Theoria and Optasia in the Old Church Slavonic Translations of the “Life of St Anthony the Great”

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**Theoria and Optasia in the Old Church Slavonic Translations of the Life of St Anthony the Great**

**Abstract.** The focus of the present paper is the terms θεωρία and ὀπτασία presented in the Greek text of *Life of St Anthony the Great* by St Athanasius of Alexandria and their translation representation in the Old Church Slavonic versions of the text. The terms are approached diachronically, i.e. in through history of Classical and post-classical Greek literature, thus providing the necessary cultural background for their usage and context. Each term, then, is commented in its exact attestation in the *Life*, providing also the corresponding translations and their wider context. The translation renderings are further analyzed in perspective of the lexical material in the classical Old Church Slavonic corpus as well as with material from texts and sources, thus aiming at contextualizing them in wider lexicological perspective.

**Keywords:** Anthony the Great, hagiography, Old Church Slavonic translations, patristics, Greek-Slavonic lexical correspondences

The *Life of St Anthony the Great* or *Vita Antonii* (BHG, 140; PG, vol. XXVI, col. 835–978; SC, 400\(^1\); VA onwards) by Athanasius Alexandrinus is regarded as one of the foundational texts for Christian monasticism as a cultural phenomenon and movement. It is beyond any doubt that Anthony (?251–356)\(^2\) was not the first monk – according to the numerous written accounts by the early authors,


as well as confirmed by the very text of the *Vita* (ch. 3). Life of Anthony, though, quickly exceeds the limits of the literary genre and becomes the example of an ascetic vita – introducing not only the practices, but also the aesthetics of the genre that later was developed in the monastic milieu. *VA* is sure to have been written soon after the death of the ‘first athletes’ (around the mid-4th c. AD), it is quickly translated in Coptic, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, Georgian and Latin. The *Vita* is later considered not only as a hagiographic narrative *par excellence*, but also as a basis for the flourishing monastic culture, ideology and their proliferous literature from the later centuries.

As such an early source, it could be expected that *VA* presents a foundational set of spiritual terminology, which monasticism uses to verbalize, think and transmit the realms and ideas it reaches to. This terminology, in the first place, can reveal interesting connections with the world of the Late Antiquity which is the philosophical and cultural background on which early Church literature develops. On the other hand, Christianity itself creates a self-sufficient ideology which is to flourish and be elaborated in the coming centuries, reaching practically both new experience and a new philosophical perception of the spiritual life. The monastic and spiritual terminology of and in the *Vita* is absorbed in the specific language that Christianity employs, especially in the later authors. This is particularly true about the Greek text of the *Vita* and its Latin translations and probably about the Old Slavonic ones, too.

This research aims at looking deeper into the translational techniques and the lexical parallels of the known Old Church Slavonic translations of the *Vita Antonii Magni* based on its Greek text. The semantic group that will be in focus in the present paper is the monastic and spiritual terminology which constitutes an important part not only of the later Slavonic literary tradition but also of the cultural and religious life of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. The precise scope of the present paper is limited to the terms denoting spiritual visions.

For this purpose, the researched field is approached both by means of classical philological tools such as contextual analysis, linguistic analysis of the style [of the author, translator, etc.] but also with the lens of the anthropology that this type of literature constructs, the cultural shift that it provokes, creating a new paradigm of identity.

The Old Church Slavonic translations of VA

*VA* is translated in Old Church Slavonic quite early; the earliest translation is known to have been accomplished in the time of Presbyter John and it is often

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attributed to him⁵. There are two other separate translations confirmed in the literature on the subject, considered to have emerged in the 14th century. The text of the *Vita* itself is attested in 52 Bulgarian, Serbian, Vlachomoldovian and Russian manuscripts, which are divided into five different versions by P. Petkov⁶. In this paper, though, I am going to follow the standard classification in three translation as accepted by the scholarship so far. Those translations could be presented briefly as follows:

a. **First translation** is considered to have originated in Preslav during the first Bulgarian Kingdom, its earliest copy could be found in the Zographou Monastery collection, N. 19 (dated to the 80s of the 14th century)⁷. This copy is characterized by the use of two *jers* (with a tendency to reduce the usage to only one), two nasal vowels with a moderate tendency of mixing them, no vocalisation of the *jers*, almost regular omission of the *l-epentheticum* and writing of ѣ on the etymological place ofꙗ⁸. The text from this copy, kindly provided to me by P. Petkov, is the one used in the present paper. Another copy of this translation is in the manuscript N. 195 from the Khludov collection, edited and published by K. Kostova⁹. Special attention to the language of this manuscript was dedicated by A. Dimitrova¹⁰, who found numerous old traces and lexical matches with what is considered to be the Preslav lexical core. One of the major characteristics of this group is the omission of chapters 51–60 of the *Vita*. This translation is considered to be the earliest one¹¹ and previous to the Metaphrastic redaction which the *Vita* has undergone in Greek environment¹².

b. **Second translation** of the *Vita* is attested mainly among the Southern and Eastern Slavic people. The full text of this translation follows the copy attested in manuscript N. 4/8 from the Rila Monastery collection (Panegyricus Vladislavi from 1479), ff. 323r – 396. The text of this copy, kindly provided

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⁵ Cf. more about the colophon containing the information, which this opinion is based upon, and some of the scholar discussion on the subject in: A. Santoro Otero, *Die altslavische Überlieferung der Vita Antonii des Athanasius*, ZKg 90, 1979, p. 98; Z. Vitić, *Житие светог Антонија Великог према српским средњовековним рукописама*, Београд 2015, p. 9–15.


