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## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LITURGICAL SUBJECTS IN THE LATE-AND POST-BYZANTINE ART<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* *The Heavenly Liturgy* appears at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as an image of the angelic procession, celebrating the Great Entrance. This iconography was formed on the basis of existing scenes of angelic worship in a cupola which gradually became more complicated and supplemented with liturgical objects. In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the images of angels-priests finally fixed in the composition and the figure of Christ the High Priest was added. This slightly changed semantics of the whole scene and likened it to the earthly liturgy. This version of *The Heavenly Liturgy* has been existing throughout the post-Byzantine period almost unchanged. At the same time, another version of the liturgy appeared, where the church service was performed not by the heavenly forces, but by saints or anonymous earthly deacons and priests. Largely based on this type, new liturgical images were formed in post-Byzantine times both in the Balkans and in Russia. Some of them borrowed the motif of the Great Entrance (for example Russian scenes *Let All Human Flesh Be Silent...* or *Cherubikon*), and some had unique iconography (*All-Saints Saturday*, *The Vision of Gregory the Theologian*). Perhaps, these iconographies were influenced by such images as *The Service of St. Basil the Great* or *The Service of St. Nicholas*.

*Key-words:* The Heavenly Liturgy, Let All Human Flesh Be Silent, Cherubikon, The Service of St. Basil the Great, Christ the High Priest, Byzantine art, post-Byzantine painting.

In this paper I shall try to survey the development of the liturgical scenes throughout the late and post-Byzantine periods in general, marking some key-points in this process. The liturgical compositions will be viewed in a broad perspective, concentrating on *The Heavenly Liturgy* and treating some other subjects as its predecessors and successors.

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Fig. 1 *The Heavenly Liturgy*. The murals of the church of Christ the Savior in Thessaloniki. Middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by M. Onufrienko.

Сл. 1 Небеска Литургија. Фреске храма Христа Спаса у Солуну. Средина XIV века. Фото. М.О. Онуфриенко.

*The Heavenly Liturgy* appears in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and depicts the transfer of the Holy Gifts from the prothesis to the altar for their consecration. The core of the composition is the Great Entrance motif, therefore usually the scenes containing this motif are named *The Heavenly Liturgy*, while the others might be called otherwise.

This iconography has been studied by several scholars. It was mentioned in the works by several Russian authors such as Nikolay Pokrovskiy<sup>2</sup>, Alexey Dmitrievskiy<sup>3</sup>, Nikodim Kondakov<sup>4</sup>, but they described only post-Byzantine compositions in monasteries of Mount Athos and Russian late medieval images. The first systematic study of the liturgical scenes was undertaken by Romanian scholar Jon Ștefanescu<sup>5</sup>. His book deals with many of them (such as *The Arc of the Covenant*, *The Sacrifice of Abraham* and others) viewing these scenes as examples of the images of liturgy, but almost without the analysis of their iconography. The monuments are listed randomly, without correlation with other contemporary artistic phenomena. Similar approach was used in the 1997 book by Tryphonos Tsompanes, *Η μεγάλη είσοδος στην εικονογραφία*. However, the main advantage of these books is reviewing not only the iconography of *The Heavenly Liturgy*, but also a number of other liturgical scenes that appeared in the post-Byzantine time. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a number of publications appeared that were based on the achievements of historical liturgics. The researchers, in addition to using iconographic and comparative analysis

<sup>2</sup> Н.В. Покровский, *Стенные росписи в древних храмах греческих и русских*, Москва 1890.

<sup>3</sup> А.А. Дмитриевский, *Современное богослужение на православном востоке*, Киев 1891, 119.

<sup>4</sup> Н.П. Кондаков, *Лицевой иконописный подлинник. Иконография Господа Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа*, Санкт-Петербург 1905, 71-72, Кат. 33.

