

SAINT METHODIUS AS THE CARRIER OF THE BYZANTINE TRADITION IN THE SLAVIC WORLD (THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL WORK OF ST METHODIUS FOR THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE SLAVS)

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ABSTRACT: For sixteen whole years after the dormition of his beloved brother Cyril (14.2.869), St Methodius fought hard for the continuation and the success of their missionary work by ministering, teaching, translating, writing, composing hymns, and confessing the Orthodox faith, until his most venerable dormition (4.6.885).

In the whole missionary work for the Orthodox illumination of the Slavs, academic scholarship places the philosopher Constantine-St Cyril in a more prominent position than his brother. St Methodius always standing in the shadow of his brother. In my opinion, a detailed study of the personality of St Methodius shows him as the one who was able to realize his brother's idea for the illumination of the Slavs and also managed to create of body of highly qualified students for the continuity of the mission. He was most certainly different from his brother, but he was in no way a lesser figure than Cyril.

The importance of St Methodius is stressed by his biographer when he compared him to the Fathers of the six Ecumenical synods. They had also been distinguished by their fighting spirit against various heresies and worked hard for the exact formulation of the Orthodox creed. And then he added the following: *And after all these [Fathers], the merciful God who wants everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, sent in our times (St Methodius), in whom no one ever took any interest, our own teacher, blessed Methodius, a worker of the Good.*

KEYWORDS: St Methodius, the philosopher Constantine-St Cyril, Slavs, Orthodox faith.

1. Biography

St Methodius was born around 815 AD (Angelov, Kodov, 1973; Nichoritis 1990, 2013, 2015). He did not occupy himself with extensive and laborious studies as his younger brother Cyril-Konstantine (826–827) did. It seems that his parents intended him for a civil administration career. He was loved and esteemed by the canons since childhood. Valuing his abilities, the emperor appointed him governor of a Slavic province. It is not clear which one it was. Some suggest it was near Salonica, others around the Strymon river, and some others – in Asia Minor. In this assignment his biographer sees the work of the divine Providence; it was meant to be the necessary preparation that Methodius needed in order to be able to accomplish his mission among the Slavs. For he had to know their traditions, their customs, and, above all, he had to master their language (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 198).

He served as a governor for ten years. He then exchanged the expensive clothes of a top government official for the humble frock of the monk. His tonsure took place in the Holy Monastery of St Polychronius, in Vithynia, Asia Minor, where eventually he was elected to serve as Father Superior (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 198). His younger brother Cyril joined him there. In the Holy Monastery of St Polychronius the two brothers dedicated themselves to study and prayer.

In 862 the two brothers were included in the diplomatic delegation of Constantinople to the Khazars, and a little later they were sent as missionaries to Moravia. They stayed in Moravia for forty months (863–867). After the completion of their education program, they were to come back to Constantinople for the ordination of their students. On their way back through Pannonia, Kotsel, the leader of that country, asked the two brothers to stay there and teach them the art of the written Slavic language. Fifty of his own people were assigned to that task of learning the written Slavic form. After that, along with their now enlarged group of students, the two brothers continued their way back to Constantinople (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 136–137). Suddenly, however, the political situation in Constantinople changed. Emperor Michael the III was assassinated and Patriarch Photius was dethroned. The new emperor now was Vassilios I the Macedonian, and the new Patriarch was Ignatius. Unceertain about what those changes could mean, the two brothers judged that it was wiser not to return to Byzantium immediately. Bulgaria did not appear to be a safe choice either. Boris had already expelled the Byzantine missionaries and had instead invited the Franks. Methodius and Cyril chose Venice instead.

They arrived in Venice in 867. There they were confronted with angry believers of the three sacred languages ideology, but Constantine was able to win in the disputation. Nevertheless, Pope Nicholas I summoned them to Rome for a reprimand. He died, however, before their arrival, and the newly elected pope, Adrian II (867–872), had very different feelings towards the two brothers. Knowing that the two brothers were bringing to Rome the relics of St Clement pope of Rome, he organized for their triumphant welcome. The pope himself, amidst a crowd of believers, holding candles in their hands, awaited for them at the gates of the city (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 139–140).

The new pope blessed the use of Slavic in the Divine Liturgy, and unreservedly approved the missionary work of the Salonican brothers. He was aiming at attaching all western Slavs to the See of Rome. The pope himself ordained Methodius to priesthood, while other Bishops ordained some of the students. It is noteworthy that one of those Bishops who participated in these ordinations was among those who believed in the three sacred languages ideology. After their ordination, the new priests, together with Latin priests, co-ministered in divine services in three Churches in Rome, and also on the tomb of St Peter.

