

The Writings of St. Cyril of Turaū

BY

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Cyril, Bishop of Turaū, was one of the most interesting figures of his time, and the lack of detail concerning his life makes his personality all the more intriguing. On the one hand we have a glimpse of a humble monk, practising the most severe forms of ascetism; on the other, we find a man of great learning, far superior to that of the vast majority of his contemporaries, not only in Byelorussia, but among the East Slavs in general. His oratorical powers earned him the reputation of a second Chrysostom. Moreover he was a significant, if not very original, theologian — and there were not many theologians among the early East Slavonic writers. He was also a spiritual teacher. But what is of particular relevance here is the fact that, because of the variety and number of his works, the saintly bishop of Turaū was undoubtedly the greatest of the early Byelorussian writers and the first known Byelorussian poet.

The great number of manuscripts in which the works of St. Cyril have come down to us testify to his popularity throughout the early Slav world from Novgorod to Serbia.¹ Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the documents referring to the details of his life. Such reticence is no doubt most commendable in the case of a person who spent most of his life in the solitude of a monastic cell: it is, nonetheless, very exasperating to a biographer.

The only written life of Cyril is in the so called *Prologue*, composed during the Tartar domination, most probably at the end of the 14th century.² It is very short, but it enables us, with the help of certain

¹) For complete survey of manuscripts containing Cyril's works see: Н. П. Еремин, Литературное наследие Кирилла Туровского; Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы АН СССР, т. XI, Москва-Ленинград, 1955, стр. 346-367 (N. P. Eremin, *Literary heritage of Cyril of Turaū*; Proceedings of the Section of Old Russian Literature of the Academy of Sciences of USSR, Vol. XI, Moscow-Leningrad, 1955, pp. 343-367).

²) An early text of the Prologue can be found in: Н. К. Никольский, *Материалы для истории древнерусской духовной письменности*, ОРЯС, т. 82, СПб. 1907, стр. 62-64 (N. K. Nikol'skij, *Materials for the history of Old Russian spiritual literature*; Proceedings of the Section of Russian Language and Literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Vol. 82, St. Petersburg 1907, pp. 62-64). A somewhat different (and later) version was published in: *Творения с. таго Отца Нашего Кирилла, еп. Туровского*; изд. Евгения еп. Минского и Туровского, Киев 1880, стр. 296 (The Works of Our Holy Father Cyril Bishop of Turaū; Ed. Evgeny, Bishop of Miensk and Turaū, Kiev 1880, p. 296).

other documents and some facts gleaned from Cyril's own writings, to reconstruct, at least in outline, the life of the saint.

According to the *Prologue*, Cyril was born in Turaū and was the son of rich parents.

Turaū (Turow) today is a small town in South-eastern Byelorussia. There is very little left to indicate that it is one of the most ancient cities of that country. The Primary Chronicle mentions Turau under the year 980³, at which time it was already the capital of a principality. Its early importance is probably due to the fact that the city is situated on the river Prypiat, not far from where it is joined by its tributary, the Sluch. There was a trade route going from the Baltic Sea following the Nioman, Sluch, Prypiat, Dniepr, down to Kiev and so to the Black Sea, and Turaū was one of the towns on that route.⁴ About the year 980, or possibly a little later, the city was conquered by Vladimir Prince of Kiev, and did not regain its independence till about 150 years later. During that period it was considered part of the Principality of Kiev. It was governed by the Prince's representatives, but more often it was given to members of the Prince's family. Thus, although no longer the capital of an independent state, Turaū retained some of its importance. Several of the princes of Turaū were related by marriage to the noble families from the West and Byzantium, and this must have had a beneficial influence on the cultural life of the city. Thus the son of Vladimir, Sviatapolk, who was given Turaū by his father, married in about 1013 a daughter of the Polish king Boleslav. Another prince of Turaū, Jarapolk (d. 1087) married in 1073 Cunegunde of Orlamünde. The Brother of Jarapolk, Sviatopolk, was Prince of Turaū from 1087 till 1093, when he became Grand prince of Kiev. His second wife, Barbara, came from a noble Greek family related to the Byzantine Emperor (although the story that she was daughter of the Emperor Alexius Comnenos seems to be unfounded). After the death of her husband, Barbara and her two sons retired to Turau. There she lived till her death in 1124. She was buried in the convent of Saint Barbara, which she herself had founded.⁵

