

ПРЕГЛЕД / ОБЗОРЫ И РЕЦЕНЗИИ / SURVEY AND BOOK REVIEWS

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FRANCIS J. THOMSON (24.11.1935–21.05.2021)  
HIS LIFE, WORK, AND LEGACY\*

With the passing of Francis James Thomson, Emeritus Professor of the University of Antwerp, the field of Slavonic and East European Medieval Studies has lost one of its most eminent specialists<sup>1</sup>.

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\* I should like to express my gratitude to Prof. Diana Phillips for her kind willingness to share personal information concerning her husband for the present contribution, as well as for proofreading its text.

<sup>1</sup> Francis Thomson and his research have been subject to various publications from 2000 up to the present day. On the occasion of his 65th birthday an article was devoted to him in *Palaeobulgarica* by M. P e t r o v a (*Palaeobulgarica*, 24 (2000), № 3, p. 116–123), and three years later the same author published an entry on him in the *Cyrillo-Methodian Encyclopedia* (Томсън, Франсис (Thomson, F.). – In: Кирило-Методиевска енциклопедия. Т. 4. Sofia, 2003, p. 64–69). In 2015 Y. Miltenov wrote an article on his scholarly contribution seen in the light of the methodological problems in Palaeoslavistics (М и л т е н о в, Я. *Научните приноси на професор Франсис Томсън в светлината на методологическите проблеми пред палеославистиката.* – *Старобългарска литература*, 52 (2015), p. 11–23). A laudatory introduction by the present author was added to the hono-



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rary volume of 2018 (S e l s, L., J. F u c h s - b a u e r, e.a. *Editing Mediaeval Texts from a Different Angle: Slavonic and Multilingual Traditions. To Honour Francis J. Thomson on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday* (= *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 276 / *Bibliothèque de Byzantion*, 19). Leuven, 2018, p. IX–XI), which also contained a humorous *laudatio* – at the same time a striking characterization of the subject – by R. M a r t i (p. 3–18), and

Francis Thomson was born to David William and Lilian Wilhelmina Thomson on November 24th 1935 in Cheam, in the London Borough of Sutton. His father was a senior civil servant who in 1944 moved to Edinburgh with his family and who, after his retirement, enrolled in the Theological College in Edinburgh to become an Anglican priest. Francis grew up as the second of five children, and at the age of 11 to 18 attended George Watson's College, a renowned public school in Edinburgh. He learned Russian there in his final years, which during his National Service helped to earn him a place in the Intelligence Corps. Remarkably, all three Thomson brothers – Robert, Francis and Anthony – became specialists in foreign languages, viz. in Oriental, Slavonic and Arabic languages respectively. Francis went on to study Germanic and Slavic philology at the University of Cambridge (Sidney Sussex College), after which he spent a year at the University of Heidelberg (1959–1960). After his return to Cambridge he became a Lecturer in German and Russian in 1961 and obtained his PhD at the Faculty of Divinity in 1964. The subject of his thesis was William Palmer (1811–1879), a theologian and oecumenist from Oxfordshire known for his visits to Russia in the 1840–1850s and for his defence of Anglican-Orthodox intercom-

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Francis Thomson's bibliography up to 2016 (p. 19–42). Obituaries: S e l s, L. *In memoriam Francis J. Thomson (1935–2021)*. – *Byzantion*, 91 (2021), p. XI–XIII; К о с т о в, А. Л. *In memoriam Францис Томсън, 1935–2021*. – *Българистика*, 42 (2021), с. 113–115; G o n n e a u, P. *Francis J. Thomson, 24 novembre 1935 – 21 mai 2021*. – *Revue des études slaves* (online), 92 (2021), № 2; M i l t e n o v a, A., A. A n g u s h e v a - T i h a n o v a. *In memoriam Francis J. Thomson (1935–2021)*. – *Scripta & e-Scripta*, 21 (2021), p. 367–369.

munion<sup>2</sup>. A keen interest in theological debate and church union, in line with his PhD research, and a strong anti-communist stance mark Francis Thomson's earliest publications<sup>3</sup>. His later work as a specialist in mediaeval Slavonic literature as well is marked by a general sensitivity to (church) historical and theological issues.

In 1963 Francis Thomson moved to Belgium to accept a position at the Higher Institute for Translators and Interpreters. The Institute later became part of the University of Antwerp, where he lectured until his retirement in 1997<sup>4</sup>. With his groundbreaking publications and his energetic presence he soon came to the fore on the Belgian Slavistics scene. As chairman and driving force of the Belgian Association of

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<sup>2</sup> Francis James Thomson, Sidney Sussex College, *William Palmer and the Orthodox Church*, thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Cambridge University, May 1963. Palmer was a controversial figure who conversed with many Russian church and state officials, for instance with Aleksej Stepanovič Chomjakov (1804–1860), the founder of the Slavophile movement. Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years 1840, 1841* were published in 1882.

