

**Monica White**

***Department of Slavonic Studies, University of Cambridge***

**Military saints in Byzantium and Rus: Continuity and Change**

The military saints, most notably George, Demetrios, and Theodore, are among the most ancient and revered in eastern Christendom. Although they were all victims of the great persecutions of Christians, they hailed from different parts of the Roman Empire and do not seem to have had strong mutual associations during the early centuries of their veneration. This situation changed dramatically under the Macedonian emperors, who took an unprecedented interest in the cultivation of a phalanx of martyr-warriors as patrons in war. Iconography and hagiography of the middle Byzantine period, while placing a strong emphasis on their military prowess, also invariably stressed their martyrdom, implying the interdependence of these features in the Byzantine imagination. It was in this form that the military saints reached Rus. Although they gained a wide following among the East Slavs very early, their Rus and Byzantine cults were far from identical, as the princes of Rus seem to have been much more devoted to the saints as warriors than as martyrs. On the other hand, the martyr-warrior ideal did find a form of expression in Rus through SS Boris and Gleb. The brothers' hagiography reflects the strong influence on their cult of ideas of protectorship and patronage, while their numerous depictions carrying swords and crosses (a combination of attributes which was almost unknown in Byzantine art) represents, in new form, the interdependence of martyrdom and military heroism.

---

**Anne-Laurence Caudano**

***Trinity College, Cambridge***

**Cosmological Approaches in Kievan Rus Literature**

The question of Kievan Rus' perception of the heavens is closely related to the study of how Byzantine cosmological systems were appropriated by the Rus. Indeed, nearly all the preserved written material that reveals approaches to cosmology is adapted or borrowed from Byzantine patristic works, often via a Church Slavonic translation made by the south Slavs. Most texts available in Kievan Rus were inspired by competing interpretations written by the Fathers of the Church concerning the shape, the structure and the nature of the world, based on the commentaries of the narrative of the fourth day of Creation (Gn. 1:14-19). On one side, Basil of Caesarea and his followers developed a positive attitude towards the world and its parts that allowed them to adopt the spherical structure of the Hellenic cosmos. On the other, Severianos of Gabala and the adherents of the School of Antioch represented the heaven as the image of Moses' Tabernacle, and adopted a view where literal interpretations of the Bible were incompatible with concepts of natural philosophy.

It is difficult to determine how much of these Byzantine treatises were understandable and understood by the Rus, how actively Rus took part in their re-elaboration in Slavonic or in their reception, and thus how representative of Rus' cosmological worldview they could be. One means of determining their impact in Rus is by assessing whether the translation and copies were easily "accessible" – practically to its audience, but also conceptually – and how the original meaning was rendered or distorted. The *Khristianskaia Topografiia* is a good case to illustrate these problems. Written by Kosmas Indikopleustes in the middle of the 6th century and translated into Church Slavonic between the 12th and the 13th century, this work describes the structure of the universe and the earth in a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and stresses the impossibility to match biblical concepts with pagan natural philosophy. It was effectively transmitted to Rus, despite the transformations it underwent during the process of its copy and translation. Indeed, many additions, suppressions or adaptations of the original text and its miniatures are and provided to the Rus a coherent and complete representation of the heaven. It was an accessible one as well, since Kosmas departed from the complex spherical system of the Greeks, which presupposed an enormous background. The *Khristianskaia Topografiia* was successful in Kievan Rus, and strongly influenced the descriptions of the heaven found in the *Paleia Tolkovaia* – a 13th century commentary of the Old Testament, which in turn provided information for short cosmological texts at the end of the 14th and in the 15th century.

