

## Old Models for New Princes: Biblical Kingship in Kyivan Rus'

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*In loving memory of George S. Hay  
(1930–2019)*

IT IS VERY LIKELY that one of the first translations of a secular author into Slavic was Agapetos's *Ekthesis*, the seventy-two chapters of advice to Emperor Justinian by this sixth-century deacon, most likely of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> Agapetos's *Ekthesis* is one of the most relevant examples of the literary genre known as "mirror of princes," whose representatives in Byzantine literature amount to perhaps a dozen. Mirrors of princes resemble, of course, the other major literary genre dedicated to the actions of the rulers, the *basilikos logos*, though the latter was more focused on praising the ruler, while the mirrors focused rather on advice.<sup>2</sup>

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1. For a detailed analysis of Agapetos's work, see Patrick Henry, "A Mirror for Justinian: The *Ekthesis* of Agapetus Diaconus," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8, no. 4 (1967): 281–308. On the relevance of Agapetos for a discussion of political ideology in Byzantium, see Ihor Ševčenko, "A Neglected Byzantine Source of Muscovite Political Ideology," *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954): 141–79. On the differences between its reception in the East and West, see Ševčenko, "Agapetus East and West: The Fate of a Byzantine 'Mirror of Princes,'" *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 16, no. 1 (1978): 3–44.

2. In this context of advice, it is tempting, particularly in the framework of our current discussion, to include works such as Patriarch Photius's letter to Khan Boris of Bulgaria, or Nikephoros's letter to Volodimer Monomakh. On the former, see Joseph R. Berrigan and Despina Stratoudaki White, eds., *The Patriarch and the Prince: The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982); and on its relevance in transmitting the notion of an ideal court to the newly converted Bulgarians, see Jonathan Shepard, "Courts in East and West," in *The Medieval World*, ed. Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 14–36, esp. 28–29. On the latter, see the analysis of this and other

Agapetos's work belongs to the short and gnomic form of the genre, whose chapters are linked by acrostics. It established a long-lasting paradigm in Byzantium and, as we will see, in other places where it was translated. According to Agapetos, the ruler should combine sound moral principles with Christian virtues and a godlike philanthropy. Agapetos believed that as God's representative on Earth, the emperor should shape his kingdom into an imitation of heaven by exercising his own philosophy of piety and philanthropy. His model drew as much on Plato as on Eusebios, and it had great influence on the mirrors subsequently composed by emperors to their sons, such as those by Manuel II or Basil I. Eventually, two more virtues were added to the model initially coined by Agapetos, and by the eleventh century we find noble origin as well as personal military prowess as key strengths to be highlighted in the emperor.<sup>3</sup>

The translation of Agapetos into Slavonic most likely was first made in Bulgaria in the tenth century. There seems to have been a first, fragmentary translation with twelve complete chapters and sixteen fragmentary chapters. There is evidence that some fragments were used in the composition of the *Izbornik* of 1076. Later manuscripts contain fuller versions, although chapters 31 and 52 on temperance and equanimity in ruling apparently were never translated.<sup>4</sup>

Agapetos's treatise emphasized Christian virtues, and its influence, direct or indirect, is clearly reflected on similar pieces in early Kyivan

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sources relevant for Kyivan political thought in Francis Dvornik, "Byzantine Political Ideas in Kievan Russia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 9/10 (1956): 73–121, esp. 111–14.

3. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed., Alexander P. Kazhdan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), s. vv. "basilikos logos," "mirror of princes."

4. Francis Thomson has argued that an earlier Bulgarian translation can be established based on the evidence of a collection of aphorisms copied in 1072, which would have been taken in its majority from Agapetos, and on the presence of Bulgarisms, though at least two East Slavisms can be identified. See Francis J. Thomson, "Made in Russia: A Survey of Translations Allegedly Made in Kievan Russia," in *Millenium Russiae Christianae: Tausend Jahre christliches Russland, 988–1988; Vorträge des Symposiums anlässlich der Tausendjahrfeier der Christianisierung Russlands in Münster vom 5. bis 9. Juli 1988*, ed. Gerhard Birkfellner (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 295–354; reprinted with additional notes as chapter 5 in Thomson, *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Mediaeval Russia* (Aldershot and Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1999). For a discussion of its relevance for the 1076 *sbornik* and its relation to the Slavonic translations of Epictetus's *Enchiridion*, see Dmitrii M. Bulanin, *Antichnye traditsii v drevnerusskoi literature XI–XVI vv.*, Slavistische Beiträge 278 (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1991), 114–37. On the use of Agapetos and other literary sources in later Muscovite political ideas, see Bulanin, "Politicheskaja doktrina v aforizmakh: Maloizuchennye istochniki *Pervogo poslaniia* Ivana Groznogo Andreiu Kurbskomu," *Die Welt der Slaven* 64, no. 1 (2019): 87–107, esp. 101–2.

Rus' literature, such as the *enkomion* to Prince Volodimer in Ilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace*, as well as in the many *pokhvaly* to deceased princes that were included in the chronicles. Indeed, the idea of making a ruler *isoapostolos*—equal to the apostles, a worthy representative of God on earth—is common to mirrors of princes across Europe as well as to this cognate form of *laudatio*<sup>5</sup> that we have come to call *basilikos logos*, whose traces in medieval Slavic literature were highlighted by Henrik Birnbaum decades ago.<sup>6</sup> According to Birnbaum, the *basilikos logos* should contain certain points; namely, the emperor's origin, physical appearance, upbringing, habits, deeds in peace and war, four virtues (courage, righteousness, prudence, and good sense), philanthropy, and good fortune, the latter disappearing in Christianized forms in favor of piety.

