

# SERAPION THE VENERABLE

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## The Kievan Rus

**Hilarion of Kiev** (metropolitan 1051–1054)  
the first native metropolitan of Kiev,  
the first known Kievan Rus writer and orator  
(*Boleslav*)

- *Discourse of Law and Grace* (ca. 1037–1050)

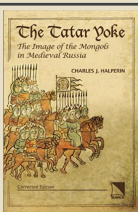
**Cyril of Turov** (died before 1182)

- "the second St. Chrysostom"
- Eight sermons delivered on the occasion of the eight Sundays beginning with Palm Sunday

## The Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus (1157–1320s)

✦ **Serapion of Vladimir** (died 1275)

- Five sermons



Halperin, Charles J. *The Tatar Yoke: the image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia*. Corrected edition. Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2009. 76–82.

## Questions

1. What are the implications of having the Christian homiletic solacing of the "survivors" of the Tatar Yoke? What is the place of Russian non-orthodox people in the Russian-Tatar conflict?
2. Why Serapion avoids calling the Tatars by name in his sermons?
3. Do you agree with Halperin that Serapion's sermons belong exclusively to the moral and not political realm ("Serapion's sermons were intended to inspire moral rather than political change" and "Serapion does not face the Mongol conquest in political terms, but in religious and moral ones.")?
4. Halperin points out that Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed "fiscal and judicial immunities" in return for praying "for the health of the khan and his clan." And later he claims that "the Mongols were simply indifferent to anything other than direct political and military action against their authority." Do you find any logical incongruity in these two assertions?
5. Halperin: "While [Serapion's] language is stylized and appropriately rhetorical, his genuine sympathy for the victims of the Mongol invasion is self-evident." Why Halperin uses the contrast clause here (While...)? Do you agree with his choice of the clause?

## Medieval Russian ecclesiastic tradition

### Written tradition of ecclesiastic literature

Manuscript  
chronicle

### Oral (spoken) tradition of ecclesiastic literature

**Homily** – a discourse on a religious theme especially delivered to a congregation during a church service.

(<https://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals.ajcp.a001001>)

from Church Latin *homilia* "a homily, sermon,"  
from Greek *homilia* "conversation, discourse," used in New Testament  
Greek for "sermon," from *homilos* "an assembled crowd,"  
from *homos* "together" (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/homily>)

**Про-поведаѣ** – calque from Late Latin *pro-edicare* "to proclaim publicly, announce" (in Medieval Latin "to preach"), from Latin *pro* "before" + *dicare* "to proclaim, to say"

**Гомиланя** – проповедь, имеющая своим предметом использование догматов церкви и св. Писания.

*Словарь иностранных слов, вошедших в состав русского языка. Чудинов А.Н., 1910.*

## Rhetoric – one of the seven liberal arts

**a** : the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by ancient critics (such as Aristotle and Quintilian) and interpreted by classical scholars for application to discourse in the vernacular.

**b** : the art or practice of writing or speaking as means of communication or persuasion often with special concern for literary effect

<https://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals.ajcp.a001001>

*rhetor* (genitive *rhetoris*) "speaker, master speaker, orator; artist of discourse; teacher of rhetoric," especially (in the Attic official language), "orator in public,"  
related to *rhetis* "speech,"

*rhema* "word, phrase, verb," literally "that which is spoken"

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/rhetoric>

### Rhetorical tradition in the Middle Ages

The early Church Father St. Augustine made one of the earliest efforts to write a rhetoric for the Christian orator. Book IV of *On Christian Doctrine* is usually considered the first rhetorical theory specifically designed for the minister. Of course, the kind of truth to which Augustine sought to give verbal effectiveness was the "revealed" truth as contained in the Scriptures.

<https://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals.ajcp.a001001>

#### Literary influence on Serapion (according to Petuxov)

1. Didactic and ecclesiastical sermons of St. John Chrysostom, who is an authority for Greek and Russian homiletic tradition.
2. The historical, nationalistic writings of Josephus Flavius, originator of the genealogical biography of a people.
3. Petuxov attributes only five sermons to be Serapion's.