The importance of Turaū is also demonstrated by the fact that it was one of the first episcopal sees in Byelorussia. The tradition that the bishopric was established there as early as 1005 with a certain Thomas as its first bishop, cannot be confirmed. We are on more firm ground when we come to the 12th century. The life of

³) "For Ragvolod came from beyond the sea and reigned in Polatsk, and Tury in Turaū, and it is after him that they (the inhabitants) were called Turovites". *Повесть временных лет*, АН СССР, Москва 1950, стр. 54 (Chronicle of the Ancient years, Ed. Academy of Sciences USSR, Moscow 1950, p. 54).

⁴) M. Tikhonov, *The Towns of Ancient Rus'*, Moscow 1959, pp. 324-25.

⁵) N. de Baumgarten, *Genealogies et Mariages Occidentaux des Rurikides Russes, Rome 1927, pp. 10-11*. For princess Barbara see: Творения... Introduction p. VIII.

Blessed Martin of Turaū, a saintly monk who was cook to the bishop of Turaū, gives us the names of four predecessors of St. Cyril.⁶

The year 1157 marked a new phase in the history of Turaū. George, son of Jaroslaū, proclaimed himself prince of Turaū and expelled from thence Boris, son of Prince Jury Daūharuki. Thus Turaū again became independent. The Prince of Kiev with their allies tried in vain to reconquer the city. The citizens of Turaū, together with their prince, gallantly defended their newly acquired independence. In the end, the Princes of Kiev had to recognize this fact and concluded a treaty of friendship with George.

Turaū must, at that time have been a large and flourishing city, since it is recorded that it had about 40 churches and monasteries.⁷

It was during this golden age of the city that Cyril lived and wrote his works.

The *Prologue* does not give us the date of his birth. However, since, for the reasons given below, we believe he became bishop not later than 1169, and at that time he must have been about 40 years old, it seems that he was born not later than in 1130.

Cyril received an excellent education. There is no doubt however, that he acquired his knowledge not in the court of any prince, but in the quiet of a monastery. Thus his scholarship, although very vast, was limited to religious matters. His knowledge of sacred Scripture, particularly of the Old Testament, was astonishing. Some writers consider him the best biblical scholar among all the early East Slavonic writers.⁸ Strangely enough he seems not to have been so well versed in the New Testament: he once even makes the mistake of attributing to St. Matthew an old Indian legend about a blind and a lame man, which served as a subject for one of his sermons!⁹ The possible explanation of this strange error may be that Cyril read the Gospel only in passages arranged for liturgical use and was not acquainted with the book as a whole.

Cyril possessed a sound knowledge of the Greek Fathers of the Church and later ecclesiastical writers. Indeed his works were so "patristic" in character, that they were often included in the so-called

⁶) »Сказание о Туровском мнихе Мартине« (Story of the Turaū monk Martin). The text is given in Творения... p. 295. The names of bishops of Turaū mentioned there are: Simeon, Ignatius, Joachim and George, the last one being the immediate predecessor of Cyril. About Joachim we have notes in the *Ipaty Chronicle*, according to which he was Bishop of Turaū from 1144 till 1146. See: Полное Собрание Русских Летописей, Том II, СПб. 1908, Москва 1962, стр. 314, 330. (Full Collection of Rus' Chronicles, vol. II, St. Petersburg 1908 (reprinted in Moscow 1962) pp. 314 and 330).

⁷) К. Т. Калайдович, *Памятники Российской словесности XII-го века*, Москва 1821, стр. XII. (K. T. Kalajdovich, *The Monuments of Russian Literature of the 12th century*, Moscow 1821, *Introduct.*, p. XII).