⁷ I express my gratitude to the brotherhood of the monastery for providing me with digitalized copies of the *Vita*.

⁸ П. Петков, *Славянските преводи...,* p. 128.


by P. Petkov, is used in the present paper\textsuperscript{13}. Its linguistic characteristics refer to what is usually found in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century texts, Petkov’s hypothesis of an Athonite origin, though, needs further elaboration and research. T. Helland finds this translation to have originated from a premetaphrastic Greek original or from a text belonging to the so-called by him mixed metaphrastic group\textsuperscript{14}.

c. Third translation – represented by only one manuscript – N. 43 from the Serbian Orthodox Church Museum collection in Belgrade, p. 1–47. It was firstly identified by K. Ivanova\textsuperscript{15}, later confirmed by T. Heland\textsuperscript{16} and published by A. Dimitrova in an online data-base of Old and Middle Bulgarian texts\textsuperscript{17}. Dimitrova dedicates a special attention to its language in a separate paper\textsuperscript{18}. This translation represents the text in the most homogenous and smooth manner, it’s considered to have been accomplished not earlier than the 14\textsuperscript{th} c. According to T. Helland, the text was translated from an original, belonging to the so called “metaphrastic vulgata”\textsuperscript{19} of the \textit{Vita} among its Greek tradition.

The exact lexicological relations between the three translations have still not been an object of a thorough scholarship. The Second and the Third translations show some clear traces of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century literary production that still need to be investigated in the context of the style and translation techniques. The present paper is hoped to contribute at least partially to understanding better the place of these texts among the Medieval Church Slavonic literacy.

\textbf{The focus of the present paper} is some of the terms denoting spiritual visions attested in the \textit{Vita}. Here I am going to present the variants attested in the three Old Church Slavonic translations of VA and to analyze them in the wider context of the medieval Slavonic translations of Greek texts.

The translation solutions are first analyzed in the context of the classical corpus of Old Church Slavonic monuments (10\textsuperscript{th}–11\textsuperscript{th} cc.) and then in view of the corpus of texts attested in later manuscripts. Thus, the paper aims not only at better understanding the origin of the terms in focus, but also at systemizing their reception in the Old Church Slavonic literary environment.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} I could also examine the digital copy of the \textit{Vita} in this manuscript thanks to the project Digital Archive ‘Bulgarian Manuscript Book’ of the Faculty of Slavic Studies in Sofia University.
\textsuperscript{14} T. Helland, \textit{The Greek Archetypes}…
\textsuperscript{17} http://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/textcorpus/show/doc_55 [12 IV 2021].
\textsuperscript{19} Those are the manuscripts W and Z according to Bartelink’s classification (cf. \textit{Athanasius: p. 81, 92–93}).
\end{footnotesize}
Terms for spiritual visions in VA

Spiritual visions are rather often manifestations of the spiritual growth in the ascetic life. Even though that later the monastic and generally Christian literature refers to them with certain skepticism, early ascetic texts contain abundant examples of such stances and experiences. Visions differ from contemplation as practice but still remain closely connected with it as much as both testify for certain dynamics in the inner life of the ascetic and its spiritual growth. In the Vita, particularly, they are denoted with the Greek terms θεωρία, ὀπτασία and φαντασία that are often rendered with similar lexemes in Slavonic. In this paper, I will focus on the first two terms as the similarity between their Slavonic correspondences is the closest. The third one and its place in the Vita is going to be examined on another occasion, due to its specific philosophical background in the classical Greek literature and its interesting outcomes in the Old Church Slavonic translations.

1. Θεωρία

In Classical Greek this term used to denote the sending of state-ambassadors to oracles or games (θεωροί). The other meaning it is attested with is 'being a spectator at a theater or games' (e.g. in Sophocles’ Oedipus rex, Plato’s Crito, Aristophanes’ Eirene) as well as ‘spectacle’ (Aeschilus, Aristophanes, Plato’s Leges), ‘viewing, beholding’ (Herodotes, Isocrates, Aristophanes). Probably it is from the latter that more specific and abstract notions of ‘contemplations, consideration’ (Plato, Epicurus, Aristotle’s Metaphysics) and ‘theory, speculation’ (Polibius et al.) have been developed. Here it’s interesting to mention Lorié’s observation that "though Plato is deeply engaged in discussing his eternal ideas he does not use the word θεωρία to express this purely intellectual speculation. To him θεωρία chiefly means scene, spectacle, show, going to a show, entering on a specific enquiry". René Arnou dedicates an extensive overview of Platonic contemplation, starting from its pre-origin. Outlining the influence of Socrates, for example, he summarizes that contemplation is a vision, but this vision comes from the inner life, depending on the exercises of the purificatory virtues. This intimate desire of the souls, that leads to this purificatory labor through which the νοῦς come to contemplating the ideas, corresponds to the desire in them that provokes the search in the realm above. Later, Aristotle’s opinion was that there was nothing more pleasant than the contemplation and that happiness was hidden in the ‘pure thought’ (EN, K, 7sqq, 1177sqq). For Aristotle, continues Lorié, θεωρία or the contemplation is

23 Ibidem, col. 1725.
an active property to God; man cannot contemplate the divine, but can only apply
himself to contemplation as much as he himself has something divine in him
(the νοῦς, his mind)24.

