

The Greek Christian Bible

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Biblical revolutions

Greek Bibles from Late Antiquity have rightly dominated scholarly interest. Pandects such as the Codex Vaticanus, perhaps a creation sponsored by the emperor Constantine from the Eusebian scriptorium of Caesarea,¹ or the newly reunited – in virtual form – Codex Sinaiticus,² stand like milestones in the history of the transmission of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, first accomplished at Alexandria and known as the Septuagint.³ These ancient manuscripts of the complete Old and New Testaments stood at the forefront of innovation in the history of the book, themselves marking, or at least greatly contributing to, the transition from scroll to codex.⁴ While the practical advantages played a part in the transition, it has been suggested that the particularly Christian interest in making use of the codex from an early period also reflected an ideological stance, aimed at visibly underlining the independence acquired by the Greek Christian scriptures with respect to their Jewish antecedents, which were traditionally written on parchment scrolls.⁵

1 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 1209. See *Vita Constantini*, iv, 36, in Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, ed. and trans. A. Cameron and S. G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), pp. 166–7 (translation), pp. 326–7 (commentary).

2 London, BL, Add. 43725. www.british-library.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/codexsinai.html (consulted 23 August 2011).

3 M. Bassetti, 'Le Bibbie imperiali dell'età carolingia ed ottoniana', in P. Cherubini (ed.), *Forme e modelli della tradizione manoscritta della Bibbia*, Littera Antiqua 13 (Vatican City: Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia, Diplomatica e Archivistica, 2005), pp. 175–265.

4 C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London and New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1983); J. van Haelst, 'Les Origines du codex', in A. Blanchard, *Les débuts du codex* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), pp. 13–35; E. Crisci, 'I più antichi manoscritti greci della Bibbia. Fattori materiali, bibliologici, grafici', in Cherubini (ed.), *Forme e modelli*, pp. 1–31.

5 I. M. Resnick, 'The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities', *Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992), 1–17.

The relation to its Jewish urtext, culturally part of an ongoing 'dialogue with Judaism', in Pelikan's phrase,⁶ remained a key aspect of the history of the Greek Bible in the Middle Ages. At the same time, the imperial patronage presumed for the early Bibles has been read symbolically as preparing the way for the extraordinary sponsorship of 'imperial' Bibles during the period.⁷

Between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century – the chronological starting point for this survey – a second revolution took place in book production, namely the passage from majuscule to minuscule scripts. The transliteration process constituted a truly editorial enterprise both for the pagan classics and for the Christian staples of biblical and patristic writings. Once more, Christians were quick to ride the current of innovation: a copy of the Gospels in an elegant archaic minuscule, signed by the monk Nicholas at the monastery of St John Stoudios at Constantinople, is dated as early as 835.⁸ This copy bears some early additions to the gospel texts, in the form of appended chronologies, which gradually expanded into a corpus of prefaces added to the more ancient system of Eusebian canon tables. Since the new writing style enabled the scribe to save much space on the written surface, more text could be fitted in easily and less expensively. Few Bibles remained written in uncial: the liturgical majuscule, an ornate, large script, took over from the hieratic biblical uncial, but this by now exceptional practice did not continue beyond the eleventh century.⁹

In this second revolution also, the Christian interest in adopting and promoting a new book form may have been spurred by two main ideological factors: the emergence of Islam as another monotheistic religion of the book;¹⁰ and the particularly eastern catastrophe of Iconoclasm.¹¹ These factors required urgent scholarly and theological reflection on Christianity's central texts, acting like a funnel in the history of their transmission. Thus the history of Greek biblical transmission is not one of static preservation of the same: it is punctuated by technical revolutions and reveals the daring struggle of

6 J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. I: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 12–27; J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. II: *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600–1700)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 200–15.

7 Bassetti, 'Le Bibbie imperiali'.

8 Tetraevangelon Uspenski (St Petersburg, Public Library, gr. 219): R. S. Nelson, *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature in the Byzantine Gospel Book* (New York University Press, 1980), p. 96.

9 G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1967), pp. 117–24.

10 C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1996), esp. pp. 223–48.

11 Pelikan, *Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, pp. 106–8. See also Chapter 42 in this volume.

exegetes (verbal or pictorial, and including translators) to make sense of the sacred text in their contemporary context.