⁸) G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, New York 1960, p. 71.

⁹) The name of the sermon is "The discourse on the soul and the body". It could be called a sermon with certain reservations only, since it was in fact a missive directed against Bishop Fedorets of Rostov (see below).

"Torzhestviennik" of "Zlatoust", i.e. collections of sermons from the Fathers of the Church. He was particularly influenced by the fathers of the period of Christian hellenism (Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Epiphanius of Cyprus etc.). He would have been able to read the works of those writers in Slavonic translations. On the other hand he must have known Greek in order to read Theophilactus the Bulgarian and Simeon Metaphrastes, whose works were not available in Slavonic translations.

All this together with the fact that Cyril undoubtedly possessed knowledge of rhetoric (which distinguished him from the other East Slav writers of his time), seems to indicate that Cyril was not self-educated, but had the advantage of formal instruction under an experienced teacher, most probably a Greek. One may wonder whether he had to resort to a center such as Kiev in order to find such a master. But perhaps it was not necessary. Indeed not many years had passed since the time when the Greek princess Barbara lived in Turaŭ, and there may well have been some learned Greeks in her entourage.

As a young man Cyril resolved to dedicate his life to God and entered a monastery in his native city. The *Prologue* does not indicate which monastery it was, but some authors think it was the monastery of Saint Nicholas.¹⁰ There Cyril "sought to please God, tiring out his body with fasts and vigils, and made himself a worthy dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit". There also he was "useful to many, teaching the people, and instructing monks to be humble and obedient to their superior, as to God himself, and to listen to him in everything". Indeed obedience was the chief characteristic of the saint's ascetic teaching.

Later Cyril embarked upon a more severe form of ascetic life and became a stylite. This was a very unusual and strenuous form of ascetism, and it was practised by a few monks in the 5th century in the Middle East, who, in their search for solitude, erected their cells above ground on a platform supported by one or more pillars. Hence the name of stylite from the Greek word "stylos" for pillar. The climatic conditions of Byelorussia would not allow anybody to lead such a life. Therefore it is probable that Cyril's pillar was not so much a pillar, as a pillar-like solitary cell, or a small tower (pyrgos), in which he enclosed himself. There, to use the words of the *Prologue*, "he prayed and fasted still more, and commented much on the Holy Scriptures".

As often happens in similar cases, Cyril's search for solitude had a completely opposite effect. He became so popular that when the bishop of Turaŭ, George, died, the Prince and people of that city petitioned the Metropolitan to appoint Cyril to the vacant see.

¹⁰) Cf. Творения... р. LXXX (Intro.); Е. Е. Голубинский, *История Русской Церкви*, т. I, полутом I, Москва 1901, стр. 794 (Е. Е. Golubinskij, *The History of Russian Church*, Vol. I, Part I, Moscow 1901, p. 794 /notes/).

As bishop, he "worked much in the Church of God, and, as regards Fedorets, the heretical bishop... the blessed Cyril denounced and anathematized him". This passage from the Prologue helps us to determine roughly the date of Cyril's appointment to the see of Turaū. Theodore (spitefully called Fedorets or Fedorets), obtained the bishopric of Rostiv in a way directly from the Patriarch, bypassing the Metropolitan of Kiev, to whose devious province this see belonged. Suspended by the Metropolitan, Fedorets began to persecute the clergy and the faithful who did not want to communicate with him. In addition, he started to preach some kind of unspecified heresy. Finally he was arrested and brought to Kiev, where he was tried and condemned to death. His arrest took place in the middle of 1169 and he must have died not later than in 1170.¹¹ Thus Cyril, who wrote a letter against Fedorets, must have been appointed to the see of Turaū not later than the beginning of the year 1169."¹²

At the enthronement of the new abbot Basil at the monastery of the Caves in Kiev in 1182 we read that, among other guests, the bishop of Turaū, Laurentius,¹³ was present. Thus it seems that in that year Cyril was no longer bishop of that city. He had either died, or resigned and retired to a monastery. The Prologue says that "having lived well and piously, and having guarded well the fold entrusted to him, he passed into the life eternal and unlimited", which makes the first alternative more probable.

