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## Church policies of Empress Elizabeth of Russia

Elizaveta Petrovna was a Russian empress for two decades (1741–1761) between indolent Anna Ivanovna and assertive Catherine II. She was a proud — although illegitimate (being as though she was born to a lover of the czar, who only later became his wife and an empress, Catherine I) daughter of Peter I, and thus, she vowed to continue his policies including church policies.

### Orthodoxy

Elizabeth was adamant about proper religious upbringing, which, to be sure, should begin at home from early childhood. She required that parents teach their children catechism and encourage them to read other religious books. Parents who failed to do that would be fined: 10 rubles fine for the nobility and 2 rubles (a price of a cow) for others. When needed, tutors would be appointed for such teaching (PSZ 11.8726; PSP 2.595).<sup>1</sup> To make such upbringing possible, she ordered printing and sending primers and catechisms to eparchies (11.8743).

Elizabeth's concern also extended to the adult citizens. She required sending to gubernia and province chancelleries information about people who did not go to confession (14.10338; PSP 4.1489). Since Anna's ukases (PSZ 10.7226, 11.8204) were not revoked, during confession people would show if they crossed themselves with two fingers or with three fingers, thereby showing that they

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<sup>1</sup> The following references will be used:

С — Екатерина II, “Автобиографическая записки”, [in:] *Сочинения императрицы Екатерины II*, vol. 12, Санктпетербург 1907.

PSP — *Полное собрание постановлений и распоряжений по ведомству Православного Исповедания Российской империи*, [second series:] *Царствование государыни Императрицы Елизаветы Петровны*, Санкт-Петербург 1899–1912.

PSZ — *Полное собрание законов Российской Империи*, Санктпетербург 1830.

were not Old Believers. Information about going to confession would also be used in the legal system: a witness who was not for three years in confession and communion could be rejected by a defendant (12.9237).

Elizabeth was concerned about the dignity of the church service and so she ordered silence during church service (PSZ 11.8559; this, actually, was a confirmation of the ukases of her predecessors, 5.3250, 7.4140). Those talking during church service would be punished and the money collected from fines would be recorded (11.8583, the conformation of 5.3250). The Moscow police would take care of the disorder caused in Moscow churches and monasteries by beggars (15.11282). Churches were to be clean, iconostases and icons were to be refreshed (13.10150). All poorly made icons were to be sent to the Synod from all churches and cloisters and replaced with well-made icons; also, poorly made icons were to be confiscated from merchants (15.10935, 15.10977, 15.10984, 15.11085; PSP 4.1682). “To beautify church service and church rituals” an annual procession was instituted to the Alexander-Nevskii monastery from the Kazan church (11.8779, 11.8821; PSP 1.438, 1.446). This concern about dignity extended to people’s houses. People were to keep clean “holy icons” in their houses (12.8935). Printed images to be used as a cheap substitution of icons should be done skillfully. Poor quality carved boards to make prints of holy images would be confiscated. Bishops in eparchies were directed to check boards to see if they were done skillfully enough (12.9049; 12.9157; PSP 2.737). Sacred images and items could not be engraved on stamps used to stamp packages; this was considered “unseemly, since not only after unpacking of letters and packages these stamped images can be thrown even in some indecent places, but even on their way such packages are carried with other things with no respect, but images of the saints should always be treated with respect” (PSP 1.109).

Elizabeth did innumerable favors to particular churches and monasteries. E.g., she ordered giving to the Simonov monastery 200 puds of salt each year from the salt factory in this monastery in spite of the opposition of the Salt Bureau (PSZ 11.8737). She ordered giving back to Gamaleevskii Kharlampiev monastery the villages of former hetman Ivan Skoropadskii (11.8739) and giving to Blagoveshchenskii monastery mills that were in the Vladimirskii uezd (11.8740). She ordered that the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery that became Trinity-St. Sergius lavra (12.8959) 1. could buy 3000 buckets of wine; 2. money taken from the lavra to the Economy College should be left in the lavra for the creation of the seminary and apothecary; 3. the mills it had should be left in it (12.8960).<sup>2</sup> The biggest gift to the church was closing the Economy College

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<sup>2</sup> Some other favors include PSZ 11.8507, 12.8905, 12.9426, 13.9649, 13.9677, 13.9846, 13.9868, 13.9917, 14.10177, 14.10201, 14.10535, 14.10337, 15.10820, 15.11316; PSP 1.123, 1.195, 1.251, 1.365, 2.554; 2.802, 3.1114.

in 1744 and ordering that profits from church lands administered by this College should be administered by the Synod “as it was before,” except for the Zaikonospaskii monastery (12.8993).<sup>3</sup> Also, to allow monks to concentrate on their monastic calling and to free them from earthly worries, it was ordered: art. 1: villages were to be administered by administrative officers, not by monasteries; art. 2: these villages were to be taxed; this did not appear to be a way of having the Economy College in disguise since; art. 3: the collected income was for monasteries — and not for the state; although, art. 6: with the money already collected houses for the handicapped should be built (14.10765).

Strict rules about becoming a monk had been gradually relaxed. In 1746, permission was granted to those who wanted to leave the military service to become monks (PSP 2.9334). In the Ukraine, from 1747, men 17 years old and up could become monks. Special ukase was needed for younger men (PSZ 13.9591); from 1757, permission seems to have been needed for all willing to be monks (14.10780, art. 5). From 1761, anyone willing to become a monk/nun could do that (15.11332).