During their stay in Rome, Constantine fell seriously ill. He was tonsured as a monk under the name of Cyril. It was fifty days before his death. On February 14th 869, and after a painful disease, Cyril left this world for eternity. He was 42 years old (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 140–141).

Three further pieces of information need to be added here. The first one has to do with Cyril's love for the Holy Monastery of St Polychronius (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 140–141). On his death bed he begged his brother never to abandon his mission. The second one has to do with the pope's policy. The pope refused to give permission to bury St Cyril in the Monastery of St Polychronius, and against the wishes of the mother of the two brothers (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 140–141). The reason is not difficult to guess. Cyril, being the first to teach the Slavs the written form of their language, was also going to be the first saint and protector of the new archdiocese of Pannonia and Moravia. St Methodius was to be nominated as its first Archbishop. This was part of the pope's strategy to bring the Slavs and Central Europe to a much closer relation with Rome.

Methodius did indeed comply with the wishes of his brother; he also went along with the pope's policy. Actually, that was his only option. He had to face all sorts of obstacles that were raised against him and against his mission by the Franks and the Bavarians. The fact that Pope John the VIII (872–882) was an orthodox pope helped a lot. It made the continuation of such a collaboration possible.

The third thing to mention here is that Methodius himself was asking for the prayers of his dead brother. These were his spiritual support against all sorts of difficulties in his archbishopric functions. Theophilactus, archbishop of Ohrid (the biographer of St Clement – one of the students of St Methodius), writes: “The time came when Methodius had to leave for Pannonia and take charge of the archdiocese in that country. In a deeply emotional state, he humbly came for the last farewell at the tomb of his beloved brother, calling in tears his name, with bitter feelings for their separation and his own isolation. In a truly unique moment he invoked for the prayers of his brother. After that, along with his students, they all took the road to Pannonia” (Milev, 1966, s. 86).

It was Kotsel, the leader of Pannonia, who asked the pope to nominate Methodius as head of Ecclesiastical organization. Pope Adrian the II was more than happy to grant him that request. It was a way to weaken the presence of the powerful archbishopric of Salzburg in the area of Moravia and Pannonia.

Kotsel received Methodius with great honors. He was not, however, satisfied that he came only as a simple priest. Soon he sent a delegation of twenty officials to Rome asking for the ordination of Methodius as Bishop of Pannonia. After his consecration as Bishop of Pannonia, Methodius took his seat in Sirmio.

Kotsel, fought for his independence from the Frankish clergy. The new archbishopric of Pannonia was now under the direct jurisdiction of the pope. But this was a situation against the interests of the Franks who wanted to be in control of all that area up to and perhaps Illyria included. The reaction of the Frankish clergy was immediate and decisive.

In the spring of 870 Methodius was arrested, most probably in Moravia. He was secretly brought to Rengensburg, where in a kangaroo trial he was convicted by Frank Bishops and Ludvig Germanicus. The main accusation was that he was preaching in places which were under Frankish jurisdiction (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 201). He was secretly imprisoned in a Swabian monastery, in dire conditions and strict confinement. In early 873, after 30 months of hardship, he was set free after the

decisive intervention of the new Pope John VIII. Methodius returned to Moravia where, in spite of its regained independence, a large number of German priests were still in operation there.

The reaction of the German clergy against the ecclesiastical use of the Slavic language was constantly mounting. Eventually, the German clergy brought matters to Rome. Methodius was accused as an heretic. He was summoned to Rome in order to defend himself in front of a curia of Cardinals. In 880, a papal bull officially acquitted Methodius of all charges (Romanides, 1973, s. 368). The pope gave his consent for the use of the Slavic language in the Church, and reinstated Methodius in the archbishopric throne of Moravia.

The enemies of Methodius were also spreading rumors that he had lost the support of the emperor who was allegedly angry with him. Fortunately, it was at that time that he received the following letter from Emperor Basil the I: "Reverend Father, I would very much wish to see you. Please, be kind to us, and since you are still in this world, do come to see us here and give us your blessings" (Angelov, Kodov 1973, s. 202).

It was in the end of 881 that Methodius comes to Constantinople for the last time. His long standing nostalgia awakened in him his deepest emotions. The emperor and the once again enthroned Patriarch Photius welcomed him with great honors. Methodius gave them a detailed account of his mission and his achievements; the emperor and the Patriarch gave him their enthusiastic approval. The emperor kept one series of the translations and two of Methodius' Slav students, a presbyter and a deacon in Constantinople.

On his return from Constantinople, Methodius primarily devoted himself to the task of translation. He completed the translation of the Holy Scriptures, of the Canon law, and of the homilies of the Fathers. In my opinion, he was implementing Patriarch Photius' suggestions (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 202).