If both paradigms are compared—Agapetos's and the *basilikos logos*—even though the comparison is necessarily made only upon the abstraction of much more detailed evidence, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. First, the virtues seemingly incorporated into the Agapetos model at a later stage of adaptation (that is, in the eleventh century) could be due to an influence from literary models such as the *basilikos logos*. Second, Agapetos's virtues (moral principles, Christian virtues and, particularly, philanthropy) seem to have been incorporated from the beginning into the literary paradigm of the *basilikos logos*, alongside other more descriptive characteristics such as physical appearance, upbringing, or habits. However, it should always be borne in mind, as mentioned earlier, that Agapetos's work is intended as advice to rulers, whereas the *basilikos logos* is an *enkomion*, and therefore their compositional aims and techniques are different.

Both these paradigms, however, are based on a Christological, New Testament approach to the virtues of the ruler, which also stresses the requirement, as Janet Nelson has stated,<sup>7</sup> to achieve sanctity through

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5. I use the Latin term *laudatio* for a type of text whose primary aim is to offer some biographical information and praise to the person to whom it is directed, whether dead or alive, religious or princely. *Laudatio* is, therefore, an encompassing label for a functionality of a text that could include a *basilikos logos*, an *enkomion*, a *pokhvala*, or a *vita*.

6. Henrik Birnbaum, "Byzantine Tradition Transformed: The Old Serbian *Vita*," in *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change; Contributions to the International Balkan Conference held at UCLA, October 23–28, 1969*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis Jr. (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972), 243–84.

7. The relevance of Janet Nelson's theory for our case will be analyzed later on. Her classic article was "Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship," *Studies in Church History* 10 (1973): 39–44.

good deeds. On the other hand, a different model, drawing more heavily on the kings and rulers of the Hebrew Bible, seeks to reinforce sacral kingship as an ascribed status. By analogy to all these kings of the Hebrew Bible, sacral kings depended heavily on the covenant between God and his people—and, most importantly, on the kings' obedience to the law of Yahweh—for delivering their respective nations from evil and destruction. Such a model could prove more helpful when the perception of apocalyptic times drew nearer. This article explores the use of such sacral models in Kyivan Rus' literature as one of the possible paradigms of divinely appointed rulers that became relevant in the construction of an autocratic model in medieval and early modern East Slavic political theory.

Aside from the use of quotations from relevant treatises on the matter from Byzantium, several types of sources—from legal documents to chronicles and other literary works, both originally composed or translated in Kyivan Rus'—have been previously analyzed in order to fully understand the political ideology of Kyivan Rus'.<sup>8</sup> This article focuses on the use of biblical citations by scribes as a compositional tool, and, therefore, less on the analysis of the texts themselves and more on the use that scribes made of parts of the Bible to convey a specific message. In this sense, the central issue is the agency of the scribe in composing the text, rather than a detailed analysis of the text itself, a path that, after many years of endeavors by both historians and literary critics alike, seems to have reached a number of dead ends. My focus, therefore, is on the scribes' choice, understanding that it was their agency and craftsmanship, put undoubtedly to the service of the ruling elites (whether political or religious), that led or guided them to construct a discourse at the service of these elites. This, in itself, is part of a construction of an ideology, because, beyond the text, the textology, and all the possible derivatives of reception theory, there is someone composing a text that we are now reading. My interest is in that someone.

The choice of biblical sources is relevant for several reasons. As I have mentioned above, and will develop further, the Bible presents at least two differentiated models for rulers, as it has been traditionally understood by medievalists and political theorists alike: a New Testament model based on acquired sanctity and encapsulated, one might argue, in the Sermon on the Mount as narrated by Matthew; and a model based on the Hebrew Bible kings that revolves around the idea of sacral kingship by dynastic rights. My contention is that scribes, in providing depictions of Kyivan Rus' princes, used the Hebrew Bible model with

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8. See notes 1 and 2 above.

increasing frequency in order, precisely, to underline the relevance of dynastic preeminence in the fight for the throne of Kyiv. It was, I would argue, the best possible way to reconcile a system of lateral succession with dynastic primogeniture by making God intervene as protector of only one of the dynastic branches in the conflict. It was also a form of adapting a model for princes that, while efficient for a political elite in Byzantium, where it was coined, was proving increasingly unfit for the Kyivan dynastic system, where blood ties and military prowess were key in the game of succession.

The choice of biblical quotations is also anchored in the hermeneutical standpoint of historical consciousness. All literary production took place in monastic scriptoria, whose members, due to their trade and lifestyle, were familiar, first and foremost, with the Bible. The relevance of the Bible as a compositional tool and of biblical keys to understand medieval Slavic texts was already highlighted by, among others, Riccardo Picchio.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the present study aims to overcome the biases one might expect when texts are analyzed using categories of reception theory only and focuses, rather, on the producer's point of view. As Gabrielle M. Spiegel mentioned in her classic article, "There is no way to determine a priori the social function of a text or its locus with respect to its cultural ambience. Only a minute examination of the form and content of a given work can determine its situation with respect to broader patterns of culture at any given time";<sup>10</sup> and furthermore,

We should, rather, seek to locate texts within specific social sites that themselves disclose the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discourse at any given moment. Involved in this positioning of the text is an examination of the play of power, human agency, and social experience as historians traditionally understand

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9. Riccardo Picchio, "The Function of Biblical Thematic Clues in the Literary Code of *Slavia Orthodoxa*," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 1 (1977): 1–31.

10. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 77. This article provides a very insightful analysis of the various approaches to the study of texts from the point of view of both literary criticism and history, highlighting the major shortcomings of the various theories en vogue for most of the twentieth century. The relevance of this article for my present research is twofold: first, for providing a parallel intellectual framework for my analysis; and second, as it will be explained later, for the way in which the author linked chronicle composition with a stronger concern about dynamic lineage in medieval France. Spiegel also acknowledges the debt of her own approach to Bakhtin's theory that "form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (p. 83).

them. Only after the text has been returned to its social and political context can we begin to appreciate the ways in which both language and social reality shape discursive and material fields of activity and thus come to an understanding of a text's "social logic" as situated language use.<sup>11</sup>

In this first approach to the study of the use of biblical quotations as a compositional tool in princely lives, I aim to uncover a possible shift in compositional models that could better adapt to the demands made by the elites. My analysis is mostly circumscribed to chronicles, as it was within chronicles where these lives or *vitae* were most commonly inserted.<sup>12</sup> The idea of granting relevance to chronicle writing as a reflection of an increasing interest not only in the place of a given country within the bigger history of the world, but also in dynastic claims, was another key point underlined by Spiegel in the above-mentioned article. Spiegel proposes that the weight granted to genealogy in medieval historiography occurred as a consequence of the importance of family and blood-tied transmission of patrimonial inheritance in medieval dynasties. Furthermore, she also asserts that such relevance

affected not only the message but also the form and literary modalities of medieval chronicles. To begin with, it supplied a model for the disposition of narrative material. As a formal structure, genealogy deploys history as a series of biographies linked by the principle of hereditary succession, which succession stands as much for the passing of time as for the legal notion of transference.<sup>13</sup>

Spiegel was right in highlighting this fact, but what becomes relevant as well is pinpointing which models of dynastic lineage were preferred and adopted by the reigning dynasties, as well as ascertaining whether such models could have changed with time.

Lives of princes should transmit, as Florent Mouchard has aptly pointed out, if not how princes really were, at least how they were dreamed or expected to be.<sup>14</sup> The repetition of certain topoi did even-

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11. *Ibid.*, 85.

12. On the discussion of *vitae* as a literary genre in Kyivan Rus', see Susana Torres Prieto, "A Godly Regiment in the Heavens Came to Help Aleksandr...: The Sanctity of Heroic Princes in Kievan Rus'," in *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, ed. Brian J. Boeck, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2012), 67–83.

13. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text," 79.

14. Florent Mouchard, "Les citations scripturaires dans la Chronique hypatienne," *Revue des études slaves* 74, no. 2–3 (2002): 419–29.

tually become a model to follow in princely descriptions, if the goal was to fulfill the “horizon of expectations” (*Erwartungshorizont*), as Jauss would put it, of the readers, who, in this case, would mainly be the political elites. It was also essential in providing a consistent model for the writer, who necessarily had to work for those elites.<sup>15</sup> The number of princely lives as independent literary works representative of a self-defined literary genre is limited, and they are mainly lives of princes-saints with a clear liturgical function.<sup>16</sup> Less hagiographic princes’ lives were usually inserted in the chronicles, very often in the form of a lament in the year of the prince’s death.<sup>17</sup> There are also a few *enkomia* that will be analyzed here. Together they constitute, to a large extent, the literature of the mirror of princes composed in Kyivan Rus’. Indeed, other medieval literary traditions do have more examples of independent works of literature that could be called a mirror of princes, or even a princely life. This fact should not confuse us as to the function that these laments and *enkomia* had in defining a princely model and, by extension, the limits and expected attributions of the ruler.

The adaptations of the Byzantine model into Slavic are often found in the *Pověst ’vremennykh lét* (hereafter PVL) from early times, frequently occurring, as Oleksiy Tolochko points out, as *pokhvaly*, or funerary *enkomia*.<sup>18</sup> The first example is the description of Prince Mstislav:

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15. Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Theory and History of Literature 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

16. Birnbaum, “Byzantine Tradition Transformed”; and Torres Prieto, “A Godly Regiment.”

17. I am referring to lives of Kyivan Rus’ princes written before the mid-fifteenth century, which are the main focus of my study. The two earliest and most famous were the lives of Boris and Gléb, amply studied in Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989). This does not mean that other lives of saints, princes, princesses, or martyrs were unknown in Rus’. Tvorogov’s catalogue lists 282 between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries; Oleg V. Tvorogov, *Perevodnye zhitiia v russkoi knizhnosti XI–XV vekov: Katalog* (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Al’ians-Arkheo, 2008). This certainly implies some knowledge of them, at least as a genre. More interesting, however, are the lives analyzed by Oleksiy Tolochko that were inserted in the chronicles, usually as laments over the death of the princes, and that also fulfilled the role of princely *enkomia*; see Aleksei P. Tolochko, “Pokhvala ili Zhitie? (Mezhdu tekstologiei i ideologii kniazheskikh panegirikov v drevnerusskom letopisanii),” *Palaeoslavica* 7 (1999): 26–38. We will return to this article later on.

18. Tolochko, “Pokhvala ili Zhitie?” Tolochko focuses more specifically on the Hypatian Chronicle, and the first part of his article is devoted to the life of the Prince of Volhynia, Volodimer Vasil’kovich (d. 1287). He talks about the very interesting notion of bricks or blocks (*kirpichi*) used by the scribe or scribes to create or recreate past princes’ lives. For Tolochko this is not just a compositional technique, but also a form of creating a

Въ лѣто 6544. Мъстиславъ изыде на ловы и, разболѣ ся и умре. И положиша и въ църкѣви у святого Съпаса, юже самъ (заложиль / създалъ) бѣ бо въздано ея при немъ възвыше, яко на кони стоячи рукою досячи. Бѣ же Мъстиславъ дебелъ тѣльмъ, чърмнь лицьмъ, великома очима, храбръ на рати, милостивъ, и любяше дружину по велику, имѣния не щадяше, ни пития, ни ядения браняше. (cols. 150:15–150:23)<sup>19</sup>

(In the year 6544 [1036] Mstislav went out hunting, and he fell ill, and he died. And he was buried in the Church of the Holy Savior which he had himself built; during his reign he had made it as tall as the hand could reach [of a man] standing on a horse. Mstislav was well-built, with a reddish face and big eyes, brave in the fight, compassionate and deeply loving of his retinue, with whom he was generous in revenues, drink, and food.)

