

UKRAINIAN CHURCHES

Photographed by William Brumfield





Human genius has always found its noblest expression in the impulse to create works of supreme and lasting beauty. In Ukraine, such genius inspired the building of houses of worship that reflect the spiritual values and esthetic ideals of their creators. Many such monuments have not survived, but those that remain, as well as illustrations and records of those destroyed, testify to the artistic achievements and religious conviction of the Ukrainian nation over long centuries.

This publication, prepared by Dr. William Brumfield of Harvard University, vividly depicts some of the most striking examples of ecclesias-

tical architecture in Ukraine. Appearing on the eve of the millennium of the Christianization of Rus'-Ukraine in 988, may it serve as a memorial to that momentous event and as a stimulus for further and fuller documentation of its spiritual and cultural legacy. Let it also be our tribute to the thousands of individuals whose support has created a monument of a different kind – the three professorships and research institute of Ukrainian studies at Harvard University – which promotes the scholarly study of Ukrainian culture, typified in the enduring beauty of the churches shown on these pages.



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Front cover: Church of Saint Andrew, Kiev.
Architect: Bartolomeo Rastrelli. 1747–67.

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Kiev and Chernihiv, 11th–18th centuries

*And gaze upon thy city, radiant in its splendor,
upon churches flourishing, upon Christianity
increasing, gaze upon thy city, illuminated with
holy icons, brilliant, surrounded with fragrant
darkness, filled with hosannas and divine song.*

— ILARION, 'Oration to Prince Volodymyr'

When Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev composed his encomium to Volodymyr (at some point between 1037 and 1050), he might indeed have marveled at the grand prince's city, whose towers, palaces, and churches had risen within a brief period, beginning in the latter part of the tenth century. For monumental architecture began among the Eastern Slavs with the coalescence of a Kievan state dominating the Dnieper River trade route, and with the acceptance of Orthodox Christianity after Volodymyr's baptism in 988.

Unfortunately, nothing remains of Volodymyr's Church of the Tithe, although portions of its walls were standing as late as the nineteenth century. The first extant monument in Kiev dates from the reign of Volodymyr's son, Yaroslav the Wise, who extended the walls of the city and constructed the Cathedral of Saint Sophia – the greatest ecclesiastical monument of Kievan Rus'. The dates of its construction are open to question (1037?–1050s), but there is no doubt that Byzantine masters played a major role in the shaping and decoration of the cathedral. The complexity of its structure – with many aisles and great vaults decorated with frescoes, with the Pantocrator under the central cupola and the Virgin orant in mosaic rising over the altar – exemplifies the vigorous fusion of religious art and architectural space typical of the Middle Byzantine period.

Throughout the eleventh century Kiev remained the dominant cultural center of the Eastern Slavs, but there were a number of other important cities in the territory of Kievan Rus'. In Cher-

nihiv, Prince Mstyslav, Yaroslav's rival, commissioned the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior in 1031. A chronicle notes that by the time of Mstyslav's sudden death (while hunting) in 1036, the cathedral walls had attained a height that could be reached by a man sitting on a horse; but there is no further information on its completion. Here, as at the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, the mosaics, frescoes, and marble decoration characterized a style still largely dependent on the skills of Greek craftsmen.

By the latter part of the eleventh century, the major churches in Kiev and Chernihiv were built within monasteries endowed by local princes. In Kiev the most notable example is the Cathedral of the Dormition at the Monastery of the Caves (destroyed in 1941), which established a simplified three-aisled plan widely used in subsequent monastery churches: the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael at Vydu-betsky Monastery (1070–88); the Church

of the Savior at Berestovo, part of the Court Monastery of the Savior (late eleventh century); the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, subsequently part of the Michael Golden-Domed Monastery (late eleventh century; demolished in 1935–36); and the Church of Saint Cyril at the St. Cyril Monastery (mid-twelfth century). Chernihiv witnessed a similar expansion of monastery building, although on a lesser scale. The primary building material for these structures was a flat brick (*plinthos*, set in a mortar of lime and crushed brick), which might be alternated with courses of rough stone, as in the Cathedral of Saint Sophia. By the twelfth century brick was used exclusively in most churches, with every other row of brick recessed in the mortar.