According to Moravian and Bohemian sources, it was Methodius who baptized the Christian ruler of Bohemia Borivoi. It was also reported that his missionary activity extended as far away as Poland.

Methodius passed away in Moravia, on April 6, 885, at about the age of 70. He was buried in the Metropolitan Cathedral. Archeological research located it in the city of Mikoultseite, on the banks of the river Morava. After his death, the administration of the Church of Moravia fell under the German Bishop Vihig, a follower of *Filioque*, a sworn enemy of the Byzantine tradition, and against the ecclesiastical use of the Slavic language. Eventually, he proved to be successful to prohibit the use of the Slavic language to Divine Liturgy.

2. On the Biblical and Patristic teaching of St Methodius

St Methodius was not inferior to his brother Cyril (John 14: 11) concerning his faith and knowledge of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is concerned. In order to link the theological work of St Methodius and his theological dialogues to the Patristic tradition, his biographer makes the following introductory note: *The all Benevolent God, to Whom His angels sing the trice Holy hymn, the Holy Trinity that we all humans praise to be in three hypostases, namely, in three Persons, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit understood as one God, ... and in the Gospel where the divine Word who in the end of times took flesh for our salvation, he Himself by His holy mouth said 'I am in the Father and the Father is in Me' (John 14: 11). In His own divine voice the Son said that it is from the Father that the Holy Spirit proceeds: 'the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father'.* (ОТЪ ТОГОЖЕ ОЦА И СЪЫН ДЪХЪ НСХОДИТЬ, ЯКОЖЕ РЕЧЕ САМЪ СЪНЪ БЖИЕМЪ ГЛАМЪ: „ДЪХЪ НСТННЪНЪ, НЖЕ ѿ ОЦА НСХОДНТЬ (Йоан 15: 26). (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 196–198).

His biographer goes on with the Orthodox exposition of the teaching of Creation and the story of the Fall (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 196–198). In the second part of his introduction he gives an account of the Old Testament, and enumerates all those sent by God to the world for the realization of the mystery of divine economy.

In the last part of the introduction, the biographer informs the reader on the results of the Ecumenical Councils. The first two had to deal with the false teachings of Arius "against the Holy Trinity", and the "blasphemies against the Holy Spirit" of Macedonius. He then goes on with the next four Councils in which the Church developed its doctrine of Christology. Special attention is paid to all

those Fathers who, being bearers of the Holy Spirit, played a distinguished role in the battles against the various heresies, and were instrumental in the formulation of the Orthodox doctrine in its entirety.

The Introduction of *The life of St Methodius* (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 196–198) comprises a quarter of the whole book. It has been scholarly argued that this originally was some independent work by the Saint himself which was later taken and used by his biographer. Others argue that it had been the work of St Cyril. According to Klimentina Ivanovna (Ivanova, 1986, s. 51) and A. A. Tachiaos (Tachiaos, 1992, s. 256), it was part of the saint's inaugural homily. According to Fr. Grivec, a distinguished scholar of the work of the two saint brothers, the dogmatic section is part of a complete and independent work by St Cyril (Kodov, Ivancev, 1985, s. 538).

On this subject, I would like to add the following: when in 879 Pope John VIII summoned St Methodius to Rome to defend himself against what Vihing and others were accusing him of, after his acquittal in 880, he sent to Svetopoulk, ruler of Moravia, a letter in which he wrote: *In front of our collegial Bishops, we asked your archbishop, His reverence Methodius, about his Orthodox creed; whether he believes what the Church of Rome believes, and whether in the Holy Liturgy he ministers according to the same belief, and whether he teaches what has been bequeathed to us by the six Holy Councils, as the Holy Fathers taught us, according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he confessed that what he believes and what he teaches is in full agreement with the Gospels, and the teaching of the Apostles, and as the Holy Church of Rome teaches, in accordance with the tradition of the Fathers. Hence, we have found his ecclesiastic teaching and practice Orthodox and sound, and we have sent him to you immediately for the administration of the Church that God has granted to him* (Romanides, 1973, s. 368; Papadopoulos, 1986, s. 283–284).

Given the content of this letter, I think it is highly probable that the dogmatic part in the biography of St Methodius is either a part or perhaps the whole of his apology against his Bavarian accusers, in front of Pope John VIII in 879–880 (Feidas, 1966, s. 491–498). On this assumption, what we have here is the orthodox confession of St Methodius in his trial in Rome in front of the pope.