<sup>3</sup> Especially his contributions to the anti-communist *East-West Digest*, published between 1968 and 1973, which their author chose to exclude from his academic publication list. See S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 19, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Occasionally Francis Thomson accepted to lecture elsewhere: in 1984 he ran a 30-hour course entitled “Uitzwerming en bekering van de Slavische volkeren tot het jaar 1000” (“Spread and Conversion of the Slav Peoples until the Year 1000”) for the section “Oosteuropakunde” of the Belgian “Universitair Derde Cycluserwijs” (viz. specialized courses for adults at university level), and in 2009 he lectured on “The Reception of Byzantine Culture by the Slavs” at the Central European University in Budapest.

Slavists he represented his new homeland on the International Committee of Slavists from 1991 until 2016<sup>5</sup>. For many years he lived in Kraainem, close to the famous Bollandist library in Brussels, where he went every Wednesday to advise the Bollandists on the acquisition of publications in the Slavonic field and to read and list new titles on Slavonic hagiography. He always stayed in touch with academic life in the UK, where in 1974 he was one of the founders of the *Slavonic and East European Medieval Studies Group (SEEMSG)*, affiliated with the Slavonic Studies Section of the University of Cambridge.

As is clear from his bibliography (on which more below) Francis Thomson was a prolific writer, who equally passionately presented the results of his research at conferences and scholarly meetings all over the world. His learned, eloquent and

witty<sup>6</sup> – but often also controversial – presentations did not go unnoticed, especially his passages at the quinquennial International Congress of Slavists, which he attended from 1978 up to 2013<sup>7</sup>. His in-

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<sup>6</sup> Many colleagues valued his humour, which in the heat of scholarly debate could take the shape of sharp irony. It is found more subtly in some of his footnotes, under the guise of quotes of his *alter egos*, Slobodan Fomič or Eleutherius Scotus. Some examples: “L’emploi de cette fable comme preuve de la présence de marchands grecs en Russie kiévienne ne fait qu’illustrer la question rhétorique de Slobodan Fomič: *Quis credulior est historiographo Russiae mediaevalis?*” (2000); “*Nominibus auctorum aut oblivioni aut fabulis traditis, res autem manebat.* Eleutherius Scotus” (2005); “...a blatant example of what Slobodan Fomič was wont to call *damnatio Russica memoriae eruditionis extraneae*” (2006).

<sup>7</sup> The VIIIth International Congress, in Ljubljana, 1978 (*The Nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia in the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries and Its Implications for Russian Culture.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 5 (1978), p. 107–139); the IXth, in Kiev, 1983 (*Quotations of Patristic and Byzantine Works by Early Russian Authors as an Indication of the Cultural Level of Kievan Russia.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 10 (1983), p. 65–102); the Xth, in Sofia, 1988 (*The Implications of the Absence of Quotations of Untranslated Greek Works in Original Early Russian Literature, Together with a Critique of a Distorted Picture of Early Bulgarian Culture.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 15 (1988), p. 63–91); the XIth, in Bratislava, 1993 (*Peter Mogila’s Ecclesiastical Reforms and the Ukrainian Contribution to Russian Culture. A Critique of Georges Florovsky’s Theory of the Pseudomorphosis of Orthodoxy.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 20 (1993), p. 67–119); the XIIth, in Cracow, 1998 (*Gregory Tsamblak. The Man and the Myths.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 25 (1998), № 2, p. 1–144); the XIIIth in Ljubljana, 2003 (no paper published together with the other contributions from Belgium, but his personal

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<sup>5</sup> His commitment to Belgian Slavistics is felt in several publications about Slavonic studies in Belgium: cf. *Slavic and East European Studies in Belgium. The First Fifty Years, 1926–1976.* – International Newsletter, International Committee for Soviet and East European Studies, International Information Centre for Soviet and East European Studies, Glasgow, 1 (July 1976), Annexe, p. I–IX; (*Country reports*) *Belgium.* – *Polata knigopisnaja*, 5 (1981), p. 46–49; *История бельгийской национальной ассоциации славистов – Бельгийского центра славянских исследований.* – *Slavica Gandensia*, 24 (1997), p. 93–110; *Slav Studies in Belgium 1975–2001.* – In: Brogi Bercoff, G., P. Gonneau, H. Miklas (eds). *Contribution à l’histoire de la slavistique dans les pays non slaves. / Beiträge zur Geschichte der Slawistik in den nichtslawischen Ländern. / К истории славистики в неславянских странах* (= Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Schriften der Balkan-Kommission, 46). Vienna, 2005, p. 303–315.

ternational rise to prominence was marked by the controversy that arose from his frank statements on mediaeval Russia's "intellectual silence", which were badly received by some (especially Russian) academics<sup>8</sup>. Generally speaking, however,

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archive records: "Attended 13th International Congress of Slavists, Laibach, August 15–21, and read paper: *Еще одна мистификация – опись греческих и латинских рукописей библиотеки Ивана Грозного*); the XIVth in Ohrid, 2008 (*The Slavonic Translations of the Prayer of Manasses with Some Preliminary Remarks on the Slavonic Translations of the Biblical Canticles*. – Slavica Gandensia, 35 (2008), p. 151–232); the XVth in Minsk 2013 (no paper published together with the other contributions from Belgium, but his contribution was on the reception of the Works of Pope Gregory the Great by the Slavs).

