

**Citation:**

Somov, A. B. (2026). Some distinctive features of the Slavonic recensions of the martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths. *Slavia Meridionalis*, 26, Article 3522. <https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.3522>

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Some Distinctive Features of the Slavonic Recensions of the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths

Introduction

Some Slavonic parabiblical texts in their present form can be seen as products of the reworking of Byzantine traditions. They may also retain fragments or motifs from late antiquity and contain readings that differ from their versions in the original languages. An interesting example of such a parabiblical composition surviving in the Greek original and in the Old Slavonic translation is a hagiographical text about the martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths. The most obvious feature of this composition that distinguishes it from other hagiographical traditions about Daniel and his three companions is its narrative account of their actual martyrdom.¹ In 1893, the Russian scholar V. M. Istrin published a study on “Alexandria of the Russian Chronographs”, in the appendix

¹ *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (Halkin, 1957, pp. 147–150) lists 23 traditions concerning Daniel and the Three Youths.

This article has been written during the framework of my fellowship at the Centre for Advance Studies “Beyond Canon: Heterotopias of Religious Authority in Late Antique Christianity” [“Jenseits des Kanons: Heterotopien religiöser Autorität im spätantiken Christentum”], hosted at the University of Regensburg and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) (Project no. FOR 2770/1).

Competing interests: no competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

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to which he included two Old Slavonic recensions of a story that represents the Christian legend about the martyrdom of Daniel and his three companions (Истрин, 1893). In 1901, Istrin published the Greek recensions of this martyrdom and established a direct connection between them and the Slavonic recensions (Истрин, 1901). These texts utilize both biblical materials from the canonical books of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Psalms, Matthew, and 1 Corinthians, and some parabiblical traditions, such as 4 Baruch and the Gospel of Nicodemus. This composition has occasionally been referenced by scholars studying apocryphal Daniel literature (e.g., Brakmann et al., 2001, p. 374; DiTommaso, 2005, pp. 78–79²; Stone, 1982, pp. 154–157, 2021, pp. 220–237³), but, with few exceptions, without detailed analysis. As M. R. James puts it: “It is a curious tale, to which little attention has been paid” (James, 1920, p. 70). This article provides such a detailed analysis.⁴ The task is twofold: (1) to give an overview of this reinterpretation of the biblical account and to demonstrate how it interacts with other biblical and parabiblical texts; (2) to illustrate some distinctive features of the Old Slavonic recensions, especially differences in the presentation of some personalities.

Overview of the textual and manuscript history

While several early Christian traditions compare the story of the Three Youths (Dan 3) in the furnace and that of Daniel in the lion’s den (Dan 6) with martyrdom (e.g., Hippolytus of Rome, *Comm. Dan.* 2.30.1; 2.35.8–9; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Hom.* 5.40; Cyprian, *Laps.* 31), another group of Christian texts goes much further and directly narrates actual martyrdom. This group of texts can be designated as “Legends of the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths” or simply “The Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths”. In this legend, the death of Daniel and his three companions was not peaceful but was actually their martyrdom for Christ at the hand of a certain wicked Persian king. Moreover, in some versions of this story, they were then resurrected together

² Only one Old Slavonic version is noted.

³ Stone mainly discusses only Armenian material.

⁴ A detailed introduction to this legend can be found in Somov (2021, 2025; Сомов, 2021) some of which is used in this article. The translation of parts of the legend in this article is mine (Somov, 2025).

with Jesus. According to Lorenzo DiTommaso's categorization, this story belongs to the so-called the Daniel legenda: "The legenda are third-person, post-biblical narratives which retell and augment the story of Daniel as it appears in Daniel 1–6" and "are concerned with filling in the gaps in the life and times of Daniel, particularly regarding his early years and his last days, death, and burial" (DiTommaso, 2005, p. 13). The most representative recensions of this legend in Greek (Истрин, 1901) and Church Slavonic (Истрин, 1893, pp. 345–356) were published, as noted above, by V. M. Istrin. These two recensions are titled "The heroic deeds and the contest of the Three Holy Youths and the prophet Daniel" (CAVT 267; BHG 484z, 484*; hereafter *Mart. Dan.* from *Martyrium tribus pueris et Danielis Prophetæ*) and "The Sermon on the Demise of the Three Holy Youths and the All-wise Daniel by our Holy Father Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria" (CAVT 267; BHG 487, 487a; hereafter *Sermo de obit.* from *Sermo de obitu sanctorum trium puerorum*). In this article, I am mainly focusing on these two recensions, but I also refer to other versions.

Istrin's edition of *Mart. Dan.* is based on Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 481, fols. 186v–191r (13th century). Istrin also consulted three other earlier manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, de fonds greca № 1491, fols. 40r–44r [9th / 10th century]; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laudianus gr. № 69, fols. 235v–240v [11th century]; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 105, fols. 133r–135r, 140v–142r [10th / 11th century]). However, since Istrin's publication, more manuscripts containing *Mart. Dan.* have been discovered, 38 extant witnesses (9th to 15th centuries),⁵ but they have not yet been analysed and published.

