

2008

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## Recommended Citation

Salmond, Wendy. "Review of The Iconostasis of Peter the Great in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg (1722-1729)," by Julia Gerasimova, *Russian Review*, 67.4 (2008).

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Salmond, Wendy. Review of The Iconostasis of Peter the Great in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg (1722-1729) by Julia Gerasimova, *Russian Review*, 67.4 (2008)

which has been published in final form at DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9434.2008.00506.x/pdf](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2008.00506.x/pdf).

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Gerasimova, Julia. *The Iconostasis of Peter the Great in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg (1722-1729)*. Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2004. x + 256 pp + 277 ill. €250.00. ISBN 90-806476-3-2.

The Baroque iconostasis in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg marks a watershed in the evolution of a peculiarly Russian phenomenon: the multi-tiered or high icon screen. Art historian Julia Gerasimova began her study of this remarkable structure while at the University of St. Petersburg, and she completed it in the Netherlands as her doctoral dissertation. Now published as a lavishly illustrated monograph, it is the first complete iconographic investigation of this key Petrine monument. In tracing the evolution and significance of both the iconostasis's structure and the icons displayed there, Gerasimova presents an important case study of how Western motifs infiltrated the imagery of Russian Orthodoxy in response to Peter the Great's imperial and dynastic vision.

The channels by which Western images and styles reached Russia has been a topic of longstanding interest to students of the Petrine period, among them James Cracraft and Lindsey Hughes. Gerasimova's study adds important new insights, thanks to the specificity of her research focus and methodology. In her opening chapters she briefly reviews how thoroughly the ground was prepared for the construction of an iconostasis in a Western idiom by 1722, when Peter commissioned it. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, a vocabulary of new architectural and decorative forms made its way to Russia, disseminated through Belarusian masters and Western books on woodcarving, while a rich new source of imagery in Renaissance and Baroque styles became available through printed Bibles. Peter's second journey to Western Europe in 1716-17 piqued his interest in the arts and also fostered an official policy of cultural exchange, as Western artists were brought to Russia and Russian artists were sent abroad for training.

In explaining the conception and construction of the Peter and Paul iconostasis, with its commingling of secular and religious motifs, Gerasimova describes the roles played by master craftsman Ivan Zarudnyi, architect Domenico Trezzini, printer Mikhail Abramov, and the Holy Synod. But it is Peter who emerges as its principle author and thus as an art patron actively engaged in the design of new imagery. The specific form of triumphal gates for the structure of the iconostasis was thus selected as a fitting permanent monument to the conclusion of the Northern War in 1721, while the depiction of St. Peter's investiture on the Royal Doors justified the tsar's claim to be head of the Russian Church on the abolition of the patriarchate. Gerasimova's analysis of the saints depicted on the iconostasis reveals that all were selected to glorify Peter and his family. In sermons and orations Peter was compared to Moses, Samson, Peter, David, King Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, St. Alexander Nevsky, the Archangel Michael, and Christ himself. Similar references and associations are drawn between the female saints and the Empress Catherine I, whose features, moreover, are reflected in the central image of the Mother of God enthroned.

Much iconographic detective work has gone into this study, expanding our knowledge of the specific imagery assimilated into Petrine icon painting via engraved Bibles such as the *Theatrum Biblicum* (Piscator Bible) and *Icones Biblicae*, and Western prints (*kunshty*) after artists like Rubens, Rigaud, and Poussin. The author also pays attention to the eclectic mix of styles, poses, and gestures encountered in the iconostasis, ascribable to the diversity of sources filtered into Russia through mass-produced print images. Although the text is descriptive rather than analytical, and peppered with small mechanical annoyances (a number of repetitions that should have been caught, many typos, awkward translations), its invaluable iconographic content will make it an essential resource for further investigation of Petrine visual culture.

The value of the book is greatly increased by the inclusion of so many excellent illustrations (over half of them in color). In addition to photographs documenting every element of the iconostasis, there are numerous comparative images, from other iconostases, icons and icon primers to engravings, costume, and West European painting. A series of paired images juxtapose icons from the iconostasis with their Dutch and German print sources. Comparisons with the iconostases in churches at Ostankino (1692) and Tallinn (1717-20) document the origins of an entirely new era in the history of the Russian iconostasis. This rich trove of imagery, quite independent of the text, provides a fascinating visual narrative of the Petrine revolution in Russian culture.

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