In *The extended life of St Cyril*, as well as in the Service in his honour, no reference is made about the heresy of Filioque (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 201) as it is the case in *The extended life of St Methodius*. In his life St Cyril had to fight for the dissemination of the Slavic alphabet and for the use of the Slavic language in the ecclesiastical books and the Holy Services. Cyril had to face the fierce opposition of the tri-linguists (or, Pilateans), who believed in the sanctity of three languages only: Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Theodorou, 1968, s. 116–117).

3. The teaching of St Methodius on the issue of *Filioque* as it appears in Slavic sources

Because of his missionary work, and his archbishopric position, St Methodius was in constant conflict with the Bavarian clergy. Besides the thorny issue of sacred languages, the addition of *Filioque* to the Nicene Creed was another major cause for confrontation (Romanides, 1973, s. 366–369). It is known that this heresy originally started in Spain. It was in the local Council of Toledo that the addition of *Filioque* was first decided. From there it was later to be adopted by the Frankish State. In 809, in the Council of Aquisgrano, and by the explicit order of Charles the Great against the opposition of Pope Leo III, the *Filioque* was adopted as an article of Creed. Subsequently, it was also adopted by the Bavarian Clergy (Mpilalis, 1969, s. 117–118).

Before I go on to the struggles of St Methodius and his students on the issue of *Filioque*, as these appear in Slavic sources, I would like to give a brief account of his teaching on the Holy Trinity, and more specifically, on the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The places in early Slavic sources in which the teaching of St Cyril and St Methodius on the Holy Spirit and His procession appear are the following: according to the introduction of the biographer, “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father Himself, as the divine voice of the Son says: ‘the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father’” (John 15: 26). And elsewhere, in the same work, the biographer of Methodius says: ... *But the ancient enemy, being envious of the human race, and not being able to accept all these things, prompted some people to move against him [Methodius], – as he did with Dathan and Abiram turning them against Moses, some openly, others covertly. These people, possessed by the Son-Father heresy, were able to attract the spiritually weaker towards their own beliefs, and from the right side, by saying: ‘the pope gave to us the power of his authority, and commanded that we cast him [Methodius] and his teachings away’.* (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 201–202).

Below I present more evidence taken from sources other than *The Extended Life of St Methodius*. They show his strong faith in the Orthodox tradition and his opposition to the heresy of *Filioque*. Specifically, in the Service of the saint, composed by his student Constantine Preslavski immediately after the death of the saint (+885), in the second verse, in the “Lord I cried out to Thee” we read: 2. Господень. Методіе блажене! Словеси последоуа богословѣше ѿвѣ отца збо родителѣ словеси, сѣща нзложителѣ доухоу прѣсватомоу; и еше же истѣе испыташе въпиа: от отца оутвѣшителѣ, не отъ сына, ѿвѣ глагола, исходаща. Тѣм же ѿви са прѣвааго сѣнна отцемъ, то[го]жде глагола богогласе. С тѣми моли са Спасоу, да спасеть ны вса. – *Faithful to the words of the Lord/ Your theology, blessed Methodius,/ Presents the Father – sole progenitor of the Word,/ And He from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds./ This is what you confessed and preached:/ From the Father proceeds the Comforter,/ Not from the Son. That’s what you were saying.* (Balan, 1934, s. 66).

Similarly, in the fourth chant of the sixth Ode of the *Canon in honor of St Methodius and St Cyril*, a work done by one of their close co-workers and students, we read the following: 24. Єресымъ къ сѣмъ противнъ ѿви са благодатию Методіе достоиными отъвѣты, (отъ) отъца оубо параклита исходаща, а не сыноу, глагола, нъ ракънствѣмъ троицю чисти исповѣдающе. – *Supported by the Grace, oh! Methodius,/ you stood up against all heresies,/ confessing the Comforter to proceed/ from the Father and not the Son/ thus proclaiming the equality of the Holy Trinity.* (Balan, 1934, s. 76).

More corroboration can be adduced from Slavic sources of the 9th and 10th century. They originate from St Methodius, his collaborators and their students (spiritual grandchildren of the saint). In early Slavic literature there is a *Canon in honor of St Demetrius of Salonica*. Many Slavologists believe that it was written by St Methodius during the time of his imprisonment. In two chants of the 9th Ode of that *Canon* we read: *Why, oh! most wise Demetrius,/ Only we, your poor servants,/ To be deprived of/ The vision of your glory?/ Out of love for our Creator,/ We are wandering/ In foreign cities and foreign lands/ Fighting hard,/ Oh! most blessed,/ To bring shame to the Tri-linguals/ and the heretics.* (Angelov, 1958, s. 9–35).

In the end of this *Canon*, more verses were added in which St Methodius speaks about the dire persecutions that were raised against him and his students by the heretics. The composer of these hymns invokes the help of St Demetrius in these words: *Oh Demetrius, save your hymn composing compatriots* (Nichoritis, 1987, s. 79–85; Nichoritis, 1992, s. 79–86).