However, the imperial generosity had its limits. When the Synod requested that taverns should be removed from the proximity of churches and monasteries, the request was denied since this would have been a loss to the treasury (PSZ 11.8821). Also, a new church could be built to replace an old one only when parishioners would provide all that was needed for the church including the land for the priests and church staff (11.8625; PSP 1.457; 2.686; 2.689). Moreover, priests and deacons were not allowed to lend money with interest (PSZ 11.8844).

Elizabeth wanted to exercise the control over the minds of her subjects. One form of it was censorship. Books in Russian printed abroad not checked by the Synod could not be brought into the country (PSZ 11.8832). The prohibition of translating books that were contrary to the teachings of the church was imposed. Books for translation were to be approved by the Synod. The prohibition included *On True Christianity* by Johann Arndt and *Historical Theatron*. Also, the *Monthly Compositions* (*Ежемесячные сочинения*) published by the St. Petersburg Academy contained many things contrary to the morals and beliefs of the church such as the existence of the multiplicity of worlds, “which gives cause to naturalism and godlessness.” Fontenelle’s *On the Plurality of the Worlds* translated by Kantemir turned out to be suspect. The Academy was to provide information about the author and the translator of the essay *On the Majesty of God* published in the *Monthly Compositions*

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<sup>3</sup> The Economy College that since 1738 had answered to the Senate would be revived for a short time in 1762 by Peter III (15.11481, 16.11643) and then by Catherine II in 1763 (16.11814) to exist until 1786 (22.1639).

(PSP 4.1532). Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* translated in the Moscow University could not be published since it contained many statements contrary to the Sacred Scripture. "Publishers of this book, not taking anything either from the Sacred Scripture nor from the laws of our Orthodox church, base all their opinions solely on natural concept adding to it the Copernican system and the view on the multiplicity of worlds which is contrary to the Sacred Scripture" (4.1507).<sup>4</sup> Predictably, all church books would be printed with the approval of the Synod, other books with the approval of the Senate. Moreover, German books that insulted Russia would be burnt (PSP 1.331). Also, articles about the imperial family could appear in newspapers only after an approval of the empress (PSZ 13.9903).

The religious zeal also touched the Academy of Sciences. Established in 1724, it did not have a charter, which was finally issued in 1747. Its art. 43 stated that professors "can be of any faith, but when beginning their duties, they should obligate themselves by an oath that neither by their teaching nor by their advices about the law they would inculcate in their students anything contrary to the Greek Orthodox faith. For which reason, there should be in the University a priest from among learned Hieromonks who in a large auditorium each Saturday should teach catechism supported by the Academician salary and there also should be a close watch [to assure] that the law of God and traditions of the Holy Fathers are really observed by all" (PSZ 12.9425).

In all matters, the Scriptures should be the highest authority. In particular, marriage could be dissolved using arguments from the Scriptures, not one's own reasoning (PSZ 13.10028, 13.10050). One would think about marital infidelity as being an argument used for divorce, but one curious application of this general rule concerned a forced dissolution of marriage of an old man since "marriage is established by God to multiply the human race, which would be really desperate to hope for someone over 80, as the named Ergolskii is already 82, in which [age] one should not seek satisfaction of the body, but should care for the salvation of his soul since according to the psalmist [Ps. 90[89]:10], a person has strength until [the age of] 80 and most [of these years are] labor and illness, which labor and illness lead to the death of man, not to the multiplication of the human race." Incidentally, it was also decided that his wife married him not for himself and not for procreation, but for his money (12.9087).

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<sup>4</sup> See also Б. Е. Райков, *Очерки по истории гелиоцентрического мировоззрения в России*, Москва 1947, ch. 10.

## Old Believers

The peculiar status of Old Believers did not change under Elizabeth's rule. They were not treated as a separate religious group to have the same rights, although limited, as other denominations, but restrictions on them were still enforced.

From 1745, schismatics could not call themselves Old Believers anymore: they were schismatics. Schismatics were to reveal themselves, as ordered in previous ukases so that they would be taxed and investigated if they said bad things about the church and tried to convert someone. Their views were "extremely misleading and pernicious to the soul." They must not convert anyone. They had to have passports if they wanted to go anywhere (PSZ 12.9155; 13.9678). All Old Believers should be registered under the punishment for hiding any of them (12.9021). Double taxation for Old Believers was retained as imposed by Peter. "Schismatics and the bearded" were to wear a sign as ordered before [6.3944] (13.10053).

Even when converted to official Orthodoxy, schismatics were to be watched to make sure they did not slip into their old ways (11.8786).

As a part of a campaign against Old Believers, it was ordered to print anti-schismatic literature that included the *Rozysk* by Dimitrii Rostovskii and the treatise of Feofilakt Lopatiskii (12.9046; PSP 1.492, 2.724; 2.739; 2.742; 2.834; 4.1681) and other books (PSP 4.1712). Incidentally, in 1741, a permission was issued to sell Iavorskii's *The Rock of Faith* that was published in 1729, but not made available (1.21, 1.30). Aimed primarily against Protestantism, it was also a weapon against Old Believers. As part of the anti-schismatic campaign, the committee to correct the text of the Bible was reinstated: the members of the Synod were to spend each day, except Sunday, on improving the Bible. Dozens of memos were issued by the Synod indicating corrections, and the corrected Bible was published in 1752 and sold for a rather steep price of 5 rubles (PSZ 13.9947; PSP 4.1657).

