

Pigs, Beast-People and Sinners

Therianthropy in Works of St. Demetrius of Rostov

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Abstract—The article is devoted to the concept of the famous preacher and church writer Demetrius of Rostov (1651-1709) that sin turns a sinner into a beast. The author demonstrates the biblical origins of this teaching and its connection with the views of the Metropolitan of Rostov on sin and its effect on man. The article examines various images of animals from the sermons of St. Demetrius of Rostov. Particular attention is paid to the image of a pig associated with carnal sins. Author found the source of the descriptions of "half-people, half-beasts" from the "Cell Chronicle" of St. Demetrius of Rostov in ancient Jewish tradition. The author concludes that the views of St. Demetrius of Rostov on the origin of the monstrous races agree with the Old Russian tradition.

Keywords—*Demetrius of Rostov; Dimitry of Rostov; Russian Orthodoxy; Russian culture of the Petrine Age*

I. INTRODUCTION

St. Demetrius of Rostov (1651-1709) was one of the most outstanding preachers of the Russian Church at the turn of 17th century. The sermons of the Metropolitan of Rostov have a rich tradition of study, and the question of the influence of various theological traditions on the homiletical writings of the saint was put more than once [1]. However, many aspects of the theology of the sermons of Dimitry of Rostov remain insufficiently investigated. Among them is the St. Demetrius's teaching that sin turns man into an animal. The connection between the sin and the animal the sermons of the Metropolitan of Rostov was considered only in the sketch of V.P. Zubov, in which the author drew particular attention to the role of animal images in the sermons of St. Demetrius. Meanwhile, the connection of the therianthropy and sin in the sermons of the Metropolitan of Rostov should be researched in a broader context.

II. ANIMALS AND EXEGESIS

One of the favorite biblical stories of St. Demetrius of Rostov was a story about the Israeli judge Gideon. When Gideon went to fight the Maadis, God commanded him to choose the best and bravest warriors. These were the ones who drank river water from the palm of their hands, and not like cattle, plunging their heads with their mouths into the river. St. Demetrius interpreted this place as follows: sweet river water is the earthly life of a person with her pleasures.

Therefore: "He who wants to defeat his enemy, drink the sweetness of this world not in a beastly manner [...], keep the abstinence in your life. Anyone who is immersed in worldly pleasures in a beastly manner will not win, but will be defeated, will not drive out the enemy, but will be driven. Who abstains in all that will be a glorious victory" [2].

And what will happen to those who would immerse in worldly sweets in a beastly manner? Such a person will turn into cattle: on the person who has forgotten God, the words of the Scripture will come true: "he is compared to senseless beasts and is to become like to them" (Psalm 48: 13) [3].

For St. Demetrius sin is a metaphysical destructive force that affects the "inner man" – person's feeling, will and mind – and through these changes the appearance – the behavior and the very image of the sinner [4]. The idea that sin by some mystical way turns a person into an animal passes through many works of St. Demetrius of Rostov. Sometimes this idea is almost imperceptible and manifests itself only in humorous comparisons. Therefore, those who fast, get irritated, angry and complain at home, they look like a bear, who, "lying in his winter lair, does not eat anything, but only sucks his paw and constantly grumbles" [5].

However, in most cases, saint Demetrius directly reveals the biblical origins of his animal imageries. Saint Demetrius consistently compares people who sin by condemnation with the swarms of the flies from the book of Exodus, with the serpent crawling in the grass from the book of Ecclesiastes, with the seven-headed serpent from the Apocalypse and, finally, quoting the epistle of the apostle Paul to Timothy, with the devil himself [6].

Even those examples that look similar to scholastic exempla are strongly connected with the exegesis of Holy Scripture. In one of the sermons, an angry man is compared to a tiger, who is furious with a bell and with an elephant, which the sound of the flute sinks. But the point of this comparison is not to surprise the listener, and not to tell about the natural history fact, but to reveal the biblical idea that the sinner becomes like a beast: "The lover of his enemy tames the wild beast and blocks his lips, just as the once holy Daniel blocked the mouths of lions. The hostile man is like a beast, which is fierce, even without being irritated; irritated, he strongly and without measure furious, tortures, bites and dries down" [7].

III. PIG AND SINNER

Probably the most widespread image of an animal in the sermons of St. Demetrius of Rostov is a pig. A beastly life, a pig's life is a life without restriction of someone's lusts, without abstinence, an unclean life.

"A carnal sinner is like a pig, for like pig sits in the mud, so he plunges into uncleanness, saint David had learned it by himself and said: "I sink in deep mire" (Psalm 68:3). The pig looks down and cannot even lift its head up. Like this, the sinner is looking down and does not want to raise his inner eyes to heaven, as St. Daniel writes about the lecherous elders who have desired the chaste and beautiful Susanna: "And they perverted their own mind and turned away their eyes that they might not look unto heaven" (Dan 13: 9). The pig moans, walking; so also do a sinner, living without any joy. These groans make the life of the sinner wretched, for as soon as he looks into his conscience, he will immediately moan, seeing himself dying and every day driven by his evil habits into the deepest abyss of perdition" [8].

