

Saint Bogolep

THE RIGHTEOUS CHILD SCHEMA-MONK OF CHERNY YAR

COMMEMORATED ON JULY 29/AUGUST 11

The editors of RUSSIAN PILGRIM have obtained a copy from an ancient manuscript of the Life of the divinely-wise child, Schema-monk Bogolep, Wonderworker of Cherny Yar (Astrakhan). In the printed catalogues of Saints there is only very brief information about him. Thus, in the work of N. Barsukov, SOURCES OF RUSSIAN HAGIOGRAPHY, it is said only that the holy child Bogolep died in the year 1632. In the Manual of Icon painting, under July 29, it is said that the child Bogolep "in appearance is young, on his head a cowl, garments of a monk" (Filimonov). In the book of Archimandrite Sergius there is a brief account of the Blessed Child in Volume 3, Appendix 3, page 60; and in Archimandrite Leonid's book, HOLY RUSSIA, it is said that Bogolep, Wonderworker of Cherny Yar, was buried in the city of Cherny Yar in the province of Astrakhan.*

In the manuscript which we have obtained, the Life begins with a text from the book of Tobit: "It is good to keep the secret of a king, but it is glorious to preach the works of God" (Tobit 12:11); and further it says, "Therefore, remembering the miracles of this righteous and divinely-wise child, one must not think that God, Who is wondrous in His Saints, will fail to glorify this righteous one also, for the sake of the miraculous glorification of His Most Holy Name."

IN THE REIGN of Tsar Alexei Michaelovich there lived in Moscow a certain pious nobleman by the name of Jacob Lukin Ushakov, who had a wife, just as pious, whose name was Catherine. The Lord God blessed their virtuous married life with the birth of a son, who was called in Baptism Boris, in honor of the Passion-bearer, the Russian Prince Boris, who is commemorated on May 2/15.

Soon after the birth of Boris, Ushakov was sent from Moscow to the outpost of Astrakhan for government service by order of the Tsar. The place of Ushakov's residence was to be the city of Cherny Yar, which was on the river Volga, 256 kilometers from Astrakhan.

Having entered upon the governance of the post assigned to him, Ushakov, faithful to his character, exercised the authority given him by God and the Sovereign wisely and virtuously. His wife was completely occupied with rearing the child. Boris, while still in his swaddling clothes, revealed in himself an extraordinary inclination for ascetic labors, which were completely un-childlike, and evidently he was foreordained by God's Providence to be a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, for the glorification of the Almighty Lord.

The first extraordinary manifestation of the glorification of the Name of God in the child was the fact that on the days established by the Holy Church for fasting,

Wednesday and Friday, in remembrance of the sufferings and death of the Saviour, Boris would not drink milk from his mother's breast and spent these days without food. The second extraordinary manifestation of piety in the child was expressed in his striving to hear the Divine service, so that no sooner would the bell begin to ring in the local belfry for the Divine service than Boris would begin to cry very loudly, and his childish cry would cease only when he was brought to church; and so his mother and their servants soon became accustomed to bringing him to church immediately after the bell would ring. In the church a joyful feeling would be expressed in the child's face, and only at the end of the Liturgy would he accept food. Then, with every day, Boris was strengthened more and more by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to the joy of his parents and the astonishment of all who knew him and heard about him.

In one of the sorrowful years when the plague had seized with its death-dealing poison the whole extent of the Russian land, from the royal city of Moscow to the boundaries of Astrakhan, the son of the Commander Ushakov, the pious child Boris, also became ill. His right leg was covered with deep sores, and the intolerable pain gave him no rest either day or night, but, faithful to his calling, the child Boris, limping, did not cease to go to the temple of God to offer his holy child's prayers, acting according to the Psalmist: *I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners* (Psalm 83:11). By the zealous concern and care of his parents and physicians, the disease of the legs finally passed. But following upon this disease it was pleasing to God to send the young righteous one a different temptation: on his face there appeared a form of leprosy. But behold, during the time of this illness a certain monk came to the house of Jacob. Being hospitably received by the Commander, the Elder blessed all who dwelt in the house and visited the Commander's sick son. Seeing the monk, Boris became yet more inflamed with love for God. Seeing in him one sent from God, he began to entreat his parents that he be allowed immediately to be clothed in the Angelic habit. The desire of their beloved son was strange, but feeling beforehand that their dear child was not fitted for life in this present world, and knowing from the Lives of the Saints examples of children receiving the Angelic habit, they decided to give their seven-year-old son this great joy. In the cathedral church of the Resurrection of Christ, Boris was tonsured in the monastic habit and called Bogolep. Then, soon after receiving the monastic habit, the righteous child was clothed also in the Schema (great habit).

The newly-made Schema-monk was not long to rejoice his parents and astonish everyone by his labors and his example of divinely wise life. Two days after receiving the Schema, the righteous boy grew ill, and on the third day he was already called into the heavenly kingdom for the eternal glorification of the Lord, together with the Angels and all the Saints who have pleased God. The parents of the newly-reposed one experienced a double feeling: great sorrow, expressed in

lamentation and weeping over their beloved son, and also an inexpressible joy at the thought that the Almighty Lord had chosen the boy from their family for the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom.