Medieval reception of the Bible: Old Testament

The 'Letter of Aristeas', a fundamental text detailing the origins of the Greek version of the Bible,¹² commanded a special interest in medieval Constantinople. Its transmission was embedded in a new programme of eleventh-century Octateuchs with commentary, and then also illustrations, and may be related to the etiological interests of the monks of the monastery of Stoudios in the early origins, and the Jewish roots, of the Old Testament. It is exceptional to find a prefatory text illuminated by a full illustrative cycle.¹³ In the Seraglio Octateuch (Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi Muzesi, Gr. 8), a paraphrase of the letter is attributed to Isaak Comnenos, patron of the Kosmosoteira monastery (founded in 1152), claiming to be 'shorter and clearer' than the original. Another famous citation of the letter is found in the scholia by John Tzetzes (c. 1110–80).¹⁴ Thus, going back to the first account of the origins of the Septuagint, purified of its patristic accretions and of the interpretative baggage that went with it, allowed the medieval Byzantines to revisit the old debate on the status of scriptures in their Greek translation. The confidence with which Gilles Dorival speaks of the Septuagint as the 'Bible des Pères [grecs]' may not be extended in an unqualified manner to the medieval period.¹⁵ At the same time, the widespread belief that the progressive Christianisation of the Middle Ages brought about a greater neglect of the Old Testament appears misguided.¹⁶

At one end of the spectrum, it has increasingly been argued that the liturgical arrangement of select passages from the Old Testament books, called the Prophetologion, basically provided the Byzantine everyman with as much acquaintance with this text as was ever possible. This knowledge was, in

12 *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes, index complet des mots grecs*, ed. and trans. A. Pelletier, SC 89 (Paris: Cerf, 1962).

13 K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs*, 2 vols., The Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint 2 (Princeton University Press, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 11–14, and vol. II, figs. 6–15.

14 N. L. Collins, *The Library in Alexandria and the Bible in Greek*, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 82 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), pp. 60–1, 99–102.

15 This is the premiss to *La Bible d'Alexandrie*: <http://septante.editionsducerf.fr/> (consulted 23 August 2011).

16 In the patristic period, the proportion of biblical citations between Old and New Testaments is nearly equal: J. Allenbach (ed.), *Biblia patristica. Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 7 vols. (Paris: CNRS, 1975–2000).

substance, orally transmitted, as the book was there only for liturgical use.¹⁷ At the other end, textual scholars struggle with transmission theories formulated in the twentieth century – for example, that upholding the ‘Constantinopolitan’ recension as the medieval text of the Septuagint, in turn derived from the ‘Lucianic’.¹⁸ While it is safer to refer to the understanding of the textual fate of individual books as set out in the introduction and apparatus to the ongoing critical editions of the Göttingen Septuaginta Unternehmen,¹⁹ there are signs from the manuscript evidence that the medieval editions were themselves concerned with the reading of their texts.

The model of the early codex, the pandect, did not endure into the Middle Ages, despite the calligraphic changes that might have actually facilitated the copying of one-volume complete bibles. Among the exceptions, a ninth- or early tenth-century fragment, extant in two portions, has been reconstructed as entailing in origin a complete Bible.²⁰ While this ‘Anachronismus’ offers a solid, compact text most likely used for private study, the contemporary two-volume edition, the famous ‘Leo Bible’,²¹ was a luxury product sponsored by a wealthy patron, and its oversized measurements and full-page miniatures with a particular emphasis on the liturgy suggest some form of display.²² It would seem that another ninth-century luxury production, the Bible of Abbot Basil, could have been in origin complete in one volume, as its present ending with the Eusebian canon tables suggests the loss of the Gospels.²³ To the fourteenth century can be dated a complete codex now in Ferrara, at one time associated with the presence of Cardinal Bessarion (1403–72) at the council held there. The marginal notes therein compared the text with the Hebrew and Vulgate.²⁴

17 J. Miller, ‘The Prophetologion. The Old Testament of Byzantine Christianity?’, in P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), pp. 55–76.

18 W. W. Combs, ‘The Transmission-History of the Septuagint’, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989), pp. 255–69; and N. Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context. Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne: Brill, 2000), pp. 223–36.

19 www.septuaginta-unternehmen.gwdg.de/ (consulted 23 August 2011); project outlined in G. Dorival et al., *La Bible grecque des Septante. Du judaïsme hellénistique au christianisme ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), pp. 198–200.

20 I. Hutter, ‘Eine verspätete Bibelhandschrift (Paris, BNF, gr. 14)’, *Palaeoslavica* 10 (2002), 159–74.

21 Vatican City, BAV, Reg. gr. 1–1B; in facsimile, *Die Bibel des Patricius Leo. Codex Reginensis Graecus 1B*, ed. P. Canart and S. Dufrenne, *Codices e Vaticanis Selecti* 75 (Zürich: Belser, 1988).

22 T. F. Mathews, ‘The Epigrams of Leo Sacellarius and an Exegetical Approach to the Miniatures of Vat. Reg. Gr. 1’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43 (1977), 94–133.

23 Now Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 2106 + Venice, San Marco, Marc. gr. 1. See G. Cavallo (ed.), *I luoghi della memoria scritta. Manoscritti, incunaboli, libri a stampa di Biblioteche Statali Italiane* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1994), pp. 446–8, cat. 51.

24 Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, Cl. II, 187, no. 106 in A. Rahlfs, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments*, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004–).

