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SELECTED
WRITINGS

VI

Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads

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ST. CONSTANTINE'S PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPELS

Constantine (also known under his monastic name, Cyril), surnamed the Philosopher, and canonized by both the Eastern and Western Churches, was born around 826. He was the youngest son of Leo, a Byzantine nobleman and dignitary in the Macedonian city of Salonika, which at that time was bilingual — Greek and Slavic. After reading extensively at home, he was educated at the University of Constantinople under Leo the Mathematician and Photius, later the renowned patriarch and Constantine's friend and patron. The Old Church Slavonic *Vita* of the Saint, compiled soon after his death, lists the subjects studied by Constantine — grammar, Homer, geometry, dialectic, and all the philosophical disciplines, rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy, and music, along with "all other Hellenic arts". His mastery of Greek, Slavic, Latin, Hebrew, and Syriac is also attested by the hagiographic sources.

After brief service in the Patriarchal Library and successful disputations with the iconoclasts, Constantine was nominated Professor of Philosophy at the University of Constantinople. He defined philosophy as the cognition of divine and human things: the extent to which man could approximate God and be the image of the Creator.

The Philosopher was sent on several responsible missions: to the Arabs, Khazars, and finally to Moravia, whose reigning prince, Rastislav, had asked the Byzantine emperor for teachers and propagators of the Christian faith in the Slavic vernacular. Constantine worked in Moravia from 863 to 867, together with his eldest brother, Methodius. He composed the Slavic alphabet that was later called Glagolitic, and he fashioned the first literary language of the Slavs, now termed Old Church Slavonic. The philosopher first put into this language the *Evangeliarium* — a selection of texts from the Gospels for reading in Divine Services — and the liturgic prayers. Later, together with his brother, he translated the complete Gospels, the Psalter, and a selection from the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles.

After laying the foundations of the Slavic Church in Moravia and then

in Pannonia, he left Moravia in 868 with Methodius to plead for the Slavic Liturgy before the Bishop of Rome, to whose jurisdiction Moravia belonged. Constantine did not live to return to Moravia. Having fallen ill in Rome, he took monastic vows under the name of Cyril and died on February 14, 869.

In his famous speech made in Venice en route to Rome, and concisely reproduced in the Old Church Slavonic *Vita*, the Liturgy in the vernacular is ardently defended with eloquently commented references to St. Paul's exhortation for the comprehensibility of prayers (I Corinthians 14) and allusions to the equality motif in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:45): "Tell me," Constantine said, "do you think that God is helpless and cannot bestow the equality of languages and peoples or that He is envious and will not give it?" The culmination of Constantine's lifework is depicted in the same way by the *Vita* of St. Clement, one of the paramount sources for the history of the Slavic Apostles: "Taking the translated books, Cyril placed them on the altar of God, offering them as a sacrifice to the Lord, thus showing that God rejoiced in such a sacrifice, for what is more gladsome to the Word than the word? The word that enables intelligent beings to vanquish unintelligibility! Thus an equal delights in an equal."

The significance of Slavicized Scripture and Liturgy as enabling "intelligent beings to vanquish unintelligibility" is precisely the subject of the remarkable poem which Constantine wrote as a prologue, *Proglas*, to the Slavic rendition of the Four Gospels, whereas his initial Slavic work, the *Evangeliarium*, was introduced by a prose preface discussing the principles and devices of translation. The followers of both Slavic Apostles admired Constantine as a writer, not only for his translation of Biblical books, his didactic and polemic sermons and treatises, but also — and equally — as the first Slavic poet, "the melodious nightingale", as the ancient prayers call him. Of Constantine's poems we still possess the highly original Prologue to the Gospels, his adaptation of Greek liturgic poetry, vestiges of an alphabetic acrostic prayer that presumably furnished the spelling names of the Slavic letters, and a few poetic fragments written by Constantine in Greek and transposed into Slavic verse, probably by the author himself. Quotations from these translations have been preserved in such Old Church Slavonic texts as Constantine's *Vita* and his History of Finding St. Clement's Relics.