Sermo de obit. in Istrin's publication is based on Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, F 33, fols. 61r–66r (16th century). Istrin also consulted Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Coislin 121, fols. 53r–55r (14th century). Since Istrin's publication, twelve extant witnesses of this recension have been found (9th to 17th centuries).⁶

The Slavonic translation of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* occurred no later than the 14th century C.E. (Иванова, 2008, pp. 363–364). Istrin's Old Slavonic edition of *Mart. Dan.* is taken from the *Great Menaion Reader* (Великія Минеи Чётин) by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow, fols. 304r–305v (16th century) (Макарий, 1904, pp. 1093–1100). Although Istrin did not indicate which manuscript he used,

⁵ They are listed in the Pinakes database (Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, n.d.-b).

⁶ Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes (n.d.-a).

a similar form of the text is found in the Russian State Library (Moscow), F. 98 #32, fols. 364v–368v (16th century) and in F. 98 #59.1, fols. 138–141 (16th to 17th centuries).⁷ The Slavonic edition of *Sermo de obit.* in Istrin's publication is taken from the manuscript Russian State Library (Moscow), F. 178 #3127, fols. 289v–294v (16th century).⁸ Istrin also consulted Moscow Theological Academy, F.173/I #90, fols. 375v–381r (16th century)⁹ and the Russian State Library (Moscow), V. M. Undol'skij Collection No 560, fols. 83–88 (15th to 16th centuries).¹⁰ In some parts of the story, this version of the martyrdom follows the homily about Daniel and the Three Youths ascribed to Gregory Tsamblak ("Gregory the monk and presbyter") called "Григоріа мни́ха ѿ прозвіи́търа сло́вемъ похва́льное стѣмъ тремъ ѡтрокомъ ѿ Дани́илу прѣкы, ѿ ѿскоу́шеніа ѿ напастѣи нахвѣдаты стѣмъ на ѡбывѣленіе тѣхъ добродѣтели, ѿ стѣмъ пригашеніи (*Great Menaion Reader*, fols. 331r–336v). The earliest manuscript is housed in the Russian National Library (Moscow), Pogodin Collection No 1011. As A. Angusheva-Tihanova demonstrates in her analysis of Gregory's manuscript of this "Word of Praise", Gregory uses a section of the text beginning from the episode of Nebuchadnezzar seeing a fourth man in the furnace, up to the hiding of the relics of Daniel and the Three Youths under Mount Gebal from the Slavonic version of *Sermo de obit.*, housed in Hilandar Monastery, Mount Athos (Greece; 14th century) (Ангушева-Тиханова et al., 2010, p. 312).

In his publication of the Old Slavonic versions of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, Istrin also discusses the links between these two recensions and several versions of the martyrdom in an abbreviated (synaxarion) format, especially those found in the hagiographical book *Прологъ* (see below) (Истрин, 1909, pp. 178–186). Moreover, although he originally regarded Old Slavonic *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* as two translations of the same Greek original, he later changed his mind and admitted that the Greek originals of these recensions are different (Истрин, 1901, p. 1).

Independently from Istrin, Ivan Franko published some other recensions of the legend found in Ukraine that are similar to those of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* (Франко, 1896, pp. 307–312). Lorenzo DiTomasso defines them

⁷ See the list of South Slavonic manuscripts containing *Mart. Dan.* in Иванова (2008, p. 364).

⁸ See the list of South Slavonic manuscripts containing *Sermo de obit.* in Иванова (2008, p. 363).

⁹ This form of the text is also found in *Great Menaion Reader* fols. 305v–307v (Макарий, 1904, pp. 1100–1107).

¹⁰ This collection is now incorporated into the Russian State Library, F. 310.

as “Slavonic Legenda Concerning the Three Youths and the Fiery Furnace” (DiTommaso, 2005, p. 508). These documents are the 16th-century Old Slavonic Zamość or “Zamoyskyy manuscript” (Zamość), fols. 753–761,¹¹ housed in the Scientific Library of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, # 203.III,¹² and a manuscript in Ukrainian by the priest Stephen Teslevtsiv (Teslevtsiv) from Transcarpathia, housed in Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine, f.3 #769, fols. 105–109, 109–113 (17th /18th century).¹³ Zamość is similar to *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* but differs from them in some interesting details. Teslevtsiv contains two texts about Daniel and the Three Youths (fols. 105–109 and 109–113), but only the second one contains the account of their martyrdom. It is a more schematic account of the martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths than Zamość.

An even more schematic version of this martyrdom is found in the Synaxarion of Constantinople (*Syn. Cp.*) col. 317–320 (10th century). It tells that, after the death of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and his three companions were arrested, interrogated, and beheaded by a wicked king named Atticus. They were buried, but then their bodies were miraculously brought to Mount Gebal. They were resurrected together with Jesus but then died again soon after. Later Greek Orthodox liturgical books called Menaia contain a similar account of this story. In addition, a very short account of the martyrdom is found in the Menologion of Basil II (*Men. Basil II*), compiled ca. 1000 C.E. by order of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II (976–1025 C.E.).

In Slavonic hagiographical tradition, such a synaxarion type of the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths is found in *Прологъ* (12th century) (Давыдова, 1999, p. 65), whose function is analogous to that of the Synaxarion (Истрин, 1893, pp. 180–183). Here, the legend about the martyrdom closely resembles the versions in *Syn. Cp.* and *Men. Basil II*. In addition, a similar story is found in Dmitry of Rostov’s *Lives of the Saints* (Житїѧ свѣтъхъ) collection (1684–1705).

