BUILDING THE TOWER OF BABEL
(Michael III, Photius and Basil I and the Byzantine Approval for the Use of the Slavic Liturgy and Alphabet in the Late Ninth Century)

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This paper will try to place the invention of the Slavic alphabet and the introduction of the Slavonic liturgy in the context of the Byzantine imperial ideology of the 860's and 870's. In 863, Constantine, a high ranking Byzantine emissary was sent to Moravia at the request of its prince Rastislav to teach Christianity in the Slavic tongue. Constantine was joined by his brother Methodius, a monk from a monastery on Mount Olympus, who was formerly *archon* of a Slavic province of the Empire[1]. The Old Church Slavonic Lives of Constantine and Methodius depict the mission to Moravia of 863 as a missionary enterprise, according to the rules of the medieval hagiographic *genre*. The *Vita Constantini* is generally accepted to have been composed after 869 when pope John VIII consecrated Methodius as Archbishop of Sirmium, and before 882. In 881–882, Methodius, Constantine's brother and archbishop of Moravia, visited Constantinople and was cordially received by emperor Basil I[2]. Some sources from the 11th century, mention the Byzantine support for Methodius' disciples after the archbishop died in 885 and his followers were disgraced and exiled from Moravia[3]. The *VC*, like the *VM* and the whole Cyrillo-Methodian hagiographic tradition, does not represent entirely the Byzantine interpretation of contemporary events, but rather reflects the attitudes and the feelings of the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples in their Byzantine-Slavic milieu.

We are told in Chapter 14 of the *Vita Constantini*[4] that the invention of the Slavic alphabet by Constantine and his followers was a miracle directly following Michael III's(842–867) reassurance that the invention of such a script would answer the long-term needs of Byzantine imperial policy. According to the hagiographer, emperor Michael III said to Constantine: 'My father and my grandfather, and

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[1] Cf. I. Š e v c h e n k o. On the Social Background of Cyril and Methodius. — In: Studia paleoslovenica. Prague, 1971, 431–351. The province is most probably *Opsikion*, according to: A.-E. T a c h i a o s. Some controversial points relating to the life and activity of Cyril and Methodius. — In: Recherchés sur l'histoire des relations Helléno-slaves. Thessalonique, 1993–1994 (Cyrillo-methodianum, 17–18), 46–61.

[2] *VM* 13, 191.

[3] *VM* 13, 191.

[4] A. V l a s t o. The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom. Cambridge, 1970, p. 30; Fr. D v o r n i k. Byzantine Missions among the Slavs: SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius. New Brunswick, 1970, p. 182.

many others have sought this [a script for the Slavic language] but did not found it.'[5] And then, Constantine was enabled to design the Slavic letters by imperial order, and dint of prayer[6]. I. Ševchenko, first has questioned whether 'one more translation of the liturgy *ad usum barbarorum* could have caused no scandal in Constantinople, especially since the decision to provide the prince of the Moravians, a *faraway ruler*, with a Slavic alphabet and liturgy was reached at the highest level'[7]. Ševchenko's doubts have been seconded by D. Obolensky, who saw a party of opponents against the "Slavophile" policy of the imperil government[8]. It was, however, Vl. Vavřinek to scrutinize the Byzantine missionary policy in the period and to demonstrate that the "Slavophile" policy of Michael III did not envisage vernacular liturgy for the Slavs[9]. Still, it is generally accepted that the use of vernacular language for the liturgy and the translation of the Scriptures became specific features of Byzantine missionary activity. It has been also argued that literacy and book production in the vernacular became characteristic of the Byzantine missionaries among the Slavs from 863 onwards[10]. The introduction of the Slavic liturgy and the letters needed for this liturgy is thought of as being Constantine's objective of furthering the Byzantine political and ideological imperialism[11]. It is doubtful, however, if Michael III and his patriarch, Photios, could foresee with such clarity that the Slavic alphabet would become an instrument of Byzantine cultural imperialism. Byzantine 'linguistic xenophobia' in the second half of the 9th century is a well known fact. Most probably, the introduction of the alphabet and the liturgy was not an official enterprise sponsored and inspired by the imperial government, but rather an innovation of the two brothers and only later tolerated by Constantinople after it had yielded results. I will concentrate on two examples of how imperial ideology, Orthodoxy and attitude to foreign languages were closely tied together, to prove that it was not Michael III, in 863, but rather his successor, Basil I, in 881–882, who gave imperial approval to the Cyrillo-Methodian innovations in Moravia.

1. MICHAEL III AND BYZANTINE ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Ninth century Byzantium was a state of Roman imperial law, Orthodox Christianity and Greek language[12]. These three basic elements of the Byzantine state were closely related and naturally the Greek language, which had successfully replaced Latin since the late 6th century, became the correct and only language of law, administration and the Church. Since Latin had still been the language

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[5] *Vita Constantini* (*VC*), 14, 104. The Old Church Slavonic versions of the *VC* and *Vita Methodii* (*VM*) are according to К л и м е н т О х р и д с к и. Събрани съчинения. Т. 3. Пространни жития на Кирил и Методий. С., 1973. English translation M. K a n t o r. Medieval Lives of Slavic Saints and Princes. Ann Arbor, 1991 (Michigan Slavic Translations, 5), 14, 67.

[6] *VC*, 14, 104; M. K a n t o r. Op. cit., 14, 67.

