

On Two Sources of the Early Bulgarian Christianity

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The present paper first highlights the historical background of the process of Christianization Bulgaria, and compares the two main sources of the missionary intentions: the epistle by Phontius and the *Responsa Nicolai Papae I. ad Consulta Bulgarorum*. An outline of the conflict between Pope Nicholas I and Patriarch Photios evolved on Bulgaria's ecclesiastical affiliation will help to understand how the papacy's attention turned towards the Slavonic mission, and, in this context, the position taken by Methodius towards the Pope, the Byzantine emperor and the Eastern Frankish ruler as well as the Archbishopric of Salzburg and its bishops. The Bulgarians assumed Christianity in the second half of the ninth century, during the reign of khan Boris I. The progress of the missionary work carried out among them faithfully reflects the current conflict between Rome and Byzantium. The Bulgarians, who had a relatively low population, came from a Turk ethnic group, had subjected the Slavonic people to their rule, and settled on the territory of the once Moesia, Scythia, Thracia and Macedonia during the rule of Krum (803–814) and Omurtag (814–831).¹ The proportion of the Christian population that survived the Bulgarian conquest cannot be determined. On the other hand, in order to reinforce his rule Krum already tried rely on the Slavs, who were more open to Christianity, against the Bulgarian boyars. This, however, led to the persecution of the Christians and fierce counter reaction during the reign of his son, Omurtag. Since the Bulgarians were afraid that the Christians would establish too close relations with the neighboring Byzantium having great power. As part of the persecution Christians living on several territories bordering on Byzantium were transferred to the northern parts of the Bulgar lands. Khan Boris (852–889) took further actions to support Christianity. His decision might have been motivated by the following reasons: Firstly, through the clergy loyal to the prince he would be able to influence the population, and the centralized ecclesiastical organization could be instrumental in driving back the Bulgarians; secondly, Christian religion seemed to provide a channel for merging the Slavs and the Bulgarians; thirdly, the Christian ruler's wide power made known to Boris both

¹ S. Runciman, *A History of the first Bulgarian Empire*. London 1930. 1sq. D. Angelov, *Die Entstehung des bulgarischen Volkes*. Berlin 1980. 84sq.

in Byzantium and the Frankish Empire seemed undoubtedly tempting to the khan.²

As he did not want to assign missionary work in his country to the Byzantine Church – by that he would have strengthened the hegemony of the *basileus* – the khan of the Bulgars met Louis the German, Eastern Frankish ruler in 862, in Tulln, and managed to enter into an agreement with him on several points. The Bulgarians would make troops available to the Frankish king against the Moravians, and the Frankish missionaries would begin their missionary work in Bulgaria.³ In 863/64, however, the famine ravaging the Bulgarians made it impossible to implement these plans. In response to the looting carried out by the Bulgarians on the territory of Byzantium, the emperor, Michael III (842–867) dealt Bulgaria a heavy blow both at sea and on land, and forced Khan Boris to unconditional surrender.⁴ In the peace treaty entered into between Byzantium and Bulgaria they determined that Byzantine missionaries would soon begin missionary work among the Bulgarians. As the first step of the Christianization, Boris assumed Christianity in Byzantium in 864. In baptism he was given the name Michael as the godfather's duty was undertaken by Michael III with political implication.⁵ After that Boris forwarded a letter to Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople,⁶ in which he wanted to get answers to his fairly practical questions regarding the missionary work. It is, by all means, worth giving an outline of the content of Photios's aforesaid letter written at the end of 864 or the beginning of 865⁷ and sent to Khan Boris I.⁸ It clearly reveals why the highly educated patriarch's reply letter written at a high theological level did not give sufficient answers to the questions concerning the Bulgarians, and why Boris urged by the dissatisfaction felt over this guidance turned to the Pope with his problems regarding Christian religion and religious life expecting Rome to give help.⁹ The questions

² Dopsch, H.: *Slawenmission und päpstliche Politik – Zu den Hintergründen des Methodios-Konfliktes*. In: *Der heilige Method, Salzburg und die Slawenmission*. Hrsg. v. Th. Piffli-Perčević–A. Stirnemann. Innsbruck–Wien, 1987. 322.

³ Dvornik, F.: *Byzantium, Rome, the Franks, and the Christianisation of the Southern Slavs*. In: *Cyrillo-Methodiana. Zur Frühgeschichte des Christentums bei den Slaven 863–1963*. Hrsg. v. M. Hellmann–R. Olesch–B. Stasiewski–F. Zagiba. Graz, 1964. 119; Zagiba, F.: *Die Missionierung der Slaven aus „Welschland“ (Patriarchat Aquileja) im 8. Und 9. Jahrhundert*. In: *Cyrillo-Methodiana. Zur Frühgeschichte des Christentums bei den Slaven 863–1963*. Hrsg. v. M. Hellmann–R. Olesch–B. Stasiewski–F. Zagiba. Graz, 1964. 292.

⁴ *Annales Bertiniani a. 866; Annales Fuldenses a. 863*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH SS 1. Hannover 1826; ed. F. Kurze–H. Häfele, MGH SS rer. Germ. Hannover, 1891; Runciman, *Bulgarian Empire*, 104.

⁵ Dopsch 1987, 323.