A real scourge at that time was self-burning preferred by many Old Believers over submission to the dictates of the state. Some ukases sensitized local authorities to this issue by requiring making any effort to prevent gatherings of schismatics, their fleeing, and self-burning. Particular care should be taken to catch their leaders (PSZ 13.9579; PSP 4.1406). Lay people were required to help the clergy to capture schismatic leaders (PSZ 14.10353). Gatherings of schismatics as "activities that endanger the soul with damnation" (15.11147) were not allowed and they were to be reported. Old Believers were not allowed to live in far away places to prevent them from self-immolation. Thus, such places were to be destroyed if anything had been built there (14.10585; PSP 4.1526). Should self-immolation have taken place, the surviving Old Believers

were to be investigated, particularly leaders and those who participated in building places where self-burning took place (PSZ 14.10644).

## Other faiths

Abandoning the Orthodox faith was a crime even if it was a Christian denomination. This begins with Catholicism. One incident illustrates the harshness of the treatment of those who chose Catholicism over Orthodoxy.

In 1727, Irina Dolgorukaia, while in Holland, “because of her simplicity, did not see any difference and contradiction between Greek-Russian faith and Roman church.” She was very ill and fearing death in the absence of an Orthodox priest, she confessed to and took communion from a Catholic priest. He also convinced her that there is no difference between the two faiths. In 1732, she confessed to and took communion from an Orthodox priest. She neglected to take the required annual confession afterwards. Confession record of Sergei, her husband, was much better. He also said that “he was not aware” of his wife’s closeness to Catholicism, which was caused “by his weakness and carelessness.” Irina, her children Nikolai and Anna, had to publicly renounce Catholicism in the court church “so that they and others looking at them were warned concerning such evil deception.” Also, for “public penance,” Sergei and her son Nikolai were sent for a year to a monastery, Irina and Anna for a year to a convent. The governess was exiled from Russia for encouraging Irina and children to stay in Catholicism (PSP 3.975).<sup>5</sup> In all this it is ironic that the future empress Catherine, while in Elizabeth’s court, was converted to Orthodoxy by arguments of Todorskii that there is virtually no difference between Catholicism and Orthodoxy (C 46).

One Christian sect that was particularly irksome to ecclesiastic authorities was “the Quaker heresy” (квакерская ересь), “contrary to God, cursed heresy” (PSZ 14.10664). Although there were some similarities to historical Quakers, it appears that the Khlysts were meant here:<sup>6</sup> they believed in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in prophesying, apparently also in glossolalia, when

<sup>5</sup> See also an account of the ober-procurator of the Synod, I. Shakhovskoi, *Записки князя Якова Петровича Шаховскаго*, Санкт-Петербург 1872, pp. 287–289.

<sup>6</sup> The two sects were established at about the same time: Khlysts by Danila Filippovich in 1645, Quakers by George Fox in 1646, apparently independently from one another. A 1733 Synodal ukase spoke about a new “квакорская ересь or христовщина” that appeared in Moscow (*Полное собрание постановлений и распоряжений по ведомству Православнаго Исповедания Российской империи* [first series], vol. 8, no. 2702, Санкт-Петербург 1869–1915,) and Khristovshchina was a name used for the Khlysts (probably introduced by Dimitrii Rostovskii in his *Rozysk*). Cf. “квакерская ересь, i.e., христовщина,” А. Попов, *Суд и наказания за преступления против веры и нравственности по русскому праву*, Казань 1904, p. 339.

whipped themselves (hence the name: хлыст/*khlyst*, a whip), they rejected marriage and advocated life as singles (PSP 4.1522).<sup>7</sup> Under Anna Ivanovna, a Schismatic Committee was formed to investigate this group and the Committee was revitalized by Elizabeth (2.824; 2.826; 2.848).<sup>8</sup> Right after Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, the amnesty was offered among others to the Khlysts exiled to Siberia; however, they were supposed to be sent to places with little population "so that they could not spread their vile evildoing." That was to be done quietly so that they would not disperse (2.552). Forgiveness was offered to those who revealed themselves and renounced their faith in writing. If they did not and were caught, they would be punished like wizards according to PSZ 8.5761 (14.10664). Importantly, the 8.5761 law included the death sentence. In any event, flogging was applied and believers were sent to hard labor (PSP 4.1522).

Another Christian group that was targeted by the authorities was the Armenian church, incidentally, a church with an impressive pedigree: Christianity was first legalized in Armenia, and only later by Constantine in Rome. It was not allowed to build the Armenian church in spite of a previous permission. Their churches were to be destroyed except the ones in Moscow and one in Astrakhan (PSZ 11.8500; cf. PSP 1.31, 1.37, 3.1295). For consolation, services were allowed to be performed in two places which were furnished like churches and in which such services had been held before (PSP 3.1295).