[7] I. Š e v c h e n k o. Three paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission. — Slavic Review, 2, 1964, p. 229.

[8] D. O b o l e n s k y. The Byzantine Commonwealth. New York-Oxford, 1971, p. 151.

[9] Vl. V a v ř i n e k. The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy and the Byzantine Missionary Policy. — In: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.–11. Jahrhundert [Akten des Colloquiums Byzanz auf dem Höhepunkt seiner Macht. Liblice, 20.–23. Sept. 1977]. Praha, 1978, 255–284. Many of the arguments here follow this fine article.

[10] For example see the recent report of R. M o r r i s: "Byzantine Missionary methods in the 9th and 10th c.", presented at the conference on the anniversary of the mission of St. Augustine to England, York, March 1997 (forthcoming publication). Such idea has been also prompted by D. O b o l e n s k y. The Byzantine Commonwealth..., p. 70 ff.

[11] I. Š e v c h e n k o. Op. cit., p. 227 ff.

[12] G. O s t r o g o r s k y. History of the Byzantine State. 3 ed. Oxford, 1968.

of Justinian's Digest and Code of the 6th c., the *Ecloga* (741) of Leo III and Constantine V was the first Byzantine legislative work to implement in Greek a juridical world order through a clearly defined legal and political agenda[13]. The legislative and ideological aspects of the Greek language were significant factors in the Byzantine imperial thinking of the 9th century.

In her recent research, M.-Th. Fögen demonstrated convincingly how Latin legal terms that had been used directly in the Digest and the Code of Justinian, were then transliterated with Greek letters in the later 6th and 7th c. Byzantine translations[14]. The identification between true law and law, written in Greek with Greek legal terminology, was finally achieved in the legislative works of Basil I, namely in the *Procheiron* (870's ?) and in the *Eisagoge* (880)[15]. Basil's goal was to reorganize Justinian's Code, the Digest and many of the novels, to purge from them superfluous or contradictory norms[16] and to eliminate Latin survivals in the texts[17]. In the Procheiron, the Eisagoge and, above all in the later Basilika, Latin terms appear translated into Greek. Since the 6th and 7th century "translations" of the Code and the Digest represented a blend of Greek colloquial language and Latin legal terminology, whereas the 9th century Byzantine 'reanimation' of Roman law was entirely in Greek. This latter observation is of great significance for it is generally accepted that patriarch Photius, the leading Byzantine intellectual in the late 9th c., was the soul of this enterprise.

Fögen has explained the translation of the Latin legal terms to Greek, by the impact that the letter of pope Nicholas I to Michael III, had on the emperor and the patriarch Photius[18]. In 965, the pope wrote: ' If you can call the Latin language barbaric and Scythian, because you do not understand Latin, you must be careful: Is it not ridiculous to call yourself emperor of the Romans though you do not know the language of the Romans?'[19]. The papal letter is an answer to a lost communication drafted perhaps by Photius and signed by the emperor in 863. Michael comparing Greek and Latin qualified the latter as a 'Scythian and barbaric tongue'. Nicholas, using the pen and the linguistic expertise of Anastasius Bibliothecarius, did not miss the opportunity to challenge the essence of Byzantine imperial doctrine[20].

Indeed, Latin had ceased to be the spoken and written word of the God-chosen emperor and was no more the language of the true Christian empire. It was replaced by Greek. This could explain why Anastasius gave as an argument pro-causa Latinae the example of the trilingual sign on the cross of the Savior. It has been argued that the locus is significant for routine Roman affinity to the

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[13] D. S i m o n. Legislation as Both a World Order and a Legal Order. — In: Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth Centuries. (Proceedings of the Symposium on Law and Society in Byzantium, 9th–12th Centuries, Dumbarton Oaks, May 1-3, 1992). Dumbarton Oaks, 1994, p. 12.

[14] Cf. M.-Th. F ö g e n. Reanimation of Roman Law in the ninth century: remarks on reasons and results. — In: Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive (Papers from 30th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 1996, 11–22). I am grateful to M.-Th. Fögen for letting me quote her paper before it was published.

[15] T. E. van B o c h o v e (To Date and Not to Date. On the Date and Status of Byzantine Law Books. Groningen, 1996, 7–27) has argued, I believe convincingly, against A. S c h m i n c k. Op. cit., p. 62 ff., for a date of the *Procheiron* between 870 and 879.

[16] Eisagoge-praefacio. — In: A. S c h m i n c k. Studien zu mittelbyzantinischen Rechtsbüchern. Frankfurt a. M., 1986, p. 6, lines 28–40, "ἀνακάτθαρσις τῶν νόμων."

[17] Procheiron-praefacio. — In: A. S c h m i n c k. Op. cit., p. 58, lines 52–53.

[18] Cf. M.-Th. F ö g e n. Op. cit., 5–7.

[19] Ibid., p. 459.

