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ΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟ ΚΑΙ Ο ΚΟΣΜΟΣ
ΤΩΝ ΣΛΑΒΩΝ



INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

**CYRIL AND METHODIUS:
BYZANTIUM AND THE WORLD
OF THE SLAVS**

28-30 NOVEMBER 2013

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THE CONSTANTINOPOLITAN PROJECT OF THE CYRILO-METHODIAN MISSION ACCORDING TO THE SLAVONIC LIVES OF THE THESSALONICAN BROTHERS



Marcello Garzanti

MISSIONARY TRADITION IN BYZANTIUM

In late 1988, I. Ševčenko opened the Ravenna conference on the millennium of the baptism of Rus' with a memorable speech on the Byzantine missions. He suggested that a Japanese person would have no difficulty in recognizing similarities between the Byzantine empire and empire of the Rising Sun, while at the same time immediately understanding that the main difference between the two is the missionary spirit of Christianity¹. However, if we look at any introduction to Byzantine civilization, it is difficult to find a chapter devoted specifically to Constantinople's missionary work, even when the focus is on Christian tradition. For example, in H. Hunger's classic text², there are no chapters devoted to Byzantine missions, although he speaks broadly of Byzantinische Ausstrahlungen ("Byzantine influence"). He only devoted a few pages to the spread of Eastern Christianity among the Slavs, even if this process witnessed the same degree of expansion in the Middle Ages as that of Western Christianity. The Ch. Hannick's contribution to the Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte, represented a turning point in Byzantine studies³. It is worth mentioning in the most recent historiography also the chapters devoted to this topic by J. Shepard in *The Oxford History of Byzantium* and by S.

1 I. Ševčenko, «Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium», in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies. Proceedings of the International Congress Commemorating the Millennium of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine, XII-XIII*, Harvard 1988-1989, 7-8.

2 H. Hunger, *Reich der Neuen Mitte. Der christliche Geist der byzantinischen Kultur*, Graz-Wien-Köln 1965.

3 Ch. Hannick, «Die byzantinischen Missionen», in *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, II, 1, ed. by K. Schäferdiek, München 1978, 279-359.

Ivanov in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*⁴.

The focus of all Byzantinists, however, as demonstrated by the Hunger essay, is on the relationship between “church and state” and on the role of monasticism. In Byzantine culture, compared to early Christian missionary trends, the contemplative and ascetic tendencies of the monastic world appear to dominate. Based on a tradition that had made a synthesis of Neo-Platonic and Stoic thought with Jewish tradition, after the Christianization of the empire, the Christian mission appeared less important than contemplative life and was finalized primarily to promoting peace within the empire. This hierarchy of values is already attested, for example, in one of the founding texts of Eastern monasticism, the *Life of Anthony*, by Athanasius of Alexandria. Here the hermit is diverted from meditation and prayer only in a second phase for reasons of charity or for the fight against paganism and heresy. Similarly, Photius, as shown in his letter to Pope Nicholas I, regretfully abandoned his life of study and meditation to take up the role of patriarch, with all the hardships and responsibility that this task at the time of Emperor Michael III implied. And we remain dubious about the idea that his letters show just a *topos humilitatis*⁵.

Preaching to barbaric peoples was not a priority of the Byzantine church and could even provoke criticism. In his *Bibliotheca*, however Photius strongly opposed the idea that in preaching to the Gentiles there was the danger of “casting pearls before swine”, just as the esteemed patristic exegete Methodius of Olympus seemed to suggest⁶. According to these considerations, historians are generally skeptical about any real missionary drive in Byzantium⁷.

THE PHOTIAN PROJECT

In the second half of the 9th century the Byzantine empire followed carefully the evolving geopolitical situation. In the Middle East, Constantinople was committed to defending the rights

4 J. Shepard, «Spreading the World: Byzantine Missions», in *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. by C. A. Mango, Oxford 2002, 230-247; S. A. Ivanov, «Religious Missions», in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500–1492*, ed. J. Shepard, Cambridge 2009, 305-332.

5 How tied Photius was to this life, how he loved his teaching, as demonstrated by the regret expressed in letters to Pope Nicholas I (858-67), who rebuked him for his election to the patriarchate. In particular, he underlined the upheaval to his quiet life brought about by high ecclesiastical office, which he had been forced to accept (Ep.290, *Nicolaio Papae*, Aug.-Sept. 861, 49-71, in Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*. 3. *Epistularum pars tertia*, ed. by B. Laourdas, L. G. Westerink, Leipzig 1985, 125-126).

6 See Photius, *Bibliothèque*, ed. by R. Henry, vol. V, Paris 1967, 107-108. Ivanov develops this interesting topic, referring to the testimony of Theophanes Continuatus (S.A. Ivanov, *Vizantijskoe missionerstvo. Možno li sdelat' iz "varvara" christianina?*, Moskva 2003, 144-145).

7 So wrote Shepard: “In fact the evangelistic impulse from Constantinople was more a matter of rhetoric than of sustained missionary endeavors” (J. Shepard, «Orthodoxy and Northern Peoples: Goods, Gods and Guidelines», in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. by L. James, Chichester, West Sussex, 2010, 173).

of Christian communities under the yoke of Islam, both politically and diplomatically and also culturally, in an intense polemic with Islam, while in the West was going slow, but inexorable the muslim conquest of Sicily. On the international chessboard, the Byzantine curia was aware of the important role of the peoples of the steppes, beginning with the Khazars, who not only controlled the Volga basin, but were trying to expand their influence as far as the Black Sea. In Byzantium there was great concern about the Carpathian and Balkan inland, opened to Central Europe and to the Danube area, which marked the old boundaries of the Roman empire. There the Carolingian Empire was proceeding with determination its work of colonization and christianization, particularly along the river Danube. Meanwhile, the Roman papacy had resumed the initiative beyond the Adriatic and especially at the time of Pope Nicholas I (†867), the Holy See planned to take again control of Illyricum, converting the barbaric peoples and reorganizing the Roman church in the territory⁸.