<sup>8</sup> In 2001 P. G o n n e a u formulated it sharply: "Loin d'apprécier l'ampleur du travail accompli par F. J. Thomson et ses incontestables apports, la plupart des spécialistes de la culture russe ancienne, en grande majorité des Russes, ont choisi soit de rejeter en bloc ces travaux, après un examen souvent sommaire, soit de les ignorer totalement", viz. in his review *Thomson Francis J., the Réception of Byzantine culture in Mediaeval Russia, Aldershot – Brookfield – Sidney, Variorum (Variorum collected studies, t. 590), 1999, paginations diverses*. – Revue des études slaves, 73 (2001), № 2–3, p. 535–537. For the debate see – apart from Thomson's Congress papers of 1978, 1983 and 1988 (see note 7) and the volume in which they were reprinted, viz. *The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Mediaeval Russia* (Variorum Collected Studies Series, 590). Farnborough, 1999 – esp. Б у л а н и н, Д. М. *15 вопросов проф. Томсону из университета в Антверпене*. – Русская литература, 1979, № 1, p. 97–101; Г р у б а ч е в, О. Н. *О работе XI Международного съезда славистов (историческое языкознание)*. – Palaeoslavica, 2 (1994), p. 235–247; А л е к с е в, А. А. *Кое-что о переводах в Древней Руси (по поводу статьи Фр. Дж. Томсона*

Francis Thomson was held in high esteem and his work received broad academic recognition, as is clear from the many honorary awards he received for his research<sup>9</sup>.

As an *emeritus* Francis Thomson energetically continued his scholarly work. More than one third of his publications were written after his retirement from the University of Antwerp in 1997. His many years of outstanding scholarship were celebrated on the occasion of his 80th birthday at the *Approaches to the Editing of Slavonic Texts (ATTEST)* workshop in Regensburg (11–12 December 2015), where he presented on the problems of editing Slavonic translations, with a case study on Isaac the Syrian's *Sermones ascetici*<sup>10</sup>. His unrelenting scholarly efforts only came to an end when health problems made it impossible for him to continue his work. His last public appearance at a scholarly meeting was at the *SEEMSG* gathering on March 17, 2019, in Clare College, Cambridge, where he read a paper on his recently published *Checklist of Slavonic Translations*. He expressly regarded his attendance at this event as a return to his beginnings and a closing of the circle of his life. After a brief period of illness – un-

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„Made in Russia“). – ТОДРЛ, 49 (1996), p. 278–296.

<sup>9</sup> He was awarded the Clement of Ochrid Medal of Honour from the University of Sofia (1988), an honorary doctorate from the University of Veliko Tärnovo (1999), and the Diploma of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (2005). In 2014 he was honoured with the Order of SS. Cyril and Methodius, First Class by the Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev.

<sup>10</sup> Workshop reports in *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch*, N.F. 4 (2016), p. 278–282; *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies (COMSt) Bulletin*, 2 (2016), p. 79–82, and *Cyrillic Manuscript Heritage* (Ohio State University Hilandar Research Library), 38, July 2016, p. 7–8.

fortunately under difficult circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic – he passed away in Antwerp on the 21st of May 2021. He leaves behind his wife and scholarly companion Diana and his two daughters Deborah and Catherine. The memorial service, held on May 27th at St Boniface Anglican church in Antwerp, was kept very private due to Covid restrictions. In accordance with his express wish his remains will be returned to the UK to find their last resting place there, in his home country.

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Francis Thomson's bibliography up to 2016, based on his personal publication list, was published in 2018<sup>11</sup>. A glance at this corpus of over 160 titles immediately evokes the image of an erudite and versatile scholar who, both as a philologist and as an historian, explored his field in breadth and in depth and who had an eye for the most minute philological detail<sup>12</sup> as well as for the broader cultural and historical background<sup>13</sup>. There is hardly a topic in the field of Palaeoslavistics that he did not at least touch upon in a footnote in one of his many and often lengthy publications.

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<sup>11</sup> In S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 19–42. In what follows reference will be made to Thomson's publications using the numbers between square brackets as in his published bibliography.

<sup>12</sup> For instance: OCS \*ΛΑΚΗΝΑ: Neither "Mare", nor "Whore", but Ghost-Word [81] (1995), or *The Name of the Monastery Where Theophanes the Confessor Became a Monk: Πολύχρονιον or Πολυχρόνιον?* [138] (2007).

<sup>13</sup> For instance: *Stages in the Assimilation of Byzantine Culture by the East Slavs, 9th–17th Centuries* [59] (1991), or *A Brief Survey of the History of the Church Slavonic Bible from its Cyrillomethodian Origins until its Final Form in the Elizabethan Bible of 1751* [130] (2006).