[20] Nicholas I to Michael III (865). — In: Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae. Vol. 6, ep. 88, 454–487.

trilingual dogma[21]. It seems more probable, however, that this use of Isidor was actually a defense of the Christian and imperial character of the Latin language in its own right. The basic difference between the imperial letter and the papal answer is that since Michael attacked the Latin, opposing this language naturally to the Greek, the language of the true Christian Roman empire, Nicholas (respectively Anastasius) challenged the Roman character of this empire in order to defend the value of the Latin language. Anastasius, being a translator himself, showed much concern about possible distortion a language can suffer in translation, quoting St Jerome 'not to render word for word, but to preserve the sense.'[22] The letter of Nicholas to Michael was echoed four years later by the well-known letter of Louis II to emperor Basil I (870). Anastasius, again the true author of this second letter, pointed out that Latin could by no means be a 'barbaric' language and disputed the translations and transliterations of the titles 'rex' and 'basileus'[23].

One further point seems worth making here. This is the qualification Scythian in Michael's letter. The pope wrote: 'Is it not well known that all barbarians and Scythians live like ignorant animals, that they do not know the true God, but worship trees and stones? From this, of course, one can see how much the Latin language, which worships the true God, surpasses the barbaric and Scythian language...'[24]. This statement of Nicholas is not surprising for the papacy was already applying the term 'Christianitas' to whole Europe[25]. For Michael, however, this was not the case. From Antiquity onwards the word 'Scythian' came to mean 'barbaric' and 'northern'. The 'Scythians' were those people living to the North of the Empire. The term had basically negative connotations in the 8th and 9th centuries and was applied to the people living to the north, of whom Byzantium had no sufficient knowledge, or to people with whom the Empire was not on friendly terms. Often 'Huns' and 'Scythians' were interchangeable terms describing Turks. Huns, however, did not entirely keep its pejorative meaning, but Scythians did. In 9th c., the Slavs and Bulgars, among others, were often called 'Scythians' by Byzantine authors[26]. Theophanes and Nikephoros used the ethnonym 'Scythians' when they wanted to emphasize the hostile and destructive approach of Slavic tribes or groups toward the lands of the Empire. The term Scythian, applied in a negative sense to Latin by Michael III in 863, as this emperor sent his emissary, Constantine, to Moravia, demonstrates by no means the imperial wish of promoting Slavic liturgical literacy and, even less shows that Michael would continue the efforts of his father and grandfather in this direction. The Scythian language, altogether with other barbaric tongues, was theoretically opposed to the main language of the Christian eicumene, the Greek spoken in Constantinople.

Fögen argued that the reanimation of the Roman law in the 870's and 880's was a more civilised and effective way for the Byzantines to react to papal insults.

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[21] I. Ševchenko. Op. cit.

[22] For this statements of Anastasius, cf. his evaluation of J. Scotus Erigena's translation of Pseudo-Dyonisios, or the preface to the Life of John of Alexandria (John Eleemonysarius) which is a letter to Nicholas I, cf. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae. Vol. 7, p. 397 (PL, Vol. 73, 339–340).

[23] Louis II to Basil I (870). — In: Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae. Vol. 6, p. 390, lines 11–15.

[24] Nicholas I to Michael III (865). — In: Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae. Vol. 6, ep. 88, 459, lines 6–32.

[25] Cf. W. Ullmann. The Growth of the Papal Government in the Middle Ages. 2nd ed. London, 1962, 153–155, with references.

[26] И. Дуйчев. Славяни - скити през Средновековието. — В: И. Дуйчев. Българско средновековие. С., 1972, 104–113.

[27] V. Grumel, J. Darrouzis. Les Regestes des Actes du Patriachat de Constantinople. Paris, 1989, No 498.

Of course, Latin ecclesiology had been outrightly condemned in Photios' letter to the eastern archbishops, dated 867. In the same year, the pope was put under anathema[27]. The Byzantines, however, took their real revenge at the Council of Constantinople of 880 and Photius' triumph found its expression in the contemporary designed edition of the Homilies of St Gregory of Naziensus. (Paris Gr. BN 510).

2. PICTURE, WORD AND ORTHODOXY. BUILDING THE TOWER OF BABEL

In the Byzantine mind of the 9th c., Greek was also inseparably linked to Christianity and Orthodoxy. Apart from the letter of Michael to Nicholas I, there is a whole set of evidence proving that the other patron of Constantine and Methodius, patriarch Photius, was a champion of the doctrine of the unbreakable bond between Greek, Orthodoxy and Empire. An excellent scholar who has mastered Greek to perfection, Photius had as his special interest philology. Photius' *Amphilochia* gives enough examples of Photius' attitude towards Greek as the language of the civilised Christian eicumene[28].

A peculiar evidence of Photius' ideas on unity of language, orthodoxy and empire at the time of the Council of Constantinople in 880, is a series of miniatures in the Codex Parisinus Graecus No 510, the Homilies of St Gregory of Naziensus[29]. The Byzantine perception of art in the second half of the 9th century as a reaction against the period of iconoclasm in Byzantium is much discussed in the literature[30]. In the acts of the Church councils and synods, polemical sermons, not only Iconoclasm, but all the heresies, past and present, were condemned, as were all external challenges to Orthodox Christianity. In the Codex 510 as well as in the Psalters of this period, image after image seem directed towards defining and defending the Byzantine orthodox position, not only on the point of the veneration of images, but on most of the essential points of Orthodox Christian dogma[31].

The miniatures of the Homilies of Gregory Naziensus are examples of the interaction between visual art, written word and oral culture in ninth-century Byzantium. R. Cormack has argued that visual art in Byzantium has been perceived as a channel to the other world and as evidence of the power of the supernatural. While not every image in the 9th c. Byzantine codices is politically motivated, among those images it is possible to discern a certain preoccupation with what might be called the defense of Orthodoxy.

