

ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ 22<sup>ΑΣ</sup> ΑΠΡΙΛΙΟΥ 1980

ΠΡΟΕΔΡΙΑ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ Ε. ΜΥΛΩΝΑ

---

## THE BYZANTINE IMPACT ON EASTERN EUROPE

ΟΜΙΛΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΤΕΠΙΣΤΕΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ ΜΕΛΟΥΣ Κ. DIMITRI OBOLENSKY

*You will not, I feel sure, expect me to approach so vast a subject in a comprehensive manner. Before telling you, however, how I intend to narrow it, I will ask you to consider, for a moment, the general framework within which any discussion of my theme must, of necessity, proceed. The framework is indeed a large one. It includes the long and chequered history of the Byzantine Empire's relations — political, diplomatic and ecclesiastical — with the peoples of Eastern Europe. These relations owed their origin to two convergent impulses: to the needs, usually defensive, of the Empire's foreign policy; and to the desire of those East European peoples who were drawn into the orbit of Byzantium to "reach out" for the fruits of its civilization, and sometimes also to tap the sources of its technological expertise.*

*To speak of the Byzantine impact on Eastern Europe is, therefore, to consider two phenomena: the expansion of Byzantine civilization beyond the Empire's northern frontiers; and the response made to this Christian and Imperial challenge by the non-Greek-speaking peoples of Eastern Europe — primarily Slavs and Rumanians. In this dialectical sense the term "impact" has much the same meaning as "acculturation", that controversial term taken from the vocabulary of the anthropologists and still regarded with distaste by some historians. It may, however, prove of some use to*

us today, particularly if we recall its definition by the French historian Alphonse Dupront: "L'acculturation sera le mouvement d'un individu, d'un groupe, d'une société, même d'une culture vers une autre culture, donc un dialogue, un enseignement, une confrontation, un mélange, et le plus souvent une épreuve de force"<sup>1</sup>.

Now for the narrowing of my subject. From the long record of Byzantium's encounter with the peoples of Eastern Europe I propose to select three moments; each covers a life-span; and each life-span is that of a man who played an active part in this encounter. These three men belonged, in some degree, to two cultures, the Greek and the Slav; each acted as a bridge between the two. It is through their efforts, failures and achievements that I shall invite you to measure the impact of Byzantium upon the peoples of Eastern Europe.

The first of them lived at the turn of the ninth century: a time when the Empire, having recently emerged from the Iconoclast crisis, had entered a period of vigorous growth, and when its civilisation, thrusting deep into the heart of Eastern Europe, began to gain the allegiance of the Slav world. A powerful instrument for gaining this allegiance had just been discovered: the Old Church Slavonic language, developed and refined by the Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius, modelled on Greek, yet close, in the early Middle Ages, to the Slavonic vernacular tongues. The translation into this language of the Greek scriptures and liturgical offices by Cyril and Methodius and their disciples laid the foundation of a composite Graeco-Slav culture which spread through Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. Our first protagonist stands at the very dawn of this culture: a Slav by birth, a first-generation disciple of Cyril and Methodius: his name — Clement of Ohrid.

To our second protagonist we leap forward two hundred years: the late eleventh century was for Byzantium another period of recovery. The military calamities of the 1070s, at Manzikert and Bari, and a severe economic crisis, had brought the Empire to the verge of collapse. The states-

---

1. "De l'Acculturation", XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Rapports, I: Grands Thèmes (Vienna, 1971), p. 8.

manship and diplomacy of Alexios Komnenos, who came to the throne in 1081, staved off the disaster for another century. Meanwhile Byzantine civilisation seemed to reign throughout Eastern Europe with effortless superiority. In the Balkans, which, despite occasional Slav revolts, were now firmly under Byzantine control, imperial ideology followed the flag. Yet seeds of decay were there beneath the surface, and by the early twelfth century the more perceptive local administrators could sense that the Empire was beginning to lose its grip over the Balkans. This mixture of confidence and insecurity is evident in the career of our second "acculturator", Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Ohrid.

Our last protagonist belongs to a very different world: a world no longer conscious of belonging to a single cultural community, and in which the bond between Greek and Slav was beginning to loosen. It is the disparate world of post-Byzantine Greece, of Renaissance Italy, and of Muscovite Russia. These were the three fields of activity of our third protagonist, Maximos the Greek. He lived during the century that followed the fall of Constantinople in 1453. And it was, as I will presently suggest, both significant and tragic that this refined representative of what Nicolas Iorga called "*Byzance après Byzance*" was, in the end, misunderstood and rejected by the very country which for several centuries had been Byzantium's most loyal satellite in Eastern Europe.

Clement of Ohrid, our first protagonist, was probably born around 840. He was a Bulgarian Slav. Our knowledge of his life is derived from two Greek medieval documents: the so-called "Long Life" of Clement, anonymous though ascribed, for reasons which seem to me convincing, to Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Ohrid; and, secondly, the "Short Life", also anonymous but attributed, on equally solid grounds, to Demetrios Chomatianos, Archbishop of Ohrid in the first half of the thirteenth century<sup>2</sup>.

---

2. For editions of the "Long Life" see A. Milev, *Grŭtskite zhitiya na Kliment Okhridski* (Sofia, 1966), pp. 76 - 146; N. L. Tunickij, *Monumenta ad SS Cyrilli et Methodii successorum vitas resque gestas pertinentia* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972), pp. 1 - 140. The "Short Life" was published by I. Ivanov, *Bŭlgarski Starini iz Makedoniya* (Sofia, 1970: reprint), pp. 314 - 321, and by A. Milev, *op. cit.*, pp. 174 - 182.