In our reconstruction, after coming to the patriarchal throne in 858, Photius, supported by the imperial curia, drew up a complex missionary plan, in which the conversion of the Slavs to Christianity would counterbalance the Germanic peoples' adherence to Western Christianity. A leading role in this project was to be played by Photius's "close friend" Constantine-Cyril ("fortissimus amicus")⁹. The constitution of the Macedonian theme and the administration of *scлавиниа* prepared this project. Since Constantine-Cyril's brother Methodius had held the office of archon in a *scлавиниа* for a long time, he was inevitably involved in the process of Christianizing the Slavs in the Byzantine Empire. All this is well presented in F. Dvornik's studies on the Thessalonican brothers' Slavic mission¹⁰. More generally, we can rebuild a picture of the Byzantine missions at the time of the famous patriarch thanks to aforementioned contributions of Hannick and Ivanov¹¹.

In general, however, research in this field is limited to describing the historical circumstances of the missions and their political, legal and canonical implications, with a special focus on the Slavic mission of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius both due to the more copious materials available, and also due to the evident historical consequences of their mission. In general, the role of Photius is understated. This may be because the focus on his personality remains firmly

8 On the papal policy of the period in Central Europe and the Balkans, see the recent essay by M. Betti (M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858-882). Papal Power and Political Reality*, Leiden 2014).

9 So it defines one of the more prominent members of the papal curia and close friend of Cyril in Rome, Anastasius Bibliothecarius (Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Epistolae Anastasii Bibliothecarii epistolae sive praefationes*, edd. E. Perels-G. Laehr, in MGH Epp. VII (*Epistolae Karolini Aevi V*), Hannover 1974, 407).

10 F. Dvornik, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IXe siècle*, Paris 1926; F. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance*, Prague 1933.

11 Hannick, «Die byzantinischen Missionen»; Ivanov, *Vizantijskoe missionerstvo*; Ivanov, «Religious Missions».

linked to the old question of the relationship between Constantinople and Rome and the so-called “Schism of Photius” with the theological diatribes that ensured him a place in history¹². Even in his essay, Ivanov only links Photius to the process of converting the khanate of Bulgaria and of the Rus’ to Christianity. While admitting that the patriarch had reflected on the theoretical foundations of the mission addressed to the Gentiles, he essentially denied the existence of an overall missionary project¹³. Only Dvornik perceives the complexity of the project starting with Photius’s role in the planning of the mission of Cyril and Methodius¹⁴.

In our opinion, it is important to give due prominence to the patriarch Photius trying to understand the Cyrilo-Methodian mission against the background of the activity of the famous patriarch. Taking into account primarily the privileged testimony of the Lives of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius¹⁵, we suggest that it was a genuine missionary project, conceived by the patriarch of Constantinople, after his enthronement in 858 with the support of Michael III and Barda. Five years later the latter would send the Thessalonican brothers to Moravia, a mission that had one of its key points in attracting the Slavic world into the orbit of Byzantium. Five years is a reasonable time to carry out preparatory work for such a mission, beginning with the creation of the glagolitic alphabet. These years saw Constantine-Cyril engaged in other missions in the Middle East and among the Khazars, revealing the broad horizons of the Photian project.

This project was to have a universal character, ecumenical in the etymological sense of the word, and was to restore Constantinople, the Second Rome, to its historical role, as evidenced by some of Photius’s homilies¹⁶.

12 In this field Dvornik played an important role in the last century in rehabilitating the Constantinopolitan patriarch. See F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism: History and Legend*, Cambridge 1948.

13 The Russian scholar, confirming the absence of specific references in his letters on a mission to the Khazars, Arabs and Slavs, is aligned with positions of L. Simeonova, who denies any planning, but admits only a reaction to the historical circumstances, reflecting about “the missionary enterprises of Patriarch Photios” (Ivanov, *Vizantijskoe missionerstvo*, 143.146, L. Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross. Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy 860s-880s*, Amsterdam 1998, 72).

14 So writes the Czech scholar: “A very likely missionary activity characterizes the first patriarchate of Photius. The conversion of the Slavs settled in the middle of the Byzantine Empire in Thrace and Macedonia was completed, and during his second patriarchate the Serbs also were entirely won over to Christianity. Photius even included Armenia in his plans for Byzantine religious expansion, as can be judged from his letters. The spread of Byzantine religious influence among the Slavs, which started under the first patriarchate of Photius, yielded as is known, permanent results...” F. Dvornik, «The Patriarch Photius in the Light of Recent Research», in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, München 1958, vol.III, 2, München 1958, 53.

15 We refer to the edition of *Vita Costantini* (VC) and *Vita Methodii* (VM) by P.A. Lavrov (P.A. Lavrov, *Materialy po istorii vozniknovenija drevnejšej slavjanskoj pis'mennosti*, Leningrad 1930), but also by F. Grivec, F. Tomšič (F. Grivec, F. Tomšič, «Constantinus et Methodius Thessalonicenses. Fontes», Radovi staroslavenskog Instituta 4, Zagreb 1960), if necessary by offering my translation.