Russia was not an easy place for Muslims. An order was issued to destroy all newly erected mosques in the Kazan gubernia, particularly in places where there were new converts (PSZ 11.8664; PSP 1.287). And again, mosques were not to be built in places where converted non-Orthodox lived "so that there would not be any temptation for newly baptized from Mahometans" and mosques in villages where there were Russians or newly converted were to be destroyed. However, conversion should not be done forcefully. If there were no Christians in a village of at least 200 or 300 male Tatars, a mosque could be built (PSZ 12.8978; 15.10991; PSP 2.671). The order of destroying mosques was carried out mercilessly. For example, as of 1756, in Kazan and Kazan uezd there were 536 mosques out of which 418 were destroyed; the remaining 118 had been built before the Kazan region became part of Russia. Mosques could be built by Tatars and newly converted Tatars were to be moved to other places; this included the separation of converted fathers from

<sup>7</sup> For their views, see also *Сенатский архив*, vol. 8, Санкт-Петербург 1897, pp. 508–512.

<sup>8</sup> The original committee was called the Schismatic Committee (PSP 2.827) or rather the Committee to the Schismatics Affairs, although it was a misnomer since the Khlysts were not schismatics, i.e., Old Believers, but a new religious group, but they did cross themselves with two fingers and called antichrists those who used three fingers (PSZ 14.10664) the way Old Believers did.

nonconverted children 13 years of age or older and nonconverted fathers and converted children (PSZ 4.10597). Similarly, Bashkirs could not build a mosque close to a place where there were new converts (12.8875). It was also decreed in 1747 that the non-Orthodox could not move from Siberia; they were allowed to build mosques a half-kilometer from the nearest city (12.9446), effectively, in the middle of nowhere.

Jews, “the haters of Christ the Savior,” were prohibited to live in Russia and the Ukraine. Those who were still there were to be “sent abroad” and under no pretext were they to be allowed to enter Russia. When expelled, they were not allowed to take gold or silver coins with them. Converts were allowed to stay but not allowed to go abroad (PSZ 11.8673; 12.8867). The Senate stated that the Jews came from Poland to Ukraine and Riga to the market, which was very beneficial to people and country; the Senate asked that the permission be extended as already allowed in 1728 (8.5324, art. 14) and in 1740 (11.8169); Elizabeth briskly shrugged it off by saying, “I don’t want the enemies of Christ to come for business” (11.8840; 12.8867). Also, António Sanches, a successful Portuguese physician (C 43), was dismissed from the Academy; as explained by the president of the Academy, Kirill Razumovskii, “Her conscience does not permit Her to allow home in Her Academy [someone] who left the Banner of Jesus Christ to let himself to battle under [the banner] of Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament. This is, Sir, the real reason of your disgrace.”<sup>9</sup>

Although non-Orthodox faiths had been given some measure of tolerance, except for the Jews, they were ordered not dare to try to convert an Orthodox believer to their faiths (PSZ 13.9722). On the other hand, Elizabeth enforced intense missionary work in which it was repeatedly stressed that no compulsion should be used during conversion: non-believers should be exposed to the Gospel, but no force should be used “since the heart of man cannot be forced and a man converted by force [...] will be a Christian on the outside, but in his heart he will be even more than before like a stone” (12.9359; PSP 3.1174; 4.1381, 4.1689). In fact, the readiness for conversion was to be given in writing and a proper formula was to be used for conversion, one for Tatars, another for idolaters (PSZ 13.9825; PSP 13.9826).

Army chaplains were directed to make an effort to convert the non-Orthodox to Orthodoxy: Tatars, etc., by teaching the willing to convert the main dogmas of the church, prayers, the creed, sacraments (PSZ 11.8540). There was a reward: the foreigners in military service who converted to the Greek faith should be rewarded by being promoted by one rank (12.9305). Other inducements were offered to gain new converts. The ukase PSZ 11.8236 was to be followed concerning the assistance of new converts in Kazan: it included a three-year break

<sup>9</sup> Письма о докторе Санхеце, *Русский архив* 1870, no. 2, col. 283.



in paying taxes (11.8792). Also, new converts would become free and not be subject to non-Orthodox landlords (11.8793).

The non-Orthodox (Tatar, etc.) in Kazan gubernia should only be employed to work in the forest (11.8785). However, they could be freed from this work upon conversion (PSZ 12.9556).

Kalmyks, who came for conversion to Stavropole, should get 2.50 rubles per family (PSZ 11.8847). They could settle in the Orenburg gubernia. In fact, to Orenburg could come people of any race and creed to settle (12.9175). Converted Kalmyks and “children of other nations” (later: “people of other nations”) should pay the same taxes as others (12.9193).

Converted non-Russians (Tatars) could buy and sell land from/to Russians, but not to nonconverted non-Russians (PSZ 15.11231).

However, conversion to Orthodoxy could have unpalatable consequences. After hostilities ended, Turkish captives were to be released except for those who converted to Christianity (PSZ 11.8594; PSP 1.154), presumably to prevent their conversion back to Islam. More generally, foreigners who converted to Orthodoxy were not to be allowed to leave Russia. They should stay with the same landlord if they were married. If they were married to a free woman or were not married, they were free to live anywhere (PSZ 12.8974). Also, only conversion to Orthodoxy was permitted: Muslims and idolaters could only convert to the Greek faith and not to Catholicism or Protestantism and then they could not be allowed to leave the state (12.9249).