⁶ See F. Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photios and the Roman Primacy," *Chicago Studies* 2 (1963), 94–107; F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*. Cambridge 1948.

⁷ See F. Dvornik, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX^e siècle*. Paris 1926, 190.

⁸ Photios, "Epist. 8," in *Patrologiae cursus completus*. ed. I.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae tomus* 1-167, Paris, 1857–1876. 102. col. 628–696.

⁹ Dvornik 1964, 121sq.; V. Burr, "Anmerkungen zum Konflikt zwischen Methodius und den bayerischen Bischöfen," in *Cyrillo-Methodiana. Zur Frühgeschichte des Christentums*

addressed by the Bulgarian legation have been lost. The Pope's reply letter (*Responsa Nicolai Papae I. ad Consulta Bulgarorum*, that is, Pope Nicholas I's letter) written in the autumn of 866, however, has been completely preserved.¹⁰ With some effort the questions can be reconstructed from the answers.

Photios's letter consists of one hundred and fourteen chapters, and in terms of its content it can be divided into two main units: a dogmatic¹¹ and a political-didactic¹² part.¹³ At the beginning of the letter, the patriarch first expounds that Christianity stands on a much higher level than heathenism, and to present the essence of Christian teachings he quotes the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, then gives a brief survey of the history of the seven general councils.¹⁴ After this historic detour, he seems to forget that his letter's addressee is a khan recently converted to Christianity who is most probably neither interested in the Byzantine theologians' subtle dogmatic argumentation, which he possibly cannot even understand, nor in need of them at all in the given political situation he is facing.¹⁵ In this part of the letter the patriarch does not fail to emphatically exhort the ruler to be faithful to his decision both to convert himself and to get his people to convert to Christian faith,¹⁶ and cautions him against giving room to heretical deviations. Also he warns him of the dangers that would be brought about if he yet wanted to return to his forefather's faith. As it was customary for neophyte kings in the middle ages, he sets Emperor Constantine to Boris as a role model for a ruler. Furthermore, he exhorts him that his steadfast adherence should be directed to the Byzantine Church, and he should not take any steps towards Roman Christianity, which is referred to by the patriarch in each case with some suspicious detachment.¹⁷

Although the second part of the letter, which we can safely call a didactic, instructive sort of section – it provides guidance of a general nature for Boris and his people on Christian teachings to be followed¹⁸ – mostly lacks any originality, it amply draws on the works of the major representatives of prince's mirror, a genre so rich in Byzantine literature.¹⁹ While writing this peculiar *Fürstenspiegel*,

bei den Slaven 863–1963. Graz 1964, 41; G. Ostrogorsky, *A bizánci állam története*. [A History of Byzantine State] Budapest 2001, 112sqq.

¹⁰ F. A. Norwood, "The Political Pretensions of Pope Nicolas I." *Church History* 15 (1946), 271–285.

¹¹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 1–22.

¹² Photios, "Epist. 8," 23–114.

¹³ I. Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion du peuple Bulgare," in *Medievo Bizantino-Slavo III*. Roma 1971, 108.

¹⁴ J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (802–867)*. London 1912, 338.

¹⁵ J. Hergenröther, *Photius, Patriarch von Konstantinopel I*. Regensburg 1867, 601.

¹⁶ Photios, "Epist. 8," 19.

¹⁷ Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 110.

¹⁸ Hergenröther, *Photius*, 602.

¹⁹ See Krumbacher, *K. Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*. München 1897, 456–457; 463–464; 491; K. Emminger, *Studien zu den griechischen Fürstenspiegeln I. Zum Andrias basilikos des Nikephoros Blemmydes*. München 1906.

Photios undoubtedly used the sources of the Old and New Testament and certain ecclesiastical authors, but to no less extent can reliance on classical Greek literature be discovered, especially on two speeches attributed to Isocrates (*ad Demoniacum*, *ad Nicoclea*).²⁰ In his exposition the patriarch reconciles the instructions of classical philosophy and Christian morality to support his exhortation addressed to the recently converted ruler and his people.²¹ He makes the evangelical command of love for God and our fellow men²² the basis of his guidance on the khan's personal conduct of life;²³ and directly in connection with that he calls the addressee's attention to Aristotle's idea of *kalokagathia*.²⁴ He emphasizes the importance of prayer in two chapters,²⁵ and specifically underlines that the ruler's primary obligation is to build churches.²⁶ He repeats *topoi* adopted also by classical philosophy which state that the ruler shall pay attention to his conduct²⁷ and manner of speaking,²⁸ shall avoid needless giggling,²⁹ obscenity,³⁰ cursing and defamatory speech,³¹ and shall be very careful in choosing his friends.³² Whatever he does, the ruler shall premeditate all of his actions,³³ and, if necessary, he shall listen to and accept his advisors' opinion.³⁴ The patriarch does not fail to emphasize that the Christian ruler shall avoid hatred, which is considered a highly heinous sin,³⁵ and fraud even against his enemies;³⁶ he shall make an effort to keep his promises,³⁷ and restrain his temper and anger.³⁸ He exhorts him to be moderate in the affairs of love³⁹ and drinking.⁴⁰ He proposes that he should keep away from unabashed and rakish amusement,⁴¹ and urges him to give thanks only to God for all good and success,⁴² and that he should endeavor to use his talent giv-

²⁰ See K. Emminger *Studien zu den griechischen Fürstenspiegeln II. Die spätmittelalterlichen Übersetzung der Demonicea III. Basileou kephalaia parainetika*. München 1913.