The manuscript was illustrated between 879–882 with careful control by the planner, who has been identified as Patriarch Photius. The collection of pictures and texts had undoubtedly been designed for emperor Basil I. It was never a public document and was not widely known even among the Byzantine elite. The Homilies codex was intended for a restricted circle clustered around Photius and Basil I[32]. This is a unique edition in which the pictures often illustrate the logic of the text, rather than the actual words. The illustrations succeed in drawing out imperial

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[27] V. G r u m e l, J. D a r r o u z и s. Les Regestes des Actes du Patriachat de Constantinople. Paris, 1989, No 498.

[28] Cf. N. W i l s o n. Scholars of Byzantium. Revised ed., London, 1996, 115-116.

[29] The literature is shown in: L. B r u b a k e r. Miniatures and Liturgy: Evidence from the 9th Century Codex Paris. Gr. 510. — Byzantion, 66, 1996, 9-34, notes 1-5.

[30] L. B r u b a k e r. Byzantine art in the Ninth Century: theory, practice and culture. — Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 13, 1989, 23-94; G. L. K u s t a s. Literary Criticism of Photius. — Ellenika, 16, 1988-1989, 132-169.

[31] K. C o r r i g a n. Visual Polemics in the Ninth Century Psalters. Cambridge, 1992, p. 5.

[32] S. der N e r s e s s i a n. The Illustrations of the Homilies of St. Gregory of Naziensus, Paris gr. 510. — Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 16, 1962, 197-198.

connotations as well as theological meanings from the texts included in the manuscript[33].

L. Brubaker has noted that unlike the other 9th century collection of Homilies of St Gregory, Milan Ambrosianus 49-50, BN 510 includes 'new scenes which were systematically substituted for the traditional sequence in order to comment visually on Gregory's text in ways specially relevant to the imperial court and the patriarchate'[34]. One of these special events was the Photian union synod of 880.

In 869, pope John VIII sent legates to Constantinople at the request of Basil I for a council of union, with instruction to reinstate Photius to the patriarchal throne after the latter expressed to the legates and the fathers his regret for his former deeds and behaviour. Photius could not accept this condition since he had been elected formerly Patriarch by a local synod after Ignatios had abdicated. The papal letters were changed and read selectively at the Council. The council confirmed Photius status as a patriarch, condemned all the heresies past and present, and banned any additions and changes to the Symbol of Faith. The papal legates reached an agreement with Basil I that Bulgaria and the rest of former Illyricum would be no more under the authority of Constantinople[35].

The Byzantine interpretation of the rearrangements of the relations with Rome is demonstrated in a series of three illustrations in the Homilies. These are the images of the Council of Constantinople (fol. 355v), of the Tower of Babel and Noah's Ark (fol. 360r). The most significant one is that of the Tower of Babel. These images cannot be found either in the 9th century Milan Ambrosiana cod. E 49 Homilies of St Gregory of Naziensus or in the 11th c. homilies of St Gregory (Paris Bibl. Nat. Coislin 239).

The representation of the First Council of Constantinople (381) (fol. 355r) was a replica of the Photian union synod at Constantinople, 880. L. Brubaker has argued that the heresy of Macedonius evoked associations with the Filioque, which was banned, although not mentioned, by the synod of 880[36]. The connection, however, is deeper and involves all the three consequent pictures from the codex: the council, the tower of Babel and Noah's Ark. The First Constantinople Council promulgated the canons against the Arian heresy and its sects and gave favour to Constantinople as the second see after Rome in honour and dignity. Additionally, it was Constantinople I who confirmed the Nicaean symbol of faith and first banned any additions and changes to it.

The representation of the council in the manuscript is followed by Gregory's homily 'On Peace II' and the picture of the Tower of Babel together with the image of Noah's Ark. The illustration of the Tower refers to Genesis 11: 1–11, the story of the mixture of the tongues[37].

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[33] R. C o r m a c k.. Painting after Iconoclasm. — In: Iconoclasm. Papers given at the 9th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. University of Birmingham, 1975, 147–163 (reprinted in: R. C o r m a c k. The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage. Variorum, 1989, IV, p. 4).

[34] L. B r u b a k e r. Politics, Patronage and Art in the Ninth Century Byzantium: The Homilies of Gregory of Naziensus in Paris (B.N. gr. 510). — Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 39, 1985, p. 2.

[35] Fr. D v o r n i k. The Photian Schism. History and Legend. Cambridge, 1948, 190–196.

[36] Ibid., 4–6.

[37] Gen. 11: 1–11: "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.[...] The people said: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the Lord [...] said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel - because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world."

Sirapie der Nersessian believed that the picture of the Tower of Babel had a strong connection with the image of the Flood placed beneath the Tower on the same folio. She identified reference to the Tower of Babel in Gregory's Homily 'On Peace' III, where he refers to the Tower, stating that all true defenders of the faith, who do not divide the Divinity, speak the same language, in contrast to the men who, in ancient times, erected the tower[38]. L. Brubaker has argued, however, that '360r. juxtapose scenes without any tight narrative connections'[39]. Indeed, there is no mention of the Tower in the adjacent homily 'On Peace II' and it seems that the most correct interpretation of the image with the Tower of Babel as an 'image of the destruction of the unity of the church, brought about dissension of the heretics'[40]. As an image of dissension and consequent punishment the Tower of Babel is balanced by Noah's Ark and his family, saved from the Flood, and the dove returning with the olive branch which are images of the restoration of peace through the union of all men within the church[41].

