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Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a study of changing ideas about and attitudes toward writing, as they are expressed in the earliest texts concerned with the invention of the Slavonic alphabet and its legendary ninth-century inventor, the Byzantine diplomat, Constantine-Cyril. It is divided into three case studies, each focusing on the three major texts narrating the invention of Slavonic and dating to the late ninth and early tenth centuries: the *Life of Constantine-Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios*, Cyril's brother, and *On Letters*, a treatise written in defence of the new alphabet.

In contrast with existing scholarship which largely accepts these texts as telling a unified, monolithic story of the birth of Slavonic culture, the thesis approaches each text as an intellectual monument, that sought to make an intervention into a specific set of socio-political circumstances. In so doing it reveals the intricate ways in which early medieval authors in Central and Eastern Europe navigated through Greek and Latin language intellectual culture, in order to compose and compile texts and thus propagate specific agendas. Moreover, it demonstrates the complex and profound ways in which the Slavonic alphabet was invented and reinvented in this process, and how this multitude of ideas about writing, albeit present in the medieval sources, has been flattened by modern historiography.

LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis is for the most part a study of changing ideas about and attitudes toward writing, as they are expressed in the earliest texts concerned with the invention of the Slavonic alphabet and its legendary ninth-century inventor, the Byzantine diplomat, Constantine-Cyril. It is divided into three case studies, each focusing on the three major texts narrating the invention of Slavonic and dating to the late ninth and early tenth centuries: the *Life of Constantine-Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios*, Cyril's brother, and *On Letters*, a treatise written in defense of the new alphabet. Its principal contribution is twofold.

The first argument takes up less space in this thesis and concerns modern historiography. But it is no less essential. I maintain that a critical engagement with medieval sources is not possible without a critical engagement with the history of scholarship which makes the texts we approach always-already read. I argue that a stable and fossilised narrative can be found in the modern scholarship and popular common-sense about Cyril, his brother and companion Methodios and the alphabet. This account sees the invention of Slavonic as an act which unified Slavs and liberated them from others. It was achieved by a sacred brotherly pair, Cyril and Methodios, who were apostles to the Slavs and united in their mission to Moravia. After the expulsion of the Cyrillo-Methodian students from Moravia, the alphabet arrived in Bulgaria, where it was preserved by the Bulgarian state and especially its ruler Symeon (ca.893-927). I argue not so much that any of these individual statements about facts are wrong, instead my principal point is that they have been put together by combining three texts with profoundly different agendas, to serve a wider, politically significant and commonly accepted contemporary narrative about the invention of Slavonic.

By identifying and disentangling the constituent parts of this common-sense narrative, this thesis is then able to excavate and critically assess the underlying assumptions that have permitted modern scholarship to forge these disparate parts into a supposed whole. The teasing out of these positions and of how they manifest themselves uniquely in the scholarship of each text, is itself part of the intellectual-historical analysis of this study, and it is as much its purpose as it is to offer new readings of the medieval texts and new arguments about their relationship to the medieval past.

The second argument which takes up the bulk of this thesis is about medieval history and is alluded to in the thesis title: that the Slavonic alphabet was not invented, but underwent a process of inventing and reinventing, in profound ways, over the course of its first century of existence, ca.870-950. The script, its inventor, Cyril, and his brother and companion, Methodios, were all repeatedly reconceptualised. Rather than one unified image of the invention, there were a number of competing and contradictory proposals produced in response to a series of fluctuating socio-political circumstances.

In Chapter 1, I argue that the *Life of Cyril* is a profoundly Byzantine text, written by a Byzantine author and likely in Byzantine Greek. Perhaps precisely due to the fact the *Life* was written so soon after the alphabet invention, the script creation is by no means the central focus of the text. Its brief appearance in the text is best integrated within the wider argument the text makes for the sanctity of Cyril, as a philosopher and saint. I argue that the text has a very tightly constructed narrative structure, and that much of its argument is organised around a tri-partite process of learning and the application of learning through disputation. This learning intentionally harmonises the tension between piety and 'outside', or classical, education present in ninth-century Byzantine culture. Having understood what the text is arguing, I make suggestions about who the text is arguing with. The chapter situates the text, within the

genre of contemporary Byzantine hagiography, and within the intellectual context of a ninth-century Constantinopolitan elite preoccupied with the relationship between learning and piety. This argument about education and missionary activity, however, fell on deaf ears, as the Moravian milieu underwent a profound transformation, and the *Life of Cyril* never made it back into the Constantinopolitan discursive milieu it targeted.

The break with this early Byzantine intellectual agenda and with Byzantium's political elite more generally is marked by the re-invention of the alphabet and of Cyril himself in the *Life of Methodios*, which forms the basis of the second chapter of this thesis. The text diminishes the significance of Cyril, learning and rhetoric, and makes the role of Byzantine imperial power appear distant and mythical. In so doing, it re-distributes the agency of Cyril, as it is found in the *Life of Cyril*, to the pope and the institution of the (Latin) church, through its more general promotion of papal supremacy. This marks the institutionalisation of Slavonic, and the earliest evidence of an understanding that the alphabet may be a politically useful tool. Against the grain of scholarship, this chapter posits that this text is best situated within the corpus of Latin missionary hagiography. A nuanced study of ideas about missionary activity between Rome and the Carolingian empire allows me to explain specific narrative interventions made by the *Life of Methodios* into the events presented in the narrative of the *Life of Cyril* and what exactly the author was trying to do in making these interventions. However, much like its main source text, the *Life of Cyril*, the best efforts of the author of the *Life of Methodios* and their community had limited success.

Slavonic writing was banned in Rome in 890, and by the turn of the tenth century the alphabet and some scribes arrived from Moravia in the Balkans, together with both versions of the invention of Slavonic noted above. This is the focus of the third chapter of this thesis. Here too, the set of political and cultural concerns pertaining to the alphabet and its use were transformed, and neither the *Life of Cyril* nor the *Life of Methodios* sufficed. Slavonic was invented anew in *On Letters*, the first text explicitly concerned with the alphabet, rather than the Byzantine philosopher saint who invented it, or the papally aligned clerics in Moravia who inherited it. The text marked the return of the Slavonic alphabet into a cultural sphere dominated by Byzantine-Greek hegemony, but it is also the first version of the invention of Slavonic targeted specifically at Slavonic speakers: I call this therefore the first such 'Byzantino-Slavic text'. In it, the author puts Cyril front and center, but strips him of his Byzantine identity, and dislocates the event of the invention from its historical specificity in Moravia. The invention becomes an event in the universal history of the Slavonic peoples, whose identity the author seeks to evoke in order to argue against the use of Greek. Amongst contemporary Slavonic texts and the available sigillographic and epigraphic evidence, the author's position appears radical.

This study seeks to reveal the cracks behind the surface narrative of continuity in the invention of Slavonic, in order to offer insight into a social history of the fragility of the early script, and the often-contemporary concerns which preoccupied its users and defenders. These various intellectual agendas performed by conscious political actors to promote specific ends are flattened or lost completely in the narrative that so prevails and reproduces itself in modern scholarship.

За Мама, която ми даде всичко.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION & SOURCE-TEXT REFERENCING

Transliteration is a necessary evil when working across alphabets and languages, and it is always fallible and imperfect. In this thesis I have tried, as far as is possible, to aim for ease and consistency.

I have used the Library of Congress guide without diacritics for Slavonic when rendering scholars' names or titles of works in the footnotes and bibliography. This does leave some things unclear: 'u' represents both 'y' and the Bulgarian hard 'ѹ'; 'i' represents both 'и' and the soft 'ѣ.' It also often leads to rendering the names of scholars, especially from the Balkans, in ways that they themselves would not: Khristo instead of Hristo, Giuzelev instead of Gjuzelev. When citing names in the main body of text or giving names to texts myself, I have opted for commonly accepted anglicised spellings for Slavonic proper nouns, partly because the alternative would be to choose to transliterate one national spelling over and above another. So, the reader will find Constantine-Cyril and Methodios instead of Konstantin-Cyril and Metoděj (Czech), Konstantin-Ciril and Metod (Slovak), Konstantin-Ćirilo and Metodije (Serbian), Konstantin-Kiril and Metodii (Bulgarian), Konstantin-Kiril and Metodij (Macedonian), or Konstantin-Kirill and Mefodii (Russian). But when citing the original publication in footnotes or bibliography, I have transliterated faithfully from the author's own language. So, one may find Methodios in the main text but Metoděj, Metod, Metodije, or Mefodii in a footnote.

For Greek I also use the Library of Congress guide when transliterating words or phrases, and I retain markers to distinguish between short and long vowels. When citing names or proper nouns in the main body of text or shorthand names I have given to texts, however, I have followed the transliteration of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*: so Theodoros rather than Theodorus, Photios rather than Photius. When citing the original publication in the footnotes, I have rendered it as the author themselves did, should the reader need to find the publication in an inflexible library catalogue, so at times Niketas in the main text is found as Nicetas in a footnote.

Working across different scholarly fields and different textual genres also comes with their different practices of referring to primary sources. This thesis does not claim to resolve the inconsistent practices across these, but simply to stick to the conventions of each field as I have found them and accept some inevitable inconsistency in my own approach. I usually refer to the editions of Greek-language chronicles and hagiographies, using the chapter numbers and line numbers assigned by their editors. Only if neither of these is available do I turn to page numbers. I refer to the editions of Latin-language hagiographies using only the chapter numbers, as line numbers are far less frequent across Latin editions and rarely transferred into translations. When citing Latin-language annals, I use the year of the entry. I cite short Greek and Latin letters using page numbers only, but long letters usually are divided into chapter by editors, so I give those. For texts surviving in Slavonic, I use both chapter numbers and lines if available, and page numbers only if not.

When referring to a text which has been translated in the main body of text, I give both the edition and translation in the first footnote, and then simply refer to the text's title and chapter number henceforth to refer to both the original and translated text. However, when the text I am citing is central to the argument and is quoted at length in an indented quote, I give a separate footnote to indicate the source of the translation. As this is a thesis intimately concerned with the exact words of these cited texts, I seek to avoid any ambiguity as to whether or not a translation is my own. Any indented English left unmarked is therefore my own.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>FGHB</i>	<i>Fontes Graeci Historiae Bulgaricae</i> , 9 vols. (Sofia, 1954-94).
<i>FLHB</i>	<i>Fontes Latini Historiae Bulgaricae</i> , 5 vols. (Sofia, 1958-2001).
<i>LBG</i>	<i>Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhunderts</i> , ed. E. Trapp, 8 vols. (Vienna, 1994-2017).
<i>LLP</i>	<i>Lexicon Linguae Palaeoslovenicae</i> , 4 vols. (Prague, 1966-97).
<i>LPGL</i>	<i>Lexicon palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum: emendatum auctum</i> , ed. F.R. Miklosich, (Vindobonae, 1862-5).
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon</i> (http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=1) (Last accessed, September 2019).
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MPG</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus: series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-66).
<i>MPL</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus: series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-64).
<i>SC</i>	<i>Soldiers of Christ, Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages</i> , eds. T. Noble, T. Head, (London, 1995).
<i>SV</i>	<i>The Synodicon Vetus</i> , ed., trans. J. Duffy, J. Parker, (Washington, DC., 1979).
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>

0.INTRODUCTION

0.1 Inventing Writing

Inventing and successfully establishing a new literacy is a tricky business. In a world where the technology of writing is already available, however small the reach of literacy, a new script has no internal drive. Separate from its situatedness in the socio-political landscape it is an empty signifier.¹ Its earliest history is often riddled with fragility and uncertainty. To succeed it requires some temporary alignment of the interests of various individuals, communities and institutions which may otherwise have opposing agendas; in the eastern Mediterranean and northern Europe of the early middle ages which concern this thesis, the two most obvious hegemonic and ever-intertwining scribal cultures were the sacred and the bureaucratic.² Furthermore, a new script has no guarantee of survival: no language requires its own, designated alphabet. Alphabets rise and fall much more readily than languages do.³

The study of the invention and growth of a particular literacy, therefore, is always the study of a complex socio-political process, of multiple actors with different agendas on the one hand, but also of contingency, on the other, of accident as much as of planned development. Studies of early writing cultures have more recently become studies of this complex process involving multiple actors with different ideas about the use of text situated in socio-political spaces.⁴ And they have come to acknowledge the ever-present

¹ In this, I side with the more recent turn toward the ‘ideological model of literacy’ which sees literacy as the product of social practices within power structures, rather than the earlier so-called ‘autonomous model of literacy’ which saw the technology as an independent driver of profound social change. For the ideological model: B. Street, ‘Introduction: the New Literacy Studies’ in his ed., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.1-21; S. Houston, ‘Overture to *The First Writing*’ in his ed., *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process* (Cambridge, 2005), p.5-7; J. Assman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.265-6. The older model can be found in the early work of Jack Goody, e.g. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977); and in slightly weakened form in his later: *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987). See also: W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1988).

² Plenty of ink has been spilled to try to assess the relative importance of these two cultures, especially in western Europe, and more often than not to stress the importance of the ‘state’ over the ‘church’. See the seminal: M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (London, 1979). More recently Clanchy’s thesis has been supported in scholarship that uses the label ‘pragmatic literacy’ for non-religious writing. See: I. Larsson, *Pragmatic Literacy and the Medieval Use of the Vernacular: the Swedish Example* (Turnhout, 2009); Đ. Bubalo, *Pragmatic Literacy in Medieval Serbia* (Turnhout, 2014). See also: W. Brown, et al. eds, *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013).

³ For instance, the Permian script was invented by the late-fourteenth-century saint Stephen of Perm, who was tasked with converting the Finno-Ugolic Komi peoples of the utmost north-east European regions of modern-day Russia. The new letters had fallen out of use by the seventeenth century, whilst the Permian language continued to be written in Cyrillic. See: Epiphanius the Wise, *The Life of Stephen of Perm*, in: *Slovo o zhitii i uchenii sviatogo ottsa nashogo Stefana, byvshego episkopom v Permi, sostavlennoe prepodobnym vo sviashchennoinokakh ottsom nashim Epifaniem*, ed. trans. Iu. Gribov, et al, in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, vol.12 (St Petersburg, 2003), pp.144-231.

⁴ M. Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011); S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950-1300* (Cambridge, 2002); A. Neuwirth, ‘The “Discovery

possibility that all progress gained can at any point be lost or reversed, as the social context in which this writing was embedded fluctuated.⁵

But whilst the real conditions of early literacy are those of fragility, and whilst the ultimate success of any innovation can never be assumed, this is rarely the impression which (pre-modern) societies have chosen to leave behind in their records. To the contrary, as societies reorganized their pasts to serve, explain or represent their contemporary concerns, earlier processes of invention, adoption and adaptation, became fossilized in what anthropologist Maurice Halbwachs has called ‘figures of memory.’⁶ In the words of Halbwachs, ‘if a truth is to be settled in the memory of a group it needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, of a personality, or of a locality.’⁷

This is nowhere truer than in the case of the invention of alphabets or literacies more generally. The complex processes discussed above are often symbolized instead by an uncomplicated event and an individual inventor. In ancient Mesopotamia, amongst the earliest societies to record writing, a Sumerian text notes that the invention of writing was occasioned by an exchange of messages between Enmerkar, the lord of Uruk, and the lord of Aratta, which was too complex for the messenger to remember, so the ruler of Uruk put the words on a clay tablet.⁸ In Plato’s famous account in the *Phaedrus*, it was the Egyptian god Thoth who gave the King Ammon the first writing.⁹ In al-Masudi’s tenth-century account, most probably sourced from a much earlier text, the prophet Zoroaster created the letters used by ancient Persians.¹⁰

In the era of Abrahamic monotheism, as a healthy dose of scepticism toward the written word withered away, these kinds of legendary accounts needed only cosmetic transformation.¹¹ Multiple gods were replaced by various mediators of the one God, either scriptural figures or, in the Christian traditions,

of Writing” in the Qur’an: Tracing an Epistemic Revolution in Arab Late Antiquity’, in H. Amirav, *et al* eds., *New Themes, New Styles in the Eastern Mediterranean: Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Encounters, 5th-8th Centuries* (Leuven, 2017), pp.113-136.

⁵ See for instance: Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p.265; T. van den Hout, ‘The Rise and Fall of Cuneiform in Hittite Anatolia’, in C. Woods ed., *Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond* (Chicago, 2015), pp.99-106.

⁶ Assman, *Cultural Memory*, p.23.

⁷ M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992), p.200.

⁸ Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, in *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*, ed., trans. H. Vantiphout, (Atlanta, 2003), pp.85-7.

⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters*, trans. W. Hamilton, (London, 1973), pp.96-7.

¹⁰ *The ‘History of the Kings of the Persians’ in Three Arabic Chronicles*, trans. R. Hoyland, (Liverpool, 2018), pp.87-9. On this see: K. van Bladel, ‘Zoroaster’s Many Languages’, in J. Lowry, *et al* eds., *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson* (Leiden, 2017), pp.190-210.

¹¹ L. Alexander, ‘The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman texts’, in D. Clines, *et al* eds., *The Bible in three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1990), pp.221-48; G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh, 2009), esp. pp.16-30.

saints. In his fifth-century *vita*, the Armenian bishop Mashtots is tasked with inventing an alphabet by King Vramshapuh (ca.389–417).¹² Whilst he is at it, Mashtots invents alphabets for Georgian and Albanian too. And in the ninth century, which concerns us here, the *Life of Cyril* records that God revealed the Slavonic letters to Cyril.¹³

Much like the alphabets whose origins they expose, these narratives are by no means necessary. It is not the case that all societies formulate figures of memory for the invention of their writing system. Whilst one can purchase a Mashtots t-shirt at most Armenian historical sites and at the Yerevan airport today, no single inventor or event dominates ideas about the emergence of the Latin, Greek or even, despite its otherwise sacred association, the Arabic script.¹⁴ Thus, as with the emergence and sustenance of the script itself, the way individuals, communities or institutions go about recording the invention of theirs or others' writing systems is always contingent on the specific socio-political contexts which occasioned this act of recording.

The historian of medieval Japan, David Lurie, has recently noted, in a comparative study of narratives on the origins of writing, that such narratives are 'highly ideological' and rarely if ever actually interested in confronting 'the emergence of something new in the distant past.'¹⁵ Stories depicting the origins of writing are always in some sense allegorical, and 'writing is never invented only once, as it is repeatedly reconceptualized and reorganized when it is adopted and adapted for different purposes.'¹⁶ This understanding forms the backbone of this thesis. It is about narratives of the origins of writing, but only insofar as narratives of the origins of writing are never really about the origins of writing.

0.II Inventing Slavonic: narrative and practice

This thesis is for the most part a study of changing ideas about and attitudes toward writing, as they are expressed in the earliest texts concerned with the invention of the Slavonic alphabet and its legendary ninth-century inventor, the Byzantine diplomat, Constantine-Cyril.

¹² See: Koriwn, *Life of Mashtots*, eds., trans. M. Abeghian, B. Norehad, (New York, 1964).

¹³ See: Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Stories about how the alphabets were invented do exist but seem to have gained little traction. For Latin and the goddess Carmenta, see: Gaius Julius Hyginus, *Fable 277: First Inventors in The Myths of Hyginus*, ed., trans. M. Grant, (Lawrence, 1960), pp.178-9. For Greek, see: Chapter 3. In the Arabic tradition, the sanctity of the language and its first speaker Ishmael was fossilised in a figure of memory-like narrative, rather than specifically the script itself. See: Ibn Qutayba, *The Excellence of the Arabs*, ed. J. Montgomery, P. Webb, trans. S. Savant, P. Webb, (New York, 2017), pp.27-30.

¹⁵ D. Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription: Some Notes on the Narratives of the Origin of Writing', *History and Theory*, 56 (2018), p.33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.48-9.

The earliest accounts of the invention of the Slavonic alphabet are two hagiographies, the *Life of Constantine-Cyril*, its inventor, and the *Life of Methodios*, his brother-cum-companion. On the basis of philological and historical analysis, which I will engage with in more detail throughout the thesis, both of these texts have been dated to the late ninth century, within no more than a few decades of the deaths of their eponymous protagonists, sometime between 869 (when Cyril died), 885 (when Methodios died) and 907 (when the region was overrun by Hungarian invasion) at the latest. These texts were written in either Rome or Moravia, a polity whose location remains disputed, but most probably covered territories between modern day Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.¹⁷ Not much later another account discussing the Slavonic alphabet's invention was written. A text, entitled *On Letters*, attributed to a monk Khrabur, which defends the alphabet against the Greek letters, has been dated to sometime between 907 and 927, not long after the arrival of the alphabet in the Balkans, where the text was most probably written. Although these texts survive in much later manuscripts, their transmission is fairly rigid and their contents surprisingly stable.¹⁸

There are, in addition, passing mentions of the fact Cyril invented the letters in a number of Latin texts, despite a total silence from contemporary Byzantine sources. There is some reiteration and reworking of the contents of the *vitae* in undated Slavonic homilies and hymns in Cyril and Methodios' honour. There are also other Slavonic texts, dated to the early tenth-century Balkans through their language or their dedication to Bulgarian rulers, which offer occasional mention of Cyril and Methodios in passing. I use these throughout the thesis, where possible, as supplementary or contextual evidence. But when it comes to early medieval sources offering a narrative of the actual invention of the Slavonic alphabet from a near-contemporary period, the three texts at the heart of this thesis are essentially all that we have.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore, that in its choice of texts this thesis can hardly claim any novelty. In Vatroslav Jagić's 1895 collection of extracts and studies, entitled *Discussions on the Church Slavonic Language from South Slavonic and Early Rus Sources*, the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios* and *On Letters* already had pride of place, making up three out of the first four texts selected.¹⁹ Just under a century later, in 1988, Boris Floria, produced an influential overview of the field and translation into

¹⁷ On the debates concerning the location of Moravia, see: M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia (858-882): Papal Power and Political Reality* (Leiden, 2014), pp.138-68.

¹⁸ The *Life of Cyril* is found, at the earliest, in a late fifteenth-century manuscript, the *Life of Methodios* in a (most probably) late twelfth-century manuscript, and *On Letters* in a codex from 1348. These will be discussed in more detail in each chapter.

¹⁹ The fourth source was an extract from the *Tale of Bygone Years* ('Povest' vremennykh let'), the earliest chronicle of Rus, dated to long after the invention of the alphabet. V. Jagić, *Rassuzhdeniia iuzhnoslavianskoi i russkoi stariny o tserkovnoslavianskom iazyke: izsledovaniia po russkomu iazyku* (St Petersburg, 1895).

Russian of what he calls *Narratives concerning the Beginning of Slavonic Literacy*. He chose the very same three texts to do so: the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios* and the treatise *On Letters*.²⁰

There is something of a paradox in the evidence concerning the invention of Slavonic, however. Whilst in the *Life of Cyril* and *Life of Methodios*, the alphabet comes into being thanks to the request of the Moravian polity, and its earliest use is in Moravia, where Cyril and later Methodios are said to translate scriptural texts, there is in actuality no securely dated manuscript or inscription in Slavonic from late ninth-century Moravia.

Thus, a rather different story is told purely from the surviving evidence of the contemporary practice of writing. The earliest explicitly dated Slavonic manuscript is a gospel from early Rus, dated to 1056-7.²¹ The earliest dated inscription in Slavonic, discovered in 2015, is a funerary inscription bearing the date 921, found in a rock-cut monastery near the North-Western Bulgarian village of Krepcha.²² Little else surviving can be dated to late ninth-century Moravia. Philologists place the earliest surviving Slavonic manuscripts, which are not internally dated, in the late tenth and early eleventh century.²³ These are usually gospels or psalters. None of the original translations of Cyril and Methodios, if they even resembled what the lives claim, have survived. Nor have any roughly contemporary manuscripts. A number of other texts, often translations or compilations from Greek, have been at various times associated with Cyril and Methodios' own hands, or Moravia more generally, but this has remained very speculative, and on a number of occasions a text considered original or Moravian has been discovered to be a compilation of extant Greek texts, or dated to the tenth-century Balkans.²⁴

In short, the invention of Slavonic is quite unlike other instances of origins of writing myths, which, as Lurie has noted, are often later attempts to explain a distant past, influenced by contemporary literacy.²⁵ By contrast, the earliest narratives of the invention of Slavonic, and I mean the *Life of Cyril* especially, and to a somewhat lesser extent the *Life of Methodios* dated to the late ninth century, seem to predate the widespread use of the Slavonic alphabet in our records. In short, the figure of memory emerged almost contemporaneously with the early fragility of new literacies, and in this case is our only source of

²⁰ B. Floria, *Skazaniia o nachale slavianskoi pis'mennosti* (Moscow, 1988; repr. St Petersburg 2001).

²¹ *Ostromirovo Evangelie 1056-1057 goda po izdaniuu A. Kh. Vostokova*, ed. A.A. Alekseev, (Moscow, 2007).

²² K. Popkonstantinov, A.-M. Totomanova, *Epokhata na bulgarskiiat tsar Samuil: ezik i pismenost* (Sofia, 2014), p.25. Prior to this the earliest dated inscription was also from the Balkans and dated to 943, see: K. Popkonstantinov, 'Razprostranenie na starobulgarskata pismenost prez IX-X v. (po epigrafski dannii)', *Starobulgarska literatura*, 17 (1985), pp.59-61.

²³ A list of the manuscripts can be found in: K. Mirchev, *Starobulgarski ezik: kratuk gramatichen ocherk* (Sofia, 1972), pp.10-12.

²⁴ For a summary of recent work, see: A. Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo nasledii: promezhutochnye itogi, spornye voprosy i perspektivy', *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 1 (2015), pp.130-52.

²⁵ Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription', p.33.

evidence for recovering this fragility. Thus, the Slavonic case study does not quite fit into either of the current fields of scholarship on early writing: namely the study of legends about the ancient origins of writing on the one hand, and of the practical uses and spread of writing and literacy on the other.

A different, much fuller picture of the use of Slavonic emerges from the tenth-century Balkans, where the alphabet arrived sometime between the 880s and the 907 collapse of the Moravian polity, and where we can locate the third text which concerns this thesis, *On Letters*. In addition to a small corpus of dated inscriptions, the Balkans offer a rich corpus of undated epigraphy in what are most probably tenth-century monastic complexes. The aforementioned corpus of translations and a smaller set of short original compositions can also be dated to the early- to mid-tenth century through their authors or dedication to Bulgarian rulers. There was, in short, some spread of the use of the alphabet throughout the Balkans by the mid-tenth century even if the reach or depth of this remains hard to discern.

This was the spread of literacy, as perceived only through its legend on the one hand and its practice on the other. But it is the purpose of this thesis to situate writing firmly in intellectual and social circumstances, rather than study it as an autonomous agent, which leads us on to the geo-political framing of this thesis's inquiry.

0.III Between Rome and Constantinople

I have chosen to frame this thesis' inquiry between Rome and Constantinople. What I mean by this is that both the stories about the origins of Slavonic, and the practice of using the alphabet as it survives in inscriptions and manuscripts, were shaped by the influence of these two hegemonic cultural centres. By Rome and Constantinople, I mean both scribal cultures: the bureaucratic, of the polities of Byzantium and the Carolingian empire, and the sacred, of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate and Roman Papacy. But is mostly the latter that concerns me here. This thesis seeks to contextualise the work of medieval authors and their communities to reveal how they used the resources of Rome and Constantinople's scribal cultures to their own authorial ends and to contribute to a critical history of connectedness as proposed by the more recent turn toward global history.²⁶

The idea of a 'Byzantine Commonwealth', of eastern Europe as a space under the cultural influence of Byzantium, even if it was not under its direct political control, as coined by Dimitri Obolensky, and the political reality of the Eastern Bloc as a unit in the latter half of the twentieth century, has meant that it has come naturally to scholars to look east when situating the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios* and *On*

²⁶ J. Belich, *et al* eds., *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford, 2014), p.14; S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), p.56.

Letters.²⁷ In the twenty-first century, the modern nation-states, which occupy the land these medieval events occurred in, have tried to re-integrate themselves into Europe, and shake off the history of Iron Curtain isolation. Thus, looking west when trying to explain medieval societies in this region has become ever more prominent, if at times, superficially so.

This thesis seeks to strike a pathway between these two opposing poles, by assessing both Latin and Greek-language contexts with particular attention to the fact that these two were not necessarily distinct but could overlap both in general, and more specifically in the way they manifest in the three texts which concern this thesis. In all cases, whilst recognising these influences, I try to assess how Rome and Constantinople and their cultural production became more or less useful resources for the authors of the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios* and *On Letters* over the course of the late ninth and early tenth centuries. In order to carry out this intellectual contextualisation between Rome and Constantinople later in the thesis, it is worth offering some brief high-political contextualisation on the region, and polities which occupied it.

This brief summary does not pretend to be a complete account of the high politics of the late ninth century. It is simply to show that when the alphabet emerged, the polities which at different times received it were deeply intertwined with one another and with Rome and Constantinople. It also seeks to illustrate just how varied the kinds of political organisation, often disguised by the word ‘state’, were in this region. Central and Eastern Europe was populated by short lived, often fragile young polities, in the borderlands between two political entities eager to stress their own stability, but nonetheless subject to constant internal upheaval and reinvention.

The Byzantine state in the ninth century occupies a peculiar place in Byzantine historiography, perhaps best summarised by the title of Leslie Brubaker’s edited volume of 1998 on the topic: *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*²⁸ The jury is still out, but it is perhaps best to ask: ‘more dead or more alive than what?’ The late ninth-century Byzantine state in particular has been categorised largely by what came before and after it: not as ‘bad’ as the catastrophic seventh and eighth centuries, when Byzantium was losing much of its eastern territory to Arab raids, and Balkan territory to Avars, Slavs and Bulgars, but not quite as ‘good’ as the tenth century, which saw some territorial gains in the east, and by the turn of the eleventh, the total incorporation of the Balkans into Byzantine territory.²⁹ This territorial stasis, and

²⁷ See: D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971).

²⁸ L. Brubaker ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot, 1998).

²⁹ See: J. Haldon, *The Empire that Would not Die: the Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640-740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010); W. Pohl, *The Avars: a Steppe Empire in Central Europe, 567-822* (Ithaca, NY, 2018); J. Shepard, ‘Slavs and Bulgars’, in R. McKitterick ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 2: c.700-

the resolution of the iconoclast schism by 843, resulted in a rich corpus of intellectual production, whether that be iconodule hagiography, comprehensive chronicles, or philosophical learning, as personified by the sometime patriarch of Constantinople, Photios (858-67, 877-86).³⁰ By the late ninth century, Byzantium was looking outward again, successfully converting the neighbouring Bulgarian polity from the 860s onwards, trying to convert the Khazars of the north Caucasus with less success (ca.861), and agreeing, at least according to the *Life of Cyril*, to send teachers to Moravia (ca.864).³¹ But these were early steps toward a more comprehensive missionary effort in the tenth century.³² For the purpose of an brief summary such as this, in the period which concerns this thesis, Byzantium was neither dead nor quite alive, but perhaps recovering.

The fate of the Bulgarian polity which concerns the last third of this thesis, is of course deeply intertwined with that of Byzantium. The Bulgars, a nomadic Turkic peoples from the central Asian steppe, arrived in the North Eastern Balkans in the late seventh century. How many came, and who they found remains unclear, but it no doubt included some formerly Byzantine peoples, or Greek speakers, and a number of Slavonic-speaking tribes. By the turn of the ninth century, they controlled much of the territory of modern Bulgaria, as well as Romania, south of the Carpathian Mountains, and more irregularly the areas of Thrace and Northern Greece. At around the same time, archaeology suggests their formerly nomadic or semi-nomadic ways were being shed, and stone constructions, identified as palaces, replaced what seem to have been wooden structures for temporary habitation in the ‘capital’, Pliska.³³ No native chronicles survive, but it appears that this initially Turkic-speaking elite also began to adopt and adapt Byzantine, sedentary-state customs: using seals and Greek inscriptions.³⁴ By the 860s the elite pursued Christianisation. Perhaps the best recorded period of medieval Bulgarian history is the long negotiation

900, (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 228-248; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (Berkeley, CA, 1996); C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford, 2006); A. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: the Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 AD to the First Crusade* (Oxford, 2019).

³⁰ See: L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850: a History* (Cambridge, 2011); A.-M. Talbot ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in Translation* (Harvard, 1998); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, in C. Mango, R. Scott trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284-813* (Oxford, 1997). On philosophy, see the current ERC-Funded project hosted at the Vienna Academy of Science: ‘Reassessing Ninth-Century Philosophy. A Synchronic Approach to the Logical Traditions’, (<https://erc-9salt.univie.ac.at/>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

³¹ J. Shepard, ‘The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 31 (1998), pp.11-34.

³² S. Ivanov, *“Pearls before Swine”: Missionary Work in Byzantium*, trans. D. Hoffman, (Paris, 2015), pp.89-90.

³³ U. Fiedler, ‘Bulgars in the Lower Danube Region. A Survey of the Archaeological Evidence and of the State of Current Research’, in F. Curta, et al eds., *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars, Khazars and Cumans* (Leiden, 2007), p.173.

³⁴ See: V. Beshevliev ed., *Purvobulgarski nadpisi* (2nd ed., Sofia, 1979); I. Iordanov ed., *Korpus na pechatite na srednovekovna Bulgariia* (Sofia, 2001).

between the ruler Boris (ca. 852–889, 889–893) and the Constantinopolitan and Roman churches.³⁵ Boris settled with Byzantium by 870 but whilst official conversation was complete, cultural Christianisation was only just beginning. It was in this context that the Slavonic alphabet arrived in the Balkans, and received some patronage from Boris' son, Symeon (ca.893–927). It is unclear how far the Bulgar elite, who still used Turkic honorific titles in their Greek inscriptions in the early ninth century and produced at least two inscriptions in what seems to be a Turkic language with Greek letters, had become 'Slavicised'.³⁶ Nineteenth-century pseudo-science's race hierarchy incentivised Bulgarian scholars to peddle this Slavicisation with some vigour, perceiving the Slavs as a superior or more Aryan race with which to become associated.³⁷ But as far as the medieval evidence is concerned, it cannot be known for certain whether the Slavonic alphabet, at the time of its arrival, was an alphabet for a majority or minority language, or an alphabet for a ruling or under class. In short, the decision to adopt it was by no means the most obvious thing to do.

Neither the Byzantine appointment of Photios as patriarch nor the conversion of the Bulgarians pleased Rome. Papal records show an excessive preoccupation with Photios and Constantinopolitan affairs, as well as sustained communication with Boris long after the expulsion of the Latin clergy from Bulgaria.³⁸ Rome and Constantinople were very well connected in this period, in part precisely as a result of these matters of dispute. Evangelos Chrysos notes that there were thirty embassies recorded between the two centres between 860 and 880 alone, thus Greek monks were not that rare in Rome, and nor were papal delegates unusual in Constantinople.³⁹

Whereas, at least in principle, Byzantium's sacred and bureaucratic scribal cultures went hand in hand and emperors appointed patriarchs, the relationships between the papacy and the Carolingian emperor(s) in the ninth century were far from rosy. Louis the German, emperor of the East Frankish kingdom, had himself tried to baptise Boris, and more generally the Frankish emperors started to undertake their

³⁵ Boris' dates are interrupted by the rule of his son Vladimir, who may have tried to restore paganism, and was quickly removed by his father. For an overview, see: V. Giuzelev, 'The Bulgarians' Conversion to Christianity', repr. in his *Medieval Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Black Sea – Venice – Genoa* (Villach, 1988), pp.115–203.

³⁶ Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski nadpisi*, n.53–4, pp.186–190.

³⁷ S. Detchev, 'Between Slavs and Old Bulgars: "Ancestors", "Race" and Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century Bulgaria', in P. Geary, et al eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Leiden, 2013), pp.243–76.

³⁸ See: *Notice for Hadrian II in Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. L. Duchesne, vol. 2 (Paris, 1989), 108.1–109; *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): the Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes from A.D. 817–891*, trans. R. Davis, (Liverpool, 1995), pp.259–92. And especially the letters to Boris from 880–882, see: John VIII, *Letters*, in *Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae*, ed. Caspar, in *MGH, Epp VII* (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (2nd ed., Berlin, 1974).

³⁹ E. Chrysos, 'Rome and Constantinople in Confrontation: the Quarrel over the Validity of Photius' Ordination', in D. Slootjes, M. Verhoeven eds., *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean: History and Heritage* (Leiden, 2019), p.41.

religious activity, whether canonical, or missionary, in house.⁴⁰ The late ninth century in particular saw an extremely concerted effort by Pope Nicholas I, Pope Hadrian II and Pope John VIII to ‘restore’ a constructed image of the former missionary glory of the papacy as an institution, whether through their own interest in Bulgaria and Moravia, or through their literary output: biographical notices, lives of earlier missionary popes, letters to foreign rulers and the way they chose to keep their own records.⁴¹

Making the papacy missionary again, especially with respect to Moravia and Pannonia inevitably displeased the Frankish kings. The region to the east of the Frankish polities had been occupied by the Avar Khaganate until the turn of the ninth century, when its western territories were subsumed by the Franks and its south eastern territories fell to the Bulgarians. The Franks undertook a process of Christianisation, for which none other than Alcuin, Charlemagne’s main court scholar, came up with a blueprint, to be found in various missionary hagiographic accounts.⁴² The Frankish kings, therefore, very much saw these territories as their own to convert and administer. And the proximity of these formerly Avar territories to areas of strong historic Byzantine influence, brought to the forefront some theological tension between the Frankish and Byzantine churches over the question of the *filioque*, namely whether the spirit proceeds from the father and the son or only from the father.⁴³

The actual emergences of the short-lived polities or principalities of Moravia and Pannonia in this region is hard to pinpoint, as prior to their mid ninth-century appearances found in the *Life of Cyril* and *Life of Methodios*, Latin chronicles record various interactions between simply ‘Slavic leaders’ and Frankish kings. Both were clearly created or at least granted by the Frankish kings on formerly Avar lands which seem to have already had plenty of Slavonic-speaking inhabitants. Both principalities therefore had deeply intertwined histories. But conflicting narratives coexist in modern scholarship as a result of the association of Moravia with the ancestor to the Czechs and Pannonia with the ancestor of the Slovaks.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Annals of St-Bertin*, 864, in *Les Annales de Saint-Bertin*, eds. F. Grat, J. Vieillard, S. Clémencet, (Paris, 1964); *The Annals of St-Bertin*, trans. J. Nelson, (Manchester, 1991). See: H. Reimitz, ‘Conversion and Control: the Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Panonnia’, in W. Pohl, *et al* eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers. From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden, 2001), pp.188-207.

⁴¹ See: Chapter 2, Part V; C. Leyser, ‘The Memory of Gregory the Great and the Making of Latin Europe, 600-1000’, in K. Cooper, *et al* eds., *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300-1200* (Cambridge, 2016), pp.181-201.

⁴² I. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1500* (Harlow, 2001) pp.85-90, esp.p.90.

⁴³ See: T. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics: Byzantines and the Filioque in the Ninth Century* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008).

⁴⁴ It suffices to compare the rather contradictory English-language Wikipedia pages for each polity to get a sense of their contested histories.

The region of Pannonia in particular, also called Carantania, the Balaton Principality or the Principality of Lower Pannonia, was granted to Pribina, a Slavic lord, as an imperial gift in 848.⁴⁵ Estimates of the area it covered vary, but it was most probably located south-south-east of Moravia, and included Lake Balaton in modern day Hungary. By the late ninth century it was held by his son, Kočel (ca.861/4-876), about whom we have rather conflicting records in Latin and Slavonic. He was the last recorded leader of the principality.

The first mention of a Moravian duke, Mojmir, is in a ninth-century Latin text primarily concerned with Pannonia. It records that he attacked Pribina, the first ruler of the Pannonian principality.⁴⁶ This resulted in Louis the German's appointment of Rastislav, Mojmir's nephew, to the duchy of Moravia.⁴⁷ Rastislav (ca.846-70) was also intent on more independence, however. He supported a number of anti-Louis rebellions, including the 861 rebellion against Louis by his son, Carloman.⁴⁸ In response, Louis the German contacted none other than the Bulgarian ruler, Boris, to ask for support against the Moravians in 863.⁴⁹ It is in this immediate context, at least according to the *Life of Cyril*, that Rastislav contacted the Byzantine emperor Michael III to ask for preachers and a bishop in the Slavonic language, ca.864. This was the very same year when Boris is recorded as contacting Louis the German for preachers in Latin in the *Annals of St Bertin*.⁵⁰ Moravia's rule then fell to Sviatopluk, Rastislav's nephew, who continued to cause problems for the Franks, regularly invading Pannonia and supporting rebellions.⁵¹ Sviatopluk died around 894, and after some decades of succession disputes, the Hungarians migrated from the Black Sea steppe and settled the territory by 907, and the Moravian principality was no more.⁵²

This narrative of the actions of the political elite by no means suffices as contextualisation of the textual production of the late ninth century. To the contrary, throughout this thesis I refrain from reducing the intellectual culture of this region to the principality or state under which it was produced, as national historiography commonly does. Rather, I use the cultural fluidity of intellectual production from this region, on the one hand, to destabilise the assumed autonomy and homogeneity of the polities Moravia, Pannonia and Bulgaria, and on the other, to also challenge the self-proclaimed stability of Constantinople and Rome.

⁴⁵ *Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*, ed., trans. F. Lošek, (Hanover, 1997), 12. (Henceforth, *Conversio*)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁷ *The Annals of Fulda*, 846, in *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, *MHG*, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* 7 (Hanover, 1891). *The Annals of Fulda*, trans. T. Reuter, (Manchester, 1993).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 855.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 863.

⁵⁰ *Annals of St-Bertin*, 864.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 869-895.

⁵² Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, 41, in Konstantin Bagrianorodnyi, *Ob Upravlenii imperiei*, eds., trans. G.G. Litavrin, A.P. Novoseltsev, (Moscow, 1989).

0.IV (Re)Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing

It is impossible to miss the significance of the invention of Slavonic to modern Slavonic-speaking nation states. The alphabet and Cyril and Methodios are celebrated annually on the Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture on May 24 in the Orthodox world, and July 5 in the Catholic world, and monuments of the brothers, churches or institutions in their name populate the Central and Eastern European landscape.⁵³ In consequence, the body of scholarship on the topic is overwhelming. Yet despite the intimidating quantity of work produced and continuing to be produced on the invention of Slavonic, the mission of Cyril and Methodios to Moravia, and the three texts mentioned above, there has been a self-diagnosed stalemate in the field. When, in 2000, Floria wrote a new introduction to his 1988 volume mentioned above, he had the option of revising and updating his bibliography in light of new research. He noted instead:

‘Однако знакомство с появившимися за это время исследованиями позволило автору сделать вывод, что ни вступительная статья, ни комментарий к переводам памятников не требуют значительной переработки.’⁵⁴

‘An acquaintance with the research which has appeared over the course of this time, has permitted the author the conclusion, that neither the introductory essay, nor the commentary to the translations of the textual monuments needs any significant reworking.’

The same impression emerges from Anatoly Turilov’s 2015 review of new developments in scholarship on the mission to Moravia and its legacy between 1985 and 2015.⁵⁵ The review sidesteps the questions surrounding the narrative of the invention and the lives of Cyril and Methodios, and focuses instead on impressive recent discoveries in the sphere of early Slavonic hymnography.⁵⁶ Whilst important philological work continues to revise the corpus of translations dated to the early period, no new original compositions have emerged outside of hymnography; nor have any new sources emerged to modify the narrative of the invention of Slavonic as it was outlined above.

Nevertheless, historical inquiry has continued its preoccupation with specific factual matters about which the surviving texts do not offer sufficient information, despite no new evidence having come to light. The debate continues to address speculative questions such as: where was medieval Moravia precisely? What is the mysterious language called ‘ros’sky’ in the *Life of Cyril*, which the saint learns? Was it Methodios or his disciple Clement of Ohrid that wrote the *Life of Cyril*? Did Cyril’s mission to the Abbasids happen,

⁵³ This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

⁵⁴ Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.5.

⁵⁵ Turilov, ‘K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo nasledii’, pp.130-52.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.134-7.

and if so on which mission recorded in Byzantine chronicles was he, and did he go to Samarra or Baghdad?

Vast quantities of such scholarship continue to be produced, cycling through such a multiplicity of speculations that we now see early-twentieth-century readings being resurrected.⁵⁷ The variety of specific interpretations however has been accompanied by a general unity in method, namely a preoccupation with our medieval texts as sources with which to establish the factual-historical narrative of events that occurred. Thus, rather than in its choice of source material, this thesis innovates in its choice of approach, thereby offering innovative readings of the texts.

This thesis is the first intellectual history of the key sources for the invention of the Slavonic alphabet. What this means is that it approaches these texts as intellectual monuments which sought to make specific contributions to contemporary political contexts, and not as sources of historical fact to be assessed or verified. It is interested in the cultures of writing about Slavonic in two senses. In the first sense, it is concerned with cultures of understanding about the new alphabet: how the alphabet slotted into the existing world of literacy, and how it was defended. But it is also interested in the cultures of writing, in the sense of actual textual practice, between Rome and Constantinople: how far authors felt free to use and abuse materials from Latin and Greek, which materials they did use, how they utilised them and to what end. Its principal contribution is twofold.

The first argument takes up less space in this thesis and concerns modern historiography.⁵⁸ But it is no less essential. I maintain that a critical engagement with medieval sources is not possible without a critical engagement with the history of scholarship which makes the texts we approach always-already read. The relationship between politics, popular discourse and medieval history in Central and Eastern Europe is stronger and more pertinent than elsewhere in Europe at the very least, if not elsewhere in the world.⁵⁹ National academies are frequently given extra funding to produce anniversary volumes on medieval

⁵⁷ For instance, the idea that *On Letters* was written against the Byzantine Greek clergy was proposed in 1927, then largely dismissed, and then resurrected in 2017. V. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava prez srednite vekove*, Vol 1.2 (Sofia, 1927; repr. Sofia, 1994), p.283; Kh. Trendafilov, 'Simeon v Pliska', *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 17 (2017), p.185.

⁵⁸ 'Modern historiography' is here used to demarcate scholarship since the so-called 're-discovery' of the key texts that form the body of this thesis by the first wave of nineteenth-century professional scholars, interested in revealing medieval Slavonic history scientifically. These texts' local use within societies prior to their extraction as medieval monuments to be mined for historical data is what I consider the 'pre-modern', although perhaps a better albeit clunkier term is 'pre-professional-historical' or 'pre-modernist.' I take this distinction from the field of archaeology's divide between 'indigenous archaeology' and 'modernist archaeology.' See: Y. Hamilakis, 'Decolonising Greek Archaeology: Indigenous Archaeologies, Modernist Archaeologies and the Post-Colonial Critique', in D. Damaskos, *et al* eds., *A Singular Antiquity* (Athens, 2008), pp. 273-284.

⁵⁹ This is similar to the use of Ancient Greece by the modern Greek state. For an excellent exposition see: Y. Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology and National Imagination in Greece* (Oxford, 2007).

figures or events, with introductions by presidents, prime ministers, local mayors and heads of the academies of science.⁶⁰ Medieval conferences are often politicized by their close interaction with the state.⁶¹ The entry or attempted entry of various Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union has also affected the ways in which scholars have framed their medieval object of study.⁶² This will be elaborated upon throughout the thesis.

I argue that a stable and fossilised ‘figure of memory’ can be found in the modern scholarship and popular common-sense about Cyril, his brother and companion Methodios, and the alphabet.⁶³ In brief, this account sees the invention of Slavonic as an act which unified Slavs and liberated them from others. It was achieved by a sacred brotherly pair, Cyril and Methodios, who were apostles to the Slavs and united in their mission to Moravia. After the expulsion of the Cyrillo-Methodian students from Moravia, the alphabet arrived in Bulgaria, where it was preserved by the Bulgarian state and especially its ruler Symeon (ca.893-927). I argue not so much that any of these individual statements about facts is wrong, as

⁶⁰ For instance, the anniversary volume on the ca. 917 death of the disciple of Cyril and Methodios, Clement of Ohrid, published by the Macedonian Academy of Science opens with a presidential address, followed by an address by the Mayor of Ohrid. T. Fiti ed., *Sveti Kliment Okhridski, 916-2016: svecheno odbeležhvanje na 1100-godishninata od upokojuvanjeto* (Skopje, 2017). Also in 2017, the Bulgarian state celebrated 1100 years since the battle of Achelous (now the Bulgarian Akheloi), at which according to Greek chronicles, Tsar Symeon defeated Byzantine troops. The celebrations of this medieval victory, which included a historical re-enactment of the battle at a field identified as the battleground, were attended by the Mayor of the Region of Pomorie, the Mayor of the City of Akheloi, and the President of Bulgaria. ‘1100 godini ot bitkata pri Akheloi’, 20 August 2017 (<https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/1100-godini-ot-bitkata-pri-aheloi-prezidentat-na-chestvaniata-663233.html>), (last accessed: January, 2020). On the role of the state in education more generally, it is also worth noting the monopolisation of school textbooks and university oversight in Hungary, under Viktor Orban. L. Wilson, ‘State Control over Academic Freedom in Hungary Threatens all Universities’, (<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2018/sep/06/state-control-over-academic-freedom-in-hungary-threatens-all-universities>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

⁶¹ The 2016, 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade, Serbia was opened by a presidential address. The then president, Tomislav Nikolić, called upon international scholars to denounce the legitimacy of the state of Kosovo’s claim to the monasteries in their territory. This was filmed for national Serbian television. The day ended with a reception at the presidential palace.

⁶² See for instance how a book on medieval Croatia is framed as the frontier of Europe in the title of: D. Dzino, *et al* eds., *Migration, Integration and Connectivity on the Southeastern Frontier of the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden, 2018). Likewise, the title of the most recent volume from the Czech Academy of Science on Cyril and Methodios reflects their integrationist agenda: P. Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodios Mission and Europe: 1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia* (Brno, 2014). The Bulgarian Academy’s anniversary volume on Clement of Ohrid also stresses this new Europe-facing worldview: S. Kuiumdzhieva, *et al* eds., *Sv. Kliment Okhridski v kulturata na evropa* (Sofia, 2018), (‘Saint Clement of Ohrid in European Culture’). On attempted re-Europeanisation of the Balkans and the shifting goal post that is Europe more generally, see the excellent: D. Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: the Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (Abingdon, 2018); O. Dhand, *The Idea of Central Europe: Geopolitics, Culture and Regional Identity* (London, 2018). And my thoughts on this more specifically in: M. Ivanova, ‘Review: *Beyond Balkanism* by Diana Mishkova’, *Balkanist*, July 2019 (<https://balkanist.net/beyond-balkanism/>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

⁶³ By ‘common-sense’, here and throughout the thesis I mean that which we consider self-evident and pre-given about the world and is therefore often left unstated explicitly. This common-sense is by no means coherent, but to the contrary most often contradictory. See: J. Rehmann, ‘Ideology in Gramsci’s Theory of Hegemony’, in his *Theories of Ideology: the Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden, 2013), pp.126-31.

that they have been put together by combining three texts with profoundly different agendas, to serve a wider, politically significant and commonly accepted contemporary narrative about the invention of Slavonic. In doing so, I show that the coherent picture painted by modern scholarship is in fact a Frankenstein's monster, bolted together from texts which originally attributed quite different, often conflicting meanings to the elements which make up this supposedly unified narrative.

By identifying and disentangling the constituent parts of this common-sense narrative, this thesis is then able to excavate and critically assess the underlying assumptions that have permitted modern scholarship to forge these disparate parts into a supposed whole. These positions are rarely explicitly expressed or formulated in the works I cite. The teasing out of these positions and of how they manifest themselves uniquely in the scholarship of each text, is itself part of the intellectual-historical analysis of this study, and it is as much its purpose as it is to offer new readings of the medieval texts and new arguments about their relationship to the medieval past.

The second argument which takes up the bulk of this thesis is about medieval history and is alluded to in the thesis title: that the Slavonic alphabet was not invented, but underwent a process of inventing and reinventing, in profound ways, over the course of its first century of existence, ca.870-950. The script, its inventor, Cyril and his brother and companion Methodios, were all repeatedly reconceptualised. Quite unlike modern historiography, there was no settled hegemonic 'figure of memory' for the invention of the alphabet in the ninth and tenth centuries, but rather a number of competing and contradictory proposals produced in response to a series of fluctuating socio-political circumstances. Over the course of this period, a number of the key features of the modern figure of memory, or traditional narrative of the invention of Slavonic, emerged in individual texts, as specific responses to contemporary problems and circumstances. But no medieval text bears the Cyril and Methodios of modern historiography.

In Chapter 1, I argue that the *Life of Cyril* is a profoundly Byzantine text, written by a Byzantine author and likely in Byzantine Greek. Perhaps precisely due to the fact the *Life* was written so soon after the alphabet invention, the script creation is by no means the central focus of the text. Its brief appearance in the text is best integrated within the wider argument the text makes for the sanctity of Cyril, as a philosopher and saint. I argue that the text has a very tightly constructed narrative structure, and that much of its argument is organised around a tri-partite process of learning and the application of learning through disputation. This learning intentionally harmonises the tension between piety and 'outside', or classical, education present in ninth-century Byzantine culture. Having understood *what* the text is arguing, I make arguments about *who* the text is arguing with. The chapter situates the text, within the genre of contemporary Byzantine hagiography, and within the intellectual context of a ninth-century

Constantinopolitan elite preoccupied with the relationship between learning and piety. I identify the particular discourse with which this text is engaging as the ‘anti-Photian’ position, associated with supporters of Patriarch Ignatios. I tease out two of this position’s key tenets and demonstrate how the *Life* subverts them. Given these Constantinopolitan preoccupations, I posit the text was written in Greek very shortly after the death of Cyril in 869, more probably in Rome or at the latest very early in the Moravian bishopric’s history. It did not perceive itself as a mythical account of a pre-destined alphabet inventor, but rather as a specific contribution to an immediate intellectual problem. This argument about education and missionary activity, however, fell on deaf ears, as the Moravian milieu underwent a profound transformation, and the *Life of Cyril* never made it back into the Constantinopolitan discursive milieu it targeted.

The break with this early Byzantine intellectual agenda and with Byzantium’s political elite more generally is marked by the re-invention of the alphabet and of Cyril himself in the *Life of Methodios*, which forms the basis of the second chapter of this thesis. The text diminishes the significance of Cyril, learning and rhetoric, and makes the role of Byzantine imperial power appear distant and mythical. In so doing, it re-distributes the agency of Cyril, as it is found in the *Life of Cyril*, to the pope and the institution of the (Latin) church, through its more general promotion of papal supremacy. This marks the institutionalisation of Slavonic, and the earliest evidence of an understanding that the alphabet may be a politically useful tool. Finally, the *Life of Methodios* forges two bonds absent in the *Life of Cyril* but ubiquitous in scholarship: a bond between Cyril and Methodios as a sacred pair with one shared purpose, and another between Methodios and the Slavic peoples. I demonstrate that the author of the *Life of Methodios* does this in part through Byzantine materials, but I argue that they do so while addressing a Latinate audience. Against the grain of scholarship this chapter posits that this text is best situated within the corpus of Latin missionary hagiography. A nuanced study of ideas about missionary activity between Rome and the Carolingian empire allows me to explain specific narrative interventions made by the *Life of Methodios* into the events presented in the narrative of the *Life of Cyril*. Through this, I show that the unification of the brothers and their relationship with the Slavs are best understood as answers to Frankish claims over the ecclesiastical hegemony of Moravia as they are recorded in the ninth-century Latin text, the *Conversion of the Bavarians and Carantanians*. This defence of Methodios’ legitimacy over Moravia and Pannonia was much needed in the late 880s and 890s, as papal support for the mission wavered. However, much like its main source text, the *Life of Cyril*, the best efforts of the author of the *Life of Methodios* and their community had limited success.

Slavonic writing was banned in Rome in 890, and by the turn of the tenth century the alphabet and some scribes arrived from Moravia in the Balkans, together with both versions of the invention of Slavonic

noted above. This is the focus of the third chapter of this thesis. Here too, the set of political and cultural concerns pertaining to the alphabet and its use were transformed, and neither the *Life of Cyril* nor the *Life of Methodios* sufficed. Slavonic was invented anew in *On Letters*, the first text explicitly concerned with the alphabet, rather than the Byzantine philosopher saint who invented it, or the papally aligned clerics in Moravia who inherited it. The text marked the return of the Slavonic alphabet into a cultural sphere dominated by Byzantine-Greek hegemony, but it is also the first version of the invention of Slavonic targeted specifically at Slavonic speakers: I call this therefore the first such Byzantino-Slavic text. In it, the author puts Cyril front and centre, but strips him of his Byzantine identity, and dislocates the event of the invention from its historical specificity in Moravia. The invention becomes an event in the universal history of the Slavonic peoples, whose identity the author seeks to mobilise, against the use of Greek. This is the closest to the figure of memory in modern scholarship. But the position of the text is once again best explained by its immediate intellectual and political context. In *On Letters*, the matter of missionary activity is abandoned for a specific, scholarly debate about the history of language, and so I situate this text within an inward-looking, educated, monastic community. Amongst contemporary Slavonic texts and the available sigillographic and epigraphic evidence, the author's position appears radical. They seek to separate the bi-lingual milieu which was responsible for the production of the earliest Slavonic texts in the Balkans into Greek and Slavonic bookmen. That they seek to do so in such an aggressive fashion leads me to posit that it is possible that Slavonic speakers in the Balkans resisted the use of Slavonic literacy, and that this text reveals the earliest evidence of internal reluctance to adopt the new literacy. Even though this text propagates an invention of Slavonic most similar to that found in modern scholarship, what it actually reveals is that in its own time, the author held a marginal position of linguistic exclusivity in an environment of identarian fluidity.

The Slavonic alphabet made its way from Moravia to the Balkans, therefore, in part due to a number of failures: the failure of the author of the *Life of Cyril* to return to Byzantium and the failure of the author of the *Life of Methodios* to secure the support of the papacy. This study seeks to reveal the cracks behind the surface narrative of continuity in the invention of Slavonic, in order to offer insight into a social history of the fragility of the early script, and the often-contemporary concerns which preoccupied its users and defenders. It seeks to argue that the idea that the Slavonic alphabet was unequivocally and undoubtedly a *good thing*, so often tacitly assumed in the national scholarship, cannot be taken for granted. Its use was only ever as oppressive or liberating as its users. In the texts which concern this thesis it is clear that the alphabet's users were often not as preoccupied with the alphabet as they were with other social and intellectual problems. Often, they used the alphabet, instrumentally, to resolve the problems they faced, sometimes they invoked the brotherhood of Cyril and Methodios, at others some suddenly relevant

relationship between them and the Slavs. These various intellectual agendas performed by conscious political actors to promote specific ends are flattened or lost completely in the narrative that so prevails and reproduces itself in scholarship.

0.V Methodologies

As noted above, it is through a methodological innovation in the study of the invention of Slavonic that I seek to offer new readings of the medieval past. This methodology did not come to its sources pre-made or pre-packaged but was formed by the interaction between the types of evidence available, their possibilities and limitations, and a number of theoretical frameworks. In what follows, I offer the reader a self-conscious reflection on the assumptions guiding the historical analysis in this thesis. This is done in line with the maxim of Hayden White that ‘historians who draw a firm line between history and philosophy of history fail to recognize that every historical discourse contains within it a full-blown if only implicit, philosophy of history.’⁶⁴

There are a number of academic discourses through which to describe the historical analysis to be found in this inquiry, and all of them have to a greater or lesser extent influenced it. By recognising, in the words of the scholar of medieval historiography, Gabrielle Spiegel, that ‘texts both mirror and generate social realities, which they may sustain, resist, contest or seek to transform,’ I draw not only on intellectual history as practised primarily by the so-called Cambridge school and spear-headed by Quentin Skinner, but also on Spiegel’s work on the social logic of the text.⁶⁵ I also draw on the Marxian theorist Frederick Jameson’s work on narrative as a socially symbolic act, an act which seeks to resolve the contradictions inherent in the socio-political structures of its context.⁶⁶

What these approaches have in common, and share with that of this thesis, is that they look to alternative ways of reading texts which prioritise their immediate local intervention over and above their absolute truth values. This thesis, together with all three approaches, ‘elucidates the meaning of texts and documents by investigating the circumstances of their composition, uses, and further receptions.’⁶⁷ Thus, both this thesis and the theorists outlined, rely on the value of some form of contextualisation to elucidate meaning.

⁶⁴ H. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), pp.126-7.

⁶⁵ G. Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text’, in her *The Past as Text: the Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), pp.3-28, 24; Q. Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, in his *Visions of Politics*, vol.1: *Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), pp.57-89.

⁶⁶ F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London, 2002), p.27.

⁶⁷ I. Hunter, ‘The Contest over Context in Intellectual History’, *History and Theory*, 58 (2019), p.185.

But there is little agreement on what effective contextualisation looks like, especially when it comes to the relationship between social and economic context, and intellectual context. Skinner in particular is keen to stress that understanding social conditions may serve to explain texts but not to ‘understand them’, and thus that the socio-political can in some sense be superseded by the context of ideas.⁶⁸ Jameson and Spiegel both attribute more interpretive weight to material conditions and specific social sites, as equally fundamental to understanding texts.⁶⁹

The inverse side to establishing the bounds of context is establishing the agency of the author. Here too, disagreement is common. Skinner and the intellectual school grant the author and their intentions the most autonomy. Jameson’s Marxian framework argues instead, for what he calls ‘semi-autonomy.’ And Spiegel’s collected essays on theory and practice in medieval historiography, leave the matter largely untheorized. In what follows therefore, I outline where I have followed, parted with and mixed these approaches, in the most crucial methodological concepts of this thesis: firstly, on the matter of contextualisation, and then on the question of authorship and audience.

0.V.1 Methodologies: Contextualisation

Three different kinds of contextualisation are performed in this thesis, which seek to recognise that texts exist in multiple *kinds* of contexts and that no one method of contextualisation will ever lead to an exhaustive understanding of the text. In doing so I seek to engage with and offer some solutions to critiques that contextualisation has faced.

The first kind of context considered by each chapter is an analysis of the identifiable sources used by each text. The method of citation greatly varies between our texts, and I consider citation in two ways. The first is the closeness of the words used: how far the text is an exact word-for-word replica of an identifiable source text. The second is the ideological thrust of the words: how far our authors agree with the ideological positioning of the words of their source texts, and how far they are using their source texts to promote another, different agenda. In some instances, close citation in words also reflects a general alignment of ideas, as in the neo-platonic definition of philosophy in the *Life of Cyril*. In other instances, a looseness of language also aligns with a profound transformation of the ideological position of the text cited, as in the use of a Byzantine synopsis of the ecumenical councils in the *Life of Methodios*. But in other cases, very close textual citation can be used to put forward a new, different argument, at odds with the position held by the text from which these words are taken, as in the use of Greek grammatical textbooks in the treatise *On Letters*. I assess the nature of texts cited and the practice of citation to offer

⁶⁸ Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, p.61.

⁶⁹ Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text’, p.26.

insights into the ideological alignment or intellectual position of the author in each text as well as more broadly the education and therefore social class of the author. Contrary to the critique of contextualism, that placing a text in context domesticates it by creating a coherent system within which the text is totally explicable and which it cannot escape, I demonstrate that in two out of three cases, namely the *Life of Methodios* and *On Letters*, these texts ‘radically upend their contexts’ and that contextualisation is the very way to reveal that.⁷⁰

The latter two kinds of contextualisation move beyond citation, and into a more tentative set of arguments for medieval context(s). Throughout the thesis I refer to this exercise as an attempt to identify a ‘discursive milieu.’ I use this phrase to strike a balance between recognising on the one hand that context in the medieval world was not purely textual, it could be experienced orally or more structurally through genre tropes and norms. In this way it was discursive. On the other hand, I settle on ‘milieu’, to insist on the fact that utterances and discourses are grounded within social environments, or milieus, and between people of varied levels of access to knowledge and power.⁷¹ In this, I side with Jameson and Spiegel on the interpretive value of material conditions as equally formative to the meaning of texts, even if, in Central and Eastern Europe in the early middle ages, these material conditions are not always readily available to us. To my mind, the post-structuralist efforts to abandon the loosely inter- and intra-personal (or social) context for an object-less and de-materialised discourse have been unpersuasive, not only because they flatten the socio-political hierarchies of social reality, but also because they leave us with no possibility for distributing moral and ethical responsibility.⁷²

The second kind of context taken into account, and the first way I seek to identify a discursive milieu is generic, and only applies to two out of three case studies in this thesis (the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios*). This analysis is concerned with structures, types and tropes available rather than specific texts or direct textual or inter-personal contact. I study contemporary Greek- and Latin-language hagiography to identify different discourses of sanctity available to the ninth-century hagiographer and then situate the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios* within these contemporary conventions. In both cases, however, I move from purely generic analysis into making claims about the social and political values professed by each text in constructing the hagiographic genre in the way that it does.

The third and last kind of contextualisation, seeks to identify a discursive milieu on the basis of both intellectual and inter-textual contexts, beyond the generic. This is done through the study of a range of

⁷⁰ M. Jay, ‘Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualisation’, *New Literary History*, 42 (2011), p.564.

⁷¹ This is framed explicitly against post-structuralist concepts of the discursive sphere such as the ‘enunciative field’. M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan, (London, 2002), pp.61-5.

⁷² Especially as it is framed by Foucault, in *ibid*.

texts in different genres which I argue are dealing with the same kinds of issues as each of my texts. This intellectual move will always be an argument to be made given the different kinds of contemporary evidence available to each text rather than a context to be taken for granted. In the case of the *Life of Cyril* and *On Letters*, this is done firstly through identifying common discursive components available in a range of contemporary texts, such as for example the question of classical learning or the matter of translation. And then secondly through demonstrating how each of my texts engages with or subverts these components. In the *Life of Methodios*, my case is stronger, and it is *for* engagement with a specific surviving set of Latin texts. In short, I make arguments *for* what each text is trying to do, in saying what it does, and what exactly it seeks to change or affect in doing so.

More generally, studying these texts together and diachronically, this thesis seeks to elide the critique that contextualism necessarily ‘implies a cessation or (at the very least) a slowing down of historical time.’⁷³ Rather, demonstrating the changing contexts between texts which inherit the same story, about the invention of Slavonic and about Cyril, but frame and structure this story differently, I seek to stress the vibrancy and flexibility of medieval intellectual culture, and to stress ‘the dynamic force field of contending contexts, both synchronous and diachronous’ available in the study of medieval texts.⁷⁴

Another way of framing the question of texts seeking to make interventions in specific inter-textual and intellectual contexts, is as a matter of authors seeking to affect specific audiences. I consider the two to some extent parallel activities, and I use the language of both throughout this thesis. But I maintain that the identification of an author and an audience requires further argument, over and above the identification of text and context, because it transposes the texts at hand into a social space, and the inquiry into a social-historical one. In this thesis I ask not simply what a text is trying to do, but why a community or individual may be trying to do that, and whether it is possible to determine if this intervention comes from a position of strength or weakness. In the words of Spiegel, I recognise that ‘language subtly mirrors the social location and relative power of its speakers’.⁷⁵ In what follows I clarify how authorship and audience is conceived in this thesis, and how the author manifests themselves in the early middle ages of Central and Eastern Europe.

0.V.2 Methodologies: Author and Audience

The post-structuralist claim that the individual (author) emerged with modernity has been subject to sustained criticism, and recent work on pre-modern authorship has demonstrated a plethora of authorial

⁷³ P. Gordon, ‘Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas’, in D. MacMahon, *et al* eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), p.36.

⁷⁴ Jay, ‘Historical Explanation and the Event’, p.561.

⁷⁵ Spiegel, ‘The Social Logic of the Text’, p.25.

modes, some of which closely resemble the self-conscious self often considered to be the product to Renaissance and post-Renaissance thinking.⁷⁶ In the early medieval context of Central and Eastern Europe, however, and especially with reference to the texts which concern this thesis, Michel Foucault's urge to abandon the *oeuvre* as a taxonomizing category for texts, Roland Barthes' murder of the named, monolithic author, and Julia Kristeva's assertion that every text is a 'mosaic of quotations', appear not so much as the well-known assault on the author in the twentieth century, but rather as an accurate description of medieval textual practice.⁷⁷

The three texts on which this thesis is centred are authorless. One, *On Letters*, circulated under a dubious name, Chernorizets Krabur (literally meaning 'the brave monk') for some of its manuscript transmission but even here no extra-textual evidence survives to allow us to construct or identify a specific author. In all three cases we have no identifiable names, no biographies, no *oeuvres*. As will be discussed, this has not stopped modern scholarship from trying to pin these texts onto known figures from the period. But this rather futile effort seems to achieve little and in effect narrows the intellectual sphere of the middle ages. By contrast, there is something of the *tabula rasa* to this anonymous state of affairs, which can be productive. Throughout this thesis, I hold on to 'the author', maintaining that texts are to some extent the product of intentions, and agency. But I recognise that 'the author' is not simply the person that the label designates, in two ways.

The first is that the author as a concept stands over and above the person it is associated with, and is analysed to some degree as an autonomous agent, with rational powers to propose arguments rather than, say, a mammal with basic physical needs.⁷⁸ Recognising this distance between the person and author, whether by calling it an 'author-function' as Foucault does or an 'author-creator' as does Bakhtin is necessary when a name like Sappho or Shakespeare hangs over a corpus.⁷⁹ In the absence of a person to attach this to, I keep to the term author, as a consciously constructed label.

⁷⁶ The modernity of the individual can be found for instance in the seminal: R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S. Heath, (New York, 1977), pp.142–8. On varied authorial discourses in the medieval west, see: R. Corradini, *et al.* eds., *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010). And in the Byzantine world: A. Pizzone ed., *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Function, and Identities* (Berlin, 2014). For one particularly self-aware Byzantine author, see: S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁷⁷ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp.23–4; R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p.146; J. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in her *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Columbia, 1980), p.66.

⁷⁸ See for instance the language in: Q. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and Interpretation', in his *Visions of Politics*, pp.90–102. For a critique, see: M. Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. D. Bouchard, (Cornell, 1980), pp.122.

⁷⁹ Foucault, 'What is an Author?', pp.124–7; M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel', in his *The Dialogic of Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. M. Holquist, (Austin, TX, 1981), pp.253–4.

The second is that the author is always already socially situated and therefore their intellectual production is shaped by the social conditions it emerged from. The state of the evidence for this thesis permit the conscious bypassing of the thorny question of how far exactly socio-economic conditions constrain the possibilities of individual agency, on which as noted above Spiegel, Jameson and Skinner disagree. In the absence of any specific biographical information to be attached to the individual authors of my texts, this thesis holds the author as intimately related to and as nearly interchangeable with what I call their ‘textual community.’⁸⁰ The scarcity of our evidence makes it difficult to determine if the author’s position was or was not simply the hegemonic one in their community or immediate social class, and therefore whether they are expressing something ‘original’ or ‘individual’ or not. As such I use the pronoun ‘they’ to refer to this medieval author, both as a gender-neutral shorthand, and as a term that carries within it the potential plurality of a textual community.

Whilst I use ‘textual community’ to denote where a text comes from, this thesis also seeks to identify the targets of these texts: the context they seek to affect or their intended audience. This also has two tenets.

Throughout, the texts presented here propose arguments which seek to resolve tensions within their social worlds, not in the offensive but often in the indicative: they declare the resolution as if it were already true. In some cases, I call this a ‘declaration’ in the words of the linguistic philosopher John Searle, in others I say simply that they ‘show’ the reality they are proposing, rather than explicitly argue for it. Both of these kinds of statements reveal the ideal audience which the texts construct within them and seek to bring into being, an audience which takes as already given the realities the texts seek to bring about.⁸¹

The second tenet of audience once again pulls us out of the text and into the social sphere. Ultimately, I seek to identify the ‘discursive milieu’, made up of social actors, that each text sought to affect. I recognise that this milieu by no means necessarily accepted the validity of the interventions proposed by our authors and their textual community. To the contrary, I often illuminate how, as far as our evidence permits, the milieus I identify, in our three cases as a Constantinopolitan-educated elite, the papal court, or a more immediate bilingual monastic circle in the Balkans, did not already share the views of the texts studied. Moreover, I suggest that these texts were not ultimately successful in persuading them. It is far from clear that the worldviews put forward by the authors or communities from which the *Life of Cyril*, the *Life of Methodios* and *On Letters* emerged, represented the hegemonic common-sense of their

⁸⁰ The term is adapted here, but borrowed from: B. Stock, *Listening for the Text: on the Uses of the Past* (Philadelphia, PA, 1990), p.150.

⁸¹ My notion of an ‘ideal audience’ is loosely based on Umberto Eco’s notion of a ‘model reader’. Eco notes that a ‘text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader’, and an empirical reader only ‘makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text’, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge, 1992), p.64.

contemporary socio-political context. This is precisely why the texts are so essential to complicating our understanding of early medieval intellectual culture but also the relationships between communities in the borderlands of cultural authority between Rome and Constantinople.

O.VI Inventing Slavonic: Cultures of Writing between Rome and Constantinople

To conclude, this thesis undertakes two intellectual projects. The first is to devise a methodology which adequately equips us to analyse the kinds of texts produced in the Central and East European medieval world. This is done as a conscious attempt to move scholarship on my topic and on the region more broadly away from the questions which have long preoccupied it, largely to do with establishing or verifying events that occurred, but often doing so within pre-existing national frameworks. This methodological move is in line with some recent work in Byzantine and medieval studies, which has sought to propose new ways of reading texts and approaching language and identity.⁸² Although some of this work has turned to the north eastern Slavs of Rus, little of it has trickled into studies of medieval Central and South Eastern Europe.⁸³

The second is to show how this new methodological approach can produce new arguments about the invention of Slavonic in particular and new insights into the social world in which it emerged. So in place of what is lost in this source-critical study, namely certainty about some of the events that occurred, this thesis offers instead what is gained: on the one hand, an insight into the dynamic and sophisticated intellectual culture of Central and Eastern Europe, which is integrated into the intellectual worlds of both Byzantium and the Frankish realm and has consequences for the study of both. On the other hand, this thesis proposes a new social history of the efforts of educated clerics to both adjust to and transform their socio-political circumstances, caught in the borderlands between the hegemonic centres of cultural production, Rome and Constantinople.

⁸² For instance: M. Mullet, *Theophylact of Ohrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Birmingham, 1997); A. Kaldellis, 'The Study of Women and Children: Methodological Challenges and New Directions', in P. Stephenson ed., *The Byzantine World* (Abingdon, 2010), pp.61-71; S. Gaunt, 'French Literature Abroad: Towards an Alternative History of French Literature', *Interfaces*, 1 (2015), pp.25-61; G. Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2018).

⁸³ For instance: S. Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge, 2006).

Chapter One:

Inventing Slavonic: *Life of Constantine-Cyril*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The body of work devoted to the study of the lives of Constantine-Cyril (henceforth Cyril) (ca.826-869) and Methodios (ca.815-886) and their invention of the Slavonic alphabet is almost boundless.¹ Their legacies are intertwined with complex national myths and constructions of modern identities.² This is nowhere more easily demonstrated than in the twelfth-century basilica of St Clement in Rome.

An otherwise unmarked and unremarkable tomb lay amidst the damp dark corridors beneath the basilica, the remains of its fourth-century predecessor. In 1861, following the failed attempt in 1857-8 to discover Cyril's remains commissioned by Pope Pius IX at the request of some Slavic bishops, the Prior of the Irish Dominican community, Fr Joseph Mulloy, discovered an empty receptacle at the end of the south wall of the fourth-century basilica, just before the staircase leading to the Mithraic area which he would later discover.³ Even though the tomb was found to be empty, and the textual evidence is far from unambiguous concerning its supposed location in the church, it was identified as the burial place of Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher and inventor of the Slavonic alphabet.⁴ This interpretation was perhaps assisted by the imminent celebrations, in Rome, of the millennium since the conversion of the Slavs.⁵ Subsequently, over the course of the twentieth century, the tomb was adorned with monuments of thanks to the 'apostle of the Slavic people' from the governments and people of Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Poland. Today, leaders of Slavonic-speaking countries make regular visits to the tomb when in Rome.⁶

¹ A pertinent example of the sheer volume of work is the attempt at a systematic bibliography of Cyrillo-Methodian studies which started in the 1930s. Three full volumes of bibliography were printed in the twentieth century for the periods 1516-1934, 1934-40, and 1940-80. Two reprints have since updated gaps in the former two volumes. This leaves us with five volumes of bibliography prior to 1980. G.A. Il'inskii ed., *Opyt sistematicheskoi kirilometodievskoi bibliografii* (Sofia, 1934). This was updated and reprinted as: S. Nikolova ed., *Kirilo-Metodievskia bibliografiia, 1516-1934* (Sofia, 2003). *Kirilometodievskia bibliografiia za 1934-40 god.* (Sofia, 1942) was updated and reprinted as: S. Nikolova ed., *Kirilo-Metodievskia bibliografiia. 1934-44* (Sofia, 2010). The last volume remains un-updated. I. Duichev, et al eds., *Kirilometodievskia bibliografiia, 1940-1980* (Sofia, 1983).

² For instance: S. Nikolova, et al eds., *Kirilo-Methodievskoto kulturno nasledstvo i natsionalnata identichnost* (Sofia, 2011).

³ L.E. Boyle, 'The Site of the Tomb of St. Cyril in the Lower Basilica of San Clemente, Rome', in E. Farrugia et al, eds., *Christianity Among the Slavs: the Heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodios* (Rome, 1988), p.76.

⁴ On the hunt of the actual remains of Cyril: L.E. Boyle, 'The Fate of the Remains of St Cyril', in L. Dempsey, ed., *San Clemente Miscellany II: Art & Archaeology* (Rome, 1978), pp.13-35. An alternative reading of the location of the tomb, given by the sources as 'ad dexteram partem altaris' was not proposed until the late twentieth century. See: J. Osborne, *Early Medieval Wall-Paintings in the Lower Church of San Clemente, Rome* (New York, 1984).

⁵ Boyle, 'The Site of the Tomb of St. Cyril', p.77.

