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The commemorations of the Publican and Pharisee and the Prodigal Son in the oldest Russian neumatic Sticheraria

The oldest surviving Russian neumatic manuscripts date from the end of the 11th – beginning of the 12th centuries. More than a century separates them from the beginning of Christian worship in Russia. The paper raises the question of the recovery of certain aspects of generations of old Russian books that no longer survive and the illuminating of possible links between Greek and early Russian traditions. The sources are the full set of preserved ancient neumatic Sticheraria with the chants of the moveable cycle and a number of Greek manuscripts, corresponding in their date of creation to the Russian mss or older.

The sequences of stichera dedicated to the commemorations based on the two Gospel readings of the Publican and Pharisee and of the Prodigal Son served as a material. These commemorations mark the first and the second preparatory Sundays and the third and second Sundays of Lent. The study proceeds through a comparative analysis of the composition of the sequences of the stichera, their textual versions, their neumatic notation and the codicological particularities of the respective manuscripts.

As a result, it is possible to reach some conclusions about the formation of the singing tradition of this commemoration in the early Russian period.

From the point of view of notation, one particular notated Greek Sticherarion influenced the process of the creation of the oldest Russian Sticherarion. This source may be dated to the 10th century; it was considered by Russian masters to be the most respected and served not just a copy, but as the guiding tool for the development of the Russian style of notation. The oldest style, as may be seen from the analysis of the notation in Russian manuscripts, was subjected to a process of internal development and correction according to the younger generation of Greek paleobyzantine sources.

In terms of composition and arrangement of the stichera, the early Greek source which determined the future Russian neumatic style apparently did not contain the preparatory Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, and the composition of the preparatory Sunday of the Prodigal Son underwent a thorough revision.

Overall, the present paper represents the initial stage of a complex research project into the oldest neumatic Russian Sticheraria of the Triodion cycle and their integration into the process of the adoption of Greek chant in Russia.