A canon. "To the Two Teachers of the Slavic Nation", composed by a disciple of Constantine and Methodius, extols both brothers, for despite adversities they taught the Moravian land to glorify God in the native tongue and thereby set an example to the whole world. According to this

Canon, the illuminator of Moravia was himself illuminated by the Holy Spirit, from Whom he received "a grace like the apostles". He was thus embraced in the Pentecostal miracle, which transmuted the confusion of languages — the punishment at Babel — into a blessed gift of tongues. In the words of the Greek service for Whitsunday, "that this grace might be most clearly known to Thy disciples and Apostles Thou didst today send down and open their lips with tongues of fire, so that by them we and the whole race of mankind received the knowledge of God in our own language, according to the hearing of the ear; and by the light of the Spirit we have been enlightened ***". Constantine himself points out the world-wide mission of the Moravian Church in his inspired Prologue, where the inaugural apostrophe, 9. "Therefore hearken, all ye Slavs!" is replaced first by the unifying summons, 23. f. "Then hear now, *** Slavic people!" Then the Slavic exhortation becomes universal, first with an individualized addressee, 67. "ye men", and finally with a collective appeal, 85. "ye nations", which intimately relates Constantine's mission to the initial, Biblical image of the Prologue, 3. "Christ comes to gather the nations and tongues".

In the following text of the *Proglas* our earlier English translation (Jakobson 1959) has been slightly revised and supplemented by a tentative reconstruction of the original Old Church Slavonic wording.

There also exist translations of this poem into German (Franko 1915, 213f.), French (Vaillant 1956, 21–23), Ukrainian (Lavrov 1928, 192f.), Czech (Vašica 1942–3, 218–221), Slovak (Pauliny 1964, 130–133), Polish (Urbańczyk 1972, 355–358), and Bulgarian (Georgiev 1933, 12–17). Two comprehensive contributions to textual criticism, but unaccompanied by translations, are of particular importance, namely, the earliest approach to this task undertaken and summed up by Sobolevskij in 1910 and its most detailed treatment by Nahtigal in 1942 (76–122 and 141–149). To my predecessors in the philological treatment of the poem I owe a number of felicitous suggestions (see overleaf).

The meter of the *Proglas*, apparently the most usual variety of the Old Church Slavonic spoken verse, goes back to the Byzantine dodecasyllable (cf. Maas 1975, Orsolya Kirsaj 1976), regularly maintains the latter's syllabic measure, and shares the main rules of this model's phrasing: first, the uniform constant requirement of the so-called "bridge" (*zeugma*) precisely in the middle of the line, after its sixth syllable; and secondly, a compulsory word (and preferably phrase) boundary at a distance of one syllable from the bridge, viz., after the fifth or seventh syllable ($\frac{1}{2} \pm 1$). Hence, as a rule the line consists of two groups of syllables, one pentasyllabic, and the other heptasyllabic, with a

1. I am the Prologue to the Holy Gospels:
2. As the prophets prophesied of old —
3. “Christ comes to gather the nations and tongues,
4. Since He is the light of this whole world” —
5. So it has come to pass in this seventh millennium.
6. Since they have said, “The blind shall see,
7. The deaf shall hear the Word of the Book,
8. For it is proper that God be known.”
9. Therefore hearken, all ye Slavs!
10. For this gift is given by God,
11. The gift on God’s right hand,
12. The incorruptible gift to souls,
13. To those souls that will accept it.
14. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
15. Teach all the people, saying:
16. “Since it is the beauty and splendor
17. Of your souls that you love to see,
18. Rejoice at their striving
19. To dispel the darkness of sin,
20. And to repel the corruptness of this world,
21. Thus to win life in paradise
22. And to escape the flaming fire.”
23. Then hear now with your own mind,
24. Since your hearing has opened, Slavic people,
25. Hear the Word, for it came from God,
26. The Word nourishing human souls,
27. The Word strengthening heart and mind,
28. The Word preparing all to know God.
29. As without light there can be no joy —
30. For while the eye sees all of God’s creation,
31. Still what is seen without light lacks beauty —
32. So it is with every soul lacking letters,
33. And ignorant even of God’s law,
34. Of the law scriptural and spiritual,
35. The law that reveals God’s paradise.
36. For what ear, having heard
37. The sound of thunder, is not gripped with the fear of God?
38. Or how can nostrils which smell no flower
39. Sense the Divine miracle?
40. And the mouth which tastes no sweetness
41. Makes of man a stone;