Indeed, the illustrations on fol. 360 r. follow and are connected to the preceding one, that of the council on fol. 355v. I would argue that the series of the pictures of the Council, the Tower of Babel and the Ark of Noah corresponds to subjects of the Photian council and is significant for the strong connection between foreign languages, translations and Orthodoxy in the eyes of the Byzantine elite and the church to other languages, to Orthodoxy in the years 879, 880 and 881.

The whole pictorial story of fols. 355v. and 360r. can be interpreted that the harmony of the Church which had existed before was broken by heresies. These heresies opposed the canons of the First council of Constantinople and were connected with a mixture of languages and corruption of the Creed. Finally, reconciliation has been reached and the unity is restored. Language, Orthodoxy and unity of the Church are closely interrelated. It has been argued already, that Gregory's interpretation on Trinitarian heresies of the 4th century, namely Apollinarism and the heresy of Macedonius, had been used by Photius in order to justify the Byzantine Orthodox position versus respectively Iconoclasm and the Filioque dogma[42]. This connection goes through the acknowledgement of Constantinople as a second Rome and condemnation of all those who were trying to alter the Symbol of Faith through adding or changing words.

Thus the three illustrations demonstrate a close, though imaginary, connection between the idea of the second Rome, Orthodoxy and language. In his letter to Zachary, Catholicos of Armenia, Photius significantly discussed the advantage of Greek over Armenian for the service of Christ[43]. In 864, Photius wrote to Valpert, the archbishop of Aquileia, that pope Leo III had the Creed written down on tablets in Greek. The patriarch pointed out that these tablets were to prevent the local clergy from translation of the Creed from Greek into Latin and hence to hinder any possible corruption of the text of the Creed in the barbaric tongue[44]. Latin corruption of the Creed became apparent in 867 when the Latin missionaries, who had replaced the Greeks in Bulgaria, were condemned by Photius. The Latins were compared to a wild boar savagely trampling on the Lord's vineyard. The false practices imposed by those impious men risen from the darkness of the West,

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[38] S. der Nersessian. Op. cit., 209-210.; PG, 35, col. 1153C.
[39] L. Brubaker. Miniatures and Liturgy..., p. 10.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] After I. Ševchenko. Op cit., p. 228, n. 29.
[44] Φωτίου τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ ἁγιωτάτου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Ἐπιστολαί: αἷς δύο αὐτου παρηρτήται πονεματία. Ed. I. Valettas. London, 1864 (repr. Hildesheim, 1978), p. 15.

included fasting on Saturdays, shortening the Lent by a week, etc. Still most important, the Patriarch wrote to the Eastern metropolitans, was the fact that the Latin clergy in Bulgaria was propagating (undoubtedly in the Scythian and barbaric Latin tongue) the heresy of the double procession of the Holy Spirit (the Filioque)[45]. Undoubtedly, in Photius' eyes, the translation and corruption of sacred texts, and especially of the Creed, were closely related. In the Homilies of Gregory Naziensus, the Tower of Babel represents a symbol of linguistic chaos and heretical teaching.

The image of the Tower is sequenced by Noah's Ark, a symbol of the unity of the church. This unity of the church was reached at the Photian council of 880 on the base of the canons of the First Council of Constantinople. Photius' interpretation on these canons was soon to be asserted by the patriarch in the titles 2 and 3 of the Eisagoge: The patriarch is an image of Christ and 'engraver' of the truth (Eis. 3,1); the see of Constantinople is the head of all the sees with the supreme jurisdiction of truth (Eis. 3,9).

We do not know anything about Photius' attitude to the introduction of the Slavic liturgy and alphabet. The image of the tower of Babel, placed in its pictorial context, between the illustrations of the II Ecumenical Council and Noah's Ark, and created at the time of the Photian union synod of 880, could be significant for Photius' attitude toward other languages and translations rather that on that of Basil I. In fact, we do not have any information about possible interest of this emperor in book production and book-illumination. The story of Parisinus gr. 510 is much more story of his designer, Photius than of the recipient, emperor Basil.

The image of the Tower of Babel, placed in its pictorial context, between the illustrations of the First Ecumenical Council and Noah's Ark could be indicative of possible Photius' attitude towards the Slavic alphabet and liturgy. The paucity of sources does not allow us to make conclusions. Such an interpretation would challenge the friendship that is generally ascribed as existing between Photius and Constantine the Philosopher. There are certain hints in the contemporary sources about some disagreements between the two intellectuals. Anastasius reports that Constantine opposed Photius in the matter of the two souls in men. It is notable that Photius is not listed among the officials approving the invention of the Slavic alphabet in Chapter 14 of the *VC*: there were only Michael III and his uncle, Bardas. According to the Life of Methodius, it was the emperor, Basil I, who received the Moravian archbishop and gave his approval to his actions. The patriarch modestly had to follow the actions of his master.

