

## THE PATTERN OF THE RELIGIOUS DISPUTES JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM FROM SPAIN TO CAUCASUS

ADRIANA MITESCU

The genre of competitions or debate between on the one hand the pagans' idolatries and the monotheism and on the other the three monotheist religions, is well diffused in the medieval Jewish and Arabic literature and in the Christian hagiographies. The pagans, such as: Egyptians, Chaldaics, Babylonians, Romans, Greeks, etc. had developed philosophical schools like Aristotelism, Neo-Platonism, Mazdaism, Shamanism, Gnosticism. The literary, religious and philosophical pattern of the competitions between pagans and Jews, Christians or Muslims enables missionary wise to compare the teachings and beliefs in an effort to prove the superiority of one or another religion. The tales begin with a general discussion of religion and prophecy and continue with descriptions of each of the three religions: principles, questions and objections followed by replies of the faithful and the heathen who will come round to new faith. The aim of any religious dispute is the conversion and thus the philosopher, the magian, the persian indovine, the wise, the Jewish scholar, the Christian monk ascetic or the caliph expound their faith. An early, unique and strange book seems to be Bardesanes' *The Dialogue of the Laws of Nations*<sup>1</sup> which dates back to the end of the third century, or short time after Bardesanes' death in 222. The text, written in Syrian language, is a synthesis<sup>2</sup> of the chaldaic astrology, the stoic and aristotelic philosophy, the ethnographic aspects of customs and institutions of different countries, the oriental wisdom and Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> BARDESANES, *The Dialogue of the Laws of Nations*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, vol. 2.

<sup>2</sup> F. HAASE, *Zur bardesanischen Gnosis*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, XXXIV, 4, Leipzig, 1910.

Eusebius<sup>3</sup> of Cesarea knew at the beginning of the 4th century the *Dialogue* from which cited the long fragment regarding the different Laws of the religious communities of Persians, Jews and Christians<sup>4</sup> which were scattered in the whole world.

In the present paper we intend to bring forward the role of doctrinary explanation inside of the textual structure of the religious disputations. In fact the dialectical demonstration, the scholastic explanation and all kind of means of convincing, lead the interlocutor to change his faith. Consequently, the assistants embrace Judaism or Christianity as we can see by using a multiple crossing reading the following texts: *Lives*<sup>5</sup> of St. Cyril and Methodius, *Povest' vremennih let*<sup>6</sup> (*First Kievan Chronicle*), the ascetic legend of Barlaam and Josaphat<sup>7</sup>, Judah ha-Levi's *Sefer ha Kuzari*<sup>8</sup> (1125), and *Jewish Correspondence*<sup>9</sup> between Hisdai ibn-Shaprut, the counsellor of the caliph from Cordoba and Khazars' Joseph king.

First of all we can observe that all the above-cited texts describe the disputations which take place on the extreme oriental boundaries of East Roman Empire, in Khazaria which was a vast territory where a conglomeration of different ethnic tribes lived. Turks, Persians, Slavs, Finishes, Goths, Jews, Arabs, Christians, Magians, nomads of the steppes, towns-men, cultivators and hunters, had different faiths and social developments. The Magians were adherents of the proscribed religion of Zoroaster and certain documents speak that this faith flourished also in Khazarian country<sup>10</sup>. At the same way other scholars speak about Zoroastrians of the Vikings who harried the coast of Spain or the pagans Rus', but such suggestion appears baseless if it is not well precised the date of these religion practices. In Khaza-

<sup>3</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VI, 10, 11, *Opera historica*, t. 3, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> F.C. BURKITT, *Early Christianity outside the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 1899.

<sup>5</sup> CYRIL AND METHODIUS, *The old Slavonic biographies*, ed. it. Milano, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> *Povest' vremennih let*, ed. rus. Lichachev, Moscow, 1950.

<sup>7</sup> *Barlaam y Josaphat*, redacción bizantina anónima, Madrid, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> JUDAH HALEVI, *Sefer ha Kuzari*, ed. Boringhieri, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> *Jewish Correspondence*, in *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, Ithaka, London, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> ZEKI ALIDI (*Ibn-Faqlān*, 319, n. 1) suggests the hypothesis of Buddhists among the Khazars.

ria there were some Christian groups scattered in different regions such as the group living in the mountains north of Tiflis. The Patriarch Photius advised the Emperor to send to Khazaria a his disciple, Constantine the philosopher. Undoubtedly Photius have felt a personal interest in Khazaria for it seems he was himself of Khazar origine. In fact, Cyril<sup>11</sup> go 'Khazarian way' from Crimea to Khazaria, by the Don-Volga route to the Khazar capital, Atil where he met the Khāqān. It is exactly the Khazars' Khāqān who proposed a competition between the religions for choosing the better one. It is quite surprising that the Jewish Spanish authors, however, had written in Spain their doctrinal treatises in a very messianic propaganda appealing to the Judaization of the Khazars and to the strong military independent kingdom where the Khazars' Khāqān and the aristocracy have professed Judaism. They used the textual structure of the *Letters* or of an immaginary dialogue between Khazarian King and the Jewish scholar who explains to him the Hebraic faith.

In Khazaria there were also adepts of Manicheism which the church considered an heresy but it is clear that we have to do with an independent religion diffused from Spain to China. There is a close link between the manichean doctrine and that christian. Mani himself was descendant from a family 'battisti' mandaic which practiced some Christian sacraments, such as baptism, communion, holy unction and Christian mystery of Messia and Holy Ghost. The Manicheism and the Christianity had different sects such as Jewish-christian, Christian-gnostic, Jewish-gnostics, samarit-gnostics, gnostics-sincretics<sup>12</sup>. In the *Life of Porphire* the diacon Mark tells about a 'disputatio' between the bishop Porphire and an woman manichean missionary, Julia who made proselyts in Gaza. During the disputation the woman was stricken by paralysis and she dead.

The Jews were already presents on the first half of the I century in Crimea according to the inscriptions in which it speaks of a synagogue. In the asiatic coasts in Pont and Bitinia<sup>13</sup> there were Jewish communities too. After the conquestion of Dacia in 103-105 under Trajan it seems that a great number of Jews were

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<sup>11</sup> CYRIL, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> J. DANÉLOU, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity (The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea)*, London, 1964.

<sup>13</sup> JOSEPH FLAVIUS, *Jewish War*, VII, V, 3,117.

arrived in Dacia with legio V Macedonica which was transferred after the Jewish war from Palestine to Mesia (Dacia). Also under Hadrian after the rebellion of Bar Kochba the Jewish slaves were sold on the coasts of Black Sea. During Roman Empire were discovered Jewish inscriptions in Dalmatia, Pannonia, Mesia and Thracia<sup>14</sup>. In the VIth century in *De Aedificiis* Procopius spoke about a tower on the Danube which was named 'Ιουδαῖος' for the Jewish merchants who penetred at East in Russia. It is well known that the Bulgars have adopted Jewish customs and faith before their migration in Mesia on the VIIth century<sup>15</sup>. The active presence of the Jews in the Roman Empire determined the church just on II century to conversion the Samaritans<sup>16</sup> as we can see in the christian polemics of Egesippe and Epiphane<sup>17</sup> who told about seven Samaritans' sects: the Samaritans themselves, the Samaritans of Gentile origine, Essens, Sabues, Gorthens, Dosithes and that of Jewish-christian of Ebionits.

We should take in account a historical detail concerning the two liturgical Jewish rites which alimented certain polemics between the Jews lived in different regions of world. There is a Palestinian rite comprising Italy, Balkans<sup>18</sup>, French-German countries, and the Babylonian one comprising Spain and Yemen. This division may be justified from the historical point of view since the Jews of the first group, originating from the Byzantine Empire accepted the Palestinian *piyyut* according to which the prayers were rendered poetically. The Jews of the second group, i.e., Greece, Turkey, communities from Persia, Aleppo, Crimea, did not accept the Palestinian *piyyut* and were letter influenced by the liturgical poetry of the great Spanish poets. The division is, however, not justified from religious point of view.

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<sup>14</sup> M. AVI-YONAH, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule*, 1984.

<sup>15</sup> THEOPHANES, *Chronographia*, ed Boor, Lipsiae, 1883.

<sup>16</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 22, 7, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Epiphane from Salamine, *Panarion*, XXX, col. 404ss.

<sup>18</sup> MARINA PUCCI, *La rivolta ebraica al tempo di Traiano*, Pisa, 1981.

*Who are the Khazars?*

The Khazars are known in the documents between the 7th and 10th centuries C. E. Their Turkic origin derived from Turkish etymology of name *quzmaq* (the wander) or *quz* (side of mountain exposed to the north). The Greek pronunciation is Χάξαρροι, that Arabic *Hazar* and in Hebrew is *Kuzari*, pl. *Kuzarim*. Originally the Khazars was a nomadic tribe reached the Volga, Caucas region from farthen east not easily determinable. In Theophanes' *Chronographia* the Khazars are called also Turks and Huns<sup>19</sup>. From 681 C.E. it seems the Huns of Varach'an, north of Darband or Caspian gates formed part of a Khazar confederation or empire. Henceforth from Crimea to the Volga and the Caucasus is considered the geographical area of the Khazars which will be conquered by the Slav state with the capital at Kiev.

We could note that the ethnic aspect of the Khazars' tribe is not relevant regarding to the coexistence or the conversion to one of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Theophanes who wrote a Chronography of the church reported precisely the different pagan tribes which lived together with the Jews and the Muslims. The ancient Great Bulgaria, for instance, c. 680 stretches from Sea of Azov along the river north of the Danube in Dacia. But in the area east of the sea lie Phanagouria = the medieval Russian Tmutorokan = modern Taman where the Jews lived. This detail can explain some Jewish customs of Bulgars which were been preserved also after their baptism. It considers that there were five Bulgarian tribes lead by five brothers. The first had remained in his ancestral lands. The second crossed the Don River and settled across from the first. The fourth and the fifth brothers crossed the river of Danube (or Ister) and then one came to the land of the Avars in Pannonia where he was subjected by the Avar Khaqan; the other reached the five cities by Ravenna, the capital of Bizantine Italy, where he came under the control of Christians. The third brother crossed the Dnieper and the Dniester and reached the Oglos or On-

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<sup>19</sup> THEOPHANES, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

glos, i.e. angle = lat. *angulus*. This triangle in Moldavia (Romania) is the land between the Prut and the Seret rivers north of the Danube. The Romanian name is *Unghi* with old forms: *ungl'u* (*înghi*) referred by H. Tiktin in his *Rumänisch - Deutsches Wörterbuch* and also by B. P. Hasdeu<sup>20</sup> who gave the same form *înghi* according to a document of property (*zapis*). Romanian language did not preserved the consonant group *gl'*. It is interesting to note that the termes which contain the group *gl'* are slavonic translation of the latin and proto-romanian words, such as a toponimic *Ugla* <rom. *unghi*> old slavonic *Oglu* (rus. *ugol*). Like that the general changes developed in the vulgar Latin in Romanian language the vowels unaccented fell such as lat. *angulus*> rom. *unghi*, *calidus*> *cald*, *dominus*> rom. *domn*<sup>21</sup>, ecc.

The tribes migrating preferred usually to occupy a territory secure from all sides on the rivers boundaries. The same situation will be at the south of the Danube in Thrace where Bulgars migrated. This division of Bulgarian migration, however, diminished the power of this Khazars' people which come from the far interior of the asiatic steppe and occupied the whole northern coast of the Black Sea. The emperor Constantine IV (668-685), according to Theophanes, 'was galled to learn that a foul, unclean tribe was living between the Danube' that means the land of old Dacia which was held by Christians. The emperor ordered a military expedition and moved against the Bulgars by land through Thrace and by sea.

The emperor marshalled his army on the land by the Oglos (*Unghi*) and the Danube because the Bulgars ravaged the villages of the proto-Romanian Christians. Theophanes reported the details of this military campaign to defend the latinized christian people against the salvage Bulgarian migration: 'when the Romans did not join battle because of the swamp, the disgusting tribe guessed their empty vanity, regained its strength, and grew more courageous'.

<sup>20</sup> B.P. HASDEU, *Cuvente den batrâni*, vol. I-II, Bucuresti, 1878-1879.

<sup>21</sup> AL. ROSETTI, *Istoria limbii române*, Bucuresti, p. 78. The early Slavs who entered in Dacia translated the latin names. The country and his people were named *Vlakhi*, *Vlasi* = Italians and also Romanians in old Slavonic texts. The term persists too in the modern West-Slavic name for Italy: Czech. *Vlchy*, Pol. *Włochy*.

After a cruel battle the Bulgarians chased the Byzantine troops to the Danube, crossed it, and came to Varna near Odysos and its hinterland. They chose like at northern where Romans defeated them a secure close territory from all side: from behind because of the river Danube and from the front and sides because of the mountain passes and the Black Sea. The Bulgarian tribes were pagans and they assailed and took cities and villages which first were under the control of the Christian East Roman Empire and the emperor finally made peace with the Bulgars and paid tribute to them like Theophanes wailed: 'was the fault of the Romans' disgrace over their great defeats. Folk far and near were amazed to hear that the Emperor, who had subjected everyone to himself, had been beaten by this newly arrived loathsome tribe'. He believed this had happened to the Christians 'because of God's will, and gladly planned to make peace'.

The event of the migration of Bulgarians' Khazarian tribes from the Kuban river in Mesia, i. e. Dacia, and then at south of the Danube in Thrace, and also the advance of other Khazarian tribes to the Black Sea and Crimea, all that has changed the equilibrium of the Christian Roman Empire, the security, the peace and the fertility of the lands in Dacia at north and at south of the Danube.

These dramatic transformations for the Christians have been reported also by the *Reply* of the Khazarian king Joseph who professed Jewish faith and was proud of his military power which came within the area of Greek economical, religious and cultural influence. By 700 C.E. or earlier there were Khazar officials in Bosphorus and Phanagoria (Tmutorokan). Khazars and Arabs had already been in the conflict in the region of Caucasus beginning with the first Arab-Khazar war in 642-652 C.E.

After the exile of Justinian II to the Crimea in 695 the Khazars are presents in Byzantine politics. Toward 704 the Khāqān helped the emperor at a crucial moment and gave him his sister Theodora in marriage. Justinian returned to Constantinople to reign a second time. His successor Bardanes (711-713) was likewise indebted to the khāqān. In 732 the emperor Leo the Isaurian married his son, the future Constantine V to a Khazar princess called in the sources Irene. The child of this marriage was Leon IV the Khazar (775-780). Evidently Irene and Theodora are baptismal and not khazar names.

During the second war Arab-Khazar in 722 which ended in 737 with the defeat of the Khazars by Marwān b. Muhammad is

said that the khāqān<sup>22</sup> have professed Islam. Later the khāqān was a Jew<sup>23</sup> as it results from the Arabic geographers such as Ibn Rustah (c. 903), Iṣṭakhrī<sup>24</sup> (c. 932), Ibn Hawqal<sup>25</sup> (977) and it is implied in the *Reply*<sup>26</sup> of Joseph that the beginning of Khazar Judaism dates as far back as 730. In this time the Khazars defeated the Arabs south of the Caucasus and consacrated a Tabernacle on the Mosaic model.

The extent of the territory ruled by the Khazars has been variously estimated, but we think, however, that at one time Khazar rule extended westward a long way beyond the Crimea-Caucasus-Volga region<sup>27</sup>. The *Chronicle* of Nestor reports that many Slav tribes which lived in this vast area paid tribut to the Khazars. In 859 C.E. the Polians, Severians and Viaticians paid them a white squirrel skin per hearth. Later these payments in kind ceased to be made, being evidently replaced by money payments<sup>28</sup>. All Slav peoples were exposed to attack coming up the valleys of the Don and Donets from Khazar territory; Kiev itself was occupied by the Khazars, especially the Huns for the some period before 862<sup>29</sup>. Regarding east of the Volga Al-Iṣṭakhrī<sup>30</sup> tells of caravans passing between Khwārizm and Khazaria mentioning specially Slav, Khazar and Turkish slaves and all kinds of furs.

According to the *Josippon*<sup>31</sup> chronicle of 10th century, Kha-

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<sup>22</sup> The Khaqan was greater than the king of the Khazars. When they appoint him they ask to him how long does he wish to reign. If he dies before the term, well, if not, he is killed when he reaches the year chosen by he himself. See M. GASTER, *The legend on the killing of the Khazar king* in Romanian, Greko-Slavonic Literatur, London, 1887.

<sup>23</sup> *Povest'*, p. see Golden Peter, *Khazar Studies, an historico-philological inquiry into the origins of the Khazars*, Budapest, 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Iṣṭakhrī-ibn-Hawqal, ed De Goeje, 220-226. Cf. SZYSZMAN SZYMAN, *Les Khazars: problèmes et controverse*, 'Revue de l'Histoire des Religions', n. 2, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn-Hawqal, ed. De Goeje, 278; see R. JEHUDAH OF BARCELONA, *Conversion to Judaism*, p. 157; BAR HEBRAEUS, *Syriac Chronicle*.