16 See in this regard B. Schultze’s essay on the worldview testified by his homilies (B. Schultze, «Das Welt-

The first aim was to preserve the security of the Christian communities in the Middle East. Undoubtedly Photius had understood their dramatic situation during a mission there. We cannot establish the exact date of this mission but it may coincide with that of Constantine-Cyril¹⁷. At the same time, Photius was certainly concerned about the spread of Judaism and the presence of Muslims among the Khazars, who controlled the trade routes to Crimea. His interest in this Eastern area is demonstrated by his relationship with the Armenian church¹⁸, but also by a letter to bishop Anthony on the conversion of Jews in Crimea¹⁹. Not surprisingly, the *Italica Legenda*, the most important Latin source on the work of the Thessalonican brothers, reports that the Emperor together with the patriarch sent Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to the Khazars²⁰. In Photius's encyclical letter to the Eastern patriarchs (867) he finally also mentions the dreaded Ros. This Scandinavian population at the head of the Eastern Slavs had descended the Dnieper and laid siege to the capital in June 860, as testified by Photius in his homilies. According to the encyclical letter, Photius had sent a mission to their settlements at the mouth of the Dnieper, headed by a bishop, who had been crowned with success²¹.

The patriarch's attention was, however, specially focused on the Bulgarian Khanate which extended along the borders of the Byzantine empire and the regions of Illyricum. Since the time of iconoclasm, jurisdiction over Illyricum had been contended between Rome and Constantinople and both Latin and Byzantine missionaries operated there. In this context, at the same time as the mission of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, the baptism of Bulgarian Khan Boris was prepared. It seems rather difficult to separate the two initiatives, both organized from Constantinople, as often happened. It is not up to us to investigate now the complexities of

bild des Patriarchen Photios nach seinen Homilien», *Kairos* 15, Salzburg 1972, 101-115).

17 According G. Plexidas, Photius would have been in the Middle East between 838 and 855 (Φωτίου Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Ο Ηγεμών, μτφρ. Γιάννης Πλεξίδαζ, εκδ. Αρμός, Αθήνα 2007, 17, see also Shepard, «Spreading the World », 235). Dvornik suggests that Photius would have been in the Middle East together with Constantine-Cyril between 855 and 856 (F. Dvornik, «The Embassies of Constantine-Cyril and Photius to the Arabs», in *To Honor Roman Jakobson. Essays on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, The Hague 1967, 569-576).

18 Ep. 284 *Asotio principi principum* (878/879), in *Epistulae et Amphilochia*. 3, 94. For Armenian sources see I. Dorfmann-Lazarev, *Arméniens et Byzantins à l'époque de Photius: deux débats théologiques après le triomphe de l'orthodoxie*, Lovanii 2004, 1-53.

19 Ep. 97 *Antonio archiepiscopo Bospori* (859/m.Sept.867?), in *Epistulae et Amphilochia*. 1. *Epistularum pars prima*, ed. by B. Laourdas, L.G. Westerink, Leipzig 1983, 132. The letter may refer to the Khazars who had converted to Judaism.

20 «Tunc imperator, simul cum patriarcha, consilio habito, pefatum Philosophum advocans, simul cum legatis illorum ac suis honorifice transmisit illuc, optime confidens de prudentia et eloquentia eius» (Grivec, Tomšič 1960, p. 59). Ivanov links the initiative of the missions sent to the Arabs and the Khazars only to the Emperor Michael III avoiding any reference to the patriarch (Ivanov, *Vizantijskoe missionerstvo*, 146-147).

21 On this matter, see V. Peri, «La brama e lo zelo della fede del popolo chiamato "Ros"», *Harvard Ukrainian Studies. Proceedings of the International Congress Commemorating the Millennium of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine*, XII-XIII Harvard 1988-1989, 124-129.

Danubian and Balkan affairs²², but it is worth pointing out the close relations between the two phases of the Photian patriarchate with respect to the Cyrilo-Methodian mission, the conversion of the Bulgarian population and the question of Illyricum.

PHASE 1 OF THE PHOTIAN PATRIARCHATE (858-867)

Constantine-Cyril and Methodius's mission began during the first phase of the Photian patriarchate with the invention of the glagolitic alphabet, the first translations and missionary work in Moravia and Pannonia (863). There is no doubt that Photius played a key role in preparing the mission: first in choosing the Thessalonican brothers, who did not belong to the high clergy, as members of the papal mission to Bulgaria. Only Methodius had the role of hegumen, while Constantine-Cyril probably had not even taken clerical status. By avoiding sending an episcopal mission into territory that the Holy See considered as belonging to Roman jurisdiction, Constantinople wanted to keep the door open to dialogue in the hope that the Pope would re-cognize Photius's rise to the patriarchate. In this sense, we should also interpret the custody of the relics of Pope Clement found in Kherson by the Thessalonican brothers. The relics represented the best evidence of readiness for reconciliation with the Roman See²³. It could therefore be assumed that, since the beginning, the mission was destined to reach Rome. Therefore it was not at the initiative of the Pope that the Thessalonican brothers arrived in the ancient capital of the empire. It may also be noted that in VC the glagolitic alphabet was not invented simply to convert the Slavs but also to confront the Latin missionaries, who might level an accusation of heresy against a Byzantine mission without written testimony of teaching. And this brings us immediately to the Photian controversy with the Roman See, raised at that time by the deposed Patriarch Ignatius.

The years 864-867 certainly marked a progressive distance between Rome and Constantinople until their reciprocal excommunication, while in the Balkans, the Byzantine plan to convert Khan Boris to Eastern Christianity (between 864 and 866) was accomplished. Towards the end of 867 two events occurred that led to a radical change: the death of Pope Nicholas in Rome and the murder of Michael III in Constantinople. The installation of Pope Adrian II and the ascent

22 For a brief description of the situation from the point of view of Byzantium see Dvornik, «The Patriarch Photius », 28-30.

23 The hypothesis seems fairly plausible to Tachiaos: "The hypothesis which immediately presents itself is that either Cyril himself or his friend and teacher Patriarch Photius believed that the relics ought to be returned sooner or later to their natural home, the Church of Rome. So Cyril could have had in mind an act of brotherly reconciliation with Rome; or equally, the relics could have been destined to serve as a supplementary feature on some future mission" (A.-E. N. Tachiaos, *Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica. The Acculturation of the Slavs*, New York 2001, 50).

to the throne of Emperor Basil the Macedonian (Emperor 867-886), created the conditions for resuming dialogue with the Holy See, but to the detriment of Photius, who was soon deposed since he was an obstacle to reconciliation with Rome. In order to reconcile with the West for more effective opposition to the Islamic world, the new Emperor restored the previous patriarch, the eunuch Ignatius, to the patriarchal throne.

