

# Ongoing history - an unbroken liturgical reality

Some thoughts on a central CBM principle

STEFAN ROYÉ\*

*CBM: Catalogue of Byzantine manuscripts in liturgical context,*  
see [www.pthu.nl/cbm](http://www.pthu.nl/cbm)

Καὶ εἶδον ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου βιβλίον γεγραμ-  
μένον ἔσωθεν, καὶ ὄπισθεν, κατεσφραγισμένον σφραγῖσιν ἑπτὰ. Καὶ  
εἶδον ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν κηρύσσοντα φωνῇ μεγαλῇ· Τίς ἐστιν ἄξιος  
ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον, καὶ λῦσαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ;  
Καὶ οὐδεὶς ἠδύνατο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐδὲ ὑποκάτω τῆς  
γῆς, ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό.  
Καὶ ἐγὼ ἔκλαιον πολλά, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἄξιος εὐρέθη ἀνοῖξαι καὶ ἀναγῶναι  
τὸ βιβλίον, οὔτε βλέπειν αὐτό<sup>1</sup>.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written  
within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong  
angel proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the book,  
and to lose the seals thereof?

And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able  
to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to  
read the book, neither to look thereon.

Apoc. 5, 1-4

---

\* Dr. Stefan Royé is a free researcher and co-ordinator of the CBM project (Catalogue of Byzantine manuscripts in liturgical context), which is housed in the Protestant Theological University (Amsterdam, NL).

1. *Τὰ τέσσαρα Θεῖα καὶ Ἱερὰ Εὐαγγέλια, μετὰ τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀποκαλύψεως τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ Ἰωάννου*, ed. Geron Theophilos monachos, reprint-edition of the edition of Venice 1853, Hiera Kalybe Hagiou Sabba, Hiera Nea Skete, Hagion Oros – Athos, 2008, p. 381.

The writer of this mystical book introduces here a liturgical perspective on worship in a book related to worship, and indeed to reality<sup>2</sup>. Although the book is written in Greek vernacular, comprehensive in itself, its content remains beyond any of the human dimensions of thought or understanding<sup>3</sup>. In order to teach us a new reality, John the Theologian (as he is called in the manuscripts themselves) speaks in a ‘liturgical dialect’, that gives his book –the Ἀποκάλυψις<sup>4</sup>– a particular value for those interested in the dynamics between reality and meta-reality, mystery and revelation, or *theandric* (divine-human) reality<sup>5</sup>.

When reading the many excellent and valuable books written by colleagues active in the different areas of biblical, liturgical, homiletic, exeget-

2. It is generally known and interesting indeed that the Apocalypse was not used for the daily reading cycles of the Byzantine ecclesiastical year, although the book is liturgical in content and character. Yet, there is an old tradition of reading preserved in the Typikon, in which the reading of the Praxapostolos (Acts, the seven General and fourteen Pauline Epistles) *plus* the Apocalypse is prescribed to be performed at the Saturday night Vigil between Vespers and Matins, beginning with the Sunday of All Saints and running unto the Sunday of Pascha, see ARCHBISHOP AVERKY, *The Apocalypse in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity*, Platina, California, 1998 (Introduction p. 34). Cf. Slav. Typikon or Ustav, Moscow 2002, p. 1040 (the rubric prescription is between square brackets). See also: *Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἀκολουθίας τῆς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις Ἁγίας Λαύρας τοῦ Ὁσίου καὶ Θεοφώρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Σάββα*. Reprint edition of the editio princeps, Venice, 1545, by Nikander Nykios, with introduction and comments by Archimandrite Dositheos, Hiera Stauropegiake Mone Panagias Tatarnes Eurytanas, Granitsa, n.d. [2009], p. 463.

3. See ARCHBISHOP AVERKY, *The Apocalypse in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity*, p. 37: ‘The Apocalypse is a mystical book which gives itself to a correct understanding and interpretation only with great difficulty; as a consequence, the Church Typikon does not indicate readings from it during the time of the Divine services’, and p. 52: ‘One must suppose that this is because in antiquity the reading of Holy Scripture at Divine services was always accompanied by an interpretation of it, and the Apocalypse is too difficult for (an ordinary) interpretation’.

4. The delivery of the Apocalypse in Byzantine manuscripts is a-typical, corresponding to fluctuating appreciations in early Christian and patristic tradition. Cf. [www.pthu.nl/cbm](http://www.pthu.nl/cbm) [Portal I Section B: Introduction to Short Catalogue Apocalypse].