¹¹ Part 1 of the legend in this version, according to the above summary, is close to that of the Krekhiv Palaea (fols. 953–955; 15th/16th cent.). The manuscript is now lost but its contents are described by Franko (Франко, 1896, pp. XLVIII–LXIV, 311–312).

¹² Zamość is extensively described by Dariya Syroyid (Сироїд, 2016).

¹³ Stephen Teslevtsiv was a village priest, who owned, and possibly compiled this manuscript, in which he collected and reworked several legends and apocrypha, usually in the form of homilies (Франко, 1981, vol. 30, pp. 260–261). The transmission history of these traditions in Teslevtsiv is difficult to trace. See Франко (1900, pp. 44–45) for more details about this manuscript.

Michael E. Stone has studied and published several Armenian versions of the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths, similar to that of *Syn. Cp.* and *Men. Basil II*. The earliest Armenian recension is found in the *Lives of the Prophets* in a Bible manuscript copied by Mekhit'ar of Ayrivank' (ca. 1271–1288): Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1500, fol. 362r. The next Armenian recension of the martyrdom is included in the second edition of the Armenian Synaxarion (1269) published by G. Bayan (1924, pp. 65–67). The same form of the martyrdom is found in the third recension of the Armenian Synaxarion (Stone, 1973, p. 115), while in the fourth edition (15th century) (Stone, 1973, pp. 116–118) the form is similar to the story found in the manuscript Yerevan, Matenadaran, 1099, fols. 183v–188r (17th century) (Stone, 2021, pp. 220–237).

The most condensed version of the martyrdom is included in the second (mid-15th century) and the fourth (ca. 16th century) editions of a Slavonic historical chronicle *Alexandria*, narrating the life of Alexander the Great (Истрин, 1893, p. 178, appendix pp. 304–305).

In this article, I focus primarily on *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, as the most representative and extensive versions of this legend.

Date and origins

The *terminus ante quem* of this legend is provided by the earliest manuscripts of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* as well as by the first edition of *Syn. Cp.*, i.e., ca. the 9th century. However, both *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* draw on earlier traditions, both referring to earlier stories (an “extraordinary and completely unknown story”; *Mart. Dan.* 3:3; cf. *Sermo de obit.* 5:6) that were adopted and incorporated into the homilies. Further, while *Mart. Dan.* is sometimes attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria, *Sermo de obit.* is ascribed to Cyril of Alexandria. Therefore, although these attributions are spurious, they indicate a possible Alexandrian origin of the legend that may relate to the cult of the Three Youths in that city. According to Coptic and Ethiopic traditions, Archbishop Theophilus built a church dedicated to the Three Youths in Alexandria as early as the 4th century (the *Life of Saint Abba John the Short* (John Kolobos); Theophilus, *Sermon on the Three Youths of Babylon*). The presence of the cult of the Three Youths in Alexandria is well established (Sarrazin, 2024, pp. 63–64), but it is unclear whether any relics of

these saints were there.¹⁴ The fact that in some versions of this legend the account of the resurrection of these righteous ones is sometimes absent (e.g., Mekhit'ar's *Lives of the Prophets*, 2nd Armenian Synaxation,¹⁵ *Men. Basil II*, 2nd and 4th editions of *Alexandria*) but the story of their martyrdom always appears suggests that either these two accounts originally existed separately but were later combined, or that the resurrection account was omitted from these versions later. Neither suggestion can be proven. However, given the absence of relics of Daniel and the Three Youths in Alexandria and Babylon, it is conceivable that the story of their resurrection was created to explain that absence, possibly combining it with an earlier account of their martyrdom. The *terminus post quem* for the legend can thus be put at around the 4th century.

That would mean that the origins of the martyrdom are Greek and may go back to some Alexandrian tradition from the early Byzantine period, though at a certain point it was connected to Constantinople and was taken to *Syn. Cp.* Michael Stone suggests a Syriac source behind the translation of the Armenian version (Stone, 1982, p. 134), but it is not clear whether such a Syriac source has survived, nor whether it was translated from a Greek version of the martyrdom.

In addition, both *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* report that Daniel and the Three Youths were martyred on 17 December (*Mart. Dan.* 5:3¹⁶; *Sermo de obit.* 5:8). Klimentina Ivanova's catalogue of South Slavonic manuscripts also indicates that the Slavonic recensions of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* were used in accordance with the church calendar on December 17 (Иванова, 2008, pp. 362–364). Furthermore, both texts refer to a portion of Scripture that was read at the annual church service dedicated to them (*Mart. Dan.* 1:3; *Sermo de Obit.* 1:3).¹⁷ In the calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church, these righteous ones are indeed commemorated on 17 December, but no Scripture reading is appointed. The author is probably referring to the reading from Daniel 3. The tradition to commemorate Daniel and the Three Youths on 17 December is also attested in *Syn. Cp.*, *Men. Basil II* and in the Greek Menaion, and is supported by the Old Slavonic recensions of this martyrdom as well as by Προλογъ, Zamość, and Teslevtsiv.