<sup>26</sup> *Reply* of King Joseph, in *Jewish Correspondence*, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> See the description of an inauguration ceremony described by Iṣṭakhrī which is conserved in a Chine sources on the Turks in the sixth century C.E. in Liu Mau-Tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Tuerken*, 1958.

<sup>28</sup> *Povest'*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> *Josippon*, ch. 64, see *Theophanis Chronographia*, *op. cit.*, p. 325, 3; 348, 29.



zaria could be originally Amalek which is the Byzantine name for the Armenians. It seems that Benjaminite noblemen was conquered Amalek under Saul<sup>32</sup>. The Benjaminites are already assumed to be the founders of Armenian Jewry in the time of the Judges<sup>33</sup>. The scholars sustain that the Khazar Jews were descended from Simeon<sup>34</sup>. Harmon, the Mountains of Darkness, is the name used by medieval Jews for the Caspian mountains. The Khazars were often taken for the Ten Lost Tribes including also Caucasus region. In the biblical age Armenia was conceived as the mountainous expanse in the north dominating the route from Erez Israel to Mesopotamia and extending to the boundaries of the known world<sup>35</sup>. The location of Armenia found in Jewish Hellenistic sources then adopted by the Muslims was also identified with a place further north in conformity with the Christian Armenian tradition.

Both Khazaria and Armenia were a literary model about the existence of autonomous settlements of 'free Jews'. Armenia kingdom of the legendary Christian eastern emperor Prester John was the overlord of a Jewish land. A geographical compilation *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* of 14th century states that the Caspian Jews<sup>36</sup> are tributaries to the queen of Armany, Tamara of Georgia (1184-1212).

### *About the Khazars' religion*

We can note that the three monotheistic religions speak about the Khazars who professed the respective three different rites but according to our opinion it is quite difficult on such contemporary or nearly contemporary documents as we possess to affirm precisely the date and the number of Khazars which

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<sup>32</sup> *Judg.* 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> *1Chron.* 4,42-43.

<sup>34</sup> *Lamentations Rabbah*, 1,14,42. This pass does not refer to the passage of the tribes through Armenia as is usually claimed but to the Jerusalem.

<sup>35</sup> The Jewish biblical commentators have developed geographical concepts concerning to area in regard to Paradise (Gen. 2,8), the divine 'mount of meeting' in the north (Isa. 14,13), the Garden of Eden (Ezek. 28,13-16) and the reviving of mankind after the Flood (Gen. 8,4).

<sup>36</sup> See the Jewish 'Gog and Magog' i.e. the Caucasus fortification dating from pre-Islamic times known as the Wall of Darband.

were organised in accordance with Jewish and the Islamic law, or the Christian Holy Scripture. We have only partial informations. For instance the date 737 indicates the circumstances of the reported conversion of the Khazars to Islam. The famous Judah ha-Levi in the historical and philosophical treatise *Kūzari*<sup>37</sup> suggested c. 740 like the date of the Khazars' conversion to Judaism. In the Christian hagiographies, for instance that of St. Abo of Tiflis who was in Khazaria c. 780 C.E., we could note the absence of distinct references to the Judaism of the Khazars. Also Cyril (Constantine the philosopher)<sup>38</sup> who was in the first mission in Crimea c. 860 said that there were Khazars who professed Judaism and the others, like the Samaritan, who were converted to christianity. We must take into consideration the Jewish authorities in Iraq, specially the Karaite<sup>39</sup> authors, who lack interest in the Khazars because these were imperfect adherents to Judaism. This is illustrated notably in their retention of a number of pagan shamanist customs which are duly noted by the Arabic geographers.

We could note that the information about a Khazar khāqān adopting Islam is related with the great Russian invasion and then khazarian leadership have need the help of Khwarizm<sup>40</sup> which implicitly means a religious conversion. After 965 the documents mentioned occasionally the Khazars as an independent people. According to the sources of the Cairo *Genizah*<sup>41</sup> was a messianic movement supposedly in Khazaria or in Kurdistan in the time of al-Afdal, the great Fatimid vizier who ruled 1094-1121. In spite of that, Oleg established himself in Tmutorokan<sup>42</sup> in 1083. Sometimes Khazaria indicates Crimea, sometimes the region of the mouth of Volga. By the 12th century the Cumans maybe the

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<sup>37</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 19. The author though that the Khazars' King adhered to the Jewish faith 400 years ago respect to 1140.

<sup>38</sup> CYRIL, *Life, op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> Karaites' sect (bene miqra = sons of reading or sons of the Bible) raised in 767 in Mesopotamia. They reject the rabbinic authorities and talmudic interpretations and proclame as unique authority the *Torah* written.

<sup>40</sup> See S. TOLSTOV, *In the Deserts of Khwarizm*, 'Asiatic Review', 40, 1944; V. ALTMAN, *Ansient Khorezmian Civilisation in the Light of the Latest Archeological Discoveries*, 1947, sustained that Judaism was brought to Khazaria in the 8th century through Khorezm.

<sup>41</sup> CAIRO *Genizah*, London, 1927; cf. *The Jewish community of the Arab world as portrayed in the document of the Cairo Genizah*, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> *Povest'*, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

Polovtsi appeared in the steppes once ruled by the Khazars. Then in the 13th century the Mongols were it in possession.

It is not surprising the conversion of the Khazars of Judaic faith to Islam because the affinities of Jewish and Islamic tenets and lore. It's well known that there were Jews among the early converts to Islam; it give rise, among Jews, to the cycle of legends on the Jewish teachers of Muhamman, and among Muslims, it said that Jewish converts plotted to under Islam from within by sowing deviations and heresies. The 12th century was marked by a wane of forced conversions in north Africa and Spain. In Jewish religious law it is technically impossible for a Jew who is born to a Jewish mother or properly converted to Judaism to change his religion. Even though a Jew undergoes the rites of another religion faith he remains a Jew. This attitude come from the covenant between God and Israel was made with him<sup>43</sup>. For the born Jew, Judaism is not a matter of choice and for the proselyte it ceases to be one once he has converted.

Let us see how the *Jewish Correspondence* described the difficult problem of the Jewish adherents among the pagan tribes of the Khazars. If this text is a historical source the latest date for the conversion would accordingly be A.C. 621 or 622. Isidore of Seville, however, has written: "Judaei mentientes nescio quem regem ex genere Iudaeorum in extremis Orientis partibus regnum tenere".

The scholars had a long polemic on the authenticity of the text of *Khazar Correspondence*. In an other manuscript is mentioned the name of Hisday, his good knowledge of Khazaria and also his authority in this land. These informations seem sustain the opinion of the authenticity. The passage is following: 'Hasday ibn-Ishāq thinks that this great long mountain [Caucasus] is connected with the mountains of Armenia and traverses the country of the Greeks, extending to Khazarān and the mountains of Armenia. He was well informed about these parts because he visited them and met their principal kings and leading men'.

We should note the fragment contains many exact geographical informations: the mountain of Caucasus connected with that of Armenia and Anatolia until in Greece at Constantinople

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<sup>43</sup> Deut. 29,10-15.

was well known to Jewish commerciants even 1000 years ago like it results from *Genizah Letters* and Procopius' historical works.

The tone of the *Letter* of Hisdai is one of inquiry which contains such questions like these: 'is there a Jewish kingdom anywhere on earth?'; 'how did the Jews came to Khazaria?'; 'in what way did the conversion of Khazars take place?'; 'where does the king live?'; 'to what tribe does he belong?'; 'what is the method of the worship?'; 'does war abrogate the Sabbath?'; 'has the khazar King any information about the possible end of the world?'<sup>44</sup>. It is obvious that such escathological question rise the doubt about the very historical authenticity of this correspondence even so Hisdai gives 961 as the terminus *ad quem*. The date 953-955 was a possible terminus *a quo*, for in those years Cordoba was visited by John of Gorz, the envoy of the German emperor Otto I. The *Reply* of Joseph contains the vast answers at the caliph's questions concerning the early history of the Khazars, the conversion to Judaism under Būlān<sup>45</sup>. In our opinion the *Letter* is a literary creation with a very religious and political aim. That is confirmed by the presence of the pattern of religious debate between the representants of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This type of narrative structure is used in all pragmatical texts of religious conversion: Judaic, Christian and Muslim. In this cas like in other similar situation of the religious propaganda, Būlān, hears the arguments of divan and at end accepts the religion of Israel. After a first king which adheres at the Jewish faith came another who organizes the religious institutions<sup>46</sup>. In this example Obodiah built synagogues and schools so that the people of Khazars became familiar with Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, the liturgy, and the rabbinic tradition. Like in the christian hagiographies, chronicles and religious panegiric narratives the king reminded his glorious predecessor. In our example the king Joseph traces his descent from Obodiah and gives a description of his country and of Jewish customs. The political and religious nature of such *Letters* is once again affirmed by the younger Buxtorf who published it in his edition of

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<sup>44</sup> *Letter* of Ḥasdāy ibn Shaprūt, *op. cit.*; cf. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Contra Iudaeos*, I, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Reply* to Joseph, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*; cf. J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*; cf. The arabic travels report the same information.

the book *Kuzari* of Judah Halevi in 1660. Obviously such text aroused the interest of Christians who have copied it if the only known manuscript, though it is undated of the *Correspondence* as a whole is conserved in the library of Christ Church at Oxford<sup>47</sup>. This manuscript is very similar to the printed text. Despite the very complex philological research of the authenticity of the *Hebrew Correspondence* and also the comparative study of short and long versions we prefer focus our analysis on the pattern itself of the narrative structure of the religious debate which precedes any conversion. The textual structure is exactly similar to other tales about religious competitions. For that before a such structure, in our opinion, any philological discussion about historical authenticity of the *Correspondence* became superfluous, because it keeps up a very historical custom.

Nevertheless, if we compare the *Jewish Correspondence*, a wonderful example of the Hebrew humanistic and liturgical propaganda, with historical documents become clear the big difference between, on the one hand, the poetical prayers of Spanish rabbinic authorities and of great poets, and on the other the short informations of the Byzantine Chronographs. The Greek historians were interested in the difficulty of the sovereigns from Constantinople to maintain the territorial unity<sup>49</sup> of the Christians reporting indirectly informations about Jews. Justinian who during his exile at Kherson accepted the help of the Khazars' Khāqān whose Judaization was not perfect, ruled after the model of the Christian basileus. In 686 Justinian sent a Roman force and subjected Armenia, where were Saracens, to the Romans, as he did in Iberia (Georgia), Albania caucasian, Baukania and Media (Dacia). Certainly, the them defended the christians of these territories but it is clear that the simple military control or the weakness of it represented an implicit possible forcing changing of faith. In 688 Justinian ordered the thematic cavalry, it means the provincial Roman army, to cross to Thrace because he wanted to take prisoners among the Bulgars<sup>50</sup> and the Sklavinoi which were pagans or partially Judaized. We should note that all wars during the migration of Khazars' tribes had also a

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<sup>47</sup> *Cambridge Correspondence, op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> *Jewish Correspondence, op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> THEOPHANES, *op. cit.*, p. 356,18; 359,8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem, Ex Div. Juss. Justiniani...*, ed. Mansi.

religious consequence which sometimes were developed literary disputes like the famous *Letters* in the medieval Muslim Spain and the *First Kievan Chronicle*.

*The origin of the disputation between Jews and Christians*

The first disputation between Jews and Christians may be considered in the period immediately after Jesus to question of the admission of Gentiles to the Church of the first disciples. According to Hebraic interpretation for male Gentiles accepting the Christian message it was especially the problem of circumcision which required an authoritative ruling<sup>51</sup>. To settle the disputes that had arisen on this subject, the 'apostles and elders'<sup>52</sup> went together to Jerusalem in what is known as the 'Apostolic Council'<sup>53</sup>. The meeting has discussed the Jewish *mitzvah*<sup>54</sup> where Peter<sup>55</sup> appears as the advocate of the admission<sup>56</sup> of Gentiles<sup>57</sup>. Also Paul<sup>58</sup> make himself as the advocate of the Gentiles.

Under Constantine the Great on the 18th September 324 the Christians became for the first time rulers of the Holy Land. Till such date the Jews had been engaged on the one side against Greek paganism in its Roman form, the 'empire', and on the other, the Jewish-Christian 'heretics' in Palestine. Till that time the Holy Land was space of the struggle of a monotheistic national faith with an international polytheism. This situation has changed when Judaism and Christianity confronted each other. The Romans kept their laws within the sphere of political matters while the Christian religion received with open arms all nations and lead them to salvation. The alliance of the empire and the Christian church represented a basic factor for a political crisis of the Jews in Palestine. The Constantine's Christianity was a very deep trust in the power of the Christian God who con-

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<sup>51</sup> *Acts*, 15,1; cf. *Lev.* 12,3.

<sup>52</sup> *Acts*, 15,2.

<sup>53</sup> *Acts*, 15,6.

<sup>54</sup> MITZVAH, *Acts*, 15,1.

<sup>55</sup> *Acts*, 15,7-11.

<sup>56</sup> *Acts*, 15,12-21.

<sup>57</sup> *Eph.* 3,6; 3,8; *2Tim.* 4,17.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*; *Gal.* 2,6-9; 14; 15-16; 17-18; 20-21; 3,7-8.

cedes the victory in the world and salvation after the death. Proclaiming Christianity a legal faith (*religio licita*) Constantine put the church on a level with the Jews' community. The church in this way was recognized as a public body. Eusebius in *Life of Constantine* mentions the law according to which Jews were not allowed to hold Christian slaves. Constantine and his mother Helena make Palestine a Christian country and began built splendid churches in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem.

We can observe that the struggle between the Roman empire and that Persian and furthermore, the despotic and often religious oppression of the East (Byzantine) Roman administration, alimented tensions of disputes between Jews, Samaritans and Christians. The Armenian historian Bishop Sebeos or the monk Astrategius of Mar-Saba reported in 7th century that Jews collaborated with the Persian conquerors against the Christians<sup>59</sup>. The Jews desired gaining authonomy for the Jewish communities of Syria and Erez Israel as has been attained by the large Jewish community of Babylonia. In opposition with the oppression that the Jews suffered under Byzantine emperors, during the reigns of the caliphs in 7th and 8th centuries the Jews as well as the Christians, enjoyed a tolerant tratament and they observed their religious rituals openly. In this time the Talmudic academies of Palestine and Babylonia were renewed. But in the first half of tenth century because the wars between various groups and military factions, the great Muslim caliphate began to desintegrate and Babylonia which was the center of this empire suffered. Thus begins a great emigration of Iraq in Jewish towards other cities in Syria<sup>60</sup> and Egypt where the refugees established their own synagogues and academies.

We could note that in fact the religious disputations between Jews and Christians are the first step of the process of the Jews' conversion. That has an historical aspect concerning the activity of the Christian missionaries and also the division and confusion of the Jews in Palestine. The Jews' conversion is the result of Constantine's edict<sup>61</sup>. The emperor was interested in con-

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<sup>59</sup> THEOPHANES, *op. cit.* The Magyars appear to be mentioned in Caucasus region by Ḥudūd al-'Ālam, ch. 22 written 372/982.

<sup>60</sup> M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule*, Jerusalem, 1984.

<sup>61</sup> J. VOGT, 'Constantinus der Grosze', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 3, cols. 306-379, Stuttgart, 1957.

verting the Jews and their leaders such Eusebius hoped for an imminent conversion of the whole of mankind, so that many of the Jewish leaders despaired when they contemplated the victory<sup>62</sup> of Christianity. In this period the church fathers deemed that the second coming of Christ must be at hand and one of its signs would be Jewish conversion. From the historical point of view it seems that the Jews' converts<sup>63</sup> were few, but from the theological point of view the conversion itself represents the new role of church which was now the true Israel. The religious disputation between Jews and Christians become difficult because the last were armed now with Origene's *Hexapla*<sup>64</sup> and also they could refer to the Hebrew original of the Bible. Therefore Rabbi Nahman averted all Jewish disputants: 'He who knows to reply to the *Minim* as well as could Rabbi Iddi, should do so, if not, he should not reply'<sup>65</sup>. The Palestinians who lived in the neighbourhood to the *Minim* or Gentiles are used to the Christian propaganda and consequently are constraint to study the Torah for replying, instead the Babylonians do not do so.

After the death of Constantine on the 22nd May 337 his three sons divided the empire between them. Palestine with the Oriental region fell to the eldest, Constantius II who became in 350 ruler of the whole empire and who made new anti-Jewish legislation with the clear aim to separate the Jews from the Christians. For instance, the emperor published in 353 a law which prohibited the conversion of Christians to Judaism and consequently the proselytes lost all their property<sup>66</sup>.

Ca. 665-700 many disputations and conflicts have arisen between Hebrews and Christians around the divine creation of man which is described in Gen. 1, 26. Furthermore, ca. 625-668 the Christian use of images of Jesus, his mother and of the Saints was another controversialy argument and a great polemic against the Jews who influenced the Muslim rulers to take away

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<sup>62</sup> D.M. DUNLOP, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 1954.