After the Mongol invasion of 1239–41, the culture of Kievan Rus' was shattered, churches were destroyed or sacked, and in the turbulent centuries that followed, many others fell into decay. Only in the seventeenth century did Kiev experience a general cultural resurgence, during which ancient monuments were repaired and new churches built. The energetic and able Peter Mohyla played a major role in the process, as did hetman Mazepa at the end of the century. During this period the Cathedral of Saint Sophia was restored and the great Lavra of the Caves substantially rebuilt. Indeed, in their zeal to create a new Kiev, the restorers applied a seventeenth-century style to churches of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; only recently have there been partial attempts to recapture the original appearance of the early Kievan



Cathedral of Saint Sophia, Kiev. Eleventh-century Marble capital.

monuments. (It should be noted that the textured and patterned brick surfaces of most eleventh- and twelfth-century churches were not originally intended to be stuccoed.)

Among the monuments of this seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century cultural resurgence, the Churches of Saint George at Vydubetsky Monastery (1696–1701) and of Saint Catherine in Chernihiv (1715) are particularly impressive, with their imposing vertical silhouette and unusual cruciform structure, which differs from the cuboid, inscribed-cross structure of earlier

churches in Russia and Ukraine. By the middle of the eighteenth century Ukrainian churches conform to the style of the late Baroque, as practiced by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Aleksey Kvasov, and Ivan Hryhorovych-Barsky. The cathedral at Kozelets and the Church of Saint Andrew in Kiev are splendid examples of work by these architects.

The history of ecclesiastical architecture in Ukraine has all too often been a story of destruction and despoilation. Much has been lost; but today, a millenium after the baptism of Saint

Volodymyr, the churches of Ukraine remain eloquent testimony to an enduring spiritual and artistic genius.

