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Enemy of All Virtues: Once Again on the Image of Tsar Simeon I (893-927) in the Oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*

The cardinal virtues – prudence (φρόνησις), temperance (σωφροσύνη), fortitude (ἀνδρεία) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) – are usually associated with individual attitudes and character traits desirable among the broader followers of Christ. Essentially Christian, although growing out of and drawing on virtues propagated by ancient pagans, they applied with particular importance to the person of the ruler, who was expected not only to be a role model but also to propagate them among his subjects². Who but a Christian ruler, exercising power by divine appointment, should be their embodiment? He was an ideal not only of courage, both on the battlefield, in preaching the Gospel and in overcoming his own weaknesses, of wise and prudent governance, an embodiment of justice, giving to everyone what was due and not harsh and quick to punish; but also characterised by a broad-minded control of anger and a humble disposition. Such attitudes were expected of both the Eastern Roman emperor and the other rulers

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² More broadly on the topic see I.P. Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: a Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century*, Leiden – Boston 2011; G. Zografidis, *Ethics, Byzantine*, in: *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. H. Lagerlund, London 2011, p. 323-328, especially p. 326-327; G. Diamantopoulos, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Works of Nicetas Stethatos*, in: *The Byzantine Platonists (284-1453), Theandrites: Byzantine Philosophy and Christian Neoplatonism*, v. 1, ed. F. Lauritzen – S. Wear, Steubenville – Ohio 2021, p. 155-191.

of the Orthodox oikoumene³. An ideal was an ideal, but individual rulers often deviated from this model. This was true not only of the native ones, from the Byzantine point of view, but also those representing neighbouring countries. This was especially so if they played an important role in the history of Eastern Rome, above all by violating the integrity of the Byzantine territories, threatening the capital Constantinople, the subjects of the Basileus and, above all, the imperial crown and dignity itself. In this respect, a particularly graceful figure in Byzantine literature was the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon I (893-927), a great antagonist of the empire, who not only unleashed war against it, but also ventured to claim the title of basileus. Here, then, was the ruler of a neighbouring state, an Orthodox Christian who had Byzantine upbringing, for he studied in the capital on the Bosphorus, who should have been the embodiment of all virtues but became, at least from an Eastern Roman perspective, their complete negation. A text that raises this issue particularly vividly is the rhetorical work (Ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Βουλγάρων συμβάσει)⁴ dedicated to the conclusion of the Byzantine-Bulgarian peace of 927, which finally ended the struggle of Simeon's time which, in retrospect (the Bulgarian was already dead by then) presented, among other things, the image of the Bulgarian tsar.

The question of the image of the tsar in the speech has already been addressed, to varying degrees, in the scholarly literature. In his basic text devoted to the era of Tsar Simeon, Ivan Bozhilov draws attention to some biblical and ancient characters with whom the Bulgarian ruler is compared, but is content to only list them, alongside a cursory commentary⁵. Other scholars also confine themselves in this respect to a general characterization of the anonymous rhetorical text⁶. This stems from the fact that most

³ For an example, see the advice Patriarch Photios gave to the newly converted Bulgarian ruler, Boris-Michael, in this regard – Photius Patriarcha Constantinopolitanus, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, v. 1: *Ep. 1*, ed. B. Laourdas – L.G. Westerink, Leipzig 1983, p. 2-39.

⁴ In the text I use the following critical edition of the oration – Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris*, in: I. Dujčev, *On the Treaty of 927 with the Bulgarians*, DOP 32 (1978) §1-22, p. 254-288.

⁵ I. Bozhilov, *Tsar Simeon Veliki (893-927): Zlatniyat vek na srednovekovna Balgariya*, Sofia 1983, p. 158-160.

⁶ P. Angelov, *Balgariya i balgarite v predstavite na vizantiysite (VII-XIV vek)*, Sofia 1999, p. 190-191; M.J. Leszka, *Wizerunek władców Pierwszego Państwa Bułgarskiego w bizantyńskich źródłach pisanych (VIII – pierwsza połowa XII wieku)*, Łódź 2003, p. 121-122; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum. Z dziejów stosunków bułgarsko-bizantyńskich w latach 893-927*, Łódź 2013, p. 272-273; P. Angelov, *Obrazat na tsar Simeon vav vizantiyskata knizhnina*, in: *Balgarskiyat Zlaten vek. Sbornik v chest na tsar Simeon*

often they take into account a wider range of Byzantine sources relating to the personality of Tsar Simeon and present a composite image of the ruler, being as representative as possible of the entire Byzantine literary community. Filling this gap, in my modest contribution from 2011, I focused explicitly on this issue in the mentioned oratorical work⁷. The present short article is a continuation of that endeavour, and in fact a small elaboration of some of the issues related to the topic that I failed to realise in that text.