⁶ 'Macedonian Delegation Bows on St Cyril's Tomb, Meets Pope Frances,' 24 May 2016, (<http://www.mia.mk/EN/Inside/RenderSingleNews/289/132004035>), (last accessed: January, 2020); 'Bulgarian President Visits St Cyril's Tomb,' 18 May 2016, (<http://www.op.org/en/content/bulgaria-president-visits-st-cyril-tomb-dominican-basilica-san-clemente-rome>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

The Cyrillo-Methodian mission's pan-Slavic celebration coexists in tension with regular geo-political controversy over its history and origins, as some nations make more explicit claims to the mission as their own. Vladimir Putin's statement to the Macedonian president on 24 May 2017 (the official 'Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture') that 'the Slavic alphabet and literature came to us from Macedonian soil' caused enough uproar to lead to Russian minister and chess player Anatolii Karpov's public clarification.⁷ Karpov insisted that 'in Russia we know that the Cyrillic alphabet came from Byzantium.'⁸ This caused more uproar in turn and led Bulgarian Prime Minister, Boiko Borisov to cancel a meeting with Karpov, who had travelled to Bulgaria to meet with the head of state, citing his statements about the alphabet as the reason for doing so.⁹ More recently still in May 2019, Pope Francis issued a message to the Bulgarian people prior to his state visit, in which he praised the land as a 'homeland of witnesses of the faith, since the time in which the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius sowed the Gospel there.'¹⁰ He was slammed by Macedonian media for 'erasing' Macedonia and placing the brothers in Bulgaria.¹¹

These contradictory common-sense assumptions which make up the figure of memory of the invention of Slavonic, namely the pan-Slavic nature of the brothers' mission and the nationally specific claims to their origins, have a dialectical relationship with our medieval texts, *Life of Cyril* (henceforth VC) and the *Life of Methodios* (henceforth VM).¹² Firstly, there are ways of reading these texts and ways of understanding

⁷ M. Cheresheva, 'Putin's Homage to Cyrillic Makes Bulgarians See Red', 25 May 2017, (<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kremlin-s-stance-on-cyrillic-origin-angers-sofia-05-25-2017>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

⁸ 'Anatolii Karpov v Bolgarii: v Rosii my znaem, chto kirillitsa prishla iz Vizantii', 19 June 2017, (<http://www.novinite.ru/articles/26221/Анатолий+Карпов+в+Болгарии%3A+В+России+мы+знаем%2C+что+кириллица+пришла+из+Византии>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

⁹ V. Aleksandrova, 'Nov rund: Kirilitsata – ot Vizantiia? Borisov vurna Karpov ot MS', 19 June 2017, (<http://www.dnes.bg/politika/2017/06/19/nov-rund-kirilicata-ot-vizantiia-borisov-vurna-karpov-ot-ms.344771>), (last accessed: January, 2020)

¹⁰ 'patria dei testimoni della fede fin dai tempi in cui i santi fratelli Cirillo e Metodio disseminato il Vangelo', D. Watkins, 'Pope Francis Sends Greetings to Bulgaria Ahead of Visit', 3 May 2019, (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-05/pope-francis-apostolic-journey-bulgaria-video-message.html>), (Last accessed: January, 2020)

¹¹ 'Papata Frantsicko gi "izbrisha" Kiril i Metodij od Makedonija i gi zapisha vo Bugarija', 5 May 2019, (<https://republika.mk/vesti/makedonija/papata-frantsisk-gi-izbrisha-kiril-i-metodij-od-makedonija-i-gi-zapisha-vo-bugarija/>), (last accessed: January, 2020)

¹² *Life of Constantine-Cyril*, (henceforth VC). No recent critical edition of the VC exists, so I have referred to a number of editions when citing the text. The main two are: F. Grivec, F. Tomšič eds. *Constantinus et Methodius Thessalonicensis. Fontes*, (Zagreb, 1960), pp.95-143 and Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani Suchineniia*, eds. B. Angelov, Kh. Kodov, vol. 3 (Sofia, 1973) pp.30-159. When citing the text, I opt for the morphology of Grivec and Tomšič for orthographic ease as well as their numbering of lines which is absent in Angelov and Kodov's edition. I have also referred to Cristiano Diddi's series of critical editions of individual manuscript traditions, especially the South Slavic ones. These have been published in preparation for Diddi's full critical edition of the VC which is still forthcoming. They can be found in his articles in *Richerche slavistiche*, published between 2004–2013, under the title 'Materiali e ricerche per l'edizione critica di Vita Constantini. I-XI'. Generally, the editions do not disagree on word choice, but often on morphology. In the rare instance that these differences are significant to my argument, I cite the variants in a footnote. I have referred to both Russian and Bulgarian language translations of the text, but all

medieval ethnicity which lend themselves to both of these kinds of conclusions. For instance, the Slavic alphabet was only transmitted to Russia from Macedonian soil, if we accept that medieval Ohrid– one of the two known centres producing Slavonic-language texts in the tenth century – was in some transcendental sense ‘Macedonian’, despite being part of the Bulgarian polity at that time.



Figure 1. The Moscow Red Square on May 24th ‘Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture’ in 2018, (photo: mospat.ru)

Secondly, these readings, often as statements uttered on the political stage, also manifest as state- and church-sponsored actions. For instance, every year on May 24th, the pan-Orthodox Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture, celebrations of the two brothers are staged across the Orthodox world. This international celebration is always already in tension with national interests and so each celebration manifests in profoundly national ways. In 2018, the Red Square in Moscow was full for a free concert, where an orchestra performed songs by Russian composers, sang by choirs dressed in Russian folk dress, and the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia addressed the audience under large posters of the two

renderings into English are my own. *Life of Methodios* (henceforth VM), 1-2. As with the VC, I have referred to both the Grivec and Tomšič, and Angelov and Kodov’s editions. Once again, I use the morphology of Grivec and Tomšič’s edition for ease, as well as the numbering of both sections and sentences. Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.185-192. Grivec, Tomšič, *Constantinus et Methodius*, pp.145-167.

brothers on stage.¹³ Meanwhile a military band paraded through the streets of Sofia led by an icon of Cyril and Methodios, concluding with a number of speeches by the president and major cultural figures, as well as recitals of nationalist poetry in front of the Saints Cyril and Methodios National Library of Bulgaria.¹⁴

The claims to Cyril and Methodios in these ephemeral celebrations are sustained by more stable state institutions. The university of ‘Saints Cyril and Methodios’ can be found in Skopje, Macedonia; Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria; Travne, Slovakia; and in Minsk, Belarus, where it is the name of the theology institute of the main national university.¹⁵ These universities carry significant cultural weight, but national claims to the Apostles to the Slavs are also sustained by countless smaller institutions and monuments. Cyril and Methodios can be found: in the ‘Cyril and Methodios’ primary school in Belgrade, Serbia; another in Bitola, Macedonia; the ‘Cyril and Methodios’ Cathedral in Prague, the Czech Republic; the ‘Cyril and Methodios’ Library in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina; depicted on the modern Bulgarian passport page and in countless statue monuments across the region, for instance in Tver’, Murmansk, Sevastopol’, Kolomna, and Moscow in Russia alone.¹⁶ Cyril and Methodios as both Apostles to all Slavs on the one hand, but as firmly nationally situated on the other, are nearly ubiquitous in Central and Eastern European Slavonic-speaking countries.

¹³ The concert was organised in collaboration between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Culture. ‘Den slavianskoi pis’mennosti i kul’tury otmetiat na Krasnoi ploshadi’, 21 May 2018, (<https://www.mos.ru/news/item/40528073/>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

¹⁴ The celebrations were organised entirely by the Bulgarian state. ‘24 mai – den na Bulgarskata prosveta i kultura i den na slavianskata pismenost’, 23 May 2018, (<http://mysofia.bg/whatwherewhen/24-may-den-na-slavyanskata-pismenost-i-kultura/>), (last accessed: January, 2020)

¹⁵ ‘Univerzitet Sv Kiril i Metodij vo Skopije’, (<http://www.ukim.edu.mk/>), (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Travne’, (<https://www.ucm.sk/>), (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Veliko turnovski universitet sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii’, (<http://www.uni-vt.bg/bul/>), (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Institut teologii imeni sviatykh Mefodiia i Kirilla’, (<https://www.theology.bsu.by/>), (last accessed: January, 2020);

¹⁶ ‘Osnovna shkola Ćirilo I Metodije, Beograd’, (<http://www.oscirilo.edu.rs/index.php?jezik=sr&strana=naslovna>) (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Osnovno uchilishte Sv. Kiril i Metodij, Bitola’, (<https://oukimbt.webs.com/>) (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Římskokatolická farnost sv. Cyrila a Metoděje, Praha’, (<https://farnost-karlin.cz/cz/>) (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Narodna biblioteka Ćirilo I Metodije, Prijedor’, (<https://www.bibliotekaprijedor.com/>) (last accessed: January, 2020); ‘Pamiatniki Kirillu i Mefodiiu v Rossii’, (<https://moskray.livejournal.com/385302.html>) (last accessed: January, 2020).



Figure 2: St Cyril and Methodios University, Skopje, (image: portalb.mk)

Thirdly, in this dialectical cycle, the contemporary ubiquity of the brothers (although originally emerging from particular readings of medieval texts) in turn shapes and conditions scholars' preconceptions about the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and thus feeds back into their (our) re-readings of these texts. This is the context within we are always already embroiled when approaching Cyril as a man. Scholarship largely accepts the first premise, that Cyril and Methodios were first and foremost apostles to the Slavs. The second, the nationalisation of the brothers, then produces various scholarly disputes about their origins, and the location of the authorship of texts about them (in Moravia, proposed by Czech scholars, or in Bulgaria or Macedonia proposed by the respective academies).¹⁷ This is not to say that scholars' arguments are reducible entirely to national loyalties. National academies are always heterotopic spaces which sustain various contradicting opinions, but there are always certain national-hegemonic opinions to

¹⁷ For Czech scholars locating the VC in an exclusively Moravian circle and set of aims, see for instance: V. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje* (Prague, 1963), p.83 (VC), p.85 (VM). The Bulgarian Academy of Science attributes the VC to the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple Clement of Ohrid who ultimately works under the Bulgarian tsar. The most recent monograph on Clement from Bulgaria calls him a Slav 'of the Bulgarian type'. More recently still, a major edited volume calls him the founder of the 'old Bulgarian language.' Kliment, *Subrani*, p.8-9; I. Iliev, *Kliment Okhridski: zhivot i delo* (Plovdiv, 2010), pp.35-7; Kuimdzieva, Totomanova eds., *Sv. Kliment Okhridski v kulturata na evropa*, p.12. Clement is accepted as a Macedonian in the two most recent volume from Macedonia, the second of which opens with an address from the president of Macedonia, which is followed by an introduction by the mayor of Ohrid. The mayor describes Clement as 'our forefather, the pillar of the Macedonian people'. T. Stojanovski, 'Za duhovnata dramaturgija vo pouchnite Slova Klimentovi', in I. Zarov ed., *Sveti Kliment Ohridski vo Umetnichkoto Tvoreshтво* (Skopje, 2012), pp.53-7; 'Address of Mr Nikola Bakraceski, Mayor of Ohrid', in Fiti ed., *Sveti Kliment Okhridski, 916-2016*, p.36.

be found in them. It is not the second conception, the nationalised Cyril and Methodios that concern us here, however.

Rather I seek to take issue with the former, ubiquitous assumption that Cyril in particular was first and foremost an apostle to the Slavs. I will deal with Methodios separately for reasons to be explained in the introduction to Chapter 2. On Cyril, scholarship mostly concurs with institutions and monuments discussed above: that he was an apostle to the Slavs, that his invention of the alphabet was his most important achievement, and, less explicitly but nonetheless the case, that this invention was somehow at odds with his Byzantine background. In the recent words of one of the most established scholars on the VC and VM, Cyril's idea to invent the alphabet 'was unprecedented and revolutionary in its implications: it was incomprehensible to his contemporaries in the West and to his peers in Byzantium, with their arrogant conviction of cultural superiority towards everything non-Hellenic.'¹⁸ At the heart of this defence of the revolutionary and un-Byzantine nature of Cyril is the acceptance of the invention of Slavonic as an act of ethnic liberation for Slavs. The value of the Slavonic alphabet in modern political discourse has projected immense value onto Cyril, its inventor, as a liberator, and basic assumptions about the monolithic simplicity of identity have ensured that in order to liberate the Slavs, Cyril has had to turn away from his own Byzantine background.¹⁹

The impact of this contemporary and politicised image of Cyril on the VC as a text has been profound. It is assumed almost universally: that the text itself is primarily about Cyril's invention of the Slavonic alphabet, his greatest achievement; that it is primarily a defence of this act and, and finally that all other activity in the text is in some way subordinated to this eventual invention. In the most thorough recent study of the papal politics of Cyril and Methodios' mission to Moravia published in 2014, Maddalena Betti notes that the VC had two aims. The first was:

'to define the holiness of Constantine by representing the life of this New Apostle who participated in the process of redemption thus showing the Slavs the way to salvation through the will of God. The second aim was to defend the Slavic alphabet, the Slavonic translation of the

¹⁸ V. Vavřínek, 'The Puzzle of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission', *Byzantinoslavica*, 75 (2017), p.78. See also: S. Nikolova, 'The Moravian Mission: a Successful and an Unsuccessful Result of the Activity of Sts. Cyril and Methodius', in A. Tachiaos ed., *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs* (Thessaloniki 2015), p. 74.

¹⁹ More nuanced assessments of Cyril as an explicitly Byzantine diplomat still recognise him as 'completely unique', for believing that 'all peoples were worthy of baptism and that all languages were created as equal', or highly unusual in his 'spirit of friendliness.' S. Ivanov, 'Cyril and Methodius among Byzantine Missionaries: Common Features and Unique Reality', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodios Mission and Europe*, p.201; I. Ševčenko, 'Three Paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission', *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964), p.226.

Holy Scriptures and the Slavonic liturgy. The Slavic language which was consecrated by the saintliness of Constantine was the main theme of the *Life of Constantine*.’²⁰

This hegemonic view is not too dissimilar from the conclusion of the Vladimir Vavřínek’s 1963 monograph and most thorough study to-date of the VC as a literary text.

‘Hlavním cílem ŽK bylo dokázat, že Konstantin byl bohem vyvolený světec, nadaný od něho mimořádnou učeností a moudrostí, který byl přímo předurčen pro působení na Moravě, a že proto jeho dílo - zavedení slovanského liturgického písemnictví - plně odpovídalo zájmům církve i učení Písma.’²¹

‘The main aim of the VC was to prove that Constantine was a saint by the will of God, and was granted with extraordinary learning and wisdom by the him, and that he was predestined to work in Moravia, and that his work - the introduction of Slavonic liturgical literature - fully corresponded to the Church's interests and the teachings of Scripture.’

Both of these positions take it as a given, that even if we accept the VC as in some sense a Byzantine hagiography in form and style, its purpose or argument was a Slavonic one, this is the ‘first original written Slavonic text’ (‘první staroslověnsky napsané původní dílo’).²²

This reading is totally obvious if viewed from the richly saturated landscape of Cyrillo-Methodian memorabilia in Central and Eastern Europe. But it may appear somewhat startling to a reader approaching the text with no prior knowledge of the subsequent spread of Slavonic. The VC is made up of roughly twenty pages of A4 in a modern printed edition, of which a mere two deal with Slavonic, one page with the Moravian ruler, Rastislav’s letter to Michael asking for a teacher and the invention, and another page devoted to Cyril’s time in Moravia.²³ As calculated by Vavřínek himself, over half (fifty four percent) of the text is taken up by cited disputations between Cyril and Jews, Muslims, Latins, heretics or pagans.²⁴ Eight full pages of the text discuss the invitation of the Khazar ruler, Cyril’s travels to Khazaria and his disputation at the Khazar court with Jewish scholars and men said to know a lot about Islam.²⁵ The disputation alone covers six pages.²⁶ In sheer volume this section is clearly the centre piece of the text. Another potential centre piece at least as prominent as the invention of the alphabet is the discovery and translation of the relics of Pope Clement, which Cyril finds in the Crimea on his route to from Khazaria.

²⁰ Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.76.

²¹ Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.81.

²² Ibid., p.53.

²³ Printed on A4 in Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.89-109, dealing with the alphabet: 14, pp.104-5. 15, pp.105-6.

²⁴ Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.66.

²⁵ Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.95-103.

²⁶ Ibid., bottom of pp.96-103.

The discovery, celebration of the relics in Rome and the decision to bury Cyril in the Basilica of St Clement take up roughly a page of text altogether.²⁷ After Cyril has taken the relics to Rome, he is buried by the pope with all the Greeks and Romans processing in his honour, unlike his brother in the *VM* who is celebrated in Latin, Greek and Slavonic.²⁸

It is by no means clear, on viewing its varied and disparate contents, that the text understands Cyril primarily as an inventor of the Slavonic alphabet, or that it considers this his teleological destiny.²⁹ Rather it is clear, that Cyril is primarily an inventor of the Slavonic alphabet, for modern historians and national institutions, to whom the Slavonic alphabet holds much more value than the relics of St Clement or a long disputation treatise against Judaism.

As discussed in the introduction, contextualisation is a multi-faceted activity. Already assumed contexts are hard to untangle from the contexts which emerge more organically from close investigations of texts. This chapter will seek, as far as possible, to avoid superimposing the contemporary image of Cyril onto the medieval texts. Moreover, it will refrain from commenting on Cyril's own ethnicity, the historicity of his deeds, or his personal character ('his love of anonymity [...] and his love for adventure').³⁰ Rather, the chapter offers a textual study of the *VC*. By withholding interest in illuminating Cyril as a man, this chapter seeks to better illuminate the *VC* as a text and as an argument. I am interested in how authorial agency organises and structures the ideological positions found in the text. I ask *what* the text is arguing and *who* it is arguing with.

The starting point of this study is the work, amongst others, of Ihor Ševčenko who has insisted that, albeit surviving in Slavonic, the lives of Cyril and Methodios 'are Byzantine documents', they 'glorify two Byzantines' and which 'rest in part on Byzantine texts written in Greek.'³¹ But, I wish to go further than simply revealing the Greek sources for packages of information found in the *VC* or generic hagiographic

²⁷ Ibid., pp.96, 107-9.

²⁸ *VC*, 18.14. *VM*, 17.11.

²⁹ He is only referred to as such in the very first introductory paragraph of the text, which differs significantly in tone and voice from the rest of the *VC*. It uses the first-person plural 'we' and describes Cyril as a teacher sent to enlighten 'our language' ('**ѢЗЫКЪ НАШЪ**'). This is at odds with the third person narration, and general Byzantine imperialism of the text, which others and caricatures Slavs and non-Romans. This imperialism will be discussed at more length below. This opening paragraph is clearly a later addition. *VC*, 1.1-4.

³⁰ T. Butler, 'Saint Constantine-Cyril's "Sermon on the Translation of the Relics of Saint Clement of Rome"', *Cyrrilomethodianum*, 17-18 (1993-4), p.21. See for instance the claim that the brothers were actually Bulgarian: A. Margaritov-Hofer, *et al*, *Za Kiril i Metodii* (Sofia, 1999). The best summary of debates on the historicity of the text, and of Cyril as a person: Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.1-157.

³¹ I. Ševčenko, 'Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12-13 (1988-9), p.13. Also acknowledged in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.56-65. Ivanov, "*Pearls before Swine*", p.91.

tropes manifested in the text.³² I part with the bulk of scholarship by not assuming the text to be a ‘Slavonic’ text, in the sense that either it promotes a Slavonic agenda, is ‘imbued with a strong Slavic patriotism’, or that it is in some ways written *for* the Slavs.³³ Instead, I begin by assessing the text and the authorial world view which it emerged from, by taking as given that the text unequivocally evokes a world which centred around and sourced its legitimacy from Byzantium, and that it propagates a Byzantine imperial agenda.³⁴

As such, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the text engages and argues with explicitly Byzantine intellectual problems, and does so using Byzantine hagiographical, rhetorical, and grammatical texts. In short, this chapter seeks to reveal how the author of the VC positions themselves within these intellectual currents, and how by doing so the text presents an argument *for* certain kinds of education, and *for* their use in certain kinds of missionary activity.

To make this argument, the chapter is divided in five parts in addition to this introduction. Part II focuses on the evidence for the integration of the VC in the corpus of Byzantine literature in general, and Byzantine hagiography in particular. More specifically it highlights how the use of Byzantine materials is not simply decorative, but crucial to the formation of the argument of the text. To do this I focus on the authorial formation of a definition of philosophy, which stresses the use of philosophical understanding or education, in the performance of ‘deeds’ or actions.

I then turn to how the text itself realises this definition in two ways. The first, Part III, is a study of how the text portrays Cyril as student, language learner and alphabet ‘creator’. The second, Part IV, explores the consequences of this learning in the portrayal of his deeds, or actual disputations. I focus on three major disputations in depth, exploring authorial rhetorical strategies, the controlled choice of content, and more importantly, the over-arching structure of the arrangement of the disputes. I argue that Cyril’s three phases of learning, and the three major disputations it prepares him for, form a significant and controlled narrative structure. I also maintain that in all disputes, the author shows Cyril utilising his rhetorical education in more subtle ways. The saint is seen ordering and structuring debates in different ways – whether syllogistic, scriptural, or other – to suit different audiences. At times his statements contradict

³² E.g. I. Ševčenko, ‘The Greek Source of the Inscription on Solomon’s Chalice in the Vita Constantini’, in *To Honor Roman Jakobson on his Seventieth Birthday, 11 October 1966* (Paris, 1967), pp.1806-18. Tropes: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.56-65.

³³ D. Obolensky, ‘Father Francis Dvornik’, *Harvard Slavic Studies*, 2 (1954), p.5.

³⁴ This Byzantine agenda has already been noted but remains at odds with the commonplace understanding of what the text is about, and so has not trickled into much of the scholarship. In the very same journal issue that Obolensky asserts the lives are imbued with Slavonic patriotism we find an article arguing to the contrary, that the texts reveal standard Byzantine thought about imperial rule. See: M. Anastos, ‘Political Theory in the Lives of the Slavic Saints Constantine and Methodios’, *Harvard Slavic Studies*, 2 (1954), pp.11-38. Also noted in: L.E. Havlik, ‘Roman Universalism and 9th-Century Moravia’, *Cyrillicmethodianum*, 2 (1972-73), pp.14-22.

each other, because different disputes occur in different phases of the history of Christianity rather than simply in different stages of his life as presented in the *VC*.

Whilst debating with Jews, Muslims and Latins forms the performative and demonstrative aspect of the text, it is only the pagans or the non-Abrahamic peoples that Cyril moves to conversion. Thus, even though heathen peoples may not be given the opportunity to formulate argumentation, the *VC* leaves no doubt as to the effectiveness of Cyril's education in persuading them, and thus offers a strong defence of 'outside' knowledge in missionary activity.

Finally, in Part V and Part VI, I try to position the *VC* in its ninth-century intellectual and inter-textual context. In the former, I argue that even though the *VC*'s author was well versed in Latin offices, and most probably writing in the West, the most relevant intellectual context for the textual argument comes from Byzantium. This is most evident through the fundamental differences in the portrayal of Cyril in surviving Latin-language materials, in particular, the overwhelming omission or concision of his elaborate education and disputations.

Turning to Byzantium in Part VI, I locate two contemporary hagiographical types used by the author of the *VC* and merged to form Cyril: the travelling (often ascetic) saint and the disputing patriarch. The fact that these *topoi* were synthesised demonstrates the significance of education when travelling amongst heathens and of travel for those with education in the Orthodox faith. Using the *Life of Patriarch Ignatios* alongside other anti-Photian sources, and some of the lesser hagiographies of the ninth century, I show that the position on education and mission presented by the *VC* engages with stories circulated about the patriarch Photios, in both their positive and negative guises. Thus, the *VC* reveals a particular intellectual stance in ninth-century Byzantium not reducible to Photios, but rather indicative of a particular social stratum, a textual community subject to particular Constantinopolitan education, preoccupied not so much with internal strife and schism, but looking outward to the fringes of the Christian world. Before I turn to Part II of this chapter, I offer a brief summary of the text's dating and narrative contents to guide the reader.

The *VC* is earlier and longer than the *VM*, which clearly used the *VC* as a source.³⁵ The text survives in full in forty-eight Slavonic manuscripts of the (late) fifteenth century or later, which come from both East Slavonic (modern day Russia and Ukraine) and South Slavonic (i.e. various Balkan) redactions.³⁶ Despite the late attestations, it seems clear that the *VC* is in fact a very old text. It records the death of Cyril as

³⁵ This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

³⁶ Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.34-45.

February 869, which acts as a *terminus post quem*.³⁷ The *terminus ante quem* is defined by the VM. Methodios is generally accepted as dying in 885, on the basis of evidence contained in a papal letter by Stephen V to the Moravian Kniaz Sviatopluk concerning his death, but it is not explicitly stated in his *vita*.³⁸ It is clear that the VM was composed before the expulsion of Methodios' followers from Moravia. This occurred not long after Methodios' death but is not mentioned by the VM. The expulsion is itself not dated specifically but most probably occurred around the time of the 890 papal ban of the Slavonic liturgy by Stephen V and certainly by the time of arrival of the Hungarians and collapse of the Moravian polity between 905-908.³⁹ Thus, the VM must be written sometime between 885-905 at the latest. The VC therefore was probably written sometime in the earlier half of the period spanning 869 to 905, and given what I argue to be its profoundly Byzantine preoccupations perhaps as early as 869-870 in Rome, prior to the arrival of Methodios as bishop to Moravia and the consolidation of papal patronage for the mission.⁴⁰

At a total of twenty A4 pages, the text begins with the birth of Cyril in Thessaloniki, and some limited details about his family's rank.⁴¹ It then turns to his move to Constantinople for education with Photios, who is not mentioned as already Patriarch of Constantinople, and Leo the Grammarian, before his peculiar ordination and appointment as librarian of the Patriarchal library.⁴² Cyril then runs away from this position and disappears into a monastery. When he is found he returns to Constantinople and has a short disputational encounter with iconoclast patriarch John VII.⁴³ After this the emperor sends him on his first diplomatic mission to the Abbasid court to dispute with Muslim scholars who blaspheme against the Trinity.⁴⁴ This dispute is given at length in the text, after which Cyril heads to Mount Olympus to visit his brother, but the retreat is interrupted by his second mission.⁴⁵ The emperor sends Cyril to Khazaria, and on his way Cyril learns a number of languages, and discovers the relics of Pope Clement in the Crimea.⁴⁶ At the Khazar court, a full dispute is performed and given between Cyril and some Jewish scholars, and men who are said to know about Islam.⁴⁷ After returning to Constantinople once again and deciphering a message on a mysterious chalice, Cyril is immediately sent on a mission by the emperor again, this time

³⁷ VC, 18.13.

³⁸ For instance: G. Soulis, 'The Legacy of Cyril and Methodius to the Southern Slavs', *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 19 (1965) p.21. F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs: SS Cyril and Methodios* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1970), p.187. Stephen V, *Letters*, 1, in *Stephani V. papae epistolae*, ed. G. Laehr, in *MGH, Epp. VII*, (Epistolae Karolini Aevi, V), (Weidmann, 1974) pp.354-8.

³⁹ Stephen V, *Register*, 33, in *Fragmenta registri Stephani V. papae*, ed. E. Caspar, in *MGH, Epp. VII* (Epistolae Karolini Aevi V), (Weidmann, 1974), pp.352-3. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De administrando imperio*, 41.

⁴⁰ Dvornik speculates that Methodios' appointment was as early as the end of 869, *Byzantine Missions*, p.151.

⁴¹ VC, 1-2.

⁴² Ibid., 3-4.

⁴³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9-13

to Moravia at the request of the local ruler Rastislav.⁴⁸ He invents the Slavonic alphabet and heads there. After some time in Moravia, Cyril goes to Venice and has a dispute with Latin priests and bishops who oppose the use of any non-sacred languages for scripture (namely not Greek, Latin or Hebrew).⁴⁹ Cyril is then called to Rome where Pope Hadrian welcomes him, gladly receives the relics of Pope Clement and blesses books in Slavonic. Not long after, the saint accepts Cyril as his monastic name and dies in Rome.

1.II. THE LIFE OF CYRIL AS BYZANTINE LITERATURE

For all its ubiquity in Slavonic studies, the VC has largely been omitted from studies of Byzantine hagiography in the ninth century.⁵⁰ It has also not been discussed in other areas of Byzantine studies to which it has much to contribute. As noted Cyril's disputations with Jews, Muslims, Venetians, and the like make up over half of the text (fifty six per cent), yet studies of rhetoric in the middle Byzantine period leave Cyril unmentioned.⁵¹ Studies of the text by Slavists or Byzantino-Slavists have, to the contrary, continued to illuminate the varied ways in which the text participates in Byzantine literary norms and motifs.

I will only point to two moments in the text, which locate the VC firmly in the Byzantine literary tradition, and in particular in a Constantinopolitan intellectual circle. The first is the discovery of a Greek prototype text for the inscription Cyril deciphers on the so-called chalice of Solomon. When in Constantinople, Cyril is said to decipher a chalice of precious stone found in the Hagia Sophia and written in Jewish and Samaritan letters.⁵² An almost word-for-word Greek version of the lines on the chalice with no reference to Cyril was found by Ševčenko in an eleventh-century manuscript.⁵³ It is clear therefore that the story of the Solomon chalice is a 'borrowing', coming into the VC 'from a context which

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15 (Moravia) 16 (Venice).

⁵⁰ Cyril is nowhere to be found in the *Dumbarton Oaks Database of Byzantine Hagiography*. No mention is made of him in the chapter on 'Hagiography from the "Dark Age" to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes', in S. Efthymiadis, ed. *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol.1: *Periods and Places* (Farnham, 2011), pp.95-142. The only mention of Cyril in the two volumes of the Ashgate Companion is in I. Lunde's short article on 'Slavic hagiography', *ibid.*, pp.369-84. Somewhat ironically, Lunde stresses that early Slavic hagiography is better considered within Byzantine conventions rather than as a unique phenomenon which originates '*ex nihilo*', even though the volume suggests the opposite by its separation into a 'Slavic' chapter. Also omitted in: A.-M. Talbot, 'Hagiography', in E. Jeffreys, *et al* eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, (Oxford, 2008), pp.862-71; I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period', in A. Bryer, *et al* eds., *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977), pp.113-31.

⁵¹ V. Vavřínek, 'Staroslověnské životy Konstantina a Metoděje a panegyriky Řehoře z Nazianzu', *Listy filologické* 85 (1962), p. 111; M. Vinson, 'Rhetoric and Writing Strategies in the Ninth Century', in E. Jeffreys ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.9-22. Averil Cameron notes a general absence of scholarship on disputation material, especially that found in hagiographies in: *Arguing it Out: Discussion in Twelfth-Century Byzantium* (Budapest, 2016), pp.10-13.

⁵² VC, 12.

⁵³ Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', pp.1806-18.

originally had nothing to do with its hero', and used as 'proof of Constantine's superior intellectual powers.'⁵⁴ This context, at least for the legend of this chalice, given Ševčenko's description of the manuscript and its contents was most probably a Constantinopolitan one.⁵⁵

The second passage under consideration is the encounter with the iconoclast patriarch, John VII.⁵⁶ The author shamelessly moulds the story of the council of the Restoration of Orthodoxy in 843 into a short disputation between Cyril and John, which concludes with the latter being silenced and 'feeling ashamed.'⁵⁷ Cyril, is impressed upon a story of Byzantine iconoclasm he has no part in, just as he is assigned agency in deciphering of Solomon's chalice, which had in fact already been deciphered.

Previous studies, however, have not gone much further than stating these motifs to be borrowings without exploring their consequences. This has largely been due to the fact that these episodes have often been studied as sources into the background of Cyril, as a historical individual, rather than sources into the cultural and symbolic landscape available to authors of middle-Byzantine hagiography. Thus, there are two sets of consequences related to considering the VC as Byzantine literature which I seek to highlight in this section, and which inform my approach. The first is to argue that the text was originally written in Greek. The second part seeks to argue that, language notwithstanding, the text is aimed at and engages with Byzantine intellectual culture in more fundamental ways than previously acknowledged.

1.II.1 Language

The debate over the language of the text intertwines closely with questions about Cyril and his commitment to the Slavs. The recognition of Cyril as an Apostle to the Slavs, has given weight to the expectation that his life must therefore have been written in Slavonic. So, it has been proposed and discarded that the text was originally written in Greek or that parts of it were in Greek and others originally in Slavonic.⁵⁸ It is evident however that the VC is steeped in Byzantine cultural symbols and both alludes to and directly cites Greek-language texts. Greek permeates in the text in less dramatic ways too. What is identified as a Greek turn of phrase is found in word-for-word translation, and Cyril is recorded praying in Greek with Slavonic letters, 'lord have mercy' ('**ΚΥΡΗΕ ΔΕΗΣΟ**') rather than the Slavonic translation (namely, '**ГОСПОДН ПОМНЛОУН**').⁵⁹ Judging both from the Byzantine literary

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.1815.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ VC, 5.1.

⁵⁷ '**СТАРЪЦЬ ОУМЛЪУА Н ПОСРАМН СЕ**', Ibid., 5.23.

⁵⁸ A. Vaillant, *Textes Vieux-Slaves*, vol.2 (Paris, 1968), p.25; R. Picchio, 'Compilazione e trama narrativa nelle 'Vite' di Costantino e Metodio', *Ricerche Slavistiche*, 8 (1960), pp.61-95; Kliment, *Subrani*, p.5 (introduction).

⁵⁹ '**ТО КТО МОЖЕТЬ НА ВОДѢ БЕСѢДѢ ПИСАТИ**', 'who can write on water', VC, 14.11. The proverb is discussed in: Kliment, *Subrani*, p.145. VC, 8.24.

motifs the text appeals to, and from the Greek-language sources used in the text like the chalice inscription, it seems that the VC was most probably written by one or more Byzantine, Greek speakers.

Moreover, it was recently discovered that the earliest church service text for Cyril, datable to shortly after his death, but formalised by the tenth century, was probably originally written in Greek.⁶⁰ This in turn strengthens the likelihood that that other early materials concerning Cyril, such as the VC, might also have been written originally in Greek. The same is suggested by the letter of Anastasius the Librarian, a contemporary papal bureaucrat, in which he retells the story of Cyril's translation of the relics of St Clement, translating the story (as he notes) from a Greek text.⁶¹

On balance, and in light of the participation of the VC in Byzantine intellectual culture, I maintain that the VC was originally written in Greek. In any case, as Anatolii Turilov notes, the fact that the service to Cyril was 'initially written in Greek, by no means excludes its early translation in Slavonic, but rather, suggests it.'⁶² The same is true for the VC. Regardless of the language, the VC is clearly targeted at an audience which shares the author's Byzantine education. This much suggests that even if translated into Slavonic, it has preserved its particular, late-ninth-century Byzantine intellectual concerns, especially with education and rhetoric.

1.II.2 Argument

As noted above, I seek to argue that the VC does not simply cut and paste Constantinopolitan hagiographical motifs. Rather, Byzantine texts and ideas underpin the text in more fundamental ways. The basis for this contention is the propagation, within the text, of a clear Byzantine imperial agenda stressing both the territorial and cultural superiority of Byzantium over its neighbours. In Cyril's debate with Muslim scholars, he is asked why Christians do not pay taxes to the Arabs, given that Jesus paid his taxes.⁶³ His response is to insist that Jesus paid taxes to the Romans, and therefore the Arabs should not judge him - 'we all give taxes to the Romans.'⁶⁴ Not long after, Cyril makes it clear that the Roman Empire is also an intellectual leader - 'all the arts came from us', he notes to his Muslim audience.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Translating the text back into Greek reveals the acrostic which is absent in the Slavonic: S. Temchin, 'O grecheskom proiskhozhdenii drevneishei sluzhby Kirillu Filozofu', in H. Rothe, *et al* eds., *Liturgische Hymnen nach byzantinischem Ritus bei den Slaven in ältester Zeit* (Paderborn, 2007), pp.328-39.

⁶¹ For more on this see below: Parts VI-V: Cyril as Ninth Century Argument.

⁶² 'Разумеется, тот факт, что служба Константину-Кириллу была первоначально написана по-гречески, отнюдь не исключает её раннего перевода на славянский, а скорее, напротив, предполагает его', Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo nasledia', p.133.

⁶³ VC, 6.40.

⁶⁴ 'рнмлянномъ въсн даньмъ дань', Ibid., 6.47.

⁶⁵ 'а шть насъ соуть въса хоща дождьства нъшла', Ibid., 6.53.

The author propagates Roman universalism freely, even through the mouths of the foreign rulers. Rastislav's request for religious preachers in Slavonic was because, as the author has him say, 'it is from you [i.e. the Romans] that good law is given to all regions.'⁶⁶ It is made clear in the text therefore, that 'we' are the Romans, and all others, Slavs, Khazars, Saracens, Venetians are on the outside – like the Moravians whose leader is informed by Emperor Michael that God 'made letters in *your* language appear, now in *our* times' (my emphasis).⁶⁷ When it comes to finding a foundational text for a predestined Apostle to the Slavs, the VC with its imperialism and caricaturing of others by no means strikes the reader as a good candidate.

More fundamentally still, the text formulates its own positions through Byzantine language and literature and locates itself within them. This is most evident in another section of the text for which Ševčenko has successfully identified a Greek-language source: that is the definition of philosophy given by Cyril. Upon completing his Constantinopolitan education Cyril is asked what philosophy is by the Logothete. He answers:

‘БОЖИМЪ Н УЛОВѢУЬСКЫМЪ ВЕЩЕМЪ РАЗУМЪ ЕЛНКО МОЖЕТЪ
УЛОВѢКЪ ПРИБЛЖИТИ СЕ БОСѢ, ЯКО ЖЕ ДѢТЕЛНЮ ОУУНТЬ УЛОВѢКА
ПО УБРАЗѢ Н ПО ПОДОБНЮ БЫТИ СЪТВОР’ШНМОУ Н’⁶⁸

‘[Philosophy is] understanding (‘razoum’) divine and human affairs, as much as man is able to approach God, since it teaches man in deeds to be in the image and likeness of the one, who created him’

The first two clauses of this definition are almost exact citations from the definitions of philosophy found in the Neoplatonist commentators on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, Ammonius, David and Elias.⁶⁹ All three

⁶⁶ ‘УТѢ КАСЬ БО НА В’СЕ СТРАНЫ ДОБРЬ ЗАКОНЪ НСХОДНТЬ’, Ibid., 14.5.

⁶⁷ ‘НЫНѢ ВЪ НАША ЛѢТА ЯКОЛЪ БѢЖЕ ВЪ НАШЕ КЪЗЫКЪ’, Ibid., 14.16.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.8.

⁶⁹ I. Ševčenko, ‘The Definition of Philosophy in the *Life of Saint Constantine*’, repr. in his *Byzantium and the Slavs: in Letters and Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), p.100; A. Busse, *Ammonius in Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces* (Berlin, 1891) 3.2-3; 3.8-9 (cited below). David’s definitions are found in his introduction, although one of the two definitions is also invoked in his commentary. Introduction: ‘οὕτως οὖν καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ὀρίζομεθα ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ὡς ὅταν εἰπώμεν ‘φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ γνῶσις θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων’, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ τέλους ‘φιλοσοφία ἐστὶν ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ’, ἀπὸ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου δέ, ὡς ὅταν εἰπώμεν ‘φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ γνῶσις θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ’, A. Busse, *Davidis prolegomena et in Porphyrii isagogen commentarium* (Berlin, 1904), 18.7-11. Commentary: ‘οὕτω καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία ἄγγελός ἐστι τῶν θεῶν· αὕτη γὰρ ἀπαγγέλλει ἡμῖν τὰ θεῖα, εἰ γε γνῶσις θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἐστὶ’, Busse, *Davidis prolegomena et in Porphyrii*, 96.7-9. Elias lists all seven after explaining their types in his commentary to Porphyry, and the ones found in the VC come second and third: πρῶτος ὁ λέγων ‘γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων ἢ ὄντα ἐστὶ’, δεύτερος ὁ λέγων ‘γνῶσις θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων’, μετ’ αὐτὸν ὁ λέγων ‘μελέτη θανάτου’, τέταρτος ὁ λέγων ‘ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπῳ’, πέμπτος ὁ ἐκ τῆς ὑπεροχῆς ὁ λέγων

authors offer both commentaries on the *Isagoge* and more general introductions to philosophy which formed the backbone of Middle Byzantine philosophical, and in particular, logical education.⁷⁰ All of these texts offer the same seven definitions of philosophy which they then categorise, comment on and repeat, to cite Ševčenko, ‘ad nauseam’.⁷¹ To offer but one example on how closely two of these align with the VC, here is Cyril’s definition alongside the text of Ammonius.

‘БОЖИМЪ Н
ΥΛΟΒΕΥΣΚΥΜΒ ΒΕΨΕΜΒ
ΡΑΖΩΜΒ ΕΛΗΚΟ ΜΟЖЕТЬ
ΥΛΟΒΕΚΒ ΠΡΗΒΕΛΗЖΗΤΗ СЕ
БОСЪ, ІАКО ЖЕ ДѢТЕΛΗЮ
ΟΥΥНТЪ ΥΛΟΒΕΚΑ ПО
УЕРАΖΩ Н ПО ПОΔΟΒΗЮ
БЫТН СЪТВОР’ШΗΜΟΥ Н’

VC, 4.8.

‘[Philosophy is] understanding
(‘razoum’) divine and human
things/affairs, as much as man is able
to approach God, since it teaches man
in deeds to be in the image and
likeness of he who created him’

‘τινὲς δὲ ὀρίζονται οὕτως· “φιλοσοφία
ἐστὶ θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων
πραγμάτων γνῶσις” [...]

ἔστι δὲ καὶ τοιοῦτος ὀρισμὸς ἀπὸ
τοῦ τέλους ὁ λέγων “φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ
ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν
ἀνθρώπῳ.”

Ammonius, 3.2-3, 3.8-9.

‘Some people define it thus:
“philosophy is knowledge (‘gnōsis’) of
both divine and human affairs” [...]

And there is also such a definition
concerned with the final goal which
says: “philosophy is likeness to God to
the best of man’s ability”

The textual community responsible for the VC, therefore, was clearly not just a Roman universalist, but a Byzantine intellectual community, where it was not unusual to proceed to the upper echelons of Byzantine education, beyond mere grammar and rhetoric and into philosophy.⁷²

It is notable therefore that the last phrase of the definition, ‘since it teaches man in deeds to be in the image and likeness of the one, who created him’, which is probably an allusion to Genesis, does not have an exact parallel in the philosophical materials. Due to this, Ševčenko concludes that ‘it is not necessary to consider this quotation [of Genesis] as a third part of Constantine’s definition’ and that two Byzantine

‘τέχνη τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν’, ἔκτος ὁ ἐκ τῆς ἐτυμολογίας ὁ λέγων ‘φιλία σοφίας’, A. Busse, *Eliae in Porphyrii isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria* (Berlin, 1900), 8.8-13.

⁷⁰ Ševčenko, ‘The Definition of Philosophy’ p.100; G. Kustas, ‘Commentators on Aristotle’s Categories and the Isagoge of Porphyry’, in his *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki, 1973), pp.101-118; Porphyry, *Introduction*, trans. J. Barnes (Oxford, 2003).

⁷¹ Ševčenko, ‘The Definition of Philosophy’, p.101. Both Ammonius and David divide the definitions into three kinds. They are either ‘ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου’ or concerned with definitions and meaning, and ‘ἀπὸ τοῦ τέλους’, or concerned with the end goal or purpose of philosophy, or they are concerned with both. For David see above. For Elias, Busse, *Eliae in Porphyry*, 7.25 onwards.

⁷² Unlike, for instance, military literate elites like the eleventh-century general Kekaumenos. See: C. Roueché, ‘The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos’, in E. Jeffreys ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.28, 33-7.

definitions of philosophy can be crystallized in the Middle Byzantine period and loosely labelled the ‘Christian philosopher-scholar’ and the ‘philosopher of the monkish ascetic kind’ of which Cyril is the former.⁷³ Yet, this dismissal seems unwarranted. It is difficult to imagine that while one segment of the text offers a chosen, controlled, and close citation of a philosophical definition, what follows is simply accidental.

Rather, the definition of philosophy offered shortly after Cyril’s education in the Hellenic arts plays a key role in the formation of the argument of the *VC* – that is an argument for the close relationship between understanding (‘razoum’) through education in ‘outside’ knowledge, and deeds. The *VC* is framed, crucially, in a way to illuminate the Christian *deeds* which follow from appropriate education and as such it seeks to dissolve precisely the kind of binary definition Ševčenko proposes.

Thus, the *VC* is not simply Byzantine literature because it alludes to Byzantine matters and motifs, but because it communicates its agenda *through* the language and framework of a Byzantine education, and because this agenda is *about* the purpose of (Byzantine) education in the Christian realm. In turn I offer a close study of the realisation of the definition through the representation of Cyril’s education, and the deeds or disputations that follow it.

1.III CYRIL’S EDUCATION: LEARNING PERFECTING GRACE

It has long been acknowledged that the *VC* is made up of disputations. As noted above, Vavřínek has demonstrated that over half of the text cites direct speech in Cyril’s disputations. But the dominance of debates is even more significant than its direct quotations alone. When broken down, after Cyril’s childhood education, thirteen of the remaining seventeen pages of the *VC* either directly quote a debate, summarise in brief an episode in which Cyril persuaded someone, or set up the context for a disputation. It is hard to argue that this is not, fundamentally, a text about argument.

The most thorough study of the disputations was made by Vavřínek. In it, he identifies four of these disputations and interprets them as a range of ways of depicting Cyril’s sanctity leading up to the invention of Slavonic, and thus ultimately defends the idea that the text was ‘primarily to be the theoretical basis of the Slavic Church in Moravia.’⁷⁴ Whilst Vavřínek also mentions Cyril’s education, mostly to refer to it as a hagiographic trope, he does not pay particular attention to the cumulative nature of the learning episodes in the *VC*.⁷⁵ I seek to argue that learning and disputing are deeply intertwined. In particular, I identify three phases of learning in the text, which I argue serve to set-up three major

⁷³ Ševčenko, ‘The Definition of Philosophy’, pp.96, 106.

⁷⁴ ‘měl být především teoretickým základem slovanské církve na Moravě’, Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.82.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.57.

disputations in the *life*: Hellenic learning, evoked in the dispute with Arabs, Old Testament languages evoked in the dispute with Jews, and what I propose to be an act of learning the Slavonic letters from God, evoked and defended in the dispute with priests in Venice. The first disputation in the text, with the iconoclast patriarch John VII is here omitted, not because it is not important but rather because it stands aside from this wider framework which forms the backbone of the text, and serves a much more specific purpose.⁷⁶ It asserts the saint's orthodoxy on the matter of iconoclasm, in a brief and simple way. It reveals that to assert a saint was an iconodule was still considered essential, to maximise their chances of successfully solidifying their sanctity in the latter parts of the ninth century. By contrast, the three disputations under consideration, take up significantly more room in the text, and represent symbolically different moments in the history of Christianity.⁷⁷ These will be discussed in Part IV. Naturally, however, to understand the role of the arguments performed by Cyril in the text, it is crucial to begin with an understanding of the author's portrayal of Cyril's learning – to understand the emulation of God 'in deeds', we must first understand the process of acquisition of 'understanding of divine and human affairs'.

1.III.1 Cyril as Learner of Arts: Hellenism

The VC presents Cyril as a devoted learner. The way it does so is central to the arguments proposed by presenting Cyril as a philosopher and saint. In his youth, the text makes clear, Cyril is not a churchman. So, Gregory of Nazianzus is used to legitimise the first phase of Cyril's education: the study of Hellenic arts.

In the first mention of Cyril's education, and therefore first phrase thereof, Cyril sits at home where 'he was learning by heart the books of the holy Gregory the theologian.'⁷⁸ Cyril then makes a sign of a cross on the wall, and writes a panegyric to Gregory of Nazianzus in which he asks him to become his 'teacher and enlightener' ('ΟΥΥΗΤΕΛΒ Η ΠΡΟΣΒΕΤΗΤΕΛΒ').⁷⁹ Yet he soon finds himself struggling with Gregory's works.

⁷⁶ VC, 5.

⁷⁷ Iconoclasm takes up only a page, the Arab debate takes up two, the Khazar six, and the Latin another two. In the A4 edition of Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.93, 93-5, 95-103, 106-7 respectively.

⁷⁸ 'СЪДЪАЕШЕ ВЪ ДОМѢ СМОНѢ, ОУУЕ СЕ НЗЪ ОУСТЬ КННГАМН СВЕТАГО ГРΗΓΟΡΙΑ БОГОСΛΟΒА', VC, 3.17. The 'Theologian' became the standard epithet of Gregory of Nazianzus by the mid-fifth century, see: R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), p.159.

⁷⁹ VC, 3.20.

‘[...] ВЪШЕДЪ ЖЕ ВЪ МНОГЫН БЕСѢДЫ Н ОУМЪ ВЕЛН, НЕ МОГЪЫ
РАЗΟΥМѢТИ ГЛБЕННЪ В ОУНЫНІЕ ВЕЛНКО ВЪПАДЕ’⁸⁰

‘[...] Delving into many orations and into their greatness in meaning, not being able to understand (‘razoumieti’) their depth, he was deeply disheartened’

The VC offers the simple solution of grammatical education. Cyril finds an old grammarian in Thessaloniki and begs him on his knees: ‘Teach me the art of grammar well!’⁸¹ The man refuses, but God soon grants it that Cyril is called to Constantinople, where he pursues a full education in the so-called ‘earthly wisdoms’. He first turns to grammar, and then to Homer and geometry under Leo, and all ‘philosophical teachings’ (‘ΦΗΛΟΣΟΦΗΚΕΣΚΑΙΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ’) from Photios, including rhetoric and arithmetic, astronomy, music and ‘all other Hellenic arts.’⁸² The very use of the phrase ‘Hellenic arts’ in a non-derogatory manner is striking.⁸³

The portrayal of classical education as a necessary prerequisite to the comprehension of holy Christian writings is not unusual. In this, the VC shares the view of Basil of Caesarea in his influential treatise on Greek literature, where we find Christian writings similarly portrayed as complex problems, demanding a depth of understanding lacking in youth.

‘εἰς δὴ τοῦτον ἄγουσι μὲν ἱεροὶ λόγοι, δι’ ἀπορρήτων ἡμᾶς ἐκπαιδεύοντες. ἕως γε μὴν ὑπὸ τῆς ἡλικίας ἐπακούειν τοῦ βάθους τῆς διανοίας αὐτῶν οὐχ οἷόν τε, ἐν ἑτέροις οὐ πάντα διεστηκόσιν, ὥσπερ ἐν σκιαῖς τισι καὶ κατόπτροις, τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁμματι τέως προγυμναζόμεθα’⁸⁴

‘Now to this [other life] the Holy Scriptures lead the way, teaching us through mysteries. Yet so long as, by reason of your age, it is impossible for you to understand the depth of the meaning of these, in the meantime, by means of other analogies which are not entirely different, we give, as it were in shadows and reflections, a preliminary training to the eye of the soul’⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.21. In some MS variations we see ‘Н В ОУМЪ ВЕЛН’ which better explains the meaning. Kliment, *Subrani*, p.111.

⁸¹ ‘ДОБРѢ НАΟΥЮН МѢ ХУДОЖЕСТВѢ ГРАМАТИЧЕСКОМУ’, VC, 3.23.

⁸² ‘Н ВЪЕМЪ ПРОУИМЪ ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣΚΑΙΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΧΟΥΔΟЖЕСТВОМУ’, Ibid., 4.2.

⁸³ A text search of the TLG database for ‘τέχνη’ and ‘ἐλληνική’ within fifteen words, which would be the most likely Greek translation of the phrase, finds only three attestations, all in Christian texts, and only two pre-date the VC: John Chrysostom’s sermon on the holy Pascha, and Didymus Caecus’ fragments of a commentary on the psalms. *TLG*, (<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>) (last accessed: January, 2020)

⁸⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, vol.4: *Letters 249-368. On Greek Literature*, eds., trans. R. Deferrari, M. McGuire, (Cambridge, MA, 1934), II.6-10.

⁸⁵ Ibid. trans. Deferrari, McGuire.

For Basil, as for the VC, the young mind is ‘unable to understand the depth’ (‘НЕ МОГЪХИ РАЗΟΥМѢТИ ГЛУБИНЪ’, ‘ἐπακούειν τοῦ βάθους [...] οὐχ οἷόν τε’) of Christian teaching, and therefore requires training in the Hellenic arts.⁸⁶ Basil’s treatise remained significant in the middle Byzantine period. It was cited and excerpted by John Damascene, as well as in the collection of maxims from St. Basil ascribed to Symeon Metaphrastes.⁸⁷ It is this kind of dissemination, rather than some direct textual connection or clear attribution of a unit-idea to Basil himself, which may most easily explain the allusion in the VC.

Gregory of Nazianzus is mentioned in the text as the primary reason why Cyril was interested in Hellenic arts. Thus, Cyril’s education in grammar, rhetoric and philosophy was only to assist his understanding (‘razoum’) of divine affairs. Gregory, arguably the ‘most important figure in the synthesis of Greek rhetoric and Christianity’ is a solid rock to base such an argument on, given that his own career also started in classical education before he was baptised and later made Bishop of Constantinople.⁸⁸ Moreover, interest in him was resurgent in ninth-century Byzantium, making him a pertinent example to a contemporary Byzantine audience.⁸⁹

That excuses are made for Cyril’s education in the Hellenic arts is important, and Gregory of Nazianzus is not the only one. Both Cyril’s intentions in learning philosophy and the deeds he chooses to do with this education are shown to be pious in this early section of the VC. Upon completing his education, the Logothete, of whom nothing else is known in the narrative, tempts Cyril to put his education to worldly rewards, offering him plenty of gold and an illustrious wife, but Cyril refuses this invitation or temptation (‘prosklēsis’).⁹⁰

Instead, the author rounds off the section dealing with Cyril’s education in grammar and philosophy with harmony between faith and outside education. He is tonsured and made librarian of the patriarchate in Hagia Sophia.⁹¹ The text is very vague about this tonsure. Cyril is tonsured again at the end of the text to become a monk (and adopt the name Cyril in place of Constantine) shortly before his death, and at this early stage of the narrative he is probably a little too young to be ordained, as the canonical age was

⁸⁶ The Slavonic term for ‘depth’ here, (‘ГЛУБИНА’), is commonly used to translate precisely the Greek (‘βάθος’). *LPGL*, p.130.

⁸⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, p.371.

⁸⁸ G. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp.261-3.

⁸⁹ See: L. Brubaker. *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁹⁰ Logothetes were usually high officials, at the head of departments with primarily but not exclusively fiscal functions. VC, 4.11-20. How typical this motif is, also features in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.58-9.

⁹¹ VC, 4.15-20.

thirty.⁹² The tonsure is best read therefore, together with the invocation of Gregory of Nazianzus, as a narrative attempt to harmonise Cyril's learning with his piety, and resolve the tensions between 'monkish ascetics' and 'Christian philosophers'.

1.III.2 Cyril as Learner of Language: the Old Testament

Cyril's classical education sufficed for his dispute with the Muslims which will be discussed below. The trip to the Khazars which followed shortly after his return from the Caliphate, however, necessitated a second wave of education in the VC. This next phase is made up of three new languages or books, Hebrew, Samaritan and an unknown language surviving as 'ros'sky'. The textual accounts of Cyril acquiring each of these languages, once again craft a careful balance between piety and 'outside education'.

After Cyril sets out to Kherson, the text notes, 'he taught himself Jewish orations and books, translated the grammar in eight parts and from this, he received understanding ('razoum').'⁹³ The terminology used clearly invokes an earlier passage in the text, when Cyril learned the orations of Gregory by heart, but feared he did not understand ('razoumieti') their depth, and so turned to grammatical instruction. In the case of Hebrew, too, understanding is only acquired after grammatical education. The 'orations and books' referred to here are most probably Old Testament texts.

It is unclear whether the text is suggesting that Cyril translated Hebrew grammar into Greek or vice versa. But it seems the act of translation is here symbolic rather than literal. The 'eight parts of grammar', probably refers to the eight parts of speech which 'became standard in Alexandrian and Byzantine grammar books' and emerge from Dionysius Thrax's second-to-first century BC textbook, the *Art of Grammar*, or *Technē Grammatikē*.⁹⁴

‘Λόγος δέ ἐστι πεζῆς λέξεω σύνθεσις διάνοιαν αὐτοτελῇ δηλοῦσα. Τοῦ δὲ λόγου μέρη ἐστὶν ὀκτώ· ὄνομα, ῥῆμα, μετοχή, ἄρθρον, ἀντωνυμία, πρόθεσις, ἐπίρρημα, σύνδεσμος.’⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid., 4.17, 7.1-5. Noted in: I. Ševčenko, 'Constantine-Cyril, Apostle of the Slavs, as "Bibliothecary", or how Byzantine was the Author of Constantine's Vita?', in B. Nagy, et al eds., *The Man of Many Devices Who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honour of Janos M. Bak* (Budapest, 1999), p.214.

⁹³ ‘**НАΟΥΥΗ СЕ ТОУ ЖИДОУБСКОУ БЕСѢДѢ Н КНИГАМЪ, ОУЕМЪ УЕСТИ ПРѢЛОЖИ ГРАМАТИКИУ Н ОУТѢ ТОГО РАЗУМЪ БЪПРИНЕМЪ**’, VC, 8.10.

⁹⁴ R. Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians: their Place in History* (Berlin, 1993), pp.58-9. This text will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3 Part III.

⁹⁵ Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. G. Uhlig, vol. 1.1 (Leipzig, 1883; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 23.

‘Speech is a combination of words in prose or verse expressing a complete thought. There are eight parts of speech: noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb and conjunction.’⁹⁶

The VC may be implying not so much that Cyril ‘translated’ Hebrew grammar into Greek, but rather that he ‘transferred’ the conceptual structures of Greek grammatical study, namely its division into eight parts, to the study of another language.⁹⁷ This grammatical education assisted understanding (‘razoum’) of Gregory of Nazianzus in Greek, now its transferral into Hebrew, helps Cyril gain understanding of the ‘orations and books’ in that language. The lesson therefore seems to be less about the language of the words, and more about the transferability and usefulness of grammatical constructs outside of the Greek language they emerge from – a sort of grammatical fundamentalism.

The process of learning entirely through grammar is balanced with a pious alternative, in the second stage of learning Cyril undertakes in Kherson.

**‘САМЪРЪНИНЪ’ ЖЕ НѢКОИ ТОУ ЖИВѢАШЕ И ПРИХОДЕ КЪ НИМОУ
СТЕЗАШЕ СЕ СЪ НИМЪ И ПРИНЕСЕ КНИГЫ САМАРЪНСКЫЕ И ПОКАЗА Е
МОУ. ИСПРОШЬ Е ОУ НИГО ФИЛОСОФЪ, ЗАТВОРИ СЕ ВЪ ХРАМИНѢ И НА
МОЛИТВѢ СЕ НАЛОЖИ И ОУТЪ БОГА РАЗЪМЪ ПРИЕМЪ, У’ТАТИ НАУЕТЪ
КНИГЫ БЕС ПОРОКА’⁹⁸**

‘And a Samaritan who was living there, went to him [Cyril], he [the Samaritan] was arguing with him, and he brought Samaritan books and showed them to him. The philosopher asked for them from him [the Samaritan], shut himself in a temple and committed himself to prayer, and he received understanding (‘razoum’) from God, he began to read the books without error’

Unlike the first wave of education Cyril receives, in which grammatical education sufficed to achieve understanding of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, and then again of Hebrew, here Cyril learns to read Samaritan books entirely through prayer. Yet he ultimately achieves the same understanding (‘razoum’).

The final act of learning, of a language whose name is unclear, synthesises these two approaches.

⁹⁶ Amended from: Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians*, p.57.

⁹⁷ Although translators of the VC have opted for ‘translated’, the verb Slavonic verb (‘ПРЪЛОЖИ’) itself has a broader meaning. It can render the Greek ‘to change’ or ‘to substitute’ (‘μεταβάλλω’) and ‘to transfer’ or ‘to place differently’ (‘μετατίθημι’). See: *LLP*, p.451-2; *LPGL*, p.734; H. Lunt, ‘On interpreting the Russian Primary Chronicle; the year 1037’, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 32 (1988), pp.251-64.

⁹⁸ VC, 8.10.

‘[...] Н ОБРѢТ’ ЖЕ ТОУ ЄВАНГЕЛІЄ Н ПСАЛТІР, РОСЬСКЫ⁹⁹ ПИСМѢНЬ
 ПИСАНО, Н ЧЛОВѢКА ОБРѢТЬ, ГЛАГОЛЮЩА ТОЮ БЕСѢДОЮ Н
 БЕСѢДОВАВЪ СЪ НИМЪ Н СЛОВО РѢЧЬ ПРНЕМЪ, СВОЮ БЕСѢДЪ
 ПРНКЛАДАК, РАЗЛНУНѢ ПИСМѢНЬ, ГЛАСНАА Н СЪГЛАСНАА, Н КЪ БОГѸ
 МОЛНТВѸ ДРЪЖЕ Н ВЪСКОРѢ НАУАТЬ ЧНСТН Н СКАЗАТИ’¹⁰⁰

‘[...] and he found a Gospel and a psalter, written in ‘ros’sky’ letters, and he found a man, who spoke with this speech (‘beseda’) and he spoke with him, and having received the force of the words (‘rech’) comparing the different letters (‘pismen’), vowels and consonants, with his own speech, and having addressed a prayer to God, he soon began to read and speak.’¹⁰¹

This description of learning can be divided into two stages. In the first, Cyril receives the ‘force of words’, i.e. their meaning, by comparing his own letters, namely the vowels and consonants, with those of the speaker of ‘ros’sky’.¹⁰² In light of the allusion to the eight parts of grammar in the section about Hebrew, the reference to vowels and consonants is also best understood as part of a grammatical approach to learning.¹⁰³ Cyril receives the ‘meaning’ or significance of the words through a study of their grammatical components. The latter statement, and second part of the process of achieving meaning in language is entirely due to divine intervention. Through simple prayer Cyril begins to ‘read and speak’.

Thus, in the third consecutive passage describing Cyril’s learning of languages, we find a harmony between the previous two. He learned Hebrew using the art of grammar alone. He learned to read Samaritan books using only prayer. But he learned the ‘ros’sky’ under question here through both the use of grammatical concepts from Greek grammatical textbooks *and* through prayer.

What language ‘ros’sky’ is meant to be has remained a matter of contention.¹⁰⁴ Generally scholars accept that a consonantal flip has occurred in the process of transmission and the original language was meant to

⁹⁹ There are variants of this word proposed by different editions. The Bulgarian Academy proposes: ‘**роуш’кым**’, Kliment, *Subrani*, p.96. Christiano Diddi’s edition of the South Slavonic testimony groups of the text proposes: ‘**рѡс’кы**’ C. Diddi, ‘Materiali e Ricerche per l’Edizione Critica di Vita Constantini: III. Edizione del Gruppo dei Testimoni Serbi’, *Ricerche Slavistiche*, 48 (2004), p.150.

¹⁰⁰ VC, 8.15.

¹⁰¹ I am grateful to Prof. Catherine Mary MacRobert for her assistance with this passage.

¹⁰² The ‘force of words’ is clearly meant in the New Testament way: ‘If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.’ (‘ἐάν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος.’) 1 Corinthians 14:11.

¹⁰³ Only the short sub section on syllables separates the explanation of vowels and consonants from that of the eight parts of speech in: Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 6-11.

¹⁰⁴ A good summary of the debates can be found in Tachiaos’s article, which nonetheless posits a rather implausible case for the Slavonic language of early Rus, see: A. Tachiaos, ‘Some Controversial Points Relating to the Life and Activity of Cyril and Methodios’, *Cyrrilomethodianum*, 17-18 (1993-4), pp.45-70.

be Syriac, although some insist the language is in fact some form of Slavonic written by the early Rus.¹⁰⁵ In the framework of my argument, Syriac makes good sense, as a language associated with the early history of Christianity. In medieval sources Syriac was used loosely as referring to all Aramaic, and it is sometimes considered to have been the language Jesus is likely to have spoken.¹⁰⁶ This at least puts it in a similar category to Hebrew and to Samaritan books. It is possible however, that the fifteenth-century manuscripts are too corrupt for the reconstitution of the original text to be feasible, or even that the similarity with the word Rus is an intentional late medieval correction by East Slavic scribes.

Regardless of this ambiguity, Cyril as a learner is not simply represented as a harmoniser of worldly wisdom and pious learning. His classical education is built upon by his education in the Old Testament languages and assists it. This process of acquiring ‘outside knowledge’, guided by divine intervention, is also performed to a particular end, a pious telos: the refutation of heathens.

1.III.3 Slavonic and Creation: The New Testament

The extremely brief account of the creation of the Slavonic alphabet, ought to be considered within this broader narrative trajectory of Cyril’s acts of learning, and the ways in which those acts prepared him for different audiences and different stages in his disputations. The two sets of learning described so far, of grammar, rhetoric and philosophy, and of Hebrew, Samaritan and ‘ros’sky’ have been mostly passive in nature. They have described processes through which Cyril acquired or received understanding, before enacting his knowledge ‘in deeds’ through disputation. Cyril learns orations by Gregory and then is taught ‘all Hellenic arts’ (‘ВСѢМЪ [...] ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΜΒ ΧΟΥΔΟЖЬСТВОМЪ’) to acquire better understanding of Gregory.¹⁰⁷ He learns the Hebrew ‘orations and books’, and then learns to ‘read’ the books of the Samaritans. With the assistance of grammar and prayer, he begins to ‘read and speak’ in the ‘ros’sky’ language. However, besides an invocation to Gregory of Nazianzus to become his teacher at the very start of the text, there is no mention of Cyril writing, actively, or creating anything anew throughout this process.

It is rather unsurprising therefore, upon a closer look at the passages regarding the Slavonic alphabet, that Cyril himself is not credited with its creation. The Slavonic letters are only made to appear to Cyril by God, in what is undoubtedly best considered a third act of learning, presented here in the form of pure

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.61.

¹⁰⁶ I am grateful to Dr Jack Tannous for letting me see his working paper entitled, ‘What is Syriac? Explorations in the History of a Name’, in K. Akalin, et al eds., *Syriac Identity: Receptions and Interpretations/Süryani Kimliği: Kabul ve Yorumlama*, (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁷ VC, 4.14.

divine revelation. This is the full explanation of the creation of the Slavonic alphabet in the *life*, and it follows Cyril's customary withdrawal to prayer.

‘[...] ВЪСКОРѢ ЖЕ КЪ ЕМОУ БОГЪ ЯВИ, ПОСЛУШАЕ МОЛИТВѢ СВОИХЪ РАБѢ, И АБНЪ СЛОЖИ ПИСМЕНА И НАУАТЬ БѢСѢДѢ ПИСАТИ ЕУАГГЕЛСКѢ: ИСПРѢВА БѢ СЛОВО И СЛОВО БѢ ОУ БОГА И БОГЪ БѢ СЛОВО И ПРОУКѢ’¹⁰⁸

‘[...] and soon, God made them [the letters] appear to him, having listened to the prayer of his servant, and he immediately put together the letters and began to write the words of the evangelist: in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and so forth’

Rather than an act of creation, God reveals the letters for Cyril to learn and put together. This clearly alludes to the same the divine agency of prayers exposed in the case of the Samaritan books and ‘ros’ky’ letters. In all three cases, prayer alone can bring access to knowledge or understanding. Here, in this final act of learning it grants access to the Gospel itself.

The same divine agency alone is credited in the only other time in the VC when the invention of the letters is described. The emperor Michael supposedly sends a letter to Rastislav, ruler of the Moravians, to announce the success, by stating that ‘God [...] having seen your faith [...] made letters in your language appear now in our times.’¹⁰⁹ Cyril is described only subsequently as the man sent by Michael, ‘to whom God made them [the letters] known’ (‘ЕМОУЖЕ КЪ БОГЪ ЯВИ’).¹¹⁰ On a number of occasions therefore, the author of the VC explicitly avoids granting Cyril creative agency.

It becomes clear that in the narrative of the VC, Cyril is not sent to Moravia because he invents the Slavonic alphabet. He invents it after the emperor decides to send him to Central Europe. Nor is he sent explicitly due to his knowledge of Slavonic. Scholars have often assumed this from the emperor Michael's assertion to Cyril prior to the mission to Moravia that ‘no one else can carry this out like you.’¹¹¹ But Slavonic is not mentioned here, the ability to speak Slavonic is only given as a reason for Cyril's appointment to the mission in the VM and the reasons for this sudden stress on Slavonic in the VM will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.¹¹² Michael addresses Cyril with nearly the same

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 14.13.

¹⁰⁹ ‘БОГЪ [...] ВНАДѢБЪ ВЪРѢ ТВОЮ [...] НЫННѢ ВЪ НАША ЛѢТА ЯВЛЪ БѢКЪ БЫ ВЪ ВАШЪ КЪЗЫКЪ’, Ibid., 14.16.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 14.16.

¹¹¹ ‘НЕ МОЖЕТЬ НИЪ НИКТОЖЕ ИСПРАВИТИ ЯКОЖЕ ТЫ’, Ibid., 14.8.

¹¹² VM, 5.8; see: Chapter 2 Part IV.

words prior to his mission to the Khazars, even though at this point in the narrative, he does not know Hebrew: ‘no one else can carry this out adequately.’¹¹³

He is sent, rather, because he is best educated in the method of debate as both a grammarian and a rhetorician and in the content of faith, as ‘monkish ascetic’, to emulate his maker ‘in deeds’ and use words to refute the opponents of the orthodox faith. As such the mission to Moravia, does not stand apart from Cyril’s encounter with Jews, Samaritans and speakers of ‘ros’sky’. Nor does his preaching in Slavonic seem particularly unusual to the author, who insists:

‘[...] МЫ ЖЕ РОДЫ ЗНАЕМЪ КНИГЫ ОУМВЮЩЕ И БОГОУ СЛАВѢ
ВЪЗДАЮЩЕ СВОИМЪ ЯЗЫКОМЪ КЪЖДО. ИДѢВЪ ЖЕ СОУТЪ СИН: АРМЕНН,
ПЕРСН, АВАЗГЫ, НБЕРН, СОУГДН ГОДН, ШЕРН, ТѢРСН, КОЗАРН,
АРАВАЛАНЕ, ЕГУПТН И НННН МНШЗЫ’¹¹⁴

‘[...] for we know peoples who have knowledge of books and praise God each in their own language. It is known that these are: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Georgians, Sogdian Goths and Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians and many others.’

Cyril’s final stage of education demonstrates a difference of degree rather than kind. This difference is the total omission of the role of rhetorical or grammatical education in the account of his acquisition of Slavonic letters. This difference can only be explained when the tri-partite disputational cycle for which Cyril’s education prepares him is explored as one cumulative whole.

1.IV CYRIL’S DISPUTATIONS: WORDS AND DEEDS

There is no doubt that, as represented in the VC, Cyril is persuasive. In addition to Vavřínek’s monograph, Cyril’s individual speeches have received plenty of scholarly attention, including a full monograph on his dispute with the Khazars.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, scholars have sought to analyse speeches

¹¹³ ‘ННЬ ВО ННКТѢЖЕ НЕ МОЖЕТЪ ДОСТОИНО СЕГО ТОВРНТН’, VC, 8.7.

¹¹⁴ VC, 16.7.

¹¹⁵ Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.53-84. On his dispute with the Muslims: Vavřínek, ‘A Byzantine Polemic against Islam’; with the Venetians: Y. Velikov, “‘Venetsianskiiat disput” na Sveti Kiril Filosof v svetlinata na antichnata ritorika’, in *Starobulgarska rukopisna kniga: sudba i missiia. V pamet na prof. Kuio Kuev – 100 godini ot rozhdenieto mu* (Sofia, 2012), pp.113-26; S. Sivriev, ‘Oratorskoto umenie na venetsianskata rech na Konstantin-Kiril’, *Palaeobulgarica*, 17 (1993) pp.48-51; with the Iconoclast patriarch: P. Balcárek, ‘Some Remarks to the Response to Iconoclasm in the Old Slavonic *Vita Constantini*’, *Studia patristica*, 48 (2010), pp.355-9; and on the Khazars: T. Moriasu, ‘Khazarskaia missiia Konstantina (ee znachenie v ZHK)’, *Starobulgarska literatura*, 10 (1981), pp.39-51; H. Trendafilov, *Khazarskata polemika na Konstantin-Kiril* (Sofia, 1999).

attributed to Cyril, as actual speeches he gave or as direct citations from his (no longer extant) works.¹¹⁶ In short, here as elsewhere, the preoccupation has been with Cyril as a historical individual and with the words he may have said. This chapter seeks to offer a comprehensive study of the rhetoric of the disputations as a connected, cumulative whole which formulates a particular argument. Contrary to Vavřínek, and for reasons outlined in the introduction of this chapter, I posit that this argument is not reducible to an apology for Slavonic but concerned more broadly with education and orthodoxy in Byzantium.

Through these major disputations, the VC is divided into three temporal spheres which require three different types of education, and three different methods of argumentation. The text maintains that the third phase, of the indisputable New Testament, is the final and most perfect, but it also insists that the former two, of classical and Old Testament education, and of disputation with other Abrahamic religions' representatives, are crucial to its achievement. This section addresses the disputes in the order in which they occur in the text, before turning to the consequences this structure has for missionary activity. To assist the reader, I provide some tables which summarise the contents of each major disputation (Tables 1-3).

¹¹⁶ For the Khazars, Trendafilov in particular tries to reconcile the text of the dispute with a mention in Chapter Ten of the VC, that Methodios translated the works of his brother into eight parts. Trendafilov spends much of his book dividing this dispute into eight parts to show that it was excerpted from Cyril's own work. See: *Khazarskata polemika*, pp.34-76. For a similar study arguing for the authenticity of a prayer by Cyril in the text see: A. Tachiaos, 'Neskol'ko zamechanii otnositel'no konchiny Konstantina-Kirilla v Rime', *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, 30 (2007), pp.160-8.

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
6.1-4	Saracens challenge Holy Trinity, ask for a man to dispute with
6.4-9	The emperor sends Cyril
6.10-13	Cyril sees demons on the doors of Christians, they challenge him to understand them
6.14-25	Accused that Christians do not follow Christ's laws, whilst Muslims do
6.26-32	Challenge of the Holy Trinity
6.33-39	Accused that Christians do not follow Christ's precept to turn the other cheek
6.40-47	Accused that Jesus paid his taxes, but Christians do not pay to the Arabs
6.48-53	Asked how he knows so much
6.54	He explains how the Caliph's garden grows by itself
6.54-55	Cyril is unimpressed by the wealth and palaces of the Caliph
6.57	They try to poison him

Table 1: Disputation at the Caliph's Court

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
8.1-10	Khazar invitation, the emperor dispatches Cyril
8.10-25	Journey: learns Hebrew, Samaritan, Ros'sky, discovers the relics of Clement
9.1-3	Upon arrival, Khazars send a 'cunning' man to dispute with him
9.3-4	Asked why the Romans appoint leaders from different families
9.5-9	Asked why Christians use the bible, rather than have their beliefs memorised
9.10-14	Arrives at the Khagan's court
9.15-22	Challenge of the Holy Trinity by Khagan
9.23-35	Challenge of Mary's ability to give birth to God
10.1-2	Cyril invites more debate at second sitting
10.2-35	Which is the oldest law – Noah or Moses?
10.36-63	Has the holy kingdom of Christians come yet?
10.64-67	Jews are blessed descendants of Shem, but the Christians of Japheth (Gen.9.26-7)
10.68-74	Are Christians blessed for putting their faith in a man, Jesus?
10.75-81	Why do Christians turn away from circumcision when Jesus did not denounce it?
10.82-88	Why do Christians worship idols?
10.89-94	Why do Christians eat pork and rabbit?
10.95-96	This is abbreviated from Cyril's discussions, translated by Methodios in 8 parts
11.1-20	Third sitting: Khazars ask why Christianity is the holiest religion
10.21-29	An advisor who knows Islam asks: Why do Christians not respect Muhammad?
10.30-46	Advisor tells Jews and Muslims Cyril has refuted them, many promise to convert

Table 2: Disputation en route to and at the Khazar Court with Jews and those who know Islam

Lines of Dispute	Topic of Dispute
16.1-58	Why do you preach in Slavonic when there are only three holy languages?
16.59	Ashamed, the Latins went on their way

Table 3: Debate with the Venetian Bishops, Priests and Monks

1.IV.1 The Caliph's Court

As Vavřínek has noted, the anti-Islamic polemic in the treatise is not particularly extraordinary, nor does it demonstrate deep knowledge of Muslim doctrine.¹¹⁷ Rather than addressing Cyril's Muslim interlocutors on their own terms, therefore, the author integrates them in the world of Roman education, stressing that he debated with 'wise men, learned in the books of geometry and astronomy and other such teachings.'¹¹⁸ Framing the Muslim scholars thus is a clear allusion to a Hellenic education, of the sort Cyril himself receives earlier in the text.

The categorisation of Muslim scholars and their particular interest in astronomy aligns with the current historiographical consensus that the revival of various Byzantine philosophical pursuits, especially with respect to astronomy and astrology, in the last quarter of the eighth century, was influenced by the flourishing of intellectual output at the Abbasid court.¹¹⁹ Cyril sits comfortably amid a number of narratives about Byzantine intellectuals engaging with Hellenic learning, and moving between the imperial and caliphal courts.¹²⁰

A significant part of Cyril's encounter with the Muslims is spent not addressing doctrine in any great detail but demonstrating his rhetorical abilities and his education. This demonstration reveals that the core of Cyril's case for Byzantine superiority is intellectual, on the one hand, and state-territorial on the other. The natural conclusion to this superiority is that the Christian religion is itself superior, for its longevity has made it more sophisticated and intellectually challenging.

The first argument concerning intellectual superiority is asserted most clearly when the Muslim scholars ask Cyril how he has answers to all their questions. He notes:

‘УЛОВЕКЪ НѢКОИ ПОУРЪПЪ ВЪ МОРИ ВОДОУ, ВЪ МѢШН’ЦИ НОШАШЕ Ю
Н ГРѢДѢШЕ СЕ, ГЛАГОЛѢ КЪ СТРАН’НИКѢМЪ: ВИДИТЕ ЛИ ВОДѢ , ЮЖЕ
НИКТОЖЕ НЕ НМАТЬ РАЗВѢ МЕНЕ? ПРИШЕДЪ ЖЕ КДННЬ МОУЖЬ
ПОМОР’НИКЪ РЕЧЕ КЪ НИМОУ: НЕ СТЫДИШИ ЛИ СЕ, СІА ГЛАГОЛѢ, ХВАЛЕ

¹¹⁷ Vavřínek, ‘A Byzantine Polemic against Islam’, p.538.

¹¹⁸ ‘МОУДРАА УЕДЪБЪ, КНИГЪ НАУЧЕНА ГЕОМЕТРИИ И АСТРОНОМИИ И ПРОУИИМЪ
ОУЧЕНИЕМЪ’, VC, 6.14.

¹¹⁹ P. Magdalino, ‘Astrology’, in A. Kaldellis, *et al* eds., *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, (Cambridge, 2017), p.203.

¹²⁰ P. Magdalino, ‘The Road to Baghdad in the Thought World of Ninth Century Byzantium’, in Brubaker ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century*, pp.195-213. The work of Dmitry Gutas has revealed this cultural transmission process at length, see: *Greek Thought Arabic Culture: the Graeco Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad in Early ‘Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/5th-10thc.)* (London, 1998).

СЕ ТЪКМО СМРЪДѢШІИМЪ, А МЫ СЕГО ПЪУННО НМАМЫ ТАКО Н БН
ДѢТЕ А ШТЬ НАСЪ СОУТЬ ВЪСА ХОУДОЖЬСТВІА НЗЪШЛА'¹²¹

‘A certain man having drawn some water from the sea, was carrying it in a skin, and was boasting, saying to strangers: ‘Do you see the water, which no one has but me?’ But a man came who was a sailor, and he said to him: Are you not ashamed to speak like this, bragging with only this stinking skin? While we have the whole sea. And you do the same, when all arts came from us’

It is clear, that the arts that ‘came from us’ are the same arts which the VC notes the Muslim scholars are trained in, namely astronomy and other Hellenic arts. Thus, the text makes an explicit association between the Middle Byzantine polity and its people, and the intellectual tradition of Hellenic education. This association is used to argue against the Caliphate. Muslim scholars can only receive from outside, something that is internal to the history of Byzantine culture, and thus they cannot match Cyril in learning. That the VC protests so much about the sea of Hellenic education available in middle Byzantium, clearly reveals the intensity of Byzantine intellectual insecurity with respect to the Caliphate.

The second strand of Byzantine superiority is the claim to state-territorial historical continuity. As noted earlier, when accused that Christians do not follow Christ’s precepts, because Jesus paid his taxes and they do not, Cyril argues that they do, because ‘we all pay taxes to the Romans.’¹²² This statement wrongly implies that Christians under Arab rule pay taxes to the Byzantine state. It also associates the medieval Byzantine polity directly with the Roman state which controlled the land Jesus lived upon. Once again, the argument against the Muslim scholars and their polity is to do with its youth. The Caliphate inherited land that is ‘Roman’, and arts that are ‘Hellenic’, both of which the VC presents as internal to, or integral aspects of the identity of the contemporary Byzantine polity.

These two historic continuities, according to the VC, result in the intellectual superiority of Christianity as a religion. When Cyril is accused that Christians only follow Christ’s law when it suits them, whilst Muslims follow Mohammed more loyally, his reply insists that ‘our God is like the depths of the sea’ and many will dive into these depths to find him.¹²³

‘[...] Н СНАННН УМОМЪ ПОМОЩНЮ КГО БОГАТСТВО РАЗЪМНОЖ
ПРНЕМЛЮЩЕ ПРѢПЛАВАЮТЬ Н ВЪЗВРАЩАЮТЬ СЕ, А СЛАБІН ЯКО Н В
СЪГННАЛѢХЪ КОРАБЛНХЪ ПОКОУШАЮТЬ СЕ ПРѢННТН, ОБН

¹²¹ VC, 6.51-3.

¹²² ‘РНМЛАННОМЪ ВЪСН ДАНМЪ ДАНЬ’, Ibid. 6.40

¹²³ ‘БОГЪ НАШ’ ЯКО Н ПОУУННА КСТЬ МОР’СКА’, Ibid., 6.17.

