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Bulgarian Contribution in Building the Byzantine Commonwealth
in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in History

by
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ABSTRACT

Bulgarian Contribution in Building the Byzantine Commonwealth in the Ninth And Tenth Centuries

by

Pavel Murdzhev

This thesis examines factors contributing to Bulgaria's important role and involvement in the creation the Eastern European Orthodox Community under the cultural influence of Byzantine Empire from the middle of ninth century.

The study primarily uses original Greek and Latin sources translated either in Old Church Slavonic or in contemporary Bulgarian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian or English. The approach of this thesis places Bulgarian-Byzantine relations in the context of the creation of the Eastern European Orthodox Community, illustrating that adopting and interpreting of Byzantine culture by the Slavic nations is a process of mutual acculturation, with paramount importance for the creation of the European cultural body.

The findings indicate that the cultural and political aspirations of the Bulgarian ruling class in the middle of the ninth century combined with the wide Byzantine cultural expansion followed declining Iconoclasm were the main prerequisite factors for the establishment of a Slavonic literature tradition.

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CHAPTER ONE

BYZANTIUM AND THE BALKANS IN THE FIRST HALF OF NINTH CENTURY

It is not very difficult to detect the catalytic and inductive forces, which prepared the base for the Byzantine revival and imperial expansionism started from the middle of IX century. The end of the Iconoclastic Epoch, consumed almost the whole cultural, economic and human potential of the Byzantine Empire, convulsed its political life and crippled the foreign policy of Constantinople for a more than a century, proved the turning point in the history of Eastern Europe. The signs of Byzantine recovery could be seen in economic and administrative reforms started by Emperor Nicephorus I (802 - 811). Domestic and foreign trade, the latter directed more and more to the countries of Eastern Europe was increasing. The main cities of the Balkan Peninsula, which the Slavs invasions had isolated from the surrounding countryside, began to regain their importance. These prerequisites combined with the Thirty Years' Peace with Bulgaria at 815, and declining of the Arab power after 842, brought the resurrection of the Empire. Even the rivalry of the Frankish Kingdom and the pretensions of its ruler Charles the Great regarding the Roman Crown were unable to stop it.

Providing detailed review about the epoch of Iconoclasm is out of the scope of this study but because of its significance to Byzantium, I can not pass by it without at least describing its main features. Starting as a pure theological treatise in the beginning of VIII century, influenced by Jewish and Islamic outlook regarding their strict

repudiation of image-worship, Iconoclasm opened a new chapter in Byzantine history when it was adopted by the Emperor Leo III (717 - 741). There is no unitary theory among the contemporary historians about the reasons for adopting Iconoclasm as state doctrine. Some of the scholars derived their explanations from the tendency of incorporation of the Asian population into the Byzantine Empire, the population strongly connected with Oriental influence, both Jewish and Islamic, which prohibiting the portraying image-worship. Others view this epoch through the pure cultural point of view: as a struggle between the Hellenistic rationality and Oriental mysticism. What was sure was that rejection of the icons was implemented unconfidently and was integrated step-by-step into the real life because of the expected resistance of the population in the European part of the Empire and the break with tradition. However, in the zenith of its existence Iconoclasm received wide support of these strata of the society who were still connected with monophysitism. The world of contemporary Byzantine historians is also divided about the character of Iconoclasm. Some scholars of this period have seen in Iconoclasm just religious causes¹, while others have believed that its essence is mainly political, directed towards the rise and growth of the monasterial landownership². Moreover, there are even different evaluations concerning Iconoclasm: some scholars have considered this epoch as fruitful for the development of secular art and education in Byzantium³. This view sounds logical until one runs into the Neoplatonism of St. John of Damascus⁴, fierce defender of the icons as confirmation of the incarnation into the human

¹L. Bréhier, "Iconoclasm" in *Le Monde Byzantine* [The world of Byzantium] ed. and trans. in Bulgarian by Peter Mutafchiev (Sofia, 1949); S. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (London, 1933).

² K. N. Uspensky, *Ocherki po Istorii Vizantii* [Essays in Byzantine history] Vol. I (Moscow, 1917).

³ Paparrigopoulo, *History of the Greek People*. Vol. III. (London, 1974).

⁴ John of Damaskus, "A Fountain of Wisdom" and "Three speeches in defense of icono-veneration" in Cyril Richardson *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (New York: St. Vladimir Press, 1995).

nature by Jesus Christ, and if one can accept that this bright sample of rationality sounds clerical. In view of these varied opinions, it is evident that the iconoclastic controversy was an extremely complex phenomenon, which was prevented from clarification because of the lack of primary sources. Anyway, the impact of Iconoclasm upon Byzantine Empire was definitely negative. The Iconoclastic Epoch initiated endless bloody civil battles in Byzantine society, exhausted all of its strengths, and attracted its entire intellectual potential. Moreover, if the policy of iconoclastic emperors was not collapsed with the death of Constantine V (741 - 775), life in Byzantium might have undergone completely radical transformation. Iconoclastic radicalism in the time of the heirs of Constantine V faded away until its complete disappearing in the reign of Constantine VI, dominated by the regency of his mother Irene (780 - 802). In May 787 the Seventh Oecumenical Council held in Nicaea, condemned hostility to icons as heresy and restored the veneration of icons. It is true, Iconoclasm had its restoration under the reigns of Leo V Armenian (813 - 820), Michael II (820 - 829), and Teophilus (829 - 842), but it did not gain the strength and the wide social support as it was in the previous century. The Iconoclasm of IX century had just an epigonic, impotent character. The internal weakness of this reaction could not be covered by the cruelty used by the few emperors' supporters, and with the death of Teophilus Iconoclasm found its end forever.

The reign of Constantine VI and his mother Irene divided the Iconoclasm in two periods and if their reign did not stop it, anyway, they prepared its final vanishing. The whole period of their reign was marked by the gradually conversion into traditional veneration of icons and the lip service which Irene had to pay to the state apparatus, still intimately connected with Iconoclasm. Practically, any radical change of ecclesiastical

policy would have been impossible. The iconoclastic system had been in full force for a half century. The highest officers of Church and State were in hands of its supporters, whether from conviction or expediency, and a large part of the army, faithful to the memory of illustrious Emperor Constantine V, was devoted to its cause. Except the gradual restoration of icono-veneration, with the same attitude Irene succeed to gain all the power in Empire and became the first Empress on the throne of Roman Emperors not just as a regent for an Emperor who was a minor or unfitted to rule. In 790 she demanded the army to take an oath recognizing her as a senior ruler and placing her name before that of the co-Emperor Constantine VI. At a time when the office of Emperor according to Roman tradition was inseparably connected with the function as a supreme military commander, the right of a woman to exercise this office was at least discussible. No wonder then, that Irene did not dare to describe herself in the legal statuses as Basileissa, but as Basileus⁵. Irene's methods of governing had little success. In order to maintain the lessening sympathy of the population, the Empress, ignoring the demands of the budget, granted generous tax remissions. These measures were enthusiastically received by the population and even Theodore of Studitus warmly praised the generosity of the Empress⁶. But as a result of the same generosity, the finance of Byzantine State, the main source of Byzantine power was ruined and brought into complete chaos. As a logical result the Imperial foreign policy steadily deteriorated in the last two decades. After the great battle with Abbasid Caliphate lost by the Romans in 781 at Thracasion⁷

⁵ J. B. Bury, "The Constitution of the Late Roman Empire" in his *Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1930).

⁶ Theodore of Studitus, "Epistola" in *Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istoria* [Greek sources for Bulgarian history (GSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954), II, pp. 174-178.

⁷ S. Runciman, *History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930, last edition in Sofia, 1994).

and the humiliation undergone by Imperial troops in 792 at Marcellae from the Bulgarians⁸, Byzantium was inferior to its two most important enemies. It had no choice but to agree to pay the sums asked by the winners, which was all the more distressing after its illustrious position under Constantine V.

The ideal, nonmaterial losses, which Byzantium endure as consequence the developments in the West, are much more historically significant than military failures in Asia or in the Balkans. On 25 December 800 in the Church of St. Peter, the Roman Pope Leo III crowned the king of Franks Charles the Great or Charlemagne, as Emperor. By incorporating Bavaria, Christianizing and absorbing Saxony, by expanding his territory at the expense of the Slavs in the East, destroying the kingdom of the Avars, and by overthrowing and annexing the Lombard kingdom, Charles the Great had made his realm the paramount power in the Christian world of his day. In suppressing the Lombards he had succeeded where Byzantium had failed, and this failure buried the authority of Byzantine Empire in Rome. After this fact the Roman Church strengthened its alliance with the kingdom of the Franks and decisively turned its back upon Byzantium.

Iconoclasm contributed its share toward preparing the event of 800. The papacy, which energetically protested against the iconoclastic measures of the Byzantine Emperors and excommunicated the iconoclasts, turned to the West in the hope of finding friendship, understanding and defense in the Frankish kingdom. Even the fact that the ecclesiastical conflict between Rome and Constantinople had been resolved at the oecumenical Council of Nicaea, that Byzantium had returned to orthodoxy and was more zealous than ever in support of icon veneration could not materially affect the situation.

⁸ Theophanes, "Chronographia" in *Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija* [Greek sources for Bulgarian history (GSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954).

The Council of Nicaea had not fundamentally reconciled these two world powers. Rome anticipated the withdrawal of all measures taken against her during the iconoclast epoch, both in the sphere of religion and ecclesiastical politics. She therefore expected complete restoration of the *status quo*, especially the return of papal patrimonies and the restitution of Roman rights of jurisdiction in South Italy and Iliricum. Constantinople refused to listen to these demands and at the Council of Nicaea the question was not even raised⁹. The relevant passage in the message of Pope Hadrian I to the Byzantine rulers was simply omitted from the Greek translation read before the Council. Those clauses in which the Pope claimed the right to censure the uncanonical consecration of the Patriarch Tarasius and to protest against the title "oecumenical" Patriarch were likewise deleted¹⁰. Actually, the Papal institute was *de facto* detached from the East in the same way as the Byzantine Imperial institute was detached from the West. Rome had not needed anymore the Byzantine military protection although that Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople shared the same religious credo. On other hand, the alliance with the conqueror of the Lombards promised much, albeit any understanding with Charlemagne on the question on the icons appeared difficult and demanded considerable compromises. The Synod of Frankfurt held in 794, under the presidency of Charlemagne and contrary to the advice of the Pope, condemned the worships of images, which had been restored to honor by the decision of oecumenical Nicaean Council in 787.¹¹ Charlemagne had already charged his

⁹ For the date and the place see G. Ostrogoski, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Theophanes, "Chronographia" in Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija [Greek sources for Bulgarian history (GSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954).

theologians to criticize this worship in the *Libri Carolini*.¹² In spite of his reverence for the Holy See, Charlemagne appeared to be, far more than the Pope, the real head of the Church in the West. When Leo III ascended the pontifical throne in 795, after the death of Hadrian, Charles stated precisely his respective positions in a letter, which leaves no doubt on the subject. The Pope became more or less the first of his bishops.¹³

Whether Charlemagne was under influence of his confidant theologian Alcuin, to whom he entrusted the task of revising the Latin text of the Bible, is discussible. However, Alcuin's prominent letter¹⁴ was indicative for the goal of Charles to call himself an Emperor and defined the pretext to that. To put in order the affairs of the church, to reestablish on the Papal throne Leo III, overthrown by revolution in Rome, and to save Emperor's dignity of Constantine VI dethroned by his mother Irene in Constantinople. The mind of this time was stressed by the political situation in Constantinople: there no woman had ever ruled with full imperial authority the Roman Empire. From the point of view of Charles and Leo III, the imperial throne was vacant. In 25 December 800 Charlemagne accepted the imperial crown. An interesting confirmation of this view is found in the fact that in Western annals referring to the year 800 and subsequent years, the name of Charles follows immediately after the name of Constantine VI.¹⁵ Charles ascended this vacant throne and became successor, not of *Romulus Augustulus*, but of Leo IV, Heraclius, Justinian, Theodosius, and Constantine the Great, the emperors of the eastern line.

¹²W. von de Steines, *Karl Veliki i Libri Karolini* [Charles the Great and Libri Carolini] trans. in Bulgarian by Vasilka Tupkova-Zaimova (Sofia, 1983)

¹³Francois L. Ganshof, "Charlemagne" in *Speculum*. Vol. 24. Issue 4. (Oct., 1949) trans. in Bulgarian by Ivan Duichev.

¹⁴"Epistolae Carolini Aevi" col. no 173, in *Latinski Izvori za Bulgarskata Istoria* [Latin sources for Bulgarian history (LSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954), I, p. 64-5.

¹⁵A. A. Vasilev, *History of Byzantine Empire*. Vol. I, (Moscow, 1928).p. 267.

The coronation of Charles the Great violated all traditional ideas and struck a hard blow at Byzantine interests - at this time was axiomatic that there could be only one Empire as there could be only one Church. Constantinople looked upon Charles' coronation as one of the many attempts to revolt against the legal ruler, and feared, not without reason, that the newly proclaimed Emperor, following the examples of other insurgents, might decide to advance toward Constantinople in order to dethrone Irene and seize the imperial throne by force. In the eyes of the Byzantine government this event was only a revolt of some western provinces against the legal ruler of the Empire. Charles was of course fully aware of the precariousness of his position and of the fact that his coronation did not settle the question of his rule over the eastern part of the Empire. Anyway, Charlemagne did not name himself "Emperor of the Romans", the official title of the Byzantine Emperors, but "*Imperium Romanum Gubernaus*" (Governor of the Roman Empire).¹⁶ Anticipating complications, Charles opened negotiations with Irene by proposing marriage to her hoping that "to unite the Eastern and Western provinces."¹⁷ In other words, Charlemagne understood that his title meant very little unless recognized by the Byzantine Empire. Irene received the marriage proposal favorably, but shortly after that, in 802, she was dethroned and exiled. The revolt raised to Empire's throne the former *logotetus* Nicephorus whose name was connected with the beginning of Byzantine recovery.

According to the oriental sources, Nicephorus was of Arabian origin.¹⁸ Former minister of finance, his appearing on the political stage is indicative of the financially

¹⁶ J. B. Bury, "The Constitution of Late Roman Empire" in his *Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1930).

¹⁷ Theophanes, "Chronographia" in Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija [Greek sources for Bulgarian history (GSBH)]. (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954)

¹⁸ Tabari, "Annales" in *Islamski Izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija* [Islamic sources for Bulgarian history (ISBS)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954), I, p.142.

lamentable situation of the Empire. The claim of Theophanes, contemporary historian and main reliable source of this period, that the Emperor's accession caused "chagrin and dismay"¹⁹ reflected only the views of certain elements of the "zealots" - the extreme monastic party and it was unacceptable that this hatred was shared by the orthodox Byzantine circles.²⁰ The new Emperor was not a pillar of the Church - he demanded of the clergy submission and loyalty to the throne and his main task, to stabilize the imperial finance, was connected with restrictions mainly affected Irene's previous grants to the monastic circles. It is understandable then that for Theophanes Nicephorus ranked a little above Antichrist and his measures toward financial stabilization was described as "ten misdeeds" of Emperor Nicephorus.²¹ After the canceling the tax remissions of the previous government, he loaded his subjects with new raising of the taxes in comparison with their previous level, and also demanded a tax for entering the tax-roll. Then he put in charge of the hearth tax, not only the peasants, but also the monasteries, the churches and numerous charity institutions.²² In order to secure treasury against losses, the Emperor made the taxpayers collectively responsible for the tax receipts, i.e. total tax liability was fixed for a specific area for which all inhabitants were answerable. Any failure to pay had to be made good by the neighbors of defaulters. Nicephorus brought certain ecclesiastical possessions under the control of the imperial demesne, though he did not lower the tax assessment of the curtailed properties.

¹⁹ Theophanes, "Chronographia" in Grycki Izvori za Bylgarskata Istorija [Greek sources for the Bulgarian history (GSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954).

²⁰ George Ostrogorski, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

²¹ Theophanes, "Chronografia."

²² Ibid.

These measures of Nicephorus succeeded definitely to reinforce the army - the most novel and radical measures of the former finance minister were directed to that. He improved the system of defense, which since the seventh century had depended upon a system of smallholders with military obligations: the *stratiots* system. Since there were apparently a sufficient number of peasants soldiers whose possessions did not allow proper soldier equipment, Nicephorus made even the poorest peasants liable for military service by arranging that the village community should cover the cost of their equipment. This guaranteed the State for any manpower reduction and ensured the recruitment of the army as effectively as *alelengion* ensured the regular payment of the taxes.²³ Furthermore, Nicephorus undertook colonization measures which had to protect particularly vulnerable territories. The inhabitants of Asia Minor were compelled to sell their possessions and were transplanted to the Slavonized districts of Balkan Peninsula, where the colonists doubtless were granted with new lands and had to undertake military service.²⁴ The great Slav invasion of the sixth and seventh centuries compelled Byzantium to withdraw from the majority of its positions in the area of Balkan Peninsula. According to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, even the Peloponnese in the middle of IX century was still a Slavonian and barbarian country.²⁵

The areas which the Byzantines sought to reclaim first of all and in which they met with particular success were the plains that lie along the Aegean, Adriatic and Ionian seaboards. The terrain, the climate and the vegetation of these coastal plains sustained a culture very different from the agricultural and pastoral way of life in the internal part of

²³ K.A. Osipova, "Alelengii v Vizantii v X veke" [Alelengion in Byzantium in tenth century] *Izvestija Instituta Istorii* (Moscow, 1960).

²⁴ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, "De Administrando Imperio". In *GSBH*, II, pp. 420-432.

²⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, "De Thematibus" [About the themes] in *Ibid.* II, pp. 403-12.

Balkan Peninsula. A largely Greek population, only temporarily submerged during the Slav invasion; the presence of ancient cities from which imperial power had never wholly vanished; the proximity of the sea which brought relief to their beleaguered garrisons, trade which fostered an outward-looking and cosmopolitan mentality; a diet whose basic ingredients were supplied by the olive, the wine and fish - these conditions, which prevailed in the maritime plains, forced the Slavs who came down from the mountains to adapt themselves to a new way of life. Whenever they succeeded in surmounting the harsh contrast of the Mediterranean climate and the unfamiliar perils of wine and malaria - hastened their absorption by the local Greek population. Physiological and sociological factors could not by themselves, of course, ensure the effective assimilation of the Slavs. Before they could be absorbed into Greek village and urban communities, Byzantium had to assert its political authority and impose its administrative order over the territories, which they occupied. Earlier attempts by Constance II and Justinian II to subdue the Slavs of Macedonia, Central and Northern Greece had no lasting results. More effective were the victories gained by Empress Irene's *logotetus* Stauracius in 783, when, leading powerful army, he succeeded to compel the Slavs tribes in Thesalonica region, central Greece and Peloponnese to recognize Byzantine sovereignty and to pay tribute. So great was the importance, which Byzantium attached to Stauracius' victory, that on his return from the campaign he was allowed to triumph in Hippodrome.²⁶ But only after two decades, in 807, the Slavs in Greece again renew their plundering - they devastated the neighborhood of Patras and attacked the city. Although the severe attacks the city was

²⁶ Constanine Porphyrogenitus, "De Thematibus."

saved and the Slavs were defeated with the help from Constantinople. Again the Byzantine chroniclers of this period optimistically considered that this is the end of the Slavs invasion in Greece. However, the Slavs in Central and Northern Greece continued to revolt several more times and some of them, living in the mountain areas preserved their nationality until the Turk Invasion in XV century.²⁷ Despite the fact that the complete subduing of the Slavs had never achieved by Constantinople, the end of the VIII and the beginning of the IX centuries marked the turning point of the Slavs invasion in the Balkans.