Contemplation as knowing God was introduced by Philo of Alexandria who
believed contemplating God was possible because God was manifesting Himself,
and also because of the “divine seed” (σπέρμα τὸ νοητόν) received by a purified
human mind (νοῦς καθαρώτατος)25. As for the meaning ‘contemplations of divine
things’, the term was used freely firstly by Plotinus, although the lexeme he pre-
ferred mostly in order to render this idea was θέα26.

Later in Patristic language27, the word extended its semantic field in the follow-
ing directions. Firstly, it preserved the notion of more general and subjective per-
ceptions such as ‘seeing, beholding’, ‘vision’, ‘spectator’. The second semantic group
encompasses more metaphoric meanings, connected with intellectual percep-
tion such as ‘reason, inquiry’, ‘intellectual learning’, ‘theory, speculation, science’
and also ‘(Platonic) speculation’. A separate third group is constituted by more
spiritual connotations – it is here that the meaning of ‘spiritual contemplation’ is
extant (not always distinguished from the Platonic one), as well as its connections
with prayer, actions, and the communion. Meanings connected with the Chris-
tian exegesis could be differentiated in a separate group – there θεωρία refers only
to the ‘vision of prophets and apostles, comprehensible and interpretable only by
minds that are separated from the earthly cares’28. Here are also some more techni-
cal notions related with the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures (especially in the
Antiochian school); some of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers regard it
alongside with the allegorical interpretation of the Word (ἀλληγορία)29. Among
the Greek Fathers the first that used frequently θεωρία were Clement of Alexan-
dria and Origen. Sometimes the term is comprehended as identical by meaning to
gνώσει although the latter used to cover the whole sphere of religious knowledge
whereas the former denoted ‘the same knowledge at its highest perfection’30. Lorié
notes that Clement and Origen, similarly to Plotinus, are one of the first authors
that postulated the oppositions θεωρία – πρᾶξις, τὸ θεωρετικόν – τὸ πρακτικόν,

24 It’s worth underlining, though, that our contemporary perception of ‘mind’ mostly as the rational
human thinking is not exactly what νοῦς was referring to.
25 PHILON, De praemiis et poenis, 6; Quis rerum div. heres, n. 13. R. ARNOU, Contemplation…,
col. 1726.
28 Cf. e.g. ἡ τοῦ προφήτου ληφθεῖσα διάνοια πρὸς τὴν θεωρίαν (Thdr. Mops. Nah. I: I (M.66.404D)),
also: ποῦ γε τὰς οὕτω φοβερὰς τε καὶ ἀπορρήτους θεωρίας δυνατὸν ἦν αὐτοῖς ὑποδέχεσθαι μὴ τῷ
λογισμῷ πρότερον κατὰ τὸν τῆς θεωρίας καρδίν ἐξισταμένοις τῶν παρόντων (ibidem, 401D).
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βίος θεωρετικός – βίος πρακτικός. Later, these dichotomies are further elaborated (rather following Origen) by Evagrius Ponticus in his ascetic theory.

In the Classical Old Church Slavonic corpus31, the Greek term θεωρία is translated with видъ, видѣние, поъзрѣ и сквѧтость. Among them, in Codex Suprasliensis theoria is attested as:

- видъ as 'ability to see, perception'
- видѣние 'spectacle'
- сквѧтость 'holiness'

In the first two examples, it could be argued that видъ renders the idea of perception, rather than the 'ability to see'. In the last case, on the other hand, θεωρία expresses the divine meaning toward which the fig tree directs. This type of interpretation is attested in the early exegesis. In all these occasions, though, the Old Church Slavonic translation does not seem to be quite accurate in rendering the Greek contextual meaning of the passages.

In John's the Exarch translation of De Fide Orthodoxa theoria is also translated as видъ and видѣние32. In Bogoslovie it is rendered as видъ meaning 'contemplation': акосе бо дослѣ къ исходѣ къыдъынъ късаузъ, тако и дѣла къ(с)твѣзтѣни ико писанѣльц напомы съ и плащъ зѣрѣлъ даетъ, кърос православлѣнъ, и приснесѣнѣ листѣ късдѣзънѣнъ дѣлы. на дѣло бо


32 Т. Илиева, Терминологичната лексика в Йоан-Екзарховия превод на “De Fide Orthodoxa”, София 2013, p. 381.
In Symeon’s Miscellanea from 1073, θεωρία is translated with видѣніе in two occasions – in both cases the meaning rendered is connected with a spiritual experience and contemplation:

58c9–10 πνευματικὴν θεωρίαν ἀνέξανεν видѣніе
57b19–20 οἱ δὲ βιον ἔχουσι τὸ τῇ τοιαύτῃ θεωρίᾳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐστιάν οἱ же κατιττένεν εἰς ταύταν καὶ κατʼ ἀνατολήν θεωρίαν ἀνέξανεν видѣніе и невѣдѣние то кърму Ти.

