

**ABSTRACTS**

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**Time and Narrative in Church Spaces**

Charles Barber

This paper focuses upon the decoration of the church interior in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Beginning with mural decoration, it will discuss the interplay of space and time in the perception of New Testament subjects. In so doing, it will emphasize a distinction between the unfolding of historical/biographical time and liturgical time. Having argued for an occasional and liturgically conditioned reception of this mural decoration, the paper will then turn to a consideration of the use of panel and portable icons in these spaces as aspects of a more personal devotion.

**The Reception of Paul and Pauline Theology in the Late Byzantine Period**

Fr. Maximos of Simonopetra

This is a study of the reception of the Apostle Paul and Pauline theology among Late Byzantine theological writers. A select number of Pauline commentators from the patristic period will be surveyed inasmuch as they were authoritative sources closely studied by later exegetes. An important bridge between the early Greek Fathers and their Byzantine successors is the collection of writings known as the *corpus Dionysiacum,* whose author was believed to be Dionysios the Areopagite, the Apostle Paul’s Athenian convert (cf. Acts 17:34). The theological themes of the *corpus* are far more Pauline than has been generally recognized, partly because modern scholarship concentrates largely on the author’s Neoplatonism, and partly because the Dionysian “Paul” does not correspond to the figure of the Apostle constructed in the wake of the Reformation. Maximos the Confessor, another important source for Late Byzantine theological writers, deepens and extends the work of Dionysios, and this study will consider the Confessor’s little-known interpretation of Paul’s heavenly ascent (2 Cor 12:2-4). The Middle Byzantine period saw a revival of interest in the Epistles of Paul, notably in the elaborate commentaries produced by Euthymios Zigabenos and Theophylaktos of Ochrid, as well as in compilations of *catenae*, all of which were heavily copied and cited by later Byzantine exegetes. Having dealt with these complex but indispensable prolegomena, this study turns to its main task, namely, the reception of Paul among Late Byzantine theological writers. While no major commentaries on the Epistles of Paul were written during this period, the Apostle’s theology was nonetheless at the center of the Hesychast controversy. The main lines of argument—and thus of Pauline interpretation—had been established in the early debates between Barlaam of Calabria and Gregory Palamas, and were not significantly altered by their contemporary and later followers. This study therefore provides a close reading of the “Hesychast” Paul as he emerges in the writings of Gregory Palamas, with reference to other Palamite writers (e.g., Theophanes of Nicaea, the Xanthopouloi), as well as to Palamas’s opponents (e.g., Barlaam, Gregory Akindynos, and others). The Pauline loci important to these authors are too numerous to be treated in this study, which is limited to what are arguably the most important: 1) the notion of so-called natural theology, 2) the nature and limits of human reason, and 3) the nature of divine grace and the experience of God. The Byzantine interpretation of these loci will be compared to parallel, modern interpretations, and it will be argued that the “Byzantine” Paul, consigned since the Reformation to the margins of biblical scholarship, remains a vital option in the understanding of a key figure in the development of the Christian tradition.

**The Appropriation of the New Testament by Middle Byzantine Preachers**

**Mediating an Encounter with the Word**

Mary Cunningham

This paper will examine the ways in which Byzantine preachers use New Testament readings as a basis for preaching to congregations in the middle Byzantine period. Although they are able only to focus on a select number of liturgical readings, homilists display both authority and creativity in their interpretation of the New Testament for Byzantine audiences. In the liturgical setting of festal vigils or divine liturgies, preachers aim to initiate an encounter between their congregations and the biblical personages whose narratives are being celebrated. Rhetorical devices including ekphrasis, exclamation, monologue and dialogue are employed in order to initiate a dramatic experience in both festal and daily preaching. It is also important to note the hymnic nature of many middle Byzantine sermons, which celebrate as well as teach the meaning of the New Testament. This paper will thus argue that middle Byzantine preaching on the New Testament represents a form of appropriation of biblical revelation. Those who mediate the Word of God feel free to engage with it in a dramatic and questioning way, hoping by this means to induce greater understanding of its meaning in their audiences. Such freedom also extends to harmonisation of synoptic narratives, adjustments of detail within such narratives, and the juxtaposition of canonical scripture with apocryphal texts. In short, the approach taken by middle Byzantine preachers towards the New Testament is surprisingly unrestrained – except by the requirements of orthodox doctrine.