The central fact of Clement's life was his close association with the work of Cyril and Methodius. This is attested by Theophylaktos, who tells us that Clement wished to model his life on that of Methodius, "whose life (I quote) he knew as no one else did, since from his youth he followed him and saw with his own eyes all the things his master did"<sup>3</sup>. How literally we are entitled to take this rather vague statement is a matter of opinion. Some historians have concluded that Clement as a young man had lived with Methodius in one of the monasteries on Mount Olympus in Bithynia, and later, during the winter of 860 - 1, had accompanied Methodius and his brother Constantine - Cyril on their embassy to the Khazars in the Caucasus Mountains. This is possible, but far from certain.

Less problematic is the role Clement must have played in the invention of the Slavonic alphabet. This alphabet, considered by most scholars today to have been Glagolitic, was adapted to a Slavonic dialect of southern Macedonia and formed the basis of the Old Church Slavonic language, whose crucial role as a channel for the transmission of Byzantine literature to the Slavs I mentioned in my opening remarks. Several contemporary sources state that Constantine, the inventor of the Slavonic alphabet, had a number of collaborators<sup>4</sup>. It is hard not to believe that Clement was one of them.

In the documents which deal with the Cyrillo - Methodian mission to Moravia, which lasted from 863 to 866, we still find no explicit reference to Clement beyond the rather vague statement of Theophylaktos that he was then one of the principal disciples of Constantine and Methodius<sup>5</sup>. We must assume, however, that he was then in Moravia, helping his masters to translate the liturgy and scriptures from Greek into Slavonic and to build, in the heart of central Europe, a Slav vernacular Church under the joint auspices of Byzantium and Rome; battling also by their side against the Frankish enemies of the Cyrillo - Methodian mission.

---

3. Milev, p. 130; Tunickij, p. 124.

4. *Vita Constantini*, xiv, 13, *Vita Methodii*, v. 10: F. Grivec and F. Tomšič, *Constantinus et Methodius Thessalonicensis. Fontes* (Zagreb, 1960), pp. 129, 155.

5. Milev, p. 81; Tunickij, p. 70.

*By January 868 Cyril and Methodius were in Rome, where their work for the Slavs received the approval of Pope Hadrian II. Here we catch our first more substantial glimpse of Clement: the contemporary biographer of Methodius tells us that three disciples of Cyril and Methodius were, by order of the Pope, ordained to the priesthood in Rome. According to a later, reliable, medieval source<sup>6</sup>, one of them was Clement.*

*For the next seventeen years we hear no more of him. Constantine - Cyril died in Rome in February 869, and Methodius, appointed Archbishop of Pannonia and papal legate to the Slav nations, devoted the rest of his life to the task of building up a Slavonic Church in central Europe. We must assume that Clement, now a priest, stood and worked by his master's side. It was not, however, until Methodius' death in 885 that Clement came into his own as a teacher and leader. In the acrimonious disputes with the pro-Frankish party which flared up in Moravia after Methodius' death, Clement appears as one of the principal spokesmen for the band of Slavonic disciples. Before long they were struck by a disaster that threatened to destroy their entire work of the past twenty years. The Slavonic liturgy was banned in Moravia, the pro-Frankish party took over, and Methodius' leading disciples, Clement among them, were arrested and expelled from the country.*

*Three of them, with Clement in the lead, made their way to the Danube. Beyond the river lay Bulgaria. Theophylaktos, our principal source for these events, tells us that they longed to reach that country, hoping to find solace (ἀνεσθῆναι) there<sup>7</sup>. Their choice of Bulgaria, if it was a choice, was a shrewd one. The Bulgarian ruler Boris had been a Christian for barely twenty years; but he seemed well aware of the advantages — worldly and spiritual — to be derived from the acceptance of Greek Christianity and from membership of the Byzantine cultural commonwealth. However, there was one fly in the ointment, and that a fairly large one. The clergy working in Bulgaria were, at least in the higher echelons, Byzantine missionaries, few of whom could have had much knowledge of the Slav language; the church services were celebrated in Greek, of which the native priests were*

---

6. I. Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

7. Milev, p. 116; Tunickij, p. 110.

largely ignorant. Boris had thus some reason to fear that the Greek clergy which controlled his church might prove to be an instrument of Byzantine domination: it was only by acquiring a native clergy and a Slavophone church that the Bulgarians could safely continue to accept Byzantine civilisation without risk of losing their cultural autonomy. Boris could hardly have failed to be well informed about the achievements of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission in Moravia. For their part the exiled disciples of Methodius — and none more than Clement, a Bulgarian by birth — must have been aware that their experience in building a vernacular Slavonic Christianity would prove useful to Boris in the dilemma in which he found himself. And, indeed, Theophylaktos tells us that Boris “thirsted after such men” (δυσῶντα τοιούτων ἀνδρῶν)<sup>8</sup>.