НСТАПЛАЮТЬ, А ШБН СЪ ТРѢДОМЪ НДВА ШТЬДЫХАЮТЬ, НЕМОЩНОЮ
ЛѢНОСТНЮ ВЛАЮЩЕ СЕ'¹²⁴

‘[...] and those strong in mind, receiving with his [God’s] help a treasure of understanding (‘razumnoe bogatstvo’) swim through and return, but the weak ones are trying to tame the sea with rotten ships, and some sink, while others with great efforts can barely rest, dragging themselves with helpless lethargy’

This is an allusion to the kind of interventions God makes elsewhere in the VC, assisting Cyril with understanding (‘razoum’). Such interventions only come to those strong in mind. This clearly points to the view expressed by the VC and Basil of Caesarea, that the mysteries of divine writings require intellectual training and education. The idea of ‘depth’ of understanding, both in Cyril failing to understand Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies prior to his education (‘ГЛЪБИНН’), and in Basil of Caesarea’s advice to young men (‘βάθος’) is realised in this metaphor of God as the ‘depths’ of the sea. Christianity therefore is for those strong in mind, and as made clear through the education of the saint, this strength comes through Hellenic education in youth for the individual. Equally as is made clear from the debate with the Muslims, it comes through the historic continuity of the inheritance of Hellenic education for the whole Christian culture of Byzantium.

What is notable about the framing of these arguments, is that they reflect Cyril’s education not only through their form – he presents *gnome*-esque sayings, and syllogistic question-and-answer arguments to persuade his interlocutors - but they also do so through their content. The debate covers issues which are less rigidly dogmatic. In these cases, the Muslim scholars question Cyril in an attempt to trick him, but this simply permits him to impress with his abilities: they ask him to interpret the demonic signs, how he knows so much or to explain the caliph’s miraculous garden. It also covers more explicitly doctrinal questions, whether that be questioning Christians’ general loyalty to Christ, their commitment to the trinity, or their specific failure to emulate Christ and pay their taxes (to the Arabs).

Throughout Cyril’s disputations with Muslim scholars the author barely resorts to scripture. Cyril uses one short citation from the Old Testament to further his case that God is like the depth of the sea (Isaiah, 53:8).¹²⁵ His only use of the New Testament is prompted by the Muslim scholars’ accusation that Christians do not turn the other cheek, in which *they* quote from Luke 6.27-9.¹²⁶ His response is rather

¹²⁴ Ibid., 6.19.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 6.17-8.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 6.34.

unpersuasive, but cites two short passages from Luke (6.28) and John (15.13).¹²⁷ The contrast between this and his more liberal use of scriptural quotations or close allusions at the Khazar court and against the Venetians is striking. In both cases, interspersed citation dominates Cyril's words. These citations number forty in the prolonged Khazar disputes and sixteen in the long speech against the Venetians, some of which are over ten lines long.¹²⁸

In short, the authorial organisation of Cyril's rhetoric against the Muslims at the Caliph's court is marked by its defence of the heritage of the Roman state, as tax collector, and Hellenic education, all coming from 'us'. Thus, the arguments put forth by the text stress that the Byzantine empire's superiority comes from the fact, that the empire pre-dates Islam and the Caliphate both in its claims to Roman territory and in its older Hellenic educational models. The consequences of this are intellectual and concern the 'depths' of the Byzantines' religious superiority. Namely, in inheriting education in Hellenic arts from 'us' (the very education Cyril himself received prior to arriving at the court of the Caliph), Muslims have not developed the necessary strength 'in mind'.

1.IV.2 The Khazar Debates

The debates at the Khazar court are not only the longest but also the broadest and most wide-ranging in content, (see Table 2). They occur not long after the second wave of Cyril's education – in Hebrew and Samaritan speech and books. Although the Khagan speaks along with others identified as knowing a lot about the Muslim faith but not explicitly as Muslims, the bulk of this debate is with Jewish scholars.

It seems clear that contemporary literature and tensions within the Byzantine polity influenced the length and centrality of this dispute in the VC. The ninth century saw both the failed mission to convert the Khazars, and a surge in anti-Jewish writing, made sharper by the association between Jews and iconoclasm.¹²⁹ The supposedly official *Letter of the Three Patriarchs* to Emperor Theophilos dated to around 836, for instance, records four tales 'at that time being disseminated in Constantinople' about Jews

¹²⁷ Ibid., 6.38.

¹²⁸ These are identified by Angelov and Kodov in their edition, see: Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.120-41.

¹²⁹ The Khazars' conversion to Judaism is generally dated to 861, so within Cyril's lifetime. On the nature of this conversion see: Shepard, 'The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism', pp.11-34; C. Zuckerman, 'On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor', *Revue des études Byzantines*, 53 (1995), pp.201-30. More generally on anti-Jewish writing: C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, (Washington, DC, 1958), p.15; R. Bonfil, 'Continuity and Discontinuity (641-1204)', in R. Bonfil, et al eds., *Jews in Byzantium: Dialects of Minority and Majority Cultures*, (Leiden, 2014), p.76; A. Cameron, 'Disputations, Polemical Literature and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period', in G. Reinink, et al eds., *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Medieval Near East: Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*, (Leuven, 1991), p.107; K. Aron-Beller, 'Byzantine Tales of Jewish Image Desecration: Tracing a Narrative', *Jewish Culture and History*, 18 (2017), pp.1-26. And more specifically on the use of Old Testament scripture to claim Byzantium as the true elect in the ninth century: S. Eshel, *The Concept of Elect Nation in Byzantium* (Leiden, 2018), pp.86-138, esp. pp.89-91.

attacking Christian images.¹³⁰ This may well explain the passage in the VC dispute (10.82-88) in which the Jews ask about Christians' idol worship, in a way rather reminiscent of the treatment of the iconoclast Patriarch John VIII, only a few pages earlier in the text (5.17-24).

Khristo Trendafilov's aforementioned monograph devoted to the Khazar polemic sought to illuminate the sources of the disputations and concluded that no clear and direct sources are identifiable.¹³¹ I take the disputation, therefore, as an original authorial composition of otherwise standard anti-Jewish tropes and works in Byzantine literature. I leave open the possibility that (Greek) sources for parts of the text can be found and that, as the VC notes, some of these may come from Cyril's own writings.¹³² But even so, this section ought to be considered as collated, compiled and ordered, by the author of the VC. Thus, I seek to elevate the author at the expense of Cyril and focus on the rhetorical framing and structure of the dispute as it stands within the VC.

The dispute at the Khazar court, with Jewish scholars in particular, engages broadly in two types of question. The first are dogmatic disagreements on specific issues like the Trinity (9.15-22), pork and rabbit (10.89-94), and idol-worship (10.82-88). The second are debates, more fundamentally, about the validity of the New Testament, and the legitimacy of Christians as the inheritors of the true religion. In all these matters, and in the dispute as a whole, Cyril does not use any citations from the New Testament. Instead, his materials come precisely from the Hebrew and Samaritan books he acquired in the second phase of his education.

The argument concerning the Trinity occurs in the same two-fold fashion both at the Caliph's court and at the Khazar court: the first question is to do with the worship of more than one entity and therefore more than one God, and the second, is to do with the belief that Mary, a woman, could not have given birth to God.

¹³⁰ Aron-Beller, 'Byzantine Tales of Jewish Image Desecration: Tracing a Narrative', p.13. Some of the editors of the letter make more of its authenticity than Aron-Beller. See: *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts*, eds. J.A. Munitiz, et al, (Camberley, 1997), p.xvii-xxxviii. The stories of Jewish image desecration are found in: p.46.

¹³¹ 'This search for more or less likely parallels with Christian hagiographical literature can continue, but it seems to us, its results are unlikely to go beyond the near coincidence of individual scenes, recurrent formulae and analogous themes.' ('Това издирване на повече или по-малко вероятно паралели с християнската житийна книжнина може да продължи, но, струва ни се, неговите резултати едва ли ще надвърлят приблизителното съвпадение на отделни сцени, устойчиви формули и аналогична тематика.'), Trendafilov, *Khazarskata Polemika*, p.104.

¹³² 'from these many [refutations], we, having shortened them, laid a few here [...] whoever wishes to find these complete and holy refutations, will find them in his books, which our Archbishop Methodios translated having divided them into eight parts.' ('ѡтъ многа же се мы оукрацише въ малъ положихомъ [...]. А нже хоцетъ съвршен'нынхъ снхъ бесѣдъ нскати н свѣтихъ, въ книгахъ нго ѡберещетъ н, елико прѣдложи оучитель нашъ архієпискоупъ Меѳодіе раздѣлъ н на ѡсемь словесъ'), VC, 10.95-6.

When the question is raised by the Muslim scholars at the Caliph's court, Cyril's answer is short on evidence, simply pointing generically to the Chalcedonian position.

**‘МЫ ОУЕО ДОБРѢ КСМЫ НАВЫКАН ШТЬ ПРОРОКЪ Н ШТЬ ОТЬЦЬ Н
ШТЬ ОУЧЕНТЕЛЪ ТРОИЦОУ СЛАВНТН, ОТЬЦЬ Н СЛОВО Н ДОУХЪ, ТРИН
НПОСТАСН ВЪ КДННОМЪ СОУЩЕСТВѢ’¹³³**

‘We are taught well from the prophets and (Church) fathers and teachers to praise the Trinity, Father, and Word and Spirit, three *hypostases* in one essence’

At the Khazar court on the other hand, Cyril turns to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to find allusions justifying the Trinity.

**‘ТѢМЪ ЖЕ МЫ БОЛ’ШЕЕ ТВОРИМЪ ВЕЩ’МН СКАЗАЮЩЕ Н ПРОРОКЪ
СЛѢШАЮЩЕ, РЕЧЕ БО ИСАИА: “СЛОУШАНТЕ МЕНЕ, ІАКОВЕ, ІЗРАИЛЮ, КГОЖЕ
АЗЪ ЗОВОУ, АЗЪ КСМЪ ПРЪВЫН, АЗЪ КСМЪ ВЪ ВѢКЫ, НЫНѢ ГОСПОДЬ
ПОСЛА МЕ Н ДОУХЪ КГО”’¹³⁴**

‘In this way, we do better, by demonstrating this [i.e. the legitimacy of the Trinity] with examples, listening to the prophets. For Isaiah said: “Hear me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I have called, I am the first, I endure in the ages (48.12), and God now sent me and his Spirit (48.16)”’

When speaking to the Arabs an allusion to evidence suffices, but it becomes a necessity to provide examples when speaking to the Jews. Different epistemological standards for proof can be taken in different circumstances, as different audiences and their level of knowledge require different methods of argumentation. And furthermore, these different audiences necessitate Cyril's education, he cannot argue with Old Testament scripture until he has learned the Old Testament languages.

The second question, of Mary's legitimacy, also offers two very different responses. As Mary features in the Qur'an, all Cyril has to do when debating with Muslims is refer to her. Namely:

**‘СЛОВО ЖЕ ТО ВЪПЛЪТН СЕ ВЪ ДѢВѢ Н РОДН СЕ НАШЕГО РАДН
СЪПАСЕНІА, ІАКОЖЕ Н МАХ’МЕТЪ ВАШЪ ПРОРОКЪ СВѢДѢТЕЛЬСТВОВАТЬ,**

¹³³ Ibid., 6.30.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 9.21-2.

НАПИСАВЪ СЯЦЕ: “ПОСЛАХЪМЪ ДУХЪ НАШЪ КЪ ДѢВѢИ НЗВОЛ’ШЕ, ДА
РОДЯТЪ”¹³⁵

‘The word that he [Christ] became flesh in the virgin and was born on account of our salvation, is also witnessed by your prophet Muhammad, who has written thus: “we have sent our Spirit to the Virgin (alludes to: Sura 19.17), having willed that she give birth (alludes to: Sura 19.19)”¹³⁶

As Vavřínek has noted, the Sura 19, which deals with the story of Mary is the most commonly cited text in Byzantine anti-Islamic literature, and by no means reveals knowledge of Arabic.¹³⁷ To Jewish scholars, however, whose scripture has no direct mention of the holiness of Mary, Cyril has to deduce the possibility of God becoming a man from the first principles of creation set out in Genesis.

The argument has three logical stages. First, the Jews are asked ‘what is the most worthy of all visible things?’, and they establish that it is man.¹³⁸ Second, the argument asserts that it is possible for God to reveal himself through clouds, storms, thunder, and smoke as he did to Moses and Job.¹³⁹ And thirdly, it follows necessarily that God can also reveal himself through man who is superior to clouds, storms, thunder. Finally, the argument concludes with a quotation, compiled from statements by Moses in Exodus, alluding to the realisation of this possibility. Namely, God not only can, but also will reveal himself.

“ВЪ ГРОМѢ КАМЕНІИ И ГЛАСѢ ТРѢБ’НЕМЪ” НЕ ЯВЛѢАНЪ НЫ СЕ К
ТОМОУ, ГОСПОДНЪ ЩЕДРЫИ, НЪ “ВЪСЕЛНЪ СЕ ВЪ НАШЕ ОУТРОБЫ ШТѢМЪ
НАШЕ ГРѢХИ”¹⁴⁰

‘Do not appear to us any longer, merciful God, in a “stone thunder and a trumpet voice” (alludes to: Exodus, 19.16), but “instil yourself in our wombs, taking away our sins” (alludes to; Exodus, 34.9)’

¹³⁵ VC, 6.31.

¹³⁶ The actual Sura 19.17-22 reads: ‘then We sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault. She said, ‘I take refuge in the All-merciful from thee! If thou fearest God... He said, ‘I am but a messenger come from thy Lord, to give thee a boy most pure. She said, ‘How shall I have a son whom no mortal has touched, neither have I been unchaste?’ He said, ‘Even so thy Lord has said: “Easy is that for Me; and that We may appoint him a sign unto men and a mercy from Us; it is a thing decreed.”’ So, she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a distant place’, *The Qur’an*, (<http://tanzil.net/#trans/en.arberry>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

¹³⁷ Vavřínek, ‘A Byzantine Polemic against Islam’, p.538.

¹³⁸ ‘УТО КСѢТЬ ШТѢ ВЪДНМЫИ ТВАРЫ УЪСТННѢИШИ ВЪЪХЪ?’, VC, 9.26-7.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 9.28.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.33.

The author is using the words of Moses very loosely, as the Septuagint simply notes ‘let my Lord go with us’ (‘συμπορευθήτω ὁ Κύριός μου μεθ’ ἡμῶν’) and does not mention being instilled in a womb.¹⁴¹

In any case, the text reveals varied argumentative styles, with different standards of evidence when discussing the same issues with different people. From logical deduction, to the use of examples the audience is familiar with, to the complete absence of examples, the argumentative style of Cyril clearly demonstrates a range of rhetorical techniques. The text is, thus, in itself, an argument for Hellenic education.

Whilst questions such as the one discussed above take up some of the debate with the Jews, as noted at the start of this section, the second type of questions about the legitimacy of Christianity as inheritor of the true religion are more prominent. These questions cover a series of topics – the Jews’ claim that they follow the oldest law of God (10.2-35) and the question of whether the kingdom of God has come yet (10.36-63) take up the most space in the discussion. But whether Jews as the people of Shem, will inherit the kingdom (10.64-67) and whether it is right to abandon circumcision (10.75-81) are also a part of the debate.

This section in the text is extremely significant, as Cyril’s disputation has to be framed completely differently from that with the Muslims. He can no longer rely on historic legitimacy through former territorial control, an older Hellenic educational system and therefore a precursor religion with intellectual superiority due to its historicity. Rather, in this section, Cyril is left to defend the younger religion, advocating change over time and the adoption of customs which pre-date the people adopting them. In the VC, Christianity’s relationship to Islam, runs parallel to Judaism’s relationship to Christianity.

Ultimately, as Bonfil notes, ‘issued from Judaism, Christianity never succeeded in denying such filiation.’¹⁴² Thus, Cyril’s disputation is largely concerned with the legitimisation of Christianity as a successor. In a similar way to the Islamic scholars who had learned the Hellenic arts from the Greeks in order to question him, Cyril speaks only in terms of Old Testament scripture to refute the Jews. Thus, he is enabled by his Hellenic education on the one hand to formulate syllogistic argumentation, and by his education in Hebrew and Samaritan, to do this with the Old Testament text.

This defence of inheritance and change is clearest in the two most central issues of the dispute: firstly, the question of which is the oldest law and whether the people of God ought to follow that one; and secondly,

¹⁴¹ *Septuagint: the Greek Old Testament*, Exodus, 34.9, (<https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=43&page=66>), (Last accessed, January, 2020).

¹⁴² Bonfil, ‘Continuity and Discontinuity’, p.74.

whether the kingdom of God has come or not. On the first issue, Cyril engages with the Jews' argument that the law of Moses is the first law of God and that the Christian one is later and so less legitimate.¹⁴³

Rather than defend the New Testament or the words of Christ, however, the author argues that there are in fact *older* laws, and that the Jews have themselves chosen a newer one.¹⁴⁴ In particular, they claim that God first gave law to Noah, after the fall.¹⁴⁵ The Jews offer the refutation that God gave a 'testament' ('ЗАВѢТЬ', 'διαθήκη') rather than a 'law' ('ЗАКОНЪ', 'νόμος') to Noah, but gave an actual law to Moses.¹⁴⁶ Cyril responds with a series of scriptural quotations in which the words are used interchangeably, so as to demonstrate that a testament is a law.¹⁴⁷ The whole exercise moves toward a defence of succession.

‘ДОБРѢ ДѢЕМЪ, АЩЕ БО БЫ АБРАМЪ НЕ КЛ’ СЕ ПО ШЕРЕЗАНІЕ, НЪ
ДРЖАЛЪ НОЕВЪ ЗАВѢТЬ, НЕ БЫ СЕ БОЖІИ ДРѢГА НАРЕКАЛЪ И ΜΩΥΣΗ
ЖЕ, ПОСЛѢДН ПАКЫ НАПИСАВЪ ЗАКОНЪ ПРѢВАГО НЕ ДРѢЖА. ТАКОЖДЕ
И МЫН ПО СНХЪ ОБРАЗѢ ХОДНМЪ И ШТЬ БОГА ЗАКОНЪ ПРИЕМШЕ
ДРѢЖНМЪ’¹⁴⁸

‘And we do well, since if Abraham had not accepted circumcision, but held on to the testament of Noah, he would not be called God’s friend, and Moses too, later when he wrote a law again, did not hold on to the previous one, and in this way, we, following his example, having received a law from God, we follow it.’

Thus, even though God did not say that he will give another law in future to Noah, it ought to be understood that when he does the succeeding law is the most pleasing to God.¹⁴⁹ Christians therefore, through this succession, have received the most worthy law.

As noted above, this position is ideologically at odds with the position taken in the VC against Muslims. This becomes most obvious on the question of whether the kingdom of God has already come. As Trendafilov has noted, albeit not within the framework this chapter seeks to develop, in answering this

¹⁴³ VC, 10.4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.11.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.16.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.17-18.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 10.20-21.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.22-34.

question Cyril's rhetoric in dispute with the Khazars offers a direct contradiction of the argument made against Muslims.¹⁵⁰

Namely, to the Muslims, Cyril defended the Christian practice of not paying taxes to the Arabs by insisting that, as noted, 'we all pay taxes to the Romans.'¹⁵¹ Thus, the legitimacy of the Christians comes from their association with the Roman empire and its historic continuity. Here at the Khazar court however, this identification of the Christians with the Roman state to which Jesus paid taxes is now abandoned altogether. Rather, Cyril argues that 'Jerusalem has fallen and that the animal sacrifices have ceased, and all that the prophets prophesied about you has come to be.'¹⁵² The Jews ask: if this is true, 'how is it that the Roman kingdom ('tsarstvo') holds power till now?'¹⁵³

‘НЕ ДРЪЖИТЬ СЕ, МИМО ШЛО БО КСТЬ ЯКО Н ПРОУДА [...] НАШЕ БО ЦАРСТВО НЕСТЬ РИМСКО НЪ ХРИСТОВО [...] РИМЛЯНЕ НДОЛѢХЪ ПРИЛЕЖАХЪ, СИН ЖЕ ОБЪ ШТЬ СЕГО ОБЪ ОТЪ ННОГО ЕЗЫКА Н ПЛЕМЕНЕ ВЪ ХРИТОВО НМЕ ЦАРСТВЮЮТЬ’¹⁵⁴

‘It does not, for it has passed as the former ones [...] our kingdom ('tsarstvo') is not Roman, but Christian, [...] The Romans worshiped idols, but now, one from one, and one from another people and tribe, rule in the name of Christ’

This statement, equating Byzantium with the fifth monarchy, or kingdom without end, was not an uncommon rendering of the Old Testament prophesy of Daniel.¹⁵⁵ But paired with a direct claim to Roman continuity against the Muslims only a few pages prior in the narrative, Cyril's rhetoric once again shows flexibility – not only in method as above, but in content too. It is possible to make contradictory statements, therefore, in order to make the most persuasive argument for Christianity, as the truth of Christianity operates beyond the truth or consistency of individual statements made by Christians.

This aligns with Kustas's assessment of the development of Christian rhetoric after late antiquity. The Christian rhetor, no longer dealing with what is possible or feasible, was dealing with divine truth.¹⁵⁶ This allowed the rhetor the use of both clarity and obscurity at different times for different purposes, because

¹⁵⁰ Trendafilov, *Khazarskata polemika*, p.62.

¹⁵¹ ‘РИМЛЯНОМЪ БЪСН ДАНМЪ ДАНЬ’, VC, 6.47.

¹⁵² ‘Іеросалимъ съкрѣшенъ ксть н жрътвы прѣстали соуть н вѣсе се се ксть събыло, кже соуть пророци прорекли ш вась’, Ibid., 10.36-37.

¹⁵³ ‘КАКО РИМСКОЕ ЦАРСТВО ДОСЕДѢ ДРЪЖИТ’ ВЛАДЫУСТВО?’, Ibid., 10.51.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.52-56.

¹⁵⁵ See: Anastos, ‘Political Theory in the Lives of the Slavic Saints’, pp.17-29; P. Magdalino, R. Nelson, ‘Introduction’, in their eds., *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC, 2006), pp.14, 20-24, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, pp.27-8.

both were ultimately revealing the same.¹⁵⁷ As such, Christianity supplemented rhetorical skill with metaphysical certainty, which in turn afforded the use of divergent information at different times, in order to confirm or further prove God as in the case above.

But there is more to this statement than inconsistency. As noted at the start of this section, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the order of these disputes, and the information they utilise, whether scriptural or not, is not random. Rather, in the wider narrative of Cyril's education and the disputations it prepares him to perform, the order realises a more universal Christian history. Cyril moves from an argument based on Hellenistic education and Roman territorialism, through to an argument entirely concerned with the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is no surprise that in the very same section he also encounters the Old Testament Ful tribe.¹⁵⁸ In these different phases of Christian history, or different Christian temporalities, it is not simply the content of his argumentation that changes – in different Christian temporalities, different things stand true.

These two strands also represent Cyril's two acts of learning – an education in the Hellenic arts, and an education in Hebrew letters and Samaritan books. As such, the trajectory of the disputations itself progresses in time. It is in line with Cyril's lifetime, as he meets the Muslim scholars after his Constantinopolitan education, and the Jewish ones after he learns Hebrew and Samaritan books. But it also follows, a more universal Christian historical time - from the state of the Romans in his dispute with the Muslims, to the successor state of the Christians which came to realise the prophecies of the Old Testament in his disputation with the Jews. According to this logic, the final dispute, inevitably, must be with New Testament Christians: a move from what Kustas aptly describes as the 'obscurity' of the Old Testament, whose events were both real and immediate, and also 'veiled foreshadowings', to the 'clear and revealed light' of the New Testament to come.¹⁵⁹ This final stage in Cyril's geographical, rhetorical and temporal journey is addressed below.

1.IV.3 The Latin Debate

There is an almost comical disparity between the breadth of topics Cyril disputes with Jews and Muslims, and the narrowness of those discussed with Latins, above all the issue of trilingualism (see table 3).¹⁶⁰ In some senses, this is not obvious given that the VC's compilation dates to a period of papal schism over Photios and the conversion of Bulgaria, and the formalisation of anti-Latin literature in the ninth

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.95.

¹⁵⁸ This tribe will be discussed at greater length below.

¹⁵⁹ Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, p.95.

¹⁶⁰ See tables 1, 2 and 3 above.

century.¹⁶¹ In some ways, the late ninth century is as good a time for anti-Latin literature as it is for anti-Jewish literature in Byzantium. Yet, the *VC* is silent on the *filioque*, even though the papal letters of John VIII may imply that this was a real issue in the bishopric of Methodios himself.¹⁶² And the text is well disposed toward the pope.¹⁶³

There are two possible reasons for this narrowness of focus. The first is to do with the relics of St Clement which the *VC* notes, Cyril brought to Rome. The translation of the relics is amongst the only events in the *VC* which finds contemporary confirmation in a Latin letter of Anastasius the Librarian.¹⁶⁴ The event was clearly well received and resulted in Cyril's recognition in the Latin church.¹⁶⁵ More pertinently, the second reason may be to do with the possible profile of the author of the *VC*. After his education in Constantinople, Cyril is given the title 'librarian' ('*βιβλιοθηκᾶρις*'). As Ševčenko has shown, the word is otherwise unattested in Slavonic, and only attested in Byzantine Greek in the ninth century with reference to Latin officials in the curia of the pope in Rome, like Anastasius the Librarian ('*bibliothecarius*').¹⁶⁶ This, Ševčenko argues, offers some insight into the kind of Greek-speaking, but at least at some point Rome-dwelling intellectual circles responsible for the compilation of the *VC* – deeply acquainted not only with Byzantine court culture, like imperial bride shows, but also with Roman official hierarchies.¹⁶⁷ Certainly, if the life was composed shortly after Cyril's death (ca.869) as seems most likely, it was therefore most probably composed either in Rome or the very earliest phases of the Moravian mission.

Perhaps even more peculiar than the pope's presentation as a protagonist, is the idiosyncrasy of Cyril's stand against the Latins. As Francis Thomson has demonstrated, tri-lingualism was in some sense an invented heresy.¹⁶⁸ It is only referred to in other later Greek sources completely unrelated to the

¹⁶¹ See: F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism, History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948); L. Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross, Photios, Bulgaria and the Papacy, 860s-880s* (Amsterdam, 1998); Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*.

¹⁶² Kolbaba, *Inventing*, pp.51-2. In one letter, John VIII calls Methodios to Rome as he has found that he is not preaching 'the things which the Holy Roman church learned from the first apostles and preaches daily' ('*que sancta Romana ecclesia ab ipso apostolorum principe dedicit et cottidie predicat*'). Given that the letter later addresses the fact Methodios is preaching in Slavonic as a separate issue, it seems possible that the disagreement is to do with the creed. John VIII, *Letters*, 201, pp.160-1.

¹⁶³ In the *VC*, the pope invites Cyril and Methodios to Rome, and welcomes a liturgy in Slavonic. He also insists that Cyril is buried in the Vatican. *VC*, 17-18. Although as Tia Kolbaba has shown this kind of respect for the pope is not entirely unusual even early anti-Latin, *filioque*-related literature. Kolbaba, *Inventing*, p.153.

¹⁶⁴ Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, in: Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Epistolae sive Praefationes*, ed. E. Caspar, (Berlin, 1912-28), pp.436-8.

¹⁶⁵ For more on this see Part V of this chapter.

¹⁶⁶ Ševčenko, 'Constantine-Cyril, Apostle of the Slavs, as "Bibliothecary"', pp.214-221.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.218-9.

¹⁶⁸ F. J. Thomson, 'SS. Cyril and Methodios and a Mythical Western Heresy: Trilingualism. A Contribution to the Study of Patristic and Mediaeval Theories of Sacred Languages', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 110 (1992), pp.67-122.

mission.¹⁶⁹ In the west the situation is more complex, and while popes changed their minds about Slavonic in particular in the few decades after Cyril's death, there is no evidence that the pope explicitly objected to Slavonic at the time of the VC's composition, and the use of other vernacular languages in the liturgy in the West is attested.¹⁷⁰ In short, it seems difficult to imagine that this was a matter of contemporary widespread and fervent dispute, rather than a textual construction, not least because of its peculiar narrowness.

The question of the dispute and its topic's historicity, however, ought not to distract from its significance in the structure of Cyril's disputations as they are presented in the VC. As noted above, a discourse with Christians is the natural conclusion to Cyril's spatial and temporal transition from Hellenic arts and pagan imperialism, through Old Testament prophesies and peoples. The style and method of disputation is key, therefore, to expressing this.

First and foremost, as noted above, only one issue is under discussion in the VC, and that is whether or not there should be only three holy languages. The audience, the aforementioned 'bishops, priests and monks' in Venice, only offer one accusation and do not intervene or respond again. As ever, Cyril's method of argumentation is not random. At first, he resorts to contemporary reality.

**‘МЫ ЖЕ РОДЫ ЗНАЕМЪ КНИГЫ ОУМѢЮЩЕ И БОГОУ СЛАВѢ ВЪЗДАЮЩЕ
СВОИМЪ ЯЗЫКОМЪ КЪЖДО. ІАВѢ ЖЕ СОУТЪ СІИ: АРМЕННИ, ПЕРСИИ, АБАЗГИ,
ИВЕРИИ, СОУГДИИ ГОДИИ, ВЕРИИ, ТЪРСИИ, КОЗАРИИ, АРАБЛЯНЕ, ЕГІПТИИ И
НИИ МНОЗИ’**¹⁷¹

‘for we know many peoples who have knowledge of books and praise God in their own language, it is known that these are: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians, Sogdian Goths, Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians and many others.’

This is the first instance in the VC where Cyril tries to use the current state of affairs as an argument. Against the Muslims, his legitimacy comes from what used to be; against the Jews he tried to argue through interpreting past prophesy that the Kingdom of God they believe is yet to come has in fact come

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.71, 94-5.

¹⁷⁰ The best account of the shifting papal position in the 880s-90s is: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.109- 206. On the use of vernaculars see for instance: M. Garrison, et al eds., *Spoken and Written Language: Relations between Latin and the Vernacular Languages in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013). And in the liturgy in particular, the work of Helen Gittos on Anglo-Saxon England in the forthcoming volume: H. Gittos, et al eds., *Vernacular Languages in the Long Ninth Century* (forthcoming). The changing papal position on the use of Slavonic will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2 Part VI.

¹⁷¹ VC, 16.7.

already. It is only once arguing with the Latins, in this third stage of his disputational cycle, that he is truly in the present.

This kind of category of evidence, however, Cyril fears is wasted on his interlocutors, and so he notes: ‘If you do not wish to understand from these (examples), then at least know (God’s) judgement from the (holy) writing.’¹⁷²

What follows are two full pages of scriptural citations concerned with the significance of the spreading of faith. The citations are simply connected by the phrases ‘and again’, or ‘also Mark says’.

Lines of quote	Source of Quote ¹⁷³
16.10	Psalm 95.1
16.11	Psalm 97.4
16.12	Psalm 65.4
16.13	Psalm 116.1, 150.6
16.14	John 1.12
16.15	John 17.20-1
16.16	Matthew, 28.18-20
16.17	Mark, 16.15-17
16.18	Matthew 23.13
16.19	Luke, 11.52
16.21-57	1 Corinthians 14.4-40

Table 4: Scriptural quotations in the Venetian Speech

As is evident, this is in no way like the method of disputation Cyril uses against Muslims and Jews. Rather, Cyril turns to another standard method of theological argumentation. There are no logical, or syllogistic steps, no argumentative structure, no induction or interpretation, and no opposition from his interlocutors. Rather, this is an argument entirely based on accumulation of evidence. As Cyril shares the holy texts with his audience, he does not need to persuade them, but rather simply points them to the revealed truth. There is a sense therefore, that scriptural proof is given because it is indisputable. It is no surprise that the education Cyril receives prior to this argument is unequivocally one of divine intervention – God reveals Slavonic letters to him, and with them Cyril himself *writes* the Gospel of John. The dominance of the New Testament, and specifically the Gospels, suggests that just as his education

¹⁷² ‘АЩЕ АН НЕ ХОЩЕТЕ ВЪТЪ СНХЪ РАЗЪМЪ, ПОНЪ ВЪТЪ КНИГЪ ПОЗНАТЕ СОУДІЮ’, VC, 16.9.

¹⁷³ As identified in: Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.138-9.

needs no assistance from grammar or rhetoric, their clarity also requires no additional comment or explanation. As such, Cyril's education in Hellenic arts or the Old Testament languages is not relevant when arguing with Christians. Because in this final stage, both geographically and temporally, one has arrived in the kingdom of God, and there is essentially no possibility to refute or disagree with the words of the Bible.

In some sense this in itself contradicts the earlier charge made by Cyril against his Muslim audience, that the teachings of their religion are 'easy and accessible' in contrast with those of Christianity. But the structure of the VC does not permit direct ascension to divine revelation. The VC makes clear that the path toward revealed truth is one through Hellenic and Old Testament education, and through the confrontation with heathens against whom a defence of the Christian faith needs to be formulated in intellectually varied ways. Thus, it is not 'easy and accessible' to receive the gospel from God, as what must come before is the intellectual preparation of education and disputation.

The stance of the scriptural quotations chosen in the VC confirms this too. They all in one way or another promote the expansion of Christianity, and reprimand those who oppose it. They insist that all people glorify God, in all lands and all languages, and they encourage apostolic activity: 'go unto the whole world and preach the gospel to all living things' (Mark 23.13).¹⁷⁴ More than a third of the speech, and its conclusion, is a passage on the intelligibility and good order in worship from the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, 14-40. The significance of languages, learning languages, and travelling to the ends of the world to spread the words of God is key in the passage. This clearly alludes to Cyril's own education in Hebrew, 'ros'sky' and Samaritan. The manifesto for missionary activity in the Epistle, therefore, is a reflection upon the first two stages of Cyril's life and disputations – his transitions through non-Christian lands. In a sense, the VC argues that it is not possible to achieve the third phase, of indisputable clarity in Christian truth, without acknowledging, educating and debating through the former two. However, once such a status is achieved, 'outside' education and missionary activity still remains the responsibility of Christians. This final section of Part IV of this chapter explores the *kind* of missionary activity promulgated by the VC.

1.IV.4 Converting the Silent

The VC is a manifesto for the utility of 'outside' education in the process of consolidating the orthodox faith. Yet despite the evidence for the significance of outside education in successfully formulating arguments against representatives of other Abrahamic religions, no Muslim, Jew or Latin Christian in the narrative ever converts.

¹⁷⁴ VC, 16.17.

More generally, there is a notable difference between the kinds of opponents Cyril argues with for which an actual account of the dispute is given, and the kinds of opponents with whom Cyril's persuasiveness is merely summarized. The VC offers full accounts of disputations between Cyril and the patriarch John VII, Muslims, Jews, and Latins. More specifically, the audience for Cyril's disputation comes from a particular social profile. In the caliphate, as noted above, he speaks to 'wise men, learned in the books of geometry and astronomy and other such teachings.'¹⁷⁵ At the Khazar court, Cyril is once again arguing with the learned bookmen of Judaism and Islam – the khagan asks specifically for a 'bookish man' ('**МѢЖА КНИЖНА**') to dispute with the other religious representatives at his court.¹⁷⁶ Those who speak at court are only the Jews, Saracens, Cyril and the Khagan himself. Lastly, in Venice, Cyril explicitly argues with: 'bishops, priests and monks' ('**ЕПИСКОПИ И ПОПОВЕ И УРЪНОРНЪЦИ**').¹⁷⁷ Thus, the only opponents warranting the possibility for a full disputation, are those of the other Abrahamic religions, with some – either more or less explicitly invoked – education.

There are no attempts to offer accounts of Cyril's words with the lesser, local Khazar general ('voivoda') threatening to besiege a Christian city, the 'Ougri' (likely Hungarians) threatening to murder Cyril, or in fact, the Slavs in Moravia who practise a mixture of old pagan beliefs alongside the trilingual heresy.¹⁷⁸ In all these instances, Cyril speaks, whether 'didactic' words or with the 'fire of the words', but his audience remains silent or at best utters a question, or a short response.

In part, of course, the author of the VC had no Byzantine ammunition against tribes whose very identification and existence is disputed. Unlike the standard tropes available to be deployed against Jews and Muslims, the VC reveals a struggle to imagine the ways in which unknown people may conduct themselves or engage with religious discourse. Nonetheless, their silence suggests a more general association between paganism, or pagans, and silence or speechlessness. If, as George Kustas argues, Christianity used pagan literature and rhetoric to forge a 'conception of the living power of the logos with which words are now invested and the function of which they aim to serve' as inherently expressing God's genius and his divine plan, then it is perhaps unsurprising that those who have no God have little to say.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ '**МОУДРАА УЕДЪБЪ, КНИГЪ НАУЧЕНА ГЕΩΜΕΤΡΙΗ И ΑΣΤΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ И ΠΡΟΥΙΝΜΕ ΟΥΥΕΝΙΕΜΕ**', Ibid., 6.14.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 8.5.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.1.

¹⁷⁸ Ruler: VC, 8.19-22; Ougri: 8.22-25; Slavs: 15.10-17.

¹⁷⁹ Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, p.55.

The people of Ful, found en route to the Khazar court, are the only exception to this scheme. They offer some refutation in defence of their tree worship.¹⁸⁰ The interaction is unique in other ways which may explain this exceptionality. Cyril reproaches the tribe for turning away from God, even though they are spoken of in scripture. To make this point, the saint cites Isaiah 66.18-9 which notes that God will go among all peoples, including ‘Tharsis, and Ful, and Lud, and Mosoch, and to Thobel, and to Greece.’¹⁸¹ The author thus clearly identifies the people Cyril meets, perhaps the people of the attested city of Ful in the Crimea, with a biblical tribe mentioned in the Old Testament, named ‘Phud’ in the Septuagint or ‘Ful’ in the Hebrew Old Testament traditions, and now commonly identified with the Lybians.¹⁸² Locating the people of Ful in the Old Testament, strengthens Cyril’s apostolic character. Cyril is the realisation of the prophecy that God will send men to the people of Ful. Perhaps it is this prophetic role, that warrants the people of Ful the ability to speak, albeit only once.

Despite the short exchange with the people of Ful, the division between long set-piece disputes with representatives of other Abrahamic-religions, and short summaries of the conversion or taming of lesser known pagans stands. Aside from the silence of the godless, this reveals an interesting paradox. Cyril’s words are most successful when he is speaking to pagans. In the case of the Ful for instance, the text notes, that ‘having spoken soft words to them he persuaded them to cut the tree and burn it.’¹⁸³ Failing immediate conversion, Cyril secures the promise of conversion from others, like the local Khazar general attempting to besiege a Christian city. This too, he does with his words.

¹⁸⁰ They insist that they are not worshipping idols, for they did not themselves create the tree. VC, 12.13-15.

¹⁸¹ ‘ΦΑΡΥΞ ΦΩΛ Η ΛΟΥΔ Η ΜΟΣΟΧ Η ΦΟΒΕΛ Η ΒΞ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΥ’, Ibid., 12.17.

¹⁸² On the location of the city and the bishopric of Ful: A. L. Yakobskan, ‘K Voprosu o lokalizatsii srednovekovnogo goroda Fuully’, *Sovetskaia arheologiya*, 29-30 (1959), pp.108-14.; C. Zuckerman, ‘Byzantium’s Pontic Policy in the *Notitiae Episcopatum*’, in his ed., *La Crimée entre Byzance et le Khaganat Khazar* (Paris, 2006). On Ful as a biblical people: I. M. Mogarichev, ‘K voprosu o prebyvanii Konstantina Filosofa v Krymu’, in his ed. *Problemy istorii i arkheologii Ukrainy. Materialy X Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferencii, posviashchennoi 125-letiiu professora K. E. Grinevicha, 4-5 noiabria 2016 goda*, (Kharkiv, 2016), p.61. Dimitur Angelov has argued that the fact the text opts for Ful rather than Phud suggests that Cyril truly knew Hebrew and is citing the Hebrew Old Testament. However, it is clear from the rendering of the other names in the list, the text cited is the Greek. The VC replaces the people of Javan in the Hebrew old testament with those of Greece (Ελλάδας) and adds the people of Mosoch (Μοσόχ) who are absent from the Hebrew. The rigidity of the Septuagint’s tradition, especially with regards to proper names makes the most likely explanation either the ease of misreading the capital Λ and Δ or the author’s ingenious manipulation of the Old Testament tribal name from Fud to Ful, in order to match the Crimean city of the same name. I am grateful to Prof. Sebastian Brock for his help with this question. Angelov’s case is found in: Kliment, *Subrani*, p.153.

¹⁸³ ‘ТАКО ЖЕ ГЛАДЪ КЫМН СЛОВЕСН ОУГЛАГОЛАВЪ НХЪ ПОВЕЛЪ НМЪ ПОСЪЩН ДРЪВО Н СЪЖЕЩН’, VC, 12.20-24.

‘[...] БЕСЕДОВАВ’ ЖЕ С НИМЪ И ОУЧЕНТЕЛНАА СЛОВА ПРЪДЛОЖИ И
ОУКРОТИ ЕГО И ОБЕЩАВЪ СЕ ЕМОУ НА КРЪЩЕННЕ ВЪЗВРАТИ ЖЕ СЕ
ФИЛОСОФЪ ВЪ СВОИ ПОУТЬ’¹⁸⁴

‘[...] and having spoken with him and offered him didactic words, he tamed him and when [the ruler] promised him that he will be baptised, the philosopher went on his way’

The same promises are made at the Khazar court. After seven pages of disputation with Jews and men who know about Islam, a large group is introduced: ‘nearly two hundred of them were converted’ and, the Khazar elite promised, the rest will be converted over time too.¹⁸⁵ This large but previously unmentioned audience has been sat silent all along.

In short, the author is not always able to conjure up the sorts of words Cyril may have said to these people and is even less capable of conjuring up the sorts of words they may have said to him. But there is no doubt in the text that these largely silent audiences are able to comprehend his words and be persuaded by them. The VC is unwavering in its certainty that those with the right education are able to spread the faith.

The firmness of the text’s position on missionary activity was by no means ubiquitous in Middle Byzantine intellectual circles. As shown by Sergei Ivanov, positions on the need for mission were ever shifting, and there was a case made against spreading the Gospel in the ninth century, as putting pearls before swine.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps the contrast between the embarrassed but unchanged Muslims, Jews and Latins, and the largely silent but converted pagans, reveals resignation to the existence of alternative Religions of the Book. Thus, the Abrahamic opponents are left as frozen rhetorical positions to be disputed with, guiding a narrative trajectory through the three phases of Christian temporality. To turn to pagans instead is, as far as the text is concerned, a good and necessary compromise.

1.V THE *LIFE OF CYRIL* AS A NINTH-CENTURY ARGUMENT: THE WEST?

The next two sections seek to position the VC’s representation of learning and missionary activity in a ninth-century intellectual context. This part assesses and broadly dismisses the possibility for a Latinate audience for the VC as it survives.

In some ways Cyril is an unusual Byzantine saint. Unlike the local ascetics or Constantinopolitan court projects of middle Byzantine hagiography, stories about Cyril were transmitted in contemporary Latin sources. A positive light hangs over him in Latin documents despite contemporary tensions between the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.20.

¹⁸⁵ ‘КРЪСТЪ ЖЕ СЕ УТЬ НИХЪ ДО ДВОЮ СТО’, VC, 11.40.

¹⁸⁶ Ivanov, “*Pearls before Swine*”, pp.89-90.

papacy and Constantinople. This transcendence of geo-political problems is largely due to his association with the translation of the relics of St Clement from the Crimea to Rome. This translation is described in the VC, as well as in a contemporary letter by Anastasius the Librarian.¹⁸⁷ It is also depicted in an eleventh-century fresco found in the remains of the fourth-century basilica of St Clement, not far from Cyril's alleged tomb.¹⁸⁸ It is clear, as far as our texts and images from the West indicate, that Cyril was *believed* to have brought the relics of St Clement to Rome. Due to the interest in Pope Clement in Rome and the Carolingian polities, the Cyril that emerges from these materials is strikingly different from that of the VC.¹⁸⁹

The earliest dated material concerning Cyril from Latin texts is a mention of him in a letter of Anastasius the Librarian to pope Hadrian II, reporting on the proceedings of the 869/70 church council at Constantinople.¹⁹⁰ The second, and more thorough account of Cyril is in another letter by Anastasius mentioned earlier in the chapter, dated to ca. 875-6, and addressed to Bishop Gauderic of Velletri, who was involved in the foundation of the chapel to St Clement, where the pope's relics were placed.¹⁹¹ The letter also reveals that Gauderic was collecting materials on the *Life and Miracles of St Clement*, and had tasked Anastasius with finding additional materials from Greek sources. Anastasius proceeds to give Gauderic what he describes as a translation from a work written in Greek by Constantine-Cyril himself; this describes the finding of the relics. Alongside, Anastasius gives what claims to be a first person account of the relic discovery from Metrophanes of Smyrna, a bishop who was an exile in Kherson at the time of the discovery.¹⁹² In places, the text in this letter has some content-based similarities with the VC – so it seems possible that either Anastasius may be using the VC (and simply not saying that he is), or more likely that both he and the VC share a Greek source. For instance, Anastasius reports an account by Metrophanes. The account records how Cyril found out that no one in Kherson knew where the relics of St Clement were, and he offered a prayer to God to try and find them, encouraging the local Christians to do the same. Some of these events are also reported in the VC.

¹⁸⁷ Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, pp.436-8.

¹⁸⁸ C. Fillipini, 'The Image of the Titular Saint in the Eleventh-century Frescoes in San Clemente, Rome', *A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 22 (2006), pp.243-250; C. Filippini, *The Eleventh-Century Frescoes of San Clemente in Rome* (PhD dissertation, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1999), pp.125-46.

¹⁸⁹ Writings attributed to Clement in Latin were circulated widely throughout the ninth century, with early manuscripts from Verona, Rome, Gaul. In the 830-50s in particular, new texts ascribed to him continued to emerge. I am grateful to Conrad Leyser for sharing a handout with a catalogue of manuscripts pertaining to Clement from the early middle ages, entitled 'In Search of a Past: Canon Law, the Cult of the Saints, and the Roman Church, 860-960'.

¹⁹⁰ Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 5, p.407; M. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.92.

¹⁹¹ Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 15, pp.436-8.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

‘Super quo stupefactus philosophus se in orationem multo tempore dedit, Deum revelare, sanctum vero revelari corpus deposcens. [...] omnes ad illa litora fodienda et tam pretiosas reliquias sancti martyris et apostolici inquirendas ordine, quem ipse philosophus in hystorica narratione descripsit, penitus animavit. Huc usque praedictus Metrophanes.’

Anastasius, *Letters*, 15, p.437

‘The philosopher was stunned by this and dedicated himself to a long prayer so that God reveals [this], that the holy relics are revealed to him. [...] He strongly roused everyone to dig up the shores and search for the precious relics of the holy martyr and pope, in a way in turn the philosopher himself described in his historical narrative. Thus, reports the aforementioned Metrophanes.’

‘СЛЫШАВЪШЕ, ЯКО СВЕТЫН
КЛНМЕНЬТЪ ЕЩЕ В МОРН ЛЕЖИТЬ,
ПОМОЛНВЪ СЕ РЕЧЕ: ВЪРОУЮ ВЪ БОГА
СВЕТЪМЪ КЛНМЕНЬТЪ ННАДЪЮ СЕ,
ЯКО ШЕРЪСТН КГО НМАМЪ Н
НЗНЕСТН НЗ МОРА. ОУБЕЖДЪ
АРХІЕПИСКОУПА Н СЪ КЛНРОСОМЪ
ВЪСЪМЪ Н ГОВЪННЫ МОУЖН Н
ВЪСЪДШЕ ВЪ КОРАБЛѢ НДѢЩЕ НА
МЪСТО ОУТНШЪШЕ СЕ МОРЪ БЕЛЪМН, Н
ДОШЪДЪШЕ НАУЕШЕ КОПАТИ.’

VC, 8.16-17

‘and having heard that the holy Clement still lay in the sea, he prayed, saying: ‘I believe in God and I have hope in saint Clement, that I will be able to find him and take him out of the sea.’ And having persuaded the bishop, and with all the clergy and leading men, he boarded a ship and arrived at the place, while the sea became very calm, and having come they began to dig’

A number of the textual complexities of the Latin transmission are revealed in this passage. Anastasius claims to use a Greek oral report to summarise the events, which he notes confirms a textual account written by Cyril himself. Neither the report nor Cyril’s account survive, yet in the VC the prayer which Anastasius summarises is given in the first person, and the events of the digging are confirmed – so it seems possible the VC shares a Greek source with Anastasius, which describes these events at more length.

This already complicated textual picture is further nuanced by the *Life and Miracles of St Clement*, begun by John Immonides but finished by Gauderic of Velletri, which only survives in fragments but is dedicated to Pope John VIII, who died in 883. So we can place the compilation of this *Life and Miracles of St Clement* shortly after Cyril’s death in ca.869 and between the letters of 874/5 and 883.¹⁹³ In the same dedication, Gauderic makes it clear that his work is divided in three parts, the last of which

¹⁹³ A. Milev, ‘Italianskata legenda v nova svetlina’, *Istoricheski pregled*, 12 (1956), p.77. On the authorship of John Immonides: L. Castaldi, ‘Le dediche di Giovanni Immonide’, *Filologia mediolatina*, 17 (2010), p.47. The text of Gauderic of Velletri and John Immonides is found in: *The Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, in *Ioannis Hymmonidis et Gauderici Veliterni, Leonis Ostiensis, Excerpta ex Clementinis Recognitionibus a Tyrannio Rufini Translati*, ed. G. Orlandi, (Milan, 1968), pp.1-165.

supposedly includes Clement's exile and martyrdom, and the return of his relics to Rome.¹⁹⁴ This third part of Gauderic's work does not survive, but it is suspected to be the *Italian Legend*, a text entitled *Vita Constantini Cyrilli cum translatione S. Clementis* in a twelfth-century manuscript under the name of Leo of Ostia, an Italian cardinal famous for his *Montecassino Chronicle*.¹⁹⁵ The reason for the attribution to Gauderic is to do with similarities in content between the *Italian Legend*, Anastasius' letter to Gauderic and the VC. In a later manuscript however, it seems that Leo's text mentions a Greek source, but does not mention Gauderic, and the *Italian Legend* is textually much closer to the VC than to the letter of Anastasius.¹⁹⁶ To resolve these numerous problems would require close examination of the two Leo of Ostia manuscripts, the Gauderic fragments, the VC and Anastasius' works. This is beyond the scope of this study and may be addressed more thoroughly in Diddi's forthcoming critical edition of the VC. Rather, I take these Latin sources, and the *Italian legend* in particular, as texts in discourse with and as receivers of a story about a philosopher called Constantine-Cyril. The way they formulate his character and side-line his education and disputations, is fundamentally different to the emphasis of the VC. This in turn points to the fact that despite engagement with Latin culture, the VC sought to engage predominantly with Byzantine intellectual problems.

The *Legend* opens with a summary of Cyril's youth, and covers the basic information found in the VC, with none of the details of his education. In short, it simply says that thanks to his abilities from youth Constantine 'deserved to be called a philosopher'.¹⁹⁷ His parents, rather than God's will, take him to Constantinople, and with no mention of Photios, Leo or the Hellenic arts, Constantine is ordained by the will of God.¹⁹⁸ After an embassy from the Khazars, whose demands and concerns are textually extremely close to the wording in the VC, he is sent to Khazaria.¹⁹⁹ The story of the discovery of the relics follows that of the VC very closely, but Cyril's seven-page discussion with the Khazars is represented here simply by a single sentence noting his successful refutations with the power of his eloquence.²⁰⁰ The narrative of Clement is followed by the Moravian mission, where once again, an extremely close re-telling of the

¹⁹⁴ 'reversionis eius ad propriam sedem miracula', Gauderic of Velletri, John Immonides, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, p.2.

¹⁹⁵ The only thing that does survive are fragments from parts one and two. Leo of Ostia's authorship was resolved through another fourteenth-century MS coming to light. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.97. I. Duichev, 'La Solution de quelques enigmes Cyrillo-Methodiennes', *Byzantion*, 23 (1954), p.203.

¹⁹⁶ 'partim vero ex relatione inventoris eiusdem corporis, de Graecis fastidioso stilo translate', Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.99.

¹⁹⁷ 'veraci agnomine Philosophus est appellatus', *The Italian Legend*, ed., trans. in *FLHB*, vol. 2., p.295.

¹⁹⁸ 'honorem quoque sacerdotii ibidem, ordinante Deo, est adeptus', *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Compare with: VC, 8.1-5.

²⁰⁰ 'predicationibus et rationibus eloquiorum', *The Italian Legend*, p.298.

demands made by the Moravian ruler. What follows omits the creation of the alphabet altogether and of the subsequent dispute with the Latins.²⁰¹

The complete absence of the overwhelming body of argumentative materials and the totality of Cyril's three-fold education is important, precisely because a very different Cyril emerges from the pages of the *Italian Legend*. This Latin-Constantine-Cyril is a philosopher too, but one whose life is emplotted entirely around the translation of the relics of Clement which is both his main achievement and his teleological purpose. The disputing, missionary Cyril of the VC therefore, appears very different from the Latin relic-translator. The VC also stands aside from the Latin tradition of missionary hagiography, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.²⁰² Thus, although it was most probably written in Rome, or in Moravia under Roman patronage, the Cyril of the VC is formulated within and through ninth-century Byzantine intellectual discourse.

1.VI THE *LIFE OF CYRIL* AS NINTH-CENTURY ARGUMENT: BYZANTIUM

In what follows, the analysis moves away from the kind of contextualisation offered at the very beginning of this chapter (Part II), which focused exclusively on texts that are cited in the VC. Instead I turn to the ideological positions and textual materials which, I argue, form the discursive milieu within which the text was composed even though they are not explicitly cited by it. This discursive milieu is proposed and established, through two kinds of contextualisation: amid contemporary hagiography, on the one hand, and amid the so-called 'anti-Photian' corpus of texts on the other. Once this has been proposed, this section will seek to locate the position of the VC within this field and offer some comments on the *type* of textual community most likely to have produced it.

Part VI of this chapter is therefore divided into two parts. The first part focuses on how the VC structures Cyril's sanctity by combining two types of Byzantine hagiographies: travelling ascetics, and disputing patriarchs. Although plenty of work has pointed to specific hagiographic tropes within the VC, no study of the text has thus far sought to integrate its more overall structure within contemporary ninth-century Byzantine hagiography.²⁰³ This has permitted scholars to maintain that the text is in some sense unique in its Slavonic purpose, quite unlike Byzantine hagiographies which, in their least charitable reading, 'are nothing but a sequence of topical places, miracles, visions, supernatural phenomena, and interventions,

²⁰¹ Ibid. p.299. Compare with: VC, 14.1-5.

²⁰² See: Chapter 2.VI.1.

²⁰³ E.g. Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.56-65; V. Vulchanov, 'The Conversion of the Saint – a Traditional Hagiographic Element in the Structure of the Life of Saint Constantine-Cyril', *Kirilo-Metodievski Studii*, 17 (2007), pp.148-52; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.54; M. van Esbroeck, 'Le substrat hagiographique de la mission khazare de Constantin-Cyrille', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 104 (1986), esp. pp.347-8.

which are usually arranged behind one another without any concept or focus.²⁰⁴ After identifying this generic structure, I move to study a group of Byzantine texts of various genres, loosely under the umbrella of the ‘Anti-Photian dossier’, which form the discursive milieu within which the VC is best positioned.

1.VI.1 The *Life of Cyril* as Byzantine Hagiography

Both to acquire his learning and to use it in argument, Cyril travels great distances. His journeys start in Thessaloniki, and move through to Constantinople, the Caliphate, Mount Olympus, the Crimea and Khazaria, Moravia, Venice and Rome. These two phenomena, travel, and a concern with education and disputation, occur frequently enough in ninth-century Byzantine hagiography, but do not, to my knowledge, elsewhere occur together.

There is a significant body of ninth-century hagiography concerned with saints who travel, and many of them visit places also visited by Cyril. The *Life of Gregory of Dekapolis* (ca.797-840/1) (BHG 711), written by Ignatios the Deacon at around 843, offers an account of his divinely inspired travels to Ephesus, Ainos, Christoupolis, Thessaloniki, Corinth, Sicily, Rome, Syracuse and, via Thessaloniki once again, to Constantinople and Mount Olympus.²⁰⁵ The ninth-century *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer* (ca.812/3-886) (BHG 944), Gregory’s spiritual son, was written by Joseph’s successor Theophanes and recounts that Joseph was born in Sicily, raised in the Peloponnese, fled to Thessaloniki, then went to Constantinople, was sent on mission to Rome by Gregory, and was exiled in the Crimea.²⁰⁶ The life of *Euthymios the Younger* of Thessaloniki (ca.823-898) (BHG 655) records that he was born in Galatia, but travelled a number of times between Athos, Mount Olympus, Thessaloniki and to the islands of Neoi and eventually Hera.²⁰⁷ A shorter journey is recorded in the *Life of Peter Bishop of Argos* (ca.850-920) (BHG 1504) who travels from Constantinople to the Peloponnese, Corinth and eventually Argos.²⁰⁸ And finally,

²⁰⁴ ‘nejsou ničím jiným než sledem topických míst, zážraků, vizí, nadpřirozených úkazů a zásahů, které jsou většinou bez nějaké koncepce a ideového zaměření seřazené za sebou’, Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.65.

²⁰⁵ Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Gregory of Dekapolis*, in *Ignatios Diakonos und die Vita des Hl. Gregorios Dekapolites*, ed. G. Makris (Stuttgart, 1997), pp.56-152; C. Mango, ‘On Re-reading the Life of St Gregory the Dekapolite’, *Byzantina*, 13 (1985), p.635.

²⁰⁶ *The Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, in *Sbornik grecheskih i latinskih pamiatnikov, kasaiushtihsia Fotiia patriarha*, ed. A. Papadoupoulos-Keramenus, (St Petersburg, 1901), pp.1-14; D. Stiernon, ‘La vie et l’œuvre de S. Joseph l’Hymnographe. A propos d’une publication récente’, *Revue des études Byzantines*, 31 (1973), pp.244-52.

²⁰⁷ *The Life of Euthymios the Younger*, in L. Petit, ‘Vie et Office de Saint Euthyme le Jeune’, *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, 8 (1903), pp.168-205; *The Life of Euthymios the Younger*, trans. A.-M Talbot, in A.-M. Talbot, R. Greenfield, eds., *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Washington, DC. 2016), pp.1-165. D. Papachryssanthou, ‘La Vie de saint Euthyme le Jeune et la métropole de Thessalonique à la fin du IXe et au début du Xe siècle’, *Revue des études Byzantines*, 34 (1974), pp.241-2.

²⁰⁸ Theodore of Nicea, *The Life of Peter of Argos*, eds., trans. A. Kaldellis, I. Polemis, in *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece* (Washington, DC., 2019), pp.117-62. I am profoundly grateful to Prof Antony Kaldellis and the

Epiphaneios' attempt to avoid communion with iconoclasts by following in the footsteps of the Apostle Andrew offers a journey around the Black Sea through Heraclea, Sinope, Trebizond and Sebastopolis amongst others, before arriving in the Crimea.²⁰⁹ It is not clear whether Epiphaneios actually went to Kherson, but he does refer to its people as having 'wavered in their faith', perhaps a reference to iconoclasm.²¹⁰

It seems, therefore, that Thessaloniki, Mount Olympus, Rome, and the Crimea, in particular, served as nodal points for the travelling holy man in the ninth century and - Peter, Bishop of Argos aside - this holy man was usually a monk or ascetic. Travel to the Arab world, on the other hand, especially Baghdad, served as a nodal point for Byzantine scholars of the same period.²¹¹ The locations Cyril is represented as visiting alone demonstrate the fusion, in the VC, of ascetic Orthodox practice with Hellenic learning.

None of the aforementioned texts, however, pay particular attention to their saint's learning, or accounts of any disputations of comparable length. In this, the VC stands apart. But it does find parallels in a number of Byzantine patriarchal saints' lives. The combination of these two hagiographical motifs – travelling ascetic, and educated rhetor, frame the VC's case for Hellenic and other outside knowledge, and its usefulness in missionary activity.

The paradigmatic example of an educated, disputing saint is found in the *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros* (ca.750-825) (henceforth VN), written also by Ignatios the Deacon.²¹² In her introduction to the translation of the text, E. Fisher describes Nikephoros as 'by no means the typical Byzantine holy man who attained sanctity by enduring great physical privations, performing notable miracles, or suffering painful martyrdom,' but rather one whose 'feats of Christian achievement were intellectual' in nature.²¹³ This sounds rather familiar. So too does the defence of Hellenic learning in the text. The account of Nikephoros' education in rhetoric and philosophy is much more elaborate than what we find in the VC. But much like the VC, which draws its definition of philosophy from a logic textbook, the VN's section

series editor Dr Alice Mary-Talbot for granting me access to proofs of this book prior to publication. A. Vasiliev, 'The "Life" of St. Peter of Argos and its Historical Significance', *Traditio*, 5 (1947) pp.163–90.

²⁰⁹ For a full list of the places he visits see: C. Mango, 'A Journey Around the Coast of the Black Sea in the Ninth Century', *Palaeoslavica*, 10 (2002) pp.255-64; *The Life of Apostle Andrew*, in: *Grecheskie predaniia o apostole Andre*, vol.1: *Zhitiia*, ed. A. Vinogradov, (St Petersburg, 2005).

²¹⁰ Mango, 'A Journey', p.263.

²¹¹ Magdalino, 'The Road to Baghdad', pp.195-213.

²¹² Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, in C. de Boor ed., *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, (Leipzig, 1880); Ignatios the Deacon, 'The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople', trans. E. A. Fisher, in Talbot ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, pp.25-142.

²¹³ E. Fisher, 'Introduction' to Ignatios, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, in Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, p.34.

on the education of Nikephoros copies over a page of text from a textbook on syllogisms.²¹⁴ Such learning once again needs to be justified.

‘[...] πρὸς γὰρ τῇ τῶν θείων λογίων μελέτῃ καὶ τὴν τῆς θύραθεν [παιδείας] εἰσεποιήσατο μέθεξιν· τῇ μὲν τὸ ἐν διδασκαίᾳ καταπλουτίσαι θέλων πειθήνιον, τῇ δὲ τὸ τῆς πλάνης διελέγχειν ἀπίθανον’²¹⁵

‘[...] and in addition to study of the divine scriptures, he also acquired familiarity with secular [rhetorical education] partly out of a desire to enhance the persuasive [quality] of his [own] teaching and partly out of a desire to expose the implausibility of [heretical] error’²¹⁶

This sentiment is shared in the VC: learning rhetorical arts, or ‘outside knowledge’ (‘τὴν τῆς θύραθεν <παιδείας>’) gives form and structure to pious content. The VC is never as eloquent nor as explicit in this matter. It shows rather than tells. But both *lives* offer a staged rhetorical disputation. Nikephoros performs a dispute with the emperor at his court, against iconoclasm. The emperor convenes this, giving the following reason:

‘[...] τοῖς οὖν περὶ τούτων διαμφιβάλλουσι πάσης ἄτερ ἀναβολῆς ὑμᾶς διαλεχθῆναι προτρέπομεν, καὶ πείσειν ἢ πεισθῆναι κεκρίκαμεν, ὥς ἂν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ δικαίως ἐγνωκότερος λεγόμενα μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου γενοίμεθα καὶ τούτῳ τὴν ῥοπὴν χαρισάμεθα’²¹⁷

‘[...] therefore, we urge you to engage without any delay in discussion with those who have doubts concerning these matters, and we have decided that [you] shall convince [them] or be convinced [by them], so that we who have come to understand what is justly expressed might stand [together] with justice and weigh out our judgements in its favour’²¹⁸

The *VN*’s dispute mirrors the Khazar Khagan’s choice to convene Cyril, Jewish and Muslims scholars at his court.²¹⁹ Both fundamentally believe that disputation is a reliable method of achieving a correct judgement on faith.²²⁰

²¹⁴ See: O. Goncharko, D.N. Goncharko, ‘A Byzantine Logician’s “Image” within the Second Iconoclastic Controversy. Nikephoros of Constantinople’, *Scrinium*, 13 (2017), pp.291-308.

²¹⁵ Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, 149.5-8.

²¹⁶ Ibid., trans. Fisher.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 170.9-12.

²¹⁸ Ibid., trans. Fisher.

²¹⁹ VC, 8.1-5.

²²⁰ The Khazar Khagan explicitly says to the emperor, that ‘if [your messenger] refutes the Jews and Saracens, then we will receive your faith’, ‘**ДА АЩЕ ПРЪПРНТЬ КЪРКЕ Н СРАЦННЫ, ТО ПО ВАШѢ СЕ ВЪРѢМЪ**’, Ibid. 8.5.

As noted above, the author of the *VC* lacks the eloquence and sophistication of Ignatios. The rendering of Cyril's short debate with the iconoclast patriarch shows no textual connection with that of Ignatios.²²¹ But in a sense this is even more useful, as it demonstrates the dissemination of such positions on Hellenic and other outside learning in the ninth century. Nikephoros and Cyril are not so much 'unusual' as they are consecutive. In a post-iconoclast Byzantine intellectual sphere, heretical beliefs and heathens were no longer debated with from within as in the *VN*. Iconoclasm and the patriarch John VII are quite marginal in the *VC*'s narrative. Rather, heathens had to be sought out from beyond the imperial borders. It is precisely due to the 'outside' nature of the peoples therefore, that 'outside' education is even more essential. The travelling, disputing saint is the natural conclusion to the successful disputing saint at home.

1.VI.2 The Case Against 'Outside Education'

The *VC*'s argument for the use of 'outside' education in missionary activity, which fuses these two types of Byzantine saint, is not made on the offensive. The text does not formulate a position against the ascetic, static, holy man educated only in scripture and contained within the cloisters of monastic life. Rather, as this chapter has demonstrated, the *VC* goes to some lengths to dissolve the tension between the so-called 'monkish ascetic' and 'Christian philosopher' of Ševčenko. However, it is clear that in ninth- and tenth-century Byzantium, there was a fully articulated position *against* the mixing of Hellenic education with Orthodox piety, and *for* ascetic monastic life.

This position was by no means new. Tension between outside knowledge and piety dates to the very beginnings of Christianity.²²² However in the ninth century this position emerged most clearly and in most extreme terms from the so-called 'Anti-Photian' dossier, and it has been the reason for the supposition, in modern historiography, that monastic piety and classical learning are broadly incompatible.²²³ In the texts which make up what scholars have come to call a 'dossier', these two positions are not simply formulated as abstract ideologies however, but remain inseparable from the characters who embody them – namely, Patriarch Ignatios and Patriarch Photios. These texts compiled by various followers of patriarch Ignatios seek to defame Photios both for his uncanonical ordination, and for his general unsuitability for the post. Patriarch Ignatios clashed with regent Caesar Bardas and was deposed in 858, which resulted in Photios' snap elevation from a layman to the highest ecclesiastical rank

²²¹ Compare: *VC*, 5.1-24, with Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, trans. Fisher, pp.81-106.

²²² For the attempt to replace outside knowledge with divine simplicity to maintain social and religious order, see: Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity*, esp. pp.123-158.

²²³ See the language of both: Ševčenko, 'The Definition of Philosophy', p.93-4; A. Kaldellis, 'Byzantine Philosophy Inside and Out: Orthodoxy and Dissidence in Counterpoint', in K. Ierodiakonou, *et al* eds., *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens, 2012), pp.129-151.

in just a week.²²⁴ This was considered uncanonical by Ignatian followers who appealed to the papacy, and found a willing supporter in Pope Nicholas I, who was eager to assert the influence of the papacy into Constantinopolitan affairs.²²⁵ In 867, however, Bardas was murdered, and the new emperor, Basil, removed Photios from office, reinstating Ignatios. A council followed in 869-70 which restored the unity of the two churches and condemned Photios.²²⁶ After Ignatios' death in 877, Photios was reinstated until his death (886) and the council of 869-70 was delegitimised. Nonetheless, the majority of the Anti-Photian dossier survives in later ninth- and early tenth-century sources suggesting that opposition to Photios did not disappear.

In what follows, I reveal what I argue to be the two main characteristics of the argument proposed by the Anti-Photian texts: firstly, the separation of an education in grammar, rhetoric and philosophy into 'outside' knowledge, to be distinguished from scriptural learning; and secondly, the association of such knowledge with deception, the obscuring of signs, and access to inaccessible information which is either 'forged', or meaningless. I then position the argument of the VC against the two principal elements of the anti-Photian position.

The most explicit articulation of the case against 'outside' knowledge is found in the *Life of Patriarch Ignatios* (BHG, 817) (henceforth, VI), written by Niketas the Paphlagonian.²²⁷ Although the text was most probably compiled in the early tenth century, there is no reason to assume that its arguments are original, or unique to the early tenth century and absent from the ninth. As Martha Vinson notes, the VI presents Photios and Ignatios as two 'polarized and polarizing symbols of their age.'²²⁸ Vinson insists that albeit rhetorically constructed, these two symbols are 'useful in revealing the issues and tensions that were perceived to be at the forefront of contemporary concern.'²²⁹ That which separated Photios and Ignatios more than dynasty, religious experience, gender or piety, 'was the issue of education'.²³⁰

²²⁴ For a detailed narrative account of these events see: Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross*, Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*.

²²⁵ The objections of the Ignatians can be seen for example in the 'anti-Photian' synopses of the ecumenical councils: *The Synodicon Vetus*, eds., trans. J. Duffy, J. Parker (Washington, DC., 1979). For a discussion of the arguments used by Nicholas and their often-forged sources, see: E. Chrysos, 'Rome and Constantinople in Confrontation: the Quarrel over the Validity of Photius' Ordination', in D. Siootjes, *et al* eds., *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean: History and Heritage* (Leiden, 2019), pp.24-46. For Photios' own defence, see his letter of 860 to Pope Nicholas I: Photios, *Letters*, 290, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, eds. B. Laourdas, L.G. Westerink, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), 290.1-140; pp.123-138.

²²⁶ The proceedings of the Fourth Council of Constantinople only survive in Latin fragments. See: H. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis, MO, 1937). pp.157-176.

²²⁷ Nicetas David, *The Life of Patriarch Ignatius*, ed., trans. A. Smithies, (Washington, DC., 2013).

²²⁸ Vinson. 'Rhetoric and Writing Strategies', p.11.

²²⁹ *Ibid*.

²³⁰ *Ibid*.

It is useful to compare the description of the education of Photios and Ignatios with that of Cyril and Nikephoros. The ‘synkrisis’, or comparison between Photios and Ignatios, offers an irreconcilable binary between two sorts of knowledge.

‘[...] περιφανῶν σοφία τε κοσμικῇ καὶ συνέσει τῶν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ στρεφομένων εὐδοκιμώτατος πάντων ἐνομίζετο. Γραμματικῆς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποιήσεως ῥητορικῆς τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας ναὶ δὴ καὶ ἱατρικῆς καὶ πάσης ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ τὸ περιὸν ὥς μὴ μόνον σχεδὸν φάναι τῶν κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ γενεὰν πάντων διενεγκεῖν, ἤδη δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς παλαιούς αὐτὸν διαμιλλᾶσθαι.’²³¹

‘[...] [Photios] was considered to have the best reputation of anyone in worldly wisdom and political acumen. In fact, so great was his mastery of literary criticism (‘grammatikē’), poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, even medicine, and almost every kind of knowledge in the secular realm (‘epistēmēs tōn thyrathen’) that he not only surpassed all his own generation, but, one might almost say, he even rivalled the ancients.’²³²

In contrast with Photios’ grammatical, rhetorical and philosophical education, Ignatios has no knowledge of what Smithies translates as the ‘secular realm’ (‘ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν’), but literally means knowledge of ‘outside affairs’, the very same ‘outside’ (‘θύραθεν’) which the VN defends.²³³

‘ὁ καὶ Ἰγνάτιος οἷά τις εὐγενέστατος ὄρπηξ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ φυτευθεὶς καὶ ἐν ταῖς αὐλαῖς τῆς μοναδικῆς πολιτείας ἐξηνηκῶς [...] καὶ πᾶσαν μὲν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην, πᾶσαν δὲ Νέαν ἐκμελετῶν, πᾶσι δὲ λόγοις τῶν ἱερῶν Πατέρων φιλοπόνως ἐσχολακῶς καὶ τούτων τὴν τε πρᾶξιν μιμούμενος καὶ τὴν θεωρίαν ἀναλεγόμενος’²³⁴

‘Ignatios like a noble sapling planted in the House of the Lord and brought to full bloom amid the cloisters of monastic life [...] by closely studying the whole of both the Old and the New Testaments, by devoting himself zealously to all the writings of the Holy Fathers, imitating their actions and taking up their spiritual contemplations’²³⁵

Ignatios comes to full bloom *inside* the cloisters not engaging with ‘outside knowledge’. Such knowledge, as represented by Photios’ worldly wisdom (‘τῇ κοσμικῇ σοφίᾳ’) is definitively ‘not in accordance with

²³¹ Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 21.30-5.

²³² Ibid., trans. Smithies.

²³³ Ignatios, *Life of Patriarch Nikephoros*, 149.5-8.

²³⁴ Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 9.7-16.

²³⁵ Ibid., trans. Smithies

Christ's precepts.²³⁶ The absolute juxtaposition to the outside and inside occurs again, when Niketas reproaches Photios directly, asking if it was 'the Old and New Testament' or the 'advice of pagan sages' ('αἱ τῶν ἑξωθεν σοφῶν γνῶμαι' literally, the knowledge of 'outside wisdoms') that incited him to persecute Ignatios.²³⁷

This fully articulated position against 'outside' education in clear opposition to scriptural learning, also reveals the second major attribute associated with learned rhetors: that those with 'outside' knowledge use this knowledge to obscure rather than to reveal truth. The assumption exposed is that there is no hidden Christian truth to be revealed through grammatical or rhetorical education. The *VI* notes that Theophanes, later bishop of Caesarea, deposited a forged book in the imperial library and then showed it to the emperor, Basil. He insisted that 'no-one other than Photios could decipher this book' ('οὐδ' ἄλλος τις, φησὶν, ἀνθρώπων ἢ Φώτιος τοῦτο διαγνῶναι δύναται' ἄν').²³⁸ The emperor calls on Photios, who in turn reveals its secrets, and their friendship is resumed henceforth.

This story reveals the belief, in Middle Byzantium, that access to particular kinds of 'outside' education can give access to obscured information, which is hard to access as a result of being in another language or using non-linguistic symbols. But the *VI* seeks to challenge this common-sense: the book was forged, and all knowledge learned men like Photios claim to reveal is fraudulent. 'Outside' knowledge does not and cannot reveal any new truth.

The same distinction between inside and out, and association between outside knowledge and deception is evident in the ninth century. In his letter to Pope Hadrian II, dated to 869/70, concerned with the proceedings of the council at Constantinople, Anastasius the Librarian offers a fascinating story about the recently anathemised Photios and Constantine-Cyril.²³⁹ The story, which he must have heard in Constantinople, clearly emerges from the temporarily victorious anti-Photian milieu. Anastasius notes that Photios is said to be teaching his students that man has two souls.²⁴⁰ Once again, outside knowledge is used to mislead and misinform. He is asked why he would do such a thing by Constantine, a 'man of great sanctity and a strong friend of his' ('magnae sanctitatis viro fortissimo eius amico').²⁴¹ Photios' response is as follows:

²³⁶ Ibid., 21.34.

²³⁷ Ibid. 48.9. Inside and outside knowledge as categories recur in Byzantine disputes about philosophy see for instance the letters of Psellos: A. Kaldellis, I. Polemis, *Psellos and the Patriarchs: Letters and Funeral Orations for Keroullarios, Leichoudes, and Xiphilinos* (South Bend, IN, 2015).

²³⁸ Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius*, 90.9-10.

²³⁹ Anastasius the Librarian, *Letters*, 5, pp.407-415.

²⁴⁰ 'Photios duarum unumquunque hominem animarum consistere praedicabat', Ibid., p.407.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

“Non studio quenquam laedendi talia” inquit “dicta proposui, sed probandi, quid patriarcha Ignatius ageret, si suo tempore quaelibet heresis per syllogismos philosophorum exorta patesceret, qui scilicet viros exterioris sapientiae reppulisset”²⁴²

“I didn't propose such things with the desire to hurt someone”, he said “but to test what patriarch Ignatius would do, if in his time some heresy would arise and circulate from the syllogisms of the philosophers, the very man who undoubtedly pushed away the men of exterior wisdom.”

The purpose of Photios' misinformation, or dangerous obscuring of the truth, is petty and personal: to challenge Ignatios. This challenge relies on the same distinctions made in the *VI*, between ‘outside knowledge’ and Photios, on the one hand, and Ignatios, as its antithesis or the one who ‘pushed away the men of exterior wisdom’ on the other. The phrase ‘exterior wisdom’ (‘exterioris sapientiae’) clearly comes directly from the kinds of phrases we see in the *VI*, ‘worldly wisdom’ (‘τῇ κοσμικῇ σοφίᾳ’) or ‘outside knowledge’ (‘ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν’). The story in Athanasius' letter concludes with Constantine reproaching Photios for his greed and jealousy.²⁴³

The purpose of this tale in Anastasius' letter is clearly to distance Cyril, presumably already buried in Rome at the time of writing, from the denounced patriarch and thus secure the legitimacy of the relics he brought to Rome. But what the letter reveals is the striking consistency of the discourse concerning Photios which was circulating in Constantinople in the ninth-to-tenth centuries, and within this discourse, of the ideological positions on education and the attributes associated with ‘outside’ knowledge. This consistency is further illuminated by the appearance of the same accusation that Photios was preaching that man has two souls found in the *Chronographia* of Pseudo-Symeon, a tenth-century chronicle which clearly incorporates a ninth-century anti-Photian text within its narrative.²⁴⁴

‘Ἐν μιᾷ νυκτὶ συνέβη γενέσθαι σεισμοὶ μεγάλοι· καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Φώτιος ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἁμβωνος δημηγορῆσαι εἶπεν ὅτι οἱ σεισμοὶ οὐκ ἐκ πλήθους ἁμαρτιῶν ἀλλ’ ἐκ πλησμονῆς ὕδατος γίνονται, καὶ ἕκαστος ἄνθρωπος δύο ψυχὰς ἔχει, καὶ ἡ μὲν μία ἁμαρτάνει, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει’²⁴⁵

‘And in one night there came to be great earthquakes, and this Photios went up onto the ambo to preach, and said that the earthquakes were not due to the multitudes of [our] sins, but that they had happened because of the overaccumulation of water, and that each man has two souls, one which sins, and the other which does not.’

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ ‘Pseudo-Symeon Magistros’, in A. Kazhdan ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991).

²⁴⁵ Pseudo-Symeon Magister, *Chronicle*, in *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker, (Bonn, 1838), 673.9-13.

The story told here differs in its specifics from that of Anastasius, making clear that Anastasius' insertion of Cyril to try to distance him from Photios was probably original. This re-framed story, about an earthquake reveals the same basic tenets, however. Outside knowledge is once again placed in opposition to divine revelation. Photios offers a scientific explanation of an earthquake, rather than a theological one. The number of souls is only a secondary concern here. And rather than Cyril, it is the emperor himself who calls Photios to reproach him.

‘καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς γελάσας εἶπεν “οὕτως δογματίζει ὁ Χαζαροπρόσωπος;” προσκαλεῖται οὖν εὐθὺς τὸν πατριάρχην, καὶ πυνθάνεται ὡς δῆθεν θυμούμενος “οὕτως δογματίζεις, ὃ μαρζούκα, δύο τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἔχειν ψυχάς;”’²⁴⁶

‘And the emperor, having laughed said: “Is it thus that the Khazar-face preaches?”, and he immediately called upon the patriarch and asked him, since he was truly angry: “Is it thus that you preach, o ‘marzouka’, that man has two souls?”’

Rather than an assault on Ignatios, as in the Anastasius' letter, Photios' justification for this preaching is pure distraction and deception. He ‘treacherously’ persuades Michael that he was ‘speaking about other matters, and not thus.’²⁴⁷ Like Emperor Basil with the forged book in the VI, Michael seems temporarily persuaded. But then the previously unmentioned, Gregory, bishop of Syracuse, asks ‘that man’ (‘τούτῳ’) what the word ‘marzouka’ means.