In the earliest Slavonic Life of St Naoum, one of the students and a close collaborator of the Salonican teachers of the Slavs, we read the following: *The heretics brutally expelled some of the students, while some others, priests and deacons, were sold for money to the Jews* (Ivanov, 1931, s. 51–58). The text goes on to add: *Soon, however, as Archbishop St Methodius had foretold, the divine wrath fell upon the land of the Moravians. God punished them for their iniquity, for their faith in heresies, and the persecution and afflictions that the Fathers had to suffer in the hand of the heretics. In a few years, the Hungarians, people from Pannonia, invaded and laid waste to their country. Those not captured by the Hungarians sought refuge in Bulgaria.* (Ivanova, 1986, s. 80–81, s. 525–526).

This Old-Slavonic text is actually part from the Epilogue (last section) of an early *Slavonic Life of St Clement of Ochrid* which, unfortunately, was lost. This was the text (of the life of St Clement, student and collaborator of the Salonican brothers) that St Theophilactus of Bulgaria had used for the composition of *The Extended Life of St Clement in Greek* (Milev, 1966).

Everyone who makes use of the text of Theophilactus will have to take into account that it has been written later than 1090, i.e., at a time when the schism was final and the Orthodox position against the *Filioque* had been definitively articulated. If we study Theophilactus’ interpretation of John 5: 31–34 (PG 123, 1224), we will notice that his approach is similar to the one that exists in *The Life of St Clement* on the issue of *Filioque*. Similarly, we would have come to the same conclusion if we were to compare the arguments in *The Life* with those in the anti-Latin treatise “On the arguments made by the Latins” (PG 126, 226–228), by the same author. *The Life of St Clement*, along with the chapters 8–9 of the treatise on the *Filioque*, are among the best theological treatises on the issue of the emanation of the Holy Spirit. This is why some 15th–16th century scholars classified the above mentioned sections of *The Life* among those codes whose dogmatic content is against the Latins. Such example are, for instance, the 15th century manuscript № 382 in the Holy Monastery of Iveron (Lampros, 1900b, s. 114), the 16th century manuscripts № 274 (Lampros, 1900a, s. 395) and № 280 in Holy Monastery of St Dionysius

(Lampros, 1900b, s. 400), and similarly the 16th century code № 83 in the library of the Greek parliament (Lampros, 1907, 228 d).

During his stay in Constantinople in 881–882, Methodius gave full account of his mission to Patriarch Fotius and everything about the issue of *Filioque*. Professor Panagiotis Christou (Christou, 1966, s. 1–28), of blessed memory, as well as Fr. Grivec (1960), believe that it was under the influence of Methodius that Patriarch Fotius wrote his own treatise ‘On the Holy Spirit’.

4. St Methodius and the early Slavic hymnography

Let's now turn our attention to *The early Holy Service of St Cyril* and *The early Slavic Holy Service of St Demetrius*. They were both composed between the years 869–885. Comparing the two we can observe a number of common elements.

They are both products of the same period and the same writing workshop. Their canons are with no acrostic, and they have been composed by taking the “... *I open my mouth...*” as their musical paradigm. Furthermore, a detailed linguistic comparison shows their very close affinity, even though the first had been composed in praise of an equal to Apostle teacher and the other for a Great Martyr (Nichoritis, 1990, s. 96–103).

According to Milo Velimirovič, the Slavic translation of *The Mother of God canon* “... *I will open my mouth ...*”, as translated by saints Cyril and Methodius (Velimirovič, 1984, s. 9–34), was what served as a guide for the musical architectonics of the two canons. In Byzantine hymnology, this is the vocal scale and the hirmos that Joseph the hymnograph uses for most Despotic and Mother (Kozhuharov, 1991, s. 28–38), of God ecclesiastical celebrations, as well as for *The Services of the St Apostles, Archangels Michael and Gabriel*, other services for Hierarchs, Teachers, etc. (Popov, 1988, s. 112–211).

Besides the two works mentioned above, in early Slavic literature, a number of other canons were composed following the same musical pattern. For instance: *Canon for the Mother of God's entrance in the Temple*; for *The Holy belt of the Mother of God*; *Service for an Apostle*; *Service for a Martyr*; *Service for Symeon the God receiver*; *Service for Efhymios the Great and others*. In the acrostic of all these canons we can read the name of the hymnographer.