## Elizabeth

Elizabeth became an empress as the result of a coup. By the then existing laws, she should never have become the empress. The succession law was changed in 1722 by Peter I that allowed the current sovereign to name their successor (PSZ 6.3893). Incidentally, he did not manage to name one, so his wife Catherine became the empress. Her son Peter II followed her for a couple of years and then Anna Ivanovna became enthroned, not quite legally. She named Ivan VI as her successor and Biron as the regent. This regency ended after a month when parents of Ivan VI became regents for a year and they were deposed by Elizabeth. In the manifest issued soon after the coup she said in effect that the sick and dying Anna did not quite know what she was doing and that the succession document which Anna signed was authored by Ostermann (11.8476). Moreover, Catherine I issued in 1727 a ukase that stated that when Peter II died childless, Anna and her descendants would become successors and then Elizabeth and her descendants (7.5070, §8, misnumbered as 5007). Peter II died, so did Anna without leaving any descendants, so it was apparently Elizabeth's turn, not Ivan's. The thing is that Peter said that only an immediate

successor could be named by the sovereign — “whomever the Ruling Sovereign of the Russian throne wants to make the Successor” — and Catherine named Elizabeth as a possible successor of the successor, Peter II, whereby she made a choice for Peter.<sup>10</sup> And so, Ivan VI was a legitimate successor of Anna Ivanovna, even though Ostermann had had his hand in this choice. Notwithstanding the pronouncements in her ascension manifest, Elizabeth was keenly aware of that fact. First, she imprisoned Ivan VI (imprisonment was continued by Catherine II, who also ascended by a coup, under whose watch Ivan VI was murdered in prison); second, for years and years Elizabeth obsessively tried to erase the memory of the brief, one-year long entronement of Ivan VI.

Elizabeth ordered that oaths to Ivan should be publicly burned because he was improperly (неправильно) enthroned (PSZ 11.8641; 12.9005; PSP 2.702). She ordered that coins with the image of Ivan should be replaced with new coins (PSZ 11.8494; 11.8690; 11.8712; 12.9093). All church and secular books printed during the regency of Biron and then of Anna Leopoldovna should be returned to the printer that published them to change the imperial title in them; books would be returned at no cost to their owners (11.8648; PSP 1.114; 1.253; 1.362). The printed sermon given by the bishop of Vologda July 3, 1739 on ascension of princess Anna Leopoldovna should be returned and all sermons given by various priests during the regencies of Biron and Anna (11.8822; PSP 1.502). Because of Ivan’s title, all passports should be exchanged (PSZ 11.8830). Ukases issued under Biron’s and Anna Leopoldovna’s regencies should not be enforced unless they were confirmed by Elizabeth (12.9110). All ukases with the title of Ivan were to be sent from all administration offices to the Senate (12.9133; PSP 2.896). All documents issued by “the last two governments” were to be sent for titles to be changed. Also, people were to return medals with the portrait of Ivan given during the funeral of Anna Ivanovna (12.9192, 12.9439). All manifests issued by Anna about the succession of Ivan and former regents and oaths were to be sent to the Senate (12.9213). Manifests of Oct. 17, 1740 and Nov. 25, 1741 were to be sent to the Senate (13.9740). All the books printed in foreign languages that mentioned any “known names” from the last two governments were to be sent to the Senate. Such books could not be brought from abroad (13.9794). There were still many church books among people published by the Kiev-Pecherskaia Lavra with pages mentioning “names of known persons,” meaning Ivan and regents. The page with “known titles” (titles of known people) were to be sent to the Lavra for being reprinted (14.10277). All of this was a sign of Elizabeth’s worry about legitimacy — or rather illegitimacy — of her rule possibly tinged with a guilty conscience.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. В. А. Томсинов, *Законодательство императрицы Елизаветы Петровны*, Москва 2009, pp. xvii–xviii.

Elizabeth has been often hailed as a merciful and humane monarch who was against the death penalty. Because people were sometimes executed for wrong reasons, sometimes they were even innocent, Elizabeth required in 1744 that the information about prisoners sentenced to death should be sent to the Senate and execution should be suspended until a ukase was issued (PSZ 12.8944).<sup>11</sup> This was effectively a moratorium on capital punishment. More particularly, captured thieves and robbers should be tortured to learn the details of their crime; if they were sentenced to death, the Senate should issue a special permission; the same should be done with escaped soldiers who became robbers and with those who harbored thieves and robbers (12.9026, arts. 4, 6, 7). Thus, torture was not abandoned (with one proviso: no torture in territories conquered from Sweden (13.9923)) and, in fact, barbarism of the justice system was hardly curtailed. Thieves and robbers sentenced to death and labor for life were to be branded with the letters BO on the head and letter P on the right cheek and Ъ on the left, which rendered the word БОПЪ, thief, in old spelling (12.9293, 14.10306). Since 1751, those sentenced to death were supposed to be used as a raw work force: those in Siberia, Orenburg, and Astrakhan gubernias were to be sent for the hardest work (13.9875); those from other gubernias were to be sent to Rågervik (today: Paldiski in Estonia) to hard labor for life (13.9871, 13.9943, 13.10113, 14.10306, 14.10541), thereby resuming in Rågervik the work which Peter had started (13.9872). However, women sentenced to death would not be sent to Rågervik, but to Siberia for life (13.9911) without cutting nostrils or branding them. The latter was not spared for men so that they would not escape, particularly from Rågervik, since they would be recognized, but women would not escape from far away places in Siberia (14.10686). Also, graciously, cutting off the hands of serious criminals would be abandoned because there was no use of such people without hands and they would have to be fed for free. For thievery and robbery, flogging with the knout should be applied, nostrils should be slit, and the person should be exiled for life (13.10086).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See also К. А. Писаренко, “Секретные протоколы Сената об отмене смертной казни, 1743–1744 гг.”, *Российский архив* 18, 2009, pp. 33, 46.