<sup>5</sup> J.D. Ștefanescu, *L'illustration des liturgies dans l'art de Byzance et de l'Orient*, Bruxelles 1936.

methods, provide a broader coverage of the material placing the liturgical subjects in religious and cultural context which is necessary for understanding the original meaning of the images. The earliest and the most significant work is the monograph by Christopher Walter<sup>6</sup>. In his view, the iconography of *The Heavenly Liturgy* was formed at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, based on the motif of the Great Entrance. In fact, this work laid the base for comprehension of this iconography as related to the liturgical life of the Church. Serbian researcher Tatiana Starodubtsev published an article on this iconography and its development in Serbian murals of the 14–15<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>7</sup>. She notes the connection between the images of the liturgy in the domes and the image of Pantokrator surrounded by the heavenly forces. Titos Papamastorakis examined *The Heavenly Liturgy* in the context of other cupola decoration schemes<sup>8</sup>. Altar scenes were overviewed by Marka Tomić Đurić in connection with St. Demetrius church in Marko's monastery. In fact, this is a number of essays devoted to various iconographic motives. The scholar describes the history and proposes an interpretation of each iconographic element basing on the liturgical texts and the monograph by Robert Taft<sup>9</sup>. The article *The Heavenly Liturgy* by Nina Kvlividze published in the Orthodox Encyclopedia can be considered to be a certain milestone in the study of this subject, since it summarizes almost all up-to-date researches<sup>10</sup>. The author states that *The Heavenly Liturgy* is an image of the Great Entrance, where angels are represented as deacons, and also notes the close connection of this iconography with other liturgical subjects such as *The Eucharist*, *Melismos*, etc. The story of this iconography is traced from the liturgical scroll in Jerusalem, Σταυροῦ 109 (late 11<sup>th</sup> c.) to the wall paintings of the Dormition Church of Sviyazhsk Monastery in Russia, so post-Byzantine paintings are not in the focus of this article. Also, there are several publications devoted to particular images, ensembles or regions<sup>11</sup>. The latest research is the article by Vasileos Marinis<sup>12</sup>. He argues that the idea of angelic service ex-

<sup>6</sup> Chr. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Т. Стародубцев, *Представа Небеске литургије у куполи*, Трећа југословенска конференција византолога (Крушевац 2000), 381–415.

<sup>8</sup> Т. Παπαμαστοράκης, *Ο διάκοσμος των τρούλων των ναών της Παλαιολόγειας περιόδου στη Βαλκανική χερσόνησο και την Κύπρο*, Αθήνα 2001, 135–165.

<sup>9</sup> М. Tomić Đurić, *To Picture and to Perform: the image of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Markov Manastir (I)*, Зограф 38 (Београд, 2014), 123–142; eadem, *To Picture and to Perform: the image of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Markov Manastir (II)*, Зограф 39 (Београд, 2014), 129–150.

<sup>10</sup> Н.В. Квлидззе, *Небесная литургия*, Православная энциклопедия 48 (Москва 2017), 487–489.

<sup>11</sup> I. Spatharakis, *Representations of the Great Entrance in Crete*, Studies in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination and Iconography (London 1996), 293–335; М. Марковић, Б. Стевановић, *Сликани програм у куполе цркве Светог Ђорђа у Добриловини*, Зограф. Часопис за средњовековну уметност 42 (Београд 2018), 209–229; Е.М. Саенкова, *О неких особенностях иконографии Великого Входа в древнерусском монументальном искусстве*, Искусство христианского мира 8 (Москва 2004), 144–151; М.О. Онуфриенко, *Небесная литургия в монументальной живописи Македонии XV–XVI веков*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства 10 (Санкт-Петербург 2020), 829–844.

<sup>12</sup> V. Marinis, *On earth as it is in heaven? Reinterpreting the Heavenly Liturgy in*

isted since Early Christian times. The author suggests that *The Heavenly Liturgy* does not parallel the heavenly service to the earthly one, as T. Papamastorakis thought<sup>13</sup>, but rather gives a special, independent way of interpreting the rite. So, one can find quite a lot of works devoted to specific issues of the liturgy scenes, but there is no any general work that would demonstrate the development of these compositions during the late and especially post-Byzantine period showing their continuity and peculiarities.