<sup>63</sup> ORIGENE, *Disputa con Eraclide*, Ed. Paoline, 1970; cf. ANASTASIOS THE SINAITE, PG 89, 1228-1238.

<sup>64</sup> ORIGEN, *Hexapla*, 245 C.E.; cf. JEROME OF JERUSALEM, PG 40, 848-860, PG 94, 409. Cf. B. JOHNSON, *Die armenische Bibeluebersetzung als hexapharscherzeuge im I Samuelbuch*, 1968.

<sup>65</sup> *Sanhedrin* 38b.

<sup>66</sup> *Codex Theodosianus*, XVI 8,7 (8 July 353); cf. V. CHANTAL, *Les Juifs dans le Code Theodosien*, vol. 33, p. 35-74, 1979.



from churches the crosses and the icons. In 873-874 Basil I caused many Jews to be baptized by force but a few of them manifested a spontaneous assent to Christ. The emperor invited them to come to disputations prepared to justify their faith. This was the first step before the submission to Christians the Jewish nation. He also promised to exempt them from the burden of the former taxes and to make honorable men of ignoble ones (*ἄτιμων*)<sup>67</sup>. Who agreed to the baptism had forsaken the Law that regarded by Jews as apostasy in the fullest sense. The Christian dogma of Incarnation and of S. Trinity<sup>68</sup> gave to the acceptance of Christianity an idolatrous character (*tavodah zarah*). The divergence between Jewish and Christian faiths led Jews to draw a strong moral<sup>69</sup> distinction between apostasy and proselytism. From an autobiography of an apostate<sup>70</sup> of the first half of the 12th century results the Christian conversion like the natural effect of gradual absorption of Christian idea and familiarity to the Christian mode of life through everyday contacts and conversation. Judah ha-Levi of Cologne was converted to Christianity and became a Premonstratensian monk.

In the context of conflicts and tensions that existed between Jews and Christians in medieval Europe the impulse to change the own faith, usually from shamanism to another religion, and from Judaism to Manichaeism and Islam was still more frequent than either side cared to admit clearly.

These kinds of tensions were evidently in the doctrinary books and we could cite that of St. John of Damascus who developed his demonstration according to the rules of disputation discours<sup>71</sup>. The author noted that the christian doctrine of the Word of God or the Spirit of God associated with the Word and especially of the Word manifest, demolishes on the one hand, the polytheistic error of the Greeks and on the other the teaching of the Jews, even so is good their opinion concerning the unity of nature. St. John of Damascus is openly polemic with the Jews: 'Should the Jew gainsay the doctrine of the Word and the Spirit,

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<sup>67</sup> ANASTASIOS THE SINAITE, PG 89, 931,933.

<sup>68</sup> PG 93, 1597-1609. Cf. S. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, PG 94, 127.

<sup>69</sup> See GEORGIOS THE MONK, PG 110, 1080; LEO GRAMMATIKOS, PG 108, 1088.

<sup>70</sup> *Hermannus quondam Judaeus, opusculum de conversione sua*, ed. by G. NIEMEYER, 1963.

<sup>71</sup> S. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Orthodox faith*, ed. latina, Venezia, 1748.

then let sacred Scripture refute him and reduce him to silence' and he cited Psalms of David and Job<sup>72</sup>.

Therefore, when he speaks of the divinity he emphasizes that Christians do not attribute the properties of the humanity to it, as like the Jews affirmed. "Thus we never speak of a possible or created divinity. Neither do we predicate the divine properties of the flesh for never we speak of uncreated flesh or humanity"<sup>73</sup>. In the case of Christ, however, the Christians called both God and man, created and uncreated, passible and unimpassible. Thus He received the properties of the co-existent nature, of the flesh and of the purity divine nature. Then, each nature communicates its own properties to the other through the identity of their person and their mutual immanence<sup>74</sup>. Dionysius<sup>75</sup> who was most learned in matters divine, said that the Divinity in its entirety has community with us in one of its Persons.

It is well known in the 12th century until the 14th and 15th centuries either the theological disputation especially in Spain, Cologne and also in Poland-Lithuania or the Halakhic deliberation between apostates who adopted Christianity and Judaism. The polemic of theological and spiritual argumentation was degenerated in a virulent anti-Jewish animus and also persecution of the Jews in Christian Spain<sup>76</sup>. At the time of the expulsions from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century the Jews distinguished the renegade apostates whom they considered an evil and the root cause of the persecutions and the people of forced converts, the *anusim* or Marranos<sup>77</sup> who practiced Judaism clandestinely. Also the Christian society was against both the Marranos and genuine converts alike. In Spain of the 15th and 16th centuries appeared the concept of the 'New Christians' who were not be equated with the 'Old Christians' of 'pure Christian blood'. Thus it could happen that the second general of the jesuit order Diego Lainez had to face opposition within the order because of his Jewish blood.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, ch. 7, p. 176. Cf. S. BASIL, *The Holy Ghost*, 18,46, PG 32, 152B.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, ch. 4, p. 276.

<sup>74</sup> *Bar.* 3, 36, 38.

<sup>75</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIOS, *Divine Names*, 2, 6, PG 3, 644BD.

<sup>76</sup> E. FALQUE, *Chronica Hispana*, sec. XII, 1990.

<sup>77</sup> See MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, *El Trato de Argel*, ed. critica F. ZAMANTAR; cf. E. LÉVI-PROVENÇAL, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 1944.

In conclusion to these few historical facts we could note that the Roman Empire became a Christian kingdom at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century. The world was for a long time pluralistic. It has been noted a continuing vigor of paganism and the vitality of Judaism and the Christian piety of many individuals.

It is not our intention to enter fully into discussion about the persistence of paganism and the Jewish proselytism in the later Roman Byzantine Empire, but it is helpful to keep this debate in mind in connection with the relation between traditional faith and the great event of the Christian conversion of Bulgarians and Rus', as well as the continue forced baptism of Jews and Muslims in Spain. Christianity is a powerful 'new' force. But the church is interested in the 'effectively christianity' of the peoples in cities of Bulgaria, Rus'<sup>78</sup> and Spain. The west Roman and Byzantine Empire had christian institutions, patterns of behavior, customs, morality, education, politics, family, public liturgies but it rested on the internal conversion of the heart and mind, i.g. authenticity and conscious choice, virtue and belief.

#### *About the content of the disputation*

Let us see the contents of such disputes arousing in the 4th century: 1. The Jewish disputants stressed strongly the Oneness of God who has no son, no father or brother according to Isaiah 44, 6: 'I am the first. I have no father; I am the last. I have no brother and beside me there is no God I have no son'<sup>79</sup>. Thus they denied the relation of Jesus to God as a 'Son of God'<sup>80</sup>.

2. The dogma of the Holy Trinity aroused still sharper opposition.

3. Another argument was the Covenant of circumcision<sup>81</sup> or the Baptism with water<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> See *Poučenie* and *The Letter to Oleg* of Vladimir II Monomach who put in light the deep conversion of personal feelings and repentance before God.

<sup>79</sup> *Is.* 44; cf. *Ex.* 29,5.

<sup>80</sup> *Esth* 8,12q; *2Macc.* 7,34.

<sup>81</sup> *Es.* 4,26; *1Macc.* 1,14s.

<sup>82</sup> ST. EPHREM THE SYRE, *Carmina contra Haereses*, 24,23 said that it is a link between *Temple/Tabernacle/Torah/Passover* and the *Holy Church* which is

The matter is extremely complex. As a religion, Judaism had great success among the peoples of the Greco-Roman world. Despite the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the cessation of temple worship the Jews maintained their traditional way of life because their tenacity and the capacity of their leaders to reinterpret their ancient traditions in the light of the new situation after the defeat by the Roman emperors Neron, Titus<sup>83</sup>, Trajan. Christian movement originally considered a sect within Judaism developed itself in different nations, societies and cultures. According to Christians the coincidence of the destruction of Jerusalem and the rise of Christianity seemed to confirm the end of Judaism<sup>84</sup>. Christianity call itself the 'true Israel'<sup>85</sup>. S. John Chrysostom mentioned that the Jews of Antioch practiced ritual bathing though, he added, that it is inferior to Christian baptism. According to Genesis Rabbach (19, 4) had a dispute in Antioch about the verse in Genesis 3, 5. The dispute centered on the word 'knowing' which in Hebrew is plural, because Elohim is also plural<sup>86</sup>. The Christians defended the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of an appeal to the plural Hebrew form of God.

At the end of the 4th century when John Chrysostom asked Jews: 'Why did you crucify Jesus' they replied 'Because he led the people astray and was a magician'<sup>87</sup>.

We must observe that all examples of christian hagiographies and Jewish philosophical and religious treatises or religious messianic *Correspondence*, like for instance the Hisday's *Letter* and king Joseph's *Reply*, describe the stages of the conversion. In Cyril's hagiography the Khazarian king from Kherson sent a letter to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople in which he denounced the Jewish pressing to convert all Khazars from Crimea to Caucasus and thus he demanded for a missionary philosopher which come to Kherson for explaining the christianity in an open dialogical debate with the Jews' scholars. The king promised to assiste attentively at this religious compe-

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built on the water of the baptism; cf. *Virginitate* 17,10.

<sup>83</sup> JOSEPH FLAVIUS, *Jewish War*, *op. cit.*

<sup>84</sup> ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum* 4,22. Cf. N.R.M. DE LANGE, *Origen and the Jews*, Univ. of Cambridge, 1976.

<sup>85</sup> *Galat.* 4,21.

<sup>86</sup> ha' elohim: Deut. 4,35; Is. 46,9; Elohim = the nature of divine creatures like as Sons of God (*Gen.* 6,2-4; *Job.* 1,6-2,1).

<sup>87</sup> ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *In Ps.* 8,3, PG 55,110.

tition for choosing the superior one. At the same way in Halevi's book the khazarian king was a good listener of the Christian and the Muslim arguments about their religion and when he realised that are the both based on Judaism, he called in a Jewish philosopher<sup>88</sup>. The following four chapters develop the dialogue between the king and the Jew concerning the attributes of God<sup>89</sup>, the prophecy<sup>90</sup>, like experience of God, the meaning of people<sup>91</sup> of Israel, of Erez Israel<sup>92</sup>, of Temple<sup>93</sup> and of Hebrew language.

According to tradition Būlān the Khazar king (730-740 C.E.) instituted Judaism in Khazaria. The 'Reply of Joseph king' to the *Letter* of Hisdai ibn Shaprut in the famous *Khazar Correspondence* refers to Būlān as a reforming king who drove the diviners and idolaters (i.e., shamanists) and accepted the Judaic monotheism in consequence of a dream or vision<sup>95</sup>. In consequence of another dream he made a successful military expedition<sup>96</sup> south of the Caucasus and then he consecrated the Tabernacle<sup>97</sup>, the Ark<sup>98</sup>, the candelabrum<sup>99</sup> and other cult objects. After a religious debate held in Khazaria on the merits of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, Būlān chose the last one which henceforth became the religion of the king and his servants. Accepting a new faith after a religious debate was the usual kind of the conversion. The Russian *Chronicle* reported the missions of Muslims, Latins, Jews and Greeks who expound the essence of their religions.

In his philosophical work *Sefer ha-Kuzari* Judah ha-Levi (1080-1141) speaks about a Khazarian king who came to him to learn about the Jewish faith. The imaginary king of this religious

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<sup>88</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 28. The Khazars' King chose the Jewish faith which is of use to prove the Law of God the Maker of the World.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 68.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 79. Halevi put in opposition *science* and *prophecy*.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 48, the divine principle rested on the people of Israel who received the word of God.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 73, 75; cf. *Deut.* 11,12; *Ex.* 23,41; *Gen* 22,14.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 111. The Hebrew language is superior, perfect and most rich because is the language of Adam whom God spoke.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 67.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 87.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 92.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 91.

dialogue is in fact the king Būlān. The author develops the principles of Jewish faith according to concepts of Aristotelic and Neo-platonic philosophy. On this basis is described the person of God, the Creation<sup>100</sup>, the gift of the prophecy, of the providence of the afterlife and particularly the content of the revealed Law. Halevi emphasizes the great role of revelation<sup>101</sup> respect to metaphisica because the Jewish Scriptures, the prayers and the liturgy are the only unimpeachably sources for the essential truths and the gifts of revelation and of the prophecy which are the gifts reserved<sup>102</sup> only for the people of Israel in Erez Israel. The Jewish people received this gift when he lived in full accord<sup>103</sup> with the Law revealed to Moses. It's very interesting that Halevi brings to light not the rational aspect of the ritual prescriptions accessibly to human reason but the irrational truths which are revealed<sup>104</sup>.

Certainly the Halevi's philosophical work is not a historical document<sup>105</sup>. On the contrary, the hagiography of the monk Cyril about his mission in Crimea with aim to convert the Khazars of the Byzantine area contains a lot of details which correspond to the historical truth<sup>106</sup>. The episode itself about the Khazarian Jews and the presence of the Jewish scholars is a very important information especially if we take into account the period of the restoration of icon<sup>107</sup> worship which was characterized by violent anti-Jewish manifestations.

The period of the polemics of Iconoclasm, the persecution of the Christians, the Jewish activity against the Christian images under the Muslim rulers, the violence and the confusion, all kind of sufferences were preserved in the historical sources. The dogmatic clarifying will remain for ever in S. John of Damascus'

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 142. *Sepher Yesirah*, 225. God created the world with 32 secret ways of wisdom, it means 10 sephiroth and 22 letters divided in three parts: 3 mothers, 7 doubles, 12 simples, i.e. the vowels, vowels longs and simples.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 152.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 63.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 76-77; *Gen.* 28,17; p. 94, *Gen.* 17,13.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 19: 'I thought to write the dialogue between the Jewish scholar and the Khazars' king like could been took place'.

<sup>106</sup> Artamanov: cf. IVAN DUJCEV, *Apocrypha Byz.-Slav.*, 1986.

<sup>107</sup> THEOPHANES, *op. cit.*; cf. ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Orthodox Faith*, *op. cit.*

*Orthodox Faith.* The theologian spoke courageously about the invisible nature of God who also becomes 'visible' through His creation that 'we know from the arrangement of the world and from governing'. The concept of 'image' is present just in *Sepher Yesirah* that Jews denied. The Son is image of the Father and image of the Son is the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is God and the Father is also God. The Son is also God.

We should note that the term image has several meanings. S. John of Damascus brings forward constantly the concept of image in Genesis, first of all respect of God who created Man after His own image, it means a likeness from visible and invisible creation. At the same way the Word of God is not an 'impersonal breath of air' but the power of speech, the Word manifest, living, self-moving, active, willing good. For that the prayer is an ascent of the mind to God. When the Christian asks of God he lifts him up to Jesus and through His sacred mind He opened the way for him to ascent to God.

Many of dogmatic distinctions, explanations or philosophical method of theological discourse which had been used by S. John of Damascus later has slipped into the monks' Chronicles, Sermons or liturgical teachings. It is clear that the conversion, the change of own faith adhering to another and also the observance of the purity of the new faith were quite difficult in this period of violent transformation, migration and wars.

A special and even curious kind of disputation turned out from the 106 questions submitted the Bulgarian prince<sup>108</sup> to Pope Nicholas I (858-86). Among these questions we could mention that of regulations for offering the first fruits<sup>109</sup>, the use of amulets<sup>110</sup>, the doubt concerning which day is the day of rest<sup>111</sup>, i. e. Saturday or Sunday, which animals and poultry may be eaten<sup>112</sup>, whether it is wrong to eat the flesh of an animal that has

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<sup>108</sup> V. TAMIR, *Bulgaria and the Jews*, New York, 1979. Cf. H. KASHALES, *Qoroth Yehudē Bulgaria*, Tel Aviv, 1971; cf. *Responsa Nicolai ad consulta Bulgarorum*, PL 119, 978-1016.

<sup>109</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, see, PL 119, R.n. 89.

<sup>110</sup> It is well known that Jews and also Christians used amulets; see R. n. 79, PL. 119.

<sup>111</sup> HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 78 said that the rest of Sabbath represents for Jews the desire to be as God after Creation; cf. *Lev.* 25,2; 25,23; see R. n. 10, PL. 119.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 88.

not been slaughtered<sup>113</sup>, see the rite of the question regarding how many days must a husband abstain from intercourse with his wife after she has given birth<sup>114</sup> recalling the prescription<sup>115</sup> and again, if should a fast be observed during a drought<sup>116</sup>. We could cite also the example of Leo Mung, born a Jew and later a pupil of the 11th century Bulgarian talmudic Tobiah b. Eliezer, who became archbishop of the diocese of Ochrida and Primate of Bulgaria. The czars of Bulgarians and Wlaks had a favorable attitude to Jews. During the Crusades many Jews have found refuge in Walachia and Bulgaria. Many Jews went to these territories from Hungary after the expulsion of 1376. In the long run these Hungarian Jews adopted the Sephardi customs of local Romaniots and Askenazim. Spanish Jews reached Bulgaria after 1490, settling in the trading towns in which Jews are then living. They came to Bulgaria from Salonika through Macedonia and from Italy through Ragusa and Bosnia. Jews conducted trade with Turkey, Walachia, Moldavia, Ragusa and Venice.