1. Proglasъ jesmъ / svetu // evang'eliju:
2. Jako proroci / prorekli sqтъ pŕěžde,
3. Хгъстъ грѣдетъ / събрати језыку,
4. Světъ bo jestъ / vьsemu miru semu.
5. Se se съbustъ / vь sedmyi vѣkъ съ.
6. Rěše bo oni: / “slѣpii prozrѣtъ,
7. Glusi slyšetъ / slovo // bukъvъnoje,
8. Bogъ že ubo / poznati dostoitъ.
9. Togo děl'ja slyšite, // slověne vьsi,
10. Darъ bo jestъ / otъ boga съ danъ,
11. Darъ božii / jestъ // desnyje čestі,
12. Darъ dušamъ, / nikoli že tьlěje,
13. Dušamъ tѣmъ, / ježe // i priimotъ.
14. Mathei, markъ, // luka [i] ioanъ
15. Učetъ vьсъ / narodъ glagol'jošte:
16. Jeliko ubo / krasotq i lѣpotq
17. Svoixъ dušъ / vidite i ljubite,
18. Raduite se, / jeliko že хотetъ
19. Grѣxovъnojq / tьmq // otъgъnati
20. I mira sego / tьljq // otъložitі,
21. I raiskoje / žitije [si] obręsti
22. I izběžati / otъ ogn'ja gorqšta.”
23. Slyšite nyně / otъ svojego uma,
24. Slyšaste ubo, / slověnskъ narode,
25. Slyšite slovo, / otъ boga bo pride,
26. Slovo že krъmę / člověčъskyje duše,
27. Slovo že krępe, / i srъdъca i umy,
28. Slovo gotovę / vьse // boga poznati.
29. Jako bez svѣta / radostъ ne bqdetъ,
30. Oku vidęštju / božijq tvarъ vьsjq,
31. Nъ bez lѣpoty / vьse // vidimo jestъ,
32. Tako i duša / vьsěka bez bukъvъ,
33. Ne съvѣdqšti / [ni] zakona božija,
34. Zakona kъn'izъna // [i] duxovъna,
35. Zakona rai / božii javljajqštja.
36. Kyi bo sluxъ, / gromъnyi tqtъnъ
37. Slyše, možetъ / boga ne bojati se?
38. Nozdri že raky, / cvѣta // ne oхajqšte,
39. Kako božije / čudo // razumějotъ?
40. Usta bo, jaže / sladъka ne čujotъ,
41. Jako kamenъ / tvorętъ [iz] člověka,

42. Even more, the soul lacking letters
43. Grows dead in human beings.
44. Thus, considering all this, brethren,
45. We speak fitting counsel
46. Which will separate all men
47. From brutish existence and carnality,
48. So that ye will not have reason without understanding,
49. While listening to the Word in a foreign tongue,
50. As if you would hear only the voice of a copper bell.
51. Therefore Saint Paul has taught:
52. "In offering my prayer to God,
53. I had rather speak five words,
54. [To say them] with full comprehension,
55. So that all the brethren could also understand,
56. Than ten thousand incomprehensible words."
57. What man will not understand this?
58. Who will not apply the wise parable,
59. Interpreting to us the true message?
60. As corruption threatens the flesh,
61. Decaying and cankering everything worse than canker,
62. If one has not his proper nourishment,
63. So each soul living wanes
64. When not partaking of Divine Life,
65. Hearing not the Divine Word.
66. Let another very wise parable
67. Be told, ye men that love each other
68. And wish to grow toward God!
69. Who does not know this true doctrine?
70. As the seed falls on the field,
71. So it is upon human hearts
72. Craving the Divine shower of letters
73. That the fruit of God may increase.
74. Who can tell all the parables
75. Denouncing nations without their own books
76. Who do not resort to a sense-making voice?
77. Even one potent in all tongues
78. Would lack power to tell their impotence.
79. Yet I would add a parable of my own
80. Condensing much sense into few words:
81. Naked indeed are all those nations without their own books
82. Who being without arms cannot fight