<sup>12</sup> So much about an assessment that her legislation “manifested wonders of humanness even by today’s standards,” Т. Б. Забозлаева, *Внутренняя политика императрицы Елизаветы Петровны (1741–1761): путеводитель по законодательству*, Санкт-Петербург 2012, p. 174. Interestingly, the suspension of the death sentence was not a popular measure. An interesting case was made that in spite of the many panegyric sermons preached in Elizabeth’s presence (weekly sermons were ordered to be preached in the court by members of the Synod (PSP 1.93, 1.110, 1.300, 3.1287); cf. Е. И. Кислова, “Издание придворных проповедей в 1740-е годы”, *XVIII век* 26, 2011, pp. 52–72; and the many odes written in her honor, she was commanded for this suspension only twice, by Lomonosov and Krinovskii. “In a country where it was at least impolitic and sometimes dangerous to disagree with the monarch, the almost universal silence on the abolition might better be read as disapproval of Elizabeth’s policy, rather than

In a 1757 case, two soldiers lured a priest, roughed him up, and derided sacraments; as a punishment, they were to run six times through the gauntlet of 1,000 men with rods and then were sent for 10 years of labor. The information about this punishment was to be distributed as a warning to others (PSZ 14.10750). Could anyone survive such an ordeal? One can wonder whether this type of harsh punishment was not a backdoor for the reintroduction of the death penalty.

And yet, all of this was stemming from an empress who claimed for herself as self-evident, graciousness and mercy. In a convoluted statement she said, “Except for the general law [set] for all Sovereigns, that in Their undertakings and decisions, [they] answer to no one except to God, [it is also] known to the entire world Our moderation and love of man in [exercising] necessary justice [which] will be enough to convince everyone that when We ordered to arrest the former Chancellor Bestuzhev and to take away all his titles and property, that this was necessary because his crimes were great and were fitting of such [a decision].” He was arrested for “his godless and inhuman actions and tricks and, finally, for insulting Majesty” (PSZ 15.10802, 15.10940). No one was safe from her ire, the ire that was a manifestation of her mercy and no one questioned a decision of a sovereign who answered only to God.

Elizabeth was not much of a ruler. She basically left foreign affairs to Mikhail Bestuzhev and internal affairs to Peter Shuvalov.<sup>13</sup> Her true passion was religious rituals and life of pleasure.

The life of pleasure included incessant balls, masquerades, hunting, and expensive living which included fashion. Her passion for fashion reached such an extent that it even affected domestic policies. She ordered that Russian and foreign merchants who had brocade and other fabric with gold and silver brought to the country should first show them to the empress and they could not be sold otherwise (PSZ 11.8524). Heinrich Stegelman was nominated as a court-manager (роф-фактор) “to procure goods for Our Court and for Our own personal usage”; ordered goods should be inspected, tariff paid, and then unneeded stuff could be sold to anyone (11.8606). European silk goods and haberdashery could be brought only to St. Petersburg, ostensibly because only in the St. Petersburg harbor would the tariff be properly exacted. These expensive goods were needed primarily by the society that lived in St. Petersburg. These goods would be stamped and if anywhere such goods were found without the stamp, they would be confiscated (15.10803). In a 1751 letter to Vasilii

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indifference to it” (C. Bryner, “The issue of capital punishment in the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna”, *Russian Review* 49, 1990, p. 415).

<sup>13</sup> “Negligence of the empress to [foreign] affairs gives Bestuzhev immense power,” wrote D’Allion to Conti, 4 Jan. 1746, *Сборник Императорскаго Русскаго историческаго общества* 106, 1899, p. 621.

Demidov, she ordered: “I found out that a French ship came with various women’s clothing and men’s sewn hats and for women artificial beauty marks (мушки), golden taffetas of various sorts and all golden and silver haberdashery: order to send it over here [to Peterhof] with a merchant immediately. And other goods that I received in Tsarskoe Selo, stoles (палантины) – blue, blue-berry (брусничный) without silver and crimson with silver – with all accessories have not been sent over here. If they are sold, take them back immediately, pay and send everything to me.”<sup>14</sup>