The only sure evidence for Byzantine reoccupation of the Balkans, and the extending its territory is the number of the themes, the administrative Byzantine units, and their location, which shows how deeply the facts of geography influenced the master-plan conceived by the strategists of Constantinople for the reduction and assimilation of the Slav invaders. Moreover, it illustrates in the same time the changing fortunes in Byzantine counter-offensive. Nevertheless, it is not always possible to decide with certainty whether the creation of a particular theme reflected the fear or the confidence of the imperial government. It is remarkable, that every one of the ten themes established in the Balkans between the late VII and late IX centuries was established in a coastal plain. Their administrative centers were mostly located in ancient cities, whose municipal and cultural traditions went back to Greek and Roman times, and the majority of these cities were seaports, which could be supplied and garrisoned by unchallenged naval power of Constantinople. With that the successes of Byzantine reoccupation ended. The internal part of the Peninsula was still out of its shadow.

²⁷ George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

The first two themes on the Balkans were created in the end of VII century. The theme of *Thrace*, comprising the eastern part of Thracian plain, near to Constantinople had its chief city Arkadiopolis, and the theme of *Hellas*, confined to Attica and Beotia, with a main city Athens, one of the few cities in the Balkans, partially escaped the ravages of the Slavs. The next theme, created after more than hundred years, between 789 and 802, was that of *Macedonia*. Its name, geographically misleading, comprised the central and western part of Thracian plain and its capital was Adrianople, and a second city - Philipopolis. In the beginning of the IX century the Byzantines established the themes *Cephalonia*, comprising Ionian Islands and *Peloponnese*, centered on Corinth. *Thesalonica* and *Dyrrarchium* were the main bases for the Byzantine seapower in Aegean and Adriatic Sea. *Nicopolis* comprised south Epirus and *Strimon* the northern regions of Thesalonica. Finally, between 868 - 878, the Byzantines created *Dalmatia*, comprising the Adriatic seashore with main cities: Zadar, Split, Kotor, and Dubrovnik.²⁸

Thus, by the end of the ninth century, Byzantium had succeeded in establishing administrative control over a string of themes, which formed an almost continuous edging around the Balkan Peninsula. Broadly speaking, south of a line drawn from Thesalonica to Dyrrarchium, the inland *Sclavinae* were by the year 900 well on the way to being reduced to political dependence on the Empire and absorbed into the theme system. By contrast, the *Sclavinae* situated north to this line remained, except the Thrace and Macedonia, beyond the reach of Byzantine administration, and in the course of the ninth century were merged into Slav states of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia.

²⁸ George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

From the point of view of Constantinople the strategy for reestablishment of the Byzantine power in the Balkans is a strategy for incorporation the *Sclavinaie* into the governing of the Empire of Romans. Consequently the transplantation of the *stratiots* from Asia Minor to Balkans was one of the first tactical step for that. This step is significant also regarding the impending struggle with Bulgaria, the main rival of the Empire in Eastern Europe, where the attention of Byzantium is concentrated after the death of Harun al Raschid, the ruler of Arabian Chaliphate in 809. This Empire's strategy for the Slavic incorporation was fully understood and carefully observed by Bulgaria, whose population, although ruled by *Protobulgarians*, was from the beginning of Bulgarian State over Danube River predominately Slavic.

After the destruction of Avar Chaganate by Charles the Great in the end of eight century, the Protobulgarians in Panonia were merged into Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian kingdom experienced a vast extension of power and territory. Bordering with the Empire of Charlemagne in the west at the Theiss River, the Carpathian Mountains to the north, and Byzantium to the southeast, Bulgaria became a great power in Europe. Its natural direction of extension after that was towards the southwestern Slavs territory in Macedonia, where the Bulgarian interests crossed the trajectory of Byzantine expansion. Overcoming conquering of Constantine V, Bulgaria, for century and a half, had not just situated in the Balkans, but also became a gravity center for the Slavs. The Slavs in Bulgaria, who at first were little more than subject tribes, supplying their Protobulgarian masters with food and other economic necessities, began to play an increasing role in the political and social life of the country. Although the paucity in the sources for the development of Slavo-Protobulgarian relations in Bulgaria, it was obvious that during the

reign of Krum (802 - 814), the process of assimilation of Protobulgarians by the Slavic factor in Bulgaria brought to certain degree of equalization with Protobulgarians in ruling the state.²⁹ Krum, a rugged fighter, pugnacious and aggressive, completely understanding the political situation, soon destined to become the scourge of the Byzantines. He well apprehended the significance of *stratiots* transplantation in the Balkans. In 808, soon after the suppression of Slavs in Patra's neighborhood, Theophanes said that "Bulgarians captured more than 1000 pounds of gold directed for the soldiers salaries in Macedonia and liquidated the *strategos* and a lot of soldiers."³⁰ The new strategic attitude of Krum towards the *Sclavinae*, tactful and patronizing, one more time is demonstrated in the writings of the stele found near by Suleimankioy, memorizing the peace conditions after the war between Krum and Nicephorus: "Chapter II is for the Slavs, subjected to the Emperor. They have to remain under the scepter of Emperor. Chapter III is for the rest of the Slavs, not subjected to the Emperor. He has to send them back to their regions."³¹ The overrunning of Serdika by Krum in 809, revealed unequivocally the methodical policy of the Bulgaria in south-west direction. The lost of Serdika, one of the key points of Byzantine's line of fortifications was alarming for Emperor Nicephorus and after serious preparation he intervened Bulgaria in 811, personally leading tremendous army. The Byzantines advanced to Bulgarian capital Pliska, destroyed the city, and after this impressive demonstration made for Serdika with the intention of restoring the fortifications. The Emperor selfishly denied the peace

²⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*. He claimed that the Bulgarian legacy to Constantinople in 814 was headed by *Ichurguboila* Dragomir - undoubtedly Slavic name. *Ichurguboila* is the second position after the Khan in Bulgarian administration.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Suleimankioy's stele," in Vasil Beshevliev *Starobylgarski nadpisi* [Old Bulgarian inscriptions] (Sofia, Berlin 1963).

demanded by the stunned Krum, but after the siege made by Bulgarians in Balkan Mountains, in 26 July 811, the Roman Army was completely destroyed and cut into pieces up to the last soldier. The Emperor himself was slain and victorious Krum fashioned from his skull a goblet, out of which he toasted his *boyars* at banquets.³² The consequences of this terrible and unexpected catastrophe were incalculable. For the blow to the Byzantine prestige was far more serious than the military defeat. No Emperor had been slain by barbarians since Valens perished in 378 in the battle with Visigoths at Adrianople. No wonder then, that the attitude of Constantinople towards the Western Empire was revised completely by the Nicephorus' heirs. While Nicephorus thoroughly ignored the aspirations of Charlemagne and even refused the Patriarch Nicephorus to dispatch the customary *sinodica* to the Pope,³³ his successor Michael I Rangabe was forced by the circumstances to salute Charles the Great as Emperor in 812 at Aachen. Of course, this new attitude was not just a result of the different personalities of Nicephorus and Michael. Nor by the fact, that as a result of recognizing emperor's title of Charlemagne, Byzantium hoped to get back in return its possessions in Dalmatia and Venice ceased by the Franks - the new attitude resulted mainly of changing the environment in the Balkans after the disaster of 811.

Although, the Byzantines lost the battle, the war about the *Sclavinaes* was still not. Byzantium had a varied arsenal to extend their influence over the Slavs. After the defeat in 811, Constantinople concentrated its efforts in Slavs territory in Northern Greece, far enough from Pliska, over the natural obstacles of the Rodopa Mountain, where the Slavic communities neither established a political unity of their own, nor had

³² Theophanes, *Chronographia*. He claimed that most of them are Slavs from neighbor *Sclavinae*.

³³ *Ibid.*

one superimposed upon them from outside, as happened to those of the northern Balkans under the Avars and Protobulgarians. They lived in tribal units, each governed by its council, and forming ephemeral alliances among themselves for particular purposes. We know little of the methods used by the Byzantine authorities to bring the Slavs under their administrative control. No doubt they varied from place to place, as did the dues and services to which the Slav communities were subjected. In the tenth century The Slavs of the themes of Thesalonika and Strimon lived under the authority of officers appointed by the *strategoi*, or provincial governors. The Slavs in the region of Patras, after their subjugation in the early ninth century, became serfs of the local bishop and, in addition to the ordinary taxes, were obliged to maintain a lodging house in the city for the free entertainment of the provincial governors, imperial agents and foreign envoys. Others as *Melingoi* and the *Ezeratae*, two Slavonic tribes who lived in Laconia in the Southern Peloponnesse, were compelled in the tenth century to accept a headman appointed by the provincial governor, to perform military service under him, and generally to carry out the public duties incumbent on crown peasants.³⁴

The incorporation of the Slavs into the administrative structure of the themes went together with a determinate effort to advance their cultural assimilation. The most effective way of achieving this end was to convert the Slavs to Christianity. No sooner had imperial officials gained a foothold in their communities than the Byzantine authorities applied themselves with vigor to this task. In the coastal regions, and in much of the interior south of the Thesalonika - Dirrarchium line, the work of Christianisation began on a large scale in the early IX century and was largely completed by the end of

³⁴ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, "De Administrando Imperio" in *GSBH*, II, pp. 420-432.

the tenth. During these two hundred years the work of the Christian missionaries, supported by the provincial governors and often by the central authorities in Constantinople, was marked by the same intertwining of religious and political motives observed in the Byzantine missions abroad. The conversion of these Slav subjects had two aspects, the one public and official, the other more spontaneous and less organized.

The public aspect is naturally the better documented. Its main feature was the establishment, and in some cases the reconstruction, of a network of bishoprics directly dependent on local metropolitanates which, in their turn, owed allegiance to the patriarchate of Constantinople. Some of these metropolitanates - Philipopolis, Thesalonika, Dirrarchium, Larisa, Athens and Corinth - were ancient sees, most if not all of which had survived the Slavonic invasions. Others, such as Patras and Nicopolis, were former bishoprics which were promoted to metropolitan rank after 800, in order to direct and organize the conversion of the Slavs. By the late ninth century, these metropolitan sees were supported by a large number of recently created suffragan bishoprics, some of which, notably in Macedonia and Thessaly, appear to have been set up specifically to minister to the local Slavs communities.³⁵ Though precise information is often lacking, one may assume that many of these Slavonic Bishoprics were created in the reign of Basil I (867-886) who, in association with the Patriarch Photius, planned and directed the conversion of the empire's Slav subjects.

No doubt he was the figure responsible for the re-Christianization of much of the Balkan Peninsula for which accomplishment he was praised unequivocally by his successor Emperor Leo VI:

³⁵ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*. (New York: Preager Publisher, 1971).

*Our father of blessed memory, Basil, the Emperor of the Romans, prevailed them [the Slavs] to renounce their ancient customs and, having made Greeks of them and subjected them to governors according to the Roman model and bestowed baptism upon them, he freed them from bondage to their own rulers and taught them to make war on the nations that are hostile to the Romans.*³⁶

While this reorganization of the Balkan dioceses was being carried out, a less conspicuous, but perhaps even more effective campaign to convert the pagan Slavs was launched in the lower echelons of the Byzantine Church. Many episodes of this campaign, whose principal agents were local missionaries, monks and parish priests, have remained unrecorded. Its results, however, belong to the outstanding achievements of Medieval Greek Christianity. In something like two centuries the Gospel was carried over the length and breadth of the Balkan Peninsula, and by the year 1000 the evangelization of the Slav subjects of the Byzantium was, if not complete, at least most partially achieved. A particularly determined effort was made in the Peloponnesse, where the restoration of Byzantine authority and the rebuilding of the roads were followed in the late ninth and the tenth by remarkable revival of religious life.

The effectiveness of Orthodox Christianity as a means of achieving the cultural assimilation of the Slavs was enhanced, in the Balkan provinces of the Empire, by the deliberate use of Greek as a liturgical language. By contrast with the Slav lands that lay beyond the Empire's borders, where, through a combination of linguistic tolerance and tactful diplomacy, the Byzantines encouraged the propagation Christianity in the Slavonic vernacular, their policy towards the Slav colonists at home was *Hellenization*

³⁶ Emperor Leo VI, "Tactica," in *GSBH*, II, pp. 467-469.

through *Christianization*. This different attitude is completely understandable in the discourse of Byzantine political theory for the world order or *oikumenie*. Through usage of varied instruments Byzantine diplomacy thoroughly succeed, as we will see furthermore, to subject the nations in vast areas of Eastern Europe to the Constantinople's idea of the *Kingdom in the Earth* resembling *the Kingdom of the Heaven*, of course under supremacy of the Emperor of the Romans. In the Slavonic lands now reintegrated into the framework of Byzantine provincial administration, Greek was not only the idiom of the church but also the language of the civil service, of the armed forces and of polite society. Knowledge of Byzantine Greek became henceforth the necessary key to social status and successful career. Byzantine society was not racist: a Slav who spoke Greek and was an Orthodox Christian found few doors closed to him. As a result, the Slavonic tribes which in early Middle Ages had colonized virtually the whole of continental Greece and Peloponnese began to loss their political independence and ethnic identity in the ninth century. Their assimilation was caused by their incorporation into Byzantine theme structure, by their acceptance of Greek Christianity and by the spell over them by the superior prestige of Byzantine power and Hellenic culture. Despite the continued resistance of isolated areas, particularly in the mountainous regions of the Peloponnese, the movement of assimilation never lost its momentum after the middle of the ninth century. First subdued, then converted and finally civilized by Byzantium, the Slavs of Southern areas of Balkan Peninsula became Greeks.³⁷

Not like the Slavs tribes in the Southern Balkan Peninsula, in the Western Balkans Byzantine expansion encountered the resistance of much better organized Slav

³⁷ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

community of the Croats. Moreover, instead of Bulgaria, Constantinople had to compete for its supremacy over these Slav communities with the much more powerful Frank Kingdom of Charles the Great, who tended not just for extending the territory of his empire, but for no less than the Byzantine crown. The establishment of Dalmatian theme though it ensured Byzantine supremacy in the principal cities of the coast did not form a continuous territory. The Byzantine strongholds were few and far between, and all around them on the coast and further inland were Slavs communities over which the empire could seldom claim control. Moreover, the Byzantine cities in Dalmatia were more dependent to these Slav communities than on Constantinople: they paid their tribute to the Slavonic tribes and the trivial payments they made to the imperial *strategoï* had only a symbolic character. Beyond the Cetina, as far as Istria in the northwest, extending north to the lower course of Verbas River and northeast as far as the Bosna River lay the country of the Croats. Their political life began to develop earlier than that of the Serbs, in two different areas situated south and north of the Sava River: Pannonian Croatia and Dalmatian Croatia, and their relations with Byzantium were closely bound up with the changing pattern of Byzantine power on the Adriatic coast.

The first stirring of political life among the Croats was the result of the eastward expansion of the Frankish Empire and destroying the Avar Chaganate. The Pannonian Croats accepted the rule of Charlemagne in the closing years of the eight century, and the Franks thus became masters of the land between the Drava River and Sava River, as far as the Middle Danube. Dalmatian Croats exchanged a nominal Byzantine overlordship for Frankish supremacy in the beginning of the ninth century and, except for the coastal cities and the offshore islands formally ceded by Byzantines to the Franks at the Treaty of

Aachen in 812. The Croats, however, soon grew restive under Frankish control, and their attempts to shake it off were supported, possibly in Pannonian Croatia, certainly in Dalmatian Croatia, by Byzantine diplomacy. In 819 Ljudevit, prince of the Pannonian Croats, revolted against the Franks, but his attempt to rally his Slavs neighbors proved a failure, and in 822, after his flight to Serbia, Frankish rule was re-imposed over his country. In Dalmatian Croatia the movement for independence developed more slowly. The local bishoprics seem to have remained in this period under papal jurisdiction. But the Empire's political presence in the coastal cities was having its effect. It was probably to secure his collaboration with the Byzantines that Mislav, prince of the Dalmatian Croats (c.835-845), transferred his residence to Klis, a fortress with a fine strategic position dominating the mountain pass leading from the interior to the coast, fourteen kilometers north of Split.³⁸

Byzantine influence in this area further increased as a result of the Adriatic policy of Basil I (867-886). In 878 the supreme power in Dalmatian Croatia was seized by a local prince, Zdeslav, a tool of Byzantium. Zdeslav promptly acknowledged the political sovereignty of the emperor and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the see of Constantinople.³⁹ This was something of triumph for the empire, whose political and religious dominion now showed promise of spreading as far as Istria and across the Dinaric Mountains towards the valley of the upper Sava River. Not since the Avaro-Slav invasions of the early seventh century had Byzantium been able to make its presence felt so to the northwest in the Balkan Peninsula. Yet this Byzantine success proved

³⁸ John A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983).

³⁹ Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*.

ephemeral. Croatia had a strong rival party, supported by the Roman clergy and led by the bishop of Nin, a see probably founded by Pope Nicholas I in 860. The very next year (879) the pro-Roman faction struck. A revolt broke out, Zdeslav was assassinated, and Branimir, the new ruler, pledged his country's loyalty to Rome. Croatia remained under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope and became, until its union with Hungary in 1102, to all intents and purposes sovereign country. Although, the influence of Constantinople was strong enough to provoke the admittedly over-optimistic claim of Constantine Porphyrogenetus expressed in *De Administrando Imperio* that "the prince of Croatia has from the beginning been in servitude and submission of the Emperor of the Romans".⁴⁰ As late as the late eleventh century the Croats acknowledged for a time the nominal suzerainty of the Emperor. Nevertheless, the events of 879 marked a turning point in their country's relation with the Empire. It proved to be the first and decisive event in a process that was to fix the northwestern border of the Byzantine Commonwealth on the borders between Serbia and Croatia.⁴¹

More definitively fruitful were the relations of Constantinople with the Serbs tribes regarding their subjection to the Emperor. The Serbs lived to the west of Bulgarian border, mostly situated in the valleys of the mountainous regions watered by the rivers of upper Drina, Piva, Tara, Lim, Ibar and the upper course of the Western Morava. The area of their original settlement in the Balkans, known in Middle Ages as *Raska* or *Rashka*, lay immediately to the north of the watershed between the Danube and Adriatic sea. It was separated from the sea by the mountains of Montenegro and by a number of kindred tribes inhabiting the coastal regions and inland districts between Neretva and Drin rivers,

⁴⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*

⁴¹ Dimitri Obolenski, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

over whom the Serbs gradually extended their authority during the ninth and tenth centuries. These were the Diocletians, between the lower Bojana and the Bay of Kotor; the Terbouniotes and Kanalites, who lived respectively in the areas of Trebinje and Konovlje, between Kotor and Dubrovnik; the Zachluni, between Dubrovnik and the lower and middle course of Neretva, whose country was known in successive periods as Hum and Herzegovina; and the Nerentani, who inhabited the coast between Neretva and Cetina rivers.⁴² Over all these tribes, the Serbs of the interior, and the Slavs on the seaboards of Montenegro and Southern Dalmatia, the Byzantines seem to have retained a largely nominal sovereignty until the reign of Michael II (820-829) when the Serbs "shook off the reigns of the Empire of the Romans and became self governing and independent, subject to none".⁴³ However, the Byzantine influence on the Serbs had never lost its momentum. In 850, in order to stop Bulgarian penetration towards the Slavs of the southern parts of the Balkans, Byzantine diplomacy succeeded to inspire a local war between the Serbian prince Vlastimir and Bulgarian khan Presian finished without any results, except for the Byzantines.⁴⁴ Namely, under the rule of Vlastimir, the Serbs appear to have made significant stride towards nationhood. Most of them had relapsed into paganism since the days of Heraclius, aiming, as Constantine Porphirogenetus, tells us equivocally: "to renounce every pledge of friendship for and enslavement to the Byzantines"⁴⁵ Yet, like Boris in Bulgaria (852-889) their rulers must have come to the

⁴² Francis Dvornik, *The Slavs. Their Early History and Civilization*. (Boston: American Academy of Arts and Science, 1956).

