



“Bible in Translation”: Bulgarian Narrative About St. Clement of Ohrid in the Interwar Period and the Transfer of Modern Ideas

„Biblia w przekładzie”
Bułgarska narracja o św. Klemensie z Ochrydy
w okresie międzywojennym
a transfer idei nowoczesnych

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ABSTRACT | The paper raises the question of the role of Biblical tradition in the transfer and adaptation of modern ideas in cultures rooted in Eastern-Orthodox tradition. The subject of reflection is the narrative about St. Clement of Ohrid, the most famous disciple of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and its various literary paraphrases during the interwar period in Bulgaria, in the context of modernist reading of the Bible, as well as the ambivalent experience of secularization among the local intellectual elites.

KEYWORDS | Bible, modernism, translation, modern culture, St. Clement of Ohrid, Bulgaria, the interwar period

As far as the Eastern Orthodox tradition is concerned, the specific status of the Bible is usually mentioned. It manifests itself first of all in the space of a temple, through liturgy and iconography, therefore the knowledge of it is ritualistic. In terms of the Eastern Orthodox theology, the hermeneutical perspective is always liturgical, as the necessary references are the Holy Tradition and a personal faith which can be experienced only in the Church. To read the Bible means to read it in communion with Christ. The emphasis is on a presumption that it is never only an individual act, although it does actualize a personality of a faithful reader. Therefore, the Eastern Orthodox attitude towards the so-called lay readings of the Bible is quite cautious and suspicious, especially when it comes to the Protestant practices and the famous notion of *Sola Scriptura*. According to the Eastern Orthodox view, what is given through the Scripture does not exhaust God's Revelation or make the Tradition less needed, or superfluous. The notion which expresses all the ecclesiastical dimensions of the way in which the Bible is perceived and interpreted in the Orthodox Church is *the liturgical*. It refers not only to the time and place of its reading, but also the nature of interpretation, which is collective, traditional, and faithful¹.

In the Bulgarian culture, due to historical circumstances the question of reading the Bible is more complex. During the Ottoman rule, Bulgarian lands were within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the official language was Greek. It was the Greek ecclesiastical and linguistic context that determined the attitude to the Western European phenomena, including the Reformation and the age of Enlightenment. Moreover, the Greek institutional and educational superiority had a great impact on the emergence of the Bulgarian national identity in the 19th century, so that the necessity of the Bulgarian Church as a patron of Bulgarian cultural and political independence became most discussed among the local elites. The problem was that the lower clergy was often undereducated and unable to perform their duties properly, and the higher clergy seemed to be influenced by the Greek perspective. Therefore, it was not the matter of lay readings that concerned the National Revival activists the most. The more relevant issue was the ability to read in Bulgarian and to identify as Bulgarian.

1 The question of the Eastern Orthodox notion of the Bible and its interpretation is only briefly sketched here, although as a research issue, it requires far more consideration. See e.g. G. Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective* (Belmont: Nordland, 1972); J. Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001). Cf. J.D.G. Dunn et al., eds., *Auslegung der Bibel in orthodoxer und westlicher Perspektive* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

As testified by various texts by Bulgarian intellectuals from the period of the National Revival, the Bible *as a book* was not actually read. Written in incomprehensible Church-Slavonic language, it functioned as an object of cult due to its sacred status in Christianity². In fact, for the greater part of the Bulgarian population, the main sources of knowledge about the Bible, apart from the Orthodox rituals and iconography, were vernacular folk legends and popular readings, most of them transferred by the oral tradition and later on spread through printed editions. The complete modern Bulgarian translation of the Bible which finally united the faithful of the Eastern Orthodox Church was published not until 1925. Before that, the Biblical text was available in Bulgarian through Protestant translations, i.e. it was provided by local intellectuals with financial and institutional help of Western European missionaries³, which was a particularly problematic circumstance. In the 19th century, the activities of protestant missions in the Ottoman empire were seen as a threat for the Bulgarian identity which was associated entirely with the Eastern Orthodoxy, and as such they were fiercely criticized. On the other hand, they indeed introduced a new cultural paradigm and provided Western European inventions and writings among local population, so that many Bulgarian cultural and political activists were in fact open for cooperation despite the religious differences⁴.

It was the Western European practices of reading that had a crucial role on the place of the Bible in the culture of Bulgarian modernism. In the process of transition to the modern cultural paradigm, the Holy Scriptures lost its absolute status of the institutionally guaranteed authority, and started to function in two epistemological orders among the Bulgarian intellectual elites: the ecclesiastical (liturgical, canonical) and the non-ecclesiastical (extra-liturgical,

2 Н. Аретов, 2016: “Парадоксалната българска рецепция на Библията през епохата на Възраждането,” *Slavia Meridionalis*, vol. 16. DOI: 10.11649/sm.2016.005.

3 For more on Bulgarian translations of the Bible, see e.g. И. Марковски, “История на българския синодален превод на Библията (с оглед към българските преводи в миналото),” *Годишник на Софийския университет, Богословски факултет*, vol. 4 (1926—1927): 1—58; J. Clark, *Bible Societies, American Missionaries, and the National Revival of Bulgaria* (New York: Arno Press, 1971); E. Solak, *Nowo-bułgarska Biblia i jej język* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1997); И. Желев, “Преводите на Библията на съвременен български език,” in *Библията в България. Сборник с доклади от научни конференции в София и Велико Търново* (София: Българско библейско дружество и др., 2007), 86—97.