Her interest in fashion and in her appearance took priority over governmental affairs. The French ambassador de la Chétardie wrote, “you cannot catch a minute to talk to the Tsaritsa about things. It is necessary to constantly overcome her carelessness. On Monday, August 20 [1742], I was in the court and I saw the Tsaritsa, but it was impossible to divert her attention from the fabric that was brought.”<sup>15</sup> Her age did not change it, it made it even worse. As French ambassador L’Hôpital reported in 1758, “the empress has a problem with losing her beauty that she maintains as well as she could with all resources of the art. She spent to that end infinite time which made her inaccessible until her toilette and her finery had been approved by her ladies and her mirror.”<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting that in all her excesses in fashion, Elizabeth advocated restraint to others. She lamented that there was a lot of loss for the state when money went abroad to purchase rich clothing and carriage. Some people “wear overly rich clothing braided with gold and silver not according to their merit.” People were not to wear rich clothing with gold and silver, they just should wear their old clothing. Existing clothing should be stamped and new could not be made under penalty. The first five classes could wear silk but not more expensive than 4 rubles for an arshine; people without rank could not have clothing with silver lining; only the first five classes could wear laces; gold and silver brocade should not be produced (PSZ 11.8680). Ceremonies accompanying the burial of known people, including courtiers, should be limited to avoid “big and unnecessary expenses” (12.9286). The empress was alarmed by “spreading of luxury among young people and was expressing [her] maternal concern about it that young Courtiers become extremely corrupted by it,” so she prohibited bringing from abroad “unnecessary things” that included laces, silk, haberdashery, snuffboxes, gloves, and the like (15.11218).

These good advices of moderation were directed to others. Elizabeth’s own preoccupation with clothing reached the level that was surprising in the case of royalty. In a fire of one of her palaces in Moscow, she lost 4,000 dresses

<sup>14</sup> Елизавета Петровна, “Записочки к Василию Ивановичу Демидову”, *Русский архив* 1878, no. 1, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> La Chétardie’s correspondence, *Русский архив* 1892, no. 9, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in: A. Vandal, *Louis XV et Élisabeth de Russie*, Paris 1882, p. 286.

(C 330). After her death, Peter III found her wardrobe in the Summer Palace that occupied several rooms and contained over 15,000 dresses — some of them worn only once, some not at all — two trunks of silk stockings, several thousand pairs of shoes, over a hundred unpacked pieces of rich French fabric and more.<sup>17</sup> This preoccupation with clothing was a reflection of her vanity: no one could look prettier than she did, no woman could look better in her dress or in her coiffure than she did. Vengeance was swift if this line was crossed. When Elizabeth found Catherine’s dress nicer than her own, she ordered Catherine to change hers. Elizabeth “was very susceptible to similar small jealousies [...] toward all other women, particularly toward those who were younger than her.” Once, in front of everyone, she cut ribbons from the head of [Natalia] Narishkina. “Another time she personally cut off half the curled bangs of her two maids of honor upon the pretext that she did not like this the way they were done.” Afterwards “these maids claimed that Her Majesty even pulled out a little bit of skin with the hair” (C 135). These were not isolated incidents. In one ball, very pretty Mme Lopukhine had a rose in her hair; Elizabeth forced her to her knees and cut out the rose from Lopukhine’s hair. Anna Saltykov met with a similar fate because of her coiffure.<sup>18</sup>

Elizabeth tried to balance all this life of pleasure with her piety which was considered to be excessive.<sup>19</sup> In fact, it was reinforced by her favorite Alexei Razumovskii, who was also very religious and although he stayed away from governmental policies, he did influence her in ecclesiastical matters.<sup>20</sup> The Synod knew it and was not shy to utilize him as an avenue to Elizabeth. However, her religious exercises frequently made a very curious impression.

Elizabeth made pilgrimages, frequently to the Trinity monastery, some 60 km from Moscow. She walked 3 or 4 km on foot and then she returned in a carriage to Moscow; the next day she returned to the point where she stopped to resume her pilgrimage. Sometimes she rested for several days in Moscow

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<sup>17</sup> [Я. Я.] Штелин, “Записки Штелина о Петре Третьем, императоре всероссийском”, *Чтения в императорском Обществе истории и древностей российских при Московском университете* 1866, bk. 4, pt. 5, p. 100. “The empress loved finery to excess and almost never she wore twice the same clothes, but she changed [them] several times a day; hers was an example that everyone followed: games and dressing filled the day” (C 60).

<sup>18</sup> P. V. Dolgoroukov, *Mémoires du Prince Pierre Dolgoroukow*, Genève 1867, vol. 1, p. 477.

<sup>19</sup> She manifested her “puerile devotion” by spending long hours before an icon of a preferred saint. Cf. A. Vandal, *Louis XV et Elisabeth de Russie*, p. 287. “In religious fanaticism [Elizabeth] exceeded the fanaticism of the clergy,” K. A., Рисаренко, *Елизавета Петровна*, Москва 2014, p. 290. In a way, it was her statutory obligation to be pious; after all, her title was “the Most-Pious, Most Autocratic Monarch of all Russia” (e.g., PSZ 11.8671).