Clement and his two companions crossed the Danube on a makeshift raft, and arrived in Belgrade, which was then a Bulgarian frontier-post. Its military governor, who seems to have been aware of Boris' fears and hopes, promptly sent them to his master. At this point — probably in 886 — began the last and the most productive period in Clement's life. He was sent by Boris to Macedonia, where he was to labour for thirty years, preaching the gospel in Slavonic, celebrating the Slavonic liturgy according to the Byzantine rite, translating Greek religious writings, and training a native clergy. In 893 he was appointed bishop. The exact location of his see, Δρεβένιτσα or, as we probably now have to read it, Δραγβίστα<sup>9</sup>, is still the object of scholarly controversy. But the true centre of Clement's missionary activities and his favorite resort was the city of Ohrid, by the beautiful mountain lake of that name. In seven years, according to Theophylaktos, he taught 3.500 pupils<sup>10</sup> — an astonishing but perhaps not impossible performance. Nor was his activity limited to spiritual and cultural matters. His biographer tells us that, in order to improve local agriculture, he brought to his Macedonian diocese all kinds of fruit trees “from the

8. Milev, p. 120; Tunickij, p. 114.

9. P. Gautier, “Clément d'Ohrid, évêque de Dragvistä”, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, xxii (1964), pp. 199 - 214.

10. Milev, p. 126; Tunickij, p. 120. Cf. R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria* (London, 1975), p. 155.



land of the Greeks" (ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Γραικῶν χώρας)<sup>11</sup>. Thanks to St Clement, northern and central Macedonia, with Ohrid, its historic centre, became a leading focus of Slavo - Byzantine culture in early medieval Europe. Meanwhile, at the opposite, north-eastern, extremity of the country, in the Bulgarian capital of Preslav, another school of Slavonic literature was developing under the patronage of Symeon, Boris' son and successor. It was here, probably in the closing years of the ninth century, that the Glagolitic script, invented by Constantine - Cyril, was replaced by the simpler Cyrillic alphabet which is largely an adaptation of the Greek. The close resemblance of Cyrillic to the Greek script invested it with prestige and gave it a greater range. To the present day, as you know, the alphabets of the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Russians are based on Cyrillic.

When Clement died in 916, the work of Cyril and Methodius, banned from its original mission-ground in Central Europe, was yielding fruit in Bulgaria, its country of adoption. It was due to St. Clement and his companions in exile that the work of building the foundations of a composite culture, Slavonic in form and Byzantine in content, was saved for Europe and the Slavs. Clement expanded the work of his masters, Cyril and Methodius<sup>12</sup>. They were Greeks, he was a Slav. But all three spanned the two worlds, working for the day when this Graeco - Slav culture would become the common heritage of the peoples of Eastern Europe.

A hundred years after St. Clement's death this, in large measure, had been achieved. The northward spread of Byzantine Christianity and the successful development of the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition had, by the year 1000, brought the Slav peoples of Eastern Europe — Serbs and Russians as well as Bulgarians — into the Byzantine cultural community. However, the survival of this community, with its bilingual Graeco - Slavonic culture, was not thereby necessarily assured. Its Slavonic component, the weaker partner, had to be accepted, supported and nurtured by those culturally more advanced members of the Byzantine commonwealth whose native

11. Milev, p. 134; Tunickij, p. 128.

12. On St. Clement see I. Snegarov, *Sveti Kliment Okhridski* (Sofia 1927); B. St. Angelov and others (edd.), *Kliment Okhridski, 916 - 1966* (Sofia, 1966).

language was Greek. I cannot here discuss the complex question of how far the Slav vernacular liturgy enjoyed the support of the Byzantine authorities. I will only say that, in my view, the Byzantine attitude to the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition was ambivalent, that this tradition had in Byzantium its critics as well as its supporters, and that in those Slav-speaking areas which were part of, or close to, imperial territory a policy of linguistic and cultural hellenisation was often enforced<sup>13</sup>.

Often, but perhaps not always. Some light on this question is shed by the career of the second of our three protagonists, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Ohrid.

The few events of Theophylaktos' life which are known with certainty can be summarized briefly. Born in Chalkis, probably before 1055, he moved to Constantinople, where he became the pupil of Michael Psellos, a teacher of rhetoric and deacon of St. Sophia. Some time in the 1080s he was appointed by the Emperor Alexios Komnenos as tutor to the young Constantine, son of the former Emperor Michael VII, who was then regarded as prospective heir to the throne. About 1090 he became Archbishop of Bulgaria, with his see in Ohrid. As primate of the Bulgarian Church, Theophylaktos was entrusted with the spiritual administration of a large, and predominantly Slav-speaking, area of the Balkans which, some seventy years earlier, had been annexed to the Empire through the conquests of Basil II. Two further facts of his biography were recently discovered by the French scholar Gautier: as one of his poems shows, he was still alive in 1125 or 1126, and possibly still at that time Archbishop of Bulgaria; and he bore the surname ὁ Ἡφαίστος<sup>14</sup>.

All the rest we know about Theophylaktos comes from his numerous writings. They include the celebrated *Παιδεία βασιλική*, written for his imperial pupil, the remarkably fair-minded treatise "On the Errors of the Latins" in which he severely criticised his Greek colleagues for slandering the customs of the Latin Church, a series of commentaries on books of the Old and New Testaments, two important works of hagiography, and a large number

---

13. On the Byzantine attitudes to the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition see D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (London, 1971), pp. 150 - 153.

14. See P. Gautier, "L'épiscopat de Théophylacte Héphaïstos, archevêque de Bulgarie", *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, xxi (1963), pp. 159 - 178.



of letters which he wrote, as archbishop of Ohrid, mostly to high-placed Byzantine officials<sup>15</sup>. This correspondence is a major source of our knowledge of conditions in the central and northern Balkans around the year 1100, and of Theophylaktos' attitude towards his Slav-speaking flock.