In the speech, the Bulgarian ruler is obliquely or directly likened to various historical and mythological figures from Antiquity, as well as to a selection of biblical characters. Among them we meet Croesus and Polycrates, Xerxes, Eteocles and Polynices, Cyrus the Younger, Alexander the Great, Typhon, Ares, Coribos, Antheus, the Egyptian Pharaoh, Adair, Holofernes, Goliath, David, Satan. One feature unites them – according to the author's interpretation they each have a decidedly negative connotation. In the text Simeon is characterized as a follower of ancient pagan deities who were violent, arrogant and ambitious, and in their image he was also lacking in temperance, and therefore deprived of one of the cardinal Christian virtues. For the anonymous author he was proud and aggressive, his actions towards Byzantium are defined as *apostasias*, i.e. a breaking away from unity with it; the imperial title he flaunted and the power Simeon aspired to, similar to those of the Byzantine basileus, were tyrannical in nature. Violating the hierarchy of earthly rulers established by the Most High, at least according to Byzantine views, the Bulgarian ruler became, following the definitions of the Byzantine rhetor, a barbarian and a Scythian, an obedient tool in the hands of Satan⁸.

What the Byzantine orator thought was the ultimate end of Tsar Simeon is not difficult to guess. In pursuit of his quest for the vanities of this world (the crown, the Byzantine throne and their transitory, earthly glory)⁹,

Veliki (893-927), ed. V. Gyuzelev – I.G. Iliev – K. Nenov, Plovdiv 2015, p. 338-340 (the same text in: *Treti mezhdunaroden kongres po balgaristika, 23-26 may 2013 g. Kragla masa "Zlatniyat vek na tsar Simeon: politika, religiya i kultura"*, ed. V. Stanev, Sofia 2014, p. 57-79); cf. H. Trendafilov, *Tsar i vek. Vremeto na Simeona. Chetri instalacii*, Shumen 2017, p. 139, 145-150.

⁷ K. Marinow, *In the Shackles of the Evil One: The Portrayal of Tsar Symeon I the Great (893–927) in the Oration 'On the Treaty with the Bulgarians'*, „Studia Ceranea” 1 (2011) p. 157-190.

⁸ See Marinow, *In the Shackles of the Evil One*, p. 166-189; K. Marinow, *Vizantiyskata imperska ideya i pretentsiite na tsar Simeon spored slovoto „Za mira s balgarite”*, in: *Kirilo-Metodieviski studii*, v. 25, ed. S. Barlieva, Sofia 2016, p. 345, 348.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Is 40,6-8; 1Peter 1,24 – *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* edidit A. Rahlfs. Editio altera quam recognovit et emendavit

he lost sight of the really important matters, i.e. the eternal things. He ends his earthly journey as the rebellious Lucifer, overthrown from his place of arrogance and pride, as Typhon, defeated by Zeus and cast into Tartarus. In our source these are only suggestions, such as may be gathered from the context of the author's entire speech¹⁰. So in the letters of the Basileus Romanos Lekapenos (920-944) to the Bulgarian ruler, Theodore Daphnopates (890/900-after 961), an imperial secretary and their true author, emphatically warns the tsar of the consequences of his persistence in rebellion and the continuation of the war. Through the mouth of the Byzantine ruler he reminds the tsar of the Last Judgment and the punishment for bad deeds¹¹. From the contents of the speech being discussed here, it follows that Simeon may be counted among those who love strife and war¹², and is included in the band of murderers who resemble, as the anonymous person has written, Cain and Lamech¹³, i.e. the types of wicked men directly designated in Holy Scripture as children of the Evil One¹⁴.

What, then, do we know about Cain and Lamech? The fundamental text for both characters is the Book of Genesis 4,1-24. Taken together, they are bloody, cruel and vengeful people, given over to sin and the whispers of the Devil. For the first of them, out of envy, killed his own brother Abel, simply because God was predisposed toward him and not toward Cain. Thus he became a fratricide. He is also listed in the Bible¹⁵ with people despising rules, blaspheming the glory of beings greater than themselves (here: the immaterial, i.e., spiritual beings – God, angels, even those fallen ones), with unreasonable individuals, envious, murmuring, angry and dissatisfied with their lot (i.e., not trusting in the Lord, not relying on Him,

R. Hanhart, v. 2: *Libri poetici et prophetici*, Stuttgart 2006, 619; *Novum Testamentum Graece: Textus Byzantinus* (*The New Testament in Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*), ed. M.A. Robinson – W.G. Pierpont, Southborough 2005, p. 331; Marinow, *Vizantiyskata imperska ideya*, p. 343-348.

¹⁰ Marinow, *In the Shackles of the Evil One*, p. 168-174.

¹¹ Theodorus Daphnopates, *Ep. 7*, ed. and tr. J. Darrouzès – L.G. Westerink, Paris 1978, p. 79-84.

¹² Cf. Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 21, p. 284, 466-472.

¹³ Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 9, p. 268, 240-270, 269.

¹⁴ See Gen 4,1-24; Wis 10,3; Matt 23,35; 1Jn 3,12-13; Jude 11 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1: *Leges et historiae*, p. 5-6; v. 2, p. 358; *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 53, 345, 351.

¹⁵ Wis 10,3 – *Septuaginta*, v. II, p. 358; Jude 3-19 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 351-352. This fragment has a broader meaning, but Cain (explicitly mentioned in verse 11) is listed there as the first of the personal examples of an apostate/godless person, and the characteristics of pseudo-brothers, false Christians, mentioned there apply to him as well.

making claims on Him), ignoring God's commandments and the Wisdom that gave them power to rule over all things, including themselves¹⁶. Cain is implicitly characterized as a flagrant sinner, uttering cruel, haughty and mocking words¹⁷, acting according to his wicked lusts, being a filthy dreamer. A person who causes schisms among believers, separates himself from the unity of the faith¹⁸, with a soulish rather than a spiritual inward disposition, would say a person moving according to earthly, fleshly (to use the Church's language) desires rather than the teachings of God. Someone resembling animals, devoid of the Spirit of God, and though taking part in the brotherly, Christian "love-feasts (αἱ ἀγάπαι)"¹⁹, a barren individual, not possessing the qualities of a true believing Christian²⁰, in other words

¹⁶ And Cain indeed ignored God's warning not to give in to sin, but to rule over it – Gen 4,7-8 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 5-6.