The early history of Bulgarian language and literature is closely linked with Jewish tradition. First of all the monk Cyril of Salonika (Constantine the philosopher) who created Glagolitic alphabet, the basic Slavonic script, later modified by Clement of Ochrid, i.e. so called the Cyrillic alphabet, had used the Greek symbols including several Hebrew symbols which represent certain phonemes of the old Slav tongue. The following letters: Б, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ correspond to Hebrew signs which are the phonetic equivalents of *b*, *ts*, *ch*, *sh*, and *shch*. This alphabet was necessary for translation of Greek liturgical works into Old Church Slavonic. The monks Cyril, his brother Methodius and their disciple Clement<sup>117</sup>, added a new version of the Bible translated from the original Hebrew. Cyril and Methodius had learnt He-

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 239-243. *Misnah* contains the precepts concerning the animals pures and impures and the methods of the slaughtering.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem.* Cf. P. REYMOND, *L'eau, sa vie et sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament*, 1958.

<sup>115</sup> *1King* 21,9; *2Chron.* 20,3; *Ne.* 9,1; *Esth.* 9,31; *Jer.* 36,9; *Gl.* 1,14; 2,15.

<sup>116</sup> *Lev.* 26,19s; *Deut.* 11,17; 28,22; 28,23s; *1King* 8,35; 17,1.

<sup>117</sup> Hrabr the monk, *O pisměneh* (Sulle Lettere), ed I.V. JAGIČ, *Razsuždenija stariki o tserkovno slavjanskom jazika*. The old slavonic alphabet contains: 24 Greek letters and 14 new invented letters. The diacritics signs and the accent of the Greek language developed confusion and heresies in the slavonic manuscripts. Consequently there is a strong religious and filological preparation of the monks copysts.



brew from the Jews' scholars of Salonika and Kherson. In their hagiography is reported they also had translated part of a Hebrew grammar. At the same way a Hebrew textual copy was used for the translation in Old Church Slavonic version of the Psalms in the 12th century *Psalterium Sinaiticum* which now is conserved at the St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai peninsula. Another famous medieval Bulgarian work translated from Hebrew is *Shestodnev (The Six Days)*, i.e. the tale of the creation of the world in the biblical tradition, composed by John the Exarch (b. 860). During the 11th and 12th centuries the Bogomils' movement, an heretical Christian sect, approximately the Western counterpart of the sect of Cathar or Albigensian, produced a religious literature rich in biblical themes.

Undoubtedly the Jewish books were considered to have magical powers and to be capable of working wonders and miracles. The books contained arcane ancient wisdom and stories about the creation of the world. In the Roman world these books were known as Jewish books, it means the Scriptures 'which are guarded by them'<sup>118</sup>. In that early Christianity of Roman and Byzantine empire Jews, pagans and Christians know that the books of Old Testament were Jewish Scripture<sup>119</sup>. Such was the situation which determined the translation from original Hebrew of Bible which Constantine the philosopher had realised after he had studied the Hebrew language with a Samaritan and a Syrian at Kherson<sup>120</sup>. We should remind that the philological and religious process of the biblical translation had alimented disputes and tensions between Jews and Christians. The Jewish authorities sustained that Christians 'only' had copies of the Jewish books. After much discussion for instance St. Jerome had become convinced that the only Bible Christians could use in disputes with the Jews who had the original Hebrew text<sup>121</sup>. In fact St. Jerome<sup>122</sup> learned Hebrew with a Jew from Tiberiade and he had a copy of the Hebrew text from his Jewish teacher because only

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<sup>118</sup> ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Jud. et gent.*, 2, 48, 415.

<sup>119</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Demonstratione evangelica*, 3, Preface 87a.

<sup>120</sup> ST. CYRIL'S *Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 75. Constantin/Cyril listen the Syrian speech so that he should understand the vowels, the accent, the letters and the pronunciation and he read the Psalms in Hebrew, Syrian and Greek languages.

<sup>121</sup> See *Genesis Rabbah* 19,4; cf. ST. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Jud.*, 7,3,919.

<sup>122</sup> ST. JEROME, *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*.

a Jew had the Bible in Hebrew. It is the same situation that was referred in the *Lives* of SS. Cyril and Methodius<sup>123</sup>. In the fourth century S. John Chrysostom had disputed with the Jews in Antioch over the Jewish books and the holiness of the synagogue<sup>124</sup>. He said that the Christians of his time thought the synagogue was a holy place because the Law and the books of the prophets can be found there.

Another theme of disputes between Jews and Christians was that of martyrs, particularly the Maccabean martyrs. In the fourth century emerged a Christian cult of the Maccabees and Chrysostom preached several sermons on the festivals of the Maccabean martyrs<sup>125</sup>, whose relics would soon become objects of pilgrimage. The Christian martyrs had given their lives in the name of Christ; their tombs had become objects of religious veneration and their bones were thought to possess divine power<sup>126</sup>. Looking at the tombs of martyrs said S. John Chrysostom, means Christian life, for the soul because through this sight is stirred to faith<sup>127</sup>.

Concerning the Maccabean martyrs the Jews emphasized that they died 'for the Law and the prescriptions of the Law; they were slaughtered because of the flesh of pork' while the Christians claimed that they 'poured out their blood for the sake of Christ'<sup>128</sup>.

There were also a conflict between Jews and Christians over the efficacy of their rites: Christians had baptism, the Eucharist rite, Epiphany, Easter, the tombs of the martyrs, the Gospel, the Creed, the Scriptures, the priesthood. The Jews had circumcision, the Sabbath, Passover, Rosh Hashannah, Yom Kipur, Sukkoth, the book of the Torah. The polemic questions are: whose traditions were most authentic; whose rites were more successful in ensuring the presence of the divine power; this divine power is found on earth?, how could access to it be achieved?

The calendar, the computation of the festivals and of the da-

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<sup>123</sup> ST. CYRIL, *op. cit.*, p. 78-85. Constantine the Philosopher had the disputation against the Jews according to whom the Bible preserved the Word, the Spirit, the divine Covenant, the Law like Covenant.

<sup>124</sup> ST. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *op. cit.*

<sup>125</sup> *IMacc.*, 6-7.

<sup>126</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, 6,2.

<sup>127</sup> ST. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Pan. Dros.*, 1,50,683-684.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem.*, *Hom. de Eleazar* I, 63,525.

te for celebrating the Pasch were a primary mark of Jewish or Christian religious distinguishing identity.

It is clear that the legitimacy of rites was measured not by religious arguments but by participating in the ritual.

We should note that the comparative analysis of the pattern of literary text which reports upon a dispute with the object of teaching the Jewish or Christian faith or of preaching the kingdom of heaven, shows up the liturgical prayers. The Jewish texts contain liturgical, halakhic, midrashic, grammatical, lexicographical, philosophical and chronological teaching, instruction, norms, rules and information. At the same way the Christian Chronicles, the liturgical teaching (*Poučenie*), the rules of monastic and ascetic life, the codes of behaviour of Christian basileus, his charity, his justice, the worship of the Lord, all that aims to preach the Gospel to the people. The literary works, written according to the pattern of the dialectic form of the religious competition, bring forward the same aim, that means to guide the community of Jews or of Judaizer proselytes and also that of the Christian nations to understand the very meaning and the intention of the divine book of the Torah and respectively of the Gospel, and to teach them to fulfill the commandments.

The conquests of Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries changed deeply the situation of Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Empire and in Persia. The Muslims reunified a vast territory from the borders of India to south of the Pyrenees. For the Jews this military success of the Muslims was seen as divine retribution for the oppression and perfidy of Byzantium and Persia. The Christian prohibition on the entry of Jews in the Holy City were lifted in 638 when Jerusalem was taken by the Arabs. For the Jews the Islamic conquest signified the unity of different region where lived majority of the Jewish people. Furthermore the Muslim Spain became a kind of Promised land for Jews because the new economic, commercial and religious situation of Islamic Spain gave rise to many Jewish personalities and families to be rich and to devote themselves to literature and arts. Hisdai ibn-Shaprut demonstrates the rise of a Jewish official and marchant to political eminence mainly on the basis of his personal abilities and culture.

We should keep in the memory this particular historical condition which linked the Spain of the 7th century and of the 15th century with the region of Khazaria and the Byzantine empire during the same period.

*The revelation of divine secrets and of the creation*

The Eastern Judaic and also Christian apocryphal literature preserved a great number of *Apocalypses*<sup>129</sup>. This literary genre denotes the works of Jewish revelations which flourished after the cessation of prophecy<sup>130</sup>. Such moment coincides with the beginning of the Christian writings that derived from the Jewish mysteries beyond the bounds of normal knowledge. The principle themes are: the secrets<sup>131</sup> of the heavens and the world order, the names and the functions of the angels<sup>132</sup>, the explanation of natural phenomena<sup>133</sup>, the secrets of creation<sup>134</sup>, the end of days<sup>135</sup>, the nature of God himself and the after eschatological matters. These writings are generally heretical Jewish, Christian or Gnostic apocalyptic books. The Hebrew terms are: *galeh* 'reveal', *gillayon*, *baraita* and also *hazon* 'vision'<sup>136</sup>. The classical period of Jewish apocalypse is from the II century B.C.E. to the II century C.E.. The basic principle is that prophecy, which had ceased, would be renewed only at the end of days<sup>137</sup>. In many cases it sees the end of days as a return to the events of creation. Therefore the virtual teachers are who had lived in the period of prophecy or the 'last generation', i.e., from Adam to Daniel included in the Bible. The narrative scheme contains: 1. an angel<sup>138</sup> who let out the mysteries; 2. the human hero who travels in the heavenly realm or he can see it in a vision; 3. the secret truths are communicated in the form of mysterious symbols<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> See *Book of Esdra, Apocalypse of Eljas and Sophonia, Apocalypse of Abraham, Ascension of Isaia*. Cf. *Is.* 13,9-22; 24,1-23; *Dn.* 10,1.

<sup>130</sup> *Num.* 16,15; *1Sam.* 8,18; *Gb.* 24,12; *Is.* 1,15; *Jer.* 26,6,9,18; *Mi.* 3,12; *Mt.* 26,61; 27,40.

<sup>131</sup> Hebr. *bara'* *Gen.* 1,1; 2,4; *Is.* 42,5; 45,18; *Qo.* 3,11; *Sap.* 2,22; *Dn.* 13,42.

<sup>132</sup> *Gen.* 16,7; *Ex.* 3,2; *Num.* 22,22; *1King* 19,7; *2King* 1,15.

<sup>133</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 229. The Letters of the consonants, the vowels, the quantity of the vowels, the accents, the secret combination of all these elements, the grammatical relation, the aspects of verbs for expressing the divine creation.

<sup>134</sup> *2Macc.* 7,28; *Sa.* 11,17; 9,9.

<sup>135</sup> *Sal.* 90,4; *Is.* 46,9-13.

<sup>136</sup> *Num.* 12,6-8; *Is.* 2,1; *Am.* 1,1; *Mich.* 1,1.

<sup>137</sup> *Wisdom.* 7,18; *Sir.* 48,25; *Is.* 2,2; *Dan.* 8,17-26; 8,19; 10,14; 11,27; 11,35-40; 12,4; 12,9; 12,13; *Mi.* 4,1; *1Cor.* 10,11.

<sup>138</sup> Hebr. *mal'ak jahweh*, *Is.* 14,32; *Mt.* 2,7.

<sup>139</sup> *Wisd.* 14,15-23; 6,22; *Dn.* 2,18; 28,47.

Obviously, the Daniel's apocalyptic book is the prototype for all later Jewish and Christian writings such as *Enoch*<sup>140</sup>, *Jubilees*<sup>141</sup> and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*<sup>142</sup>, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were apparently written from the time of John Hyrcanus. The apocalyptic view of life is the continue war between good and evil or demons as consequence of the early fallen of evil angels that developed a moral code of the history and of individual action in the world and also in the heaven.

In the Roman period apocalyptic writings emphasized especially the national suffering. The Psalms of Solomon speak of Romans, of Pompey and his death and of the messianic kingdom. 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* reflect the spiritual upheaval which followed the destruction of the Temple. Apart the typical mysticism and secret symbols, their chief aim is national and political. Certainly, it is not casual that during two centuries C.E. aroused writings centered around the revelation of the secrets of God and the universe, such as the Slavonic book of *Enoch*. The Greek *Apocalypse of Abraham*<sup>143</sup>, *Testament of Abraham* (I or II century C.E.), *Life of Adam and Eve*<sup>144</sup> and *Testament of Job*<sup>145</sup> are similar to Jewish ones.

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<sup>140</sup> *Book of Enoch*, in *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* Oxford, 1913; see G.W.E. NICKELSBURG, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishna*, London, 1980, and also 'God's Judgement in I Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel according to Luke, NTS 25, 1979, p. 324-344.

<sup>141</sup> *The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis*, translated from the Editor's Ethiopic, London, 1972; cf. M. TESTUZ, *Les idées religieuses du livre des Jubilés*, Ginevra-Paris, 1960.

<sup>142</sup> *The 12 Patriarchs*, the Editor E. TURDEANU, *Les Testaments des douze Patriarches en slave* in 'Journal for the Study of Judaism', I; 1970, p. 48-184; cf. R.H. CHARLES, *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Oxford 1908, and M. DE JONGE, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. A critical edition of the Greek Text*, Leyde, 1978; H.J. DE JONGE, *The earliest traceable stage of the textual tradition in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in M. De Jonge ed.

<sup>143</sup> *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *op. cit.*; cf. E. VON NORDHEIM, *Die Lehre der Alten I*, Leyde, 1980; *Il testamento di Abramo*, apocrifo giudeo-cristiano, Roma, 1995. Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE in *De civ. Dei* XVIII, XXIX said that the Hebrew prophets and patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses are much earlier than any of the Gentile philosophers.

<sup>144</sup> *Apocalypse of Moses and Life of Adam and Eve*, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, N.Y., 1985.

<sup>145</sup> *The Testament of Job*, *op. cit.*; cf. K.W. NIEBUHR, *Gesetz und Paränese*.

The cosmic dualism of the apocalyptic writings is common to the Talmud, to the christian byzantine apocrypha and also to gnostic manichean<sup>146</sup> works. But in our opinion the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature are based on the Talmudic tradition as we can see from the following eschatologic themes: the vision of Paradise<sup>147</sup> and Hell, the fate of the soul after death<sup>148</sup>, the Messiah<sup>149</sup>, the description of the seven heavens<sup>150</sup> with an angelology. Furthermore, the divine mysteries<sup>151</sup> (*ma'aseh merkavah*) and those of the creation (*ma'aseh bereshit*) became secret topics reserved for groups of mystics. The 'throne of glory'<sup>152</sup> of the I Enoch played an important role in the Merkavah<sup>153</sup> literature. In the Jewish gnostic literature Enoch became angel who named Metatron. The period of Redemption or the 'end of days' or the calculation of the 'end'<sup>154</sup> is also an especially theme of Merkavah Mysticism. The Jewish canon which distinguished the pure talmudic tradition and the apocrypha was already fixed at the end of the Persian period<sup>155</sup>. The books of the Apocrypha flourished during the Hellenistic period when Israel was described as a whole without any reference to sects and schisms.

After the sectarian division<sup>156</sup> is the beginning of the Ha-

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*Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*, Tübingen, 1987.

<sup>146</sup> The manichean religion was considered an heresy and St. Ephrem the Syrus in *Hymns* polemized against Bardesanes, Marcione and Mani even so the Maniches appeared later.

<sup>147</sup> *Gen.* 2,8-14.

<sup>148</sup> Hebr. *nefes*, *Sal.* 30,4, 86,13, 89,49, 116,4.

<sup>149</sup> *Sal.* 17,21, *Sal.* 7, *Ass. Mos.* 10,1-10, *En.* 48,10, *4Esd.* 13,1-12, *Dn.* 7,9-13, *En.* 46,1; 48,2ss.; 69,26; 48,7; 62,7; 61,8.

<sup>150</sup> It speaks of three or seven heavens: *2Cor.* 12,2. In the rabbinic literature of the II century and in the apocrypha like as *Testament of Levi*, *Ass. Mos.* it speaks of seven heavens; in the slavonic *Book of Enoch* there are 10 heavens, in the Greek version of *Apocalypse of Baruck* there are five heavens.

<sup>151</sup> HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>152</sup> *Is.* 66,1; *Acts* 7,49; *Mt.* 5,34; 23,22; *Sal.* 11,5; 103,19; *Wisd.* 18,15.

