



# Slavic Civilization

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## *The Rus' Primary Chronicle* *(Povest vremennykh let)*

These excerpts are from the Samuel Cross translation of the Rus' Primary Chronicle. The text is from *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor. Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953.

### **The Russian Primary Chronicle**

*Laurentian Text*

*Translated and edited by*

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# The Rus' Primary Chronicle<sup>1</sup>

This is the tale<sup>2</sup> of bygone years regarding the origin of the land of Rus', the first princes of Kyiv, and from what source the land of Rus' had its beginning.

Let us accordingly begin this narrative. After the flood, the sons of Noah (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) divided the earth among them. To the lot of Shem fell the Orient, and his share extended lengthwise as far as India and breadthwise (i.e., from east to south) as far as Rhinocurura, including Persia and Bactria, as well as Syria, Media (which lies beside the Euphrates River), Babylon, Cordyna, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Arabia the Ancient, Elymais, India, Arabia the Mighty, Coelesyria, Commagene, and all Phoenicia.

To the lot of Ham fell the southern region, comprising Egypt, Ethiopia facing toward India, the other Ethiopia out of which the red Ethiopian river flows to the eastward, the Thebaid, Libya as far as Cyrene, Marmar is, Syrtis, and other Libya, Numidia, Massyris, and Maurentania over against Cadiz. Among the regions of the Orient, Ham also received Cilicia, Pamphylia, Mysia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Camalia, Lycia, Caria, Lydia, the rest of Moesia, Troas, Aeolia, Bithynia, and ancient Phrygia. He likewise acquired the islands of Sardinia, Crete, and Cyprus, and the river Gihon, called the Nile.

To the lot of Japheth fell the northern and the western sections, including Media, Albania, Armenia (both little and great), Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, Galatia, Colchis, Bosporus, Maeotis, Dervis, Sarmatia, Tauria, Scythia, Thrace, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Molossia, Thessaly, Locris, Pellene (which is also called the Peloponnese), Arcadia, Epirus, Illyria, the Slavs, Lychnitis and Adriaca, from which the Adriatic Sea is named. He received also the islands of Britain, Sicily, Euboea, Rhodes, Chios, Lesbos, Cythera, Zacynthus, Cephallenia, Ithaca, and Corcyra, as well as a portion of the land of Asia called Ionia, the river Tigris flowing between the Medes and Babylon and the territory to the north extending as far as the Pontus and including the Danube, the Dniester, and the Carpathian Mountains, which are called Hungarian, and thence even to the Dniπρο [Dnieper]. He likewise acquired dominion over other rivers, among them the Desna, the Pripet', the Dvina, the Volkhov, and the Volga, which flows eastward into the portion of Shem.

In the share of Japheth lies Rus', Chud, and all the gentiles: Merya, Muroma, Ves', Mordva, Chud beyond the portages, Perm', Pechera, Yam', Ugra, Litva, Zimegola, Kors', Let'gola, and Liv'. The Lyakhs, the Prussians, and Chud border on the Varangian Sea. The Varangians dwell on the shores of that same sea, and extend to the eastward as far as the portion of Shem. They likewise live to the west beside this sea as far as the land of the English and the French. For the following nations also are a part of the race of Japheth: the Varangians, the Swedes, the Normans, the Gotlanders, the Rus', the English, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Romans, the Germans, the French, the Venetians, the Genoese, and so on. Their homes are situated in the northwest, and adjoin the Hamitic tribes.

Thus Shem, Ham, and Japheth divided the earth among them, and after casting lots, so that none might encroach upon his brother's share, they lived each in his appointed portion. There was but one spoken language, and as mankind multiplied throughout the earth, they planned, in the days of Yoktan and Peleg, to build a tower as high as heaven itself. Thus they gathered

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<sup>1</sup> This translation is taken from *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor. Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953. The text has been lightly edited.

<sup>2</sup> The original Cross translation begins with the phrase: "These are the narratives of bygone years...." Since then, the word "tale" has become more common as a translation of "povest."

together in the plain of Shinar to build the tower and the city of Babylon round about it. But they wrought upon the tower for forty years, and it was unfinished. Then the Lord God descended to look upon the city and the tower, and said, "This race is one, and their tongue is one." So the Lord confused the tongues, and after dividing the people into seventy-two races, he scattered them over the whole world. After the confusion of the tongues, God overthrew the tower with a great wind, and the ruin of it lies between Assur and Babylon. In height and in breadth it is 5400 and 33 cubits, and the ruin was preserved for many years.

After the destruction of the tower and the division of the nations, the sons of Shem occupied the eastern regions, and sons of Ham those of the south, and the sons of Japheth the western and the northern lands. Among these seventy-two nations, the Slavic race is derived from the line of Japheth, since they are the Noricians, who are identical with the Slavs.

Over a long period the Slavs settled beside the Danube, where the Hungarian and Bulgarian lands now lie. From among these Slavs, parties scattered throughout the country and were known by appropriate names, according to the places where they settled. Thus some came and settled by the river Morava, and were named Moravians, while others were called Czechs. Among these same Slavs are included the White Croats, the Serbs, and the Carinthians. For when the Vlakhs attacked the Danubian Slavs, settled among them, and did them violence, the latter came and made their homes by the Vistula, and were then called Lyakhs. Of these same Lyakhs some were called Polyanians, some Lutichians, some Mazovians, and still others Pomorians. Certain Slavs settled also on the Dnipro, and were likewise called Polyanians. Still others were named Derevlians, because they lived in the forests. Some also lived between the Pripet' and the Dvina, and were known as Dregovichians. Other tribes resided along the Dvina and were called Polotians on account of a small stream called the Polota, which flows into the Dvina. It was from this same stream that they were named Polotians. The Slavs also dwelt about Lake Il'men', and were known there by their characteristic name. They built a city which they called Novgorod. Still others had their homes along the Desna, the Sem', and the Sula, and were called Severians. Thus the Slavic race was divided, and its language was known as Slavic.