4 For more on the ambiguous attitude toward Protestants, see Е. Джевицка, “Българската реформация? За хибридизацията на идеите в процеса на модернизацията на културата,” *Slavia Meridionalis*, vol. 17 (2017), DOI: 10.11649/sm.1370.

non-canonical, secular) one. The question of individual reading of the Bible became even more relevant, although at the turn of the 20th century, the Bulgarian theological studies were not established yet⁵, so the only reference point in ecclesiastical terms was provided within the limited space of the Church milieu, by clergymen formed mainly in Russian theological academies. The secular readings became more and more popular, and manifested themselves in two regimes of interpretation — the religious and the aesthetic one. This process of moving away from the original — theological and liturgical — context of reading towards secular interpretations, mainly scientific and literary one, which were usually related to the Catholic and Protestant cultural models, was one of the most important signs of secularization. As a result, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bulgarian intellectuals had access to various sources of knowledge about the Bible, not only the Eastern Orthodox liturgy and tradition, but also foreign, often non-orthodox, literature. The weaker the connection with the church rituals, the greater the influence of the secular paraphrases, but also the greater intertwining between the folk tradition and various secularistic readings⁶.

However, it should be pointed out that there was one more source of knowledge about the Biblical tradition and its ideological horizon, which is usually marginalized, but — in my opinion — is worth more consideration, namely the old Church writings that were re-discovered precisely during the period under scrutiny. It was in the first decades of the 20th century that the mediaeval Bulgarian tradition became a subject of scientific research, being acknowledged as an important component of national identity. The first (modern) Bulgarian translations of (Old) Church Slavonic or Greek hagiographic texts are important testimonies in this regard. I would like to suggest that literary paraphrases of medieval texts that were written in the interwar period in order to disseminate knowledge about local saints for the purposes of the national ideology are particularly interesting testimonies of the modern functioning of the Biblical tradition.

In this paper, the problem of translation will be raised in terms of three questions: the politico-historical context of translating the medieval hagiographic texts into Bulgarian; the fact of translating the hagiographic narratives for the needs of secular prose genres; the conditions of translating the

5 The first Theological Faculty was established in 1923 — at the Sofia university.

6 For more regarding the issue of the Bible in modern Bulgarian culture, see e.g. E. Drzewiecka, "Reception of the Bible in modern Bulgarian culture: The (post) secular and the national," in *The Experience of Faith in Slavic Cultures and Literatures in the Context of Postsecular Thought*, eds. D. Sosnowska, E. Drzewiecka (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018), 144—164.

ideas of the Eastern Orthodox origin within the process of creating modern literary paraphrases. The interpretative perspective will be given by the ideological horizon that was developed by Charles Taylor, and in particular — his concept of the emergence of the modern social imaginary, which is a product of a process in which the “old” (pre-modern) ideas are not neutralized, but only reinterpreted. Provided that the “new” (modern) ideas are founded on heterogeneous concepts and mental categories, it is necessary to explore the influences and their deep traces with regard to the “older” layers of meanings. Undoubtedly, the Biblical tradition is one of the most crucial reference points, and as such needs re-evaluation⁷.

The research focus will be on the narrative about St. Clement of Ohrid, the most famous disciple of SS. Cyril and Methodius, who at the turn of the 10th century, under the granting of prince Boris-Mikhail and tsar Simeon I, preached in the western territories of the Bulgarian state, which has been commonly associated with the region of Macedonia. Clement of Ohrid was the first Bulgarian bishop and saint, whose achievements are directly related with the Cyrillo-Methodian and educational roots of Bulgarian culture. In this sense, he is among the most important heroes in the Bulgarian great narrative that combines the universal role models of a missionary, a teacher, and a protector of the people, as well as the national and nationalistic ideals of the Bulgarian elites and state authorities in the 20th century, and as such provides a particularly meaningful case of *translating ideas*⁸.

The figure of St. Clement of Ohrid was noticed by Bulgarian intellectuals as early as the second half of the 19th century within the National Revival focus on the medieval tradition, but it was (re)discovered only at the beginning of the 20th century in the context of the jubilee of 1000 years since his death in 1916. In the interwar period, it gained great importance and popularity which was accompanied by the serious development of the scientific research on the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage, and manifested itself in various literary and

7 Ch. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Cf. Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

8 For more regarding the image of St. Clement of Ohrid during the interwar period in Bulgaria, see: Е. Джевицеца, “Първоучителят и покровителят. Образът на св. Климент Охридски в българската проза в периода между двете световни войни и въпросът за ‘симфонията на властта,’” in *A на жената бяха дадени крила. Сборник в чест на професор Светлина Николова / And Wings Were Given to the Woman. In Honour of Professor Svetlina Nikolova* (София: КМНЦ-БАН, 2022), 999—1026. Cf. М. Войтчак, “Свети Климент Охридски в следосвобожденския и междувоенния период на българска литература,” *Научни трудове на Пловдивския университет*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2002): 413—421.

popular works⁹. It has been already commented on, precisely in the context of the political and cultural aspirations of the young Bulgarian state. However, I would like to draw more attention to the literary works, because they seem to point towards more general problems of Bulgarian culture during the process of its modernization. All the texts I have analysed, regardless of whether they were literary paraphrases of St. Clement's life or writers' reflections on his spiritual heritage, confirm that the pattern of storytelling was already established at that time. Moreover, they indicate what was the common knowledge in this regard and how the way of interpreting of the saint was related to the Bulgarian cultural context.

The plot and the structure of the narrative were based on *The Life of St. Clement by Theophylact of Ohrid*, one of the most important sources of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission, which was written in Greek and introduced to the Slavic world in the second half of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, this hagiographic text had two modern Bulgarian translations — by Dimitar Matov (1885)¹⁰ and Danail Laskov (1916)¹¹, but its general content was already well-known through textbooks, which had been repeating its most significant episodes since the late 19th century¹². All the literary works aimed at retelling the story about St. Clement, which referred to the events that were testified by Theophylact, i.e. the childhood, his mission as a pupil and co-worker of Cyril and Methodius, the exile from Moravia, and the salvation in Bulgaria, and then a new mission in Macedonia thanks to the cultural policy of prince Boris and his son — tsar Simeon, following mainly the translation by Laskov, which was the official Church

9 For more, see e.g. Д. Найденова, “Кирило-Методиевото дело и българският национален идеал (1878—1944),” *Кирило-Методиевски студии*, vol. 20 (2011): 266—276.