Many scholars take it for granted that the composer of these works was St Clement of Ochrid (Angelov, 1966, s. 79–105). But in his hymns, St Clement lets us know his name in the acrostic (Popov, 1988, s. 112–211). This is not the case here. Why was his name not in *The services of St Cyril and St Demetrius* also? As I shall show below, the most plausible explanation is that Methodius himself was a participant in the composition of these hymns.

For many scholars today, the contribution of St Methodius in the composition of *The Life of St Cyril* is not excluded (Pasternak, 1902, s. 5; Brükner, 1906, s. 186–229; Brükner, 1913). It is a fact that Methodius translated the Holy Scripture in just eight months assumption (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 202), dictating his translation to two quick writer students. Why should not he do something similar for the life of his brother? No one knew the life of St Cyril better than Methodius.

Recently, with the help of a computer, a more detailed text analysis was made of the early Cyril-Methodius literature, including all possible texts of St Clement. Nadežda Romankova (Romankova, 1994, s. 21) concluded that *The extended Life of St Cyril* is the product of a common effort of a whole team of writers, one of which was Clement.

The linguistic richness of *The Life* and of *The Service in honour of St Cyril* has led a number of distinguished scholars to support the thesis that, originally, these texts were first written in Greek and subsequently translated into Slavonic (Tomšić, 1955, s. 195–198; Vaillant, 1963; Vaillant, 1968, p. 25; Tahiaos, 1992, p. 232). Indeed, the structure and the syntax of *The extended Life* and *The Service*, the expressivity of the text, its manner of thinking and its logical consequences, they all make reference to the Greek education and the identity of the author. However, this does not necessarily imply that the texts were originally written in Greek. To begin with, there is no such a Greek text available. We should also take into account the fact that the saint was first honored locally, his pious flock being mostly composed by his students, and, furthermore, he was the first saint of the new Orthodox Church whose archbishop was his brother Methodius.

In my opinion, the composition of *The Service of St Cyril* is prior to that of *St Demetrius*. The reason is that in *The Service of St Cyril* no mention was made about the hard persecution that the two saints suffered. However, these are explicitly mentioned in *The Slavonic Service of St Demetrius*.

For *The service of St Cyril*, the composer, following Joseph the hymnographer, borrowed the melody from the Slavic translation of *The canon of the Mother of God*. His prototype was the Service commemorating the Translation of the Relics of St John Chrysostome (January 27). This is the same rhythm in which *The Service of St Demetrius* was later composed. It is also the musical model that Clement later uses for his own hymns, which retain their close linguistic and philological affinity.

In my opinion, the reason why so many works of St Methodius are attributed to his student Clement of Ochrid, is that Clement closely followed and mimicked the style of St Methodius. This is in agreement with what the biographer of St Clement, Theophylactus of Bulgaria writes: *The Great Methodius was the goal of his life. His mind was in earnest need of him, and he whole heartedly wished for his success. His [Methodius] life and actions were like the work of a wise painter out of which he was taking guidance for his own life. He knew Methodius' life better than anyone else* (Milev, 1966, s. 130).

As we have already said it, St Clement reveals his name in the acrostic of the canons that he composes. But there is no such acrostic in *The old Slavonic services of St Cyril and St Demetrius of Salonica*. Why?

When the identity of the author of texts of early Slavonic literature is at issue, we should always start our research with the possibility of St Methodius might be their probable author. This is justified by the papal letter to the Moravians in which he stated that he was sending to them Methodius after his consecration *in order to teach you and translate for you the books in your language* (Grasheva, 1982, s. 84–92). The author of the encomium of St Cyril and St Methodius makes a similar statement: *...he adorned the Church with hymns and spiritual chants*.

Because of the incantation *Demetrius, protect the hymnographers who are your compatriots*, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΕ ΣΑΧΡΑΝΤΕΗ ΠΤΕΒЦН СЪЦІѠѢ ѠЄЧЕСТВА ТВОЕГО, which is met in four chants in *The Service of St Demetrius*, I have concluded with certainty that it is the work of St Methodius. On further reflection, however, and by taking into account some other chants in which reference is made to persecutions, harassment and captivity (*naked in the mountains*) (Nichoritis, 1987; Milev, 1966, s. 110–114). I have now come to the revised conclusion that we should not exclude the possibility that a number of students have also contributed either in the original composition or in its later and final completion. The most probable conclusion seems to be the following: the texts that belong to the period of the early Slavonic literature are the result of the collective work of a team of students under the guidance of St Methodius.

5. The Students Continue the Work of St Methodius

After the death of St Methodius in 885, the work of the Cyril-Methodius mission to the Slavs of Central Europe is dismantled. Many of the students of St Methodius were sold as slaves to the Jews of Venice (Ivanov, 1931, s. 306). A certain official of the Byzantine emperor Vassilius, after a lot of effort, finally managed to buy them back and set them free. Some of them followed him to Constantinople where they were presented to the emperor.