Having lost the support of the previous Emperor and of their friend patriarch Photius, Constantine-Cyril and Methodius went to Rome, offering the relics of Clement as a sign of reconciliation (868). Just at that moment, the philo-Frankish party of the Roman curia, led by Formoso, who had worked so hard in the Bulgarian Khanate, appeared to be defeated and were opened new perspectives in relations with Byzantium. Following the death of Constantine-Cyril (869), Methodius, who had decided to continue with the mission, was forced to submit himself to the exclusive protection of the Pope.

PHASE 2 OF THE PHOTIAN PATRIARCHATE (878-886)

The second phase of Photius's patriarchate was inaugurated with his reconciliation with Rome. It was characterized by a careful policy of penetrating the Balkans as far as the Adriatic coast. At this stage Methodius, Archbishop of Great Moravia (†885), dealt with the organisation of a local church and the translation of religious texts into Slavic, including the first Slavic version of the Bible. His Life testifies to a trip to Constantinople, about which historians express doubts, but which we have no reason to deny. This episode could be explained by Photius's new rise to the patriarchal throne and the resumption of his missionary policy, but at the same time by the difficulties encountered by Methodius in defending the tradition of the Constantinople Creed in Moravia. This rapprochement with Constantinople would also explain the hostility of Rome, where the philo-Frankish party had taken a dominant position with John VIII (†884). In those years Methodius had to defend himself against attacks by the priest Viking, whom Rome had imposed as his suffragan.

Methodius probably made that journey in the year 879, when bishop Gabriel of Ochrid took part in the Synod of Constantinople convened by Photius²⁴. Photius's activity from Ochrid to Moravia, in collaboration with Methodius, however, raised the concerns of John VIII towards the bishops of Dalmatia from Nin to Split. In letters written in 879, in fact, John VIII had expressed his fear about the spread of "Greek and Slave» influence²⁵. Moreover, Methodius had

24 E. Naxidou, «An Aspect of the medieval History of the Archbishopric of Ochrid: its Connection with Justiniana prima», *Byzantinoslavica* LXIV, Praha 2006, 153-167.

25 In 879, Pope John VIII wrote: "*Porro si aliquid de parte Grecorum vel Sclavorum super vestra ad nos reversione vel consecratione aut de palli perceptione dubitatis, scitote pro certo, quoniam nos secundum*

introduced his disciples to the tradition of Eastern Christianity and they had been trained to translate from Greek. Methodius's funeral was also held in Greek to emphasize the relationship with Constantinople, despite the fact that Methodius recognized that the territory was under Roman jurisdiction.

The penetration of Methodian tradition in the Croatian area may already be the result of the work of the Archbishop of Moravia and not only later by his disciples from Bulgaria. Again we can assume that Photius had moved in accordance with the new Emperor Basil the Macedonian who kept close relations with prince Zdeslav, a precious ally against the Bulgarian Khan, who outside the Byzantine jurisdiction and with the help of Rome, was preparing to set up his own independent patriarchate²⁶. Meanwhile, at the initiative of Photius, the Christianization of the Serbian population was developed²⁷.

In this first phase, the project encompassed a vast area from Moravia to the shores of the Adriatic Sea as far as Crimea, collided with Rome, looked to the East, from Crimea to the Volga and Armenia. In the second phase, the Photius project seems to focus more on the surrounding areas, trying to contain the Bulgarian Khanate and establishing closer relations with the Danube and Dalmatic area. There is no doubt, however, that in the mission to the Slavs the patriarch's closest collaborators were Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, and that their mission was addressed to all the Slavs, especially in an anti-Frankish perspective.

PATRIARCH PHOTIUS AND THE SLAVIC LIVES OF CONSTANTINE-CYRIL (VC) AND METHODIUS (VM)

It might be objected that the Patriarch Photius is hardly mentioned in their Slavic Lives. This fact, however, depends on the time period in which these hagiographical texts were written. Photius is mentioned in the VC, simply as his master in philosophy, elsewhere the anonymous author speaks only of the "patriarch". Even the VM speaks only of the "patriarch", although it is obvious that the narration relates to Photius, initially at the time of Michael III and later at the time of Basil the Macedonian. There is an easy explanation: the VC was written in Moravia when Photius was still alive, but it could only remember him as a teacher and not as the patriarch in the context of the Filioque controversy with the Germanic clergy. The VM, written by

sanctorum patrum decessorumque nostrorum pontificum statuta vos adiuvaré auctoritate curabimus" «Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae», ed. by E. Caspar, in MGH, Epp. VII (*Epistolae Karolini Aevi V*), Berolini 1974 (II ed.), 157 (ep. 196).

²⁶ Dvornik even suggests a trip of Methodius to Croatian territories, but his reconstruction of philo-papal Methodius orientation is not convincing (Dvornik, «The Patriarch Photius», 54, fn.187).

²⁷ See Dvornik «Les Slaves», 132ss., 233-258.

his disciples in Bulgaria, could not bring out the figure of Photius, while the First Bulgarian empire was building its own patriarchate in opposition to the Constantinople patriarch. On the contrary, even though temporary, disagreements with Constantinople should be highlighted, as we read in his Life.

It is important to observe that Photius's missionary project was taken up by different Emperors (and even by Patriarch Ignatius, who returned to the office after Photius's first resignation from the patriarchate). The role of the Emperor, considered to be "equal to the Apostles", should not be underestimated but we cannot reduce the whole missionary initiative to imperial policy²⁸. In this regard I would like to mention the words of Constantine-Cyril on his death bed: "From this moment I am no longer a servant of the Emperor, nor of anyone else on earth, but only of God almighty. And I have been and I will be for ever. Amen"²⁹.