10 *Живот, деяния, изповедания и кратко изложение за чудесата на св. отец наш Климент, български архиепископ*. Д. Матов, trans. Средец, (Българско книжовни дружество, 1885); *Животопис на св. Климента, български архиепископ*. Д. Матов, trans. (Пловдив, Хр. Г. Данов, 1896).

11 Д. Ласков, *Живот и дейност на св. Климент Охридски с една негова проповед* (София, Св. Синод на Българската православна църква, 1915); *Житие на Св. Климента Охридски*. Д. Ласков, trans. (София, Св. Синод на Българската православна църква, 1916).

12 New data about St. Clement and his cult in the region of Ohrid became available thanks to Viktor Grigorovich, and his book *Outline of a Journey through European Turkey* (1848), which was popular among Bulgarians through an article translated and published in 1857 in one of the most serious press editions in Bulgarian, *Tsarigradski Vestnik*, as well as the first Slavic translation of the work of Theophylact of Ohrid by Parteniy Zografski, which was published in 1858 in *Balgarski knizhici*, another important Bulgarian journal of this period.

edition at that time. As such, they can be seen as modern paraphrases of the hagiographic text.

This study is based on the analyses of six selected literary paraphrases of the life of St. Clement of Ohrid: *The First Teacher* (1928) — a popular novel by Dencho Marchevski (1893—1973), who was an author of many short stories and novels, as well as methodological manuals¹³; *Tsar Simeon's Meetings with Clement of Ohrid* (1932) — a short story by Nikola Stanev (1862—1949), who was an acknowledged teacher and historian, editor of *Uchilishten vestnik*, and author of many books and history textbooks¹⁴; *St. Clement of Ohrid* (1934) — a popular novel by Hristo Zlatinchev (1884—1946), who was a popular writer at the time, but also an author of school textbooks on patriotism¹⁵; *The First Teachers* (1934) — a popular novel by Tsvetan Minkov (1891—1967), who was a popular author of many historical novels, short stories and other works dedicated to Bulgarian history and literature¹⁶; *The First Teacher* (1934) — a popular novel by Nikola Nikitov (1898—1958), who was one of the founders of the Society of Children's Writers (1928) and editor of the Great Bulgarians Library (1935—1945)¹⁷; *In the beginning was the word* (1943) — a short story by Fani Popova-Mutafova (1902—1977), who was a very popular writer during the interwar period in the field of historical prose¹⁸.

I am interested in the narrative itself and the question of which episodes are paraphrased, how they are presented and why. Although a part of these quasi-biographies were dedicated for children or young people, it seems that the reference point according to which the source was retold is the same. It was never a “simple” repetition, but a unique adaptation with educational purpose, that is a specific translation for the needs of a particular genre. Not coincidentally, most of the paraphrases were written by authors who were educators specializing in the history of Bulgaria, and published in the 1930s, when the focus on St. Clement's heritage increased due to the current situation in the country. At the beginning of the Second World War, the Bulgarian view on the most famous Cyrillo-Methodian disciple justified the fight for Macedonia, as the saint became a metonymy of the Bulgarian cultural rise, even the superiority of Bulgaria in nationalist terms.

13 Д. Марчевски, *Първоучителят* (София: Древна България, 1928).

14 Н. Станев, “Цар Симеонови срещи с Климента Охридски,” *Венец*, no. 2 (1932): 246—258.

15 Х. Златинчев, *Св. Климент Охридски* (София: Хемус, 1935).

16 Ц. Минков, *Първите учители* (София: Древна България, 1934).

17 Н. Никитов, *Първоучителят* (София: Ново училище, 1935).

18 Ф. Попова-Мутаfoва, “В начало бе словото,” *Братско слово*, no. 9 (1943): 172—174.

However, my objective is not to investigate linguistic aspects of the modern Bulgarian translations and paraphrases of St. Clement's *Life*, but to reveal the hermeneutic potential of this issue in terms of the history of ideas and the modern social imaginary. My starting point is the fact that the episode which is particularly popular is the meeting between the saint and the Bulgarian rulers, especially Simeon. All the afore-mentioned authors developed this motif to a different but still significant extent, which suggests that it is charged with some deep meanings. In this study, I will propose some hypotheses.

Indeed, in the *Life of St. Clement by Theophylact of Ohrid* much attention is paid to the important role of a state ruler in disseminating the work of SS. Cyril and Methodius, the cooperation between secular and spiritual authorities. This is manifested not only in the description of the unreasonable behaviour of the Moravian prince Rostislav, but also in the way in which St. Methodius guided Boris, then Rostislav, as well as in the attitude of Boris and Simeon towards the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples in Bulgaria. However, it seems that these issues received even greater attention in the interwar popular narrative.