42. Pače že sego / duša bezbukъvъna
43. Javlјajetъ se / vъ človecъxъ mrtva.
44. Se že vъse my, / bratije, smyslęšte,
45. Glagol'emъ vy / svętvъ rodobъnъ,
46. Iže človely / vъse // otъlqcitъ
47. Otъ žitija / skotъska i roxoti,
48. Da ne imošte / umъ // nerazumъnъ,
49. Tuždemъ językomъ / slyšęšte slovo,
50. Jako mędъna / zvona // glasъ slyšite —
51. Se bo svętyi / ravъlъ uče reče:
52. "Molitvę svojo / vъzdaјę pręžde bogu,
53. Jako slovesъ / pętvъ // xoštq izdrešti,
54. Svъ razumomъ / [svoimъ glagolati,]
55. Da i bratija / vъsę // razumęjqtъ,
56. Neže tmq slovesъ // nerazumъnъ."
57. Kyi človely / nerorazumęjetъ?
58. Kyi ne priložitъ // pritъče mędry,
59. Svъkazajqtę / besędy pravu namъ?
60. Jako bo tvъlja / plъtvъxъ nastoitъ,
61. Vъse tvęšti, / pače // gnoja gnojęšti,
62. Jegda svojego / brašъna ne imatъ,
63. Tako vъsęka / duša // otъradetъ
64. Žizni, božija / ne imošti života,
65. Egda slovese / božija ne slyšitъ
66. Inq že paky / pritъčq mędro žęlo
67. Da glagol'emъ, / človeci, ljubęšte se,
68. Xotęšte rasti / božijemъ rastomъ,
69. Kъto bo vęry / seјę // ne vęstvъ pravu?
70. Jako sęmeni / padajqtę na n'ivę,
71. Na svędvъsichъ / tako // človecъscevъ,
72. Dъžda božii / bukъvъ trębujqtę,
73. Da vъzdrastetъ / plodъ // božii pače.
74. Kъto možetъ / pritъče vъse [rešti]
75. Obličajqtę / bez kъn'igъ języku
76. Vъ smyslъnę / glasę ne glagol'jqtę?
77. Ni, ašte vъse / języku umęjetъ,
78. Možetъ svъkazati // nemoštъ sichъ.
79. Obače svojo / pritъčq da pristavlјq,
80. Mъnogъ umъ / vъ malę ręči kaže.
81. Nazi bo vъsi / bez kъn'igъ języci,
82. Ne mogqtę se / brati // bez orqžija

83. The Adversary of our souls
84. And are ripe for the dungeon of eternal torments.
85. Therefore, ye nations whose love is not for the Enemy
86. And who truly mean to fight Him:
87. Open eagerly the doors of your reason
88. You who have now taken up the sturdy arms
89. That are forged through the Lord's Books
90. And who truly crush the head of the Enemy.
91. Whoever accepts these letters,
92. To him Christ speaks wisdom,
93. Feeds and strengthens your souls,
94. Jointly with all the Apostles and Prophets.
95. Whoever speaks their words
96. Will be fit to slay the Foe,
97. Bringing God good victory,
98. Escaping the cankerous corruption of flesh —
99. Flesh whose life is like a sleep;
100. These will not fall but hold fast,
101. And come forth before God as men of valor,
102. Standing on the right hand of God's throne,
103. When He judges the nations with fire,
104. And rejoicing throughout the ages with the angels,
105. Eternally praising God the merciful,
106. Always with songs from the holy books,
107. Singing to God who loves man:
108. To Him befits all glory,
109. Honor and praise to the Son of God forever,
110. With the Father and with the Holy Ghost,
111. From all creatures, unto the ages of ages!
112. Amen. .