²¹ Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 111.

²² Matth. 22, 38-40.

²³ Photios, "Epist. 8," 23.

²⁴ Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea* 5, 1, 16. (Ed. I. Bywater. Oxford, 1970.)

²⁵ Photios, "Epist. 8," 25-26.

²⁶ Photios, "Epist. 8," 27.

²⁷ Photios, "Epist. 8," 30.

²⁸ Photios, "Epist. 8," 31.

²⁹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 32.

³⁰ Photios, "Epist. 8," 33.

³¹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 35.

³² Photios, "Epist. 8," 36-37; Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 112.

³³ Photios, "Epist. 8," 29; 48.

³⁴ Photios, "Epist. 8," 49.

³⁵ Photios, "Epist. 8," 51-52.

³⁶ Photios, "Epist. 8," 71; 89.

³⁷ Photios, "Epist. 8," 76-77.

³⁸ Photios, "Epist. 8," 84-87.

³⁹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 91-94.

⁴⁰ Photios, "Epist. 8," 95.

⁴¹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 100-101.

⁴² Photios, "Epist. 8," 113.

en by nature for the benefit of his subjects and fellow-men,⁴³ and should not pass judgments on others.⁴⁴

The second part of Photios's exhortation expounds the exercise of the ruler's rights. The patriarch attempts to outline the portrait of an ideal ruler composed of a peculiar mixture of Christian and heathen ideas. Boris shall both live his life in the spirit of Christianity, and as a sovereign he is primarily obliged to take care of his subjects' salvation;⁴⁵ and the subjects' gain in faith will measure and prove the ruler's own virtue.⁴⁶ In the recently converted country the implementation of the model presented by the patriarch must have been utterly helpful for establishing a state organization following the pattern of Byzantine *theokratia* based on the coordinated action of a closely intertwined State and Church. Photios, on the other hand, resolutely marked the limit beyond which the ruler authorized to exercise secular power was not allowed to have any say in the Church's internal affairs.⁴⁷ For the avoidance of any doubt, the letter makes it clear that only harmonized action and cooperation between the State and the Church can create the unity, *homonoia* of a Christian people.⁴⁸ The ruler is obliged to make just amends and administer justice to those who have suffered wrong;⁴⁹ furthermore he shall act resolutely and hard against those who have caused damage to the community, and shall be forbearing and merciful towards those who do harm to his own person.⁵⁰ Strict laws shall be in force in the country; however, the subjects shall be led pursuant to the principles of humanity.⁵¹ Compliance with the laws shall be enforced merely by threatening with sanctions, that is, by raising awareness of the possibility of being punished rather than by punishment.⁵² Excessive rigor shall be by all means avoided; the ruler shall make an effort to win his subjects' benevolence since a government based on that stands on a much safer ground than the one that intends to wring obedience from the people merely by intimidation.⁵³ In the argumentation on the administration of justice, the author of the letter briefly outlines the key attributes of a good judge,⁵⁴ and urges Boris to make efforts to come into possession of them.⁵⁵ Further on, he gives the ruler advice on political realism stressing that he shall not stop keeping armed forces on the alert, because should he fail to do so, he might face a lot of problems and unpleasant

⁴³ Photios, "Epist. 8," 66.

⁴⁴ Photios, "Epist. 8," 68; Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 113.

⁴⁵ Photios, "Epist. 8," 19.

⁴⁶ Photios, "Epist. 8," 90.

⁴⁷ Photios, "Epist. 8," 28.

⁴⁸ Photios, "Epist. 8," 27; Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 113.

⁴⁹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 34.

⁵⁰ Photios, "Epist. 8," 38.

⁵¹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 42.

⁵² Photios, "Epist. 8," 43.

⁵³ Photios, "Epist. 8," 41.

⁵⁴ Photios, "Epist. 8," 54.

⁵⁵ Photios, "Epist. 8," 59.

surprises.⁵⁶ Internal quarrels and uprisings shall be strictly put down because the victory thereof would threaten the country with falling back to heathenism and the State with being wound up.⁵⁷ No specific advice, however, is given in the Patriarch's letter on actions to be taken in such cases, which makes it probable that the letter was written shortly before the pagan uprising actually taking place in Bulgaria, because it is right to assume that otherwise his guidance regarding this subject area would not stay on the level of mere generality.⁵⁸ The forces instigating hostility and discord shall be hammered into unity, and channeled into action against possible external enemies.⁵⁹

After having outlined the patriarch's letter we can establish that his exhortation and guidance touch on too profound issues senseless and unintelligible for Boris not well-versed in dogmatics, on the one hand; and, as regards everyday religious life, they move too much on the level of generalities, *topoi* taken over from classical and Christian prince's mirror, on the other. Consequently, they do not have any practical use for a ruler who intends to Christianize his country. So it is no wonder that one year after his conversion, in August 866, Boris sent his delegates, his kinsman, Petrus, and two boyars, Iohannes and Martinus to Pope Nicholas I (858–867).⁶⁰ Loaded with rich presents meant to be given to the Pope and the churches of Rome - including the weapons by which Boris had beaten off the recent pagan uprising - they did arrive in Rome. Simultaneously, Boris turned again to Louis the German in a letter, and informed him that after having converted his people to Christian faith he would seek to maintain alliance relation with him, and asked him to provide ecclesiastical books and means necessary for liturgy.⁶¹ The delegacy handing over a letter to the pope which requested answers to his questions and guidance on both the true articles of faith and the most basic issues of everyday Christian life was received by Nicholas I with great pleasure since he saw it as an assurance that the letter sent by Photios had not solved the khan's questions, and had not dispelled his doubts - and that is why now the ruler desired to approach the Roman Church.