On the other hand, it is also encountered as разоумѣние ‘understanding’, разоумѣнъ and мысль (134c6–7):

63a12 ὁ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξαφανίσας τὴν λήθην καὶ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν φυσικὴν δηνομον ἐκπρεπῶς θεωρίαν δ εικε στὸν δοσιμην ἰακνη̣τι καὶ κατεξεκυτίς τὴν φυσικὴν διήνυσεν ἐκπρεπῶς θεωρίαν
226a22 κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀκριβὴ θεωρίαν πο ξλοσφυττυμουμου μαν̣αν

Although θεωρία is not attested in the Miscellanea from 1076, it’s related verb θεωρέω is encountered, it is translated with видѣти and разоумѣвати. In the translation of book of Prophet Jezekiel it is rendered with видѣніе, видѣніе and разоумѣнъ, дальнии разоумѣнъ

It is interesting to mention that the lexemes видѣ, поозрѣ are not encountered in the dictionary of St Kliment Ohridsky’s original orations.

Data from the hymnography for now could be taken from A. Bonchev’s dictionary where θεωρία as ‘night dream’ and ‘contemplation, spiritual knowledge; theory’ is attested as видѣніе in the Lenten Triodion. In the menaia it is attested as θεωρία (lit. ‘vision of God’, ‘comprehension in prayer’, Men. for March), θεωρία (‘vision of God’, ‘focus in prayer’, Men. for January), видѣ (‘seeing’, ‘looking’, Horologion, evening service of the Compline), θεωρία (i.e. θεωρία, 2nd Saturday of the Lenten Triodion), видѣніе.

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The last lexeme is used to render the Greek θεωρία in the Medieval Slavonic translation of the Life of St Pachomius the Great (according to its copies in the National Library of Bulgaria, N. 307, 105v–163v, Rila Monastery Collection, N. 4/8 (Panegiricum Vladislavi), 456r–483v, and Zographou collection N. 90, 140r–197r). In the corpus of translated works in Old Church Slavonic and later texts the same translation solution is encountered also in the Synodicon of Orthodoxy (Syn. Borili)\textsuperscript{38}, Gregory of Nyssa’s De hominis opificio\textsuperscript{39}, John the Exarch’s translation of Dialectica\textsuperscript{40} and the 14th century translation of the Dogmatica\textsuperscript{41}, in the Areopagite corpus\textsuperscript{42} and the Middle Bulgarian translations of abbas Dorotheus’s works\textsuperscript{43}.

In the Life of St Anthony Old Church Slavonic translations, θεωρία is attested in the following contexts:

1.1. οἱ δὲ συνόντες ἰσθάνοντό τινα θεωρίαν αὐτὸν βλέπειν (82)

*Translation 1*: σι же раꙁоумѣвше чюа̑хѫ нѣкое̑ видѣниє̑. на горѣ си̏ вїдѣше 140r

*Translation 2*: соу́щїи же съ ни́мь, ѻ̑щоу́щаахоу нѣ́кое ви́дѣнїе ꙁрѣ́ти е̑мꙋ 343r

*Translation 3*: о̑нї же раꙁꙋваахѫ(!), сьматрѣѫше видѣнїе нѣкое видѣти 41r

In this passage all the three translations are in a huge extent identical. Here θεωρία is connected with the visions, that the saint receives as part of his ascetic life, i.e. it is related with his contemplative life. On the other hand, it is not explicitly marked whether the vision relates to God, his angels, or saints, or to an attack of the demons.

\textsuperscript{38} А.Тотоманова, И. Христов, Речник-индекс на словоформите в Бориловия синодик и придржаващите го текстове в ръкопис НБКМ 289, София 2015, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{40} E. Weiher, Die Dialektik des Johannes von Damaskus in kirchenslavischer Übersetzung, Wiesbaden 1969 [= MLSDV, 8], p. 304.
\textsuperscript{43} К. Димитров, Ава Доротей. Слова. Среднобългарски превод. Гръcko-български словоуказател, Велико Търново 2013, p. 497.
1.2. Ποτὲ γοὖν καθεξόμενος καὶ ἐργαζόμενος, ὡσπερ ἐν ἐκστάσει γέγονε, καὶ 
pολὺς ἦν ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ στενὰζων (82)

*Translation 1:* ε̃κ Ε̃κ οὐ̍κο ύ̑κκολι σκ̃αδα ὡ̑ α̑κλαδα, ί̑κας ε̃κ̃ης ε̃κ ρ̃α̃μπ̃ήλ̃ή 

*Translation 2:* Χ̍κκογ̽δα οὐ̍κο ύ̑κκο λ̃κ̃αδα, ί̑κο ε̃κ̃ης ἔ̑στεναλί̃ ἀ̑π̃ησ̃τε. ὡ̑ λ̃ι̑οή̑ 
κ̃ε̃κ ε̃κ ρ̃α̃μπ̃ήλ̃ή στέναλ. 348r