As far as the meeting between Clement and Boris is concerned, the Cyrillo-Methodian disciple is presented as wise and kind, ready to talk about God's works without abusing the ruler's generosity. However, it is Boris's prudent behaviour that deserves attention. In all the works I have analysed, the Bulgarian prince is particularly interested in the spiritual condition of the people, deeply concerned that, despite the baptism, Christianity is not spreading in his country. In Dencho Marchevski's novel *The First Teacher*, this "handsome and slender man with a meek and kind look" is thirsty for teaching, and his soul is like a dry land soaked in the word of Clement. That is why he begs him to become "a teacher of our people" and sends him away so that "the Greeks will not be able to achieve their hellish thoughts"¹⁹. In Hristo Zlatinchev's novel — *St. Clement of Ohrid*, the prince even issues an order to the Macedonian people to accept the disciple of Cyril and Methodius "from the heart and soul"²⁰. The figure of Prince Boris is admirable and flawless, which corresponds with the Greek source, as well as the image of the Bulgarian Baptist in the Eastern Orthodox Church, but also draws a parallel with the figure of the current Tsar Boris III (reign: 1918—1943). What is interesting, however, is that the image of his son Simeon is a little more complicated. The tension is caused most probably by the episode about the so-called resignation of Clement, which is known from the *Life* by Theophylact.

19 Марчевски, *Първоучителят*, 14.

20 Златинчев, *Св. Климент Охридски*, 15.

71. And already bowed down with age and exhausted with the toils of a lifetime, he decided to give up his bishopry, not because he sought to flee and abandon the duties in which the Holy Spirit had placed him as the shepherd of the flock, as the guardian of the Church of the Lord (Acts 20:28), but because of a blessed, God-inspired contentment and the fear that his feebleness might destroy the work of God (Rom. 14:20). And he went to the king and told him (...). (...)

72. The king stood aghast at this unexpected request, because the undesirable, when heard unexpectedly, terrifies one all the more. He said, **“Why do you speak like that, father? How could I bear to look at another one sitting on this throne while you are still alive? How can I deprive my kingdom of your prelate’s blessings? Your leaving the bishop’s seat would be a bad omen of my own dethronement. But, if I have offended your reverence with anything, erring unwittingly, and you, sparing us as a father would, are unwilling to make public my improper conduct with regard to you and conceal the true reason under the pretext of bodily weakness, I am ready to stand to account and heal my father’s pain. But if you have nothing to accuse me of, why do you yourself desire to hurt those who have hurt you not? Neither can you blame the clergy of being disobedient and rebellious, for, giving birth to all of them through the Gospel, you also subject them to yourself and to God. Nor can you blame us ourselves for possibly going astray from your commandments, and nothing else of your deeds deserves rebuke. Why do you then permit it that your children should lament your unprovoked stepping down? But either you submit, father, or otherwise mine is the resolute word. Whatever you say, I will not obey, whatever you do, I will not concede, because a stepping down is only allowed to the unworthy, while you stand above all merit”**²¹.

21 *Life of St. Clement by Theophylact of Ohrid*. S. Nikolov, trans., in *Kiril and Methodius: Founders of Slavonic writing*, ed. I. Duichev (Sofia-New York: Boulder, 1985), 93—126. All the emphases are mine. The English translation is based on the modern Bulgarian translation by Aleksandar Milev. For more, see A. Милев, *Гръцките жития на Климент Охридски: Увод, текст и обяснителни бележки* (София: БАН, 1966). The Bulgarian translation that was the main reference point during the interwar period was by Danail Laskov: 97. Най-сетне, отслабнал вече от старост и изнемощал от трудове, (св. Климент) реши да се откаже от епископията, не за да избегне от службата, или да напусне длъжността, която Дух свети го постави да пасе църквата Божия (Деян. 20, 28), но поради блажено и боговдъхновено благоговение, защото се боеше да не би по причина на неговата немощ да се разстрои Божието дело (Рим. 14,20). 98. И като се яви пред царя, той му дума (...). (...) 99. Царят, потресен от тая неочакваност, — защото човек наистина се потърсва, когато неочаквано чуе нещо нежелателно — му отговори: „Що думаш ти, отче? Как мога аз да гледам да седи друг на тоя престол, докато ти си жив? Как да лиша царството си от твоите архиерейски благословии? Твоето отричане от

According to the medieval source, the motive for Clement's requests was "a blessed and God-inspired contentment". "Already bowed down with age", the Bulgarian bishop "feared that his feebleness might destroy the work of God"²², and also wished to prepare for his death in union with God in a monastery. Simeon "stood aghast at this unexpected request" and refused as a king. "Whatever you say, I will not obey, whatever you do, I will not concede, because a stepping down is only allowed to the unworthy, while you stand above all merit"²³. Due to the assumption that the true reason of the request is concealed, the royal response is extensive and variably argued, and consists of many interesting statements, such as the prophetic "Your leaving the bishop's seat would be a bad omen of my own dethronement"²⁴.

In the interwar period, the episode received alternative explanations which point out the special status of this particular account of Theophylact's work. The problem is the relation and the hierarchy between the two figures — the state ruler and the spiritual teacher, and the question of the *real* reason for Clement's request. It is perceived by some scholars as very surprising and insufficiently argued. Vasil Zlatarski (1866—1935) — one of the founding fathers of the Bulgarian historiography — saw here a protest against Simeon's policy that was aimed at creating Bulgarian patriarchate, which would be contrary to the Orthodox tradition and canons, as well as the testament of Boris and the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples, since "according to the canons, every bishop is associated with his diocese until his death". According to him, Clement was "particularly cautious and strict in this respect" and "undoubtedly refrained

епископския трон за мене е кобен белег, че ще изгубя царския си престол. Ако с нещо съм оскърбил твое преподобие, като несъзнателно съм съгрешил — защото (съзнателно) не зная да съм съгрешавал в нещо против тебе, а ти като ни щадиш като баща, не искаш да изобличиш моята лоша обноска спрямо тебе, а прикриваш истинската причина с предлог за телесна немощ, — тогава кажи, моля те, — аз съм готов да се покая и като син да изцера болката на баща си. Ако ли пък нямаш какво да посочиш като наша вина, то защо сам искаш да наскърбиш тя, които с нищо не с те оскърбявали? Не можеш и клира да обвиниш, че е непослушен и непокорен (Деан. 7,15), защото ти сам всички възроди чрез Евангелието и ги възпита в предаденост към себе и Бога; нито вас можеш обвини, че скоро захвърлихме другите твои заповеди, — нито друго нещо има за осъждане у твоите пасоми (миряните). Защо тогава оставаш чедата (си) да оплакват твоего безпричинно отгеляне? Или се съгласи, отче, или — ако не, ще кажа строга дума: каквото и да казваш, няма да те послушам, — каквото и да сториш, няма да се съглася. Отгеляне може да им, струва ми се, само за недостойните, — а ти си по-горе от всяко достойнство" (*Житие на Св. Климент Охридски*, 70—71). Further translations of the Bulgarian texts are mine.