The *Responsa Nicolai Papae I. ad Consulta Bulgarorum*, that is, the letter written by Pope Nicholas I in the autumn of 866, has been completely preserved; however, the questions put by the Bulgarians, the *consulta* had been lost. So their number, original form can be deduced only from the Pope's responses. As the Pope's letter divides the responses into one hundred and six chapters, researchers were inclined, perhaps too hastily, to assume that the letter of the Bulgarians consisted of the same number of questions.⁶² Another point that is worth considering is the language of the questions as we cannot preclude that the ruler sent his questions in Greek to the Pope, who was of course familiar with this idiom too. On the oth-

⁵⁶ Photios, "Epist. 8," 104.

⁵⁷ Photios, "Epist. 8," 62.

⁵⁸ Dujčev, "Au lendemain de la conversion," 115.

⁵⁹ Photios, "Epist. 8," 62.

⁶⁰ Dvornik, *Byzantium, Rome, the Franks*, 123sq.

⁶¹ E. Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches, I-III*. Leipzig 1887–1888, 2: 188.

⁶² Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, 2: 190.

er hand, we may assume that the official translation of the letter was made by Anasthadius Bibliothecarius since in the documents available to us there are several references to his translator's skills and quite accurate translating technique strictly adhering to the original text.⁶³ On the grounds of the above, we can accept the system of questions (*consulta*) reconstructed on the basis of the responses (*responsa*) by Ivan Dujčev,⁶⁴ which counts one hundred and fourteen questions, to which the Pope summed up his responses in one hundred and six chapters. Albeit, the responses lack any system whatsoever, it can be taken for granted that we should not impute this to the pope. He most probably only followed the order of the questions and gave his responses accordingly. The only modification he made was arranging his responses to several questions following each other and deemed coherent in terms of content into a single chapter.⁶⁵ On the other hand, if two or more questions referred to a single subject, and such questions were scattered in the letter, the pope kept to the original order, and at the relevant point only referred back to the question already discussed.⁶⁶ The phrases "*in prima quaestionum vestrarum fronte*", "*praeterea*", "*porro dicitis*" and "*postremo*" occurring in the responses make it probable that the original order of the questions (*consulta*) was adhered to.⁶⁷

After determining the order of the *consulta*, we can make an attempt to systematize the questions in terms of subject matter. As a matter of fact, several questions are related to Christian religion, its everyday practice, the many ways of integrating heathen customs into Christianity, legal order and ecclesiastical organization.⁶⁸ Regarding this subject area, the most cardinal definition of the document is that the ruler's utmost goal is to preserve the unity of faith in his country.⁶⁹ They ask how they should wear the cross; if they could kiss it;⁷⁰ if it is obligatory to receive the sacrament when visiting the church;⁷¹ if those baptized by false priests can be considered Christians, or they should be baptized again;⁷² if they should have repentance for punishing false priests too strictly;⁷³ if severe punishment of the subjects revolting against the ruler can be deemed a sin. (Fifty-two heathen dignitaries rose against the ruler putting ideas of heathenism on their banner, and Boris exterminated them and all their offshoots;⁷⁴ what should

⁶³ "Nicolai I. Papae epistolae," in MGH EE VI. *Karolini aevi IV.* ed. E. Perels, Berlin 1925, 191, 240, 487-488.

⁶⁴ I. Dujčev, "Die Responsa Nicolai Papae I. ad consulta Bulgarorum als Quelle für die bulgarische Geschichte," in *Medievo Bizantino-Slavo I.* Roma 1965, 129.

⁶⁵ See supra, note 63.

⁶⁶ Cf. „Responsa,” 36; 39; 45; 47; 63; 100.

⁶⁷ Dujčev, "Die Responsa Nicolai Papae I." 138.

⁶⁸ Dujčev, "Die Responsa Nicolai Papae I." 139.

⁶⁹ „Responsa,” 106.

⁷⁰ „Responsa,” 7.

⁷¹ „Responsa,” 9.

⁷² „Responsa,” 14-15.

⁷³ „Responsa,” 15-16.