The works of Cyril that have come down to us are various and many. There are some 30 prayers, two *canons*, and letters on the spiritual life. But it was his sermons that earned him the greatest fame and therefore they deserve prime consideration.

Altogether there are 8 sermons which can be attributed without any doubt to Cyril of Turaū, all of them for the Feasts and Sundays of the Eastern period. They are: 1. Sermon for Palm Sunday; 2. Sermon for Easter Sunday; 3. Sermon for the Sunday of St. Thomas, or Antipascha (1st Sunday after Easter); 4. Sermon for the Sunday of Myrrh-bearing women (2nd after Easter); 5. Sermon for the Sunday of the paralytic (3rd after Easter); 6. Sermon for the Sunday of the blind man (5th after Easter); 7. Sermon for the feast of the Ascension; 8. Sermon for the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council Of Nicea (6th after Easter).

On Sundays and feasts from Easter to Pentecost the Byzantine Church commemorates the events in which the divinity of Jesus Christ was made manifest in the most striking manner. The

¹¹) Fedorets was apparently at the beginning encouraged and protected by prince Andrew Bogolubski of Vladimir, who however later changed his mind, arrested Fedorets and sent him to Kiev. The Lavrenty Chronicle gives the date of his arrest and expulsion as 8th May 1169 (ИСРЛ, Vol. I, p. 355) whilst according to the *Ipaty Chronicle* this happened on 8th May 1172 (ИСРЛ, Vol. II, p. 551). The first date seems to be more probable.

¹²) See note 9.

¹³) *Ipaty Chronicle*: ИСРЛ, Vol. II, p. 627.

corresponding passages from the Gospel are read during the liturgy. They present a splendid opportunity for a skilled preacher, and Saint Cyril certainly does not lose this opportunity. Starting from the Gospel story, he dramatises it, often converting it into a dialogue between Christ and Thomas, or Christ and the paralytic, or between the angel and the women who came to the tomb of Christ.

Thus when the paralytic at the pool of Bethsaida¹⁴ tells Jesus about all his suffering and complains that he has no man who will put him into the water, Christ answers:

"How can you say that you have no man? . . . I became man for your sake, bountiful and merciful, and did not belie the promise of the incarnation... For your sake, having abandoned the sceptre of the kingdom above, I am wandering in the service of those below... for your sake, being invisible to the hosts of angels, I have appeared to all men: for I do not despise my image lying in corruption, but I wish to save him and to lead him to the understanding of truth..."

Let us note in passing the deeply patristic spirit of the passage in which the saint develops the idea of universal salvation through Christ along the traditional lines of Byzantine theology. Let us give another example from the discourse of the angel to the women at the tomb of Christ¹⁵:

"I will tell you of the charitable love of God who suffered for Adam who had fallen into corruption. This God came from heaven and was incarnate and made man in order to renew that which was corrupted and raise it to heaven... Adam stretched his hands to the fatal fruit and, becoming the slave of sin, descended from Eden to hell. Christ stretched out his hands on the cross and liberated man from condemnation and death."

Sometimes, when the subject permits, the sermon becomes a real mystery play, the action now on earth, now in heaven... Thus in the sermon on the feast of the Ascension, Cyril assembles on the mount of Olives not only the apostles, but also patriarchs, prophets and the whole congregation of the faithful. At the same time there is joyous activity above, where angels and archangels bring the cloud on which Christ is about to ascend to heaven, and prepare the throne of the Cherubim... The apostles, seeing that their Master is about to depart, cry out: "Lord, leave us not orphans, those whom Thou hast loved in Thy mercy, but send us the Holy Spirit, as Thou hast promised unto us." Finally Christ, after blessing all present, begins to ascend to heaven. Let us now quote the passage in full:

"Before Him went the angelic hosts, with fear and joy, wishing to open the gate of heaven; but the guardians refused to open the gate, saying: "This is the gate of the Lord, and no earthly beings can pass through it, for such is the order of God that no one should pass;

¹⁴) Sermon for the Sunday of the Paralytic. The Gospel read on this Sunday is John 5, 1-15.