**Bearing Witness: New Testament Women in Syriac and Byzantine Hymnography**

Susan Ashbrook Harvey

In the turbulent social world of the early Byzantine east, the Bible played a crucial role in civic life. Its stories and its characters provided important tools for the work of identity formation, cultural re-fashioning, and the models by which social roles were articulated, promulgated, and sustained. All this took place in the context of heated competition between religions, where it mattered which Bible one knew, which stories one told, and which holy figures served as one’s models.

 In such a milieu, the work of hymnography as a source of biblical instruction took on particular importance. Commentaries were generally the preserve of a scholarly (male) elite. But hymns were written for public performance and participation: sung in sacred buildings, during processions through city streets, at shrines, in cemeteries, in monasteries, and in households. Their purpose was to instruct, exhort, and inspire the Christian population – learned or unlearned, young or old, male or female. At a time when literacy was uncommon, hymns were crucial tools for teaching Biblical stories and instilling church doctrines; for the moral formation of Christian subjects, and the ethical training of Christian citizens.

This paper will consider the presentation of New Testament women in two early Byzantine hymnographic traditions, Syriac and Greek. I will focus in particular on the figures of the Samaritan Woman (John 4:7-42) and the Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50) in the hymns of St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) and St. Romanos the Melodist (fl. 540s).

**Producing New Testament Manuscripts in Byzantium**

**Scribes, Scriptoria, and Patrons**

Nadezhda Kavrus-Hoffmann

Very little is known about the production of New Testament manuscripts before the ninth century (the so-called *majuscules*): the names and social status of the scribes, as well as the patrons and places of production, are not known. Moreover, none of these early manuscripts has been securely dated, and no attempt has been made to carbon-date them, to the best of my knowledge. For example, Codex Washingtonensis (W, or GA 032) has been attributed to the fourth, fifth, sixth, and recently to the eighth century.

 The earliest minuscule New Testament manuscript with a scribal colophon is codex Petropolitanus 219 from the National Library of Russia: it contains four Gospels and was executed by the scribe and hegumenos of the Stoudios Monastery, Nikolaos, in 835. Codicological and paleographic evidence enabled me to attribute to the Stoudios scriptorium another ninth-century New Testament manuscript, codex Gruber 152 from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The Gruber 152 is an early minuscule manuscript that contains the complete New Testament. Such manuscripts are rare: of about 6,000 known Greek New Testament manuscripts, only sixty-one contain the complete New Testament. The Stoudite New Testament manuscripts are not decorated and were most likely intended for the internal use in the Monastery.

 In the late ninth and first half of the tenth centuries, many small-sized Gospel manuscripts were produced in Constantinople. Most were exquisitely decorated with headpieces and initials, and some with portraits of the evangelists. These “pocket-sized” books probably were executed in independent *ergasteria*, not in monastic scriptoria, and were intended for private patrons—for example, codices Petropolitanus gr. 220 and “Hoffman Gospels” at the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

 In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the growing number of monasteries and churches in the Byzantine Empire created an increasing demand for New Testament manuscripts, especially lectionaries. Scribes in Constantinople and many new centers of manuscript production, such as Mount Athos and Cyprus, toiled to meet this demand. The Latin conquest disrupted manuscript production in Constantinople, but the New Testament manuscripts continued to be produced in the provinces—for example, Epiros.

 At the end of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth centuries, the Palaiologan Renaissance revived manuscript production in Constantinople, and many beautifully illuminated New Testament manuscripts were executed in the Hodegon Monastery and in independent *ergasteria—*for example, manuscripts that comprise the so-called “Palaiologina group.” Provincial centers also flourished—for example, in Thessalonike (scribe Theodore Hagiopetrites and his circle).

 Thus, New Testament manuscripts were produced in every known monastic and independent scriptorium of Byzantium and were used in monasteries and by patrons, many of whom or whose heirs donated these manuscripts to monasteries.