certain prevalence of syllabically ascending constructions (5+7) over falling ones (7+5). Not only phrase units, but also divisions of phrases into word units serve as breaks. Verse boundaries may also, apparently, bisect a phrase by separating the subsequent subordinate word from the preceding superposed member of the same phrase (63. *отпадеть*, 64. *Жизни*). We follow Nahtigal in marking word boundaries after the fifth syllable by a single slant (/) and after the seventh syllable by a double one (//). In the lines combining these two word boundaries each of them is marked, the first by a single, and the second by a double slant, e.g.,

83. Съ противникомъ // душь нашихъ,
84. Gotovi moky / večьnyje vь plěny.
85. Iže bo vraga, / języci, ne ljubite,
86. Съ n'imь že se / brati // myslęšte žęlo,
87. Otvęzęte priležno umu dvęri,
88. Oręžije priimъše tvęrdo nynę,
89. Ježe kovęť / kъn'igy gospodyn'e,
90. Glavę tvęręšte / neprįjazni vel'mi.
91. Iže bo siję / bukъvy priimetъ,
92. Mędrostъ [tęmъ] / xristosъ glagol'etъ
93. I dušę vašę / [kręmitъ i] krępitъ
94. Съ apostoly / i prorokey vsęmi.
95. Iže bo sixъ / slovesa glagol'jęšte,
96. Vraga ubiti / podobъni będęť
97. Pobędę prinosešę // kъ bogu dobrę,
98. Rъti bęžęšte / tълję // gnojevъnyje,
99. Rъti jeježe / životъ jako sъny;
100. Ne padajęšte, / krępъko že stojęšte
101. Jako xrabъri / kъ bogu javl'ъše se,
102. Božija stola / stojęšte o desnję,
103. Jegda ogn'emъ / sęditъ językomъ,
104. Radujęšte se / съ ang'ely vь vęky,
105. Prisno slavęšte / boga // [prę]milostiva,
106. Kъn'izъnami / vsęgda [že] pęsnъmi,
107. Bogu pojęšte / človęky milujęštju.
108. Tomu vsęka / podobajetъ slava,
109. Čъstъ i xvala / [synu //] božiju vynę
110. Съ oтъсемъ / i svętomъ duxomъ
111. Oтъ vsęje / tvari // vь vęky vękъ.
112. Aminъ. .

2(5+2+5):

19. Gręxovъnyję / tьmę // oтъгъnati
20. I mira sego / tълję // oтъložiti,

where the symmetry of the two central dissyllabic accusatives (5+2+5) underscores their grammatical, semantic, and phonic similarity, and creates a harmonious prelude to the conversion of human intelligence (*umъ*) into the Lord's Wisdom (92. *mędrostъ*) and to the final apotheosis of the heroes (*xrabъri*).

The endeavor to reconstruct the original text of the *Proglas*, based on

its metrical structure and on a philological comparison of the four extant manuscripts of the poem, presents us with a considerable number of retouches introduced into the original text by its successive copyists. While most of their alterations are easily detectable and removable, there remain a few arguable cases. In the three preserved records of the entire *Proglas*, all three of which actually preface the Slavic Tetraevangelium, the text pertains to the Serbian version of the poem. We find the latter's initial part (43 lines) preserved, moreover, in a Russian manuscript of the sixteenth century. In spite of its late date, in a few passages this fragment proves to be more conservative and reliable than the three Serbian manuscripts written in the XII–XIV centuries.

One distich of the *Proglas* ostensibly differs in its meter from other lines of the poem. It is the conclusive, expressly militant call, and the two breaks, in this case both of them compulsory, are signally shifted one syllable farther from the bridge 2(4+4+4):

87. Оtvъrзѣте прѣлѣбно уму двѣри,

88. Орѣзѣте приимѣше тврѣдо нунѣ.

Each of the six segments carries an *r*; moreover, the segments display a correspondence in their word-beginning sounds, or sound groups, with the parallel constituents of the second line: ОtvъrзѣTE — ОрѣзѣTE, прѣлѣбно — приимѣше, двѣри — тврѣдо. The deliberate conciseness and comparability of all the segments in the structure of this distich may be brought into connection with the latter's summit position in the only avowedly subjective passage of the poem: 79. "Yet I would add a parable of my own; 80. Condensing much sense into few words". This parable announces the imperative necessity for Books in the nation's proper language in order to "crush the head of the Enemy" (90. *glavъ neprijazni*) and "to slay the Foe" (96. *vraga ubiti*). In the whole *Proglas* it is the sole reference to the author himself (79. *svojъ da pritъčъ pristavlъjъ*). The literature of the Moravian mission depicts its two leaders as implacable warriors against the Enemy and their miraculous battle using comprehensible words as sturdy arms.