22 "Life of St. Clement," 120.

23 "Life of St. Clement," 121.

24 "Life of St. Clement," 121.

Simeon from any action in this direction”²⁵. Ivan Snegarov (1883—1971), an influential theologian and Church historian, argued against this explanation in the study *The Bulgarian First Teacher* (1927), stating that it was unlikely that the patriotic, legitimate and humble Clement would oppose the national ideal that had been outlined by Boris and interfere with the politics of Simeon²⁶. In his book *St. Clement of Ohrid* (1927) published in the series “Famous Bulgarians”, he pointed out that there was no evidence for Zlatarski’s reading and that it was in fact a question of “too vigilant hierarchical conscience”²⁷. Another historian popular at that time, Ivan Pastuhov (1876—1961) claimed that Clement had been observing closely the events that were related to the king’s policy, and “did not stand idly by, (...) condemning the people’s doom”, so “it is known that this [old age weakness] was not the real motive”. “Obviously, the motives were not personal, but of a much different nature, which is evident primarily from Simeon’s anxiety”. According to Pastuhov, the proof of the “true reasons” for the resignation should be seen in Simeon’s words: “Your denial of the episcopal throne is a fatal sign for me that I will lose my royal throne” prove²⁸. Scholars’ interpretations depended on their field of expertise and the general view of selected historical facts, as well as the relationship between the Church and the State in Bulgarian conditions. The explanations tended to be set within the notion of a protest against Simeon actions, which was seen in relation with either the state authority, or the common people. In any case, the fundamental assumption was that the episode can be read as a historical account.

Changes in the literary accounts were determined by the writers’ attempts to adapt the story for the needs and cognitive possibilities of their readers. However, there were some similar shifts in meanings which deserve attention beyond the matter of clarity of the storyline. My hypothesis is that during the interwar period, there was indeed a particular focus on the meeting between St. Clement and Simeon and it was caused not by the artistic potential of the episode itself, but the relevance of the question that stood behind it, namely the relationship between the spiritual and the secular power. In this sense, the interwar interpretations can be treated as references to the traditional

25 В. Златарски, *История на българската държава през средните векове*. Т. 1. Ч. 2. *Първо българско царство — От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство 852—1018* (София: Държавна печатница, 1927), 400.

26 И. Снегаров, “Българският първоучител Св. Климент Охридски — живот и дейност,” *Годишник на Софийския университет. Богословски факултет*, vol. 4 (1927—1928): 317 (note 4).

27 И. Снегаров, *Св. Климент Охридски* (София: Държавна печатница, 1927), 25.

28 И. Пастухов, *Българска история*. Т. 1. *Предисторическо време. Древност. Средновековие* (София: Хемус, 1945), 229.

vision on the relation between the powers, and thus — articulations of actual functioning of some theological and political notions in this regard, provided that the contexts was built by the topical at that time discussions on the role of Orthodox Church in the Bulgarian social life.

In comparison with the medieval prototype, the literary works are different in the way in which the figure of Simeon is depicted. The reason for Clement's wish to be dismissed from his office is the same. However, since in the hagiographic account Simeon's response is very complex, its literary versions are significantly shortened and adapted to modern language, and thus simplified according to the writers' interpretation of the relation between the two heroes. In this regard, the question is what the author's emphasis is, especially provided that in many cases, there are some interesting scenes or motifs added that make the meeting more coherent for the readers.

In Marchevski's novel, *The First Teacher*, the meeting is presented as a symbolic clash of two forces: by "manly Simeon" and "white-bearded and withered Clement". What is important, the author added a footnote regarding the source, and this is the only literary work that refers directly to the *Life* by Theophylact, which seems to be a kind of insurance, since the king's response can be perceived as disrupting. Perhaps as an attempt to soften up this impression, there is another addition.

Why do you speak like that, father? How could I leave my kingdom desolate without your archpastoral blessings? Your leaving the bishop's seat is a bad omen I will lose my king's throne. If I have offended your reverence with anything, erring unwittingly, and you, sparing us as a father would, and conceal the true reason under the pretext of bodily weakness, then, tell me please — I am ready to stand to account and heal my father's pain. But if you have nothing to accuse me of, why do you yourself desire to hurt those who have hurt you not? You cannot blame the clergy of being disobedient and rebellious, for, giving birth to all of them through the Gospel, you also subject them to yourself and to God. You cannot blame us ourselves for possibly going astray from your commandments, and nothing else of your deeds deserves rebuke. Why do you then permit it that your children should lament your unprovoked stepping down? Either consent, father, or else I will speak a stern word: **Whatever you say, I will not obey, whatever you do, I will not concede, because a stepping down is only allowed to the unworthy, while you stand above all merit".**

And, turning to the boyars, the king asked: — What do you say?²⁹

29 Що думаш, отче? Как бих оставил царството си да запустее без твоите архипастирски благословения? Твоето отричане от епископския трон за мене е зло-

Simeon asks his boyars for the opinion. It is the son of Ekhach who speaks on their behalf and begs Clement to stay. Ekhach is the name of a boyar who welcomed Clement and Naum to his home after they arrived at Boris’s court, just as in the hagiographic source. Therefore, it is his son’s testimony about the blessed fruits of Clement’s work that makes the bishop accept the will of the king and the boyars, which is presented in fact as a common will. Importantly, afterwards, everyone goes to greet the people that gathered in front of Simeon’s palace eager to see the Slavic bishop.