More common were Bibles made of separate volumes, with a preponderance of extant single-volume psalters,²⁵ and self-standing New Testaments, which clearly do not entail the existence of as many complete Bibles.

It is a rare chance to be able to assemble once more the *disiecta membra* of biblical editions, a task achieved by the concerted codicological and art-historical work of Cavallo and Belting for the 'Bible of Niketas', reconstructed from three large-format volumes preserved in different modern libraries.²⁶ These three manuscripts complement each other, sequencing the books from the Minor and the Major Prophets to the sapiential books, accompanied by a catena to Jeremiah, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. The commentary is strikingly arranged in the margins, the text-blocks delineating precise shapes, such as classical pillars, crosses or even birds. These *marginaria decorata*, framing the central biblical text, deploy the script's decorative potential ('Figurengedichte') to produce an un-iconic adornment marking a high-quality production, suggestive of the similar use of calligraphy for sacred embellishment in neighbouring iconoclast cultures.

We may contrast this delicacy of touch in the Bible of Niketas, which decorates the Old Testament books with oblique shapes built by letters, with the overwhelmingly figurative strip-narrative of the famous Joshua Scroll (Vatican City, BAV, Pal. gr. 431), equally a product of the tenth century. This parchment scroll, over 10 m long, written with select passages from the book of Joshua and illustrated horizontally by a continuous frieze – the only surviving Christian biblical scroll – still astonishes by the narrative boldness of its outlined figures. Did the choice of format, turning backwards from codex to scroll, carry a symbolic meaning? Are we before a unique creation, or a copy,²⁷ perhaps one of many? Did the Joshua narrative actually allude to contemporary events, such as the campaigns of Nikephoros Phokas (963–9) for the reconquest of Palestine from the Muslims?²⁸

25 A. Pietersma, 'Septuagintal Exegesis and the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter', in P. W. Flint and P. D. Miller (eds.), *The Book of Psalms. Composition and Reception* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 443–75; G. R. Parpulov, 'Psalms and Personal Piety in Byzantium', in Magdalino and Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, pp. 77–105.

26 H. Belting and G. Cavallo, *Die Bibel des Niketas. Ein Werk der hofischen Buchkunst in Byzanz und sein antikes Vorbild* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979).

27 O. Kresten, 'Giosuè, rotulo di', *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1991–2002), vol. vi, pp. 643–5.

28 J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs. A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 105–19; O. Kresten, 'Oktateuch-Probleme. Bemerkungen zu einer Neuerscheinung', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84–5 (1991–2), pp. 501–11, at pp. 502–3 and n. 8.

The relevance of the multifaith *Sitz im Leben* and of the multicultural environment characteristic of the Byzantine world has been highlighted by Kathleen Corrigan as contributing to the choice of iconography for the most ancient psalter with marginal picture-commentary, the Chludov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum, D. 29).²⁹ Going back to earlier texts of Jewish–Christian polemics, Corrigan has highlighted their impact on the exegetical choices and even on the aesthetic presentation of the characters flanking the psalm texts, especially Jews. This creation was reinterpreted in a later series of marginal psalters produced at the monastery of Stoudios in the second half of the eleventh century. Here, too, the ‘dialogue with the Jews’ gains prominence through a punctual revisiting of the Davidic text in the light of Christian exegesis. The ‘irruption des saints’³⁰ in the iconography served to bridge a gap between the Old Testament patriarchs, always haloed in the depictions, and the Christian continuation of sacred history. At the same time, in a series of symbolic images, such as that of Christ handing down the tables of the Law to Moses in the Theodore Psalter (1066),³¹ the Jewish people were drawn into Christian revelation.

It may be objected that the very Jewish roots of the biblical text compelled the Christian exegete to take that route. In fact, the more usual typological exegesis, based upon the Messianic interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament,³² was intentionally set aside in favour of other exegetical directions. For example, there are instances in which images can be explained only in terms of Jewish exegesis, revealing a cultural and theological interaction behind the creation even of largely narrative illustrations.³³ Moreover, the recourse to arcane pseudo-epigraphical sources, such as the *Paraleipomena Ieremiou*, reveals a *recherché* attitude to the pictorial choices that is not easily explained away. The relationship between the various narrative cycles is clearly complex, as the study of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Octateuchs

29 K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

30 L. Mariès, ‘L’irruption des saints dans l’illustration du psautier byzantin’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950), 153–62.

31 S. Der Nersessian, *L’Illustration des psautiers grecs du moyen âge. vol. II: Londres, Add. 19.352*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques 5 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970), fig. 75; *Theodore Psalter: Electronic Facsimile*, ed. C. Barber (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), fol. 44r.

32 The contributions in M. Knibb (ed.), *The Septuagint and Messianism*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 195 (Leuven University Press, 2006), downplay the difference in Messianic potential between the Hebrew *Vorlage* (original version) and the versions of the Greek Bible.