¹⁷ Are not these the words with which he answered God after He had asked him – after the murder of Abel – where his brother was: "I know not; am I my brother's keeper? (Οὐ γινώσκω· μὴ φύλαξ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ μου εἰμι ἐγώ;)" – Gen 4,9 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 6.

¹⁸ Cain separated from Abel, both spiritually, in terms of faith, the knowledge of the Lord, and physically, by removing him from the face of the Earth.

¹⁹ It refers to gatherings of believers in Christ during which they shared the table, i.e. ate together.

²⁰ The comparisons used by the New Testament writer (Jude 12b-13 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 352) to describe such persons are very telling – they are "waterless clouds carried by winds (νεφέλαι ἄνυδροι ὑπὸ ἀνέμων παραφερόμεναι)" (v. 12b), i.e. not directly guided by the Holy Spirit, but rather pushed and nudged here and there by false and contradictory teachings (cf. Jas 1,6 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 323, though there the reference is to waves, not clouds) or pagan deities whose incarnations were the winds (Gr. ἄνεμοι – see A.J. Atsma, *Anemoi*, in: *Theoi: Greek Mythology*, in: <http://www.theoi.com/Titan/Anemoi.html> [accessed: 13.07.2022]). The plural used here is of great significance, since in the Bible the Holy Spirit is also likened to the wind (Jn 3,7-15 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 197-198), but it is explicitly referred to in the singular, which alludes to the only true direction of the movement of the faithful Christian child of God (cf. Rom 8,14 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 364). Furthermore, the fragment of John's Gospel referred to is only saying that, like the wind, we do not know where He comes from or where He goes, and the Spirit Himself cannot be seen, but therefore His works (by means of hearing and the eyes) can be known. And so the individuals mentioned – "waterless clouds" – do not bring coolness to living creatures and irrigation to the earth, which would in principle lead to life, growth and fruitfulness (cf. Ps 62,2; Is 55,10-11 – *Septuaginta*, v. 2, p. 63, 641). Let me add that rain in Holy Scripture is again a symbol of the Spirit of the Lord, i.e., if they are deprived of it, the rain, it means that they are actually deprived of Him, the Spirit. They are further compared to "autumn trees, barren, twice dead, uprooted (δένδρα φθινοπωρινὰ ἄκαρπα δις ἀποθανόντα ἐκρίζωθέντα)" (v. 12b). Twice dead, first, because, like the trees in autumn, they are destitute of fruit (probably

alluding to late autumn). Second, because they are uprooted, removed from the natural conditions in which they would flourish, i.e., from the fertile and life-giving soil. And are not believers in the Lord called to bring forth the following fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (ἀγάπη, χαρά, εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις, πραότης, ἐγκράτεια)” – Gal 5,22-23a – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 427; cf. Col 3,12-15 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 448. And this is only possible when the believer is planted in the House of the Lord (cf. Ps 1,1-3 – *Septuagint*, v. 2, p. 1), when he is rooted in Christ and from Him receives the life-giving juices that consequently produce the expected fruits of faith (cf. Jn 15,1-8; Col 2,6-7 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 233, 446). It is also possible that the mention of the twice-dead may also allude to the so-called Second Death of John’s Revelation (Rev 2,11; 20,6; 21,8 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 499, 527, 528), signifying the final separation from fellowship with God and his faithful people, i.e. the saints (cf. Matt 25,46; 2Thess 1,9 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 59, 457). In the context of Cain, it is interesting that the Second Death, expressed by eternal torment in the lake of fire, is intended, among others, for “the unbelieving, the filthy, the murderers [...] and all liars (ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν [...] καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν)” (Rev 21,8 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 528) – i.e., the things which he was guilty of because he disbelieved the Lord in spite of the warning he had heard; he polluted his soul by indulging in sinful desires, in consequence of which he killed his brother and lied to God that he did not know what had happened to Abel. And Jude goes on to say that men like him are “fierce waves of the sea, foaming their shame, starry wanderers, for whom blackest darkness is forever reserved (κύματα ἄγρια θαλάσσης, ἐπαφρίζοντα τὰς ἐαυτῶν αἰσχύνας· ἀστέρες πλανῆται οἷς ὁ ζῶφος τοῦ σκότους εἰς αἰῶνα τετήρηται)” – verse 13 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 352. Here we have a very dangerous and violent, absolutely uncontrolled sea-waves, which indiscriminately and furiously throw to the surface what has hitherto been hidden in the depths of the sea. The image is emphatic and highly evocative to anyone who has seen such wild and destructive sea waves. For the Byzantines, whose lives were accompanied by the sea on a daily basis, especially in the metropolitan city of Constantinople, as well as along the coasts of the countryside, such sights were certainly familiar. In this context, let me recall that the Byzantine rhetor, in characterizing the war, also likens it to a sea storm, and more precisely to triple sea billows (Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 2, p. 254, 25). And so, with the help of the agitated sea expanse, St. Jude wanted to show the fearful and unrestrained power of the vices of the flesh which controlled the wicked, including Cain himself, and which they were unable to hide from the world’s view, just as the raging sea was tearing out of its bowels all that was hitherto unrecognizable. The image of the foaming water seemed to recall the drunken water that gushed over the mouth of the sinner seized with passions or demonic powers. Thus all their shameful deeds saw the light of day. The comparison with the starry wanderers refers us again to Cain, who, after his sin, was doomed to wander, thus deprived of his roots, away his own land, i.e. he was excommunicated from the rest of mankind. This is even more evocative if one considers that according to ancient and medieval (and still other) views the wanderer, the foreigner, was a dubious and undesirable person for settled communities (A.E. Laiou, *The foreigner and the stranger in 12th century Byzantium*, in: *Fremde der Gesellschaft. His-*