His earliest scholarly writings [1–15] were still clearly linked to his theological formation and PhD research. Most of his contributions to *East-West Digest* – not numbered in his published bibliography – dealt with the fate of the Orthodox Church under communism<sup>14</sup>, and his first listed publication is on economy (in the theological sense) and the validity of non-orthodox sacraments in the Orthodox Church [1]. His first reviews were written for *The Journal of Theological Studies* and *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* [2–4]. Interestingly, the book review remained one of Thomson's favourite means of actively engaging in the scholarly debate and proved him to be an avid and critical reader. His reviews were often sharp<sup>15</sup>, sometimes more encouraging, but always critical, and they always brought something new to the discussion. Especially typical are his many long review articles, such as those of 1980 and 1985 [17 and 36] (13 and 26 pages) discussing Aurelio de Santos Otero's *Apocrypha Slavica*, or his review of 2005 of Gerhard Podskalsky's *Mediaeval Bulgarian and Serbian Theological Literature* [128] (47 pages), which became a sort of appendices to be used together with the reviewed reference works.

This critical attitude is also seen in Thomson's concern for sound research and solid methodology, which is reflected in a number of contributions of the 80s and 90s on methodological issues, such as *On the comparison of Slavonic translations with non-critical editions of the Greek texts* [38] (1986), *Towards a Typology of Errors in Slavonic Translations* [47] (1988), *Towards a Typology of Quo-*

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<sup>14</sup> S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 19, note 1.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. *The Curse of Dracula, or How Not to Publish Books* [54] (1990).

tations in *Early Slavonic Literature, with an Assessment of their Value for Textology* [53] (1990), or *On the Problems Involved in Translating Slavonic Texts into a Modern Language* [75] (1994). Moreover, the titles in his bibliography often contain typical formulations – markers as it were – that betray his inclination (a vocation almost) to expose falsifications and scholarly misconceptions: ‘alleged(ly)’ [27, 28, 69, 74, 89], ‘myth/mythical’ [51, 60, 63, 72, 98, 154], ‘false’ [90], ‘fiction’ [83]<sup>16</sup>. This earned him the ironically meant title of “мифоборец”<sup>17</sup>, which he wore as a badge of honour.

For the early years a brief (and badly edited) publication of 1980 deserves to be mentioned as it sheds light on the ambitious project that prompted him to take the first steps towards starting his famous *cartotheca* (on which see more below), viz. *A Guide for Slavonic Translations from Greek down to the End of the Fourteenth Century* [16]. However, the real milestone in his early bibliography is his contribution of 1978 to the VIIIth International Congress of Slavists on *The Nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia* [13]<sup>18</sup>, which in its title already summarizes the dominant research line for the years to come and which sparked a long-lasting controversy, as already mentioned above. Work on the Slav – and more particularly the Russian – reception of Byzantine Christian literature continued throughout the 80s and 90s, as de-

monstrated especially by his contributions to the IXth and Xth International Congress of Slavists (1983 and 1988) [25 and 48]<sup>19</sup>, *The Bulgarian Contribution to the Reception of Byzantine Culture in Kievan Rus’* of 1989 [51], and further throughout his other publications on the Slavonic reception of individual authors and texts. In the 80s the works of the great Byzantine Church Fathers were at the centre of his attention – the Cappadocians [26, 30, 52], especially Basil of Caesarea [22, 39, 44] as well as the ubiquitous John Chrysostom [23, 30, 29] and Ephraem Syrus [28, 37]. Pivotal titles from the 90s – [65] (“*The Cause of Old Russia’s Intellectual Silence*”, 1993), [69] (“*Made in Russia*”, 1993), [84] (“*The Distorted Mediaeval Russian Perception*”, 1995), and [80] (*The Intellectual Culture of Early Russia and the Historian’s Task. An Open Letter to Oleg N. Trubačev*, 1995)<sup>20</sup> – show the controversy at its peak. This stage in his scholarly career was in some way concluded with the annotated reprint of his main articles on the subject in the *Variorum Collected Studies Series* (“*The Reception of Byzantine Culture in Mediaeval Russia*”, 1999) [102]<sup>21</sup>. The later bibliography reveals an exceptionally broad range of research interests, too many to be mentioned within the scope of the present publication. Suffice it to touch upon three topics here.

From 1989 onwards Francis Thomson represented Belgium on the Biblical commission of the International Committee of Slavists, and his bibliography shows him to be increasingly engaged with Biblical studies [74, 99, 104, 112, 114, 123,

<sup>16</sup> Viz. in R. M a r t i’s laudatio *Fact and Fiction: On Historiography, Hagiographic Topoi, Myths and Enigmatic Readings in a Hitherto Unknown Vita*. – In: S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Б у л а н и н, Д. М. *Мифы о Григории Цамблаке и мифоборчество Ф. Томсона*. – Русская литература, 2000, № 2, p. 211–216.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. note 7 supra.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. note 7 supra.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. note 8 supra.

<sup>21</sup> For the many reviews, see S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 34, note 14.

