

Saints and Feasts in the menologies of Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions

Popular scientific summary of the project

Project aims

Liturgical life of the churches is reflected in their liturgical books. One of those books, considered to be the most important, is the Gospel, the main part of which is composed of four books of the Good News (hence the term tetra {gr. τέτταρα = four}). The use of the Tetraevangelion in the services is possible when liturgical information is provided regarding the memory of a saint or a feast falling on a particular day, as well as which part of the Gospel text should be read and which verses from the Scripture precede it. This liturgical information was usually assigned to fixed (unmovable) liturgical calendar – the so-called menologion. In the twelve parts, corresponding to twelve months, of the menologies (gr. μήν = month), to each day of the month the memory of a saint or saints and sometimes a feast has been assigned.

The aim of the project is to analyse the remembrances of saints and feasts mentioned in the menologies in all the preserved Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions, i.e. books printed until 1800 in various areas of Slavia Orthodoxia, among others, in the territories of modern Russia (Moscow), Ukraine (Lviv, Kiev and Pochayiv), Lithuania (Vilnius and Yev'ye {Vevis}), Serbia and Montenegro (Rujno, Belgrade and Mrkšina Crkva) and Romania (Tîrgoviște, Sibiu, Braşov, Alba Iulia, Bucharest and Sebeş).

Printed until 1800, the Cyrillic liturgical Tetraevangelions were addressed to specific recipients. Those were Christian communities, whose liturgical practice reflected not only the Christian feasts known to everyone, but also the local ones – testified to only in a limited area and time, continuing earlier (ancient or medieval) liturgical traditions, also often known only locally. Liturgical reforms and changes in liturgical traditions (conformity and differentiation) were reflected in the liturgical apparatus of the menologies of the Cyrillic Tetraevangelions printed until 1800.

Research description

The research will use all the preserved Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions, i.e. 107 editions, printed between 1512 and 1800. Text of their menologies will be subjected to descriptive, textual, liturgical, typographical, and linguistic analyses. They will allow presenting the similarity and diversity of liturgical traditions and changes taking place in them, textual dependencies of particular editions and relations between printing centres, typographical conditions and characteristics of various local varieties of the Church Slavonic language.

Justification of the research topic

The younger liturgical tradition represented by liturgical books printed from 1500 to 1800, as opposed to the older one represented by manuscripts, has been studied much less frequently. The Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions have been analysed only by book experts. They were used extremely rarely in textological works (mainly the text of the Gospel). Their menologies (as opposed to manuscript menologies) containing a list of saints and feasts have not yet been the subject of textual, liturgical, and other studies, even general ones.

Most important expected results

The analysis of the catalogue of saints and feasts in the menologies of the Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions allows a reinterpretation of the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church in its various local variations (Middle Bulgarian, Serbian, Lviv, Kiev, Pochaiv, Moscow, Vilnius); the presentation of the scope of undertaken reforms and changes in liturgical life; the indication of cooperating publishing centres and their importance (also domination); the analysis of typographical workshop of publishers and evolution of the Church Slavonic language. The results of the research on menologies of the Cyrillic early printed Tetraevangelions have a chance to be used in further scientific work of theologians, medievalists, or linguists. It will be particularly interesting to compare the results of this project with the results of analyses of manuscripts, including other types of books (e.g. prologues, typicons, etc.).