The *VC* mentions that Constantine argued with 'trilingual heretics' in Venice defended and compared the introduction of the Slavic alphabet with that of the alphabets of the Armenians, Syrians, Georgians, Egyptians, Arabs and Khazars. Cyril also used the argument of St John Chrysostom that the Word of God had been translated into foreign tongues[46]. Such a disputation would not be possible in the Constantinople of patriarch Photius. The evidence, if true at all, refers to a period earlier than the 9th century[47]. Translations and liturgies in barbaric tongues were, however, characteristic of the Late Antique Empire, in which, according to C. Mango, 'the native Greek speakers represented less than a third of the total population, say 8 million, making allowance for the unassimilated peoples of Asia Minor and for the Latin and Thracian speakers of the Balkans. The Greek, Coptic

[45] PG, 102, col. 721-41. Quotation after D. O b o l e n s k y. The Byzantine Commonwealth..., p. 127.

[46] J o h n C h r y s o s t o m. [Homily held in the Church of St. Paul]. — In: PG, 63, col. 500-501, 506, 509.

[47] I. Š e v c h e n k o. Op cit., p. 228, n. 30; p. 230, n. 37.

and Aramaic elements would thus have been on a footing of near parity'[48].

Such 'pro-barbarian' sentiments in the Late Antique empire are understandable; in the 9th century, however, such sentiments became completely irrelevant. Still, the Georgian liturgy was not valued so much in ninth-century Byzantium. The Life of St Hilarion of Iberia († 875) describes how Georgian monks have been treated on Mount Olympus, the monastery in which Methodius had been once a monk. They were urged by the *hegoumenos* to use the Greek language in liturgy. The compliance of the Georgians made Basil I interfere in their favor[49].

The Armenian, Egyptian (Coptic ?), Khazar (Gothic ?) and partly Syriac case, however, would make more sense from 'Photian' point of view, for these peoples differed dogmatically from Byzantine Orthodoxy, precisely in Trinitarian matters. It really seemed that translation and corruption of the sacred texts were tied together in a Gordian knot.

Yet, the use of the vernacular in liturgy is believed to be a characteristic of the Byzantine missionary approach. Again it was Photius who had answered the question of what should be chosen as the language for spreading the divine truth. The real language for spreading the divine truth should be the language of the holy icons, rather than the written word. M. Mullet is undoubtedly correct in saying that 'yet when the Byzantines compare pictures and words, unlike their colleagues in the west, it is usually to the detriment of writing'[50]. Indeed, in homily XVII of 29 March, 867, Photius clearly privileged pictures over words— they would teach better, have a greater effect, aid the memory and stimulate emulation of the martyrs[51].

The theory set down by Photius was implemented in the story of the Bulgarian conversion as told by Theophanes Continuatus[52]. Boris, the khan of the Bulgars, summoned a Greek monk, a painter called Methodius and commanded him to paint .. anything he might wish, on condition that the sight of the painting should induce fear and amazement in its spectators. The painter depicted the picture of the Second Coming of the Lord... When Boris had seen the finished painting, he conceived thereby the fear of God, and after being instructed in our [Byzantine] holy mysteries, he partook of divine baptism in the dead of night'[53]. Undoubtedly, the khan received instruction in Greek just as he would receive, in 864, a long epistle from Photius, again in Greek, listing the ecumenical councils of the Church and the heresies condemned by them.

Yet, Constantinople expected new converts to mirror the imperial ideals of Constantinople. Spiritual sons should accepts the custom of their God-fathers. The converts were supposed to subscribe to the Byzantine conception of the world order. Photius' letter to Boris from 864 left small room for doubts that Constantinople might tolerate any innovations or local ethnic customs within the newly converted country. The letter is a typical example of a Byzantine 'mirror of princes' and this can explain its popularity within the Byzantine commonwealth in

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[48] C. M a n g o. Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome. New York, 1980, 13-31.

[49] P. P e e t e r s. Saint Hilarion d'Iberie. — Analecta Bolandiana, 32, 1913, 236-269, quoted by D. O b o l e n s k y. Cyrille et Mиthode et la christianisation des Slaves. — Settimane, 1967, 599-600. I am grateful to D. Obolensky for his kind advice and for bringing my attention to this source.

[50] M. M u l l e t. Writing in Medieval Byzantium. — In: The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe. Cambridge, 1990, p. 167.

[51] Φωτίου ομιλίαι. Ed. B. Laurdas. Thessaloniki, 1959 (Suppl. 12, to 'Ελληνικά), 166-167; Engl. transl. C. M a n g o. The Homilies of Photius. Cambridge, 1958, p. 294.

[52] Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae. Ed. I. Bekker. Bonn, 1857, 163-164. Engl. transl. in C. M a n g o. The art of the Byzantine Empire. Sources and Documents. 2nd ed. Toronto, 1986, 190-191.

[53] Ibid.

the Middle ages[54]. In this letter, as P. Brown has correctly noted, 'the Bulgarians were told by the Byzantines, whom they consulted, that they would have to sacrifice their trousers and their Central Asian turbans if they wished to take part in the liturgy'[55].

3. RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE EVIDENCE FROM THE *VC* AND *VM*

The illustration of the tower of Babel is important for giving the *terminus post quem* the Slavic liturgy and alphabet were, if not accepted, at least tolerated by the Byzantine court and church. This must have happened after the reassertion of the Byzantine orthodoxy, and the establishment of friendly terms with Rome at the Council of Constantinople, in 880, and the following visit of Methodius, archbishop of Moravia to Constantinople in 881-2.