⁷⁴ „Responsa,” 17.

be done with those who refuse Christianity, and remain obstinate to heathenism.⁷⁵⁾

The next group of questions concern worship. What should be done when they cannot completely perform prayer at the military camp?⁷⁶ When sitting at the table, if there is no priest or deacon present, is it allowed to cross oneself, and start eating thereafter?⁷⁷ Is it such a great sin indeed, as the Greeks assert, to pray in the church not with arms crossed on one's chest?⁷⁸ Is it prohibited, again as Greek teachings claim, to appear to receive Holy Communion ungirdled?⁷⁹ In periods of drought, is it allowed to pray for rain and observe fast?⁸⁰ Is it considered a sin indeed, as the Greeks assert, to eat from the meat of an animal killed by a eunuch?⁸¹ Should women stay in the church with covered or uncovered head?⁸² How many times a day should a layman pray?⁸³ When is it prohibited to appear to receive the sacrament? Can someone whose nose or mouth is bleeding receive the sacrament?⁸⁴ How many days after the birth of a child can a woman enter the church?⁸⁵ Should a married priest be expelled or kept?⁸⁶ Is a priest sinful of adultery entitled to administer the sacrament or not?⁸⁷ What should be done when someone receives news of the enemy's attack during prayer, and does not have time to finish the prayer?⁸⁸ What procedure shall be applied against those who have risen against Christianity but are willing to do penance voluntarily, which they have been prohibited to do by the Byzantine priesthood?⁸⁹ Is it deemed a sin when a widow is forced to become a nun?⁹⁰ Is it allowed to pray for parents who deceased as heathens?⁹¹ May a Christian hunt together with a heathen person, and may a Christian eat from the meat of the game so killed together?⁹² Is it allowed to bury suicides, and is it allowed to offer sacrifice for them?⁹³ Is it allowed to bury Christians in the church?⁹⁴ Must those killed in action be brought

⁷⁵ „Responsa,” 41.

⁷⁶ „Responsa,” 38.

⁷⁷ „Responsa,” 53.

⁷⁸ „Responsa,” 54.

⁷⁹ „Responsa,” 55.

⁸⁰ „Responsa,” 56.

⁸¹ „Responsa,” 57.

⁸² „Responsa,” 58.

⁸³ „Responsa,” 61.

⁸⁴ „Responsa,” 65.

⁸⁵ „Responsa,” 68.

⁸⁶ „Responsa,” 70.

⁸⁷ „Responsa,” 71.

⁸⁸ „Responsa,” 74.

⁸⁹ „Responsa,” 78.

⁹⁰ „Responsa,” 87.

⁹¹ „Responsa,” 88.

⁹² „Responsa,” 91.

⁹³ „Responsa,” 98.

⁹⁴ „Responsa,” 99.

home if their parents and comrades want to do so?⁹⁵ Who may be given alms?⁹⁶ Must force be applied against heathens who are reluctant to assume Christianity?⁹⁷ What should be done with the Muslim books they possess?⁹⁸

Several questions concern holidays, ecclesiastical festivals and periods of fast.⁹⁹ Is it allowed to wear the sign of the cross also in Lent,¹⁰⁰ and receive the sacrament every day?¹⁰¹ Is it allowed to perform any work on Saturday and Sunday?¹⁰² On the holidays of which apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins must one refrain from serf's work?¹⁰³ Is it allowed to sit in judgment and pass death sentence on the holidays of the saints and in Lent?¹⁰⁴ Is it allowed to travel or engage in battle on Sundays and holidays and in Lent, of course only when it is required by necessity?¹⁰⁵ Is it allowed to hunt,¹⁰⁶ play games and have amusement,¹⁰⁷ and marry and hold a feast in the period of Lent?¹⁰⁸ What should be done with those who have had sexual intercourse with their wives during Lent?¹⁰⁹ Is it allowed for husband and wife to fulfill their marital obligations on Sunday?¹¹⁰ How many times a year is it allowed to deliver baptism?¹¹¹ During which periods shall one refrain from eating meat;¹¹² is it allowed to eat meat on the day of baptism, and for how many days after christening shall one give up eating meat;¹¹³ and, finally, is it allowed to eat early morning?¹¹⁴

Nonetheless interesting are the questions from which we can indirectly obtain considerable additional information on the ancient religion and beliefs, way of life and legal order of the Bulgarians. The Bulgarians' dynamistic-manistic beliefs,¹¹⁵ that is, the faith in impersonal and mystical vital force abiding in men and animals, most frequently located in the head and carried by the blood, can be de-

⁹⁵ „Responsa,” 100.

⁹⁶ „Responsa,” 101.

⁹⁷ „Responsa,” 102.

⁹⁸ „Responsa,” 103.

⁹⁹ Dujčev, „Die Responsa Nicolai Papae I.” 140.

¹⁰⁰ „Responsa,” 8.

¹⁰¹ „Responsa,” 9.

¹⁰² „Responsa,” 10.

¹⁰³ „Responsa,” 11.

¹⁰⁴ „Responsa,” 12; 45.

¹⁰⁵ „Responsa,” 36; 46.

¹⁰⁶ „Responsa,” 44.

¹⁰⁷ „Responsa,” 47.

¹⁰⁸ „Responsa,” 48.

¹⁰⁹ „Responsa,” 50.

¹¹⁰ „Responsa,” 63.

¹¹¹ „Responsa,” 69.

¹¹² „Responsa,” 4.

¹¹³ „Responsa,” 69.

¹¹⁴ „Responsa,” 60.