<sup>153</sup> It is well known that *ketuvim* were canonized much later than the Prophets and the tripartite canon represents three distinct and progressive stages in the process of canonization.

<sup>154</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*

<sup>155</sup> H.H. ROWLEY, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, 1947.

<sup>156</sup> See JOSEPHUS, *Apion* I, 40-41. 'From the death of Moses until Artaxerxe ... the prophets wrote the events of their time, from Artaxerxe to

smonean period when are composed the pseudepigraphical works such as *Book of Jubilees* in the reign of John Hyrcanus during the conquest of the cities of 'Edom' (Romans), the similar part of Enoch, and *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Jewish *Apocrypha* deal with the struggle against idolatry. The pseudepigraphists believed that prophecy continued and any new prophet could make laws as we can read in *Jubilees* and knows the past and the future. The visionaries were maintained among the people who attributed their works to the ancients or future themselves 'interpreting' the period in which they lived as 'end of the days'. So, past and present are written in the 'heavenly tablets'<sup>158</sup>. Convinced of their possibility to know the future the Essenes<sup>159</sup> authors extended considerably the advent of the Messiah regarded as preexistent, like in *Enoch*.

We should note also the difference between the Eastern and Western Church concerning their official attitude to the Apocrypha as may be seen from the lists of Melito, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Pseudo-Athanasius, Dialogue of Timotheus and Aquila. The Eastern church usually followed *Josephus* numbers 22 books, although *Baruch* and *Epistle of Jeremiah* included in the *Book of Jeremiah*. In the Roman Church under the influence of Augustine the concils of Rome (382), Hippo (392) and Carthage (397) officially included the Apocrypha in the canon<sup>160</sup>. St. Augustine expressed his doubts about Enoch and also about others 60 books of Old and New Testament. Paradoxically from the first century to the sixth century Hebrew literature, I mean the talmudic and midrashic one, developed as if the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha did not exist. That was in fact translated and frequently reelaborated in the Christian Greek and Slavonic popular books which

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our own time (i.e. the first century C.E.) the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact successions of the prophets'.

<sup>157</sup> M. GASTER, *Greeko-Slavonic Literature*, London, 1889.

<sup>158</sup> *Oracles of Sibyl*; cf. *Ex.* 31,18.

<sup>159</sup> Hebr. *hasen* = saints or sailents who lived in Palestine on the coasts of the Dead Sea. They represent a Jewish sect during the life of Jesus. Philo of Alexandria, Joseph Flavius, Plinio and Mishna spok about the Essens. They observed a monastic and ascetic kind of life, the poornes, the celibat, gain their life working the fields, they had the cult of Moses and of the angels, they did not participated at the worship in the Temple and did not made the sacrifices of animals.

<sup>160</sup> T. TCHERIKOVER, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 1959.

generally had conserved the catechism and not of its original Hebrew form. For that the attempts of scholars, like M. Gaster, to discover in the popular medieval stories the Hebrew originals of the Greek works is undoubtedly a fail from Judaic point of view, because there is not connection between medieval Hebrew literature and Greek, Slavonic, Armenian, Georgian and Latin apocrypha. The collection itself and the publication of the byzantine apocrypha are very important for the Eastern orthodox chronicles, hagiographies and parenetic literature. In the Renaissance period began the modern Hebrew scholars and interest in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha who quested in this material the traces of Jewish historical and literature tradition.

The christian interpretation of the story of *Adam and Eve* is quite different of that conserved in rabbinic literature. The Christian Apocrypha emphasized that God schooled and exhorted the adamitic copy to conversion<sup>161</sup> in many ways, by groaning and trembling, by a flood of waters and the near destruction of the entire race, by the confusion and division of tongues, by the destruction of cities by fire, by war, victories and defeats, by the Law and prophets. All that aims at the destruction of the sins which had abounded under many forms and had enslaved Man. The death is on account of sin and consequently the human nature should be strengthened and renewed. Finally the Creator and Lord himself took up the struggle in behalf of His own creation and became a teacher indeed.

At the same way when the peoples like Adam and Eve were disobedient and did not worship the Lord they suffered defeat at the hands of their enemies, because the priests and the people were 'exceedingly unfaithful'. We can observe that Jews and Christians drew on this tradition to interpret the events that were happening in their own time.

Another factor was the appeal to prophecy. According to Gen. 49,10 Christians took the prophecy to mean that the scepter shall not depart from Judah, after the coming of Jesus, because there was 'no longer any who were called King of the Jews'. The Jews in fact did not believed the Messiah had come, and they argued that the Messiah was taken up in a whirlwind to return another time.

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<sup>161</sup> E. TURDEANU, *La Littérature Bulgare du XIV siècle et sa diffusion dans les pays Roumains*, Paris, 1947.



The first historical separation of Jews from non-Jews practising of their religious observances, is expressed in the legend of the *Letter of Aristeas*<sup>162</sup> in occasion of the translation of the Scripture from Hebraic into Greek language.

The second separation may be the different interpretation of the apocryphal work dealing with Adam's life and death. The book had been preserved in Greek, Latin and Slavonic versions and in Hebraic one composed in Palestine between 100 B.C.E. and 200 C.E.. The Greek version known as *Apocalypsis Moysis*<sup>163</sup> tells how Adam and Eve finding life outside Paradise difficult. The Latin version *Vita Adami et Evae*<sup>164</sup> developed the decision of human copy to entreat God for nourishment and propose to do penance by standing in water: Eve in the Tigris for 37 days and Adam in the Jordan for 40. By a trick the devil induces Eve to end her penance before the designated time.

The Slavonic and Romanian<sup>165</sup> versions, even similar to that Greek and Latin contain new episodes of great theological interest. Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise, beg God for nourishment and received the seventh part of Paradise. Adam begins plowing but the Devil prevents him from wearying until the man acknowledges his lordship over human generations and the earth. To trick the Devil, Adam signs following covenant: 'I and my children belong to who ever is Lord of the earth'. The devil keeps secret this document under a stone in Jordan but it will be broken by Jesus Christ when He goes in Jordan for receiving the John's baptism. This episode is particular spiritual and concerns the Man's struggle against the Devil. The penance by water shows a marked tendency toward ascetism, emphasizing the purification by baptism<sup>166</sup>. In opposition with the Latin version in the Slavonic and Romanian ones, Eve withstands the Devil's blishments and completes her penance. The dualism of the Greek and Slavonic versions clears up the distinguishing feature of body and soul.

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<sup>162</sup> *La lettera di Aristes a Filocrate*, R. Tramontano, introduzione, testo, versione e commento, Napoli, 1931.

<sup>163</sup> *Apocalypse of Moses*, *op. cit.*

<sup>164</sup> *Adam et Eva*, Latin version, Lausanne, 1967.

<sup>165</sup> *Adam and Eve*, Romanian apocryph, in *Crestomatie de literatură română veche*, Cluj-Napoca, 1984.

<sup>166</sup> S. EPHREM THE SYRE, *Carmina Nisibena* 39,7; *Virg.* 37,6; cf. *2Kings* 5,10; *Epiph* 5,6; 6,12.

On the contrary the Orthodox faith developed a precise doctrinary literature concerning the hypostasis of the soul and the body. Such is the hypostasis which is made of both. It is clear there is not a division between soul and body but they unite and bind them together. Moreover, once the natures become hypostatically united, they remain absolutely indivisible. Even the death, according to St. John of Damascus, represents one and the same unity of the soul and of the body. Consequently Christ is the perfect unity of the divine and human natures 'while His animate body subsisted in the pre-existent hypostasis of God the Word and had this for a hypostasis [...] in the Holy Trinity a hypostasis is timeless made of each external existence'.

*The first Covenant between God and Israel*

The Bible reports the religious Covenant between God and the people of Israel. The theophany and the proclamation of the Law has been recited at the Feast of Tabernacles at the beginning of the year of release<sup>168</sup>. This periodical convocation was a solemn undertaking by the congregation which is reflected in the Sinai covenant<sup>169</sup>. The structure of it is similar to that of Deuteronomy: history<sup>170</sup>, laws<sup>171</sup>, promises and threats<sup>172</sup>, conclusions of covenant or blessing and curses. The Sinai Covenant described in Exodus 19-24 has this structure: the divine address, the historical introduction stressing the grace of God toward the people and its election, the law<sup>174</sup>, the ratification of the covenant by means of the cultic ceremony and the recital of the covenant document<sup>175</sup>. This treaty pattern of the biblical covenant was used for centuries in the ancient Hittite documents but never with a very religious significance.

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<sup>167</sup> S. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Orthodox faith, op. cit.*

<sup>168</sup> *Deut.* 31,10-13.

<sup>169</sup> *Ex.* 19,4-6.

<sup>170</sup> *Ex.* 20,1; 23,19.

<sup>171</sup> *Deut.* 3,20-23.

<sup>172</sup> *Deut.* 24,1-11.

<sup>173</sup> *Ex.* 19,4-6.

<sup>174</sup> *Ex.* 23,20-33.

<sup>175</sup> *Ex.* 24,3-8.

It is clear that the narrative is organized in base of the moral principles which emerge in *Deuteronomy*. This book, an organic literary and also religious normes named *Sefer ha-Torah ha-zeh* (*The Book of Teaching*)<sup>176</sup>, represents the covenant of the plains of Moab<sup>177</sup>. *Deuteronomy* speaks explicitly of the deposit of the tablets of the covenant and the book of the Law in the divine Ark which is considered the footstool of the Deity; the cherubins constituting in fact the throne. In the Hittite historical documents the sovereign urges to vassal to take possession of the given land. In a fashion similar God says in *Deuteronomy*: 'I have placed the land at your disposal, go take possession of it'<sup>178</sup>. The purpose of these reminders is to justify the command forbidding the trespass of the fixed borders of these nations. The scholars have studied the patterns similars in the Hittite treatises and also in the *Deuteronomy* which were preserved for approximately 800 years. But this so well analysis of quite identical patterns emphasized the great different significance: while the Hittite treatises from the 14th - 13th centuries B. C. E. had political character the Sinai covenant in Israel was especially religious<sup>179</sup>. For instance, the exhortations in the political treatises are similar only in form and style to that of *Deuteronomy* where God exhorts<sup>180</sup> his elect people to keep faith with him. It is clear that the significance is quite different. The Book of *Deuteronomy* abounds in terms originating in the diplomatic vocabulary of letters and state Neo-Assyrian treatises of the second and first millennia B.C.E., especially the vassal treatises of Esarhadon which are contemporaneous with *Deuteronomy*. Such expressions as: 'to follow with the whole heart and with the whole soul'<sup>181</sup>, 'to be perfect with'<sup>182</sup>, 'to serve'<sup>183</sup>, 'to put the words in one's heart'<sup>184</sup>, 'not to turn right or left'<sup>185</sup>, etc. The scholars have

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<sup>176</sup> *Book of Torah*. Cf. ST. JEROME, *op. cit.*

<sup>177</sup> See *Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft*, 32, 1927.

<sup>178</sup> *Deut.* 1,8,21.

<sup>179</sup> *Deut.* 2,6-8; cf. *Deut.* 1,39; 3,18; 4,13.

<sup>180</sup> *Deut.* 4,1-2; 4,14.

<sup>181</sup> *Deut.* 4,29; 6,5; 10,12; 13,4; 30,2; *1Sam.* 12,24; *2King* 10,31; 23,3; *2Chr.* 34,31; 15,15.

<sup>182</sup> *Sir.* 44,17; *Ez.* 28,15; *Mt.* 5,48.

<sup>183</sup> *Ez.* 7,16; 10,26; 23,25; *Deut.* 4,6,10; 6,13; 10,12; 10,20; 11,13; 13,5; 21,5; *Gs.* 22,5; 22,27.

<sup>184</sup> *1King* 9,7; *2Chr.* 7,17; 19,9; *Ps.* 78,72; 101,2.

<sup>185</sup> *Deut.* 5,32; *Gs.* 1,7; 23,6; *2Sam.* 2,19; *Pr.* 4,27; *Is.* 30,21.

studied all types of identical patterns in the annals of Ashurbanipal's state and in Deuteronomy but anybody may note the great difference, it means the religious covenant of God with His people. In *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* there is a clear religious significance.

The covenants with Abraham<sup>186</sup> and with David<sup>187</sup> which are concerned respectively with the gift of the land and the gift of kingship and dynasty established a very new type of covenant, I mean a divine covenant with a people which was chosen by God. The Abrahamic-Davidic covenants which are of obligatory divine type became in Christian nations the strong reason of their conversion to Christian faith. The Mosaic concept of the promise of God to give the land<sup>189</sup> to the Abraham's descendants and also to establish the David's dynasty shows up the condition that he (Abraham) 'kept my charge'<sup>190</sup>; 'walked before God'<sup>191</sup> and he is expected 'to be perfect'<sup>192</sup>. At the same fashion the covenant with Patriarchs is considered as valid forever. Even when Israel sins<sup>193</sup> though the people is severely punished<sup>194</sup> Israel God intervenes to help because He 'will not break his covenant'<sup>195</sup>. The exile of northern Israel appeared to refute the claim to eternity of the Abrahamic covenant. The divine covenant is eternal only if the people keeps faith with God. A similar interpretation is given to the Davidic<sup>196</sup> covenant in the Books of Kings.

In opposition with the diplomatic and politic covenant treaties of the suzerain and their vassals in the Hittite and Syro-Palestine examples, the Sinai covenant is the very beginning of Israel's religion. The faith that God is king of Israel is the most genuine and ancient doctrine of Israel. In the period of the judges the israelitic tribes resisted kingship because of the profound belief that God was really king of Israel and that the proclama-

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<sup>186</sup> *Gen.* 15,17.

<sup>187</sup> *2Sam.* 7; *Ps.* 89.

<sup>188</sup> *Lev.* 26,43.

<sup>189</sup> *1King*, 2,4; 8,25; 9,4-5.

<sup>190</sup> *1 King*, 8,22-26.

<sup>191</sup> *1Sam.* 8,6-7.

<sup>192</sup> *2Sam.* 7.

<sup>193</sup> *1Sam.* 12,14,24-25; *2King* 11,17.

<sup>194</sup> *Is.* 52,15.

<sup>195</sup> *Ez.* 15,15; *Lev.* 26,44; *Gdc.* 2,1; *Jer.* 14,21; *Dn.* 3,34; *Ml.* 2,8.

<sup>196</sup> *2Sam.* 5,4.

tion of an earthly king would constitute a betrayal<sup>197</sup>. This is clearly expressed in Gideon's reply to the people's offer of kingship but it is even more necessary in Samuel's denunciation of the request for a king<sup>198</sup>. Earthly kingship in Israel though accepted therefore seems a kind of a compromise: David's kingship was conceived as granted to him by the Great suzerain<sup>200</sup>. The king and the people of Israel were considered as vassals of God, the real Overlord.

*The new Covenant between God and Christians in the land of Rus'*

We should note that the Russian chronicles reported the process of christian conversion using the same pattern of disputes between either Jews and Christians, Latins, Greeks, or Bulgarians, Muslims. The religious competitions bring forward such questions: whose religion is more powerful?<sup>201</sup>; whose rites are the most effective?<sup>202</sup> The primary goal of the Greek missionaries was to win back the Jewish proselytes<sup>203</sup>, like the ancient Bulgarians, to the Christian rites.

The early Christian conversion in the land of Rus' may be considered a synthesis of all questions of christianity which was in permanent competition with the Jewish authorities. For instance, the episode of the marriage of Vladimir proved that the matrimony was a way to gain converts which was used also by the Christian Byzantine emperors Basil and Costantine as well as the Jews, because since a woman married a Jew inevitably she adopted the Jewish religion. In the Vladimir's case the Byzantine princess Anna, the sister of the emperors of Constantinople converted his pagan husband. Then since, Vladimir was baptized he encouraged his people to adopte the Christian religion.

<sup>197</sup> *Gdc.* 6,12-24; 6,25-32; 7,18ss.

<sup>198</sup> *1Sam.* 8,5; cf. *Deut.* 17,14.

<sup>199</sup> *1Chr.* 11,1; *2Sam.* 5,1-5.

<sup>200</sup> *1Sam.* 12,12; *Esther* 4,17s.; *Ps.* 5,3; 9,37; 44,5; *Is.* 33,22; 43,15; *2Macc.* 1,24; *Jer.* 10,10.

<sup>201</sup> *2Macc.* 1,24; *Gb.* 9,4; *Ps.* 24,8; *2Cor.* 13,3; *Ap.* 18,8.

<sup>202</sup> *Num.* 22,6; *Lc.* 18,42; *Eph.* 1,20; 3,7.

<sup>203</sup> That means the Khazars from Crimea for whom Cyril went in mission in Khazaria where preached the Gospel.