The oldest of the students were condemned to life exile. They found refuge in Bulgaria where the environment proved to be more fertile for the continuation of their mission. In my opinion, it was Patriarch Fotius who, in anticipation of a possible failure of the mission in Moravia, gave them the idea to complete their mission in the State of Boris, i.e., in Bulgaria, as it did indeed happen.

The Extended Life of St Clement of Ochrid, written by Theophylactus archbishop of Ochrid (Nichoritis, 1990, s. 109–139), is the main source of information about the persecution that the students suffered under the Franks and the Bavarians. It is also the main source of information on the continuation of their mission later on, in Bulgaria.

Moravia and Pannonia were left without any Orthodox teachers, and at the mercy of the Bavarian clergy who tried to undo whatever sacred and holy had been planted in those lands by the Byzantine teachers. The result was that the desire of the Slavic flock to celebrate the Holy Services in their own language gradually died. It all happened with the blessings of Pope Stephan V, successor of Pope John VIII, the reason was the mission with which St Cyril and St Methodius were to accomplish, which was a flower of the Orthodox Byzantine spirituality.

On the basis of all the above, we are now able to come to a number of conclusions. Initially, in the days of St Cyril, the main effort of the mission was to secure the ecclesiastic use of the Slavic

language. This was accomplished with the approval of the pope, and the ascendancy of Methodius to the archbishopric throne. With the dormition of Cyril, the mission of archbishop Methodius had a much more complex fight to carry out.

He suffered all sorts of hardship. He was slandered; he was prosecuted; he was judged in illegal courts; he was condemned; he was imprisoned. His tribulations purified him in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

What gave rise to this intense hatred from the part of the German clergy? What was the reason for which Christian clergymen were pushed to such extreme kinds of action and persecute their brothers “in Christ” with such a fury? Was it the language? But the freedom to celebrate God in one’s own language had the approval of the Holy See. Furthermore, St Methodius was appointed archbishop of Pannonia and Moravia by the pope himself.

Was it the Byzantine ritual? But in the two thousand years of Church history no such intense persecutions had ever taken place either for the sake of the ritual or for the language in which the mass and other services were going to be ministered. There had to be something deeper than that. All major Church upheavals had to do with some incorrect interpretation of the Orthodox doctrine. It was because of doctrinal differences that Holy Synodes had to convene, the conflicts among hierarchs were bitter and gave rise to all sorts of extreme actions: arsons, persecutions, exiles, physical violence, schisms and finally heresies.

The validity of all the evidence used above, and the sources from which it was taken, date back to the time of St Methodius and his students. It is not doubted by Slavologists. Let me recap it in its most salient points:

1) The enemies of Methodius, *...being possessed by the Son-Father heresy...* were saying: *The pope granted all authority to us; as for him [Methodius] and his teaching, he commands that we chase him out* (Angelov, Kodov, 1973, s. 201–202).

2) *You came to us saying: The Comforter proceeds from the Father and not from the Son ...* (Canon in honour of St Cyril and St Methodius, 4th chant, 9th Ode)

3) *The Comforter proceeds from the Father and not from the Son...* (2nd verse of ‘Lord, I cried to Thee’, *The Slavonic Service of St Methodius*.)

4) In *The Service of St Demetrius*, Methodius himself bore witness to the persecution that he had to suffer: *...from the cruel soldiers of the idolaters and from the heretics*. The biographer of St Naoum, a student of Methodius, stated that the Moravians suffered a lot because of *... illicit works and the heresy, and because of the persecution that the Orthodox Fathers had to suffer*. Notice that in these quotes the word *heresy* is explicitly mentioned. Similar is the point made by the hymnographer of the student of Methodius Konstantine Preslavas in the following statement: *we beseech thee glorious hierarch Methodius, protect with your prayers your own flock which is persecuted by the heretics, for the sake of the orthodox faith*.

5) In his letter to Svetopulk, Pope John VIII, brought up the issue of Orthodoxy in the following: *... he performs the Divine Liturgy in the same manner as it has been received in the Church of Rome*. And again: *... that which he confessed in accordance with the Gospels and the teaching of the Apostles, and in accordance with what the Holy Church of Rome teaches*. As we know, the Popes Andrian II and John VIII did not accept the addition of *Filioque* (Romanides, 1973, s. 368–378). Because of his Orthodox position (Romanides, 1973, s. 367), Methodius was called by Pope John VIII *... a valiant attendant of the Orthodox faith*.