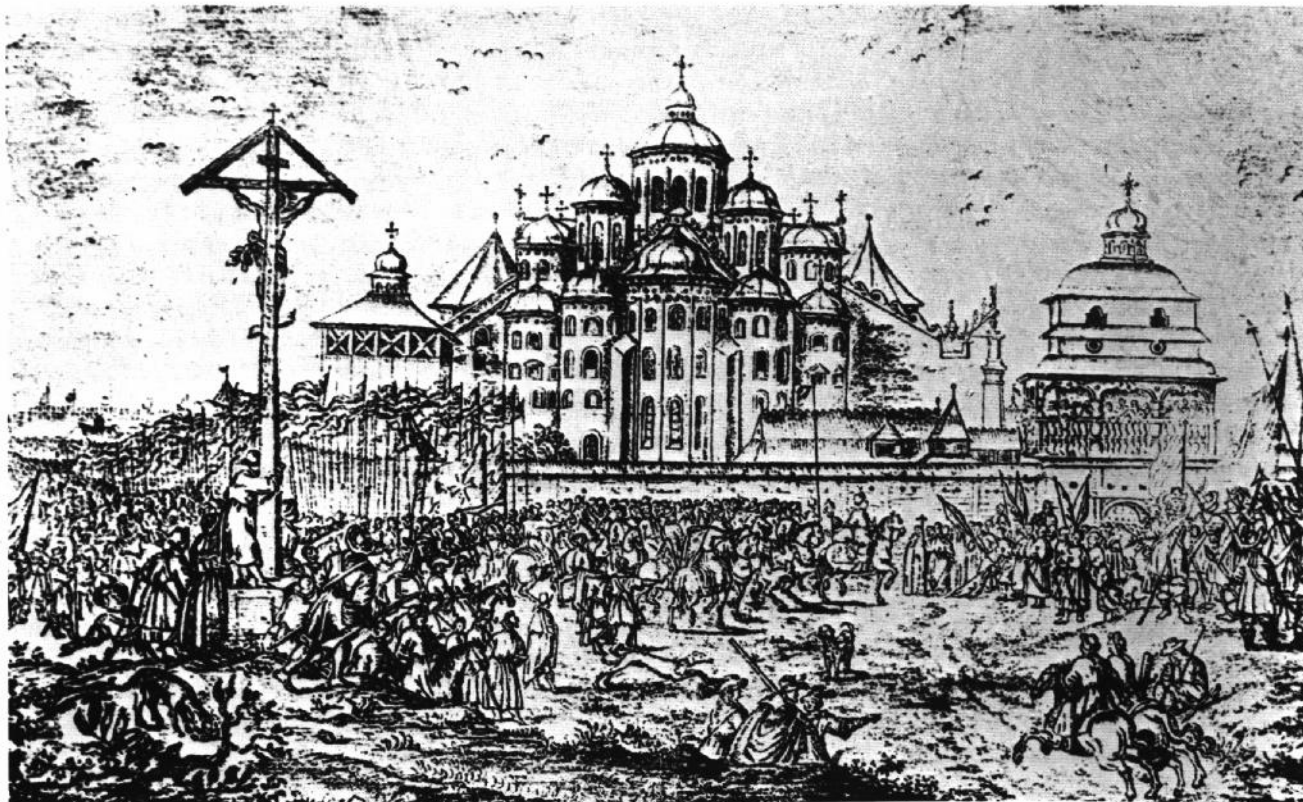
Dr. William Brumfield

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Cathedral of Saint Sophia. Drawing by A. Westerfeld, a German mercenary in the army of Prince Radziwil. This view, taken during

the Polish occupation of Kiev (1651), shows the cathedral after its restoration by Peter Mohyla in the 1630s–40s.