*Translation 3:* ι̑ν̃γ̽δα ε̃κο σκ̃αδα, ί̑κο ε̃κ ε̃κ α̃ι̑ακ̃α̑κ̃ α̑ι̑ε̑τε̑. ὡ̑ λ̃ι̑οńskaς 
β̃ρ̃α̃δ̃ήλ̃ης. 40r

In this passage the Greek text is rendered much more freely in Translation 1, 
combining somehow the translations of ἐκστάσις and θεωρία. The translator seemingly 
is aware about the connection between the spiritual vision of the saint and the 
state he is while receiving it. The Old Church Slavonic term ρα̃μπ̃ήλ̃ή 
rendered these two Greek terms, though it is hard to determine which exactly. It is more 
probable that ρα̃μπ̃ήλ̃ή stands as a translation of θεωρία as far as ἐκστάσις is 
amost definitely rendered as α̃ι̑ακ̃α̑κ̃ in the eldest monuments of Old Church 
Slavonic literacy⁴⁴.

The term ρα̃μπ̃ήλ̃ή itself is not attested in the vocabulary of the Classical 
corpus. It could be found, though, in Sreznevsky⁴⁵ and in A. Bonchev (in Menaion 
Praxos for October of 1096).

1.3. Ὡ τέκνα, βέλτιον, ἐλέγεν, ἀποθανεῖν, πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι τὰ τῆς θεωρίας (82)

*Translation 1:* ω̑ χ̃ε ᾃς δα σκ̃ενε ἐ̑στε β̃ρ̃ήκ̃τ̃ε ρ̃ε̃κ̃ε. πρ̃keletal α̑δ̃ε β̃θ̃ε 
ε̃κ̃ης ῶμ̃ο̃λ̃ήν̃. 140r

*Translation 2:* ω̑ χ̃ε να λ̃κ̃αδα σκ̃ενε σκ̃ανέ ε̃κ̃ης β̃ρ̃ήκ̃τ̃ε πρ̃keletal α̑δ̃ε 
β̃θ̃ε ε̃κ̃ης κ̃ήν̃. 343r

*Translation 3:* ω̑ χ̃ε να λ̃κ̃αδα α̑δ̃ε σκ̃ενε σκ̃ανέ ε̃κ̃ης β̃ρ̃ήκ̃τ̃ε 
ρ̃ε̃χε. πρ̃keletal α̑δ̃ε β̃θ̃ε ε̃κ̃ης κ̃ήν̃. 41v

An interesting translation decision in this passage could be observed concerning 
the phrase τὰ τῆς θεωρίας (the things of/related to the vision) – rendered by

⁴⁴ И.П. П еtroв, Чудеса и изъяснения: Предварителни наблюдения върху старобългарските 
Международна научна конференция Сегед, Унгария, 8–9 юни 2017 г., ed. G.L. Balázs, M.B. Farkas, 
H. Majoros, Сегед 2017, p. 61–68; idem, L’horreur de la vie et l’exstase de la vie: първоначални 
бележки върху екстатичната терминология в житието на св. Антоний Велики и славян- 
ските му преводи, [in:] Sapere aude. Сборник в чест на проф. дън Иска Христова-Шомова, 

⁴⁵ И.И. Сре́нёвский, Материалы для словаря древнерусского языка по письменным памятни- 
Theoria and Optasia in the Old Church Slavonic Translations…

раꙁ оу мње in Translation 1. A possible explanation for this solution, could be found in the renderings of the verb θεωρέω which often carries the meaning ‘understand’ and is thus translated with раꙁоумъ – e.g. in the translation of the Book of the Twelve Prophets, Habbacc. 2:1 ἀνω θεωράκτινα προφυκεσκαλα όνιλα. Τοις προφητικοις ὀφθαλμοις θεωρήσω46. The same translation solution is found also in John Exarch’s translation of *De Fide Orthodoxa*. As it was presented above, it is also extant is Symeon’s Miscellanea from 1073 and with some degree of uncertainty might relate to a certain translation technique of the Preslav circle. In the case in the *Vita*, though, the translation seems to be rather mechanical and incoherent to the surrounding context47.

Similar occasions of θεωρία translated as “understanding, perception” are found in the *Izbornik* of 1073 (Symeon’s/Svetoslav’s Miscellanea) as in: 63a12 ὁ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξαφανίσας τὴν λήθην καὶ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν φυσικὴν διήνυσεν ἐκπρεπῶς θεωρίαν – ἀ εἰτε ὅτι δογμα πνευχεν ζελαέτω καὶ οὐεϊκαῖν το εστηκτῆνε σκαίρων ραꙁολυκὴν λέπτοτη; 226a22 ὀ γκλοοπτευκτονουμνον ραꙁουλον – κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀκριβῆ θεωρίαν. It is plausible, therefore, that this translation choice might be mainly typical for the monuments of the Preslav circle48.