The fighting spirit of the poet is reflected in the manifest insertion of his own parable, with its bellicose imagery, into the text of the *Proglas*. It is also noteworthy that the only parable characterized by the author as his personal contribution focuses on the misfortune of whole peoples who lack the Sacred Scripture in their mother tongue. To the individual tragedy of "every soul lacking letters" (32., 42.) which was mourned in the antecedent parables, this one supplement manifestly signed by the author superimposes the image of decay as an inevitable menace to "all nations without their own books" (81.): "as corruption threatens the

flesh" (60.) of one who is deprived of his proper nourishment (62. *svojego brašъna*), so these impotent, armless nations (82.–84.) "cannot fight (*se brati*) against the Adversary of our souls And are ripe for the dungeon of eternal torments". The paronomastic rapprochement *brašъna* — *brati* enhances the comparison between the metaphoric images of lacking food and arms. Apart from this single allusion to the reputed militancy of the two Moravian teachers there is no other reference in the poem to any missionary deed. The vernacular Script and Mass are viewed as a direct "gift by God" (10.) "to those souls that will accept it" (13.). The fruitful care of the two Salonika brothers and their mission for the Slavic flock is deliberately impersonalized in the *Proglas* and almost hidden behind the brief appeal: 23. "Then hear now with your proper mind, 24. Since your hearing has opened (literally; since you have heard — *slyšaste*), Slavic people, 25. Hear the Word, for it came from God ***". It is the *Proglas* itself which proves to be personalized: 1. "I am the Prologue to the Holy Gospels", an early example of the Church Slavonic custom of presenting the title word of the narration as its first person hero. Cf. the introductory sentence of the forword to the Slavic version of the dialectical treatise by John of Damascus — *azъ jesъmъ dialektika, otъ boga svobodъnaja mъdrostъ* — or in the foreword to a grammatical treatise — *jesъmъ bo otъ sedmi načelъnaja i svobodъnaja mъdrostъ grammatika* (see Jagić 39 and 328). The preface is presented as a prologue anticipating and predicting the subsequent content. The Prologue is the preface and the speaker of the preface. Through its initial cluster, as well as the latter's prefixal function, the word *proglasъ* is tied to the subsequent sentence 2. *proroci proroekli sъtъ prѣzъde*. This unusual word used as the title of the poem introduces a consecutive set of prognostic announcements: 2. the prophets prophesied; 3. Christ comes to gather; 5. so it has come to pass; 15. [the four evangelists] teach saying; 51. St. Paul has said in teaching; and to sum up the whole suite, 91. "Whoever accepts these letters, 92. to him Christ speaks wisdom, *** 94. Jointly with all apostles and prophets."

The whole prologue is built on a system of etymological and paronomastic ligaments. The first person verb *jesъmъ* is closely knit with the two final verses of the thematically inaugural "quintet" of the poem through the four combinations of the consonants /s/ and /m/ with the vowel /e/: 1. *jesъmъ* — 4. *vъsemu* — *** *semu* — 5. *sedъmyi*. The fifth verse differs distinctly from all other lines of the poem in its six-fold accumulation of the sibilant /s/ and in assigning to this consonant the two extreme syllables of the verse (5. *se *** sb*), both pertaining to the same grammatical paradigm. This line is, moreover, the only one in the

Proglas which confirms that the miracle prophesied of old has been accomplished in the seventh millennium (*se se sьbystь vь sedmyi věkь sь*) which, according to medieval eschatology, will lead humanity to the Last Judgment.

It is with the representation of the miracles accomplished that the *Proglas* begins to display its characteristic chains of alliterations, starting with: 6. SLěpii — 7. SLYšetь SLOVO — 9. SLYšite SLOVĚNĚ.