¹⁴ See the overview of this issue in Somov (2025, pp. 18–21).

¹⁵ The Armenian tradition about the martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths does not mention their resurrection but says they were “revealed” (e.g., Stone, 1982, p. 155).

¹⁶ According to Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 481.

¹⁷ Cf. “The prophecy that has just been read for the sake of the kingly and kindred Youths Hannaias, Azarias, and Misael, and the prophet Daniel” (*Sermo de obit.* 1:3).

Plot of the legend

According to *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, the story consists of two parts.

Part 1: Daniel and the Three Youths in Babylon

This part narrates a lament for Jerusalem and the siege and fall of the city, followed by the mournful journey of the captured Jews from Jerusalem, among whom were Daniel and the Three Youths, the life of these four righteous ones in Babylon, and the Three Youths in the furnace.

Part 2: The Martyrdom and Resurrection of Daniel and the Three Youths

This part of the legend tells how Daniel and the Three Youths were persecuted by Atticus, the wicked Persian king, and how they rebuked him for his paganism and were beheaded. Their heads were united with their bodies and they were miraculously buried in mount Gebal. After 400 years (*Syn Cp.* Col. 319; *Teslevtsiv* 3.13)/440 (*Mart. Dan.* 5.8; *Zamość* 5.8), they were resurrected immediately after the resurrection of Jesus together with other righteous ones.

Biblical and parabiblical references in the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths

Mart. Dan. and *Sermo de obit.* refer to or allude to the Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. In reference to the episodes from the book of Daniel, they use the so-called Theodotion translation (Th.) rather than the Old Greek translation (OG).¹⁸ At an early stage of the transmission of Daniel, the OG version was replaced by Th. because it was believed that Th. better resembles the Hebrew text (Davis Bledsoe, 2015, p. 179). In fact, both OG and Th. are most probably

¹⁸ The term OG is used instead of LXX in the case of the book of Daniel in order to distinguish between the original Greek translation of Daniel from the Hebrew Bible and the Theodotion recension.

related to the same Hebrew and Aramaic *Vorlage* (especially in Dan 1–3, 7), but render it differently – Th. more literally.

Most of these references and allusions are made from memory rather than from the written biblical text. Some of them are modified and are used as part of creative contextual exegesis. Below are some representative examples of such references and allusions.

Mart. Dan. and *Sermo de obit.* 1:6 “quote” Isaiah. *Mart. Dan.* has the following text: “Wash yourselves, become clean, and learn to do good. O Jerusalem, in you righteousness lodged, and now murderers! But how does righteousness lodge? The offspring of the virgin’s flesh”. In fact, this is a *cento* (collage or compilation)¹⁹ with several loosely used verses taken from LXX Isaiah (1:16–17; 1:21; and 7:14).

Mart. Dan. and *Sermo de obit.* 1:6 also blend LXX Psalm 131:8 and Isaiah 1:22–23 and ascribe both verses to David: “Rise up, O Lord, into your rest, you and the ark of your sanctuary. Your taverers mix the wine with water and your rulers are disobedient”.

Mart. Dan. and *Sermo de obit.* 1:7 “quote” the following verse, attributing it to the prophet Micah: “I will turn your feasts into mourning and I will deport you beyond Babylon”. There is actually no such text in the book of Micah. In fact, both recensions allude to Amos 5:27 (cf. “and I will deport you beyond Damascus”, NRSV) and 8:10 (cf. “and I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation”, NRSV).

The whole episode about the refusal of the Three Youths to sing psalms in Babylon is based on several verses of LXX Ps 136:

Thus, having been beaten and walking on foot, they arrived in Babylon, which is on the third river. There [the instruments] were hung on trees and the Assyrians pressed hard, saying, “Sing us a psalm in the same way you did in your land!” (cf. LXX Ps 136:1–4). Then, the three kindred Youths stood up and said, “It is impossible to speak the words of God before unclean lips”. Then, until the ninth hour that day they were humbled by the rod-bearers. The blameless Youths said, “We will praise the Lord in secret”. (*Mart. Dan.* 2.5–6)

On the other hand, while referring to the Old Testament from memory, *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* are more careful with the New Testament. Thus, they both quote Matt 27:52–53 very closely (quotations italicized):

¹⁹ I would like to thank the Prof. Dr. Anna-Maria Totomanova from Sofia University for bringing this term to my attention in this context.

When the Jews set up the Cross against our Lord Jesus Christ, when the foundations of the ground trembled and were shaken from seeing God being given over to the grave, when heaven trembled, rocks were broken in pieces, the tops of mountains trembled, when all of Hades was illuminated and *many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and, having entered the holy city, appeared to many*, among whom were Abel and Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Baruch, John the Forerunner of Christ and Hezekiah with his spouse, then their own three related children Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, and their mentor and the wise Daniel were raised. (*Mart. Dan.* 5.6–7)

Similarly, *Mart. Dan.* cites 1 Cor 15:6: “That is why Paul says, ‘He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died’” (5:9).

In addition to their knowledge of canonical biblical texts, as illustrated above, *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* are familiar with some parabiblical traditions about the prophet Jeremiah.