To some extent the memory of the Photian project suffered a *damnatio memoriae* in Byzantium itself because his figure remained tied to the controversy with Rome and to the anti-Ignatian party, and because at the time of the Byzantine conquest of the Balkans and the conversion of Rus' (988), the geopolitical situation had changed profoundly. There is no doubt, however, that the Photian project found a new application in the Rus' at the time of Prince Vladimir.

GUIDELINES OF THE PHOTIAN PROJECT

Generally, the study of the Cyrilo-Methodian mission is focused on its cultural implications, especially in the field of language history and translation: the question of the ritual adopted, the role of the Slavic language in the liturgy, the texts translated and the quality of the translation of the Thessalonican brothers's works. The guidelines of the missionary project and the arrangements for its implementation remain entirely overshadowed. In fact, the texts on the Cyril-Methodian issue, starting from their Slavic Lives, are a unique source for studying the theoretical development and practical realization of the Christian mission by the Byzantines, especially beyond the borders of the empire. Therefore we need to read the texts from this point of view in order to analyse the art of mission at the time of Photius, when the patriarchate strongly promoted his ecumenical role³⁰.

28 So thinks, for example, V. Peri, quoting the letter of Patriarch Photius to the Eastern patriarchs (V. Peri, «Spalato e la sua chiesa nel tema bizantino di Dalmazia», in *Vita religiosa, morale e sociale ed i concili di Split (Spalato) dei sec. X-XI. Atti del Symposium internazionale di storia ecclesiastica (Split, 26-30 settembre 1978)*, ed. by A.J. Matanić, Padova 1982, 303, fn.88).

29 These words also inspired by ancient funerary inscriptions, according to R. Jakobson represent a composition in verse (R. Jakobson, «Stichotvornye citaty v velikomoravskoj agiografii», *Slavistična revija*, X, Ljubljana 1957, 118).

30 This ecumenical vision is testified evidently by the famous letter of Rastislav in VC, chap. XIV.

On the basis of VC and VM we can establish that the Byzantine mission, according to the patristic tradition, rested on certain main guidelines. First, preaching work was developed, based on the biblical and patristic sources, which placed the historical events presented in the liturgy within a historical providential pattern. It was a teleological philosophy of history, in which the Roman empire played a key role³¹. Second, preaching was closely linked to liturgy. It was therefore important to understand the liturgy, realized through mystagogy: just in the patristic era the celebration of the liturgy was accompanied by a set of explanatory tools, starting from the interpretation of the rites and sacraments³². Third, preaching contains a reflection on the new Christian morality, especially on questions where the pagan tradition appeared to contradict Christian practices, such as in the context of family morality.

At an organizational level, the missionaries proceeded to educate the local clergy who could perform the functions of predication and celebration also with missionary tasks. This clergy could have a role in mediating with local authorities, to whom the missionaries always referred when carrying out their work. Finally, they favoured the formation of a local monastic order, which was created almost immediately in the lands where the Christian faith of Eastern tradition had its roots³³.

In the Slavic context this process became more complex when it was decided to invent a new alphabet and to write in the Slavonic language, starting from the translation of sacred and liturgical texts. Such a decision, with such far-reaching consequences for European history as a whole, presupposed an idea of religion and culture that reflected the Hellenistic and Christian Mediterranean roots: the idea of Christianity as a religion of the book and its appeal to the mind (nous), i.e. to enlighten reason able to exercise philosophy³⁴. This perspective could help, for example, to better understand the definition of διδασκαλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, which means in the Life of Clement, Constantine-Cyril and Methodius and their disciples³⁵.

31 See on this topic the reconstruction of political Byzantine ideology by A. Carile (A. Carile, «Byzantine Political Ideology and the Rus' in the Tenth–Twelfth Centuries», Harvard Ukrainian Studies. Proceedings of the International Congress Commemorating the Millennium of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine, XII-XIII, Harvard 1988-1989, 400-413).

32 We must underline that the patristic exegesis is largely oriented to explaining the sacramental rites, and in general to Christian worship. A deep reflection on the relationship between holy scriptures and liturgy in the patristic can be found in J. Danielou, *Bible et liturgie. La théologie biblique des sacrements et des fêtes d'après les Pères de l'Église*, Paris 1951.

33 We have scant information about it. Perhaps the first news in the Slavic field is the initiative of Patriarch Photius who had sent certain Bulgarians to monk Arsenius to be educated (I. Dujčev, *Medioevo bizantino-slavo. I. Saggi di storia politica e culturale*, Roma 1965, 268).

34 These are the key issues in the *Proglas* to the Gospel, generally attributed to the same Constantine-Cyril (A. Vaillant, «Une poésie vieux-slave: la *Préface de l'Évangile*», *Revue des Études Slaves* XXXIII, Paris 1956, 7-25).

35 Hannick, «Die byzantinischen Missionen», 297.

We cannot dwell now on each of these points, which I will analyse in a special monography. Here instead, we would like to remember the biblical and patristic cornerstones of the preaching of the Thessalonian brothers, which we can find mainly in the VC and VM. In the past we had already begun to carry out this research, although not in any systematic way. We present here some results³⁶.

APOLOGY OF MISSION

The teaching of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius was based primarily on holy scriptures. According to the Moravian Liturgical Service, during his stay in Rome Constantine-Cyril defended his mission in Moravia and Pannonia before the Pope and cardinals on the basis of psalms and apostolic letters (“dauidicis et apostolicis autoritatibus”)³⁷.

