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**ON PATRIARCH TIKHON'S BLESSING OF THE WORK OF CULTURAL WORKERS IN PROTECTING AND RESTORING WORKS OF EARLY PAINTING**

This article is a preliminary attempt to shed light on the subject of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon's support for the activities of those scholars who, in the first years of Soviet power, devoted all of their efforts to saving works of religious art. Particularly relevant to this theme is a document of August 1918 in which Patriarch Tikhon gave his blessing to the work of the Commission for Restoring Works of Art and Antiquities.

This document played an exceptional role in the history of Russian culture. Not only did it provide the commission with a reliable protection for its work, it also clearly articulated the Patriarch's position on the protection and restoration of ancient works of religious art as a whole. It was a position that the Patriarch maintained throughout all his years of service. He later gave similar blessings in verbal form, the only kind available to him given the direct threat to his life, brutal surveillance by the OGPU, arrests and so on. Fortunately, reliable testimony to His Holiness's consistently expressed wish has been preserved. Only relatively recently has it become possible to collect and analyze this information. This extraordinary document of 1918 was known to a number of scholars and restorers, but was published for the first time just a few years ago (Fig. 1). The text is as follows:

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1. This article was first published as, “O blagoslovenii Patriarkhom Tikhonom trudov deiatelei kul’tury po sokhraneniu i restavratsii pamiatnikov drevnei zhivopisi,” Vestnik pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo Gumanitarnogo Universiteta. Istoriiia russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi, 2 (19) (2006), 27-33.

DEED OF HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA TIKHON [AUGUST 1918]

The Commission for the Restoration of Works of Art and Antiquities, in the persons of its president I. E. Grabar' and members V. T. Georgievskii and A. I. Anisimov, has now embarked on the study of early works of Russian icon painting by the great masters Andrei Rublev and Dionisii. To this end the members of the Commission are undertaking to travel to the most ancient holy places of our Fatherland.

Desiring that this undertaking, so beneficial for the Holy Church, should be successful, I ask God's blessing on these toilers for science.

Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

The commission referred to in the document was formed in June 1918 as part of the Collegium on Museum Affairs and the Protection of Works of Art and Antiquities. In a number of documents its title varied (particularly in the early days), but the most commonly used was the Commission for the Preservation and Disclosure of Works of Early (or Early Russian) Painting. Regardless of its title, however, its basic essence remained the same.

3. Igor' Emanuelovich Grabar' (1871-1960), painter and art historian, one of the founders of scientific restoration; editor-in-chief and one of the authors of the Istoriia russkogo iskusstva, 6 vols (1909-1916); head of the Board of Trustees of the Tret'iakov Gallery (1913-1917) and its director (1918-1925); president of the National (later State) Museum Reserve (from October 1918) as a subsection of which the Commission for Receiving Church Property worked (from November 1918); deputy head of the Section on Museum Affairs and the Protection of Works of Art and Antiquities of Narkompros; member of the section's collegium; headed the Commission that in 1924 became the Central State Restoration Workshops (until 1934).

4. Vasilli Timofeevich Georgievskii (1861-1923), art historian, museum worker and archivist; served in the field of church education; member of the Education Committee of the Holy Synod, the editorial committee of the journal Svetil'nik, the Committee for the Guardianship of Russian icon painting; professor of the Institute of Art History in St. Petersburg; discovered and was the first to publish the frescoes by Dionisii in the cathedral of Ferapont Monastery (1911); after 1917 also worked in the Armory.

5. Aleksandr Ivanovich Anisimov (1877-1937), art historian, one of the founders of scientific restoration; head of the Department of Religious Life in the Historical Museum (1920-1929); in the 1920s a professor at Moscow University, Iaroslavl University, and Vkhutemas; one of the heads of the Commission/Central State Restoration Workshops; arrested in 1919, 1921, and 1930 (sentenced to ten years in camps, served out his term in the Solovki camp; shot.

6. Manuscript Division of the State Tret'iakov Gallery (henceforth, OR GTG), f. 68, d. 257.

7. See P. A. Semechkin, "Otdel po delam muzeev i okhrane pamiatnikov iskusstva i stariny Narkomprosa RSFSR; Izmeneniia v sostave tsentral'nykh restavratsionnykh organizatsii v 1918-1934 gg. Skhema," Grabarevskie chtenia (Moscow: VKhNRTs, 2003), pp. 53, 61.