A cursory reader of these letters might easily conclude that, as the senior representative of the Byzantine Church in Bulgaria, Theophylaktos was every inch what today would be called a colonialist oppressor and a rabid imperialist. The opinions he held of his diocese and its inhabitants were, for one thing, less than complimentary. The Bulgarians he describes as "monsters", "scorpions" and "frogs", among whom he is condemned to live. Φύσις... Βουλγαρική, πάσης κακίας τιθηρὸς<sup>16</sup> — this judgement of Theophylaktos hardly suggests a zealous pastor or a benevolent *Kulturträger*. Furthermore, he shows a disagreeable snobbishness in affecting to despise local Slavonic place-names, which does not prevent him from using a βάσβαρον ὄνομα as a technical term whenever he feels a professional need to do so<sup>17</sup>. His letters to officials in Constantinople are full of lachrymose complaints at being relegated to what he evidently regarded as a dreary outpost of the Empire. "Now that we have lived for years in the land of the Bulgarians", he wrote about 1105, "the rustic way of life has become our friend and companion"<sup>18</sup>. There seems little doubt that Theophylaktos was, on the whole, unloved by his Bulgarian flock: in one of his letters he complains that the people of Ohrid, evidently to spite their Greek archbishop, sang a victory song (παῖνά τινα ἐπὶ νίκῳ) in the streets of the city, in remembrance no doubt of the past glories of the Bulgarian nation<sup>19</sup>.

---

15. Theophylaktos' letters are published in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 126, cols. 307 - 558. On the need for a critical edition see S. I. Maslov, in *Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgaricae*, ix, 1 (Sofia, 1974), pp. 5 - 15. For his other works see H. - G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), pp. 649 - 651.

16. P.G. 126, col. 444.

17. See A. Leroy - Molinghen, "Trois mots slaves dans les Lettres de Théophylacte de Bulgarie", *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, vi (1938), pp. 111 - 117.

18. P.G. 126, col. 396.

19. *Ibid.*, cols. 308, 508.

However, a closer scrutiny of Theophylaktos' correspondence may caution against passing too hasty a judgement on this fastidious ecclesiastical proconsul. A recurrent theme of his letters is his loathing of the imperial tax-collectors (πράκτορες) who, in implementing the stringent fiscal policy of Alexios Komnenos' government, were particularly active in the peripheral areas of the Empire. "The πράκτορες", he wrote in one of his letters, "are always robbing us"<sup>20</sup>. One of them, who seems to have been the chief fiscal agent sent from the capital, passes like an evil genius through the pages of Theophylaktos' correspondence. His name was Ἰασίτης, and he, no less than Theophylaktos, had influential friends in Constantinople and was thus able to block the archbishop's efforts to have him removed<sup>21</sup>. It must be admitted that the archbishop, who owned extensive lands in Macedonia, was fair game for Ἰασίτης and his rapacious minions<sup>22</sup>. Theophylaktos was so obsessed with the exactions of the tax collectors that, even on the death of his own brother, he was unable to forget them: "Who", he wrote in a poem lamenting him (now that you are gone), "will restrain the violent assault of the πράκτορες? Who will close the mouths of these ministerial frogs?"<sup>23</sup>. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Theophylaktos' war with the πράκτορες was motivated solely by self-interest. In one of his letters he assails them savagely for "gathering wealth from myriads of talents, laid up in store with tears and sorrow"<sup>24</sup>. He complained that those who held public office (τὰ δημόσια πράττοντες) were held in bondage by Satan, and he called upon the authorities to desist from "slaughtering, destroying and depriving parents of their children"<sup>25</sup>.

Like every intelligent colonial administrator, Theophylaktos knew that gentle methods as a rule are more effective than the resort to violence. Hence he urged that the population of "barbarian lands" be treated with

20. *Ibid.*, col. 549.

21. *Ibid.*, cols. 432 - 433, 445, 516.

22. In a letter to the emperor's son-in-law Theophylaktos refers with withering sarcasm to the stories of his alleged wealth, spread abroad by his enemies: *ibid.*, col. 415.

23. P. Gautier, "L'épiscopat de Théophylacte Héphaistos" *loc. cit.*, p. 174.

24. P.G. 126, col. 372.

25. *Ibid.*, col. 336.

"kindness" (χρηστότης) and not with the power of the sword<sup>26</sup>. Only by tempering firmness with humanity, he repeatedly wrote, could the Bulgarians be prevented from becoming disloyal and rebellious; and he exhorted the imperial authorities to treat them with caution and restraint, "lest the patience of the poor be finally exhausted (οὐδ' ἀπολείται εἰς τέλος ἡ τῶν πενήτων ὑπομονή)"<sup>27</sup>.

The conviction that Theophylaktos was capable of identifying himself with the needs and aspirations of his flock is strengthened by what we know of his ecclesiastical activity. The see of Ohrid, which he administered, had by a decree of Basil II in the early eleventh century been granted the status of an autocephalous archbishopric. Its incumbent, though appointed by the emperor, was canonically independent of the patriarch of Constantinople<sup>28</sup>. Theophylaktos fought vigorously and, it seems, successfully to maintain this autonomy. Soon after his arrival in Ohrid the Patriarch, without consulting him, authorized the foundation of "a house of prayer" in his diocese. Theophylaktos wrote angrily to the metropolitan of Chalcedon: "What right does the Patriarch of Constantinople possess in the land of Bulgaria, he who has no power to ordain anyone nor any other privilege in this land, where there exists an autocephalous archbishop?"<sup>29</sup> He displayed the same vigour in defending his subordinate clergy. In a letter to the emperor's son-in-law he complains bitterly that his clerics are compelled to pay for the use of their mills twice as much as laymen, and that they are taxed more heavily than others for the use of fishing waters on the edge of Lake Ohrid<sup>30</sup>.

