

Liturgical Scrolls in the Byzantine Sanctuary

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THE DEPICTION of important bishops and episcopal authors in the lower register of the apse and on the side walls of the sanctuary is a motif familiar in Byzantine and post-Byzantine ecclesiastical programs. These figures, when they first appear in the painted program of the church shortly following the Iconoclastic period, are generally depicted in a frontal stance and holding closed Gospel books to their chests. Seemingly, there is no fixed rule for their placement within the painted program, for the bishops can be found in various parts of the church: on the side walls of the nave or even the narthex.¹ Beginning, however, in the eleventh century, and increasing in the twelfth, these figures came to be depicted exclusively within the confines of the central sanctuary and its side chambers. The number of figures chosen for depiction, and the selection of bishops to be included in the scene, vary depending upon the needs served by the artistic program. Four bishops, however—Basil, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian, and Athanasius of Alexandria—generally form the core of the episcopal figures.

Their gradual confinement to the sanctuary in the post-Iconoclastic period was also accompanied by a significant change in appearance. At this time, the bishops abandoned their strict frontality in favor of a three-quarter stance.² Furthermore, they

¹ In Hosios Loukas, half-figure frontal bishops are located in high niches carved into the side walls of the nave. In the eleventh-century (earliest) layer of the church of Agioi Anargyroi in Kastoria, Basil and Nicholas are found in the narthex.

² For an analysis of the transition from the frontal pose see M. Chatzidakis, "Βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες στον Όρωπό," *DeltChrArchHet* SER. 4 1 (1959–60) 87–107. For the development of this iconography see also J. D. Stefanescu, *L'illustration des liturgies dans l'art de Byzance et de l'Orient* (= *AnnPhil-HistOr* 3 [Brussels 1935]) 451–55; C. Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London 1982), "L'évêque célébrant dans l'iconographie byzantine," in A. Triacca, ed., *L'assemblée liturgique et les différents rôles dans l'assemblée*

eventually donned *polystavria* instead of plain *phelonia*³ and unfurled scrolls inscribed with the inaudible prayers of the liturgy in place of closed Gospel books. This radical transformation suggests that their function within the church program had changed and, as will be shown, may in fact mirror contemporaneous changes in liturgical practice.⁴

One particular change in the painted bishops, the form of the text that they hold, deserves closer scrutiny and will constitute the focus of this article. For if these manuscripts represent actual scrolls used by the celebrants through the course of the liturgy, then the change from a closed codex to an unwound and inscribed liturgical scroll reflects a change in both the form of the manuscript and the manner of liturgical celebration at this period. Indeed, the use of scrolls during prescribed moments of the liturgy is mentioned in Byzantine sources from the twelfth century onward, at the same time as their first appearance in painted representations. According to these sources, such scrolls (εἰλητάρια, κοντάκια) were unrolled and read by the celebrant at specific moments of the service. An examination of these sources and their specific instructions for the use of liturgical scrolls will serve to clarify the connection between the painted liturgy and the contemporary liturgical celebration.