Liturgical subjects were present in Byzantine art since the Middle Byzantine period. *The Communion of the Apostles* was one of the main compositions of the altar decoration at that time. The sporadic inclusion of ritual realities (liturgical vestments and vessels) in this scene shows the unity of the heavenly and earthly Churches, but in a metaphorical way. The figures of angels-deacons add only one element of the actual rite to the composition. *The Officiating Bishops* as well as *Melismos* became widely spread in the altar decorations of Byzantine churches since the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

*The Heavenly Liturgy* appeared in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Serbia and Constantinople almost simultaneously, in the dome of the Kraljeva Church in Studenica (1314) and in the prothesis dome of the Chora Monastery church (1320–1321). Initially the scene was formed spontaneously as an expression of the idea of an angelic service, embodying the idea of the theophany, based on the existing schemes of the dome decoration. As T. Starodubtsev has already shown, *The Heavenly Liturgy* scenes in the dome are rather close to the compositions in Panagia Theotokos Church in Trikomo (12<sup>th</sup> c.), Panagia Kanakaria in Litrankomi (12<sup>th</sup> c.), St. Euphimianus in Lisi (13<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>14</sup>. The angelic procession occupies the same place and plays the same role as the angels next to Christ Pantokrator or the apostles in the *Ascension*. Moreover, the location of *The Heavenly Liturgy* in the dome reflects the comprehension of this subject as an image of theophany. This also can be confirmed by the texts of the liturgy interpretation. Thus, Nicholas Kabasilas (1322–1397/1398), on the one hand, considered the Great Entrance rite to be an utilitarian action, and on the other hand, did not deny the possibility of its symbolic interpretation. All the meanings given by Kabasilas are connected with the images of the Lord's Second Coming. During the 13<sup>th</sup> century the scene of the angelic worship became more and more complicated, supplemented with liturgical objects (candles or censers as in the church of Taxiarchai in Kostaniani and The Virgin Olympiotissa in Ellassona, late 13<sup>th</sup> c.). We can also consider the inscriptions with liturgical contents paraphrasing the *Let All Human Flesh Be Silent* hymn to be the forerunners of *The Heavenly Liturgy* in the altar spaces. At the next stage, the motif of the Holy Gifts transfer, images of angels in diaconal vestments, the altar and the prothesis appeared. In fact, the development of the scene was gradual: from an abstract angelic procession to the depiction of a specific moment of the Liturgy. Due to liturgical motives included in the dome painting, the faithful joined the heavenly world. Inasmuch as the Great Entrance was the most significant and

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*Byzantine art*, Byzantinische Zeitschrift 144, Issue 1, 255–268.

<sup>13</sup> Παπαμαστοράκης Τ. Ο διάκονος... Σ. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Т. Стародубцев, *Представа Небеске литургије у куполи*, 405–410.

magnificent part of the Liturgy that took part not only in the altar but in the naos too, perhaps this made the artists transform the abstract angelic procession into a procession with the Holy Gifts<sup>15</sup>.

*The Heavenly Liturgy* in Byzantine art is represented in two types, which can be placed both in the dome, and in the altar space. The first type is the most common and, apparently, the oldest one. This is a representation of the service performed by the heavenly forces. It was formed at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and existed throughout the post-Byzantine period. The main motif of the first iconography type is the Great Entrance as it is depicted in the dome of the Kraljeva Church in Studenica which is the earliest example. The procession of angels marches from the prothesis to the altar carrying the Holy Gifts. In later images this iconographic scheme became more or less complex, but the core remained unchanged<sup>16</sup>. Initially, the procession moved from the prothesis table to the altar, but since the 1340–1350s the prothesis table disappeared<sup>17</sup>. So by the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the composition got its final form.

Altar paintings are slightly different from the scenes in the domes. The obligatory element of the altar composition is the image of Christ the High Priest<sup>18</sup>, standing behind the altar, to whom the angels-deacons and the angel-priests attend. Most scenes are placed in the altar space,



Fig. 2 *Let All Human Flesh Be Silent...* 1580–1590s. The sacristy of the Pokrovsky Cathedral at the Rogozhsky Cemetery. Photo by <https://icons.pstgu.ru/icon/4135>.

Сл. 2 „Да молчит всякаја плоть человека ...“. 1580–1590. Сакристија Покровске катедрале на Рогошком гробљу у Москви. Слика снимљена: <https://icons.pstgu.ru/icon/4135>.