When the Polyanians lived by themselves among the hills, a trade-route connected the Varangians with the Greeks. Starting from Greece, this route proceeds along the Dnipro, above which a portage leads to the Lovat'. By following the Lovat', the great lake Il'men' is reached. The river Volkhov flows out of this lake and enters the great lake Nevo. The mouth of this lake opens into the Varangian Sea. Over this sea goes the route to Rome, and on from Rome overseas to Tsargrad [Constantinople]. The Pontus, into which flows the river Dnipro, may be reached from that point. The Dnipro itself rises in the upland forest, and flows southward. The Dvina has its source in this same forest, but flows northward and empties into the Varangian Sea. The Volga rises in this same forest but flows to the east, and discharges through seventy mouths into the Caspian Sea. It is possible by this route to the eastward to reach the Bulgars and the Caspians, and thus attain the region of Shem. Along the Dvina runs the route to the Varangians, whence one may reach Rome, and go from there to the race of Ham. But the Dnipro flows through various mouths into the Pontus. This sea, beside which taught St. Andrew, Peter's brother, is called the Rus Sea.

When Andrew was teaching in Sinope and came to Kherson (as has been recounted elsewhere), he observed that the mouth of the Dnipro was nearby. Conceiving a desire to go to

Rome, he thus journeyed to the mouth of the Dnipro. Thence he ascended the river, and by chance he halted beneath the hills upon the shore. Upon arising in the morning, he observed to the disciples who were with him, "See ye these hills? So shall the favor of God shine upon them that on this spot a great city shall arise, and God shall erect many churches therein." He drew near the hills, and having blessed them, he set up a cross. After offering his prayer to God, he descended from the hill on which Kyiv was subsequently built, and continued his journey up the Dnipro.

He then reached the Slavs at the point where Novgorod is now situated. He saw these people existing according to their customs, and on observing how they bathed and scrubbed themselves, he wondered at them. He went thence among the Varangians and came to Rome, where he recounted what he had learned and observed. "Wondrous to relate," said he, "I saw the land of the Slavs, and while I was among them, I noticed their wooden bathhouses. They warm them to extreme heat, then undress, and after anointing themselves with an acid liquid, they take young branches and lash their bodies. They actually lash themselves so violently that they barely escape alive. Then they drench themselves with cold water, and thus are revived. They think nothing of doing this every day, and though tormented by none, they actually inflict such voluntary torture upon themselves. Indeed, they make of the act not a mere washing but a veritable torment." When his hearers learned this fact, they marveled. But Andrew, after his stay in Rome, returned to Sinope.

While the Polyanians lived apart and governed their families (for before the time of these brothers there were already Polyanians, and each one lived with his gens on his own lands, ruling over his kinsfolk), there were three brothers, Kyi, Shchek, and Khoriv, and their sister was named Lybed'. Kyi lived upon the hill where the Borichev trail now is, and Shchek dwelt upon the hill now named Shchekovitsa, while on the third resided Khoriv, after whom this hill is named Khorevitsa. They built a town and named it Kyiv after their oldest brother. Around the town lay a wood and a great pine-forest in which they used to catch wild beasts. These men were wise and prudent; they were called Polyanians, and there are Polyanians descended from them living in Kyiv to this day.

Some ignorant persons have claimed that Kyi was a ferryman, for near Kyiv there was at that time a ferry from the other side of the river, in consequence of which people used to say, "To Kyi's ferry." Now if Kyi had been a mere ferryman, he would never have gone to Tsargrad. He was then the chief of his kin, and it is related what great honor he received from the Emperor in whose reign he visited the imperial court. On his homeward journey, he arrived at the Danube. The place pleased him and he built a small town, wishing to dwell there with his kinsfolk. But those who lived near by would not grant him this privilege. Yet even now the dwellers by the Danube call this town Kyivets. When Kyi returned to Kyiv, his native city, he ended his life there; and his brothers Shchek and Khoriv, as well as their sister Lybed', died there also.

After the deaths of these three brothers, their gens assumed the supremacy among the Polyanians. The Derevliaus possessed a principality of their own, as did also the Dregovichians, while the Slavs had their own authority in Novgorod, and another principality existed on the Polota, where the Polotians dwell. Beyond them reside the Krivichians, who live at the head waters of the Volga, the Dvina, and the Dnipro, and whose city is Smolensk. It is there that the Krivichians dwell, and from them are the Severians sprung. At Beloozero are situated the Ves',

and on the lake of Rostov, the Merya, and on Lake Kleshchino the Merya also. Along the river Oka (which flows into the Volga), the Muroma, the Cheremisians, and the Mordva preserve their native languages. For the Slavic race in Rus' includes only the Polyanians, the Derevlians, the people of Novgorod, the Polotians, the Dregovichians, the Severians, and the Buzhians, who live along the river Bug and were later called Volhynians. The following are other tribes which pay tribute to Rus': Chud, Merya, Ves', Muroma, Cheremis', Mordva, Perm', Pechera, Yam,' Litva, Zimegola, Kors', Narva, and Liv'. These tribes have their own languages and belong to the race of Japheth, which inhabits the lands of the north.

Now while the Slavs dwelt along the Danube, as we have said, there came from among the Scythians, that is, from the Khazars, a people called Bulgars who settled on the Danube and oppressed the Slavs. Afterward came the White Ugrians, who inherited the Slavic country. These Ugrians appeared under the Emperor Heraclius, warring on Chosroes, King of Persia. The Avars, who attacked Heraclius the Emperor, nearly capturing him, also lived at this time. They made war upon the Slavs, and harassed the Dulebians, who were themselves Slavs. They even did violence to the Dulebian women. When an Avar made a journey, he did not cause either a horse or a steer to be harnessed, but gave command instead that three of four or five women should be yoked to his cart and be made to draw him. Even thus they harassed the Dulebians. The Avars were large of stature and proud of spirit, and God destroyed them. They all perished, and not one Avar survived. There is to this day a proverb in Rus' which runs, "They perished like the Avars." Neither race nor heir of them remains. The Pechenegs came after them, and the Magyars passed by Kyiv later during the time of Oleg.