---

**Pierre Gonneau**

***Université de Paris-Sorbonne***

**“Thou shalt see greater things than these”: irreverent use of Holy Scripture in the *Повесть о Савве Грудцыне***

*Povest' o Savve Grudcyne* (POSG) is the story of a young man, a merchant's son, who, having signed a pact with the devil, leads an adventurous and debauched life, but is miraculously saved from damnation by the Holy Mother of God and ends his life in a monastery. The tale had a quite considerable success (almost 80 18th- and 19th-century manuscript copies). One of the most daring devices the author uses has so far attracted little attention from the specialists: it is quoting the Holy Scripture in many ways, traditional and irreverent.

Reading the story, one cannot but think of two famous biblical episodes: the Parable of the Prodigal son (Lc.15:11-32) and Joseph's misadventure with Potiphar's wife (Gn.39:7-20). Three other references may have served as models for the whole Tale. Those are, in the first place, Pr.20 or Ap.14:9-10. But the Tale's readers must also bear in mind Pr.9, since verses 1 to 11 are the reading prescribed in the Russian orthodox liturgy on July 8th, i.e. the feast of the Apparition of Our Lady of Kazan, and the date of Savva's miraculous healing. Many more references may be added to the list of biblical images to be found in the text in a context consistent with their original meaning: positive ones are used to glorify God and the Just, negative ones to vilify evil and its agents.

POSG's biblical setting, however, also presents a very different aspect. This includes some of the quotations mentioned and many more, which are used by the author in a rather unorthodox way. One of the clearest illustrations of such ambivalent use of the Scripture is provided by the Parable of the Prodigal son. Its orthodox use has prepared the reader for a reference to the return of the Prodigal son in the final scene, where Savva is saved by the Mother of God. But instead of that, it comes much earlier, when Savva, having struck his pact with the devil, returns to his mistress to enjoy her company...

Besides, the hero is made to act as the Christ or utter some of His words in contexts that have little to do with piety. Thus, the episode where Savva leaves town and wanders in the countryside in search of the demon is modeled on Jesus' departure into the desert (Mt.14:13-14). Which in turn is followed by an imitation of the Temptation of the Christ (Mt.4:8-9). As for the scene depicting Savva's encounter with the demon, it is a parodic mix of The Acts 9:4 and Mc.1:24.

But Savva is not the only character in the Tale to usurp the identity of Jesus Christ. His "false brother" the demon stands by him. In POSG, the demon who makes Savva sign the pact repeatedly addresses him in the words of Jesus, among which the famous "Thou shalt see greater things than these" (Mt.22:18, Jn.8:14,19, Jn.14:1-2, Jn.1:50). Many other speeches put in the demon's mouth are excerpts from Psalms or the New Testament which are usually applied to God or men of God (Ps.21:12, 118:19, He2:11-12, Jn.14:8, Ps.56:6...). The parody reaches a climax when Savva and the demon go into the midst of the river Dnepr upon the dry ground just like the children of Israel in Ex.14:21-25.

As Marcia A. Morris (The Literature of Roguery in 17th and 18th C. Russia) suggested, Savva's adventures are a mirror image of the destiny of the famous *samožvanec* Grishka Otrep'ev. They both break their vows, disown their family, sign a pact with the devil, only Savva ends his life in the Chudov abbey, the very monastery Grishka fled from at the beginning of his career. And while Grishka is damned, Savva is saved.

The theme of the Saving Grace is indeed central in the Tale. This is confirmed by the "biblical thematic clue" we find in the sentence-long title of POSG. Despite the numerous variations in its phrasing, it almost always celebrates God's "philanthropy". Its so-called "first redaction" also praises "God, longsuffering and abundant in mercy... [who] delivers the Christians".

In the Bible, these words occur in reference to God's marvellous deeds and/or in exhortations to penance and conversion. This is particularly true of Ps.86(85). Thus, the biblical clue at the beginning of the Tale is in symphony with its ending and that is the main element on which Russian mediaeval readers based their comprehension of any given text. Beyond all its magic episodes, POSG offered to a learned clerk a curious illustration of the wickedness of that cunning enemy of mankind, the devil.

*"The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose"*

W. Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice* I,3