Through his uncleanness, the carnal sinner becomes close to demons and far from God: "where people do not have God before their eyes, there are only pigs and demons, I mean piggish life and demonic" [1, p. 184]. Demons perceive such a person as their legitimate prey: "they are pleasant to him as pig is pleasant to wolf" [9].

Sin deprives man of reason and therefore sinner becomes like unreasonable cattle: "As a person's face is disgraced from receiving any wound or leprosy, so does the mind become insane through the return to sin after repentance, and then the person is no longer a reasonable man, but is an unreasonable cattle, to which he likens, according to the written: "he is compared to senseless beasts, and is to become like to them" (Psalm 48: 13)" [10].

The prelate shows this on the example of the statue of Dagon from the Philistine sanctuary. When the Philistines, having seized the ark of the covenant, put it in the temple, then the next night they found a statue of Dagon on the ground. The next night Dagon fell again, hands and feet broke off from the statue of the fish-man, only fish part remained. St. Demetrius interprets Dagon as the image of a sinner, and the fall of an idol as the image of man's sinful falls. Moreover, the second fall is worse than the first: "If he falls again, if he returns to former lawlessness, then his fall is incomparably worse, for then he ruins his head – that is his mind, and hands – that is reasonable actions; then his face is disfigured before God and before people". Having lost the mind, man is completely enslaved to a sinful habit. "Without a head, mind, and without hands - the actions of reasonable - there is only Dagon, that is the unintelligent fish, or, better to say, the insensitive and inactive idol; and such a crushed idol cannot soon be put on a right place. You need an artist to again attach to him that head that has fallen away and those hands that have fallen away, and this requires a lot of work, time and effort" [11].

Therefore, evil deeds, evil thoughts and darkened minds make a person like animal in mind and temper. "This age is called the daughter of Babylon, for as in Babylon lived wild

beasts, onocentaras and syrens, so in this age there are evil people, unrighteous and sinners, who for their evil deeds are called wild beasts. The God called idolaters and sinners who wished to come to the knowledge of the divine God, beasts, saying: "The beast of the field shall glorify me, the jackals and the daughters of ostriches: because I have given waters in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, to my chosen." (Isaiah 43: 20) "[12]. As noted by the subtle researcher of the sermons of the Rostov saint, V.P. Zubov: "St. Demetrius emphasizes the visibility of his images and at the same time he does not fear a broad and profound allegory ... From this materiality one step to lycanthropy" [13].

IV. BEAST-LIKE TOWER-BUILDERS

Saint Demetrius takes this step. In Babylon: "there was King Nebuchadnezzar, who for his pride was turned by God into an ox and who ate grass in the desert for seven years" [14]. Therefore, the spiritual beast-likeness turns into a bodily beast-likeness: "A grave sin ... turned people into cattle, like Nebuchadnezzar" [15].

In the same city of Babylon, the sin of God-fighting literary turned people into beasts. In the "Cell Chronicle", a work on sacred history, there is a story about the fate of the builders of the Tower of Babel: "The Lord not only mixed human languages, but also changed the beauty of the image of man in many people, hardly leaving the human semblance of them. For from the creators of the tower, troubled by the wrath of God, various evil genera originated, like the degenerates of human nature, half-beasts and half-people, about which we here and something will say " [16].

After this, St. Demetrius brings the list of "half-beasts and half-people". This is the list of "monstrous races", borrowed from the "World Chronicle" by Johannes Nauclerus and the "Golden Legend" of Jakobus de Voragine. Both were important sources that St. Demetrius used for his "Cell Chronicle" [17].

The most interesting of the St. Demetrius's examples is the famous description of satyr and centaur from st. Jerome "Vita Pauli":

"About these humanlike creatures is written in the life of St. Paul of Thebes. Once Antony the Great went into the depths of the desert to find the saint Paul. There was a great heat at noon, and the old man tired, but was cheerful in spirit and did not return from the path taken. If he did not know where to go, he reinforced himself, saying: "I trust my God that He will show me His servant whom He promised to show." A short time later he saw a man like a horse, whom the poets call the hippocenter.

Seeing this, the old man armed himself with the saving sign of the cross and asked boldly: "Listen, where does the slave of God dwell?" The beast bowed from the words of the saint and, unable to speak with a voice, showed his hand to the side in which it was necessary to go to the slave God, and retired a quick run from the Monk Anthony. The old man was surprised at the vision of this beast and went where it was indicated.

Arriving at a certain stony place, the old man saw another beast, who was also like a man to the floor, but the rest of his body was brutal - the legs were goats and horns on his head. The old man was astonished to see him, but, armed with an unshakable faith, he asked without fear, saying: "Who are you?" The beast, while bearing the date fruit, as the pledge of peace, said: "I am one of the mortals living in the desert, people are called satyrs and are revered as one of their gods; I am sent as representative of my flock to beg you to pray for us to our common Lord, who, when He came into the world, became known to us, because "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth". (Psalm 18, 5).