Thus the Polyanians, who belonged to the Slavic race, lived apart, as we have said, and called themselves Polyanians. The Derevlians, who are likewise Slavs, lived by themselves and adopted this tribal name. But the Radimichians and the Vyatichians sprang from the Lyakhs. There were in fact among the Lyakhs two brothers, one named Radim and other Vyatko. Radim settled on the Sozh', where the people are known as Radimichians, and Vyatko with his family settled on the Oka. The people there were named Vyatichians after him. Thus the Polyanians, the Derevlians, the Severians, the Radimichians, and the Croats lived at peace. The Dulebians dwelt along the Bug, where the Volhynians now are found, but the Ulichians and the Tivercians lived by the Dniester, and extended as far as the Danube. There was a multitude of them, for they inhabited the banks of the Dniester almost down to the east, and to this day there are cities in that locality which still belong to them. Hence they are called Great Scythia by the Greeks.

These Slavic tribes preserved their own customs, the law of their forefathers, and their traditions, each observing its own usages. For the Polyanians retained the mild and peaceful customs of their ancestors, and showed respect for their daughters-in-law and their sisters, as well as for their mothers and fathers. For their mothers-in-law and their brothers-in-law they also entertained great reverence. They observed a fixed custom, under which the groom's brother did not fetch the bride, but she was brought to the bridegroom in the evening, and on the next morning her dowry was turned over.

The Derevlians, on the other hand, existed in bestial fashion, and lived like cattle. They killed one another, ate every impure thing, and there was no marriage among them, but instead they seized upon maidens by capture. The Radimichians, the Vyatichians, and the Severians had the same customs. They lived in the forest like any wild beast, and ate every unclean thing. They

spoke obscenely before their fathers and their daughters-in-law. There were no marriages among them, but simply festivals among the villages. When the people gathered together for games, for dancing, and for all other devilish amusements, the men on these occasions carried off wives for themselves, and each took any woman with whom he had arrived at an understanding. In fact, they even had two or three wives apiece. Whenever a death occurred, a feast was held over the corpse, and then a great pyre was constructed, on which the deceased was laid and burned. After the bones were collected, they were placed in a small urn and set upon a post by the roadside, even as the Vyatichians do to this day. Such customs were observed by the Krivichians and the other pagans, since they did not know the law of God, but made a law unto themselves.

Georgius says in his Chronicle:

“Among all the nations, there are some that possess a written law, while others simply observe certain fixed customs, for, among those devoid of law, their ancestral usage is accepted in its stead. To this class belong the Seres, who live at the end of the world, and apply as law the customs of their ancestors, which forbid them to commit adultery or incest, to steal, to bear false witness, to kill, or do any wrong whatsoever.

“The law of the Bactrians, called Brahmans or Islanders, which is derived from the forefatherly prescription, prohibits them for reasons of piety from eating meat, drinking wine, committing adultery, or doing any sort of wrong, solely in consequence of religious scruple. But among the Indians, who dwell beside them, are found murderers, criminals and doers of violence beyond all nature. In the most remote portion of their country, they practice cannibalism and kill travelers and, what is worse still, they devour them like dogs.

“The Chaldeans and the Babylonians have a different code, which allows them to marry their mothers, to commit carnal sin with their nieces, and to commit murder. They regard every shameless deed as a virtue when they commit it, even when they are far from their own country.

“The Gelaeans maintain other customs: among them, the women plough, build houses, and perform men’s work. But they indulge in vice to the extent of their desire, for they are by no means restrained by their husbands, nor do the latter at all concern themselves about the matter. There are among them bold women who are capable of capturing wild beasts by virtue of their strength. The women have control over their husbands, and rule them.

“In Britain, many men sleep with one woman, and likewise many women have intercourse with one man. The people carry on without jealousy or restraint the vicious customs of their ancestors.

“The Amazons have no husbands, but like brute beasts they are filled with desire once each year in the springtime, and come together with the neighboring men. This season seems to them, as it were, a time of celebration and great festival. When they give birth to children and a male is born, they kill it, but if the child is of the female sex, then they nurse it and bring it up carefully.”

Just so, even in our own day, the Polovcians maintain the customs of their ancestors in the shedding of blood and in glorifying themselves for such deeds, as well as in eating every dead or unclean thing, even hamsters and marmots. They marry their mothers-in-law and their sisters-in-law, and observe other usages of their ancestors. But in all countries we Christians who believe in the Holy Trinity, in one baptism, and in one faith, have but one law, as many of us have been baptized into Christ Lord and have put on Christ.

After this time, and subsequent to the death of the three brothers in Kyiv, the Polyanians

were oppressed by the Derevliaus and other neighbors of theirs. Then the Khazars came upon them as they lived in the hills and forests, and demanded tribute from them. After consulting among themselves, the Polyanians paid as tribute one sword per hearth, which the Khazars bore to their prince and their elders, and said to them, "Behold, we have found new tribute." When asked whence it was derived, they replied, "From the forest on the hills by the river Dniipro." The elders inquired what tribute had been paid, whereupon the swords were exhibited. The Khazar elders then protested, "Evil is this tribute, prince. We have won it with a one-edged weapon called a sabre, but the weapon of these men is sharp on both edges and is called a sword. These men shall impose tribute upon us and upon other lands." All this has come to pass, for they spoke thus not of their own will, but by God's commandment. The outcome was the same in the time of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, when Moses was led before him, and the elders of Pharaoh foretold that he should subjugate Egypt. For the Egyptians perished at the hand of Moses, though the Jews were previously their slaves. Just as the Egyptians ruled supreme, but were themselves subsequently ruled over, so it has also come to pass that the Rus' rule over the Khazars even to this day.