33 K. Weitzmann, ‘The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustration’, in his *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscripts* (University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 77–95.

and their later copies has proved.³⁴ Nevertheless, the theological points made by these complex interrelations, as well as by the more surprising images, cannot be neglected, however difficult the key to their interpretation is from the modern viewpoint. For example, the richly illustrated book of Kings/Samuel, Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 333 warrants a deeper analysis than the one it has so far received.³⁵

The psalter Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 752, dated by its Easter tables to 1059, and perhaps also of Stoudite origin (connected with the production of the monastery of Stoudios), bears witness to a specific interest in the language used by the Jewish–Greek translation of scriptures.³⁶ The particularity of this codex is that it relates illustrations directly to the commentary, rather than to the scriptural text, and anachronistically juxtaposes biblical and historical players to jolt the beholder into a symbolic, contemporary understanding of the subjects represented.³⁷ The second-century translator of the Jewish Bible into Greek, Aquila, is here depicted three times: once with the Emperor Hadrian; next standing with the other famous translator (or reviser), Symmachus the Ebionite; but in the third instance teaching the scriptures to the biblical Sons of Korah, celebrated authors of the Psalms. It is striking that Aquila should be depicted with a halo. Both his presence and his celebration are curious for more than one reason. To begin with, his translation is thought to have been lost at an early stage of Jewish Hellenism, probably as a consequence of the Christian enforcement of the Septuagint version on Jewish congregations through Justinian’s Novel 146 in 553;³⁸ moreover, Aquila’s literal translation was considered to have been written in a spirit of controversy with respect to the Septuagint.³⁹ In contrast, Vat. gr. 752 reflected a respect and regard for

34 Lowden, *Octateuchs*, and Kresten, ‘Oktateuch-Probleme’. The corpus of illuminated Octateuchs had been published posthumously from Weitzmann’s work by Bernabò (see n. 13).

35 J. B. A. Lassus, *L’illustration byzantine du Livre des Rois, Vaticanus Graecus 333*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques 9 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973).

36 E. de Wald, *The Illustrations in the MSS. of the Septuagint. vol. II: Vaticanus graecus 752* (Princeton University Press, 1942).

37 I. Kalavrezou et al., ‘Critique of the Emperor in the Vatican Psalter gr. 752’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), 195–219, emphasise the contemporary relevance of the images of David.

38 See G. Veltri, ‘Die Novelle 146 περί Ἑβραίων. Das Verbot des Targumvortrags in Justinians Politik’, in M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer (eds.), *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), pp. 116–30. But cf. the new evidence for the continued use of Aquila in Jewish medieval communities: de Lange in this volume, pp. 62–5.

39 On this problematic, see R. Kraft, ‘Christian Transmission of Greek Jewish Scriptures: A Methodological Probe’, in A. Benoît, M. Philonenko and C. Vogel (eds.), *Paganisme, judaïsme, christianisme. Influences et affrontements dans le monde antique. Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon* (Paris: De Boccard, 1978), pp. 207–26.

Aquila similar to that found in Origen's *Hexapla*.⁴⁰ Hexaplaric readings are indeed part of the interest of this manuscript of Psalms.⁴¹

There are further signs of interest in Hexaplaric readings and in Jewish exegetical traditions in the eleventh-century scholia written in the margins of a fifth-century codex now in Milan (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A. 147 inf.).⁴² In this case, as in the later full-scale retranslation of the Old Testament into Greek witnessed in the parallel Greek and Hebrew pages of the 'Graecus Venetus' (Venice, San Marco, Marc. gr. 7), the grey area between Christian and Jewish exegesis is exposed, and the attribution to one or other group remains suspended. Aslanov argued that the author of this new Hebrew-based translation, the bishop Simon Atumanus, was a convert from Judaism.⁴³ Although the setting for the new translation is no longer Constantinople, it is remarkable that its presumed author – whether a Jew or a Christian in origin – received his early education and fulfilled his monastic vocation at the monastery of Stoudios.⁴⁴

Medieval reception of the Bible: New Testament

With the Greek New Testament, clearly no issues arise concerning a translation. Yet despite its original form, the multiformity of the text – whether due to accidents of transmission, theological modifications, regional peculiarities or liturgical adaptations – cannot be escaped here either: 'The notion that the Byzantine Text has exclusive characteristics is coming under greater criticism'.⁴⁵ The results of Birdsall's probing into the gospel text of Photius,

40 On Aquila, see A. Paul, 'La Bible grecque d'Aquila et l'ideologie du Judaïsme ancien', in H. Temporini (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, vol. 20.1: *Religion (Hellenistisches Judentum in römischer Zeit, ausgenommen Philon und Josephus)* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1987), pp. 221–45; G. Veltri, *The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 163–89.