Even before their departure, the Thessalonian brothers had selected certain biblical quotations, crucial to defending their actions, especially regarding the use of Slavonic in the liturgy. Later, in Moravia, these biblical passages served Methodius and his disciples to defend his work as Archbishop consecrated in Rome to build the first Slavic church.

These quotations therefore had an apologetic purpose, but they were also important for oral preaching, of which we unfortunately have no direct evidence. We can rebuild this arsenal on the basis of biblical quotations in the texts dating back to the Cyrilo-Methodian age, especially through analysis of their Slavic Lives.

Firstly we must consider the long passage from the First Letter to the Corinthians, which occupies most of chapter sixteen of VC (1 Cor. 14, 5-33, 37-40), but with a completely different meaning compared to St. Paul’s original letter. The long passage of this Pauline epistle concerns the proper order in the Christian assemblies and especially the so-called “glossolalia”, and apparently has no bearing on the dispute about the use of Slavonic in the liturgy. However, as it often happens in patristic commentaries, Constantine-Cyril extends the meaning of the passage, regarding a general topic of the First Letter to the Corinthians: the order of Christian assemblies. So St. Paul’s criticism of the disorderly practice of “glossolalia” and its appeal for translating the languages of prayer so as to be understandable to everyone, gains a new meaning. Applied to the new situation according to Constantine-Cyril’s interpretation, the quote is used to justify

36 See more widely M. Garzaniti, «Weisheit der Evangelien und Exegese der Heiligen Schrift im Werk von Kyrill und Methodios», in *Methodios und Kyrillos in ihrer europäischen Dimension*, ed. by E. Konstantinou, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, 73-83; M. Garzaniti, «Rol’ i značenie Svjaščennogo Pisanija v “Žitii Mefodija”», in *Svjaščennoe Pisanie kak faktor jazykovogo i literaturnogo razvitija (v areale avraamskich religij)*. *Sankt-Peterburg.30 ijunja 2009 g.*, ed. by E.N. Meščerskaja, Sankt-Peterburg 2011, 149-157.

37 See the *Moravian Liturgical Service* (prima lectio) in A. Teodorov-Balan, *Kiril i Metodi. Svezka vtora. Nabožen pomen i istorični svidetelstva za Kirila i Metodija*, Sofija 1934, 191.

the translation of sacred texts into Slavonic and the presence of Slavonic in the liturgy.

This quotation follows St. Paul's verse of the Letter to the Philippians, "And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 11), closely related to the interpretation of 1 Cor. 14, 39 ("and forbid not to speak with tongues"), which is the key of the previously mentioned passage³⁸. This chapter of VC looks like a bible chain, which contains passages of holy scriptures that Constantine-Cyril had collected for his polemics against the "trilingual heresy" and it represents the authoritative basis of their mission.

THE UNIVERSAL HORIZON AND THE TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The most significant quotes in the Lives include the verse from the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy, "God who will have everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2, 4, VC chap. I, 1; chap. XIV, 16; VM chap. II, 1). With these words, Cyrilo-Methodian teaching wishes to emphasize the universality of salvation, linking it to the Greek idea of "knowledge of truth." The St. Paul quote occupies a key position in Cyrilo-Methodian sources and we meet it in the preface of the VC and in the beginning of the VM. We read the same quotation in the Proglas to the Gospel and in the Treaty on the letters of monk Chrabr³⁹, witnesses providing a more or less direct echo of the Cyrilo-Methodian mission, and dating to no later than the first generation of disciples of the Thessalonican brothers.

The teleological conception of history plays a fundamental role in VC and VM. We can find a brief meditation on this matter at the beginning of VM. Probably inspired by the Orations on Athanasius of Gregory of Nazianzus (21, 37), the anonymous author of VM conceived the idea of including a long preamble in the VM, perhaps a catechesis of Constantine-Cyril or Methodius, which summarizes the long history of salvation, since the creation of the world through the happenings of Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, until the age of the Apostles and "Martyrs" and the celebration of the ecumenical councils⁴⁰. The work of Methodius is interpreted as the latest outcome of the project of salvation, in a particular historical situation, which saw collaboration between the Eastern Roman Emperor Basil I and the Petrine See at the time of Adrian II to spread the Gospel among the Slavic peoples.

38 It is worth mentioning that this verse is explicitly quoted in the letters of John VIII *Praedicationis Tuae* and *Industriae Tuae*, sent respectively to Methodius and Svatopluk (Teodorov-Balan, *Kiril i Metodi*, 219, 222; Grivec, Tomšič, *Constantinus et Methodius Thessalonicenses*, 72-73; *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici*, I-V, Brno 1966-1976, III: 193, 207).

39 See text edition in K. Kuev, *Černorizec Chrabr*, Sofija 1967.

40 Vavřínek, relying on Grivec, assumed that this is a catechesis of Constantine-Cyril (V. Vavřínek, «Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje a panegyriki Řehoře z Nazianzu», *Listy filologické* 85, Praha 1962, 121).

THE CHARACTER OF MISSIONER

In the second chapter of VM, which immediately follows the long preface, the hagiographer quotes the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor.9, 22). Referring to the virtue of Methodius, the anonymous author underlines his readiness to become “all things to all, to win all” (VM, chap. II, 3). But in the Bible we read: “all things to all, to save at least some” (1 Cor. 9, 22). Verse 22 is evidently not reproduced literally. The hagiographer seems to look at the whole passage of 1 Cor. 9, 19-23. The key role of this quotation in the Life is confirmed by its presence in the epilogue of the VM, but even here the Pauline passage is not reproduced literally, “was all things to all, to win all” (VM, chap. XVII, 13).