In the year 6360 (852), the fifteenth of the induction, at the accession of the Emperor Michael, the land of Rus' was first named. We have determined this date from the fact that in the reign of this Emperor Rus' attacked Tsargrad, as is written in the Greek Chronicle. Hence we shall begin at this point and record the dates. Thus from Adam to the Flood, 2242 years elapsed; from the Flood to Abraham, 1082 years; from Abraham to the Mosaic Exodus, 430 years; from the Mosaic Exodus to David, 601 years; from David and the beginning of the reign of Solomon to the captivity of Jerusalem, 448 years; from the captivity to Alexander, 318 years; from Alexander to the birth of Christ, 333 years; from the birth of Christ to Constantine, 318 years; and from Constantine to Michael, 542 years. Twenty-nine years passed between the first year of Michael's reign and the accession of Oleg, Prince of Rus'. From the accession of Oleg, when he took up his residence in Kyiv, to the first year of Igor's principate, thirty-one years elapsed. Thirty-three years passed between Igor's accession and that of Svyatoslav. From the accession of Svyatoslav to that of Yaropolk, twenty-eight years passed. Yaropolk ruled eight years, Vladimir thirty-seven years, and Yaroslav forty years. Thus from the death of Svyatoslav to the death of Yaroslav eighty-five years elapsed, while sixty years separate the death of Yaroslav from that of Svyatopolk. But we shall now return to the subject, recounting what occurred during this period (for we set our beginning at the first year of Michael's reign) and we shall record the dates in order.

6361–6366 (853–858). Michael the Emperor went forth with an army by land and sea against the Bulgarians. The latter, on catching sight of his armament, offered no resistance, and asked leave to be baptized and to submit themselves to the Greeks. The Emperor baptized their prince with all his warriors, and made peace with the Bulgarians.

6367 (859). The Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Chuds, the Slavs, the Merians, the Ves', and the Krivichians. But the Khazars imposed it upon the Polyanians, the Severians, and the Vyaticians, and collected a white squirrel-skin from each hearth.

6368–6370 (860–862). The tributaries of the Varangians drove them back beyond the sea and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war one against

another. They said to themselves, "Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the Law." They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus': these particular Varangians were known as Rus', just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, English, and Gotlanders, for they were thus named. The Chuds, the Slavs, the Krivichians, and the Ves' then said to the people of Rus', "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us." They thus selected three brothers, with their kinsfolk, who took with them all the Rus' and migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. On account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of Rus'. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforesaid they were Slavs.

After two years, Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He assigned cities to his followers, Polotsk to one, Rostov to another, and to another Beloozero. In these cities there are thus Varangian colonists, but the first settlers were, in Novgorod, Slavs; in Polotsk, Krivichians; at Beloozero, Ves', in Rostov, Merians; and in Murom, Muromians. Rurik had dominion over all these districts.

With Rurik there were two men who did not belong to his kin, but were boyars. They obtained permission to go to Tsargrad with their families. They thus sailed down the Dnipro, and in the course of their journey they saw a small city on a hill. Upon their inquiry as to whose town it was, they were informed that three brothers, Kyi, Shchek, and Khoriv, had once built the city, but that since their deaths, their descendants were living there as tributaries of the Khazars. Askold and Dir remained in the city, and after gathering together many Varangians, they established their dominion over the country of the Polyanians at the same time that Rurik was ruling at Novgorod.

6371–6374 (863–866). Askold and Dir attacked the Greeks during the fourteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Michael. When the Emperor had set forth against the infidels and had arrived at the Black River, the eparch sent him word that the Rus' were approaching Tsargrad, and the Emperor turned back. Upon arriving inside the strait, the Rus' made a great massacre of the Christians, and attacked Tsargrad in two hundred boats. The Emperor succeeded with difficulty in entering the city. He straightway hastened with the Patriarch Photius to the Church of Our Lady of the Blachernae, where they prayed all night. They also sang hymns and carried the sacred vestment of the Virgin to dip it in the sea. The weather was still, and the sea was calm, but a storm of wind came up, and when great waves straightway rose, confusing the boats of the godless Rus, it threw them upon the shore and broke them up, so that few escaped such destruction and returned to their native land.

6375–6376 (867–868). Basil began his reign.

6377 (869). The entire nation of the Bulgarians accepted baptism.

6378–6387 (870–879). On his deathbed, Rurik bequeathed his realm to Oleg, who belonged to his kin, and entrusted to Oleg's hands his son Igor', for he was very young.

6388–6390 (880–882). Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Chuds, the Slavs, the Merians and all the Krivichians. He thus arrived with his Krivichians before Smolensk, captured the city, and set up a garrison there. Thence he went on and captured Lyubech, where he also set up a garrison. He then came to the hills of Kyiv, and saw how Askold and Dir reigned there. He hid his warriors in the boats, left some others behind,



and went forward himself bearing the child Igor'. He thus came to the foot of the Hungarian hill, and after concealing his troops, he sent messengers to Askold and Dir, representing himself as a stranger on his way to Greece on an errand for Oleg and for Igor', the prince's son, and requesting that they should come forth to greet them as members of their race. Askold and Dir straightway came forth. Then all the soldiery jumped out of the boats, and Oleg said to Askold and Dir, "You are not princes nor even of princely stock, but I am of princely birth." Igor' was then brought forward, and Oleg announced that he was the son of Rurik. They killed Askold and Dir, and after carrying them to the hill, they buried them there, on the hill now known as Hungarian, where the castle of Ol'ma now stands. Over that tomb Ol'ma built a church dedicated to St. Nicholas, but Dir's tomb is behind St. Irene's. Oleg set himself up as prince in Kyiv, and declared that it should be the mother of Rus' cities. The Varangians, Slavs, and others who accompanied him, were called Rus'. Oleg began to build stockaded towns, and imposed tribute on the Slavs, the Krivichians, and the Merians. He commanded that Novgorod should pay the Varangians tribute to the amount of 300 grivny a year for the preservation of peace. This tribute was paid to the Varangians until the death of Yaroslav.