This first description clearly matches some of the criteria of the *basilikos logos* pointed out before, such as a physical description, deeds in peace and war, some of the four above-mentioned virtues, and even, it could be said, philanthropy, although his generosity was mainly addressed to his retinue.

Slightly later, the description of Iaroslav placed greater emphasis on his Christian virtues as well as his cultural endeavors:

И бѣ Ярославъ любя църкѣвныя уставы, и попы любяше повелику, излиха же чърноризьцѣ, и књигамъ прилежа, и почитая часто въ дъне и въ нощи. И събра письцѣ мьногы, и прекладаше отъ Грекъ на Словѣньское письмо; и съписаха књигы мьногы, и съниска имиже поучають ся вѣрнии людие наслажають ся учения божьствнаго. (cols. 151:27–152:5)

(And Iaroslav liked the religious conventions and cared greatly for priests, but particularly for monks, and he greatly enjoyed books, and read a lot, day and night. He assembled many scribes and translated books from Greek into Slavonic writing, and they wrote [or

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dynastic narrative that became standardized and that, by underlining certain aspects, highlighted the sanctity of the dynasty and its members.

19. All citations of the PVL are taken from the critical edition in Donald Ostrowski, comp. and ed., with David J. Birnbaum and Horace G. Lunt, *The "Pověst' vremenykh lět": An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2003). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

copied] many books, and thus he obtained them, and by them faithful people are being taught and enjoy religious education.)

This description, conversely, lacks an adequate physical description, but offers a description of his habits and of his deeds in peace, rather than in war. Most importantly, neither of the two descriptions mentions any possible noble origin.

Later in the chronicle, the description of Prince Rostislav seems to be more similar to Mstislav's than Iaroslav's, since it offers a physical description and mentions his philanthropy, here addressed to the poor instead of his personal retinue:

Бѣ же Ростиславъ мужь добръ на рати, възрастьмъ же лѣпъ и красньнъ лицьмъ и милостивъ убогимъ. Умьре же мѣсяца февраля въ 3 днь, и тамо положенъ бысть въ църкѣви святаыя Богородица. (cols. 166:15–166:20)

(Rostislav was a man good at war, well built and fair-faced and charitable with the poor. He died in the month of February, on the 3rd day, and was buried there [Cherson] in the Church of the Holy Mother of God.)

It is only in the description of Vsevolod Iaroslavich that we read for the first time of his ancestors, his noble origin, as well as all his Christian virtues and good habits, strongly underlining his philanthropy:

Въ лѣто 6601, индикта 1 лѣто, престаѣи ся великыи кнѣзь Вьсеволодъ, сынъ Ярославъ, вѣнукъ Володимирь, мѣсяца априля 13 днь, а погребенъ бысть 14 днь, недѣли суци тѣгда страстьнѣи и дни суцю четвѣртѣку, въ нѣже положенъ бысть въ гробѣ въ велицѣи църкѣви святаыя Софѣи. Сиѣи благовѣрныи кнѣзь Вьсеволодъ бѣ (издѣтѣска / измлада), любѣя правду, набѣдя убогыѣи и въздая чѣсть епископомъ и презвутеромъ, излиха же любѣяше чѣрноризьцѣи, и подаваше требованиѣ имѣ. Бѣ же и самъ въздѣржа ся отъ пѣяньства и отъ похоти. (cols. 215:27–216:11)

(In the year 6601 [1093], the first year of the indiction, the great Prince Vsevolod, son of Iaroslav, grandson of Volodimer, died in the month of April, on the 13th day, and was buried on the 14th, followed by a week of mourning, and being a Thursday the day they laid him in the burial ground of the great Church of Saint Sophia.

This pious prince Vsevolod was from childhood a lover of justice, he provided for the poor, honored the bishops and priests, loved greatly the monks, and gave them whatever they needed. And he refrained from drinking and lust.)

Finally, Prince Volodimer Vsevolodovich Monomakh (cols. 264:15–264:23 and 281:7–281:16), the addressee of Nikephoros’s advice and himself composer of a work of advice to his sons, is described mainly as very close to the Church, once again underlining the virtues of philanthropy and Christian morals:

Володимиръ же такъ есть любьзливъ, любьвъ имѣя къ митрополитомъ, и къ епископомъ и къ игуменомъ, паче же чьрньчьскыи чинъ любя, и приходящая къ нему напиташе и напояше, акы мати дѣти своя. Аще кого видить или шюмна, или въ коемъ зазорѣ, не осужаше, нъ вьсе на любьвъ прекладаше и утѣшаше. (cols. 264:15–264:22)

(Volodimer was that kind, since he cared for the metropolitans and the bishops and the abbots, but most of all he cared deeply for the monks, and whenever they turned to him, he would give them food and drink, like a mother to her children. Whenever he saw someone making a fuss or doing something shameful, he would not judge him, but rather calmed him down peacefully and consoled him.)

All of the examples given here contain at least two, if not more, of the virtues that the *basilikos logos* was supposed to have; namely, the emperor’s origin, physical appearance, upbringing, habits, deeds in peace and war, four virtues (courage, righteousness, prudence, and good sense), philanthropy, and piety. Throughout the chronicle we find that descriptions of princes aim to emphasize not only their political and military deeds, but also their pious behavior. This attribution of a specific type of descriptive treatment to each prince according to his historical role corresponds not to a confusion of models on the part of the copyist, nor to a confusion of genres (historiography/hagiography), but rather to the opposite: the copyist, conscious of the relevant features to be highlighted on each occasion, underlines those dictated by tradition at each of the successive stages of transmission. This is a key point of the current study: that scribes made conscious and meaningful selections of the material available to them.