Key words repeated (mostly thrice) serve to enhance serial alliterations: 8. Dostoitь — 10. DARь *** DANь — 11. DARь *** DESNYJE — 12. DARь DUŠAMь — 13. DUŠAMь — 17. DUŠь. The *sl* chain of 6.–9. reappears with the same familiarized and semantically motivated set of constituents: 23. SLYšite — 24. SLYšaste *** SLOVĚNьSKь — 25. SLYšite SLOVO — 26. SLOVO — 27. SLOVO — 28. SLOVO.

The words *slovo* and *bogь* are the most frequent nouns of this hymn to the Divine Word, each of them numbering ten occurrences in the poem, and the intimate bonds between these two nouns are revealed by their direct confrontation in the lines 25. *slovo*, / otь boga and 28. *slovo gotovę / vьse boga // poznati*. The verb *slyšati* in most of its occurrences has the accusative *slovo* as its object. The interplay of these verbs and nouns is enhanced by beginning three lines (23.–25.) with the same verb, and three further lines (26.–28.) with the noun *slovo*. The ethnonymic stem *slovĕn* — felt to be derived from *slovo* — emerges twice, and solely with reference to the hearing of the word. Cf. especially the sequence 24. *slovĕnьskь narode*, 25. *slyšite slovo* and the paronomastic transition from the nationally limited *SLOVĚNьSKь narode* to the universally oriented 26. *čLOVĚčьSKYJE duše*.

Among those original Old Church Slavonic writings for which one may assume Constantine's authorship, three pieces reveal striking affinities. In the first of these texts, the Preface to the Evangelium, the earliest of his translations, the Philosopher discusses the tasks and difficulties of transposing the Greek original into Slavic (cf. Vaillant 1948); the *Proglas* was meant to introduce Constantine's further achievement, the entire Slavized Tetraevangelium, and to elucidate the significance of the labor spent; finally, a tirade inserted into the Old Church Slavonic *Vita* of Constantine, the polemic reply allegedly given by the teacher in Venice, autumn 867, to the "ravens" who defied the Slavic liturgy, sums up the doctrine of the Moravian mission. The treatise, the poem, and the argument, — all three pieces are consecrated to the Divine Word. Full of yearning for its universal comprehension, all three of them hail the translation of the Holy Writ and Songs into the vernacular, particularly into Slavic, and all three directly refer to the

same Epistle of St. Paul (I Corinthians) asking for commonly comprehensible words in the church prayers.

In the oldest of the three documents, the treatise which prefaced the Slavic Evangelium, the Philosopher added a quotation from St. Paul's allegedly "great disciple" Dionysius the Areopagite, which condemns the unreasonable attachment to empty, incomprehensible words and phrases and the foolish disregard of meaning. This legacy learned from Dionysius and some further impulses due to his treatise, *The Divine Names*, seem to flash across Constantine's *Proglas*.

According to C. E. Rolt's conclusive observations (145f.), in the view of the author of the treatise ascribed to Dionysius "the Supra-Vital and Primal Life is the cause of all Life, and produces and fulfills it and individualizes it" in any mode whatsoever: intelligence (*Proglas: razumь*), reason (*umь*), sensation (*vidĕti, slyšati, qxati, čuti*), nutrition (*brašno*), growth (68. *Xotęšte rasti božijemь rastomь *** 73. Da vьzdrastetь plodь božii pače*). That "ascending scale between Nothingness and the Super-Essence" which proves to underlie the system of values outlined by Dionysius (p. 19) finds a salient set of correspondences in the Old Church Slavonic poem. The twilight substituted for light still enables the eye to see all of God's creation, yet all "what is seen without (full) light lacks beauty" (31.). As an example of a decadence into nothingness the poem uses the metaphoric petrification of those ones whose mouth "Tastes no sweetness" (40.). As it was explained by Dionysius, here lies the difference between the aboriginal lifelessness of a stone and "the failure of the thing's proper virtues". The endowment of the mouth and nostrils with a natural capacity for feeling the divine miracle (*čudo*) leads to a paronomastic fastening of the tie between the organs of sense and their attainment (39. *čudo* — 40. *čUJotь* within the intrusive frame of six velars: 39. КАКО 40. *sladьКА*, 41. *ЈАКО КАМЕНь *** človĕКА*).