6391 (883). Oleg began military operations against the Derevlans, and after conquering them he imposed upon them the tribute of a black marten-skin apiece.

6392 (884). Oleg attacked the Severians, and conquered them. He imposed a light tribute upon them and forbade their further payment of tribute to the Khazars, on the ground that there was no reason for them to pay it as long as the Khazars were his enemies.

6393 (885). Oleg sent messengers to the Radimichians to inquire to whom they paid tribute. Upon their reply that they paid tribute to the Khazars, he directed them to render it to himself instead, and they accordingly paid him a shilling apiece, the same amount that they had paid the Khazars. Thus Oleg established his authority over the Polyanians, the Derevlans, the Severians, and the Radimichians, but he waged war with the Ulichians and the Tivercians.

6394–6395 (886–887). Leo, Basil's son (called Lev by us), became Emperor. He called to the throne his brother Alexander, and they ruled together twenty-six years.

6396–6406 (888–898). The Magyars passed by Kyiv over the hill now called Hungarian, and on arriving at the Dnipro, they pitched camp. They were nomads like the Polovcians. Coming out of the east, they struggled across the great mountains, and began to fight against the neighboring Vlaks and Slavs. For the Slavs had settled there first, but the Vlaks had seized the territory of the Slavs. The Magyars subsequently expelled the Vlaks, took their land, and settled among the Slavs, whom they reduced to submission. From that time this territory was called Hungarian. The Magyars made war upon the Greeks, and seized the Thracian and Macedonian territory as far as Salonika. They also attacked the Moravians and the Czechs.

There was at the time but one Slavic race including the Slavs who settled along the Danube and were subjugated by the Magyars, as well as the Moravians, the Czechs, the Lyakhs, and the Polyanians, the last of whom are now called Rus'. It was for these Moravians that Slavic books were first written, and this writing prevails also in Rus' and among the Danubian Bulgarians. When the Moravian Slavs and their princes were living in baptism, the Princes Rostislav, Svyatopolk, and Kotsel sent messengers to the Emperor Michael, saying, "Our nation is baptized, and yet we have no teacher to direct and instruct us and interpret the sacred scriptures. We understand neither Greek nor Latin. Some teach us one thing and some another.

Furthermore, we do not understand written characters nor their meaning. Therefore send us teachers who can make known to us the words of the scriptures and their sense.” The Emperor Michael, upon hearing their request, called together all the scholars, and reported to them the message of the Slavic princes. The scholars suggested that there was a man in Salonika, by name Leo, who had two sons familiar with the Slavic tongue, being learned men as well. When the Emperor was thus informed, he immediately summoned the sons of Leo from Salonika, directing him to send to court forthwith his sons Methodius and Constantine. Upon receipt of this message, Leo quickly sent forth his sons. When they came before the Emperor, he made known to them that the Slavs had communicated to him their desire for teachers who could interpret the holy scriptures to them. The Emperor prevailed upon them to undertake the mission, and sent them into the Slavic country to Rostislav, Svyatopolk, and Kotsel. When they arrived, they undertook to compose a Slavic alphabet, and translated the Acts and the Gospel. The Slavs rejoiced to hear the greatness of God extolled in their native tongue. The apostles afterward translated the Psalter, the Oktoechos, and other books.

Now some zealots began to condemn the Slavic books, contending that it was not right for any other nation to have its own alphabet apart from the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Latins, according to Pilate’s superscription, which he composed for the Lord’s Cross. When the Pope at Rome heard of this situation, he rebuked those who murmured against the Slavic books, saying, “Let the word of the Scripture be fulfilled that 'all nations shall praise God' (Ps. lxxi, 17), and likewise that 'all nations shall declare the majesty of God according as the Holy Spirit shall grant them to speak' (cf. Acts, ii, 4). Whosoever condemns the Slavic writing shall be excluded from the Church until he mend his ways. For such men are not sheep but wolves; by their fruits ye shall know them and guard against them. Children of God, hearken unto his teachings, and depart not from the ecclesiastical rule which Methodius your teacher has appointed unto you.” Constantine then returned again, and went to instruct the people of Bulgaria; but Methodius remained in Moravia.

Prince Kotsel appointed Methodius Bishop of Pannonia in the see of St. Andronicus, one of the Seventy, a disciple of the holy Apostle Paul. Methodius chose two priests who were very rapid writers, and translated the whole Scriptures in full from Greek into Slavic in six months between March and the twenty-sixth day of October. After completing the task, he appropriately rendered praise and honor to God, who had bestowed such a blessing upon Bishop Methodius, the successor of Andronicus. Now Andronicus is the apostle of the Slavic race. He traveled among the Moravians, and the Apostle Paul taught there likewise. For in that region is Illyricum, whither Paul first repaired and where the Slavs originally lived. Since Paul is the teacher of the Slavic race, from which we Rus' too are sprung, even so the Apostle Paul is the teacher of us Rus', for he preached to the Slavic nation, and appointed Andronicus as Bishop and successor to himself among them. But the Slavs and the Rus' are one people, for it is because of the Varangians that the latter became known as Rus', though originally they were Slavs. While some Slavs were termed Polyanians, their speech was still Slavic, for they were known as Polyanians because they lived in the fields. But they had the same Slavic language.