1.4. Ἀντωνίου δὲ μόνον ἡ εὐχὴ καὶ ἡ ἄσκησις, ὡς ἐνεκέν ἐν τῷ ὅρει καθῆμενος, ἔχαρε μὲν τῇ τῶν θείων θεωρίᾳ (84)

*Translation 1:* ἄντωνίῳ ἂ τς τικλιξ λολιγνα ενκε. ὑ καζαξαβαζιν ἓτε ἅκακ εν γορκε σκάλα λομκε εα. ὑ ὀνέκας εα δαν ραꙁονμολν ὀ εζεκεεν. 141γ

*Translation 2:* ἄντωνιῳ ἂ ενκε τικлво λατηκα ὑ αοετή, ἓτε ὀαδή ἐν γορκε σκάλα, ὀνέκας εα εν οεκα εν εβέκενιν ηδεκεν. 343ν

*Translation 3:* ἄντωνίῳ ἂ τς τικλιξ λατηκα, ὑ αοετή ενκε. ὑοικε ὀαδή ἐν γορκε σκάλα, ὀνέκας εα εν οεκα εβέκενιν]|ην ηδεκεν. 42γ—42ν

In this passage, again, it is the First Translation that renders a different solution for translating θεωρία in the phrase τῇ τῶν θείων θεωρίᾳ. As in 1.3., θεωρία here is rather connected with the verb θεωρέω as ‘comprehend, understand’. Here, though, its translation with ραꙁομνυν is particularly specific, because this Old


47 It should also be noted that in the Classical corpus, though, θεωρέω is always translated with *verba videnti*.

48 Given the expected synonymity between θεωρία and γνῶσις (cf. supra, L.T.A. Lorité, *Spiritual Terminology*…, p. 145) an interesting confirmation is found again in the *Izbornik* of 1073, where γνῶσις is translated as ραꙁομνυν in numerous occasions: 8r21, 226r12–13, 37r18, 38n10, 4066, 118a2, 133a18–19, 133a29, 154b26, 159r4, 164r13, 168v25–26, 168r26, 199a7–8, 20066, 201b14, 201v18, 204a11, 20969–10, 210a2, 210a8–9.
Church Slavonic lexeme is used in translating other important terms not only of the monastic culture but in theology as well (especially that of St Athanasius of Alexandria) – mostly σύνησις and νοῦς⁴⁹.

2. ὀπτασία

Although not attested in the Classical Greek literature, the word appears in Anthologia Graeca (as ‘vision’), in Septuagint (Dan. 9:23) and in Luke (1:22, as ‘apparition’). It is related with the late Greek ὄπτασομαι ‘being seen’, derived from one of the suppletive stems of βλέπω (Perf. Act. ὄπωσα, Aor. Pass. ὄφθην) (LSJ). In Patristic Greek ὀπτασία is attested with meaning ‘vision, appearing (of God, Christ, saint, demon)’⁵⁰.

In the classical corpus of Old Church Slavonic monuments ὀπτασία is translated with видъ, видѣние, видѣние, обавление, where only видѣние is attested in the vocabulary of St Kliment Ohridsky’s orations.

Codex Suprasliensis contains most of the extant translation variants of ὀπτασία:

- видѣние (and видъ only once in a passage where both mean “night vision”)
  294.21 тότε τοίνυν Αἰθέριος ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου καὶ τὴν ὀπτασίαν διακρίνας… καὶ τὴν ὀπτασίαν τοῖς πατράσιν ἀπαγγείλας τῇ ἀνθρώπῳ εὐθανάστῃ ἀνεχόμεθα. Οἱ ιερεῖς οὐκ ὑφίστανται καὶ σύνθετον καὶ οἰκεῖον θυσίαν καὶ ὀπτασίαν ὑπὸ συντρίμμιον φανερώντος αὐτῷ δηλοῖ αὐτῇ λέγων

- видѣние
  529. 22 ὁ τοίνυν ἁγιώτατος ἐπίσκοπος σὺν παντὶ τῷ κλήρῳ ἐκέλευσεν συνεχῆ εἰς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην διηγήσασθαι συνεχῶς εἰς τὸ κλήρον, ὡς καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ἐκεῖνος ἐπὶ τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην. ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῳ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῳ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλίνεται καὶ ὡς τὴν ὀπτασίαν ταύτην πρὸς τὸ κλήρον εἶπεν "οὐκ ἔστιν ὡς ἄγγελος "πρὸς τὸ κλήρον, ἐν τῷ ἐνδείκτῃ ἀπεκλί

In Symeon’s Miscellanea of 1073 it is translated with видъ: видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣти видѣ

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⁵⁰ G.W.H. Lampe, A Patristic…, p. 967.
1466:14 (Migne 349): ὁ βλέπων τῶν ἄγγελων ὀπτασίαν οἶδεν, ὅτι τὸν ἄγγελον εἶδε, καὶ οὐ τὸν Θεόν.

и видѧ и видѣнїе аггельско, вѣсть вѣсть ко аггела видѣлъ єⷭ҇ а не б҃а

1716:11 (Migne 421): οἶδεν ὁ Ἀπόστολος ὃ πέποθεν ἐν τῇ ὀπτασίᾳ

Вѣсть ли апостолъ еже поиѧть къ видѣнїи

The same correspondence видѣнїе is extant in the translation of the Areopagite corpus52, Gregory of Nissa’s De hominis opificio53.