Scholarship has taken the man who is asked and who answers the question with a bizarre etymology of the word ‘marzouka’ to be the emperor, Michael.²⁴⁸ But in the context of the anti-Photian materials discussed here, and in particular their preoccupation with deciphering the obscure, I argue ‘that man’ (‘τούτῳ’) to whom the question is asked is Photios. The question is a challenge, to Photios, to decipher a foreign word, through attempting to understand its etymology. The grammar also permits this.

In the text, the emperor first asks the Photios whether he truly preaches that man has two souls. The patriarch's treacherous response opens with a grammatical change of subject clearly indicated with a ‘but he’ (‘ὁ δέ’). It is immediately after the patriarch's response that the following text occurs:

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 673.18-22.

²⁴⁷ ‘δολερῶς’, ‘ὡς περὶ ἄλλων ὑποθέσεων εἰπεῖν, οὐχὶ δὲ οὕτως.’, *ibid.*, 673-4.1-2.

²⁴⁸ Shepard, ‘Photios’ Sermons on the Rus Attack’, pp.113-4; J. Gouillard, ‘Le Photios du Pseudo-Syméon magistros. Les sous-entendus d’un pamphlet’, *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, 9 (1971), pp.398-9.

‘τούτω Γρηγόριος ὁ Συρακούσης ἠρώτησε “τί τὸ μαρζούκας σημαίνει;” ὁ δὲ εἶπεν “τὸ μάρ κύων, τὸ ζού σῦρε, τὸ κάς κάσσυμα· τουτέστι κύων ἔλκων δέρμα.”’²⁴⁹

‘Gregory of Syracuse asked this man: ‘What does ‘marzoukas’ mean?’, and he replied ‘The ‘mar’ [means] dog, the ‘zou’ [means] skin and the ‘kas’ [means] dragging, therefore this is: a dog dragging [its] skin’

It seems most likely that the ‘and he’ (‘ὁ δὲ’) of this question is the very same ‘and he’ (‘ὁ δὲ’), who answered the previous question, namely Photios. Given that this is an interrogation of Photios for his unorthodox beliefs, a dialogue of clarification between the two interrogators seems unnecessary. Rather, the joke is on Photios for trying to decipher a clearly foreign word through Greek etymological parts.

The VI made the point that ‘outside knowledge’ cannot reveal truth by stressing that the book was forged. In this tale, the same point is stressed by challenging Photios to decipher something which is actually not decipherable with his grammatical skills. The etymology Photios derives is embarrassing. The phrase which roughly translates to a ‘dog dragging its skin’ may have sexual connotations, as one of the specific meanings of ‘κύων’ is foreskin, or it may allude to an ancient proverb, literally ‘to skin a skinned dog’ (‘κύνα δέρειν δεδαρμένην’), meaning ‘to flog a dead horse.’²⁵⁰

The actual word ‘marzoukas’ is elsewhere unattested in Greek, and Jonathan Shepard has suggested it is a personal name, that has connotations of foreign-ness, and particularly with the people of the Eurasian steppe.²⁵¹ As such, that its purpose is to stress the other-ness implied by ‘Khazar-face’, which may be a comment on Photios’ family background.²⁵² However, if as I propose, the purpose of asking Photios the meaning of the word is to demonstrate his knowledge and etymological deductions have no value, then it may be the case that the word itself does have real meaning which is intentionally being obscured.

It is unsurprising therefore that the word ‘marzoukas’ does very closely resemble an actual word in Arabic, derived from the verb ‘razaqa’ (‘رزق’) meaning to provide someone with the means of subsistence or spiritual possessions, an act often associated with God.²⁵³ The noun, ‘marzūq’ (‘مرزوق’), is the passive participle form of ‘razaqa’ and means someone ‘blessed (by God), fortunate, prosperous or

²⁴⁹ Pseudo-Symeon, *Chronicle*, 674.2-4.

²⁵⁰ I am grateful to Professor Marc Lauxtermann for this suggestion. His proposed translation for the phrase was ‘flogging the dolphin.’

²⁵¹ Shepard, ‘Photios’ Sermons’, pp.113-4.

²⁵² Ibid, p.115.

²⁵³ J. Cowan, *et al* eds., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Urbana, 1994), p.336. I am grateful to Dr Phil Booth for pointing me in this direction.

successful'.²⁵⁴ The emperor is othering Photios, by calling him blessed in a language associated with a competing religion and polity. More specifically, it may be an attempt to associate Photios' heretical teaching with his interaction with non-Christian peoples, by using an Arabic word, and thus perhaps alluding to Photios' embassy to the middle east.²⁵⁵ But even if the real meaning of the word was not necessarily known to Byzantine readers, the text makes clear that Photios, using to his training in 'outside knowledge', can only deduce nonsense from a symbol endowed with real meaning.

In short, a position against 'outside knowledge' can be solidified across a range of texts and cannot be separated in them from the figures of Photios and Ignatios. This position has two major attributes, the first the incompatibility and distinctness of 'outside knowledge' and of scriptural learning. The second, is the association of 'outside knowledge' with deception and obfuscation, and therefore the belief that such knowledge cannot reveal any meaningful hidden truth. A third and smaller point, only evident in pseudo-Symeon, is the potential connection between distorted dogma and the Caucasus (as the emperor calls Photios 'Khazar-face') and the Caliphate (given the Arabic source for 'marzoukas'). The implication is that contact with foreign peoples can lead to using one's knowledge to mislead. The attributes of this position have clear consequences for missionary activity. Focusing on learning within the cloisters of the monastery, eliminates the possibility of looking outwards. As Cyril Mango has noted, the *VI*, the most elaborate articulation of this position, has very little to say about Ignatios' actual achievements – there is no iconoclast that Ignatios persuades, as Nikephoros does, and no pagan or heathen that he converts.²⁵⁶ Thus, suspicion hangs over both 'outside knowledge', and outside peoples.

This is the debate in ninth-century Byzantine discourse with which the *VC* engages. It does so neither by attacking asceticism nor by an outright defence of Hellenism. Rather it does so by seeking to reinterpret the categories of analysis.

First and foremost, as I have argued throughout, the *VC* much like the *VN* does not accept the charge that 'outside knowledge' is incompatible with the learning of a monastic ascetic. The representation of Cyril's education ensures that divine revelation and scriptural study go hand in hand with the uses of grammatical education. In the *VC*, 'outside knowledge' is used to organise and structure scriptural knowledge, and to deduce Christian truths, logically, from Old Testament.

Secondly, the *VC* also engages with the idea of inaccessible knowledge, which requires specific skills in order to be deciphered. The statement in the *VI* that 'no-one other than Photios could decipher this book'

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p.337.

²⁵⁵ Mentioned in the preface of the *Bibliotheca*, see: N. Wilson, *Photios: the Bibliotheca* (Bristol, 2013), pp.25-6.

²⁵⁶ C. Mango, 'The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios' in A. Bryer, *et al* eds., *Iconoclasm* (Aldershot, 1977), p.139.

is echoed by the VC's encounter between Cyril and the Chalice of Solomon, 'which [letters on the chalice], no one was able to read or understand.'²⁵⁷ Cyril deciphers this chalice text because, the VC claims, it was in Hebrew and Samaritan letters. As noted above, in reality the chalice text was clearly already circulating in Greek.²⁵⁸ This insistence on Hebrew and Samaritan, is an original addition by the VC to refer back to Cyril's acts of learning. As discussed above, Cyril acquired the ability to read Hebrew and Samaritan books through the harmony between grammatical education and divine intervention. Thanks to this harmony, Cyril was able to decipher the chalice. Rather than a forged text, or a misdirected etymology, the information concealed in Hebrew and Samaritan is a 'prophecy about Christ' ('**сѣ нсѣ пророуѣство о христѣ**'), described by Ševčenko as a 'cramming of all the main events in Christ's life into a slightly enlarged text of the inscription.'²⁵⁹

The story of the chalice does not simply stand as 'proof of Constantine's superior intellectual powers' therefore.²⁶⁰ The case it is making is more subtle. What it suggests, rather, is that there are legitimate, orthodox, truths which lay obscured and inaccessible to those without the appropriate education to decipher them. Where the case against outside education showed Photios unable to deduce the meaning of the word 'marzoukas' through Greek etymology, the VC shows to the contrary that Cyril is able to use the eight parts of Greek grammar and to compare vowels and consonants, to attain understanding of Hebrew and Samaritan books. From this, he is then able to decipher a prophecy about Christ.

Thirdly, the VC somewhat rehabilitates the Crimea and the Caucasus. Cyril successfully converts all those who threaten to attack him, including the local Khazar leader ('voivoda'), and the group of Hungarians. He corrects the faith of those who have gone astray, like the Ful tribe. He discovers holy relics, performs two miracles and secures the promise of conversion from the ruler of the Khazars.

The Crimea and the Caucasus are lands of biblical peoples and miracles rather than exile, and lands of possibility rather than heresy. This was already possible in Byzantine discourse. In the *Life of Stephen the Younger* (early ninth century), the author seeks to legitimise the return of iconophile exiles to Constantinople, by representing outposts of exile, including Kherson, as strongholds of orthodoxy during the conflict.²⁶¹ But rather than engaging with iconoclasm, or simply accepting the unorthodox

²⁵⁷ 'НХ'ЖЕ НЕ МОЖАШЕ НИКТОЖЕ НИ ПРОУНСТН НИ СКАЗАТИ', VC, 13.3.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.; Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', p.1812.

²⁵⁹ VC, 13.10; Ševčenko, 'The Greek Source of the Inscription', p.1815.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.1816.

²⁶¹ N. Evans, *Mountains, Steppes and Empires: Approaches to the North Caucasus in the Early Middle Ages* (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2016), p.185; Stephen the Deacon, *The Life of Stephen the Younger*, in *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre*, ed., trans. M.-F. Auzépy (Aldershot, 1997), pp.85-276; M.-F. Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie et l'iconoclisme byzantine: le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune* (Birmingham, 1999), p.125.

connotations of a region, as found in Pseudo-Symeon, the VC argues for possibilities in the Crimea and the Caucasus through missionary activity.

In short, whilst it is possible to trace the outlines of the anti-Photian position in the VC, it is clear that the premises which form this position are re-interpreted in the text. Learning and its relationship to piety was contested and malleable, not reducible to two binary Photian and anti-Photian intellectual positions. The flexibility of ‘outside learning’ as a symbol, shown in the VC, can also be glimpsed in some of the lesser hagiographies of the ninth century, which are not explicitly engaged with the Photian schism.

The *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, which recalls the saint’s exile to the Crimea under Bardas (and therefore probably due to his Ignatian sympathies), recalls the transition between patriarchs as follows.

‘Ἰγνατίου δηλαδή τοῦ θείου ἀρχιερέως ὁσῶς πατριαρχοῦντος καὶ τὸν θρονόν τῆς βασιλείδος μεγαλόπολεως εὐσεβῶς οἰακίζοντος. οὗ μετὰ τὴν πρὸς κύριον ἐκδημίαν καὶ Φώτιος ὁ αἰμῖνησαντος πατριάρχης, τὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀναδεδεγμένος πηδάλιον, τὸν αὐτὸν μακαρίτην Ἰωσήφῳ ἐστεργέ τε καὶ ἐξεθείαζε καὶ τῶν ἐκείνου καλῶν ἐπαινέτης καθίστατο τῶν ἄλλων ὑψηλότερόν τε εἶναι καὶ ὑπερκεείμενον · ὃς τῷ σοφῷ πλουτῶν τὴν ἀγιότητα καὶ ἀρετὴν ἤδη κρίνειν καὶ βίον δοκιμάζειν ὑπὲρ ἅπαντας ἀσφαλέστερον’²⁶²

‘In that time Ignatios the divine arch-priest held the patriarch’s office in a godly manner and adorned piously the [patriarchal] throne of the great imperial city. But after Ignatios’ departure to the Lord, also Photios the patriarch of eternal memory, when he was elected to the helm of the church, both felt much affection for the same Joseph of blessed memory, and extolled him, and became the proclaimer of Joseph’s virtues, and [regarded him] as both higher than the others and above the rest. [Photios] being rich in wisdom, knew [how] to judge holiness and virtue most accurately and how to assess one’s way of life more reliably than anybody else.’

Within their positive epithets one still finds glimpses of the differences that the anti-Photian dossier makes so extreme. Ignatios holds the patriarchal throne in a ‘holy’ (‘ὁσῶς’) and ‘pious’ (‘εὐσεβῶς’) manner, whilst Photios is rich in ‘wisdom’ (‘τῷ σοφῷ πλουτῶν’). These qualities could easily, as in the VI, be portrayed as contradictory or competing, by simply specifying whether Photios’ wisdom was ‘worldly’ and ‘outside’ or not. Rather than specify this, the text discusses his ability to ‘judge’ (‘κρίνειν’) both ‘holiness’ (‘τὴν ἀγιότητα’) and ‘virtue’ (‘ἀρετὴν’), both piety and the more loosely classical concept of virtue, or valour. When wisdom is undefined therefore no contradiction or competition emerges

²⁶² *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, p.10-1, 12.25-33.

between Ignatios and Photios, or their educational positions. And so it was perfectly possible for authors to refuse to engage with the extreme terms of the anti-Photian case, both here and in the VC.

The same flexibility is seen in the *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, which also recounts the resignation of Ignatios in passing. The author acknowledges that Ignatios, struggled with a ‘terrible sedition by those ruling the empire at the time’ (‘ταύτης ἰθύνας τοὺς οἵακας καὶ δεινῶς ὑπὸ τῶν τότε δυναστευόντων τῇ βασιλείᾳ σκευαζόμενος’), and that he stepped down ‘partly voluntarily and partly coerced’ (‘τὸ μὲν ἐκῶν, τὸ δὲ βιαζόμενος’).²⁶³ But there is no attack on Ignatios himself, nor on Photios who is once again subtly commended for his intellect.

‘Φώτιος γὰρ ἦν ὁ μακάριος, ὁ φωτὸς ἀκτῖσι φερωνύμως τοῦ ὀνόματος πλήθει διδασκαλιῶν καταλάμπας τὰ πέρατα’²⁶⁴

‘That was namely the blessed Photios: the man who illuminated the ends [of the world] with rays of light, after the meaning of his name, by the multitude of his teachings’

Once again, Photios’ multitude of teachings (‘πλήθει διδασκαλιῶν’) are not defined as either ‘outside’ or inside. Thus conflict or tension is avoided. The passage also reveals an association between Photios and ‘the ends [of the world]’ (‘τὰ πέρατα’). This may well be the very same association we find inverted in Pseudo-Symeon, where he is derided for his associations with the Khazar lands, and it is certainly an idea pertinent to the VC, preoccupied as it is with the spreading of Christian argumentation to the Caucasus, Middle East and Latin West.

The component parts of the anti-Photian position were clearly available in the discursive milieu of ninth-century hagiography. Different texts and their authors chose to engage or not engage with these by choosing to define or not to define different kinds of education. The VC goes further than the *Life of Joseph* and the *Life of Euthymios the Younger* by choosing to engage with questions of learning and piety, rather than bypass them through vagueness. It makes evident the possibility of acquiring ‘outside’ knowledge in a pious manner, and to use this outside knowledge to pious ends, whether deciphering a prophesy about Christ, or syllogistically structuring an argument about the Old Testament to embarrass Jewish scholars. The very act of formulating this is a challenge to the anti-Photian position which creates an ‘outside-inside’ boundary and asserts that ‘outside’ knowledge cannot decipher or deduce meaning, without forgery or deception.

²⁶³ *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, 12.18-9, 22.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.31-2.

This challenge is formulated neither through hostile polemic, nor through the persons of Ignatios and Photios. And it goes further than just asserting the utility of ‘outside’ knowledge to Christian understanding. Rather it stresses the significance of action, namely missionary activity, or converting ‘outside’ peoples. This pragmatic objective perhaps explains the decision not to engage with inter-patriarchal conflict, and only mention Photios in passing as a teacher.

1.VI.3 Conclusions

I argue that the portrayal of Cyril in the *VC* as a ‘third way’ candidate, through his carefully crafted learning and education, points to a textual community that was aware of, and engaged with the intellectual debates of the Constantinopolitan court but reluctant to engage in internal, personal conflict. To this outward looking intellectual sphere of classically educated, but clearly self-identifying pious Christians, writing more probably in Rome or less probably in Moravia, inter-personal defamation likely seemed futile, in the grand scheme of Abbasid intellectual competition, and the failure of the conversion of the Khazars signalled in the text. The *VC* is therefore very much an elite text, authored by a person or group with access to the highest levels of Byzantine education, intended for an audience with at the very least some such education, and engaging with an intellectual problem, pertaining to the most hegemonic spaces of Byzantine intellectual activity, namely the Constantinopolitan centre.

The content of the *VC*, as I have proposed it, appears somewhat at odds with the fact the text survives in Slavonic alone, and that there is no Greek-language evidence for a cult of Cyril. There is no entry in the Synaxarion, no surviving life, homily or hymn. This points to some failure, some moment when the connection between this elite Byzantine milieu, in Rome and later Moravia, severed links with the Byzantine intellectual sphere. The *VC* never made it back to Byzantium. Instead, this Byzantine clerical elite responsible for this text settled into a local Moravian diocese, embroiled in local political problems. The *VC* was not fit for purpose in this context, and the legend of Constantine-Cyril was recast to cope with a new set of uniquely Central European, Latinate concerns. This re-framing, as it survives in the *Life of Methodios*, is what I turn to next.

Chapter Two:

Institutionalising Slavonic: *The Life of Methodios*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Life of Methodios* (henceforth, *VM*) has long stood in the shadow of that of his brother Constantine-Cyril. While the thousand-year celebrations since the death of Cyril, which took place 1869, saw a surge in scholarly publications, the same was not true for the anniversary of a thousand years since Methodios' death in 1885.¹ It was not until the 1100-year celebrations in 1985 that Methodios received his own symposium and set of scholarly publications.² Even so, publications concerning Methodios, as a historical figure, or the *VM*, as a text, rarely, if ever, engage with him or it separately from Cyril as a figure, or the *VC* as a text. The reason for this has been the assumption, scholarly and more popular common-sense, that the two brothers are in some sense a unit, with the same goal and the same purpose.³ This purpose, albeit rarely explicitly formulated, is always assumed to be 'enlightening' the Slavs, or more specifically the mission to Moravia. As the preamble of the 1993 constitution of the then newly formed Republic of Slovakia notes: 'we the Slovakian people, bearing in mind the political and cultural legacy of our ancestors [...] mindful of the spiritual bequest of Cyril and Methodius and by the historical legacy of Great Moravia [...] have herewith and through our representatives, adopted this constitution.'⁴ That Cyril and Methodios had one spiritual goal, and therefore have left one 'spiritual bequest', in enlightening the Slavs of Moravia, is intertwined with the very basis upon which the Slovakian people claim a right to national autonomy.

This common-sense which has materialised as a 'figure of memory', in the words of Halbwachs, is regularly reproduced in scholarship, which often refers to the two brothers' agency collectively.⁵ To give but one example: 'the interest of Constantine and Methodius [in a mission to the Slavs] had its deep roots and accompanied Constantine and Methodius from their early childhood to death.'⁶ Note 'the interest' in the singular. The two brothers' unity of purpose is also transferred by scholars onto the two texts, the *VC* and *VM*. In this process, information is often taken uncritically from one text to supplement the other. There is little engagement with the possibility that the two *vitae* may be trying to achieve or argue different things, and might therefore be omitting, including or transforming textual content in accordance with their different purposes. Most commonly, scholars take the *VC* as the base narrative, and while they

¹ I. Rušek, 'Vurkhu deloto na slavianskiiat purvouchitel Metodii', *Kirilo-Methodievi studii*, 17 (2007), p.613.

² For example, see the two-volume international symposium proceedings from Bulgaria: N. Shivarov, *et al* eds., *Mezhdunaroden simpozium 1100 godini ot blazhenata konchina na sv. Metodii*, 2 vols. (Sofia, 1989).

³ This is evident in their celebration as a pair discussed in Chapter 1.I, whether on May 24th or in the various schools, universities, and statues that bear their name as a holy pair.

⁴ 'Constitution of the Slovak Republic' (<https://www.prezident.sk/upload-files/46422.pdf>), (last accessed: January, 2020). Also noted in: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.3.

⁵ For a discussion of both the meaning of common-sense and 'figures of memory' in this thesis see the Introduction.

⁶ S. Nikolova, 'The Moravian Mission: a Successful and an Unsuccessful Result of the Activity of Sts. Cyril and Methodius', in A. Tachiaos ed., *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs* (Thessaloniki, 2015), p.62.

accept and include all ‘new’ information from the *VM* to supplement the *VC*, they often do not engage with all the ways in which the *VM* contradicts the *vita* of his brother.⁷ The texts are considered so unified that, P. Devos and P. Meyvaert proposed the hypothesis that there was in fact one text to begin with, which included the lives of both brothers, but that the followers of Methodios extracted the information about Methodios into a *vita* of his own.⁸ Not much later in 1973, the Bulgarian Academy of Science’s edition of the two texts chose to ascribe them both to one person, Clement of Ohrid, even though not a single manuscript attestation of the texts assigns either of them to Clement, and the two texts never occur in the same manuscript.⁹ This authorial attribution is by no means accepted universally in modern scholarship, but it is symptomatic of some of the assumptions informing approaches to the texts.¹⁰ The slightly more radical positions of Devos, Meyvaert and the Bulgarian Academy, were balanced out in Boris Floria’s 1988 review article of the field, which represents the broad scholarly consensus.¹¹ It too insists on unity, asserting that ‘the author [of the *VM*] evidently, saw the monument he created [i.e. the *VM*] as an addition and continuation of the *VC*.’¹²

Starting from this assumption of unity scholars have used these two texts in tandem rather than in contrast. Even formal recognition of the differences between the *VC* and *VM*, and therefore possibly between their authors, can be side-lined by this assumed, fundamental unity of purpose. Vladimir Vavřínek’s close study of the two texts, highlights some formal difference, and keeps the two lives in separate chapters, yet tacitly accepts the common-sense most succinctly summarised in the words of Henrik Birnbaum: the lives ‘are very different indeed, while generally representing the same ideology.’¹³

⁷ Uses of these texts in this pick and mix way to write narrative history are plentiful, here are just a few examples from major studies: A. V. Istrin, *1100 let slavianskoi azbuki* (Moscow, 1963; 3rd ed., Moscow, 2010), pp.14-23, 27-36 etc.; B. Angelov, *Kiril i Metodii: slavianski i bulgarski prosvetiteli* (Sofia, 1977), p. 8; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp.66, 102, 103-4, 107 etc.; F. Grivec, *Slovanska apostola Sv. Ciril in Metod* (Ljubljana, 1927), esp. pp.39-40, 52-66. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp.137, 142-3; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.174-5; A. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom: an Introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1970), pp.35-7; Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.45.

⁸ P. Meyvaert, P. Devos, ‘Autour de Léon d’Ostie et de sa Translatio s. Clementis (Légende italique des ss. Cyrille et Méthode)’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 74 (1956), pp.202-5.

⁹ Kliment, *Subrani*, Vol. 3.

¹⁰ For a summary of the arguments for and against Clement, as well as a list of scholars who believe Methodios to be the author of the *VC*, see: Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.82-4.

¹¹ Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.87.

¹² ‘автор, очевидно, рассматривал созданный им памятник как дополнение и продолжение ЖК’, *Ibid*.

¹³ The *VC* is mostly mentioned in the chapter about the *VM* to highlight similarities, e.g.: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.86. This close consideration of the two texts, however, does not stop Vavřínek from conflating their narratives in his more recent work, like using the sequence of the Moravian mission as it is found in the *VC* (Moravia – Balaton – Rome), but inserting Methodios even though he is not mentioned in the *VC*. V. Vavřínek, ‘The Puzzle of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission’, *Byzantinoslavica*, 75 (2017), pp.70-98; H. Birnbaum, ‘The Lives of SS Constantine-Cyril and Methodius: a brief reassessment’, *Cyrrillomethodianum*, 17-18 (1993-4), p.9.

But it is far from clear that the contemporary and politicised image of Cyril and Methodios as an inseparable and coherent pair was as prevalent in medieval texts as it is today. Two types of evidence point toward caution. The first is to do with the process of reception of Cyril and Methodios as individuals in the immediate aftermath of their deaths. In particular, the work of Krasimir Stanchev and Anna Vlaevska-Stancheva has challenged the common assumption that the Roman church celebrated Cyril and Methodios together from as early as the late ninth century. Rather they have demonstrated that:

‘[...] в действителност посмъртната съдба на двамата братя е различна, в частност отношението към Методий не е в никакъв случай еднозначно, а обединяването им в една култова двойка, официално призната от Римската църква е сравително късен процес, започнал с едикта на чешкия крал и император на Свещената Римска империя Карл IV от 21.11.1347 г. и получил силен тласък през втората половина на 19ти век.’¹⁴

‘[...] in reality, the posthumous fate of the two brothers is different, partly as attitudes toward Methodios are not unambiguous, and their unification into one cultic pair, officially recognised by the Roman church, is a relatively late process, which began with the edict of the Czech king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles IV on 21.11.1347 and received a significant boost in the latter half of the nineteenth century.’

Cyril is recognised and celebrated in Rome primarily as the bearer of the relics of Pope Clement, as discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁵ Methodios’ role in this remains unclear from the Latin record, as he is not mentioned in the VC account of the relic-discovery, nor in the *Italian Legend* and the letter of Anastasius the Librarian. The eleventh-century frescoes in San Clemente, Rome which depict the translation of the relics, portray two eastern monks bringing them. But they are un-labelled, and only one, most likely Cyril, has a halo.¹⁶ The other, therefore, even if it is Methodios, which we cannot necessarily assume given the silence of the Latin records, was not considered a saint in eleventh-century Rome.¹⁷

To the contrary, the legacy of Methodios in the Frankish church was somewhat tainted. In the *Conversion of the Bavarians and the Carantanians* (henceforth *Conversio*), a late ninth-century text from the Archbishopric of Salzburg which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter, Methodios is

¹⁴ K. Stanchev, A. Vlaevska-Stancheva, ‘Ot Eretik do svetets: evoliutsiia na metodieviia obraz v zapadnata traditsiia’, *Kirilo-Metodievi studii*, 17 (2007), p.687.

¹⁵ See: Chapter 1.V.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the images see: L.E. Boyle, ‘The Fate of the Remains of St Cyril’, in L. Dempsey ed., *San Clemente Miscellany II: Art & Archaeology* (Rome, 1978); C. Fillipini, ‘The Image of the Titular Saint in the Eleventh-Century Frescoes in San Clemente, Rome’, *Word & Image*, 22 (2006). The image of the fresco can be found on WikiCommons, ‘San Clemente Fresco’

(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_clemente_fresco.jpg) (last accessed: January, 2020)

¹⁷ Stanchev, Vlaevska-Stancheva, ‘Ot Eretik do svetets’, p.690.

attributed with the promotion of the Slavonic alphabet alone, but it is no cause for celebration for the archbishopric claiming authority over the land.

‘[...] quidam Grecus Methodius nomine noviter inventis Sclavinis litteris linguam Latinam doctrinamque Romanam atque litteras auctorales Latinas philosophice superducens vilesce fecit cuncto populo ex parte missas et ewangelia ecclesiasticumque officium illorum, qui hoc Latine celebraverunt.’¹⁸

‘[...] a certain Greek named Methodios with the newly discovered Slavonic letters, cunningly (‘philosophice’) by-passing the Latin language, the doctrine of the Roman church and the authoritative Latin letters, made worthless for the whole people of that area, in part, the masses, the gospels and the church services of those who had celebrated in Latin.’

Later, as the relations between Byzantium and the west worsened, the records of the 1061 Synod of Split ratified by Pope Alexander II, show that this dislike for Methodios in the Frankish realm spread to the papacy. Perhaps influenced by the 1054 schism between the eastern and western churches, Methodios was represented in much harsher terms than a ‘certain Greek.’¹⁹

‘Dicebant enim, goticas litteras a quodam Methodio haretico fuisse repertas, qui multa contra catholice fidei normam in eadem sclavonica lingua mentiendo conscripsit, quoamobrem divino iudicio repentina dicitur morte fuisse damnatus’²⁰

‘They [i.e. the prelates, bishops and pope] said that a certain heretic called Methodius had devised a Gothic alphabet [sic], and he perniciously wrote a great deal of falsehood against the teachings of the Catholic faith in that same Slavonic language. On account of this, he is said to have been condemned by divine judgement to a swift end.’²¹

Thus, information about the two brothers was circulating separately in the two centuries after their deaths. As far as the textual traditions of remembrance in the western church were concerned, the two are barely connected except inasmuch as Methodios is still associated with the Slavonic alphabet, even when Cyril is nowhere to be seen. Moreover, the ways in which the brothers were commemorated demonstrates different images and agendas: Cyril was a friendly diplomat who brought back the highly valued relics of a post-apostolic pope, while Methodios was a cunning bishop who used the Slavonic letters to impinge,

¹⁸ *Conversio*, 12.

¹⁹ The records of this council, which once again banned the use of Slavonic, only survive in summary, transmitted in a thirteenth-century history. Thomas of Split, archdeacon, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, ed. O. Perić, trans. D. Karbić, M. M. Sokol, J. R. Sweeney, (Budapest, 2006), pp.76-9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.78.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.79.

initially on the Archbishopric of Salzburg's territory, and by the mid-eleventh century to undermine the very norms of the Catholic faith. Of course, the Latin church was not the only tradition to receive the legacies of the brothers, but it does demonstrate one way in which it is perfectly possible, and historically more reasonable to begin an inquiry with two separate figures and texts, rather than an inseparable pair.

The second point of caution against assuming this unity of purpose is to do with the evidence from the manuscript transmission of the two *vitae*. The transmission of the VC as briefly noted in the previous chapter, is extremely complicated. The earliest attested manuscript is as late as 1469.²² Over forty-eight full copies of the text survive from eight groups of transmission traditions of both southern Slavonic and eastern Slavonic origins²³ These have preoccupied Christanno Diddi for over a decade, in the preparation of a new critical edition.²⁴ The VM has a more straightforward textual history. The earliest manuscript is the twelfth-century so-called Uspenskii miscellanea.²⁵ Fourteen more are known all dating to the late fifteenth century or later, all are of east Slavonic redaction and most of them are from the *menologion* redacted by Makarii, the sixteenth-century Novgorod metropolitan, the so-called *Great Menaion Reader* ('Velikie Chet'i-Minci').²⁶ There are no South Slavonic manuscripts, but knowledge of Methodios is recorded there and therefore it is highly unlikely the VM was transmitted directly to Rus.²⁷ Nonetheless, the two texts did not circulate as a pair.²⁸ Even the corpus of *menologia* manuscripts points to this distance. Cyril was most often found in *menologia* under the month of February or October, whilst Methodios was found under April. For much of the transmission this meant notices about the brothers would be in physically different books, as *menologia* manuscripts often contain readings for only one month. This is the dominant kind of text in which the VC appears, with eleven attestations of the VC in October-only books, and six in April-only books.²⁹ But even multi-month *menologia* which feature the VM (five manuscripts as opposed to four in *menologia* for April alone) or the VC (three) never feature the

²² Kliment, *Subrani*, p. 34.

²³ Forty-eight are listed in: Ibid., pp.34-45.

²⁴ For a more detailed study of each tradition, alongside critical editions of individual testimony groups, as mentioned in the last chapter, see the studies of Diddi in *Richerche slavistiche*, published between 2004–2013, under the title 'Materiali e ricerche per l'edizione critica di Vita Constantini. I-XI.'

²⁵ Kliment, *Subrani*, pp.161-2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ This will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.IV.

²⁸ The closest the two texts get to one another is the late seventeenth-century manuscript N.330 from *Undolski*, entirely devoted to texts about Cyril and Methodios, including the VC and the service to Cyril and Methodios, but not the VM. Kliment, *Subrani*, p.43, n.42. Betti has also noted that the two texts never appear in one MS, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.82.

²⁹ The VC in *menologia* for October: Kliment, *Subrani*, p.35 n.3-4, p.36 n.6, p.37 n.10, p.38 n.16, p.39 n.22, p.40 n.27, p.41 n.28, n.33, p.42 n.34, n.36 (total: eleven). The VC under February ibid., p.39 n.17, n.20, n.23, p.42 n.37, p.43, n.41, p.44 n.44 (total: six). The VM in *menologia* for April: ibid. p.165, n.2, n.4 (not April-only, but VM is under April 6th), n.5, p.166 n.6, n.7, n.8 (as n.4), n.10 (as n.4), p.167 n.12-3 (as n.4) (total: nine).

two lives in one book.³⁰ In short, in early modern Russia, the two texts seem to have neither been read together, nor were the saints celebrated on the same day.

I do not mean to build an argument entirely on early modern manuscript transmission, nor on the reception of Cyril and Methodios in the Latin church. Rather, these discussions have sought to illustrate how the historical evidence bases concerning the two brothers are far more fragmented than modern historiography has permitted. In short, if the two lives have been received so differently, is it also possible that they were formulated separately, and had different goals, specific to each text and its context? The present study therefore is not a study of *The Lives of Cyril and Methodios*, but explicitly a study of the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios*, as two texts, which present two very different saints, appealing to different modes of sanctity and to different legitimising authorities. It is not my purpose therefore to resolve the differences between these texts, which scholars have tended to attempt more or less explicitly, but rather to try to explain them.

In particular, the starting point of this study is one major discrepancy between the two *Lives*, which remains, to my knowledge, largely unaddressed even if it is occasionally acknowledged. That is: the general absence of Methodios from the VC, and more specifically his complete absence from the most crucial moment of the text for many scholars, namely the Moravian mission.³¹ Methodios is mentioned only four times in the whole VC. The first mention is after Cyril's embassy to the Caliph's court, when he goes to Mount Olympus to find his brother, Methodios, there.³² The second time is at the end of the Khazar debates, when the author notes the debates are abbreviated, and that 'our teacher archbishop Methodios translated' the full texts, thus offering no information on Methodios' presence or absence in the actual narrative scene described.³³ The third mention is near the end of the Khazar mission. Methodios has not been mentioned for the duration of the trip, or the invitation. Then Cyril performs one of his only miracles in the text, making swamp water drinkable.³⁴ He then turns to 'his brother Methodios' and tells him to drink, in the only indication Methodios is present for the whole seven pages. The last mention of

³⁰ The VC under February in multi-month *menologia*: Ibid. p.35, n.18, n.38, n.40 (total: three). The VM under April in multi-month *menologia*: Ibid. p.165, n.4, n.8, n.10, n.12-3 (total: five).

³¹ Note a rare mention of the absence of Methodios in the Venice debate: Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.60. Likewise, Istrin acknowledges that Methodios may not have been on the Khazar mission although he does this not because of the brevity of the mention in the VC, but because he argues that Methodios was busy christening Boris of Bulgaria, conflating the Thessalonican missionary with a painter and monk called Methodios mentioned in the account of the conversion of Bulgaria in the chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus, Book IV. Istrin, *1100 Let*, p.22. See: Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronicle I-IV*, in: *Chronographiae Quae Theophanis Continuati Nomine Fertur Libri I-IV*, eds., trans. M. Featherstone, J. Signes Codoñer, (Berlin, 2015), 14-15. More often than not, however, as noted above, scholars resolve this absence by simply using the VM to supplement the VC, for a longer list of examples, most of which deal with Moravia, see: p.101, ft.7.

³² VC, 7.5.

³³ Ibid., 10.96.

³⁴ Ibid., 12.3.

Methodios is the very end of the VC when Cyril has died in Rome. Methodios appears, rather inexplicably. He has not been mentioned since the water miracle and is entirely omitted from the Moravian mission. He appears to ask the pope to let him take Cyril's body back to Byzantium, but settles to have him buried in the Basilica of St Clement.³⁵ Within the logic of the VC it seems most likely that Methodios has come from Olympus having heard that Cyril has passed away in Rome to collect his body and take it to a designated 'brotherly' monastery.³⁶ If one were to read the VC alone, the 'spiritual heritage' of the brothers Cyril and Methodios appears somewhat confusing.

By conflating the narratives of the VC and the VM into one story, scholars have side-lined the fact that the texts are at times directly contradictory. But in this conflation, it has also been the case that, in the words of Ian Wood in his seminal study of western missionary hagiography, *The Missionary Life*, 'the purposes of our sources [have] been ignored in earlier, often pious, attempts to construct the Grand Narrative of Mission.'³⁷ If we understand the 'Mission' to be that of Cyril and Methodios rather than Boniface, Wood's statement provides a good summary of the bulk of the work done on the VC and VM, to date. I also take it to be the case that 'those purposes could be best understood by considering the relationship between texts.'³⁸ To try to reconstruct the purposes of the VM therefore, it is worth directly addressing the relationship between the VM and the VC as texts.

The VM re-writes the VC sometime not long after the death of Methodios. As discussed in Chapter One, the texts were written in fairly close succession, the VC most likely sometime between ca.869 and ca.885 when Methodios dies, and the VM most likely sometime in the last decades of the ninth century. The issues of the legitimacy of Methodios and the Slavonic liturgy, which will be discussed in greater length below, point especially to a date of composition during the papacies of Stephen V (ca. 885-91) and Formosus (ca.891-6), which oversaw the ban on Slavonic liturgy in 890.³⁹

In re-writing the story of the VC, the VM adds Methodios to both the missions to Khazaria and to the initial mission to Moravia. While scholarship has largely accepted Methodios' presence, what has remained unexplored is the nuanced ways in which the VM re-tells these stories, and re-frames their focus, and often even re-orders their chronology. This study will seek to assess how Methodios' sanctity is formulated, and how and why information from the VC is used and reframed in the VM in the process.

³⁵ Ibid., 18.16.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.xi.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Vavřínek takes the fact the text does not mention the ban as evidence it was written prior to it, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.85.

Why was Methodios inserted into a story to which he is otherwise rather peripheral? And what consequences does this have for the portrayal and defence of the Slavonic alphabet?

In the next three sections of this chapter (numbered II, III and IV), I seek to establish what intervention the *VM* is trying to make through a close textual study of the life and of its sources. The sources I discuss are ones cited in the text such as the *VC* and a synopsis of the Ecumenical councils. I contend that the *VM* formulates a fundamentally different argument for Methodios's sanctity to that found in the *VC*. A large part of this difference comes from the sources of legitimacy to which the *vita* appeals, namely the pope and emperor. Although both figures are present in the *VC*, in Part II, I show how their significance is elevated through the insertion of a synopsis of the Ecumenical Councils in the opening of the text, which sets up the narrative as one guided by institutionalised authority over and above individual intellect or disputation. Having dealt with the relationship between Methodios and the pope in Part II, I turn to the other two key relationships guiding the *VM*. In Part III, on Methodios and Cyril, I show just how disruptively the *VM* inserts Methodios into the early life of Cyril, forging a brotherly bond ubiquitous in scholarship but absent from the *VC*. In Part IV, on Methodios and the Moravian Slavs, I demonstrate how this newly formulated Cyrillo-Methodian unity is applied to the ethnicization of the Moravian mission, strengthening a relationship between Cyril and Methodios and the Moravian Slavs, which is entirely absent in the *VC*.

The second major undertaking of this chapter is an attempt to situate the *VM* and its radical transformation of the story of the invention of Slavonic in contemporary textual and intellectual culture. In Part V, I explore potential Byzantine texts and contexts for the *VM*. Despite the dominant acceptance of Byzantine textual and political influence on the Moravian mission, the section demonstrates that there is no evidence for the influence of either Byzantine textual models or the Byzantine political centre in the formation of the *VM*. In Part VI, I part with scholarly consensus which turns eastwards, and argue that the *VM* is best considered as a Latin-ate text, both in genre and in intended audience. Here the analysis is concerned not with texts explicitly cited in the *VM*, but with the kinds of texts I posit formed the discursive milieu of the Moravian textual community responsible for the *VM*. I argue that: the *VM* actively engages in its form and content with the tradition of Latin missionary hagiography; that its argument is formulated explicitly against Frankish arguments for administrative rule over Pannonia as formulated in the *Conversio*; and that the text seeks to secure papal patronage, by forging, amending, and reinventing not only the legacy of Cyril and the alphabet, but also the historic relationship between the papacy and Moravian mission. This textual argument is prefaced with a summary of the contents of the *VM*, to assist the reader.

At roughly seven folia, or eight A4 pages, the *VM* opens with a two-page genealogy of the men of God, through the Old and New Testament: this feeds into a summary of the ecumenical councils, which concludes with the introduction of Methodios, as their successor.⁴⁰ A brief notice on the nobility of his parents follows, before Methodios is appointed by the emperor to an ambiguous Slavonic lordship ('kniazhenie').⁴¹ A few years later, he leaves secular office for mount Olympus.⁴² The account is incredibly brief on this time too, so it is unclear how long he spends there. Next, he is sent with his brother Cyril to the Khazars since, as the text notes, there were Jews there blaspheming against the Christian faith.⁴³ Upon his return, the emperor offers him a bishopric but instead he takes up life as a monk at the monastery of Polychron.⁴⁴ Immediately after this, Rastislav and Sviatopluk send word to emperor Michael asking for teachers and Cyril and Methodios are sent to Moravia.⁴⁵ There, Pope Nicholas hears of them and invites them to Rome.⁴⁶ The text does not mention whether or not the pope has died, so it seems as if Nicholas welcomes them and refutes trilingualist heretics in Rome.⁴⁷ Then Cyril dies in Rome, and Kočel writes to the pope to ask for teachers.⁴⁸ This time the pope, now identified as Hadrian II, specifically, obliges and sends Methodios with a papal letter to Kočel, Rastislav and Sviatopluk cited in full in the text.⁴⁹ Kočel immediately sends Methodios back asking that he be made bishop by the pope, 'which happened.'⁵⁰ Then local bishops moved by evil turn on Methodios claiming his territory is theirs, and imprison him for two and a half years in Germany.⁵¹ The pope hears of this and has him released, and Methodios performs three minor acts of prophesy, before the Frankish bishops challenge him again, but a papal letter (not in the text) is said to confirm Methodios' position once more.⁵² Methodios is then challenged by the same bishops who say the emperor is angry with him, so he travels to the emperor and back.⁵³ He then devotes himself to work, appointing scribes and priests and pursuing more translations, before he tames the newly arrived Hungarian ruler.⁵⁴ Finally he appoints a successor and dies, with a funeral service in Latin, Greek and Slavonic.⁵⁵

⁴⁰ *VM*, 1-2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁰ 'КЖЕ Н БЫСТЬ', *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10-12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

2.II THE LIFE OF METHODIOS AS PAPAL LITERATURE?

As argued in Chapter One, the VC is unequivocally a monument of Byzantine literature. In the text ‘we’ are the Byzantines and the intended audience is firmly a Byzantine one. The VM has often been paired with the VC in this respect. Ihor Ševčenko, has insisted for instance that the lives of *both* Cyril and Methodius ‘are Byzantine documents’, they ‘glorify two Byzantines’ and they ‘rest in part on Byzantine texts written in Greek.’⁵⁶ At closer examination, however, the VM is more complicated. Of the eight full A4 pages which make up the text, a mere page in total deals with events which occur in Byzantium, such as Methodios’ birth, and under the auspices of the Byzantine empire, such as the embassy to the Khazars and the first mission to Moravia, which the VM rewrites to include Methodios.⁵⁷ Four full pages are devoted to Methodios acting as a papal agent, appointed and defended by the pope.⁵⁸ Who ‘we’ are in the VM is far from obvious.

This complexity with respect to the VM’s allegiance is best demonstrated in the rather peculiar opening of the life. As noted, the text begins with a nearly two-pages-long (so almost a quarter of the VM) list of holy men God sent to his people in the aftermath of the fall.⁵⁹ The list begins with Old Testament figures like Enoch, Abraham, Isaiah and Moses,⁶⁰ then moves through John the Baptist⁶¹ into the New Testament apostles Peter and Paul.⁶² It then mentions they were followed by martyrs and the struggle to weed out heresy.⁶³ What comes next is an abbreviated account of the ecumenical church councils.⁶⁴ It concludes by placing Methodios within this list of succession of holy men, describing him as an equal, ‘lesser than some but greater than others.’⁶⁵

This section of the text has been of little interest to historians, who have at best noted its unusual nature in the corpus of Byzantine hagiography.⁶⁶ Only two studies have recognised this part of the text as a council synopsis.⁶⁷ The former of these offered a comparison of the councils alongside a Slavonic synopsis text

⁵⁶ Ševčenko, ‘Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium’, p.13. As noted in Chapter I, this is also acknowledged in: Vavřínek, whose book opens with a whole chapter on Byzantine hagiography to provide a context for his subsequent studies of the VC and VM individually, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.15-29.

⁵⁷ VM, 2.4-7.3

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8-17.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.6-12.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.13-29.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.30.

⁶² Ibid., 1.31.

⁶³ Ibid., 1.32.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1.33-38.

⁶⁵ ‘ОБЪХЪ ЖЕ МАЛЫ МЪННН, А ДРΟΥГЫНХЪ БОЛНН’, Ibid., 2.1-2.

⁶⁶ Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.86-7.

⁶⁷ Originally studied in: P. Lavrov, *Kirilo ta Metodii v davn’o-slov’ians’komu pis’menstvu* (Kiev, 1928), pp.57-9. Reproduced in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.90-2.

and noted key differences, albeit in haste.⁶⁸ The latter one reproduced these findings to argue that the whole introduction of the *VM* was a confession of faith written by Methodios himself and performed at the papal court.⁶⁹ No study has compared the text to the contemporary genre of Byzantine synopses and their internal nuances, or explored the consequences of opening the *VM* with such a text. Rather than seeking to attribute agency to Methodios, I argue that the changes to the source text were authorial interventions, which in turn shape the formulation of both religious and secular authority in the *VM*.

Abbreviated accounts or synopses of the church councils are very popular in Byzantine literature, in part due to their centrality to Byzantine orthodox authority.⁷⁰ In the Latin west, however, their authority seems much diminished, and their circulation does not at all resemble that of their eastern counterpart. Copyists of one of the earliest translations of the councils into Latin, made by Dionysius Exiguus in the early sixth-century, already diluted their authority, by transmitting them together with Dionysius' collection of thirty-eight papal decretals from Siricius (384-399) to Anastasius II (496-8).⁷¹ This widely circulated collection was expanded by Pope Hadrian I to be given to Charlemagne as a definitive collection of canon law in 774, now known to scholars as the *Dionysio-Hadriana*.⁷² Drawing on this, Charlemagne promulgated the 789 *Admonitio Generalis*, which also features canons from the councils.⁷³ In all these sources, however, there are two main differences with the Byzantine tradition. Firstly, the councils are used in a supplementary position, usually alongside papal decretals or more recent synods held regularly within the realm. Secondly, they always include a list of the canons that they agreed, alongside these other decretals, for what is clearly practical use: a guide for the behaviour of clerics or laymen.⁷⁴ This stands in stark contrast to the Byzantine tradition, where council synopses assume a much more antiquarian guise. More often than not they are concerned primarily with those convening and attending the councils, and the

⁶⁸ Lavrov, *Kirilo ta Metodii*, pp.57-9.

⁶⁹ Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.91-2.

⁷⁰ There are a large number of Byzantine so-called *Konzilssynopsen* texts and many still unedited, so it is nearly impossible to generalize. Their main features are that they all seem to use the same sources, and that they can be divided loosely into three types: six council, seven council and all council (local, etc.) synopses. Sometimes these synopses stand alone, sometimes they are embedded in narratives. For a general introduction to what can be said about the genre and its history, alongside the edition of one such text from the late ninth or early tenth century see: L.M. Hoffman, W. Brandes, *Eine unbekannte Konzilssynopse aus dem Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts*, (Frankfurt am Main, 2013), pp.15-25. For a history of the circulation of Byzantine canonical collections proper, rather than synopses, see: D. Wagschal, *Law and Legality in the Greek East: the Byzantine Canonical Tradition, 381-883* (Oxford, 2015), esp. pp.32-50. For the consolidation of the councils as the true sources of religious authority in late antique Christianity: Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order*, pp.217-29.

⁷¹ C. Leyser, 'Law, Memory and Priestly Office in Rome, c.500', *Early Medieval Europe*, 27 (2019), pp.61-84. I am grateful to Dr Conrad Leyser for letting me see this prior to its publication. A. Firey, 'The Collectio Dionysiana' (<http://ccl.rch.uky.edu/dionysiana-article>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

⁷² G. Brown, 'Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance', in R. McKitterick ed., *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994), p.17.

⁷³ M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011), p.136.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.139-40. See, for instance: Charlemagne, *General Admonition: Aachen, 789*, in trans. P.D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Kendal, 1987), pp.209-20.

heretics excommunicated, and not specifically with listing the canons agreed. In Byzantium, the canons themselves appeared in separate collections, often but by no means always in the same manuscripts as council synopses.⁷⁵ To my knowledge, no Byzantine-style council-synopsis tradition exists in Latin.

Thus, the *VM* is here using a truly Byzantine source. Nonetheless, despite using a Byzantine tradition, the *VM* fundamentally re-frames the council synopsis and re-allocates power primarily to papal representatives whilst omitting Constantinopolitan and other patriarchal agents. To demonstrate the unusual nature of this account of the councils it is worth comparing it to contemporary Byzantine summaries of the ecumenical councils. In particular, I will compare the *VM* account to two late ninth-century Byzantine synopses.

The first is found in Photios' letter to Boris of Bulgaria, written only a couple of decades before the death of Methodios, which opens with the creed and then offers the ruler an account of the holy church councils and the various heresies they weeded out.⁷⁶ In many ways, a summary of the councils which emerges from the core of the Byzantine patriarchal office specifically for export in a missionary context, is the closest we may get to the conventional or politically correct *Byzantine* version of the councils in the ninth century. Nonetheless, there is no such thing as an apolitical re-telling of the ecumenical councils, even if many of them ultimately resort to the same types of sources such as the *Church History* of Theodoret, the *Epitome* of Theodore Anagnostes' *Tripartite History*, and the chronicles of George the Monk and Theophanes the Confessor.⁷⁷ Photios' own excommunication by the papacy and the conflict concerning the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Bulgarian church, certainly affected the formulation of his account. In light of this, I will also compare the *VM* to the *Synodicon Vetus* (henceforth *SV*).⁷⁸ This account of all synods, ecumenical, non-ecumenical and heretical is of crucial assistance in establishing a ninth-century norm in the attribution of agency, as it offers convenient checks and balances on Photios. The text was most probably compiled in the late ninth century, as the last council it records dates to 869-70.⁷⁹ It

⁷⁵ This is the case with all six manuscripts which feature the aforementioned anonymous council edited by Hoffmann and Brandes, but it is much less often the case for integrated synopses found in historical texts or letters: *Eine unbekannte Konzilssynopse*, pp.37-44 (manuscripts), pp.17, 20. (examples of integrated synopses); Wagschal, *Law and Legality in the Greek East*, pp.32-50.

⁷⁶ Photios, *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*, in *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, eds., B. Laourdas, L.G. Westerink, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1983), 1-1205, pp.5-15.

⁷⁷ These are all used by the council summary: *SV*, p.xiv. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Church History* in *Theodoret: Kirchengeschichte*, eds. L. Parmentier, F. Scheidweiler, (Berlin, 1954); Theodoret of Cyrillus, *A History of the Church from AD. 322 to the Death of Theodore of Mopsuestia AD. 427*, trans. E. Walford, (London, 1854). *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G.C. Hansen, (Berlin, 1971). George Hamartolos, *Chronicle*, in Georgios Monachos, *Chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1978). Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, in Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, (Leipzig, 1883). *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD284-813*, trans. C. Mango, R. Scott, G. Greatrex, (Oxford, 1997).

⁷⁸ *SV*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xiii.

concludes by going beyond the final council, reviews Patriarch Photios' career from 870-886, and demonstrates why his deposition was deserved. The text sits firmly within the so-called 'Anti-Photian' dossier, and was most likely compiled almost contemporaneously with the *VM*, whose *terminus post quem* is 885.⁸⁰ As will become clear, largely due to the position taken on Ignatios, it is also more prone to prioritising papal authority than Photios.

Photios' letter offers much longer accounts of the councils, and more details about those attending and about the actual contents of the heresies discussed than the *VM*. The *Synodicon Vetus* is also more detailed than the *VM* on those present, but does not usually engage with the theology of the resolutions in great depth. Generally, all three note who called or presided over the council first, and then whom the council anathemised. To illustrate the contrasts between these accounts, I begin with the First Ecumenical Council of 325 in Nicaea, a particularly contentious council since its original acta do not survive.⁸¹ Photios opens his account with the list of attendees, listing bishops first and the emperor overseeing the council last. It is worth offering at least the beginning of his list of attendees in full.

‘Ἡ τοίνυν πρώτη καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ ἁγία σύνοδος ἐν τῇ κατὰ Βιθυνίαν Νικαίᾳ συνεκροτήθη· ὀκτωκαίδεκα δὲ καὶ τριακόσιοι, θείων ἀρχιερέων ὁμήγυρις, τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας κρίσιν ἐνεχειρίζοντο. ὧν ἦσαν προέχοντες Ἀλέξανδρός τε ὁ τὸν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀρχιερατικὸν θρόνον λαχὼν διυθύνειν, ἀνὴρ βαθεῖα μὲν πολιᾷ, παραπλησίῳ δὲ φρονήματι σεμνυνόμενος, βίου δὲ λαμπρότητι καὶ ὁσιότητι γνώμης καὶ πίστεως ἀκριβεῖα τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον παρρησίαν πολλὴν οἰκειούμενος· καὶ δὴ καὶ Σίλβεστρος καὶ Ἰούλιος, τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπίσημοί τε καὶ διαβόητοι πρόεδροι, αὐτῶν μὲν οὐδέτερος παραγεγονώς, Βίτωνά δὲ καὶ Βικέντιον ἑκάτερος ἀνθ’ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τὸν οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρχιερατείας χρόνον τῇ κοινῇ παρεῖναι συνελεύσει προβαλλόμενοι, ἀνθρώπους ἀρετὴν τιμῶντας καὶ εἰς τὸ τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου ἀξίωμα παραγγέλλοντας.’⁸²

‘The first holy ecumenical synod was assembled in Nicaea, in Bithynia, a gathering of 318 of the holy prelates, electing the judgement of truth. Its leaders were not only Alexander, who was steering the Constantinopolitan patriarchal throne, a man who was exalted by great depth, and likeness in wisdom, who since his life was most illustrious and his knowledge most pious, and his faith accurate, acquired great boldness with respect to the divine, but also Silvester and Julius, the famous and renowned leaders of the Roman church in the time of their rule, sent forth Vito and

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.xv. The date of Methodios' death is noted in: *VM*, 17.10. On the anti-Photian dossier, see: Chapter 1.VI.

⁸¹ Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order*, pp.183-6.

⁸² Photios, *Letters*, 1.63-74.

Vicentius each instead of the other, to be present in the gathering, men honoured with respect to their virtue and elected to the honour of *presbyter*.⁸³

Photios continues by listing the bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, amongst others attending, and concludes by stating that the whole synod was gathered (‘ἁθροίζων’) by and overseen by the Emperor Constantine.⁸⁴ What is crucial here is the equal weight being given to the patriarch of Constantinople and the Roman representatives, but that the patriarch comes first. Those who came first or led the council (‘προέχοντες’) are ‘both’ Alexander ‘and indeed’ Silvester and Julius, who were not in fact present.

The *SV* is not too far removed from Photios’ account, in that both offer a list of the bishops of all five patriarchal sees. Nonetheless, the *SV* shows some crucial differences.

‘Ἦς ἐξηρχον προκαθεζόμενοι Βίτων καὶ Βικέντιος πρεσβύτεροι, τὸν τόπον ἐπέχοντες Σιλβέστρου τοῦ πάπα Ῥώμης καὶ τοῦ διαδόχου αὐτοῦ Ἰουλίου, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀλεξανδρείας, Μακάριος Ἱεροσολύμων, Εὐστάθιος Ἀντιοχείας, ἐκ προσώπου Μητροφάνους Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Ἀλέξανδρος πρεσβύτερος, Ὅσιος ὁ Κουρδούβης ἐπίσκοπος, καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ ἐν χριστιανοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀπόστολος.’⁸⁵

‘Its presiding leaders were the presbyters Vito and Vicentios taking the place of Rome’s Pope Sylvester and his successor Julius, Alexander of Alexandria, Macarios of Jerusalem, Eustathios of Antioch, the presbyter Alexander representing Metrophanes of Constantinople, Hosios the Bishop of Cordoba, and Constantine the apostle among the Christian emperors.’⁸⁶

The *SV* reveals how the Photian account obfuscates the Constantinopolitan Alexander’s position as a replacement, places the patriarchal see first, before the papal envoys, and makes explicit Constantine’s role as convener; whereas the *SV* lists him simply as one of the presiding leaders. If therefore, the Photian account is inherently less willing to acknowledge or prioritise papal power, the *SV* is clearly what a Byzantine account of the council which is sympathetic to the role of the papacy would look like in the ninth century. The *VM*, however, goes even further than the *SV*. It simply notes:

⁸³ I have consulted the translation of Berrigan and White but since it is very loose and heavily abbreviated, this translation is my own. J.R. Berrigan, D. S. White trans., *The Patriarch and the Prince: the Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline, MA, 1982).

⁸⁴ Photios, *Letters*, 1.74-89, quote from: 1.87-90.

⁸⁵ *SV*, 35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.29.

‘СЕЛВЕСТРЪ УБѢТНО ТРЪМН СЪТЫ Н НІ ОТЬЦЬ ВЕЛНКАГО ЦѢСАРА
КОНСТАНТИНА НА ПОМОЩЬ ПРИНМЪ СЪНЪМЪ ПЪРВЫН СЪБРАВЪ ВЪ
НИКЕѦ’⁸⁷

‘Silvester together with three hundred and eighteen fathers, having accepted the help of Caesar Constantine, gathered the first council in Nicaea’

The *VM* omits all other patriarchal sees in attributing agency for the gathering of the council, which are recognised in both Photios’ account and the *SV*. The author of the *VM* also fails to mention that Silvester was not present at the council at all and omits mention of his ambassadors, whom both Photios and the *SV* acknowledge. In line with the *SV*, the *VM* reduces Constantine from the one who gathers (‘ἄθροίζων’), to simply the one whose help was received (‘НА ПОМОЩЬ ПРИНМЪ’). This pattern of papal primacy and the removal of other patriarchal sees is largely consistent with the retelling of all six councils included in the *VM*. Even when the *SV* grants agency to others, the *VM* universally names the Roman representative first regardless of whether or not they were present. This attribution of power to Rome is consistent even when it is not clear that the pope himself had ratified the council at the time of its gathering. The account of the First Council of Constantinople in 381 bears this out. In Photios’ letter the account is given as follows.

‘[...] εἰς πεντήκοντα δὲ καὶ ἑκατὸν ἄνδρας ἱεροῦς συναγείρετο, ἐξάρχους ἔχουσα Τιμόθεόν τε τὸν Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ τὸν ἀξιοθαύμαστον τῆς Ἀντιοχείας Μελέτιον Κύριλλόν τε τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων τοὺς ἀρχιερατικοὺς θρόνους ἰθύνοντας’⁸⁸

‘[...] [the council] gathered a hundred and fifty holy men, and had as its leaders both Timothy of Alexandria, and the miraculous Meletios of Antioch and Cyril of Jerusalem, who guided the patriarchal thrones.’

Photios proceeds to list attendees, noting ‘both the Gregory, who was bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, and who is famous for his works of theology.’⁸⁹ He concludes the section by saying ‘in addition to whom after a short while also Damasus Bishop of Rome, made it known that he upholds the same things, promulgating in harmony with those things formerly agreed.’⁹⁰ The text then turns to expounding the

⁸⁷ *VM*, 1.33.

⁸⁸ Photios, *Letters*, 1.124-7.

⁸⁹ ‘Γρηγόριος ὃς τε τῆς ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ Νύσσης ἐπίσκοπος καὶ ὁ τῆς θεολογίας ἐξ ἔργων ἐπώνυμος’, *Ibid.*, 1.131-2.

⁹⁰ ‘οἷς οὐ πολὺς χρόνος καὶ Δάμασος ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης τὰ αὐτὰ κρατύνων ἐγνωρίζετο, σύμφωνος τοῖς προλαβοῦσι καθιστάμενος’, *Ibid.*, 1.134-5.

heresy of Arius and concludes with the emperor who held the throne at the time, but without giving Theodosius the same agency as Constantine in having the council convened.⁹¹

The SV is almost completely consistent with this, noting the leaders of the council as ‘Timothy of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem [...] and the Christ-loving Emperor Theodosius.’⁹² Once again, the SV is kinder to the pope, noting explicitly that Damasus held his own synod in Rome, the proceedings of which he sent to Constantinople, where they were accepted, rather than that he simply agreed with the council at Constantinople.⁹³

In contrast the VM distorts this picture, permitting only the elevation of Gregory of Nazianzus, to second in significance.

‘ДАМАСЪ ЖЕ И ФΕΟΛΟΓЪ ГРΗΓΟΡΙΗ СЪ СЪТЪМЪ ПАТНЮ ДЕСАТЪ
ОТЪЦЪ И СЪ ВЕЛИКИМЪ ЦΕΣΑΡЬМЪ ФΕΟΔΟΣΙΗМЪ ВЪ ЦΕΣΑΡΗΓΡΑΔѢ
ПОТВЪРДНША СВАТЫИ СОУМ’БОЛЪ, КЖЕ КСТЬ ВѢРΟΥЮ ВЪ ЕДИНЪ
БОГЪ’⁹⁴

‘Damasus and Gregory the Theologian with 150 fathers and with the great Caesar Theodosius in Constantinople confirmed the holy symbol, which is faith in one God’

There are different levels of obfuscation. The SV and Photios stress Damasus’ synod ratifying the council, but its dating is far from clear, especially due to the council’s controversial third creed asserting the primacy of Constantinople, second only to Rome.⁹⁵ But where both the SV, albeit more prone to attributing papal agency, and Photios stress church unity by pointing to the ultimate agreement between Damasus and the council, the VM is concerned with papal primacy first and foremost. It makes the pope, who was not only not present but also not in agreement with the council for some time after its completion, its assembler and leader. The presence of Gregory of Nazianzus here, is perhaps best explained through the central role Gregory plays in the VC, where Cyril’s education begins with his orations.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1.127-172.

⁹² ‘ὁ Ἀλεξανδρείας Τιμόθεος, Κύριλλος Ἱεροσολύμων [...] καὶ ὁ φιλόχριστος βασιλεὺς Θεοδοσίος’, SV, 77.5-7.

⁹³ Ibid., 78.2-5.

⁹⁴ VM, 1.34.

⁹⁵ On potential papal councils held in response see: H. Marot, ‘Les conciles romains des IV et V siècles et le développement de la primauté’, *Istina*, 4 (1957), pp.435-62. And Dvornik who dates the reaction later, to c.500: F. Dvornik, *Byzance et la Primauté Romaine* (Paris, 1964), pp.55-60.

In the Council of Ephesus, Photios opens with Cyril of Alexandria who, he notes, also represented the absent Celestine of Rome, before listing other bishops and ultimately the emperor.⁹⁶ This is broadly in agreement with the *SV* which describes Cyril as no more than ‘the supporter of the apostles’ (‘ὁ τῶν ἀποστόλων συνήγορος’).⁹⁷ The *VM* opens with ‘Celestine and Cyril with two hundred fathers’, once again obscuring Celestine’s absence.⁹⁸

In the case of the Council of Chalcedon, Photios grants agency first and foremost to Emperor Marcianus, and then to the leaders of the Council, whom he lists as Anatolios, Paschasinos and Lykinios whom he calls bishops, and ‘with the presbyter Boniface who held the place of Leo the most-holy pope of Rome.’⁹⁹ The *SV* is brief on this, asserting that Pulcheria, the emperor’s wife urged him to convene the council, and not listing any of its leaders.¹⁰⁰ The *VM* once again renders this purely a papal-led council. Omitting Pulcheria and the bishops Photios mentions, it notes the council was led by ‘Leo and Anatolios with the orthodox Caesar Marcianos.’¹⁰¹

At the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, Photios notes the leaders were Menas and Eutychios, and ‘Vigilius, who held the holy see of Rome, whilst he was present in the city, was not present at the Synod.’¹⁰² Despite its papal leanings, the *SV* renders the rulers as ‘Eutychios of Constantinople, the great Apolinarius of Alexandria, Domnus of Antioch, and the Christ-loving Emperor Justinian.’¹⁰³ It continues acknowledging that ‘Virgilius of Rome, though present in the city, did not take part in the sessions’, the wording of which is sufficiently different to suggest that, as elsewhere, the source is different to that of Photios.¹⁰⁴ Once again, the *VM*’s version of the information is striking. Omitting Eutychios altogether, the author renders the council as being led by ‘Vigilius with the god-pleasing Justinian.’¹⁰⁵

On the third Council of Constantinople in 680/1, Photios notes the leaders as

⁹⁶ Photios, *Letters*, 1.172-6.

⁹⁷ *VS*, 84.3.

⁹⁸ ‘Κελεστίνη ἡ Κηρήνῃς ἐκ δὲ βῆμα ἐκτομα οὐχὶς’, *VM*, 1.35.

⁹⁹ ‘σὺν Βονιφατίῳ πρεσβυτέρῳ τὸν τόπον ἐπέχοντες Λέοντος τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου πάπα Ῥώμης’, Photios, *Letters*, 1.221-3, 216-225 in full.

¹⁰⁰ *VS*, 92.1-5.

¹⁰¹ ‘Λεὼς ἡ Ἀνατολὴ ἐκ πραιποβερνιμὲς ἡ βασιλεὺς Μαρκεανὸς’, *VM*, 1.36.

¹⁰² ‘Βιγίλιος ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης τὴν ἱερὰν λαχὼν ἐφορείαν, παρὼν μὲν τῇ πόλει, οὐ παρὼν δὲ τῇ συνόδῳ.’ Photios, *Letters*, 1.269-70, 1.264-70 for Menas and Eutychios in full.

¹⁰³ ‘ἡσπερ ἐξήρχον οἱ πατριάρχαι προκαθεζόμενοι Εὐτύχιος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείας ὁ μέγας Ἀπολινάριος, Δόμνος Ἀντιοχείας, καὶ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς ὁ φιλόχριστος’, *VS*, 123.3-6.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Βιργίλιος δὲ Ῥώμης παρὼν οὐ συνήδρευσε’, *VS*, 123.6. Compare with above footnote 61.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Βῆτην ἡ ἐκ βογοζγοδὲνιμὲς ἡ νοῦστη[ν] ἡμὲς’, *VM*, 1.37. The text says Justin, but this may be a scribal error when rendering the name into Slavonic, or it may be the product of confusion about the dates of the council. Editors generally correct it to Justinian.

‘Γεώργιος τε, ὃ τῆς βασιλίδος πόλεως ὁ ἀρχιερατικὸς θεσμὸς ὑπῆρχεν ἐγκεχειρισμένος, καὶ Θεόδωρος καὶ Γεώργιος, ἐν πρεσβυτέρων ἀξιώματι κατειλεγμένοι, ἅμα διακόνῳ Ἰωάννῃ, οἱ ἀντὶ Ἀγάθωνος τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου πάπα Ῥώμης εἰς τὴν τῶν ἐξάρχων τάξιν ἠριθμοῦντο’¹⁰⁶

‘Both Georgios, to whom the patriarchal rule was entrusted, and Theodore and Georgios who held the position of presbyters, together with the *deacon* John, who were a part of the embassy in place of Agatho, the most holy pope of Rome.’

Similarly, to the First Council of Nicaea, Photios tries to balance the leadership with a ‘both ... and’ clause but places Constantinople before Rome. Also, much like the First Nicaean council SV puts the papal legates first, ‘the Roman Pope Agatho’s representatives, the presbyters Theodore and George and the deacon John.’¹⁰⁷ George the Patriarch of Constantinople comes second and is followed by Antioch and the representatives of Alexandria and Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸ The VM, once again, obliterates the papal absence and erases other patriarchal sees. The council was led by ‘Agatho, the apostolic pope, together with two hundred and seventy fathers and the honourable Caesar Constantine.’¹⁰⁹ More tellingly still, the VM omits the account of the seventh council, dealing with iconoclasm, a uniquely Byzantine issue.

The purpose of presenting all six councils in full across these three texts is threefold. Firstly, to acknowledge that, since no account is apolitical, the synopses of the councils within Byzantium were far from rigid and unified and could be put to different agendas. Secondly, to demonstrate that even accounting for these internal differences and agendas, by comparing two accounts which come from the two farthest positions in ninth-century Byzantine intellectual circles, the so-called Photian and Ignatian milieus, the stories of these councils still demonstrate basic similarities of narrative. And thirdly, in light of these similarities, the VM stands out not simply as an account of the ecumenical councils which is in some sense pro-Ignatian, or anti-Photian, in its sympathy with the pope. Rather, this is an explicitly papal account, far more extreme than even the most pro-papal positions held in Byzantium.

The consistency with which the VM does this in all six councils leaves a very particular image of political and religious authority. That is, a firm hierarchy of religious power, with papal primacy as unequivocal and the role of the patriarchate of Constantinople only rarely even acknowledged. This is a striking manipulation of a Byzantine text, for a particular papal purpose. But it is important to note that the elevation of papal power is entirely at the expense of patriarchal sees, and not at the expense of imperial

¹⁰⁶ Photios, *Letters*, 1.321-5.

¹⁰⁷ ‘ἢς ἐξῆρχον προκαθεζόμενοι τοποτηρηταὶ τοῦ πάπα Ῥώμης Ἀγάθωνος Θεόδωρος καὶ Γεώργιος πρεσβύτεροι καὶ Ἰωάννης διάκονος’, SV, 141.3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 141.5-8.

¹⁰⁹ ‘**ΔΓΑΦΟΝΖ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΥΣΚΥΗ ΠΑΠΕΖΪ ΣΖ ΔΖΒΪΜΑ ΣΖΤΟΜΑ Η Ο ΟΤΥΪΖ ΣΖ ΥΪΣΤΥΝΗΜΪ ΚΟΣΤΑΝΤΗΝΥΜΪ ΨΕΑΡΥΜΪ**’, VM, 1.38.

power. Whilst the pope remains the single consistent source of religious authority, graced with councils he may not even have attended, the only other figure which remains consistently present in the *VM* account is the emperor in the guise of a helping hand.

It is, of course, not unusual to mention the emperor in these accounts, but within the corpus here selected, Photios and the *SV*, the emperor plays a number of different, at times contradictory roles in different councils. In Photios' synopsis, Constantine gets pride of place in the first Council of Nicaea, as the 'great and marvellous' ('ὁ μέγας καὶ ἀξιόγαστος') emperor who 'both gathered the synod and made it more illustrious through his presence.'¹¹⁰ In the *SV*, on the other hand, as noted above he is simply an 'apostle among Christian emperors'.¹¹¹ Photios leaves both Theodosius I and II (respectively the Council of Constantinople and Ephesus) till last in his account, giving them no credit in its gathering or agenda: Theodosios I, the 'champion and himself famous for his piety', and Theodosios II simply delivering 'ancestral and imperial rule'.¹¹² The *SV*, opens with the arrival of Theodosius I in Constantinople but does not suggest he has any role in the council being gathered.¹¹³ But it assigns full responsibility to Theodosius II, claiming he ordered the Third Ecumenical Council.¹¹⁴ With Chalcedon, imperial agency is attributed in reverse – it is Photios who puts Marcian first, whilst the *SV* briefly notes that the council was the product of Marcian hearing about a papal synod, and ultimately of his wife persuading him to call it.¹¹⁵

As I note above, these decisions are not random, and they in turn shape the agendas of the two texts, inasmuch as no council synopsis is apolitical. The particular agendas of those two texts lie beyond the scope of this study. However, what is crucial is that the versatility of order in Photios and the *SV*, whether the emperor is mentioned first or last, and the varied nature of the account of imperial contributions, whether gatherer, assistant, or completely uninvolved, are all flattened in the *VM* to produce a formulae of council gathering in which essentially the only constants are the pope (and his envoys) and the emperor. Councils therefore are gathered with the 'great Caesar Constantine', or with 'the great Caesar

¹¹⁰ 'τὴν τε σύνοδον ἀθροίζων καὶ λαμπροτέραν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀπεργαζόμενος', Photios, *Letters*, 1.88-90.

¹¹¹ 'ὁ ἐν χριστιανοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀπόστολος', *SV*, 35.

¹¹² 'πρόμαχος καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς εὐσεβείας γνωριζόμενος', 'τὴν πατρώαν καὶ βασιλείον ἀρχὴν', Photios, *Letters*, 1.169-70; 1.214-5.

¹¹³ *SV*, 77.

¹¹⁴ 'βασιλεὺς ὁ μικρὸς Θεοδοσίος ἐν Ἐφέσῳ τῶν διακοσίων μακαρίων πατέρων τρίτην οἰκουμένην σύνοδον συγκροτηθῆναι ἐκέλευσεν', *Ibid.*, 84.1-3.

¹¹⁵ 'Ἡ δὲ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμένη τετάρτη σύνοδος τὸν ἐν βασιλεῦσιν εὐσεβέστατον Μαρκιανὸν συμπαρόντα καὶ συμπνέοντα ἔχουσα', Photios, *Letters*, 1.216-7. 'Ἀλλὰ καὶ Πουλχερία ἡ εὐσεβὴς ἀγούστα διεγείρειν τὸν σύζυγον οὐ κατώκησε σύνοδον οἰκουμένην τετάρτην ἐν Χαλκηδόνι τῶν ἑξακοσίων τριάκοντα θεοφόρων πατέρων ἀθροίσασθαι', *SV*, 92.1-3.

Theodosios' (whom neither Photios nor the SV consider was involved).¹¹⁶ The VM omits Theodosios II, but continues with the 'orthodox Caesar Marcian', with the 'god-pleasing Justinian' or with 'the honourable Constantine Caesar.'¹¹⁷ All of these come after the pope, and where the pope is always in the nominative, they are always grammatically subordinate, in all cases, apart from Constantine the Great where the grammatical construction is slightly different and uses a genitive, the emperor is put in an instrumental of accompaniment.

A peculiar structure of religious and political authority emerges. The pope is front and centre in the gathering of ecumenical councils which, as already discussed were not nearly as influential in the west as they were in the east. And yet, despite the papal primacy, imperial authority comes second, often before or instead of other patriarchal sees. This bi-partite system of power essentially acknowledges one ecclesiastical and one political ruler. To my knowledge such a rendering of the councils is original. I argue that this synopsis reveals the structure of authority which underlies the rest of the VM, and guides both the organisation of old material and the insertion of so-called new material into the narrative. The text begins with establishing these sources of authority by presenting them as responsible for the very order of orthodoxy, and as emerging from a line of Old Testament prophets, and New Testament evangelists. It then goes on to use the pope and emperor for the justification and legitimation of the Methodian position in Moravia. This is evident first and foremost in the VM's re-telling of the VC, through which the VM inserts Methodios as an actor in the story of Cyril.

2.III 'AND METHODIOS WITH HIM': THE LIFE OF CYRIL IN THE *LIFE OF METHODIOS*

As noted above, it is a fact little reflected upon that Methodios barely features in the VC. He is absent both in the most studied moments of the text, such as the invention of the Slavonic alphabet, but also in moments where it would seem natural for him to be mentioned – such as the section on Cyril's childhood offering information about his father and six siblings.¹¹⁸ On the basis of this, I will in turn assess the representation of this early material in the VM to argue two things. The first is that the author of the VM, had no knowledge of the life of Methodios prior to his arrival in Moravia as a papal representative, beyond that which is contained in the VC; and that all the so-called 'new' material about the early life of Methodios is fictitious, inserted into the text to strengthen key arguments proposed by the VM and its rendering of Methodios as papal representative. And secondly, that the VM redistributes the agency and power of Cyril in the VC either to Methodios (and therefore the two of them as a pair) or to the pope. This

¹¹⁶ 'вѣликаго цѣсара Константина', 'съ великимъ цѣсаремъ ѳеодосіемъ', VM, 1.33; 1.34.

¹¹⁷ 'съ правобѣрнымъ цѣсаремъ Маркианомъ', 'съ богоугоднымъ Юстинианомъ', 'съ устынымъ Константиномъ цѣсаремъ', 1.36, 1.37, 1.38.

¹¹⁸ VC, 2.1-2 (birth), 14-16 (Moravian mission).

either makes the acts of Cyril appear as a part of a unified plan Cyril shared with his brother, (a sentiment absent from the *VC*, but dominant in plenty of modern scholarship) or it elevates the pope, as a source of legitimacy. This latter elevation is in line with what I have shown in the previous section, to be the propagation of papal primacy in the *VM* more broadly.

The *VM* first inserts Methodios into the stories about the life of Cyril when it narrates the mission to the Khazars, thus omitting the caliphal visit. It is clear from the *VM* account of the Khazar mission, that the author did not have access to any new information to add to the course of events at the Khazar court. Omitting the seven full pages of debates found in the *VC*, and even the short mention of Methodios in the *VC* on the journey back from Khazaria, the *VM* simply stresses that:

‘[...] СЪ ЖЕ МОЛНТВОЮ А ФИЛОСОФЪ СЛОВЕСЫ ПРЕМОЖЕТЬ Я Н ПОСРАМНСТЕ’¹¹⁹

‘[...] and he [Methodios] with prayers, and the philosopher with words, they overcame and embarrassed them [the Jews]’

The explicit insertion of Methodios in this narrative does two things. The first, is to distribute the agency of Cyril alone in *VC* to both Cyril and Methodios. The second is to diminish the role of disputation by subordinating it to prayer. In this abbreviated account therefore, the careful balance between revelation and education found in the *VC* is rewritten. Prayer is no longer simply a source of revelation of knowledge to be used in disputation, as in the *VC*; prayer alone is an agent in this scene, and one with equal if not greater effect. Placing Methodios and his method of countering heathens first, the *VM* suggests that hierarchically prayer is superior to philosophical words, even though what the actual effect of prayer was in the ‘embarrassing and overcoming’ of the Jewish scholars remains unclear.

Methodios is also inserted into the Moravian mission, which is narrated immediately after the abbreviated account of the trip to Khazaria. The request for a bishop from Rastislav in the *VC*, becomes a request for teachers from Rastislav and Sviatopluk in the *VM*. Other than this, the emperor’s initial words to Cyril are much the same. In the *VC* he tells him that, ‘no one else can carry this out like you’, which is simply paraphrased in the *VM*.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ *VM*, 4.4.

¹²⁰ ‘НЕ МОЖЕТЬ НИЪ НИКТОЖЕ НСПРАВНТИ ЯКОЖЕ ТЫ’, *VC*, 14.8. ‘НИЪ СЕГО ДА НЕ МОЖЕТЬ СЪТВОРНТИ РАЗВЪ ТЕБЕ’, *VM*, 5.6.

The *VM* proceeds by including Methodios in the imperial instructions to go to Moravia and dilutes Cyril's agency in the very account of the invention of the alphabet. Both agree that God made the letters appear to Cyril, and without granting creative agency to Cyril as an actor. The *VC* notes:

‘[...] ВЪСКОРѢ ЖЕ ꙗкоу БОГЪ ЯВИ, ПОСЛУШАЕ МОЛИТВѢ СВОИХЪ РАБѢ И АБНѢ СЛОЖИ ПИСМЕНА НАУАТЬ БЕСѢДѢ ПИСАТИ ЕУАГГЕЛСКѢ: НСПРѢВА БѢ СЛОВО И СЛОВО БѢ ОУ БОГА И БОГЪ БѢ СЛОВО И ПРОУЧЕ’¹²¹

‘[...] and soon, God revealed them [the letters] to him, having listened to the prayer of his servants, and he immediately put together the letters and began to write the words of the evangelist: in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and so forth’

Whereas the *VM* renders this as:

‘[...] ДА ТОУ ЯВИ БОГЪ ФЛОСОФУ СЛОВЕНСКИ КНИГЫ И АБНѢ ОУСТРОИВЪ ПИСМЕНА И БЕСѢДОУ СЪСТАВЛЪ ПОУТИ СЯ ИАТЪ МОРАВЪСКАДО, ПОИМЪ МОФЕОДНѢ’¹²²

‘[...] and God revealed the Slavonic books to the philosopher, and he, having immediately arranged the letters, and having compiled a text/speech, headed on the road to Moravia, taking Methodios with him.’