Describing Nebuchadnezzar’s attack against Jerusalem and the fall of the city, *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* give some details about Jeremiah, Baruch, and Abimelech:

But Jeremiah was running around, lamenting, saying, “*How long until you will be quiet, O God?*” (cf. LXX Jer 29:6; MT Jer 47:6) And the prophet Baruch got angry, being locked in the chasm on account of their lawless deed, (cf. 4 Bar. 4:7–12) and the prophet Abimelech kept watch outside the city in order not to see the desolation of the city and the misfortune that suddenly occurred. (*Mart. Dan.* 1.12–13; cf. *Sermo de obit.* 1.12–13)

According to 4 Baruch 4, Jeremiah, Baruch, and Abimelech are led in different directions at the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 39:16–18; 45:2–5). In the book of Jeremiah, Abimelech is an Ethiopian eunuch in the house of King Zedekiah in Jerusalem. Abimelech helped to save Jeremiah from the cistern into which he had been thrown (Jer 38:38:6–13) and was promised that although he would see the destruction of Jerusalem, he would be saved from death (39:16–18). In 4 Baruch, the Lord commands Jeremiah to send Abimelech to the vineyard of Agrippa until the end of the Exile (3:14). Then Jeremiah asks Abimelech to go to the farm of Agrippa to get some figs for the sick (3:21–22). There he will spend 66 years sleeping under a tree. *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* paraphrase this story, changing some minor details but conveying the main idea that Abimelech is safe and far away from the destruction of Jerusalem.

Mart. Dan. and *Sermo de obit.* could have used either the long or the short recension of 4 Baruch,²⁰ or an abridged version from the Greek Orthodox Menaion, which collects the legends about Jeremiah for 4 November under the title “The Story about the Lamentation of the Prophet Jeremiah over Jerusalem and about Its Capture and the Trance of Abimelech” (*Μηνναῖον τοῦ Νοεμβρίου*, 1889, pp. 25–27), which is similar to the short recension of 4 Baruch (Allison, 2019, pp. 5–6)²¹ or to the *Tale of the Captivity of Jerusalem*, which is a reworked version of 4 Baruch. The authors of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* could also be familiar with an account of the destiny of Jeremiah and Abimelech after the defeat of Jerusalem in the *Jeremiah Apocryphon*, which contains many details similar to 4 Baruch.

Finally, the deliverance of the righteous ones from Hades and their settlement in paradise demonstrates that *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* are familiar with *Descensus ad inferos* traditions, especially with the Gospel of Nicodemus. In the Gospel of Nicodemus 10, the repentant criminal (cf. Luke 23:43) is given a sign of the cross from Jesus as a pass to paradise. This pass must be shown to the angel guarding the entrance there. *Sermo de obit.* 4:14 is probably alluding to this tradition:

The criminal was a forerunner into paradise, the eleventh-hour worker by the word of the Lord, which removed the flaming sword (cf. Gen 3:24). For when the Lord said to the criminal, “*you will be with me in paradise*”, this word, having removed the flame of fire, brought the criminal to paradise.

Representation of personalities in the Slavonic recensions

In the above passage from *Sermo de obit.* 4:14, in the manuscripts consulted by Istrin, the repentant criminal from Luke 23:43 is called simply τοῦ ὥρας ἐργάτου (“a worker of the hour”). The Slavonic version of *Sermo de obit.* adds ἑΔΙΗΝΗΔΕΚΑΤΑΓΟ ᾗΔ (“of the eleven hour”), reasonably alluding to the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1–16. Those whom the lord of the vineyard hired later than others arrived at the eleventh hour (five o’clock;

²⁰ The long and short recensions of 4 Baruch are described by Dale C. Allison (2019, pp. 3–8).

²¹ *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, however, allude on the passage about Baruch sitting in the tomb (4 Bar. 4:10–11), which is not found in the Greek Menaion.

20:6–9). The eleventh hour symbolizes the criminal's repentance at the last moment.²² This addition needs further investigation as to whether the Slavonic translator used a Greek manuscript unknown to Istrin that had ἐνδεκάτην ὥραν (cf. Mat 20:6), or whether it was a creative translation decision.

Further, in the episode in which the Three Youths rebuke the wicked king Atticus, Mishael tells him:

you are worse than crawling and poisonous animals which bring up fire through their lips and then extinguish it. For calling those a god, you pour bloody food over the image of a dog or a wolf. So, it is given to your kind and to your tribe to prosper on earth for the purpose of cursed hypocrisy, as did Magedon, your father, who because of illusory wealth, being in companionship with the Syrians, attached himself to a marital partnership. For which reason, on the instigation of the unclean water spirit, you have learned to kill and consume the offspring of cows and bulls by fire; you regard this unlawful shameless act as a sacrifice. Mixing their blood with dough, you do not realize that you are eating their own flesh, and therefore you are also called Manicheans. (*Mart. Dan.* 4.4–7)

This passage exhibits several prejudices about Zoroastrians and Manichaeans. Moreover, any existence of the Manicheans in Persia at the time of Daniel and the Three Youths is historically inaccurate as the Manicheans did not appear until the 3rd century C.E. However, it may indicate the familiarity (albeit very limited) of the text's composer with the Manicheans and his intention to address them in a veiled way by having the characters of the past speak into the author's situation.