41 A. Shenker, *Hexaplarische Psalmenbruchstücke. Die hexaplarischen Psalmenfragmente der Handschriften Vaticanus graecus 752 und Canonicianus graecus 62* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975).

42 M. Fincati, 'Per la storia dell'Esateuco Ambrosiano A147 inf.', *Aevum* 2 (2009), pp. 299–339; Fernández Marcos, *Septuagint in Context*, pp. 175–6.

43 C. Aslanov, 'La Place du Venetus Graecus dans l'histoire des traductions grecques de la Bible', *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes* 73 (1999), 155–74.

44 G. Fedalto, *Simone Atumano, monaco di Studio, arcivescovo latino di Tebe, secolo XIV* (Brescia: Paideia, 1968), pp. 11–14.

45 J. van Bruggen, 'The Majority Text. Why not Reconsider its Exile?', in S. McKendrick and O. O'Sullivan (eds.), *The Bible as Book. The Transmission of the Greek Text* (London: BL / New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2003), pp. 147–53; M. W. Holmes, 'From Nestle to the *Editio Critica Maior*: A Century's Perspective on the New Testament Minuscule Tradition', in McKendrick

however hampered by the state of the editions, are disconcerting. In ninth-century Constantinople, at the highest level of ecclesiastical authority, a wide range of variations were observed, attesting either to a version akin to the Caesarean that is not extant in any of the collated surviving manuscripts, or bearing witness to the prelate's idiosyncratic practice of using different gospel manuscripts at different times. Birdsall concluded that '[i]n Photius' time, the Byzantine text was not the dominant type in Greek Christendom, and it was either unknown to him or not approved by him'.⁴⁶ The point at which it later became the universal *textus receptus* has yet to be established.⁴⁷ Further research on the gospel text of medieval authors ought to be undertaken with this aim. However, surveying the biblical citations in, for example, the critically edited *Catecheses* of Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022),⁴⁸ would still be a challenge, partly because of the absence of a critical biblical apparatus and partly because of the methodological problems in the spiritual authors' manner of citation.⁴⁹

In some cases, such as the 'Ferrar group', a connection between textual variants and localisation has been successfully established through a synergy of editorial and palaeographical studies.⁵⁰ It was hoped that further information on the historical contextualisation and geographical distribution of the variants in which the gospel text was read out would arise from the study of lectionaries.⁵¹ Though research has progressed in this field, and the variants

and O'Sullivan (eds.), *Bible as Book*, pp. 123–37, pointing to two 'efforts to publish the Byzantine text': *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, ed. Z. C. Hodges and A. L. Farstad, 2nd edn (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1985), and *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine Majority Text Form* ed. M. A. Robinson and W. G. Pierpoint (Atlanta, GA: Original Word, 1991).

46 J. N. Birdsall, 'The Text of the Gospels in Photius', *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 7 (1956), pp. 42–55 and 190–8.

47 Details of its evolution are in B. M. Metzger and B. D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th edn (Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. pp. 137–94.

48 B. Krivochéine (ed.), *Syméon le nouveau théologien. Catéchèses*, trans. J. Paramelle 3 vols., SC 96, 104, 113 (Paris: Cerf, 1963–5; 2nd edn 2006–).

49 G. D. Fee, 'The Use of Patristic Citations in New Testament Textual Criticism. The State of the Question', in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II, vol. 26.1: *Religion (Vorkonstantinisches christentum. Neues Testament)* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1992), pp. 246–65.

50 K. and S. Lake, 'Family 13 (The Ferrar Group). The Text According to Mark', *Studies and Documents* 11 (1941), 1–128, developed in M. D'Agostino, 'Osservazioni codicologiche, paleografiche e storico-artistiche su alcuni manoscritti del "gruppo Ferrar"', *Rudiae. Ricerche sul Mondo Classico* 7 (1995), 3–22.

51 B. M. Metzger, 'Greek Lectionaries and a Critical Edition of the Greek New Testament', in K. Aland (ed.), *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neues Testaments, die Kirchenvaterzitate und Lektionare, Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung* 5 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1972), pp. 479–97.

from a wide sample of lectionaries have been included in the latest critical edition of the Gospels,⁵² the appreciation of their significance is still far from clear. One conclusion, perhaps unsurprising given the quick spread of Christianity over a wide area, was that the variants are such as to support a theory of lectionary formation that envisages the gradual fusion of different local traditions into an 'official' text that was then commonly used and carefully copied. Even so, not one but two families of lectionaries can be identified, each transmitting at least some ancient readings.⁵³

Paul Canart accurately describes the two-fold form of manuscript presentation of the vast number of gospelbooks produced across the centuries: that in a continuous text (Tetraevangelon) and that broken up into liturgical pericopes (lectionary).⁵⁴ The order of the texts varies from that of the current printed editions, so that the Pauline Epistles precede Acts. In Byzantium, the Apocalypse was not normally appended to the New Testament until the fourteenth century.