Chapter 13 of the Vita Methodii mentions that the archbishop went to Constantinople where he was well received by the emperor. The archbishop had already had success in introducing the Byzantine liturgy (in Slavonic) to Moravia, had defended the Byzantine Orthodox position, and had opposed the Franks, who had been introducing the Filioque dogma. The innovations of Cyril and Methodius also bore the stamp of papal approval.

It was still however much easier to obtain papal approval for the Slavic liturgy than to obtain approval from Constantinople, in the 860's. The Papal permission of the use of the Slavonic liturgy in the 870's should not have been so unusual, if the Archbishop of Salzburg, Virgil, an Irish and papal appointee, had tried to invent an alphabet for his Slavic flock in the late 8th century[56]. In his Responsa ad consulta Bulgarorum (866), pope Nicholas I, in his turn, demonstrated how tolerant Rome could be towards local customs in the process of Christianisation. In the pope's opinion, trousers and turbans were irrelevant to the matter of worship[57].

We do not have any evidence that Basil I's attitude towards foreign languages and liturgy in the vernacular, had been different from that of Michael III. On the contrary, the Chronicle of Monembasia leaves little doubt as to how energetically the Slavs in Peloponnesos had been Hellenised. It asserts that, 'Basil I converted the Slavonic tribes from their old religion and, 'having grecised them (γραικοσας), subjected them to governors according to Roman custom, honoured them with baptism, and delivered them from the oppression of their own rulers'. Undoubtedly, the term 'grecised' means the conversion of the pagan Slavs to Orthodox Christianity and the setting up of an ecclesiastical organisation.

The moment of Methodius' appearance in Constantinople was well chosen. The archbishop of Moravia carried with him the newly composed Vita of his brother Constantine who already had, in the West, the reputation of a holy man after finding the relics of St Clement. The *Vita* was written on the eve of Methodius' journey to Constantinople, and was a kind of report on what the brothers had been doing for all those 17 years. Vaillant has asserted the existence of a Greek lost version of the Life, prior or contemporary of the Slavic one, which Greek version should have been used as a source for the Life of St Clement written by Gauderich of Velletri before 882. If this is true, it is likely that originally the *VC*

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[54] И. Ч и ч у р о в. Политическая идеология средневековья: Византия и Русь. Москва, 1990, с. 18 сл.

[55] P. B r o w n. The Rise of Western Christendom.Triumph and Diversity. Oxford, 1996, p. 319.

[56] H. W o l f r a m. Conversio Bagoariorum et Caranthanorum. Das Weißbuch der Salzburger Kirche über die erfolgreiche Mission in Karantanien und Pannonien. Wien-Köln-Graz, 1979, 66-70.

[57] Cf. Photios to Boris (864). — PG, 102, 585-989.

had been intended to justify Constantine's work not only in the West but also in the Byzantine empire. The *Vita* aimed chiefly at defending the use of the Slavic alphabet and liturgy in Moravia, by proving that Constantine-Cyril was a holy man. Once Constantine's sanctity was proved, his work would be more easily accepted. In that sense, the Vita Constantini, like many other hagiographic works, appears to be a product of propaganda and it could be easily compared with its contemporary parallels[58].

Chapter 14 of the Vita asserted that the Slavic alphabet and liturgy had the approval of Michael III. Michael had been dead for a long time as had been his uncle Bardas. Their permission could not mean much for Basil I but would have impressed his learned patriarch Photius. And it was his opinion which was important. According to the same paragraph, Constantine had asked the emperor Michael: 'Who can write a language on water and acquire for himself a heretic's name'[59]. Such fear seemed reasonable in the 9th century Constantinople where politics, Orthodoxy and linguistics were tied together in a Gordian knot.

Both emperor Basil I and Methodius had good reasons to reach a perfect understanding between each other. It has been argued that Moravia was a special case and Constantinople did not bother that much about the liturgical language of that remote country[60]. Moravia was, however, a neighbour of the Bulgarian khanate and undoubtedly had similar weight to that of the Khazars in the eyes of Constantinople. That is why the same imperial emissary, namely Constantine the Philosopher, in 861, visited the Steppes under the pretext of proselytising the Khazars from Judaism to Christianity. In 863, Constantine and his brother went to Moravia to spread the true faith among the Slavs. I have recently argued that the Khazar mission of Constantine, in 861, was a political entrustment designed in the *Vita Constantini* as a missionary enterprise[61]. It seems that the Moravian mission of SS Cyril and Methodius came as an outgrowth of Constantine's mission to the steppes. Moravia, Bulgaria and the Pontic steppes constitute in many respects different aspects of Byzantine 'Northern policy' in the later 9th century[62].

In a tradition where the boundary between sacred and profane had fallen somewhere into the twilight zone, an imperial emissary could happily turn into a saint just as a holy man could have important political and social functions[63]. Just as Constantine's missions to the Steppes and Moravia in the 860's had been diplomatic enterprises designed as missionary projects, Methodios' journey to Constantinople in 881-882 combined political and religious objectives. The archbishop of Moravia could never feel secure with papal support for the Slavic alphabet and liturgy. In 879-880, he once more had this support in 880 with the bull 'Industriae tuae'. However, the appointment of Methodius' adversary Viching as Bishop of Nitra and the weakened positions of John VIII in Rome (indeed the pope was rather old at this time), made Constantine's brother travel to Constantinople.