Theophylaktos' ability to identify himself with the cultural traditions of the Bulgarian Church is nowhere more apparent than in his biography of St. Clement of Ohrid, to which I alluded in another section of this

---

26. *Ibid.*, cols. 336, 428.

27. *Ibid.*, col. 425.

28. See G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford, 1968), p. 311, n. 1.

29. P.G. 126, cols. 416 - 417.

30. *Ibid.*, col. 448. Cf. A. Leroy - Molinghen, *op. cit.*, pp. 111 - 112.



paper<sup>31</sup>. In this *vita*, almost certainly based on a lost Slavonic original, he lavishes enthusiastic praise not only on Clement, who more than anyone else was responsible for establishing the Slavonic liturgy and literature in Macedonia, but on Clement's masters Cyril and Methodius, the architects of the Slav vernacular tradition. It is clear that he regarded himself, the incumbent of the see of Ohrid, as a distant successor of St. Clement. I would like to show, by three examples, how close, in his *Life of St. Clement*, Theophylaktos came to making his own the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition.

One feature of this tradition, which we find in Slavonic works composed in Moravia, Bulgaria and Russia during the early Middle Ages, was the belief that the late entry of the Slavs into the Christian community was no sign of inferiority: rather was it to be viewed in the light of the parable in St. Matthew's Gospel (XX, 1 - 16) of the householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard: those who were hired at the eleventh hour received the same salary as those who from the beginning had "borne the burden and heat of the day". Similarly Theophylaktos, in his account of the Bulgarians' conversion to Christianity, states that they came to know Christ, "although they entered the divine vineyard around the eleventh or the twelfth hour"<sup>32</sup>.

Another characteristic feature of the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition was the cult of St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Constantine - Cyril, according to his *vita*, when defending the fundamental equality of all languages before God, quoted from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians — a text that was to become an ideological manifesto for the champions of the Slav vernacular tradition. In like manner Theophylaktos describes Cle-

---

31. The problem of the authorship of the "Long Life" of St. Clement has provoked some controversy. Theophylaktos' authorship of the work has been impugned by I. Snegarov, "Les sources sur la vie et l'activité de Clément d'Ochrida", *Byzantinobulgarica*, i (1962), pp. 79 - 119 and by P. Gautier, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, xxii (1964), p. 294. The contrary arguments in favour of Theophylaktos' authorship put forward by A. Milev, *Grŭtskite zhitiya na Kliment Okhridski*, pp. 31 - 71, seem to the present writer entirely convincing.

32. Milev, p. 88; Tunickij, p. 82.

ment as Βουλγάροφ γλώττη πρῶτος ἐπίσκοπος... καὶ Παῦλος ἄλλος τοῖς Βουλγάροις Κορινθίοις ἄλλοις γενόμενος<sup>33</sup>.

A third feature of the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition is the idea that the invention of the Slav letters was an extension of the miracle of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in tongues of fire upon Christ's apostles. By acquiring the Scriptures and the liturgy in their own language the Slavs — according to this notion — received "the word", the λόγος, the precious gift which enabled them to understand and proclaim the true faith. This Pentecostal image is used by Theophylaktos in a passage of his *Life of St. Clement* where he tells us that Cyril and Methodius, before inventing the Slavonic alphabet, turned to the Holy Spirit: Πρὸς τὸν Παράκλητον ἀποβλέπονσιν, οὗ πρῶτον δῶρον αἱ γλῶσσαι καὶ τοῦ λόγου βοήθεια<sup>34</sup>.

These explicit references to several basic tenets of the Cyrillo - Methodian tradition, coupled with the impression gained by a closer study of his correspondence, are, in my view, incompatible with the picture of Theophylaktos, painted by Zlatarski<sup>35</sup> and some other Bulgarian historians, as a malevolent hellenizer, eager to uproot the Slavonic language and culture in his diocese. In rejecting this oversimplified view, we need not go to the opposite extreme, represented for example by Ivan Snegarov<sup>36</sup> and D. A. Xanatalos,<sup>37</sup> the first of whom argued that Theophylaktos actively promoted a Bulgarian national consciousness, and the second over-stressed his humane concern for his flock. In attempting to assess the role he played as archbishop of Bulgaria, I personally incline to a middle position, close to the

33. Milev, pp. 128, 132; Tunickij, pp. 122, 126.

34. Milev, p. 80; Tunickij, p. 70.

35. V. N. Zlatarski, *Istoriya na Bŭlgarskata Dŭrzha, prez srednite vekove, ii* (Sofia, 1934), pp. 262 - 350.

36. *Istoriya na Okhridskata arkhiepiskopiya, i* (Sofia 1924), pp. 222 - 224.

37. *Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Makedoniens im Mittelalter, hauptsächlich auf Grund der Briefe des Erzbischofs Theophylaktos von Achrida*, Diss. Munich, 1937; Θεοφύλακτος ὁ Βουλγαρίας καὶ ἡ δοῦσις αὐτοῦ ἐν Ἀχρίδι, *Θεολογία*, vol. 16 (1938), pp. 228 - 240.

views of Ivan Dujčev<sup>38</sup> and the Soviet scholar Gennady Litavrin.<sup>39</sup> They believe, and I think rightly, that the Byzantine authorities, however much they affected to despise the Bulgarians as "barbarians" and strove constantly to assimilate their country into the Empire's administrative structure, did not pursue therein a policy of systematic hellenization. To do so in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in the teeth of the solidly entrenched cultural traditions which the Bulgarians had inherited from their own past, would in any case have been hardly feasible.