Marchevski’s book is the only one that develops the episode so extensively, introducing significant changes, and by them — establishing the strong image of Simeon as a respected and prudent king who is interested in a will of others, suggesting his “prodemocratic” position. In other works, the dialogue between the bishop and the ruler adheres to the account by Theophylact, but even then some motifs are added in order to clarify the message.

In Stanev’s short story, *Tsar Simeon’s Meetings with Clement of Ohrid*, Simeon’s answer is a shortened and adapted quote from the account by Theophylact. His stern words are not mentioned. There is no definiteness in his response. There is only a request for forgiveness and a fervent desire for the bishop to remain in office — due to his excellent work and the people’s respect.

The king was very saddened to hear these words and answered: — “Why do you speak like that, father? How could I bear to look at another one sitting on this throne while you are still alive? You are a holy and worthy man. How can I deprive my kingdom of your blessings? If I or others have offended you, please forgive us. The people respect you, they need you, and you must remain at your post, because there is no one more worthy than you”³⁰.

кобен белег, че ще загубя царския си престол. Ако с нещо съм оскърбил твое преподобие, като съм сгрешил от незнание, а пък може би ме щадиш като баща и прикриваш истинската причина с телесна немощ — тогава кажи ми, моля, аз съм готов да се покая и като син да изцера болката на баща си. Ако ли пък никак не можеш се оплака от нас, то защо сам искаш да наскърбиш тия, които с нищо не са те наскърбили? От клира не можеш да се оплака, че е непокорен, защото ти самичък го избра за себе си и за Бога, като прероди всички чрез евангелието. Пък и нас не можеш обвини, че скоро захвърляме твоите заповеди, нито изобщо друго нещо има от наша страна осъдително спрямо твоите работи. Тогава защо накарваш чедата си да плачат за твоето безпричинно оттегляне? Или се съгласи, отче, или в противен случай ще кажа строга дума: Каквото и да казваш, не ще те послушам, както и да сториш, няма да се съглася. Оставка може да има, струва ми се, само за недостойните, а пък ти си по-горе от всяко достойнство. И, като се обърна към болярите, царят запита: — Какво ще кажете вие? (Д. Марчевски, *Първоучителят* (1928), 25—26).

30 Царят много се натъжи, като чу тези думи и отговори: — Що думаш ти, отче? Как мога да гледам да седи на твоя епископски престол друг, докато ти си жив?

In this way, the role of Clement and his position towards the king is emphasized. After his death Simeon “mourns him bitterly”³¹. The additional context is given by their two previous meetings, both of which are held in an atmosphere of great respect for Clement, who accepts Simeon’s will only if it is indeed for the people’s sake.

In the popular novel by Nikola Nikitov *The First Teacher* (1935), Simeon’s response to Clement’s request is even more shortened, and the main part is about the willingness of the ruler to apologize to the bishop as a son to a father.

Why do you speak like that, father? How could I bear to look at another one sitting on this throne while you are still alive? If I have offended your reverence with anything, I am ready to stand to account and heal my father’s pain. Whatever you say, here is my stern word: you will stay, because you are the most worthy of all³².

It deserves special attention, given that the author of the work added a scene in which Clement arrives in Preslav, walks through its streets, enters a church, sees its beauty, and then visits the palace, and notes the skilful clothes of the ruler, who welcomed him³³. Simeon himself is presented as a follower of Boris and the one who entrusted Clement with the episcopal mission, but the description of the capital after his enthronement, as well as his royal clothes can be interpreted as signs of distortion of the Holy Testament of SS. Cyril and Methodius. Thus, his humility seems to be an important indication about how the relationship with the churchman should look like.

Seemingly small yet significant changes in relation to the hagiographic prototype, which are observed in the analysed works, are caused not only by the need to adapt the complex narrative of the *Life*, but also present adequately the relationship between the two leading figures — the clergyman and the ruler. Clement is an experienced and wise continuator of his spiritual father, St. Methodius, i.e. he is focused on the good of the people and the development

Ти си свят и заслужил мъж. Мога ли да лиша царството си от твоите благословии? Ако нещо аз или други сме те оскърбили, молим да ни простиш. Народа те почита, има нужда от тебе и трябва да останеш на службата си, защото няма от тебе по-достоеен. (Н. Никитов, *Първоучителят* (1935), 156—158.

31 Н. Станев, *Цар Симеонови срещи...* (1932), 258.

32 Що думаш ти, отче? Как мога да гледам да седи друг на твоя епископския престол, докато ти си жив? Ако с нещо съм те оскърбил, аз съм готов да се покая и като син да изцера болката на баща си. Каквото и да кажеш, ето моята строга дума: ти ще останеш, защото ти си най-достойният от всички. (Н. Никитов, *Първоучителят* (1935), 31).

33 Н. Никитов, *Първоучителят* (1935), 28—31.

of common education. Simeon is young and strong, also concerned for the good of the state. Interestingly, there is no mention of his military conquests. The focus is on his educational and cultural activities. In this sense, he appears as a true successor of his father, Prince Boris. The two understand, respect and support each other, having in mind the same goal: the welfare of the people.