¹⁵) Sermon For the Sunday of Myrrh-bearing women. Gospel: Mark 15, 43-47 and 16, 1-8.

now, however, we are astonished to see a man sitting on the throne of the Cherubim and attempting to pass the gate before the seraphim.' Then the angels announced to them the might and dignity of the Son of God, encompassed in the human body, and told them not to oppose the will of God, who made everything in wisdom. 'For — they said, — He went down, unseen by anybody, and He ascends in the form of a slave.' But they answered: 'We shall not obey till we hear the command of God.' Then Christ Himself cried out: 'Open for me the gate of righteousness, that I may enter and tell my Father what I did and how I suffered on earth.' Recognising the voice of the Lord, all the angelic powers fell down and cried out: 'Although we did not see Thee going down, O Lord, we adore Thee ascending in glory'."

The dramatic element is not the only means used by Cyril in order to achieve the desired effect. He likes to use an opposition of terms, as in following passage taken from his sermon for Easter Sunday:

"Jesus Christ was crucified as man, but as God he eclipsed the sun... As man he cried and gave his spirit, but as God he made the earth tremble... As man He was pierced in his side, but as God He rent in two the veil of the first Law..."

Cyril, employs repetition in order to underline his point. Thus in the sermon for the Sunday of the blind man,¹⁶ when Christ meets again the man to whom he gave sight and asks him if he believes in the Son of God, the latter answers:

"I believe, O Lord, and adore Thee! I believe in Thee, O Son of God, and praise Thee! I believe, O Lord, and announce Thee to the world as Christ the saviour of the world! I believe, O Merciful One, in Thy coming down on earth and Thy ascension as man..."

Much has been said about Cyril's sense of nature. Indeed he has some beautiful passages, especially when he compares the renewal of nature in spring with the renewal of creation through Christ. On closer examination, however, it seems that the source of his inspiration is not so much the countryside around Turaū as similar passages in works of Gregory of Nazianzus.¹⁷

Here are some examples taken from Cyril's sermon for the 1st Sunday after Easter:

"Today the spring in all its beauty revives the earthly nature; the strong winds, blowing softly, bring forth abundance of fruit, and the earth, nourishing the seeds, gives birth to the green grass..."

A little further on he continues:

"Now the lambs, newly born, and the calves, running through the pastures, jump and are happy to come back to their mothers, while the shepherds play flutes and joyously praise Christ..."

¹⁶) Gospel: John 9, 1-38.

¹⁷) For the influence of Gregory of Nazianzus on Cyril of Turaū see: Andre Vaillant, *Cyrile de Turov et Gregoire de Nazianze*, Revue des Etudes Slaves, Tome 28, Paris 1950, pp. 34-50.

Unfortunately, with the best of intentions, he spoils the literary effect by elaborating upon the picture:

"The spring is the faith of Christ, which through baptism produces the rebirth of man; the winds that blow softly are the sinful thoughts which, transformed by penance into virtue, bring forth fruit salutary to the soul, and the earth is our nature, receiving the seeds of the word of God..."

Although his sermons earned him the name of the second Chrysostom, there is practically nothing in them which would remind us of the great archbishop of Constantinople, so famous for his practical sense. In fact, the moral part is completely lacking. For that reason Cyril came under the heavy criticism of certain scholars, who saw in his sermons little more than an empty exercise in the art of rhetoric.¹⁸ Such criticism seems hardly justified. First it must be noticed that all Cyril's known sermons belong to the most solemn period of the Church's calendar and therefore one could expect them to be in the form of panegirics (Although it is true that John Chrysostom knew how to draw moral conclusions even on these occasions). Secondly, even if the moral teaching is lacking in them, Cyril uses his sermons to express some deep theological thoughts. On the whole they give an impression of joyous praise coming from a soul used to the contemplation of divine mysteries. Thus, if we want a comparison, we must look for it not in St. John Chrysostom, but rather in St. Gregory of Nazianzus.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to consider the spiritual and ascetical teaching of Cyril. We shall only mention that they are contained in his letter to the abbot Basil of Kiev and in his discourse on monastic life.¹⁹

We must say, however, a few words about Cyril's hymnography, which makes him the first known Byelorussian poet. Altogether Cyril wrote some thirty prayers: "for each day of the week", daily confessions of sins, prayer "for the departure of the soul"; and at least 3 canons.