In Halperin's article:

1. Serapion's sermons are sometimes attributed to Efreem the Syrian or to Byzantine authors such as John Chrysostom, and other sermons are occasionally and probably spuriously attributed to Serapion.

<b>Main proponents</b>	E.V. Petuxov Michel Gorfín (history as found in, rather than as functioning in, Serapion's work) N.K. Gudin (Serapion's Kievan heritage was integrally connected with the life of Vladimir-Sviatoslav' Rur')	Ralph Bogert
<b>Name of the method</b>	Surface view Extrinsic criticism Historical criticism Traditional socio-allegorical interpretation	Language-oriented approach Descriptive rhetorical analysis
<b>Serapion's total literary activity</b>	Put it into a broad cultural perspective and to trace the historical and social context of that activity.	Address it in terms of 'specific, observed phenomena in the text.'
<b>Sermons</b>	as pretexts focus on how they reflect historical personalities and social relations of their time	as texts focus on • their patterns and style, the specific functioning rhetorical techniques, mode, and aesthetics; • personal relationships between the creator and his individual listener
<b>The result of such a method of study</b>	the allegorical interpretation of a piece of literature as a historically valid artifact	the analytical investigation of the sermons as viably purposeful units of language

#### Speaker-audience interaction

- ❖ In the exordium, **comprobatio** (approval) – complimenting one's judges or hearers to win their confidence.
- ❖ Serapion **associates** himself directly with his listeners: their common bond is their faith and nationality (also, enemies, the use of first person plural pronouns (us, our), etc.).
- ❖ The speaker underscores his **harmonious relations** with his listeners by establishing a lexical affinity with them: for example, referencing agrarian phenomena, preserving simplicity and terseness characteristic of folk similes, no showy pictorial style, sparsity of epithets, Serapion is never carried away by his rhetorical skill.
- ❖ Serapion is more occupied with the **live** exigencies of his sermons performance than with the erudite consistency of their **logic**. However, he never loses the rhetorical **consistency**.
- ❖ Serapion asks his audience to use their eyes, when he draws from the experience of their **everyday life**. Then he imposes from above a higher order, the one they can see with their mind's eye.
- ❖ Serapion exploits rhetorical devices in a well-balanced way in order to have a **direct, personal** effect on his listeners. He proceeds by rhetorical means to press upon his audience as **individuals**.
- ❖ Serapion **delimits** the relationship between speaker and audience. The spiritual father is speaking from a position of **authority**. His audience is that of commoners for whom he is morally **responsible**.
- ❖ His audience is laymen not clergy: they **hear** from the books, and he has **read** the Word.
- ❖ The **diction** is emphatic (rise of the voice, stress, intonation).
- ❖ The use of **retardation mechanisms in speech**, simplifying mechanisms for the ease of listener's perception.

#### Uniqueness of Serapion's sermons

- ❖ Serapion chose to speak not on ecclesiastic life (monasteries, monks, the church hierarchy and organization) but on **secular** life (towns, people).
  - ❖ Serapion was **free in his thematic** treatment of the topic chosen: instead of speaking on the occasion of a church holiday, he must have decided himself what it was necessary to speak about.
  - ❖ He spoke as an individual and could speak his own mind (**parhresia** (free-spokenness, frankness) – candid speech).
  - ❖ Serapion develops tropes based not so much on **visuality** as on **tactility**. He uses the figurative energy of the concrete image and paraphrase the Scripture in figuratively neutral, concrete terms.
- Лихачев: "В русской средневековой литературе гораздо больше, чем в литературе нового времени, сравнений, подчеркивающих осязательное сходство, сходство вкусовое, обонятельное, связанных с ощущением материала, с чувством мускульного напряжения."

#### The Scripture and history

- ❖ Serapion thinks that one may be guilty simply by doing nothing to prevent evil. One should manifest the active benevolence.
- ❖ The goal of sermons is to create in the mind of the listener a palpable connection between the current state of affairs in Russia and happenings described in the Scriptures.
- ❖ The episodes from biblical history to which Serapion refers belong to the past, but as prototypes for present events, they are felt to be close in time.
- ❖ A conscious shift of address from the removed rational plane of Scripture and history to the immediate presence and time of the listener.
- ❖ In the minds of the listeners, ancient events have the weight of history, tradition, and authority.