This reading fits into the church discourse according to which St. Clement is the first teacher and patron, but also the spiritual father of the Bulgarian church, yet his achievements were in fact possible thanks to the policy of Boris, and then the support of Simeon. However, it should be noted that the interwar period is defined not by the traditional, even conservative discourse on the role of the church and the king as two guardians of the nation, but also strong ideological tensions caused by the progressing secularization of the social order. Thus, the relationship between the church and the state becomes a key issue here. In this context, the motif of the meeting between a Bulgarian saint and a Bulgarian ruler appears to be particularly useful as a way of articulating notions about the role of the Church. During the interwar period this motif is quite popular and refers not only to the life of St. Clement of Ohrid but also St. John of Rila. For example, Petar Mutafchiev, in his famous essay "Pop Bogomil and St. John of Rila. The spirit of negation in our history" (1934), referred to the hagiographic account about the meeting between the saint and tsar Peter in the context of the spiritual responsibilities of the two individuals. St. John's refusal to meet the king in person was seen as an expression of detachment from the needs of the people and as such can be read in the context of the author's rhetorical question about the clergy: "Had they strayed so far from their duty to serve God and his people?"³⁴. The connection between God's service and the people's service is fundamental here.

The meeting between a saint and a king appears to be an essential leitmotif and is indicative of certain ideas about the role of the Church and its relationship with the state. Moreover, due to its enlightenment/educational and national dimension, it is the story of St. Clement of Ohrid that seems to be particularly appropriate to highlight the popular notion, which corresponds with the basic expectation that is embedded in the cultural horizon of the Bulgarians: the necessity of a harmonious cooperation between the two authorities.

The notion of a harmonious cooperation between the State and the Church seems to refer to the theological concept of the symphony of powers, becoming even its legitimized continuation. Deeply rooted within the local tradition, it becomes a justification for the cooperation between the State and a particular

34 П. Мутафчиев, "Поп Богомил и Свети Иван Рилски. Духът на отрицанието в нашата история," *Философски преглед*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1934): 106.

Church institution — the Orthodox one. However, the reference to the ecclesiastic ideal of the symphony of powers is in fact brought up in a completely new situation, i.e. of a modern national state in which the main authorities are diminished in a different way, and the ideological horizon is more pluralistic. Nevertheless, one cannot speak here about the Western model of separation of powers, because in Bulgarian case the two institutions only seemingly have different competencies and spheres of influence, and only seemingly the secular government is above all religious institutions in an equal way.

The interwar narrative of St. Clement of Ohrid is based on the assumption that the saint is a moral authority and a spiritual leader, but the secular ruler has to be spiritually responsible and an insightful mentor as well, as illustrated by the life of Prince Boris. Both the clergyman and the ruler are educators. Both of them are active figures, but the “secular-spiritual” division does not relate directly to the division of different spheres of action. The fact that the public engagement of the saint is not only approved but also required is particularly meaningful in this regard.

And still, what needs more consideration is the fact that Clement’s meeting with Simeon receives in literary texts more attention than the meeting with Boris, which is not only due to the plot potential of the episode. All the writers’ attempts to soften the tension between Clement and Simeon testify to the need for the idea of a harmonious cooperation to be clarified, but in my opinion it is not only because of the ambiguity of the hagiographic account or the contradictory view on Simeon’s imperial politics that is typical of the Bulgarian historiography at that time.

The works that I have been analysing are not written within the Church circles and cannot be read as direct expressions of the Orthodox Church discourse, and yet — by engaging themselves with the Orthodox Church-founded narrative, they complete and address the national identity with the help of symbols and plots from the medieval and religious narratives which correspond directly with the National Revival tradition. As such, they confirm the fundamental role of the older, including religious traditions during the period of transition towards the modern social imaginary.

The meeting between St. Clement and Simeon is presented as if it were a clash of two powers in terms of a strong opposition “secular — spiritual”, in which only one of the opponents embodies the desired ideological notions, and as such is a rightful representative of the social order. My hypothesis is that the poetic and ideological potential of this episode is particularly high because it actualizes a well-known Old Testament topos “King vs. Prophet”. Indeed, its medieval source is based on the Biblical patterns by definition, so an intended relation between the Biblical paradigm and the hagiographic

account should be assumed. However, what if the topos "King vs. Prophet" is actualized here not because of its direct or indirect connection with the hagiographic source? What if the literary paraphrases of the meeting between St. Clement and Simeon are in fact testimonies of a different influence that is of well-known Biblical patterns in modern, even Western-centric readings? What if the topos "King vs. Prophet" affects the new interpretation of the episode in terms of both a clear and useful reminiscence of Biblical tradition and a universal interpretative model that is appropriated within the secular conditions?

Without doubt, the interwar narrative of St. Clement of Ohrid answers to the imperative of the people's "enlightenment" in terms of liberation and secular education, which in Bulgarian culture is associated with the Cyrillo-Methodian Testament and the national cause already during the National Revival. What is more significant, however, is that it is also a vivid example of a legitimization of the Church tradition in the conditions of the modern state. The saint is presented not only as a counsellor, but also as a model to follow for the authorities. St. Clement is the first teacher of prince Boris and the patron of king Simeon. With his work, he ensures proper functioning of the state and, if necessary, intervenes in public affairs. Ultimately, it turns out that the spiritual authority of the Church prevails — it is the Church that is a guardian of the social order. In this sense, the story of St. Clement is perhaps the most striking expression of a conservative discourse in terms of a discourse that connects the religious affiliation and the monolithic view of the state along with its development.