¹¹⁵ About manaism see H. Wagenvoort, *Roman Dynamism. Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion*. Leiden, 1956. H. J. Rose, „Numen and mana,” *Harvard Theological Review* 44 (1951), 109. H. J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion*. London 1948.

duced from the questions whether animals not killed with a knife but simply struck dead may be eaten.¹¹⁶ Most probably the same subject area is addressed by the question inquiring whether they may continue to wear their turban-like headwear spun from linen, deemed prohibited by the Greeks especially in the church,¹¹⁷ and with what should they replace the horsetail used so far in battles as a banner,¹¹⁸ since primitive peoples' attributed *mana* to the tail of certain animals.¹¹⁹ The question regarding a stone endowed with curing effect, found during the period of heathenism might have come from similar ideas too.¹²⁰ According to the *consulta*, eating certain animals and birds was considered taboo;¹²¹ it also concerned taboos when they asked the Pope how long after the birth of a child a woman might not go to church,¹²² and how long their husbands might not have intercourse with them.¹²³ The question whether women are allowed to stay in church with covered or uncovered head¹²⁴ might have come from the tabooistic nature of hair, especially long hair known from several examples.¹²⁵ The issue of sanctioning heathen subjects unwilling to assume Christianity and offering sacrifices to idols – the *Responsa* describes that in certain cases the sacrifice was the first fruits¹²⁶ of the produce¹²⁷ – was raised by the delegacy before the pope.¹²⁸ They also inquired if the ill might continue to wear certain amulets they attributed curing effect to round their neck.¹²⁹

They also put some questions to the pope with regard to the notion of days suitable and unsuitable for fighting and traveling as well as the rituals, magic words and dances related to them; notably, if this practice could be made part of a people's life converted to Christianity,¹³⁰ to which of course the answer was no.¹³¹ In heathen faith, after their death suicides usually become harmful spirits, and to prevent them from returning they were not given the burial in accordance

¹¹⁶ „Responsa,” 91.

¹¹⁷ V. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte*. Amsterdam 1981, 358.

¹¹⁸ „Responsa,” 71.

¹¹⁹ Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, 359.

¹²⁰ „Responsa,” 62. Cf. H. Vámbéry, *Die primitive Cultur des Turko-tatarischen Volkes*. Leipzig 1879, 249.

¹²¹ „Responsa,” 43.

¹²² „Responsa,” 68.

¹²³ „Responsa,” 64.

¹²⁴ „Responsa,” 58.

¹²⁵ Cf. A. Brelich, „Appunti sul Flamen Dialis,” *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* 8 (1972), 17–21; W. Pötscher, „Flamen Dialis,” in *Hellas und Rom*. Hildesheim 1988, 422.

¹²⁶ Cf. M. P. Nielsson, *Primitive Religion*. Tübingen 1911, 71; Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, 386.

¹²⁷ „Responsa,” 89.

¹²⁸ „Responsa,” 41.

¹²⁹ „Responsa,” 79. Cf. A. Bertholet, „Amulette und Talismane,” in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Tübingen 1926, 315–317.

¹³⁰ „Responsa,” 34; 35.

¹³¹ Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, 382–384.

with customary ceremonies, or, in certain cases, no burial at all. So it was not by chance that one of the questions raised the point whether suicides should be buried, and if any kind of *sacrificium* should be delivered to for them.¹³² They buried those who died by natural death with due tribute to their memory raising a tomb over them; and they brought home the corpses of those killed in action.¹³³ Christian conversion, however, was not able to wind up the ancient religion immediately – the fact that the mission ran into opposition at several places is unambiguously indicated by the occurrence of a pagan revolt shortly before the delegacy was sent, which was put down and the fifty-two dignitaries involved in it were executed by Boris.¹³⁴ This is clearly stated in the *Responsa* too.¹³⁵

At several points the *Responsa* adverts to the Bulgarians' way of life and customary law before Christianity. So, for example, it unanimously reveals that polygamy was a generally accepted custom; otherwise they would not have asked the pope if a man might have two wives at the same time.¹³⁶ It was customary for the fiancé to give the fiancée gold and silver objects, oxen, horses and other valuable goods as dowry before the conclusion of marriage.¹³⁷ After her husband's death a widow was not allowed to marry again, and to prevent that in any case she was forced to live the rest of her life as a nun.¹³⁸ However, it was presumably a generally accepted practice that a man who became a widower married again as the *consulta* includes a question whether this practice might be maintained.¹³⁹ With regard to the items of the *consulta* that supply data on religious beliefs we have already mentioned that the Bulgarians wore a turban-like headgear made of linen.¹⁴⁰ The other typical article of their clothing was *femoralia* presumably similar mostly to trousers, which was worn both by men and women.¹⁴¹ The development of Bulgarian legal order took a decisive turn by assuming Christianity, but the *Responsa* supplies important information on the customary law of the period preceding it. A slave, who escaped from the owner, if caught, was severely punished;¹⁴² a slave slandering his master was treated the same way,¹⁴³ but the sources do not reveal anything else about the actual content of the sanction.¹⁴⁴

¹³² „Responsa,” 98. Cf. R. Hirzel, „Der Selbstmord,” *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 11 (1908), 75.

¹³³ „Responsa,” 100.

¹³⁴ Runciman, *Bulgarian Empire*, 105.

¹³⁵ „Responsa,” 18. Cf. V. Beševliev, „Zur Frage der slavischen Einsiedlungen im Hinterland von Thessalonike im 10. Jahrhundert,” in *Serta slavica in memoriam A. Schmaus*, hrsg. W. Gesemann, München, 1971, 37–41.