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6495 (987). Vladimir summoned together his boyars and the city-elders, and said to them, "Behold, the Bulgars came before me urging me to accept their religion. Then came the Germans and praised their own faith; and after them came the Jews. Finally the Greeks appeared, criticizing all other faiths but commending their own, and they spoke at length, telling the history of the whole world from its beginning. Their words were artful, and it was wondrous to listen and pleasant to hear them. They preach the existence of another world. 'Whoever adopts our religion and then dies shall arise and live forever. But whosoever embraces another faith, shall be consumed with fire in the next world.' What is your opinion on this subject, and what do you answer?" The boyars and the elders replied, "You know, oh Prince, that no man condemns his own possessions, but praises them instead. If you desire to make certain, you have servants at your disposal. Send them to inquire about the ritual of each and how he worships God."

Their counsel pleased the prince and all the people, so that they chose good and wise men to the number of ten, and directed them to go first among the Bulgars and inspect their faith. The emissaries went their way, and when they arrived at their destination they beheld the disgraceful actions of the Bulgars and their worship in the mosque; then they returned to their country. Vladimir then instructed them to go likewise among the Germans, and examine their faith, and finally to visit the Greeks. They thus went into Germany, and after viewing the German ceremonial, they proceeded to Tsargrad, where they appeared before the Emperor. He inquired on what mission they had come, and they reported to him all that had occurred. When the Emperor heard their words, he rejoiced, and did them great honor on that very day.

On the morrow, the Emperor sent a message to the Patriarch to inform him that a Rus' delegation had arrived to examine the Greek faith, and directed him to prepare the church and the clergy, and to array himself in his sacerdotal robes, so that the Rus' might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. When the Patriarch received these commands, he bade the clergy assemble, and they performed the customary rites. They burned incense, and the choirs sang hymns. The Emperor accompanied the Rus' to the church, and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the chanting, and the pontifical services and the ministry of the deacons, while he explained to them the worship of his God. The Rus' were astonished, and in their wonder praised the Greek ceremonial. Then the Emperors Basil and Constantine invited the envoys to their presence, and said, "Go hence to your native country," and dismissed them with valuable presents and great honor.

Thus they returned to their own country, and the Prince called together his boyars and the elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys who had been sent out, and suggested that their report be heard. He thus commanded them to speak out before his retinue. The envoys reported, "When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.

Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here.” Then the boyars spoke and said, “If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Olga who was wiser than all other men.” Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.

After a year had passed, in 6496 (988), Vladimir proceeded with an armed force against Kherson, a Greek city, and the people of Kherson barricaded themselves therein. Vladimir halted at the farther side of the city beside the harbor, a bowshot from the town, and the inhabitants resisted energetically while Vladimir besieged the town. Eventually, however, they became exhausted, and Vladimir warned them that if they did not surrender, he would remain on the spot for three years. When they failed to heed this threat, Vladimir marshalled his troops and ordered the construction of an earthwork in the direction of the city. While this work was under construction, the inhabitants dug a tunnel under the city-wall, stole the heaped-up earth, and carried it into the city, where they piled it up in the center of the town. But the soldiers kept on building, and Vladimir persisted. Then a man of Kherson, Anastasius by name, shot into the Rus' camp an arrow on which he had written, “There are springs behind you to the east, from which water flows in pipes. Dig down and cut them off.” When Vladimir received this information, he raised his eyes to heaven and vowed that if this hope was realized, he would be baptized. He gave orders straightway to dig down above the pipes, and the water-supply was thus cut off. The inhabitants were accordingly overcome by thirst, and surrendered.

Vladimir and his retinue entered the city, and he sent messages to the Emperors Basil and Constantine, saying, “Behold, I have captured your glorious city. I have also heard that you have an unwedded sister. Unless you give her to me to wife, I shall deal with your own city as I have with Kherson.” When the Emperors heard this message they were troubled, and replied, “It is not meet for Christians to give in marriage to pagans. If you are baptized, you shall have her to wife, inherit the kingdom of God, and be our companion in the faith. Unless you do so, however, we cannot give you our sister in marriage.” When Vladimir learned their response, he directed the envoys of the Emperors to report to the latter that he was willing to accept baptism, having already given some study to their religion, and that the Greek faith and ritual, as described by the emissaries sent to examine it, had pleased him well. When the Emperors heard this report, they rejoiced, and persuaded their sister Anna to consent to the match. They then requested Vladimir to submit to baptism before they should send their sister to him, but Vladimir desired that the Princess should herself bring priests to baptize him. The Emperors complied with his request, and sent forth their sister, accompanied by some dignitaries and priests. Anna, however, departed with reluctance. “It is as if I were setting out into captivity,” she lamented; “better were it for me to die at home.” But her brothers protested, “Through your agency God turns the land of Rus' to repentance, and you will relieve Greece from the danger of grievous war. Do you not see how much harm the Rus' have already brought upon the Greeks? If you do not set out, they may bring on us the same misfortunes.” It was thus that they overcame her hesitation only with great difficulty. The Princess embarked upon a ship, and after tearfully embracing her kinfolk, she set forth across the sea and arrived at Kherson. The natives came forth to greet her, and conducted her into the city, where they settled her in the palace.

By divine agency, Vladimir was suffering at that moment from a disease of the eyes, and could see nothing, being in great distress. The Princess declared to him that if he desired to be relieved of this disease, he should be baptized with all speed, otherwise it could not be cured. When Vladimir heard her message, he said, "If this proves true, then of a surety is the God of the Christians great," and gave order that he should be baptized. The Bishop of Kherson, together with the Princess's priests, after announcing the tidings, baptized Vladimir, and as the Bishop laid his hand upon him, he straightway received his sight. Upon experiencing this miraculous cure, Vladimir glorified God, saying, "I have now perceived the one true God." When his followers beheld this miracle, many of them were also baptized.