⁴³ Constantine Porphirogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*

⁴⁴ L.Maksimovich, *Istoria Srpskogo Naroda* [History of the Serbian people] Vol. I, (Belgrade, 1984) p.138; the comment is based on the *De Administrando Imperio* by Constantine Porphirogenetus

⁴⁵ Constantine Porphirogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*.

outlook that in the international Balkan world their paganism was an obstacle to political and cultural progress. It was in the beginning of the reign of Basil I that the Serbs decided to seek admittance into the civilized world of Christendom.⁴⁶ This event is detailed described by Constantine Porphyrogenetus, the grandson of Basil I:

*They sent envoys to the emperor...requesting that they might be placed under the humane yoke of Roman authority and under that of its supreme pastor [i.e. Byzantine patriarch. The emperor, like the humane father, who received senselessly rebellious son who repented and returned to the fold, received and excepted them, and straightway sent them priests together with a diplomatic agent...When they had all received divine baptism and returned to the Roman allegiance, the emperor's authority was fully restored over their country... and he wisely determined that they should be governed by princes[of their own nation] chosen by them.*⁴⁷

This, of course is a typically Byzantine interpretation of the facts, and it may not have wholly accorded with the political situation which the Serbs themselves placed on their reaction. Yet, from these words one could conclude that Serbian embassy to Constantinople was empowered in requesting Greek missionaries and to offer their ruler's political allegiance to the Emperor. The Byzantines, in sending to Serbia an embassy, whose aims were both religious and political, took the view that the Serbs, by accepting Christianity from Constantinople, had become subjected to the Romans. This view was identical with the one that the Byzantines had when dispatching their mission to Bulgaria in 864-5, which required deeper analysis and which is the main concern of the next

⁴⁶ G.Sp.Radojicic, *Za Dobata na Srpskoto Pokrstvane* [About the date of Serbian conversion] (Belgrade, 1986). He stated that the Serbs are converted in Christianity between 867-874.

⁴⁷Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*.

chapter. But whereas the Bulgarians remained after their conversion politically independent of the Empire in all but theory, the Byzantine government felt strong enough to impose on the still inchoate Serbian nation a real political vassalage, and to insist that their elected princes have to be confirmed by the authorities of Constantinople. Because of the paucity of the sources it is unknown whether the acceptance of Christianity and imperial suzerainty provoked some social or political tensions in Serbia comparable to those occurred in Bulgaria. If there were any, they were probably far less intense and disruptive. The Serbs, unlike the Bulgarians, lacked an alien aristocracy with a traditional hostility to the Empire. The only known of militantly anti-Christian tribe in that area were Nerentani on the Adriatic coast, who were then outside Serbian control. Notorious pirates, they were a constant threat in the first half of ninth century to communications between Byzantium and Venice. In vain did the Venetians seek to convert them, in the hope to curb their piracy. Their warlike spirit seems to have made them for long refractory to Christian influence. Known as "Pagani" to the inhabitants of the Dalmatian cities, they were the last tribe in northwestern Balkans to accept Christianity - they were finally converted by Byzantine missionaries later in Basil I's reign.⁴⁸

So, after all the obstacles and difficulties, in the middle of the ninth century Byzantium succeeded to extend its political and cultural influence over significant territory in the Balkans. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter of this study, in the second half of the ninth century their influence was spread much over the Balkans, in the vast areas of Central and eastern Europe, over the nascent Slav countries of Great Moravia and Russia, the Khazar Chaganate, parts of Poland and even to the seaboard of

⁴⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenetus, *De Administrando Imperio*.

Baltic sea. And paradoxically, the main assistance for that extension of their influence, was acquired by Bulgaria, their traditional and most dangerous rival in the Balkans.

The "Thirty Years' Peace", concluded by Krum's successor Omurtag (814 - 831) with the Empire in about 815, could not fail to bring the Bulgarian state, now anchored for nearly century and a half in the Balkans into a more intimate relationship with Byzantium. During the next fifty years these relations remained tense and ambivalent. The Bulgarian khans, following Tervel's example, were keenly aware of the towering prestige of Byzantium and of advantages they could gain in relation both to their own subjects and to foreign countries by adopting the trappings of its civilization. On other hand, the wars of Constantine V and Krum were still a living memory. The khans could not allow themselves to forget that in eyes of the Byzantines the Bulgarians were alien intruders in the Balkans, which realm if it could not be wiped off the face of the earth, might at least be brought into political subjection to the Emperor. An influential section of the Bulgarian people, especially the descendants of the *boyar* aristocracy who had crossed Danube with Asparuch, still regarded Byzantium as the hereditary foe. Finally, the Bulgarians were still pagans. Their religion, which they brought from Asia and which combined a belief in a supreme God, the glorification of the war, and the cult of the ancestors, remained in the eyes of their rulers a means of maintaining their cultural identity and independence in the world where the spread of Christianity could be expected to lead to Byzantine political control⁴⁹. This ambiguous attitude to Byzantium underlay the policy of Omurtag and his successors. The evidences of the growing Byzantine influence could be find partly in architecture - the palaces erected by the khans

⁴⁹ Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria na Srednovekovnata Bulgarska Durjava*. Vol. I [History of the medieval bulgarian state] (Sofia, 1937).

to commemorate their military and other achievements. These exploits are described in inscriptions on columns and tombstones, a large number of which dates from the reign of Omurtag.⁵⁰ A few of them attempt to transcribe the Protobulgarian language with Greek characters, but a great majority are in Greek vernacular of the time. It is true that the Protobulgarians had no script of their own, and that some knowledge of Greek must have survived the barbarian invasions in this northeastern corners of the Balkans. Yet, it remains a striking proof of the continued appeal of Byzantine civilization in this area that Greek was used as the official written language of the Bulgarian state in the first half of the ninth century. The content of these inscriptions, moreover, suggests that some of the traditions of the Byzantine chancellery were then being imitated at the court of Pliska. The most striking example is using of the term "ruler by God's authority" (*ho ek theou archon*) in the khan's titles⁵¹ Its Christian connotations were doubtless not taken too seriously; and there are no explicit traces of Christian belief in these simple but moving words which Omurtag had inscribed on a column when he caused his own tomb to be built:

*Man dies, even though he lives nobly, and another is born; and let the latest born, seeing this, remember him who made it. The name of the prince is Omurtag, the Sublime Khan. God grant that he live a hundred years.*⁵²

Omurtag's policy was in fact overtly and at times violently anti-Christian. The growing success of Byzantine Christianity in his realm no doubt alarmed him for political reasons. The principal agents of his proselytism were the many thousands of prisoners

⁵⁰ Vasil Beshevliev, "Stele from Chatalar"; "Stele from Philipi"; "Stele from Suleimankioy" in his *Starobylgarski nadpisi* [Old Bulgarian inscriptions] (Sofia-Berlin, 1963).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "Stele from Chatalar" in *Ibid.*

whom Krum had taken from the Byzantine cities in Thrace⁵³ and deported to Bulgaria. Attempts to make them renounce their religion failed, at least in some cases, and a number of them were put to death by order of the khan. The most distinguished of these martyrs was Manuel, metropolitan of Adrianople.⁵⁴ Before long Christianity gained a convert in the khan's own family : Omurtag's son and successor Malamir (831 -836) was forced to execute his own brother Enravotas, who had been baptized under the influence of a Greek captive from Adrianople.⁵⁵

The first recorded encounter between Bulgarian paganism and Byzantine Christianity had several features of more than a local interest and suggests a cultural model, which at some degree, was to be reproduced in other countries of Eastern Europe. First of all, although the growing prestige of Christianity in Bulgarian land, it could not be state that paganism was at a phase of decline. Moreover, the Bulgarian doctrine, which was also as Byzantine, based on theological sanction was proved as a superior because of the military and political success during the wars with Byzantium. In philosophy arguing between Omurtag and the prominent captive Greek Kinam, described by the writings of Theophilact of Ohrid, Bulgarian khan used this as evidence:

*The power of our god is significant. Because respecting him we seized all the Romans country. And if Christ was real powerful god he would keep you unslaved, because he is yours and you respect him.*⁵⁶

Nevertheless, although victorious, this doctrine became more and more isolated

⁵³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, announced ten thousands from Adrianople alone.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Simeon Mitropolitan, "Pismata na Teophilacta Ohridski, Archiepiskop Bulgarski" [Teofilact of Ohrid's epistolae] *SbBAN*, XXVII, (Sofia, 1931).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

and typical credo just for the Protobulgarian nobility. Partly, because of the changing model of life of the Protobulgarians - the abandonment of their former nomadic life and the need to adapt themselves to a predominantly agricultural economy created a new situation for which their social and religious traditions were unprepared. On the other hand, summarizing the sources, the Slavic factor in Bulgaria was at time more receptive and influenced to the Christianity than the Protobulgarian aristocracy. A fact no doubt due in some degree to the earlier contacts of the Slavs to Byzantine communities in the Balkans, their lack of some definitive doctrine towards Empire and finally to the greater social and political cohesion of the Protobulgarians clans. At the end, it is in the first half of the ninth century that Bulgarian paganism first appeared as an aggressive, actively anti-Christian force. This feature, which it retained during decades that followed the country's official conversion to Christianity, was scarcely fortuitous. A hostile attitude to Christianity was certainly linked to the fear of Byzantine imperialism, which Protobulgarians had displayed ever since they came into the Balkans. But it is equally true, that the paganism of their ruling clans became more self-conscious and aggressive at the very time when it was nearing its dissolution. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the following century in Scandinavia and Russia, where the dying paganism of their rulers erupted for a while into overtly anti-Christian movements.⁵⁷

This attitude towards Byzantine imperialism was expressed in the foreign model of Omurtag's successors. Malamir (831-836) and Presian (836-852) combined both Krum's and Omurtag's approach towards Byzantine imperialism. They continued to use the resistance of the Slavs tribes against the administration of Constantinople as an ally in

⁵⁷ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantium Commonwealth* (New York: Preager Publishers, 1971).

the defense of Bulgaria and extending its territory, and increased the violence and persecution against Christians among their subjects. And if the first part of their strategy was fruitful the war against Christianity was completely lost. In 837 Persian inspired revolt among the *Smoleni* - a Slav tribe inhabiting the region between Rodopa Mountain and Aegean Sea, in order to draw away the Byzantine attention of consequent Bulgarian attack towards Philipopolis.⁵⁸ But earlier, in the reign of Malamir, Christianity had already inserted its roots even in the khan's family and announced its unavoidable victory.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930, last edition in Sofia, 1994).

⁵⁹ Simeon Mitropolitan, "Pismata na Teophilacta Ohridski, Archiepiskop Bulgarski" [Teofilact of Ohrid's epistolae] *SbBAN*, XXVII (Sofia, 1931).

CHAPTER TWO

THE BAPTIZING OF BULGARIA

The *Thirty Years' Peace* concluded with Bulgaria in 815 and the internal problems in Arab Caliphate gave to Constantinople the very rare option to take a breath from its enemies. On the throne of Roman Emperors, after the death of Nicephorus in 811 and abdication and consequent death of his son Staurakius, ascended Michael I Rangabe just to be dethroned soon after the shameful defeating at Versinkia by Krum at 813. Leo V Armenian (813-820), the former *strategus* of theme Anatolikon became a new Emperor. It is ambiguous, whether before the plot against Michael Leo finalized and modeled his iconoclastic credo, or he used the Iconoclasm just as justifying the coup. But as a doubtless representative of the theological circles attached to the Iconoclasm, he used the relative tranquillity on the borders for immediate turning the official Byzantine doctrine of icono-veneration. The coincidence of the names, the native places and shared fortunes with Leo III, the illustrious and victorious iconoclast emperor, are probably the main reasons for his seeking furthermore parallels with the policy of the prominent predecessor. Leo V's program was simple and proved by the time: restoration of the imperial military power and revival the Iconoclasm. Neither he, nor his followers had any doubt that the military disasters of the last reigns were the result of its iconodule policy.¹

¹ "Scriptor incertus de Leone Bardae Filio," in *Latinski izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija*, [Latin sources for the Bulgarian history, (LSBH)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1932), II, pp. 49-50.

But the reasons of Leo V to take such a radical step for restoration the Iconoclasm were different than these, which had impelled his namesake to do the same eighty-eight years before. Leo III was a devout theologian, believer in his deed. Leo V's approach to the question was a practical one. Soon after Easter (1 April) 815, Synod under the authority of the new Patriarch Theodotus Melissenus was held. It repudiated the Oecumenical Council of Nicaea of 787 and recognized the *acta* of the iconoclast council of 754.² It stated that it did not regard the icons as idols, but all the same it ordered their destruction. This was characteristic of the whole Leo V's policy: spiritually he adhered to the basic statements of the old Iconoclasm, but in performance he was more cautious because of the lack of wide social support. This lack of mass support for Iconoclast reaction produced in the emperor's court constant insecurity for the Leo's throne, which in the last years of his reign turned into pure paranoia. In spite all precautions he could not elude his fate and on Christmas Day 820 he was killed in front of the altar of St. Sophia by his comrade in arms Michael the Amorean.³

The opinions vary regarding the religious views of Leo's successor Michael II, the founder of Amorean dynasty. Some of the historians consider him neutral and indifferent, a man who followed the path of tolerance and proclaimed the great principles of freedom of conscience.⁴ Others call him a "convinced iconoclast, though not a fanatic."⁵ George

² G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957)

³ Theophanes Continuatus, "Chronographia" in *Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istorija* [Greek sources for the Bulgarian history, (GSBH)] ed. by Ivan Duichev, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954), II, pp. 112-114.

⁴ A.A. Vasilev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol.I, (Madison and Milwaukee: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).

⁵ N. Grossu, *The Blessed Theodore of Studion*, (London, 1952); V. Zlatarski, *Istoria Na Srednovekovnata Bulgarskata Durjava* [History of the medieval Bulgarian state] Vol. I (Sofia, 1937).

Ostrogorsky claimed that Michael's indifference towards Iconoclasm is based on his awareness that the fight against the icons lost its momentum.⁶

The main event during the Michael's reigning was the severe civil war provoked by Thomas of Gaziura, or as more usually known, Thomas the Slav in 821. Actively supported by Arabs, Slavs, and people discontent with the iconoclast policy of Michael, Thomas, an old fellow soldier of the emperor, gained significant success during the first year of the rebellion. The leader of the rebels received wide support when he proclaimed himself as a champion of the iconodules and even that he was the deposed emperor Constantine VI. The revolt upgraded to the degree of social revolution: moreover, Thomas appeared as a protector of the poor whose burdens he promised to enlighten.⁷ He was crowned Emperor by the Patriarch of Antioch and almost all the themes in Asia Minor except Opsikon and Armeniakon accepted him. For more than a year Constantinople was besieged by the rebellions until they were smashed into pieces by the Bulgarians in the spring of 823.⁸ Just as Tervel rescued Leo III from the Arabs, Omurtag, the son of the Byzantine most bitter foe, due to the terms of the *Thirty Years' Piece* saved Michael II. Albeit seeming paradoxically to the Bulgarian doctrine described in the previous chapter, neither Thomas was accepted in Pliska as a Slav, nor the help for the Michael was result just of the good Khan's will. Omurtag had been aware that help for obviously inaccessible Michael behind the walls of Constantinople would not be for free. Moreover it was a good pretext for a legal plundering Thrace. Indeed, after the defeat the

⁶ G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957)

⁷ Theophanes Continuatus, "Chronographia", col. 53, in *GSBH*, pp 334 -5.

⁸ Ibid.

rebellion army had to rise the siege, the movement lost its momentum and soon Thomas was captured and killed.

The three years civil war weakened Byzantium in such a degree, that Constantine VII Porphyrogenetus considered the reign of Michael II as the period of the most severe setback of Byzantine expansion in the Balkans.⁹ The Egyptian Arabs ceded Crete and began systematically to push out the Byzantine troops from the Sicily. The Byzantine predominance in the Mediterranean and particularly in Adriatic was completely undermined. Michael's son and successor Theophilus (829-842), was a devout and theological man, not like his father, who was parvenu and illiterate. The new emperor was a romantic person as he showed by his attachment to Iconoclasm, which was now on its death-bed and his enthusiasm for the Arabian culture, against whose bearers, ironically, he had to fight throughout his whole reign. Loyal to his teacher, John the Grammatic, the theoretician and prominent supporter of Iconoclasm, Theophilus made his reign the paramount of the second period of Iconoclasm. The ascending of John the Grammatical at the Patriarch throne in 837 was a starting point for the beginning of cruel persecutions against the iconodules. Although the emperor and the patriarch used every possible means to revive the iconoclast movement, their failure to do so became daily more apparent. Iconoclasm died with the emperor in 842. After the depose of John the Grammatic in the next year, a Synod held in March 843, proclaimed the restoration of the icons.¹⁰ Again, as it was in the time of Irene, the iconodules found their supporter in the face of woman - Theodora, the widow of Theophilus and regent of the minor Michael III.

⁹ Constantinus Porphyrogenetus, "De Administrando Imperio" (DAI) c. 29, 60, in *GSBH*, p.433.
¹⁰ Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria Na Srednovekovnata Bulgarskata Durjava* [History of the medieval Bulgarian state] Vol. I (Sofia, 1937).

The decisions of the synod in March 843, were the turning point in the history of Eastern Europe. The termination of the Iconoclastic controversy was a prime cause of the new vigor and initiative which the empire's foreign policy, now linked more closely than ever to the missionary program of its church displayed in the second half of ninth century. It was then that Byzantine civilization, spreading far beyond the empire's borders gained the allegiance of a substantial part of the Slavic world. The Byzantine cultural revival was not confined to the field of religion. A renaissance of secular learning, particularly in classical studies, had begun in the reign of Theophilus. Two of its remarkable features were the gradual substitution of the minuscule for the uncial writing - reform which for its cultural significance has been compared to the later invention of printing, and the increase the number of *scriptoria* which served as workshops for the coping the manuscripts. Theophilus restored the University of Constantinople and appointed as its principal teacher the celebrated scholar of his time Leo the Mathematician.¹¹ During the following decade after declining of Iconoclasm a remarkable group of scholars gathered within the University of Constantinople. Among them were Leo the Mathematician, a man with encyclopedic knowledge whose interests, apart from the mathematics were focused on natural science and mechanics, Photius, the greatest theologian and philosopher of his time, who played the leading role in this intellectual movement, and Constantine-Cyril, the future *Apostle of the Slavs*. Their mutual relationship and careers illustrate the central role played by the University of Constantinople, reorganized again in 863 by Michael III (842 - 867) and Caesar Bardas,

¹¹ The common opinion among the leading historians (Ostrogorski, Diehl, Boor, Vasilev, Obolenski) is that the history of University of Constantinople is vague during the epoch of Iconoclasm, but it is indisputable that the restoration of the University is a deed of Theophilus.

not only in the revival of learning, but also in the missionary achievements and in the cultural expansion of ninth century Byzantium. Photius, appointed patriarch of Constantinople in 858, planned during the 860s the missions to Moravia, Bulgaria, and Russia; Constantine, after taking part in an embassy to the Arabs (855-6)¹² and leading another to the Khazars (860-1)¹³ headed together with his brother Methodius the Moravian mission (862-3)¹⁴ which brought Byzantine cultural influence to the lands of the both sides of Middle Danube. The iconoclast crisis was a period as decisive for the spiritual development of the Byzantine Empire as the struggle against the Persian and Arab invasions had been for its political existence. The military invasion from the East was followed by a spiritual onslaught, which rolled over the Empire in the form of the iconoclast controversy. Its defeat was as significant for the cultural life of Byzantium as military success had been for its political growth. The downfall of the campaign against icons signified the victory of the Greek religious and cultural outlook over the Asian characteristics embodied in Iconoclasm. Henceforth Byzantium, as a Graeco-Christian Empire also occupied a unique cultural position, set midway between the East and West.

After rehabilitation of the icons there was immediate resumption of the war with the Arabs, where the Byzantine military thinking showed new and remarkable spirit of dare and enterprise. But after all, the period of really intense military and cultural activity in Byzantium began with the changing of government of Theodora and her favorite *logotetus* Theoktistus by her son Michael III and his uncle Bardas in 856. Actually, Ceaser Bardas is the prominent figure initiated the great deeds of Byzantine achievements

¹² *Vita Constantini*, ed. by Hristo Kodov (Sofia: Prosveta, 1981).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

started in the reign of Michael III. After consolidation of the empire power in the East, against the Arabs, Constantinople gained the chance to focus its attention towards the Balkans and the Eastern Europe.