Olga who had received the holy baptism in Constantinople exhorted his son to conversion but Svjatoslav answered: 'How shall I alone accept another faith? My followers will laugh at that'<sup>205</sup>. The pressure of the christian mother emphasizes the usual way of the religious conversion of a nation: 'If you are converted, all your subjects will perforce follow your example'<sup>206</sup>. Olga prayed, however, for his son and especially for his country: 'So be the will of God. If God wishes to have pity upon my kin and upon the land of Rus', let him lead my son's heart to return to God, even as God has granted me to do'<sup>207</sup>. Thus the *Chronicle* of Nestor narrates the conversion of Rus' like a Covenant of God with the people of Rus' similarly to that with Israel. It seems the conversion is not a result of Greek missionaries but a historical and also spiritual alliance of God with the Russian Prince and with his people. Olga in fact prayed night and day for her son and for the people like Juditha<sup>208</sup>.

Before his conversion Svjatoslav ruled and attacked Khazars, Vlakhs, Bulgarians or Byzantines, he defeated them receiving tribute for them but he neglected his own country. The chronicle brings to light the Svjatoslav's sin, i.e., he not obey his mother<sup>209</sup> counsel and implicitly he had no pity on his native land, on his mother in her old age and on his children<sup>210</sup>.

The Svjatoslav's conversion is a long personal progress, because he returned to Kiev for driving the Pechenegs out in the steppes and regretted what his family had suffered at the hands of invaders. When was again peace, however, he had no responsibility toward his people because he announced to his mother and to his boyars that he didn't care to remain in Kiev but should prefer to live in Pereyaslavets<sup>211</sup> on the Danube. He just took up his residence in this town which Svjatoslav desired the centre of his realm because all riches were concentrated: gold,

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<sup>204</sup> Even the Bulgarian tribes lived in the territories of Byzantine empire they were baptized in the 9th century. According to Georgius Monachus in 934 the Magyars over in Thrace and came as far as Constantinople.

<sup>205</sup> *Povest', op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 79.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>208</sup> *Juditha*, 8,1-8.

<sup>209</sup> *Deut.* 5,16; *Lv.* 19,3.

<sup>210</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Life of Constantine* book IV, ch. 24, *op. cit.*

<sup>211</sup> Pereyaslavets on the Danube is the town Tulcea in Romania.

silks, wine, various fruits, silver, and horses, furs, wax, honey and slaves. Olga was in precarious health and begged him first to bury her<sup>212</sup>. In fact three days later she died.

a) The earthly covenants and the sacrifices to idols

After the death of Olga Svjatoslav divided the power between his three sons and he returned to Danube for attacking Vlakhs, Bulgarians and Greeks. But later he had the intention to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with Byzantine Empire. In the end he concluded a treaty with John, surnamed Tzimisces, written in Silistra in 971. Svjatoslav, Prince of Rus' confirmed a covenant that he desired to preserve peace<sup>213</sup> and perfect amity with each christian Emperors, particularly with Basil and Constantine. Therefore the Russian Prince didn't attack upon their territory, he will not collect an army or foreign mercenaries against their realm, particularly the district of Kherson, or the cities adjacent or against Bulgaria. Svjatoslav promised to preserve this treaty inviolate and he took as garancy the accurse<sup>214</sup> of the god in whom Rus' believed, namely Perun and Volos, the god of flocks.

After the Svjatoslav's death begun the faight between the three brothers and the events are a series of guilty of blood. Finally Vladimir began to reign alone in Kiev and in sign of mercy he set up idols<sup>215</sup> on the hills: one of Perun, others of Khors, Dazh'bog, Stribog, Simar'gl and Mokosh. The people sacrificed to gods their sons and their daughters so that the land of Rus' and the hills were defiled with blood. Vladimir had many woman: a lawful wife from Lybed, and then various foreign women like as a Greek woman, one Czech, a Bulgarian, etc. He had three hundred concubines at Vyshgorod, another three hundred at Belgorod, two hundred at Berestovo. According to the pattern of the pagan prince Vladimir is described as an 'insatiable in vice'<sup>216</sup>. He even seduced married woman and violated young girls. He

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<sup>212</sup> Ps. 103,13; 2Macc. 7,27; Is. 47,6.

<sup>213</sup> *Povest'*, p. 87.

<sup>214</sup> We should note that the *Chronicle* brings to light the worship of idols was without love; on the contrary it was dominant the demonic curse; *ibidem*.

<sup>215</sup> 1Cor. 5,10s; 6,9; 2Kings 13,6.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 95.

was compared with Solomon<sup>217</sup> concerning his libertine comportment. 'For it is said that Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines'<sup>218</sup>. Vladimir is compared again to Solomon at the sight of his imminent conversion: 'He was wise, yet in the end he come to ruin. But Vladimir though at first deluded, eventually found salvation'<sup>219</sup>.

The *Povest'* reports on the practice of human sacrifices especially the young fair boys and girls that the Rus' made to the idols. Before the great disputation between the religions which took place in the presence of Vladimir who finally accepted the holy baptism, the *Chronicle* narrates about a dispute between the Christian Varangian immigrated from Greece and the messengers of the Prince who came to him to take possession of his son that they might offer him to the gods, because the 'gods have claimed him as their own'<sup>220</sup>. The Varangian replied that is not a matter of gods but 'only idols of wood'<sup>221</sup>. He testified the Christian God called 'God whom the Greeks serve and worship'<sup>222</sup>, i.e., the God Creator of the world.

The argument of the Creation is in fact the basic principle of religious disputation between Jews and Christians. The Varangian requires what have these gods created<sup>223</sup> while they are themselves manufactured and therefore he refused to give up his son to devils. The messengers took up arms against the Varangian and his son; then the soldiery killed them and anybody knows where they are buried.

It is clear that we have to do with an episode of the Varangian martyrs, even earlier to Vladimir. This story gives evidence of the small and lonely christian communities who find themselves cut off from the Rus' pagans, and also it brings out the struggle between God who is symbolised by the Cross and the devil, the Lord of the vast land of Russes. The devil said that this land was his habitation 'a land where the apostles have not taught nor the prophets prophesied'<sup>224</sup>. Certainly the *Povest'* is a

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<sup>217</sup> *1King* 11,1-13.

<sup>218</sup> *Povest'*, p. 95.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>220</sup> *Povest'*, p. 97.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97-99.

<sup>223</sup> See the ch. on the dispute about the divine Creation.

<sup>224</sup> *Povest'*, p. 97-99; see the legend about S. Andrew who came to pre-



historical source but also an extended parable regarding the power of the Devil who ruled for long time in the Russian territory where the different tribes, nations and languages offered sacrifices to the idols. The Kievan Chronicle narrates the wars of Russian princes who conquered one after another the peoples of the Khazarian confederation, but it also is the spiritual struggle according to the manichean order between good and bad i.e., the Cross and the Devil.

#### b) The religious proselytism in Rus'

The first tentative to conversion the Russes to the monotheism came from the Bulgarians of Volga who were of Muhammedan<sup>225</sup> faith and made Islamic proselytism in Rus' like *Povest'* reports regarding their embassy visiting Vladimir: 'Though you are a wise and prudent prince, you have no religion. Adopt the our faith and revere Mahomet'<sup>226</sup>. At this suggestion Vladimir inquired what was the nature of this religion. The rules of Islamic faith provide the practice of circumcision, the interdiction to eat the pork and to drink wine and the promise to complete fulfillment of carnal desires after death. Vladimir listened but he didn't like the abstinence from pork and wine: 'Drinking is the joy of the Russes. We cannot exist without that pleasure'<sup>227</sup>.

The next embassy was that of the Germans<sup>228</sup> who came from the Pope. The Pope's emissaries put in opposition the christian faith, i.e. the divine light and God, the Creator of world with the idols which are only wood. The purpose of catholic faith is that to do everything to the glory of God as S. Paul teaches. The text reported simply the Vladimir's reject and in this

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ch the Gospel in Crimea. The church of Constantinople imported in 356 some reliques of S. Andrew, S. Luke and S. Timotheus for an apparent apostolic tradition.

<sup>225</sup> It is well known that the Bulgarian tribes arrived in Mesia and then in Thrace preserved some codes of Jewish behavior concerning the ritual eating, amulets, the Sabbath rest, normes of sexual life and fast.

<sup>226</sup> *Povest'*, p. 101.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>228</sup> The term 'Germans' means Latins, i.e., the Franks' missionaries who worked in Bulgaria under the Khaqan Boris-Michael.

way it is clear that this episode was inserted after the polemics between the Pope Nicolas I and the Patriarch Photius.

The Jewish Khazars hearing of these missions came themselves to instruct the Rus' in Jews' faith. They expound the following precepts: believe in the one God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, circumcision, not eating pork or hare, and observing the Sabbath. The Prince asked where their native land was, and the Jews replied that it was in Jerusalem. Vladimir insisted and they explained in the following way: 'God was angry at our forefathers and scattered us among the Gentiles on account of our sins. Our land was then given to the Christians'<sup>229</sup>. We could recognize in this answer the Christian theology of the Cross. For S. Paul<sup>230</sup> the old Mosaic covenant was a 'dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone [...] dispensation of condemnation [...] (which)... fadet away' in comparison with the new covenant, which is the 'dispensation of the Spirit'. Vladimir rejected the Jewish faith because he was frightened of divine anger. 'How can you hope to teach others while you yourselves are cast out and scattered abroad by the hand of God? If God loved you and your faith, you would not be thus dispersed in foreign lands. Do you expect us to accept that fate also?'<sup>231</sup>.

Then the Greeks sent to Vladimir a scholar who spoke about the day when the Lord will come to judge<sup>232</sup> the earth and to destroy all these who do evil and abomination and reminded in this connexion Sodom and Gomorrah<sup>233</sup> i.e., the Mahometan Bulgarians. Then the scholar polemized against the Christians from Rome concerning the *oplatki*<sup>234</sup> because they have modified the faith. According to the comun christian opinion the sin of Jews is that they killed the prophets, crucified the Lord who came down to earth and then they persecuted the Christians. The Lord awaited their repentance, but they did not repent so that

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<sup>229</sup> *Povest'*, p. 101.

<sup>230</sup> S. PAUL, *Heb.* 7,1-28.

<sup>231</sup> *Povest'*, p. 101.

<sup>232</sup> The icon of the Judgement reveled to Vladimir the love of God.

<sup>233</sup> Sodom and Gomorrah, *Gen.* 14,8; *Deut.* 29,22; *Jer.* 23,14; 50,40; *Am.* 4,11; *2Pet.* 2,6; *Povest'*, p. 233.

<sup>234</sup> Sl. *oplatki*, *Povest'*, p. 233. It is the Greek polemic against the Latin rite which use bread without leaven for the Holy Communion. The orthodox church has a complicate rite of preparing the Eucharistic bread and the leavening; see Photius' *Epistolae* and *Mystagogia*, PG. vol. 102, col. 279-400; 585-990.

the Lord let loose the Romans upon them<sup>235</sup>, their cities were destroyed, they were scattered among the Gentiles<sup>236</sup>, under whom they are now in servitude.

We could note that contrary to other missions, the Greek scholar before the description of Christian dogma brings to light the day of divine Judgement and the sins of all these who offended<sup>237</sup> the Lord. Then Vladimir inquired why God should have descended to earth and should have endured such pain. The scholar explained the basic Christian mystery of Incarnation<sup>238</sup> beginning with the tale of Genesis<sup>239</sup>. The *Povest'* reported an apocryph<sup>240</sup> version of *Genesis* because in the fourth day of Creation it said that the chief of the angelic host decided to descend to the earth<sup>241</sup> and seize upon it like God. But God cast him straightway out of heaven and the tenth order of the angels who had been subject to Sathanael<sup>242</sup>, the adversary of God.

The Greek scholar testified that they, the Greeks, inherited the Apostles teaching about the kingdom of God (see the Patriarch Photius' *Letter*) about the baptism with water and the Spirit, about the Cross and the Passion of the Lord Jesus, about his Resurrection and his Ascension into heaven. The scholar speaks in fact about the ineffable beauty of the kingdom of heaven but also about the torment of hell prepared for the sinners. The unbaptized shall be exactly tormented with fire and telling thus the monk exhibited to Vladimir an icon on which was depicted the Judgement Day of the Lord. It is the same episode about the Bulgarian Khaqan Boris who accepted the orthodox baptism. The Prince was deeply moved and he regarded the happy who are upon the right in opposition with woe to those upon the left. In a didascalical way the scholar try to convince the Prince: if he desired to take his place upon the right with the just, then he should accept baptism. But Vladimir took his coun-

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<sup>235</sup> J. FLAVIUS, *Jewish War*, *op. cit.*; cf. St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Jud.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>236</sup> Gentiles and the Gospel according to Luke who wrote for them, *2Cor.* VIII, 18-19; *2Tim.* II, 8; *Coloss.* IV, 14.

<sup>237</sup> *The Apology of Aristide*, Cambridge, 1891, Text and Studies, vol. I.

<sup>238</sup> The Word Incarnate, *John* 1,14.

<sup>239</sup> The Word of the Creation, *John* 1,1s.

<sup>240</sup> The apocrypha of Creation.

<sup>241</sup> In the apocryphal version Sathanael was present together with God during the divine Creation of Man; cf. *Povest'*, p. 103-107.

<sup>242</sup> See *Šestodnev*, Bulgarian ed. Sofia, 1983.

sel to heart saying that he shall wait yet, because he desired to inquire about all the faiths. The prince organized the disputations between the religions before the people, his boyars and the elders because he wanted listen also their opinion on this subject. The elders counseled the prince to inquire about the ritual of each religion and how it worships God. His emissaries went in the mosque, then among the Germans (according to the pattern of Bulgarians' baptism it is the question of Franks' missionaries under Lewis the German) and finally they visited the Greeks at Tsar'grad. The Russian delegation appeared before the Emperor telling him that they had arrived to examine the Greek church. The Byzantine Emperor rejoiced, he sent a message to the Patriarch to prepare the church and the clergy so that the Russes might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. The Patriarch and the clergy assemble performed the customary rites<sup>243</sup>, burned incense and chairsang hymns. The Emperor accompanied the Russes to the church and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the pontifical service, the chanting. The Russes were astonished for the splendor and beauty of Greek ceremonial.

### c) The marriage and the Christian conversion

After a year Vladimir attacked with an armed force against Kherson, a Greek city and at last he captured it. Then he sent messengers to the Emperors Basil and Constantine for asked in marriage their sister, Anna. The Emperors replied that it is not meet for Christians to give in marriage to pagans. If he accepts the baptism he shall have their sister in wife, inherit the kingdom of God and become their companion in the faith.

Unless the Prince does so, however, they cannot give him Anna in marriage. Vladimir accepted baptism and desired that the Princess should herself bring priests to baptize him. Anna lamented but her brothers counseled: 'Through your agency God turns the land of Rus' to repentance, and you will relieve Greece from the danger of greivous war'<sup>244</sup>.

By divine agency Vladimir was suffering at that moment

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<sup>243</sup> *Povest'*, p. 121-125.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibidem*. Cf. *Deut.* 28,28; *2Kings* 6,18; *Wisd.* 19,17.

from a disease of the eyes<sup>245</sup> and the princess declared that he will be cured if he receive the baptism. Vladimir desired to know if is the God of the Christians great and the Bishop of Kherson together with the princess' priests baptized Vladimir who glorified God for the miraculous cure: 'I have now perceived the one true God'<sup>246</sup>. After Vladimir was baptized the priest explained to him the tenets of the Christian faith, then he took the Princess in marriage, he founded a church, two bronze statues and four bronze horses and then he departed for Kiev. Arrived at his capital he ordered that the idols should be cut to pieces or burned with fire. Then the princess called any inhabitants, rich or poor to come to the Dnieper where the priests of the princess and those from Kherson baptised into the water a countless multitude.

After the people was baptized and many souls saved, Vladimir rejoiced and gave mercy to Lord because his people know the true God 'even as the other Christian nations have known long before'. Then the Prince ordained that wooden churches should be built and established where pagan idols had previously stood, such as the church of St. Basil on the hill where the idol of Perun was. He took the children of the best families and sent them for instruction in book-learning. Vladimir began to found churches and to assign priests throughout the cities and to invite the people to accept baptism in all the cities and towns.

The *Povest'* reports the conversion of Vladimir and his people as a miraculous sign of the Lord who took pity upon them. In such way Jesus Christ loved<sup>247</sup> his new people and the land of Rus'. This spiritual love was aroused among Russian people because the pious men and righteous women accused the demons once receiving baptism and repentance for the remission of sins and all the people<sup>248</sup> became conscious that he formed a new Christian nation, i.e., the elect of God<sup>249</sup>. Vladimir lived in the Christian faith and desired to build a church dedicated to the Holy Vergin. When the church was completed the Prince entered it and prayed to God: 'Make these new people, whose heart thou

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<sup>245</sup> The sign of the blindness before the conversion is used also by Halevi, *op. cit.*, p. 120, i.e. the antithesis between blinds and the Sons of Israel which had the light of the heart.

<sup>246</sup> *Povest'*, p. 127.