Perria and Iacobini present perhaps the earliest extant illuminated post-iconoclast gospelbook: an elegant, diminutive copy of the Tetraevangelon, dedicated to a certain Dionysios, perhaps a high functionary of the imperial administration in the tenth century, whose name emerges from the dedicatory verses composed for each gospel, written in gold ink over purple-dyed parchment (Messina, University Library, F. V. 18). Besides some seventeen illuminated arcades framing the Eusebian tables as well as originally featuring the portraits of the evangelists, only one of which is extant, it represents in its full-page frontispiece the stylised edicule (shrine) of the Holy Sepulchre. Its editors consider the specimen as marking the completed transition to the new form of codex confection, with its fine combination of uncial and minuscule scripts and as a first, firm manifestation of truly Byzantine (as opposed to Late Antique) art. By their study, they have restored its provenance to

52 *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. edn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / [no pl.]: United Bible Societies, 2001).

53 K. Wachtel, 'Early Variants in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels', in J. W. Childers and D. C. Parker (eds.), *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2006), pp. 28–47, at p. 40; C. D. Osburn, 'The Greek Lectionaries of the New Testament', in B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research. Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 61–74.

54 P. Canart, 'Il libro dei Vangeli nell'Impero bizantino', in F. D'Aiuto, G. Morello and A. M. Piazzoni (eds.), *I Vangeli dei popoli. La parola e l'immagine del Cristo nelle culture e nella storia* (Rome: Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo / Vatican City: BAV, 2000), pp. 77–92. A hands-on guide is D. C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

the Byzantine capital.⁵⁵ Otherwise, conclusions about dating and provenance remain on shakier ground – a total lack of secure comparative evidence from the production of Greek codices in central and northern Italy leaves the gospelbook, Basle, Universitätsbibliothek, Gr. A.N. III. 12, written in a late biblical majuscule, to stand out on its own.⁵⁶ Among its peculiarities is the presence of a ‘marginal harmony’ of the Gospels, that is, a concordance of the Gospels written in the lower margin of each page, rather than concentrated in a table at the beginning of the book. This relatively rare characteristic in Greek manuscripts is the norm for Syriac, Georgian and Armenian gospelbooks, and may have originated in one of the provinces of Byzantium, spreading later towards its centre.⁵⁷

The continuity between Old and New Testaments is demonstrated through iconography and poems that set a parallel between Christ and Moses, juxtaposed in the opening of the lectionary Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 1522, in the gospelbook Paris, BNF, suppl. gr. 1335 (end of twelfth century), and in Athos, Dionysiou 4.⁵⁸ To the eleventh century belong two fully illustrated gospelbooks: the Stoudite Tetraevangelon in Paris, BNF, gr. 74,⁵⁹ that had later imitations in the Slavic milieu,⁶⁰ and the Tetraevangelon in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, gr. VI. 23.⁶¹

Besides these internal clues as to the importance and the meaning of the gospelbook in medieval Byzantium, one may look for the value attributed to it in poetry. Daniele Bianconi surveyed the collection by John Mauropous, metropolitan of Euchaita (c. 1050–70?), where the concept of Christ’s incarnation is represented through the materiality of the book in an intricate wordplay between Christ as ‘logos’ and the words written on the parchment, so that the

55 L. Perria and A. Iacobini, *Il Vangelo di Dionisio. Un manoscritto bizantino da Costantinopoli a Messina* (Rome: Argos, 1994), and ‘Il Vangelo di Dionisio. Il codice F. V. 18 di Messina’, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 31 (1994), 81–163.

56 A. Cataldi Palau, ‘A Little-Known Manuscript of the Gospels in “Maiuscola Biblica”’: Basil. gr. A.N. III. 12’, *Byzantion* 74 (2004), 463–516.

57 F. D’Aiuto, ‘Il libro dei Vangeli tra Bisanzio e l’Oriente. Riflessioni per l’età medio-bizantina’, in Cherubini, (ed.), *Forme e modelli*, pp. 309–45, at pp. 334, 338–41.

58 Nelson, *Iconography of Preface*, pp. 66–7.

59 H. Omont, *Évangiles avec peintures byzantines du XIe s. Reproduction des 361 miniatures du manuscrit grec 74 de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Berthaud Frères, 1908); S. Der Nersessian, ‘Recherches sur les miniatures du Parisinus graecus 74’, *Festschrift für Otto Demus zum 70. Geburtstag*, special issue, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 21 (1972), 109–17; S. Dufrenne, ‘Deux chefs-d’œuvre de la miniature du XIe siècle’, *Cahiers Archéologiques* 17 (1967), pp. 177–91.

60 S. Der Nersessian, ‘Two Slavonic Parallels of the Greek Tetraevangelion: Paris 74’, in her *Études byzantines et arméniennes / Byzantine and Armenian Studies*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 231–78.