The ‘text’ put together by Cyril may well be the Gospel mentioned in the *VC*. But the omission of an explicit mention of the Gospel, and its replacement by the vague ‘word’ or ‘speech’ (‘БЕСѢДОУ’) goes some way toward diminishing Cyril's agency. The fact that Cyril writes the Gospel in the *VC* is crucial in the unfolding of that narrative due to the forthcoming New Testament disputation. Here, no such dispute follows, and no such narrative structure exists, so the *VM* can spare Cyril some of his success, and shift significance towards ‘Methodios with him.’

More crucially, where Cyril retreats to prayer by himself in the *VC*, the *VM*, makes clear that both brothers retreated to prayer, ‘together with others who were in the same spirit as them.’¹²³ Thus it is not only the actual putting together of the alphabet that the *VM* makes less sacred by removing the writing of the Gospel. The context in which this happens redistributes Cyril's agency to Methodios and others, and this is consistent with the redistribution in the Khazar debates. The *VM* seeks both to increase the role of

¹²¹ *VC*, 14.14.

¹²² *VM*, 5.11.

¹²³ ‘НА МОЛИТВОУ СЯ НАДОЖИСТА И СЪ ННѢМН, НЖЕ БАХОУ ТОГОЖЕ ДОУЧА’, *VM*, 5.10.

Methodios, who is now credited with some of the prayers (once again) that led to the alphabet revelation, but also to elevate different kinds of legitimacy to those found in the VC. Cyril's disputations and his education are side-lined here in favour of the prayer of Methodios or elsewhere, as we shall see shortly, the pope and the institution of the church.

The most striking divergence between the narratives of Cyril's travels in the VC and VM is to do with the order of events in the immediate aftermath of the mission to Moravia and is well noted in scholarship.¹²⁴ As noted in the introduction, my purpose is not to resolve these contradicting accounts, but rather, to explain them. In the VC, the lone philosopher Cyril ended his time in Moravia, when he was invited to Balaton, where Kočel welcomed him; Kočel then received the Slavonic gospel, before Cyril headed to Venice to hold the third major disputation in the VC, with Latin bishops on trilingualism.¹²⁵ Pope Hadrian II (867-872) then heard about Cyril and called him to Rome, joyfully receiving the relics of St Clement. Cyril died in Rome shortly afterwards and his brother Methodios appeared trying to take his body to Mount Olympus. In the VM, however, the order of these events is entirely reframed. Whilst the two brothers are both in Moravia for the initial mission, Pope Nicholas (858-867) calls them to Rome, and immediately legitimises their teaching by placing the Slavonic gospel on the altar of St Paul and anointing Methodios.¹²⁶ Subsequently, it is in Rome rather than Venice, that trilingual priests object to the Slavonic gospel. Then Cyril dies in Rome and Methodios is sent alone to Kočel in Pannonia by the pope.

The encounter with trilingualists, in particular, is transformed entirely by the VM. Their objection that there ought to only be three holy languages is not refuted by Cyril's eloquence. Instead, the pope resolves this problem.

**‘[...] АПОСТОЛѢ ПИЛАТЪНЫ И ТРЪЯЗЫУЪННѢ НАРЕКАЪ ПРОКЛАТЪ
И ПОВЕЛЪ КДННОМОУ ЕПИСКОУПОУ, НЖЕ БЪ ТОЮЖЕ ЯЗЕЮ БОЛЪНЪ И
СВѢТѢ ОТЪ ОУЧЕНИКЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКЪ ТРИ ПОПЫ А В АНАГНОСТА’¹²⁷**

‘[...] and the pope having called them Pilatists and trilingualists, cursed them and ordered one bishop, who was sick with this sickness, to anoint three priests from the Slavonic students and two readers.’

Rather than simply distribute Cyril's agency to Methodios, here Cyril is replaced altogether by the pope. This results in a significant reframing of religious authority. In the VC, it is accepted that an impious

¹²⁴ Most recently by Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.84-5, amongst others.

¹²⁵ VC, 15-6. On the dispute with the Venetians, see: Chapter 1.IV.3.

¹²⁶ **‘ПОЛОЖЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКѢ ЕВАНГЕЛНѢ НА ОЛТАРѢ СВѢТААГО ПЕТРА АПОСТОЛА, СВѢТѢ
ЖЕ НА ПОПОВЪСТВО БЛАЖЕНААГО МЕТОДНЪ’**, VM, 6.1

¹²⁷ VM, 6.4.

belief can be corrected through disputation. In the *VM* the individual is replaced by the institution of the church. The *VM* is explicit that the pope names the heresy and curses its proponents. This, of course, is perfectly in line with the pope as presented in the synopsis of the ecumenical councils earlier in the *VM* – he gathers councils and he anathemises the heretics. Moreover, resolution comes not through persuading the Latins otherwise as in the *VC*, but through the use of the religious hierarchy of the church to order those who disagree to anoint the Slavonic students. The legitimacy of Slavonic is not expressed through careful citation of scripture, as in the *VC*, but through the institutionalisation of its preachers.

At this stage the *VM* disposes with Cyril altogether. Even though he goes to Balaton (alone) in the *VC*, the *VM* has Cyril die prior to this mission. On his premature deathbed, the text once again seeks to stress the role of Methodios. In doing so, the *VM* formulates precisely the kind of united purpose the two brothers are seen as having in modern historiography. Cyril tells his brother to continue their pursuit, and in a speech vastly different from his *VC* death-bed prayer, he notes:

‘СѢ, БРАТѢ, БѢ СΟΥПРОУГА БАХОБѢ, КДННОУ БРАЗДОУ ТАЖАЩА, Н
АЗЪ НА ЛѢСѢ ПАДАЮ СВОИ ДѢНЬ СЪКОНУАБЪ’¹²⁸

‘Here, brother, we were both in a yoke, pulling one plough, and I fall in the field, having completed my days’

This sense of the togetherness of the brothers, ubiquitous in scholarship, is nowhere to be seen in the *VC*. This evocative agrarian metaphor of brotherhood, however, is widely used in funerary literature in Greek and Latin. Vavřínek has already pointed to a similarity with *Oration 43* of Gregory of Nazianzus, upon the death of Basil of Caesarea, which notes that the parting of Gregory and Basil when the latter left Athens was like the cutting of a body in two, ‘or like the parting of two oxen that have shared the same manger and yoke, bellowing piteously for each other in distress at their separation.’¹²⁹ But the very same metaphor can be found in Ambrose, the archbishop of Milan’s oration upon the death of his brother.

‘Bos bovem requirit, seque non totum putat, et frequenti mugitu pium testator amorem, si forte defecerit cum quo ducere collo aratra consuevit: et etgo te, frater, non requiram?’¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Ibid., 7.2.

¹²⁹ Vavřínek, ‘Staroslověnské životy’, p.115. ‘ἡ μόσχων συντρόφων καὶ ὁμοζύγων διάζευξις γοερὸν μυκωμένων ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοις καὶ οὐ φερόντων τὴν ἀλλοτρίωσιν’, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 43*, in *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée* ed. F. Boulenger, (Paris, 1908), 24.4; Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, *Funeral Orations* trans. L. McCauley, M. McGuire, (Washington, 2003), pp.48-9.

¹³⁰ Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, *On his Brother Satyrus*, in Sancti Ambrosii, ‘De Excessu Fratris sui Satyri’, in *Opera Omnia, Juxta eiditionem monachorum sancti benedicti*, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1836), 8. I am grateful to Dr Efthymios Rizos for pointing this similarity out.

‘If ever an ox has sought the stricken mate with which it was accustomed to be yoked to the plough, and has felt that a part of itself is missing and has given proof of its tender affection by frequent bellowing, why, brother should I not long for you?’¹³¹

The *VM*’s insistence, through the mouth of Cyril and through a well-established metaphor for brotherhood, that the brothers were doing the same work the whole time is perhaps the clearest example of the consequences of re-telling the *VC* source material in this text. Not only does the author seek to insert Methodios in the *VC* stories of mission, but also to use the protagonist of the latter to assert that Methodios’s work had the same purpose as that of Cyril.

In short, the *VM* is a radical departure from the *VC*, not only in its narrative order or account of events and in the insertion of Methodios in the Moravian mission to begin with. It is also an ideological re-framing of the *VC* material and its rhetorical preoccupation. Key to this re-framing is the repositioning of Cyril, reduced to one half of a brotherly pair, toward the institutionalisation of the Slavonic vernacular. This institutionalisation is performed through the two authority figures, emperor and pope, elevated in the opening section of the *VM*. This institutionalising agenda of the *VM* is not only present in the re-telling of the early *VC* material. Rather it also comes into clearer focus when analysing the ‘new material’ inserted into the text, which helps formulate another key relationship in the *VM*, between Methodios and the Slavs.

2.IV METHODIOS AND THE SLAVS

As noted above, I maintain that most of the of so-called ‘new information’ inserted into the *VM* narrative of Cyril’s missions prior to Balaton is not informed by another source to which the author had access, but rather that it is invented and inserted specifically to support Methodios’ later appointment as archbishop in Moravia. This added information helps to consolidate a second relationship, not between Methodios and the pope, but between Methodios and the Slavs, upon which his institutional legitimacy as a bishop is based. As demonstrated in the previous chapter such a relationship was not a core part of the *VC*, and there is no sense that the Slavonic mission is a difference in kind rather than degree within Cyril’s educational and disputational trajectory. This relationship between Methodios and the Slavs is formalised and strengthened not only by the pope but also by the Byzantine emperor, whose secular authority is recognised from the very outset of the *VM* in the summary of the ecumenical councils. In turn I will address the ‘new information’ in the early life of Methodios, where his legitimacy is assured by the emperor, before turning to the cause which the information is inserted to support, namely the mission to Moravia and Balaton where Methodios’ legitimacy is assured largely by the pope.

¹³¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, *Funeral Orations*, trans. McCauley, McGuire, p.164.

The first instance of what historians have considered to be ‘new information’ in the *VM* is to do with Methodios’ time prior to entering Mount Olympus since, as already noted, in the *VC* Methodios first appears as a monk, already on Mount Olympus. The *VM* does two key things with the family and early years of Cyril and Methodios. The first is to remove the specific Byzantine titles of Leo, Cyril’s father, provided in the *VC*, where he is said to hold the ‘rank of *droungarios* under the *strategos*.’¹³² This title makes good sense in the *VC*, and has been demonstrated by Ševčenko to have particular social connotations in ninth-century Byzantium, which can help Byzantine educated readers situate Cyril’s family within Byzantine society.¹³³ Its omission from the *VM* fits within what I argue more generally, through the church councils and the re-telling of the life of Cyril, to be the de-Byzantinisation of the story of the brothers, and its re-configuration around a papal and central-European core. The Moravian author of the *VM* may not have known or understood these titles or may have thought them irrelevant to their intended readership. Instead, the *VM* notes that Methodios is given a secular position of power in the region, the role of which is somewhat unclear.

‘ДОНДЕЖЕ ЦЕСАРЬ БЫСТРОСТЬ ЕГО, КНАЖЕНННН КМОУ ДАСТЬ
ДЪРЖАТИ СЛОВѢНСКО, РЕЧЕ ЖЕ АЗЪ, ЯКО ПРОЗЪРА, КАКО Н ХОТАШЕ
ОУЧНТЕЛА СЛОВЕНННМЪ ПОСЛАТИ Н ПЕРВАГО АРХИЕПИСКОУПА, ДА
БЫ ПРООУЧНЛЪ СЯ ВСЕМЪ ОБЫЧАЕМЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКЫНМЪ Н ОБЫКЛЪ
Я ПО МАЛОУ’¹³⁴

‘And when the Caesar heard about his quickness, he gave him a Slavonic ‘kniazhenie’ (lordship) to hold, I would say, as if he prophesised he was going to send [him] as a teacher to the Slavs and first archbishop, in order that he had studied all the Slavonic customs and began to become accustomed to them [the Slavs] little by little’

Francis Dvornik has argued that a ‘khiazhenie’ is the Greek ‘archontia’ (ἀρχοντία), an administrative unit smaller than a theme, and that this was the Strymon ‘archontia’, north of Thessaloniki, which was later turned into a theme and is attested to by the ninth-century seal of an ‘archōn’ (ἄρχων) of Strymon.¹³⁵ But an ‘archōn’ (ἄρχων) of Strymon is not found in the Uspenski *Taktikon*, or list of offices, which dates to ca.842-843 and is not textually attested elsewhere until Philotheos’ *Kletorologion*, or *Lists*

¹³² ‘САНЬ ДРАГАР’СКЫН ПОДЪ СТРАТИГОМ’, *VC*, 2.1.

¹³³ I. Ševčenko, ‘On the Social Background of Cyril and Methodios’, repr. in his *Byzantium and the Slavs*, (Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp.479-492.

¹³⁴ *VM*, 2.5.

¹³⁵ F. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague, 1933), pp.15-8. ‘Seal of Bardas Imperial Spatharios and Archon of the Strymon (ninth century)’, *Dumbarton Oaks Online Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, (<https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

of *Precedence*, a list of offices dated to September 899.¹³⁶ This means it may well have post-dated the mission to Moravia in ca.864.

Furthermore, whilst there are twenty-five ninth-century ‘archōn’ office holders in the largest Byzantine seal database hosted by Dumbarton Oaks, the title could also be applied in a neutral way to refer to foreign rulers as well as imperial bureaucrats.¹³⁷ That an ‘archōn’ ruled an ‘archontia’ therefore is far from obvious. In fact, the noun ‘archontia’ is rather rare in Byzantine literature. A word search of the word, and all its declensions, in the whole corpus of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, the largest corpus of ancient, medieval and early modern Greek texts, offers a mere thirty-five results.¹³⁸ By contrast a word search for ‘archon’ gives us over 9,000. Of the thirty-five attestations of ‘archontia’, only six date to the tenth century or earlier.¹³⁹ Of these six, three use the word figuratively or abstractly, not referring to a particular ruler or ruler, but to rule in general, often in a generic Christian context.¹⁴⁰

The only three references to an ‘archontia’ in the singular, as an area of rule in the rather comprehensive, albeit of course not complete corpus of the *TLG*, all come from the corpus of Constantine Porphyrogenitos. I have found two more attestations of the word as an administrative title with the help of the *LBG*, in the genitive plural ‘archontiōn’ (‘ἀρχοντιῶν’). Across these examples the title is used to refer to small polities in the west Balkans, Lombardy and the Crimea and Bosphorus.¹⁴¹ The only constant across the five examples seems to be that they refer to territories *not* within the rule of Byzantium. The term seems to indicate a rather generic secular lordship, but it seems highly unlikely that in this instance it

¹³⁶ F. Uspenski, ‘Vizantiiskaia tabel’ o rangakh’, *Izvestiia russkogo arkheologicheskogo rnstituta v Konstantiropole*, 3 (1898), pp.98-137. Philotheos, *Kletorologion*, ed., trans. N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des 9e et 10e siècles* (Paris, 1972), pp.80-235.

¹³⁷ The people called ‘archon’ in the protocols for greetings in the *Book of Ceremonies*, for examples, includes a range of peoples whose dominion would not be considered an ‘archontia’: Armenian lateral rulers, the rulers the Caucasian Albania, Bulgaria, Sardinia, Russia, the Pechenegs, and even the ‘archontes’ of the Turks. Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. J. J. Rieske, R. Niebhur, trans. A. Moffatt, M. Tall (Leiden, 2017), II.46-48.

¹³⁸ *TLG*, (<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/inst/tsearch.jsp?s=15>) (last accessed: January, 2020)

¹³⁹ The bulk of results actually come from twelfth-to-fourteenth-century monastic acts and *typika* (nine results), and early modern (fifteenth to seventeenth century) Greek texts (twelve results) such as Theodore Zygomalas and Marinus Buniales. *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Theodore of Stoudite, uses it as a synonym for ‘arches’ (‘ἀρχῆς’). ‘Τηλικούτης οὖν ἐπιλαβόμενοι ἀρχῆς καὶ ἀρχοντίας, ὧ τέκνα, καὶ ταῦτα δωρεὰν παρὰ θεοῦ’, Theodore Studites, *Sermones Catecheseos Magnae*, 1-2.23-25, in *S. Patris Nostri Theodori Studitae, Magnae Catecheseos Sermones, Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* 9/2 (*Cat.* 1-77), ed. J. Cozza-Luzi, (Rome, 1888-1905). John Chrysostom uses it abstractly: ‘Τούτων τοίνυν ὡς προεῖρηται τὴν ἐξουσίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχοντίαν καὶ τὸν ζῆλον διαδέχονται οἱ τίμιοι διδάσκαλοι’, John Chrysostom, *In Joannem Theologum*, in *MPG*, 59, (Paris, 1857-1866), pp.614.9-10. And in the *Life of Gregentios* it is a proper noun, the name of a woman: ‘Ἡ δὲ μακαρία Ἀρχοντία (τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὄνομα τῇ αἰοδίμῳ ἐκείνῃ γυναικί)’, *The Life of Gregentios of Taphar*, 8.232.

¹⁴¹ Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *De administrando imperio*, 30.99-101 (West Balkans), 27.1-2 (Lombardy). Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. trans. C. Mango (Washington, DC, 1990), 45.9-10 (Crimea).

is referring to a specific, historically accurate administrative post that could have been given to Methodios in Thessaloniki.

Rather, it seems more likely that the use of this term by the author of the *VM* is best explained within the text and its immediate surroundings rather than through some knowledge of a sometime existent, possibly local administrative office in Byzantine Greece. The emperor, as established in Part I, was a key figure of secular authority in the world of the *VM*. Thus, given the known Byzantine background of the saint, the author ingeniously inserted a direct appointment by the emperor, of Methodios to a Slavic ‘kniazhenie’. What this achieves is that Methodios is already connected to the Slavs from his youth, by one of two kinds of legitimate authority in the *VM*.

In fact, the text makes it clear that this appointment was made to serve a particular function in the narrative. The author comments – in the only use of the first person singular in the text – that with this appointment it was ‘I say, as if [the emperor] prophesised, how he was going to send him as a teacher of the Slavs and their first archbishop.’¹⁴² It is perhaps best read with a smirk on the author’s part. They seek to make a clear textual connection between this imperial appointment and the later ecclesiastical one, and they are quite happy to do it in the most unsubtle manner possible.

There are broader political consequences of this appointment by the unspecified Byzantine emperor, and a more immediate reason, specific to the language of the text why the author may have chosen the word ‘kniazhenie’. The *VM* does not simply strengthen the legitimacy of Methodios. It also weakens the legitimacy of Frankish political authority over the Slavs. There are three kinds of political titles in the *VM*. There is the king (‘**ΚΟΡΟΛΑ**’) on the Western front, the Caesar (‘**ЦЕСАРЬ**’) or emperor, and then there is the ‘Ruler (‘kniaz’) of the Slavs’ or ‘Slavic ruler (‘kniaz’), (‘**КНАЗЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКЪ**’), which refers to Rastislav and Kočel.¹⁴³ When the emperor appoints Methodios, he appoints him to a ‘Lordship (‘kniazhenie’) of the Slavs’, or ‘Slavic lordship (‘kniazhenie’)’ (‘**КНАЖЕННЕ СЛОВЕНСКО**’).¹⁴⁴ It is never expressed thus in the text, but that would make Methodios, technically a ‘Slavic ruler (‘kniaz’)’ (‘**КНАЗЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКЪ**’) like Rastislav and Kočel. It seems therefore, that although the primary reason for inserting this clearly fictitious appointment is to do with connecting Methodios to the Slavs from an early age, the text also more subtly suggests that the emperor has power to appoint political rule

¹⁴² ‘**рече же азъ, яко прозъра, како н хоташе оуучитѣла словѣннѣмъ посълати н първаго архієпискоупа**’, *VM*, 2.5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.1 (king), 2.5. (Ceaser), 5.1 (Slavic *kniaz*)

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.5.

over Slavic peoples, over and above western kings. By contrast, the king (‘**КРОЛА**’), on the Western frontier, is described explicitly as ‘an enemy of Moravia.’¹⁴⁵

It is worth noting here that there is only one other package of original information in the early life of Methodios, for which it is clear the VM uses another source. The text provides a very specific account of the monastery Methodios joins after his return from the Khazar mission – Polychronion (‘**ПОΛΗΧΡΟΝΗ**’). This monastery itself remains hard to find in Byzantine records and, as Francis Thomson has argued, has been incorrectly identified with the monastery of Polychnion where Theophanes Confessor was made a monk.¹⁴⁶ Even if Thomson is correct that Polychron is to be distinguished from Polychnion, then the VM offers extremely precise information about the monastery ‘which had an income of up to twenty-four [measures] of gold and in which there lived more than seventy monks.’¹⁴⁷ The source for this clearly must be some sort of typicon of a monastery, called perhaps Polychron, perhaps Polychronion, probably on Olympus. But this anomaly remains the only new information inserted into the early life of Methodios in the VM which has an external source, rather than simply being fictitiously added to better frame later events. It does not affect the argument that the text is proposing more broadly, however, and the way it uses ‘new’ information to do so.

Leaving this anomaly aside, the connection between Methodios and the Slavs is ratified by secular authority in this first instance of new information in the VM. The first mission to Moravia, sent by the emperor, marks a second institutional strengthening of the association between Methodios and the Slavs. This strong relationship between Methodios and the Slavs has no parallel in the VC. The VC does not even mention the fact that Cyril speaks Slavonic; it is simply assumed from the fact he receives the alphabet.¹⁴⁸ The VC presents the invitation from Rastislav as a question of conversion which in turn reveals the high status of the Byzantine polity as a law-giver.

**‘ЛЮДЕМЪ НАШНМЪ ПОГАН’СТВА СЕ ѠТВРЪГ’ШНМЪ Н ПО ХРНСТІАН’СКИ
СЕ ЗАКОНЪ ДРЪЖЕЩЕМЪ, ОУУНТЕЛѦ НЕ НМАМЫ ТАКОГО, НЖЕ НИ БЫ
ВЪ СВОИ ЯЗЫКЪ НСТОУЮ ВЪРѢ ХРНСТІАН’СКѢЮ СКАЗАЛЪ, ДА СЕ БЫШЕ Н
ННЫ СТРАНЫ ЗРЕЩЕ ПОДОБНИИ НАМЪ. ТО ПОСЛАНЪ, ВЛАДЫКО,**

¹⁴⁵ ‘**БРАГОУ Моравскаго**’, VM, 9.1.

¹⁴⁶ F. Thomson, ‘The Name of the Monastery where Theophanes Confessor Became a Monk: ΠΟΛΙΧΝΙΟΝ OR ΠΟΛΥΧΡΟΝΙΟΝ?’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 125 (2007), pp.120-138.

¹⁴⁷ ‘**НМОУЖЕ КСТЬ СЪМЪРА К Н Д СПОУДОБЕ ЗЛАТА, А ОЦЬ ОБЕЛѢ О ВЪ ННМЪ КСТЬ**’, VM, 4.6.

¹⁴⁸ VC, 14.6-9, 13-14.

ЕПИСКОПА И ОУЧИТЕЛЯ ТАКОГО, ШТО ВАСЬ БО НА ВСЕ СТРАНЫ ДОБРЬ
ЗАКОНЬ ИСХОДЯТЪ'¹⁴⁹

‘Our people have turned away from paganism, and abide by Christian law, yet we do not have such a teacher, who would tell us the true Christian faith in our language, in order that other countries having seen us would imitate us. So send us, ruler, such a bishop and teacher, for it is from you that good law is given to all regions.’

The VC focuses on the act of conversion, which has already occurred, and on Christian law in particular. The leader does not even identify himself or his people as Slavs, and the VC calls him a ‘Moravian ruler’ (‘**Морав’скы князь**’).¹⁵⁰ He simply requests vernacular preaching. In fact, nowhere in the account of the initial mission and invitation to Moravia is the language or ethnicity of those involved specified in the VC.¹⁵¹ It is not until Cyril’s arrival in Balaton, that the books he is translating are specified as ‘Slavonic’¹⁵², and it is not until the Venetian debate that the letters are referred to as being created ‘for the Slavs’ by the Latin priests.¹⁵³ That is not to say that Cyril did not preach in Slavonic, or that Rastislav did not speak Slavonic, but simply that this was not of primary significance for the author and argument of the VC.

In contrast, the VM, as noted above, first introduces the central European ruler as a ruler (‘*kniaz*’) of the Slavs (‘**князь словѣнскъ**’) and his appeal is not on the basis of Byzantine legitimacy or law giving, but specifically on the basis of ethnicity.¹⁵⁴ The text goes so far as actually to exclude the Byzantine polity itself from the request and make it particular to someone who already has a relationship with the Slavs. The VM renders Rastislav’s request as a paired request with Sviatopluk, his successor, who receives Methodios as archbishop.

‘**ѡако божнѣю многостѣю съдрабнѣмъ и соутѣ въ ны въшьлн
оучителе мнози крѣстниани изъ Влахъ и изъ Грькъ и изъ Нѣмьць
оучаще ны разднѣ, а мы словѣни проста ѹады и не нмамы,
нже бы наставилъ на истинноѹ и разоѹмъ съказалъ. То добрън**

¹⁴⁹ VC, 14.3-5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 14.2

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 14.1-18, 15.1-18.

¹⁵² ‘**вєд’мн словєн’скыи кннгы**’, Ibid., 15.18-19.

¹⁵³ ‘**како си ти сътвориша нынѣ словєнємъ кннгы**’, Ibid., 16.2

¹⁵⁴ VM, 5.1

ВЛАДЫКО, ПОСЪЛН ТАКЪ МОУЖЬ, НЖЕ НЫ НСПРВНТЬ ВЪСАКОУ
ПРАВЬДОУ¹⁵⁵

‘Since we are steady in the mercy of God, there have come to us many Christian teachers from the Vlachs, from the Greeks, and from the Germans, teaching us different [things], but we, the Slavs, are simple children and we do not have someone, who would lead us to truth and would give us understanding. So, good ruler, send us such a man, who would make right every right!’

It is notable that Rastislav does not ask for a bishop in the *VM*, as he does in the *VC*: he simply asks for a teacher. More pertinently, the invitation for a teacher as presented in the *VM* is specifically centred on the Slavs and their nature. It is no coincidence therefore that the *VM* stresses Methodios’ efforts to get to know and learn to love their habits. The ethnic disambiguation of Christian teachers specifically refers to the ‘Greeks’ as one amongst many groups who are not suited to the task. Thus, Rastislav’s request in the *VM* even though writing to a Byzantine emperor, is made essentially to exclude Byzantine missionary activity, and necessitates someone who knows Slavonic specifically, and the Slavs as people. In this way, where the *VC* presents Cyril as an unequivocally Byzantine imperial agent, whose knowledge rests on a Greek-language education, the *VM* seeks to stress the particular non-Greek-ness of the teacher requested by the Rastislav. The relationship established between Methodios and the Slavs, therefore, is crucial to the initial Moravian mission, as a mission with ethnic specificity, one requesting a specific person, rather than the general assistance of the Byzantine polity as a lawgiver. This second imperial act of patronage therefore is explicitly not institutional. The emperor does not appoint Methodios (or Cyril) to a religious post. He once appoints Methodios to a secular lordship (‘kniazhenie’), and once sends him as teacher.

This same affinity between Methodios and the Slavs is also twice strengthened by the pope. The first instance is his letter of response to Kočel’s request for a preacher. The pope replies to Kočel in the following way prior to issuing a bull, associating Methodios with the Slavs in general, by saying he sends him:

‘[...] НЕ ТЕБЕ ЕДИННОМУ ТЪКЪМО НЪ ВСЪМЪ СТРАНАМЪ ТЪМЪ
СЛОВЕНЬСКИМЪ СЪЛЮ Н ОУЧНТЕЛЪ ОТЪ БОГА Н ОТЪ СВАТАГО
АПОСТОЛА ПЕТРА, ПРВАГО НАСТОЛНИКА Н КЛЮЧЕДЪРЖЦА
ЦЕСАРЬСТВЕНЮ НЕБЪННОМУ¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 5.2-3.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.2.

‘[...] not only to you but to all those regions of the Slavs, I send him as a teacher from god and from the holy apostle Peter, the first [enthroned] and key-keeper of the heavenly kingdom’

Thus Methodios, as destined from his youth and through his position, becomes personally associated with the Slavic peoples, and is not sent specifically to one secular ruler or another, but to the people as an ethnic collective category: to all the lands of the Slavs. He is sent, first and foremost however, at this instance as a teacher to all the Slavs. It is only after Kočel receives Methodios, that he writes again sending Methodios back and asking the pope ‘to elevate him to the bishopric in Pannonia.’¹⁵⁷ The pope obliges. Thus, Methodios is twice granted patronage by the highest ecclesiastical authority recognised in the text, once as teacher and once as bishop.

This parallel Methodian elevation, by emperor and pope, is strongly and tightly crafted by the *VM*’s author. The text goes to great lengths to avoid any possibility of confusion about whose authority reigns supreme over what. As noted, the *VM* has the initial request by Sviatopluk and Rastislav be for a teacher not for a bishop as it is in the *VC*. In *VM*’s aforementioned papal letter to Kočel, Rastislav and Sviatopluk, where the pope sends Methodios as a teacher to all the lands of the Slavs, he also offers some narrative clarification on what had formerly occurred when Cyril and Methodios first arrived in Moravia. Namely, the pope notes that the rulers of Moravia and Balaton had asked for a teacher not only from the pope but also from Emperor Michael.¹⁵⁸ Unlike Michael, he was unable to offer a teacher as swiftly, but:

‘ОНА ЖЕ ОУВѢДѢВША АПОСТОЛЬСКАГО СТОЛА ДОСТОЯЩА БАША
СТРАНЫ, КРОМѢ КАНОНА НЕ СТВОРИТЕ НИЧЬОЖЕ, НЪ КЪ НАМЪ
ПРИДОСТЕ И СВАТАГО КЛИМЕНТА МОШИ НЕСОУШЕ’¹⁵⁹

‘the two of them [Cyril and Methodios], having found out that your land [i.e. Moravia and Balaton] belongs to the apostolic throne, did not do anything against the canons, but came to us and brought the relics of Saint Clement’

This passage is key. The author is carefully navigating political and ecclesiastical authorities, to ensure, by using words attributed to the pope himself, that Methodios did nothing uncanonical, and therefore that the initial imperial patronage which sent him and Cyril to Moravia was in fact short lived. The brothers immediately recognized papal authority and the boundaries of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It goes without saying by this point that there is no such concern in the *VC*, where Cyril travels essentially unbothered by

¹⁵⁷ ‘ДА Н ЕМО СВАТНТЬ НА ЕПИСКОУПСТВО ВЪ ПАНОНИИ’, Ibid., 8.17.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.8

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 8.10.

ecclesiastical jurisdiction and spends time in Moravia and Balaton, preaching and converting without hesitation.

The fact the *VM* goes to such length to clarify this, however, points to the complexity of the position the text is trying to propagate. The *VM* is clunkier than the *VC*. Where the latter is propelled forward by its disputations and its roaming protagonist, the *VM* is steeped in complications and clarifications of the story found in the *VC*. Some of these insertions and complications are clearly intending to do little more than include Methodios in the life of Cyril.

However, it is evident that once the author decided to connect and base the validity of Methodios' position as bishop in Moravia on the early life of Cyril, they found the *VC* wanting. Its protagonist and his lengthy disputations offered little interest in or engagement with the institution of the church, and had to be removed, and balanced by prayer or the pope's personal intervention. The *VC*'s account of Cyril's time in Moravia and Balaton without papal approval were clearly out of line with the authorial hierarchy accepted by the *VM* and its author; thus once again the *VM* used the pope to correct this, stressing the brothers immediately bowed to papal jurisdiction. Furthermore, the idea of Kočel in particular, asking Cyril to go to Balaton, as if he had personal agency to choose teachers, is a problem for the *VM*, which has to be resolved by Kočel asking the pope not once, but twice for Methodios, first as teacher and then as bishop. And the *VC*'s appeals to Hellenic learning, Roman territorialism, and Byzantine superiority both in the words of Cyril, but also in the words of Sviatopluk, were found unnecessary, to be omitted, or transformed entirely into an anti-Greek request for Slavonic preachers.

In short, the *VM* is truly a radical transformation of the story of the *VC*. This is made clear from the very outset of the text, which uses the ecumenical councils to establish a bi-partite definition of authority, with the pope as primary ecclesiastical leader, and the emperor as his assistant and only legitimate secular ruler. It then proceeds to utilise both of these authorities to formalise a strong relationship between Methodios and the Slavs upon which Methodios' claim to the bishopric of Pannonia lies. It does so firstly through the emperor. The *VM* insists that the emperor appoints Methodios prophetically to a Slavonic *kniazhenie*, permitting him to learn about the Slavs, and then sends him and his brother more informally as teacher to Moravia. It then strengthens this through a double papal promotion. The request of the Moravian kings is explicitly not for a Greek, and so, only Methodios, with his prior relation to the Slavs, is eligible. Cyril therefore has to die in Rome and Methodios goes to Balaton, but he is sent by the pope not just to Balaton but to all the lands of the Slavs. This initial mission as teacher is then formalised by a second papal appointment, this time sending Methodios as bishop of Pannonia.

In so doing, the *VM* transforms its main source, the *VC*, first and foremost by inserting Methodios into stories from which he is originally absent, whether in Khazaria or Moravia, and secondly by diminishing the agency of Cyril, either by distributing some of it to Methodios, all of it to the pope, or by removing Cyril from crucial moments of the *VC* like the Balaton mission altogether. Thus, Methodios is firstly attached to Cyril, as an ox pulling the same yoke, formulating a fraternal unity in purpose, absent not only from the *VC* but also from the immediate reception of the two brothers in the Latin church. This was only resurrected, as noted earlier, from the fourteenth century, to reach its apotheosis in the nineteenth and dominate historiography to this day. In what follows, I explore the two potential intellectual and intertextual contexts for the production of a text like the *VM*, namely contemporary Byzantine and Latin textual culture, and for the formulation of such a particular model of authority.

2.V THE *LIFE OF METHODIOS* AS NINTH-CENTURY ARGUMENT: BYZANTIUM?

As is clear from the chapter so far, the *VM* does use Byzantine sources, like council-synopses, and seeks to integrate Methodios into Byzantine administrative terminology, albeit in the vaguest possible sense. This strongly suggests the presence of Greek-language materials at the author's disposal. That Greek remained significant in Methodios' circle is also attested by the medieval register of Reichenau Monastery. The monastery was visited by Methodios and his associates most probably on their way back to Moravia, after their release from Bavarian imprisonment sometime in 873.¹⁶⁰ The register for the ninth century records the names of Methodios and five other companions written in Greek, in one majuscule hand: Methodios, Leon, Ignatios, Ioakin (sic), Symeon, and Dragais.¹⁶¹ The script, known as upright ogival, resembles that in other dated ninth-century majuscule hands, such as the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite manuscript in Paris at the French National Library, Gr.437, dated to the early ninth century, and displaying similar descenders on deltas and gammas.¹⁶² Thus, Greek clearly was still spoken in the Moravian bishopric and by those closely associated with Methodios, and this points to the possibility that Greek texts influenced or informed the *VM* and thus had an impact on its intended audience.

As noted in Part I of this chapter, the Byzantine nature of the *VM* as a hagiographical text has long been taken for granted. Most studies of the text also accept the significance of Byzantium as a political entity and its continued contact with the mission as portrayed in the *VM* and thus Byzantium's influence over

¹⁶⁰ F.V. Mareš, 'Die Namen Des Slavenapostels Methodius von Saloniki und seiner Gefährten im Verbrüderungsbuch des Reichenauer Klosters', *Cyrrillomethodianum*, 1 (1971), p.107.

¹⁶¹ 'ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΣ, ΛΕΟΝ, ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΣ, ΙΟΑΚΙΝ, ΣΥΜΕΟΝ, ΔΡΑΓΑΙΣ', Ibid. p.108, Folio image found between pp.112-3.

¹⁶² Pseudo-Dionysius, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gr.437, (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000953x>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

the community that produced the text.¹⁶³ In this section I seek to argue in turn, that neither Byzantine episcopal hagiography nor the actual Byzantine political state can be seen as exerting any significant influence on the text. In fact, the *VM* marks a significant break with Byzantium, both with its literary models and in terms of contact with the political centre and its elite. The residual Greek of this tri-lingual milieu therefore, whilst it served the author by giving them access to materials to manipulate, whether these be ecumenical synopses or the *VC* itself, was no longer paired with the Byzantine imperialism taken as given in the *VC*.

In what follows, Section 2.V.1, I situate the *VM* within contemporary episcopal hagiography in Byzantium. This comes in two sorts, contemporary lives of near contemporary bishops, and medieval accounts of earlier missionary bishops. Neither seems to have any contact with or influence on the construction of Methodios as a bishop and saint in the latter half of the *VM*.

Then, in Section 2.V.2 I address the slightly more elusive question of whether or not the Byzantine political centre continued to have contact with the Moravian milieu when Methodios was made bishop. I argue that it did not, and that the vague portrayal of Byzantine imperial power in the *VM* is best understood not as an actual portrayal of a real emperor, but as a model of secular power to serve as a comparative critique of the immediate threat of Frankish political authority.

2.V.1. Byzantine Bishops

There are two kinds of episcopal hagiographies in the literary culture of Middle Byzantium. The first is the near-contemporary, middle-Byzantine bishop's *vita*. This genre was by no means the dominant kind of *life* produced in Middle Byzantium, even if recent work on Middle Byzantine hagiography has somewhat nuanced the commonplace idea that all of the 'heroes of ninth-century hagiography were neither empresses nor ecclesiastical prelates but chiefly monastics and ascetics dwelling on Mt Olympos in Bithniya.'¹⁶⁴ It has nonetheless become clear that, as Efthymiadis notes, a 'certain increase in bishops is also observable', in particular in the ninth-tenth centuries.¹⁶⁵ Thanks in large part to a recent publication

¹⁶³ This is the basic premise of Dvornik's appropriately titled *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs*, and likewise the guiding assumption of Obolensky's idea of a Byzantine Commonwealth. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, e.g. p.171. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, e.g. pp.145-6. Vlasto, *Entry of Slavs*, pp.9-12. This has been nuanced more recently as isolated periods of state sponsored mission. See: Ševčenko, 'Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium', p.11. And assessed even more critically by Sergei Ivanov, whose conclusions, I largely accept, and will discuss more below, 'Religious Missions', in J. Shepard ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, 2008), pp.304-32. Idem, "*Pearls Before Swine*".

¹⁶⁴ S. Efthymiadis, 'Hagiography from the 'Dark Age' to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes' in his ed. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol.1 (Farnham, 2011), p.110. E. A. Fisher, 'Introduction', to Ignatios the Deacon, *The Life of Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople*, in ed. A-M. Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC, 1998), p.34.

¹⁶⁵ Efthymiadis, 'Hagiography from the "Dark Age"', p.123.

of a collection of mostly previously unedited and unpublished lives of Middle Byzantine saints from Greece, it is possible to review a corpus of contemporary Byzantine bishops in order to establish the kind of blueprint for such hagiography in and around the late ninth century.¹⁶⁶ These include the slightly more familiar Peter, Bishop of Argos (ca.860-930) (*BHG* 1504) and Peter's own funerary oration for Athanasios, Bishop of Methone (ca.825-899) (*BHG* 196), and the lesser known and more poorly recorded saints Theokletos of Bishop of Lakedaimon (ca.800-879) and Demetrianos, Bishop of Kythrea (ca.829-913) (*BHG* 495).¹⁶⁷

Broadly speaking, and Peter of Argos aside, these saints and their lives or funeral orations lack much of the richness or detail of their monastic contemporaries and near-contemporaries such as Ioannikios (ca.762-846) (*BHG* 935), the aforementioned Efthymios the Younger (ca.823-898) or Saint Luke (ca. 890-950) (*BHG* 994), to name but a few.¹⁶⁸ By contrast, some texts I have consulted are much harder to date including the *Life of Theokletos of Lakedaimon*, and in other cases the lifetimes of the bishops themselves remain hard to establish with precision. Thus, I have read these and their overall similarities as evidence of the kinds of tropes and topoi available, rather than any one specific potential model text for the VM.

The central elements of these episcopal texts are twofold. The first is the saints' reluctance to take office, often due to their previous asceticism.¹⁶⁹ The second is the authors' praise of the care the bishops took of their flock, thanks to their various Christian virtues. In the latter, there is a total absence of conversion or missionary work. It is clearly not perceived as the duty of the bishop. To take but one example, the *Funeral Oration of Athanasios Bishop of Methone*, was written sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century and was probably based on a lost life of the bishop. This is an exceptionally useful text as its author, Peter, Bishop of Argos, would in turn receive his own hagiography. Thus, this elaborate account of episcopal virtue, is composed by someone who would in turn themselves be considered episcopally virtuous.

¹⁶⁶ A. Kaldellis, I. Polemis eds., trans., *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece* (Washington, DC, 2019). I am grateful to Professor Antony Kaldellis and the series editor Dr Alice-Mary Talbot, for letting me see the proofs of this volume prior to its publication.

¹⁶⁷ Theodore of Nicea, *The Life of Peter of Argos*, eds., trans. A. Kaldellis, I. Polemis, *Saints of Ninth and Tenth Century Greece*, pp.117-62. Peter of Argos, *Funeral Oration for Athanasios of Methone*, in *ibid.*, pp.69-116. *The Life and Miracles of Theokletos of Lakedaimon* in *ibid.*, pp.163-256. *The Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, in: H. Grégoire ed., 'Saint Demetrianos, évêque de Chytri (île de Chypre)', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 16 (1907), pp.204-40, pp.217-236 (text).

¹⁶⁸ *The Life of St Ioannikios*, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, ed. J. van den Gheyn, vol.2.1 (Brussels, 1894), pp.384-435; trans. D.F. Sullivan, in ed. Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders of Images*, pp.243-353; *The Life of Efthymios the Younger*, eds., trans. A-M. Talbot R. P. H. Greenfield, *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Washington, DC, 2016), pp.1-126; *The Life and Miracles of Saint Luke*, eds., trans. C.L. Connor, W. Connor, (Brookline, MA, 1994).

¹⁶⁹ E.g.: *Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, p.228-30. *Life and Miracles of Theokletos*, 4.2, 5. Theodore of Nicea, *Life of Peter of Argos*, 6.1.

In Peter's account Anastasios is praised primarily for the care of his community. He is commended for acquiring the 'four cardinal virtues, as well as those that follow upon them', and some abstract examples of his prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice are given.¹⁷⁰ He is then favourably compared to classical figures whom he did not resemble: 'he did not act like Zamolxis', 'he did not legislate as Minos did.'¹⁷¹ In turn, he is compared to all those biblical figures he did follow and resemble, as 'his teaching was sowed into the earth of those who listened and looked at him.'¹⁷² His hospitality resembled Abraham, he 'imitated David's forbearance and pity', his 'ardour for preaching the Gospel' resembled the disciples.¹⁷³ There is no indication in the text as a whole, and its twofold comparison of Athanasios, that the act of converting rather than the act of maintaining and strengthening the faith of a flock, was a necessity for a virtuous bishop. The same general themes are reiterated in the shorter account of the *Life and Miracles of Theokletos, Bishop of Lakedaimon*, who probably died around the 879; he is praised for his faith, generosity and moderation before his miracles are recounted, and in the rather elaborate description of the *Life of Demetrianos of Kythrea*, which also commends the former ascetic for his generosity, care and healing.¹⁷⁴

It was not the case however that conversion work was simply unnecessary in Middle Byzantium. That there were many heathens left to convert is made clear by the texts themselves, which reveal occasional acts of conversion. The *Life of Peter of Argos*, for instance presents conversions as the indirect consequence of another of his pastoral virtues, namely generosity. The *Life* discusses a terrible famine in the Peloponnese, which led to the reserves of flour running out.¹⁷⁵ Peter performs a miracle ensuring that the last jar suffices to feed everyone.

‘Ταῦτα θρυλλούμενα σχεδὸν ἀνὰ τὴν ὑπ’ οὐρανόν, ὑπηγάγετο καὶ βαρβάρους, οἱ κατὰ κλέος τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀρετῆς ἀφικνούμενοι, ἐξώμνυντο μὲν τὰ πάτρια καὶ τὴν ἐκ προγόνων θρησκείαν, τῇ δὲ ἡμετέρᾳ μετετάττοντο καθαιρόμενοι καὶ μεταπλαττόμενοι τῷ θείῳ λουτρῷ.’¹⁷⁶

‘These stories spread almost throughout the whole world and attracted even some barbarians to him. They came because of the fame of his virtue, and they foreswore their own customs and

¹⁷⁰ ‘Τὰς μὲν οὖν γενικὰς οὕτω κατώρθωσεν ἀρετὰς καὶ σὺν αὐταῖς τὰς ἐπομένας αὐταῖς’, Peter of Argos, *Funeral Oration for Athanasios*, 7.1.

¹⁷¹ ‘οὐ καθάπερ Ζάμολξις’, ‘οὐ Μίνως Κρήταις νόμους ἐνθείς’, Ibid., 8.1.

¹⁷² ‘ὁ διδασκαλικὸς λόγος διὰ τῆς ἀρίστης πράξεως ἐν τῇ τῶν ἀκουόντων καὶ ὁρώντων κατασπειρόμενος γῇ’, Ibid., 8.2.

¹⁷³ ‘Ἐζήλωσε καὶ Δαυὶδ τὸ ἀνεξίκακον καὶ φιλόθεον’, ‘τὸ σύντονον ἐν τῷ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου κηρύγματι’, Ibid., Abraham: 9.1, David: 9.2, Gospel: 10.1.

¹⁷⁴ *Life and Miracles of Theokletos*, 7.1. Miracles: 13-15; *Life of Demetrianos*, pp.231-2.

¹⁷⁵ Theodore of Nicaea, *Life of Peter of Argos*, 8.1-2.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 9.1.

ancestral faith and embraced our own, having been cleansed and transformed through holy baptism.’¹⁷⁷

Peter’s virtues drove people to conversion. He himself, however, did little but tend to his flock. In short, there is little one can find in the formal genre of episcopal hagiography in the Middle Byzantine period which seems to have influenced the part of the *VM* dealing with Methodios’ time in office. Methodios does initially reject a bishopric when it is offered by the emperor.¹⁷⁸ In this early section of the *VM* he is perhaps most in line with his Byzantine contemporaries. But there is no protest by Methodios when the pope appoints him bishop, nor is there any discussion of his pastoral virtues after his appointment. Rather, the narrative becomes so interspersed with the various challenges that Methodios faces, that aside from three small instances of his prophetic abilities, the text essentially does not talk about what Methodios actually *did* in office, rather than who did or did not support him. The *VM*’s concerns therefore, are far removed from the concerns of a middle-Byzantine episcopal hagiographer.

It is not that mission was not a matter of concern, dispute, and consideration in Byzantium however, as discussed in the chapter concerning the *VC*. Missionary episcopal hagiography does survive in Middle Byzantium, but as a very particular and archaising genre. Missionary bishops appear as the ancient subjects of long, novelistic and often largely mythical hagiographic texts. These kinds of texts are much harder to date, but at least three existed or were composed in or around the ninth and tenth centuries. The *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina* recalls the story of Pankratios sent by apostle Peter himself to evangelise Sicily and must have been written locally in Sicily but found its way to Constantinople in the late eighth century, and certainly before 814.¹⁷⁹ At 250 pages of Greek in its modern edition and double that with its translation, the account is full of inconsistencies and clearly significantly post-dates the events it discusses.¹⁸⁰ This kind of delayed, elaborated and often misinformed engagement with late antique missionary activity is also evident in the aforementioned *Life of Apostle Andrew* by the Monk Epiphanius who decided to follow his footsteps, albeit at times dramatically diverging from Andrew’s route.¹⁸¹ As, Stallman-Pacitti notes, Epiphanius clearly knew the *Life of Pankratios* and is one source for its *terminus ante quem*.¹⁸² Last but not least, *Life of St Gregentios of Taphar*, most likely compiled sometime in the tenth century, offers over a hundred and ten pages of Greek in its modern edition, and

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ *VM*, 4.6.

¹⁷⁹ *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, pp.2-3.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.11-16.

¹⁸¹ *Life of Apostle Andrew* in: *Grecheskie predaniia o apostole Andre*, vol.1: *Zhitiia*, ed. A. Vinogradov, (St Petersburg, 2005).

¹⁸² *Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, p.11.

narrates a mostly imagined fifth-century mission to Yemen by Bishop Gregentios.¹⁸³ These dramatic missions of yesteryear however, whilst at times inter-textually connected with one another, seem to have never interacted with the expectations of contemporary run of the mill Byzantine bishops. Amidst this novelistic sub-genre, the *VM*'s account of Frankish captivity, papal and imperial confirmation appears rather alien, with its political immediacy, terseness and lack of preoccupation with miraculous deeds.

Thus, the more one explores the nature of Middle Byzantine hagiography, the more misplaced appears the truism that the *VM*, must be considered a Byzantine work together with the *VC*. It is clear, that if one were to try to explain or situate the *VM* as a hagiographic monument, one has to look away from Byzantine literary production.

2.V.2 The Byzantine State in the *VM*

As noted in the introduction to Part V of this chapter, it is often, albeit not universally, accepted that the Byzantine state maintained some contact with the Moravian mission after Cyril's death. This is largely based on one vague passage in the text, recording a visit Methodios made to Byzantium late in his career upon the invitation of an unnamed emperor. However, both in this passage and the rest of the *VM* as a text, the reality of the Byzantine imperial centre and its elite appear very far away. Rather, what remains of Byzantine imperial power is a mythical antithesis to the secular Frankish king, who unlike the emperor (as presented in the *VM*) consistently disobeys the pope.

As noted earlier, the author of the *VM* omits specific Byzantine terminology found in the *VC* such as the administrative title of Cyril and Methodios's father. This titular specificity is replaced by the vague assertion that Methodios 'was not of a simple, but from both [parents] of a good and honourable family'.¹⁸⁴ Likewise, in the *VC* the Khazarian mission is framed as an explicit imperial venture. The emperor tells Cyril that if he wishes to go alone he would do well, 'but knowing the imperial ('tsarskuu') country and honour, go honourably with imperial help.'¹⁸⁵ This imperial pride is omitted in the *VM*, where the emperor does not speak at all. The narrative simply notes he sent the philosopher and his brother.¹⁸⁶ The silencing of the imperial nature of diplomacy and missionary work is done most explicitly with Moravia. In the *VM*, the Moravian rulers specifically ask for Slavonic speakers and not Greeks, and the emperor turns to the brothers due to their non-Greek-ness, noting that in Thessaloniki they speak

¹⁸³ *Life of Gregentios of Taphar*, p.6.

¹⁸⁴ 'БѢ ЖЕ РОДА НЕ ХОУДА ОУЗЪ ОБЮДОУ, НЪ БЕЛМН ДОБРА Н УБЪТНА', *VM*, 2.4.

¹⁸⁵ 'НЪ ЦАРЬСКЮ ДРЪЖАВѢ БѢДЫ Н УБЪТЪ, УБЪТНО НАН СЪ ЦАРСКОЮ ПОМОЩНЮ', *VC*, 8.9.

¹⁸⁶ 'ПОСЛА ЦЕСАРЬ ПО ФНЛОСОФА БРАТА НГО ВО КОЗАРЫ', *VM*, 4.1.

Slavonic.¹⁸⁷ This stands in stark contrast with the aforementioned elevation of the Byzantine state in the *VC*, where Rastislav he asks Michael, because ‘it is from you that good law is given to all the regions.’¹⁸⁸

Some of these omissions could be accidental, or simply the product of the general shortening of the *VC* text in its *VM* retelling. However, the consistency with which they occur strongly suggests an intentional erosion of the Byzantine imperial agenda found in the *VC*. Aside from one mention of the name Michael, no names, of parents, emperors, Constantinopolitan teachers or other companions are noted in the *VM*, nor is there any geographic specificity or description of the route to Khazaria. Even the word ‘Constantinople’ is nowhere to be seen even though the *VC* makes clear that Cyril spends plenty of time there and that in the *VM*’s story, Methodios visiting the emperor would necessitate a visit to Constantinople.¹⁸⁹ In many ways, Byzantium and its eastern neighbours, so central to the *VC*, feel very far away in the *VM*.

The *VM* remains a messier document than the *VC* however, because despite diminishing the essential ‘Byzantine-ness’ of the emperor and missionary activities as seen in the *VC*, imperial power as a concept is crucial in the *VM* narrative. But, what of the imperial power in the council synopses? The emperor in this opening section, as noted above, is constructed and then utilised in the *VM* as an inheritor of the Christian prophets and saints, and subsequently as reliable assistant to the formation of Christian orthodoxy, and to the pope.

I suggest that this emperor, found in the *VM* is not *that* emperor, the Byzantine emperor, self-acclaimed inheritor of Roman territory and Hellenistic learning, found in the *VC*, nor is he intended to represent the actual emperor on the ninth-century Constantinopolitan throne. Rather, what we are left with in the *VM* is an abstracted, almost mythological imperial hand, which operates at a distance but unequivocally supports the Methodian mission, in ways that, as the *VM* is keen to stress, completely align with papal jurisdiction. This ideal emperor, or ideal secular ruler, serves a key purpose to be contrasted with the much more immediately felt secular power on the Moravian doorstep, namely the Frankish king or, as the *VM* calls him the ‘enemy of the Moravians.’

As noted above, the *VM* goes to the length of using a letter by Hadrian II to assert that, while they were emperor’s messengers, Cyril and Methodios recognised that Moravia was papal territory and went straight to Rome.¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, the Frankish king ‘together with all [his] bishops’, claims that Methodios

¹⁸⁷ *VM*, 5.1-8.

¹⁸⁸ *VC*, 14.5.

¹⁸⁹ *VM*, 13.

¹⁹⁰ *VM*, 8.4-11.

is ‘teaching on our land.’¹⁹¹ Rather than concede to Methodios’ claim this is the land of St Peter they imprison him for two and a half years, until the pope intervenes, forbidding ‘all the king’s bishops’ from serving mass until they release him.¹⁹² Thus, in the *VM* the emperor does right by the pope whereas the Frankish king does not, regardless of the fact that in the *VC* we see no evidence of Cyril or his imperial patron rushing to appease Rome.

The *VM* presents the Frankish king and his bishops, both of whom disobey papal authority, as the anti-power to the pope and emperor of the ecumenical councils presented at the start of the text. The same ‘they’, referring to the king and his bishops, recurs in the text as an amorphous group trying to challenge Methodios. After his initial arrest, noted above, they are refuted by the pope. A second challenge is posed and a papal letter once again affirms that Methodios is legitimate.¹⁹³ Immediately after this, the unspecified ‘they’, presumably the king and his bishops again, claim that ‘the emperor is angry with him [Methodios], and if he were to find him, he would not have his life.’¹⁹⁴ Instead of anger, the emperor, unnamed, writes to Methodios expressing a desire to see him. Upon his arrival, presumably in Constantinople, the text notes:

‘АБНѢ ЖЕ ШЪДЪЩЮ КМОУ ТАМО ПРИЯТЪ Н СЪ УБЪСТЬЮ ЦЪСАРЬ
БЕЛНКОЮ Н РАДОСТЬЮ Н ОУУЕННѢ КГО ПОХВАЛЪ, ОУДЪРЬЖА ОТЪ
ОУУЕННИКЪ КГО ПОПА Н ДЪАКОНА СЪ КНИГАМИ. БЪСЮ ВОЛЮ КГО
СЪТВОРИ КЛНКО ХОТЪ Н НЕ ОСЛОУШАВЪ НИ О УБЪСОМЪЖЕ¹⁹⁵, ОБЛЮБЕЛЪ Н
ОДАРИ БЕЛЪМИ ПРОБОДАМИ Н ПАКИ СЛАВНО ДО СВОЕГО СТОЛА. ТАКО ЖЕ
Н ПАТРИАРХЪ’¹⁹⁶

‘And immediately he [the emperor] received him who had come, and the emperor praised his teaching with great honour and joy, and he took a priest and a deacon with books from his [Methodios’] students. He carried out all his desires and did not disobey him concerning anything, and he embraced him and gave him many presents, and once again, he gloriously sent him to his throne. And likewise, the patriarch.’

¹⁹¹ ‘НЪ СЪ БЪСЪМИ ЕПИСКОУПИ, ЯКО “НА НАШЕИ ОБЛАСТИ ОУУЕНИШН”’, *VM*, 9.1.

¹⁹² ‘БЪСН КОРОЛКВН ЕПИСКОУПИ’, *VM*, 10.1.

¹⁹³ *VM*, 12.5.

¹⁹⁴ ‘ЦЪСАРЬ СѦ НА НЪ ГНѢВАТЬ, ДА АЩЕ Н ОБРАЩЕТЬ, НѢСТЬ КМОУ ЖИВОТА НМѢТН’’, *Ibid.*, 13.1.

¹⁹⁵ A slightly peculiar phrase. The critical apparatus of Grivec and Tomšič’s edition suggests the meaning to be, a variation on the previous phrase: ‘imperator ei de omnibus credidit’ (‘the emperor trusted him on all matters’). This seems to make most sense. *Constantinus et Methodius*, eds. Grivec, Tomšič, p.163 n.11.

¹⁹⁶ *VM*, 13.1-6.

Studies of the text often discuss this affair as an authentic historical event, in line with a general assumption that the Byzantine state was in contact with the Moravian mission. They insert the names of emperor Basil I and Patriarch Photios, and date it to ca.880, prior to a trip Methodios makes to Rome which is recorded in papal letters.¹⁹⁷

As already argued by Sergei Ivanov, however, there is little evidence of a consistent and coherent imperial missionary ideology in ninth-century Byzantium.¹⁹⁸ Rather, as I have sought to show in Chapter 1, mission was a matter of serious intellectual contention. Moreover, not a word of the Moravian mission survives in Greek language texts. Were it not for this vague passage, it would be easy to assume that certainly by the time Methodios was appointed by the pope, if not before, the Byzantine state apparatus was not interested or involved in the region. No protest is made after Methodios' successors are expelled, and presumably the Latin rite is reintroduced.¹⁹⁹

As Ivanov has demonstrated, a much clearer imperially sponsored missionary agenda can be discerned by the early to mid-tenth century, not least with the mission to Alania sponsored by the Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos.²⁰⁰ This agenda is evident also in the representation of emperors, whose missionary prowess starts to be highly commended. In his tenth-century biography, the *Vita Basili*, the ninth-century emperor Basil I is praised profusely for converting the Slavs of the Western Balkans.²⁰¹ It is this tenth-century image of Basil, and conception of missionary work more generally, that informs Dvornik and Obolensky's imposition of Basil as a historical figure upon the VM text. Yet, credited though Basil is with the conversion of Slavs in the western Balkans, there is no mention of Moravia or Methodios in the *Vita Basili*. Had such an event occurred, I see no reason why it would not have been a perfect addition to the narrative of the tenth-century hagio-biographer.

With all this in mind, and as discussed in the introduction, high political context is not always the best source of information when trying to understand the meanings of texts. Rather, the account of the VM is better explained within rather than without the text. First and foremost, one cannot ignore its vagueness. Neither emperor, nor patriarch, who seems to come to the author as an afterthought, are named. In the VC by contrast, although the current patriarch is not, emperor Michael and the iconoclast patriarch John VII

¹⁹⁷ E.g. Istrin, *1001 let slavianskoi pismenosti*, p.42; Grivec, *Slovanska Apostola*, pp.67-8; Vlasto, *Entry of Slavs*, pp.76-7; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.171; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp.145-6.

¹⁹⁸ Ivanov, "Pearls before Swine", p.92.

¹⁹⁹ Also noted in: Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.107-127.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp.103-106. Theophanes Continuatus, *Vita Basilli*, in: *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo vita Basilii imperatoris aplectitur*, ed., trans. I. Ševčenko, (Berlin, 2011), 54. Some of the Slavs of the western Balkans are coincidentally twice converted in another text associated with Constantine Porphyrogenitus' circle, first by Heraklios and then by Basil. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De administrando Imperio*, 31 (Heraklios), 29 (Basil).

are named. But secondly and more importantly, the *VM*'s portrayal of the emperor is once again in line with the author's presentation of imperial secular authority as the ideal subordinate to papal authority, and as the antithesis of Frankish political authority.

It is by no means incidental that the whole visit to the Byzantine emperor is introduced by an accusation from the Frankish opposition, the elusive 'they' which stands in for the king and his bishops. As noted thus far, the Frankish king and his bishops are painted in the *VM* as an enemy to Moravia, constantly challenging and questioning Methodios' position. The pope and emperor, on the other hand, are established from the outset as the only sources of legitimate authority, which is constantly there to refute challenges. This brief account of imperial support after Frankish challenge, comes immediately after a more substantial account of papal support in response to another episode of Frankish hostility.²⁰²

The image of imperial power in the *VM*, therefore, is abstract and distant, but appears conveniently only to reassert its unequivocal support for Methodios, in harmony with the pope. The model, as set up in the initial account of ecumenical councils, in which the emperor agrees with the pope, is never broken in the *VM*. This is an incredibly simplified image of Byzantine-papal relations in the late ninth century, which were in fact riddled with conflicts over the jurisdiction of Bulgaria and ordination of Patriarch Photios.²⁰³ Thus, the *VM*'s formulation of imperial power is made entirely in refutation of a more local, real, and threatening secular authority found in the Frankish kingdom.

But this is by no means to suggest that Moravia shows no signs of contact with Byzantium, in perhaps less formalised or centralised ways. Recent archaeological work has demonstrated that the lands associated with Great Moravia, across modern day Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia reveal a mixed material culture with influences considered 'western', Carolingian or other, but also 'eastern', or Byzantine.²⁰⁴ For instance, in the early period of Christianisation, eighth to early ninth centuries, burial archaeology reveals men wearing late Avar, or early Carolingian belts and Viking-style axes. Yet we find women decorating themselves with gold and silver rings, and buttons which have been named 'Byzantine-oriental jewellery' or jewellery of the Veligrad or Staré Město type.²⁰⁵ Glass object finds from throughout the ninth century reveal a similar cultural crossroads, with some items, like funnels

²⁰² *VM*, 12.

²⁰³ See: Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross*.

²⁰⁴ See for instance, as well as a number of other individual site summaries in the volume: H. Herold, 'Gars-Thunau, Austria', in P. Kouřil ed., *Great Moravia and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Brno, 2014), p.233-9.

²⁰⁵ L. Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission and the Archbishopric of Methodios on the Basis of Archaeological Sources in the Area of Veligrad- Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, p.75.

and globular beakers, showing contact with the Carolingians, but others such as fragments of lamps, were made from the basic type of Byzantine glass.²⁰⁶

Perhaps less surprisingly, the material culture of religions points to the same. Whilst Poláček has stressed that recent archaeological work has led to the re-dating to the late ninth century of a large number of churches in Mikulčice which were originally thought to be pre-mission, Galuška identifies at least four churches which already stood before the Cyrillo-Methodian mission.²⁰⁷ Even at these earlier sites, commingling is clear: a small lead cross pendant with a picture of Christ and a Greek liturgical inscription on the obverse was found in a grave at Uherské Hradiště, which is considered to be an earlier Christian site.²⁰⁸

However, such materials are neither reducible to the Moravian mission alone, nor to centralised imperially guided interactions. It is highly likely that contact and exchange persisted between people, pilgrims and merchants. But they do not necessarily offer any insight into whether this Moravian milieu and the Greek sources available to it, continued to maintain active contact with Byzantium, as a polity and its political, intellectual and literate cultures. As I have sought to show, it seems most likely that it did not. While Greek, clearly remained present and known in the milieu from which this text emerges, there was a significant discontinuity in knowledge about and contact with, firstly, Byzantine literary models and conventions, and secondly, with the Byzantine imperial elite. In what follows, I argue for a Latinate model for the *VM* as a hagiography, and a Latin language text as its intended opponent.

2.VI THE *LIFE OF METHODIOS* AS NINTH-CENTURY ARGUMENT: THE LATIN WEST

This section posits that Western textual models and intellectual contexts best explain the *VM* as a text. It no longer deals with texts that are cited or referred to explicitly in the *VM*. Rather it moves onto the second and third types of contextualisation carried out in this thesis: what I refer to in the introduction as the generic and the intellectual and inter-textual. As discussed in the introduction, the purpose of these contextualisations is to offer insight, on the one hand, into the author and textual community which produced the text and, on the other, into the discursive milieu which the *VM* targeted. Firstly, I break new ground in seeking to firmly situate the *VM* in the corpus of Latin episcopal hagiography. Parts VI.1.1 and VI.1.2 of this chapter focus on the formal qualities of Latin missionary hagiography. Part VI.1.3 situates

²⁰⁶ L. Galuška, *et al*, 'The Glass of Great Moravia: Vessel and Window Glass, and Small Objects', *The Journal of Glass Studies*, 54 (2012), pp.61-92.

²⁰⁷ Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission', p.76-77; L. Poláček, 'Great Moravian Sacral Architecture. New Research, New Questions', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, p.71.

²⁰⁸ Galuška, 'Christianity in the Period of Byzantine Mission', Fig.6.

the *VM* within this corpus to illuminate the particular approach the author of the *VM* takes to structure authority. This completes my generic analysis.

Secondly, I engage with non-hagiographic texts which offer insight into the intellectual and inter-textual context surrounding the composition of the *VM*. Part VI.2 explores the relationship between the *VM* and the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*. Part VI.3 assesses the authenticity of papal actors presented in the text and offers explanations for their use, through an analysis of surviving contemporary papal letters and registers.

Unlike the scarcity of research on the *VM* in the context of Latin hagiography, recognising that Frankish and papal politics influenced the shape of the *Life* has been long accepted in scholarship and become ever more prominent in recent years.²⁰⁹ This thesis remains a textual study however, and, unlike the bulk of the literature on this topic, this inquiry will not be concerned with weighing the reliability of the *VM* alongside other texts to establish more clearly the events that occurred. Rather, it is taken as a given that texts, hagiographical or other, are not solipsistic literary exercises, but political acts with particular historicised agendas. As such, I ask what the author of the *VM* was trying to do with their text, and how they sought to affect their socio-political environment.

2.VI.1 The *VM* as a Latinate Hagiography

2.VI.1.1 Carolingian Missionary Hagiography

The Latin church's tradition of hagiography in the early medieval period was thriving. Walter Berschin has listed two hundred texts dating to the Carolingian period, ca.750-920, of which 155 are biographies or martyrdoms.²¹⁰ Ian Wood's study of missionary lives, notes twenty-one *vitae* more or less explicitly concerned with missionary activity or conversion, and in almost all cases focused on bishops, all dated to the eighth and ninth centuries.²¹¹ Wood's major study does not give the *VM* the same kind of

²⁰⁹ The papal political context was already considered central in: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.86; Dvorník, *Byzantine Missions to the Slavs*, pp.131-59; Simeonova, *Diplomacy of the Letter and the Cross*, pp.272, 296-318; Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.54-7. But Betti's is one of the first studies to look at the mission from the papal court, *The Making of Christian Moravia*. This is in line with a general trend mentioned in the introduction to look westward and integrate Moravia and Pannonia into Frankish/Carolingian and therefore 'European' politics, both in recent Czech and in recent Croatian scholarship.

²¹⁰ K. Gibson, 'The Carolingian World through Hagiography', *History Compass*, 13-12 (2015), p.630.

²¹¹ For a table with all the relevant saints and authors' names, dates and locations see: Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.52.

hagiographical treatment as his Latin corpus, even if elsewhere in his work he does make clear the need to add ‘to the Latin texts [...] that of Methodios.’²¹² This is what this study seeks to achieve.

There is no place in this thesis for a sustained study of the whole Latinate missionary corpus, but this section begins by pointing out some of its general characteristics. This is not to give this corpus a ‘spurious uniformity’, nor to obscure the localised hagiographic traditions of particular regions, like Brittany or the localised purposes of particular texts like the *Life of Anskar*.²¹³ Nonetheless, some schematic outlines help illustrate how different the Latin tradition was from its Byzantine contemporary, and how this may offer a much better context for the composition of the *VM*.

The interest in the hagiography of mission, unlike in Byzantium’s *Life of Pankratios*, *Life of Andrew* and *Life of Gregentios of Taphar*, was not only a matter of revisiting historic figures, although this was a part of the project. This is shown by Alcuin’s ca.796 *Life of Willibrord*, depicting a saint who lived sometime between ca.658-738, or the anonymous *Life of Willehad* (written ca.840-55), who died in ca.789.²¹⁴ However, the tradition also had an ongoing concern with contemporary figures, with texts written no more than a generation or two after the saint’s life. Willibald’s *Life of Boniface* was written ca.768, not long after the saint’s death in ca.754 and Huneburg of Heidenheim’s *Hodoeporikon of Saint Willibald* was written sometime before 786, when Willibald, her brother, was still alive.²¹⁵ Rimbert’s *Life of Anskar* was composed nearly contemporaneously with the *VM*, written shortly, perhaps several months, after the saint’s death in 865 but certainly before Rimbert’s death in 876.²¹⁶

In addition to the fact that Latin churchmen and women regularly produced episcopal hagiography of mission in the eighth and ninth century, it is clear that this corpus was deeply intertwined, both inter-

²¹² I. Wood, ‘The Latin Hagiography of Mission from Rimbert to Bruno of Querfurt’, in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, p.35.

²¹³ I. Wood, ‘The Use and Abuse of Latin Hagiography in the Medieval West’, in E. Chrysos, et al eds., *East and West: Modes of Communication, Proceedings of the First Plenary Conference at Merida* (Leiden, 1999), p.99; J. Smith, ‘Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, c.850–1250’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), esp. pp.315-6.

²¹⁴ Alcuin, *The Life of Willibrord*, in *Vita Willibrordi, archiepiscopi Traiectensis*, ed. W. Levison, in *MHG, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 7 (Hanover, 1920), pp.81-141; Alcuin, *Life of Willibrord*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp.189-211; *The Life of Willehad*, in *Das Leben des hl. Willehad, Bischof von Bremen, und die Beschreibung der Wunder an seinem Grabe*, ed. A. Röpke, (Bremen, 1982); *Life of Willehad*, trans. P. Potter, T. Noble, in *SC*, pp.281-91.

²¹⁵ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.61-5; Willibald, *The Life of Boniface*, in *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo*, ed. W. Levison, *MHG, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in Usus Scholarum, Vitae Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini* (Hanover, 1905), pp.1-58; Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp.107-140; Huneberc of Heidenheim, *The Life of Willibald*, in *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eischstetensis et vita Wynnebaldis abbatis Heidenheimensis auctore sanctimoniale Heidenheimensis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MHG, Scriptores*, vol. 15.1 (Hanover, 887), pp.80-117; Huneberc of Heidenheim, *The Hodoeporicon of Saint Willibald*, trans. C. Talbot, in *SC*, pp.141-164.

²¹⁶ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.125. Rimbert, *The Life of Anskar*, in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und der Reiches*, ed. W. Trillmich, (Darmstadt, 1961), pp.16-133. *Anskar, Apostle of the North, 801-865*, trans. C. H. Robinson, (London, 1921).

textually and inter-personally. On the one hand, saints were either related, as in the case of Hugeburg's brothers Willibald and Wynnebald, or are said to have known each other, as a large number of them came from Anglo-Saxon England (e.g. Boniface, Willibrord, Willehad) and went to Frisia or Saxony, aware of the legacy of others. On the other, the texts commemorating them are clearly aware of and using other *vitae* from the corpus. As illustrated in a diagram by Wood, this produces a deeply inter-connected body of texts, concentrated in three clusters: the Bonifatian, hence, for instance, the *Life of Boniface* being used in the *Life of Willibald*; the Willibrordian, as for instance the *Life of Willibrord* being used by the *Life of Willehad*; and the Anskarian, with the *Life of Anskar* being used in the *Life of Rimbert* his hagiographer and successor.²¹⁷ Regardless of the saint's background, the texts were written not in Anglo-Saxon England or Rome, but either in the north of the Frankish territories, like Münster and Bremen, in the centre, like Mainz, Würzburg, Fulda and Heidenheim, or the east, in places like Freising and Salzburg.²¹⁸

With this kind of broad structural outline at hand, the similarities with the *VM* appear rather striking. A foreign saint, not native to the land they are assigned, arrives from afar with some papal approval and wavering cooperation from the local rulers, to tend to the conversion of the people. This description is more or less true, despite the particularities of each text, of Boniface, Willibrord, Willehad, Anskar and Methodios. Boniface from Wessex, and Willibrord and Willehad from Northumbria all arrived initially in Frisia and then moved on to other parts from central Germany. Anskar from Corbie, near Amiens was sent to Denmark and Sweden. Methodios, albeit from the east, was sent from Thessaloniki or Bithynia to the lands of the Moravians.

When considered alongside the *VM* the inter-textuality of the Latin corpus is also rather striking, especially in the direct use and re-integration of hagiographical material related to a saint's predecessor. Scholars have never questioned why it is that the *VM* uses the *VC*, simply assuming that it was the case that Methodios was present in Cyril's missions. But, as I have sought to demonstrate, in the *VM* Methodios is in fact inserted quite disruptively into the material of the *VC*, where he is almost absent. This begs the question: why did the author turn to a pre-existing life, and use the *VC* text as a starting point, stressing the unity between Cyril and Methodios?

This kind of inter-textual continuity was much less usual in the relevant Byzantine hagiographical corpus reviewed. The only comparable example that comes from the Middle Byzantine period is the *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, an ascetic saint, which stresses his connection with his saintly mentor Gregory of Dekapolis.²¹⁹ In an episcopal context, even when scholars suggest that the episcopal hagiographies

²¹⁷ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.53.

²¹⁸ For a table with all locations: Ibid. p.52.

²¹⁹ *Life of Joseph the Hymnographer*, 5-6.

such as that of Theokletos of Lakedaimon, are written later by a bishop seeking to honour a predecessor on the episcopal throne, the text itself starts and stops with the life of the bishop, not with the see more generally.²²⁰ More often than not Byzantine saints and bishops in particular seem to source their legitimacy from their own actions alone.

To the contrary, the Latin texts reviewed here commonly stress continuity and connection through use of existing hagiographies of worthy predecessors. As Wood notes, the *Life of Rimbert* (865-76), Eigil's *Life of Sturm* (ca.794-800) and Liudger's *Life of Gregory* (786/800-04) are all 'as concerned with the master as with his pupil', but the lives of Willibald and Willehad, too, regularly feature the figure of Boniface and stress knowledge and continuation of his work.²²¹ The former, in particular, makes much of Rimbert's relationship to Anskar whose *vita* he wrote. It stresses that upon noticing him and his learning, 'immediately, the great bishop [Anskar] established him to be an indivisible companion of his mission.'²²² And later, that 'they had one heart, one soul, one spirit, one faith always.'²²³

The use of a saint as a predecessor to make claims to sanctity is not dissimilar from what the *VM* does with the *VC*. Taking Cyril, as the first man the emperor sends to Moravia, the author both inserts Methodios and distributes Cyril's work to him, but he also has Cyril stress that the two brothers were 'carrying one yoke.' It is perfectly possible that the decision to start from the *VC* when composing the *VM* was as much informed by the models of contemporary hagiography in Latin available at the Moravian bishopric, as by the political circumstances which made Cyril a good person with whom to affiliate Methodios. I will return to the particular political reasons why the author may have sought to strengthen a connection with Cyril in parts VI.2 and VI.3 of this chapter.

2.VI.1.2 The Pope in Latin Hagiography

It is important to note that the Latin corpus, although interconnected, is not static. There was clear change over time amongst these texts and their concerns.²²⁴ In particular, the corpus reveals changing relationships between the papacy, Frankish secular and ecclesiastical authority and the missionaries themselves, and these are crucial to better situating the *VM* as a text.

²²⁰ *Life of Theokletos of Lakedaimon*.

²²¹ Ibid. p.134. *The Life of Rimbert in Vita Rimbertii*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, 55 (Hanover, 1884); Eigil, *The Life of Sturm*, in *Die Vita Sturmi des Eigil von Fulda: literarkritisch-historische Untersuchung und Edition*, ed. P. Engelbert, (Rome, 1968); Eigil, *The Life of Saint Sturm*, trans. C. H. Talbot, in *SC*, pp.165-187; *The Life of Willehad*.

²²² 'mox eum domnus episcopus indivisibilem suae legationis comitem esse constituit', *Life of Rimbert*, 5.

²²³ 'cor unum et anima una, unus spiritus et una fides erat semper in eis', Ibid., 9.

²²⁴ Wood notes for instance, the decline of Scandinavian missionary hagiography at the end of the ninth century. *The Missionary Life*, pp.136-7.

In what follows, I demonstrate how early Frankish missionary hagiography gave a prominent role to the papacy in missionary work, albeit always in harmony with local and in particular Frankish political authority. This underwent a change during the ninth century, as noted by Conrad Leyser, when Frankish churchmen and women start to make pronounced use of the *Register* of Pope Gregory the Great and assume leadership in missionary activity.²²⁵ I show that the Frankish polity's claims to be carrying out the work of Pope Gregory also manifest themselves in the hagiography of the ninth century, where missionary work is led by local rulers and only supported by the papacy. The ninth century, as Leyser notes, also saw a papal response, culminating in the commissioning of *Life of Gregory* by Pope John VIII.²²⁶ This response too, I seek to argue, was profoundly hagiographical. It is in the context of these changes and opposing camps of missionary ideology that we can best situate the *VM* as a text, and its choice of genre and allegiance.

2.VI.1.2.1 The Early Missionaries

The *Life of Boniface* by Willibrord was written at the request of Bishop Lull and in the context of particular local diocesan politics between Mainz and Fulda, rather than in the context of grand mission.²²⁷ Nonetheless, the pope is a crucial source of authority. The saint first arrives in Frisia at a time of quarrel between the Frisian and Frankish king; this results in the rebuilding of shrines and Boniface's return home.²²⁸ His second trip is directly sanctioned by Rome, which he visits on pilgrimage, speaks with Gregory II and is later asked to make a 'report on the savage people of Germany' concerning 'whether the untilled fields of their hearts were ready to receive the seed of preaching.'²²⁹ He then turns down an offer of episcopal office by Willibrord, but later accepts one from Rome as 'he dared not contradict so great a pontiff sitting on the apostolic see.'²³⁰ This leads to his ordination to a bishopric without a see.²³¹ The pope permeates the *Life of Boniface*, with a specific section devoted to the succession of Gregory III, and the insistence that much like Gregory II, this pope too offered his vocal support for Boniface.²³² Secular Frankish rule in contrast is supportive, whether that be Charles or Carloman, but at times its politics can be obtrusive, as in the case of the quarrel between Charles and Radbod.²³³ It is the pope who puts

²²⁵ Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', pp.182-5.

²²⁶ Ibid. pp.187, 191-2.

²²⁷ J. Palmer, 'The "Vigorous Rule" of Bishop Lull: between Bonifatian Mission and Carolingian Church Control', *Early Medieval Europe*, 13 (2005), esp. pp.260-8. On the *Life of Boniface* as not primarily a missionary text: Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.64-5.

²²⁸ Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4.

²²⁹ 'ad inspicendos inmanissimos Germaniae populos', 'ut an inculta cordium arva, euangelico arata vomere, praedicationis recipere semen voluissent, consideraret', Ibid., 5.

²³⁰ 'quia contradicere huic tanto pontifici apostolico sedi praelato non auderet', Ibid., 5-6.

²³¹ Ibid., 6.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid., 5.

Boniface under ‘the protection and devotion’ (‘munime ac devotione’) of Charles even if in reality his activity was probably just as much tied to kings; during the Carolingian church synods, the *Life* stresses, Boniface remained a ‘legate of the Roman church and the apostolic see.’²³⁴ Thus in the *Life of Boniface*, papal power permeates ecclesiastical politics. Only once this is attained, can local patronage from secular rulers be secured.