The attribution of virtues typical of saints to princes was a common phenomenon in the European Middle Ages. If indeed Tolocho

is correct and the funerary laments and panegyrics inserted in the chronicles functionally replaced the mirror of princes in Kyivan Rus'; and, moreover, if these forms of princely lives were not composed independently and subsequently inserted, but rather were an integral part of chronicle writing across all the lands of Rus',<sup>20</sup> then the use of literary topoi from saints' hagiographies to describe princes as martyrs aspiring to *imitatio Christi*, particularly in the first stages of Christianization, would certainly reinforce the idea that these princes had been given a divine mission—the defense of the land as well as the defense of the faith—with the conviction that if the dynasty was holy, so was the land over which it ruled.

Mouchard, in his own analysis of biblical citations in the Hypatian Chronicle, highlighted the characteristics that seem to have been shared by many of the princes: brotherly love, generosity, humility in battle, perseverance, temple building, and wisdom. It is important to underline that the last two virtues are mainly identified with Hebrew Bible models, either comparing the churches built with the Temple of Solomon, or defining a wise prince with the comparison “second to Solomon.” More importantly, perhaps, for the present purpose is that the two last virtues only appear with any frequency after the year 6683 (1175).<sup>21</sup> Are we observing a transition from a New Testament to a Hebrew Bible model, from sanctity to sacrality?

In the year 6784 (1276/7), for example, the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle relates how Volodimer Vasil'kovich decides to build a city:

И посемь вложи Богъ во сердце мысль блугу князю Володимирови, нача собѣ думати, абы кде за Берестьемъ поставити городъ. И взя книги пророческыя, да тако собѣ во сердци мысля рче: “Господи Боже сильный и всемогий, своимъ словомъ все созидаю и растряю, што ми, Господи, проявишь, грѣшному рабу своему, и на томъ стану.” Розъгнувъ же книги, и выняся ему пророчество Исаино: “Духъ Господень на мнѣ, егоже ради помаза мя благовѣстити нищимъ, посла мя ицѣлити скрушенымъ сердцемъ, проповѣдати полоненикомъ отпущение и слѣпымъ прозрѣние, призывати лѣто Господне приятно и день воздания Богу нашему, утѣшити вся плачущаяся, дати плачущимся Сивоону славу, за попель помазание...веселье, украшение за духъ уныния, и нарекутся роди правды, насаждение Господне

20. Tolochko, “Pokhvala ili Zhitie?,” 32.

21. Mouchard, “Citations scripturaires,” 422.

со славу, и созижють пустыня вѣчная запустѣвшая преже, воз-  
двинути города пусты, запустѣвшая от рода.” (p. 308)<sup>22</sup>

(Afterwards God implanted a worthy thought in Volodimer’s mind, and he began drawing up plans to build a city somewhere beyond Berestja. He took [down] the Books of the Prophets and thinking out loud he said: “My powerful and almighty Lord God, who creates and governs everything with His word. What wilt Thou reveal [now] to Thy sinful slave?”<sup>23</sup> Having said this, he opened the [Holy] Scriptures and Isaiah’s prophecy appeared before him: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; He had sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and sight to the blind, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn, to give those that mourn the Glory of Zion, to give them anointment and joy for ashes and beauty for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called generations of righteousness, and the plants of the Lord that He might be glorified, and they shall build upon the eternal wastes which had become deserted in previous times in order to raise up the deserted cities which were desolate for generations.”<sup>24</sup>) (p. 89)

From this prophecy, Prince Volodimer, the chronicler continues, built

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22. All quotations of the original text of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle are taken from the text prepared by Olga P. Likhacheva in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, ed. D. S. Likhachev et al., vol. 5, *XIII vek* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997), 184–357. All translations from the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle are taken from George A. Perfecky, *The Galician-Volynian Chronicle* (Munich: W. Fink, 1973).

23. Although these words are supposedly uttered by Prince Volodimer himself, they are very much inspired by the text in 2 Samuel 7:25–27, which recounts the prayer of David to Yahweh: “(25) And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. (26) And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. (27) For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. (28) And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: (29) Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.” All biblical quotations are given according to *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

24. Isaiah 61:1–4.

the city of Kamenets. This is the same Prince Volodimer whose gruesome death in December 6797 (1289) is described further on, and whose *enkomion* after death compares him with King David:

Паче милостынею бяше милостивъ, слыша Господа, глаголюща: “Аще створите братьи моей меньшей, то и мнѣ створисте,” паки Давидъ *глаголетъ*: “Блаженъ мужъ милуя и дая всь день о Господѣ не потъкнется.” Мужество и умъ в немъ живяше, правда же и истина с нимъ ходяста, инога добродѣянья в немъ много бѣаше, гордости же в немъ не бяше, зане уничижена естъ гордость предъ Богомъ и человекы, но всегда смиряше образъ свой скрушенымъ сердцемъ, и въздыхание от сердца износя, и слезы от очю испущаше, покаяние Давыдово приимъ, плачяся о грѣсех своих, возлюбивъ нетлѣнная паче тлѣнных, и небесная паче временных, и царство со святыми у Вседержителя Бога паче притекущаго сего царства земнаго. И чести тя обѣщника Господь на небесехъ сподоби благовѣрря твоего ради, еже имѣ в животѣ своемъ, добръ послухъ благовѣррю твоему, обителниче святая, церквы святая Богородица Марья, юже созда прадѣдъ твой на правовѣрнѣй основѣ, идеже и мужественое твое тѣло лежитъ, жда трубы архангеловы. Добръ зѣло послухъ брат твой Мстилавъ, егоже сотвори Господь намѣстника по тобѣ твоему владычеству, не рушаща твоих уставъ, но утверждающа, ни умаляюща твоему благовѣррю положения, но паче прилагающа, не казняща, но вчиняюща, иже нескончанаа твоя учиняюща, аки Соломонъ Давида, иже в домъ Божий великий и святыи его мудростю созда на святость и очищение граду твоему, иже всякою красотою украси, златомъ и серебромъ и каменьемъ драгимъ, и сосуды честными, яже церкви дивна и славна всѣмъ окружнымъ сторонам, акаже ина не обрящется во всей полунощий земля от востока и до запада. (pp. 343–44)