<sup>20</sup> *Записки Шаховскаго*, pp. 50, 57. Razumovskii was “naturally pious and owing so much to the Church,” in words of R.N. Bain, *The Daughter of Peter the Great*, Westminster 1899, p. 148.

or in some place along the way. In 1748, it took almost all summer to complete it.<sup>21</sup> She also made a pilgrimage in 1744 to Kiev with a large retinue. Elizabeth “also marched on foot and frequently she went hunting.” Along the way, in Kozelsk, there were continually balls and gambling, sometimes 50,000 rubles went through the tables (C 52). On the last day in Kiev, people watched a comedy shown in one convent; from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. only a half of it was shown (53). The entire pilgrimage resembled more sight-seeing filled with entertainment such as hunting and gambling than a religious exercise. It is thus not unfair to state that she turned her pilgrimages into “parties of pleasure.”<sup>22</sup>

Elizabeth had a lifelong lover, Alexei Razumovskii, which surely did not agree with religious standards, widespread as the custom of having lovers was in European courts. She was rumored to have a secret marriage to make her liaison agree with the religious requirements,<sup>23</sup> but this did not stop her from having numerous affairs, with the full knowledge of Razumovskii. Her nymphomaniac desires reached such a level that instead of rather traditional *ménage à trois*, it was possible to speak about the *ménage à cinq*.<sup>24</sup> And yet, she was concerned about the decency of her subjects. Men and women could not take a steam bath together in public bathhouses, which “is rather disgusting” (PSZ 11.8842; 15.11094). Even in prison men and women were to be kept separately “so that there would not be any temptation and cause of sin” (12.8877).

All in all, the Orthodox church breathed some relief during Elizabeth’s rule after the dark times of Peter when the church was subjugated to the state and after the boorish rule of Anna Ivanovna had continued this subjugation. At the same time, policies toward other faiths were tightened which found the extreme manifestation in the treatment of the Jews. It appears that a soft treatment of the church and harsh treatment of any other faith was Elizabeth’s way of appeasing her ways, namely her devotion to luxurious life, her spendthrift,

<sup>21</sup> С 153, 271; А. А. Васильчиков, *Семейство Разумовских*, vol. 1, Санкт-Петербург 1880–1894, p. 104; see also three 1746 letters of la Chétardie to Amelot, *Сборник Императорскаго Русскаго историческаго общества* 100, 1897, pp. 310, 313, 319–320.

<sup>22</sup> K. Waliszewski, *La dernière des Romanov, Élisabeth I<sup>re</sup>, impératrice de Russie, 1741–1762*, Paris 1902, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> In a 1747 telegram, a legation councilor of Saxonia Petzold, said, “As the public has suspected for a long time and I now reliably know, a few years back the empress and the ober-jägermeister made/tied the *mariage de conscience*” (E. Herrmann, *Geschichte des russischen Staats*, Hamburg 1853, vol. 5, 202), i.e., they married in secret. It is said that the ceremony took place in Perovo near Moscow, very likely officiated by Elizabeth confessor Dubianskii, *Семейство Разумовских*, vol. 1, p. 20. P. V. Dolgorukov, *Mémoires du Prince Pierre Dolgoroukow*, p. 486, mentioned their being married in 1744.

<sup>24</sup> P. Longworth, *The Three Empresses: Catherine I, Anne, and Elizabeth of Russia*, New York 1973, p. 208; R. Coughlan, *Elizabeth and Catherine: Empresses of All the Russians*, New York 1974, p. 101; V. A. Nikolaev, A. Parry, *The Loves of Catherine the Great*, New York 1982, p. 42.

her vanity, her lack of constraints in the boudoir. That resulted in a bizarre mixture of religious rituals and entertainment. There was very little if any spirituality in this and plenty of ritualism. The church benefitted from it, at least politically, but her hypocrisy in dictating proper behaviour to others while openly defying her own recommendations of modesty and frugality could hardly encourage others to follow her recommendations rather than her actions. On this spiritual level, the church effectively was losing authority at least among the upper strata of the society where the way Elizabeth conducted herself was an example keenly followed by many.

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## Church policies of Empress Elizabeth of Russia

### Summary

Elizaveta Petrovna, an 18th-century Russian empress, cared for the religious beliefs of her subjects. In her legislature, she addressed the problem of religious upbringing of children and ceremonial requirements of adults, which included behaviour during church services and the frequency of confession. There was a measure of religious tolerance under her rule, but attempts for religious conversion could be made only by Orthodox believers. Her own life was filled with incessant entertainment coinciding with the admonition of her subjects to be restrained. Elizabeth tried to balance her life of pleasure with her excessive piety, ostensibly ritualistic and easily mixed with entertainment.

**Keywords:** Empress Elizabeth of Russia, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Old Believers, church policy

## Polityka kościelna carycy Elżbiety Romanowej

### Streszczenie

Elżbieta Piotrowna, osiemnastowieczna caryca, dbała o wiarę religijną swych poddanych. W swoim ustawodawstwie zawarła prawa dotyczące religijnego wychowania dzieci i przestrzegania rytuałów kościelnych przez dorosłych, co obejmowało zachowanie podczas nabożeństw i częstotliwość spowiedzi. Pod jej rządami panowała pewna tolerancja religijna, ale próby nawrócenia religijnego mogli podejmować tylko wyznawcy prawosławia. Jej własne życie było wypełnione nieustanną rozrywką, co zbiegło się z nawoływaniem jej poddanych do powściągliwości. Swe życie wypełnione przyjemnościami Elżbieta starała się zrównoważyć przesadną pobożnością, która była raczej rytualnej natury i łatwo mieszała się z rozrywką.

**Słowa kluczowe:** caryca Elżbieta, prawosławie, starowiercy, polityka kościelna