<sup>247</sup> *Ps.* 144,4; *Prov.* 15,9; *Wisd.* 1,10; *Lk.* 2,14; *Zc.* 11,10; *Acts* 15,14-18.

<sup>248</sup> *Deut.* 5,10; *Ps.* 102,23; 117,1; *Is.* 25,3.

<sup>249</sup> *Deut.* 33,3; *Sir.* 44,21.

hast turned unto wisdom to know thee as the true God'<sup>250</sup>. Vladimir has built a new church after any battle such as the sacred Transfiguration in Vasil'evo when the Prince defeated the Pechenegs upon the day of the Lord's Transfiguration. He with his boyars, the elders of the cities and many peoples celebrated a great festival for eight days and distributed to the poor the sum of three hundred *grivny*<sup>251</sup>. Then he returned to Kiev on the feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God and the prince held another great festival.

The *Povest'* refers a blessed time when the Russian people was Christian and loved his Lord and the Lord loved his new people elect. The prince loved the words of the Scriptures which he put it into practice. Listening the words<sup>252</sup> of Solomon 'He that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord', he invited each beggar and poor man to come to the Prince's palace and receive whatever he needed. Moreover each Sunday were invited at palace his subjects<sup>253</sup>, the boyars, the court officers and distinguished citizens and there was much meat, beef and game. Vladimir consulted them concerning matters of administration<sup>254</sup>, wars and government. He instituted the judgement after due process of law.

It is clear that Vladimir is described as a new Constantine<sup>256</sup> of mighty Rome who baptized himself and his people; for the prince of Rus' imitated the actions of Constantine himself. He distinguished in repentance and almsgiving, he turned always from his sin and performed equity and justice. Like Constantine the Great, Vladimir died in the orthodox faith.

The chronicler brings to light the benefits<sup>257</sup> that Vladimir

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<sup>250</sup> *Povest'*, p. 131.

<sup>251</sup> *grivnij* = old Russian silver monet c. 400 gr.

<sup>252</sup> *Prov.* 19,17.

<sup>253</sup> EUSEBIUS, *Life of Constantine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>254</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>256</sup> *Povest'*, p. 141.

<sup>257</sup> The benefice of Christianity is mesearred by God's purpose to chosen people who live as refugees and made a holy people by his Spirit. In the first Letter from Peter these peoples of refugees were scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Because the divine great mercy God gave them 'new life by rising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people', *1Pt* 3-4.

conferred up on the land of Rus' by its conversion. The people of Rus' mindful of their holy baptism, hold this prince in pious memory and glorify God in prayers hymns and psalms, singing to God as his new people, enlightened by his Holy Spirit, maintaining the hope of God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

After the death of Vladimir one of his descendants, Svyatopolk, was guilty of killing his brother Boris who waited to die. He prayed singing matins<sup>258</sup>, the Psalter<sup>259</sup>, then the canon and in the end he prayed the eikon of Lord for helping him to endure his passion, to accept the death from the hand of his own brother and to hold it not against him as a sin. Similar to the Prophets and the Apostles the blessed Boris died receiving from the hand of Christ the crown among the righteous. The impious Svyatopolk reflected to kill another brother, Gleb, while this was praying for their father's death. The *Chronicle* refers about these martyrs as a salutary gifts upon the land of Rus' because they were the protectors of it praying the Lord in behalf of your countrymen, enlightening the whole land of Rus' so appearing in faith immutable because the new people had ever driven away darkness. The relics of these two first martyrs<sup>260</sup> was deposited in the church so they interceded for Russian nation.

Svyatopolk was born in a period pre-Christian and desired to rule alone in Rus' and therefore he reflected kill his brothers but ignored that God confers the power according to his divine design to whom loves his fait Law and righteousness. If the princes are righteous in the land many sins are remitted<sup>261</sup>. But if they are evil and deceitful, then God visits yet greater evil upon that country for the prince is its head. On the contrary, Jaroslav the Wisdom is a model of the christian basileus; he loved the books: the Gospel, the teachings of the Apostles and the lives of holy fathers and prayed in the metropolitan church of St. Sophia, which he himself had founded. He adorned it with gold and silver and churchly vessels. He founded also many other churches in the cities and districts, he appointed priests who teach the people how fullfild the duty which God has prescri-

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<sup>258</sup> Ps. 3,1; 38,2,17; 111,1-3.

<sup>259</sup> Ps. 22,12,16; 7,1.

<sup>260</sup> St. J. Chrysostom spoke about the festivals in honour of local martyrs.

<sup>261</sup> Deut. 6,18; Ps. 112,4.

bed and to go often in the churches. The prince rejoiced to see the multitude of his churches and of his Christian subjects while the devil was afflicted since he was conquered by this new Christian nation.

I think it is necessary that I should bring forward the type of Russian Christian rule according to *Povest'* and Hilarion's *Sermon about Law and Grace*<sup>262</sup>. After 1054 it seems that Hilarion had written the part of *Povest'* concerning the diffusion of Christianity in Rus' land.

The prince Vladimir I represented the perfect unity between the faith and the authority. He destroyed the temples of idols and founded the churches and adorned it with icons. The priests offered in all the churches the pure sacrifice without blood. Hilarion praises Vladimir- Vasilij, the teacher<sup>263</sup> of Rus' who received the knowledge of the Lord. Vladimir was called apostle<sup>264</sup> of Christ, the friend<sup>265</sup> of justice, the home of wisdom<sup>266</sup>, the cradle of piety<sup>267</sup>, disciple<sup>268</sup> of Christ. Hilarion brings to light the virtue of the faith because Vladimir did not read the Law or the prophets but he believed<sup>269</sup> sincerely the Crucified and he knelt down before Him. The monk referred the detail of *Povest'* that Vladimir reflected about the salvation<sup>270</sup> which the Son of God gave to the new nations. The charity<sup>271</sup> triumphed in the Judgement<sup>272</sup>. Vladimir recognized Jesus Christ, the Son of God not in a council<sup>273</sup> but into his mind and his heart<sup>274</sup> and then ordered it in whole his realm. Vladimir was like Constantine the Great who had tur-

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<sup>262</sup> HILARION, *op. cit.*, p. 71. The monk glorified the apostles and 'the our teacher and pedagogue, the great *Khagan Vladimir*'.

<sup>263</sup> *Lk.* 24,46-47; *Rom.* 2,20.

<sup>264</sup> *Acts* 4,2; *Rom.* 16,7.

<sup>265</sup> *Wisd.* 10,9.

<sup>266</sup> *Ps.* 72,13.

<sup>267</sup> *Math.* 10,42; *Mk.* 9,41.

<sup>268</sup> *Jac.* 2,13; *Sir.* 17,17; *Math.* 10,32.

<sup>269</sup> *Lk.* 1,28; cf. *Acts.* 14,27.

<sup>270</sup> Vladimir Monomak especially in his autobiography and in the famous *Letter to Oleg* exaltes the purification and the repentance of the souls after the sins of the Russian leaders because God castigated the people through the invasion of Pechenegs.

<sup>271</sup> *Math.* 9,13; *Ps.* 98,3; *Is.* 52,10; *Lk.* 2,30; 3,6.

<sup>272</sup> *Wisd.* 3,9; *Sir.* 11,15; *Eph.* 6,23; *1Tim.* 1,14.

<sup>273</sup> *Ps.* 37,33; *John* 16,8; cf. Hilarion aluded at council of Calcedonia concerning the polemics about the two natures of Jesus Christ.

<sup>274</sup> *Jer.* 29-13; *Heb.* 10,22.



ned to the Lord Romans, Greeks and Rus'. Similarly, Olga, the grandmother of Vladimir was like Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. Vladimir represents the Christian basileus who is like God and is blessed by God.

His universal charity leads his people to conversion and salvation<sup>275</sup>. He takes delight in serving and in worshipping the Word of God. Hilarion describes the Vladimir's ideal spiritual descent: David - Moses - Christ - Constantine the Great - Vladimir, the new Constantine - his son Vladimir Monomach, the teacher of Rus'. He announced to his people the divine commandments<sup>277</sup>, he nourished his subjects with words of instruction<sup>278</sup> and the grace of his character. His chastity was great and also he instructed others. He was shepherded caring for his flock and the father<sup>281</sup> rejoicing over his children. He brought his force by the Grace of the Holy Ghost, educated his people in the Gospel, instructed them in the teaching of the Fathers, made them wise in the fear of the Lord, surrounded them on all sides with prayerful activity, he had a holy soul and conscious thoughts and he implanted in all his subjects a great love. The Rus' received this love<sup>282</sup> and preserved it perfect. The logical conclusion of this eulogy is that the Christians in Rus' land are the fruits of Vladimir's Grace who was pastoral love. The Christian Prince exercised the authority teaching and preaching the Gospel, pouring the virtuous<sup>283</sup> instruction into the hearts<sup>284</sup> of all who beheld him. Vladimir had been sent by God<sup>285</sup> and he made the Will<sup>286</sup> of the Lord and for that he received the power<sup>287</sup> working in the apostles.

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<sup>275</sup> *John* 5,2.

<sup>276</sup> VLADIMIR MONOMAK in *Poučenie* which contains short liturgical prayers recall the divine commandments and the new covenant of the Faithful with God.

<sup>277</sup> HILARION, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 71.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 73.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 75.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 77.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 83.

<sup>283</sup> *Wisd.* 6,18.

<sup>284</sup> *Ps.* 25,10; *Wisd.* 4,5; *Acts* 11,18; *Rom.* 5,16.

<sup>285</sup> *John* 7,27-29; 7,42; 12,44s; 17,8,23.

<sup>286</sup> *Matth.* 11,26; *John* 6,40; *Acts* 20,27; *Eph.* 1,6,9.

<sup>287</sup> *Rom.* 1,6; *1Tes.* 2,13, *Hebr.* 1,3.

Hilarion said in his *Discourse* that among the rulers Vladimir rejoiced because he was the apostle who led his nation to resurrection<sup>288</sup>. The Rus' were dead in the spirit when they believed the idols. After the baptism they were not slaves<sup>289</sup> but free, they were not strange<sup>290</sup> but a new God's elect nation<sup>291</sup>, they were not unknown<sup>292</sup> but adopted sons<sup>293</sup> of God.

We could recognize in Hilarion's *Discourse* an implicate incessant parallel between the Jewish faith, liturgy, prayers and the Christian dogma, the holy church and the divine love.

The Russian historians of literature considered the tale concerning the conversion of St. Vladimir an apocryphal version or untruth invention. Despite such interpretation we are interested specially in the analysis of the pattern of the debate between the religions which took place at the court of the kneaz. The tale describes the same pattern of choosing the upper religion, like we could see in all types of tales about the religious proselitism, such as J. Halevi's treatise, *The Khuzars*, or *First Kievan Chronicle*. In similar fashion the scholars considered the story of the impression produced upon Vladimir by the picture of the Last Judgement an apocryphal interpolation which contains no truth. Such tale may be a later invention, not even Russian but Greek one. I would recall one of these interpretations.

Shakhmatov, for instance, suggested that the tale of the icon of the Last Judgement derived from a Bulgarian chronicle; he thought identify a similar tradition according to which the Prince Boris of Bulgaria was converted in 865 after beholding a mural of the divine Judgement by a monk artist named Methodius. We think that it is necessary to distinguish between two things: 1. the historical and ecclesiastical informations of chronicles, written by Theophanes, G. Skylitzes, Cedrenus, Hamartolus etc.,

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<sup>288</sup> Acts 4,2; 17,32; 23,6; 24,15; 1Cor. 15,22, 2Cor. 13,4.

<sup>289</sup> Jer. 15,2; 43,11; Bar. 2,5; Ap. 13,16.

<sup>290</sup> Ps. 69,9, Eph. 2,12. You were foreigners and did not belong to God's chosen people. You had no part in its covenants, which were based on God's promises to his people, and you lived in the world without hope and without God', 4,18.

<sup>291</sup> Wis. 3,9; Matth. 24,31; Mk. 13,27; Lk. 18,7; Rom. 8,28,33; 11,7.

<sup>292</sup> 2Cor. 6,9; Gal. 1,22.

<sup>292</sup> Gal. 4,5; Eph. 1,5; 2Pet. 1,4.

<sup>292</sup> 2Cor. 6,9; Gal. 1,22.

<sup>293</sup> Gal. 4,5; Eph. 1,5; 2Pet. 1,4.

and 2. the pattern of the religious competitions with the object of conversion of the heathen to Christianity.

d) The debate between the Jewish faith and the Kievan ascetic monks

The Jewish scholars<sup>294</sup> consider that the Monastery of the Crypts or Catacombs (Pecherskaya Lavra) early was a hill where the Jews of Kiev praised. The *Povest'* relates that Hilarion, a virtuous man, learned and ascetic, presbyter at church of the Holy Apostles used to walk from Berestovo toward the Dnieper to a certain hill and made his oraisons there. There was a great forest on the spot. He dug a little catacomb and often went to offer his prayer to God in secret. But Hilarion was appointed Metropolitan in St. Sophia in Novgorod. Then a layman from the city of Lyubech went on pilgrimage to Mt. Athos where he became monk, called Antonius, and he returned to Kiev. He went about the monasteries reflecting where he should live and finally he liked the Hilarion's crypt. He lived a very ascetic life praying to God, eating dry bread every other day, drinking water moderately and digging the crypt. The Antonius' conduct augmented the number of the brotherhood and the pupils dug a new great crypt and a church and cells. God through the intercession of the Holy Vergin continued to increase the brethren and Antonius prayed the prince Izyaslav to give to monks the hill which is above the crypt. Izyaslav rejoiced and the prior with the brethren founded a great church and fenced in the Monastery with a palisade, with many cells and adorned it with ikons. The Crypt Monastery thus issued from the benediction of the Holy Mount and was founded by tears, fasting, prayer and vigil<sup>295</sup>.

Another monk, Theodosius, the Prior of the Crypt Monastery conducted an ascetic life; after his death he had given command that he should be buried in the crypt where he had performed many good works. Others monks were constant in fasting, some in vigil, some in genuflexion and they shone out like bright beacons throughout the land of Rus'<sup>296</sup>. The presbyter Da-

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<sup>294</sup> See M. SCHULMAN, *Judaic influence as reflected in ideas and motifs of the 'Kievan Primary Chronicle'*, New York.

<sup>295</sup> *Povest'*, p. 199.

<sup>296</sup> We can recognize the Greek ascetic life. Furthermore, Nestor's *Life of*

mian was so auster<sup>297</sup> and temperate that he lived only on bread and water till his death. Another brother named Jeremy remembered the conversion of Rus' because God had conferred upon him the gift of prophecy<sup>298</sup>. Another ancient named Matthew had the gift of second sight because he beheld a devil which circulated among the bretheren. Another monk Isaak who in the secular life was a merchant of Toropets adopted an ascetic mode of life and had a long war against devilich artifice but in the end he won his victory over the demons<sup>300</sup>. These saint national figures recall the sermons of S. John Chrysostom about the early martyrs. We could cite the miracle of fire and light which came out from the relics of Theodosius which were discovered and then transfered to the Cathedral of the Transfiguration in the Crypt Monastery, so that he became a symbol of the Russian church<sup>301</sup>. In his *Discourse* Hilarion described the son of Vladimir I, Izyaslav the Wisdom whose Christian name was Georgij. According to the pattern of the Christian basileus he built the cathedral of St. Sophia, the Great Door of Kiev, the church of Theotokos of Annunciation. The angel came to the town of Kiev as like as he came to the Holy Vergin telling: 'Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!'<sup>302</sup>. Hilarion prayed for the town of Kiev because the Lord is with him and after the holy baptism Kiev was revived in Jesus Christ. Before that the city was dead while the christianity was everywhere in the world, 'now Kiev shined by the icons of saints and was purified by the incense', the prayers and sacral hymns. First of all we must lay stress on the particular rethorical fashion used by Hilarion in his *Discourse*. He described Christianity in Rus' land like a covenant of God with his new people of Rus'. Like Jews,

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*Theodosius* reported that the monk sent one of his pupil to Constantinople to secure a copy of the monastic rule of Studion, see *Povest'*, p. 201.

<sup>297</sup> *Povest'*, p. 203.

<sup>298</sup> The gift of prophecy is conferred upon the christian ascetic monk. Halevi denied it, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>299</sup> The gift of the second sight, see *Povest'*, p. 203.

<sup>300</sup> See on the war with the demons *Life* of St. Antonius, see *Povest'*, p. 205-225.

<sup>301</sup> The early Russian church was independent from Constantinople because maybe Vladimir allowed the newly founded church to be subject to Ochrida in Bulgaria, or according to the example of Bulgarian independent church, the Prince organized also the autocephalous church of Rus'.

<sup>302</sup> *Lk.* 1,68; 78; 7,16.