Vladimir was baptized in the Church of St. Basil, which stands at Kherson upon a square in the center of the city, where the Khersonians trade. The palace of Vladimir stands beside this church to this day, and the palace of the Princess is behind the altar. After his baptism, Vladimir took the Princess in marriage. Those who do not know the truth say he was baptized in Kyiv, while others assert this event took place in Vasilev, while still others mention other places.

After Vladimir was baptized, the priests explained to him the tenets of the Christian faith, urging him to avoid the deceit of heretics by adhering to the following creeds:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth; [the chronicle continues with the text of the Creed]

Believe, also, they said, in the seven councils of the Church: the first at Nicaea, comprising three hundred and eighteen Fathers, who cursed Arius and proclaimed the immaculate and orthodox faith; the second at Constantinople, attended by one hundred and fifty Fathers, who anathematized Macedonius (who denied the Holy Spirit), and proclaimed the oneness of the Trinity; the third at Ephesus, comprising two hundred Fathers, against Nestorius, whom they cursed, while they also proclaimed the dignity of the Mother of God; the fourth council of six hundred and thirty Fathers held at Chalcedon, to condemn Eutyches and Dioscorus, whom the Holy Fathers cursed after they had proclaimed the Perfect God and the Perfect Man, our Lord Jesus Christ; the fifth council of one hundred and sixty-five Fathers, held at Constantinople, which was directed against the teachings of Origen and Evagrius, whom the Fathers anathematized; the sixth council of one hundred and seventy Holy Fathers, likewise held at Constantinople, which condemned Sergius and Cyrus, whom the Holy Fathers cursed; and the seventh council, comprising three hundred and fifty Holy Fathers, which was held at Nicaea, and cursed those who do not venerate images.

Do not accept the teachings of the Latins, whose instruction is vicious. For when they enter the church, they do not kneel before the images, but they stand upright before kneeling, and when they have knelt, they trace a cross upon the ground and then kiss it, but they stand upon it when they arise. Thus while prostrate they kiss it, and yet upon arising they trample it underfoot. Such is not the tradition of the Apostles. For the Apostles prescribed the kissing of an upright cross, and also prescribed the use of images. For the Evangelist Luke painted the first image and sent it to Rome. As Basil has said, the honor rendered to the image redounds to its original. Furthermore, they call the earth their mother. If the earth is their mother, then heaven is their father, for in the beginning God made heaven and earth. Yet they say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." If, according to their understanding, the earth is their mother, why do they spit upon their mother, and pollute her whom they caress?

In earlier times, the Romans did not so act, but took part in all the councils, gathering together from Rome and all other Sees. At the first Council in Nicaea, directed against Arius, Silvester sent bishops and priests from Rome, as did Athanasius from Alexandria; and Metrophanes also dispatched his bishops from Constantinople. Thus they corrected the faith. At the second council took part Damasus of Rome, Timotheus of Alexandria, Meletius of Antioch, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Gregory the Theologian. In the third council participated Coelestinus of Rome, Cyril of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem. At the fourth council participated Leo of Rome, Anatolius of Constantinople, and Juvenal of Jerusalem; and at the fifth, Vigilius of Rome, Eutychius of Constantinople, Apollinaris of Alexandria, and Domnus of Antioch. At the sixth council took part Agathon of Rome, Georgius of Constantinople, Theophanes of Antioch, and Peter the Monk of Alexandria; at the seventh, Adrian of Rome, Tarasius of Constantinople, Politian of Alexandria, Theodoret of Antioch, and Elias of Jerusalem. These Fathers with the assistance of the bishops, corrected the faith.

After the seventh council, Peter the Stammerer came with the others to Rome and corrupted the faith, seizing the Holy See. He seceded from the Sees of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Antioch. His partisans disturbed all Italy, disseminating their teaching in various terms. For some of these priests who conduct services are married to one wife, and others are married to seven. Avoid their doctrine; for they absolve sins against money payments, which is the worst abuse of all. God guard you from this evil, oh Prince!

Hereupon Vladimir took the Princess and Anastasius and the priests of Kherson, together with the relics of St. Clement and of Phoebus his disciple, and selected also sacred vessels and images for the service." In Kherson he thus founded a church on the mound which had been heaped up in the midst of the city with the earth removed from his embankment; this church is standing at the present day. Vladimir also found and appropriated two bronze statues and four bronze horses, which now stand behind the Church of the Holy Virgin, and which the ignorant think are made of marble. As a wedding present for the Princess, he gave Kherson over to the Greeks again, and then departed for Kyiv.

When the Prince arrived at his capital, he directed that the idols should be overthrown, and that some should be cut to pieces and others burned with fire. He thus ordered that Perun should be bound to a horse's tail and dragged down Borichev to the stream. He appointed twelve men to beat the idol with sticks, not because he thought the wood was sensitive, but to affront the demon who had deceived man in this guise, that he might receive chastisement at the hands of men. Great art thou, oh Lord, and marvelous are thy works! Yesterday he was honored of men, but today held in derision. While the idol was being dragged along the stream to the Dnipro, the unbelievers wept over it, for they had not yet received holy baptism. After they had thus dragged the idol along, they cast it into the Dnipro. But Vladimir had given this injunction "If it halts anywhere, then push it out from the bank, until it goes over the falls. Then let it loose." His command was duly obeyed. When the men let the idol go, and it passed through the rapids, the wind cast it out on the bank, which since that time has been called Perun's sandbank, a name that it bears to this very day.

