

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И НАУКАТА НА РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ  
КИРИЛО-МЕТОДИЕВСКИ НАУЧЕН ЦЕНТЪР ПРИ БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ  
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и информационните технологии**

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## The Liturgy Question in the Vita of Methodius

Thomas Daiber

*Cyril and Methodius, Liturgy, Theology, Old Church Slavonic, Greek terminology*

Considering the historical mission of the Slavic apostles it is of crucial importance to know which liturgy was introduced and celebrated by Methodius in Great Moravia. Methodius's choice of either the Roman or the Byzantine liturgical tradition for his missionary efforts is crucial to reconstruct the reasons why his missionary work met such harsh resistance amongst the Frankish clerics, since liturgy played a crucial role in the cultural assimilation of non Germanic peoples at the borders of the Frankish territory. The paper will point to some wording in the Vita Methodii to understand what is meant by Pope Hadrian's declaration that Methodius was allowed to "celebrate in both languages".

Considering the historical mission of the Slavic apostles, it is of crucial importance to know which liturgy was introduced and celebrated by Methodius in Great Moravia. Debate on this question has a long history. While Alexander Brückner at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century stated that Methodius had celebrated according to the Latin liturgy, Antonín Dostál [1962] has raised arguments that Methodius celebrated according to the Greek rite. The extant Old Church Slavonic manuscripts show both liturgical traditions [Prague vs. Kiev fragments; ed. Mareš 1979]. Methodius's choice of one or the other liturgical tradition for his missionary efforts is crucial to reconstruct the reasons why his missionary work met such harsh resistance amongst the Frankish clerics. While the intentions of the Frankish clerics are mostly outlined as purely political [Stökl 1976], new insights [Štíh 2014] into the process of the Christianization of the Slavic neighborhood at the borders of the Frankish state show that liturgy played a crucial role in cultural assimilation, and only the use of the Latin liturgy could serve this goal. The difference between Latin and Greek liturgy had already been understood in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in theological terms which only later would appear explicitly under the terms "primacy" (and "filioque").

Paying attention to the fact that in the 9<sup>th</sup> century it is uncertain what could be understood as a proper "Latin" liturgy [cf. Atkinson 1989 about mixed Greek-Latin liturgies in the Frankish state], this paper analyzes the political implications of Eastern and Western liturgy as mentioned in 10<sup>th</sup>-century sources. It is argued that these implications were already at the core of the debate in the times of Methodius. The hypothesis will be underlined by pointing to some formulations in the Vita of Methodius which seem to reflect the debate on liturgy by their use of Grecisms. We will not renew, of course, the assumption that the Vita Methodii (extant in copies starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century) was originally written in Greek, which has been rejected with solid reasoning by Grivec [in Grivec/Tomšič 1960: 15]. Greek remnants in the Vita Methodii surely have to be explained in terms of cultural proximity. But it can be pointed to some wording and syntactic con-

structions which vary from analogical formulations in other Church Slavonic manuscripts. Understanding formulations in the *Vita Methodii* as influenced by (Greek) liturgical terminology allows us to understand what is meant by Pope Hadrian's declaration that Methodius was allowed to "celebrate in both languages".

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