Moravia needed Byzantine support against the Frankish empire. In the early 880's, the Franks struggled against Svatopluk (Zwentibald) of Moravia[64]. Methodius

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[58] See H. W o l f r a m. Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum, p. 69; F. D v o r n i k. Byzantine Missions..., p. 50 ff.; A. V l a s t o. The Entry..., p. 33 ff.

[59] *VC*, 14, 67.

[60] D. O b o l e n s k y. The Byzantine Commonwealth...

[61] P. G e a r y. Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages. Ithaca-London, 1994, p. 18.

[62] S. N i k o l o v. Constantine and Methodios in the Steppes. The Magyar Connection of Ninth-Century Byzantine Northern Policy. — Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 21, 1997 (forthcoming).

[63] P. B r o w n. The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in late Antiquity. — Journal of Roman Studies, 61, 1971, 80-101.

might have suggested to his ruler, Svatopluk, to continue the policy of Rastislav, that once had proved being successful. Although it is well known that Svatopluk himself favoured the Latin liturgy as performed by the Franks, he was trying to expand his power into lands controlled by Slavic or Slavic-speaking people not particularly inclined to Christianity in its Frankish mode. The *Vita Methodii* implies a direct connection between Methodius' return from Rome and then from Constantinople, and the military achievements of Svatopluk[65]. Methodius' journey to Constantinople was combined with his encounter with the Magyars. In 882, a Hungarian raid was carried out in Central Europe[66]. It is generally accepted that the Hungarian incursion in the region might have backed Svatopluk's (Zwentibald's) struggle against the eastern Frankish realm[67], and that Hungarians had been 'fighting against the Eastern Franks in what is today Eastern Austria presumably not of their own initiative but by invitation of Svatopluk'[68].

And again, perhaps, Bulgaria had been one of the objectives of this diplomatic crossover, just as it had been some twenty years before, in 861-863. Then the Magyars were invoked by the empire to stop the Frankish impetus in Pannonia, and whilst preventing the Bulgars from forming an effective alliance with Louis the German, to secure their baptism from Byzantium. In 881-882, Bulgaria had another chance of choosing between Constantinople and Rome. The council of 880 annulled the decisions of the preceding anti-Photian council of 869-870, which had brought Bulgaria under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople, and gave the papacy the theoretical chance to recover the lands of former Illyricum. The Magyar raid of 882, along with other factors, ensured that Bulgaria never took advantage of this opportunity and, at the same time, diminished the Frankish hegemony in Moravia. The recurrence of events happening in similar circumstances may lead to a reappraisal of the Byzantine approach to the steppe nomads, the northern Balkans and Central Europe in the period between the 860's and the 890's. In the 880's, however, Methodius, being once experienced in Hungarian matters, presumably acted in accord with Svatopluk as Moravian archbishop, and, by all means, with the consent of the Byzantine government[69].

On the other hand Svatopluk might have became as important for Basil I as his uncle, Rastislav had been for Michael III. Byzantium needed to strengthen its positions in the Balkans, after Branimir of Croatia replaced the Byzantine protégé Zdeslav, and was acknowledged by the pope as independent ruler in 880. Byzantium had just agreed with pope John VIII to refrain from direct interference in the ecclesiastical structure of Bulgaria, Croatia and other lands of former Illyricum. Methodius' visit to Rome offered that just Constantinople needed. Not surprisingly, Basil I gave his support to the Apostle of the Slavs. This was symbolically expressed,

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[64] *VM*, 13, 123.

[65] *VM*, 10, 119. Such a connection has been also seen by Ch. B o w l u s. Franks, Moravians, and Magyars. The Struggle for the Middle Danube. Philadelphia, 1995, 194-196.

[66] Continuatio Annalum Iuvanensium maximorum. — In: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, SS, Vol. 32/2, p. 742: "... the first war [was] with the Hungarians [...] the second war with the Qabars (cum Cowaris)".

[67] Cf. I. T o t h. Konstantin-Cyril és Métod, élete és mukodése. Budapest, 1981, 170-178.

[68] Gy. C r i s t o. Hungarian History in the Ninth Century. Szeged, 1996, p. 175. Cf. Ch. B o w l u s. Op. cit., 237-238.

[69] This became possible after papal vindication of Methodius in Moravia and the reconciliation between Rome and Byzantium at the council of Constantinople of 879/880. The letter of John VIII to Svetopluk, *Industriae tuae notum esse volumus* (880), (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae, Vol. 7, ep. 255, 222-224, suggests, however, that in spite of the fact that ruler and archbishop got in bad terms, their relations should have got well after Methodius' return from Rome.

as mentioned in the sources, through the creation of a new chapel, adjoining the church of Elijah the Tishbite in the eastern part of the palace. The new chapel was dedicated to St Clement, 'martyr of great suffering and endurance, wherein Basil I deposited the latter's head and the holy relics of many other martyrs from which he himself and his successors have received both spiritual and bodily healing'[70]. The chapel was the first sign of imperial vindication for the brothers Constantine and Methodius. The next steps were more practical. Some five years later imperial emissaries would ransom Methodius' disciples from the slave-markets in Venice and would direct them to Bulgaria. This, however, is another story.

[70] Vita Basilii, 323, 78. English transl. in C. M a n g o. The Art of the Byzantine Empire..., p. 196.