130, 136, 142, 158]. Both his contribution of over 300 pages on *The Slavonic Translation of the Old Testament* [99] in the conference volume *Interpretation of the Bible. Interpretation der Bibel. Interprétation de la Bible. Interpretacija Svetega pisma* (1998) and his monograph on *Dobrowsky and the Slavonic Bible* [123] (2004) are fundamental publications to Biblical scholarship and to Slavistics in general.

Remarkable, from the later 1990s onwards, is a renewed interest in church history and oecumene<sup>22</sup>, especially in the 16th century Union of Brest (1595–1596), which separated the dioceses of the Ruthenian Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the Eastern Orthodox Church for them to enter into communion with Rome [92, 95, 100], and the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545–1563) [124, 126].

Also recurring in the bibliography for the years after 2000 is the *Florilegium of Symeon*, or the *Izbornik of 1073*, which was first discussed at length in 1993, in *The Symeonian Florilegium – Problems of Its Origin, Content, Textology and Edition* [67]. Francis Thomson was the initiator of a Leuven-based project entitled “Critical edition and study of a series of theological works attributed to Maximus the Confessor and of the Greek model of the anthology of tsar Symeon of Bulgaria”, which was approved in May 1997 but never came to fruition. It did, however, result in six further fundamental contributions on the *Symeonic Florilegium* and its Greek model, the *Soterios* [125, 134, 135, 141, 144, 150], published between 2004 and 2014.

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<sup>22</sup> Also, e.g. *The Slavonic Bible as an Oecumenical Link between East and West* [114] (2002).

Although the list of Francis Thomson’s publications only runs until 2016, not much needs to be added: his article *The Problems of Editing Slavonic Translations* in the same volume<sup>23</sup>, and the brief, co-authored lemmata on the *Slavonic Judith* (chapt. 9.10, p. 106–107), *Prayer of Manasseh* (chapt. 11.9, p. 264–267), *Tobit* (chapt. 14.13, p. 461–462), and *Wisdom of Solomon* (chapt. 15.9, p. 527–529) in the Brill reference work *Textual History of the Bible* (vol. 2C. Ed. M. Henze, F. Feder. Leiden, 2019), which had already been written in 2013 but appeared only 6 years later. However, this does not mean that Francis Thomson stopped writing after 2016 – on the contrary: he was still planning to publish a broad survey of East Slav menologia<sup>24</sup> and he kept working on a personal project, dedicated to his father, viz. a book on Scots in Russia, intended for a broader, not strictly scholarly audience, which he very nearly managed to complete (and which will hopefully still find its way to a publisher, even though its last chapters have been left unfinished)<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> In: S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 427–435.

<sup>24</sup> *A Survey of the Principal East Slav Menologia down to the Early Eighteenth Century*, see op. cit., p. 19, note 4. The menologium was already the subject of some of his publications, which dealt with the *Hilandar Menologium*, the largest extant South Slav menologium [145, 147, 149].

<sup>25</sup> In 2003 he had already published an article on *The Scottish Enlightenment in Russia* [122]. The table of contents of the manuscript of his proposed book contains the following chapters, of which I to XIV are complete: I. First Contacts, II. Earliest Mercenaries, III. Patrick Gordon and Paul Menzies, IV. The Young Peter the Great and Scottish Mercenaries, V. Henry Farquharson and the Beginning of Russian Science, VI. Peter the Great, the Jacobites and the First Scottish Doctors, VII. The Period from Em-

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Francis Thomson's published writings represent no more than a fraction of his real scholarly output. In 2018 his 87-page long *Checklist of Slavonic Translations* was published<sup>26</sup>, based on a personal document for private use that provided a synopsis of his *cartotheca*, a card index of attested Slavonic translations from the 9th century up to the times of Peter the Great (1672–1725)<sup>27</sup>. The publication was welcomed because it provided a first glimpse of the famous (but to the outside world

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press Catherine I to Empress Elizabeth, VIII. Scots in the Russian Navy after Peter the Great, IX. Scottish Doctors, X. William Richardson, XI. Sir John Sinclair and Ossianism, XII. The Scottish Enlightenment in Russia, XIII. Trade and Industry, XIV. Architects, Gardeners and Artists, XV. Clerics and Missionaries, XVI. Nannies, XVII. Scots in the Life of the British Community in Russia, XVIII. The Russian Interlude in the Life of James Semple, Swindler and Impostor.

<sup>26</sup> *Checklist of Slavonic Translations*. – In: S e l s, L., J. F u c h s b a u e r. *Editing Mediaeval Texts...*, p. 43–129, following Thomson's *Bibliography* on p. 19–24.