The fear of gradual byzantinization through christianization in Bulgaria after the Thirty Years' Peace logically set the country in an anti-Byzantine, Western orbit. The relations between Bulgaria and the Frankish Empire started during the reign of Omurtag. Hostile in the beginning, regarding the supremacy upon the Slav tribes between Tisa and Timok, they became definitely friendly when the first treat between them was concluded in 832, naturally directed against Byzantium.¹⁵ By the time when Boris I became a ruler in 852, Bulgarian foreign policy seemed firmly set on a pro-Frankish, Western course.¹⁶ Here too, no less than in the relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium, political and religious factors were intertwined. For the Frankish and the Byzantine Empires were then competing not only for the political heritage of the Roman Empire, but also for the religious and consequently the political allegiance of the Balkan people. Moreover, behind the Carolingian Empire stood the Church of Rome, distrustful at times of the tendency of Germanic rulers to regard churches as private property of their secular founders, yet anxious to take advantage of Frankish missionary zeal to extend the boundaries of Western Christendom. Boris' mercurial relations with Byzantium, Rome and the Franks were in the next two decades, to determine the religious and cultural future of his country.

The situation in Southeastern Europe became much more complicated after

¹⁵ *Annales Fuldenses.*” In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica- Scriptores (MGH-SS)*, III, pp 367-368. in *LSBH*, II, pp. 145

¹⁶ Vasil Guzelev, *Knjaz Boris I [Prince Boris I]* (Sofia: Nauka I Izkustvo, 1969)

establishment and consolidation of the state of the Moravian Slavs, Great Moravia. Soon, the Moravian State became main obstacle for the Frankish expansion to the East. Seeking constantly some advantage, Bulgarians often changed their political engagements in the conflict between Moravians and the Franks: in 853 Bulgarians emerged as a Moravian allies against the king of the Franks Louis the Pious.¹⁷ Anyway, Theophilact of Ohrid commented this war as completely unsuccessful: "the Bulgarian land was covered by the Franks."¹⁸ In the consequent peace with the Franks the engagement of Boris for accepting Christianity was mentioned as a clause of the treat¹⁹. The treaty with Bulgarians was concluded under pressure of achieved successes by Great Moravian king Rostislav together with the rebel son of Louis the Pious, Karloman. As a part of his duties to the treat with the Franks Boris invaded the Moravian lands: Rostislav as a counter-strike sought help from the emperor in Constantinople. Thus, in the middle of the ninth century the political forces in Southeastern Europe were divided into two main coalitions: Bulgaria and Frank kingdom, and on other hand Byzantium, Great Moravia with Karloman, and the Slav tribes of Serbian and Croatian. In 863, the political status quo in the Balkans compelled Bulgaria to open several fronts: Constantinople encouraged the Serbian and Croats to attack the Bulgarians.

Moreover, the rumors that Boris is ready to accept the Christianity from the Franks seriously alarmed the Byzantines. The danger of spreading Carolingian influence in Thrace and turning Bulgaria into an avant-garde of the Papacy provoked Michael III to

¹⁷ "Annales Bertiniani" in *MGH-SS*, I. p 448; in *LSBH*, II p 286-287.

¹⁸ Simeon Metropolitan, "Pismata na Teofilakta Ohridski, Arhiepiskop Bulgarski"[Theophilact of Ohrid epistolary] *SbBAN* XXVII, 1931.

¹⁹ "Annales Bertiniani." In *MGH-SS*, I. p 448. *LSBH*, II p 287; Nicolaus I Papa. "Epistola" in *MGH-Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, VI. 293.in *LSBH*, II p. 62.

an immediately military demonstration. In the fall of 863, in accordance of usual tactics he moved the army to the Bulgarian frontier and sent his fleet along the western coast of Black Sea. Now, paralyzed on three fronts, enduring incredible hunger after the poor harvest, stricken by plague and earthquakes, Bulgarian ruler begged for the peace. His country was helpless. The immediate negotiations finalized in the beginning of the 864 with *Deep Thirty Years' Peace*.²⁰ The main conditions in the treat were: the alliance with the Franks had to be terminated, Bulgaria had to accept the Christianity from Constantinople. The territorial borders also were carefully outlined and confirmed. There is no signs that the borders were changed, and thereby the conclusion of V.N. Zlatarski that main goal of the treat was the conversion of Bulgaria in Christianity was accepted by the other leading byzantinists.²¹ The Bulgarian envoys arrived in Constantinople for concluding the treaty were the first officially baptized Bulgarian nobles by the Byzantines. Soon after that, in the spring of 864 Boris accepted the Christianity in Pliska and received the name Michael, as his godfather, the Emperor.

It is significant that several Byzantine authors, writing in the following century, assert that on becoming Christians the Bulgarians acknowledged the sovereignty of the Byzantine emperor.²¹ This claim is also mentioned, with patent disapproval by Pope Nicholas I in a letter addressed to Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims.²² This claim fully accords with a nation, having accepting the empire's Christian faith, became thereby subject to the authority of the emperor, who was held to be the sole legitimate sovereign

²⁰ V.N. Zlatarski, *Istoria* Vol. I, 2. p.21.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²¹ Theophanes Continuatus, "Chronographia," IV,15. In *GSBH*, II, p. 336; Georgius Monachus Continuatus in *GSBH*, II,p 47

²² Nicolaus I Papa, "Epistola" in *MGH-Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, IV, p.601, in *LSBH*, II, p. 65.

of the Christian world. A sign of this subordination was the spiritual relationship that bound henceforth the ruler of the newly converted nation to the person of the emperor. The degree of this relationship, which varied from country to country, was supposed to define the exact status occupied by this nation in the international community of Christian states of which the emperor was the supreme head. In this hierarchy the English ruler was only his friend, the Bulgarian, his son; the Rus' one, his nephew. Charlemagne was grudgingly granted with the position of a brother.²³ How far these Byzantine claims to sovereignty were accepted by the "son of the emperor" Boris is hard to discover. In his subsequent policy he certainly showed no signs of acting as the emperor's subject. Yet, there is reason to believe that he valued his spiritual adoption by the emperor, which increased his authority at home and prestige abroad, and that neither he, nor his successors ever challenged the Byzantine doctrine of the one, universal Empire whose overlord was the Emperor of the Romans in Constantinople. Although unchallenged in theory, this doctrine, with its corollary that Bulgaria occupied a subordinate place in the Byzantine Commonwealth, did in practice generate tremendous tension in the Bulgarian State and society.

Because of the paucity of the sources it is difficult to trace the development of the Christianity in pre-Christianized Bulgaria and the correct evaluation of official Bulgarian attitude towards it. Moreover, for sure there were two attitudes. The official and political served to the expedience of the Bulgarian government and related Christianity with the Byzantinization of the country, i.e. with disloyalty, expressed in hostility and persecution towards the Christians. The other, unofficial and tolerant was expressed by both supreme

²³ Ioanis Karaianopolus, *Politicheska teoria na Vizantia* [Political theory of Byzantium] (Sofia: Climent Ohridski University Press, 1992).

Bulgarian power and common population in certain moments when it was useful for the same this political expedience. It is hard to believe that somebody in Pliska forget about the Christian conversion of the founder of Bulgaria, Khan Kubrat, in the middle of seventh century, or for the conversion of Khan Tervel in beginning of the eight century. Or that even Khan Krum married his sister to the Christian. The same Krum who made a goblet from the skull of Nicephorus, but who neither touched the Christian churches when seized Serdika, nor these in Mesembria or Adrianople.²⁴ Although, the persecutions against the Christians in the reign of Omurtag and Malamir, whose victim became the even crown-prince Enravota, the brother of Malamir, the religious tolerance, when it is not related directly to some political ambitions seemed to be undoubted. At least, because of the fact that Slav population in Bulgaria, although subordinated by the Protobulgarians was left to express its religion freely.²⁵ Furthermore, it is naïve to accept that conversion into Christianity of Bulgaria was result only of some military thread, especially in the time of the varied international coalitions in the middle of ninth century. The reasons were complex and intertwined, and not in the last place was the fact that Christianity in Bulgaria in the eve of the conversion already had certain social position.²⁶ Brilliant diplomat, Boris obviously comprehended the delicate situation in both domestic and international political plan. He needed consolidation of the ethnically divided population of Bulgaria, divine sanction of his power, and recognition in international aspect. He desperately needed to transform Bulgaria into legitimate international power and

²⁴ Ivan Dujchev, "Istoricheski Izvori za Bylgaro-Vizantiiskite Otnoshenia Prez Pyrvata Polovona Na IX Vek" [Historical sources for Bulgarian-Byzantine relations in the first half of ninth century] in *Izvestia na Instituta po Istoria*, XIV-XV. 1964, p 349.

²⁵ Ibid. p 343.

²⁶ Pl. Pavlov, *Bylgarskite Svetci* [Bulgarian saints] (Sofia: Tangra Press. 2001).

although his unsuccessful military operations he turned the military defeats into great diplomatic victory by adopting Christianity without falling in some political dependence.

Meanwhile, the changed political doctrine affected painfully Protobulgarian aristocracy. Boris' conversion was followed by a nation-wide revolt in 865.²⁷ Boris' motivation for the baptizing were shared just by the elite surrounding the Khan - for the huge part of the population and middle nobility the act of Khan's baptizing was symbol of denying the traditions, symbol of betrayal. As if the Khan by his own betrayed the whole state in the hands of its death enemies. In the crucial battle near the capital Pliska Boris, relied on the loyal supporters, crushed the rebellion. The consequent answer of the Khan was horrifying: fifty-two of the ringleaders, all of them Protobulgarian nobles, together with their families were put to death. Boris released the common people, but the horror of the commitment haunted his conscience to his very end. Although there are not reliable sources, the participating of the Byzantine clergy in suggesting this cruel reaction was more than likely.²⁸ The Khan's sense of deep guilt is very underestimate by the historians for the consequent rejection and expulsion out of the country the very same clergy and seeking contacts with Papacy. In his correspondence with Pope Nicholas I Boris was eager to know was his judgment in 865 right or not.²⁹ Furthermore, if we continue this linearity of logic, we can approach the reason for abdicating the throne by Boris and his retiring in monastery for seeking redemption in 889.

At the time the Byzantine authorities were working to consolidate their hold over Bulgaria. Soon after the revolt of the *bojars*, or at least before the news reached

²⁷ Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia, Annales Bertiniani*, MGH-SS, I. p 448. LIBI, II p 287; *Nicolaus I Papa. Epistola*, MGH-Epistolae Karolini Aevi, VI.

²⁸ D.Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc. 1971).

²⁹ "Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum", col. 72, in *LSBH*, II. p 110.

Constantinople, Patriarch Photius sent a letter to the Bulgarian ruler thoroughly resembling the Bulgarian -Byzantine ambiguous relations in the moment.³⁰ Photius was one of the greatest Byzantine scholars of all time, and an accomplished stylist and rhetorician. His epistolary is redolent of these qualities. In ample and learned phraseology, it expounds the doctrines of the church as defined by the oecumenical councils, demonstrates the superiority of Christianity over paganism, and, tempering classical wisdom with orthodox theology and ethics, paints an ideal portrait of a Christian philosopher-ruler. As a literary exercise whose manifest aim was to overwhelm a barbarian ruler with the wisdom and splendor of the Christian tradition of East Rome, Photius' letter is impressive. But much of the patriarch's scholarship and dialectical skill was wholly lost upon Boris, whose knowledge of Greek could scarcely have been adequate to enable him to understand the lengthy admonitions without the help of translator. Moreover, Boris was interested in practical applications of his new religion in the moral, social, and political fields. On these worldly considerations Photius letter had no trace. There was, anyway, passing reference to the *homonía* (concord) which a Christian ruler should strive to establish among his subjects³¹ - an ideal which Boris faced in his own country with the ethnic dualism of Protobulgarians and Slavs and with the religious antagonism of pagan and Christian, could not fail to view with approval. There was doubtless a fine sense of diplomatic value of silence in the letter - nowhere did Photius refer to the Byzantine emperor, Boris' new spiritual father. The opposite: he flattered Bulgarian ruler by comparing him, on account of his evangelical zeal, with

³⁰ Photius, "Epistola"no 8, in *PG*, 107.col. 957; in *GSBH*, II p 212.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Constantine the Great.³² No wonder then that Boris did not find much satisfaction in the letter. The future of his country's relation with the empire must have seemed to him fraught with dangerous pitfalls. The widespread hostility to Byzantium that existed in his country had been dramatically demonstrated by the *boyar* revolt, and the Greek clergy, now active in Bulgaria, combined their missionary work with political loyalty to the emperor. In order to save the independence of his country while continuing to reap the benefits of his new association with the empire, it was essential to build up a separate and if possible autonomous ecclesiastical organization in Bulgaria. The idea of acquiring a separate patriarchy for Bulgaria may well have occurred to Boris at time of his baptizing - it was for sure in his mind by the summer in 866.³³ However, the Byzantines, who regarded Bulgaria as their own missionary preserve, were unlikely to accede to such a request. Photius in his letter to Boris was ominously silent on all matters concerned with the status and organization of the new Bulgarian Church. Frustrated in his plans of ecclesiastical autonomy, and disappointed in the Greeks, who seemed to be treating him as a poor barbarian, Boris decided to renew his former links with the West. In the summer in 866 he sent an embassy to the court of Louis the Pious at Regensburg , requesting Frankish missionaries to his country.³⁴ Simultaneously he dispatched envoys to Rome to ask the Pope Nicholas I for a patriarch and priests.³⁵ Entirely aware about the personal hostility between Nicholas I and Photius regarding the noncanonical ascending of the latter on the Patriarch throne, in the context on the already traditional rivalry between Rome and Constantinople, Boris as if was pronouncing the start of the

³² Ibid.

³³ "Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum", col 73, in *LSBH*, II. p 111.

³⁴ *Annales Bertiniani* in *MGH-SS*, I. p 474; in *LSBH*, II p 228.

³⁵ *Annales Fuldenses* *MGH-SS*, III, pp 367-368; in *LSBH*, II, p.148.

competition for the supremacy of the Bulgarian See. Moreover, in the contest was included the Frankish clergy, rather as representative of significant political power than some third ecclesiastical alternative. As one could suppose, both missions were accepted in Rome and Regensburg with undisguised pleasure. Nicholas I, who claimed spiritual jurisdiction over the whole Christendom and was determined to reimpose the direct authority of Roman Church over these areas of Eastern Balkans which had been annexed by Constantinople in the eight century, was deeply satisfied with the change of Bulgarian course. He promptly sent two bishops to Bulgaria, Formosa from Port and Paul from Pupilonas, and after solemn ceremonial handed back the answers to Boris questioning. The letter of Nicholas I to Boris, as this of Photius to Boris, contained the overall picture of the real situation of Bulgaria, domestically and internationally. And as the Photius' letter, this is exclusively important source for the present study. It provides evidence of the methods used by Byzantine missionaries in Bulgaria and of the doubts and fears aroused in the minds of Boris and his subjects. Moreover, this letter illustrates vividly the strains and pressure produced in Bulgarian social and political life not only as the separate historical event but also as a common model for all Christianized by Byzantium countries, especially Russia and Moravia.

Most of Boris' questions seem to the modern reader trivial. To judge from the pope's reply, not a single theological issue was raised in them. Boris may have felt that he had enough theology from Photius, and he realized properly that there was no fundamental doctrinal difference between the Latin and the Byzantine Churches. The addition of the word *filioque* to the Western Creed and papal supremacy did not become a vital issue until the following year, when it was raised by Photius, who accused the Latin

clergy of teaching this heretical doctrine in Bulgaria. Even then the papal claims were regarded by the Byzantines rather as a matter of jurisdiction, than of doctrine. Boris' questions were concerned with behavior, not with belief. Were the Byzantines right, he asked the pope, in forbidding Bulgarians to have baths on Wednesdays and Fridays,³⁶ to take communion without wearing their belts,³⁷ or to eat meat of animals killed by eunuchs.³⁸ And were they justified in claiming that no layman may conduct public prayers for rain³⁹ or make the sign of the cross over the table before a meal,⁴⁰ and insisting that people should stand in the church with their arms crossed over their breasts?⁴¹ The pope's answers to all these questions were, of course, in the negative. Indeed, one can not avoid the suspicion that Boris expected that this would be so, and that the Bulgarians had been adversely struck by the formalistic ritualism of the Byzantine missionaries and by their attempts to ensure for the clergy a dominant position in the country social life. At least on one occasion the Greek seem to have exerted political pressure on Boris: his question as to whether they were right in refusing to accept the repentance of some of the pagan rebels – also negatively answered by the Pope⁴² - confirms that the Byzantine clergy in Bulgaria were responsible for his decision to deal harshly with the ringleaders of the revolt. The triviality of some of these questions should not blind us to their underlying significance. The little we know about Bulgarian paganism suggests that it attached great importance to religious observance. The problem

³⁶ *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad consulta Bulgarorum*, col. 84, LSBH, II, pp. 112-130.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

of replacing one set of ritual rules by another could not fail to have substantial social implications.

Three of Boris' questions referred specifically to Byzantine ecclesiastical claims. His inquiry as to "how many patriarchs there are"⁴³ was no doubt intended to sound the pope on the Greek theory of the *Pentarchy* and his question as to which of them came second in Christendom after the bishop of Rome⁴⁴ was clearly designed to test Nicholas' opinion on the Byzantine view that it was the patriarch of Constantinople. Nicholas reply to both questions showed scant regard to the Byzantine position. He admitted that there were five patriarchates in all, but he strongly denied that Constantinople was second among them, declaring that this city, though it called itself " the New Rome" was neither an apostolic foundation nor a see that deserved, on other than political grounds, to rank as a patriarchate. The third questions implied that in one field the Byzantines were claiming an even wider authority: were they right, Boris asked, that the holy chrism, used in the sacraments of the church, was produced only in their empire and from there distributed throughout the world?⁴⁵ This statement, which the pope dismissed contemptuously, seems to echo, in an ecclesiastical context, the universal pretensions of the Byzantine Empire.

Boris' interest in patriarchs was, of course, prompted by more than a desire to test the validity of contemporary Byzantine ecclesiology. For reasons that have already been explained he badly wanted one for himself. His request for a patriarch was, however, nimbly side-stepped by the pope. For the present, Boris was told, he would have to be

⁴³ *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum*", col 73, in *LSBH*, II. pp. 112-130.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

content with an archbishop. The future would depend on the report of the legates whom Nicholas was sending to Bulgaria.⁴⁶

Boris was irritated at some of the rules of behavior which the Byzantines were trying to impose on the newly converted Bulgarians, he resented their interference in the political life of the country, and became aware that the supremacy claimed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople over Eastern Europe undermined his hopes of securing an autonomous church. These facts, which may be inferred by the pope's answers, help to explain his overtures to Rome and to the Franks. Apart from these grievances, many of Boris' questions reveal his preoccupation with the particular problems created by the impact of Christianity on still largely pagan society and on the traditional institutions in Bulgaria. Most of these problems had arisen as the result of the importation of Byzantine culture into Bulgaria. These changes and innovations brought by this alien culture produced dislocation and resistance, which are often encountered whenever a more advanced culture-pattern is introduced into a backward country. This phenomenon is clearly of the greatest interest to the researcher of cultural diffusion. The preservation of the letters addressed almost simultaneously to Boris by the Byzantine patriarch and the pope, and the fact, that Boris endeavored to play off the one against the other, have ensured that this process is more fully documented regarding ninth century Bulgaria than in any other East European land over which Byzantine civilization became dominant.