**New Testament Exegesis in Byzantium**

Tia M. Kolbaba

Byzantines who wanted to understand the Scriptures faced an enormous body of early Christian and patristic texts. Asked a difficult question about doctrine, few felt the need to reinvent the wheel. An Orthodox teacher asked about, for example, consubstantiality could consult any number of patristic commentaries on the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Even easier—and more likely—he could consult a catena of patristic commentaries on John 1 or a florilegium of excerpts on consubstantiality. Everything important was there in one reference volume, a situation few teachers can resist. Faced with a lineup of comments, interpretations, and explanations from Origen to John Chrysostom and beyond, he would have felt little need to add something of his own. New exegesis, then, was called forth primarily when historical circumstances raised issues not adequately discussed by the Fathers. It should not surprise us that the Byzantine intellectuals most praised for interesting exegesis lived in interesting, even turbulent times: Photios, Psellos, Palamas. So too new exegetical moves might be made in response to challenges from outside the Orthodox world, as when Michael Glykas spent many pages proving that the Last Supper did not take place during the days of unleavened bread or when Theophylact of Ochrid discussed the procession of the Holy Spirit in his commentary on John 3:31-34. This paper suggests that, in exegesis as in so much else, we will understand both the conservatism and the historical specificity of Byzantine thought only when we abandon the search for the “original” and listen instead for new variations within the many variations on old themes.

**The Hagiographer’s Bible**

Derek Krueger

What can biblical quotations in Byzantine hagiography tell about the reception of the Bible and its place in Byzantine culture? A survey of saints’ lives composed in the first half of the seventh century raises questions about the meaning and function of biblical quotations, echoes, and allusions in Byzantine hagiography. Quotations of passages familiar either from the lectionary or prayers often go unremarked, while more obscure passages require tagging to identify their source. The handling of such biblical material reveals how authors constructed their audiences as familiar with the Bible primarily through liturgical sources and experience. Hagiography thus confirms the patterns and methods in which the constituent parts of the Bible were disseminated at the end of antiquity and shows how expectations of such Bible knowledge framed hagiographers’ efforts to compose texts with complex intertextual relationships with the Bible’s vocabulary, rhetoric, and narratives. The texts also suggest different levels of biblical knowledge in different social groups.

With attention to passages quoted from the words of Jesus and the letters of Paul, this paper considers hagiography as evidence for the reception of the New Testament in the religious culture of the seventh century before the rise of Islam. The works of Leontios of Neapolis, for example, were written in a colloquial Greek and for a lay audience. His quotations and allusions to biblical narratives attest a level of biblical familiarity that was likely common in the broader populations of Christians regularly attending church on Sundays and festivals. He draws primarily from the Gospels and the Psalms, together with some quotations from the Pauline corpus. The *Life of Mary of Egypt*, composed in a more churchy linguistic register nevertheless assumes a similar baseline exposure. John Moschos’s *Spiritual Meadow,* likely composed for a monastic audience, surprisingly, quotes little from the Bible. On the other hand, the high-style vita of the Patriarch Eutychios by Eustratios, which also quotes patristic authors, appeals to a very broad base of biblical knowledge, still emphasizing what would have been familiar from attendance at liturgical services. In their use of biblical texts, however, each author interprets them. Hagiography thus gives evidence also for exegesis.

**Giving Voice to the New Testament in Byzantine Chant**

Alexander Lingas

The New Testament includes multiple references to song and scholars of early Christianity have suggested that a number of its more poetic passages may be quotations of primitive Christian hymns. Some of these texts were incorporated as chants by the regional traditions of Christian liturgy that began to crystallise during the reign of Constantine*.* Musical settings of passages from the New Testament, however, were vastly outnumbered in Late Antique chant repertories by texts from the Old Testament, especially the Book of Psalms. When combined with a newfound reluctance to permit the chanting of texts not found in canonical scripture—a trend enshrined in Canon 59 of the Council of Laodicea as a prohibition of 'private psalms'—this placed the church in the awkward position of celebrating Christ and his saints mainly through quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures read typologically or anagogically through the lens of Christian exegesis.

This paper examines how this dilemma was addressed musically in the worship of Constantinople and Jerusalem, the rites of which formed the basis for the Stoudite and Neo-Sabaïtic liturgical syntheses of Middle and Late Byzantium. The two regional traditions shared the practice of solemnly chanting pericopes from their New Testament lectionaries, but during the middle of the first millennium A.D. their urban rites diverged radically on the use of extra-scriptural chants. Whereas the Constantinopolitan Rite of the Great Church limited the sung explication of specifically Christian narratives and ideas within its services to a small body of hymns and refrains, the churches of Palestine came to adorn the biblical skeleton of their Divine Office with vast numbers of increasingly complex genres of exegetical hymns.