<sup>15</sup> See: М.О. Онуфриенко, *Истоки иконографии «Небесная литургия» в византийском искусстве*, Византийский временник 105 (Москва 2021), 242-257.

<sup>16</sup> The following monuments can also be attributed to the same group: Church of St. George in Staro Nagoričane (1316–1318), Katholikon of the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos (ca. 1320, 19<sup>th</sup> c.), Dormition of the Virgin in Gračanica (1320–1321), Hodegetria Church in the Patriarchate of Peć (1337), Archangel Michael in the Lesnovo Monastery (ca. 1347), Dečani Monastery Church (ca. 1335-1345), Hagia Sophia in Mystra (ca. 1350–1365), Ascension of Christ in the Ravanica Monastery (ca. 1385), Sts. Constantine and Elena in Ohrid (1380s) and some others, including badly preserved ones (paintings of the Holy Trinity Church in Manasia (1406–1418) and the Virgin Mary Church of the Kalenić Monastery (1418–1427)).

<sup>17</sup> Т. Стародубцев, *Представа Небеске литургије у куполи*, 398.

<sup>18</sup> On the iconography of Christ the High Priest see: Т. Παπαμαστοράκης, *Η μορφή του Χριστού-Μεγάλου Αρχιερέα*, Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 17 (Αθηνά 1994), 67–78.

but some are in the prothesis<sup>19</sup>. It is not possible to separate the process of development of the dome and altar scenes. As Papamastorakis correctly pointed out, the dome composition was designed initially and then it was adapted for the apse<sup>20</sup>.

In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the second type of iconography appeared, although it was less frequent. Unfortunately, all of the examples have been damaged, so that none of them presents this iconography in full. The motif of the Great Entrance does not play a leading role here; the emphasis is shifted to other details of the real service. In these scenes the liturgy is performed by the earthly clergy together with the saints. A prototype of such scenes could be *The Service of a Sainly bishop (The Service of St. Basil the Great, The Service of St. Nicholas)* that existed since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is an image of the bishop, who stands in front of the altar, holding a scroll in his hands. These compositions are direct representations of a certain moment in the liturgy. Probably these scenes show the moment just before the Communion<sup>21</sup>.

The earliest example of the *Heavenly Liturgy* iconography is the wall painting of the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the church of Christ the Savior in Thessaloniki. (**fig. 1**) The scene consists of several episodes, showing various moments of the liturgy. Among others, there are Little and Great Entrances, and the second one is inscribed as *Tà Χερουβείμ*, so this composition can be understood as an event taking place during the Cherubikon singing. The liturgy is celebrated not by the heavenly forces and Christ, but by earthly clerics in an ordinary church. St. Nicholas receives the vessels, while the Savior in a mandorla appears in glory to the participants during the service<sup>22</sup>. The scene also includes singers together with Romanos the Melodist standing on the pulpit, deacons, reading the Psalter, as well as elements of the church interior (the Royal gate, ciborium, templon, etc.). So the everyday event is transferred to the highest level. The images of the holy hierarchs together with the earthly clergy express the unity of the earthly and heavenly Churches. Similar motives are still found in a number of Cretan churches. For example, in the church of St. George in Agios Georgios (Ierapetra, Crete, second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> c.) in the altar, in the eastern niche of the southern wall, we can find the image of an earthly deacon, who carries both a chalice, and a diskos with Christ in it<sup>23</sup>.

In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the first type of The Heavenly Liturgy was formed, with a complete hierarchy coinciding with that of the

<sup>19</sup> The following monuments can also be attributed to the same group: church of Theotokos Peribleptos in Mystra (ca. 1350–1380), St. Demetrios Church of the Marko's Monastery (1377), as well as a number of Cretan churches of the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>20</sup> Τ. Παπαμαστοράκης, *Ο διάκοσμος του τρούλου*, 138.

<sup>21</sup> М.А. Маханько, *К истории сюжета «Служба святого Николая»*, От Царьграда до Белого моря: сборник статей по средневековому искусству в честь Э. С. Смирновой (Москва 2007), 248.