<sup>27</sup> As in Thomson's personal checklist document – which he naturally used in combination with the actual card catalogue – the list contains only author names and titles of original works (to which sometimes information about the nature of the translation has been added), ordered first chronologically per century (translations dated to the 9th c., to the 9–10th c., to the 10th c. etc.) and then alphabetically by author or title. It does not contain identifiers such as *CPG* or *BHG* numbers, nor pointers to descriptions or editions. The chronological arrangement makes it possible to obtain an idea of the corpus of translations in any given period of time, but it hampers the search for information about a particular author or text, as the reader will have to go through every individual chronological section to piece together the available information.

also somewhat elusive) *cartotheca*, but as a meagre reflection of the actual catalogue it disappointed at the same time<sup>28</sup>.

A better picture of the extent and the nature of the ambitious card project – “ce travail aux allures bénédictines”, as Pierre Gonneau wrote<sup>29</sup> – is provided in the already mentioned publication of 1980, *A Guide to Slavonic Translations from Greek down to the End of the Fourteenth Century*<sup>30</sup>. Here its author described the objective that had already been hinted at in his publications since the 1970s, viz. to establish an authoritative survey of mediaeval Slavonic translations, starting from the first beginnings of Slavonic literacy. The article provides a blueprint for his life's project and sheds light on his initial scholarly intentions. A comparison of this

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<sup>28</sup> In her review in *Scripta & e-Scripta* 20 (2020), p. 391–396, E. D i k o v a called the list “a useful tool for an initial orientation”, and I. H r i s t o v a - Š o m o v a wrote in her review in *Старобългарска литература*, 59–60 (2019), p. 275–288, „Жалко е, че издателите са се ограничили само с отбелязване на заглавия, без да посочат поне по един източник, където всеки превод е регистриран“. Ugo Zanetti in *Analecta Bollandiana* 137 (2019), p. 440–442, called the checklist an “avant-goût”, and wrote “si cette Checklist ne remplace en aucune façon l'opus magnum que tout le monde attend (d'où les souhaits, quelque peu intéressés, de longues années – de vie, mais aussi d'activité! – que l'on a adressés au jubilaire), il révèle, en tout cas, l'ampleur du sujet”.

<sup>29</sup> G o n n e a u, P. *Thomson Francis J., the Reception of Byzantine culture in Mediaeval Russia*. – *Revue des études slaves*, 73 (2001), fascicule 2–3, p. 535.

<sup>30</sup> *A Guide to Slavonic Translations from Greek down to the End of the Fourteenth Century*. – In: *Paléographie et diplomatique slaves. Rapports et communications du séminaire de paléographie et diplomatique slaves, septembre 1979, Sofia (= Balcanica, 3, Études et documents, 1)*. Sofia, 1980, p. 27–37.

publication with the checklist published 38 years later shows how the project's scope was broadened to include translations made from other languages than Greek, as well as translations made after the 14th century, viz. up to 1725, with even a brief appendix for the immediate post-Petrine period. Clearly, what was initially envisaged was the compilation of a "systematic guide" to Old Slavonic translations – a *clavis*, a key or *ключ*, to mediaeval Slavonic translation literature – "based upon printed catalogues", with the aid of the "new guides and works devoted to the study of patristic and Byzantine literature from which the quasi-totality of all Slavonic translations were made"<sup>31</sup>. Clearly, the original emphasis was on Byzantine-Greek texts translated in the context of the Slavonic reception of Byzantine Christianity, in line with Thomson's initial church historical and theological focus. In fact, one of the things that triggered the idea was an attempt in Je. Golubinskij's *History of the Russian Church* to establish "a list of works available in Slavonic translations in pre-Mongol Russia"<sup>32</sup>, which Thomson considered outdated and which he intended to update in his controversial

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., p. 27 and 29, note 3. By the "new guides" Thomson meant in the first place M. Geerard's *Clavis patrum graecorum* (1974–1979) and the reference works by H. Beck (Beck, H. *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (= *Byzantinisches Handbuch*. 2. Vol. 1). Munich, 1959; Beck, H. *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur* (= *Byzantinisches Handbuch*. 2. Vol. 3). Munich, 1971) and H. Hunger (Hunger, H. *Die Hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (= *Byzantinisches Handbuch*. 5. Vols. 1–2). Munich, 1978).

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., p. 29, note 2; Голубинский, Е. *История Русской Церкви*. Т. 1. Ч. 1. *Период первый, Киевский или до-монгольский*. Москва, 1901, p. 880–924.

article on the Russian reception of Byzantine Christianity of 1978<sup>33</sup>. It was his insatiable hunger for knowledge and a typical urge to be exhaustive that eventually led him to include such translations as, for instance, Leontius Gross's Slavonic translation from Dutch (1694) of the work "*Pyrotechnia of konstige vuurwerken*", or the 18th-century Russian translation from German of Michael Boehme's "*Kurtze doch bewährte Vieh-Artzney*", etc.<sup>34</sup>

In *A Guide to Slavonic Translations* Thomson meticulously described the sections of his Slavonic *clavis* – *Bible*, *Apocrypha*<sup>35</sup>, *Hagiography*<sup>36</sup>, *Liturgy*<sup>37</sup>,

<sup>33</sup> See note 7, publication [13] in his bibliography.