Further, Atticus's father is called Magedon (Μαγεδών) in this passage, but this name is not associated with any historical Persian ruler. In LXX Josh 12:22; Jdg 1:27; 2 Chr 35:22, Μαγεδών relates to the valley of Megiddo (cf. Ἀρμαγεδών in Rev 16:16), but that does not help us to interpret this name. Furthermore, Μαγεδών may be associated with Μυγδονία, which is a city in Thrace, a region located on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea. There, according to some traditions, the great martyr Irina (4th century C.E.), whose memory is remembered on 5th May, according to the Eastern Orthodox calendar, was born.²³ However, this does not help us again to clarify what this name relates to. Μαγεδών may also relate to Greek μάγος, which is of Persian origin

²² Cf. "You, oh, Lord, have given the paradise to the prudent criminal, within one hour" in the Orthodox exapostilarion of the Great Friday.

²³ Cf. Slavonic МАГЕДОНЪ in Dmitry of Rostov's *Lives of the Saints* (Димитрий Ростовский, 1764, p. 378).

and in some contexts is used for Persian priests and magicians (cf. Matt 2:1). It may also refer to μαγουδαῖος. In *Epistula ad Theophilum imperatorem de sacris imaginibus* 11, John of Damascus describes μαγουδαῖοι as magicians (φαρμακοί), enchanters (ἐπαοιδοί), and astrologists (γαζαρηνοί). On the other hand, μαγουδαῖος could be a conflation of μάγος and Ἰουδαῖος that means Jewish magician (Lampe, 1961, p. 819). De Jong (1997, p. 404 n. 58), however, argues that μαγουδαῖος is a confused reading of μαγουσαῖος. Apart from its use as a synonym of μάγος, referring to Persian priests and more generally Zoroastrians (de Jong, 1997, p. 405 n. 63–64), this word also appears in the texts as a term for followers of a Persian esoteric sect that practised vegetarianism and incestuous marriages (Lampe, 1961, p. 819; see, e.g., Ps. Clem., *Rec.* 20.20–21; Basil the Great, *Ep.* 258.4; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. ev.* 6.10.16.4, 6.10.38.3; Epiphanes of Cyprus, *Ancor.* 113.2.3; *Pan.* 3.512.18; 3.512.23; Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos* 3.1376.32; 3.1384.40; Georgius Hamartolus, *Chronicon breve* 110:141).

I show below the Slavonic witnesses of this text.

Table 1. A comparison of the Greek and Slavonic versions of *Mart. Dan.* 4:6 and Zamość 4:6

<i>Mart. Dan.</i> 4:6	<i>Mart. Dan.</i> 4:6 in the <i>Great Menaion Reader</i>	Zamość 4:6
Καὶ δέδοται μὲν τῷ γένει σου καὶ τῇ φυλῇ σου πλουτεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πρὸς ὑπόκρισιν κατάρας, ὡς Μαγεδών, ὁ πατήρ σου, ὃς διὰ πλοῦτον φασματικὸν συρίναις συμβίσας πρὸς γάμον κοινωνίαν ἤρατο	СИ ДАНО ОУБО ЕСТЬ РОДЪ ТВОЕМОУ ꙗкоже Магедонъ, ѡцъ твои, ꙗже богатства ради приведе нааго сѣранынами са ѡженити ѡзvoli.	ДАНО ОУБО ЕСТЬ РОДОУ ТВОЕМОУ ꙗкоже Макидонъ, ѡцъ твои, ꙗже богатства ради неправеднаго Сиринами ѡженити са ѡзvoli.
So, it is given to your kind and to your tribe to prosper on earth for the purpose of cursed hypocrisy, as did Magedon, your father, who because of illusory wealth, being in companionship with the Syrians, attached himself to a marital partnership.	So it is given to your kind and to your tribe to prosper on earth to the condemnation of the curse, as did Magedon, your father, who for the sake of brought wealth let himself be married to Sirens.	So it is given to your kind and to your tribe to prosper on earth to the condemnation of the curse, as did Makidon, your father, who for the sake of unjust wealth let himself be married to Sirens.

As this comparison shows, the Slavonic version of *Mart. Dan.* renders Μαγεδών similarly to Магедонъ. However, in the later Slavonic Zamość 4:6, it is changed to Макидонъ. Probably, it is a transliterated version of Greek Μακεδών. In the LXX, Μακεδών is used to refer to two characters: Haman in LXX Esth 8:12; 9:24, and Alexander the Great in 1 Macc 6:2. The LXX translator of the book of Esther could have been identifying Haman as a Macedonian instead of using the less intelligible “Agagite” (אַגָּגִי) (cf. MT Esth 3:1) and viewed him as a hostile Macedonian officer. Similarly, Alexander could have been taken as a hostile king in 1 Maccabees. However, in the Slavonic Bible, Μακεδών is rendered as МАКЕΔОНАНИНЪ or МАКЕДОНЬСКІЙ (as in the Ostrog Bible), but not as Македонъ or Макидонъ. The author of Zamość might have somehow associated the enemy of the Jews in Persia in the time of Esther with a certain hostile Persian king, the father of Atticus. However, such an interpretation seems overly sophisticated. Furthermore, the name could have been anachronistically taken as a distorted version of the name Macedonius, which may refer to Macedonius I, the bishop of Constantinople (4th century) who founded the heretical ante-Nicene sect of Macedonians or *Pneumatomachi*. Moreover, the name Atticus could refer to an archbishop of Constantinople (5th century) with the same name. He was a successor of John Chrysostom in the See of Constantinople. At the beginning of his church career, he was in opposition to Chrysostom, but after his death Atticus became his supporter. He had become a monk when he was young and was taught by certain monks who belonged to the Macedonians. Later he became Orthodox (Wace & Piercy, 1911, p. 69). If the author or editor of Zamość knew this Atticus’s biography, he may have metaphorically incorporated it into the story: King Atticus is like the Archbishop Atticus, for whom Macedonius of Constantinople was a kind of spiritual father. This may mean that Atticus the king is portrayed as a heretic like the Macedonians and Manicheans. However, it cannot be ruled out that the author simply read Μαγεδών as “Makidon”, given the similar sound of the two words.