Frescoed Scrolls and Actual Scrolls

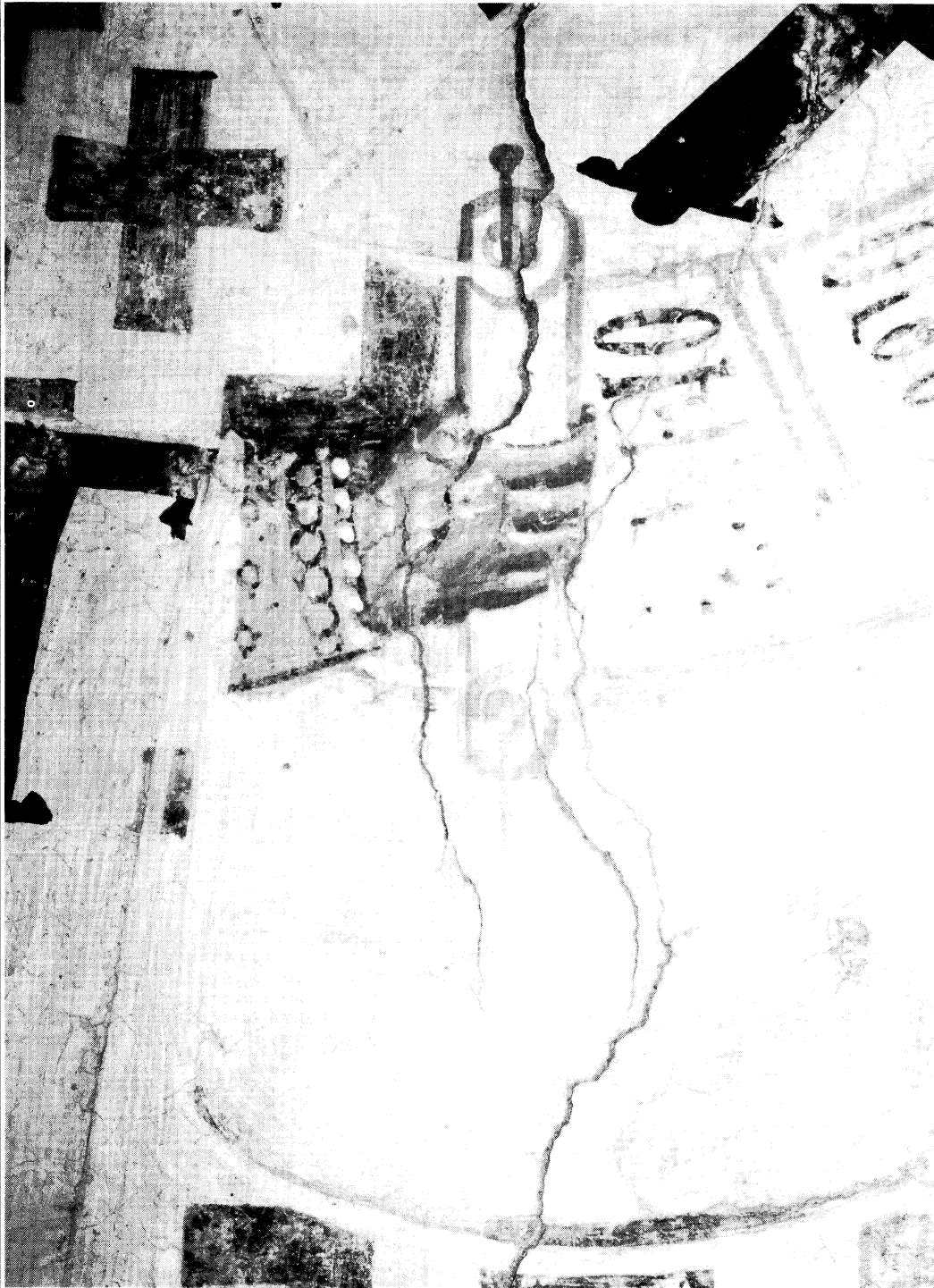
Extant inventories of Byzantine monasteries suggest that large foundations possessed at least one liturgical scroll for each of the liturgies. Clearly, the number of actual scrolls in a single monastery would vary according to the size of the community and the wealth of the establishment. The inventory of September 1201, from the Monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos, lists four *kontakia* of the liturgy of St Basil and four

(Rome 1977) 321–31, and “La place des évêques dans le décor des absides byzantines,” *RArt* 24 (1974) 81–89.

³ Phelonia (chasubles) were cloak-like vestments worn primarily by bishops and priests. The polystavria were phelonia decorated with an intricate cross pattern. In monumental painting, polystavria are generally white, with a cross motif in black, burgundy, or dark blue.

⁴ For an expanded treatment of this subject see S. Gerstel, *Monumental Painting and Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Byzantine Sanctuary: The Example of Macedonia* (diss. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University 1993).