<sup>34</sup> In 1996 Francis Thomson aptly formulated this broadened scope in an appendix that was added to his contract with *Brepols* publishers for the publication of his *cartotheca* (see infra): "It records the gradual evolution from the exclusively ecclesiastico-patristic translations in the earliest centuries via the burgeoning interest in the Latin West in the fifteenth century to the beginnings of interest in secular culture in the second half of the seventeenth century, which culminated in the cultural revolution imposed by Peter the Great."

<sup>35</sup> To which he added: "Clearly it is impossible to make any watertight division between apocrypha and many hagiographic works. This section will contain apocryphal gospels, acts, apocalypses and erotapocriseis; apocryphal vitae will be dealt with under hagiography. A special subsection will be devoted to *Indices librorum prohibitorum*" (*A Guide to Slavonic Translations*, p. 27). It is clear that for the apocryphal section he was faced with categorial overlap and hence some classification problems, as is also clear from the extant state of the card catalogue (see infra).

<sup>36</sup> With the remark that hagiographical texts composed by known authors would be included in the section devoted to individual authors.

<sup>37</sup> With subsections devoted to each of the liturgical books.

Law<sup>38</sup>, *Individual Authors*<sup>39</sup>, *Anonymous works*, and *Florilegia*<sup>40</sup> – and he added: “With regard to each individual entry relating to a single work the following details will be given: 1) Date and place of the translations; 2) Nature of the translations [...]; 3) Brief survey of later redactions; 4) Influence on original literature in Old Bulgarian, Old Russian etc.; 5) Separate excerpts found elsewhere, eg. in the synaxarium or in florilegia; 6) Title and incept; 7) Archaeography [...]; 8) Bibliography.” In an appendix he presented the cases of John Scholasticus’ *Synagoge L titulorum* (which forms the basis of the Moravian nomocanon) and the Sinai florilegium (often referred to as *Jagić Zlatoust*) as examples<sup>41</sup>.

After the publication of *A Guide to Slavonic Translations* (1980) – in which its author indicated that “[w]ork has been going on for some seven years on this project and some 3,000 individual translated works of the period down to the end of the 14th century have so far been listed”<sup>42</sup> – the project remained of paramount importance in his scholarly work, even though it was never mentioned equally explicitly

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<sup>38</sup> “This will deal with the contents of the four main types of nomocanon, the Moravian, Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian” (Op. cit., p. 28), with the remark that legal works composed by individual canonists would be included in the section devoted to individual authors.

<sup>39</sup> “No differentiation will be made between authentic works and dubia or spuria since such questions are properly dealt with in patristic and Byzantine research; the idea of a dubium or a spurium was alien to early Slav literature” (Ibidem).

<sup>40</sup> “The principal early florilegia and panegyrica to which frequent references are made in the other sections will be listed” (Ibidem).

<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., p. 30–36.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit., p. 29.

in later publications<sup>43</sup>. Years of study and meticulous analysis went into a growing archive of several thousand index cards, in which he tried to keep pace with incessantly advancing scholarly insights. In December 1996 he signed a contract with the *Brepols* publishing house in Turnhout for the publication “in the series *Corpus Christianorum* (with a green linen cover)” of his *Clavis Slavica*, for which he had in mind “4 volumes of approximately 450 pages each”, to be completed within five years, as stipulated in an appendix to the contract. However, due to its extremely ambitious and inherently open-ended nature the project was destined to remain unfinished.

Even though Francis Thomson was very protective of his *clavis* and never considered a collaborative approach, he realized early on that this was not a project to be carried out by a single individual: “Such a project would, however, be far beyond the ability of any one scholar and would require years, if not decades, of labour by a whole team”<sup>44</sup>. When by the end of 2019 his health no longer permitted him to work on the cards, he expressed the wish that the card index be digitized and find an institutional home so as to secure his work for the next generations of scholars. This task was entrusted to the undersigned (KU Leuven) and to Prof. Jürgen Fuchsbauer (Universität Innsbruck). Together with a large part of Francis Thomson’s personal library<sup>45</sup>, his *cartotheca* was donat-

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<sup>43</sup> As Ugo Zanetti formulates it in his review of 2019 (cf. note 29 supra), p. 440, it remained “accessible uniquement dans son fabuleux fichier ou, par petites touches, dans les innombrables notes dont il parsème ses publications”.

<sup>44</sup> *A Guide to Slavonic Translations...*, p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Publications with regard to the general field of Slavistics (viz. on linguistic, literary, historical and other topics) were transferred

ed to become part of the patrimony of the KU Leuven, where sections of it are currently being scanned by the *KU Leuven Libraries Department of Digitization* under the supervision of Mr Bruno Vandermeulen, with Austrian and Belgian funding<sup>46</sup>.