Nicholas letter reveals that the Bulgarian ruling class also was preoccupied by the problem of reconciling Christianity with the traditions of their military society in which the great emphasis was laid on the cultivation of warlike virtues and the glorification of

⁴⁶ *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum*", col 75, in *LSBH*, II, pp. 112-130.

military success. Cases could easily occur when the need to attend to Christian duties interfered with the efficient pursuit of war. What is one to do, Boris asked the pope, when a military campaign coincides with Lent,⁴⁷ or when the news of one enemy attack is received during the time of prayer?⁴⁸ More perplexing still was the inherent contradiction between the Christian insistence on charity and mercy and the need for a ruler to deal harshly with criminals or those who fail in their military duties. Must one then forgive murderers, thieves and adulterers? Can confessions be extracted without the use of torture? Can a criminal be granted the right of asylum in a church? And how is one to treat the soldiers who run away from the battle or disobey the orders to march against the enemy?⁴⁹ And behind these concrete questions loomed the larger and even more difficult one - is the existence of criminal law, with its system of punishments, compatible with Christian ethics? It seems unlikely that Nicholas' replies, in which, he reasonably advised Boris to temper justice with mercy, differed substantially from the attitude taken in these matters by Byzantines, except for their refusal to forgive the repentant survivors of the pagan rebellion, a severity which, we have seen, was censured by the pope.

This group of questions reveals the problem of how the Christian State has to deal with religious dissent. Boris' predecessors had persecuted the Christian of their realm. This situation was now reversed: how, he asked the pope, should one treat inveterate worshippers of pagan idols? Should they have to be forced to accept Christianity?⁵⁰ The pope's advice to use methods of gentle persuasion and, if these failed, to have no social

⁴⁷ *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum*", col 73, in *LSBH*, II. pp. 112-130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

contacts with the heathens, would no doubt have been given by Photius too, had his views been sought on the matter. We may suspect, however, that Byzantine missionaries were sometimes less scrupulous and were apt to turn a blind eye to use more forceful measures by the Bulgarian authorities. Boris' uncertainty as to proper way of dealing with pagans was not confined to the home ground: several of his questions show that he was concerned at the possible effects of Christianity upon his country's foreign policy. What, he asked, was the right way to conclude an alliance with a friendly nation? What one should do when a Christian state breaks a solemn treaty it has signed with one's own country? And is it permissible for a Christian realm to conclude a treaty with a pagan one?⁵¹ The pope's answers, though somewhat hesitant, were clearly designed to reassure Boris: the nature of international treaties must depend on the customs of the countries concerned; in difficult cases advice should be sought from the Church; alliances with the pagan countries are permissible, provided that the Christian partner genuinely seeks to convert its heathen ally. The last of these answers could explain at least the doctrinal base of the Louis the Pious' attitude towards Boris in their treaty concluding in 863: the desire of the Louis to convert the Bulgarians into Christians as a prelude for concluding the treaty.

To sum up, Boris' questions to the pope suggests that in 866 he hoped that by renouncing Byzantine jurisdiction and submitting to Rome he would solve two basic problems which his country faced after its conversion into Christianity. The first arose from the need to ensure that the acceptance of the new religion did not undermine the social cohesion and military efficiency of his realm. The second was inherent in Boris'

⁵¹ *Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum*", col 73, in *LSBH*, II. pp. 112-130.

determination to see that Christian Bulgaria did not become a mere political satellite of the Byzantine cultural expansionism. Internal unity and the maintenance of his country's autonomy were his two basic aims. Both were reflected in the specific requests he made to the pope: he asked for a code of secular law, for liturgical books and an autonomous patriarch.⁵²

There is no doubt that in the next year or so Boris remained convinced that he had got the better deal out of Rome. He swore fidelity to the see of St. Peter, welcomed the papal mission which arrived in Bulgaria in late 866, and expelled the Byzantine clergy from his country. The close relations with the Latin missionaries, especially with Formosa from Port, convinced Boris that this was the right choice: in the person of Formosa the Bulgarian ruler found the desirable leader and organizer of his church. Obviously, Formosa was a charismatic person with the significant influence upon Boris not only because of his personal qualities but also because of the completely coincidence of their views regarding the autonomy of Bulgarian church, which now gained its well-defined outlines.⁵³ In the second half of 867, in Rome arrived envoys from Bulgaria, which in behalf of their ruler wanted Formosa to be pointed by the pope for archbishop of Bulgaria.⁵⁴ Nicholas I was confused. Aside from his doubtless political skills, he was selfish and suspicious, seeking everywhere a double game. He was well remembered Boris' political turning around two years ago and suspected not without reason that Formosa intentions went too far away from the primary scheme of Rome: to spread its jurisprudence over Bulgaria but not to grant some independence. Instead of Bulgarian

⁵² Responsa Nicolai I Papae ad Consulta Bulgarorum", col 76, in *LSBH*, II, pp. 112-130.

⁵³ Eugenius Bulgarius. "Invectiva in Roman pro Formoso Papa", in *LSBH*, II, p. 309.

⁵⁴ Anastasius Librarian. "Vita Nicolai I Papae", col. 609-610, in *LSBH*, II, p. 185-187.

demanding, he pointed two new persons as his legates, the bishops Dominic from Trivena and Grimwald from Polimartia, and insisting of immediately returning of Formosa in Rome.

The papal refusal to promote Formosa as an archbishop of Bulgaria was the most fatal mistake of the Rome's relations with the East, with crucial results not only regarding Bulgarian incorporation into Rome's orbit, but also regarding the common rivalry with Constantinople for the supremacy over the Eastern Europe. By the end of 867 opinion in Bulgaria appeared to swing in favor of the Byzantine Church. Moreover, after the resigning of Photius in the summer in of 867 and the death of Nicholas I in November 867, in the context of new *status quo* between Rome and Constantinople, the new pope Hadrian II was not in hurry to take some final decision.

The Byzantine authorities soon recovered from the blow of the competition with Rome for the Bulgarian see. Their reaction was vigorous. In the spring of 867 Photius sent an encyclical letter to the leaders of the other Eastern Churches.⁵⁵ Much of the content was devoted to the last events in Bulgaria. After alluding to the original conversion, when that barbaric nation "renounced their ancestral demons and orgies"⁵⁶ he unleashed a flow of passionate rhetoric on the subject of their recent apostasy. Passing from the metaphors to doctrine, he lists the more disreputable customs and false teachings imposed by the wicked Latins on the unfortunate Bulgarians. Some of these differences, which were then becoming controversial issues between Byzantine and Roman Churches, may seem of minor importance, but Photius was in pain to remain to his Eastern colleagues that "even the smallest neglect of the traditions leads to the complete contempt

⁵⁵ Photius. "Epistola". no 9, col. 546, in *GSBH*, II p 220.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

of the dogma".⁵⁷ More serious still, he pointed out, was the fact that the Latin clergy in Bulgaria was propagating the dogma of the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit (the *filioque*): this was downright heresy. Photius assured other patriarchs that he would do everything in his power to bring the Bulgarians back to Orthodoxy, and urged them to send representatives to a synod, to be convened in Constantinople in order to condemn the Latin errors.⁵⁸

The Bulgarian question was turned into an exclusively important one in the growing tension between Rome and Byzantine Churches. Since 863, when the pope Nicholas I, claiming direct jurisdiction over all Eastern Christendom, excommunicated and deposed Photius, a state of open schism existed between them. The papal decision were ignored in Constantinople, and in 867 Photius initiated synod, presided by the emperor, deposed and excommunicated Nicholas I, and condemned the *filioque* and other Latin usage. Later in that year the situation was transformed by a palace revolution in Constantinople. Michael III was assassinated and his successor and murderer, Basil I, compelled Photius to resign. Ignatius, the new patriarch was *persona grata* with the pope, and his appointment restored communion between Rome and Constantinople.⁵⁹

If the new pope, Hadrian II, hoped that the end of the schism would cause the Byzantine to renounce their claim over Bulgaria, he was mistaken. Boris, whose hopes of securing a patriarch must have worn thin by then, was showing increasing impatience at Rome's refusal to let him appoint a person of his choice as archbishop of Bulgaria. Both Nicholas I and Hadrian II were determined to show him that the decision in this matter

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Photius. "Epistola". no 9, col. 546, in *GSBH*, II p 220.

⁵⁹ Dimitri Obolensky. *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

rested with the Holy See. The former, in the closing days of his life, complained that the Bulgarians were falling prey to Byzantine propaganda and were cold-shouldering the Latin clergy. Papal librarian Anastasius noted with alarm that the Greeks were using full-scale bribery and indigenous sophistries in an endeavor to detach Boris from Rome.⁶⁰ It is clear that the full resources of imperial diplomacy were being marshaled to bring Bulgaria back into the Byzantine orbit.

In the next year, 868, Boris continued to persist in pursuing his aim: an archbishop from Rome. This time Boris' choice was deacon Marinius, confident person and follower of Formosa's ecclesiastical and political views. Loyal to his credo of papal supremacy and because of arose distrust towards Formosa's ambitions, Hadrian II again, as his predecessor, refused to confirm the Bulgarian choice. His appointment was deacon Sylvester, who together with the bishop of Ancona, Leopard, arrived in Pliska to be chosen by the Bulgarians.⁶¹ One more time Boris was assured that the interests of the Holy See, to turn Bulgaria into dependant political pillar of the papacy, an avant-garde of the Rome's rivalry with Constantinople did not coincided with the Bulgarians ones. His intentions were totally different: to extract the advantages from accepting Christianity without falling in some political dependence, no matter which one, the papal, or the Byzantine. The appointment of deacon Sylvester confirmed the Boris' view that the time of honeymoon with Rome was finished. The mistakes of the papal-supremacy credo were repeated with monstrous uniformity. Although the changing circumstances around Bulgarian Church problem, the attitude of Rome was always the same: no flexibility, no creativeness, and no diplomatic tact. Sylvester did not stayed in Bulgaria for a long time

⁶⁰ Anastasius Librarian, "Vita Nicolai I Papae", col. 623-624, in *LSBH*, II, p. 190-191.

⁶¹ Anastasius Librarian, "Vita Hadriani II Papae", col. 639, in *LSBH*, II. 193-4.

– in the next year he, accompanied by Dominic from Trivena and Leopard from Ancona, was sent back to Rome. They brought a letter from Boris again, but this time the tone of the latter was peremptory. “We wish bishop Formosa or deacon Marinius to be appointed as eventual archbishop of Bulgaria”⁶² Startled Hadrian decided to maneuvering. In his extensive letter he was agreed with any choice of the reverent Bulgarian prince except both persons, Formosa or Marinius.⁶³ Boris did not need this expected option anymore. He was already decided what to do.

In February 870, a council of the universal church, convened in Constantinople to judge the rival claims of Photius and Ignatius, was ending its sessions, started in October 869. Its last plenary meeting was attended by Bulgarian delegates who brought an urgent message from their sovereign. Three days later the council was hastily re-convened on the emperor’s orders to consider Boris’ communication: to which church, he disingenuously inquired, should his country belong – to the Roman or to the Byzantine?⁶⁴ An acrimonious debate ensued, with the papal legates taking one side and the representatives of the Eastern patriarchs, the other. Both sides appealed to historical precedent. The former urged that Bulgaria was part of the ecclesiastical province of Illiricum, which had once been under Roman jurisdiction; The Byzantines and the Easterners retorted that this territory had formerly belonged to the Byzantine Empire. It was a foregone conclusion: the pope’s representatives were in a minority and the council decided that Bulgaria should henceforth be under jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁶⁵

⁶² Anastasius Librarian, "Vita Hadriani II Papae", col. 639, in *LSBH*, II. 193-4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The decision was implemented forthwith. It was now a turn of the Latin clergy to be expelled from Bulgaria, Greek priests returned, and an archbishop appointed by Patriarch Ingatius, was sent to take charge of the Bulgarian Church. The Byzantine authorities were careful in 870 to avoid the mistake four years earlier had thrown Boris into the arms of the pope. The archbishop of Bulgaria, though canonically dependent on Constantinople, was granted of autonomy, and a rank superior to that of the majority of the bishops of the Byzantine Church, subjected directly to the Patriarch.⁶⁶

The relations between Bulgaria and the empire now seemed set on a smooth course. The Bulgarian Church was divided into dioceses, headed by bishops. Most were presumably sent from Constantinople. Through them, and through clerics and secular agents who accompanied them, and the further diffusion of Byzantine culture to Bulgaria seemed assured. Young Bulgarians, destined for high office in their church, were sent to Constantinople to be trained in the monastic life, where they attended a school under the direction of abbot Arsenius.⁶⁷ Among them was prince Symeon, Boris' son, who was to acquire in Constantinople not only a religious training, but a solid grounding in Greek secular education. Yet behind this picture of peaceful cultural penetration underlying obstacles persisted. The tensions caused by the impact of Byzantine patterns upon a rapidly changing and still partly pagan Bulgarian society, and so vividly illustrated by Boris' correspondence with Nicholas I, could not be removed in a few years. Moreover, the remnants of the old Protobulgarian clans, crippled though they were by Boris' harsh measures after their revolt, were gathering strength in the new generation, their traditional

⁶⁶ George Ostrogorsky, *History of Byzantine Empire*; Ivan Giuzelev, *Knjaz Boris I* [Prince Boris I], (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1969); Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria*.

⁶⁷ Photius, "Epistola". 95, PG, 102.col. 904-5; in *GSBH*, II p 222.

dislike of Byzantium undiminished. We lack detailed information of the difficulties which the Bulgarian nation was experiencing in adapting itself to the cultural changes that resulted from its new relationship with the empire during the two decades following Boris' final acceptance of Byzantine Christianity. But there is no doubt that these difficulties were enhanced by two factors – the continued ethnic dualism between Protobulgarians and Slavs, and the fact that Byzantine Christianity was preached in a language unintelligible to the great majority of Boris' subjects. It is understandable that because of certain reasons explained before, Christianity continued to gain more converts among the Slavs than among the Protobulgarians. Thus, Boris was increasingly driven to rely on the cooperation of the former to achieve the two main aims of his internal policy: the consolidation of the Bulgarian Church and the promotion of social and political unity within his realm. In one sense these two aims were related – for his Slavonic subjects seem to have accepted far more readily than the Protobulgarian aristocracy, the new patterns of Byzantine culture. In another aspect, they were still difficult to reconcile: the clergy working in Bulgaria were, at least in the higher ranks of the hierarchy, for the most part Byzantine missionaries few of who could have had an adequate command of the Slav language. The church services were celebrated in Greek, of which many of native priests were largely ignorant. Christianity thus suffered from the grave disability of appearing in Bulgarian an alien garb, and its leading representatives labored under the disadvantage of being foreigners, whose means of communication with their flocks were at best imperfect.

It did not take Boris long time to realize that only by acquiring a native clergy and by solving the linguistic problem could his people safely continue to accept Byzantine civilization without risk of losing their cultural independence.

CHAPTER THREE

BULGARIA - MOTHERLAND OF THE SLAVIC CULTURE

Boris' efforts for adopting Christianity without falling in political dependence, combined with his longing for building a united nation from the ethnically divided population of his country led unavoidably to the point of intersection with the mission and work of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius. Paradoxically, the Bulgarian interpretation of Moravian mission of Cyril and Methodius resulted in the most significant conquest of the Slavic world in the Early Middle Ages and at the same time became the greatest success for the empire's foreign policy. The beginnings of this operation were modest and unspectacular, but its long-term effects were of tremendous importance for the future relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria and thus, for the peoples of Eastern Europe.

In the middle of ninth century, the ruler of the Moravian State, Rastislav, succeeded in his attempt to overthrow Frankish hegemony. The threat of an independent Moravia provoked swift reaction from the Franks and it was mainly to curb Rastislav's insubordination that Louis the Pious concluded the alliance with Boris, which has been mentioned in the previous chapter.¹ The Moravian prince, faced with the danger of military encirclement, reacted with equal promptness. In 867 he sent an embassy to Constantinople. It was no wonder that that his envoys were instructed to seek a political

¹ See footnote 19 in previous chapter.

alliance with the empire. Michael III's government, which felt equally threatened by the rapprochement between Bulgaria and the Franks, responded to Rastislav's offer by concluding a treaty with Moravia. These political negotiations between Byzantium and Moravia are not explicitly mentioned in any contemporary document. However, the international alignment of forces at the time, as well as subsequent events, make it virtually certain that these negotiations were consummated by a formal alliance between the two powers. Medieval writers were interested in another aspect of Rastislav's embassy to Byzantium, which indeed was to prove of more lasting significance than the political one. Rastislav requested the emperor to send the Moravians a Christian missionary acquainted with their own Slavonic language.² It is clear that in so doing he was moved by the awareness that the German priests working in Moravia were acting as agents of Frankish imperialism, and by the hope that a Slav-speaking clergy owing allegiance to Constantinople would help him to increase his country's cultural autonomy. The emperor's choice of ambassadors to head the return mission to Moravia fell on two brothers from Thesalonika, Constantine and Methodius. Some reference has already been made to the career of the former, to his intellectual distinction, to his personal links with the leading Byzantine scholars of his time, and to the role played by the University of Constantinople in training him as a missionary and a diplomat. The two brothers came from a family with a tradition of public service; their father had worked on the staff of the *strategos* of the theme of Thesalonika. Methodius, the elder, had held a high administrative post, possibly that of governor, in one of the Slav provinces of the

² "Vita Methodius," in Hristo Kodov, *Prostranni Jitia na Svetite Bratja Kiril I Metodii* [The lives of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius] (Sofia: Climent Ohridski University Press, 1981).

empire.³ He and his brother were thus, by birth and training, part of the Byzantine "establishment", while their education placed them in the mainstream of the tradition of scholarship and letters which was then actively sponsored by government circles in Constantinople. Both entered the ranks of the clergy: Constantine was ordained deacon, and Methodius became a monk in the great monastic foundation of Mount Olympus in Asia Minor. Their ability and experience were highly valued in Constantinople. In 860, for instance, they were entrusted by the Emperor Michael III and Patriarch Photius with an important political and religious mission to the realm of the Khazars, north of the Caucasus.⁴ Several years before that Constantine headed another mission, this time to the court of the Arab Caliphate in Baghdad.⁵ When they were chosen for the Moravian mission, Methodius was abbot of one of the monasteries of Mount Olympus,⁶ while Constantine was a teacher in philosophy at the patriarchal school attached to the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.⁷

Constantine and Methodius were admirably equipped to lead a mission, one of whose aims was to preach Christianity to the Moravians in the Slavonic language. Thessalonica, their native town, was in the ninth century a bilingual city; the presence of numerous Slavs living within its walls, and the close contact between its citizens and the Slav communities in the surrounding countryside, explain the intimate knowledge of their language which they acquired in their childhood. The success of Moravian mission

³ Vita Methodius," in Hristo Kodov, *Prostranni Jitja na Svetite Bratja Kiril I Metodii* [The lives of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius] (Sofia: Climent Ohridski University Press, 1981).

⁴ Dimiter Angelov. "Hazarskata misia na Kiril I Metodii" in *Vizantiiskata diplomacia prez IX vek* [The Khazar's mission of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius in Byzantine diplomacy during ninth century] (Sofia, 1978).

⁵ D. Angelov. "Arabskata misia na Kiril" [The Arabian mission of Constantine-Cyril] in *Ibid.*

⁶ *Vita Methodius*

⁷ *Vita Constantini*. in Hristo Kodov. *Prostranni Jitja na Svetite Bratja Kiril I Metodii* [The lives of the saint brothers Cyril and Methodius] (Sofia: Climent Ohridski University Press, 1981).

depended not only on the ability of its members to preach Christianity in the local language by word of mouth, but also on necessity to provide the Moravians with Slavonic translations of the Scriptures and of the Christian liturgy. This problem had for some time been exercising the minds both of the Frankish and Byzantine missionaries who worked among the Slavs. The Franks, during the first half of the ninth century, had translated for the benefit of their Moravian converts a few Christian texts from Latin into Slavonic, and transcribed them in Latin characters. Among them were formularies of baptism and confession, the Creed and the Lord's prayer.⁸ The Byzantines had made similar efforts during their missions among the Slav subjects of the empire, transcribing Slavonic religious terms or even whole texts by means of the Greek alphabet, doubtless in the expectation of the day when these alien settlers on their territory be sufficiently Hellenised to understand the Greek Scriptures and liturgy.⁹ Outside the borders of the empire, however, the problem was more complicated. Apart from the fact that a number of sounds in the Slavonic language could not be adequately rendered by means of the Greek alphabet, the new Slav nations that were emerging in the ninth century beyond the empire's northern borders were developing a degree of political and cultural self-awareness which made their leaders desire to obtain proper translations of the Scriptures and the liturgy into their own language. And this presupposed the existence of a Slavonic alphabet.