The prayers are obviously written in the solitude of a monastic cell and are intended for private devotion. They are marked by a deep spirit of humility and the contrition of a sinful soul, tempered however by a serenity which comes from confidence in God's unbounded mercy. It is this confidence that makes the author break out into a hymn of praise, as in the following short prayer intended to be said on Saturday evening:

"Make me worthy, O Lord, to see the morning and the sun and to be preserved, with Thy help, from sin; and grant that I may praise Thy unbounded greatness. Thou hast made all this beautiful world for the service of us sinners: also make me worthy of these Thy gifts. I pray to Thee, O Merciful Lord, grant that one day I may

¹⁸) Golubinskij, *op. cit.*, p. 797-8.

¹⁹) On Cyril's Spiritual teaching see: P. Tatarynovič, *San Cirillo vescovo di Turov e sua dottrina spirituale*, Rome 1950; Also: Fedotov, *op. cit.*, p. 797-8.

see the unextinguishable, endless, incorruptible light of Thy face. And now, with Thy help, rejoicing in Thy mercy, I cry to Thee: Glory to Thee, consubstantial, undivided, life-giving glorious Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen."

Cyril's prayers were very popular and were often included in collections of prayers of the Church Fathers.

Canons in the Byzantine rite are hymns in honour of a feast or of a saint. Each *canon* consists of 9 songs (although the 2nd song is generally omitted), each being connected with one of 9 canticles taken from Scripture (8 from the Old Testament, the 9th the Magnificat). The verse linking the canticle with the corresponding song of the *canon* is called *hirmos*. Let us take for example the famous canon for Easter Sunday, written by John Damascus. Since the first canticle is the song of Moses after crossing the Red Sea (Ex. 15, 1-19), the *hirmos* of the first song of the canon is as follows:

"On the day of Resurrection let us, o people, be clothed with gladness; it is the Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord: for from death to life, from earth to heaven, has Christ our Lord caused us to pass, singing the hymn of victory."

Here we see clearly the link between idea of Moses leading Israel from Egyptian captivity, and Christ — the new Moses — leading us through his resurrection from death to life. Many *canons* are of great artistic beauty and among their authors there are such men as John Damascus, Theodore the Studite, Cosmas the Hymnographer, Sophronios and others.

Cyril wrote three *canons*. One of them, the great penitential *canon*, is mentioned in the *Prologue*, but its text has not been found. We are fortunate in having the texts of two other *canons*: the *canon* of supplication to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the *canon* in honour of Saint Olga, grandmother of "Vladimir the Great. It is the *canon* to Our Lord that interests us most here. It is much too long to be quoted at any length, but here are a few extracts from it. The *hirmos* of the first song reads as follows:

"Remembering Moses' right hand, escape, o soul, from sinful Egypt and turn away from the slavery of spiritual Pharaoh, so that, supported by the cross and with the help of humility, you may cross the sea of desires, crying: Let us sing to the Lord, for He is exceedingly great."

The last verse of the song is addressed to the Mother of God:

"Like the foolish virgins, I have no lamp of penance and have not acquired the oil of mercy; in vain I knock at the door: it is closed for me. O Mother of God! Save my soul from cruel sufferings."

As a further example here is the full text of the 6th song of the *canon*:

HIRMOS. Seated like Jonas,²⁰ within the whale of my evil deeds,

²⁰) The corresponding canticle from the Old Testament is Jonas 2, 3-10. The last but one verse in each song of Cyril's canon is directed to the Holy Trinity, while the last one is, traditionally, in honour of the Mother of God.