(But he showed his compassion best through charity, for he heard the [Voice of the Lord]: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto [one of the] least of [these] my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” And David said as well: “Blessed is the man who shows mercy and gives [alms] the whole day, [for] he will not err in the Lord.” Courage and reason resided within him, while justice and truth marched at his side. He also had many other virtues: There was no pride in him, because pride is condemned by God and man. He always humbled his appearance with a grief-stricken heart, sighing from [its inner reaches], tears streaming from his eyes. [Thus he imitated] David’s

repentance, weeping for his sins, for he grew to love eternity more than transience, heavenly [bliss] more than temporary [existence on earth] and the kingdom of God the Creator and His saints more than this fleeting earthly kingdom. And it has pleased God to make you a herald of honor in heaven because of your devotion [for which you were known] during your life. A good witness to your devotion is the Holy Church of the Blessed Virgin, the mother of God, which your grandfather built on the orthodox foundation and where your valorous body [now] rests, awaiting the archangel's trumpet.) (p. 109)

After which, his brother and heir Mstislav is described, naturally, as Solomon:

(A very good witness is your brother Mstislav whom God made heir of your power, who does not destroy your laws, but strengthens them; who does not diminish the institutions of your piety, but increases them; who does not undo, but creates; who finishes that which you have left unfinished, as Solomon [finished the works begun] by David; who built a great and holy temple of God with his wisdom that it may hallow and purify your city; and who embellished [it] with all manner of beautiful things—with gold and silver and precious stones and with sacred vessels [so that it] is a wonder to and renowned in all surrounding lands. Another like it cannot be found from east to west in all the northern land.) (pp. 109–10)

The relevance of Hebrew Bible sources in defining princely attributes becomes more evident, though, as time passes, and not only in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle. The use of these sources also crosses into other genres besides the princely life. Whereas there is only one Hebrew Bible reference in Ilarion's *enkomion* to Volodimer Sviatoslavich (a reference to the continuation of his works by his son Iaroslav, as if they were David and Solomon), the *Instruction* of Volodimer Monomakh, recorded in the PVL *sub anno* 1096 (6604), but probably inserted after Monomakh's own death in 1125, is abundant in quotations from the Psalter (quotations from Psalms 43, 37, 124, 56, 58, 59, 30, 63, 64, 34, in order of appearance). All these quotations focus on the special relation of the king to God, and of the protection that God gives to his elected king, particularly underlining the Lord's protection against one's own enemies, an essential part of the covenant between God and his people. Indeed, the lines in which Monomakh directly instructs his sons on how to behave morally are a paraphrase from the first chapter of Isaiah, rather than, for example, a summary of the Sermon of the Mount (Matt. 5–7). It might also be relevant that in the entry of the same year,

we find the first reference in Kyivan culture to the apocalyptic vision of Pseudo-Methodius, the mentioning of Gog and the Magog (a people first mentioned in Ezekiel 38), and, perhaps most importantly, the first mention of Alexander the Great as the messianic king who will deliver humankind when the end of the world comes. Interestingly as well, the description given of Prince Roman Mstislavich at the beginning of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle *sub anno* 1201 (6709) draws heavily on the descriptions of Alexander the Great as provided in Josephus and Malalas, including the detail of the Iron Gates:

[he], who conquered all the heathen nations and at the same time wisely kept the Divine commandments: He used to pounce upon the infidels like a lion and [full of wrath] like a lynx. He would annihilate them like a crocodile and pass through their lands like an eagle, for he was courageous as an aurochs. He emulated his grandfather [Prince] Monomax, who had destroyed the heathen descendants of Ishmael—called Polovcians—and banished [the Polovcian Khan] Otrok to the Obez land beyond the Iron Gates; [only Khan] Syrčan remained by the Don and subsisted on fish.<sup>25</sup> (p. 17)

I have argued elsewhere that Alexander the Great enters East Slavic literary tradition as a biblical king, so it could be argued that he is functionally being treated like other famous kings of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>26</sup>

Continuing with the inspiration drawn from the Hebrew Bible, Vsevolod III “Big Nest,” prince of Vladimir, is described in his obituary in the Laurentian Chronicle *sub anno* 1212 (6720) with the following words: “All lands trembled at his name, and his fame spread throughout the whole country.”<sup>27</sup> This phrasing is inspired by Isaiah 64:2: “As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy

25. “Одолѣвша всимъ поганьскымъ языкомъ ума мудостью, ходяща по заповѣдемъ Божимъ: устремил бо ся бяше на поганья, яко и левъ, сердить же бысть, яко и рысь, и губяше, яко и коркодилъ; и прехожаше землю ихъ, яко и орель, храборъ бо бѣ, яко и туръ. Ревноваше бо дѣду своему Мономаху, погубившему поганья измаилтяны, рекомыя половци, изгнавшю Отрока во обезы, за Желѣзная врата, Сърчнови же оставшю у Дону, рыбою оживъшю.” Likhachev, *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, 5:184. The description of the gates as made of iron is present in Josephus and Malalas, but not in Pseudo-Methodius or the Pseudo-Callisthenes’s *Romance of Alexander*, where it is expressly mentioned that they were made of brass.

26. Susana Torres Prieto, “A Hellenic Emperor at the Kyivan Court: Alexander the Great and Apocalyptic Kingship in East Slavic Historiography,” *Ruthenica* 15 (2019): 45–65.