The purpose of innovation of the Slavonic alphabet created by Constantine-Cyril and his brother Methodius opens countless hypotheses and discussions among the historians. According to *Vita Constantini*, Michael III admitted to Constantine in 862 that

⁸ Dimitri Obolensky. *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

⁹ Ibid.

his two predecessors, Theophilus and Michael II, had tried in vain to invent a Slavonic alphabet.¹⁰ This task was now undertaken, and successfully accomplished by Constantine. Medieval writers describe this invention as rapid and state that it was made for the specific needs of the Moravian mission and as the result of Constantine's appeal for divine help. His early career certainly shows that he was an outstanding linguist. Yet, we also know that he had collaborators and disciples who helped him in this task. It seems likely, that both he and Methodius, whose interest in missionary work among the Slavs must have developed well before 862, had been working to compose a Slavonic alphabet for some years before Rastislav's embassy arrived in Constantinople.¹¹ The alphabet which Constantine invented before leaving was, not surprisingly in view of his birthplace and childhood environment, adapted to Slavonic dialect of Southern Macedonia, from the neighborhood of Thesalonica. Moreover, knowing well that the brothers originated of the nobility of Thesalonika, i.e. there was little chance for inter-social contacts between them and speaking Slavonic populations, the directions for seeking the roots of such familiarity with the Slavic vernacular have to be pointed in their family. Such a heretical hypothesis, that the Constantine and Methodius originated from mixed Graeco-Slavic family is not new in historiography, but although logical, unfortunately, there is no trace in the sources of that. Anyway, it should be noted that in the ninth century the various languages of the Slavonic world were far from having their present differentiation: their close similarity in vocabulary and syntax ensured that the spoken tongue of the Macedonian Slavs was fully intelligible to those of Moravia.

¹⁰ *Vita Constantini*

¹¹ *Vita Methodius*

The nature of Constantine's alphabet has provoked no less controversy than the purpose of this innovation. The oldest Slavonic manuscripts that have come down to us are written in two different scripts, the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic. The complex philological problem of which of them was invented by Constantine- Cyril can not be adequately discussed in this study. It should be said, however, that in the virtually unanimous belief of present-day historians, the alphabet invented by Constantine was the Glagolitic, while so-called Cyrillic script, which bears his later monastic name of Cyril, is the result of an attempt by Methodius' disciples, to adapt Greek uncial writing of the ninth century to the phonetic peculiarities of the Slavonic tongue in Bulgaria. Of the two, the Glagolitic is more complicated. Although, the main source for that was the Greek minuscule script, some of the letters bore the signs of Semitic and Coptic alphabets. Cyrillic, on other hand, is an adaptation of the Greek alphabet, but its comparative simplicity, and its resemblance of the Greek script, invested it with far greater historical importance.

Before leaving Constantinople, Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, translated a selection of lessons from the Gospels, intended for liturgical use. In the Byzantine Church the lectionary begins with the opening verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, which are read during the Easter liturgy: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."¹² Their symbolic relevance to the impending task of evangelizing the Slavs in their own language was lost neither on Constantine, nor on his medieval biographer.¹³

¹² Holy Gospel by St. John I:1

¹³ *Vita Constantini*

In the autumn of 863 the Byzantine mission arrived in Moravia and was warmly welcomed by Prince Rastislav. Its immediate tasks were two. The first was a religious and cultural one: Constantine and Methodius had to build the foundations of Slav vernacular church by translating the essential liturgical and scriptural texts and training a native clergy. The second problem was political. As envoys of the Byzantine emperor, they needed to come to terms with the Frankish clergy who had been working in Moravia for at least half a century.¹⁴ Moreover, it was not only the Frankish clergy, but also the secular and ecclesiastical powers which supported them: the Frankish Empire which claimed political authority over Rastislav's domains and the Roman Church, which exercised spiritual jurisdiction over Moravia. In the first of these tasks they achieved rapid success. The liturgical services had so far been celebrated in Latin, a language with which the Moravians were almost wholly unfamiliar. In a short time Constantine, in the words of his biographer, translated into Slavonic "the whole ecclesiastical services, matins, the hours, vespers, compline and the Mass."¹⁵ There is little doubt that Constantine's Slavonic liturgy was, at least originally, based on the current Greek rite, and that the Mass which he translated was the Byzantine liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. At some later date, it seems that the Latin Mass was also translated into Slavonic for the use of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, though in what circumstances we do not know.¹⁶

The second problem that faced the Byzantine mission, posed by the presence in Moravia of an active Frankish clergy, jealous of its prerogatives, was a more delicate one.

¹⁴ Francis Dvornik."The significance of the Mission of Cyril and Methodius". *Slavic Review*. Vol.23.issue 2 (June, 1964) pp 195-211.

¹⁵ *Vita Constantini*

¹⁶ Francis Dvornik."The significance of the Mission of Cyril and Methodius". *Slavic Review*. Vol.23.issue 2 (June, 1964) pp 195-211.

Constantine and Methodius had come as envoys of their emperor to a country to which Byzantium could lay no convincing political or ecclesiastical claim. They had come as an invitation of the Moravian ruler, but the latter for his entire bid for independence, was still under strong Frankish pressure. Indeed in 864, the year following the arrival of Byzantine missionaries, the armies of Louis the Pious invaded Moravia, eventually forcing Rastislav's submission. The Frankish clergy, not without reason, regarded Constantine and Methodius not like squatters on pagan soil, but like trespassers on their own missionary field. Furthermore, the Slavonic liturgy which the Greeks were implanting in the country, no doubt with the support of the Moravians themselves, was a challenge to the liturgical monopoly, based on the Latin Mass, which the Franks had hitherto enjoyed in the country. The latter must have known that the Byzantine Church recognized, at least in theory, that the Greek liturgy could be lawfully translated into foreign languages. But Moravia was part of Western Christendom and in the western Church, that the Latin had for long been recognized as the only legitimate idiom for public worship. It is hardly surprising that the Frankish clergy, enforced by the Louis the Pious' military demonstration of force, viewed the missionary activity of Constantine and Methodius with profound suspicion. It was clear that the Byzantine mission could survive only if it secured the protection of some power able to support it against the Franks. The Byzantine Empire, geographically remote and occupied at the time with its dispute with the Roman Church and the conversion of Bulgaria, could not be expected to intervene effectively. Prince Rastislav did everything he could to assist the work of Thesalonician brothers, but his freedom of action was severely limited by the military strength of Louis the Pious. There was only one power able to interfere authoritatively in the ecclesiastical

affairs of Moravia and sufficiently interested at the same time to reduced the influence of the Frankish clergy - the Papacy. The eastward expansion of the Frankish missions and the manifested intentions of the bishops of Salzburg and Pasau to build a powerful Germanic Church in Central Europe were arousing the suspicions of Pope Nicholas I. Knowing well the insubordinate tendencies of Frankish episcopate, he considered that their policy threatened the superior rights of the Roman See. In 867 he sent an invitation to Constantine and Methodius to visit him in Rome.¹⁷

The two brothers received the invitation in Venice. They had left Moravia several months earlier in order to have some of their disciples ordained to the priesthood in Constantinople.¹⁸ On their way to Venice they stayed for certain time at the court of the Slav prince Kocel, near Lake Balaton in Pannonia. Although Kocel owed political fealty to long Louis the Pious and spiritual allegiance to the archbishop of Salzburg, he welcomed the Byzantine missionaries with the same enthusiasm as Rastislav. Like his Moravian colleague, Kocel obviously hoped to replaced the Frankish hierarchy by his own Slav-speaking clergy owing more or less tenuous allegiance to the Byzantine patriarchate: he and fifty of his subjects were instructed by the Constantine and Methodius in the Slavonic alphabet.¹⁸

In Venice, the Thesalonician brothers had their second encounter with an organized group of Latin clerics strongly opposed to the Slavonic Liturgy. Constantine's biographer suggested that this opposition was fiercer and more articulate than the resistance they had encountered in Moravia. The local bishops, priests and monks, he

¹⁷ Anastasius Librarian. *Vita Nicolae I Papae*, LSBH, II, p 185-186.

¹⁸ Dvornik's analysis on *Vita Constantini* is indisputable here.

¹⁸ *Vita Constantini*.

tells us, fell upon Constantine "like ravens upon a falcon,"¹⁹ arguing that it is permissible to celebrate the divine office only in three languages - Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

Constantine retorted by denouncing this doctrine as "the three language' heresy,"²⁰ the name which his disciples later adopted as a polemical term to describe their opponents' views, and in an ensuing debate with his adversaries propounded with great eloquence his conviction that all the languages are equally valid and acceptable in the sight of God.²¹

The stay of the two brothers in Rome changed radically both the character of their mission and their own destinies. They probably reached Rome in late December 867. Pope Nicholas had died on November 13, but they were solemnly received by his successor Hadrian II, who was elected pope on December 14. The relics believed to be those of Pope Clement I (90-99?), which Constantine had discovered in Cherson on his mission to the Khazars, and which the brothers had taken with them to Moravia, provided the main reason for such a reception.²² Moreover, they could hardly have chosen a more propitious moment to plead their case before the Holy See. The Papacy had recently gained the spiritual allegiance of Boris of Bulgaria, whose realm bordered on Moravia. It was not unreasonable to hope that the whole Slavonic world might soon be brought under its direct authority. The Roman visit of Constantine and Methodius augured well at the beginning. Hadrian II not only approved their liturgical innovations, but also ordered that their disciples should be ordained.

¹⁹ *Vita Constantini*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The relics were not genuine. It is not even established that Pope Clement I died as a martyr. The *Acts of Clement*, not composed until the fourth century, contained the legendary account about his exile and death as a martyr in Cherson. In Constantine time the authenticity of this legend was generally accepted. For details see Dvornik, *The legends of SS Cyril and Methodius*. (Paris, London, 1949).

Constantine did not long survive this crowning achievement of his missionary career. After a brief illness, he died in Rome on 14 February 869 and was buried in the church of St. Clement in Rome. A few weeks before his death he became a monk under his now more familiar name of Cyril. After consulting Prince Kocel, Hadrian II appointed Methodius archbishop of Panonia and papal legate to the Slavonic nations, reviving for this purpose the long defunct diocese of Sirmium, and granting him jurisdiction over Panonia, Moravia, Slovakia and perhaps part of Croatia. At that very moment the political situation in Central Europe took a critical turn which placed in jeopardy the whole future of the Slavonic Church as planned by the pope, Methodius, Rastislav and Kocel. In 870 Rastislav's nephew Svetopluk seized power in Moravia, had his uncle imprisoned and acknowledged the supremacy of Louis the Pious. Methodius, on arriving in his new missionary diocese, thus found himself deprived of one of his main supporters. The Frankish and Bavarian clergy, who considered that their prerogatives in Panonia and Moravia had been violated by Methodius' new jurisdiction, secured his arrest. Condemned as a usurper of episcopal rights by a synod of bishops probably held in Regensburg, he was imprisoned for two and a half years in Swabia.²³ It was not until 873 that the new pope John VIII, having learnt at last of Methodius plight, compelled Louis the Pious and the Bavarian bishops to release him.²⁴

During the next twelve years Methodius worked to build up his Slavonic Church in Central Europe. His position was a singularly difficult one. He had to contend with three main problems, caused by the Franks, the Moravian government, and the Papacy. The Frankish clergy did everything possible to undermine his authority: their resentment

²³ *Vita Methodius*. In Kodov.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

of his archiepiscopal powers and their dogged opposition to the Slavonic liturgy now combined with a theological grievance, which they loudly voiced both in Moravia and Rome. The Frankish Church was now firmly committed to the doctrine of the *filioque*. The Church of Rome, though it did not formally accept this doctrine until the early eleventh century, had already begun to adopt it unofficially. Methodius, who despite his position as papal legate, remained a Byzantine in outlook, could not fail to regard this doctrine, accepted by his Frankish subordinate clergy, as heretical.

Secondly, Methodius was handicapped by the lukewarm support of Prince Svetopluk. The new Moravian ruler, after revolting against Louis the Pious and even defeating his troops in battle, began to lean increasingly on the Frankish clergy. His annexation of a large part of Panonia suggests that he may have entertained the ambition to supplant the Franks as the main political power in Central Europe. He certainly had no use for the pro-Byzantine policy pursued by his predecessor.

Finally, Methodius came to realize in these years that Rome was losing interest in the Slavonic liturgy. It seem that the Papacy was becoming more and more unwilling to risk a major conflict with the Frankish clergy for the sake of this liturgy. But John VIII, though he imposed a temporary ban on the Slavic liturgy, continued to support Methodius. In 880 he vindicated the liturgical use of the vernacular as firmly as Constantine had done in his disputation with the protagonists of the "three languages heresy" in Venice.²⁵ This proved to be the last papal pronouncement in medieval times in favor of the Slavonic liturgy. John VIII successors, turning their back on the policy inaugurated by Nicholas I and Hadrian II, banned its use.

²⁵ Papa John VIII. "Epistola" in *LSBH*, II, p. 240

In his growing loneliness, Methodius now turned for help to his Byzantine fatherland. His enemies in Moravia were vindictive enough to try to isolate him from this last source of support. According to Methodius' biographer, they spread alarming rumors, alleging that he was in disgrace in Constantinople.²⁶ In 881 Methodius traveled to Constantinople at the invitation of Basil I. He was warmly received by the Emperor and patriarch Photius, and before returning he left behind in Constantinople two of his disciples, supplied with church books translated from Greek into Slavonic.²⁷ The purpose of his visit in Byzantine capital remains vague and hypothetical. Byzantine support may have impressed Svetopluk, but it did not put a stop to the hostility of the Frankish clergy and their head representative Wiching.

Anyway, after his return to Moravia, he devoted the last his years to the work of translation. He had already helped Constantine to render into Slavonic the Greek liturgical offices and the New Testament. Now, with the assistance of his disciples, he translated the canonical books of the Old Testament, selected writings from the Greek Fathers (*Paterikon*) and the *Nomokanon*, a Byzantine manual of canon law and of imperial edicts concerning the Church. The latter usefully supplemented the adapted translation, attributed by some scholars to Constantine, of the *Ecloga*, a Byzantine manual of private and criminal law. Thus, in the space of some twenty years, Constantine and Methodius had provided the new Slavonic Church in Central Europe not only with the Christian Scriptures, but also with translations and adaptations of Byzantine juridical texts, religious and secular.

²⁶ *Vita Constantini* in Kodov.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

In 885 St. Methodius, harassed by the intrigues of the Frankish clergy, Svetopluk's unconcern, and the indifference of Rome, died in Moravia. After his death his principal disciples, Gorazd (a Moravian Slav, whom he had appointed as his successor), Laurence, Clement, Naum and Angelarius, were imprisoned by the Moravian authorities. The last three were then exiled from the country. So ended the life work of SS Cyril and Methodius, apostles of the Slavs and founders of Slavonic Christianity. The subsequent arrests and deportations - the elder Slavic priests were shipped off to the Bulgarian frontier, younger ones were auctioned on the slave market of Venice - eliminated the elite of the Slavic hierarchy in Great Moravia. About twenty years later, the Hungarian invasion destroyed the Moravian State. It also broke the backbone of debilitated Slavo-Byzantine Church of Moravia and Panonia. Yet it took more than two centuries for the result of their work to be wiped out in Central Europe - a sure sign of its vitality and popular appeal.²⁸ Outlawed in Moravia, the Slavonic liturgical and literary tradition probably found refuge in remote monasteries in the Moravian and Bohemian forests. In Bohemia, which had formed part of Svatopluk's realm and which after his death became subject to the Frankish Empire, the Slavonic liturgy continued to survive alongside Latin Christianity for two centuries. Unfortunately, it was fruitless existence, with fading functions and no more results than to bring Bohemia into the orbit of Graeco-Slavonic culture. This fact, anyway, is significant only by the view of technically geographical extending of the Byzantine civilization, not by its solid cultural results. This

²⁸ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

persistence of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition in Bohemia, Dalmatia, or even Southern Poland is, however, of marginal importance for the furthermore cultural development of the Slavic world.

What was truly significant for building the bridges of Byzantine cultural penetrating to Slavonic world was the fact that the success of Cyrillo-Methodian mission began in exile. Expelled from Moravia upon their master's death, the disciples of Methodius found refuge in another land. Their work was saved for Europe and the Slavs by the Bulgarians, whose destiny was to enrich the work of Constantine-Cyrrill and Methodius on their soil and, in the fullness of the time to transmit it to the other people who owed allegiance to the Orthodox Church - the Serbs, the Ukrainians, the Russians, and the Romanians. In the initial stages of this work, Clement was the person who played the leading role.

On their release from the Moravian prison Clement and his companions longed to go to Bulgaria, hoping to find the "solace" there.²⁹ It is unlikely that, in attributing these expectations to them, the hagiographer is simply being wise after the event. Clement was Bulgarian by birth: after the torments he had endured in Moravia, it was natural enough that he should seek "solace" in his native land. But there may well have been other reasons for his choice of Bulgaria: indeed, the author of the "Long Life" seems to hint, even then, at a meeting of minds between Clement and the Bulgarian ruler.³⁰ Boris was presumably well informed from neighboring Moravia about the achievements of Cyril

²⁹ Alexander Milev. *Grytskite zhitija na Kliment Ohridki* [The Greek lives of Clement of Ohrid], Sofia, 1966. "The Greek Lives." consists the two main sources for the life of Clement: "The Long Life" whose authorship disputably is attributed to Teophilact of Ohrid, and the "Brief Life" - with an author Dimiter Chomatian. Furthermore they will be referred as "Brief life" and "Long life".

³⁰ *The Long Life of Clement*, in Milev. There is big probability that this encounter could be realized in the sense of the meeting between Bulgarian envoy and Cyrillo-Methodian mission in Rome in the winter of 868, as it is suggested also by the *Long Life of Constantine-Cyrril*.

and Methodius, several of whose leading disciples were now at hand to help him resolve his cultural and political dilemma, described in details in the previous chapter. No wonder that, in the words of the "Long Life", Boris "thirsted after such men."³¹ The military governor of Belgrade, then in Bulgarian territory, was doubtless aware of his sovereign's preoccupation. When Clement, Naum and Angelarius had rested from their exertions and sufferings, he sent them on to Pliska, the Bulgarian capital.

Boris was delighted at the arrival of the Slavonic missionaries in Pliska and received them warmly. They were billeted on local grandees, and had regular consultations with the sovereign and his advisers. The "Long Life" hints at certain secrecy surrounding these meetings. It seems that Boris wished to discuss the main lines of his future policy with Clement and his companions without the risk of antagonizing the opposition. The identity of these potential adversaries of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition is not clear. They could have been members of the old Bulgarian aristocracy, still loyal in the main to their Pagan ancestry and traditions, who only twenty years earlier had led a powerful if abortive revolt against Christianization of Bulgaria. Or, no less likely, they may have belonged to the Greek clergy in Bulgaria, jealous of their prerogatives and resentful of the sudden appearance of a distinguished group of rival missionaries. Whatever the truth, we may be sure that Boris and his collaborators recognized that their plan to expand the work of Cyril and Methodius in Bulgaria required cautious handling and careful preparation.

Although we lavish praise upon the Byzantines for their encouragement of national Slavonic liturgy and their linguistic tolerance, not all of this praise is deserved.

³¹ *Long Life of Clement*. In Milev.

In Byzantium, a multinational state, the cultivated people were familiar with the past and current use of tongues less perfect than Greek for Christian worship. 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. But in these matters the goals of the Byzantine court are different than those of the British and *Bible Foreign Society*, for instance. In areas closer to home, or whatever the Byzantines felt strong enough, they practice vigorous cultural imperialism, which implies linguistic intolerance. In the sixth and seventh centuries, Slavs had overrun Greece and penetrated into Peloponnesse and the islands. They were made to disappear as Slavs not by the sword alone and certainly not by the encouragement of Slavic letters, but by the reimposition of the Greek administration, the introduction of the Greek Church hierarchy, and by the celebration of the liturgy in Greek, as it was described in first chapter of this study. The forced Hellenization of conquered Bulgaria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries requires no surmises. This Hellenization seems to have included the introduction of Greek as the liturgical language and in addition attempted to supplant Church Slavonic literature by Greek equivalents.