a false brother (such as Cain was to Abel). To put it in another way, here was a man who was part of God's family, and although he had the chance and right to enjoy God's grace, he seems not to have treated it seriously, and as the apostle Jude says of his kind, he turned it to dissipation, and thus, in a sense, denied God, i.e. became ungodly²¹.

Furthermore, as other biblical passages inform us, by killing his brother Cain proved that he was in fact descended from the Evil One, i.e. he was the son of the Devil, and as such hated Abel because, unlike him, the slain sibling had been righteous. In other words, the deeds they performed, their actions, bore witness to who they were, as people, by nature. Those of Cain were evil, lacking faith, so he fundamentally hated his brother instead of loving him, which made him sympathetic to the evil, sin-manifested, Satan-obeying world, changing him into a natural enemy of God's faithful people²². However, when Cain expressed his fears about his fate – after God cursed him and deprived him of the opportunity to fruitfully till the ground, making him an exile and a wanderer upon it – God promised him that in the event someone killed him, after finding out who he was and (presumably) what he had done to his brother, he would be avenged sevenfold (ἑπτά; ἑπτάκις). But God's mercy and protection for Cain did not end there, but the Most High put a mark upon him, that he should not be hurt by anyone who met him²³. According to the biblical meaning of the number seven

torische und Sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zur Differenzierung von Normalität und Fremdheit, ed. M.Th. Fögen, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 71-97; see also *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, ed. F.R.P. Akehurst – S.C. Van D'Elden, University of Minnesota Press 1997). Additionally, a stellar wanderer could have been a comet or meteor (or, as the Byzantines called them, "shooting stars"), which according to contemporary beliefs portended extraordinary, usually malevolent, events (cf. Leo Diaconus, *Historia* X 8, ed. C.B. Hase, Bonnae 1828, p. 172, 1-8). Intuitively, we understand that the blackest darkness, or more literally, the darkness of darkness, is reserved for all of them, for the "clouds" and the "trees" as well as for the "waves" and the "star-wanderers", i.e., for the wicked pseudo-brothers, even though on first reading the text we think only of the cosmic darkness in which the stars are located. There is a strong semantic opposition in the text of the rain-bearing clouds to the arid ones, of the healthy, fruitful trees to the uprooted and dead ones, of the light of the solitary wandering (or falling) star to the impenetrable darkness. An impenetrable, unnatural, inhumanly profound darkness (alien to human experience), for how else to understand the definition "the blackest darkness/the darkness of darkness (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους)" if not the embodiment of absolute, physical and spiritual darkness, the essence of darkness and nothingness.

²¹ Jude 4 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 351.

²² 1John 3,7-15; Hebr 11,4 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 344-345, 474.

²³ Gen 4,15.24 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 6.

– i.e. perfection, perfect completeness of something, wholeness, absolute completion of a deed, ideal finality²⁴ – it meant that God would provide/ would measure the complete, appropriate, ideal and just punishment of the one who killed Cain. On the other hand, taking this figure literally, we can see in the sevenfold vengeance an underlining of the importance of Cain's life in the eyes of God, because for one life of his the Creator would have required a satisfaction consisting, most likely (according to the Old Testament rule "fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth")²⁵, of seven human lives²⁶. And all this in spite of his evil deed.

In the context of Simeon, an interesting connection arises here, suggesting that the reason he started the war with his southern neighbour was his envy of the Byzantine ruler, whom God had honoured with a preeminent position among earthly monarchs, i.e., showed a greater, extraordinary predisposition toward him than toward the others, for whom such a position was unavailable. Probably, like the people of Cain's ilk, in accordance with the views of the orator, the Bulgarian ruler murmured because of his inferior position to the basileus of Constantinople, and the apparent injustice, at least in his opinion, of the judgments of God. Here was the place for him to utter violent blasphemies and angry invectives even against the Most High because of this state of things. Such an attitude – rise against God – would undoubtedly testify to a lack of reason, prudence, and be evidence of the loss of another cardinal virtue. In doing so, Simeon broke the established rules and ignored God's warning, giving in to his own, fleshly desires (as a filthy dreamer, to use St. Jude's nomenclature) for position and glory. This conclusion is consistent with other fragments of the oration relating to the personality of the Bulgarian tsar. Let me recall that the author of the speech also compares Simeon to the biblical King David and does so, in a manner unusual for the Middle Ages, because of a negative connotation – David could not build God's temple of peace, in which the glory of the Lord would reside, because he had shed much human blood and his

²⁴ See J.P. Dickson, *The Genesis of Everything: An historical account of the Bible's opening chapter*, „ISCAST Online Journal: Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology” 4 (2008) p. 7-8, 9, 11, 13-14; A. Bandy, *The Hermeneutics of Symbolism: How to Interpret the Symbols of John's Apocalypse*, „The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology” 14/1 (2010) p. 46-58; Th. Saaty, *Seven is the Magic Number in Nature*, „Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society” 160/4 (2016) p. 358.