Cathedral of Saint Sophia, Kiev. The view from the east conveys something of the cathedral's original appearance, considerably altered since the eleventh century. Plaster has been stripped from

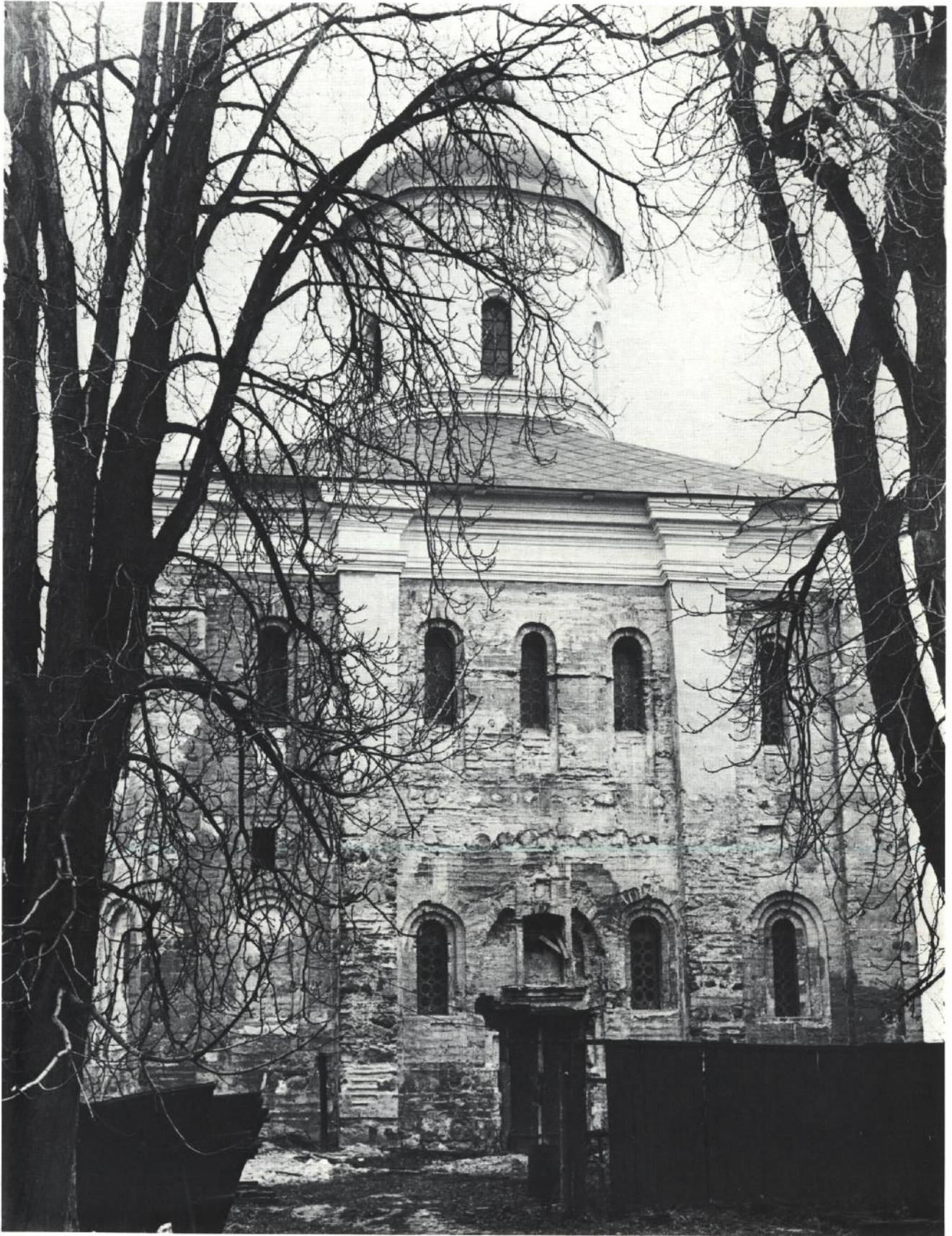
portions of the five apses to reveal the *opus mixtum* (stone and flat brick) construction.



Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior. Chernihiv. 1036–50s (?); restored in seventeenth century.



Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior. West Facade.



Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, Vydubetsky Monastery, Kiev. 1070–88.



Cathedral of Saint Cyril, Monastery of Saint Cyril. Kiev. Mid- twelfth century.



Cathedral of the Dormition, Monastery of the Caves, Kiev. 1073-78.



Church of the Savior at Berestovo, Kiev. 1113(?)–25. Sacked in 1240 and restored in the seventeenth century by Peter Mohyla,

the church has retained only the west walls (the narthex) of the original structure.



Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Savior, Chernihiv. 1031–50s.



Cathedral of Saints Boris and Hlib, Chernihiv. Late twelfth century.



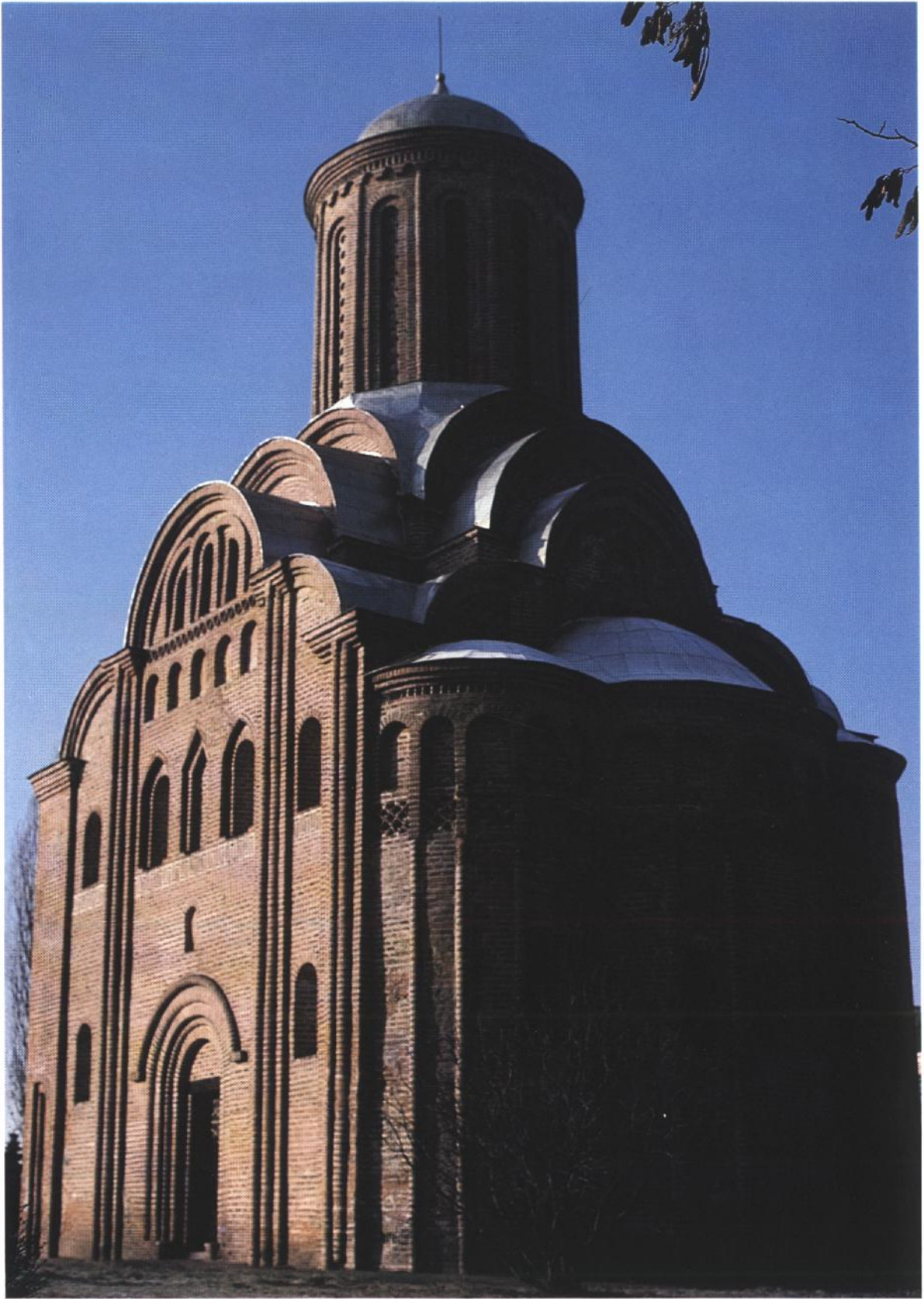
Cathedral of Saints Boris and Hlib, Chernihiv. Late twelfth century. One of several monuments in Kievan Rus' devoted to the martyred princes, the church is one of the most fully restored monuments from the pre-Mongol period, and is an excellent example of twelfth-century Kievan architecture, close in design to the Church of Saint Cyril.

Cathedral of Saints Boris and Hlib. Fragment of original capital.





Cathedral of Saints Boris and Hlib. Northwest view.



Pyatnyts'ka Church, Chernihiv. Late twelfth century.



Pyatnyts'ka Church, Chernihiv. Late twelfth century.



Church of Elijah, Illinsky Monastery, Chernihiv. Early twelfth century.



Church of Saint George, Vydubetsky Monastery, Kiev. 1696–1701.