<sup>22</sup> Ε. Κουρκουτίδου-Νικολαΐδου, *Ναός του Σωτήρος Χριστού Θεσσαλονίκη*, Αθήνα 2008, 100.

<sup>23</sup> I. Spatharakis, *Representations of the Great Entrance in Crete*, 304. Also see: K. Gallas, K. Wessel, M. Borboudakis, *Byzantinisches Kreta*, München 1983, 441–442.

Church on earth, the other type of this subject also appeared. All these changes aimed at a more concrete representation of the reality. Undoubtedly, they are connected with all the alterations that took place in the Byzantine art during the Paleologan time targeted to embody the heavenly world using the realities of the mundane one, and to demonstrate reality of the God's appearance in our world.

However, the changes might be associated with the Hesychastic idea of deification of the human nature. Heavenly reality constructed in the manner of the earthly one showed the ideal human state, the ideal earthly world in all its details. Therefore, the theme of theophany, revelation (especially in dome paintings), which was thus connected with „deification“, was also important. Thinking on the individual reasons for changing the iconography, I may suppose that this was due to the intellectual atmosphere of the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which was saturated with theological controversies. Although the Eucharist and the liturgy were not the central subjects of St. Gregory Palamas' writings, he had some controversies about it with his opponents. These debates on the Eucharist could have inspired artists to change the composition, to make it more concrete more like a real service. For example, Palamas' attention to the presence of Christ Himself in the Eucharist<sup>24</sup> possibly might implicitly influence on the direct appearance of the Christ image in *The Heavenly Liturgy*. His image as the High Priest in this scene was an adequate replacement for the central image of the Savior in the dome. And nearly at the same time, the images of the angels-priests became usual for this subject<sup>25</sup>. Due to it Christ appeared in liturgical vestments too, thus complementing the existing composition. So, the entire hierarchy with Christ at its head, depicted in the dome, possibly might demonstrate the Divine dimension of the Church service and Church hierarchy, which may also echo the Palamas' ideas<sup>26</sup>. So, all these changes and new versions in iconography were not only prompted by the neoplatonic ideas but were also a response to the theological discussions of that time.

In the post-Byzantine period *The Heavenly Liturgy* was also included in fresco programs both in a dome<sup>27</sup> and in an altar apse<sup>28</sup>. *The Heavenly Liturgy*

<sup>24</sup> See: А.Г. Дунаев, *Богословие евхаристии в контексте паламитских споров*, Богословские труды 42 (Москва 2009), 146–168; И. Мейендорф, *Евхаристический догмат в богословских спорах XIV столетия*, Пасхальная тайна. Статьи по богословию (Москва 2013), 597–604.

<sup>25</sup> Although the earliest example is the painting in the prothesis dome of the of Chora monastery, this motif became widespread since the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It can be seen, for example, in the Dečani Monastery.

<sup>26</sup> St. Gregory Palamas argued against Dionysios the Areopagite notion that the Eucharist was the only sacred symbol denoting Christ. This idea was quite popular in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it is also found in the writings by Philotheos Kokkinos. According to Palamas, God Himself appeared in the Eucharist, so His Body was not a symbol but the true receptacle of God.

<sup>27</sup> For example, in the katholikon of Stavronikita (1546) and Gregoriou (1768-1779) monasteries on Mount Athos; in the church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi (late 16<sup>th</sup> century), Katholikon of Treskavac monastery (1480-s).

<sup>28</sup> In the painting of the Great Lavra and the Chapel of St. Nicholas of this church (1535), the katholikon of the monasteries Docheiariou (1568) on Mount Athos and Barlaam in Meteora (1548).



Fig. 3 *The Vision of St. Gregory the Theologian*. The murals of the prothesis of the Church of Our Lady of Smolensk of the Novodevichy Convent. 1598. Photo by A. Preobrazhensky.