²⁵ Cf. Exod 21,22-25; Lev 24,19-21; Deut 19,19-21; Matt 5,38 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 122, 201, 322; *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 9.

²⁶ For example, among the relatives of the possible killer.

hands were stained with it²⁷. In this case we can look for an immediate connection with the image of Cain, especially since according to Byzantine tradition and art²⁸ to kill Abel he used a curved knife (Gr. μάχαϊρα), which implies the draining of the blood from the body²⁹, and probably staining the murderous hand with it.

This also applies to the statements emphasizing the audacity shown by the Bulgarian ruler, his boastfulness, the haughty and pompous verbosity with which he appeared during his personal meeting with the Byzantine emperor under the walls of Constantinople in 923³⁰. It is the same on the occasion of his personification, especially his character and the consequent conduct of the Bulgarian, with the unreasoning wild beasts³¹, guided only

²⁷ Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 16, p. 278. 371-378; T. Todorov, „Slovo za mira s balgaite” i balgaro-vizantiyskite politicheski otnosheniya prez poslednite godini ot upravlениeto na tsar Simeon, in: *Balgariya, bulgarite i tehните sasedi prez vekovete. Izsledvaniya i materialy ot nauchnata konferenciya v pamet na doc. d-r Hristo Kolarov, 30-31 oktombri 1998 g., Veliko Tarnovo*, ed. Y. Andreev, Veliko Tarnovo 2001, p. 142-145. On the matter of King David, the blood he shed and his failure to build the temple of God see 2 Reigns 16,5-11; 3 Reigns 8,15-20; 1 Suppl. 22,6-10 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 598-599, 646-647, 797.

²⁸ Dionisius Phurnensis, *Interpretatio ars pingendi* II 15, ed. A. Papadopoulou-Kerameos, Petroupoleos 1909, p. 48.

²⁹ Which agrees well with the biblical text mentioning that Abel's blood cried out from the earth to the Lord (Gen. 4,10 – *Septuagint*, v. 1, p. 6), i.e. flowed out upon the latter.

³⁰ Cf. Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 16, p. 276, 362-278, 369. There is no mention in this passage of any threatening statements made by the Bulgarian ruler to the Byzantines, but the reader may be left with such a conviction, given that in it the tsar is compared to the biblical Goliath, who blasphemed the Jewish army and its God (cf. 1Kings 17,8-10.16.23.36.42-44 – *Septuagint*, v. 1, p. 533-534, 535, 536). Despite the seemingly precise information of the Byzantine sources on the date of Simeon's meeting with Romanos Lekapenos, the issue remains debatable – see the serious arguments for 923 in J. Howard-Johnston, *A short piece of narrative history: war and diplomacy in the Balkans, winter 921/2 – spring 924*, in: *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization. In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. E. Jeffreys, Cambridge 2006, p. 348; Leszka, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum*, p. 206, n. 44.

³¹ It is in connection with the Byzantine campaign against Bulgaria in 917 that the orator claims that the Romans set out “against the wild boar in the forest (κατὰ τοῦ ἐκ δρυμοῦ μυνιοῦ)” (Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 14, p. 276, 343-346), and more specifically the meeting of Tsar Simeon with Emperor Romanos Lekapenos in 923. He writes that, like the fiercest of the beasts (τὰ τῶν θηρίων ὀμότερα), when they get into difficulty before those who are shooting them and begin to struggle against the arrows (τὰ βέλη, also: the spears), so he (tr. Simeon), when he lost because he did not get what he wished, with hostility burst out holy bile (or anger) upon the forest (τοῖς δρυμοῖς τὸν χόλον ἀπέσκηψε

by their senses and instincts, and not by the wisdom proceeding from the Spirit of God. Again, this would demonstrate a lack of wisdom. In the case of the latter, by adopting an uncompromisingly hostile attitude towards the Byzantines, his brethren in Christ, by rejecting God's rules and decrees, in a certain sense the tsar lost his humanity, especially if it be borne in mind that he did so quite deliberately, as a Christian illumined by the light of faith and truth. In this sense it may be said that he then lost the vital Breath (Gr. ἡ πνοὴ ζωῆς, i.e. the Spirit of God) which Adam received at the time of creation³². To some extent this harmonizes with his comparison with the beasts³³, which, according to the Old Testament account of the creation, though possessed of a living soul (Gr. ἡ ψυχὴ ζωῆς), were not animated directly by the Creator Himself (He did not create them personally, as in the case of man), but according to His spoken word the earth brought them into being – hence, probably, the difference in the nouns used by the biblical author. In other words, the Bulgarian ruler lost the personal connection with the Creator³⁴.