The same representation of authority is found in the slightly more peculiar *Life of Willibald*, a significant part of which is a *hodoeporikon*, or relation of his voyage to Jerusalem.²³⁵ Written by his sister, Huneberc of Heidenheim, it records Willibald’s subsequent settlement in a Benedictine monastery and his visit to Rome with his Spanish monk-cum-companion, Petronax.²³⁶ Once again, papal authority trumps local ecclesiastical authority. Boniface asks the pope that Willibald be sent to him and leave the monastery of Saint Benedict, but Willibald wishes to check with his abbot. The pope insists that his command was sufficient permission and Willibald pledges to go in accordance with the pope’s wishes.²³⁷ It is Boniface who ultimately makes Willibald a bishop, but the pope looms large and secular power is essentially absent beyond a fleeting mention of Duke Odilo.²³⁸

2.VI.1.2.2 The Carolingian Transformations

Although Carolingian hagiography has received ‘less attention from historians than the eras that preceded or followed’, one of its most studied projects is that of Alcuin and his contemporaries at the court of Charlemagne.²³⁹ Crucially, in the words of Felice Lifshitz, the rewriting processes at the court of Charlemagne were not simply a matter of tidying up grammar, but a question of re-writing early medieval texts ‘because the latter clashed with their own historical perspectives.’²⁴⁰ One major change was on the question of missionary work. Wood pinpoints the *Life of Willibrord* by Alcuin as a blueprint for missionary ideology, and the first life to be ‘specifically concerned with mission.’²⁴¹ The fact this blueprint emerged from the imperial rather than papal centre had clear consequences for the role of papal

²³⁴ ‘Romanae ecclesiae sedis que apostolicae legatus’, Ibid., 6, 8; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.57, 131.

²³⁵ Huneberc of Hedenheim, *Life of Willibald*; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.64.

²³⁶ Huneberc of Hedenheim, *Life of Willibald*, 5.

²³⁷ ‘illumque sine sollicitudinis ambiguitate securum cum suae iussionis licentia oboedientialiter pergere precepit [...] Confestimque tunc Willibaldus sacris sermonum exortationis consensum atque effectum se spontanee perpetrare, respondit’. Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ A. Bosworth, ‘Learning from the Saints: Ninth-Century Hagiography and the Carolingian Renaissance’, *History Compass*, 8 (2010), p.1056.

²⁴⁰ F. Lifshitz, ‘Beyond Positivism and Genre: “Hagiographical” Texts as Historical Narrative’, *Viator*, 25 (1994), p.99.

²⁴¹ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.85-90, esp.p.90.

authority in local missionary affairs, in the case of Alcuin particularly to do with the territory of the collapsed Avar polity.²⁴²

The *Life of Willehad* is perhaps the most useful distillation of these changes, precisely because it tells an eighth-century story related to the Bonifatian mission to Saxony and Frisia but does so in a significantly re-focused ninth-century way. Similar trends are witnessed, however, in other texts about contemporary mission like the *Life of Anskar*.²⁴³ Written sometime ca.838-850s, the anonymous *Life of Willehad* was composed at Echternach, a monastic centre with no access to missionary fields, and as Wood argues, it uses Willehad as a vehicle for Alcuin-ate ideas.²⁴⁴ The structural similarities with the *Life of Boniface* are perhaps intentional but their re-casting is clear. Willehad is said to leave Anglo-Saxon England not with the permission of his abbot, as Boniface did, but with the permission of the king of the Angles, Alchred.²⁴⁵ Subsequently he travels to Frisia, and nearby regions, not simply reviewing the land as Boniface does until he is given papal appointment, but preaching and converting, as if the king's dispensation sufficed.²⁴⁶ The *Life of Boniface* next takes the saint to Rome to receive papal approval and be sent north, but the *Life of Willehad* sees Charlemagne invite the saint instead, and having 'received him reverently and honourably' ('honorifice ac reverenter suscipiens'), he 'sent him to Saxony to the region that is called Wigmodia' to build churches and convert the people there.²⁴⁷ When royal quarrel brought his mission in Saxony to an end, Willehad finally made a visit to Rome.²⁴⁸ In place of papal appointment or pallium, Willehad mourns those lost in Saxony and having received nothing other than 'the consolation of the venerable Pope Hadrian' ('consolatione venerabilis papae Adriani'), the text notes, 'the servant of God departed and returned joyfully to Francia.'²⁴⁹ Later with Charlemagne's council and approval he sets off to Wigmodia, and the text stresses that 'the excellent prince [Charles] [...] had Willehad the servant of God consecrated bishop.'²⁵⁰ It is not the case therefore that missionary work was opposed or at odds with the papacy but simply that in ninth-century Carolingian hagiography its actors were no longer represented

²⁴² Ibid., p.85; Reimitz, 'Conversion and Control', pp.189-206.

²⁴³ In the *Life of Anskar*, the establishment of the archbishopric of Bremen is presented as King Louis' decision to follow upon the plan of Charlemagne, not the pope. Anskar is made archbishop of this Bremen see, and it is only 'in order that these arrangements should be permanently established', that the emperor sends Anskar to the pope. This is a complete reversal of the *Life of Boniface* where it is Gregory II who sends the saint, Boniface, to the secular ruler Charles. Rimbart, *Life of Anskar*, 12-3; Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 6.

²⁴⁴ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.90-1.

²⁴⁵ Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4; *Life of Willehad*, 1.

²⁴⁶ Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4; *Life of Willehad*, 3-4.

²⁴⁷ 'misit in partes Saxoniae ad pagum qui dicitur Wigmodia', *Life of Willehad*, 5.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

²⁴⁹ 'servus Dei gaudens repedabat in Frantiam', Ibid., 7.

²⁵⁰ 'memoratus praecellentissimus princeps, [...] servum Dei Willehadum consecrari fecit episcopum', Ibid., 8.

as legates of the apostolic see, as the *Life of Boniface* makes clear, but legates of Frankish imperial power.²⁵¹

2.VI.1.2.3 The Papal Response

In the early medieval Carolingian realms, hagiographic output was clearly a political medium through which to express, construct or project a state of social and political hierarchy desirable to authors and their communities. And as such this use of hagiography ought to be considered a part of the same project which, as Leyser notes, made the *Register* of Gregory the Great an indispensable resource in the early ninth century for the creation of a range of institutions like new bishoprics and monasteries in the Frankish polity, and especially in Charlemagne's circle.²⁵²

Hagiography was clearly considered as a political tool with equal potency by the papacy, as it formed a significant part of the response to the aforementioned Carolingian missionary claims. What Leyser calls the papacy's attempt to 'take control of the memory' of Gregory from the Frankish courts manifested itself in a burst of textual production, which was overwhelmingly hagiographical, and which was concentrated precisely in the mid to late ninth century, contemporaneous with the establishment of the Moravian bishopric and compilation of the *VM*.

This exclusively papal-centred hagiographical output was both interested in reclaiming former apostolicism and praising contemporary papal missionary activity. Four texts attest to this ninth-century papal response, and perhaps somewhat suspiciously all four have been associated more or less explicitly with one author, John Immonides, a deacon and one of the 'most important cultural figures at the Papal curia' who served under Pope Nicholas, Hadrian II and John VIII.²⁵³ The first text written by Immonides is the *Life of Gregory* which is also the first recorded instance of Pope Gregory acquiring the epithet 'the great'.²⁵⁴ The text, possibly 'the longest saint's life in early medieval Europe', was explicitly commissioned around 873 by Pope John VIII, the only pope whose correspondence with Methodios in Moravia survives, at around the same time that John requested that his own correspondence be kept in the model of Gregory's *Register*.²⁵⁵ The second text associated with John Immonides is the *Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, mentioned in Chapter 1, which had been requested by and was ultimately completed by Gauderic of Villettri sometimes after Immonides' death, but before 882, when John VIII was assassinated,

²⁵¹ Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 6.

²⁵² Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', pp.182-5.

²⁵³ 'uno dei personaggi di maggior rilevanza culturale presso la Curia pontificia', P. Chiesa, 'Giovanni Diacono', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol.56 (2001) (<http://www.treccani.it/biografie/>), (last accessed: October 2019).

²⁵⁴ John Immonides, *Life of Gregory*, in *MPL*, vol. 45, pp.62-242; J. Latham, 'Inventing Gregory "the Great": Memory, Authority and the Afterlives of the *Letania Septiformis*', *Church History*, 84 (2015), p.11.

²⁵⁵ Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', pp.189, 191-2.

as it is dedicated to the pope.²⁵⁶ This text was written shortly after the arrival of the relics brought by Cyril, and was clearly at the very least papally supported if not sponsored. It is associated with members of the highest echelons of the papal curia, namely Anastasius the Librarian who helped by translating Greek texts and Immonides himself.²⁵⁷

Production of papal hagiography for earlier figures the curia wished to reclaim occurred at the same time as the framing of contemporary figures in their image. The third and fourth texts which form part of this papal response are the biographical notices for Pope Nicholas I and Pope Hadrian II, which survive anonymously in the *Liber Pontificalis* but have been variously assigned to John Immonides and Anastasius the Librarian.²⁵⁸ These mark a significant break with the earliest papal biographies in the *Liber*. Whoever the author, their innovative agenda is in part to do with the role of the papacy in missionary activity. Parting from the established convention of simply listing building works, the *Liber* texts are eager to stress the ‘Gregorian’ qualities of both popes, and offer accounts of their attempts to bring Bulgaria under papal jurisdiction.²⁵⁹ This was in line with Pope Nicholas’ conscious choice to evoke Gregory’s works profusely in his famous *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*.²⁶⁰ That this was a successful association for Nicholas seems clear in the dream sequence of Immonides’ *Life of Gregory*, in which a mysterious bishop, now generally identified as Formosus, tries to stop Immonides’ work, but Gregory himself appears together with ‘Pope Nicholas of venerable memory’ and chases the bishop away.²⁶¹ Already by the 870s, Nicholas was remembered as Gregory’s right hand man.

The accounts of mission in the *Liber* texts are much more akin to the early Bonifatian hagiographies than to the Carolingian rewritings of mission, but their total silence on the role of the Franks in the Bulgarian

²⁵⁶ *Life and Miracles of Saint Clement*, pp.1-165.

²⁵⁷ On the prominence of Anastasius: R. Forrai, *The Interpreter of Popes: the Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (PhD Thesis, Central European University, 2008), pp.1-4.

²⁵⁸ *Notice for Nicholas I*, 107.1-83 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, pp.131-72; *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes*, trans. R. Davis, pp.205-49; *Notice for Hadrian II*, 108.1-109 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, pp.173-91; *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes*, trans. R. Davis, pp.259-92. On the association with Immonides: Chiesa, ‘Giovanni Diacono.’

²⁵⁹ Noted by: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.44. The various breaks in the patchwork text of the *Notice for Nicholas*, are noted in *The Lives of the Ninth Century Popes*, p.189. On the conversion of the Bulgarians: *Notice for Nicholas*, 69-75. *Notice for Hadrian*, 12-3, 47-59, 61-4.

²⁶⁰ Pope Nicholas I, *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria*, 6, 7, 10, 49, 64, 68, 99. In *Epistolae Papae Nicolai*, ed. E. Perels, *MGH, Epp. VI*, (Epistulae Karolini Aevi 4) (Munich 1978), pp.568-600. *The Responses of Pope Nicholas I to the Questions of the Bulgars A.D. 866 (Letter 99)*, trans. W. North, in: *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, (<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/866nicholas-bulgar.asp>) (last accessed: January, 2020).

²⁶¹ ‘beatus Gregorius, comitante secum dextrorsum reverendae memoriae papa Nicolao’, John the Deacon, *Life of Gregory*, 100. On the identification of Formosus: P. Devos, ‘Le mystérieux épisode final de la Vita Gregorii de Jean Diacre. Formose et sa fuite de Rome’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 82 (1964), pp.356-81. On the episode more generally: C. Leyser, ‘Charisma in the Archive: Roman Monasteries and the Memory of Gregory the Great, c.870–c.940’ in F. de Rubeis, et al, *Le scritture dai monasteri, II Seminario internazionale di studio ‘I monasteri nell’alto medioevo’* (Rome, 2004), pp.214-5.

conversion negotiations paints a more extreme picture. The pope is the primary leader of the mission, local rulers comply or invite it, and only in the notice for Hadrian II do the Greek clergy oppose it.²⁶² The Frankish polities are absent altogether, despite evidence that Boris of Bulgaria had also asked for bishops from King Louis, which had in turn annoyed both parties.²⁶³

Both texts also reveal insights into the way they perceive secular and religious authority more broadly. The notice for Nicholas opens with two consecutive meetings between the pope and the emperor, who remains unnamed. In the first, the emperor travels to meet Nicholas, in the second, immediately afterward, the pope travels to meet the emperor.²⁶⁴ The latter scene features the emperor serving as groom to the pope, leading his horse on foot.²⁶⁵ The statement is clear: secular power is a helping hand to papal hegemony. A similar message emerges, albeit in a different context, from the notice for Hadrian which records a dispute between Roman and Greek clergy over the matter of which see Bulgarian territories fall into.²⁶⁶ The papal legates make clear that ‘the jurisdiction of sees organizes things otherwise than the divisions of kingdoms allow.’²⁶⁷ In other words, even though Byzantium formerly ruled the lands of Bulgaria, they remain territories of papal ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In short, hagiography was a profoundly politically-charged genre in the ninth-century Latin context, quite unlike its Byzantine episcopal equivalent, and the papacy’s use of it sought to counter Carolingian claims.

2.VI.1.3 The Pope in the *Life of Methodios* amid Latin Hagiography

In the study of the *VM*, as has been noted already, the bulk of scholarship has tended looked eastward, but I am not the first to argue that the *VM* is best considered amidst and within the activities of Western missionaries. Two scholars, Grivec briefly in 1927 and Betti a little more thoroughly in 2013, have pointed to similarities between the work of Methodios as a person, and that of Boniface or Augustine.²⁶⁸ Betti has noted in particular that both Methodios and Boniface visit their areas of mission initially without

²⁶² *Notice for Hadrian II*, 47-58.

²⁶³ *Annals of St Bertin*, 866.

²⁶⁴ *Notice for Nicholas I*, 9.

²⁶⁵ This had only been recorded once before in 754, when according to the *Liber Pontificalis* King Pepin led Pope Stephen II’s horse at Champagne. *Notice for Stephen II*, 25 in *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchense, vol.1, pp.440-463. *The Lives of the Eight-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): the Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817*, trans. R. Davis, (Liverpool, 1992), pp.297-308. The practice, then, interestingly, picks up in late Byzantium. R. Gomez, ‘The Donation of Constantine in Byzantium’, *Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Seminar*, Trinity Term 2019, Oxford.

²⁶⁶ *Notice for Hadrian II*, 51-2.

²⁶⁷ ‘aliud ordinant iura sedium, aut patiuntur divisiones regnorum’, *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁶⁸ Grivec, *Slovanska apostola*, p.13; Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.172-4.

but then specifically with papal support, and that both are granted geographically vague sees.²⁶⁹ But as yet no close textual comparison like the one attempted here has been carried out.

This section seeks to make two points, the first is that structurally, as a saint's life, the *VM* resembles the *Life of Boniface*, and the other earlier texts of the Frankish missions, in the way it represents the relations between local secular rulers, the saint and the pope. And thus, that it is consciously distinct from contemporary ninth-century Frankish episcopal hagiography. The second is that, ideologically the text parts with the balanced political landscape of the *Life of Boniface*, and in its promotion of papal supremacy accepts the premises of contemporary papal hagiographies. It seems highly probable that the author was aware of the hagiographic surge of production at the heart of the papal curia, and intentionally composed the *VM* as a text in which popes behave in the kind of Gregorian manner that they fashioned for themselves in the ninth-century textual output which they patronised.

There are a number of structural similarities between the *Life of Boniface* and the *VM*. The *Life of Boniface* stresses, quite unlike later Carolignian texts such as the *Life of Willehad*, that Boniface did not undertake any active preaching in Frisia before his visit to the papacy.²⁷⁰ As discussed earlier, the *VM* also goes to great lengths to insist that Methodios and Cyril did not do anything once they arrived in Moravia, as they immediately understood this to be papal territory.²⁷¹ Both are sent as teachers first, and only upon another visit to Rome, are they elevated to the role of bishop.²⁷² Further, both saints are sent to a people and not to a see, Boniface to report on the 'savage people of Germany', and Methodios to 'all the lands of the Slavs.' Both saints also refuse to be appointed to the episcopal office, whether that be Willibrord in the *Life of Boniface* or the unnamed emperor of the *VM*. Neither resists the appointment by the pope. If we omit the Franks altogether from the *VM*, the portrayal of Sviatopluk, Rastislav and Kočel and their unwavering support, but total deference to papal commands also aligns with the portrayal of secular authority in the *Life of Boniface*. The sections on the Moravian and Pannonian missions are the original contributions of the *VM* author, and they closely resemble the structure of the *Life of Boniface*. It is by no means impossible given the life's circulation, therefore, that the author of the *VM* had come across the text in some shape or form.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.172-4.

²⁷⁰ Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 4.

²⁷¹ *VM*, 8.4-16.

²⁷² Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 5; *VM*, 8.4-16; Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.173.

²⁷³ The manuscript circulation of the *Life of Boniface* does not make this an impossibility, in Levison's edition a number of ninth-century copies survive, including one from Bavaria (Codex Monacensis n.1086), not far from the Eastern Frontier. It is also possible the Moravian milieu had access to these kinds of texts directly from the papacy. On manuscripts see: *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo*, ed. W. Levison, pp.xviii-xxvii, esp. no.1, 2a, 3 and 6.

The *VM* does not simply choose to emulate this earlier text in structure, and therefore stand aside from contemporary debates over leadership in missionary work. It also clearly chooses to side with the papal position of the ninth century. Its account of the ecumenical councils as led by the pope but assisted by the emperor, are in the spirit of the image in the notice for Nicholas I, of the pope on horseback, being led by the emperor as groom.²⁷⁴ The servility of secular power in matters of religion is evident in both. Likewise, the case that the territory of Moravia is papal territory, made by the *VM* against Frankish bishops, relies on the exact same ideological premises as the case of the papal legates against the Greek clergy on Bulgaria: this was at one time papal land, and therefore, regardless of political jurisdiction, ought to be so once again. In the notice for Hadrian II, this means identifying Bulgaria with the episcopal sees Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, Thessaly and Dardania; in the *VM* Methodios is appointed to the somewhat mysterious seat of Saint Andronicus, once again claiming a historic papal see over and above contemporary political overlordship.²⁷⁵ This of course suggests the possibility that the author of the *VM* was aware of the missionary pose of the contemporary papacy, and more so the practice of expressing this hagiographically. One is tempted to suggest that the author of the *VM* had access to the notices for Nicholas I and Hadrian II given the Moravian milieu's recorded contact with John VIII at the height of the textual production. Could the generic account of imperial reverence to Pope Nicholas be in turn echoed by the equally vague reverence to Methodios expressed by the other unnamed emperor in the *VM*?

Absolute certainty about direct textual connections notwithstanding, it is clear that the author of the *VM* knew which way the political wind was blowing, and what language was required to appeal to papal patronage. That the text served clear political purposes has led some scholars to suggest that it is not really a hagiography.²⁷⁶ But to the contrary, I argue that the choice to write a hagiography of Methodios as a way of promoting the case of Moravian episcopal independence was an extremely conscious authorial decision, based on intimate knowledge of the value and use of the genre in the Latin tradition.

Whilst the specific ninth-century state of Latin hagiography informed the structure and generic papal agenda of the *VM*, in what follows, I suggest that the exact articulation of the defence of Moravia in the text, was framed specifically against Frankish claims to the territory as they were articulated in one surviving text, the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*.

²⁷⁴ *VM*, 1-2; *Notice for Nicholas*, 9.

²⁷⁵ *Notice for Hadrian*, 53; *VM*, 8.17.

²⁷⁶ Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.104.

2.VI.2 The Case for Methodian Illegitimacy: *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*

The *VM* and the letters of John VIII both attest to the capture and imprisonment of Methodios by Frankish bishops.²⁷⁷ There is general scholarly consensus, that the *Conversio* as a document was ‘made necessary by the presence of Methodios.’²⁷⁸ Moreover, given its compilation in 870, shortly after the imprisonment of Methodios, and its heavily legalistic language, it is most probable that the arguments the text conveys were the very same arguments used in court to prove that Methodios was an ‘intruder et invasor in the diocese of Salzburg.’²⁷⁹

The *Conversio* is a unique text in Latin literature, but what little attention it has received has come largely from historians of the Frankish world.²⁸⁰ At most, historians of the Moravian mission have acknowledged that it offers insight into the sorts of reasons given for the imprisonment of Methodios, but no close textual analysis of the two texts has been carried out side by side.²⁸¹ I would argue such a comparison is much needed, because it is highly likely the author of the *VM* had access to the *Conversio* as a text, or that at least had heard its arguments made in the Methodian trial. In light of this, I argue that both the form and content of the *VM* suggest it is engaging with and arguing against the *Conversio* position. This is threefold: firstly, the use of ecumenical councils in particular, secondly the stress on the camaraderie between Methodios and the Slavs of Moravia and Pannonia, and thirdly the role of and use of the local rulers, Sviatopluk, Rastislav and Kočel in the text. I start with a short summary of the contents of the *Conversio*.

The text opens with a summary of the life of Rupert, the first archbishop of Salzburg, and then offers a list of those who succeeded him, ending with Virgil who the text claims was appointed in 767.²⁸² As Wood notes, this is not the date historians agree on (namely, 749), nor is it a sufficient summary of the

²⁷⁷ *VM*, 9.9. Only fragments in canonical collections survive from letters of John for the period 872-6. Of these, a number are addressed to Frankish dignitaries asking for Methodios’ release. John VIII, *Register*, in *Fragmenta Registri Ioannis VIII. Papae*, in *MGH, Epistolarum*, 7, 5 (Berlin, 1928), 20-23.

²⁷⁸ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.173.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.172; H. Wolfram, ‘The Bavarian Mission to Pannonia in the 9th Century’, in Kouřil, *Great Moravia and the Beginnings of Christianity*, p.29; *Idem.*, *Grenzen und Räume. Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung* (Vienna, 1995), p.259. With a bibliography in: Reimitz, ‘Conversion and Control’, p.204; Lošek, *Die Conversio*, p.7.

²⁸⁰ E.g. S. Airlie, ‘True Teachers and Pious Kings: Salzburg, Louis the German and the Christian Order’, in R. Gameson, *et al eds.*, *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2001), pp.89-105; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp.168-181.

²⁸¹ E.g. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.125. More often than not, scholars have previously turned east, to Byzantium, and not west when studying the lives, largely due to the dominance of the *VC* and conflation of the two lives into one purpose discussed at the start of this chapter. This has meant that the *Conversio* is absent from the major studies on the *VM* or Methodios in Moravia more broadly. See for instance: Grivec, *Slovanska apostola*, pp.95-98; Dvornik, *SS Cyril and Methodios*, pp.160-193; Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské*, pp.85-113. Betti’s focus on the papal context, means that she has only fleeting remarks on the *Conversio*.

²⁸² *Conversio*, 1-2.

conversion of Bavaria, as it reduces the process entirely to the foundation of the archbishopric of Salzburg.²⁸³ The text then turns to a history of the Carantanians and the Pannonian lands, which encompasses the Lake Balaton mentioned in the *VC* and *VM*, and are called simply ‘Pannonia’ in the lives.²⁸⁴ A brief history of Carantanian rulers, Dagobert and Samo, moves the text into the eighth century, when Avar attacks lead the Slavic leader Boruth to ask for help from the Bavarians, and accept Frankish overlordship.²⁸⁵ The purpose of this story is clearly to stress the history of Frankish control and therefore conversion of the Carantanian peoples. The text then records Boruth sending his son and nephew to the Bavarian court to be raised as Christians, and how the two of them succeeded as leaders of the Carantanians.²⁸⁶ The nephew, Hotimir (or Chietmar), is then said to focus on Christianisation, asking the aforementioned Virgil for a bishop.²⁸⁷ Virgil sends Modestus with clerics, all of them named, and more clergy after Hotimir’s death at the request of *dux* Waltunc, all of them named together with the churches they dedicated.²⁸⁸ The text then moves to an ancient history of Lower Pannonia and how Charlemagne hands the region to Arno, Bishop of Salzburg.²⁸⁹ Arno receives a *pallium* from Pope Leo and is sent by Charlemagne to preach to the Slavs. He goes with a *comes* Gerold and Deoderic who he presents with a bishop.²⁹⁰ After Arno’s death the text stresses that the area remained under the control of Salzburg and focuses on his successors.²⁹¹ In particular, Liupram, archbishop of Salzburg, makes an agreement with the chieftain Pribina, to go through and consecrate his lands.²⁹² A list of the priests and churches consecrated under Pribina follows.²⁹³ Then in 848 Louis the German grants to Pribina all that he held in lower Pannonia except the lands owned by the church of Salzburg, which are specified in detail.²⁹⁴ The friendship between the Franks and Pannonians continues even after the Moravians killed Pribina, ca.860/1; under his successor Kočel more churches are consecrated and named.²⁹⁵ By way of conclusion the text’s makes its purpose even clearer.

‘A tempore igitur, quo dato et praecepto domni Karoli imperatoris orientalis Pannoniae populus a Iuvavensibus regi coepit praesulibus usque in presens tempus sunt anni LXXV, quod nullus episcopus alicubi veniens potestatem habuit ecclesiasticam in illo confinio nisi Salzburgenses

²⁸³ Wood, *Missionary Life*, p.168.

²⁸⁴ *Conversio*, 3.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

rectores neque presbyter aliunde veniens plus tribus mensibus ibi suum ausus est colere officium, priusquam suam dimissoriam episcopo praesentaverit epistolam. Hoc enim ibi observatum fuit, usque dum nova orta est doctrina Methodii philosophi²⁹⁶

‘Since the time when the people of eastern Pannonia were placed under the direction of the bishop of Salzburg on the orders of the emperor, Charlemagne, up to the present time, it has been seventy-five years that no bishop, having come from elsewhere, has had ecclesiastical authority in this region except the rectors of Salzburg, nor has any priest, having come from anywhere else dared to perform the office for more than three months before submitting his letter of discharge to the bishop. This was observed there, until the new teaching of the Philosopher Methodios appeared.’

The text makes three moves therefore, presented as a general history of the conversion of the Bavarians and Carantanians. The first is to establish the foundation of Salzburg as an archbishopric, which is the sole purpose of the Bavarians in the narrative. The second is to establish that the secular Carantanian rulers had been under the over-lordship of the Franks since the time of Boruth in the eighth century, and had themselves been open to and requesting of Christianisation from the Franks; and the third is that this region of Carantanian rule was granted by Charlemagne to the Archbishopric of Salzburg for missionary purposes. All these claims are supported by tedious lists of priests and churches consecrated. Although the *Conversio* is no hagiography, it is clear that the way in which it envisages the role of secular and papal authority in missionary activity is not too dissimilar from that of the *Life of Willehad*. It is Charlemagne who tells Arno to preach to the Slavs; and the pope only makes an appearance to grant his approval and *pallium*. Moreover, as Wood argues, the *Conversio* is a testament to the move away from the hagiographical and toward the legalistic discourse of mission north of the Alps. As documentation from the newly consecrated lands accumulated, a move away from legendary heroes and toward detailed legalistic precedent makes good sense. It is perhaps this same documentary *zeitgeist* that we see in the *Life of Anskar*, which likewise seems more concerned with the legitimacy of its diocese than its missionary hero.²⁹⁷ What becomes clear when reading the *Conversio* is that the Methodian case is rather weak in terms of contemporary Frankish missionary discourse.

Lacking in diligent lists of formerly consecrated churches, priests or bishops, the only response that the Methodian community could muster was a different kind of list with which the text opens: a list of prophets, evangelists, and ecumenical councils. Whereas the *Conversio* claims immediate authority through near-contemporary priestly succession, the VM opts for universal authority, by positioning

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁹⁷ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.181.

Methodios as a successor in the long line of Christian holy men. As discussed, this amounts to an acceptance of papal primacy, but it also serves as a direct attack on the legitimacy of the local church councils held in the Carolingian territories.²⁹⁸ Only six councils are recognised by the *VM*, and Methodios follows in the footsteps of those original founders of the right faith, not in the footsteps of contemporary and near-contemporary local bishops like Arno or Virgil.

The stress on camaraderie between Methodios and the Slavs is also best explained in the context of the *Conversio*'s account of a historic relationship between the Frankish and Carantanian leaders. In the *Conversio* this starts with the Slavs asking for help from the Franks in the eighth century and ends with Louis the German's donation of the Carantanian lands back to their rulers, as a sign of generosity. Whilst this relationship was most likely not as rosy as the *Conversio* suggests, the text is structured around a clear us/them binary. The background of Cyril and Methodios, as Slavonic speakers, clearly lent itself to the dissolution of this binary. Given the purpose of the *VC*, Cyril's Slavonic is, perhaps unsurprisingly, barely evoked in that text. In the *VM* on the other hand, we see the activation of a potential identity category: the focus on Methodios' Slavonic speech and personal relationship with the Slavs is used to formulate a legitimacy claim on different terms to those available to the Franks. The *VM* turns to the personal history of Methodios to establish a slightly more abstract but nonetheless cogent relationship between Methodios and the Slavs, to compete with the historic relationship between the Frankish church and rulers and the Carantanian Slavs.

It seems clear that both texts make cases for their protagonists as the upholders both of ecclesiastical continuity and of relations with the Slavonic polities. The way they go about this, however, is fundamentally different, and as I argue, the *VM* in particular was most probably a reaction to precisely the kind of discourse we find in the *Conversio*.

There is one final aspect of the *VM* narrative that can be explained as a reaction to the *Conversio* case, namely the representation of the role of Kočel, leader of Pannonia or Carantania. As noted above, the Kočel mission is the most heavily reworked part of the narrative of the *VC* found in the *VM*.²⁹⁹ In short, in the *VC*, Cyril goes to Moravia alone, then is called to Balaton by Kočel, teaches some students there and heads to Venice to debate trilingualists, and then to Rome to be endorsed by Hadrian II and die. In the *VM*, the two brothers arrive in Moravia and are called by the pope immediately. Then Cyril dies and Kočel writes to the pope asking for a Slavonic teacher. The pope sends Methodios to all the Slavs, writing to Rastislav, Sviatopluk and Kočel, but then it is Kočel once again who asks the pope to make Methodios

²⁹⁸ This is in stark contrast with the *Life of Boniface*, for example, which presents early medieval church councils as the continuators of the ecumenical council tradition, see: Willibald, *Life of Boniface*, 8.

²⁹⁹ See: Chapter 2.III.1.2.

his bishop. This change is particularly striking given that unlike Sviatopluk, we have no surviving papal letters to Kočel actually discussing Methodios. To the contrary John VIII asks the Frankish clergy to give over Methodios from imprisonment specifically to the care of Sviatopluk.³⁰⁰ Why does Kočel shift from essentially a non-actor in the VC to the person who twice asks for Methodios from the pope in the VM?

As I have mentioned thus far, scholars have not spent much time trying to explain these inter-textual contradictions. Betti, whose study is by far the most comprehensive of the two texts in the last few decades, spots this difference. At one point, she suggests that this means Kočel entered into ‘secret negotiations with the Apostolic see’, but at another she uses the fact Sviatopluk, Rastislav and Kočel were ‘confusingly mentioned at different times’ and that they ‘appeared or disappeared without any clear explanation’ to argue for a later dating of the VC and VM texts.³⁰¹ Trying both to use the VM’s mention of Kočel as a source for actual papal policy, and then dismissing the use of the name, due to its difference with the VC, as a confusion with no explanation other than that the text was written later, Betti tries to have her cake and eat it. I argue that the use (or non-use) of Kočel does have a ‘clear explanation’, and more broadly, as elsewhere in this thesis, that differences between texts are not simply mistakes but ideological transformations.

To start with it is worth noting that the Moravian and Pannonian polities in the eighth and ninth centuries were of rather different status. The former was more of an autonomous polity, whilst as far as the Franks were concerned the latter was a sub-kingdom of sorts granted by the Frankish king to Pribina as a gift.³⁰² This sub-autonomous status, or at least the perception thereof, is what enables the arguments over ecclesiastical jurisdiction found in the *Conversio*, which notably says nothing of Moravia. It is no surprise therefore, that given the Frankish missionary work in Pannonia and the *Conversio*’s specific invocation of Kočel himself, as a ruler who continued the consecration of churches under the Frankish church, the VM is keen to make a claim to Kočel.³⁰³ The Kočel the author found in the VC however, as someone interested in a Byzantine missionary working without papal approval, did not suffice. This Kočel was transformed by the VM into a fully paid-up supporter of papal ecclesiastical supremacy, who twice asks specifically for Methodios (and not Cyril) from the pope. Given the specific claims of the *Conversio* that Pannonia was given a bishop by Salzburg, it is crucial in the VM that it is not Rastislav, as in the VC, but Kočel who asks for Methodios to be made bishop by the pope.³⁰⁴ This, together with the papal letter

³⁰⁰ Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.133.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.69, p.89.

³⁰² Wolfram, ‘The Bavarian Mission’, pp.30-1; C. Lübke, ‘From the Perspective of the East Frankish Empire: Moravia and its Ascent to Power under Prince Rostislav’, in ed. Kouřil et al, *The Cyril and Methodios Mission and Europe*, pp.89-90.

³⁰³ *Conversio*, 13.

³⁰⁴ *Conversio*, 11; VC, 14.1-5; VM, 8.17.

already discussed, seeks to erase or at least refute the legitimacy of the missionary work done in Pannonia under the Archbishopric of Salzburg.

To sum up, a number of peculiarities or divergences from the *VC* found in the *VM* can be best explained not as mistakes of a later text, but as specifically responding to contemporary debates proposed by the Frankish church and witnessed in the *Conversio*. If, as I have argued, the *VM* is quite clearly on the side of the papacy, and pitching its text to appease a papal patron, why did it need to challenge the positions of the antagonistic Frankish church? That the Methodian community needed answers to those challenges, is made most clear if we turn to the papacy's position on the Methodian see in the aftermath of the death of John VIII.

2.VI.3 The Question of Methodian Illegitimacy: the late ninth-century papacy and Moravia

As it is well acknowledged in scholarship, the *VM* was written at a particularly unfortunate time for the Methodian milieu.³⁰⁵ The assassination of John VIII in 882 witnessed a change in papal policy toward Moravia at least by the time of Stephen V.³⁰⁶ Stephen banned the use of Slavonic in the liturgy in 890, accused Methodios of disobeying John and confirmed that the papacy had no theological issue with the Frankish church's position on the *filioque*.³⁰⁷ This re-rapprochement with the Frankish church, came not only from the papacy however, but also from Sviatopluk, who, from what the last letters of John VIII suggest, was asking for Methodios' Frankish rival, Wiching, to be made bishop of Nitra.³⁰⁸ This alone, points to one reason why the *VM* author felt the need to engage with arguments posed by the *Conversio*, as the reality of papal support was in fact waning, and as the papacy itself became more persuaded by the position of the Frankish church.

The representation of the papacy in the *VM* points to the very same recognition of the changing tides at the Roman court. Rather paradoxically, papal documents reveal only Pope John VIII's actual contact with Methodios and Moravia. No letters by Nicholas I or Hadrian II survive to or about Methodios and the Moravian mission, and neither Cyril nor Methodios are mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* recording the two popes' lives. This is doubly striking given the missionary interest of the texts discussed earlier. Yet, whilst Nicholas and Hadrian both feature in the *VM* as supporters of Methodios, John VIII, the only pope whose support is recorded in independent witnesses, is not mentioned at all.

³⁰⁵ E.g.: Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.85-6.

³⁰⁶ Leyser, 'The Memory of Gregory the Great', p.196.

³⁰⁷ The papal position on the *filioque* had up until then been rather ambivalent. Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.46; Stephen V, *Register*, 33.

³⁰⁸ Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p.175; John VIII, *Letter* 255, p.223.

Betti, in the most comprehensive study of the papacy and Moravia, offers two slightly different explanations for this paradox. Firstly, on the state of the papal record she supports Peri's argument that Hadrian II and John VIII, who seem to have defended Methodios, present a radical divergence with papal policy.³⁰⁹ In consequence, Betti argues that Stephen V's change of tune on the matter of Methodios, and the ecclesiastical remit of Moravia, was in fact a return to the usual papal approach. This in turn, permits Betti to suggest that the absence of papal records concerned with Methodios from Hadrian II's letters and *vita* is not accidental, but rather an erasure or suppression motivated by this shift in papal policy under Stephen V.³¹⁰ She also voices the possibility proposed well over a century ago by Lapotre that the corpus of John VIII's *Register* for the years 872-876, which does not survive except in excerpts, was in fact subject to 'an intentional violation.'³¹¹ I take no issue with the possibility for ideological destruction here.

However, whilst Betti views the papal records as living monuments, affected by and engaging with contemporary politics, the *VM* is given no such courtesy. In the *VM*, the omission of John VIII and 'this problematic description of papal policy is barely sufficient to support the very early dating that scholars attribute to the sources.'³¹² In short, when the papal registers omit information it is because of political action, when the *VM* does it is because of error. As elsewhere in this chapter I seek to challenge the idea that the *VM*'s omissions are simply mistakes, by arguing three things.

Firstly, that it is clear the *VM* author had access to letters by John VIII but used these together with information from the *VC* to formulate a forged letter by Hadrian II. Secondly, that this was done for the same reason that the *VM* inserts another pope, Nicholas I, absent from the *VC* into its narrative, namely, to create a sense of continuity in papal practice and to omit any evidence of papal doubt in the Methodian position. And thirdly, that the insertion of Hadrian II and Nicholas at the expense of John VIII is done precisely because of the *VM*'s recognition of the changing power dynamics in Rome, which had led to the ascension of Stephen V (ca.885-891) and the return of John VIII's rival Formosus to the papal court and later to the papal throne (ca.891-896). Thus, the *VM*'s advocacy of papal primacy, and refutation of Frankish claims to the Moravian lands, was in some sense an offering toward a new, wavering papal patron in the decade or so after Methodios' death. This offering seems to have been met with limited success.

³⁰⁹ Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.44-7; V. Peri, 'Il mandato missionario e canonico di Metodio e l'ingresso della lingua slava nella liturgia', *Archivum Historiae Pontificae*, 26 (1988), pp.9-70.

³¹⁰ Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.53-4.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.123; A. Lapotre, 'L'Europe et le Saint-Siège à l'époque carolingienne I. Le pape Jean VIII (872- 882)', in *Études sur la papauté au IXe siècle* (2nd ed., Torino, 1978), pp.57-437.

³¹² Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.105

The VM's rendering of a letter by Hadrian II has already been discussed in this chapter. The text serves more than one purpose in the VM. A key role played by the letter discussed above is to make clear that Cyril and Methodios never transgressed papal jurisdiction, a correction to the narrative of Cyril's travels as they are presented in the VC. Another function of the letter in the VM is to establish Hadrian II's patronage of Methodios and his insistence that the use of Slavonic is permitted, provided that 'during the mass may the Apostle and Gospel be read in Latin first, and afterwards in Slavonic.'³¹³ This kind of compromise is not discussed in the VC where the pope blessed the Slavonic books and had the students of Cyril ordained. In the VC, these students then performed the liturgy (the Greek word is used in the Slavonic here 'liturgy' ('ΛΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΗ')) and not as in the VM the Latinate word for mass) in Slavonic in a number of churches in Rome: St Peter, St Hadrian, St Petronius and St Paul.³¹⁴ No mention is made of the service following or being followed by Latin. As noted, moreover, no letter of Hadrian II survives which asserts this.

However, as a number of scholars have discussed, the letter of Hadrian found in the VM does use the language of authentic papal letters. Milko Kos' thorough line-by-line analysis of the letter, demonstrates Latin examples of phrases and honorific titles from surviving letters by Nicholas, Hadrian II and John VIII, and insists that the letter must therefore be authentic, and by Hadrian II.³¹⁵ This does not necessarily follow. All this study demonstrates is that the letter is believably papal. More specifically, it has been noted that the letter contains content which resembles that of a letter by John VIII, in particular one known as *Industriae Tuae* to Sviatopluk of Moravia and dated to 880, but few have taken this as evidence to doubt the authenticity of the former.³¹⁶ The case for authenticity however seems clunky: the VM author uses an authentic letter by Hadrian II which does not survive but does not use surviving letters by John VIII which we know were sent to Sviatopluk, the ruler to whom Methodios is assigned for protection, and which contain all of the information necessary to formulate the text found in the VM. It seems that here,

³¹³ 'ДА НА МЪШН ПЪРВЕЪ УЪТОУТЬ АПОСТОЛЪ Н ЕВАНГЕЛНѢ РИМЪСКЫ, ТАУЕ СЛОВЪНЪСКЫ', VM, 8.13 The Apostle or Apostolos in the Orthodox liturgy is a book believed to be authored by one of the twelve apostles including various letters and acts of the apostles, usually ordered in calendar form. This reading always precedes the Gospel reading. There is an interesting mix here of Orthodox liturgical terminology and the use of the Latin language and Latin term for 'mass'.

³¹⁴ VC, 17.7-9.

³¹⁵ M. Kos, 'O pismu papeža Hadriana II knezom Rastislavu, Svetopolku in Koclju', *Razprave, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti v Ljubljani*, 2 (1944), pp.271-95.

³¹⁶ Those accepting its authenticity include: Kos, 'O pismu papeža Hadriana II', p.295. B. Grafenauer, 'Der Brief Hadrians II an die slavische Frusten: echt, verfälscht oder Fälschung? (Unersicht zum Stand der Forschung)', in *Acta Congressus Histriae Slavicae Salisburgensis in memoriam SS. Cyrilli et Methodii anno 1963 celebrati*, IV (Wiesbaden, 1968), pp.63-77; M. Lacko, *The Popes and Great Moravia in Light of Roman Documents* (Rome, 1972), p.86-7; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp.147-9; Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, p.96; Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.73. Betti strongly questions its authenticity but does, on a number of occasions, then use it as actual evidence for papal behavior, see: Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, pp.86-9 (doubts of authenticity), p.172, p.192 (uses nonetheless).

the simplest explanation is the most plausible: the *VM* just uses the letters by John VIII that were at hand. The *Industriae* enjoins:

‘[...] ut in omnibus ecclesiis terrae vestrae propter maiorem honorificentiam evangelium Latine legatur et postmodum Sclavinica lingua translatum in auribus populi Latina verba non intellegentis adnuntietur.’³¹⁷

‘that in all your lands’ churches, as a sign of reverence the gospel let the Gospel be read in Latin and afterwards proclaimed translated into the Slavonic language for the ears of the people who do not understand the Latin words’³¹⁸

This is the same instruction we find in the *VM* letter, but not in the *VC*. Whenever this was agreed, it was clearly after the death of Constantine-Cyril and the completion of his *vita*. It is also a letter from John VIII to Sviatopluk that makes it clear that Hadrian II had first sent Methodios to Moravia.³¹⁹ With such a letter at hand, the *VM* author, whose loose editorialising abilities have been clearly established in the way that the council synopsis and *VC*, has clearly taken the information provided in the letters of John VIII, to formulate what an original letter by Hadrian II might plausibly have looked like. The letters of John and the *VM* also share a small corpus of relevant biblical quotations to defend vernacular liturgy. The *VM* section of the letter stating the custom of reading Latin first and then Slavonic notes the purpose of Slavonic letters:

‘ДА СЯ НСПЪЛНИТЬ КНИЖЬНОЕ СЛОВО ЯКО: “ВЪСЪХВАЛАТЬ ГОСПОДА
ВЪСН ЯЗЫЦН” И ДРОУГОНДЕ: “ВЪСН ВЪЗГЛАГОЛЮТЬ ЯЗЫКЫ
РАЗЛАДНУБНЫ ВЕЛНУБА БОЖИЯ, ЯКОЖЕ ДАСТ НМЪ СВЯТЫН ДОУХЪ
ОТВЪЩАВАТИ”’³²⁰

‘in order that the word of scripture would be carried out: “Praise God all people” (Psalm, 116:1), and elsewhere: “Everyone will praise the greatness of God in different languages, as the holy spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts, 2:4)

The *Industriae* also dwells on the purpose of Slavonic. However, it is several sentences before asserting the order of languages that it notes:

³¹⁷ John VIII, *Letters*, 255, p.224.

³¹⁸ Amended from Betti, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.87.

³¹⁹ ‘Quia vero audivimus, quia Methodios vester archiepiscopus ab antecessore nostro, Adrian scilicet papa, ordinatus vobisque directus aliter doceat, quam coram sede apostolica se credere verbis et litteris professus est, valde miramur.’ John VIII, *Letters*, 200, p.160.

³²⁰ *VM*, 8.13.

‘Litteras denique Sclaviniscas a Constantino quondam philosopho reppertas, quibus Deo laudes debite resonent, iure laudamus et in eadem lingua Christi domini nostri preconia et opera enarrentur, iubemus; neque enim tribus tantum, sed omnibus linguis Dominum laudare auctoritate sacra monemur, quae praecipit dicens: “Laudate Dominum omnes gentes et collaudate eum omnes populi”, et apostoli repleti Spiritu sancto locuti sunt omnibus linguis magnalia Dei; hinc et Paulus caelestis quoque tuba insonat monens: “Omnis lingua confiteatur, quia dominus noster Iesus Christus in gloria est Dei Patris.”’³²¹

‘And lastly, we justly praise the Slavonic letters previously found by the philosopher Constantine, and through which praises of God resound, and we order that the praises and deeds of Christ our lord, are expounded in that language; and we are reminded to praise God in his divine power, in all languages, which prescribed as follows: “Praise the Lord all nations, and praise him together with all people” (Psalm, 116) and the apostles filled with the holy spirit, declaring the wonders of God in all languages (Cf. Acts, 2:11), here is also the heavenly Paul admonishing us with the sound of the trumpet: “And every tongue confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father” (Phil., 2:11)’

The use of Psalm 116 serves in both texts as a justification for the invention of Slavonic, as is the use of Acts 2, albeit slightly different sections across the two texts. Psalm 116 is also used in the VC, as one of the quotations Cyril throws at the Latins in the third major disputation in this text.³²²

That the VM is using content from the letters of John VIII therefore seems clear, as was already suggested by Betti’s analysis. A more sophisticated obfuscation is occurring in the forged letter, however. The *Industriae* by John VIII is in fact rather unusual, because it represents a major change in the pope’s position on the use of Slavonic in the liturgy.³²³ In an earlier set of two letters to Sviatopluk and Methodios, it is clear that John’s position on the role of Slavonic was initially more prohibitive. John VIII wrote to Methodios in 879, calling him to defend himself in Rome. In the letter, aside from questioning the content of his teachings, which may be to do with the *filioque*, the pope separately addressed the medium of Methodios’ teaching.

³²¹ John VIII, *Letters*, 255, p.223-4.

³²² VC, 16.13. See a table of all quotes in Chapter 1.III.c. Vavřínek has noted this similarity too, but has instead argued that the reason the letter of Hadrian II in the VM uses the same quotations as the VC is not because the former text had the latter at hand but because the third disputation of the VC actually circulated as a separate treatise written by Cyril himself, and delivered at the papal court before Hadrian II and John VIII. This seem unnecessarily overcomplicated, see: Vavřínek, *Staroslověnské životy*, pp.77-8.

³²³ Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.73-4; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, pp.162-6.

‘Audimus etiam, quod missas cantes in barbara, hoc est Sclavina lingua, unde iam litteris nostris per Paulum episcopum Anconitanum tibi directis prohibuimus, ne in ea lingua sacra missarum sollempnia celebrares, sed vel in Latina vel in Greca lingua, sicut ecclesia Dei toto terrarum orbe diffusa et in omnibus gentibus dilatata cantat. Predicare vero aut sermonem in populo facere tibi licet, quoniam psalmista omnes ammonet Dominum gentes laudare et apostolus: “Omnis” inquit “lingua confiteatur, quia dominus Iesus in Gloria est Dei patris.”’³²⁴

‘We have heard, in addition, that you sing the mass in the barbarian, that is to say Slavonic language, due to which with our letter, sent to you through Paul the Bishop of Ancona, we forbid that you celebrate the sacred mass in that language, but either in the Latin or the Greek language, as the church of God delivers it, which has spread in the whole world and has [spread] amongst all people. We permit you, however, to preach among the populace [in Slavonic] since the psalmist calls all people to praise God (cf. Psalm 116), and the apostle says: “And let every tongue confess, that Jesus is our Lord to the glory of the father” (Phil. 2:11)

It seems clear therefore, that a mere year before his letter to Sviatopluk, John VIII used the same two biblical citations (Psalm 116 and Phil. 2:11), to argue the very opposite case: that Slavonic ought not to be used in the actual mass, but only in sermons or homilies. What changed John’s policy is beyond the scope of this study, but it seems clear that the papal position on Slavonic was far from stable, even between two letters and two years. With no letters from Hadrian II surviving, it is far from clear under what precise conditions with respect to the use of Slavonic the initial appointment of Methodios was made. It is possible, that Hadrian’s policy was much more akin to John’s 879 letter than that of 880, or that his policy too changed drastically over short periods of time. What the *VM* is doing therefore, by selecting the later *Industriae*, and putting its position into the mouth of Pope Hadrian II, is trying to create a long-term precedent for an unstable, short lived policy. The *VM* author was clearly aware this was the best deal they were going to get. There was no reason for the *VM* to not use the precedent we found in the *VC* where Hadrian II seems to offer absolutely no restrictions on the Slavonic liturgy in Rome, if this had seemed to the author a plausible or possible outcome. But if it was clear by the 880s that this was not an option, the *VM* settled instead for forging a historic document to propagate a fairly short-lived, but unusually accommodating papal stance.

The same attempt to fabricate a continuity between the papacy and Moravia can explain the insertion of Nicholas I into the *VM*. In the *VC*, it is noted that ‘the pope’ invites Cyril to Rome, and it is later clarified

³²⁴ John VIII, *Letters*, 201, p.161.

that this pope was Hadrian II, who welcomes Cyril.³²⁵ In the *VM*, however, it is Nicholas I that invites the brothers, welcomes them, blesses their teaching and places the Slavonic books on the altar of St Peter.³²⁶ This has either been accepted as correct, or dismissed as a ‘lapse of memory’ on the part of the *VM* author as there is no evidence whatsoever that Nicholas made contact with Cyril.³²⁷ Once again this discrepancy has not been considered as intentional. Yet inserting Nicholas in the narrative makes good sense, given the serious instability with which the textual community was faced. Another papal patron on the list could not hurt. A patron who was associated closely with missionary activity elsewhere and who, in part thanks to the efforts of John VIII, had acquired a status as eminent as Gregory the Great’s right hand man, would have no doubt appeared particularly appealing.³²⁸ It is perhaps precisely due to this Gregorian association, that the *VM* chooses its words carefully; Nicholas wanted to see the brothers ‘as angels of God’ (‘**ѿ а҃ко а҃н҃г҃ла б҃о҃ж҃иѿ**’). Could this perhaps be an allusion to Gregory’s famous exclamation upon first encountering Anglo-Saxon slave boys, that they ought to be ‘co-heirs with the angels of heaven’?³²⁹

Regardless, spreading the Moravian mission’s support across Nicholas I and Hadrian II is a clear attempt to invent tradition by appealing to two highly respected and venerated pontiffs. In so doing, however, the *VM* distances the Moravian mission’s activity and legitimacy from John VIII. Even when the text is clearly alluding to John VIII’s letters to Frankish bishops asking that Methodios be released from imprisonment, it does not name the pope.³³⁰ This consistent omission is best explained by an awareness amidst the textual community responsible for the text, that the legacy of John VIII in papal circles was far from uncontroversial. John VIII’s rival Formosus, whom he accused of striving for papal office in 876, and whose condemnation John repeatedly secured, was back in Rome immediately after the pope’s assassination in 882 and may well have been on the papal throne by the time of the composition of the *VM*, i.e. sometime between ca.886-907.³³¹ Thus, the silence of the *VM* is best read as a silence informed by the silence of the *Liber Pontificalis* and by the silence of John VIII’s no longer extant register.

The *VM* emerged from a community that was readjusting to changing patronage. This meant that the *VM* as a document had on the one hand to prove that its community’s papal loyalty was not reducible to John VIII’s patronage, whilst on the other, to tackle the legalistic discourse of the Frankish authorities from

³²⁵ *VC*, 17.1-2.

³²⁶ *VM*, 6.1.

³²⁷ Accepted in, for example: Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs into Christendom*, p.52-4; Istrin, *1100 let slavianskoi azbuki*, p.33. Also accepted in Betti, who is mistaken in claiming that Nicholas is also mentioned in the *VC*, *The Making of Christian Moravia*, p.62. Dismissed in: Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.138.

³²⁸ Discussed above: see Chapter 2.VI.

³²⁹ ‘et tales angelorum in caelis decet esse coheredes’, Bede, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, 2.1. (<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/bede/bede2.shtml#2>), (last accessed: January, 2020).

³³⁰ *VM*, 10.1-6.

³³¹ Leyser, ‘The Memory of Gregory the Great’, p.196.

which it had thus far been protected by papal patronage. To do so, the textual community reinvented the legacy of Cyril whose own good reputation in the ninth-century papal court for bringing the relics of St Clement made him suitable for the *VM*'s author's purposes, but whose Byzantine imperialism and concern with education seemed of little relevance or interest. It also had to transform the textual and political legacy of Byzantine church councils to put them to the service of the community's newly adopted papal supremacy, and last but not least it had to tinker with papal documents to provide evidence for its long-standing alliance with reputable Gregorian popes.

Although these may seem like radical textual interventions, it is worth pointing to one contemporary parallel to better situate this kind of textual practice within contemporary convention. In his study of the *Life of Anskar*, discussed above, Eric Knibbs demonstrates how Rimbert, Anskar's successor, and his community forged a number of papal pallia grants in order to resolve the problem that Anskar was only appointed as archbishop to the see of Bremen, whilst Rimbert had been assigned to the see of Hamburg.³³² In so doing, the text uses double pallium grants, otherwise unattested, and forges a grant by Pope Nicholas I to create a previously unattested dual see of Hamburg-Bremen, two locations over sixty miles apart.³³³ There is no founding document surviving for 'any diocese that emerges in the Carolingian period', and plenty of surviving documents from the register of Nicholas show the text to be using 'outright documentary forgery.'³³⁴ This practice of forgery is much more radical than what we find in the *VM*. The care taken to produce a letter in plausible language, which communicates a position an actual pope did hold briefly, is a world away from the total invention of non-existent documents and previously unattested dual sees. But both the *Life of Anskar* and the *VM* belong to the same moment, of the late-ninth century, as authority became less and less centralised, and the papacy's relationship with Frankish missions was far from secure. As Knibbs puts it for the *Life of Anskar*, but as pertinent for the *VM*, it is in response to this instability, that 'these enterprising clerics fought for their own survival, and the survival of their institution by means of documentary deception', amongst other things.³³⁵

2.VI.4 Conclusions

To conclude, there is no doubt that the *VM* is a text produced by a community stuck between a rock and a hard place. Rather than being a representation of these current affairs, however, it is best to consider the

³³² Knibbs, *Anskar, Rimbert*, pp.176-7.

³³³ *Ibid.*, pp.4-6.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.6, 198. More generally, see: pp.137-175.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10. This was by no means the only text which was the product of such forgery. The corpus of Pseudo-Isidore's writings was also consolidated in the ninth century, blending decretals with the fictitious voices of former popes, to give the weight of age-old tradition to rulings on contemporary issues. See: C. Leyser, 'Episcopal Office in the Italy of Liudprand of Cremona, c.890-c.970', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), p.803.

VM as a declaration, as defined in the work of the linguistic philosopher John Searle.³³⁶ A declaration is an assertion of a particular state of affairs, which seeks to bring into existence that state of affairs. For instance, if someone standing before two bowls of soup were to point to one and say: “this is your soup”, then she would be trying to transform a neutral bowl of soup into a possessed one, and if ‘you’ proceed to eat from that bowl and not from the other, you have accepted the terms of the declaration, and the declaration has become valid.

The VM is a declaration of a number of things: that the Moravian mission is aligned with long-term papal practice; that its actors, Methodios, Cyril and the Moravian community have always accepted papal supremacy; that there are clear and persuasive arguments for the legitimacy of Methodios against claims to the contrary by the Frankish ecclesiastical administration arousing from his and Cyril’s personal relationship with the Slavs; and that therefore papal support ought to be continued by the election of Methodios’ chosen successor, Gorazd.

To make these declarations, the VM’s author and their community adopted and adapted its sources from Greek and Latin, forging and amending papal documents, and transforming the Cyril of the VC, by sidelining his concern with rhetoric, disputation and education, by forging a previously non-existent brotherly bond with Methodios, and by elevating the ethnic qualities of the mission to Moravia and the invention of the alphabet. This was the first instance in which inventing a Slavonic alphabet for a community of Slavs and using it in a religious context became a politically pertinent matter, and not simply an intellectual question as in the VC. The invention of Slavonic as it is here repurposed, remains instrumentalised in a wider conflict over ecclesiastical jurisdiction at the fringes of the Carolingian world.

A declaration need not be successful, nor does it have to be true. As far as the evidence permits us to say, the pope did not accept Gorazd as bishop to Moravia, and Frankish hegemony returned to the region with the appointment of Wiching, until the rapid collapse of the Moravian polity by ca.907. This short-lived tri-lingual community of educated clerics, therefore, was either subsumed in Latin hegemony or expelled.

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the Moravian mission, the story of the invention of Slavonic, in both the VC and the VM versions, was transmitted southward to the Balkans. There, some of the two texts’ most central declarations, interventions and arguments became irrelevant once again, but others proved to be useful ammunition for particular contemporary intellectual debates in early tenth-century Bulgaria. It is to this next phase in the process of inventing, contesting and reframing the invention of Slavonic and its key actors Cyril and Methodios that I turn to in the final chapter of this thesis.

³³⁶ J. Searle, ‘A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts’, in his *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.149-151.

Chapter Three:
Defending Slavonic: *On Letters*

3.I INTRODUCTION

As noted at the end of the last chapter, sometime either after the ban on Slavonic liturgy by Pope Stephen V in 890 or around the 907 collapse of the Moravian polity, the Slavonic alphabet arrived in the Balkans. This chapter follows the alphabet from Central to South-Eastern Europe.

It is worth noting, that the memory of the missions recorded in the VC and VM was not totally lost in Moravia, and was transmitted northward to Bohemia and Poland.¹ However, the dissemination and use of the Slavonic alphabet in tenth-century Moravia, Bohemia and Poland remain contested.² The earliest original compositions from Bohemia, largely legends concerning the Přemyslid dynasty and especially their ruler Václav/Wenceslas and his grandmother Ludmila, were composed first in Latin and then translated into Slavonic, or were composed only in Latin.³

By contrast, a large corpus of Greek-to-Slavonic translations can be more or less firmly located within the bounds of the late ninth- and early-tenth century Balkans, and amongst them a much smaller, but nonetheless significant corpus of original compositions in Slavonic.⁴ These texts discuss the questions of translation, the Slavonic alphabet, and at times evoke Cyril, Methodios and Moravia, even if they mostly lack the kind of historical information of interest to historians of high politics.

Yet, this corpus of texts is the earliest record of an intellectual milieu of scribes working in Slavonic and offering a polyphony of contemporary voices on similar issues.⁵ This community was distinctly bi-

¹ See: Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, (Western Slavs) pp.194-229, (Eastern Slavs) pp.230-259; Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs into Christendom*, (Western Slavs) pp.86-142, (Eastern Slavs) pp.187-207; S. Barlieva, 'The Cult of Saints Cyril and Methodios: the Phenomenon of Shared Identity in the Slavic World', in M. Gray, ed., *Rewriting Holiness: Reconfiguring Vitae, Re-Signifying Cults* (London, 2017), pp.229-41.

² The same scholars can express more or less confidence in how widespread it was. A more sceptical assessment: P. Sommer, D. Třeštík, 'Bohemia and Moravia', in N. Berend ed., *Christianisation and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c.900-1200* (Cambridge, 2007), pp.233-4. A more positive assessment: P. Sommer, 'Saint Procopius and the Sázava Monastery', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, pp.296-99. On the interesting developments of the memory of Cyril and Methodios in thirteenth-century Bohemia see: M. Wihoda, 'The Tradition of Saints Cyril and Methodios in the Memory of the Přemyslid Era', in Kouřil ed., *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe*, pp.310-14.

³ Sommer, Třeštík, 'Bohemia and Moravia', p.249.

⁴ These will be introduced and discussed at length in Part V of this Chapter. The area I loosely refer to as the Balkans here and throughout this thesis takes modern day Albania and Northern Macedonia as its western border, the Black Sea as its eastern border, the Carpathian Mountains on the north and the Aegean coast from Thessaloniki eastwards to Istanbul as its southern border. The surviving epigraphic evidence from the tenth century clusters in the south west (between modern day North Macedonia and Albania) and in the north east (in the Danube region between modern day Bulgaria and Romania). Locating texts surviving in manuscripts is a trickier task, however, so I have chosen a wider geographic area to permit contemplating production outside of known monastic and imperial centres. For the inscriptions' distribution, see: K. Popkonstantinov, O. Kronsteiner eds., *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, vol. 1, (Salzburg, 1994).

⁵ By contrast, the number of texts surviving which can safely be dated to Moravia is highly contentious, as discussed in the introduction. See: Turilov, 'K izucheniiu velikomoravskogo literaturnogo nasledia', pp.130-52.

lingual, working in both Slavonic and Greek. Of course, ‘all literate technologies to one degree or another are embedded within structures of privilege, access, textual codes, and literacy education.’⁶ Thus, this chapter can ultimately offer insight on this privileged bilingual milieu, or literate social class. But written text was disseminated orally, and literacy was a complex sliding scale, and so the ideas and decisions made by this milieu could ‘influence the illiterate and quasi-literate as well as those who can read and write.’⁷ Thus the ideas about writing, formulated and formalised by this intellectual circle, could have had profound consequences for the spread and use of Slavonic across South-Eastern and North-Eastern Europe.

This chapter will start from *On Letters*, a treatise attributed to the Monk Khrabur (or Khrabr), and the first surviving text dedicated entirely to a defence of the Slavonic alphabet explicitly against the Greek alphabet. It will then turn to the wider corpus of texts that can be dated to the late ninth- and early tenth-century Balkans. It is the purpose of this study to approach these texts not as sources for historical narrative, to establish events that occurred, but as sources of intellectual history, reflecting varied and changing ideas about writing in Slavonic, the alphabet and its use in the early medieval Balkans.⁸ As is the case throughout this thesis, I seek to destabilise the consolidated narrative of the birth of Slavonic culture and to offer instead an alternative narrative, of the repeated new representations and reconfigurings of its origin story, and of the continued contestation and transformation of the Slavonic alphabet and ideas about its use and purpose over the ninth and tenth centuries.

Section II of this chapter will highlight two already-assumed contexts which have shaped the study of *On Letters* and the other texts which emerge from the Balkans at the turn of the tenth century: first, the *Life of Clement*, and second, the objectification of the Bulgarian state as an actor in the preservation of Slavonic culture. Departing from these predetermined contexts, the chapter starts instead with a close study of the text, *On Letters*. Section III introduces the modern scholarship and pre-modern reception of *On Letters*. Section IV turns to an assessment of the sources the author used, focusing on two kinds of source: Byzantine texts in Greek, and the VC and VM. It identifies a specific Greek source for a section of *On Letters* formerly considered original, and moreover demonstrates that the author uses Greek language material differently to the use we find in the VC and VM. This use marks a shift away from compositions about the Slavonic alphabet which face outwards from Slavonic speakers to external sources of authority

⁶ Amsler, *Affective Literacies*, p.xvii.

⁷ B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), p.7.

⁸ Despite the large number of editions of *On Letters* I cite the most recent one by Veder throughout and use the numbering he provides, but often render the English myself. I have referred to the other major editions and will note them only if there are discrepancies when discussing word choice. *On Letters* in W. Veder, *Utrum in alterum abiturum erat? A Study of the Beginnings of Text Transmission in Church Slavic* (Indiana, 1999), pp.159-167.

or legitimacy, and toward textual production aimed directly at Slavonic speakers. That these speakers were bilingual or at least educated in Greek leads me to call *On Letters* a Byzantino-Slavic text, aimed at a Byzantino-Slavic milieu. In addition, I posit that the text is either intentionally omitting and profoundly transforming the *VC* and *VM*, or that it simply does not have access to the two lives as we know them today.

Section V assesses the main argument of *On Letters*, which is presented in the form of a thesis-anti-thesis relationship between Slavonic and Greek. I argue that the author frames Slavonic and its invention as more sacred than that of Greek, by elevating the sanctity of Cyril on the one hand and abstracting the invention event on the other. The text distances Cyril from his ethnic and linguistic markers as we find them in the *VC* and *VM*, and omits altogether the specific historical circumstances in which the alphabet was invented. It thus shifts the focus away from missionary activity, an issue central both to the *VC* and *VM* in different ways, towards a much more academic question of the history of language and alphabet creation. In this way, I argue, against the grain of existing scholarship, that *On Letters* is a radical departure from the *VC* and *VM* and that its author transforms the legend of Slavonic invention in new ways toward a new specific historical context, namely the early medieval Balkans.

Section VI seeks to situate the text in its contemporary milieu. It suggests that *On Letters* is neither an attack on Cyrillic nor on the Byzantine clergy as has previously been argued, and that both of these positions have been shaped by a theory of ethnicity, which assumes it to be impossible for Slavonic speakers to oppose Slavonic literacy. Instead, I posit that the text is arguing against bi-lingual Slavonic-Greek speakers, who were likely literate in both, but were nonetheless resisting the use of Slavonic writing, or showing what the author considers undue reverence for Greek. *On Letters* seeks to create division, between Slavonic and Greek speakers and bookmen, in an environment in which such categories were clearly fluid. The premises of the positions that the text opposes can be seen in the other contemporary texts of the tenth century. These demonstrate both ambivalence and ambiguity with respect to their authors' personal self-identification as Slavs or Byzantines, and some clear reverence for the Greek language. In short, although *On Letters* survives in over a hundred and forty manuscripts and has become in some sense the hegemonic reading of the invention of Slavonic, I suggest that in the tenth-century Balkans, this text was an extreme and radical assault on a contemporary consensus of bilingualism, identarian fluidity and some hesitation to the adoption of the new Slavonic literacy.

3.II WHERE NOT TO START

In the absence of a Slavonic chronicle tradition, studies of the arrival of Slavonic literacy in the Balkans at the turn of the tenth century, and thus of *On Letters* and other contemporary texts, have been framed by

two main kinds of context. The first and backbone historical account is found the eleventh-century Greek *Life of Clement* which survives under the name of Theophylact of Ohrid, but which scholars largely accept drew on older, possibly Slavonic-language material.⁹ This has been supplemented by tenth-century Byzantine sources, even though, as discussed in Chapter 2, they have nothing to say about the Slavonic alphabet in particular.¹⁰ Using these sources, scholars have consolidated a reified object, the Bulgarian state, which is either treated as an actor in its own right, or as one anthropomorphised in Symeon, its ruler (ca. 897-927); this state is then regarded as responsible for the conscious preservation of the Slavonic alphabet and culture. The Bulgarian state, when conceived thus, is the second kind of context which has shaped the study of *On Letters*. In turn I offer a critique of the use of the *Life of Clement* to frame our understanding of *On Letters*, and a more general critique of the objectification of the Bulgarian state or its people, as agents in this wider narrative of preservation.

3.II.1 The *Life of Clement*

The *Life of Clement* is often used to explain or contextualise the tenth-century texts mentioned above, as it offers a narrative account of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission's arrival in the Balkans after the expulsion of Slavonic from Moravia.¹¹ Yet, rather as the *VM* restructures information about the mission to Moravia from the *VC* to its own ends, the *Life of Clement* too significantly reframes the Moravian mission and its arrival in the Balkans, in light of what are clearly eleventh-century concerns.

The *Life of Clement* as it survives was authored by Theophylact of Ohrid, the eleventh-century Byzantine court intellectual who wrote about his time in Ohrid as exile.¹² This complex text clearly does have earlier, perhaps Slavonic language, sources.¹³ These may be the *VC* and *VM* and/or an earlier *Life of Clement* which used the *VC* and *VM* as sources.¹⁴ The narrative voice oscillates between regarding the Slavs as 'us' and as 'them.'¹⁵ This is further complicated by the ethnicization of the Slavonic peoples and

⁹ Theophylact of Ohrid, *The Life of Clement*, in *Grutskite zhitiia na Kliment Okhridski. Uvod, tekst, prevod i obiasnitelni belezhki*, ed., trans. A. Milev, (Sofia, 1966), pp.76-163.

¹⁰ The sources from Byzantium are mostly chronicle accounts of Symeon's wars with Byzantium, and the letters of Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos to the ruler during these wars. For the most thorough chronicle narrative see: Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicle*, in *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren, (Berlin, 2006). *The Chronicle of the Logothete*, trans. S. Wahlgren, (Liverpool, 2019). Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, eds., trans., R. Jenkins, L. Westerink (Washington, D.C., 1973), esp. Letters 3-31.

¹¹ E.g. Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs*, pp.168-9; Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.245; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, p.95-6. All switch to the *Life of Clement* as their main narrative source when *VC/VM* run out. It is also often the backbone narrative into which the short *Life of Naum* is plugged. See: M. Kuseff, 'St Nahum', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 29 (1950), pp.139-52, pp.142-3 (text).

¹² See: Mullett, *Theophylact of Ohrid*, pp.43-69.

¹³ Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, pp.76-147.

¹⁴ It presents Cyril as a scholar and Methodios as an institutional bishop, as do their two *vitae*, e.g. Ibid. 2.4.

¹⁵ 'Us' when discussing the students of Clement of Ohrid, *ibid.* 18.58. 'Them' when treating the Bulgarians, their dark land, their rough language, and their wild and unlearned nature etc.: *ibid.* 2.5, 2.6. 21.63.

their language as Bulgarians, rather than Slavs, and the assertion that Methodios baptised Boris himself.¹⁶ Such ethnic re-labelling is a radical departure from the materials we can safely date to the early tenth century, where the most common label used to name and categorise is Slavs and not Bulgarians.¹⁷

It is clear that much of the *Life of Clement* as it survives today has been reorganised around the subsequent eleventh-century context, and in particular the 1054 split between the eastern and western churches over the *filioque*.¹⁸ Although the *filioque* was already an issue of contention in the ninth century, it does not feature in the *VC* and *VM*.¹⁹ The *Life of Clement* reframes Methodios and his disciples, as bastions of Byzantine theology, arguing for the Chalcedonian position in brand new staged debates with Latin opponents.²⁰ The fact that some of their words in these debates have extremely close textual parallels in Theophylact's own treatise against the Latins and that no other tenth-century Balkan sources in Slavonic reveal a preoccupation with the *filioque*, strongly point to the likelihood that the anti-Latin sentiment in the *Life of Clement* was Theophylact's own.²¹ The *Life of Clement* frames the exodus from Moravia as a doctrinal issue, but in light of doctrine as it had solidified by the eleventh century.²² As such it offers little insight into our inquiry.

Thus, this chapter starts by accepting that Slavonic writing did arrive in the Balkans and at the Bulgarian court most probably through clerics and scribes from Moravia, sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century, but it will withhold judgement on the precise way this occurred.

3.II.2 Bulgaria in the History of Slavonic

The birth of Slavonic culture, presented in both political and scholarly common-sense narratives, which unify the *VC* and *VM* as texts, and Cyril and Methodios as a sacred pair, does not come to its conclusion in Moravia. This established story continues in the medieval Bulgarian polity, which popular and scholarly discourse, both within and without Bulgaria, considers as a crucial period for the preservation of Slavonic culture. This common-sense takes it as a given that the various groups of actors involved in the adoption and adaption of Slavonic in the Balkans shared an overarching mission of conscious continuity and preservation, and an idea of what Slavonic meant and what it was for.

¹⁶ E.g. Ibid. 2.6, 4.15-16.

¹⁷ This will be discussed in depth in Part VI.2 below.

¹⁸ Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 4.17, 8.25.

¹⁹ This was probably due to the fact, that unlike the Frankish churches, the papacy had not made its position clear until the turn of the tenth century and was therefore not the target of heretical claims in the early texts, as discussed by Tia Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin Heretics*, esp. p.153.

²⁰ Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 8.25, 16.47-52.

²¹ See: Milev, *Grutskite Zhitiia*, p.47

²² Theophylact, *Life of Clement*, 12.35-39.

Medieval Bulgaria's role in the universal narrative of Slavonic culture, is perhaps best represented by *The Slav Epic* ('Slovanská epopej'). This cycle of twenty monumental canvass paintings (the largest at over six by eight meters) by Czech Art Nouveau artist Alfons Mucha, executed between 1910 and 1928, represents nineteen key moments in the history of Slavonic peoples, and one futuristic concluding piece entitled 'Slavs for Humanity.'²³ The first few paintings deal with the period that concerns us. The opening two, 'Slavs in their Original Homeland' and 'The Celebration of Svantovit' (a supposedly pre-Christian rite), present dark and moody mythological scenes, where Slavs face current or oncoming disaster before their supposed mass migration southward. Scene three, 'The Introduction of Slavonic Liturgy in Great Moravia', depicts a major shift in colour and mood. The wild natural scenes steeped in deep blue are replaced by a bright palatial courtyard. Prince Rastislav sits on a throne before a priest reading a letter which confirms Methodios' legitimation by the pope. Methodios stands to the side flanked by two followers. It is clear that Mucha considers this the true birth of a victorious Slavonic culture.



Figure 3. Alfons Mucha, The Slav Epic cycle No.4: Tsar Simeon I of Bulgaria (1923) (photo: muchafoundation.org)

²³ The paintings were on display in Moravský Krumlov until 2012, when they were moved into the Veletržní Palace in Prague, the city to which Mucha bestowed them, where they remained until 2016. They spent May-December 2019 in Brno, and are, at the time of writing, not on display. For the full images see: <http://muchafoundation.org/gallery/themes/theme/slav-epic/> (last accessed, January 2020). I am grateful to Dr Alexandra Vukovich for bringing this to my attention.

The next scene is entitled 'Tsar Symeon I of Bulgaria', and once again presents a bright and warm coloured palatial scene. This time, a lavish palace interior frames the tsar in old age sitting pensively on his throne and reading from an open manuscript. A court full of scribes sprawls before him frantically writing and reading pieces of parchment on the marble floor and its fine carpets. This is the preservation of Slavonic literature, and the refuge for the Cyrillo-Methodian mission directed by Bulgaria as state, anthropomorphised in Symeon as ruler *par excellence*.

As I have sought to show throughout this thesis, the popular, the fanciful, the political and the scholarly are deeply intertwined in the study of the invention of Slavonic. This twentieth-century imagining of the legendary Cyril and Methodios fading to be replaced by a state-based and leader-centred preservation effort is not far removed from the language of academic literature, and not only from within Bulgaria. In the words of the Czech scholar Francis Dvornik, 'the work of Constantine-Cyril and Methodios, rejected by the west, was saved by the Bulgarians.'²⁴ The Russian scholar Boris Floria notes that the task of preserving Slavonic 'was only completed successfully and fully in Bulgaria. The First Bulgarian Kingdom became the main hearth from which Slavonic writing and Slavonic literature were spread to other countries.'²⁵

The most complete iteration of this thinking is found in the words of French Slavist Roger Bernard from a 1963 speech in Paris, later published in a Bulgarian translation as the preface to a scholarly publication under the title 'Giants in Spirit'.²⁶

‘Но една млада държава, привлякла вниманието на средновековния свят с военните си победи, постъпи благородно и мъдро, като приети прогонените ученици на Кирил и Методий, повечето от които в същност бяха нейни чедра. Тази държава съхрани и подклаждаше пламъка, който двамата братя бяха запалили, за да предаде по-късно този пламък на останалите славянски народи и на бъдещите поколения. Тази държава беше България. Поради благородното си поведение и значимостта на наследството, което тя спаси, България си спечели неувяхващата благодарност на останалите славянски народи и уважението на целия цивилизован свят.’²⁷

²⁴ Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.244.

²⁵ ‘успешно и в полном объеме была решена лишь в Болгарии. Первое Болгарское царство стало тем главным очагом, откуда славянская письменность и славянская литература стали проникать в другие страны’, Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.105.

²⁶ R. Bernard, ‘Velikani na dukha’, in B. Kastelov, et al eds. *Bulgaristika i Bulgaristi: statii i izsledvaniia, bulgaristikata v chuzhbina, portreti na bulgaristi* (Sofia, 1981) pp.25-33.

²⁷ Ibid. p.28.

‘But a young country, which had attracted the attention of the medieval world with its military successes, acted nobly and wisely, when it gave shelter to the banished students of Cyril and Methodios, most of whom were in fact its own children. This country preserved and fuelled the flame, which the two brothers had lit, in order to pass on this flame later to the other Slavonic peoples and to future generations. This country was Bulgaria. Due to its noble behaviour and the significance of the inheritance which it saved, Bulgaria won the unfading gratitude of the rest of the Slavonic people and the respect of the whole civilised world.’

This discourse relies on two ideological manoeuvres. The first is the unification of Cyril and Methodios, their purpose and mission, into one flame. As I have sought to demonstrate this unification is not warranted by the surviving texts, but rather is an invention of the later *VM*, as part of a wider project to make acceptable and legitimate the position of Methodios before the papacy’s changing policy. This papal agenda is lost in the narrative presented above. The second is the formalisation of the unit of (medieval) Bulgaria as an object in history, and then the reification of this object as a (cultural) agent in its own right in the history of Slavonic culture. This historical object or agent, responsible for ‘saving’ or ‘preserving’ or ‘fuelling’ the Slavonic flame is at times personified by its rulers Boris, or in Mucha’s paintings Symeon, and is at other equated times more generically with the state, the ‘kingdom’ (‘tsarstvo’) in the words of Floria or ‘country’ (‘durzhava’) in the translated words of Bernard.

This objectification of medieval Bulgaria, as the second phase of the birth of Slavonic culture, is just as uncritical as the unification of Cyril and Methodios as a holy, ideologically aligned pair. The overall narrative summarised by Bernard fails to engage closely and critically with the textual monuments from the early medieval Balkans which are called upon to support this monolithic story, as individual contributions to a complex and versatile intellectual and political life. As I have shown, in the case of the *VC* and *VM*, this failure to address these monuments on their own terms has had the consequence of disguising the specific agendas of each text and their fundamental difference, and thus significantly oversimplifying early medieval intellectual culture in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

I take the same to be the case here: that the term Bulgaria and its use in scholarship, especially interchangeably with Symeon, has, in striving to preserve continuity, disguised a complex and multi-vocal intellectual culture. This is not to say that Symeon was not literate, or not responsible for patronising translations at his court.²⁸ Rather, it is to make two points of caution. The first is to assert that even if dedicated to a ruler, individual texts cannot be assumed to have an agenda interchangeable with

²⁸ Plenty of his correspondences survive from the Greek side, as do a few short letters in the Byzantine bureaucrat Leo Choerosphaktes’ collection, which are assigned to Symeon, and scholars generally accept as his own, see Leo Choerosphaktes, *Letters*, 1, 3, 5, in *FLHB*, Vol. 8, pp.176-8.

that of the ruler, or of that ruler's state. Such reductionism is unthinkable in the works of, say Bede, whose *Ecclesiastical History* would never be reduced to King Ceolwulf or the state of Northumbria, or Thomas Aquinas, whose *On Kingship* would never be mistaken as at one with the position of the text's dedicatee and patron, the King of Cyprus.²⁹ And the second is to challenge the readiness with which scholars attribute texts which have no textual link to Symeon, to his influence or to his personal agenda.³⁰

Due to this readiness to attribute total agency to Symeon, whenever a text does not contain within it any direct link to Symeon's imperial patronage I refer to that text as emerging from the Balkans, geographically, rather than Bulgaria as a polity. In so doing I try as much as possible to avoid subsuming the agendas of individual authors and textual communities within the objectives and purposes of the state (or state personified as ruler). This kind of separation is by no means always necessary, but I use it here to serve as an over-corrective to the scholarship concerning medieval Bulgaria in particular. In large part due to the persistence of the label 'Bulgaria' throughout the middle ages and into the modern state of Bulgaria, the term has become especially charged with narratives of national continuity. This is quite unlike other labels which I use in this thesis, such as Moravia, which is now a largely geographic label for a region in the Czech Republic, whilst its medieval location remains contested, and Byzantium, which was an antiquarian label referring to the old city of Constantinople in the middle ages, and a different kind of antiquarian label from the Renaissance onwards referring to the East Roman Empire as a whole. The Bulgaria of the tenth century, by contrast, is accepted and assumed to be the progenitor of the Bulgaria of the twentieth. How pervasive this continuity is can be seen in the 1981 state-wide celebrations '1300 Years Bulgaria' ('1300 Години България'), which led to the production of a large body of scholarship alongside several architectural monuments, and eighty documentary films and various country-wide exhibitions on Bulgarian history.³¹ The key monument of this celebration, a large statue entitled '1300

²⁹ Bede, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, Praefatio; Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship (To the King of Cyprus)*, Proemium, in *S. Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opuscula Theologica*, eds. R. Verardo, R. Spiazzi, M. Calcaterra (Torino, 1954), p.257.