**Illustrated Greek Gospel Books and New Testament Textual Criticism**

Kathleen Maxwell

Art historians of Byzantine manuscripts have acknowledged the importance of textual criticism for more than eighty-five years,[[1]](#footnote-1) but how often, in fact, do texts and their figural and non-figural decoration travel together? Specifically, if one examines the Greek texts of Gospel manuscripts that art historians have linked through their ornament and/or figural illustrations, what is the likelihood that their texts will have been associated by New Testament text critics? The answer is similar to those disclaimers that one finds in the fine print of a cosmetic advertisement: individual results may vary. In my experience, there is no way to anticipate if Byzantine Gospel manuscripts featuring similar figural or non-figural decoration will have related texts. The good news is that New Testament text critics have taken full advantage of new technologies so that the research is less tedious and the results more accurate than even a few years ago. The data generated by New Testament text critics will often lead the art historian down surprising paths, shedding light on relationships among manuscripts that are often counterintuitive.

In this presentation I will share the results of my forays into the field of New Testament text criticism. I will begin by summarizing the results of my research of the Greek text of the Byzantine illustrated Gospel book, Paris gr. 54, and of the Gospel books of the ‘decorative’ style. Then I will address the results I have encountered in my more recent research on Byzantine Gospel books from various periods. If time permits, I will conclude with a brief description of some of the newer on-line research tools created in Münster and Birmingham.

**Lectionaries of Constantinople**

Robert S. Nelson

Most people in the Greek speaking world knew the New Testament through hearing it read during the liturgy. Any copy of the New Testament could be used for that purpose, but a special text type, the Gospel lectionary, was developed to present readings according to the liturgical year. The scholarly study of that lectionary has lagged behind the New Testament proper. The initially promising work by textual scholars at the University of Chicago in the 1930s and slightly later by art historians like Kurt Weitzmann did not yield the results the authors intended for reasons that Mary-Lyon Dolezal has explored. More recent investigations of the text and illuminations of Greek lectionaries, led by Dolezal and others, however, have opened up the subject, especially for eleventh-century Constantinople, and suggest that now may be the moment to look again that this topic. This paper will set recent work in larger contexts through an examination of certain tenth-century manuscripts, patriarchal lectionaries in the following centuries, and the texts and illumination of Palaiologan manuscripts written in Constantinople.

**New Testament Textual Traditions in Byzantium**

David Parker

The traditional view of the Byzantine text in western New Testament textual criticism has been of a late, corrupt text. Scholarship has developed out of a struggle to replace the humanists’ Textus Receptus with a text based on fourth-century evidence. The nature of the struggle means that a polarity evolved between scientific philology and traditionalism which provided heat as well as light. The emphasis on contrast between a purer text of the ‘great majuscules’ and the degenerate Byzantine text should be set aside and the textual history of the New Testament re-examined.

This reassessment is possible today since for the first time we are able to analyse the text using full sets of data. In editing the Gospel of John, we have collected two such sets: a series of 153 test passages in the first four chapters in which the readings of all surviving manuscripts are recorded; and a complete collation of all witnesses for the whole of Chapter 18. These sets of evidence are all recorded in databases, allowing us to compare any two manuscripts, to find the witnesses closest to any selected manuscript, and to develop local stemmata showing how readings developed.

The paper will present some of the findings of this research in order to consider how a reassessment of the Byzantine text may be starting to look. It will also review the critical edition of the Byzantine text of John completed in Birmingham and consider briefly the ecumenical issues lying behind the edition.

**Elective Affinities: The Genealogy of Byzantine New**

**Testament Manuscripts**

Georgi R. Parpulov

The paper will illustrate some ways in which scribal practices affected the transmission of the Greek New Testament text from ca. 900 to ca. 1400. My first example will be several groups of Gospel manuscripts known to have been copied, in each case, by a single scribe. It will be shown that the manuscripts within each group do not have matching textual profiles. In the second instance, I shall discuss the so-called “revised koine,” a group of Byzantine New Testament manuscripts copied by various hands but virtually identical in textual profile. I shall argue that this group originated in Constantinople ca. 1300. Its existence illustrates the close interaction between professional scribes in the Byzantine capital during the fourteenth century.