With great honor the blessed child was buried in the same city of Cherny Yar near the very church of the Resurrection of Christ where he had received the Schema, at the left side of the Altar, so that from their mansion his parents might daily see the place of their son's repose and might pray to the Lord Who glorifies His Saints, that He, being All-merciful, might not fail to glorify also this God-pleasing child, the Schema-monk. For did not the Lord Himself say, *Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?* (Matthew 19:14).

The Lord Who is wondrous in His Saints soon glorified His new chosen one. In the reign of the same Sovereign, the Tsar and Great Prince Alexei Michaelovich, the rebellion of Stenka Razin infected the whole of Russia with a great turmoil. Having laid waste a multitude of cities and villages, Razin came also as far as Cherny Yar, where he destroyed many houses and took many inhabitants captive for his own evil purposes. On leaving Cherny Yar, however, he remembered that he had not yet destroyed the city completely and that the soldiers from Moscow might find a point of support for their pursuit of him. Therefore, he sent a regiment of Tatars who had surrendered to him, so that they might destroy utterly the unfortunate city. But what were the astonishment and confusion of the Tatar regiments when, approaching the city, they saw, walking on the walls, a boy Schema-monk! Those who succeeded in going closer to the wall heard the voice of the holy Monks saying, "Depart from here, wretched ones! You cannot do anything to this city, because God has placed me to guard this city." Nevertheless, there were stubborn ones found among them who, despite everything, wished to enter the city, but an invisible power held them; finally, being struck by blindness, against their will they were forced to depart, and only a mile away from the city walls did they receive their sight back, by God's power, after having done nothing to the city because of the prayers of the righteous child Bogolep, being pursued by holy guards of Angels. They returned in disgrace to their Ataman, Razin, in the city of Astrakhan. But the outlaw did not believe the tale of the disgraced regiment and became extremely angry at them, sending another regiment to lay waste the city. This regiment met the same fate, and so the Moscow troops under the leadership of Ivan Bogdanovich Milaslavsky could enter the city and firmly establish themselves in it.

During the reign of the next Tsars, John and Peter Alexeivich, by the help and intercession of the child Bogolep, Cherny Yar was saved from the Kuban Tatars. When they came up to the city to lay it waste, there suddenly appeared before them a Child-monk on a white horse who strictly commanded them to go away. The Tatars were seized with an indescribably fear and returned without doing any harm to the city.

In 1695 a priest at the church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in the city of

Astrakhan, whose name was John, was struck by an affliction of the eye. Praying to the Lord to grant him healing, he had the joy after prayer one night to see the child, Schema-monk Bogolep, who commanded him to paint his image and sent it to his tomb in the city of Cherny Yar, adding, "When you will have fulfilled this command, you will be healed of your affliction." Rising from sleep, the priest, who was also an icon painter, was perplexed as to how, being almost blind, he was to paint an icon of the child Schema-monk whom he had seen. However, using all his strength so as to depict the righteous one, he took a board and made a sketch on it. What was his astonishment when, after undertaking the work, he began to feel that with every minute he was getting better, and at the end of the work he was almost completely healed! Having received help for his affliction, the priest began, day by day, to put off the finishing of the work, and he did not send the icon to the designated place; and finally he forgot about it altogether. Thus a year passed. The priest again became afflicted, even more severely than before, with a disease of the eyes. A second time the child Bogolep appeared to him, reproaching him for his negligence, and a second time commanding him to finish painting the icon which he had begun and not completed, and to send it to his tomb in Cherny Yar. Then the priest promised with an oath to fulfill the commandment of the blessed child if only he would receive healing. Immediately after this he undertook the completion of the work and, having finished it, with the blessing of Archbishop Sabbatius he set out with the icon for Cherny Yar, where, with a procession and the ringing of bells, the icon was triumphantly greeted and placed on the tomb of the child Bogolep.

In the manuscript which we have there are set forth several miracles received from the holy child. Without giving them all, we cannot fail to make a remark about the following extraordinary manifestation of the miraculous power of God through His chosen one.

In Cherny Yar there was a city guard whose name was Gerasimus, who was deaf and dumb from birth. Once at night, when as usual he was on guard at the tower which is called Zaklikusha, he saw before him the child Bogolep surrounded by an extraordinary light. Gerasimus was frightened and signed himself with the sign of the Cross and, not moving, with piety and reverence he looked at the light-bearing righteous one who said to him, "Do not fear, Gerasimus, but bow your head"; and when he had bowed his head, the holy child touched him with his hands and became invisible. From this hour Gerasimus was completely healed and was not deaf and dumb any more, and he began loudly to glorify the Lord and His servant, the child Schema-monk Bogolep.

The illustration of the righteous child which is here presented is taken from a rare copy of the above-mentioned icon which was painted by the Priest John.



SAINT BOGOLEP
Troparion, Tone 3

REJOICE, O BOGOLEP, divinely wise child,* thou didst appear on a white horse, showing youth an example of purity,* and all who revere thee, God's Schema-monk,* thou dost protect from foreign invaders and unbelievers.* Pray for us now that we may prosper in true faith and piety* and obtain from the Lord great mercy.

* This whole article is translated from RUSSIAN PILGRIM (*Russky Palomnik*), 1893, no. 10. Bogolep is the Russian translation of the name *Theoleptos*.

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