61 T. Velmans, *Le Tétraévangile de la Laurentienne. Florence, Laur. VI. 23*, *Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques* 6 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

gospelbook is celebrated in his verses (Carm. 31) as ‘dead skin bearing living words’ (ὡς δέρμα νεκροῦ ζωτικῶς φέρον λόγους).⁶² The gospelbook is the ideal place for developing the theology of ‘the Word made flesh’.⁶³ The outward appearance of the gospelbook, with its precious binding, often decorated in silver and/or gold with a crucifixion scene, was also remembered in Byzantine poems, its important theological statement displayed in the liturgical processions. One may wonder whether the opulence of the handicraft, which Chrysostom criticised as vain, really was such a ‘status symbol’ in the Middle Ages as in the early period.⁶⁴ The impact of centuries of theological reflection, and the heavily monasticised milieu in which books were produced – however close to the circles of the imperial court – suggest a more pointedly spiritual significance to the beautiful artistic creations of the middle Byzantine period.

Bilingual or plurilingual Bibles

The bilingual Greek–Latin Bibles consisted of psalters, gospelbooks and, occasionally, Pauline Epistles with or without the Apocalypse. The most famous group was produced at the abbey of St Gall in Switzerland in the ninth century, responding to the scholarly interest of a group of learned monks, mainly Irish immigrants, perhaps with some genuine Greeks among them (the ‘ellenici fratres’). These manuscripts present a frozen Greek calligraphy, the so-called western biblical majuscule, yet display the Greek text as the prominent one while the Latin translation was added between the lines as a kind of commentary or reading aid to the main text. The most famous enterprise was that of Solomon III, bishop of Constance, who in 909 devised a ‘quadruplex’ psalter where, to two Latin versions (*Romanus* and *Gallicanus*), were added two Greek columns with the Septuagint psalter, one of which was transliterated into Latin characters (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Bibl. 44 (A. I. 14)).⁶⁵ Besides St Gall, interest in Greek was manifest in Reichenau and in some French

62 D. Bianconi, ‘Et le livre s’est fait poésie’, in P. Odorico, P. Agapitos and M. Hinterberger (eds.), *‘Doux remède . . .’. Poésie et poétique à Byzance. Actes du IV^e Colloque international EPMHNEIA. Paris, 23–25 février 2006* (Paris: De Boccard, 2009), pp. 15–35.

63 A. Louth, ‘The Theology of the Word Made Flesh’, in J. L. Sharpe and K. van Kampen (eds.), *The Bible as Book. The Manuscript Tradition* (London: BL / New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 1998), pp. 223–8.

64 G. Cavallo, ‘Libri in scena’, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies. London, 21–26 August 2006. Vol. 1: Plenary Papers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 345–64.

65 P. Radiciotti, ‘Manoscritti digrafici grecolatini e latinogreci nell’Alto Medioevo’, *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 40 (1998), 49–118.

centres, and spread also to some Ottonian scriptoria, extending to the adoption of Greek liturgical formulae. At Reichenau, a precious seventh-century copy of the psalter, which had travelled there from Byzantium via Rome, was adapted in the tenth century for liturgical use through marginal annotations and a partial translation into Latin (Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, RP 1). In the twelfth century, a *Psalterium quintuplex* envisaged five columns of text, one of which was a transliteration of the Greek (Monte Cassino, Archivio della Badia, 467 BB).

Despite the high regard for the Greek text these erudite exemplars exude an air of self-conscious rigidity, which is absent from the examples copied in genuine bilingual areas of the Byzantine empire. Although localisation cannot always be certain, manuscripts from crusading territories such as Palestine (Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 81, psalter, twelfth century; London, BL, Add. 47674, psalter, thirteenth century), Cyprus, Crete and Constantinople itself (Paris, BNF, gr. 54, 'Hamilton Psalter', thirteenth to fourteenth century)⁶⁶ have attracted scholarly attention.⁶⁷ A privileged area remains southern Italy,⁶⁸ where the use of the two languages for this type of bilingual biblical document acquired the typical facing page layout, with the Greek text occupying the primary position on the left-hand side of the manuscript opening, while both sides were written in ordinary minuscule scripts. Textual analysis helps to reveal which language is in fact the leading one for each manuscript, especially regarding those texts for which a Latin version is ordinarily absent, such as Psalm 151 and the odes appended to the Greek psalter. The production of these bilingual codices in every area seems to have been due mainly to ad hoc commissions or fortuitous combinations of scribal manpower of both linguistic extractions, resulting in occasional productions each with its own characteristics. A good example is the thirteenth-century bilingual psalter, London, BL, Add. 11752, probably copied in Terra d'Otranto, with a prevalence of Latin over Greek. Its sumptuous appearance has led to an attribution to the D'Angiò court.