³⁰ See for instance this very recent attempt to suggest Cyrillic was in fact Symeon's own idea: Trendafilov, 'Simeon v Pliska', p.183. This elevation of Symeon is somewhat akin to the way authorial agency and control is attributed to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos in the field of Byzantine studies, yet Symeon lacks a reassessment as damning as: I. Ševčenko, 'Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitos', in J. Shepard, *et al* eds., *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), pp.167-95. This question of Constantine's literacy and literary output is still being debated, most recently see: N. Gaul, *et al* eds., *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos: From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio* (Wiesbaden, 2018).

³¹ The 1300 years start with 681, the date of a peace treatise between Asparukh and Constantine IV, shortly after the arrival of one branch of the Turkic steppe Bulgar tribe in the Danube region, recorded in rather mystical terms in: Theophanes, *Chronicle*, 357-8. The following are just a small selection of scholarly works commissioned for the occasion: N. Kovachev ed., *1300 godini Bulgarska durzhava: dokladi i suobshteniia ot nauchna konferentsiia provedena na 5 i 6 noemvri 1981 g. v chest na 1300 godishninata na Bulgarskata durzhava* (Veliko Turnovo, 1982); G. Bogdanov, *1300 Godini Bulgariia: tematichna prepouchitelna bibliografiia* (Sofia, 1973); D. Cholakova, *et al* eds., *Bulgariia 1300: sbornik ot metodichni i bibliografski materialii* (Plovdiv, 1980); B. Cholpanov, *I Nii sme dali neshto na sveta: 1300 godini Bulgariia* (Sofia, 1972). On the films, exhibitions and other celebrations, see: I.

Years Bulgaria’, erected in the centre of Bulgaria’s capital, Sofia, in 1981 and only recently dismantled in 2017, was divided into three scenes, which moved forward in time and told the story of ‘Bulgaria’.³²



Figure 2: ‘1300 Years Bulgaria’ Monument, Sofia, (Source: bgspomen.com)

The composition representing the present is an elevated male figure standing upright on left hand side of the monument. It depicts a victorious worker, and more broadly the idealised body of the Bulgarian socialist citizen. The middle scene represents a *pietà*, a variation on the representation of the lamentation of Christ by the Virgin Mary, except here it is a lamentation for the Bulgarians lost in wars and uprisings against Ottoman rule. If the present is the worker, and the past a lament for the Bulgarian state’s absence under Ottoman rule, it is perhaps no surprise to see how the origins of the Bulgarian state and its 1300 years of history are depicted in the lower right hand side of the monument: ‘Tsar Symeon and the Golden Age of Bulgarian Literature’, which portrays the ruler standing over scribes and laying the foundations of Bulgarian literature.

Kunchev, ‘Proektut 1300 godini Bulgariia – raztochitelna gradnomaniia ili nevizhdano kulturno dostizheniie?’, 16 April 2016 (<https://bulgarianhistory.org/1300bulgaria/>), (Last accessed: January, 2020).

³² ‘Pametnikut pred NDK otide v istoriata’, 28 July 2017, (<https://frognews.bg/novini/pametnikat-pred-ndk-otide-istoriata.html>), (last accessed: January, 2020)

To use the state label, Bulgaria, and the cultural and ethnic homogeneity it evokes in popular discourse, therefore, is especially unsatisfactory when one studies the complex, multi-lingual intellectual production of the Balkans, and Central and Eastern Europe more broadly. I have sought to show throughout this thesis, that politics in the early medieval world, and especially in Central and Eastern Europe, are not useful guides to the substance of cultural production. Thus, throughout this chapter I retain the label ‘Bulgaria’ when a text relates to the court or ruler, recognising that Symeon clearly did concern himself with commissioning Slavonic text but maintain this to be a distinctly medieval Bulgaria; I opt for the Balkans elsewhere, as an explicitly politicized recognition of the region’s mixed ethnic and linguistic population.

3.III ON LETTERS

The treatise *On Letters* is one of a handful original compositions datable to late-ninth or early tenth-century Bulgaria. Scholarly consensus, with which I agree, has settled on sometime between 897 and 927 for both philological reasons, and the fact that defending the alphabet against Greek makes most sense in an early medieval Balkan context, although where exactly the text was written remains a matter of contention.³³ In contrast with the rather brief accounts of the invention of Slavonic we find in the *VC* and *VM*, *On Letters* is the earliest surviving text to deal entirely and completely with the Slavonic alphabet. Under 3,000 words in length, the text opens with a summary of the invention of Slavonic letters by Constantine-Cyril. It then asserts the Slavonic alphabet’s superior sanctity by comparing it to the history of the Greek alphabet’s compilation. It offers a list of all Slavonic letters, before turning to a more polemical format of question and answer, defending the alphabet from a number of aggressors who argue the alphabet was not sacred as it was not one of the alphabets to be found on the cross of Christ, and as it continued to change over time.³⁴

In some manuscripts, including the earliest dated *Laurentian Codex* of 1348, the text is attributed to the Monk Khrabur (or Khrabr in Russian spelling), in the vast majority of others from the fifteenth century onwards it is assigned to Constantine-Cyril, and in the rest to no author.³⁵ Even so, no information concerning the author survives outside the treatise, and the name itself could simply be the short adjective

³³ For a comprehensive summary of the dating debates: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.20-38; more recently, and for the *terminus ante quem*: Veder, *Utrum in alterum*, pp.179-182.

³⁴ This list of letters is missing in the earliest surviving manuscript. Floria, *Skazaniia*, pp.109-10.

³⁵ The name Chernorizets Khrabur appears in only eight of the seventy-three manuscript attestations of the text for which Kuev produces full editions, including the 1348 Laurentian Codex and two fifteenth-century codices, the Moscow and the Sava. Already in the fifteenth century, however, an alternative attribution developed to Constantine Cyril, as in the Chudov Manuscripts N.269, and this became the dominant attribution into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More manuscripts of the text have come to light since Kuev’s study and are used by Veder in his critical edition, but these are usually later attestations and do not disrupt the general dominance of Constantine-Cyril. Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.185-418.

‘brave’ (‘*ХРАБЪРЪ*’), i.e. the brave monk. In part due to the possibility that ‘Khrabur’ may or may not be a name, historians have argued that Khrabur was in fact any one of the handful of named figures who tower over the anonymous mass that is early medieval Bulgaria: the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple Clement of Ohrid; the court translator John the Exarch; the monk Duks who transcribed Constantine of Preslav’s translation *Four Orations Against the Arians*; and even Symeon himself (more evidence to the attempts to equate Bulgarian literate culture with the state and tsar).³⁶ There are, however, no obvious textual reasons to reduce the author of *On Letters* to any of these named individuals. As with the *VC* and *VM*, I prefer to avoid assigning anonymous texts to known authors, once again stressing the multi-vocal nature of medieval intellectual culture. Throughout, as with the *VC* and *VM*, I shall simply refer to ‘the author’, as a functional term, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis.³⁷ It is once again, my purpose, on the basis of textual analysis, to make arguments *for* the kind of community that may have produced this text, rather than to start *from* a community or person, and seek to understand the text through them. For this reason, I avoid the use of Khrabur, as a name, in part due to the small number of manuscripts that transmit it, and to avoid the moralising character its meaning, ‘brave’, has added to discussions of the author.³⁸ I leave it to the reader, after a close study of the text and its contemporary context, to decide whether or not the author and their textual community were in fact brave.

Perhaps due to the text’s uniqueness, *On Letters* was extraordinarily popular in the pre-modern Slavonic-speaking world.³⁹ It survives in over a hundred manuscripts from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century and has been estimated by Kuev to be the single most copied non-liturgical text in medieval Slavonic. With liturgical texts included, Kuev places it either second or third, after a homily in praise of Michael and Gabriel (roughly a hundred and fifty manuscripts) and roughly equal to a homily in praise of Lazarus (roughly a hundred manuscripts) both attributed to Clement of Ohrid.⁴⁰ It is worth dwelling on this popularity a little.

³⁶ Here are just a few examples. Clement: F. Snopek, *Apoštolové slovanští Konstantin-Cyryll a Methoděj: slovo odvety universitnímu professoru dr. Brücknerovi* (Prague, 1913). John the Exarch: G.A. Il’inskii, ‘Kto byl chernorizets Khrabr?’, *Vizantiiskoe Obozrenie*, 3 (1917), pp.152-6. Doks: E. Georgiev, *Raztsvetut na Bulgarskata literatura v IX-Xv.* (Sofia, 1962), p.312-4. Symeon was most avidly proposed by Bulgarian scholar Zlatarski, ‘Koi e bil Chernorizets Khrabur?’ in *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava*, pp.820-9. And more recently Trendafilov, ‘Simeon v Pliska’, p.185.

³⁷ See: Introduction, 0.V.

³⁸ It is possible this moralising character was the product of the fourteenth-century context of our earliest manuscript, or an earlier myth or legend.

³⁹ As noted in the introduction to this thesis, this rather clunky ‘pre-modern’ label, in the sense of pre-modernist, specifically in this context to demarcate the before and after of the so-called ‘re-discovery’ of the *VC*, *VM*, *On Letters* and other medieval texts by the first wave of nineteenth-century professional scholars, interested in scientifically revealing medieval Slavonic history. See: p.21, n.58.

⁴⁰ Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p.182.

The treatise *On Letters*, regardless of the accuracy or intentional inaccuracy of the way it portrays the invention of the alphabet with respect to the versions of the story transmitted in the VC and VM, became the most representative pre-modern text about the invention of Slavonic. Present in over a hundred manuscripts, it has a circulation over twice that of the VC (at forty-eight manuscripts) and over six times that of the VM (at fifteen). More pertinently still, most of the manuscripts in which the text is found are full of other grammatical or philological treatises concerned with Slavonic writing, at least thirty-seven according to Khristo Trendafilov's count. The text makes it into the earliest (seventeenth-century) Russian *bukvary*, or textbooks designated to enable readers to acquire literacy.⁴¹ This meant that for many late medieval and early modern East Slavonic readers, an engagement with *On Letters* would have predated and shaped their encounter with most other written literature, including the VC and VM. Whatever the argument of *On Letters* and the author's purpose, therefore, it is worth bearing in mind that this rendition of the invention of Slavonic would become relatively hegemonic amongst pre-modern readers at least by the sixteenth century. This hegemony has no doubt affected modern scholars' opinions of how widespread or dominant the text's position was in the ninth or tenth century.

This significance notwithstanding, the text and its anonymous author have received far less historical than philological attention. The mention of *On Letters* is often brief in key historical works such as those of Dvornik, Vlasto, or Curta and usually integrated into a wider narrative based on the *Life of Clement* and Byzantine chronicles, as discussed above.⁴² Philological studies, on the other hand, centred entirely on the text are in abundance. In the twentieth century alone, the text received one monograph with seventy-three individual manuscript editions, one monograph of a critical edition based on eighty manuscript attestations, and another critical edition that drew on eighty-three attestations.⁴³ At fewer than 3,000 words, it may well be the Slavonic text with the highest ratio of scholarship per word of primary source.

Given that the genre of the text does not lend itself to narrative history, scholars have been more willing to accept and label *On Letters* as a polemic than to consider the VC or VM as such, and thus to discuss *On Letters* in terms of the ideas it puts forward.⁴⁴ These ideas, however, have been treated by scholarship more akin to medieval exegesis than critical assessment, with inaccuracies excused or corrected, but

⁴¹ Kh.Trendafilov, 'Skazanie za bukвите na Chertnorizets Khrabur: retseptsiia i funktsiia', in *Vtori mezhdunaroden kongres po bulgariskita, Sofiia 23 Mai – 3 Iuni, Dokladi 11: Stara bulgarska literatura* (Sofia, 1987), pp.92-4.

⁴² See: Chapter 3.II.

⁴³ In seventy-three individual editions in Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.185-419; critically reconstructed from eighty attestations in *Chernorizets Khrabur: O Pismeneh*, ed. A. Dzhambeluka-Kosova, (dictionary) E. Dogramadzhieva (Sofia, 1980); and once again from eighty-three attestations in Veder, *Utrum*. Another monographic study of *On Letters* was published in this period, with a translation and commentary but it used earlier critical editions: D. Petkanova, *Chernorizets Khrabur* (Sofia, 1984; 2nd ed., Sofia, 1999).

⁴⁴ For instance: Georgiev, *Raztsvetut*, pp.317-21. Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs*, p.177. Petkanova, *Chernorizets*, pp.62-75.

rarely explained. The overwhelming assumption has remained that, as it defends Cyril and the letters he invented, the text is therefore in some sense a continuator of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and its supposedly coherent objectives.⁴⁵ To my knowledge only once in the vast body of work on the text has the suggestion surfaced that the treatise's critique and defence may be purely rhetorical.⁴⁶ Exegetic study has been especially prominent in work on the sources of *On Letters*. In what follows I offer the first detailed critical assessment of the sources of text in Part IV, and then of its argument in Part V, which does not already assume the text's intellectual validity or that its arguments were widespread or successful.

3.IV ON LETTERS AS A BYZANTINO-SLAVIC TEXT?

The first part of this section explores the use of Byzantine grammatical sources in *On Letters*. It argues that *On Letters* uses Byzantine sources, but that it does so in a way which is completely unlike the VC and somewhat unlike the VM. What I mean by this is that the arguments the text is trying to make are not intended to be understood within a Byzantine, papal, or Frankish intellectual milieu, but that material from Byzantium's textual production is co-opted toward new, for want of a better term, Byzantino-Slavic ends. The second part addresses a question which is far too often taken as a given in the field: namely, whether *On Letters* shows any sign of a direct use of the VC or VM as texts, and what consequences this use or non-use has for the established narrative history of Slavonic culture.

3.IV.1 *On Letters* and the Grammarians

It has long been acknowledged that the author of *On Letters* uses Greek-language sources, and that they were therefore proficient in Greek.⁴⁷ Despite the long lists of potential influences produced by scholars such as Kuev, however, only two short sections of the text have been shown with any degree of certainty to be citing a Greek text.⁴⁸ These two sections, the first on the meaning of the first letters in the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, and the second on the history of the compilation of the Greek alphabet, sit somewhat apart in *On Letters*, but are found in one consecutive section of a single text in Greek. The exact origin of this Greek text remains an open question, because the grammatical information it contained has been transmitted widely under different authors, and often with no clear date of composition.

⁴⁵ An excellent example of this exegetical style of study is the diligent work of Kuev, which is entirely devoted to a historical and philological explanation of the text, its production, the dating system it uses, and the potential sources it may have used. This is a profoundly useful study. Yet, no critical assessment of the arguments, alongside the corpus of literature about Slavonic is to be found here: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, esp. pp. 38-46. See also: Petkanova, *Chernorizets*, pp.62-75.

⁴⁶ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, pp.194-5.

⁴⁷ At least as early as 1895: Jagić, *Razsuzhdeniia*, pp. 297-319.

⁴⁸ See: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.56-71.

The source text which was put forward first, was the treatise *On Grammar*, a text which has recently been argued to be the authentic work of Theodore Prodromos, the twelfth-century Komnenian court poet, to whom it is attributed in thirty-three manuscripts.⁴⁹ Later, Antonin Dostál pointed instead to the *Scholia Marciana*, a short explanatory treatise on the alphabet found in a fourteenth-century manuscript; it is one of the many undatable *scholia* accompanying Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar*, the text which formed the backbone to Byzantine grammatical education and was mentioned briefly in Chapter 1.⁵⁰ As some of the wording of *On Letters* is closer to the *Scholia Marciana* than to *On Grammar*, this has been largely accepted, although the *Scholia Marciana* remains rejected or unknown to some scholars.⁵¹

It is clear, however, that neither text is definitively the source, as both post-date *On Letters* in one way or another. If we accept the attribution to Prodromos, then in its composition his treatise, *On Grammar*, post-dates the tenth-century composition of *On Letters*.⁵² Moreover, many of its manuscripts post-date the earliest manuscript of *On Letters*, the 1348 *Laurentian Codex*.⁵³ The *Scholia Marciana* is anonymous and has no clear date of composition, but its earliest manuscript dating to roughly the fourteenth century, is at best a contemporary of the 1348 *Laurentian Codex*. That both *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana* are citing much older material is clear. But what is not so clear is whether the two have a common medieval ancestor, which perhaps the author of *On Letters* also had access to, or whether their two traditions had split in antiquity.

That the two texts have some sort of early medieval shared ancestor is certainly possible, as a close examination of *On Letters* shows that the Greek text translated by the author is indeed in some instances closer to that of the *Scholia* but in other instances, the text of *On Letters* is actually closer to the now largely dismissed *On Grammar*.

⁴⁹ In its original edition *On Grammar* was attributed to a Pseudo-Theodosios, considered to be a later continuator of another ancient Greek grammarian, Theodosios of Alexandria. It is this name, Pseudo-Theodosios that one can find in the studies of *On Letters*, but Zaglas has since made a strong case for the authenticity of Prodromos. Jagić, *Razsuzhdeniia*, pp.310-9; Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.57-9; N. Zaglas, 'A Byzantine Grammar Treatise Attributed to Theodorus Prodromos', *Graeco-Latina Brunensia*, 16 (2011), pp.77-87; For the text: Theodore Prodromos (under Pseudo-Theodosius), *On Grammar*, in *Theodosii Alexandrini grammatica*, ed K. Götting, (Leipzig, 1822) pp.1-197. Manuscript data from Pinakes, (<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>), (last accessed, October 2019).

⁵⁰ A. Dostál, 'Les origines de l'apologie slave par Chrabr', *Byzantinoslavica*, 24 (1963), pp.236-246. The *Scholia* is found in: *Scholia Marciana (partim excerpta ex Heliodoro, Tryphone, Diomede, Stephano, Georgio Choerobosco, Gregorio Corinthio)* in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. A. Hilgard, vol.1.3 (Leipzig, 1901; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), pp.292-442. See Chapter 1.II.2.

⁵¹ Veder makes no explicit commitment on the text he cites, but a close study of the Greek in his edition suggests he is using the *Scholia Marciana*, Veder, *Utrum*, pp.101-107. Discarded by: G. Ziffer, 'Le fonti greche del Monaco Chrabr', *Byzantinoslavica*, 56 (1995), pp. 561-570. Ignored or unknown to: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p.56. I. Dobrev, 'Za Otnoshenieto na Chernorizets Hrabur kum edno razsuzhdenie na gramatika Psevdo-Teodosii', *Ezik i Literatura*, 33 (1978), pp.38-40.

⁵² Manuscript data from Pinakes, (<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>), (last accessed, October 2019).

⁵³ For a facsimile of the whole Laurentian codex, see: *Lavrentiy's Miscellany (Tsar Aleksandur's Miscellany of 1348)*, ed. E. Zashev, (Sofia, 2015).

‘Πρῶτον μὲν τῶν παρὰ τοῖς
Ἑλλήσι στοιχείων ἦν ἐξ
ἐτυμολογίας τοῦ ἄλεφ, Ἑβραίων
πρώτου στοιχείου, ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται
μάθησις, ἐντελλόμενον τῷ
εἰσαγομένῳ παιδίῳ «μάθε»· ἄφ’
οὗ ἄλεφ **καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμοίως
μιμησάμενοι τὸ πρῶτον
στοιχεῖον ἄλφα κεκλήκασι...**’

Scholia Marciana, p.320, 7-11

Ἡ τῶν παρ’ Ἑλλήσι στοιχείων
εἰσαγωγή ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλεφ
γένονεν, Ἑβραϊκοῦ πρώτου
στοιχείου, ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται
μάθησις, ἐντελλόμενον τῷ
εἰσαγομένῳ παιδί καὶ λέγον
μάθε· ἄφ’ οὗ ἄλεφ. **Καὶ αὐτοὶ
δὴ οἱ Ἕλληνες ὁμοίως
μιμησάμενοι τὸ ἄλφα
κεκλήκασι ...**

On Grammar, p.1.1-5

‘**ЖНДОБЕ БО А ПИСМА
НМЖТЪ АЛЕФЪ, КЖЕ
СА СЪКАЗАЕТЪ
ΟΥΥΕΝНΗ, СЪВРЪШАИЖИ
ВЪВОДНМОУ ДЪТНШΟΥ
Н ГЛАГОЛИЖИ:** “ΟΥΥН
СА”, КЖЕ КСТЪ АЛЕФЪ.
**Н ГРЪЦН, ПОДОБАИЕ СА
ТОМОУ, АЛЪФА РЪША’**

On Letters, 4.1-6

‘The first of the letters by the
Greeks was from the etymology
of ‘aleph’, the first letter of the
Hebrews, which means
‘teaching’, commanding to the
child being introduced: “learn!”,
and from which ‘aleph’, **the
same ones, likewise imitating,
have called the first letter
‘alpha’...**

The beginning of the letters by
the Greeks was from ‘aleph’,
the first Hebrew letter, which
means ‘teaching’, commanding
to the child being introduced,
and saying: “learn!”, and from
which aleph, **also the same
Greeks, likewise imitating
have called [it] alpha...**

For the Jews have ‘aleph’ as
[their] first letter, which means
‘teaching’, perfecting the child
being led, and saying: “learn!”,
which is aleph. **And the Greeks
imitating this, called [it]
alpha...**

As we can see in the section highlighted in bold, both *On Letters* and *On Grammar* specify ‘the Greeks’ where the *Scholia Marciana* only has ‘the same ones’ (‘αὐτοὶ’). Likewise, *On Letters* and *On Grammar* note the Greeks ‘called [it] alpha’, omitting ‘the first letter’ we find in the *Scholia Marciana*. It is still the case however that the two Greek texts share much more with each other than they do with *On Letters*.

Given that the relationship between *On Grammar* and the *Scholia* remains unclear therefore, and the possibility that *On Letters* is citing a shared ancestor of both extant Greek texts, it remains imperative to study *On Letters* alongside both *On Grammar* and *Scholia*. But, to establish the kind of ancestor of *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana* that the author of *On Letters* had before them, it is worth briefly turning to the use and circulation of the treatise of Dionysios Thrax and its scholia collections.

Dionysios Thrax, was a second-to-first century BC grammarian, from Alexandria (rather than Thrace), who is believed to have written a short grammatical treatise entitled *Technē Grammatikē*, or the *Art of Grammar*, which if genuine, makes it the oldest surviving such text.⁵⁴ The question of how much of what survives is genuine remains in doubt, but due to its brevity (less than 3,000 words) the text was often accompanied by elaborate supplements (four regular ones) and *scholia*, which alone, when collated, form

⁵⁴ R. Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians: their Place in History* (Berlin, 1993), pp.41-3.

a 600+ page volume.⁵⁵ One such collection of scholia is the aforementioned *Scholia Marciana*. Importantly, the *Art of Grammar* and its scholia appear to have been the ubiquitous source of Greek grammatical education by Late Antiquity. Wouter's examination of grammatical papyri from Egypt available in 1979 makes the important conclusion that 'at least by the first century A.D. there was widespread teaching of Greek grammar based on manuals very much on the lines of the *Art of Grammar*, sometimes apparently copying parts word by word' or making individual and small variations.⁵⁶ The use of Dionysios and his scholia continued in Byzantium. Parts of his treatise were commented on by George Choïroboskos, an eighth-to-ninth-century grammarian and possibly librarian at Constantinople.⁵⁷

The kind of text the author of *On Letters* had before them in the tenth-century Balkans, therefore, was probably a manuscript with Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar* and its scholia for the purposes of Greek-language education, akin to that which George Choïroboskos had before him. Scholarship has alluded to this in the past, but I will argue that the author of *On Letters* had access to a copy of Dionysios Thrax's *Art of Grammar* proper, and not simply to its scholia.⁵⁸ I demonstrate this to be the case by using parts of *On Letters* formerly considered original, before offering an assessment of the method of citation of Greek texts in the treatise more broadly.

To begin with, Dionysios' text proper opens with a definition of 'grammar', and the six elements thereof. Number six is as follows:

‘ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΥ

Γράμματά ἐστιν εἰκοσιτέσσαρα ἀπὸ τοῦ α μέχρι τοῦ ω. γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς, ὡς καὶ παρ’ Ὀμήρῳ. “Νῦν δέ μ’ ἐπιγράψας ταρσὸν ποδὸς εὐχεται αὐτῶς” [Λ 388]. Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν στοιχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ E. Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica and Grammatical Treatises, from their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period* (Oxford, 2006), pp.77-8, 83; R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1988), pp.366-7. In Bekker's 1816 edition there are 362 pages of scholia, for under 3000 words of text. In 1901 Hilgard published a roughly 650-page volume of scholia alone. I. Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* (1816); A. Hilgard, *Scholia in Dionysii Thracis artem grammaticam* (Leipzig, 1901).

⁵⁶ Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, p.44; A. Wouters, *The Grammatical Papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Contributions to the study of 'Ars Grammatica' in Late Antiquity* (Brussels, 1979).

⁵⁷ N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London, 1996) pp.22, 70.

⁵⁸ The difference between Dionysios 'proper' and the scholia has been dealt with very loosely in both Dostal and Ziffer. For instance, see the ambiguity in: Ziffer, 'Le fonti greche', p.567.

⁵⁹ Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 9.1-7.

‘On Letters

Letters of the alphabet are twenty-four in number, from alpha to omega. They are called “scratched letters” because they are formed by scratching and scraping; for writing was the same as scraping among the ancients as it is also with Homer: “Now that you have scratched the sole of my foot you are boasting like this” (*Iliad* 11, 388) They are also called “ordered elements” because they have an ordered place and position in the language.’⁶⁰

The two key terms used to describe letters by Dionysios, point to the opening section of *On Letters*. Scholarly attention has focused primarily on this section’s historicity as a narrative of the invention of Slavonic. Much more pertinently, however, this section reveals something fundamental about the author’s use of sources and the argument for literacy that the text puts forward.

‘γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ **γραμμαῖς**
καὶ **ξυσμαῖς** τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ
ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς’

Art of Grammar, 9.1-3

‘They are called “scratched letters”
because they are formed with
scratching and scraping; for writing
was the same as scraping among the
ancients’

‘Прѣжда ѿ ѹбо словѣнѣ не
имѣахъ писмѣнъ нъ
ѹрьтамн н **рѣзанъмн**
ѹтъѣхъ н гатаахъ...’

On Letters, 1.1-4.

‘And so, earlier, the Slavs did not
have letters but with **lines** and
scratches counted and divined ...’

I would here amend Robins’ translation slightly, as the word for ‘with scratching’, literally ‘with scratches’ (‘γραμμαῖς’), can also be translated as ‘by making lines’ or ‘with lines’, which aligns with the Slavonic ‘with lines’ (‘**ѹрьтамн**’).⁶¹ Whilst for ‘scraping’, or literally ‘with scrapes’ (‘ξυσμαῖς’), Liddell, Scott and Jones have simply ‘scratching’, and Robins’ choice of word seems purely cosmetic. Both the Greek (‘ξυσμαῖς’) and Slavonic (‘**рѣзанъмн**’) indicate something cut, scratched or scraped with a sharp point. These are very peculiar terms to use, especially with reference to letters, both in Greek and Slavonic. For ‘scratching’ in Greek (‘ἡ ξυσμή’), Liddell, Scott and Jones only offer the citation from Dionysios’ treatise.⁶² For ‘scratches’ or cuts in Slavonic (‘**рѣза**’), both of the most detailed Old Slavonic dictionaries, Miklosich’s *Lexicon Palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum* and the Czech Academy of

⁶⁰ Amended from: Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians*, p.53.

⁶¹ *LSJ*, p.359. See: *LPGL*, p.1123; *LLP*, p.890, in the latter there is also a word closer to scratch, a cut, or incursion, but the only attested source is the passage from *On Letters* above.

⁶² *LSJ*, p.1193.

Science's *Lexicon Linguae Palaeoslovenicae*, only have the citation from *On Letters*.⁶³ So, given that we know a popular scholia collection to the *Art of Grammar* contains information found in *On Letters*, this similarity in terminology makes it very likely that the author of *On Letters* had access to the *Art of Grammar* proper. The same is suggested by the line that follows in *On Letters*.

‘Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ
τὸ ἔχειν στοιχόν τινα καὶ τάξιν’

The Art of Grammar, 9.5-6

‘They are also called “ordered
elements” because they have an
ordered place and position in the
language’

Robins, p.45

‘КРЬСТНВЪШЕ ЖЕ СѦ,
РНМЬСКЫНМН Н
ГРЬУЬСКЫНМН ПНСМѢНЫ
НЖЖДААХЖ СѦ ПЬСАТН
СЛОВѢНСКЖ РЬУЬ БЕЗ
ΟΥСТРОИѦ’

On Letters, 1.4-9.

‘And having been baptised they tried
to write Slavic speech with Roman
and Greek letters without order’

Both texts utilise the idea of ‘order’ (‘ΟΥΣΤΡΟΗ’, ‘τάξις’) when discussing alphabets or letters. When Dionysios is talking about Greek letters, letters are called ‘ordered’ in Greek, because they have a place and position. The point being made by *On Letters* is that this position in Greek is lost when trying to write Slavonic with Greek letters, and this naturally results in disorder (‘БЕЗ ОУСТРОИѦ’).

A final section of *On Letters* quite clearly confirms that the author had access to Dionysios’ *Art of Grammar* proper. This section is the history of the compilation of the Greek alphabet, which is based on the Greek source common to Prodromos’ *On Grammar* and the *Scholia Marciana*. Despite the interest in the sources of *On Letters*, and the debate concerning whether it was Prodromos’ text or the *Scholia* that the author was using, the actual words found in *On Letters* have remained surprisingly unnoticed. These show a crucial difference between the history of the Greek alphabet as it is to be found in *On Grammar* and the *Scholia*, and as we find it in *On Letters*.

⁶³ *LPGL*, p.811; *LLP*, p.660.

Παλαμήδης δ' ὕστερον ἐλθὼν,
ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλφα,
δεκαεξὶ μόνα τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν εὔρε
στοιχεῖα, α β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ
ς τ υ· προσέθηκε δὲ αὐτοῖς
Κάδμος ὁ Μιλήσιος γράμματα
τρία, θ φ χ, διὸ καὶ πολλῶ τῷ
χρόνῳ τοῖς δεκαεννέα ἐχρῶντο·
[...] Μετὰ ταῦτα Σιμωνίδης ὁ
Κεῖος εὐρὼν προσέθηκε δύο, η
καὶ ω, Ἐπίχαρμος δὲ ὁ
Συρακούσιος τρία, ζ ξ ψ, καὶ
οὕτως ἐπληρώθησαν τὰ
εἰκοσιτέσσαρα.

Scholia Marciana, 320, 20-26

Πρῶτος τοίνυν ἦν ὁ Παλαμήδης ὁ
ἀρξάμενος εὐρίσκειν ὕστερον τὰ
ἐλληνικὰ γράμματα· εὔρε δὲ
ἐκκαίδεκα μόνον στοιχεῖα
τουτέστιν Α. Β. Γ. Δ. Ε. Ι. Κ. Λ. Μ.
Ν. Ο. Π. Ρ. Σ. Τ. Υ. Κάδμος δὲ ὁ
Μιλήσιος μετὰ ταῦτα προσέθηκεν
αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλα τρία γράμματα, τὸ
Θ καὶ τὸ Φ καὶ τὸ Χ· διὸ πολλῶ τῷ
χρόνῳ τοῖς ἐννεακαίδεκα στοιχείοις
ἐχρῶντο· [...] ἔπειτα Σιμωνίδης ὁ
Κεῖος εὐρὼν τὸ Η καὶ Ω μέγα
προσέθηκε τοῖς ἄλλοις· μετέπειτα
τὸ Ζ, τὸ Ξ, τὸ Ψ, καὶ οὕτως
ἐπληρώθησαν τὰ εἰκοσιτέσσαρα
γράμματα τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἃ καὶ
στοιχεῖα λέγονται·

On Grammar, 1.18-2.9

‘ΠΑΛΑΜΗΔΖ ЖЕ ПОСЛѢДѢ
ПРНШЬДЪ, НАΥНЪ ОТ
ΑΛΖΦΥ Η ΒΗΤΥ, ΣΙ
ΠΗΣΜΕΝΖ ΤΖΚΖΜΟ
ΕΛΖΛΗΝΟΜΖ ΟΕΡΒΤΕ.
ПРНЛОЖΗ ЖЕ ΗΜΖ ΚΑΔΖΜΖ
ΜΗΛΗΣΗΗ ΠΗΣΜΕΝΑ Γ.
ΤΕΜΕЖЕ ΜΖΝΟΓΑ ΛΕΤΑ ΦΙ
ΠΗΣΜΕΝΥ ΠΗΣΑΑΧЖ. ПО
ТОМЪ СΗΜΟΝΗΔΖ, ΟΕΡΒΤΖ
ПРНЛОЖΗ В ΠΗΣΜΕΝΗ,
ΕΠΗΧΑΡΗΗ ЖЕ СЪКАЗАТЕΛЬ Γ
ΠΗΣΜΕΝΑ ΟΕΡΒΤΕ, Η СЪБЪРА
СА ΗΧΖ ΚΔ. ПО ΜΖΝΟΖΒΧΖ
ЖЕ ΛΕΤΕΒΧΖ ΔΗΟΝΗΣΗΗ
ΓΡΑΜΖΜΑΤΗΚΖ Σ
ΔΖΒΟΓΛΑΣЪНУХЪ ΟΕΡΒΤΕ, ПО
ТОМЪ ЖЕ ΔΡΟΥΓЪ Η Η
ΔΡΟΥΓЪ Η Γ ΥΗΣΜΕΝΗΤΑΗ.
Η ΤΑΚΟ ΜΖΝΟΖΗ
ΜΖΓΟΓΥΗΜΗΗ ΛΕΤΥ ΚΔΖΒΑ
СЪБЪРАША ΛΗ ΠΗΣΜΕΝΖ.

On Letters, 10.1-18.

And **Palamedes**, having come
later, began from alpha and found
only 16 letters for the Greeks, [α
β γ δ ε ι κ λ μ ν ο π ρ ς τ υ],
Kadmos of Miletus added 3
letters to these, [θ φ χ], and after
a long time they found 19. [...] After
these things, **Simonides of Keios**,
having found them added
two letters, η and ω, **Epicharmos of Syracuse**
[added] three, [ζ ξ ψ], and in this way 24 [letters]
were added up.

And first it was, therefore,
Palamedes who later began to find
the Greek letters. But he only found
16 letters, here they are: [Α. Β. Γ. Δ.
Ε. Ι. Κ. Λ. Μ. Ν. Ο. Π. Ρ. Σ. Τ. Υ].
After this, **Kadmos of Miletus**
added to them also another three
letters: the Θ and the Φ and the Χ.
After a long time, they found the 19
letters. [...] Then, **Simonides of Keios**
found the Η and Ω and added
[them] to the others, and since then
the Ζ and Ξ, and Ψ, and in this way
the 24 letters of the Greeks were
added up, which are also called
stoicheia.

For **Palamedes** came after, [and]
having begun from Alpha and Beta,
he only found 16 letters for the
Hellenes. **Kadmos of Miletus** added
3 to them. And it was so for many
years, they were writing with 19
letters. After **Simonides** found and
added 2 letters, **Epicharmus the ‘Commentator’**
3 letters, and 24 of
them were brought together. And
after many years, **Dionysios the
grammarian** found 6 diphthongs,
and then another 5 and another also 3
numerals. And in this way, many
people over many years barely
gathered 38 letters.

It is clear from the use of names, that in this instance the text *On Letters* is closer to the *Scholia* which mentions Epicharmus of Syracuse.⁶⁴ It is also clear that when the author got to Epicharmus, and the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet, they had run out of Greek alphabet creators but were in desperate need of more, in order for them to make the point that the Greek alphabet, in fact, has as many letters as the Slavonic, namely thirty-eight. Rather deceitfully, then, the author has inserted none other than a ‘Dionysios the Grammarian’, who cannot be anyone but Dionysios Thrax, together with a number of diphthongs (which are not technically letters) to boost the numbers up to the required thirty-eight. The first number of diphthongs listed in *On Letters*, six, aligns with the number of diphthongs listed by Thrax in the *Art of Grammar* proper: ‘There are six diphthongs: αι αυ ει ευ οι ου.’⁶⁵ Hence, *On Letters* and its author must have had access to the full text of Dionysios rather than just its *scholia*.

Despite this access to the text, the author of *On Letters* chose not to relate its contents exactly. Dionysios neither claims to invent or discover these diphthongs, nor that diphthongs are in fact letters, nor does he proceed to add another five diphthongs and three numerals. That *On Letters* was not intended as a Greek grammar is clear, but so too is the fact that the author was certainly using one. This method of citation is worth exploring, as the deployment of Byzantine material in *On Letters* reveals some key differences with the *VC* and *VM*.

First and foremost, this use of Greek-language material, namely intentionally obscuring the Byzantine content to achieve its own aims, is fundamentally different to the use of Byzantine texts in the *VC*. As I argued in Chapter 1, Byzantine intellectual culture is both the source of the *VC*’s arguments and the intended audience for its outputs: ‘we’ in the text are the Byzantines not the Slavs. Thus, the use of Byzantine material, even when it is creative, is within the parameters of Byzantine culture. The expansion of the definition of philosophy discussed earlier, for instance, seeks to resolve an age-old tension in Byzantine orthodoxy between classical learning and Christianity, by fusing a neo-platonic definition of philosophy with an allusion to Genesis. The likelihood of the *VC* misrepresenting how many letters there are in the Greek alphabet in order to strengthen the sanctity of Slavonic, as *On Letters* does, is very slim indeed.

In the *VM*, however, one body of Byzantine source material is used in a way that seems much more familiar to the practice of citation found in *On Letters*, namely the opening synopsis of Ecumenical councils. As discussed in Chapter 2, Part II, it is evident that a council-synopsis of the Byzantine type was accessible to the *VM*’s author. However, this source text underwent a number of intentional obfuscations to represent all Ecumenical councils as papally-guided affairs, even those which the pope did not attend.

⁶⁴ Dostal, ‘Les origins’, p. 242.

⁶⁵ ‘Δίφθογγοι δέ εἰσιν ἕξ· αι αυ ει ευ οι ου’, Dionysios Thrax, *The Art of Grammar*, 10.8.

It is this kind of politicized repurposing of Byzantine material that *On Letters* shares with the *VM*. But one key difference remains. The *VM*'s portrayal of political and religious authority looked towards a papal patron. Thus, the *VM* is an outward looking text, as far as the community of Slavonic speakers in Moravia is concerned, seeking legitimacy from without. This the *VM* shares with the *VC*, as both texts have identified within them a 'Slavonic people' who receive the liturgy. But for both texts, this community is a means to an end, whether that be to an argument about Byzantine missionary activity or to a claim to papal patronage. *On Letters* on the other hand, is very much an inward-looking text when it comes to Slavonic-speaking communities. It is the first early Slavonic text which is explicitly *about* the invention of the alphabet and specifically aimed *at* those who can speak Slavonic. That it does so entirely through and with Byzantine literature, to make points about Greek in relation to Slavonic, is what makes it, a Byzantino-Slavic text.

3.IV.2 *On Letters*, the *Life of Cyril* and the *Life of Methodios*

Pointing out the differences between the use of Byzantine material in *On Letters*, the *VC* and *VM*, does beg the question: did *On Letters* have access to the *VC* and *VM* as we know them today? As noted above, scholars have often assumed that this has been the case, in large part due to the conviction that since *On Letters* is about the letters and their inventor, Cyril, it is therefore in some sense a continuation of the history of Slavonic. A unity of purpose over time and space prevails. To give but one example, Italian philologist Riccardo Picchio asserts that the same apostolicism that we find in the *VC* is again re-affirmed in the *VM*, and that very same apostolicism acts 'as a dialectical premise in the treatise *On Letters* by the monk Khrabur.'⁶⁶ As I have shown earlier in this thesis, there is hardly a shared idea of apostolicism between the *VC* and *VM*. To extend this false elision to *On Letters*, as the fundamental premise for the text, is to fail to engage with the fact that *On Letters* is not concerned with the mission to Moravia at all. I will argue, in fact, that it is not concerned with missionary activity whatsoever.⁶⁷

This kind of assumption of what the text is about is very similar to the assumption that *VC* is primarily and only about the invention of Slavonic, as discussed in Chapter 1. Both of these are best described as instances of 'inductive' rather than 'deductive' contextualisation, where a pre-assumed context of a

⁶⁶ 'come premessa dialettica nel trattato Delle Lettere del monaco Hrabr', R. Picchio, 'Questione della lingua e Slavia cirillomethodiana', in his ed., *Studi sulla questione della lingua presso gli Slavi* (Rome, 1972), p.34. The same sentiment is expressed by Kuev: 'The defence of Slavonic writing in this case is not a new and unknown occurrence in history. The same idea is served earlier by the brothers Cyril and Methodios. So in this respect, Khrabur is their equal and follower.' ('Защитата на славянската писменост в случая не е ново и непознато явление в историята. На същата идея преди това служат братята Кирил и Методий. Така, че в това отношение Храбър е техен равенствен последовател.'), Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p.151.

⁶⁷ The text portrays the invention of the letters and the divine appointment to Cyril as one without a geographical place. More on this below. See: *On Letters*, 2.

conscious continuity and preservation of Slavonic structures scholars' engagement with the texts before them.⁶⁸ And as discussed in the introduction whilst it is certainly the case that 'identifying a relevant context is logically antecedent to the inquiry', it also remains the case that some contexts are more relevant than others, and some contextual assumptions can be tested through close textual comparison.⁶⁹

The surprising fact is that close textual similarities between the *VC*, *VM* and *On Letters* are thin on the ground, very much unlike the clear textual borrowings from the *VC* by the author of the *VM*.⁷⁰ Of course, the author of *On Letters* knows who created the alphabet and therefore must have access to some source relating to Cyril and Methodios.

‘КОНСТАНЪТНЪ ФИЛОСОФЪ, НАРЪЧАЕМЫИ КИРИЛЪ. ТЪ НЫ ПИСМЕНА
СЪТВОРИ И КЪНИГЫ ПРЪЛОЖИ, И МЕТОДИИ БРАТЪ ЕГО’⁷¹

‘Constantine the philosopher, called Cyril. He created the letters for us and translated the books, and Methodios, his brother.’

That Methodios makes an appearance in the invention of the alphabet is key. As I argued in Chapter 2, scholarship has often failed to account for the absence of Methodios from the Moravian mission and alphabet invention in the *VC*. This innovation by the *VM* is accepted here, so the source of *On Letters* must come via the *VM* rewriting of the invention narrative. This composite Methodios invention narrative is also found in the homily to Cyril and Methodios, often but perhaps erroneously attributed to Clement of Ohrid, but not in the homily to Cyril alone (also attributed to Clement) which is much closer in content to the *VC* and does not mention Methodios.⁷² It is clear that both kinds of narrative continued to circulate in different genres and texts for different purposes in the late ninth- and tenth-century Balkans. But whilst there are evident reasons why the *VM* may seek to stress the role of Methodios in the context of the instability of the bishopric of Moravia in the late ninth century, it is less clear whether accepting the role of Methodios and thus the *VM* narrative of the invention of Slavonic held any particular ideological weight in the context of the Balkans, and *On Letters* in particular.

⁶⁸ Shogimen, ‘On the Elusiveness of Context’, pp.233-52.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.243. see: Introduction, O.V.

⁷⁰ It is perhaps telling that Kuev’s chapter devoted to the sources of *On Letters* does not even mention potential Slavonic language material. Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.56-71.

⁷¹ *On Letters*, 14.11-15.

⁷² Composite two-brother invention: *Panegyric to Cyril and Methodios*, in: Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani*, vol.1, pp.443-511, esp.468-75 and translated in: Kliment Okhridski, ‘Pokhvalno slovo za Kiril filosof’, trans. in L. Gasheva, *Stara Bulgarska literatura*, vol. 2, (Sofia, 1982), pp.81-3; Cyril only: *Panegyric to Constantine-Cyril*, in Kliment, *Subrani*, vol.1, pp.415-443, esp.426-8 and translated in: Kliment Okhridski, ‘Pokhvalno slovo za Kiril i Metodii’, in Gasheva, *Stara Bulgarska literatura*, vol. 2, pp.84-92.

In any case, *On Letters* mentions Methodios only this once but reiterates Cyril's alphabet creation more than five times.⁷³ The role of Methodios is also rather unclear, both verbs 'created' and 'translated' are in the singular so must refer to Cyril: so what did 'and Methodios his brother' ('и Мѣѡдїи братъ ѿ ѿ') do? In short, even though the source of *On Letters* must have mentioned Methodios, the author is clearly more interested in Cyril than Methodios. This marks a shift away from the preoccupations of the Moravian bishopric in the *VM*, back towards Cyril as a key actor.

Aside from this knowledge of the creators of the alphabet, upon close examination there are no clear direct textual borrowings between the *VC* and *VM* and *On Letters*. The only topic of discussion that the three texts share, is the question of trilingualism, that is, the opposition to Slavonic on the basis of the belief there ought to only be three holy languages: Latin, Greek and Hebrew. This issue serves as a good barometer of the kinds of things each text is interested in. As already discussed in Chapter 2.III, there is a stark difference in the way the *VC* and *VM* represent the issue of trilingualism. In the former Cyril debates with Venetian priests and monks and embarrasses them with his brilliance and with a florilegium of biblical quotations. In the latter the pope reprimands the proponents of trilingualism, and forces some of them to consecrate Slavonic-preaching priests, thus heavily institutionalising the legitimacy of Slavonic. Across these two texts and the papal letters by John VIII, there emerges what I discuss in Chapter 2.VI as a body of biblical quotations or tropes to defend Slavonic in this context, that the three (*VC*, *VM*, and John VIII's letters) share: in particular Psalm 116 (used in all three texts) and Acts 2 (used in the *VM* and a letter of John).⁷⁴ These scriptural quotations are all concerned with the missionary nature of Christianity and promote the preaching of the word of God to all peoples in all languages.

It is perhaps striking, as already observed in passing by Kuev, that the author of *On Letters* 'gives argumentation about their thesis [i.e. on trilingualism], which cannot be found in the case of the two brothers.'⁷⁵ In *On Letters*, the question of trilingualism appears and is dealt with in a starkly different manner to what we find in the *VC* or *VM*.

⁷³ Cyril as lone creator: *On Letters*, 2.6-12; 5.1-2; 7.13; 12.1-4. Only single mention of Methodios with him: 14.11-15.

⁷⁴ See: Chapter 2.VI.

⁷⁵ 'такава аргументация на своята теза, каквато няма у двамата братя', Кувев, *Chernorizets*, p.152.

“Не славѣтъ се богъ о семъ. Аще
 бѣ бы емоу снѣ годѣ было,
 тѣ не бы ли могли
 сътворити да быше и си
 испрѣва, писмени пишуще
 бесѣды свои, славили бога? Не
 три языки токмо не избралъ:
 еврейскыи, и греческыи и
 латинскыи” [...] и побѣждае не,
 нарекуе ихъ триязычницы и
 пилатъны, яко Пилатъ тако
 написавшю на тѣлѣ
 господни’

VC 15.5-9.

‘God is not praised in this way [i.e. in Slavonic]. For if this would have been to his liking, could he have not created it to be so that from the beginning they wrote letters and praised the lord with their words? But he chose only three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin.” [...] And he (Cyril) defeated them, and called them trilingualists and Pilatists, since Pilates had written this on the cross of the Lord’.

‘Баахоу же етера многа
 чаде, ѿже гоужахоу
 словенскыи кнѣгы,
 глаголюще, яко не достонѣтъ
 никому же языкоу
 имѣти боуковъ своихъ,
 развѣ евреи и гречъ и
 латинъ, по Пѣлатовоу
 писанию неже на крѣстѣ
 господни написана. Неже
 апостолѣмъ пилатъны и
 триязычницы нарекаѣтъ
 прокляты’

VM, 6.3-4.

‘And there were many other people, who were denigrating the Slavonic books, saying that no people are worthy of having its own books, except the Jews, Greeks and Latins, in accordance with Pilate’s inscription which he wrote upon the cross of the Lord. And the pope having called them Pilatists and trilingualists, condemned them.’

It is clear here, certainly in the final sentence, that the VM is borrowing nearly directly from the VC. The author simply changes the agent who names the opposition Pilatists from Cyril to the pope, and transforms the action from disputational ‘defeat’ to the more formal ‘papal condemnation’. By contrast, in *On Letters* the charge appears as follows.

‘Дроузни же глаголютъ: “Убо емоу сътъ словенскы кнѣгы?
 ни тѣхъ бо нетъ богъ сътвори, ни ти ангели, ни сътъ
 иже коньны, яко жидовскы и римскы и еллинскы, ѿже
 отъ коня сътъ, и приимати сътъ богомъ.” А дроузни мнѣтъ,
 яко богъ а имъ нетъ сътвори писмена. И не вѣдѣтъ са
 убо глаголюще, окаянии, яко “г ми языки нетъ богъ
 повелѣлъ кнѣгамъ быти, ѿкоже въ евангелии пишеть: И бѣ
 дѣска написана жидовскы и римскы и еллинскы, а

„СЛОВЕНЬСКЫ‘ НѢСТЪ ТОУ. ТѢМЪЖЕ НЕ СЖТЪ СЛОВЕНЬСКЫ КЪННГЫ
ОТЪ БОГА”⁷⁶

‘And others say: “What are the Slavonic books for?” Neither God nor angels created them, nor do they exist from the beginning, as the Hebrew, and Roman and Greek, which are from the beginning and are accepted by God.” And others think that God made the letters for them first. And they do not see what they are saying, the wretches, “God has willed that there be books in three languages, as it says in the Gospel: And it was written on the board in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, but Slavonic was not there. Therefore, the Slavonic books are not from God.”’

The argument for trilingualism in *On Letters* shares only one argument with the *VC* and *VM*, and that is the Gospel of Luke’s account of the three languages written on the cross of Christ. This certainly leaves open the possibility that the author had access to a text akin to the *VC* or *VM*. However, it is clear that absence from the cross of Christ is a commonplace objection to new liturgical languages, and specifically to Slavonic, as seen already in the *VC*. Therefore, a direct textual link is far from necessary. The similarity could just as easily be the product of the author’s knowledge of the Gospel or more specifically of the kinds of arguments commonly made against Slavonic.

Aside from this similarity, the objections raised against Slavonic in *On Letters* are most likely locatable to the early medieval Balkans. In this context, the group of so-called ‘trilingualists’ makes two innovative arguments. The first innovation is a specific and explicit concern with *who* created the letters and more specifically the accusation that ‘neither God nor angels’ created the Slavonic alphabet. The second innovation is the anti-Slavonic sub-group which believes that God created letters ‘for them’ first. These are nowhere to be seen in the *VC* and *VM* corpus.

The introduction of these two new concerns, pre-empts a very different answer to the tri-lingualist position, and points to a different intellectual culture with different objections to the new literacy than what we found in Moravia. Rather than turning to the corpus of Psalms and Acts quotations which defend all peoples’ right to praise the Lord (Psalm 116) or declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:11) in all languages, *On Letters* uses only one supposedly biblical quotation before deploying some examples: ‘All things come to be by God, in order, and not at once.’⁷⁷ This quotation is not concerned with the apostolic mission of Christianity. Rather, it is concerned first and foremost with establishing God as the creator of all things, including alphabets, and secondly with establishing that those (presumably of the Greeks or

⁷⁶ *On Letters*, 8.1-17.

⁷⁷ ‘ВЪСѦ ПО РАДОУ БЫВАЮТЪ ОТЪ БОГА А НЕ ННОГДОЖ’, *Ibid.*, 8.21-2.

Hebrews or Latins) who believe that their alphabet was first, are wrong, because all creation has a natural order.

The objection of the so-called trilingualists in *On Letters* is not about apostolicism, but about the genealogy of the creation of languages followed by alphabets. As a result, *On Letters* does not employ quotations from the Psalter, but turns to an argument about the history of language. It argues that neither Hebrew, nor Greek, nor Latin is the oldest language, because Adam spoke Syriac and then proposes a history of language difference based on a reading of the Babel myth.⁷⁸ From Adam to the Flood, and from the Flood until Babel, all people spoke Syriac. Then, as will be discussed in more detail below, languages were distributed to the ancient peoples together with specific customs: the Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, Jews and Greeks.⁷⁹ The absence of the Latins here, and more generally in the treatise makes clear that the Moravian mission and its concerns were no longer matters of interest to the author of *On Letters* and their community. This kind of argumentation is entirely absent in the *VC* and *VM*, both of which defend the use of Slavonic either through a broad appeal to education and missionary activity, or through the specific missionary practices of the early medieval papacy and its saintly heroes.

There are already clear signs, therefore, both in the nature of the use of Byzantine sources in *On Letters*, and in the way that the text deals with the so-called trilingualist objection to Slavonic, that this is a very different text to the *VC* and more different still to the *VM*. But the question of the availability of either remains open. There are two likely possibilities.

The first is that we take as a given the statement in *On Letters* that all Slavonic scribes or bookmen know who created the alphabet, and also accept that this knowledge came specifically from one of the two *vitae*; given the reference to Methodios, this was more probably the *VM*.⁸⁰ This is certainly possible, as there is evidence that the *vitae* were transmitted south before they went to Rus.⁸¹ John the Exarch, for instance, working under the patronage of Symeon and therefore in the early tenth century, explicitly claims that he is following Cyril and Methodios in their translation efforts, in the preface to his translation of John of Damascus' *On the Orthodox Faith*, named *Heavens* in Slavonic (and referred to as such in the rest of this chapter).⁸² If we accept that *On Letters* had access to the *VM* and/or *VC*, however, we must also accept

⁷⁸ *On Letters*, 9.1-5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.11-23.

⁸⁰ 'ТО БЛ҃ГЕ Б҃ЖААТЪ', *Ibid.*, 14.9-15.

⁸¹ C. Diddi, 'Towards a Critical Edition of the Vita Constantini: The South Slavonic Tradition, the Russian Copies of the Menologium for February and the Russian Miscellanies', in Kulik, *et al* eds., *The Bible in Slavic Tradition*, p.458.

⁸² John the Exarch, *Heavens*, in *Ekthesis akribēs tēs orthodoxou pisteōs des Hl. Johannes von Damaskus: In der Übersetzung des Exarchen Johannes*, eds. L. Sadnik, R. Aitzetmüller, vol 1. (Freiburg im Preissgau, 1967-83), pp.2-4.

that the author is choosing to use this text (or these two texts) in the most minimal of ways, and is choosing to reframe the question of Slavonic entirely, as a matter of language history rather than apostolicism.

The second, and more sceptical possibility is that the *VC* and *VM* were not all that well known in the Balkans, and that *On Letters* has a vaguer source, whether a hymn or short homily, or an oral tradition that the alphabet was created by two men, Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher, and Methodios his brother. This source must come from the tradition of the Methodian re-writing of the invention of the alphabet, but it is possible that it is very far removed from the *VM* itself. This is suggested by a closer look at the aforementioned preface by the court writer John the Exarch, *Heavens*, which claims to continue the translation efforts of Cyril and Methodios.⁸³ John the Exarch ascribes translated ‘readings from the Gospel and Apostles’ to Cyril (perhaps a gospel lectionary), and translations of ‘all sixty canonical books’ to Methodios.⁸⁴ These details however do not align exactly with the *VC* or the *VM*.

The *VC* notes that Cyril started by writing the famous John 1:1 quote, but then vaguely notes that he translated ‘the whole church ritual order’, and ‘taught them [the Moravian students] the matins, the hours, the vespers, the post-vesters and the liturgy.’⁸⁵ The *VM* on the other hand notes that Methodios translated ‘all books in full except Maccabees’, because ‘earlier, with the philosopher, he had only translated the Psalter, the Gospel with the Apostles and selected church services.’⁸⁶

John Exarch’s source is clearly closer to the *VM* than the *VC*. Just as *On Letters*, therefore, John the Exarch is receiving a Methodian-ised tradition of the alphabet invention. But there are still some differences between the *VM* and the preface to *Heavens* which point to an intermediate source or a flexible oral tradition. John Exarch omits the ‘except Maccabees’ clarification, and renders ‘all books in full’, meaning holy books, as ‘canonical books.’ This could simply be a cosmetic change, but it could also indicate a reinterpretation of the intended ‘scripture’ into a more practical set of liturgical texts: from a gospel to a gospel lectionary for instance. John the Exarch also separates the works of Cyril and of Methodios, which are presented as collaborative in the *VM*, and slightly diminishes them. The *VM* notes the two brothers translated from the Gospel, Apostles *and* Psalter, whereas John the Exarch omits the Psalter, and notes Cyril translated service ‘readings from the Gospel and the Apostles.’ In short, the

⁸³ Ibid., p.2.

⁸⁴ ‘ОТЪ ЕВАНГЕЛІЯ И АПОСТОЛА [...] ИЗБОРЪ’, ‘ВСА ОУСТАВНЫЯ КНИГИ’, Ibid., p.4.

⁸⁵ ‘ВЪСЪ ЦРКВНЫИ УННЪ’, ‘НАОУУН КЪ СТЪРНИЦИ, И ЧАСОВНИ, И ВЕЧЕРНИ, И ПАВЕЧЕРНИЦИ, И ТАННЪИ СЛОУЖБЪ’, *VC*, 15.2-3.

⁸⁶ ‘ВЪСА КНИГИ, ВЪСА НСПЪЛНЪ, РАЗВЪ МАКАВЕИ’, ‘ПЪСАЛТЫРЬ БО БЪ ТЪКЪМО И ЕВАНГЕЛІИ СЪ АПОСТОЛОМЪ И ИЗБЪРАНЫМИ СЛОУЖБАМИ ЦРКВНЫИМИ СЪ ФІЛОСОФЪМЪ ПРЕЛОЖИЛЪ ПЪРВЪИ’, *VM*, 15.1, 4.

author of *Heavens* has access to *something* like the *VM*, but not necessarily the *VM* itself as it survives today.

I support the latter possibility, that the Cyrillo-Methodian source of *On Letters* is not the *VC* or *VM* in particular, but a more diffusely transmitted story, whether in oral form, or in the form of homily or hymn, which nonetheless emerges from the *VM*'s re-writing of the invention of Slavonic. Evidence is admittedly scarce, and thus it cannot be ruled out that the author of *On Letters* had access to but chose not to use the two *vitae*, especially given the flexibility with which they use the *Art of Grammar*. Either of these options albeit tentative, point to a very different picture to that of the oft-assumed straightforward continuity between the *VC*, *VM* and *On Letters* found in scholarship.

The uncertain state of the surviving evidence does not permit us to determine whether the changes to the Cyrillo-Methodian legend visible in *On Letters* are original to this text. It is possible instead, that this version of the legend reflects a widespread rewriting of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, circulating orally and textually in the early medieval Balkans when *On Letters* was written. Perhaps the same Balkan version is glimpsed in John the Exarch's preface to *Heavens*. As such, it is difficult to ascertain whether the author of *On Letters* was doing something unusual in their presentation of Cyril and Methodios and in their use or non-use of the *VM*, or whether theirs was the common-sense of the community of learned bilingual clerics in the early medieval Balkans.

Nevertheless, a transformation of Cyril and of the invention of the alphabet is evident in *On Letters*, along different intellectual lines to those found in the *VC* and *VM*. This has only been touched on so far. And whilst the uncertainties concerning the Cyrillo-Methodian source leave some questions open, the chronologies of the *VM* and *On Letters* permit us at least to locate these changes to a place and time, even if not explicitly to a person or court. As discussed in Chapter II, the *VM* must have been composed sometime after ca.886 and sometime before ca.907, whilst as mentioned above the *terminus ante quem* of *On Letters* is ca.927. In the grand scheme of uncertainty surrounding early medieval Central and Eastern European history, these are rather tight timelines. They point to major changes in the representation of the invention of Slavonic and its creator from what we find in the *VC*, once after the death of Methodios and found in the *VM*, and once again within only a few decades in the early medieval Balkans, found in *On Letters*. To put it simply, the Slavonic alphabet and the formation of its meaning was an ongoing process. Whilst Cyril may have *invented* the letters, medieval authors continued *inventing* what they meant and what they were for, to different ends in different contexts throughout the ninth and tenth centuries.

3.V LETTERS IN *ON LETTERS*

In this section I offer an analysis of the argument of *On Letters*. This has three parts. The first assesses the representation of the narrative of the invention of Slavonic and its inventor. The second analyses what is presented as the anti-thesis to Slavonic, the invention of Greek and its inventors, and the consequences this has for Cyril and his categorisation. The third and final part explores the complex tensions these two binaries reveal. Throughout, I maintain that *On Letters* departs radically from the sentiments of the VC and from the preoccupations of the VM, and I argue that this shift is one away from the Latinised core of the VM, and back toward a Greek-language core, but one which is also the first to introduce hostility into the relationship between Greek and Slavonic. This is, therefore, the first Byzantino-Slavic reading of the invention of Slavonic.

3.V.1 Inventing Slavonic

As noted above, *On Letters* opens with what I have argued to be a transformation of Dionysios Thrax's text about letters in his treatise, the *Art of Grammar*. It is important to examine precisely how the section I have identified is manipulated. The author of *On Letters* uses this to form the basic timeline and framework for their invention of Slavonic.

‘γράμματα δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ γραμμαῖς
καὶ ξυσμαῖς τυποῦσθαι· γράψαι γὰρ τὸ
ξῦσαι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς. Τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ
καὶ στοιχεῖα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ ἔχειν
στοῖχόν τινα καὶ τάξι’

Art of Grammar, 9.1-6

‘They are called “scratched letters”
because they are formed with lines
and scratches; for writing was the
same as scratching among the
ancients. They are also called “ordered
elements” because they have an
ordered place and position in the
language’

‘Прѣжде оубо словѣне не
имѣахъ писменъ нъ
урѣтамъ нъ рѣзаньмъ
урѣтѣхъ нъ гатаахъ поганъ
сѣще. Кръстивъше же сѧ,
рѣмьскыимъ нъ
грѣцкыимъ писмены
нѣждаахъ сѧ писати
словѣнскъ рѣчь безъ оустроѧ’

On Letters, 1.1-8.

‘And so, earlier, the Slavs did not have
letters but, with lines and scratches,
counted and divined, being pagan. And
having been baptised they tried to write
Slavic speech with Roman and Greek
letters without order’

The author of *On Letters* transforms a description of early literacy into a distinction between paganism and illiteracy, and Christianity and literacy. The text notes that earlier the Slavs used ‘lines and scratches’, and this is in line with Dionysios who notes that ‘for the ancients’ writing was also done ‘with lines and scratches.’ However, *On Letters* does not accept the very basic premise of the *Art of Grammar* that scratches *are* letters, arguing instead, that scratching was the product of illiteracy – it is what the Slavs did when they ‘did not have letters.’ This illiteracy is associated with another innovation from *On Letters*, namely the introduction of religion. They did this in some sense because they were pagan. In one sweep, *On Letters* has denied the Dionysian account of letters, and proposed instead a binary: pagan scratching versus Christian letter-writing.

The text proposes three stages to this literacy acquisition, the first being pagan scratching, the second writing with foreign letters which was done ‘without order’. This too is a subversion of the *Art of Grammar*’s definition of (Greek) letters, which makes clear they are ordered, and have a ‘rightful place and position’. The third and most holy stage, is effected by God.

‘[...] **УЪЛОВѢКОЛЮБЬЦЬ БОГЪ, СТРОИИ ВЪСѦ [...] ПОМНЛОВАВЪ РОДЪ СЛОВЕНСКЪ, ПОСЛА НМЪ КОНЪСТАНТЪТНА ФИЛОСОФА НАРНЦАКМАКГО КИРИЛА**’⁸⁷

‘man-loving God, who orders everything [...] having felt compassion for the Slavic race, sent Constantine the philosopher called Cyril to them.’

On Letters cleverly distinguishes, therefore, between the attempts to record Slavonic in Greek and Latin ‘without order’ (**БѢЗ ОУСТРОИ**) and the successful attempts to do so in Slavonic, which are brought about by God ‘who orders everything’ (**СТРОИИ ВЪСѦ**). In addition to subverting the scheme present in the *Art of Grammar*, the text diverges from the narrative of the invention of the letters in the VC and VM discussed at length in Chapter 2. In short, in both the VC and VM it is Cyril who reaches out to God to ask for letters by praying, in a historically situated moment of missionary activity to Moravia.⁸⁸ God reveals these letters upon the request, and it is the emperor, Michael, who sends Cyril to the Slavic people. The account in *On Letters*, therefore, generalises this specific event of imperial policy into an abstraction of divine compassion, which happens in no particular time or place.

The sanctification of the invention of Slavonic results in the sanctification of Cyril, in much stronger terms that we find in the VC and VM. One of the main illustrations of this is the terminology used to

⁸⁷ *On Letters*, 2.1-6.

⁸⁸ VC, 14.13; VM, 5.11.

describe the invention of Slavonic in the text. Both the *VC* and *VM* are keen to retain the theological transferral of agency. Saints act on behalf of or via God, not of their own accord, and so Cyril does not himself create the letters, ‘God revealed [the letters] to him’ or ‘God revealed the Slavonic books to the philosopher.’⁸⁹ *On Letters* credits Cyril in much more concrete terms: ‘he created the letters and translated the books.’⁹⁰

The operative Slavonic verb, ‘to make’ or ‘create’ (‘сѣтворити’), renders the Greek ‘to make’, ‘create’ or ‘complete’ (‘ποιέω’, ‘πράσσω’, ‘ἐπιτελέω’), and shifts the agentic weight of creation onto Cyril.⁹¹ This is completely at odds with the tendency of the *VM* to diminish Cyril’s agency to the advantage of Methodios or the pope, but it is also radically different from the *VC* where Cyril’s invention of the alphabet is always described as an answer to a prayer; he is simply a passive receiver. And it is not accidental, *On Letters* uses this, and only this verb, to refer to the invention of Slavonic by Cyril and does so on seven separate occasions.⁹² The only other agent in the text who is permitted this verb is God.

Thus, the text makes Cyril vaguer, generalises the invention of Slavonic and unchains it from the specific time and place recorded in the *VC* or *VM*. It also elevates Cyril, in stark contrast with the diminished Cyril of the *VM*, but also in contrast with the travelling philosopher of the *VC*. Cyril in *On Letters* is permitted action that the author of the *VC* considered too sacred even for a saint.

3.V.2 Inventing Greek

In the broad outline of the treatise given at the start of this chapter, it was made clear that the rhetorical opponent to the Slavonic alphabet in the text is the Greek alphabet. If Slavonic and its sanctity are the thesis of the treatise, the Greek and its lack thereof are very much the anti-thesis. As Slavonic is sanctified, therefore, *On Letters* seeks to paganise Greek.

As noted above, Slavonic letters are made or created by Cyril. When narrating the invention of Greek, on the other hand, *On Letters* often uses the verb ‘to discover’ (‘обрѣсти’, rendering the Greek ‘εὐρίσκω’) or ‘to add’ (‘приложити’, rendering the Greek ‘προστίθμι’).⁹³ This is the case when *On Letters* quotes from its grammatical source and it does reflect the Greek choice of verb.⁹⁴ But other instances where *On Letters* is not quoting directly, make clear that the author is going to some lengths to avoid

⁸⁹ ‘к ѿмоу богу ѿвн’, *VC*, 14.13; ‘ѿвн богу философу словѣнскы кнѣгы’, *VM*, 5.11.

⁹⁰ ‘пнѣмѣна сѣтворн н кѣнѣгы прѣложн’, *On Letters*, 14.13-14.

⁹¹ *LPGL*, p.958; *LLP*, pp.345-351.

⁹² *On Letters*, 2, 4, 5, 7 (twice), 12, 15.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 7.9, 10.6-18; *LPGL*, p.476; *LLP*, p.491.

⁹⁴ See: *Scholia Marciana*, 320.20-26; *On Grammar*, 1.18-2.9.

using the term ‘to create’ or ‘make’, even if it follows from the premise that God created all things, that God created Greek too.⁹⁵

Thus, while Cyril, ‘created the letters and translated the books’, ‘they [were] many [men] over many years, seven of them ordered the letters.’⁹⁶ Greek letters were found, ordered or added but never made or created. This kind of intellectual gymnastics is made most evident in one of the most complete summaries of the author’s general point in the treatise.

**‘СЛОВЕНЬСКА ПИСМЕНА СВАТЕНША СЖТЪ Н УБЪТЕНЕНША, СВАТЪ БО
МЖЪ СЪТВОРИЛЪ Я КСТЪ, А ГРЪУЬСКА ЕЛЪЛННН ПОГАННН’⁹⁷**

‘The Slavonic letters are holier and more venerable, for a holy man has created them, while the Greek [letters] – pagan Hellenes’

Euphemistic verbs have here been replaced by the total absence of a verb. It is understood, of course, that the supplement is ‘created’, but it is not stated. Thus, *On Letters* solidifies a distinction between creation and discovery or ordering, in which the process of creation alone is a divine act. In consequence, never explicitly created, Greek is de facto not holy.

Just as the sanctity of Slavonic has consequences for Cyril and his sanctity, the paganization of Greek has consequences for Greek speakers. Throughout the text, ‘Greeks’ and ‘Hellenes’, are used interchangeably, even though the author seems to prefer the former, which together with its adjectival form is used fourteen times, whilst the latter and its adjective is used six times.⁹⁸ It seems at one instance, when the two are put together that the alphabet is described as ‘Greek’, but the people as ‘Hellenes’, but this is contradicted elsewhere in the text when ‘Greek’ clearly means people too.⁹⁹ As far as *On Letters* is concerned therefore, Greeks and Hellenes seem to be one and the same. This makes good sense in the context of *On Letters*’ generic theory of languages and peoples, which emerges from a reading of Genesis 11:6-8. The text argues that everyone spoke Syriac ‘until God scattered the languages/people at the

⁹⁵ It came to my attention, late into the writing of this chapter, that this difference in vocabulary was noted also by L. Karpenko, “‘Skazanie o pismenakh’” chernoriztsa Khrabra kak istochnik izucheniia glagolicheskoi problemy’, *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 7 (2003), p.165.

⁹⁶ **‘ПИСМЕНА СЪТВОРИ Н КЪНИГЫ ПРЪЛОЖИ’**, **‘А ОНИ МЪНОЗИ МЪНОГЫ ЛЪТЫ - З НХЪ ПИСМЕНА ОУСТРОИ’**, *On Letters*, 14.13-14; 12.6-8.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 12.9-11.

⁹⁸ Greeks: Ibid. 1.11; 2.10; 2.12; 3.5; 4.6; 4.7; 4.9; 6.4; 7.4; 7.5; 11.5; 12.11; 13.5; 14.1. Hellenes: 8.5; 8.15; 9.3; 9.23; 10.1; 12.11.

⁹⁹ ‘but the Greek [alphabet] - Pagan Hellenes’, (**‘А ГРЪУЬСКА ЕЛЪЛННН ПОГАННН’**), Ibid., 12.11; but then: ‘And the Greeks, imitating this, say ‘alpha’, (**‘Н ГРЪЦН, ПОДОБАЩЕ СЪ ТОМОУ, АЛЪФА РЪША’**), Ibid., 4.6.

building of the tower, as it is written.¹⁰⁰ The consequences of this scattering, for the author, seem to be more profound and elaborate than the scant text of Genesis reveals.

‘Н ꙗкоже са ꙗзыци размѣшаша, тако н нравн н обычан н
оуставн н законн н хитростн на ꙗзыкы’¹⁰¹

‘and just as the languages/people were mixed up, so too were the dispositions and customs, and rules, and laws and arts into the languages/people’

The word used here, literally meaning ‘tongue’ (‘ꙗзыкъ’), has a very large range of meanings, including both language and people, or ethnos.¹⁰² It is unclear whether the author uses it to mean specifically the former or the latter, but they clearly take the scattering of Babel to have resulted in the making of different peoples with different dispositions. Thus, what we would perhaps consider ‘ethnic’ difference, is here perceived as interchangeable with and the product of linguistic practice. The text lists a series of peoples/language speakers, and their respective key customs or dispositions. The Egyptians were given geometry, the Persians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians are given astronomy, witchcraft, soothsaying, spells and all the human arts.¹⁰³ These are rather standard Greek *topoi*. Kuev’s source-study finds lists like these in early Christian literature such as the *Clementine Recognitions* assigned to Clement of Rome from the first century, and Tatian’s *Against the Greeks* from the second century, as well as the fifth-century Theodore of Cyrus’s *A Cure for Pagan Maladies* (although literally the word translated as ‘Pagan’ is ‘Hellenic’, ‘ἡ Ἑλληνικῶν Παθημάτων Θεραπευτική’) as well as in the near-contemporary ninth-century *Chronicle* of George the Monk, Hamartolos.¹⁰⁴

The author of *On Letters* assigns broadly the same skills to the same peoples, as we find in Tatian, Theodore and the like. In some sense, the anti-Hellenism of early Christian writers such as Tatian and Theodore has found a new home in *On Letters*, to be used against contemporary, ninth-century Greek. This section of *On Letters*, dealing with languages/people and their divinely assigned post-Babel attributes, clearly has a Greek source, different to that of the grammatical history of Greek found in *On*

¹⁰⁰ ‘Н доидеже богъ раздѣли ꙗзыкы при стѣлпотвореннѣ, ꙗкоже пишеть’,
Ibid., 9.7-8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9.10-12.

¹⁰² See: *LLP*, pp.1020-2.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 9.13-23.

¹⁰⁴ Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.59-60; *Clementine Recognitions*, in *Die Pseudoklementinen II. Rekognitionen* eds. F. Paschke, B. Rehm, (Berlin, 1965). Tatian, *Against the Greeks*, in Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments* ed., trans. M. Whittaker, (Oxford, 1982). Theodore of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies* in *Théodoret de Cyr. Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, ed. P. Canivet, 2 vols. (Paris, 1958). Theodore of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, trans. T. Halton, (New York, 2013). George Hamartolos, *Chronicle*, in *Georgii monachi chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1904).

Grammar and the *Scholia Marciana*.¹⁰⁵ I would argue that an early Christian text against Hellenism is a likely suspect for this source. But the text in *On Letters* is not close enough to any of the potential sources identified by Kuev, such as Tatian, Theodoret and George Hamartolos, to be considered as a translation or citation.

Its key difference with the aforementioned texts is the way it treats the Jews, who are absent in the texts identified by Kuev. What *On Letters* considers to be the ‘dispositions, and customs and rules’ given to the Jews are:

‘СВЯТЫЯ КЪНИГЫ ВЪ НИХЪЖЕ КСТЪ ПЬСАНО ЯКО БОГЪ СЪТВОРИ
НЕБО И ЗЕМЛѦ И ВСЯ ЯЖЕ НА НЕЮ И УЛОВѢКА И ВСЯ ПО РЯДОУ,
А ЕЛЪЛННОМЪ – ГРАМЪМАТИКНѦ, РИТОРИКНѦ, И ФИЛОСОФНѦ’¹⁰⁶

‘the holy books in which it is written that God created heaven and earth and all things which are on it, and man and everything according to order, while to the Hellenes - [were given] grammar, rhetoric and philosophy’

Note once again this preoccupation with divine order. This contrast between Greeks and Jews is clearly intentional, marked by the ‘a’ connective, here translated as ‘while’, which usually indicates a weak opposition; more than ‘and’, less than ‘but’. The rest of the passage listing Egyptians, Persians and the other peoples uses the simple ‘and’ connective; only here at the very end of the list do we find grammatical opposition. *On Letters* is keen to stress therefore, that the Hellenes, who are the same as the Greeks within the text, were not the chosen people of God; they were given Hellenic arts alone.

This is precisely the kind of categorical separation of sacred scripture and Hellenic learning that I have argued the VC seeks to reconcile by casting Cyril as a Christian philosopher. The VM on the other hand, whilst it diminishes Cyril and his rhetoric at the hands of the pope and church, seems more uninterested in than hostile to Hellenic education. The expression of clear hostility here marks a major change in discourse about the Slavonic alphabet, as well as a return to sourcing its defence exclusively from Greek-language sources. In *On Letters*, we witness the return of the invention of Slavonic from its temporary Latinate milieu back into the fold of Byzantine intellectual influence. But this transition is not back into the world view of the VC and its Byzantine supremacy, but a new hybrid culture of Slavonic speakers with a Greek education.

¹⁰⁵ This is also clear from the fact that here the text uses only the word ‘Hellene’ to describe ‘Greeks’ whereas everywhere else it sticks to ‘Greek’ or uses both interchangeably. See footnote 98 of this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ *On Letters*, 9.17-23.

The author of *On Letters* seems to have gone to some lengths through Greek-language literature to find all the possible ways of diminishing the role of Greek and with it, reducing Greeks to Hellenes. It is Greek grammatical texts which allow the author to reveal the paganism of the founders of the Greek alphabet. Likewise, it is early Christian texts against Hellenism offering Greek-language tropes about ancient peoples, which allow the author to reveal that Greeks were given philosophy and pagan learning but not sacred texts by God. Whilst I have not found a direct source for this, I would add a text to Kuev's list of possible relatives, a text whose sentiment is certainly in agreement with that of *On Letters*: Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio Evangelica*, concerned with elevating Hebrew above Hellenic Greek culture.¹⁰⁷ By putting together these two kinds of text, a grammatical history of the alphabet and an early Christian assault on Hellenism, *On Letters* makes a strong case not only against Greek, but against the holiness of its people, both historic and contemporary.

One could be tempted to say, in light of the discussion in Chapter 1 Part IV, that there is something Ignatian about the position the author of *On Letters* on grammatical and rhetorical education. But just as the VM's use of the Ecumenical Councils, the position of *On Letters* is more extreme than any discourse within Byzantine intellectual culture. *On Letters* both denounces Hellenic learning in the past *and* associates the Hellenes with contemporary Greek speakers. The totality of these arguments, sourced from different types of document, are damning and would not be to the liking of even the staunchest Ignatian supporter: for the author of *On Letters* Greek is not the oldest language, it is not a holy language, and nor are its speakers holy or sacred in any way. This starkly contradicts contemporary Byzantine discourses, such as that of the new 'chosen people' or in the words of Shay Eshel, Elect Nation, which sought to elevate the sanctity of the Byzantines as the new Israel and became especially strong from the eighth century onwards.¹⁰⁸ This Old Testament discourse had ethnic specificity, and elevated the Byzantines over others, in contrast with a more inclusive idea of the Christian church as universal to all believers regardless of ethnos.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. 'For by copying different sciences from different [peoples], they [the Greeks] got geometry from the Egyptians, and astrology from the Chaldeans, and other things again from other [peoples]; but nothing from any others like that good which they found from the Hebrews. This was knowledge of the God of everything, and the rejection of their own deities.' ('ἄλλα γὰρ παρ' ἄλλων ἀποματτόμενοι μαθήματα γεωμετρίαν μὲν παρ' Αἰγυπτίων ἔσχον, ἀστρολογίαν δὲ παρὰ Χαλδαίων καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἕτερα παρ' ἐτέρων· οὐδὲν δὲ παρά τισιν ἄλλοις οἷόν τινες αὐτῶν τὸ παρ' Ἑβραίοις ἀγαθὸν εὗραντο. τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ἡ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων θεοῦ γνῶσις καὶ ἡ τῶν οἰκείων θεῶν κατάγνωσις'). Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, in *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica*, ed. K. Mras, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1954-6), 10.4.28-30.

¹⁰⁸ Mike Humphreys argues for instance that the reform of law, especially with the imperial code of the *Ekloga* of 741, propagated the idea of Byzantium as a new 'Chosen People', and subsumed Justinianic Law to that of the Old Testament. See: M. Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era, c.650-850* (Oxford, 2014), pp.81-128. Shay Eshel traces this discourse in other types of texts and notes similarly that it is the product of Byzantine decline in the face of Arab conquests. He stresses that it became particularly strong after the 843 Triumph of Orthodoxy and can be found in various letters to Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria from the early tenth century: Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium*, pp.10, 86-138, esp. pp.122-33.