We have been able to demonstrate that verse 1 Cor. 9, 22, revised in the light of 1 Cor. 9, 19-23, it has a key position in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and is applied particularly to the figure of the bishop⁴¹. In the first half of the ninth century, probably on the basis of the funeral Oration on Basil, this quotation was included in the Life of the patriarch of Constantinople, Taras (730-806), who restored the worship of icons and, we must underline, that he was a relative of Patriarch Photius. Maybe, inspired by Patriarch Photius, the quotation, elaborated according to the patristic tradition, could have been included in Cyrilo-Methodian teaching⁴². We have also observed that the aforementioned Pauline quote appears several times in a reworked form in Photius’s letters. We meet it, for example, in the conclusion of his letter to the Archbishop of Thessalonica, Paul⁴³.

This Pauline passage, then, is entered in the reflection of the Thessalonican brothers according to the exegesis of the church father, becoming the leitmotif of Methodius’s pastoral work. After his death, presenting the inheritance of the bishop of Great Moravia to posterity, the revised quotation of 1 Cor. 9, 22 was adopted to interpret his teaching in the light of the apostolic model, offered by St. Paul, assuming the function of biblical key of the VM.

41 Garzaniti, «Rol’ i značenie», 152-154. We find traces even in his sermons. The Pauline passage that contains this verse is read in the liturgy of the vigil of the Epiphany, and to this important feast Gregory devotes a sermon in which the preacher expands on the concept of “gain” and “salvation”, exhibited in the Pauline reading (Oration 38). For the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus we used the edition by C. Moreschini (Gregorio di Nazianzo, *Tutte le orazioni*, ed. by C. Moreschini, Milano 2000).

42 See *Sancti Tarasii Constantinopolitani Vita*, in PG 98, coll. 1385-1424, particularly col.1420.

43 See Ep.283 Paulo Archiepiscopo Thessalonicae, 529-532, in *Epistulae et Amphilochia. 2. Epistularum pars altera*, ed. by B. Laourdas, L.G. Westerink, Leipzig 1984, II, 253.

MORAL TEACHING

Lastly, we just want to mention the series of biblical quotations concerning Methodius' moral teaching. In his Life (VM, chap.XI) we read that the Archbishop tried unsuccessfully to dissolve the marriage between an adviser to the prince and his godmother, which certain complaisant priests had supported. A. Vaillant linked this passage with the fragment of a sermon in Codex Clozianus, which follows the Homily for Palm Sunday of John Chrysostom, and identified Methodius with the author of this homily⁴⁴. In this sermon, of which we retain only the end, we read an appeal to the prince for the enforcement of God's law, without any preference, and specifically an explanation of the prohibition of marriage between the baptized and their godmothers or their godchildren. This severe speech is followed by a presentation of the doctrine of Christian marriage with the help of a biblical chain (Eph. 5, 3-6, but with remodelling, Mt.19, 3, Mt.5, 32, Mt.19, 6, Mal.2, 15-16).

Even with another order, we find a similar chain in the VC (chap. XV), which accuses the Latin clergy of allowing the celebration of illegitimate marriages. It starts with the quotation from the prophet Malachi, which presents several verses in an elaborated form (Mal. 2, 15-16. 15.14), followed by several Gospel passages against adultery and the indissolubility of Christian marriage (Mt 5, 27-28, Mt 5, 32; Mt.19, 6). Interestingly, this chain is introduced by the invitation to rightful sacrifice, with the quotation of Ps. 54, 14, while in the epilogue of the homily we read an adapted quotation from the Book of Samuel, in which obedience is recognized as being better than any gift (1 Sam. 15, 22). We are probably dealing with a chain drawn up by the Thessalonican brothers for pastoral practice already in their mission to Moravia and one that Methodius applies in a particular case, when he opposed the marriage of an adviser to the prince to his godmother. In Photius's letter to Khan Boris, who took the name Michael at his baptism, despite the dominating exposure of Christian dogmas, reflections on moral issues are not entirely absent. Notable among these are the attitude towards women and the issue of marriage, with a clear reference to Mt.5, 28⁴⁵.

Although both brothers aspired to retire into a monastery, to devote themselves to prayer and meditation on the holy scriptures, the imperial court forced Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to engage in a difficult mission among the Slavs. They faced this challenge with the instruments in their possession, according to the Eastern Christian tradition, based on the interpretation of the Gospel and the holy scriptures according to patristic thought, which put the liturgy and the

44 See A. Vaillant, «Une homélie de Méthode», *Revue des Études Slaves* XXIII, 1-4, Paris 1947, 34-47.

45 Ep.1, 1043-1067, in *Epistulae et Amphilochia. I*, 34.

celebration of the sacraments at the centre of Christian life. The reference to the holy scriptures, then, was essential, both for apologetic purposes, especially for defending the mission against its detractors, and for the catechetical instruction of neophytes. The brief reflection on the biblical quotations and chains in the Lives of the Thessalonican brothers is the best testimony to the work that was prepared in Constantinople, most likely under the leadership of Patriarch Photius. Other elements might result from more detailed research into biblical exegesis in the work of Photius, but this study requires specific research.

CONTINUITY OF THE PHOTIAN LEGACY IN THE SLAVIC AREA

There are additional elements that link Photius to the work of Cyril and Methodius beyond the witnesses of the Lives of the Thessalonican brothers and their biblical quotations, corroborating their testimony. The first is the presence of the Slavic version of a Photian homily in the Codex Suprasliensis, which could date back as far as the time of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius⁴⁶. The subject, linked to the idea of Christian pedagogy, develops a key theme of missionary work.

Further testimony of Photius's influence on their mission is provided by: *Izbornik 1073*. This miscellaneous codex, compiled at the time of prince Sviatoslav Kiev, goes back to a Slavic manuscript related to the age of Tsar Simeon of Bulgaria. Thirty years ago, however, I.V. Levočkin advanced the hypothesis that this collection of patristic writings could be identified with the "Book of the Fathers" translated by Methodius during his episcopal ministry in Moravia (VM chap. XV, 5). His thesis, however, was not followed especially because of the weakness of his arguments⁴⁷. About ten years later, however, fundamental research was published by M.V. Bibikov (1996) devoted to this work in which the eminent Byzantine scholar studying the Greek tradition of the model of *Izbornik 1073* suggests that this miscellany was conceived in Constantinople in the imperial curia in the second half of the ninth century.