5. See A. PAPANTONIOU, ‘The Theandric Mystery of Jesus Christ in Byzantine Christology’, in *Studia Theologica*, 3 (2009), pp. 177-196 (p. 177): ‘The principle of theandricity constitutes the most significant contribution made to Christology by Byzantine theology. In light of this principle, the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos, is perceived as theandric, that is, in the one person or hypostasis of Jesus Christ, the fullness of divinity and the fullness of humanity have been united’.

ical, hagiographical and ascetical studies, it becomes clear that this aspect of *theandric* reality is quite often marginalised, or even, one might say, ‘forgotten’. What is the reason for this? I believe that the deeply-rooted, institutionalised academic disciplines, developed over centuries of highly established philological training and education, have brought researchers to such a height of knowledge and detail, that science has been removed too far from the original reality context itself, to become highly abstract. This trend has been detected by the funding institutions, for instance the *Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research* [NWO], which is now inviting research applicants in the Humanities to concentrate emphatically on issues such as knowledge dissemination and the application of research results for a broader public than the purely academic. Or the current international funding programme *Humanities in European Research Area* [HERA], which is now focusing on the theme “Uses of the Past”, which indicates a similar line of thought, that practical viewpoints and the implementation of research results are highly opportune. These are clear signs of acknowledgment that science and reality, or actuality, should be more attuned to one other. I would conclude that this invitation concerns not only the output of academic research, but also the *input*, the facts themselves, the *empereia*, the dynamism of reality.

In the area of the study of Byzantine liturgy and codex delivery, with which the CBM programme is concerned, this may seem a difficult task at first sight, but nothing is further from the truth. The dynamism between ancient practices and modern reality is visibly evident. For the study of the ancient Byzantine ecclesial manuscripts, this implies research of the *Typikon*<sup>6</sup> and all related topics and documents, handwritten and printed, which are connected to and interact with each other according to the regulation of the *Typikon* (the Hieron Evangelion is used together with the Apostolos, the Psalterion, the Menaion, the Triodion, the Synaxaristes, and so on)<sup>7</sup>. The *Typikon* is today part of an ongoing reality of liturgical prac-

---

6. A *Typikon* is the central directive liturgical book for Orthodox liturgical practice. There are various manuscripts and printed editions. For basic information, see J. GETCHA, *Le Typikon Décrypté. Manuel de liturgie byzantine*, Paris, 2009, pp. 43-52 [also now available in Eng.].

7. See S. ROYÉ, ‘The coenobitic Τυπικὸν and principles of codex composition. The li-

tice, still to be observed in Eastern Orthodox churches<sup>8</sup> and monasteries in Greece<sup>9</sup> and in the rest of the world.

History builds continually on fact and experience and it is important for scholars to realise that they are part of that history, and that they view history ‘retrospectively’ with a present day appreciation, and with self-adopted principles of observation and judgement. When investigators function within established historical and philological paradigms, naturally seen to be objective and which allow the scholar to look ‘upon’ history from a comfortable distance, they miss in fact the empirical aspect of their subject which can be attained through a more functional and dynamic approach. New scientific paradigms are needed in the Humanities and in especially in the philological disciplines, that take experiential approaches into account.

CBM is developing a dynamic and empirical approach to its research subject to allow the Byzantine manuscripts, beginning with the NT and OT corpora, their provenance, and all aspects of their original usage to ‘come to life’ as it were. Below, we provide some of the consequences of the new approach<sup>10</sup>.

## Empirical research

Behind the handwritten documents lies a world of living worship and prayer, practiced by engaged people, a whole empirical field of experience

---

turgical context of the collection of Byzantine manuscripts of Mone Karakallou’, in K. Spronk, G. Rouwhorst, S. Royé (eds.), *A Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts in their Liturgical Context: Challenges and Perspectives*, (Collected Papers resulting from the expert meeting of the Catalogue of Byzantine manuscripts programme held at the PThU in Kampen, the Netherlands on 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009), Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, 2013, pp. 235-270.

8. For the present-day Typikon of the Great Church of Christ, see the website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: <http://www.ec-patr.org/gr/typikon/>.

9. On Mount Athos is used, for example, *Τυπικὸν ἢ Τυπικὴ διατάξις τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Διονυσίου περὶ τῆς καθημερινῆς ἀκολουθίας, τοῦ Ἑσπερινοῦ, τοῦ Ὁρθροῦ καὶ τῆς Λειτουργίας, κατὰ τὰς Κυριακὰς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς ἑορτὰς τοῦ ὅλου ἐνιαυτοῦ, μετὰ πασῶν τῶν περιπτώσεων αὐτῶν*, Hiera Mone Hagiou Dionysiou, Hagion Oros, 2004.

10. For more precise details regarding CBM, see the website [www.pthu.nl/cbm/](http://www.pthu.nl/cbm/) approach and the Collected Papers mentioned in n.6.

in fact. The written documents were not created in study rooms from behind a writing desk, as abstract fruits of the minds of scholars. In other words, the objects of study stem from a living liturgical reality, not ‘science’ in the usual sense of the word.

### Theory versus experience

Everyone understands that there is world of difference between the teaching of a subject in theory (take music, or woodcarving) and teaching of a subject through experience (by a musician, or an experienced woodcarver). This difference can also be observed in Byzantine codicology, which was (and even still is today) a ‘practical’ science: the preparation of parchment sheets; the copying of a book by hand; the art of calligraphy etc. Many scholars are experienced in reading and analysing ancient handwritten documents in a theoretical manner, but are not deeply initiated in the art of transcription, which is accompanied by reflection on the content, the use of the book, and the ability to structure a document for and according to its practical usage.