I cry out to Thee, O Christ: Before my soul perishes, take me out of the sinful depths and lead me into Thy holy Church and hear my prayer.

To Thee I fly, O Christ, asking for remission of my sins, with which I have burdened my wretched soul from youth till the present day: But Thou, O Merciful One, give me tears of repentance.

Thou art most merciful, O Christ, and Thou wantest not the death of a sinner: light up the lamp of Thy loving kindness and recover me — Thy lost coin — and, calling all the holy neighbours, make a joyous feast for angels and for men.

In vain thou labourest, o my soul, seeking to save thyself alone, if thou hast no help from God. Therefore I prostrate in adoration before Thee, O Holy Trinity: save me who puts all his hope in Thee.

Thou art greater than all earthly and heavenly powers, O Most Pure Virgin, Mother of God! Be my advocate before Thy Son and the God of all, that He may give me consolation on the day of judgement.

Finally it is hard to refrain from quoting the beautiful hirmos of the 9th song (linking this song with the Magnificat):

Being Virgin by nature, Thou didst give birth above nature to God who destroyed the curse of Eve and freed Adam from chains: pray now to Him that He may grant me remission of sins, that I may magnify Thee, O Mother of God, with a joyous heart.

The above examples are sufficient to show the difference between Cyril's sermons and his prayers and hymns. Any rhetoric, evident in the former, is practically absent in the latter. Instead, they are characterized by intensity and sincerity of religious feeling. The slight artificiality which can be detected in certain hirmi of the canon is due to the fact that Cyril tried to conform to the rules of traditional Byzantine hymnography. There is no doubt, however, that Cyril's prayers and canons are the finest things written by him. Some authors are of the opinion that they are among the best examples of Eastern religious literature of this kind.²¹

Cyril of Turaŭ wrote in his native language which was Old Byelorussian. One must bear in mind, however, that the differences between various Slav languages at that time were much less pronounced than they are today. They were still less evident in written works, which were very much influenced by Church Slavonic. Nonetheless those differences existed and they already included what

²¹) Cf. Ep. Макарий, *Св. Кирилл еп. Туровский как Писатель*; Исторический чтения по языку и словесности ИАН, СПб. 1857, стр. 165 (Bishop Makary, *St. Cyril, Bishop of Turaŭ, as a Writer*; Historical Lectures on Language and Literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg 1857, p. 165).

became later the characteristics of the national literary languages.²²

Cyril learnt his art of expression from the Greeks, but he did not, imitate them slavishly, as did many others of his time. Instead he adapted what he had learned to his own needs, taking into account the character of his own native language. In doing so, he revealed for the first time the beauty and richness of Byelorussian, and showed that it is capable of expressing the most sublime thoughts. In this lies the greatness of Saint Cyril as a writer.²³

APPENDIX

THE PROLOGUE LIFE OF SAINT CYRIL OF TURAŪ²⁴

On this day²⁵ we commemorate Our Holy Father Cyril, Bishop of Turaū.

The blessed Cyril was born and brought up in Turaū, being the son of rich parents. He liked not, however, the riches and the passing glory of this world, but rather he was constant in study of divine writings and mastered well the Sacred Scriptures. After a time he entered a monastery and became a monk. There he strived most of all to please God, tiring out his body with fasts and psalmody and making himself a pure dwelling of the Holy Spirit. He was useful to many, teaching (the people) and instructing monks to be humble and to obey their abbot as God Himself, and to listen to him in everything. For a monk who does not obey, as he promised to do, cannot be saved. Afterwards the blessed Cyril, wishing to undertake still

²²) "There are many reasons to believe that the local language of the people in 12-13th centuries differed little in its characteristics from the language used in the same places in 17-18th centuries... The greater part of particularities, which we now consider as characteristic traits of various East Slavonic languages, existed already then". А. А. Крывіцкі, *Наша Родная мова*, Мінск 1964, бач. 25 (А. А. Kryvicki, *Our Native Language*, Minsk 1964, p. 25).

