"Culture" is a very difficult term; and yet is is central to all branches of human knowledge, creativity, ethos, Weltanschauung, religion, politics, and so on. It seems that the best definition to date is that of A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.1

It is my contention that the religious culture of Kievan Rus', both in its pre-Christian and Christian forms, has exhibited many distinctive characteristics, some of which are as follows:

1. There is a great tendency towards the portrayal of the sacred, the redeemed, the divinized and the glorified, but

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primarily under the aspect of Beauty, that is in the aesthetic dimension.\(^2\)

2. It interprets all the history of the Kievan Rus' as a sacred history, or a history of salvation. This means a series of mighty acts and interventions of God (or gods) as the Creator and the Giver of Grace in historical developments and events.\(^3\)

3. It is very strongly prophetic, that is, seeking for prophecy as the means of foretelling the future.\(^4\) It also interprets the contemporary situation in the light of aetiology, that is, it states that a prior event which the Kievan Rus' experienced is seen as a conditioning reason for a contemporary situation.

**Aetiology** is etymologically derived from the Greek *aitia* 'cause'.\(^5\) Here we must distinguish between the mythological and historical aetiologies. **Mythological aetiology** is usually of an unscientific and popular nature, based on folklore; and yet it can be extremely important in the development and meaning of a culture, religion, and historical consciousness. It is a picturesque portrayal of an alleged and mythical cause located in the undetermined

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