The Biblical topos "King vs. Prophet" could be used here in order to address the relationship between the Church and the State. One may even say that it serves as a model of interpretation that is oriented towards a modern discourse on religion and its place within a secular society. The question is whether the hermeneutic potential of the religious tradition changes the way in which the relationship between the secular and the spiritual power in the history of Bulgarian people is addressed. How do Biblical topoi function in Bulgarian culture of the beginning of the 20th century? What is the context of their understanding and adapting for the purposes of modern ideological discussions? Indeed, the topos "King vs. Prophet" actualizes a particular ecclesiastic and prophetic dimension of Judeo-Christian tradition, but is it obvious for the modern writers and readers? I argue that there is a crucial shift resulting from the context of the modern social imaginary. If so, one can read the interwar literary paraphrases of St. Clement's life as presenting new ideas under the mask of old ones with special regard to their cultural — which means also secularized or naturalized — potential.

In modern literary interpretations of St. Clement's meeting with Simeon, there are few important differences in comparison with the biblical narratives about the strong confrontations between the Israeli Kings and Prophets. Although with his deeds and words, Clement reminds to the king what is important just as the Israeli prophet, he does not refer to the will of God, but the will of the people. The Church and the State are understood here with regard to the same sphere of jurisdiction: the secular society of the Bulgarian people. St. Clement is presented as focused on the welfare of the people within the temporal, earthly dimension. This social engagement of a priest is expected in Bulgarian culture due to the legacy of the National Revival polemics. The main existential dimension is the secular, or "natural" one, and the ultimate authority belongs to the people. It is the people who are an absolute referring point and as such determine both the obligations of the state and the church, as well as their complex relations.

This crucial difference is a sign of the secularization process, but not in terms of laicization of society, that is the rejection of religious sphere of life, but differentiation of social spheres, that is their emancipation from religious institutions and norms. Thus, the question of the jurisdiction and possible fields of legitimacy of the state (the secular) and the Church (the religious) institutions is raised. The fact that the idea of the harmonious cooperation is brought up testifies to the importance of the Church tradition and a particular role model that is represented by St. Clement, but also reveals the clash between the modern expectations and the premodern language. It is not a rejection of religious tradition, but rather a renunciation of religious authority in the sense of authority which is legitimized by references to the supernatural, as conceptualized by Mark Chaves³⁵.

Related to the emergence of the modern concept for the nation and nationalism³⁶, the new idea of power is based on the "natural" legitimacy of the people and not the "supernatural" legitimacy, that is of God, and requires a reorganization of public and political order. All the tensions between the Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church after the Liberation in 1878, including social debates over the status of foreign schools, religious sects or the issue of civil marriage, could be seen as testimonies of the subsequent limitation of church influence based on the renunciation of the religious, that is "supernatural", legitimacy.

35 M. Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces*, vol. 72, no. 3 (1994): 749—774.

36 L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Thus, the case of the "King vs. Prophet" topos may be seen as a part of a greater discussion that was held during the interwar period in Bulgaria with regard to religion and its social function and meaning for the Bulgarian nation. The question is how the topos was read and used. What were the reference points? Therefore, there is a need to investigate how this motif functioned in modern literature and theological studies, as well as liturgy and popular Church and Christian writings, in regard to Bulgarian culture. Here, the problem of translating the hagiographic genre for the needs of secular prose genres may be of particular significance.

I would like to suggest that through this literary motif of the meeting between a saint and a ruler, two important questions are raised: the question of the relationship between the modern powers and the question of functioning of the religious, in fact Judaeo-Christian tradition under the conditions of the secular age. The latter can be seen in two dimensions: first, in terms of the strategy of adapting parabiblical topoi and theological ideas within the Church discourse, which would be aimed at nationalization of the Church heritage for legitimization purposes, and secondly, in terms of the reception of the parabiblical topoi and ideas by secular audience for artistic purposes. The focus on the functioning of Biblical tradition would then confirm that in the process of transition to the modern social imaginary, the relationship between the so-called old ideas and the so-called new ideas should be seen not in terms of consecutive adaptation, but in terms of complex and indeed *mutual* interferences, which make all the meanings even more dynamic and unexpected. It should be assumed that the Bible functions not only as a thesaurus of recognizable idioms and topoi, but also an ideological context that could force the shifts of meanings. In this perspective, the question of the "Bible in translation" needs to be seen as a particularly significant factor in the process of transmitting ideas and creating modern sense-making horizon.

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„Biblia w przekładzie”

Bułgarska narracja o św. Klemensie z Ochrydy w okresie międzywojennym a transfer idei nowoczesnych

STRESZCZENIE | W artykule poruszono kwestię roli tradycji biblijnej w transferze i adaptacji idei nowoczesności na gruncie kultur prawosławnych. Przedmiotem namysłu jest narracja o św. Klemensie z Ochrydy, najsłynniejszym uczniu św. św. Cyryla i Metodego, oraz jej literackie parafrazy z okresu międzywojennego w Bułgarii — rozpatrywane w kontekście modernistycznego odczyt(yw)ania Biblii, a także ambiwalentnego doświadczenia sekularyzacji ze strony lokalnych elit intelektualnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE | Biblia, modernizm, przekład, kultura współczesna, św. Klemens z Ochrydy, Bułgaria, okres międzywojenny

Ewelina Drzewiecka

“Bible in Translation”:

Bulgarian Narratives About St. Clement of Ohrid in the Interwar Period and the Transfer of Modern Ideas

SUMMARY | The paper raises the question of the role of Biblical tradition in the transfer and adaptation of modern ideas in cultures rooted in Eastern-Orthodox tradition. The subject of reflection is the narrative about St. Clement of Ohrid, the most famous disciple of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and its various literary paraphrases during the interwar period in Bulgaria, in the context of modernist reading of the Bible, as well as the ambivalent experience of secularization among the local intellectual elites.

KEYWORDS | Bible, modernism, translation, modern culture, St. Clement of Ohrid, Bulgaria, the interwar period

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