The last important example is again taken from *Mart. Dan.* 4.4–7. Rebuking Atticus, Mishael indicates that Magedon was “in companionship with the Syrians (συρίαις)”. Συρίαις is an unusual form and may be a confused spelling of συρίαίς. According to Basil the Great, the above-mentioned Magusaeans considered fire to be a god (τὸ πῦρ ἡγοῦνται Θεὸν) and practised incestuous marriages (γάμοις ἐπιμαίνονται παρανόμοις) (*Ep.* 258.4). This may refer to Magedon’s marriage with the Syrians. The earliest reference to Μαγουσαῖοι is found in the Syrian author Bardaisan of Edessa, *Bk. Laws* (ܠܟܬܝܠܐܝܢ; Drijvers, 2007,

pp. 44, 54; Lund, 2007, p. 162), which indicates the presence of Zoroastrianism in Syria (de Jong, 1997, p. 406). This word must have been problematic for Slavonic translators. The Slavonic version renders it as сѣръянынами, which is similar to how Naiman the Syrian is translated in 2 Kgs 5:20 (сѣръянина). However, the Greek manuscript at Bodleian Library, Laud. gr. 69 does not have σὺρίναις but σείρισι, which might also be a confused reading of σείρησι (Σειρῆνες/Συρίνες; “Sirens” or “deceitful women”). That is how this term is rendered in Zamość 4.6 (Сиринами).

It is not possible, however, to know exactly how the author of Zamość made this translation decision and what form of the Slavonic manuscript he had at hand. The Slavonic text in *Mart. Dan.* and Zamość is similar but not identical. Significant differences: “Magedon” is called “Makidon”; “Syrians”, “Sirens”; “for the sake of the brought wealth”, “for the sake of unjust wealth”.

Conclusions

The brief overview in this article of hagiographical texts about the martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths indicates that they retell the story of Daniel and his three companions (Dan 1–6) and narrate their martyrdom for Jesus Christ as well as their consequent resurrection immediately after his resurrection. Probably the tradition about their martyrdom, which could have originated earlier, was at a certain point combined with the account of their resurrection. The *terminus ante quem* of this composition is ca. the 9th century and its *terminus post quem* is ca. the 4th century C.E. Two recensions of this martyrdom (published by Istrin) are attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria (*Mart. Dan.*) and Cyril of Alexandria (*Sermo de obit.*); although these attributions are spurious, they do indicate their Alexandrian origin. Most likely this tradition originated in Greek, probably in Alexandria, though later it was also connected to Constantinople. Both *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* adopt the legend for not only hagiographical but also liturgical purposes, given that the date of the martyrdom is set at 17 December, according to the Eastern Orthodox church calendar. The Slavonic translation of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* was made no later than the 14th century.

In *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, most references to the Bible are made from memory. Some of these references are modified “quotations” used as

creative contextual exegesis. The “quotations” employ various approaches, such as compiling several loosely used verses (e.g., Isa 1:16–17; 1:21; and 7:14 in *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* 1:6), blending several verses (e.g., LXX Ps 131:8 and Isa 1:22–23 in *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* 1:6), and even incorrect attributions (Amos 5:27 is quoted as Micah in *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* 1:7). On the other hand, the quotations from the New Testament are more accurate than those from the Old Testament (e.g., Matt 27:52–53 in *Mart. Dan.* 5:6–7; *Sermo de obit.* 4:11; 1 Cor 15:6 in *Mart. Dan.* 5:9 and *Sermo de obit.* 4:15; Luke 23:43 in *Sermo de obit.* 4:14). They are not strictly direct quotations; rather, they are a form of adaptation in which a biblical passage has been adapted to fit a new context. Both recensions also use some parabiblical traditions, such as 4 Baruch and the Gospel of Nicodemus. The authors effortlessly switch between biblical and parabiblical traditions throughout the text and use the parabiblical and legendary material to give the story greater dramatic and rhetorical effect.