When this beast spoke, an exhausted hermit joyfully dipped his face with tears, rejoicing about Christ's glory and Satanic perdition, and at the same time amazed at how he could understand the speech of the satyr. Striking with a rod on the ground, the monk said: "Woe to you, the city of Alexandria, for you revere monsters instead of God! Woe to you, the city of the fornicators, in which demons from all over the world have gathered! What kind of answer will you give, when the beast professed the Christ's power, and you regard the forest monsters as gods? "When the saint said this, the beast fled into the wilderness.

Concerning this beast, let no one think that this is untrue, since under Constantius, such an anthropoid beast, called a satyr, was brought alive to Alexandria and that was a great surprise to all the people. But when he died, his body, so that it would not rot, was salted with salt and sent to Antioch to the king" [18].

By this time, European scholars for over half a thousand years have been convinced of the existence of monstrous races. Ancient geographers placed monsters in distant India and Ethiopia. In the Middle Ages, "monster races" were known as wonders of distant countries, or as allegories of vices and virtues. In the 16th - 17th centuries, the European knowledge of distant countries has expanded enormously, but ancient views on "monstrous races" persisted among European scholars. Naturalists finally broke with the ancient tradition only at the turn of the 17th century. The majority of "monstrous races", like centaurs or headless people become the curiosities of the past, while some, like satyrs, have been classified as anthropoid apes [19].

However, Saint Demetrius was not interested in "monstrous races" as in a natural phenomenon. For him, the existence of satyrs and centaurs was an illustration of the ultimate degradation, of the literal turning of man into beast under the influence of sin. It is not by chance that St. Demetrius speaks of "monstrous races" as "half-people, half-beasts." Explaining the reasons for the existence of monsters, St. Demetrius remarks that they are the descendants of Noah, "but from the time of the Tower Building, they destroyed the beauty of the human image and their mind was brought into confusion by the wrath of God. Since that time, they have become imperfect people, half-beasts and horrors?" [20].

In the "Cell Chronicle", the possibility of the existence of beast-men is argued by the examples of Nebuchadnezzar and Tiridates, and also by the argument that certain monstrous babies are born who, if they had reached adulthood, would

give birth to their own kind. These explanations are given with reference to the St. Augustine. Indeed, in the "City of God" a whole chapter is devoted to the question of monstrous races. However, St. Augustine never said that monstrous races are the descendants of the builders of the Tower of Babel. The references of Johannes Nauclerus's "Chronicle" of and the "Golden Legend", the sources of St. Demetrius, are false [21]. But this idea was not the invention of medieval authors, it goes back to the Jewish tradition of the beginning of the 1st millennium AD.

For the first time the legend that the builders of the tower of Babel, were deprived of human form and became like beasts in punishment for the sin of God-fighting, appeared in the Jewish texts of the 1st -2nd century AD, such as the "Biblical antiquities" of Pseudo-Philo of Alexandria and the so-called apocryphal "The Third Book of Baruch." Exegetically, this view is associated with the transformation of Nebuchadnezzar. The view that some of the builders of the Tower of Babel was turned into various kinds of monstrous humanoid and demonic creatures: monkeys, spirits, demons, night demons, werewolves, is found in the later rabbinic tradition, right up to the Middle Ages [22] [23].

The most vivid description of the beastlike appearance of the builders of the Tower of Babel is given in the apocryphal "Third book of Baruch", created among Jews or Christians between the end of the first and the beginning of the 3rd century AD. In this apocalyptic text there is a description of the builders of the Tower of Babel on the second and third Heaven. Those who built the Tower of Babel, for their sin were turned into monsters and have cattle breasts, deer antlers, legs of goats and loins of sheep. Those who forced others to build a tower, have dog muzzles, legs of deer and goat's horns [24].

The revelation of Baruch is known in the Slavonic translation and was well known in Old Rus. A.S. Demin notes that "Babylonian" explanation of the origin of monster-people occurs in Old Russian historical and natural scientific works [25]. Thus, the views of st. Demetrius on the origin of monstrous "beast people" from the builders of the Tower of Babel could have had as their source ancient Russian literature. Latin chronicles referring to (as it turned out - erroneous) St. Augustine in this case could only be an argument in favor of an opinion well known to the Metropolitan of Rostov.

V. CONCLUSION

Sermons and didactic works of the St. Demetrius of Rostov contain a consistent teaching that sin turns man into a beast. These reflections of the Rostov Metropolitan are, in essence, an exegesis of a number of passages of the Holy Scriptures. The information picked up from other sources, including from Latin chronicles, serves only as an illustration to this biblical interpretation. It is noteworthy that the views of the Rostov Metropolitan are within the framework of the Eastern Christian tradition. Paradoxically, even the information on the origin of monsters, borrowed from the Latin chronicle with reference to the St. Augustine, in the end still prove to be only a confirmation of the opinions

known to the ancient Russian literature. All this confirms the view of st. Demetrius of Rostov as a theologian that was closer to the Old Russian tradition than to the baroque scholasticism of the Early Modern age.

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