Constantine-Cyril was a highly educated man - it is important that all the Latin and Greek sources firmly agree on this point. This protégé of the emperor and the patriarch, lionized in the highest circles, must have shared the cultural credo of the Byzantine elite. This is not mere speculation: *Vita Constantini* depicts his victory over the Arabs in a dispute, which ranged over the whole field of arts. When the astonished adversaries wanted to know the reason for Cyril's vast knowledge, the *Vita* has him reply:

"All the arts have had their origin with us (i.e. with Byzantines)."³² Yet we find no trace of such haughtiness in reports on the Slavic Apostles' missionary activity or in works which reflect the atmosphere prevailing among the Apostles' first disciples. But was this spirit of friendliness and equality of Cyrillo-Methodian mission paradoxical? To the Byzantines, who inherited from their Hellenic past the habit to divide the world into Hellenes and barbarians, scorn for the barbarians was a counterpart to their own limitless cultural pride. Throughout the better part of Byzantium's existence, the barbarians - that is, non-Byzantines - appear in stereotyped descriptions as cunning, false and cowardly, cruel, refusing to abide by the rules of civilized behavior, overbearing the victory, abject in defeat. God Himself imposed on the Byzantines the duty of subduing the barbarians and of incorporating them into the empire.

However, they were also diplomats and missionaries. Knowing St. Paul by heart, they for sure realized that the Lord called upon barbarians first and that in the eyes of God barbarians were their brothers. This realization should have been especially vivid during their missionary activities. Alas, only a few Byzantines faced the consequences of the Pauline doctrine squarely. Baptism did change the barbarians, those bestial creatures, into human beings, but the mere fact of the barbarians' conversion was indeed a miracle. How else could they have changed from animals into their brothers? On the whole barbaric nations, as opposed to individual barbarians, were too despised to be genuinely accepted into the community of Byzantine civilization, even after they accepted baptism. Voices like that of Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, who in the first half of the fifth century advocated the natural equality of all human beings and of all languages, were extremely

³² *Vita Constantini*. In Kodov.

rare except in the closing years of Byzantine history. In Theodoretus' opinion, virtue could be acquired in any language - after all, the Old Testament prophets did not know Greek. Foreign tongues might sound barbaric to the Greek, but Greek dialects sounded no less barbaric to barbarians themselves.³³ Sometimes a barbarian language - Persian or Latin, for instance - might even be superior, by virtue of its natural conciseness, to Greek verbosity. Both Theodoretus and before him John Chrysostom knew that by their time the word of God, transmitted originally in Hebrew, had been translated into "all" languages: Egyptian, Thracian, Persian, Indian, Armenian, Scythian, and Sarmatian.³⁴

This liberality, anticipating Cyrillo-Methodian tolerance, had its explanation in the historical circumstances prevailing at the time Theodoretus wrote, as well as in the personality of the author. Theodoretus was himself a Syrian and his mother tongue was Syriac. He could therefore poke fun at Greek, especially since he wrote it very well himself. Moreover, he was attacking the pagans who rallied around the banner of Greek-Pagan culture and invoked the excellence of the Greek tongue. They had to be deflated, shown that they, too, owed a great deal to barbarians, and told not to boast too much but rather to admire those who told the truth without rhetorical embellishment in any language whatsoever. No wonder that in later Byzantium where pagans were no more and where most writers were native Greeks, views like these of Theodoretus were hardly repeated at all. Voices idealizing the barbarians and reviewing the value of Byzantine culture began to be strongly heard only in the last two centuries of the empire, when

³³ Michael Choniatis, the learned metropolitan of Athens in twelfth century, was so cast down by the discovery how far short his *demotic*-speaking peasant flock fell from his shining vision of the ancient Greeks, that he wrote these remarkable words: "I am becoming barbarian by living a long time in Athens." For details see Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (London, 1971).

³⁴ Neither Theodoretus, nor John Chrysostom were pro-barbarian. They were just anti-Hellenic. For details see Igor Shecchenko. "Three Paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission". *Slavic Review*, Vol. 23, Issue 2 (June, 1964), 220-236.

Byzantine intellectuals lost faith in the absolute value of their culture and state. In early and middle-Byzantine times, the most positive ideal picture of barbarians was that of Brahmans and of Chinese, that is, of barbarians dwelling as far away as possible. Barbarians who lived closer by, and especially the neighbors of the empire, had to be satisfied with the stereotyped and pessimistic evaluation³⁵ In the sixth century, Agathias, a Byzantine chronicler, did not share the Theodoretus' favorable view of the expressiveness of the Persian language. Instead, he "proved" that it was impossible to render clear and precise Hellenic notions into the rough and unrefined speech of Persians.³⁶ Three centuries later, Cyril's protector, Emperor Michael III, pointed out to the Pope that the Latin tongue was barbaric and Scythian³⁷ As for the Cyril's other protector, mentor and friend, Patriarch Photius, he lectured the Armenians on the superiority of the Greek culture and reminded them that the Gospels had been written in Greek for the Greeks.³⁸ We should not forget, however, how convinced the cultivated Byzantine was of the superiority of Greek over all other languages: for him these barbarian languages remained impenetrable to true civilization and notorious Byzantine snobs, such as Anna Comnena or Theophilact of Ohrid, felt obliged to apologize from time to time to their Greek readers for using proper names of barbarian origin.⁴⁰ This linguistic snobbery could very well co-exist with the belief, at least theoretical, that the barbarian could lose their barbarian nature by becoming Christian and a member of

³⁵ Simeon Metropolitan. "Pismata na Teofilakta Ohridski, Arhiepiskop Bulgarski"[Theophilact of Ohrid epistolary] *SbBAN XXVII*, 1931.p 256

³⁶ Agathias. "Historia." in *Grucki Izvori za Bulgarskata Istoria* [Greek sources for the Bulgarian history, (GSBH)] ed. by Ivan Duichev, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Press, 1954), II, pp. 112-114.

³⁷ Nicolae I Papae. "Epistola" in *MGH-Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, IV, p.601; in *LSBH*, II, p. 65.

³⁸ Photius. "Episola: a letter to Zachary, Catholicos of Armenia" in *GSBH*, II,p. 227.

⁴⁰ Simeon Metropolitan. "Pismata na Teofilakta Ohridski, Arhiepiskop Bulgarski"[Theophilact of Ohrid epistolary] *SbBAN XXVII*, 1931.p 256

Byzantine community. However, there existed even on a religious level an ambiguity and tension between the superiority complex of literate Byzantines and their belief that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Gentile. This doublethink no doubt reflected the tension between the Hellenic and Christian traditions, which was never wholly overcome in Byzantium.

On the other hand, however, stayed the tolerant Byzantine attitude towards other languages. Realizing that Slavonic liturgy was the best instrument for Christianization the Slavs, Byzantine authority did not hesitate for moment to support such a mission. Moreover, from the twelfth century we have two other Byzantine statements approving of liturgies of non-Greek languages. The celebrated canonist Theodore Balsamon, in reply to the patriarch of Alexandria who asked of him whether the Syrian and Armenian priests in Egypt should be required to celebrate the liturgy in the Greek language, stated: "Those who are wholly ignorant of the Greek language may celebrate in their own languages."⁴¹ At about the same time Eustatius, metropolitan of Thessalonica, declared that the word of the Lord could be preached in any language.⁴² These statements allow us to postulate a fundamental Byzantine conception in favor of national languages but in certain qualifications.

In Byzantium, during the second half of the ninth century, obviously were two opposing attitudes: one accepting and the other contesting the legitimacy of the Slavonic liturgy. No doubt, the presence of the emperor and the patriarch among the supporters of Slavic liturgy made the linguistic tolerance official doctrine of the Byzantine court. But it

⁴¹ Theodore Balsamon. "Responssa ad Interrogationes Marci, Patriarche Alexandrie." *In GIBI*, III, pp. 187-189.

⁴² Eustathii Metropolitae Thesalonicensis. *Opuscula*, quoted by Igor Sevcenko in "Three Paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission". *Slavic Review*, Vol. 23, Issue 2 (June 1964), 220-236.

seems that when Cyril invented the Slavonic alphabet a group of influential people in Byzantium was firmly opposed to this linguistic and liturgical experiment. The *Vita Constantini* tells us that the emperor considered the translation of the Greek liturgy to be an innovation without recent precedent. And even Cyril himself feared that in undertaking this work, he might be accused of heresy.⁴³ We may assume that the opposing group supported a doctrine popular as Cyril called it later "three linguistic doctrine": that the divine office could be celebrated only in three languages - Hebrew, Greek and Latin. No wonder that Cyril was so well prepared to defend his work from the three linguistic doctrinaires in Venice: for certain he had already some experience in Constantinople.

Those were probably the reasons, which compelled Boris in Bulgaria to be so precarious and secluded in his plans for building the Slavonic Church in Bulgaria. Although *Vita Methodius* explicitly announced "two disciples and books"⁴⁴ left by Methodius after his visit in Constantinople in 882, there were no traces of some traffic of Slavonic books and people skilled in Slavonic alphabet between Constantinople and Pliska before the coming of Methodius disciples in Bulgaria. On the other hand the very source, *Vita Methodius*, clearly states that an envoy of the emperor visiting Venice, after Methodius' death, noticed a group of slaves offered for sale by Jewish merchants. On inquiry he discovered that they were disciples of Cyril and Methodius, whom the Moravians sold as heretics. He bought them and took them back to Bulgaria to continue their work.⁴⁵ Accidentally or not, it happened after the start of Boris' program for

⁴³ *Vita Constantini*

⁴⁴ *Vita Methodius*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

building Slavonic Church: a clear indication of "double-thinking" attitude of Byzantine authorities towards its relatively close proselytes.

Before long the three Slavonic missionaries, Clement, Naum and Angelarius went their separate ways in Bulgaria. Angelarius died in the months following their arrival in Bulgaria. Naum remained in Pliska, while Clement, was sent, probably in 886, as a missionary in Macedonia.⁴⁶

The reason why Clement, now the undisputed leader of the disciples of Cyril and Methodius, was dispatched to this remote southwestern province of the Bulgarian kingdom have been much debated. It has rightly been argued that, by contrast with north-eastern Bulgaria - the country political center, which seems to have still retained at that time a sizable minority of Protobulgarians - the population of Macedonia was predominantly Slavonic. The region had only recently been incorporated into the Bulgarian realm. An experienced pupil of Cyril and Methodius who was in addition probably a Macedonian Slav by birth, could be expected to minister effectively to the spiritual needs of the people of this province and to hasten their cultural assimilation into Boris' kingdom.

There has been much discussion about the whereabouts of the centers of Clement's new activity. On this point the "Long Life" is not very helpful. Boris, we are told, detached the territory of Koutmitsinitza from that of Kotokios', and appointed Dometas governor and Clement "teacher" of this territory.⁴⁷ Kotokios (or Kotokion) has so far eluded all attempts at identification. Koutmitsinitza, on the other hand, can be located, at least approximately. The pointers are provided by the "Long Life", which tells

⁴⁶ *Long Life of S. Clement*. In Milev.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

us that Boris bestowed on Clement three comfortable houses in Diabolis, as well as "places of rest" near Ohrid and Glavinitsa.⁴⁸ It is clear from the context that these three towns - Ohrid, Diabolis, and Glavinitsa - were situated on the territory of Koutmitsinitsa. Ohrid, on the northeastern shore of the lake of that name, in the heart of western Macedonia, was Clement's favorite residence and in the large measure thanks to him, it now became one of the principle centers of the new Byzantium- Slavic, or actually Byzantium-Bulgarian, culture in the Balkans. Diabolis, the second center of Clement's teaching, has been plausibly located in the upper valley of the Devolli river, not far from the southern shore of the Lake Ohrid, in what is today southeastern Albania. As for Glavinitsa (Kefalonia in Greek), the "Brief Life" tells us that Clement often resided there, and that he left behind some "monuments."⁴⁹ These "monuments" were probably the stone columns which, according to the "Brief Life", could still be seen in Glavinitsa in the early thirteenth century. By a striking coincidence, a votive stone was discovered in 1918 by the Austrian army in the town of Balshi, southern Albania, inscribed with a text which refers to the baptism of King Boris and the Bulgarians.⁵⁰ The location of Glavinitsa between Berat and Valona is confirmed in two passages in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*.⁵¹ Balshi, situated in that very area, is hence identified with Glavinitsa by most modern scholars.

It is obvious that Koutmitsinitsa, over which Boris gave Clement license to teach, covered a large area between Lake Ohrid and the Adriatic Sea. It encompassed the region of the west Macedonian lakes and much of central and southern Albania. The indigenous

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Brief Life of St. Clement*. In Milev.

⁵⁰ Vasil Beshevliev. *Starobulgarski nadpisi* [Old Bulgarian inscriptions] (Sofia- Berlin, 1963).

⁵¹ Anna Comnena. *Alexiad*, in *GSBH*, II, 243-262.

Albanians, in the western and southern parts of Koutmitsinitza, probably lived in close proximity to the Slavs, the most recent invaders of this area. There can be little doubt that Clement's pupils included Albanians as well as Macedonian Slavs, who after acceptance of Christianity by Boris in 864 and of the Slavonic written language as official for the Bulgarian chancellery in 893, called from now on themselves Bulgarians. The brighter alumni from both these groups next decades played their part in fostering the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition among the Serbs.

When Clement was appointed as "teacher" (*didaskalos* in Greek) of Koutmitsinitza he was still only a priest. He held this post for seven years, until he was consecrated bishop. The title *didaskalos*, later held by some prominent members of Byzantine clergy, apparently designated priests or deacons, specifically entrusted with teaching and preaching. It was only in the late eleventh century that the status of the *didaskalos* was formally recognized within the patriarchate of Constantinople. By an imperial edict of 1107 it was made to correspond to a particular ecclesiastical rank.⁵² In the twelfth century the *didaskalos* became a privileged clerical order with administrative as well as teaching duties, and also the right of reporting directly to the patriarch.⁵³ However, there is no proof that this function, thus formally defined, existed in the ninth century. Yet the nature of Clement's commission, and the close relations he enjoyed with the provincial governor, show that the powers he was given by Boris in 886 were far wider than those of a mere schoolmaster or preacher.

In a particularly arresting passage, the "Long Life" describes Clement's teaching

⁵² Dimitri Obolensky. *The Byzantine Commonwealth*.

⁵³ George Ostrogorsky. *History of the Byzantine State*. (New Brunswick: New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1957).

methods. The children were thought to write in three stages. First Clement would make them draw the shape of individual letters. Then he would explain the "meaning" of what they had written, and finally he would guide their hands in a motion of consecutive writing.⁵⁴ The alphabet he used in the first years of his ministry in Koutmitsinitza was almost certainly Glagolitic, the creation of Constantine-Cyril.

Onlookers were struck by Clement's ability to do more than one thing at a time. Thus, while he was teaching children, he would simultaneously read and "write books."⁵⁵ By "writing books" his biographer probably meant copying manuscripts, an occupation in which, especially if we accept that he had been Methodius' shorthand secretary, he was no doubt highly proficient.

The more promising of Clement's pupils went on to join the ranks of his chosen disciples, who were given more advanced theological training and no doubt singled out for ordination. According to the "Long Life", they numbered 3,500. Measured against the fact that the Slavonic literary tradition was still in infancy, this represents remarkable achievements. By any standards Clement's teaching results represented an educational undertaking almost without parallel in the Middle Ages. After seven years in Koutmitsinitza, Clement had done much to further Boris' plan to replace Greek clergy by native Slavs and to build National Bulgarian Slavonic Church.

As for the Naum's activity, which established its center around Pliska and the future capital Preslav, there is paucity in the sources. Although both his *Vitas*, the main sources of his life, and indirect literary references by his disciples on his activity, his undoubted administrative and ecclesiastical functions in Pliska remained obscured.

⁵⁴ *Long Life*. In Milev

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

However, the Naum's activity was the basic stone for building the Plisko-Preslav's cultural center which prominent representatives created the literary heritage later called "The Golden Age" of Bulgaro-Slavic culture. The names of Constantine from Preslav, John the Exarch, the Monk Chrabr (which according to many historians was the pseudonym of the future Bulgarian Emperor, Symeon the Great), Prince Boris' brother Dox, and his son Tudor Doxov were just some of the names whose writings survived during the times.

In 889 Boris, satisfied by the realization of his life work, abdicated, and entered in a monastery, appointing as his successor his eldest son Vladimir. Unfortunately, there followed a complete reversal of Boris' policy. Vladimir, or Rasate - his pagan name - who had probably been kept too long in the background, was closely linked with those backward-looking elements in the Bulgarian ruling class who had revolted against Boris in 864. Doubtless in agreement with the "Protobulgarian" aristocratic party, Vladimir renounced his father's special relationship with Byzantium, encouraged a revival of paganism, and began a persecution of the Christian clergy. The whole policy of transformation of Bulgaria from a federation of tribes and clans into a centralized feudal state with a homogenized by Christianity population was in danger. Finally, Boris, whose patience about his son's arbitrariness was spent, realized that his life work is threaten and emerged from his monastery cell heading his reliable guards against his son. Relying on his immense personal moral authority, he ousted his son from power and had him blinded.⁵⁶ In this delicate situation, he convened a council of *boyars*, attended by provincial governors and high officers of state as well as by Protobulgarian and Slav

⁵⁶ Reginonis, "Chronicon." In *LSBH*, II, p.307.

tribal leaders.⁵⁷ He justified his action to them and obtained their agreement to accept his younger son Symeon as ruler.

Two other decisions of exceptional importance were accepted at the council of *boyars* in 893 representing the fruition of much of Boris' work. The capital was transferred from Pliska, which had too many pagan associations, to the new royal residence of Preslav, around 40 miles to the southwest of Pliska. Slavonic was proclaimed as a language of liturgy and teaching of the church and the language of internal administration of the state.⁵⁸

With Boris back in his monastery, there seemed to be every prospect of the same understanding between Clement, Naum and the new Bulgarian ruler. Symeon had been educated in Constantinople where he earned the qualified approval of his Greek mentors. He had not yet succumbed to his fateful ambition to usurp the throne of Byzantium. He shared his father's enthusiasm for Slavonic letters, and proved eager to foster them by royal patronage. This very patronage was the main reason, which gave the focus of Bulgarian intellectual energy to upgrade the Clement's and Naum's heritage to "The Golden Age of Bulgarian Medieval Culture." One of Symeon's first acts was to summon Clement in Preslav and to appoint him bishop.

Clement remained bishop of Dragovitsa or Velitsa for twenty-three years (893-916). Both his biographers describe the last period of his life rather sketchily. The picture that emerges is of a man alive to the practical duties of his new office, yet mindful too of

⁵⁷ Vasil Zlatarsky, *Istoria na Srednovekovnata Bulgarska Durjava* [History of the medieval Bulgarian state] (Sofia, 1937).

⁵⁸ For details see Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria* and his reliance on the medieval Russian sources.

his earlier teaching vocation. As "the first bishop of Bulgarian language"⁵⁹ he could now continue with new authority the work of his masters, Cyril and Methodius.

An enigmatic and much discussed sentence of the "Brief Life" states that Clement " skillfully devised other shapes of letters with a view to make them clearer than those which wise Cyril invented" With the help of these new letters he "wrote down all the scriptures, panegyrics, and lives of martyrs and holy men, as well as sacred hymns."⁶⁰ How this passage to be understood? Did Clement invent a new alphabet, or merely simplify an existing one? The question acquires special interest in the light of the fact that the earliest Old Church Slavonic manuscripts were written in two different scripts, the Glagolitic and Cyrillic. Glagolitic, the more complex, is a highly distinct and original creation, although some borrowings from the Coptic and Armenian alphabets. Cyrillic, the more simplified is an apparent attempt, revolutionary in its essence, of adaptation the Greek uncial letter, known in Bulgarian state office, for the phonetic peculiarities of the Slavonic language. The comparative simplicity of the Cyrillic alphabet, and its close resemblance to the Greek script with its range and prestige, accounts for its greater historical importance. To the present day, the church books and modern alphabets of Bulgarians, Serbs, Russian, and Ukrainians are slightly changed forms of this alphabet. The Rumanians, too, adopted this alphabet in the Middle Ages, and their liturgical books were written and printed in Cyrillic until the late seventeenth century.

