

Caesarius of Heisterbach. Dialogus miraculorum. Dictio V: On demons. Russian translation, preface and commentary

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Language: Russian

This is

the first Russian translation of the 5th distinctio of the Dialogus Miraculorum, perhaps the most interesting part of the famous collection of exempla compiled by Caesarius of Heisterbach in 1220s. The chapter is meant to illustrate how the presence of evil, or more precisely, the demons, can be felt, and is roughly structured in the following groups: visions of demons, the obsessed and the proofs of them being truly obsessed; heretics and their heresies; how the apparitions of demons can hurt people; demons as servants; demons as provokers of iniquity; demons hurting nuns; different apparitions demons can take; demons laughing over impious monks.

Dialogus is, as its title suggests, a dialog: two characters (Caesarius eagerly disavows them as fictional in the preface), a monk and a novice, discuss miraculous events, how one needs to interpret them for the salvation of the soul proper. Together with the works of Jacques de Vitry and Étienne de Bourbon, Dialogus is a work where the exemplum appears at its best (not a literary form to be readily discarded as per E. R. Curtius, who based his view on the exempla on a later, and perhaps very flawed, evidence from Dante).

The «new» exemplum of the 12th century, preached to a modernized monastic or a «homines novi» urban audience, had to be realistic (in a medieval sense) and tended to include folk legends or beliefs in the narrative: this means that the literature of exempla contains invaluable evidence on the civilization of the Middle Ages as well as the European folklore. The 5th distinctio of Dialogus is translated for the first time in Russian in full, and the reader hopefully would appreciate Caesarius' style: after all, it's the genre of the exemplum that predeceases the Renaissance novella and modern short story.



Key words: [examples](#), [medieval literature](#), [folklore](#), [demons](#), [heresies](#), [Waldenses](#), [Cathars](#)

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