But where does this leave Constantine-Cyril? Although Cyril was already somewhat de-Hellenised in the *VM* which reduced his disputations to brief summaries and entirely dispensed with his education, there is no doubt that it remained known to the authors of the *VC* and *VM* that Cyril and Methodios were Byzantines, came from Thessaloniki and spoke Greek. This is undeniable even when the *VM* makes clear that the brothers had strong connections to the Slavs. The hybridity the *VM* tries to construct for Cyril and Methodios however, is nowhere to be seen in *On Letters*. Rather than Greek-speaking individuals with personal connections to the Slavs, forged by emperor and pope, in *On Letters* Cyril is portrayed as the very opposite of the Greeks. His ethnic or linguistic identity is erased entirely for a sacred, albeit vague one. Simply put, ‘the Slavonic letters are holier and more venerable, for a holy man has created them, while the Greek [letters] – pagan Hellenes.’¹⁰⁹

The categorical imbalance in the qualifications here is crucial. The Greek alphabet was invented by people defined and categorized by their religion, pagan, and their ethnicity, as Hellenes (as noted above, this text considers linguistic practice and ethnic markers as interchangeable). The Slavonic alphabet was invented by a man without an ethnic marker, but only a religious one: sanctity suffices, Cyril is holy and that is all he is. This generalization is very much at odds with the *VM*, and its narrative innovations to the early lives of Cyril and Methodios, which forge a personal relationship between the brothers, and especially Methodios, and the Slavs. There is no attempt in *On Letters* to suggest Cyril knew Slavonic, had personal compassion for the Slavs or was one. He is simply a man sent by God, ‘righteous and sincere.’¹¹⁰

In short, as it elevates the sanctity of Slavonic, *On Letters* sanctifies Cyril by abstracting him from a specific historical time and place and from any linguistic or ethnic identity. In so doing, it paganises Greek, its alphabetic history and its speakers, as Hellenes whose linguistic identity is the same as their ethnic disposition and reducible to grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and no more.

3.V.3 And the Cracks begin to Show

As already noted in the case of Cyril and his identity, the thesis-antithesis of *On Letters* relies on obfuscation, whether that be of the number of letters in the Greek alphabet, or of the background of Cyril as it is found in the *VC* and *VM*. It is clear within the text itself, however, that these categorical distinctions are not as neat as they appear, and this tension shows in *On Letters*. The tension reveals itself in a number of inconsistencies within the text, which are especially revealing of the authorial concerns.

¹⁰⁹ ‘СЛОВЕНЬСКА ПИСМЕНА СВАТЪНША СЖТЪ Н УБЪТЪНЪНША, СВАТЪ БО МЖЖЪ СЪТВОРИЛЪ Я КСТЪ, А ГРЪУБСКА ЕДЪЛННН ПОГАННН’, *On Letters*, 12.9-11.

¹¹⁰ ‘ПРАВЪДНА Н НСТА’, *Ibid.*, 2.8.

The first source of tension is to do with Cyril's ethnic profile and that of the alphabet. As presented, in the treatise Cyril is an un-ethnicised holy man, opposite to Greeks or Hellenes in his sanctity. Yet *On Letters* also concedes that he 'created thirty letters and eight for them, some according to the system of the Greek letters while others in accordance with Slavonic speech.'¹¹¹ It follows logically that Cyril spoke Greek. But the text's own ideology of language presents a problem here. As discussed above, in the text, as revealed when discussing Babel, linguistic practice is equated with ethnic character. If Cyril spoke Greek therefore, by the rules of *On Letters* itself, this would make him a Greek. This issue is left unaddressed. On the one hand therefore, the author stresses the Slavonic letters' likeness to Greek. On the other, they go to great lengths to stress the profound difference between the invention of Slavonic by a sacred man, and the compilation of Greek by a group of pagans. Why salvage the letters but not the Greek alphabet or its speakers?

The second source of clear tensions is on the issue of change over time. *On Letters* makes a strong case for the superiority of Slavonic on the basis of its invention in one moment by one holy man, and on the convergence of this moment of invention with the moment of the translation of the holy scriptures. In short, 'Constantine, called Cyril, both created the letters and translated the books in a few years. But they [i.e the Greeks] [were] many and over many years.'¹¹² In the text more generally, nothing good happens 'over many years' nor is anything good corrected or changed over time. The Slavs wrote with lines and notches and were pagan for 'many years' ('МЪНОГА ЛѢТА').¹¹³ The Greeks wrote with Phoenician letters for 'many years' ('МЪНОГА ЛѢТА').¹¹⁴ And in the end, 'many in many years barely gathered' the totality of Greek letters.¹¹⁵ But the author's own definitive statement of the fast completion of the Slavonic alphabet is undermined by a question from the imagined opponents.

‘АЩЕ ЛИ КЪТО РЕЧЕТЪ, ЯКО “НѢСТЬ ОУСТРОИЛЪ ДОБРѢ, ДА ПО НЕМЪ СЯ ПОСТРАЖЕТЪ И КЩЕ”, ОТВѢТЪ РЕЧЕМЪ СМЪ: “И ГРЪУЬСКИ ТАКОЖДЕ МЪНОГАШЕДЫ СЖТЪ ПОСТРАЖАЛИ АКИЛА И СМЪАХЪ, И ПО ТОМЪ И НИИ МЪНОЗИ.” ОУДОБѢЕ БО КТЪ ПОСЛѢЖДЕ ПОТВОРИТИ, НЕЖЕ ПРЪВОЕ СЪТВОРИТИ’¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ ‘СЪТВОРИ НИМЪ А ПИСМЕНА И И, ОВА ОУБЕ ПО УННОУ ГРЪУЬСКИНХЪ ПИСМЕНЪ, ОВА ЖЕ ПО СЛОВѢНЬЦѢ РЪУН’, Ibid., 2.9-12.

¹¹² ‘КОНСТАНТИНЪ, НАРИЦАЕМЫИ КИРИЛЪ, И ПИСМЕНА СЪТВОРИ И КЪНИГИ ПРЕЛОЖИ В МАЛѢХЪ ЛѢТЕХЪ. А ОНИ МЪНОЗИ МЪНОГИ ЛѢТЫ’, Ibid., 12.1-6.

¹¹³ Ibid., 1.25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 10.3. Identical with the above phrase in 1.25.

¹¹⁵ ‘И ТАКО МЪНОЗИ МНОГИМЪ ЛѢТЫ КДЪВА СЪБЪРАША’, Ibid., 10.17-18.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 13.1-9.

‘And if someone says: “He has not ordered [them] well, if after him they are still being reordered”, we say [this] answer to them: “And Aquila and Symmachos also reordered the Greek [ones] many times, and after them many [others]” For it is easier to add [to a creation] than to initially create.’

The mention of Aquila and Symmachos, who were first- and second-century AD translators of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, indicates that this passage is concerned with translation rather than letter invention. Yet the author’s riposte seems rather weak. They concede the very thing for which they have spent much of the text reproaching the Greeks. Namely, that alphabet compilations and scriptural translations go on for many years and change over time. The admission that it is harder to invent, than it is to amend must reflect contemporary practice, and in turn must reflect the contemporary amendment of scriptural translations in Slavonic. It does the author no favours to insert it if it does not. I will return to this question of stability in alphabet and translation below.

The third tension within the text is the relationship between abstraction and specificity in the invention of the alphabet. Throughout the text, as discussed above, Cyril’s invention of the letters is framed as an event in the relative chronology of the Slavonic peoples: it came after paganism, and after conversion and the use of Greek and Latin. However, it is not portrayed as an event that occurred in a historically specific place or time, as in the *VC* and *VM*. God sends Cyril to the Slavonic people, not Emperor Michael. There is no sign of the narrative mission to Moravia, or its missionary concerns. Yet knowledge of the invention of Slavonic is crucial to the argument of the text, and thus at its conclusion the author offers a date for the invention.

**‘ВЪ ВРѢМЕНА МИХАНЛА, ЦѢСАРѢ ГРЪУЬСКА, И БОРИСА КЪНАЗА
БЪЛГАРЬСКА, И РАСТИЦА, КЪНАЗА МОРАВЬСКА, И КОЦЬЛА КЪНАЗА
БАЛТѢНЬСКА’¹¹⁷**

‘In the time of Michael, *Caesar* of the Greeks, and Boris, *kniaz* of the Bulgarians, and Rastislav, *kniaz* of the Moravians, and Kočel, *kniaz* of the Balatons’

The text proceeds to give the year 6363 since the beginning of the world, either 855 or 863 depending on whether the author was using the so-called “Constantinopolitan” or Alexandrian estimation of the beginning of the world.¹¹⁸ By giving a time, and a list of rulers who ruled at that time, *On Letters* also offers a space within which the alphabet was created. But the text consciously avoids naming the specific

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 14.21-27.

¹¹⁸ This has been the source of some debate. For a summary of the positions and an argument for the Alexandrian, and therefore the later 863 date, see: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.85-95.

place in which this occurred. The rulers listed are mostly those through whom Cyril comes to invent the letters – from Michael, to Rastislav to Kocel, as attested in the *VC*. But none is given a role or any agency. If the author had these names to hand, it is likely that they also had some version of the mission to Moravia even if only an oral or abbreviated one. They have chosen to omit it, however, and put in its place a dating year. The dating year puts Rastislav and Kocel, those involved in the early mission, in the same list as Boris of Bulgaria, who is not mentioned as having any role whatsoever in the *VM* and *VC*. This clearly points to the fact the text was composed in the Balkans, and likely under the rule of the polity of Bulgaria, as scholarship has long suggested.¹¹⁹ This addition also makes clear that *On Letters* seeks to transform the moment of alphabet-invention, fixed in time, place and political circumstance in ninth-century Moravia, into an event in universal Slavonic history, a transition from illiteracy to literacy, which occurred in all these Slavonic-speaking places at once.

To conclude this section, in short, *On Letters* presents a binary opposition between Greek and Slavonic, in nature, creation and inventor, which is very much a reinvention of the invention of Slavonic as we find it in the *VC* and *VM*. By seeking to abstract the moment from its particular historical context into one that is central to a universal history of the Slavs, the author performs a number of manipulations to the kinds of materials probably available to them. This new argument for Slavonic, however, is not failproof, and a number of tensions are evident within the short treatise. These, I argue, can help us identify the kind of context this text emerges from. In the next section, I turn to precisely this: given *what* the text is trying to argue, *who* is the text arguing with?

3.VI *ON LETTERS* AS AN EARLY TENTH-CENTURY ARGUMENT

On Letters and its context pose a very different set of challenges to those posed by the *VC* and *VM*. With the latter two texts, even though the precise location of authorship, Moravia or Rome, seemed at first unclear, one obvious place to start when seeking to analyse the texts was in terms of genre: contemporary hagiography between Rome and Constantinople. *On Letters*, on the other hand, is quite clearly written in the Balkans, in the aftermath of the Moravian mission. That much is clear in light of its addition of Boris to the list of rulers of relevance to the alphabet invention, and in light of its shift away from the Latin preoccupations of the *VM*, and back toward a firmly and exclusively Byzantine set of sources. But a genre-based context for a comparative intellectual analysis of *On Letters* is not forthcoming. There is no particular historic type of alphabet-defence that can be found in the Byzantine tradition, in this instance

¹¹⁹ In other and later manuscripts from the East Slavonic world this list of rulers is expanded with the addition of names from early Rus, such as Riurik, Vladimir and Olga. However, Boris is present in all traditions. See: Veder, *Utrum in Alterum*, p.149 for Boris, and p.150, esp. traditions a and a for Rus.

the obvious place to look. Instead, the text has loosely been called an apologia, a polemic, a philological treatise, a grammatical preface or an encyclopaedic entry.¹²⁰

The closest comparisons, already noted by scholars, have been drawn from other languages, for instance to the tenth-century Georgian short hymn by John Zosimos entitled *Praise and Exultation of the Georgian Language*.¹²¹ This text although seemingly superficially similar, in fact, offers little help in understanding *On Letters*. Written by a monk in exile either in Palestine or at Mount Sinai, it reflects on Georgian as a language in some sense in a dormant phase, ‘buried’ in the words of the author, but which will emerge victorious and witness the Second Coming first.¹²² This makes good sense, given Zosime’s flight from the Caucasus, and time spent amongst non-Georgian speakers. *On Letters* seems, on the contrary, to be written amongst and for people who can speak Slavonic, and its defence is not simply of the language, but rather of its alphabet, of the act of writing *in* Slavonic, not simply speaking in it.

In the absence of an obvious generic family to turn to, the structure of this analysis will break with the patterns set up for the VC and VM. In the case of both texts my contextual method was twofold. I first offered a genre-related analysis of contemporary hagiography, so a similar form but different content. Secondly, I turned to sources in different genres, whether anti-Photian or Latin legalistic documents, which nonetheless discussed issues pertinent to the VC and VM, so: a study of texts similar in content but different in form. Lacking a genre-based corpus, however, in the case of *On Letters*, I shall turn directly to texts scholars have accepted to be similar in content but different in form: namely the original compositions dated to or around the late ninth and early tenth century in the Balkans, mentioned at the very start of this chapter. In part one of this section (VI.1), I seek to point out a few ways in which *On Letters* is a very different text to its most likely Slavonic contemporaries. In part two (VI.2), I posit an argument for the intended audience of the text by returning to the tensions identified earlier in this chapter (in Part IV.3).

3.VI.1 The Texts of the Late Ninth- and Tenth-Century Balkans

As alluded to at the start of this chapter, there is a large body of translations and a small corpus of original compositions securely datable to the late ninth- and tenth-century Balkans with a significant number locatable at the court of Symeon of Bulgaria in particular, on the grounds of invocations of his patronage. Some of the most notable of these texts are: a translation of a collection of homilies of John Chrysostom

¹²⁰ For a full list see: Trendafilov, ‘Simeon v Pliska’, p.188.

¹²¹ John Zosime, *Praise and Exultation of the Georgian Language*, trans. D. Rayfield in his, *The Literature of Georgia: a History*. (London, 2010), pp.34-35. It is used as a relevant comparison for *On Letters* in: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, p.75; B. Martin-Hisard, ‘La langue slave, la langue géorgienne et Byzance au Xe siècle’, *Byzantinoslavica*, 50 (1989), pp.33-45.

¹²² Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia*, p.33.

associated with Symeon; translated homilies for every feast of the year and Anastasius of Alexandria's *Four Orations against the Arians* (surviving in a copy by the monk Duks dedicated to Symeon) by Constantine of Preslav; John the Exarch's aforementioned *Heavens* and his translation of Basil of Caesaria's *Hexaameron*, which is dedicated to Symeon; and a number of religious texts, a large proportion of which are in a question-and-answer format, now known as the *Izbornik 1073*, which is extant in a version dedicated to Sviatoslav of Rus, but was probably originally dedicated to Symeon as well.¹²³

Since most texts in medieval Slavonic lack a named patron, are otherwise undated, and are usually found in late medieval or early modern manuscripts, there is also a body of floating texts whose language has led philologists to point to an early medieval, likely south Slavonic providence. This means the texts were probably translated or compiled in the Balkans but if and when exactly remains unknowable. These texts include translations of histories such as the *Chronicle* of John Malalas, the *Chronicle* of George Synkellos and the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor, and what Willian Veder has argued to be a series of interwoven florilegia of a range of theological texts, which he dates mostly to the tenth century and places at the Bulgarian court.¹²⁴

Although the body of translations or compilations is fairly large, certainly in comparison to the body of texts we can firmly date to Moravia, datable original compositions remain a rarity from the late ninth and early tenth centuries.¹²⁵ They are limited mostly to prefaces: Constantine of Preslav's *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary* which includes the *Alphabetical Prayer*, an acrostic introducing his homiliary, some

¹²³ No full edition of the Chrysostom homiliary exists, but for a thorough study of the sources see: Miltenov, *Zlatostrui; Starobulgarskoto Uchitelno evangelie na Konstantin Preslavski*, eds. M. Tikhova, E.V. Ukhanova, (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012). Only the third oration against the Arians has been edited with a parallel Greek text. Constantine of Preslav, *Four Orations Against the Arians* in: *Sv. Atanasii Aleksandriiski vtoro slovo protiv Arianite (v starobugraski prevod)*, ed. P. Penkova, (Sofia, 2015); John the Exarch, *Heavens*. John the Exarch, *Hexaameron*, in *Shestodnev Ioanna ekzarkha Bolgarskogo*, eds. G.S. Barankova, V.V. Mil'kov (St Petersburg, 2001); Ioan Ekzarkh, *Shestodnev*, trans. N. Kochev (Sofia, 1981). The *Izbornik 1073* is published both as a Rus and as a Bulgarian source in: *Izbornik Sviatoslava 1073 goda* (Moscow, 1983); *Simeonov sbornik v tri toma: po Sviatoslavoviat prepis ot 1073*, 3 vols. (Sofia, 1991-2015).

¹²⁴ See: S. Franklin, 'Malalas in Slavonic' in E. Jeffreys, *et al* eds., *Studies in Malalas* (Sydney, 1990) pp.276-86. George Synkellos, *Chornicle*, in A.-M. Totomanova ed., *Slavianskata versiia na khronikata na Georgi Sinkel (izdanie i komentar)* (Sofia, 2008). Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, in A.-M. Totomanova ed., 'The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor in the Slavic Tradition', in M. Jankowiak, *et al* eds., *Studies in Theophanes* (Paris, 2015). Veder has identified at least two other collections which he dates to tenth-century Bulgaria, the *Kniazhii Izbornik* and the *Izbornik of John the Sinner* see: W. Veder, *Khiliada godini kato edin den: zhivotut na tekstovete v pravoslavnoto slaviianstvo* (Sofia, 2005) pp.120-185.

¹²⁵ On the issue of compilation versus composition in early Slavonic texts see: R. Picchio, 'Compilation and Composition: Two Levels of Authorship in the Orthodox Tradition', *Cyrrillomethodianum*, 5 (1981), pp.1-5. W. Veder, 'The Treatment of Texts in Early Slavic Literature', repr. in his *Khiliada godini kato edin den* (Sofia, 2005) pp.93-6.

short words of introduction and a single original homily of the fifty-one collected in his *Didactic Gospel*; the preface to John the Exarch's *Heavens* and to the *Hexaameron*, and finally of course, *On Letters*.¹²⁶

These aside, once again, a handful of texts float undated and undatable, but linguistically and morphologically likely to be from the early medieval Balkans. Two such texts are introductions to gospel lectionary translations. The first is a text I shall refer to as *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine.¹²⁷ It is the introduction to a gospel lectionary translation which survives in a thirteenth-century manuscript of Serbian recension, where it is ascribed to some Constantine.¹²⁸ Scholars have long remained divided over whether it is Constantine-Cyril himself or Constantine of Preslav, but the simplest solution may be once again that there were in fact more than two people in the early medieval Byzantino-Slavic world called Constantine.¹²⁹ The second gospel preface, which I shall refer to simply as *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel* is a partly corrupted text. It discusses translation and as a result of this was, until Vaillant's convincing case to the contrary, associated with John the Exarch.¹³⁰

I will consider *On Letters*, in the context of all of these original compositions as they dwell in part on the new alphabet, its purpose and use. I omit the homilies attributed to Clement of Ohrid dealing with Cyril and Methodios due to serious concerns about their attribution to their alleged author and therefore of their composition in our period, which I do not have the space to elaborate upon in this thesis.¹³¹

¹²⁶ The *Alphabetical Prayer* in its oldest manuscript and the original homily: *Starobulgarskoto uchitelno evangelie na Konstantin Preslavski*, pp.3-5. And in a critical edition: K. Kuev, *Azbuchnata molitva v slavianskite literaturi* (Sofia, 1974), pp.170-5. The full preface and the text I use in this thesis is found in: Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, in *Veder, Utrum in Alterum*, pp.153-7. Prologues found in: John the Exarch, *Heavens*, pp.2-28. Ioan Exarkh, 'Prolog kum Nebesa', trans., K. Ivanova, S. Nikolova, in *Turzhestvoto na Slovoto. Zlatniyat vek na bulgarskata knizhnina: letopisi, zhitiya, ritorika, poeziya* (Sofia, 1995), pp.181-3. John the Exarch, *Hexaameron*, pp.301-8.

¹²⁷ *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine: A. Vaillant, 'Une poésie vieux-slave: la Préface de l'Évangile', *Revue des études slaves* 33, (1956) pp.7-25. 'Proglas kum evangelieto', trans. Ivanova, *Turzhestvo na Slovoto*, pp.12-5.

¹²⁸ The thirteenth-century manuscript is found in the Hilandar Monastery collection, under shelf-mark HM.SMS.23. I am grateful to the Hilandar Research Library, at Ohio State University and the monks of the monastery for granting me access to the microfilm during my time in Ohio.

¹²⁹ Those who consider it is Constantine-Cyril, for instance include: E. Georgiev, *Dve proizvedeniia na Sv. Kirila* (Sofia, 1938). Vaillant, dismisses the Philosopher and sensibly notes that this does not therefore mean it *has* to be Constantine of Preslav, but does concede that the language and topic suggest this was produced at around the turn of the tenth century, and so the Preslav scholar seems as good a candidate as any. Vaillant, 'Une poésie vieux-slave', p.25.

¹³⁰ *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*: A. Vaillant, 'La préface de l'Évangélique vieux-slave', *Revue des études slaves*, 24 (1948), pp.5-20.

¹³¹ All texts associated with Clement are printed as a corpus, but the criteria for selection vary from the use of his name on the MS, to the topic being perceived as relevant to him, to texts which utilise a model homily which is assigned to him, even though surely the purpose of a model homily is that anyone could use it. Kliment Okhridski, *Subrani Suchineniia*, 3 vols (Sofia, 1970-7).

Existing studies of *On Letters* have already pointed to the relevance of texts such as John the Exarch's *Heavens*, but they have tended to look for sources which the author of *On Letters* used directly.¹³² This seems in some sense a futile task, as what survives in Slavonic translation was most likely the tip of the iceberg of once-extant Greek language materials in the Balkans that the author of *On Letters*, in light of their use of other Greek sources, was perfectly capable of navigating. Moreover, a close study of the materials put forward leaves the reader sceptical of direct textual relationships.¹³³ A secondary concern of studies of this kind, and in particular of those keen to situate *On Letters* amidst the early tenth-century literature of the Bulgarian court has been to try to pin authorship onto known figures, and at times to go down the slippery slope of ascribing it all to Symeon. In the words of Khristo Trendafilov, after pointing to some (unconvincing) similarities between *On Letters* and John the Exarch's work:

‘Това, което все пак може да се каже е, че За Буквите отговаря изцяло на замислите на цар Симеон и на идейно най-близките до него книжовници. Вероятно трактатът е написан от един от тях, по инициатива на владетеля и с неговото дейно участие.’¹³⁴

‘That which can be said, after all, is that *On Letters* fully corresponds to the intentions of Tsar Symeon and to the bookmen closest to him ideologically. It is likely that the treatise was written by one of them, at the initiative of the ruler and with his active participation.’

I once again refrain from attributing imperial agency where it is not necessary, and seek to consider these texts, not as a set of sources, but as texts available within the discursive milieu in which the ideas of *On Letters* can be assessed. Since some of these texts are much harder to date and place than the texts I discussed when contextualizing the VC and VM in Chapters 1 and 2, I will take them to be indicative of the *kinds* of ideas available in the early medieval Balkans, rather than consider them to be the specific texts to which *On Letters* may be responding (quite unlike, for example, my argument about the *Conversio* in Chapter 2.VI.2)

There are a number of overlapping spheres of concerns that can be found amidst the texts identified above. Whilst highlighting the complexity of the discourse and the position of *On Letters* within it, I will pick out two: namely, the ‘Slavs’ as category, and the role of Greek and the question of translation. After

¹³² See for instance: Kh. Trendafilov, ‘Preslavski izvori za traktata ‘Za Bukvite’ na Chernorizets Hrabur’, *Preslavska knizhovna shkola*, 7 (2003), p.286 K. Ivanova, ‘Edin veroiaten iztochnik na “Za Bukvite” ot Chernorizets Khrabur’, in *Literaturoznanie i folkloristika. Sbornik v chest na 70-godishninata na akad. P. Dinekov* (Sofia, 1983), esp. pp.82-8.

¹³³ Especially in: Kh. Trendafilov, ‘Preslavski izvori’, p.286.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.291. More recently, Trendafilov has made his argument much more extreme, arguing that Symeon wrote *On Letters* originally in Greek shortly after returning from Constantinople. Trendafilov, ‘Symeon v Pliska’, p.185.

addressing these I turn to the key question that has preoccupied scholars with reference to a number of tensions within the text identified in Part 3.IV: to whom is *On Letters* addressed?

One key issue pertaining to the texts noted above is the question of the role of the ‘Slavs’ as an entity in these texts. The *VC* and *VM* are aimed at Byzantium or the Latin west, and take the ‘Slavs’ as an uncritical object of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission. In the case of the *VM* in particular, the relationship between Methodios and the Slavs becomes instrumental to the case for the mission’s success. The way this manifests itself is not permitting complexity to the Slavonic speakers of central Europe, but rather through constructed association between Methodios and the category the *VM* considers as ‘Slavs’. There are Slavs, out there, and Methodios knows them, but little thought is given to more complicated questions of identification, such as why it is that those from Thessaloniki who know Slavonic are not Slavs in the same way as those in Moravia.

In the *Alphabetical Prayer* of Constantine of Preslav, some of the sentiment of the *VM* is also manifest, as the author addresses God on behalf of the ‘Slavonic tribe’ (‘СЛОВЕНЬСКО ПЛЕМѦ’) which now ‘seeks the word of the gospel’ on the one hand, and on the other addresses directly ‘my brothers, fathers and sons’ to not look down upon him.¹³⁵ He does not seek to ethnicise this brethren, which given its gender, is likely the monastic or at the very least a clerical class. So, while the ‘Slavs’ exist out there, as the tribe that seeks God, they are not necessarily the same as the audience or the author. Likewise, John the Exarch’s prologue to *Heavens* opens with an account acknowledging Constantine created ‘the letters of the Slavonic books’ (‘ПИСМЕНА СЛОВЕНЬСКИХЪ КЪНИГЪ’), spends time dwelling on translation, but nowhere ethnicises the ‘brothers’ he is addressing.¹³⁶ The ‘Slavs’ as a category are altogether absent, and the author never moves from Slavonic books to ‘Slavonic people’. The only text which survives and breaks with this ambiguity between the Slavs out there in the world, and the addressees of the author is the *Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine. Here, the addressees of the text are explicitly the Slavs: ‘Listen to this, Slavs’ (‘СЛЫШИТЕ, СЛОВЕНЕ, СѦ’), ‘listen Slavonic peoples, listen to the Word for it came from God.’¹³⁷ Yet the identity of the author remains distant, the Slavs are addressed as ‘you’ never as ‘we’.

¹³⁵ ‘НШЕТЪ ЕВАНГЕЛЬСКА СЛОВА’, ‘БРАТНѦ МОЯ, ОТЬЦИ ЖЕ И СЫНОВЕ’, Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, pp.153-7.

¹³⁶ John the Exarch, *Heavens*, p.2.

¹³⁷ ‘СЛЫШИТЕ ОУБѦ, НАРОДИ СЛОВЕНЬСКИ, СЛЫШИТЕ СЛОВО, ОТЬ БОГА БО ПРИДЕ’, *The Annunciation to the Gospel* by a Constantine, p.10, 9. 24-4.

This ambiguity of identity is permissible on part of these authors precisely because their activity is one of translation.¹³⁸ As some historians of nationalism have suggested, cultural, linguistic or other kinds of identities are produced and at the very least sustained in texts.¹³⁹ All three of the above texts seek consciously to contribute to a written culture in Slavonic. A process of cultural translation may seek to produce a new cultural identity, but it is inevitably the case that its producers' own linguistic and cultural backgrounds must be mixed, or liminal, for them to be the vehicles of this translation. Thus, such an activity does not permit a rigid linguistic-ethnic divide, and whilst a number of these texts point to a category of Slavs, or Slavic peoples out there in the world, their authors do not speak of themselves in these terms.

Translation, the second major issue a number of these texts deal with explicitly, is a case in point of this identitarian ambiguity. Common across the aforementioned texts is the trope of authorial humility. As Constantine of Preslav notes, he was 'afraid to begin' his translation of the gospel lectionary, 'having seen the worry of the words to be beyond my incomprehension and strength.'¹⁴⁰ Or in the words of John the Exarch in the preface to *Hexaemeron*, 'so poor is our mind, that having nothing in our own home, it put together these words using [the words of] others.'¹⁴¹

But in addition to this more generic humility which comes naturally to the intertextual nature of medieval written culture, some texts exhibit apologia for translation, and especially for deviation from the Greek text at hand. John the Exarch's preface to *Heavens*, is the most famous and elaborate example. And here, as in *On Letters*, Hellenic and Greek are one: Methodios translated 'from the Hellenic language, that is to say Greek.'¹⁴²

‘МОЛЮ ЖЕ ВЫ ПОУНТАЮЩАА КНИГЫН СНА МОЛНТИ БОГА ЗА МЯ
ГРѢШНИКА, СЪ ДОБРОМЫСЛЕНЕМЪ И ВЪНИМАНИЕМЪ ПОУНТАНИЕМЪ
ТВОРИТИ И ПРАЩАТИ МЯ НАДЕЖДЕ МНѢЩЕ МЯ РАЗАНУЪ ГЛАГОЛЫ
ПРЕЛОЖЬША. НЕ БО РАВНѢ СЯ МОЖЕТЪ ПРИСНО ПОЛАГАТИ КЛАНЬСКЪ
АЗЫКЪ ВЪ НИЪ ПРЕЛАГАЕМЪ. И ВСЯКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ ВЪ НИЪ
ПРЕЛАГАЕМУ ТО ЖЕ БЫВАЕТЪ. НЕБОНЪ НЖЕ ГЛАГОЛЪ ВЪ НИОМЪ

¹³⁸ I mean this both in the mundane sense, but also as an alternative to the paradigm of 'reception' of Byzantine culture, as proposed by Simon Franklin, 'The Reception of Byzantine Culture by the Slavs', repr. in his *Byzantium – Rus – Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture* (Aldershot, 2002), pp.384-5.

¹³⁹ Maxim developed by B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006). Put in roughly these words in: Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*, p.4.

¹⁴⁰ 'ОУБОУХЪ ЖЕ СЯ НАУАТИ', 'ТРЪПЪТЪ СЛОВЕСЪ ВНАДѢВЪ, БЫШЕ НЕДОУМѢНИИ И СНАБЫ МОЕИ СЖИШЬ', Constantine of Preslav, *Prologue to the Gospel Homiliary*, 4.40-2.

¹⁴¹ 'СНЦЕ БО ЕСТЬ НИШИН НАШЪ ОУМЪ, ДА НЕ НИМЫ В ДОМѢ СВОЕМЪ НИЧЕО ЖЕ, УЮЖИМЪ ВЪЗГРАДИ СЛОВЕСА СЯ', John the Exarch, *Hexaemeron*, p.308, 6b 23-5. 7a 1-2.

¹⁴² 'ОТЪ ЕЛЛИНСКА АЗЫКА КЖЕ КСТЬ ГРЪУСКЪ', John the Exarch, *Heavens*, p.4.

ЯЗЫЦѢ КРАСѢНЪ, ТО ВЪ ДРУЗѢМЪ НЕКРАСѢНЪ, НЖЕ ВЪ ННОМЪ
СТРАШЕНЪ, ТО ВЪ ДРУЗѢМЪ НЕСТРАШЕНЪ [...]¹⁴³

‘And I beg you, who will read these books, to pray to God for me the sinner, to read with grace and care, and to forgive me where you believe I have put down words differently. For it is not possible to always render the Greek language equivalently in another translated [language]. And in every language rendered into another, it will be thus. Since that word which is pleasant in one language, is then unpleasant in another, and which is fearsome in one [language], is then not fearsome in another [...].’

The text carries on by pointing to words which have a different gender in Greek and Slavonic, such as the masculine Greek word for river, ‘potamos’ (‘ποταμός’), rendered by the feminine Slavonic ‘rieka’ (‘рѣка’).¹⁴⁴ A similar set of examples is given in the second, and partly corrupted, *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel* edited by Vaillant. Due to this similarity of topic, the text has been associated with John the Exarch, but as Vaillant makes evident, it is clearly a separate text (although I disagree with his attempt to assign it to Constantine-Cyril.)¹⁴⁵ Here too, gender is involved, but a more sacred reason is given in addition.

‘<ПОДЪ>ВНЗАХЪМЪ СѦ ДА БЫХЪМЪ НСТО<ВОК> ПОЛОЖИЛИ ...
<Е>ВАНГЕЛИИ БОАШТЕ СѦ ПРИЛОЖИТИ ... ДА АШТЕ И ХОУДА СѦ КЪДЕ
ОБРАШТЕТЬ ПРИЛОЖЕНО <НѢУ>ТО ТО ДА РАЗΟΥМѢТЬ УБѢТА. И
АКОЖЕ ПО НОУЖДИ ТО <К>ТЬ СЪТВОРИЛО А НЕ ДЪРЗОСТНѢ НИ
СЪМѢНИИМЪ’¹⁴⁶

‘we were striving to lay down the true [form] ... fearing to add to the gospel ... and where anything small is to be found added, so that the [person] reading could comprehend [it], know that it was done by necessity and neither with boldness nor temerity.’

Both of these texts reveal reverence or respect for the source language. This is rather weaker in John the Exarch who recognises such changes are essential in all translation, but nonetheless proceeds to list Greek words he is apologising for re-gendering. In the second instance, the reverence is much stronger as

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.22-4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.24-6.

¹⁴⁵ *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*, pp.6-11. Attribution to Cyril: Vaillant, ‘La préface’, p.18. One can and is indeed tempted to collect a body of scholarship on authorship, which if one is careful and selective may as a whole render the vast majority of surviving early Slavonic literature either to Constantine-Cyril or Symeon’s pen.

¹⁴⁶ The triangular brackets are Vaillant’s additions, the dots indicate a gap in the original text, unlike the dots in square brackets used elsewhere in this thesis which indicate my omission. *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*, 16-20.

rendering the words equivalently is associated with the holiness of the Gospel itself. It is not impossible that this reverence is related to the aforementioned liminality of the authors involved, whose loyalties were not necessarily all Greek nor all Slavonic. John the Exarch, Constantine of Preslav and the vast body of dark matter that makes up the translators of the early medieval Balkans were at the very least bilingual authors. What this meant definitively for their personal sense of self remains inaccessible, but the distance between the ‘Slavonic tribe’ out there in the world to be enlightened, and the much more immediate but un-ethnicised community of brothers these texts often invoke, and this humility with respect to Greek, seems to point to a complexity of personal self-identification hitherto unacknowledged in the scholarship of early Slavonic.

3.VI.2 *On Letters* in the Balkans

As in the texts above, the Slavs are also presented as an entity out there in the world in *On Letters*. Moreover, like the Slavs of the *Alphabetical Prayer*, the Slavs of *On Letters* are also grammatically othered, ‘God sent *them* Constantine’ (my emphasis), not ‘us’.¹⁴⁷ But there are some key differences between *On Letters* and its contemporaries. The first is that the text gives a rather more mature account of the level of Slavic Christianization, than the *Alphabetical Prayer*. In the latter, the Slavonic tribe has only just turned to conversion, whilst in *On Letters* these Slavs have already been christened and have now proceeded to greater piety by receiving literacy from God.¹⁴⁸

There is also a collective ‘we’ in *On Letters* which is absent in other texts. This ‘we’ is defined not so much by ethnicity, as by position on the Slavonic alphabet: ‘what do *we* say to *them* [i.e. those who object to Slavonic]?’ (my emphasis), asks the author.¹⁴⁹ It is constructed against the antagonistic ‘they’; once again not explicitly the ‘Greeks’ but those who object to Slavonic. This is a significant break with the narrative voices of the texts discussed so far, where, at best, the audience of brothers (‘you’) was to be instructed.

On Letters breaks even more aggressively with the custom of translation apologetic and reverence for Greek found in the texts noted above. Greek texts are transformed to suit the author’s argument and the Greek language and its history are exposed as Hellenic, pagan, and unholy in comparison with Slavonic. Rather than apologise for Greek words losing gender or being changed due to their connotations when transferred into Slavonic, *On Letters* posits a different argument altogether.

¹⁴⁷ ‘ПОСЛАД НМЪ КОНЪСТАНЪТННА’, Ibid., 2.6.

¹⁴⁸ *On Letters*, 1.6.

¹⁴⁹ ‘КЪ ТЕМЪ УБТО ГЛАГОЛЕМЪ?’, Ibid., 8.18.

‘НЪ КАКО МОЖЕТЪ СѦ ПИСАТИ ДОБРЪ ГРЪЧЬСКИМЪ ПИСМЕНИ “БОГЪ”
НАН “ЖИВОТЪ” НАН “ЗЪЛО”, НАН “ЦРЬКЫ” НАН “УБЛЮБЪКЪ” [...] И НАН
ПОДОБНА СМЪ?’¹⁵⁰

‘but how is it possible to write “God” or “life” or “mightily” or “action” or “church” or “person”
[...] and others similar to them, well with Greek letters?’

The words chosen by the author all include letters representing vowels which are unique to Slavonic, and therefore which have no alphabetic representation in Greek. Rather than dwell on what is lost in translation, the author focuses on what is gained by adopting the Slavonic alphabet to write in Slavonic, namely a full and accurate representation of the sounds of the Slavonic language. This shifts the issue from a question of whether one should translate at all, into a question about whether this translation into Slavonic should be into the Greek alphabet or into a new Slavonic alphabet.

Moreover, the author of *On Letters* seeks to make clear or dispel the idea that the Greek words of the holy scripture in particular should be revered, as is suggested by the *Anonymous Annunciation to the Gospel*. It is clear in *On Letters* that scripture was given to the Hebrews not the Greeks, and that it was translated into Greek and changed over time by various actors like Aquila and Symmachos.¹⁵¹ It follows that one should not be concerned with the exactness of the Greek in translation. The silence of *On Letters* on the fact that the New Testament was first written in Greek is telling.

In short, *On Letters* does not ‘fully correspond’, in the words of Trendafilov, to the ideas of John the Exarch or Symeon, or any of the texts we can posit as its near contemporaries. Whether the author of *On Letters* had direct access to these texts in particular remains less relevant than the likelihood that these kinds of positions on Greek and on the ‘Slavs’ as a category were available in their discursive milieu.

The text tackles the ambiguities of personal identity present in the prefaces discussed so far, with a clear attempt to disambiguate between the languages of Greek and Slavonic, and between the people who defend Greek rather than Slavonic. But it is crucial that, when carefully examined, the text does not refer to either those objecting to Slavonic (i.e. the ‘they’ of the text) or those defending the use of Slavonic (i.e. the ‘we’ of the text) in simple ethnic terms. Rather than target the disambiguation at either Slavs or Greeks in particular, these two groups of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are only fleshed out once in the text. In contrast to the usual ‘us’ and ‘them’ ambiguity, one question is posed more specifically.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.10-24. I have omitted “ДѢЛАННѢ” (‘action’) which Veder includes in this list but is not attested in any of his MS traditions, nor in any of the other editions of the text by Dzhambeluka-Kossova and Kuev discussed in the introduction.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 9.17-23., 13.5-9.

‘АЩЕ БО ВЪПРОСИШ КЪНИГЪУНА ГРЪУЬСКЫЯ, ГЛАГОЛА: “КЪТО ВЫ КСТЪ ПИСМЕНА СЪТВОРИЛЪ, НЛИ КЪНИГЫ ПРЕЛОЖИЛЪ?” ТО РЪДЪЦН ОТЪ НИХЪ ВЪДАТЪ. АЩЕ ЛИ ВЪПРОСИШ СЛОВЕНЬСКЫЯ БОУКАРА, ГЛАГОЛА: “КЪТО ВЫ ПИСМЕНА СЪТВОРИЛЪ КСТЪ НЛИ КЪНИГЫ ПРЕЛОЖИЛЪ?” ТО ВСИ ВЪДАТЪ [...]’¹⁵²

‘And if you ask Greek bookmen, saying: “Who created your letters, or translated your books?” Then few of them will know. But if you asked Slavonic bookmen: “Who has created your letters or translated your books?” Then all know [...]’

The author, and their literati contemporaries in the early medieval Balkans, were undoubtedly both Greek- and Slavonic-language bookmen. *On Letters* is therefore a clear attempt to make a complex set of identities appear neat, to separate those using Greek from those using Slavonic, and to equate the former with opposition to Slavonic, and the latter with opposition to Greek. The author does this even with their choice of vocabulary. The word which I translate as (Slavonic) ‘bookmen’ (‘boukaria’ ‘БОУКАРА’) is unattested elsewhere in old Slavonic texts, whereas the word which I translate as (Greek) ‘bookmen’ (‘kuniguchiia’ ‘КЪНИГЪУНА’), is rather common.¹⁵³ The meaning of the rare word, scribes or learned men is clear, but this looks like the author’s attempt to derive a unique word for Slavonic bookmen from the Slavonic word for ‘alphabet’ (‘azbouka’), once again to differentiate them from Greek, or more generic bookmen and to firmly fix their identity to the new alphabet. It seems the word itself, however, did not quite take off.

In short, *On Letters* is quite unlike the prefaces discussed so far. But the question remains, *who* is this for?

3.VI.3 *On Letters*, Audience and Greek in the Early Medieval Balkans

Scholarly consensus in the early twentieth century considered *On Letters* to be an attack on the Byzantine Greek clergy still in Bulgaria after the arrival of Slavonic.¹⁵⁴ Given the obvious problem that a treatise against the Byzantines written in Slavonic, a language they could not read, would not be particularly persuasive, this opinion has been largely abandoned.¹⁵⁵ Instead, scholars have settled on reading *On Letters* as an inter-alphabetic polemic. Two alphabets which record Slavonic survive from the medieval

¹⁵² Ibid., 14.1-9.

¹⁵³ *LLP*, pp.148, 91.

¹⁵⁴ Zlatarski, *Istoriia na Bulgarskata durzhava*, p.283. And also taken up by: Kuev, *Chernorizets*, pp.20-25. Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p.153. This argument still holds in some Bulgarian scholarship, see: Petkanova, *Chernorizets*, p.81.

¹⁵⁵ More recently, Trendafilov has tried to resurrect the case that the treatise was written against the Byzantine Greek clergy, by positing that it was originally written in Greek by Symeon. Trendafilov, ‘Symeon v Pliska’, p.185.

period: Glagolitic, a script with letters less akin to Greek and Latin and more strokes per letter on average than either, and Cyrillic, a script much closer to Greek with additional letters to represent specific Slavonic vowels and consonants absent in Greek.¹⁵⁶ Despite their misleading names, the former, Glagolitic, is associated with Constantine-Cyril. The most common reading of *On Letters* is that it is a defence of one alphabet against the other, more usually of Glagolitic against Cyrillic, ‘in the guise of Greek’.¹⁵⁷

However, despite the co-existence of the two alphabets in the earliest Slavonic manuscripts and in epigraphy, none of our medieval sources specify the alphabet being discussed, mention this difference of scripts or imply any animosity between them. At most, some texts, like the later Greek *Short Life of Clement* (possibly by the thirteenth-century bishop Demetrios Chomatenos), and *On Letters*, allude in vague terms to changes being made to the unspecified Slavonic alphabet.¹⁵⁸

The reason scholars have become so preoccupied with an inter-alphabet animosity in which sources show no interest, has to do with their common-sense assumptions about identity, and how identity manifests itself on the ground. This understanding is made explicit by Floria, in his narrative of the emergence of a dominant opinion on the target audience for the treatise.

‘Наконец, с опубликованием в 1963 г. специального исследования о Храбре чехословацкого исследователя В. Ткадльчика получил, думается, окончательное решение и вопрос: против кого был направлен трактат Храбра? [...] Храбр вел полемику не с представителями византийского духовенства, [...] а с образованными представителями болгарской знати и болгарского духовенства. Для них было самоочевидным, что славянский язык вполне может быть языком богослужения и письменности, но они возражали против того способа записи, который предлагали нашедшие приют в Болгарии ученики Константина и Мефодия.’¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ One of the reasons Glagolitic is considered older is that it is found under Cyrillic in palimpsested manuscripts, but never vice versa. Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.113. See for instance the Sinai Slavonic NF 3, double palimpsested codex: <https://sinai.library.ucla.edu/viewer/ark:%2F21198%2Fz1rb7dmv> (Last accessed: January, 2020)

¹⁵⁷ See: from the early twentieth century see seven scholars arguing for Glagolitic and six arguing for Cyrillic listed in: Georgiev, *Razsvetut*, p.327. More recently for Glagolitic: Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p.215. Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.112. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions*, p.251. Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs*, p.177. Only Franklin dismisses this argument. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, p.194.

¹⁵⁸ The list of the oldest Slavonic manuscripts, which nonetheless lack precise internal dating, has a mix of both manuscripts in Cyrillic and Glagolitic. Mirchev, *Starobulgarski ezik*, pp.10-12. The inscriptions that survive are overwhelmingly in Cyrillic, but some Glagolitic can also be found in both the north east and south west: Popkonstantinov, Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische*, e.g. for Glagolitic in the north east: p.73, p.167. Demetrios Chomatenos, *Short Life of Clement*, ed. A. Milev, *Grutskite zhitiia*, 14; *On Letters*, 13.1-9.

¹⁵⁹ Floria, *Skazaniia*, p.114.

‘In the end, with the publication of the special study concerning Khrabur by the Czechoslovakian scholar V. Tkadl’chika in 1963, the question received what is considered its conclusive answer: who was the treatise of Khrabur written against? [...] Khrabur was not polemicizing with the Byzantine clergy [...] but the educated representatives of the Bulgarian elite and clergy. For them it was obvious that the Slavonic language was fully capable of being a language for religious worship and literacy, but they objected to the means of recording it [i.e. in Glagolitic], which were offered by the students of Constantine and Methodios, who found refuge in Bulgaria.’

What is here assumed to be ‘obvious’ for the Bulgarian elite and clergy, rather appears to be what is obvious to scholars in the twentieth century: namely, that the primary causal force behind the actions of medieval speakers of Slavonic was their identity as speakers of Slavonic and nothing else. In Bulgarian scholarship in particular, this assumption that Slavonic was an obvious and self-evident choice, has resulted in the invention of an unattested council led by Symeon which supposedly made Slavonic the ‘official language’ of the medieval polity. This council, and the contemporary politics of early twentieth-century Bulgaria which led to its invention, have been persuasively exposed in a recent article by Angel Nikolov, but this was much too late to challenge related assumptions about ethnicity, identity in texts, including *On Letters*, from late ninth- and early tenth-century Bulgaria.¹⁶⁰

The question remains. Why is it impossible to contemplate that Slavonic speakers may have preferred not to write Slavonic? Why must the ability to speak Slavonic be considered the only category which defined the commitments of scribes in the early medieval Balkans? Personal self-identification cannot be reduced to language alone. We will never know whether a monk in the north-western Balkans identified first and foremost as a Bulgarian, a Slav, or speaker of Slavonic, a Roman, or speaker of Greek, or simply as a servant of God. These loyalties and attributes could be held at once or be activated at different times in different situations.¹⁶¹ It is to oversimplify the intentions and intellectual abilities of medieval actors to assume them reducible to one or the other.

I argue instead, that *On Letters* is arguing against those who can speak Slavonic, who may well be capable of writing it, but who prefer to write in, or retain reverence for, Greek, not because they are ‘Byzantine’ clergy, nor because they consider themselves ‘Greeks’. Just as personal self-identification cannot be reduced to language alone, so too individuals and communities’ choice of language cannot be reduced to their personal self-identification. There are a range of factors which may influence individuals’

¹⁶⁰ A. Nikolov, ‘Convocatio Omni Regno: the Council of 893 and its “Reflections” in Contemporary Historiography’ in A. Kulik, *et al* eds., *The Bible in Slavic Tradition* (Leiden, 2016), pp.547-60.

¹⁶¹ I take my lead on these issues from: R. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), esp. pp.7-63.

choices of language use. In the medieval Balkans, there were clear benefits, financial and career-related, to the ability to write in Greek, just as there were possible personal, aesthetic, or practical reasons why individuals may have considered supporting a new literate culture more trouble than it was worth.

I will start by demonstrating some literary and practical reasons why Greek may have appeared more appealing or, at the very least, a ‘safe pair of hands’ in contrast with Slavonic regardless of the user’s identity or background. I will then turn to some socio-politically situated reasons which may have also contributed to the hesitation *On Letters* is trying to challenge.

First and foremost, learned or literary medieval Greek had a standardised grammar.¹⁶² This was fully elaborated from at least as early as the fourth to fifth century AD, when Theodosios of Alexandria put together his *Canons*. The text offers full inflection tables for nouns and verbs.¹⁶³ Secondly, by the medieval period, scriptural texts in Greek had fairly stable traditions. To give an example: the Greek New Testament project at the University of Münster, has provided data on the stability of the New Testament text in Greek in the middle ages.¹⁶⁴ To take just one reading: of the 2,900 Greek New Testament miniscule manuscripts, the text of John 7:9 has five variants, the first is attested in 1,463 manuscripts, the second in a hundred and forty-one, the third in fifty six and the fourth in eight, and the last only in one manuscript.¹⁶⁵ This kind of proportion is fairly representative across the text, with majority readings being incredibly dominant. Of the thirty manuscripts dated securely to the tenth century, which concerns us, these texts have ca. ninety percent majority readings, and at times ninety-five.

By contrast, no standard medieval Slavonic grammar survives. In the words of Zhivov about early Rus written culture, but equally pertinent for the early medieval Balkans, medieval scribes in Slavonic ‘did not use grammatical textbooks or lexica, and they did not have the conceptions of a monolithic and all-encompassing linguistic standard.’¹⁶⁶ Instead, variations in both the orthography and morphology of surviving manuscripts suggest that there were local norms which could temporarily stabilise in a specific time or place, but that there was no universal medieval Slavonic grammatical, orthographic and

¹⁶² Learned Greek, in all its rigidity was stood somewhat apart from the more fluid vernacular Greek, for the difference see: M. Hintenberger, ‘Introduction’, in his ed. *The Language of Byzantine Learned Literature* (Turnhout, 2014), pp.1-12. It is this more rigid learned Greek that concerns me here.

¹⁶³ Theodosios of Alexandria, *Canons*, in *Grammatici Graeci*, ed. A. Hilgard, vol. 4.1 (repr. Hildesheim, 1965), pp.3-42 (nouns), pp.43-99 (verbs).

¹⁶⁴ ‘New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room’, University of Münster (<http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace>) (Last accessed, January, 2020)

¹⁶⁵ All data from *ibid.* Presented by Georgi Parpulov, ‘The Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament’, *Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Seminar*, University of Oxford, Trinity Term, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ ‘не пользовались ни грамматиками, н словарями и не располагали представлениями о едином и общеобязательном языковом стандарте’, V.M. Zhivov, *Vostochno-slavianskoe pravopisanie XI-XIII veka* (Moscow, 2006), pp.24-4.

morphological textbook comparable to the aforementioned *Canons* of Theodosios of Alexandria for instance.¹⁶⁷ Grammar notwithstanding, major questions remain concerning the early Glagolitic alphabet too, some of which are as basic as whether it had thirty-six or thirty-eight letters.¹⁶⁸

Likewise, the translation of scripture into Slavonic was by no means stable in the tenth century. It appears most likely, based on the philological study of surviving manuscripts, that whatever early translation was done in Moravia, was either lost or re-translated by the time the Slavonic script arrived in the Balkans.¹⁶⁹ Even so, this was largely for liturgical purposes as no full translation of the bible was available in Slavonic until 1499.¹⁷⁰ There is no equivalent to the Münster New Testament Greek project for Slavonic, but were there to be, the results would no doubt show more difference.

In short, the surviving evidence of language practice and translation stability points very much to the opposite of what *On Letters* asserts about Slavonic. As discussed in Part IV.3, there is major tension in the text. On the one hand the author accuses Greek of change over time and promotes Slavonic as sacred precisely due to its invention in a single moment in time by one holy man, who also translated the scriptures. On the one hand the text acknowledges the critique that Slavonic continues to be changed over time. Clearly the stability of Greek was appealing, otherwise the author would not have resorted to asserting the clearly inaccurate case for the stability of Slavonic. *On Letters* attempts to create stability simply by declaring it.

By contrast, medieval written Slavonic appears messy, unstable and multi-alphabetic. Its scriptural translation was ongoing, and the difficulty it brought with it was not simply practical. As Mary MacRobert notes, translation of scripture is not simply about rendering words but about introducing

¹⁶⁷ There are not enough manuscripts surviving and dated from the tenth century to study that period specifically, but the closest approximation, the manuscripts of early Rus show orthographic and morphological variation between different places, in short lapses of time, between source manuscripts and copied manuscripts, and even between scribes within one manuscript. For a case study on a few linguistic features, and some general remarks see: Zhivov, *Vostochno-slavianskoe pravopisanie*, pp.9-76.

¹⁶⁸ For the other major questions around the alphabet and an attempt to offer some solutions: W. Veder, 'The Glagolitic Barrier', *Studies in Slavic and General Linguistics*, 34 (2008), pp.489-501, esp. pp.489-90. For a comparative study of Glagolitic abecedaria, demonstrating the letter variations in the attestation of the alphabet: W. Veder, 'The Glagolitic Alphabet as Text', in M-A. Dürrigl, et al eds., *Glagoljica i hrvatski glagolizam: zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa povodom 100. obljetnice Staroslavenske akademije i 50. obljetnice Staroslavenskog instituta, Zagreb-Krk, 2.-6. listopada 2002* (Zagreb-Krk, 2004), pp.375-387.

¹⁶⁹ This general pattern is clearly outlined with respect to the Psalter in: C.M. MacRobert, 'What is a Faithful Translation? Changing Norms in the Church Slavonic Version of the Psalter' *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 69 (1991), p.405. But can also be noted about the non-liturgical books of the Old Testament: *Starobulgarskiiat prevod na stariia zavet*, ed. S. Nikolova, 1 vol. (Sofia, 1998), p.xviii. And of the Old Slavonic New Testament Apostolos: I. Khristova-Shomova, *Sluzhebniiat apostol v slavianskata rukopisna traditsiia* (Sofia, 2004), p.14.

¹⁷⁰ F. Thomson, 'The Intellectual Silence of Russia', repr. in his *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Medieval Russia* (Aldershot, 1999), p.xx.

‘people to a new and essentially different way of seeing the world, which their language may not be equipped to express.’¹⁷¹ This is relevant beyond scripture too, as is made clear from the diligent Slavonic translation of George Choïroboskos’ treatise *On Tropes*, which introduces key poetic terms like metaphor and allegory.¹⁷² The poetical tropes’ terminology is carefully calqued; compound words are translated into their components producing new Slavonic compound words. Whilst this is technically accurate however, the specific terminology it introduced was foreign to the Slavonic language, not necessarily connected to native words or ways of seeing the world.

In short, the translator’s task was not easy nor were the tools at their disposal, namely the Slavonic alphabet and literary language, fixed and stable. Once we let go of the assumption that ethnic commitment is a necessary and given driver of the promotion of any literacy, it becomes clear that new literacies have little internal drive. Everything is stacked against them. Their success needs to be explained with reference to the socio-political circumstances they emerge in rather than taken as the given victory of ethnic liberation.

And there are some clear contemporary socio-political reasons why continuing to use Greek in the Balkans would be beneficial, both socially and financially. First and foremost, evidence strongly suggests that administrative work within the Bulgarian polity was done in Greek. Before converting to Christianity and prior to the arrival of the Slavonic alphabet, the early-ninth-century Bulgarian elite already used Greek for their inscriptions. This was the case both for outward, Byzantine-facing texts, like peace treaties which defined territory lines, and for more inward facing monuments like funerary inscriptions on behalf of the ruler for his bereaved elites.¹⁷³ These early inscriptions are largely ‘official’ in that they pertain to the ruler or ruling elite, the state, its boundaries and history.

Official epigraphy in Greek continued into the late ninth and tenth century. The only two surviving inscriptions by or specifically concerned with Boris and Symeon as rulers are in Greek. The inscription concerning Boris mentions the conversion of Bulgaria in ca.863/4 and may therefore pre-date the arrival of Slavonic.¹⁷⁴ The latter is an inscription dated to 904 recording the boundary (‘ὄρος’) between Bulgarians and Romans in the reign of Symeon, with two more inscriptions similar to it now lost.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷¹ MacRobert, ‘What is a Faithful Translation?’, p.403.

¹⁷² George Choïroboskos, *On Tropes*, in Slavonic: *Simeonov Sbornik*, pp.668-674. In Greek: *Rhetores Graeci*, ed. L. Spengel, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1856), pp.244-256.

¹⁷³ See: Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski nadpisi*, pp.152-170 (peace treaties), pp.212-225 (funerary inscriptions).

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.139-40, n.15.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.170-2, n.46. On the fascinating politics of the discovery of the monuments: A. Nikolov, ‘Svidetelstva za izdirvaneto i prouchvaneto na trite Simeonovi nadpisa kraj Solun prez 1897-1898’, in *Srednovekovniiat chovek i negoviiat sviat. Sbornik v chest na 70-ta godishnina na prof. d.i.n. Kazimir Popkonstantinov* (Veliko Turnovo, 2014), pp.825-836.

Greek text was found around twenty two kilometres north of Thessaloniki, so is perhaps a better guide to language practice there than at court, but the more general absence of official inscriptions in Slavonic is peculiar if Slavonic was indeed an official court language.

Slavonic language inscriptions, on the other hand, proliferated over the course of the tenth century.¹⁷⁶ However, those collected in *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, the main published but by no means comprehensive such catalogue, point to a notable change in the inscription type: the Slavonic inscriptions although more plentiful, are much less ‘official’ or related to the state or rulers.¹⁷⁷ Only one text in Slavonic mentions Symeon. The funerary inscription of an elite man named Mostich notes that he served under both Symeon and his successor, Peter (ca.927-969). It is not clear when exactly Mostich died, so it is difficult to know with certainty how much of a guide the language choice is to elite practices under Symeon.¹⁷⁸

By contrast the lead seals of Bulgarian rulers Boris, Symeon and his successor Peter reveal an uninterrupted use of Greek.¹⁷⁹ Letters surviving from Byzantium show that knowing Greek to communicate with those beyond the polity’s borders was clearly needed. Although the correspondences of Theodoros Daphnopates and Nicholas Mystikos with Symeon overwhelm our records, it was not only rulers that were in contact with Byzantium.¹⁸⁰ Nicholas also wrote to the archbishop of Bulgaria and the chief man of Symeon.¹⁸¹ Theodore Daphnopates also replied to ‘those who have written from Bulgaria, to ask whether the body of the Lord is corruptible or incorruptible.’¹⁸² These were presumably Greek-speaking or bilingual clerics who had suddenly become preoccupied with a niche late antique controversy. The letter they received from Daphnopates is written in the most tedious Greek. If their question was written in a Greek anywhere near as dense and complex, they must have been very well educated indeed. Doubtless many more letters were exchanged between middling bureaucrats and clerics. But scholars have been less than willing to make the leap that Greek was probably needed to communicate within the Bulgarian polity too. Greek-language seals of rulers Boris and Symeon have

¹⁷⁶ Popkonstantinov, Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische*, Table 7, ‘Datierte Inschriften’.

¹⁷⁷ See the volume as a whole, to find plenty of individual ‘I wrote’, invocations and monastic graffiti. Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Beshevliev, *Purvobulgariski*, pp.225-7, n.71. See also: S. Stancheva, ‘Nadgrobniiat nadpis na edin preslavski boliarin ot X v.’, *Istoricheski Pregled*, 11 (1955), pp.61-75.

¹⁷⁹ Iordanov, *Korpus na pechatite*, pp.31-36 for all twenty-seven surviving seals of Boris, all in Greek; pp.40-54 for all forty four surviving seals of Symeon, all in Greek, and pp.56-66, for all 52 Greek seals of Peter. See this is also discussed in: K. Popkonstantinov, ‘Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria: a Case Study in Byzantine Epigraphy’, in A. Rhyby ed., *Inscriptions in Byzantium and Beyond. Methods - Projects - Case Studies*, (Vienna, 2015), pp.196-7.

¹⁸⁰ Letters to Symeon: Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, eds., trans. J. Darrouzes, L.G. Westerink (Paris, 1978), 5-7. Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, 3-31.

¹⁸¹ Nicholas Mystikos, *Letters*, archbishop: 4, 12, chief man: 13,

¹⁸² ‘πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ Βουλγαρίας γράψαντας, εἰ ἄρα φθαρτὸν ἐστὶ τὸ τοῦ Κυρίου σῶμα ἢ ἄφθαρτον’, Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, 8.

been found in and near Silistra (on the Danube), Varna (Black Sea coast, northern Balkans), Shumen (north east inland), Debel't (central Black sea coast), Sliven (central inland), and Plovdiv (south west inland), well within the confines of the territory of tenth-century Bulgaria.¹⁸³ It seems perfectly likely that some if not most were attached to Greek-language letters.

Nor is it the case that the tenth-century evidence points to a clean Greek-state, Slavonic-church divide. The surviving seals pertaining to the church are all in Greek, with one exception, a Slavonic language seal of a monk and *synkellos*, of which six copies survive.¹⁸⁴ Further, the archaeological work of Kazimir Popkonstantinov in the tenth-century monasteries of Ravna and Chernoglavtsi in the north western Balkans, has shown that Greek continued to be inscribed on church walls.¹⁸⁵ In these two monasteries, in the multi-lingual and multi-alphabetic graphosphere of Cyrillic, Glagolitic, Greek and in very few instances Latin, Greek made up the majority of material on the monastic complex walls, at roughly forty percent.¹⁸⁶ Many of the inscriptions are of scriptural texts, the Gospel or Psalter, which suggests Greek may have persisted as a liturgical language too.¹⁸⁷ Another corpus of objects with text which reveal the use of Greek are medieval amulets with prayers, scriptural quotations or incantations. Personal or private piety therefore was also multi-lingual, as twenty out of the eighty lead amulets of the tenth to eleventh centuries from the Balkans are in Greek.¹⁸⁸ One wonders what other contemporary monastic complexes, as of yet unexcavated or not preserved might show.

It is only in the last few decades that Popkonstantinov has pointed, albeit in brief, to the implications of these findings: namely, the existence of local Greek literacy and education, rather than travel to study in Constantinople or Byzantium more generally as had previously been assumed.¹⁸⁹ But the assumption is still that Slavs are learning Greek. Yet literacy has to be acquired no matter the native tongue of a person. Further, in the ninth- and tenth-century Balkans, it is by no means clear that Slavonic was a 'vernacular' in the Western medieval sense of the word any more than Greek was, or any more than the Turkic

¹⁸³ Just an illustrative one seal per place, but many places have several Iordanov, *Korpus na pechatite*, n.32 (Silistra); n.8, n.30 (Varna); n.29 (Shumen); n.12 (Debel't); n.22 (Sliven); n.10 (Plovdiv).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp.78-86, esp.pp.81-4 for Slavonic. Also published in Popkonstantinov, Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarische*, p.188, n.7.

¹⁸⁵ Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', pp.195-201.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.196. For the term 'graphosphere', see: S. Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 2019), pp.1-18.

¹⁸⁷ Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p.197. Some examples in both Greek and Slavonic can be found here: K. Popkonstantinov, 'Psaltirni i evagelski tekstove v epigrafski pametnitsi ot srednovekovna Bulgariia', in *Obshtestvo, vlast, istoriia. Sbornik v chest na prof. d-r. Miliiana Kaimakova*, (Sofia, 2013), pp.501-10.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.198. K. Popkonstantinov, 'The Letter of Abgar on a Tenth-Century Amulet', in K. Grunberg, *et al* eds., *Ars Philologica. Festschrift Baldur Panzer* (Vienna, 1999), pp.649-54.

¹⁸⁹ Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p.198.

language of the Bulgar tribe was.¹⁹⁰ It is not clear that Greek was a language one had to learn whereas Slavonic a mother tongue, as Latin was with respect to English in Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁹¹ I posit that the seven bi-lingual inscriptions in the *Altbulgarische Inschriften*, together with the corpus of Greek-only texts on walls and objects in multi-lingual graphospheres, point to a much more ethnically complex and multi-lingual environment than we have formerly assumed in the monastic complexes of the early medieval Balkans.¹⁹²

It is precisely in this social space, the monastic complexes of multi-lingual cohabitation, Greek-to-Slavonic translation, but also the continued use of Greek, that I seek to situate *On Letters*. It need not be that *On Letters* was written in Ravna or Chernoglavtsi in particular. But I argue that it certainly emerged from that kind of place, where Greek-language education was carried out with the exact texts the author of *On Letters* manipulates in narrating the history of Greek: the *Art of Grammar* and its various scholia.

The author of *On Letters* was utilising content available to and shared by a monastic literate class and demonstrating mastery of this material through manipulation. What they produced was an antidote to Greek-language education, presenting a carefully crafted case against Graeco-*philia*, which cannot be reduced to Byzantino-*philia*. It is precisely due to this, that even as the author dismisses Greek, they make efforts to insist that a large number of Slavonic letters are borrowed from it. Greek is the barometer against which Slavonic's legitimacy must be judged, as the audience I propose was learned precisely in its grammar and history. *On Letters* seeks to divide these bilingual monastic brothers into Greek and Slavonic bookmen, by promoting the consolidation of distinction with enough aggression to suggest this distinction was not clear, and by defending the stability of a literary tradition which was by no means secure.

This narrow milieu of a learned, bi-lingual clerical or monastic set also best explains the profound absence of missionary sentiment in the treatise. Unlike the other texts discussed above, which preface gospels or other key theological translations, *On Letters* does not discuss conversion as an issue of contemporary concern, nor does it defend Slavonic using the stock phrases of the New Testament found in the VC and VM. This is not about the spreading of the word, or about the right of all peoples to praise God in different languages. The treatise has a very narrow set of concerns, namely: to establish that the language history of Greek, as it can be found in Greek-language sources, necessitates the devaluing of the

¹⁹⁰ This Turkic survives in two inscriptions most likely from the ninth century. Beshevliev, *Purvobulgarski*, n.53-4, pp.186-190.

¹⁹¹ For an excellent exposition of the circumstances in the West, where Latin was a hegemonic, but non-native tongue and vernacular literacies offered opportunities for subversion and resistance see: Amsler, *Affective Literacies*, esp. pp.1-71.

¹⁹² Popkonstantinov, Kronsteiner, *Altbulgarischen*, p.129, p.141, p.153, p.181, p.187, p.215, p.219.

Greek language. This is done through close analysis, choice selection and gentle subversion of Greek-language materials.

This is not an outward-facing text. It does not speak to a flock of converts, nor does it face Byzantium, or Rome. Rather, what is unique about the text is that, in the extremity of its position, it is arguably the first text written in Slavonic which can reveal insight into contestation about the Slavonic alphabet and its use *within* the community of Slavonic speakers. The VC defends missionary multilingualism within a Byzantine discourse on Hellenic education; the VM defends the Moravian Slavonic mission with an appeal to papal precedent and a personal relationship between Methodios and the Slavs. There is no sense in either of these texts that the Slavonic speakers may not be united in their enthusiasm about the Slavonic alphabet. Rather their support, in both texts, is taken as an unfaltering given.

On Letters reveals what I argue to be the earliest evidence for internal disagreement among users of Slavonic, as to the need and use of a Slavonic alphabet. As such it marks a key turning point in our ability to study an actual, active intellectual culture within a Slavonic-speaking milieu, on the question of alphabet-invention. The position that the text attacks was clearly not totally hegemonic, as texts in Slavonic were commissioned at court. But as shown, even a brief analysis of other contemporary texts, including those associated with the court of Symeon, reveals that the works of John the Exarch and the Gospel Annunciations contain the premises which, taken to an extreme, are attacked by *On Letters*. As such the treatise is clearly more purist in its support for Slavonic than even some of its contemporary Greek-to-Slavonic translators.

3.VI.4 Conclusions

Ideas about the Slavonic alphabet were made and remade, the alphabet was invented and reinvented, transformed and contested as it travelled from Central Europe to the Balkans. The arguments of the VC and VM as I have presented them in this thesis, were to some extent unsuccessful. The VC never made it back into Byzantine intellectual culture, Cyril never made it into the Greek Synaxarion. His legend was reworked instead for a local Moravian-papal agenda, as it is found in the VM. But in this case too, the declaration of papal support and legitimacy, was unsuccessful, as the mission lost the patronage of pope and local ruler. The alphabet arrived in the early medieval Balkans therefore, through a series of accidents or failures. And in the Balkans, in one particular kind of milieu, the questions surrounding the Slavonic alphabet were not ones of missionary activity, or local patronage. These were superseded by a much more specific debate about the use and necessity of Slavonic in direct comparison only with Greek, in a set of local circumstances of ethnic and linguistic fluidity which had good reason to tend toward resistance to Slavonic.

The large body of translations datable to the tenth century in Bulgaria may suggest that on this matter, the position of *On Letters*, its reading of Cyril and the sanctity of Slavonic, was successful. Yet there is a serious problem with the survival of our Slavonic texts. Overwhelmingly preserved in manuscripts of East Slavonic redaction from Rus or Muscovy, these texts made it north. But what did not?¹⁹³ The availability of Greek-language manuscripts, copied or written in in the Balkans during the tenth century, will remain a known unknown, and this asks us to retain doubts about the victory of the case against Greek found in *On Letters* in the tenth-century Balkans. Could the short burst of imperial patronage for translations under Symeon be simply a courtly political project, whilst monastic complexes elsewhere remained multi-lingual or predominantly literate in Greek regardless of their inhabitants' backgrounds? The fact that in the tenth-century monasteries of Ravna and Chertnoglavtsi, Greek made up the largest share (at forty percent) of epigraphic material found ought to give us pause.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Knowledge and availability of the Greek language was significantly rarer in Rus than it was in the Balkans, even if it was not as rare as Francis Thomson's fatalistic assessment concludes. This alone offers good reasons as to why Greek-language manuscripts from the Balkans may not have been transmitted *en masse*. For the extreme case that aside from Hilarion of Kiev, no Rus author 'reveals any acquaintance with Byzantine works in the original Greek', see: Thomson, 'The Intellectual Silence of Russia', p.xi. For more nuanced takes acknowledging some borrowing of Greek words into East Slavonic, and the continued albeit limited use of Greek in Rus on icon-labels and coins, see: I. Ševčenko, 'To Call a Spade or the Etymology of *Rogalije*', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 (1995), pp.608-26; S. Franklin, 'Greek in the Kievan Rus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 46 (1992), pp.69-81.

¹⁹⁴ Popkonstantinov, 'Greek Inscriptions from Ninth-Tenth Century Bulgaria', p.196.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has sought to nuance and complicate a scholarly narrative of relative simplicity: that the Slavonic alphabet was created by the efforts of two holy apostles to the Slavs and preserved by the Bulgarians. What I offer instead, through largely intellectual-historical analysis, is an exposition of a series of arguments about Slavonic, which were made over the course of the late ninth and tenth centuries, as responses to and as attempts to influence fluctuating socio-political circumstances. Approaching the alphabet and our texts in the way I have proposed in this thesis makes two important and novel interventions.

In the first instance, this thesis has sought to contribute to the reassessment of the various nationalist and intra-nationalist common-senses which have dominated the medieval history of Central and Eastern Europe. This reassessment is largely in its infancy, but it has come in two main forms. The first has been the attempt to complicate ideas about how identity manifests itself on the ground, both in the past and present.¹ The second has been through an analysis of the role of nationalism in scholarship on the middle ages from the nineteenth and early twentieth century.² Both of these have informed my approach, and neither has been previously applied specifically to the study of the invention of the alphabet. This may be in part due to the fact that the alphabet is often seen as a source of inter-national unity rather than nationalised difference. But as demonstrated in this thesis, Cyril and Methodios are always-already nationalised, whether in each local state celebration, or in scholarly disputes over their ethnicity, intentions, or commitments to the Slavs. I maintain that medieval history is more deeply entwined with the self-fashioning of contemporary Central and Eastern European nation states than it is in their Western European counterparts. As such I have proposed a model for the study of the medieval Central and Eastern European world, which is attuned to and critical of this significance. This is not to say, that Western European nation states are ‘better’ or more ‘critical’ than their neighbours, but simply that more often than not their contemporary self-fashioning relies on reifying more recent historical events and figures.

In the second instance, I show that at each of the three stages discussed in this thesis Slavonic was invented anew. In Chapter 1, the invention of Slavonic appears as the feather to a philosopher-monk’s cap, in a text engaged in discourse about mission and education. In Chapter 2, it was ethnicized, attached

¹ See: Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; W. Pohl, et al eds., *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800* (Leiden, 1998); Plokhy, *The Origins of Slavic Nations*.

² See: D. Mishkova ed., *“We the People”*; D. Dzino, ‘From Byzantium to the West: “Croats and Carolingians” as a Paradigm-Change in the Research of Early Medieval Dalmatia’, in Dzino, et al eds., *Migration, Integration and Connectivity*; Geary, Klaniczay eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth Century Europe*.

firmly to the Slavs, and in turn, to Methodios, as the relationship between the two became the clenching argument for Moravian episcopal legitimacy in the face of the legalistic discourse of Frankish religious hegemony. It was only in Chapter 3, in the tenth-century Balkans that the invention of the alphabet became a central issue of concern, at the heart of a learned, bi-lingual milieu. As such it became generalised and mythologised as an event in the universal history of the Slavs. It was weaponised against Greek and as I argue, against some resistance to the adoption of the Slavonic alphabet in the Balkans.

The implications of revealing that the alphabet continued to be contested and reinvented are twofold. The first is to reveal the vibrant intellectual culture to which these texts attest. This culture of contestation is often lost in the traditional narratives of continuity and general agreement between medieval actors about the significance of the alphabet. The intellectual world revealed by these texts was produced by interaction with scribal traditions in Greek and Latin, and by the restless agency of authors and their textual communities, eager to utilise these scribal traditions to their own ends. Throughout, I show how the scribal cultures of Greek and Latin were no more monolithic and unified than that of Slavonic. The authors of our texts often found the tools they required already available in these corpora: whether that be an early Latin missionary hagiographic model which elevates the authority of the pope, or an early Christian text against Hellenism. By demonstrating how deeply intertwined the texts at the heart of this thesis were with Byzantium and the Frankish world, I hope to destabilise the essential and assumed ‘Slavonic-ness’ of my texts and equally the ‘Byzantine-ness’ or ‘Frankish-ness’ of the cultural production of Byzantium and the Frankish world respectively. As a contribution to the slightly older field of medieval intellectual history and the brand-new field of Byzantine intellectual history, this thesis is by no means an exhaustive survey of this field of intellectual production.³ It hopes, rather, that it will stimulate further work concerned with the complex intellectual life in the cultural borderlands between Rome and Constantinople.

The second point of revealing the contestation of Slavonic has been to show that it is possible to use the intellectual arguments of our texts, to explore whether and how they sought to affect immediate socio-political circumstances from which they emerged. Or, in other words, to use the competing ‘figures of memory’ found in our narratives to gain insight into the social history of early writing. I have argued in Chapter 1 that the VC was primarily an intellectual exercise, engaging with Constantinopolitan discourses about education and missionary activity. I show that these discourses had recently been materialised and politicised in the figures Photios and Ignatios, but that the VC’s position seems to intentionally avoid explicitly engaging with this political conflict. Rather the VC seeks to side-step it altogether, with an example in the form of the life of Constantine-Cyril. By contrast in both Chapter 2 and 3, I have argued

³ See: A. Kaldellis, N. Siniossoglu eds., *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2017).

that it is in fact possible to gain some insight into the fragile socio-political realities our authors sought to affect through a close study of texts and their intellectual contexts. This has been done thanks to the methodological distinctions proposed at the start of this thesis between the ‘ideal audience’ proposed by each text, and the material audience likely to have received it. In Chapter 2, this socio-political context has been long accepted by scholars as the Moravian episcopate’s struggle with the Franks and the pope. But I have sought to show that a text-led inquiry offers the opportunity to significantly expand our understanding of the Moravian position. It does so by pointing, as I have done, to the specific sets of arguments posed against the Moravian milieu by Frankish authorities, and to the specific local significance of hagiography as a genre in the relations between the late ninth-century papacy and the Carolingian polities. Lastly, in Chapter 3, I posit a novel reading of *On Letters*, as a text situated in the monastic centres of the early medieval Balkans. I argue on the basis of textual, epigraphic and sigillographic analysis, that this was socio-political space of identarian fluidity and bi-lingualism. And moreover, that the complexity of this space has been masked previously by essentialist understandings of the relationship between language and identity. Throughout this thesis, I have sought to make a case for my method as much as for my findings.

In addition to its content and method, this thesis has also sought to contribute to the wider field of the history of early writing. It was the theoretical advancements of this field, in particular the ‘ideological model’ for writing that framed my inquiry. But the example of the invention of Slavonic, which has remained out of touch with this field altogether, can fill a crucial gap in the scholarship on early writing. As outlined in the introduction, studies of early writing come in two types. Either they are studies of the mythical narratives of the origin of script, which as Lurie notes are ‘highly ideological depictions of a particular kind of idealized contemporary literacy rather than attempts to confront the emergence of something new in the distant past.’⁴ Or, they are studies of what has been termed the pragmatics of writing, the spread of inscriptions, manuscripts, charters or the levels of literacy of groups or individuals.⁵ Precisely due to the temporal proximity of the invention of the alphabet and emergence of a series of contesting narratives around it, the case study of Slavonic demonstrates how these two strands can interact: how authors and their textual communities’ ideas about writing engaged with the socio-political spheres which permitted, policed or promoted the literacy. I argue that this engagement was productive: it kept producing new stories and claims to the alphabet and its creators rather than reifying one origin story

⁴ Lurie, ‘Parables of Inscription’, p.33.

⁵ See: E. MacArthur, ‘The Conception and Development of the Egyptian Writing System’, in Woods ed., *Visible Language*, pp.115-36. J. Palka, ‘The Beginnings of Maya Writing’ in *ibid.*, pp.225-31. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307*, Larsson, *Pragmatic Literacy and the Medieval Use of the Vernacular*; Bubalo, *Pragmatic Literacy in Medieval Serbia*.

about a distant past as is the case with Egyptian, Sumerian or Japanese writing.⁶ In consequence, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, when it comes to the origins of script, the more recent the invention, the more contested its origins.

Whilst I have sought to present a diachronic study of three historically specific claims for and to the Slavonic alphabet, it is by no means the case that this thesis seeks to propose a history of neat, linear progress or development. To the contrary, each of the new inventions of Slavonic did not supersede or replace the former. These conflicting arguments about the alphabet coexisted in the intellectual world of medieval Slavonic. The author of *On Letters* may well have had access to both versions of the invention narrative, as presented in the VC and VM, or through more diffuse channels of hymns, homilies or oral tradition. By the eleventh century all three arrived in early Rus, and one of the opening entries of the earliest Rus chronicle, the *Tale of Bygone Years* ('Povest' vremennykh let'), records the invention of Slavonic.⁷ It is once again a foundational moment, yet this time for a new polity, in a new place and time. Doubtless this process of reinvention continued up until and beyond the earliest manuscripts recording the narratives of the alphabet invention discussed in this thesis. In many of these instances it is difficult to establish what the act of recording these texts meant to those recording them. But in some cases, we can see glimpses into the later receptions, inventions and reinventions of stories about the alphabet, as in the prevalence of *On Letters* in literacy textbooks from early modern Muscovy. Much of the work of understanding how the alphabet continued to be reconceptualised remains to be done, and it will in turn better inform our understanding of scholarship on the medieval texts.

In short, it has been the purpose of this study to cause some disruption, to offer its own, new narrative of the process of inventing Slavonic, and, as it does so, to invent Slavonic anew. But it has also sought, through its method, to open up new avenues of research into an old topic, which precisely due to its immense contemporary significance has been shaped by a narrow set of concerns for nearly a century.

⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, pp.96-7; C. Woods, 'The Earliest Mesopotamian Writing', in his ed., *Visible Language*, pp.33-50; Lurie, 'Parables of Inscription', pp.33-8.

⁷ *Tale of Bygone Years*, in *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, eds. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, D. S. Likhachev, (St Petersburg, 1996, rev. M. B. Sverdlov), pp.15-16.

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