### Functional iconography and ornamentation

The arrangement of the recent printed edition of the *Theion kai Hieron Evangelion* (Athens 2003)<sup>11</sup>, is an excellent example of functional iconography and ornamentation. Not only is the traditional order of Gospel readings is provided with rubrics in red and the actual pericope readings in black ink, also the codex structure is kept with ornaments as found in the manuscripts<sup>12</sup> and even functional iconography is maintained in this fine edition. Attention to the structural function of iconography and ornamen-

---

11. Θεῖον καὶ Ἱερὸν Εὐαγγέλιον, κατὰ τὸ κείμενον τὸ ἐγκεκριμένον ὑπὸ τῆς Μεγάλης τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Athens, 2003. [ed. A. Androuses and others]

12. One can observe the functional iconography and ornamentation in, for instance, the fine facsimile edition of the 14th century Vatopedi Hieron Evangelion codex by S. N. KADAS, *The Illuminated Lectionary of John VI Cantacuzenus. Facsimile edition of Codex Vatopediou Skeuophylakion 16*, Thessaloniki, 2001.

tation in Byzantine manuscripts is given attention by some experts (Hutter<sup>13</sup>, Dolezal<sup>14</sup>, Dufrenne<sup>15</sup>), but is not yet applied in recent catalogues of Byzantine manuscripts as a leading principle of *codicography*.

### Holistic approach

There is a close connection between the various and divergent manuscript types, which in fact are united in liturgical practice. In fact they gain their *raison d'être* connection with one another, for instance, a *Hieron Evangelion* and a *Tetraevangelion*, an *Apostolos* and a *Praxapostolos*, and so on, have their own codex titles and structure<sup>16</sup> through their. This insight invites the scholar to take the whole of liturgical practice in which the documents are united into account as a point of departure, and to study various aspects and books, from a holistic point of view, without isolating books or texts from their actual context.

### Ongoing liturgical reality: *Byzantium after Byzantium*

Ongoing reality implies an ongoing history, and thus any one period should be treated in relation to another (later) period, and vice versa, and recent developments should be studied in relation to earlier periods. One should take into account that the Byzantine period (formally the 4<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>

13. I. HUTTER, 'Decorative systems in Byzantine manuscripts, the Scribe as Artist: Evidence from Manuscripts in Oxford', in *Word & Image. A Journal of Verbal / Visual Enquiry*, 12.1 (1996), pp. 4-22.

14. M. L. DOLEZAL, 'Illuminating the liturgical word: text and image in a decorated lectionary (Mount Athos, Dionysiou Monastery, cod. 587)', in *Word & Image. A Journal of Verbal / Visual Enquiry*, 12.1 (1996), pp. 23-60.

15. S. DUFRENNE, 'Rubricateurs et ornemanistes dans les manuscrits écrits en minuscules bouletées', in *Paleografia e codicologia greca*, (Atti del II Colloquio internazionale, Berlin-Wolfenbüttel, 17-21. Oktober 1983), Ed. by D. Harlfinger and G. Prato, Alessandria, T. I-II, 1991, pp. 305-319.

16. See L. POLITIS, *Ὁδηγὸς καταλόγου χειρογράφων* (Γενικὸν Συμβούλιον Βιβλιοθηκῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδος 171), Athens, 1961. Further the CBM website ([www.pth.u.nl/cbm/Short Catalogue](http://www.pth.u.nl/cbm/ShortCatalogue)).

century) did not stop with the end of the Byzantine Empire from a *liturgical* point of view and that it continued into the present day in the liturgical practice of many Eastern Orthodox churches and monasteries worldwide. This insight is also called *Byzantium after Byzantium*<sup>17</sup>. Thus the history of Byzantine liturgy can be seen to be the field of ever-accumulating fact and experience, and scholars could profit from this insight, integrating present-day empirical research into new research models.

### Theological content and context

Observing the present day reality of liturgical practice in Eastern Orthodox monasteries, for instance on Mount Athos, makes clear to the scholar that one central, profound given is often omitted in present day manuscript studies and cataloguing work. This is what we traditionally call *theological content and context*. This content we find in the many Byzantine manuscripts and Greek printed editions (forgotten and unknown to many researchers), which have been disseminated to libraries and owners all around the globe. The context is the liturgical practice for which the documents were manufactured, which remains untouched and undiscussed by scholars on the whole.

In conclusion, the study of Byzantine manuscripts in liturgical context is an ongoing contribution to a living reality, an ongoing endeavour and enterprise, which concentrates on content in an empirical way.

---

17. First by N. JORGA, *Byzance après Byzance: Continuation de l'Histoire de la vie Byzantine*, Bucharest, 1935 [cf. the edition of 1971 with an avant-propos of M. Berza], later adopted by others. Cf. A.-E. TACHIAOS, 'Byzantium after Byzantium', in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir, Byzantium - Russia - America*, ed. by J. Breck, J. Meyendorff, and E. Silk, Grestwood, NY, pp. 31-40.