Сл. 3 Визија Григорија Богослова. Фреске олтара Смоленске катедрале Новодевичког манастира. 1598. Фото. А.С. Преображенског.

and the image of the Savior demonstrate the possibility of salvation in the bosom of the Church. In the altar scenes, the Savior is often depicted twice: at the beginning of the procession and receiving the vessels, carried by angels. This correlates to *The Communion of the Apostles* which is often placed below *The Heavenly Liturgy* (as, for example, in the churches of Nekresi, Georgia (mid-16<sup>th</sup> c.), or Barlaam Monastery (1548), Meteora, Greece). Also, this monumental composition was adapted to icon format (*The Heavenly Liturgy* by Michael Damaskinos, mid-16<sup>th</sup> c.), but icons with this subject were not widespread.

During the post-Byzantine period, the tendency of including elements of the earthly world in *The Heavenly Liturgy* was growing in different ways. The first one can be seen, for example, in the altar wall painting of Piva Monastery in Montenegro (1605), where the procession of angels on the one side carries out the epitaphion and on the other side they bring it back to the altar. So, the Great Entrance begins in the mural, then the earthly clergy in the real church continues it, and finally it ends also in the mural: the fresco shows the beginning and the end of the procession, complimenting the earthly one and showing its part hidden from the worshipers. Another way of interaction can be found in the church of The Forty Martyrs in Chrysapha, Greece (1620s), where the procession of the Great Entrance is depicted against an image of a contemporary iconostasis, so the scene shows a real church space with specific interior details<sup>29</sup>.

Another side of this process can be seen in the way how the new liturgical subjects were constructed. Most of them used the motif of the Great Entrance, and new compositions appeared on this basis. The Romanian painting *Taking out the epitaphion* in the narthex of Dobrovac monastery is rather close to *The Heavenly Liturgy*. It uses as the main motif of the angelic procession, who carries the shroud, as the composition of this scene. But due to absence of Christ the High Priest and the liturgical vessels (discos and chalice) and presence of the saint bishops this scene transformed from the metaphorical image of the liturgy to the depiction of the real rite of the taking out the epitaphion on the Good Friday Vespers on Holy Saturday Matins.

<sup>29</sup> Λ. Τσέλιγκα–Αντουράκη, *Ένα εικονογραφικό άπαξ στην αγίδα του Ιερού Βήματος των Αγίων Τεσσαράκοντα στα Χρύσαφα Λακωνίας (1620)*, Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 34 (Αθήνα 2013), 215-226.



During the post-Byzantine period completely new liturgical subjects were created in Russia. *The Cherubikon* and *Let All Human Flesh Be Silent...* both used the motif of the Great Entrance, but the first scene is closer to the Byzantine *The Heavenly Liturgy* than the other one due to the depiction of the angels and the image of the Christ the High Priest. (**fig. 2**) Yet the compositions became more complex: besides marching angels with Holy Gifts *The Cherubikon* includes episodes of preparation of the Eucharist, image of a church, a small group of worshipers and the Lord Sabaoth in the sky. Thus the scene shows the heavenly church service descending to an earthly church. *Let all human flesh be silent...* included the image of a large group of praying saints and mortals, the Great Entrance performed by earthly clerics processing to the Three Hierarchs. Thereby this iconography demonstrates the whole universe celebrating the Holy Saturday when this hymn is sung. In contrast with *The Cherubikon*, its semantics has shifted from the depiction of everyday liturgy to the visualization of the ideal state of the humanity and their salvation<sup>30</sup>. Thus the Balkan scenes which developed the Byzantine schemes and meaning depict the moment of the Liturgy itself, demonstrating the connection between our world and the Heaven, while *Let all human flesh be silent...* shows the whole Church, all mundane world praying to God during the Liturgy.