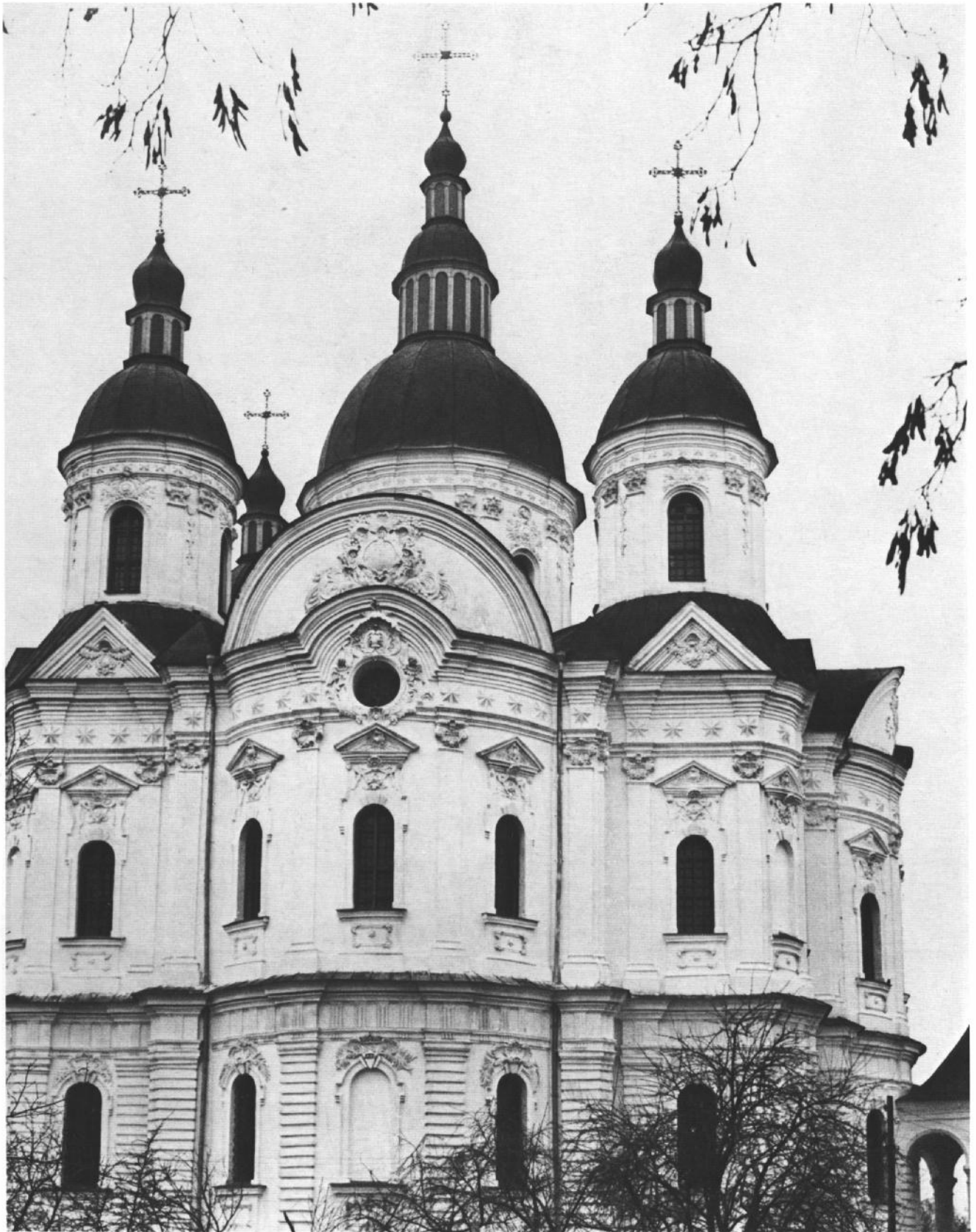


Refectory Church of the Savior, Vydubetsky Monastery. 1696–1701.



