditional splendor of the Orthodox liturgy in their doctrines. Strygolnyks criticized the flaws of modern Novhorod clergy, its immorality, greed, pride and were supported by the part of lower clergy. As a result, Republican government resorted to rigid repressions [16, c. 185]. The first public execution of Strygolnyks on one of the central streets in Novhorod took place in 1375. It was mentioned in the chronicle: „Then Strygolnyks were killed:



deacon Mykyta, deacon Karpo and his third man were thrown from the bridge”. By the end of 1380`s the Strygolnyks movement in Velykyi Novhorod was liquidated. It`s remnants had to leave the capital and move to Pskov [7, с. 205].

Summing up, we can claim that church organization and Episcopal authority characteristics in the Novhorod Republic in the 12-13th centuries, can be characterized as very autocratical in terms of their functional prerogatives. The archbishop`s role in the political, social and economic life of Novgorod was dominant. Any international treaty, law or resolution couldn`t be signed without his blessing. So, the clerical factor in the Novhorod Land`s Middle Age history on the one hand determined Novhorod`s socio-political development and, on the other hand, it`s spiritual and cultural priorities and ideals.

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