²³) There are some of the more important editions of Cyril's works:

(i) Еремин, *op. cit.* in ТОДРЛ (See Note 1): Vol. XII, 1956, pp. 340-361; Vol. XIII, 1957, pp. 409-436; Vol. XV, 1958, pp. 331-348. This is the most recent critical edition of Cyril's sermons and ascetical writings.

(ii) Калайдович, *op. cit.* (See Note 7). The book contains Cyril's sermons and ascetical writings together with a few works whose authorship is dubious.

(iii) Творения (See Note 2). Contains Cyril's *Canon* of Supplication and prayers. Sermons in Russian translation only.

(iv) Никольский, *op. cit.* (See Note 2) on pp. 88-94 gives the text of Cyril's canon to St. Olga.

(v) Макарий, *История Русской Церкви*, т. III, СПб. 1857, стр. 96-149 и 310-339 (Макаry, *History of the Russian Church*, Vol. III, St. Petersburg 1857, pp. 96-149 and 310-339). In this book there are reproduced in full the text of the *Canon* of supplication together with some prayers in a version differing somewhat from that in Творения.

²⁴) The present translation is made from the text published by Nikolskij, *op. cit.* (See Note 2). The manuscript is probably from the end of 14th or beginning of 15th centuries.

²⁵) I.e. 28th April, the feast of Saint Cyril of Turaū.

greater tasks, entered into a pillar and shut himself in it. There he remained for some time, fasting and praying still more and commenting much on Sacred Scriptures. He became famous in all that country. At the request of the prince and the people he was elevated by the Metropolitan to the bishop's throne and was appointed Bishop of the city of Turaŭ, the one of this name not far from Kiev.²⁶ He worked much in the Church of God, and as regards Fedorets, so called because of his spite, the blessed Cyril denounced his heresy from the Sacred Scripture and anathematized him. He wrote many letters to the prince Andrew Bogolubski, works on the Gospel and the prophets, sermons for the feasts of Our Lord and many other discourses useful to the soul, as well as prayers and praises of many saints.²⁷ Having written all these many works, he committed them to the Church, which has preserved them till the present day for the instruction and consolation of the faithful people of Rus'.²⁸ Thus, having run his course well and piously and having looked well after the flock entrusted to him, he passed over to the life eternal and everlasting. Let us come today, brethren, and praise this holy bishop, saying: Hail, noble hierarch, teacher, second Chrysostom, who shined forth more than any other in Rus'. Hail, thou who with thy holy and resplendent teaching enlightened every corner of Rus'. Hail, thou who, like a sun, brought the light of divine knowledge to those who were in the shadows and in darkness. We entreat Thee, offering this our humble supplication: Pray for us to the Almighty, in whose presence Thou dardest now to stand, that we may be delivered from our present afflictions and freed from the godless Agarians²⁹ tormenting us all the time. May we also, through thy prayers, obtain mercy and the remission of sins and the enjoyment of eternal goods in the life to come in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

²⁶) There was another Turaŭ not far from Polatsak (Polack).

²⁷) In the text of the Prologue published in Творения (See Note 2) this passage reads as follows: "He wrote many letters to the prince Andrew Bogolubski concerning the Gospel and the Prophets; these are read on the Feasts of Our Lord. He also wrote many other discourses useful to the soul, such as prayers and praises of many (saints), and composed the great penitential canon to Our Lord according to the letters of the alphabet". This passage is interesting because of the reference to the Great canon. However it incorrectly identifies Cyril's letters to prince Andrew Bogolubski (which have not yet been found) with his sermons for the Feasts of Our Lord.

²⁸) The word "Rus'" was a generic name for the part of Europe comprising the present-day Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russia (or, rather, what was known not long ago as Muscovy). The nearest and most exact translation of this word into English would be "East Slavonic lands". To identify Rus' with present-day Russia is both incorrect and very confusing.

²⁹) I.e. Tartars.