It is into this bi-lingual, bi-cultural world of the Balkans at the turn of the eleventh century that I would like to fit our Theophylaktos. We may assume that he performed loyally and efficiently the task entrusted to him by his imperial master — that of keeping the inhabitants of his mainly Slav-speaking diocese in subjection to Byzantium. How far he genuinely despised them is no doubt a matter of opinion. I would suggest myself that the disdain he showed towards them stems in a large measure from the literary conventions of the time. It is not for me to remind my present audience of the strangely similar terms in which, some hundred years later, the learned archbishop of Athens, Michael Choniates, referred to his Athenian flock<sup>40</sup>. Certainly Theophylaktos never ceased to sigh for the distant delights of the City where he had studied and taught with distinction, and with whose authorities of church and government he maintained close links. We do not know whether he learned the Slavonic language. But it is startling to read in one of his letters that he regarded himself a true citizen of Constantinople, but a Bulgarian by adoption (if this is what the admittedly obscure expression τὸ ξένον Βούλγαρος really means);<sup>41</sup> and it is hard not to remain unmoved by the more homely details he gives occasionally of himself, such as his fondness for a delicious local fish (almost certainly the celebrated Lake Ohrid trout)<sup>42</sup> or his valiant attempts to take

38. I. Dujčev, "Vŭstaneto v 1185 i negovata khronologiya", *Izvestiya na Instituta za Bŭlgarska Istoriya*, vi (1956), pp. 327 - 356.

39. G. G. Litavrin, *Bolgariya i Vizantiya v XI-XII vekakh* (Moscow, 1960), pp. 363 - 375.

40. Τὰ σωζομένα, ed. Sp. Lambros, ii (Athens, 1880), p. 44.

41. P.G. 126, col. 504.

42. Ibid., cols. 380, 468, 481, 517 - 520.



his mind off the south wind that howled round his residence by composing iambic verses<sup>43</sup>.

Our last protagonist belongs not to two worlds, but to three: the worlds of Renaissance Italy, post-Byzantine Greece and Muscovite Russia. The Russians have long regarded the monk Maximos, who came to Moscow from Mount Athos in 1518 and lived in Russia until his death 38 years later, and whom they call Maksim Grek (the Greek), as a major figure in the history of their culture; even though they profited little from his learning and, as we shall see, treated him with revolting cruelty. In an epoch-making book, published in Louvain in 1943, Elie Denissoff proved conclusively that Maximos was none other than Michael Trivolis, a Greek expatriate who frequented the humanist schools of Italy in the late fifteenth century<sup>44</sup>. It is not often that the biography of a major historical figure is so unexpectedly enlarged by a scholarly discovery; and Denissoff could claim with justice that, thanks to his book, the Life of Maximos the Greek assumed the shape of a diptych, of which Mount Athos was the hinge, and Italy and Muscovite Russia were the two leaves.

The Trivolai were a distinguished Byzantine family, with Palaeologan connections. One branch had settled in Mistra. Michael was born in Arta about 1470. Twenty years later we find him in Corfu, where he stood for election to the Governing Council. The results must have been wounding to his pride: 20 votes were cast for him, 73 against<sup>45</sup>. It was probably in

---

43. *Ibid.*, cols. 393 - 396. On Theophylaktos of Ohrid, apart from the works cited above, see A. Leroy - Molinghen, "Prolégomènes à une édition critique des 'Lettres' de Théophylacte de Bulgarie ou de l'autorité de la 'Patrologie grecque' de Migne", *Byzantion*, xiii (1938), pp. 253 - 262; V. A. Nikolaev, *Feodalni otnosheniya v pokorenata ot Vizantiya Bŭlgariya, otrazeni v pismata na Teofilakt Okhridski, Arkhiepiskop Bŭlgarski* (Sofia, 1951); R. Katičić, Βιογραφικά περί Θεοφυλάκτου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Ἀχρίδος, Ἑπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν, xxx (1960 - 61), pp. 364 - 385; B. Panov, *Teofilakt Okhridski kako izvor za srednovekovnata istorija na Makedonskiot narod* (Skopje, 1971).

44. E. Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident* (Paris - Louvain, 1943).

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 84 - 86, 144 - 145.

1492 that he moved to Florence, where his vocation as a scholar was strengthened and directed by the teaching of John Lascaris and Marsilio Ficino. The influence of Plato and of the Florentine "Platonic Academy" were to remain with him, for better or for worse, all his life.

Another, very different, influence was experienced by Michael Trivolis during those early years in Florence: that of the Dominican preacher Savonarola. Its full impact was to come later, after Savonarola's execution in 1498; yet well before then we seem able to detect in Michael's temperament a tension between the two basic propensities of his life — the humanist and the ascetic.

In one of his later writings, composed in Russia, he described in detail the University of Paris<sup>46</sup>. It has sometimes been assumed that he visited that city. This is unlikely; but he did announce to the Russians, half a century later, the discovery of America, more precisely of a large land called Cuba<sup>47</sup> — "politically" as Professor Ševčenko has observed, "one of his more prophetic statements".<sup>48</sup>

The next phase of Michael's life in Italy took him in 1496 to Venice, where he worked for Aldus Manutius, who had just embarked on his great edition of the Greek authors, and two years later into the service of another distinguished Hellenist, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola. In 1502, after a religious conversion whose causes remain hidden from us, he entered the Dominican order and became a monk in the monastery of San Marco in Florence. It is worth noting that this was the very monastery of which Savonarola had been the prior. Many years later Michael described to the Russians in great detail the life and organisation of the Dominican Order, while carefully concealing the fact that he had belonged to it himself<sup>49</sup>. His secret was to remain undiscovered for more than four centuries.