27. “Сего имени токмо трепетаху вся страны, и по всей земли изиде слухъ его.” *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 1, *Lavrent’evskaia letopis’* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Eduarda Pratsa, 1846), 184.

name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.” The entry for the first year of his reign, 1186 (6694), starts as well with a reference to Jeremiah 31:35: “Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name.”<sup>28</sup>

Finally, references to Solomon’s wisdom and his building of the Temple, two of the virtues frequently used to describe princes, are found, as mentioned above, in the Hypatian Chronicle, and increasingly in later entries.

Another, later work should be mentioned here because it draws on the same repository of biblical images, although here the implications emerge more clearly. The *Life and Death of Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich, Tsar of Russia*, concerns Dmitrii Donskoi (1350–1389), the hero of the famous epic work the *Zadonshchina*. The *Life* was written at the end of the fourteenth century, shortly after his death, and is included in several chronicles of the first half of the fifteenth century, appearing under the year of his death. The author of the *Life* achieves a parallel between Prince Dmitrii and biblical kings not only by comparing him to Adam, Noah, Moses, and David, all of whom he surpasses, but also by comparing his dominions to Israel—for example, “In the years of his reign the Russian land flourished in the same way as once did the promised land of Israel”<sup>29</sup>—and his own enemies to enemies of Israel, equating Mamai with the Amorite king Og of Bashan, who was defeated by Moses: “And he acted in the same way as King Og of Bashan acted, bragging before the Lord’s Tabernacle of the Congregation in Shiloh, who perished there after being bragged.”<sup>30</sup> Of the four biblical figures with whom Donskoi is compared, only one, David, was king, but he was so by being directly appointed by Yahweh. David is the founder of the

28. “Въ лѣто 6694 (1186), мѣсяця мая въ 1 день, на память святаго пророка Іеремія, въ среду на вечерни, бысть знаменьє въ солнци, и морочно, бысть велми, яко и звѣзды видѣти, челоуѣкомъ въ очю яко зелено бяше, и въ солнци учинися яко мѣсяць изъ рогъ его яко угль жаровъ исхожаше: страшно бѣ видѣти челоуѣкомъ знаменьє Божье.” *Lavrent’evskaia letopis’*, 167.

29. The quotations from the *Life* are given according to the text prepared by M. A. Salmina in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, vol. 6, *XIV–seredina XV veka* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), 206–27: “И умножися слава имени его, яко и святаго князя Володимера, и въскипѣ земля Рускаа в лѣта княжения его, яко преже обѣтована Израилю” (p. 208).

30. “Аки и преже Агагъ, царь васанескъ, похвалися на кивот завѣта Господня, иже в Силомѣ: сице похвалився, самъ погыбе” (*ibid.*, 208). The English translations of this and previous lines are taken from Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, rev. and enl. [2nd] ed. (New York: Dutton, 1974), 315–22.

dynasty whose descendants Yahweh repeatedly promises to keep on the throne of Israel, despite their misdemeanors. The further identification of the Rus' land with Israel only reinforces the identification of Donskoi with David, who enjoys divine protection.

### CONCLUSIONS

Further study is required to fully explore the implications of the increasing use of models drawn from the Hebrew Bible in princely lives.<sup>31</sup> The kings of the Hebrew Bible are somewhat different from the aforementioned Christological, New Testament model of the "new Constantine," although they share some characteristics with late formulations of Agapetos and the *basilikos logos*, particularly on the key question of the noble origin of the king. The New Testament model emphasizes the necessary Christian virtues expected of a king.

By contrast, in the Hebrew Bible it is clear that the only real ruler is God himself, and the only law is the law he himself transmitted to Moses. This is the essence of a theocracy. Kings are, and certainly were, supervised and reprovved by the prophets, to whom God directly speaks, also on political issues, such as the description of a good monarchy found in the first book of Samuel. It is understood that pretending to rule, granting a human law, is an act of defiance against God, a hubris that can and will be condemned by God himself. The example of Saul illustrates how disobedience to God's requests is enough to lose the crown. The prophets and the whole religious class rule over kings, and the prophets are the only ones who can interpret God's will. The whole idea of governance revolves around two key concepts: messianism, or God's appointed rulers, and eschatology, particularly in apocalyptic literature or visions.

The kings of the House of David, like the saints, are sacral; namely, they do not achieve their sanctity, they are rather chosen by God because they belong to the right dynasty. It is precisely this aspect that, for example, the Franks wanted to underline when they also adopted

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31. There is still much material to examine in order to determine whether certain Hebrew Bible figures are used more than others. Undoubtedly, Solomon, for his wisdom, and David, for being the first of his successful ruling house, feature prominently. Certain books of the Hebrew Bible are used more frequently than others; for example, Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, together with Samuel, are extensively quoted or paraphrased, probably because, from all the repository available, these sources better expressed what the scribes wanted to say.

the topos of being the New Israel.<sup>32</sup> The comparison of medieval and early modern kings to Hebrew Bible rulers is not surprising, since there are no kings to be compared to in the New Testament, and that was one of the main reasons why kings had to be equal to the Apostles (*isoapostolos*) in order to be “special.” The equation of one’s own enemies with the enemies of Israel is not infrequent either, as seen in the description of Dmitrii Donskoi’s adversary Mamai as an Amorite king (a very descriptive simile). The Hebrew Bible seems to have been used in all possible modes in Kyivan Rus’—optative, descriptive, and prescriptive<sup>33</sup>—depending on the needs of the place and time; that is, on the *Sitz in der Zeit*.<sup>34</sup>