¹³⁶ „Responsa,” 51.

¹³⁷ „Responsa,” 49.

¹³⁸ „Responsa,” 87.

¹³⁹ „Responsa,” 3.

¹⁴⁰ „Responsa,” 66.

¹⁴¹ „Responsa,” 59. Cf. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, 396.

¹⁴² „Responsa,” 21.

¹⁴³ „Responsa,” 97.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode*, 414.

Similarly, a free man who fled from his country was severely punished, but the actual sanction is again unknown to us.¹⁴⁵ In this respect it is worth noting that the frontiers of the country were strictly guarded. Guardsmen failing to fulfill their duty and allowing either free men or slaves to flee were punished by death.¹⁴⁶ Death was the punishment of murderers of kinsmen.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, severe, presumably qualified death penalty was imposed on those who murdered their fellow-soldier,¹⁴⁸ or who was caught committing adultery with a strange woman.¹⁴⁹ They sanctioned negligent manslaughter,¹⁵⁰ theft¹⁵¹ – if a subject charged with theft or robbery was unwilling to admit his crime, the judge was allowed to wring confession from him by force¹⁵² – and abduction.¹⁵³ They punished those who castrated others,¹⁵⁴ who brought false charges,¹⁵⁵ and who gave deathly poison to others.¹⁵⁶ Women treating their husband badly, committing adultery and slandering their husband were threatened to be punished by abandonment, also incurred *eo ipso*.¹⁵⁷ Uprising was punished by death, which penalty was inflicted not only on the perpetrators but their families too.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, there are several highly important questions that concern the ecclesiastical organization: Is it possible to assign a patriarch to the head of the Bulgarian Church?¹⁵⁹ Who shall ordain the patriarch?¹⁶⁰ How many patriarchs are there actually?¹⁶¹ Which patriarch comes right after the pope of Rome in the church hierarchy?¹⁶² And, finally, is it true what the Greeks assert that chrism is made exclusively in their country, and is taken from there everywhere else around the world?¹⁶³ Special attention should be paid to a certain aspect of the question regarding the assignment of the patriarch: Did it manifest Boris's efforts to attain the establishment of a patriarchy for his country,¹⁶⁴ or he simply intended to obtain information on the structure of the ecclesiastical hierarchy?¹⁶⁵

¹⁴⁵ „Responsa,” 20.

¹⁴⁶ „Responsa,” 25.

¹⁴⁷ „Responsa,” 24; 26; 29.

¹⁴⁸ „Responsa,” 27.

¹⁴⁹ „Responsa,” 28.

¹⁵⁰ „Responsa,” 30.

¹⁵¹ „Responsa,” 31.

¹⁵² „Responsa,” 86.

¹⁵³ „Responsa,” 32.

¹⁵⁴ „Responsa,” 52.

¹⁵⁵ „Responsa,” 84.

¹⁵⁶ „Responsa,” 85.

¹⁵⁷ „Responsa,” 96.

¹⁵⁸ „Responsa,” 17.

¹⁵⁹ „Responsa,” 72.

¹⁶⁰ „Responsa,” 73.

¹⁶¹ „Responsa,” 92.

¹⁶² „Responsa,” 93.

¹⁶³ „Responsa,” 94.

¹⁶⁴ Runciman, *Bulgarian Empire*, 110.

¹⁶⁵ Dujčev, „Die Responsa Nicolai Papae I.” 142.

The former option seems to be more probable because by the assignment of the patriarch the Bulgarian Church could have been made completely independent of Byzantium by the ruler, and it would have been much less strictly and closely subjected to the Roman Church.¹⁶⁶ The Pope, however, very diplomatically evaded Boris's request, and not even mentioning the possibility of obtaining the dignity of patriarch he held out the prospect of appointing an archbishop to the head of the Bulgarian Church in the future. As a matter of fact, only in case he received proper report from his delegates on the conditions of Bulgarian Christianity.¹⁶⁷

Simultaneously with his letter and missionary work, Pope Nicholas began to deal with the issue of developing an independent Bulgarian ecclesiastical organization. (In 860, Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople, in accordance with the practice generally accepted and applied by the five patriarchs, asked Pope Nicholas to acknowledge his own, somewhat contested election. The pope made the granting of his approval subject to the acknowledgement of the papal claim to the Illyricum and Thessaloniki, that is, almost the whole of the Balkans including Bulgaria.¹⁶⁸ Although until March 862 Photios seemed to be willing to fulfill this claim, at a council held in Rome in 863 the Pope deprived him of his dignity and threatened him with excommunication – presumably he expected Photios's successor, Ignatios to be more permissive regarding the issue of the Balkans.¹⁶⁹) With respect to the Bulgarian mission, Pope Nicholas set out from the conviction that the territory of the Balkans was directly subject to the Pope's supremacy. However, he did not ordain the patriarch requested by Boris to Bulgaria. He merely held out the prospect of setting up an archbishopric independent of Byzantium.¹⁷⁰ Missionary work was commenced by the delegacy sent off to Bulgaria under the leadership of Formosus of Porto, the later pope (891–896), and Paulus of Populonia.¹⁷¹

Louis the German, who was called on by the Bulgarian delegacy in Regensburg, also pledged himself to send missionaries to Bulgaria. However, the preparations took too long, and the Frankish delegation led by Bishop Ermenich of Passau arrived in the Balkans only in the spring 867 where the Roman missionaries getting ahead of them had already begun to convert, preach and baptize.¹⁷² Gravely disappointed in his hopes, Ermenich waited for Louis the German's permission, and returned to Passau.¹⁷³ The conflict that manifested itself regard-

¹⁶⁶ Hergenröther, *Photius*, 2: 650.