Michael Trivolis' career as a Dominican was brief. By 1506 we find him, now as the monk Maximos, in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount

46. *Sochineniya Prepodobnogo Maksima Greka*, iii (Kazan, 1862), pp. 179 - 180 and f. French transl. in Denisoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 430 - 431.

47. *Sochineniya*, iii, p. 44; Denisoff, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

48. I. Ševčenko, "Byzantium and the Eastern Slavs after 1453", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, ii (1978), p. 13.

49. *Sochineniya*, iii, pp. 182 - 205, Denisoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 249 - 252.

*Athos, back in the Church of his fathers. We know little of his life at that time. What is clear is that, despite a strong aversion to the idiorrhhythmic life then prevalent on Athos, he came to regard the Holy Mountain as his true spiritual home.*

*It was in 1516 that the last and longest period of Maximos' life began. In that year an embassy from the Muscovite ruler, Basil III, arrived on Mount Athos. Its purpose was to find and invite to Moscow a competent translator. The Russian Church, from its birth in the tenth century and until the mid-fifteenth, had been directly subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople; and during this period the royal library, relegated to the cellars of the Moscow Kremlin, had been enriched by a large number of Greek manuscripts brought from Byzantium. By the early sixteenth century few if any Russians were capable of reading them. There was need of an expert to decipher them and to translate them into Slavonic.*

*The choice of Maximos for this task was by no means obvious. He held no ecclesiastical office beyond that of a simple monk, and he knew no Russian. Yet his reputation as a scholar must have weighed in his favour. On his journey north he spent nine months cooling his heels in Constantinople. There can be little doubt that the Patriarchate took this opportunity to brief him on the two vital issues which then dominated its relations with Russia: the wish to restore its authority over the Russian Church, which had lapsed in the mid-fifteenth century; and the hope of obtaining from Muscovy aid, material or political, for the Greek Orthodox subjects of the Sultan.*

*Maxim (as we may now call him, using the Russian form of his name) arrived in Moscow in March 1518. His first task was to prepare a translation of patristic commentaries on the Psalter. As he still knew little Russian, he had to translate from Greek into Latin, which his Russian collaborators then rendered into Slavonic. This extraordinarily cumbersome procedure could hardly fail to lead to errors of translation: for these Maxim was later to pay dearly.*

*Before leaving Mount Athos, Maxim had secured from the Russians a promise that, his task completed, he would be allowed to go home. However, the Muscovite authorities seemed in no hurry to honour their obligation. Meanwhile, through his close contacts with local personalities, Maxim*



was becoming dangerously involved in public controversy. The first half of the sixteenth century was a period of great ferment in Muscovy: educated Russians seemed to be locked in endless and passionate debate. They had indeed much to argue about: whether the sovereign was omnipotent, or should share his power with the aristocracy; whether heretics should be burnt at the stake; what was the role of monasticism in contemporary society; and what was the right relationship between church and state. One of these issues requires brief examination here, for it had a lasting effect on Maxim's fate.

During the late Middle Ages two different types of monasticism were prevalent in Russia. On the one hand, we find, mainly in the central areas, the large coenobitic house, owning land, often on a considerable scale, exploiting peasant labour, practising works of charity and immersed in administrative and economic activity. This type of monastery was known as "Josephian", after the name of Joseph, abbot of Volokolamsk and an influential figure at the turn of the fifteenth century. On the other hand, in the Far North, groups of small hermitages, known as *lavrai* in Greek and *skity* in Russian, clustered round clearings in the forest. Their monks came increasingly to believe that landowning was incompatible with the monastic estate. It was in these remote *skity* that the contemplative tradition burned with a brighter flame; and the leaders of this movement, known as the "Elders from beyond the Volga", became the spokesmen in late medieval Russia of the mystical teaching of Byzantine hesychasm<sup>50</sup>.

When Maxim came to Russia the "Josephian" party was on the ascendant, though the problem of monastic estates remained a burning issue. It is hardly surprising that Maxim, with his experience of Athonite monasticism, sided with the "Non-Possessors", as the opponents of monastic estates were also called. With what seems to have been a certain lack of tact or caution, he allowed his Moscow cell to be used as a kind of dissident *salon* where critics of Muscovite society gathered to air their grievances. This, in sixteenth century Russia, was asking for trouble.

---

50. See J. Meyendorff, *Une controverse sur le rôle social de l'Eglise: La querelle des biens ecclésiastiques au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en Russie* (Chevetogne, 1956); F. von Lilienfeld, *Nil Sorskiij und seinen Schriften* (Berlin, 1963).