Church of Saint Catherine, Chernihiv. Completed in 1715. Built to commemorate the heroism of Chernihiv's cossacks in the

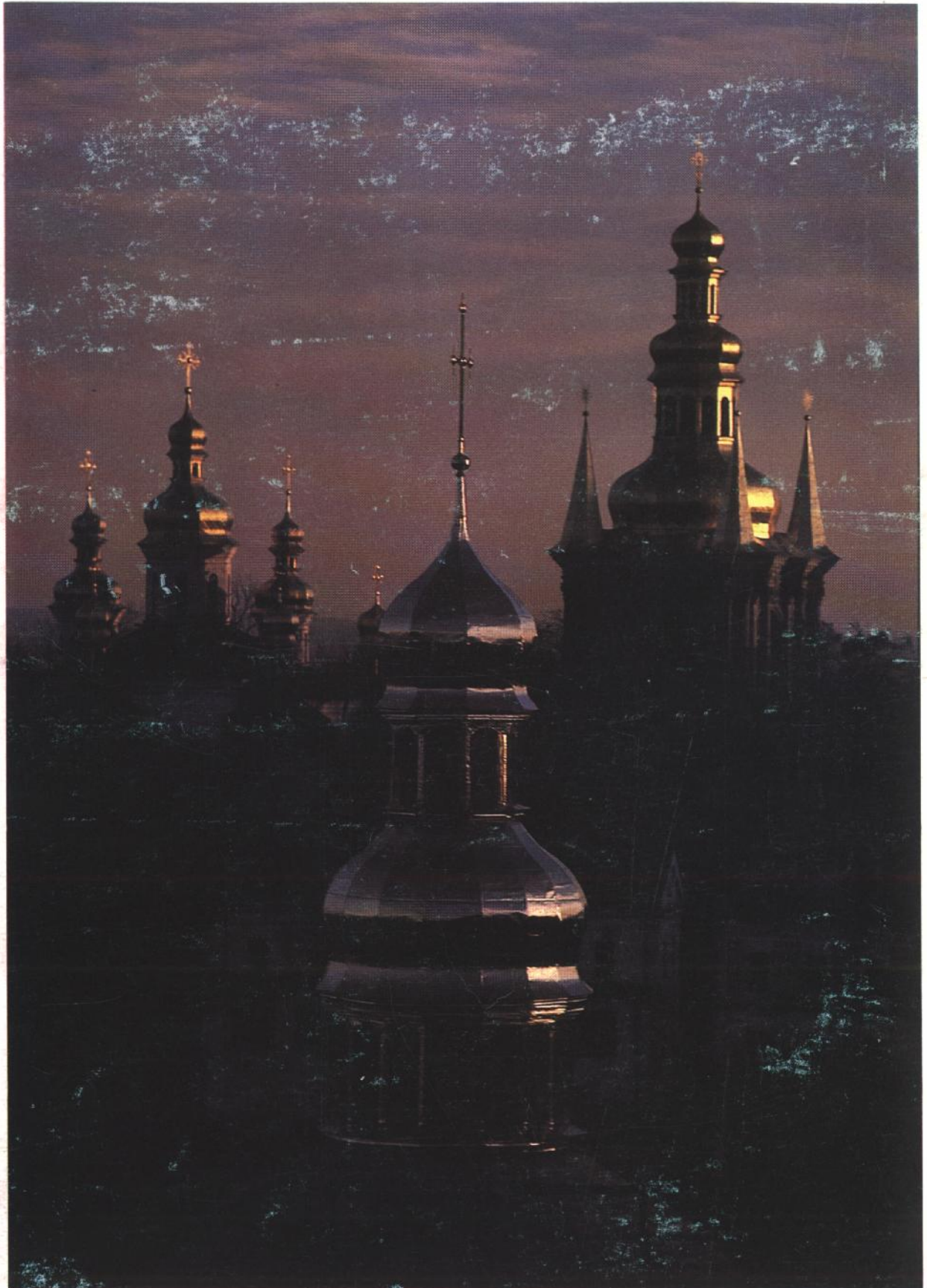
storm of the Turkish fortress of Azov (1696), the church is an excellent example of "cossack baroque."



Church of the Nativity of the Virgin. Kozelets. Attributed to Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Aleksey Kvasov, and Ivan Hryhorovych- Barsky. 1751-63.



Bell tower, Church of the Nativity of the Virgin. Kozelets. 1766–70.



Ensemble of the Near and Distant Caves, Monastery of the Caves, Kiev.
Late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.