Rus' were invited by God to convert their heart<sup>303</sup> and to observe the divine Commandments. This spiritual parallel between the Hebraic elect people and the new Russian nation stands out even at the beginning of the *Discourse*, when Hilarion said that he wrote not for the enemies<sup>304</sup> of the Lord, but for the sons of the Lord themselves who were nourished with the sweetness of the divine books that contain the Word of God, the Logos Christ. The structure of Hilarion's *Discourse* is that of an implicate answer during a possible debate between Judaism and Christianity. The first question/answer was: what was the merciful of the Law and what that of the Grace. God came to Abraham at the end of biblical time and then God himself visited<sup>305</sup> the human genre and he came down from the heaven for coming in the Virgin's womb and she had received the Lord in the tent of her body. Hilarion expounds the christian doctrine like a pedagogical and also theological competition between on the one hand the Law and on the other Grace and Truth<sup>306</sup>. The Grace was offended, said Hilarion, and her sons, the Christians were violated by the Jews. Consequently the monk implored as Sarah, the mother of nations<sup>307</sup>, who said to Abraham: 'Send this slave-girl and her son away'.

The son of this woman must not get any part of your wealth, which my son Isaac should inherit<sup>308</sup>. In the same way Hilarion cry an anathema on the Jews: 'Drive away the Jews and the Law and scatter them among all the nations'<sup>309</sup>.

Then Hilarion described the opposition between the darkness and the Truth<sup>310</sup>, it means the Jewish faith and the Christian

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<sup>303</sup> Ps. 25,10. With faithfulness and love he leads | all who keep his covenant and obey | his commands', Jer. 35,15.

<sup>304</sup> See St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Contra Iulianum et Gentiles*, Fordham Univ., 1967.

<sup>305</sup> HILARION, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Cf. Lk. 1,68; 78; 7,16.

<sup>306</sup> According to Christians the opposition *Torah/Grace* was the legitimation of the new divine instruction; see St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Quod Christus sit Deus*, New York, 1966.

<sup>307</sup> Heb. 11,11.

<sup>308</sup> Gen. 21,10.

<sup>309</sup> HILARION, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>310</sup> The opposition *darkness/Truth* is another rethorical pattern used by Christians. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 16 used also the 'darkness' = the error of the pagans which had not religion. The pagans lived in the darkness because they had not Law of Truth.

one. The sons of Grace became hers adopted by God and by the Father. The Law was extinct<sup>311</sup>, so that the Grace showed<sup>312</sup> itself. The humanity didn't recognized himself in the Law<sup>313</sup> but go on freely with Grace. The Jews corrected themselves before the lamp of the Law, while the Christians built their salvation in front of the sun<sup>314</sup> of the Grace. The Jews rejoiced in the earthly things while the Christians in heavenly ones<sup>315</sup>. The repentance of Jews is hard-hearted, said Hilarion, because it was not disseminated among all other nations remaining only in Israel; while the Christian salvation was spread from one boundary to another of the earth<sup>316</sup>. Therefore the Jews were the first<sup>317</sup>, but the Christians with the Grace became greater. Here Hilarion recall Joseph who said to Jacob to blesse the elder brother and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to the head of Manassech. He said to his father: 'Not that way, father, this is the elder boy put your right hand on his head'<sup>318</sup>. But Jacob refused saying: 'I know, my son, I know, Manassech's descendants will also become a great people. But his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become

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<sup>311</sup> Christians sustained that the Law was not more legitime after the fall of Jerusalem; see also P.R. COLEMAN-NORTON, *St. John Chrysostom's Use of Josephus*, *Classical Philology* 26, 85-89, 1931.

<sup>312</sup> Christianity as Light is in opposition to darkness of idolatry.

<sup>313</sup> Christians said that the mankind did not recognize the Law but choose the 'new' instructions of the Word Incarnate. At the same way Halevi said that Judaism is like the heart among the organs of the body, i.e., Jewish faith is sickest and as well healthiest religion among nations, see *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>314</sup> The opposition *lamp/sun* develops that of *Torah/Grace*, *Num.* 4,16; J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 90; see VLADIMIR MONOMACH, *Letter to Oleg, Povest'*, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>315</sup> The opposition *earthly world / kingdom of heaven* alimented the disputes between Jews and Christians. Halevi rejected the ascetic life and lived for riches, good food, sufficient sleep, joyfulness, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>316</sup> The opposition between the 'old' faith and the 'new' one develops a theory of the end of Jews and of the future of the new nations. Jesus himself used figures of speech to preach in the sinagogues. But the figures of speech and the parables will not be necessary if the faithful pray to the name of Jesus Christ who defeated the world, *John*, 16,25-33.

<sup>317</sup> The *first* and the *last* religion, see J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 105; see also W.H.C. FREUD, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church, A study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*, New York, 1967.

<sup>318</sup> Gen. 48,17-18.

great nations'<sup>319</sup>. In this way Jacob put Ephraim before Manasseh. Certainly the Hilarion's interpretation of such events of Jewish faith is quite different of the Hebrew tradition. Of course we have to do with the Christian argumentation concerning the superiority of the Christian dogma. Hilarion recall in the beginning it prayed only in Jerusalem<sup>321</sup> but then Christianity was spread in the whole world. The Jewish faith ended<sup>322</sup>, the Law failed. God didn't received<sup>323</sup> the Tabernacle of the holocaust, neither the Tables, neither the victim of the purification. Hilarion based his demonstration on the Jesus' word to the Samaritan woman. She said that her Samaritan ancestors worshipped God on that mountain but the Jews required that Jerusalem was the place where it should worship God. Jesus replied: 'Believe me, woman, the time will come when people will not worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem'<sup>324</sup> because there will be the who pray everywhere the St. Trinity. Hilarion said that Jesus visited the Jews but they rejected him<sup>325</sup>. Then the Romans had destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem and the Judaism ended<sup>326</sup>; the Jewish people were scattered among other nations<sup>327</sup>, so that the bad didn't remain close. So God gave new instructions to new nations<sup>328</sup>. The faith of the Grace was widespread on the world until was arrived also in the land of Rus'. Finally the Russian people together with all the Christians glorify

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<sup>319</sup> Gen. 48,19.

<sup>320</sup> The aspect of superiority of one or another religion was the aim itself of the dispute between Jews and Christians.

<sup>321</sup> St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, Paris, 1970, ed. gr. PG 48,701-812.

<sup>322</sup> The Christians were convinced that after the destruction of the second Temple the Jewish faith was ended. Halevi said that God preserved Jews so even scattered among nations, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>323</sup> St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, Washington, 1979.

<sup>324</sup> *John* 4,19-26.

<sup>325</sup> See St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Les Coabitations suspectes*, Paris, 1955.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibidem.*; cf. BLAKE GOODAL, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Letters of Paul to Titus and Philemon*, Berkeley, 1979.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibidem.*, Halevi said that the Jews were 'ferment' of faith among the Christian nations, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>328</sup> Christians opposed 'old' divine alliance to that 'new' but for the Jewish religious tradition this does not exist.

the St. Trinity while the Jews were quiet<sup>329</sup>. Jesus Christ is glorified<sup>330</sup> and the Jews accursed; the new nations were leaded and the Jews driven away<sup>332</sup>. Unhappily such rethorical pattern alimented an anti-Semit attitude.

### *Conclusions*

The disputes between on the one hand Jews and early Christians and on the other Jewish movement of proselytism in Rus' land and Christian conversion of Rus', developed a particular philosophic and religious dialectic demonstration based on the structure of rich rhetorical figures. The period after the destruction of the Jewish state remained as the so-called 'period of the Mishnah and the Talmud', i.e., the period of suffering and scholarship. J. Halevi had written his medieval treatise with the clear purpose to restore the political history of the Jewish nation and faith as a whole. The great historical opportunity of the strong military confederation of the Khazars' tribes whose Khāqān and the aristocracy professed Jewish faith, was a sign that God preserved the Jewish nation in spite of the miserable medieval situation. Halevi was also a famous religious poet and in his poems he prayed for his people: 'My Heart is in the East: A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain / Seeing how precious in mine eyes it is to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary'<sup>333</sup>.

The Christian conversion of the peoples in the East Roman Empire and also in that Byzantine was a long process in the context of the continuous conflicts with pagans, Jews, Muslims and many sects. The Christian Greek missionaries were worth per-

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<sup>329</sup> See St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies Against the Jews*, Univ. of Chicago, 1966.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>331</sup> According to Eusebius' interpretation in *Life of Constantine* God leads the nation to the victory while after the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews had not a state and a Temple for worship God who rejected their sacrifices.

<sup>332</sup> This is another rhetorical pattern meaning the opposition between the unity of Christian nations and the Jewish people scattered among the enemies.

<sup>333</sup> J. HALEVI, *Selected Poems*, Philadelphia, 1928, p. 2.



suauding that they represent the 'true Israel' and the future of all nations. The Byzantine rulers oppressed the Jews who nevertheless alimented doctrinal polemics, debates in the tribunals; they also controlled the commercial changes from China, India, Persia, Russia to Constantinople, Syria, Spain. Christian and Jewish writers have much to tell about the 'enemies', the 'crimes' and 'punishment'. For instance the emperor Heraclius asked Benjamin of Tiberias, a Jewish notable, 'Why did you do evil to the Christians?' (during the Persian invasion) and he replied simply: 'Because they are enemies of my religion'<sup>334</sup>.

We are interested in such historical details not in themselves, but for bringing to light how in the context of the relationship with Christianity the Jewish Messianic hopes developed a particular literary forme, the so-called 'Salvation Midrashim'. Any work of this genre used the structure of the book of Daniel, even so later the Jewish authorities rejected the authenticity of the text because the Christians based on it their demonstrations.

We should note, however, the reciproc respect of Jewish and Christian writers when they imagined the religious disputes because they gave a correct description of the opposing religion. J. Halevi for instance, spoke about the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ who was man, like visible body and also God in his interiority invisible. In the *First Kievan Chronicle* the Prince Vladimir listened attentively the Jewish scholar but he was frightened of the divine anger and punishment<sup>335</sup>. Paradoxically, the icon that the Greek missionary had shown to Vladimir did not frighten the prince into baptism on account of Hell; on the contrary the Jewish story of the fall of Jerusalem on the divine hand and Will had a major psychological effect.

Finally, the purpose of any dispute is not only to make adherents and proselytes but also a competition of loving and worshipping God<sup>336</sup>. The deep and incessant prayer is the unique way to maintain the collectivity of the nation in communication with God<sup>337</sup>. Undoubtedly the Messianic Jewish movement which flourished in Spain around 1100 brought forward that the joy-

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<sup>334</sup> THEOPHANES, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20. It seems that then the emperor persuaded him to convert and baptized him.

<sup>335</sup> *Povest'*, p. 101.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibidem.*, p. 125; cf. HALEVI, *op. cit.*

<sup>337</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*

fulness of the Jewish Khazar adherents before the Rus' baptism, is the result of a high humanistic culture which developed literary formes similar to christian hagiographies and chronicles.

One of the purposes of this paper is to show that the Jews were an important factor in the history of Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian orthodoxy. The Jews were presents in these territories before C. E. . The migration of Jewish population was continuous in time of wars or by the Byzantine oppression. Starting from this historical reality Moses Gaster<sup>338</sup>, philologue, literary historian and folclorist, disciple of the romanist G. Gröber, thought that the oral popular literature: legends, folk tales and apocrypha were a result of the Hebrew apocrypha of *Sapher Yesirah*, *Testament of the Patriarchs* and of *Apocalypses*. The titles of his works report on the comparative study of the Jewish religious literature and the Balkanic christian popular one. Let us see some of these, such as: *Talmudic legends and Romanian ones* (1882-1883), *A Talmudic tale in Romanian language* (1883-1884), *Kabala: the origine and its development* (1883-1884), *The apocrypha in the Romanian literature* (1884), *Karaites* (1884-1885), *Haggadia* (1884-1885), *The origine of the alphabet and the Romanian orthography* (1885), *View on the Hebrew literature* (1885-1886), *Die rumänische Miracles de Notre-Dame*, Florence, 1886, *Lectures on Greeko-Slavonic Literature and its relations to the Folk-Lore of Europe during the Middle Age*, London 1887, *Crestomatia română*, Leipzig, 1891, *Jewish and Spanish popular literature* (1892-1893), *Jewish tales 1000 years ago* (1896-1897), *Studies and Text in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archeology* vol. I-III, London, 1925-1928, *A sensational discover of biblical texts* (1932).

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<sup>338</sup> Moses Gaster (b. 17.9.1856 Bucarest - d. 5.3.1939 Abingdon England) was the first born of the eight sons of a Jewish family originary from Holland. His father was the consul of Holand at Bucarest. M. Gaster has studied at Rabbinic seminary and at the University at Breslaw (Wroclaw). In 1877 he took the doctorat at Leipzig. In 1880 Gaster obtained the title of rabbin and pracher. He became member of the literary Society 'Junimea' (*The Young generation*) at Iasi where he presented his work *The Romanian popular literature*. He was friend with the poet Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), both interested in the study of medieval romanian language. In 1885 owing to an antisemit movement Gaster was expelled from Romania and he lived at London. In 1908 he became the president of the Folk-Lore Society. In 1921 he returned in Romania and in 1929 became membre of the Romanian Academy.

Certainly the method of the philologic and religious research that M. Gaster used for his thesis that Christian Greek, Slavonic and Romanian literature was a natural development of Hebrew biblical apocrypha to day is quite overcome, but the argument itself remains very actual. Paradoxically, the explanation of this actuality there is in a narrative fragment written by a Gaster's contemporar, i.e. the poet Mihai Eminescu. Through the manuscripts of the young Eminescu, student at University of Viena and Berlin there is a short story: *Father Joseph*<sup>339</sup>. The hero is a kind of solitary, lay monk who was studying Greek manuscripts because interested in astrological calculation. His great culture was turning round an unique kernel, that is the Bible. According to the Jewish *Safer Yesirah* any atom is the center of the world and also this center maintains the relationship with the things of the whole world. The eye of the Lord, said the father Joseph, hold any atom of the whole universe and all souls of his creations. Such philosophical religious thought there is also in Halevi's treatise which Eminescu knew in the deutsch translation of the romantic poet H. Heine. Halevi developed in Aristotelic and Neo-platonic terms the biblical conception of the atom which constitutes either Center or his relationships with others elements of world, humanity and time, i.e., zodiacal signs, days of weeks and months<sup>241</sup>. According to a spiritual movement of Balcanik orthodoxy, the old father Joseph thought that the study of the Bible was a necessary preparation for a deeper revelation of Christianity<sup>342</sup>. Eminescu thought too that the Middle Age was the semination of the Christian faith and the future will be the messianic time when the earth will be transformed in the garden of the Lord. Moreover, the Bible was the kernel of all kind of knowledge and understanding proposed by the positivistic sciences. Exactly that in Halevi's *Kuzari* the sciences<sup>343</sup> are not at all a pretext to doubt about the truth of Bible. Similarly, the Eminescu's hero has read the French Encyclopedists, but their love for science and their atheistic attitude did

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<sup>339</sup> M. EMINESCU, *Opere*, vol. VII, Bucarest, 1977, p. 311.

<sup>340</sup> L. GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. Philadelphia, 1909-1938.

<sup>341</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*

<sup>342</sup> E. TURDEANU, *op. cit.*; cf. RUBIO C. GONZALO, *La angelologia en la literatura rabínica y sefardí*, Barcelona, 1977.

<sup>343</sup> J. HALEVI, *op. cit.*

not convinced Joseph. On the contrary, he rejects the Encyclopedists' claim that they could really deny the omniscience of God: 'A writer who writes against the Bible should be sick or unhappy'<sup>344</sup>. Furthermore, Joseph doubts rather that the modern positivistic society with its positivistic universities were really a progress of the world that it proclaimed.

This sure advance of the positivism gave to Father Joseph an anxiety and he began to look for the meaning of the world in Kabbal and *Secrets of the Sibyl*<sup>345</sup> but unfortunately the answer did not exist secretly in himself before consulting again and again the Bible. M. Eminescu has announced 150 years ago the doubt and the inevitable anxiety of Man of our time who does not look for the kernel of the divine equilibrium of the world which should become the garden of the Lord and not an empty space of disorder and confusion. Concluding, we should note the pattern of the competition of the three monotheistic religions used, either an imaginary dialogue with a clear spiritual significance, see Halevi's *Kuzari*, or historical, pastoral and political engagement with the aim to convert pagans or Judaized proselytes, see the famous *Letter* of Pope Nicola I who answered the questions of Bulgarian Khaqan Boris using the same pattern of debate. It means the conversion of the new tribe of Bulgarians arrived in the Eastern Roman Empire, under the Catholic Church.

At the same way the conversion of Rus' to Christianity brought up-to-date the pattern of the dialogue between the three religions and also between Latin, Greek and the autocephalous churches.

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<sup>344</sup> M. EMINESCU, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

<sup>345</sup> *The Oracles of Sibyl* in christian version as well as the Jewish one spoke about Salvation, Penance and Last Judgement; cf. PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, M., *Tradiciones mesiánicas en el Targum palestinese*, Valencia-Jerusalén, 1981.