In A. Bonchev’s dictionary two more translation solutions are attested: ὕκρωσενни (Men. for November 12th canon, song 6) and κοινζρѣнє (Sir 43:17)54.

In the Life of St Anthony, the term is extant three times with a general meaning of ‘vision, apparition (of a saint or an angel)’.

2.1. καὶ γὰρ τὴν τῶν ἄγαθῶν καὶ τῶν φαύλων παρουσίαν εὐχερὲς καὶ δυνατὸν ἐστι διαγνῶναι, τοῦ Θεοῦ διδόντος οὕτως. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἁγίων ὀπτασία οὐκ ἐστὶ τεταραγμένη (35)

Translation 1: приходѧть бо скврънныхь и добрыхь. оу̑добъ мощно е̑сть раꙁ оу‐мѣти. бо҃у даѧ̑щоу ст҃хъ видѣниа̑ сице, нѣсть мощенъ

Translation 2: ибо̀ ꙁлы̀х же и бл҃гхь пришь́ствїе оу̑до́бь и възмо́жно ѥⷭ҇ позна́ти б҃оу пода́ющꙋ. си́це с҃тыхь ꙋбо̀ видѣ́нїе нѣ҆сть съмоу́щено

Translation 3: добрыим бѡ и ꙁлыимъ пришествиемъ, оу̑добно и мощно е̑стъ раꙁ‐оу мѣти. б҃оу подаѫщоу таковѡ, с҃тмь видѣнїемъ. нѣ съмѫщенъ

In this passage all the three translations render the Greek term similarly. In the first translation τεταραγμένη is probably mistakenly given as мощенъ instead of съмѫщенъ which is the exact correspondence of the Greek perfect participle, and which is the variant in the other two translations. One could assume, as well, that certain choice in the Slavonic translation might be due to a scribal error or a misreading in the Greek tradition. Although, as per the critical edition of G.J.M. Bartelink55, no data can be taken as proving the later assumption, for now.

52 Das Corpus des Dionysios Areiopagites..., p. 1753.
53 Gregorius Nyssenus, p. 117.
54 И. Христов, Гръцко‐църковнославянски..., p. 597.
55 Athanasius, p. 230.
2.2. Τοιαύτη μὲν οὖν ἡ τῶν ἁγίων ὀπτασία (35)

Translation 1: τάκο ἄκε ἔτυχ’ ιάκληνε. 128r
Translation 2: τάκους οὐκ έκ ἔτυχ’ καὶ ἱδ’ινείς 332v
Translation 3: τάκου ἄκε ἔτυμλυ καὶ ἱδ’ινεί. 19r

In this passage only the first translation shows a more contextually elaborated solution rendering ὀπτασία with ιάκληνε. This is explained by the fact that the only varia lectio in this place that G.J.M. Bartelink provides (in the pre-metaphrastic codex Vat. gr. 866 from the 11th–12th c.) reads παρουσία instead of ὀπτασία, a term which would exactly correspond to ιάκληνε. This excerpt, together with the previous one constitutes a part of St Anthony’s sermon before the gathered monks. In his speech, Anthony instructs the brethren on how to recognize and distinguish between the apparition the good and those of the bad forces. In both of the passages, it could be observed that ὀπτασία was used to denote the good spiritual beings. My work with the text of the Vita so far has showed that another word was used to refer to evil forces, false visions etc., namely φαντασία – a term that I will analyze elsewhere.

2.3. οἱ δὲ συνόντες ἴσθανοντό τινα θεωρίαν αὐτὸν βλέπειν. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὰ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ γινόμενα πολλάκις, ἐν τῷ ὄρει τυγχάνων ἔβλεπε καὶ διηγήσατο Σαραπίωνι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ, ἕνδον ὄντι καὶ βλέποντι τὸν Ἀντώνιον ἀσχοληθέντα τῇ ὀπτασίᾳ (82)

Translation 1: си же раꙁоумѣвше чюа̑хѫ нѣкое̑ видѣниє̑. на горѣ си̏ вїдѣше. і̑ понекладше Θερапиїўноу еꙁкпоу, кънѧтъ сѫмꙋоу. і̑ видѧмꙋи і̑ Ꙙпраꙁниꙗвꙋς сѫ видꙙнѣꙗвꙋ. 140r
Translation 2: соу́щїи же съ ни́мь, ѻ̑щоу́щаахоу нѣ́кое ви́дѣнїе ꙁрѣ́ти е̑мꙋ. и̑бо̀ и̑ ꙗ̑́же въ Егѷптѣ бы́ваемаа мнѡ́жицею въ гѻр̑ѣ сы̏и ꙁрѣ́ше. и̑ повѣ́довааше Сераѣпїѡ̑ноу е̑пⷭ҇кпоу, в̑кнѧоꙗтъ соу́мꙋоу і̑ зрѢіꙋоу Антѡ́нїа оꙁпꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗ迪拜. 343r
Translation 3: онї же раꙁꙋваахѫ(!), съматрѣѫще видѣнїе нѣкое видѣти. і̑бо въ Θηνїїткъ къвꙗлꙗмꙗа миꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗȧꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗгласꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙋꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗꙗгласꙗ迪拜. 343r