#### Structure of Serapion's sermon

- ❖ **Exordium** (entrance) – the first part of a classical oration. It caught the audience's interest while introducing the subject.
- ❖ **Explicatio** – the statement of theme.
- ❖ **Amplification** (enlargement) – rhetorical device used to expand a simple statement. / **Refutatio** (confutation) – the fifth part of a six-part classical oration. This part answered the opponent's arguments.
- ❖ **Peroratio** (conclusion; epilogue) – the last part of the six-part classical oration. This conclusion was often an impassioned summary, not simply a review of previous arguments (summing up, amplification, appeal to pity).
- ❖ **Epilogus** (reasoning) 1. Peroration. 2. Inferring what will follow from what has been spoken or done before.

#### Six-part classical oration

- ❖ **Exordium** (entrance) – catches the audience's attention.
- ❖ **Narratio** (narration) – sets forth the facts.
- ❖ **Partitio** (division) – sets forth points stipulated (agreed upon by both sides) and points to be contested.
- ❖ **Confirmatio** (proof) – sets forth the arguments that support one's case.
- ❖ **Refutatio** (confutation) – refutes opponent's arguments.
- ❖ **Peroratio** (conclusion; epilogue) – sums up arguments and stirs audience.

Lanham, Richard. *A Handbook of Rhetorical Terms: A guide for Students of English Literature* (2nd ed.). Berkeley: Los Angeles: London: University of California Press, 1970. (1967 – 19 ed.).

Two main methods of rhetorical argument	
Redundancy (Retardation)	Consistency
<b>Chiasmus</b> (crossing) - the ABBA pattern of mirror inversion. The term is derived from the Greek letter X (chi) whose shape, if the two halves of the construction are rendered in separate verses, it resembles.	<b>Auxesis</b> (increase, amplification). 1. Use of a heightened word in place of an ordinary one. 2. Words or clauses placed in climactic order. 3. Building a point around a series of comparisons.
<b>Parallel constructions</b>	<b>Dieresis</b> (division) - dividing the objects into genus and then into species in order to amplify and qualify. Inverted dieresis - species to genus.
<b>Synonym</b> - one of two of the same language having the same or nearly the same essential or generic meaning and differing only in connotation, application, or idiomatic use.	<b>Synecdoche</b> (understanding one thing with another) - substitution of part for whole, genus for species, or vice versa.
<b>Pleonasmus</b> (excess) - excessive thematic repetition.	<b>Apodixis</b> (demonstration, proof) - confirming a statement by reference to generally accepted principles or experience.
<b>Anaphora</b> (carrying back) - repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.	<b>Antonomasia</b> - descriptive phrase for proper name.
<b>Parataxis</b> (placing side by side) - clauses or phrases arranged independently (a coordinate, rather than a subordinate, construction).	<b>Hypotaxis</b> (subjection) - an arrangement of clauses or phrases in a dependent or subordinate relationship.

Other Rhetorical devices used by Serapion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Apomnemonymis</b> (recounting, summarizing) - the quotation of an approved authority from memory.</li> <li>❖ <b>Categoria</b> (accusation, assertion, prediction) - reproaching a person with his wickedness to his face.</li> <li>❖ <b>Exoche</b> - the singling out of a particular after the naming of a group that would include it.</li> <li>❖ <b>Erotesis</b> (a questioning) - a "rhetorical question," one which implies an answer but does not give or lead us to expect one.</li> <li>❖ <b>Hypophora</b> - asking questions and immediately answering them.</li> <li>❖ <b>Commoratio</b> (lingering) - emphasizing a strong point by repeating it several times in different words.</li> <li>❖ <b>Conduplicatio</b> (doubling, repetition) - repetition of a word or words in succeeding clauses for amplification, emphasis, and to express emotion.</li> <li>❖ <b>Martyria</b> (testimony, evidence) - confirming something by one's own experience.</li> <li>❖ <b>Anthypallage</b> (substitution) - change of grammatical case for emphasis. This is one of those figures which really make sense only in an inflected language like Latin or Greek.</li> <li>❖ <b>Homoioptoton</b> ("in a like case, with a similar inflexion") - the use in a sentence or verse of various words in the same case and with similar case endings.</li> <li>❖ <b>Homoioleuton</b> (like ending) - the use of similar endings to words, phrases, or sentences.</li> <li>❖ <b>Polyptoton</b> - repetition of words from the same root but with different endings.</li> </ul>