To be sure, both the language issue and the Byzantine ritual had a negative impact on the Bavarian clergy. However, putting here all other possible political motivations aside as well, the primary reason for the persecution of St Methodius and his student was the issue of *Filioque*.

* * * * *

For sixteen whole years after the dormition of his beloved brother Cyril (14.2.869), St Methodius fought hard for the continuation and the success of their missionary work by ministering, teaching, translating, writing, composing hymns, and confessing the Orthodox faith, until his most venerable dormition (4.6.885).

In the whole missionary work for the Orthodox illumination of the Slavs, academic scholarship places the philosopher Constantine-St Cyril in a more prominent position than his brother. St Methodius is like always standing in the shadow of his brother. In my opinion, a detailed study of the personality

of St Methodius shows him as the one who was able to realize his brother's idea for the illumination of the Slavs and also managed to create a body of highly qualified students for the continuity of the mission. He was most certainly different than his brother, but he was in no way a lesser figure than him.

The importance of St Methodius was stressed by his biographer when he compares him to the Fathers of the six Ecumenical synods. They had also been distinguished by their fighting spirit against various heresies and had worked hard for the exact formulation of the Orthodox creed. And then he adds the following: *And after all these [Fathers], the merciful God who wants everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, sent in our times (St Methodius), in whom no one ever took any interest, our own teacher, blessed Methodius, a worker of the Good.*

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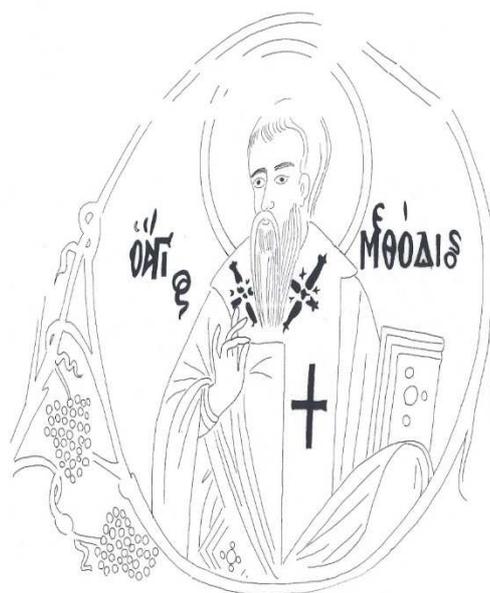
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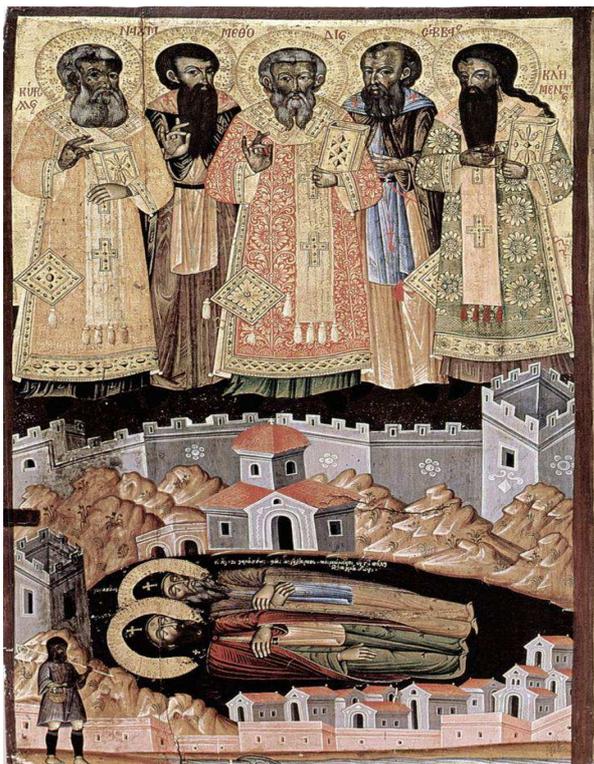
Application



1. Saint Methodios in the icon of Saint Eptarithmoi. Icon taken by the church of the prophet Elijah Siatishta Greece – 1744



1a. Saint Methodios in the icon of Saint Eptarithmoi. Icon taken by the church of The prophet Elijah, Siatishta Greece – 1744



2. Saint Eptarīthmoi, Church of Holly Mary – Berat, Ioannis Tsetiris – Albania – 1805



2a. Saint Eptarīthmoi, Church of Holly Mary – Berat, Ioannis Tsetiris – Albania – 1806



3. Saint Eptarīthmoi, Church of Holy Mary's Birth – Monastery of Ardenitsa – Albania (1744)



3a. Saint Eptarīthmoi, Church of Holy Mary's Birth – Monastery of Ardenitsa – Albania (1744)