Whereas the lives of the first princes-saints created either models of sacrality in passion-sufferers, or sanctity models (closer, perhaps, to the Byzantine *basilikos logos*) in the lives of princes contained and recycled in the chronicles, the later lives and depictions, including what are purportedly self-depictions in the form of writings to one’s own heirs, lean increasingly toward Hebrew Bible models. This change of tone might not be casual or accidental, and it could well be the result of further independence from Byzantine/classical models that proved increasingly difficult to follow. In Byzantium, as it is known, the emperor was acclaimed once he assumed power, and his supremacy, at least until he died or was removed, violently or not, was generally acknowledged, even by the church over which he ruled. The Byzantine imperial dynastic model was less concerned with the right of blood that was important in the West and also becoming more relevant in Rus’, whose lateral system of succession made blood ties, in any degree, a good enough reason to justify not only assassinations of brothers, nephews, and uncles, but also increased the pressure on Kyiv from peripheral principalities eager to

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32. Mary Garrison, “The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne,” in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114–61. Nevertheless, as Garrison aptly points out, “Every allusion to Old Testament history, every borrowing of biblical language, every reference to the concept of the elect cannot be taken at face value as a literal-minded self-representation as the New Israel. Old Testament typology, like all comparisons, can function as either simile or metaphor; it can express a wish or a hope; it can purport to describe things as they are, or imply a prescription about the way they ought to be. Any attempt to interpret apparent evidence for covenant theology therefore requires one to consider which of these modes—optative, descriptive or prescriptive—was intended” (*ibid.*, 118). Indeed. While references to the Hebrew Bible in earlier writings do not necessarily point to a certain direction, they certainly provide a good repository of themes and images from which scribes drew inspiration.

33. As defined by Garrison, “Franks as the New Israel?,” 118.

34. See Torres Prieto, “A Godly Regiment,” 77.

acquire the right to the Kyiv throne. By contrast, a centralized Byzantium, like a centralized Rome before, did not allow for such upheavals. Thus the Hebrew Bible model, which privileged the right of blood and belonging to the right house as a prerogative to rule, might have been more to the taste of those who were the first recipients of these forms of mirror of princes: the princes of Rus' themselves.

Over time, therefore, after a period of imitators of Christ who were more keen on working hard to achieve sanctity with their own deeds and by their own means, sacrality in Kyivan Rus' seems to be bestowed less on the principle of sainthood than on the principle of belonging to the right branch of a family. The increasing number of references to the princes' parents and grandparents perhaps attests to a new concern of belonging to the right house or branch appointed by God to rule, and, in that sense, with the messianic concern that was not so evident in earlier generations. It could be argued that belonging to the right dynasty is a *sine qua non* of all medieval monarchies in Europe. It is no less true, however, that political ideology drawn from the Hebrew Bible was a better fit for an emerging state whose role in the eschatological history of Christian salvation was soon to be defined, if not already being defined, in the twelfth-century peripheries of Kyiv.

We have, therefore, ruling dynasties that not only adopted quickly the imported doctrine from Byzantium, but, as Vladimir Vodoff also points out, "transformed the sacralization of power into a cult of those who held it, the princes," which in any case was only replicating the "pagan conception of a prince assuming a sacral function."<sup>35</sup> Of course, in comparison with other traditions, none of the Rus' princes in the examples above were canonized and, as Janet Nelson pointed out, sacral kingship and royal sanctity are not wholly comparable phenomena: sacrality is an ascribed, not an achieved, status. Sanctity, on the other hand, is something that is achieved, not automatically bestowed, and it has to be acknowledged by others.<sup>36</sup>

The first lives of princes that were composed in Kyivan Rus' closely followed the hagiographic model of martyred saints.<sup>37</sup> In the description of the passive resistance of Boris and Gléb, the author tried to equate them to the other martyred saints and, ultimately, to the Passion-sufferer Christ himself. Their sanctity, in Nelson's terms, was not in their actions, but rather in their lack of them, and they only had to put themselves

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35. Vladimir Vodoff, *Autour du mythe de la Sainte Russie: Christianisme, pouvoir et société chez les Slaves orientaux (Xe–XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves, 2003), 66. My translation.

36. Nelson, "Royal Saints and Early Medieval Kingship."

37. Lenhoff, *Martyred Princes*.

in the hands of God to achieve sanctity. A further development was the *imitatio Christi* that some princes wanted to achieve by being and behaving like good Christians. In this New Testament model, where the sacral and political spheres are separated, the prince is expected to take inspiration from the Gospels, and behave like a shepherd with his sheep, guiding and protecting them. This active policy of the sacralization of power, however, does not die out after the first generations have achieved their longed-for political preeminence, and cannot be reduced to a more or less active policy of constructing religious or monastic buildings. As time went by, there seems to have been an increased demand for another model, one that would tie blood dynastic rights more closely to the divine protection of the land.

Aside from the members of the right branch of the family seeking confirmation, or confirming, their own legitimacy, the other great beneficiary of this political philosophy was the Church, who, like the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, presents itself as the only entity that can tell kings how to behave. The religious upper echelons thus acquired a tremendous, and local, power that allowed them to enter the political game directly. With its exclusive knowledge of God's wishes, the Orthodox Church, creator and custodian of the models described above, deprived of sanctity and at the same time granted sacrality to the princes of Rus', those who would eventually become grand princes, and later on tsars, all of them appointed directly by God, but closely scrutinized by patriarchs.

The addressees of texts such as Agapetos's treatise or other, similar forms of mirrors of princes must be understood as the princes themselves. Whether these *enkomia* were primarily addressed to the protagonist (if still alive) or the relatives or heirs of the deceased is debatable, but in no case did any of these forms of literature have a social or liturgical function that would validate any working hypothesis as to the religious or secular character of the audience or ultimate receivers. Monastic literary efforts other than liturgical or hagiographic tales served the interests either of the monastic community itself, or its patrons. In this case, the interests of particular scribes, which were not necessarily the interests of the whole or the official Church, did necessarily have to be aligned with those to whom they served. That does not mean that political elites dictated what had to be copied and composed or how, but rather that the knowledge of the scribes was sufficient to identify the relevant ideas that would please their patrons and use the available material to give them the form they wanted. If, at the same time, they could also advance their own agenda, the benefit was mutual.