*In 1525 Maxim was arrested and tried by an ecclesiastical court presided over by his arch-enemy, Metropolitan Daniel of Moscow. The charges against him included holding heretical views, slandering the Grand Prince of Moscow, having treasonable relations with the Turkish Sultan, claiming that the Russian Church's independence from the patriarchate was illegal, and denouncing the monasteries and the church for possessing land and peasants. The charge of heresy, based on no more than grammatical errors in his translations, was false and absurd; so also—as we now know from material recently discovered in the Soviet Union—was the allegation of treason<sup>51</sup>. The last two charges, relating to the uncanonical status of the Russian Church and to monastic estates, were presumably true.*

*After a grossly biased trial Maxim was sentenced to solitary confinement in the Volokolamsk Monastery (the bastion of the "Possessors"), was put in chains and allowed neither books nor writing materials. His imprisonment was to last for 23 years. In 1531 he was tried again, largely, it seems, because of his refusal to confess to the earlier charges, and was sentenced to imprisonment in another monastery. Gradually the harshness of his treatment diminished, especially after his chief tormentor, the Metropolitan Daniel, was removed from office in 1539, and the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria wrote soon afterwards to Ivan IV, requesting his release. Maxim repeatedly begged his jailors to let him return to Mount Athos. The stony-hearted Russian authorities refused all his requests to be allowed to go home, at least once on the grounds that he knew too much about their country.<sup>52</sup> During the last few years of Maxim's life his torments came to an end. He was allowed to reside in the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius near Moscow (in what is today Zagorsk), where he spent his time teaching, writing and reading. Despite his fading eyesight, he taught a fellow monk enough Greek to enable him to copy out the Psalter in that language, and wrote to his chief persecutor, the Metropolitan Daniel, consol-*

---

51. See N. A. Kazakova, *Ocherki po istorii russkoy obshchestvennoy mysli* (Leningrad, 1970), pp. 177-243; N. V. Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 130-145.

52. *Akty, sobrannye Arkheograficheskoy Ekspeditsiei*, i (St. Petersburg, 1836) p. 143; cf. E. Golubinsky, *Istoriya russkoy tserkvi*, ii (Moscow, 1900), p. 816.

ing him on his fall from power and offering him complete forgiveness. He died in the Trinity Monastery in 1556, at the age of almost ninety.

The posthumous fate of Maxim the Greek in Russia was a curious one. His opinions on many matters of vital concern to Russian society were too much at variance with official policy to make him fully acceptable, at least in the next few generations. It is true that the wonderful patience with which he endured 23 years of cruel torments caused him to be venerated as a martyr, especially by those Russians who were in opposition to the official church. He had moreover, in his lifetime, a small circle of Russian admirers, some of whom were men of outstanding calibre. It is perhaps surprising to find among them the Tsar Ivan the Terrible. But Maxim's influence in Russia was always very limited. It is remarkable that this Byzantine scholar was long revered for his statements on the sign of the cross, while his references to Greek classical literature were largely ignored<sup>53</sup>. It is only in this very restricted sense, I believe, that we can legitimately speak of Maxim as ὁ πρῶτος φωτιστὴς τῶν Ῥώσων, to quote the subtitle of Papamichael's Greek biography of him<sup>54</sup>.

Other scholars have pointed out that there is something symbolic in Maxim's Russian destiny. The rejection of a man who, in his spiritual life and in the depth of his scholarship, typified what was best in the culture of post-Byzantine Greece, marked in a real sense Russia's turning away from her ancient heritage of Byzantium<sup>55</sup>. It is true that, at the very time he was in Muscovy, the Russian churchmen were developing their egregious theory of Moscow the Third Rome, which ascribed to their capital city the role of focus of universal power and centre of the true Orthodox faith. But Maxim was too much of a Byzantine at heart to be taken in by this meretricious substitute of the Byzantine oecumenical idea, propounded in Russia by his sworn adversaries, the "Josephian" monks. He could not fail to observe how, in sixteenth-century Russia, through the narrowing of spiritual horizons and in the wake of the *Realpolitik* of its

---

53. Ševčenko, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

54. G. Papamichael, Μάξιμος ὁ Γραικός, ὁ πρῶτος φωτιστὴς τῶν Ῥώσων (Athens, 1950).

55. See especially G. Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviya* (Paris, 1937), pp. 22 - 24.



rulers, the Christian universalism of Byzantium was being transformed and distorted within the more narrow framework of Muscovite nationalism. Perhaps this is why Maxim's vision of the Christian commonwealth is, in the last resort, pessimistic. In a passage of pointed allegory he tells us that, toiling one day down a hard and wearisome road, he encountered a woman dressed in black, sitting by the roadside and weeping disconsolately. Around her were wild animals, lions and bears, wolves and foxes. "The road", she said to Maxim, "is desolate and prefigures this last and accursed age". Her name, she told him, was Vasileia<sup>56</sup>.

I shall not attempt, in conclusion, to sum up my three mini-biographies. I will merely suggest that the impact of Byzantium upon the peoples of Eastern Europe would be worth investigating further in each of the three phases I have tried to evoke today: the cultural spring of the early Middle Ages, touched—like every cultural spring—with the excitement of novelty and creation; the high noon of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when all seems constant and fixed, yet signs of decline are just beneath the surface, for all to read who have eyes to see; finally, the evening's lengthening shadows, when—in the century that followed the fall of Byzantium—its heritage was obscured in some countries and rejected in others. The time was not so distant when this inheritance would become the preserve of churchmen, artists and scholars. Some of them at least, rightly or wrongly, may perhaps be inclined to look back to Byzantium and its impact on Eastern Europe with feelings akin to those described by one of your poets as πόνους παλιούς, πονὸν μέσα τους κοιμοῦνται.

---

56. *Sochineniya*, ii (1860), pp. 319 - 337. See J. V. Haney, *From Italy to Muscovy: the Life and Works of Maxim the Greek* (Munich, 1973), pp. 164 - 167.