Firstly Bibikov refers to the dedication of a Parisian code (Paris.gr.922, f.4), which speaks about "Augusta Eudoxia". This person could be identified with the Empress Eudoxia Ingerina, a figure of the Byzantine court who played an important role in the court at the time of the Emperor Michael III, and later as a wife of the Emperor Basil and mother of future Emperors Leo and Alexander, as well as of the Patriarch Stephen⁴⁸. She was thus the originator of the

46 See text edition in *Supraslski ili Retkov sbornik*, ed. J. Zaimov, M. Capaldo, voll. I-II Sofija 1982-1983.

47 I.V. Levočkin, «"Otečeskie knigi" i *Izbornik Svjatoslava 1073g.*», *Sovetskoe Slavjanovedenie* 6, Moskva 1985, 75-80.

48 M. V. Bibikov, *Vizantijskij prototip drevnejšej slavjanskoj knigi. *Izbornik Svjatoslava 1073g.**, Moskva 1996, 301-307. See on this figure C. Mango, «Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty»,

Macedonian dynasty. It is worth recalling not only that she belonged to the noble family of Martinakioi, but in particular her Varangian origin (Ingerina from Ingvar). We must, therefore, presume, some relationship with the Eastern Slavic world, in which the Varangians had settled.

Secondly in the Greek manuscript Laura G 115, the short patriarchal chronicle therein contained ends with a reference to the second rise of Photius to the patriarchal throne⁴⁹. Nevertheless the Russian scholar seems to prefer a later date for the composition of the Greek model of *Izbornik* 1073, namely the era of Emperor Alexander, the son of Basil, and the Patriarch Nicholas Monk, mentioned in other Greek manuscripts of the Greek miscellany at the basis of the *Izbornik*, but still deeply attached either to the same Eudoxia or, as in the case of the Patriarch Nicholas, to Photius⁵⁰.

In any case, it seems clear that this anthology was compiled in a Photian environment, before or after his death. We favor the first hypothesis, however, considering that Photius was famous for his collections of texts and quotes, starting with his famous *Bibliotheca*.

The content of the miscellany should also be taken into account⁵¹. The *Izbornik* is an anthology of the writings of the church Fathers, extraordinarily useful for training the clergy. Photius or his associates may have completed and dedicated it to the empress Eudoxia Ingerina, planning to use it to train missionaries destined to work with new peoples, from the Rus and the Probulgarians to the Slavs. At the time of Photius's second patriarchate, Methodius may have heard about this work or its prototype during his stay in Constantinople, when he reestablished contact between the Archbishopric of Moravia and the curia of Constantinople. There is no doubt that if Methodius had effectively translated the Bible, as the VM (chap.XV, 1-3) tells us, he would also have needed this miscellany, which is essential for proper exegesis, starting from the list of canonical books and the question of the figural interpretation. Methodius could have brought the Greek prototype of *Izbornik* 1073 or a similar anthology from Constantinople and have had it translated for the disciples and clergy that he was training. The definition of "Book of the Fathers" well corresponds to the titration of the same *Izbornik*: "Collection of many Fathers. Interpretation of obscure words in the Gospel and Epistles, and other books, briefly explained for memory and for ready answers".

In general, the research focuses on the nature of this encyclopaedic miscellany, but the constructive principle that revolves around the holy scriptures is not clearly identified, beginning

Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog Instituta, XIV-XV, Beograd 1973, 17-27.

49 *Ibidem*, 317.

50 *Ibidem*, 318.

51 See F. Thomson, «The Symeonian Florilegium – Problems of its Origin, Contents, Textology and Edition, together with an English Translation of the Eulogy of Czar Symeon», *Palæobulgarica* 17/1, Sofija 1993, 37–53.

with the Gospel and the Apostle, which are interpreted according to the patristic exegesis in the pedagogical form of question and answer. The erotapokriseis genre is, in fact, the core of *Izbornik* and most of the questions are related to the biblical exegesis⁵².

This hypothesis, which we will develop in the future, allows us to recognize at the very beginning of Methodius's translation work, his attempt to build up a fundamental library including not only liturgical texts, but also the Bible and the tools for commenting on it, in a miscellany that represents the first exegetical anthology of Slavic literature. This is probably why Methodius's disciples edited a copy to offer to Tsar Simeon, adding a eulogy which testified to the Tsar's protection towards the formation of a church of Methodian origin in Bulgaria. The choice had to fall precisely on this miscellany for its educational purposes, the same purposes as the Greek anthology conceived at the time of Patriarch Photius.

CONCLUSION

The missions of Cyril and Methodius were part of a broader missionary project developed in Constantinople in the second half of the ninth century, particularly by Patriarch Photius in an area which includes the space of ecumene from the Middle East to central Europe. This far-reaching missionary effort was based on theological reflection, which is testified by the use of the Bible and patristic exegesis in the Cyrilo-Methodian sources. The complex history of *Izbornik* 1073 can also be placed in this vein. The analysis of VC and VM affords us an open window on the missionary idea in the Byzantine empire, which differs in certain aspects from the missionary concept developed by the Roman Apostolic See.



52 On the trail of Bibikov and with the support of F. Thomson, S. Sieswerda, who prefers to give the Greek model of *Izbornik* the remarkable title of *Soterios*, continued to study the Greek manuscript tradition without being able to identify the constructive principle of the miscellany (D.Tj. Sieswerda, «The Σωτήριος, the original of the *Izbornik* of 1073», *Sacris erudiri* 40, Turnhout 2001, 293-327).