*A Guide to Slavonic Translations* (1980) is helpful to navigate through Francis Thomson's scholarly legacy in its physical form, viz. the massive catalogue of over 60 metal and wooden boxes that together contain some 100,000 handwritten cards, large and small, often with information written on both the front and the back<sup>47</sup>. As could be expected on the basis of the article, boxes with large cards on the Bible, hagiography, liturgy, law and florilegia are part of the corpus, as well as four boxes on individual authors<sup>48</sup>. The mate-

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to the Faculty library of Arts and Philosophy of the Ghent University, while specialized publications on religion and mediaeval literature went to the collection of LOCEOC (*The Louvain Centre For Eastern And Oriental Christianity*) in the Maurits Sabbe Library, the Research and Heritage Library of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the KU Leuven.

<sup>46</sup> <https://bib.kuleuven.be/english/BD/digit/digitisation/digitisation>.

<sup>47</sup> To these should be added a number of disparate cards found within books, in folders and in desk organisers, which have been preliminarily stored in cardboard boxes. It is not yet clear to which extent they belong to the *cartotheca* and should therefore be added somewhere in the card boxes. Some may just contain loose working notes or reminders.

<sup>48</sup> The author cards have already been digitized thanks to funding obtained by Prof. Jürgen Fuchsbaauer at the Universität Innsbruck, and some of the cards have already been used there to 'train' the *Transkribus* software, used for automated recognition and transcription of handwritten text, to convert Thomson's handwriting into digital text. A set of approximately 150 cards was transcribed

material on apocrypha is somewhat dispersed: the category was crossed out on the label of one of the large boxes, and the material is found under "Bible", "Hagiography", as well as in a separate box labelled "Anonymous apocrypha", the result of the categorial overlap already noted by the author in 1980<sup>49</sup>. There are additional boxes of miscellaneous content without real correspondence to the categories listed in the article, but clearly related to their author's favoured research topics<sup>50</sup>. Thomson distinguished between large and small cards – in the introduction to his *Checklist* he wrote: "Contained in the list are the approximately 1950 translations, which have been studied in some detail and described on large cards. The c. 3000 translations on which evidence has been collected on small cards but has not as yet been evaluated will be included after evaluation". There are, indeed, small-card boxes on authors, on anonymous works, on "Menologia and Hagiography", and on "Bible, Law, Apocrypha", as well as boxes of mixed content, labelled "Homilies. Law. Penitentials. Creeds. Hymns. Liturgy.

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manually, after which these transcriptions were used to train a model in *Transkribus*, which in turn was used for the automated transcription of some sample cards. The results were very encouraging, as the program reached a degree of accuracy of around 97%.

<sup>49</sup> See note 35.

<sup>50</sup> One box is labelled "Reception of Byzantine culture. Historiography. Forgery. History. Schools and literacy. Libraries and archives. Literature. Art", with an additional category "Newspapers" added later; another box is labelled "Sacred liturgical languages. Types of Latin and Greek. Vernaculars. Knowledge of Languages. Greeks in Russia. Westerners in Russia", and yet another bears the label "Translation theory and practice, general and Slav. Biblical translation. Textual criticism. Editing".

Prayers. Kalendar. Synodica. Diptychs. Medicine. Science” and “East Slav Anonymous Works. Hagiography etc. Western Slavs. Rumanians. Greeks and Westerners in Russia”. The bulk of the material, however, can be considered auxiliary and relates to the whole range of texts recorded in the thematic and author indices, viz. an *Incipitarium* – 9 metal boxes with some 12,500 small cards containing the texts’ incipits and their identifications (title and author)<sup>51</sup> – and a *Bibliography* of no less than 37 metal card boxes, containing over 50,000 references to scholarly publications on Slavonic translation literature, arranged alphabetically by author<sup>52</sup>.

To kick-start a digitization project of this size, the *Professor Francis J. Thomson Legacy Project* was set up in the spring of 2021 at the *KU Leuven Department of Greek Studies*, with the support of Francis Thomson’s family<sup>53</sup>. The project aims to preserve, digitize and extend access to

the entire *cartotheca*, to safeguard Francis Thomson’s unique scholarly legacy, and to promote further research in the field that he held so dear, especially research that builds bridges between the fields of Byzantine and Slavonic studies. The *Professor Francis J. Thomson Legacy Project* relies on private funding and on the generous support of academic organisations such as *SEEMSG*, the asbl/vzw *Byzantion* (*La Société belge d’études byzantines*), and the asbl/vzw *Graecitas Christiana*. It is hoped, however, that more substantial project funding will make it possible to extend the scope of the project and to ensure that Francis Thomson’s life’s work will provide a fruitful ground for the research of future scholars in the fields of both Byzantine and Mediaeval Slavonic Studies.

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<sup>51</sup> “[It contains] an index of the incipits which will enable immediate recognition of all the texts listed in the guide” (Op. cit., p. 29). This part of the *cartotheca* has also been scanned, this time thanks to KU Leuven funding and UK support from *SEEMSG*. Metadata are being added, and an online open access publication is planned for the near future.

<sup>52</sup> Not included in this number are some small wooden boxes that contain reference aids for personal use, viz. general bibliography, lists of useful dictionaries and grammar books, registers of names, manuscripts, libraries and repositories, abbreviations etc.

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/grieks/thomson>.