

SELECT SERMONS

BY

The late Metropolitan of Moscow,

PHILARET.

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.

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A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

OF THE LATE

METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW, PHILARET.¹

BASIL Drosdow, later known by the name of Philaret, was born on the 26th of December, 1782, in Kolomna, one of the district towns of the government of Moscow, where his father lived as parish priest. The family Drosdow was poor, poor even among their own class, who are generally so needy in Russia. This clerical class has, through a series of administrative measures and other circumstances, acquired the character of a caste, yet without being one in reality, or rather in principle. The ecclesiastical career, although actually open to all, has become through custom the almost exclusive lot of the children of the clergy. Exceptions to this rule seem to exist but to bear testimony to that fundamental principle of the Church, which has been almost entirely obliterated by custom. At seventeen years

¹ The historical details of the present notice have been borrowed from a book published in Moscow in 1868, by Mr. Souchkow, under the title of "Memoirs of the Life and Time of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow."

of age Drosdow was placed by his father at the Seminary of Troïtza, founded and supported by the celebrated monastery of that name,¹ where he occupied from the beginning among his fellow-students a prominent place. Platon, at that time Metropolitan of Moscow, took the youth into notice, and placed him henceforth under his special protection.

In 1803 Drosdow was appointed Professor of the Greek and Hebrew languages, and of Rhetoric, in the same Seminary in which he had but recently completed his studies. To be able to justify the election of the former professors, the student of yesterday turned with redoubled energy to his books, and in a few years he became a profound scholar in all those sciences which are so necessary to an ecclesiastical career.

In 1806, at twenty-four years of age, he preached his first sermon. The Metropolitan Platon, himself the most eloquent preacher of his time, was so satisfied with the oratorical talent and solid knowledge displayed by the young man, that he conferred upon him the honorary title of Preacher to the Monastery of Troïtza, an honour which the young layman shared together with the Archimandrite of that illustrious house.

In the year 1808, Drosdow bade farewell to the world, and took the triple vow of monastic life—the vow of chastity, poverty, and obedience—in the presence of his Metropolitan, who did not hesitate to transgress in his behalf the canonical law, which forbids the taking of the final vow

¹ *Troïtza* means *Trinity*. The monastery bears also the name of *S. Sergius*, in honour of its founder. It is situated about forty-seven miles from Moscow, and is as much revered for the sake of its holy patron as for the many glorious and patriotic deeds of its inmates during many centuries.

of monastic life before the age of thirty. Henceforth Basil Drosdow bore the name of Philaret.

In 1809 there came an order from the Holy Synod for the monk Philaret to be sent to the monastery of S. Alexander Nevsky in S. Petersburg. To exchange the place where he had passed his youth, where he was appreciated and had distinguished himself, for a town entirely unknown to him, a life among strangers, who might perhaps be ill-disposed towards the new comer, and in whose breasts his rising reputation might excite envy; all this offered a prospect in no wise cheering to the young scholar, utterly ignorant of the ways of the world.

The Metropolitan Platon, grieved to see himself deprived of his favourite pupil, who promised to reward so amply his paternal care, wrote to the Synod thus:—"Philaret has manifested his unwillingness to go to Petersburg in the tears he has shed." And again, further;—"Above all, I beseech the Holy Synod concerning the monk Philaret, that he may be sent back to the monastery of Troïtza . . . Having watched over his education with the anxiety of a father, I should consider his return a great comfort to my old age."

Notwithstanding the request of the influential prelate, Philaret was obliged to go to S. Petersburg, and it was not until many years after the death of his illustrious patron that he returned to his beloved monastery as Archbishop of Moscow.

Here commences the second epoch, so to speak, of the life of Philaret, whom we see at twenty-seven years of age entering upon that active and glorious career of public duty, which was to end but with his life.

It was now the early part of the reign of Alexander I., a time which abounded in beneficent reforms, proceeding from