66 K. Maxwell, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Codex Grec 54. Modus Operandi of Scribes and Artists in a Palaiologan Scriptorium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000), 117–38.

67 G. de Gregorio, 'Tardo medioevo greco-latino. Manoscritti bilingui d'Oriente e d'Occidente', in F. Magistrale, C. Drago and P. Fioretti (eds.), *Libri, documenti, epigrafi medievali. Possibilità di studi comparativi. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio dell'Associazione italiana dei Paleografi e Diplomatisti, Bari (2–5 ottobre 2000)* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2002), pp. 17–135.

68 A. Cataldi Palau, 'Manoscritti greco-latini dell'Italia meridionale. Un nuovo Salterio vergato da Romano di Ullano', in her *Studies in Greek Manuscripts* (Spoleto: CISAM, 2008), pp. 411–42, and 10 pls.

The region of the eastern Mediterranean has also proved fertile ground for bilingual productions, although the Arab conquest soon caused the replacement of Greek by Arabic, since this also functioned as the liturgical language of the Melkites.⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that the polyglot productions in these areas eventually did not even contemplate Greek appearing in any of the parallel columns.⁷⁰ However, fragments of Greek and Arabic gospelbooks are preserved, dating to the ninth or tenth century.⁷¹ Other fragments of a Greek–Arabic text of the odes have been retrieved by digital techniques from the palimpsest Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L. 120 sup., and have been dated to the end of the ninth century.⁷² The quick reuse of this bilingual witness demonstrates how Greek had soon become obsolete. On the other hand, the multiethnic composition of the southern Italian population, including the presence of converted Muslims and of immigrants from the Sinai region, who took refuge in Calabrian monasteries, gave rise to an autochthonous production of Greek–Arabic scriptural manuscripts, especially concentrated in Norman Sicily in the twelfth century.⁷³

Conclusions

It is often assumed, particularly in the case of art-historical methodology in the school of Kurt Weitzmann, that the Late Antique Bibles produced between the fourth and sixth centuries remained authoritative models for later productions, so that the extant medieval bibles are often described in terms of their lost predecessors.⁷⁴ When we look back from the Byzantine Middle Ages, however, the presumed mirror-images shock us by their lack of

69 L.-A. Hunt, 'Cultural Transmission. Illustrated Biblical Manuscripts from the Medieval Eastern Christian and Arab Worlds', in Sharpe and van Kampen (eds.), *Bible as Book*, pp. 123–35.

70 Radiciotti, 'Manoscritti digrafici', p. 105 (on Vatican City, BAV, Barb. or. 2); J. B. Chabot, 'Note sur la polyglotte de la Bibliothèque Ambrosienne de Milan', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947), 451–3 (on Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B. 20, 1–2 inf.). The languages used are Ethiopian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian, proceeding in this order from the inner margin.

71 G. Bardy, 'Simple remarques sur les ouvrages et les manuscrits bilingues', *Vivre et penser. Recherches d'exégèse et d'histoire*, 3rd ser. (1943–4), 242–67. Nos. 0136 and 0137 in K. Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994).

72 C. Pasini, 'Un frammento greco-arabo delle Odi bibliche del palinsesto Ambrosiano L. 120 sup.', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici* 39 (2002), 33–53, and 16 pls.

73 A. M. Piemontese, 'Codici greco-latino-arabi in Italia fra XI e XV secolo', in Magistrale, Drago and Fioretti (eds.), *Libri, documenti, epigrafi medievali*, pp. 445–66, and 6 pls.

74 M. Bernabò, 'Una rivoluzione nello studio della miniatura medievale: Kurt Weitzmann e *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*', and H. L. Kessler, 'Il contributo di Kurt Weitzmann alla storia della miniatura medievale', *Miniatura* 3–4 (1990–1), 109–12 and 113–16, respectively.

uniformity.⁷⁵ Almost paradoxically, in spite of the great value of tradition and the determinant cultural weight of the patristic centuries, and notwithstanding the relevance of preserving a sacred text in its purest, most reliable form, each Bible that has come down to us is an idiosyncratic, creative *unicum*. This phenomenon is only partially explained by the vagaries of scribal practices in the craft of manuscript confection. More pointedly, both the text and its exegesis, in words or images, reveal an active involvement of each generation of scribes, monks and scholars in grappling with the sacred text, as well as their efforts to satisfy the specific requirements of the patrons and recipients of their commissions.⁷⁶ Further work remains to be done in delving into the biblical and para-biblical texts and situating them in their medieval context across the Byzantine commonwealth.

75 G. Peers, *Sacred Shock. Framing Visual Experience in Byzantine Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), esp. pp. 35–58 on the Chludov Psalter.

76 G. Cavallo, 'Forme e ideologia della committenza libraria tra Oriente e Occidente', in *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale* (Spoleto: CISAM, 1992), pp. 617–43, esp. pp. 618–21, 627–8.