The poet's attention is attracted by chasms between the presence and loss of a sense-perception, for instance between eyesight or hearing and blindness or deafness. But much deeper (*pače sego*) is his response to the tragic gulf which separates the intelligent power of the human soul from the latter's sufferings through the incomprehensibility of words heard and of letters learned and seen: 42. "the illiterate soul (*duša bezbukьvьna*) 43. grows dead in human beings" (cf. also 32.). 63. "So each soul living wanes *** 65. Hearing not the Divine Word." One's own proper comprehension is the miracle glorified by the poem and pointed out by a set of cognate terms (*umь, razumь, razumĕti*) and by an insistent recourse to the possessive adjectival form of the reflexive pronoun (*svoi*). The

meaningful vernacular heard and uttered with one's own understanding (*otъ svoego uma: sъ razumotъ svoimъ*) carries the Word from God (*otъ boga bo pride*) and is consistently opposed in the poem to the defied oxymoron "reason without understanding" (*umъ nerazumъnъ*) of those who are listening to the Word in a foreign tongue (*tuždetъ jezykomъ*) as if hearing the voice of a copper bell (*mědъna zvona glasъ*).

The deployed and multiplied call to the Slavic people to listen to the Divine Word with their own mind (23.–25.) is surrounded by references first to the listeners' souls which save their beauty and splendor by striving to escape the fire of the nether world (18.–22.) and then to the same human souls when they receive their blessing from the Divine Word (26.–28.) These two framing passages display a predilection for pairs of alliterative, both morphologically and semantically resemblant, words parallelistically applied in correlated lines. They are, on the one hand, the distich 26. *slovo že kрѣmѣ / člověčskyje duše*, 27. *slovo že kрѣpѣ / i sръdъca i umy*, and on the opposite side, the semantically negative pair *тъma — тълja* (with an identical syllable *тъ* followed by two different sonorants). The full use of this pair is made in the lines devoted to the striving of our souls (19.–20.) "to dispel (*otъgъnati*) the darkness of sin, and to repel the corruptness (*тъljo otъložitъ*) of this world". A phonic correspondence between the latter accusative and infinitive furthers the imagery, while the will of our souls 22. "to escape the flaming fire", invoked at the end of the same compound sentence, confronts the religious proximity of the fire and darkness with their sensual contrast and signals the interconnection between the initial goal of the depicted strivings and the final one with an impressive paronomasia: 19. *OTъGъNati — 22. OTъ OGN'ja*. At the second appearance of the noun *тъlja*, namely in the paronomastic context — 60. *Jako bo тълja / pлѣтbъ nastoitъ* ("As corruption threatens the flesh") — once more nearby we detect its partner word *тъma*, this time in the meaning "multitude, ten thousand": 56. *Neže тъmъ slovesъ nerazumъnъ* ("Than ten thousand incomprehensible words"). Both for the inquirer into "the Divine Names" and for the author of the *Proglas* the darkness of sin and the multitudes of incomprehensible, unreasonable, alien words were but two pernicious displays of Nothingness, and the Old Church Slavonic *тъma* must have been felt as one single word with two shades of meaning, whatever the still discussed historical relation between the two lexical units may be.

From the initial to the final lines of the *Proglas* the poet remains faithful to the masterful architectonics of sound and sound sequence, morpheme and word, repetition and variation. Constantine's power in the literary language he created is indeed amazing; it embraces the whole

diversity of functions assigned to the new tool, and despite all the valuable studies done, one is still in need of a new, comprehensive and unflinchingly objective evaluation. In particular, the uncommon wealth and range of Constantine's poetic means still requires a broad systematic analysis. His Prologue to the Holy Gospels is an unmatched classic of Slavic homiletic poetry. The philosopher deploys the brightest poetic figures of the Byzantine world in order to affirm and deepen the sovereignty and equality that are bestowed on every nation and on everyone within each nation as soon as the native word has found its access to the Holy Communion, which, by the Middle Ages, was conceived as the acme of attainable communication.

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