However, the passage quoted in connection with Cain from the Epistle of Jude primarily refers to the fact of the new creation in Christ and the related indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the born-again believer. This motif also appears elsewhere in the discourse, where the author mentions

– Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 16, p. 278, 369-371), by which the rhetorician means the destruction of the forests in the neighbourhood of the Byzantine capital. And elsewhere in the work Simeon is defined as a “wild beast” (τὸ θηρίον – Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 15, p. 276, 359) or, to adopt an even more eloquent translation, “a predator, a monster, a bloodthirsty beast hostile to man”. It is worth adding that this last Greek definition was also used as a curse, with the meaning “vile beast, monster, scoundrel” (cf. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. H.G. Liddell – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie, Oxford 1996, p. 800; *Słownik grecko-polski*, v. 1, ed. O. Jurewicz, Warszawa 2000, p. 449). For a fuller picture, I also pass on related definitions: θῆρ, θηρὸς – “wild beast,” plural “mythological animals, monsters, mythological personages” (cf. Typhon, to whom Simeon is also equated in the speech) – *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 799; *Słownik grecko-polski*, v. 1, p. 449. Nor can I exclude that in the oration the author uses the definition τὸ θηρίον (also in the plural) in its purely ecclesiastical sense, referring, among others, to pagan deities, to animals as the incarnation of demons, to Antichrist, Satan and his angels – cf. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe, Oxford 1961, p. 651-652.

³² Gen 2,7 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 3; cf. Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 9, p. 268, 241-243.

³³ Cf. also Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris*, § 9, p. 270. 250, where the man endowed with divine inspiration, after having rebelled against his brother in imitation of Ares, is likened to the wild beasts, i.e. the Arabian predators.

³⁴ Gen 1,24-30; 2,4-7 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 2, 3.

Simeon's claim to the imperial crown. He designates his actions as apostasy (ἀποστασία), because of his proclamation as basileus and the other things³⁵, by which the sign (σφραγίς) was profaned. On the one hand, the rhetor means the seals on which Simeon is designated as basileus, chiefly of the Romans, thus profaning the true imperial seals belonging to the Byzantine ruler. On the other hand, however, in a considerably deeper sense, he thinks primarily of the sign of the Holy Cross, and by means of this metaphor of the profanation of the Christian faith by the Bulgarian ruler in general. According to the rhetorician evil (κακόν) was thus born, and Simeon appropriated to himself the fruits of his parent (τὰ γεννήματα τοῦ τεκόντος ἐξιδιάζεται), on the one hand having rejected his father, and on the other hand the spirit (καὶ ἀθετεῖ μὲν τὸν πατέρα, ἀθετεῖ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα) which is the pledge of sonship (δι' οὗ ὁ ἀρραβὼν τῆς υἰότητος)³⁶. In this fragment, the Byzantine author deliberately uses New Testament clichés to define the nature of the spiritual relationship between the Byzantine basileus (the father) and the Bulgarian ruler (the son). In this biblical reference, we can also discern a hint that by rejecting the spiritual fatherhood of the Byzantine emperor, his adoption by him, Simeon in fact also rejected the Lord the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of his personal relationship with God, his own salvation, and his heavenly inheritance awaiting him³⁷. Instead of resigning himself to his situation and obediently waiting for the inheritance destined for him by the Saviour, Simeon, coveting above all that which was not destined for him, and on that occasion committing murders against his brethren in faith, betrayed not only his spiritual parent, i.e. the Byzantine emperor, personally, but in fact the Lord Himself, because he defied His laws and decrees, thus denying the communion with the Byzantines in faith and the Holy Spirit Himself, sustaining and guaranteeing the unity between them³⁸. His deeds and their consequences proved that he was not under the influence of the Spirit of God, did not allow the latter to guide him according to the teachings and will of Christ, i.e., was no longer a son of God³⁹. As a consequence of this, in the context of Cain

³⁵ The author doesn't specify what, but most likely he is referring to either other titles/dignities or deeds that took place after assuming the imperial dignity.

³⁶ Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris*, § 12, p. 274, 310-316.

³⁷ Rom 8,14-15.23; 2Cor 1,21-22; 5,5; Eph 1,13-14 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 364, 404, 408, 429; cf. also A. Stavridou-Zaphraka, *Ho Anonymos logos „Epi te ton Boulgaron symbasei”*, „Byzantina” 8 (1976) p. 394-395, note to p. 372, v. 2-4.

³⁸ Cf. 1Cor 12,12-14.27; Eph 4,3-4 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 394, 395, 433.

³⁹ Cf. Rom 8,14 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 364.

and his ilk, there was a split in the Body of the Christ, i.e. the community of believers, the Orthodox Church! And Simeon's entire conduct would have been nothing short of injustice – reaching for someone else's title, elevating himself above his assigned position and, above all, taking armed action against the Christians to enable him to carry out his plans.