⁵⁹ Simeon Metropolitan. "Pismata na Teofilakta Ohridski, Arhiepiskop Bulgarski"[Theophylact of Ohrid epistolary] *SbBAN XXVII*, 1931.p 259

⁶⁰ *Brief Live*. In Milev

Can the authorship of the second Slavonic alphabet be ascribed to Clement? Many scholars relied to Clement's indisputable spiritual leadership in Bulgaria accept this hypotheses, but they faced several difficulties.⁶¹

The West-Bulgarian or Ohrid's literary center was prominent with its significant conservatism: from this center originated all written Glagolitic sources known today. Also Clement was in such a degree obsessed by his respect, love and enthusiasm to his masters Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, that it would be incredibly that he had dared to revise their life-work, the Glagolitic alphabet. Furthermore, no reliable tradition connects Clement's name with the Cyrillic alphabet. And finally, several blatant historical errors have been detected in the "Brief Life," which counsel caution in accepting all of its statements.⁶²

Other historians connect the creation of Cyrillic just logically with the Plisko-Preslav literary center and the impact of Greek education of its patron, Symeon.⁶³ It is true, the Glagolitic was not unknown in Preslav, but, anyway, all the writings known today in Cyrillic and created in the period of the end of ninth and beginning of the tenth centuries originated in Preslav.⁶⁴ However, the lack of direct dates from the sources makes the searching of the creator of Cyrillic alphabet pointless, although some indirect dates suggest that Symeon is probably the key factor of the initiative for implementation of Cyrillic alphabet. This initiative, coinciding with the Symeon's ascending on the Bulgarian throne, could not be possible without the supreme sanction of Bulgarian ruler.

⁶¹ For example Dimiter Angelov and Ivan Duichev

⁶² For details see Milev.

⁶³ Ivan Bojilov, Genadiy Litavrin, Vasil Giuzelev. Cyril Mirchev

⁶⁴ Cyril Mirchev. *Istoricheska Gramatika na Bulgarskia Ezik* [Historical grammar of Bulgarian language] Sofia, 1978.

Moreover, Symeon, called by his contemporaries, "half-Greek"⁶⁵ because of his Greek education was the main provider of Greek literary influence in Preslav.⁶⁶ These reasons lead to the logical summarizing that Cyrillic alphabet is created in Preslav. The acceptance that the creation of the Slavonic Church in Bulgaria and accepting the Slavic scripts as official were realization of the idea of independence of Bulgarian ruling class headed by Boris and Symeon, axiomatically determined Cyrillic alphabet as pure Bulgarian creation. The Cyrillic alphabet, invented for the needs of the Bulgarian administration, by a Bulgarian creator, became the first request of the Bulgarians for partnership with Byzantium for building the common cultural world of *Byzantinoslavica*.

This new place of Bulgaria in the world of medieval European nations was definitely noticed by its contemporaries. Two common features of the writings of the Cyrilo-Methodian tradition, composed in Bulgaria in late ninth and early tenth centuries declared the sense of triumph for this achievement. The first is that the Slavs, by acquiring the vernacular liturgy and scriptures, have "been numbered among the great nations which praise God in their own languages"⁶⁷ and have gained direct access to the knowledge of God. This heritage was seen as an outpouring of divine bounty, which Clement, together with other writers of its time in Bulgaria made concrete through the image of rain: thanks to St. Cyril, he wrote, "the rain of divine understanding came down upon my people."⁶⁸ The idea of ethnic self-determination implicit in these words provides

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Vasil Zlatarski. *Istoria*

⁶⁷ *Vita Constantini*. In Kodov.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

the second characteristic in the early Slavonic writings in Bulgaria. Not by accident Clement was called "the first bishop in the Bulgarian language"⁶⁹

The consequent upsurge of writings in Slavonic in the last decade of the ninth and in the early decades of the tenth centuries, both in translation from Greek and as original composition has no parallel in early medieval Europe. As Boris predicted in his dreams, the adoption of Slavonic as the language of church and literature, and indeed as the national language of Bulgaria - it has always been the language of the mass of the people - ended any remaining antagonism between Protobulgarians and Slavs and quickly led to the development of a native literate class, the setting of the schools of Preslav and Ohrid and finally to the national Bulgarian sense of dignity and pride.⁷⁰

One would expect that the infant Slavonic literature, quasi-immobilized by the tutelage of Greek, would slowly discard it as time went on. Actually, the exact opposite occurred. The first post-Methodian, generation in Bulgaria undertook quite formidable tasks, and accomplished them boldly and on whole successfully.

It is not always possible to determinate whether particular texts were written in Preslav's or Ohrid's scriptorium. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples had already translated the Bible and the most essential liturgical texts, including the three liturgies of John Chrysostom, Basil and Gregory the Great. The same is true probably for the rare liturgies of SS, James and Peter. The remaining liturgical books, some of them of great length were translated in Bulgaria, probably in the late ninth century: the *Euchlogion*,

⁶⁹ "Long Life"

⁷⁰ Almost a hundred years after the subjugation of Bulgaria by the Byzantine Empire, the people of Ohrid greeted their new Greek bishop, Theophilact, by singing Bulgarian provocative patriotic songs, hymning the past glories of Bulgaria in order to enrage him. For details see Simeon Metropolitan. "Pismata na Teofilakta Ohridski, arhiepiskop bylgarski"[Theophilact of Ohrid epistolary] *SbBAN* XXVII, 1931.p 259

Gospel Readings, Praxapostos, Psalter, Horologion, Triodion, Pentekostarion, Oktoechos, Menologies etc. But local Slavic saints were added to the *Menologies*.⁷¹

Among patristic texts the great fourth and fifth-century fathers were extensively translated. No complete survey has ever been made of the many unpublished versions. The rarities, which testify to the thoroughness with which Christian literature was rendered into Slavonic and the erudition of the translators, include Severian of Gabala, Diadochos of Photike, Ephram Syrus and Isaac of Antioch. Ascetic works were also among those early translated, which was natural since many monasteries were centers of translation. John Climacus, Dorotheus, Maximus Confessor, John Damascene and Theodore of Studion belong to this category. More than these liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral and ascetic texts were needed to render Byzantine Christian tradition accessible to the Slavonic readers. The Christian Cosmography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, itself originally polemical work directed against the Christian Aristotelians of Alexandria, was translated in Bulgaria in the early tenth century, as an introduction to the Christian view of the physical world.⁷²

A Christian state whose ruler derived his authority from God needed a body of law. Boris asked Pope Nicholas I to send him a code of laws in 867. There is evidence of early translations of *Nomocanons* of John Scholasticus and John Nestetes. These are compilations of ecclesiastical and civil law, which would be used primarily by churchmen. The *Ecloga* and the *Farmer's Law* were also translated and adapted, presumably very early, before the publication of the *Procherion* and the *Epanagoge* by

⁷¹ Ciril Mirchev. *Istoricheska Gramatika na Bulgarskia Ezik* [Historical grammar of Bulgarian language] (Sofia, 1978).

⁷² Ibid.

Basil I and Leo VI. The Bulgarians did not go on trying to adapt Byzantine law to their own rather different society. They compiled their own legal code.⁷³

The intensive practice of translation rapidly made of Old Slavonic literary tongue, suitable for original writing. It was in this period that the Byzantine twelve-syllable line was adopted for Slavonic poetry, which followed Greek models, such as *Introduction to the Gospel* by Bishop Constantine, or the anonymous panegyric of Tsar Symeon.⁷⁴

Little is known of the life of John the Exarch, who evidently lived in the late ninth or early tenth century. He translated John Damascene, and composed the *Shestodnef*, an account of the creation largely based on the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil and *Heavens*. He is also the author of nine other encomiums, as *Praise for John Chrysostom*, *Praise for Christmas*, etc.⁷⁵

Constantine the Prezbiter became bishop of Preslav in the first year of Symeon's reign. His principal work was a bright Gospel commentary based on the patristic sources, *Preface to the Gospel*, an masterpiece devoted to the triumph of the creation of the Slavonic scripts. There was also a treatise on the organization and services of the church, drawing on but not blindly following Byzantine models. To a quite different category belongs Constantine's *Outline of History*, a free adaptation of the *Breviary* of Nicephorus. A translation of Anastasius' *Tracts against the Arians* has a preface in which Constantine declares that it was made at the command of Symeon in 907.⁷⁶

⁷³ Robert Browning and Temple Smith. *Byzantium and Bulgaria: A Comparative Study Across Early Mediaeval Border*. (London: Temple Smith, 1975).

⁷⁴ Ciril Mirchev. *Istoricheska Gramatika na Bulgarskia Ezik* [Historical grammar of Bulgarian language] (Sofia, 1978).

⁷⁵ Emil Georgiev. *Razcvetyt na Bulgarskata Srednivekovna literatura*. [The flourishing of medieval Bulgarian literature] (Sofia, 1979).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

The Monk Khrabr, was the author of the *Za pismenah* (For the Letters), the short treatise on the Slav alphabet, an bright apology for the Cyrillo-Methodian creativeness. The author shows acquaintance with Greek grammatical theory but great disdain for chauvinistic Greek attitudes in cultural matters. The work must date from about 893 when the question about proclaiming the Slavonic language as official for sure affected the Greek clergy in Bulgaria.⁷⁷

Symeon, the new Bulgarian ruler, who later by sword won the title *Emperor of Bulgarorum* from the Byzantines, not only patronized the literature but also, took part himself in the translation of a collection of homilies of John Chrysostom known as *Zlatostruj*⁷⁸

But above all were the distinguished writings of Cyrillo-Methodius disciples Clement and Naum, who after Clement's death in 916 continued his work in Ohrid. To the modern reader among the numerous Clement's works the most interesting are those in which personal undertones can be detected. Thus his panegyric of St. Demetrios,⁷⁹ which eulogizes the heavenly protector of Thesalonica, echoes the devotion so movingly paid this martyr-saint by a distinguished native of the city, Clement's teacher Methodius. Similarly, his encomium of his namesake, St. Clement of Rome,⁸⁰ despite a somewhat florid style and conventional content, recalls an important moment in his life, when still a young man, he probably accompanied his masters carrying the saint's relics from Moravia to Rome. But perhaps the most remarkable of Clement's writings is his

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Emil Georgiev. *Razcvetyt na Bulgarskata Srednivekovna literatura*. [The flourishing of medieval Bulgarian literature] (Sofia, 1979).

⁷⁹ Sv. Climent Ohridsky: *Sybrani Suchinenia* [St. Clement of Ohrid: collected writings] ed. by Boyan Angelov (Sofia, 1970)

⁸⁰ Ibid

encomium of Constantine-Cyril.⁸¹ of all his extant works it is the warmest and most personal. The intensity of his devotion to his master's memory repeatedly breaks through the sober etiquette of conventional hagiography. Based in part on the *Vita Constantini*, it illustrates the underlying features of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition. Fittingly enough, Constantine's achievements of teaching is likened by Clement to that of St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, whose work was brought to fulfillment by "Cyril, the philosopher, who overflowed all countries, from east to west, and from north to south"⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² *Sv. Climent Ohridsky: Sybrani Suchinenia* [St. Clement of Ohrid: collected writings] ed. by Boyan Angelov (Sofia, 1970)

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The Bulgarian-Byzantine model of bilateral political relations was from the beginning of the eight-century so symbiotic and dynamic, that every event in one part of this system affected significantly the other. The pressure of the nine military campaigns of Constantine VII against deteriorated Bulgaria in the middle of eight century gave exactly the opposite result from expected one. Instead of liquidation of Bulgaria, the Protobulgarian ruling class was united, the internal dynastic problems were eliminated and on the throne in Pliska ascended Krum, the first northern serious danger for the empire's existence. Later, during the Thirty Years' Peace, the passiveness of Krum's successors slowly but unavoidably brought into Bulgaria the spreading of the Byzantine cultural influence, which paramount accomplishment in the middle of ninth century became the baptizing of Bulgaria by the Great Church of Constantinople. The Byzantine cultural impact obviously did not presuppose the existence of friendly relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium. So tremendous was the pressure of Byzantine cultural superiority upon Bulgaria that the only means of resistance against it was the sword. The cultural pressure of *Byzantinism* in Bulgaria at the time of Boris provoked the immense anti-Byzantine aggressiveness embodied in the title of Boris' successor: "Symeon, the Emperor of all Bulgarians and Greeks."⁸³ Approaching the limit, over which there is no more national identity, Bulgaria changed the balance of the power in the system to such a

degree, that this led to the second deadly threat for the Empire: Bulgarian hegemony in the Balkans became absolute for almost thirty years during the reign of Symeon (893 - 927). Adopting the Byzantine thought and literature, architecture, art and everyday style of life, Bulgarian elite, embodied by Symeon, now tried to usurp the Roman crown. It looked as if the more anti-Byzantine the Bulgarians were in their political aspirations the more *Byzantinized* they became; they fought the enemy with the enemy's own weapons. Again, after Symeon's death, Bulgaria peacefully consuming Symeon's achievements, increasingly *Byzantinised*, would almost disappear politically. Such a model of relations was completely copied by Serbia during her domination in the Balkans in fourteenth century and with certain qualifications by the Russians in the next century. Although the Byzantine-Russian relations were naturally not determined by the political threat of *Byzantinism*, and consequently the loss of national identity, *Byzantinism* remained the most powerful weapon in the contest regarding the heritage of the Roman Empire for both Russians and Byzantines in the last years of Byzantine existence.⁸⁴ The conclusion is simple: Bulgaria, and after that Serbia and Russia achieved their great cultural contributions to the Byzantine Orthodox Commonwealth only at the times of externally political rival with that very *Byzantinism*, which they desperately tried to gain as a norm of their internal life. Ironically, their doctrine was founded on the presumption that the Slavonic language was a Christian language, blessed by God through the Saints Christian Apostles Constantine -Cyril and Methodius, while the Greek language was pagan of its origin. As for the Byzantine genesis of the Thesalonician brothers and their support by

⁸³ Nicholas I, "Letters." In *GIBI*, II, p.392.

⁸⁴ Igor Shevchenko, *A Neglected Byzantine Source of Muscovite Political Ideology* (Naples: Instituto Universario Orientale, 1991).

Byzantine emperor there was not a trace of gratefulness or recognition in the Slavonic writings.

In making parallels between Moravia and Bulgaria, it is very easy to state that what Methodius had been to Moravia and Panonia, his follower St. Clement was to Bulgaria, only with more enduring effects. Then, there would be only one step to the statement that Clement's work could live on after his death and be consolidated in the course of the next hundred years simply because the Bulgarian, unlike Moravian existence, was not threatened by the Frankish Empire nor destroyed by the Hungarian invasion.

But we must go beyond this elementary cataclysmic explanation. That the Great Church of Constantinople did not flood Bulgaria with its own missionaries was due not to some doctrinal agreement or to its fondness for the Slavic liturgy, nor to lack of precedent - missionaries from Constantinople had been dispatched to Bulgaria twice before, in 860's and 870's - but to the fact that the Bulgarian ruling class preferred another policy and was able to enforce it. Therefore, the role of SS. Clement and Naum for building Slavonic church in Bulgaria could not be dispatched from that of St. Prince Boris. No wonder that Bulgarian Orthodox Church pronounced the three of them as saints right after their death.

The coincidence of two factors in the middle of ninth century was actually the prerequisite of the rising of Slavonic literature as an international language in medieval Europe.

The first of these factors was no doubt the Byzantine revival of the Hellenistic-Christian civilizing values expressed in the victory of icono-veneration over the Iconoclasm and of the humanistic virtues of ancient Greece over the abstract influence of

the Orient. The consequent revival of monastic life rapidly delivered its fruits: the invention of new, more rapid means of writing, the minuscule script. Logically, the introduction of a faster mode of lettering reflected in an increased demand for literature. Furthermore, there was only one step from the flourishing of literature, arts and sciences to the export of Byzantine culture and its transformation into the most victorious weapon of Byzantine political expansion. Soon after the decline of Iconoclasm, the University of Constantinople was re-established and new cultural elite was cultivated, who spread the ideas of universal Christianity embodied in the Church of Constantinople. Just for three decades, from 840's to 870's, the Byzantine thinking underwent the incredible transformation from the fruitless internal Iconoclastic controversy to the proud statement pronounced in the face of the Arabs, the Khazars and the Romans, that " our kingdom is eternal because it is the kingdom of Christ" and because "all the arts originated with us."⁸⁵ This superior culture transformed the barbarian Slavic invaders in Balkans into subjects of the emperor, not by sword, but by *Byzantinization* and *Christianization*. Finally, by the Moravian mission of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius this culture spread its influence over huge areas in Eastern Europe and changed forever the history of its people.

Secondly, if the results of this cultural expansion were surprising even for its creators in Constantinople, they were due to the pivotal role of the Bulgarian ruling elite, who accepted, accommodated and modified the very *Byzantinization* for its needs in seeking nationally homogenous and spiritually independent identity. Paradoxically, by defending their spiritual independence from Constantinople, Bulgarians became co-

⁸⁵ *Vita Constantini*, inKodov.

authors with their rivals, the Byzantines, for creation Slavic literature tradition.

Moreover, during the last century and a quarter of the First Bulgarian Empire (680-1018), the Bulgarian elite gathered enough strength and added enough works to the core of the Cyrillo-Methodian work to enable it not only to help in the re-Christianization of the Serbs, but also to assist in the Christianization of the Eastern Slavs: the Russians.

Bulgaria in the ninth and tenth centuries was not just a link in the system of Russian-Byzantine or Serbian-Byzantine relations, she herself appeared as a source of a high cultural values and was the model which Russian and Serbian political elite followed.⁸⁶

Bulgaria was the first country in the Byzantine Commonwealth, which created relations of independence and parity with Byzantine Empire and although the thorough domination of Constantinople in the cultural horizon of the Medieval Europe, acted as an equal architect for building the Byzantine Commonwealth.

Analyzing Bulgarian contribution in building Byzantine Commonwealth, let us take a look what remained from these Slavic tribes, who slavicized the Balkan territories of the Byzantine Empire during the period from fifth to ninth century. Of about 1,200 place-names, many of them still exist. Some Slavic pockets in the Peloponnesse, attested as late as the fifteenth century. About 275 Slavic words in the Greek language, perhaps a faded Slavic trace or two in Greek folklore. Nothing more. In matters of cultural impact this ultimate result is called complete assimilation.

And was the disappearing of Moravian State due only to the severity of Hungarian invasion? Was not that due to the lack of national self-determination, national identity, which is based on the national culture - the product of national literature

⁸⁶ Genady Litavrin, *Byzantium, Bulgaria, Old Russia* (Saint Petersburg: Aleteya, 2000)

tradition? The simple comparison with Bulgaria and Russia, where the different foreign domination for more than two centuries could not erase the national self-conscious of Bulgarians and Russians, proves undisputedly, that the failure of establishment of national cultural origin in Moravia resulted in liquidation of Moravian statesmanship.

Moreover, if Bulgaria succeeded in avoiding the fate of Moravia it was not due only to its traditional hostility towards the Empire. The vitality of Bulgarian State and its powers of recovery shown in the struggle with the Empire proved the cultural basis of pre-Christianized Bulgaria. The few samples of Protobulgarian art and culture, evidences of their beliefs and historical sense surviving through the time are enough to prove that the culture field of Pagan Bulgaria was not a *tabula rasa* and to suggest that Bulgarian Christian culture could not be considered just as a Slavic hymn of Byzantine civilization. In Bulgaria the Byzantine heritage was interpreted by the existed culture in a process called acculturation, which started long before the *Christianization* and *Byzantinization* of Bulgaria and whose model during the Middle Ages formed the cultural character of all European Orthodox nations.

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