**Byzantine Textuality and the New Testament: Commentary and Catena**

Jeremy Schott

This paper explores the ongoing tradition of biblical exegesis in the Byzantine world after the eclipse of the biblical commentary as a literary form in late antiquity and the Middle Byzantine period (roughly seventh to eleventh centuries CE). Focusing on several manuscripts of the Pauline and Pseudo-Pauline epistles, I reflect on how New Testament texts were experienced as part of a web of intertextuality among late antique and Middle Byzantine intellectuals.

Catenae and the New Testament texts to which they are linked have traditionally been studied in isolation, with New Testament text critics working out the stemmata of New Testament texts and Patristics scholars plumbing catenae for fragments of lost commentaries of the Fathers. In the Middle Byzantine period, however, commentary and base-text were frequently transmitted and read together. Indeed, the pages of Middle Byzantine manuscripts were often designed so as to facilitate the inclusion (even proliferation) of catenae and other marginalia. Byzantine codices of the New Testament brought together previously distinct genres and forms (e.g. commentary, base-text, cross-referencing, *kephalaia*) in a complex literary technology. Middle Byzantine manuscripts and their catenae thus offer an excellent source for exploring several key dimensions of Byzantine textuality, from theories of authorship and authority to theories of meaning.

**The Afterlife of the Apocalypse of John in Byzantium**

Stephen Shoemaker

It is well known that the Apocalypse of John has a peculiar status within the biblical canon of the Christian East, and for centuries leading figures in the Greek church refused to recognize it as Scripture. Although this book of Revelation ultimately would find its way into Eastern Orthodox Bibles, it did so only slowly and gradually, and even still today one finds a kind of silent echo of this writing’s liminal past in the context of Eastern Christian worship, where the Apocalypse is never read. The reason for this exclusion is obvious: during the era when these lectionaries were forming, the Apocalypse was widely regarded as non-canonical. Nevertheless, the Apocalypse was the subject of two major commentaries from the early Byzantine period, and its influence on the broader pattern of Eastern Christian worship has also frequently been noted. This paper will explore some possible explanations for this medieval disregard for the Apocalypse and its lack of influence on early Byzantine eschatology. In particular, the forceful anti-Roman rhetoric of the Apocalypse seems to have been difficult to reconcile with Byzantine identity. Surprisingly enough, however, there is evidence to suggest that it was possibly much more influential on Jewish apocalyptic literature of the early Byzantine period.

**Narrating the Sacred Story: New Testament Cycles in Middle and Late Byzantine Church Decoration**

Nektarios Zarras

The paper attempts to highlight the impact of the portrayal of the Gospel story on believers’ comprehension of it in the Middle and Late Byzantine period. I will argue that the way in which the believer approaches and perceives the sacred story differs significantly between these periods.

Cycles of the Middle Byzantine period (Dodekaorton, Passion) include the most well-known episodes of the Christ’s and Virgin Mary’s life, which chronologically span the entire liturgical year and depict fragmented scenes in conjunction with other more brief cycles in different parts of the church (Nea Moni of Chios, Daphni). The partiality of those scenes complicate understanding for the faithful, who are unable to bring together in an integral chronological and liturgical sequence the scenes in order to understand the major truths of faith described in the New Testament.

On the contrary, in narrative cycles of the Palaiologan period in Thessalonike (St. Nicholas Orphanos), Serbia (Staro Nagoricino) and Constantinople (Chora monastery), the New Testament text is illustrated in detail, so as to portray as many scenes as possible, depicted with a multitude of episodes into a continuous zone (frieze) running around all the walls of the naos. The historical sequence of the scenes is fixed because it is defined by the order of lections of the gospel passages during the services of Lent (Parables), Holy Week (Passion Cycle) and the Pentekostarion period (Appearances after the Resurrection). Techniques of narration of the New Testament text, such as *synthesis* and *antithesis,* are widespread in Palaiologan painting facilitating, as the story unfolds in the form of a religious epic film, the believer’s deep understanding of the entire cycle regardless of his literacy or the lack of it.

1. A. M. Friend, “The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts,” *Art Studies* 5 (1927): 115-146, and especially pp. 115f. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)