¹⁶⁷ Obolensky, D.: *A Bizánci Nemzetközösség (The Byzantian Community of Nations)*. Budapest, 1999. 116.

¹⁶⁸ Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photius," 91sq.

¹⁶⁹ Dopsch, *Slawenmission und päpstliche Politik*, 325.

¹⁷⁰ „Responsa," 72–73.

¹⁷¹ H. Grotz, *Erbe wider Willen. Hadrian II. (867–872) und seine Zeit*. Wien-Köln-Graz 1970, 101sq.

¹⁷² *Annales Fuldenses a. 866; a. 867*; H. Löwe, "Ermenrich von Passau, Gegner des Methodios. Versuch eines Persönlichkeitsbildes," in *Der heilige Method, Salzburg und die Slawenmission* Innsbruck-Wien 1987, 228.

¹⁷³ Dvornik, *Byzantium, Rome, the Franks*, 122.

ing the Bulgarian mission revealed the tensions between the papacy and the Eastern Frankish Empire.¹⁷⁴ Photios, however, was not willing to tolerate Rome's intervention into his sphere of authority; and, therefore, at a Council of Constantinople in 867 he had Pope Nicholas I removed, of which the Pope, who died in the meantime, was not informed.¹⁷⁵ In the same year, however, the assassination of the *basileus*, Michael III and the removal of Photios completely changed the political constellation, and the plans of Pope Nicholas I concerning Bulgaria seemed to attain the stage of implementation after his death. Affairs reached a crisis when Rome did not keep Pope Nicholas's promise to set up an independent Bulgarian archbishopric.¹⁷⁶ Khan Boris turned to Pope Adrian II (867-872) with the request to appoint Formosus Archbishop of Bulgaria, but the pope saying that he could not transfer Formosus as bishop to another diocese did not fulfill the claim.¹⁷⁷ Certainly the actual cause must have been the influence of the anti-Formosus fraction in Rome produced on the pope.¹⁷⁸ A similar thing happened to deacon Marinus, who later became pope (882-884), when he was not appointed to be the Bulgarians' archbishop due to Adrian II's opposition; and deacon Sylvester proposed by the pope to take the archbishop's seat was refused by Khan Boris.¹⁷⁹ Beside personal conflicts, most certainly the pope's reluctance must have been due to the fact that he wanted to keep Rome's direct supremacy over the Balkans, which would have been hugely limited by setting up the archbishopric – that is why the papacy could not reap the fruits of its missionary policy pursued in this region.¹⁸⁰

Disappointed in the Roman Church, Khan Boris turned to Basileios I (867-886) and Patriarch Ignatios, and restored his relations with Byzantium. This was made official by the Council of Constantinople 869/70. At one of the last meetings of the Council – after having expelled the delegates of Rome – Bulgaria was placed under the control of the Patriarchy of Constantinople, and soon Ignatios ordained an archbishop and several bishops for the Bulgarians.¹⁸¹ Boris expelled the Roman missionaries from his country, and Bulgaria – already as an independent archbishopric – resisted Pope John VIII's (872-882) later attempts to win the country back to Rome.¹⁸² In the course of the missionary work commenced during the reign of Khan Boris – just like through the stages of Methodius's fate, who

¹⁷⁴ Dopsch 1987, 326.

¹⁷⁵ Dvornik, *The Photian Schism*, 91sq.

¹⁷⁶ Dopsch 1987, 326.

¹⁷⁷ Z. Kosztolnyik, "Róma és a területi egyház küzdelme a közép Duna-medencében a 9. század folyamán" [Struggle between Rome and the Local Church in Middle-Danube-basin in the ninth century] *Aetas* 12:2-3 (1997), 215.

¹⁷⁸ Grotz, *Erbe wider Willen*, 230sq.; Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, 2: 192sq.

¹⁷⁹ Grotz, *Erbe wider Willen*, 209sq.

¹⁸⁰ Dopsch, *Slawenmission und päpstliche Politik*, 327.

¹⁸¹ M. Eggers: *Das Erzbistum des Method. Lage, Wirkung und Nachleben der kyrillomethodianischen Mission*. München, 1996. 25.

¹⁸² Dopsch, *Slawenmission und päpstliche Politik*, 328.

performed conversion among the Moravians - Bulgaria served as a playground for power politics between Rome and Byzantium, and the Eastern Frankish Empire concurring with each other. However, the Roman Church, setting off with better chances owing to the Bulgarian's fear of the hegemony of Byzantium and thanks to Pope Nicholas I's agility and *Responsa*, in a few years' time lost its advantage gained in this respect because patriarch Ignatios, the successor of Basilios I and Photios was willing to raise Bulgaria to the rank of an independent archbishopric, which Pope Nicholas I and Pope Adrian II were from first to last reluctant to do.