Thereafter Vladimir sent heralds throughout the whole city to proclaim that if any inhabitants, rich or poor, did not betake himself to the river, he would risk the Prince's displeasure. When the people heard these words, they wept for joy, and exclaimed in their

enthusiasm, "If this were not good, the Prince and his boyars would not have accepted it." On the morrow, the Prince went forth to the Dnipro with the priests of the Princess and those from Kherson, and a countless multitude assembled. They all went into the water: some stood up to their necks, others to their breasts, and the younger near the bank, some of them holding children in their arms, while the adults waded farther out. The priests stood by and offered prayers. There was joy in heaven and upon earth to behold so many souls saved. But the devil groaned, lamenting, "Woe is me! how am I driven out hence! For I thought to have my dwelling-place here, since the apostolic teachings do not abide in this land. Nor did this people know God, but I rejoiced in the service they rendered unto me. But now I am vanquished by the ignorant, not by apostles and martyrs, and my reign in these regions is at an end."

When the people were baptized, they returned each to his own abode. Vladimir, rejoicing that he and his subjects now knew God himself, looked up to heaven and said, "Oh God, who has created heaven and earth, look down, I beseech thee, on this thy new people, and grant them, oh Lord, to know thee as the true God, even as the other Christian nations have known thee. Confirm in them the true and inalterable faith, and aid me, oh Lord, against the hostile adversary, so that, hoping in thee and in thy might, I may overcome his malice." Having spoken thus, he ordained that wooden churches should be built and established where pagan idols had previously stood. He thus founded the Church of St. Basil on the hill where the idol of Perun and the other images had been set, and where the Prince and the people had offered their sacrifices. He 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.

He took the children of the best families, and sent them for instruction in book-learning. The mothers of these children wept bitterly over them, for they were not yet strong in faith, but mourned as for the dead. When these children were assigned for study, there was fulfilled in the land of Rus' the prophecy which says, "In those days, the deaf shall hear words of Scripture, and the voice of the stammerers shall be made plain" (Is., xxix, 18). For these persons had not ere this heard words of Scripture, and now heard them only by the act of God, for in his mercy the Lord took pity upon them, even as the Prophet said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" (Ex., xxxiii, 19).

He had mercy upon us in the baptism of life and the renewal of the spirit, following the will of God and not according to our deeds. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved his new people, the land of Rus', and illumined them with holy baptism. Thus we bend the knee before him saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, what reward shall we return thee for all that thou hast given us, sinners that we are? We can not requite thy gifts, for great art thou, and marvelous are thy works. Of thy majesty there is no end. Generation after generation shall praise thy acts" (Ps., cxlv, 4–5).

Thus I say with David, "Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, let us call upon God and our Savior. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, praising him because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever, since he hath saved us from our enemies, even from vain idols" (Ps., xcv, 1–2, cxxxvi, 1, 24). And let us once more say with David, "Sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth! Sing unto the Lord, praise his name: tell his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all nations (Ps., xcvi, 1–4). For the Lord is great and greatly praised, and of his majesty there is no end" (Ps., civ, 3). What joy! Not one or two only are saved. For the Lord said, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that

repenteth” (Math., xv, 10). Here not merely one or two, but innumerable multitudes came to God, illumined by holy baptism. As the Prophet said, “I will sprinkle water upon you, and ye shall be purified of your idols and your sins” (Ezek, xxxvi, 25). Another Prophet said likewise, “Who like to God taketh away sins and remitteth transgressions? For he is willingly merciful; he turneth his gaze upon us and sinketh our sins in the abyss” (Mic, vii, 18–19). For Paul says, “Brethren, as many of us as were baptized in Jesus Christ were baptized in his death, and with him, through baptism, we were planted in death, in order that as Christ rose from the dead in the glory of the Father, we also might likewise walk in newness of life” (Rom., vi, 3). And again, “The old things have passed away, and new are made (Cor., v, 7); now hath approached our salvation, the night hath passed, the day is at hand” (Rom., xiii, 12); “Thus we obtained access through faith into this grace of which we are proud and through which we exist” (Rom., v, 2). “Now, being freed from sin, and having become servants of the Lord, ye have your fruit in holiness” (Rom., vi, 20).

We are therefore bound to serve the Lord, rejoicing in him, for David said, “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in him with trembling” (Ps., ii, 11). We call upon the Lord our God, saying “Blessed be the Lord, who gave us not as prey to their teeth. The net was broken, and we were freed from the crafts of the devil. His glory has perished noisily, but the Lord endures forever, glorified by the sons of Rus', and praised in the Trinity.” But the demons are accursed of pious men and righteous women, who have received baptism and repentance for the remission of sins, and thus form a new Christian people, the elect of God.

Vladimir was enlightened, and his sons and his country with him. For he had twelve sons: Vysheslav, Izyaslav, Yaroslav, Svyatopolk, Vsevolod, Svyatoslav, Mstislav, Boris, Gleb, Stanislav, Pozvzd, and Sudislav. He set Vysheslav in Novgorod, Izyaslav in Polotsk, Svyatopolk in Turov, and Yaroslav in Rostov. When Vysheslav, the oldest, died in Novgorod, he set Yaroslav over Novgorod, Boris over Rostov, Gleb over Murom, Svyatoslav over Dereva, Vsevolod over Vladimir, and Mstislav over Tmutorakan'. Then Vladimir reflected that it was not good that there were so few towns round about Kyiv, so he founded forts on the Desna, the Oster', the Trubezh, the Sula, and the Stugna.

He gathered together the best men of the Slavs, and Krivichians, the Chuds, and the Vyatichians, and peopled these forts with them. For he was at war with the Pechenegs, and when he fought with them, he often overcame them.

6497 (989). After these events, Vladimir lived in the Christian faith. With the intention of building a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin, he sent and imported artisans from Greece. After he had begun to build, and the structure was completed, he adorned it with images, and entrusted it to Anastasius of Kherson. He appointed Khersonian priests to serve in it, and bestowed upon this church all the images, vessels, and crosses which he had taken in that city.

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