In turn, the aforementioned Lamech, descended from the lineage of Cain (one would say that the apple does not fall far from the tree!), was willing to kill anyone, even a child, if it merely hurt or bruised him. Therefore, out of selfish motives, i.e., a sense of self-importance and inviolability of his own life, he wanted to repay disproportionately the damage suffered. Additionally, on his own, i.e. without God's sanction, explicitly referring to the example of his ancestor, he wanted to be avenged even seventy-seven times (ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ), in other words an unimaginable number of times, and in fact, using the symbolic meaning of the number, an infinite number of times⁴⁰. Lamech's exaggerated statement testifies that he sought for himself a vengeance out of all proportion to reality and in excess of God's justice, in effect belittling it and deeming it insufficient, which was no doubt a manifestation of disrespect, an affront to God's majesty. The example of Lamech may hint that even if the Bulgarian tsar was in some way wronged, deprived of something by the Byzantines, he in turn did them far more harm than they did him, and his conduct, his attitude, was in complete contradiction to God's law. Furthermore, we know what the response, the attitude of a true disciple and follower of Christ (as Simeon ought to have been!) should have been looking at the two examples of behaviour discussed here – i.e., those of Cain and Lamech. And so, on the question of the apostle Peter, how many times he should forgive his brother when he sinned against him, and whether it should be as many as seven times (ἑπτάκις; the example of Cain!), Jesus answers, not seven, but seventy-seven times (ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ; the example of Lamech!), in other words, always. He informs his disciples, moreover, that to such an attitude they must be motivated by the fact that God has forgiven them many more trespasses than they have to forgive others. He also warns that the lack of sincere forgiveness of their brethren (primarily those by faith, but also those according to creation) leads to a lack of forgiveness of their own sins by the Most High⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Gen 4,24 – *Septuaginta*, v. 1, p. 6.

⁴¹ Matt 18,21-35 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 40-41; cf. Lk 17,3-4 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 168.

Simeon, however, did not habituate himself to the teaching of Jesus. Resembling the evil characters mentioned in the Bible, and with them those who, as the author says, were found on the left side of the judgment throne of Christ, where the goats belonged, i.e. those whose names were blotted out of the Book of the Saved (ἀπαλειφῇ δὲ τῆς βίβλου τῶν σωζομένων)⁴², to be cast into the eternal fire destined for the Devil and his angels⁴³, Simeon might have expected a similar fate. For he chose the way of Cain (τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Κάϊν)⁴⁴, the way of hatred, which is utterly opposed to the gospel of Christ and the Christian way of life⁴⁵, and became a fratricide, because he really shed fraternal, Byzantine, and therefore Christian blood. And whoever hates his brother is a murderer (ἀνθρωποκτόνος), and therefore is deprived of eternal life, will not enter the Kingdom of God, and abides in death⁴⁶. Going a little beyond the circle of the author's direct references to Holy Scripture, not excluding at the same time that his own thought could have taken this path of interpretation, while at the same time having the certainty that it fitted within his Christian worldview, I might add that the aforementioned transgression – the shedding of brotherly, Orthodox blood – is so much greater a transgression than that of Cain, inasmuch as the spiritual kinship of all believers in Christ is much stronger and more important than that of the flesh, based on physical ties (i.e. ephemeral, terrestrial), because, unlike it, it has an eternal character⁴⁷. And so, Simeon's fate was foreordained, for Cain, and Lamech, like every hardened sinner, were facing God's judgment and eternal punishment under the guise of the blackest of darkness, in other words, a terrible eternity devoid of relation-

⁴² Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris*, § 9, p. 270. 255-260.

⁴³ Matt 25,31-46 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 58-59. It is possible that to this idea expressed in the rhetorical work must be referred the already mentioned Second Death (ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος), which in the Revelation of John (Rev 21,8 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 528) is associated, among others, with “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ)”.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jude 11 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 351. The term “way” has a great significance in Christian teaching because it means, symbolizes the whole way of one's life, his behavior, and the direction in which he is headed. That is why the whole Christian teaching has been called “The Way (ὁδός)” – Acts 9,2; 18,25; 24,22 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 269, 296, 311; cf. Jn 14,6 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 231.

⁴⁵ 1John 3,11-13 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 345.

⁴⁶ 1John 3,14-15; Gal 5,19-21; Rev 22,14-15 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 345, 426-427, 531; cf. Wis 10,3 – *Septuaginta*, v. 2, p. 358.

⁴⁷ Cf. Matt 12,46-50; Mk 3,31-35; 10,29-30; Lc 8,19-21 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 26, 76, 97, 141.

ship with God⁴⁸. Without much error, therefore, it could be pointed out that the Bulgarian ruler lacked the personal fortitude to fight the temptations, the enticements of his own corrupt and fallen heart.

And so, according to the Byzantine author of the oration, Simeon chooses the earthly, the carnal, and ultimately the temporal and mortal, which by its nature is opposed to the spiritual, the eternal, i.e., he chooses human wisdom and glory instead of that of God. Instead of resigning himself to his God-ordained place in the earthly hierarchy of rulers, to remain a faithful spiritual son of the Roman basileus, he rises up against his spiritual mentor, stretching out his hands to that which is fundamentally not his, in effect murmuring and rebelling against the very Creator and Founder of this earthly structure of rulership. Moved by his own discontent and envy of the Basileus of Constantinople, for whom God had shown greater favour, he began a bloody and destructive war against the Byzantines, his Orthodox brethren. In this way he resembles the murderer Cain, proving himself to them a false brother in the faith, likening himself to Lamech, the cruel representative of Cain's family, who had too high an opinion of his own person and expected to be granted considerably more than was really his due. For this reason God did not even allow him to lay the foundation of the House, i.e., His temple, in other words to restore peaceful coexistence between the Christian nations divided by war (even if he would have liked to!), although he was a legitimate Bulgarian ruler, i.e., in assuming the throne he received the anointment (χρῖσμα) and Divine inspiration (ἐπίπνοια) from above⁴⁹. The cardinal virtues with which he should legitimise himself became alien to him when he followed a false voice tempting him to reach for what did not belong to him by starting a war with his southern neighbours, his brothers in faith. In the eyes of the Byzantines, he became their embodied opposite.