In this passage, it could be noticed that neither of the Slavonic three translations render the difference between θεωρία and ὀπτασία. Special attention should be paid to the verb in the construction ἀσχοληθέντα τῇ ὀπτασίᾳ (participium

56 Athanasius, p. 232.
coniunctum after the Dative participle βλέποντι, governed by διηγέομαι – the formal verbum regens). The verb ἀσχολέω is rendered by праꙁдьновати ‘to idle, to laze, to be free’ in the classical corpus in its active form, while the medio-passive meaning is rendered with тъщати сѧ ‘to hurry, to rush; to strive, to try, to make efforts’. In the passage above, all the translations approach these solutions somewhat differently. Translation 1 & 3 use упраꙁнити сѧ ‘to release, to free; to stop; to destroy; to find time’, from the same root as праꙁдьновати. The verb used in Translation 2 о̑упражнꙗти сѧ (non attested in the classical corpus) is imperfective and thus is more grammatically incorrect regarding the Greek text where the active aorist participle expresses a momentary or accomplished action. On the other hand, the first and the third translation use a past participle of a perfective verb, thus keep a formal closeness to the Greek original. This could be stated for the relation to the Greek text of all of the three translations, which somehow do not render clearly enough the meaning in this particular case.

Concluding remarks

From the passages regarded in this paper, it could be observed that only the First Translation renders θεωρία with праꙁоумъ/праꙁоумьное, and not only with видѣние. Similar translation solutions, as shown in the beginning, were characteristic for the Miscellanea of 1076. This solution is often encountered in early translations and texts from the Preslav circle, which only could confirm that the First translation pertains to the early translated texts of this circle. Such unestablished rendering of a term as important in the Christian spiritual terminology as θεωρία, could probably be explained with still undeveloped terminological system through which the contemplative communion with God could be expressed. Because of this lack of a strictly established terminology, the translation is more literal and does not render contextual hues while striving to reflect more strictly the Greek word (in this case the verb θεωρέω which could mean both ‘see, look, contemplate’ and ‘understand’). In the Symeon’s Miscellanea of 1073 and in Codex Suprasliensis, a larger set of translational equivalents is found; this could lead to the conclusion that at this time the terminological environment was still not unified, still developing it was rather focused on rendering the contextual nuances rather than establish a clear singular lexical equivalent of the Greek terms. It is noteworthy, though, that this term was in a way perceived and rendered with words denoting ‘understanding’ and ‘perception’, sometimes adequately to the surrounding context, but sometimes in a seemingly more mechanical manner. The Greek term theoria itself had still a long way in its conceptualization and lexical reception in the realm of Old Church Slavonic literacy. ‘Contemplation’ as a spiritual practice was a more abstract term than ‘vision’ which is more easily comprehensible and thus clearer as expression through language. On the other
hand, it could be summarized that in these Old Slavonic translations θεωρία was perceived and rendered with two semantic circles of terms, that more or less transmit the connection between ‘seeing, vision’ and ‘understanding’, without creating a new one-word Slavonic correspondence.

Here it’s worthy to mention that in both Latin translation of the Vita this notion of θεωρία as contemplation lack equivalent, while the more concrete meaning of ‘vision, the thing seen’ is rendered with visio, visus, apperentia in the Anonymous translation and with visio and revelatio in the translation of Evagrius of Antiochia. Probably this was the reason behind translating those two terms the same way. On the other hand, the data from A. Bonchev’s dictionary (mostly from Menaion texts) reveal much more elaborated picture of translation solutions, which have caught considerably wider sphere of nuances. Whether genre specifics of a text dictated (and if so, in what extent) the translation accuracy and variability, is a question that needs a deeper research of its own.

Considering ὀπτασία, it is only the First translation that stays close to Codex Suprasliensis (in rendering the Greek term with видение). In all other occasions, this Greek word is not perceived differently than θεωρία and thus not rendered with another lexical device than видение. Again, A. Bonchev’s dictionary reveals a wider semantic circle of solutions that correspond to more contextually specific equivalents of the Greek term.

It is notable, also, that none of the attested translations use the lexeme видъ – probably reserved for more philosophically nuances texts.

Consequent research on the spiritual terminology of the Vita and its lexical relation with other Old Church Slavonic texts will probably clarify the equivalency of the Old Church Slavonic words and the Greek terms of the originals. Also, the question about the dependency between the text genres, the translational circles and the strategies of rendering the Christian terminology remains open. Approaching these issues will contribute to our understanding the cultural dialogue between Bulgarian kingdom and Byzantium, but also the way Christianity, and especially monasticism, was perceived and accepted in Slavonic environment through its specific language.

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57 L.T.A. Lorité, *Spiritual Terminology* …, p. 152. The later Western writers, such as Jerome, Augustine, and especially Cassian, prefer using contemplatio for this more abstract notion, when not employing (now and then) theoria (*ibidem*, p. 160).


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