The comparative analysis of Greek and Old Slavonic versions of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.*, as published by Istrin and Franko, demonstrates that they resemble but are not fully identical with the corresponding Greek texts. In those places where they correspond to the original, they follow their Greek source quite literally, but in some passages they have some important deviations in terms, names, or even creative interpretations. A good example of the creative exegesis discussed in this article is “the eleven-hour worker” in *Sermo de obit.* 4:14, which alludes to Matthew 20:1–16. An example of deviation in names is the rendering of Magedon as МАКИДОНЪ in Zamość 4:6. Several options are possible to explain this deviation: МАКИДОНЪ as a hostile Macedonian from the book of Esther or 1 Maccabees; as referring to Macedonius I, the bishop of Constantinople; or simply as reading Μαγεδών as “Makidon”.

An intriguing example of a difference in translating other personalities is σὺρί-
ναις (*Mart. Dan.* 4:6). This problematic Greek word was translated as сѹранынами in the Slavonic version of *Mart. Dan.*, but as Сиринами in Zamość 4:6.

This yields further perspectives on the complexity of the process of transmission of this legend in the Slavonic cultural-linguistic milieu and invites further research on the Old-Slavonic manuscripts of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* Such research must include the additional textual investigation of the Greek witnesses of this legend, not only those with which Istrin dealt but also those which are available now. All this makes a critical Greek edition of *Mart. Dan.* and *Sermo de obit.* a *desiderium*.

Abbreviations

Mart. Dan. – *The heroic deeds and the contest of the Three Holy Youths and the prophet Daniel (Martyrium tribus pueris et Danielis Prophetæ).*

Sermo de obit. – Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, *The Sermon on the Demise of the Three Holy Youths and the All-wise Daniel (Sermo de obitu sanctorum trium puerorum).*

Teslevtsiv – A manuscript by the priest Stephen Teslevtsiv from Transcarpathia

Zamość – Zamoyskyy manuscript

Appendix

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

- *Mart. Dan.*, Barb. gr. 481, fols. 186v–191r [13th century].

Biblioteca Vallicelliana (Rome)

- *Sermo de obit.*, F 33, fols. 61r–66r [16th century].

Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris)

- *Mart. Dan.*, de fonds greca № 1491, fols. 40r–44r [9th /10th century]; Coislin 105, fols. 133r–135r, 140v–142r [10th /11th century].
- *Sermo de obit.*, Coislin 121, fols. 53r–55r [14th century].

Bodleian Library (University of Oxford)

- *Mart. Dan.*, Laudianus gr. № 69, fols. 235v–240v [11th century].

Matenadaran Institute named after St. Mesrop Mashtots (Yerevan)

- *Lives of the Prophets* in a Bible manuscript copied by Mekhit'ar of Ayrivank' (ca. 1271–1288), 1500, fol. 362r.

Moscow Theological Academy

- *Sermo de obit.*, F.173/I #90, fols. 375v–381r [16th century].

Russian National Library (Moscow)

- *Great Menaion Reader*, Pogodin Collection No 1011, fols. 331r–336v

Russian State Library (Moscow)

- *Mart. Dan.*, F. 98 #32, fols. 364v–368v [16th century], F. 98 #59.1, fols. 138–141 [16th–17th century].
- *Sermo de obit.*, V. M. Undol'skij Collection № 560, F. 310, fols. 83–88 [15th–16th century]
- *Sermo de obit.*, F. 178, № 3127, fols. 289v–294v [16th century].

Scientific Library of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

- Zamoyskyy manuscript (pol. Zamość), # 203.III, fols. 753–761

Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine

- A manuscript in Ukrainian by the priest Stephen Teslevtsiv from Transcarpathia, f.3 #769, fols. 105–109, 109–113 [17th/18th century].

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Niektóre cechy charakterystyczne słowiańskich redakcji Męczeństwa Daniela i trzech młodzieńców

V. M. Istrin opublikował dwie greckie (1903) oraz dwie starosłowiańskie (1893) redakcje chrześcijańskiej legendy o Męczeństwie Daniela i trzech młodzieńców. I. Franko opublikował kilka innych redakcji tej legendy odnalezionych na Ukrainie (1896). Wszystkie te teksty wykorzystują zarówno materiał biblijny, jak i pewne tradycje parabiblijne. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje kilka najważniejszych biblijnych i parabiblijnych cytatów oraz aluzji występujących w tej legendzie, a także sposób przedstawienia niektórych postaci w jej greckich i słowiańskich redakcjach.

Słowa kluczowe: recepcja Biblii; tradycje parabiblijne; hagiografia; redakcja grecka; redakcja słowiańska; Męczeństwo Daniela i trzech młodzieńców; Psalm; Izajasz; Jeremiasz; Baruch; Mateusz; zmartwychwstanie; Syryjczycy

Some Distinctive Features of the Slavonic Recensions of the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths

V. M. Istrin published two Greek (1903) and two Old Slavonic (1893) recensions of the Christian legend about the Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths. I. Franko published some other recensions of this legend found in Ukraine (1896). All these texts utilize both biblical material and some parabiblical traditions. This article examines a few of the most significant biblical and parabiblical quotations and allusions in this legend, as well as how some personalities are rendered in its Greek and Slavonic recensions.

Keywords: Bible reception; Parabiblical traditions; hagiography; hagiographical texts; Greek recension; Slavonic recension; Martyrdom of Daniel and the Three Youths; Psalms; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Baruch; Matthew; resurrection; Syrians

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