Although the above reflections are to a certain extent hypothetical, they are a logical consequence of the explicit, if brief and indirect, comparison of the eminent Bulgarian ruler with the two Old Testament characters. I cannot be entirely certain that the Byzantine orator had in mind all the biblical connotations I have mentioned referring to Cain and Lamech, but by all accounts, keeping in mind the importance of the Bible as a hypertext of the Byzantine world and a basic element in education during the period under consideration (combined with the most important ancient texts

⁴⁸ Jude 13-15 – *Novum Testamentum Graece*, p. 352.

⁴⁹ Cf. Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 16, p. 278, 371-374, 375-378.

and motifs), it seems that the interpretation I have proposed fits perfectly with the author's worldview and his knowledge of these two figures from the Scripture. Moreover, the analysis of this comparison is in full accord with other passages of the oration that are relevant to the personality of the Bulgarian ruler. I have no doubt that through this reference the rhetor was intending to belittle, and present in the darkest possible colours, both the personality of Tsar Simeon and his aims and achievements. Of course, one (for there are more) of the reasons for this lies in the oratorical technique itself – against the background of the Bulgarian ruler thus presented, the personages of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos and Tsar Peter I (927-969), Simeon's successor, who concluded the peace treaty in 927, finally ending the long-standing Bulgarian-Byzantine feud, stood out more brightly and more positively⁵⁰.

Enemy of All Virtues: Once Again on the Image of Tsar Simeon I (893-927) in the Oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*

(summary)

This article focuses on the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon I (893-927), who in the second half of his reign entered into a protracted military and ideological conflict with the Byzantine Empire. He wished not only to extend his dominions at the expense of his southern neighbour, but also to equal it in titulature, and it is possible – although scholars differ on this point – that his aspirations reached even further, namely Constantinople itself. Either way, Bulgaria under his reign posed a serious threat to Byzantium and was its main antagonist. The death of the Tsar in 927 and the conclusion of peace with the Empire by his son, Peter I (927-969), finally put an end to the conflict between both the states. The celebrations marking the conclusion of the agreement provided an opportunity to recapitulate. In a rhetorical speech written for the occasion, Simeon's actions and aspirations were severely criticised – through comparisons to figures from ancient literature and biblical texts, the Byzantine speaker discredited the attitude of this ruler. Comparisons to characters who aroused negative connotations in listeners and readers deprived Simeon of all the virtues belonging to a Christian ruler and, above all, of the cardinal ones by which he should, above all, legitimise himself.

Keywords: cardinal virtues; Simeon I (893-927); medieval Bulgaria; Byzantine-Bulgarian relations; Byzantine rhetoric; Byzantine ideology; the image of Bulgarians in Byzantine sources; the others in medieval sources; medieval biblical exegesis

⁵⁰ See Anonymos, *De pace cum Bulgaris* 16, p. 278, 374-375; 17, p. 278, 379-383.

Wróg wszelkich cnót: Raz jeszcze w sprawie wizerunku cara Symeona I (893-927) w mowie *Na pokój z Bułgarami*

(streszczenie)

Artykuł koncentruje się na postaci cara bułgarskiego Symeona I (893-927), który w drugiej połowie swojego panowania wszedł w długotrwały konflikt militarny i ideologiczny z cesarstwem bizantyńskim. Pragnął bowiem nie tylko poszerzyć swoje włości kosztem południowego sąsiada, lecz także zrównać się z nim w tytulaturze, niewykluczone zaś, jakkolwiek w tej materii zdania uczonych są rozbieżne, iż jego aspiracje sięgały jeszcze dalej, a mianowicie samego Konstantynopola. W każdym razie Bułgaria czasów jego panowania stanowiła poważne zagrożenie dla Bizancjum. Śmierć cara w 927 roku i zawarcie pokoju z cesarstwem przez jego syna, Piotra I (927-969), ostatecznie położyła kres konfliktowi pomiędzy oboma krajami. Uroczystości związane z zawarciem porozumienia stały się okazją do podsumowań. W napisanej z tej okazji mowie retorycznej działania i aspiracje Symeona zostały poddane surowej krytyce – poprzez porównania do postaci z literatury antycznej i tekstów biblijnych bizantyński mówca zdyskredytował postawę tego władcy. Porównanie do tych z nich, którzy wzbudzali u słuchaczy i czytelników negatywne konotacje, pozbawiło Symeona wszelkich cnót przynależnych chrześcijańskiemu władcy, a nade wszystko tych cnót kardynalnych, którymi przede wszystkim powinien się legitymizować.

Słowa kluczowe: cnoty kardynalne; Symeon I (893-927); średniowieczna Bułgaria; relacje bizantyńsko-bułgarskie; retoryka bizantyńska; ideologia bizantyńska; obraz Bułgarów w źródłach bizantyńskich; obcy w źródłach średniowiecznych; średniowieczna egzegeza biblijna

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