Also, several new compositions were constructed on the basis of the established motif of *The Service of a Sainly bishop*. It could be supplemented in different ways with praying worshipers, the Great Entrance motif, images of the Lord Sabaoth, liturgical vessels etc., but the core remained. *The Vision of St. Gregory the Theologian* is based on the text of the liturgy commentary<sup>31</sup>. (**fig. 3**) This subject was not widespread, but rather popular in Russia where it was placed in the altar part of the church (Cathedral of the Archangel in Moscow Kremlin, 1560s, 1652–1666; Church of Our Lady of Smolensk of the Novodevichy Convent, 1598; Holy Trinity Church in Vyaziomy, late 16<sup>th</sup> century), while in the Balkans there was only one example — the series of miniatures (Vat. gr. 2137). The main task was not to convey the text of the commentary in detail, but to show the activity of the heavenly forces during the earthly liturgy. Therefore, artists were limited to only the most important scenes in miniatures as well as in frescoes. Due to the Great Entrance motif in one of the pictures, this subject occupies the intermediate position between *The Heavenly Liturgy* (and scenes on this basis) and different types of *The Liturgy of St. Basil*. The last one has several different versions (which are rather close one to another) and titles, such as *The Service of the Holy Saturday*, *All-Saints Saturday*. The almost identical iconography and many different titles suggest that the names were chosen for the image, and not vice versa. Although all these icons do not depict the liturgical action directly, they are related to the liturgy theme. These scenes

<sup>30</sup> On Russian subjects see: М.О. Онуфриенко, *Новые литургические сюжеты в русской живописи XVI века*, Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства 11 (Санкт-Петербург 2021), 382-397.

<sup>31</sup> The text could be named differently, the one of the names is *Διάλυσις τῆς ἀγίας λειτουργίας*. On the Slavonic translation and the Greek text see: М. Желтов, «Откровение святого Григория Богослова о литургии»: исследование, текст и его славянские переводы, Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия 3: Филология 54 (Москва, 2018), 9-26.

were widespread in Russia, and I know only one example of this subject in the Balkans — the icon *The Divine Mystagogy* (*Η Θεία Μυσταγωγία*)<sup>32</sup>. Despite its iconography is different from all known Russian icons, it depicts Saint Basil the Great recording his liturgy in front of the apostles and Christ the High Priest behind the altar, so this version can be considered to be a part of this group too.

Thus, in the late and post-Byzantine periods, several liturgical subjects were developed. Since the beginning they acquired more and more concrete forms that were borrowed from liturgical practice. The Great Entrance motif, which is the core of *The Heavenly Liturgy* composition, existed since the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and influenced the other liturgical subjects. *The Heavenly Liturgy* was the main type of the liturgical scenes. Other types, on the one hand, were inspired by the main one, and, on the other, they could develop *The Service of a Sainly bishop* iconography or follow a text. Using images of earthly clerics and details of service, artists demonstrated the unity of the earthly and heavenly Church. Such a literal reflection of symbolic ideas through the details of mundane world was rather common in the late and especially post-Byzantine epochs.

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КРАТАК ПРЕГЛЕД ЛИТУРГИЈСКИХ ТЕМА У КАСНОВИЗАНТИЈСКОЈ  
И ПОСТВИЗАНТИЈСКОЈ УМЕТНОСТИ

Тема „Небеска Литургија“ појављује се почетком XIV века. Представља слику анђелске поворке Великог входа. Иконографија је формирана на основу већ постојећих сцена богослужења анђела у куполи, која је постепено постајала све сложенија и допуњена сликама појединих богослужбених предмета. Средином XIV века у композицији се коначно фиксирају слике анђела-свештеника и додаје се лик Христа Спаса Великог Архијереја – то мало мења семантику целе сцене и упоређује са земаљским богослужењем. Ова верзија „Небеске Литургије“ постојала је готово непромењена током читавог поствизантијског периода. Истовремено се појављује још једна верзија, у којој службу врше не небеске силе, већ свеци или безимени земаљски ђакони и свештеници. У великој мери на основу ове варијанте у поствизантијском периоду формиран су нови литургијски заплети. Неки од њих су мотив Великог входа позајмили из „Небеске Литургије“ (на пример, руске композиције „Да молчит всякая плоть человека...“ или „Иже херувими...“), док су други независни сцене („Литургија Василија Великог“, „Виђење Григорија Богослова“). Очигледно, на њихово формирање су снажно утицале слике попут „Службе св. Василија Великог“ или „Служба Св. Николе“.

<sup>32</sup> Κατ' εικόνα. Ιερά κειμήλια πίστεως και πολιτισμού της Εκκλησίας των Σερρών, Σέρρες 2019, Κατ. 54.