Other Rhetorical devices and tropes used by Serapion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Ecphonesis</b> (exclamation) - exclamation expressing emotion.</li> <li>❖ <b>Meiosis</b> (lessening) - to belittle, often through a trope of one word; use a degrading epithet.</li> <li>❖ <b>Heidiadys</b> (one by means of two) - expression of an idea by two nouns connected by "and" instead of a noun and its qualifier. [for example, "by length of time and siege" instead of "by a long siege"]</li> <li>❖ <b>Simile</b> (like) - one thing is likened to another, dissimilar thing by the use of <i>like</i>, <i>as</i>, etc.; distinguished from <b>Metaphor</b> in that the comparison is made explicit.</li> <li>❖ <b>Metaphor</b> (transference) - changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it, assertion of identity rather than, as with <b>Simile</b>, likeness.</li> <li>❖ <b>Antipodosis</b> (giving back in return) - a <b>simile</b> in which the objects compared correspond in several respects.</li> <li>❖ <b>Metonymy</b> (change of name) - there are four types, corresponding to the four Causes: substitution of cause for effect or effect for cause, proper name for one of its qualities or vice versa.</li> <li>❖ <b>Litotes</b> (plainness, simplicity) - 1. denial of the contrary; 2. understatement that intensifies.</li> </ul>

<p>Rise, honored head, from your grave; rise, cast off sleep, for you are not dead but sleep to the day of the common resurrection. Rise, you are not dead, for it is not meet that you should die who have believed in Christ, the life of the whole world. Cast off sleep, raise your eyes and you will see that while deeming you worthy of such honors there on high, the Lord has also kept you in remembrance here on earth through your son. Rise, see your son George,<sup>6</sup> see your progeny, see your dearly beloved, see him whom the Lord produced from your loins; see him adorning the throne of your land, and rejoice; be glad. Likewise look upon her, your pious daughter-in-law Irene, see your grandsons and great-grandsons, how they live, how the Lord has preserved them, how they profess the faith with a devotion like your own, frequent the holy churches, praise Christ, bow before his name. See, too, the town shining in grandeur, see the churches flourishing, see Christianity growing, see the city gleaming with the light from holy icons and fragrant with thyme and vocal with praise and sacred chants raised to God. And, seeing all this, rejoice and be glad and praise the good God, architect of it all.</p> <p>A very fine witness to your piety is your son George, whom the Lord has made heir to your dominion; he does not violate your statutes but maintains them, does not diminish what your piety decreed but increases it, does not confound but puts in order, finishes what you left unfinished, as Solomon finished what David began.</p> <p>Hilarion of Kiev, <i>Discourse of Law and Grace</i>, ca. 1037-1050 Guday, pp.88-89</p>
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Tropes and Syntax
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metonymic reduction</li> <li>• Syntactical parallelism characteristic of paratactically coordinated clauses.</li> <li>• Negative syntactical parallelism</li> <li>• Negative anaphoric construction</li> <li>• Parallel construction provides variation with conformity, maintains the clear line of exposition.</li> <li>• Symmetry, for example, is realized in the opposition of two semantically equivalent sentences.</li> </ul>

Three branches of rhetoric:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deliberative</li> <li>• judicial or forensic (debate, polemic)</li> <li>• epideictic or commemorative (praise)</li> </ul> <p>• Serapion's sermons are neither judicial nor epideictic</p>