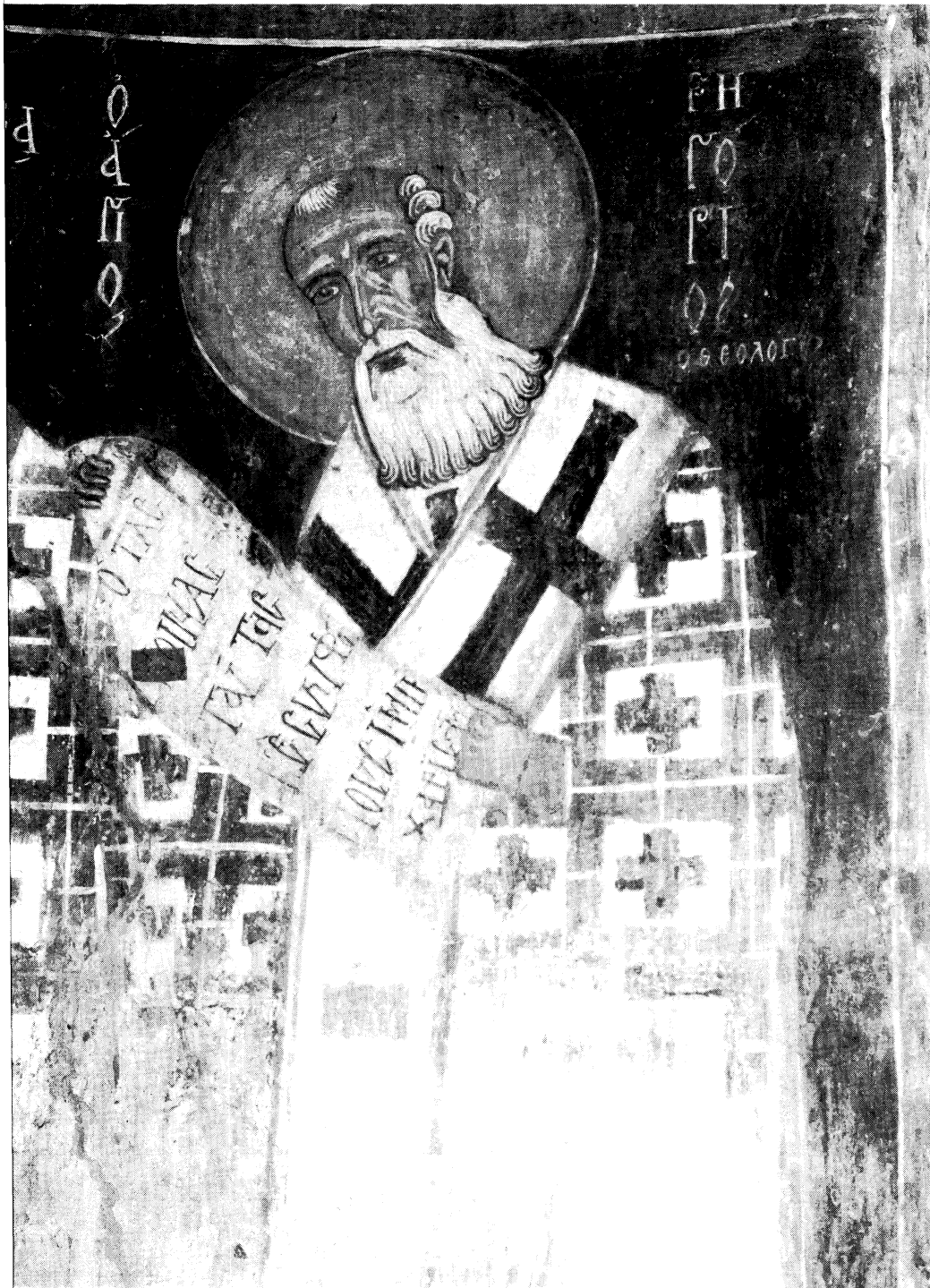
GERSTEL PLATE 1



Detail of scroll held by St John Chrysostom. Church of St. John Chrysostom, Geraki, *ca* 1300. Photograph by the author used with the permission of the Fifth Ehporeia of Byzantine Antiquities.



"St Euthymios Miraculously Enveloped by Fire while Officiating in Church," Chapel of St Euthymios, Thessaloniki, 1303. With permission of the Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum.



St Gregory the Theologian holding scroll with the Third Antiphon. Church of St Demetrios Krokeon, 1286. Photograph by the author used by permission of the Fifth Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities.

PLATE 4 GERSTEL



St John Chrysostom. Church of the Taxiarchs, Kastoria (14th cent.);
by permission of the Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum.

others for that of Chrysostom.⁵ The 1247 inventory written by the monk Maximos from the monastery of the Holy Mother of God of Koteini at Philadelphia lists three scrolls containing the liturgy of Chrysostom and three for that of Basil.⁶ The *metochion*⁷ of the monastery contained an additional set. The 1396 inventory of the treasury of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople lists five scrolls.⁸ Thus, large churches or monasteries must have had a collection of liturgical scrolls for use during the celebration.⁹

A large group of actual liturgical scrolls survive, more than one hundred on Mt Athos alone.¹⁰ In most cases these scrolls contain the liturgies of Basil or John Chrysostom, as well as short rubrics. In rarer cases, however, the text may also contain

⁵ C. Astruc, "L'inventaire—dressé en septembre 1200—du Trésor et de la Bibliothèque de Patmos. Édition diplomatique," *TravMém* 8 (1981) 15–30.

⁶ M. I. Gedeon, "Διοθήκη Μαξίμου μοναχοῦ κτίτορος τῆς ἐν Λυδία μονῆς Κοτινῆς," *Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά* 2 (1939) 263–91.

⁷ In Byzantium, *metochia* were smaller monastic establishments dependent on a larger monastery.

⁸ F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra et Profana Collecta* II (Athens 1862) 568. The inventory simply lists *κοντάκια πέντε* without specifying which liturgy they contain.

⁹ Monastic collections with substantial numbers of liturgical scrolls include those catalogued by M. Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai* (Wiesbaden 1970); N. Bees, *Τὰ χειρόγραφα τῶν Μετεώρων* I (Athens 1967); A. Komines, *Facsimiles of Dated Patmian Codices* (Athens 1970); S. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos* (Cambridge 1900); A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* I (Brussels 1891); and I. Sakkelionos, *Πατμιακὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* (Athens 1890).

¹⁰ Art historians have focused primarily on decorated liturgical scrolls. For these manuscripts see B. V. Farmakovskij, "Byzantine Parchment Manuscript Rolls with Miniatures," *Izvestija Russkago Arkheologiceskago Instituta v Konstantinopole* VI (1901) 253–359 (in Russian); V. Kepetzi, *Les rouleaux liturgiques byzantins illustrés (XI^e–XIV siècles)* (diss. Université de Paris IV 1979); A. Grabar, "Un rouleau liturgique constantinopolitain et ses peintures," *DOP* 8 (1954) 163–99; J. G. Herzog zu Sachsen, "Die liturgische Rolle im großen griechischen Kloster zu Jerusalem," *ZChrK* 12 (1911) 369–74; L. Bréhier, "Les peintures du rouleau liturgique no. 2 du monastère de Lavra," *SemKond* 11 (1940) 1–19; V. Lichatchova, "La décoration d'un rouleau liturgique de la Bibliothèque publique d'État de Léningrad," *CahArch* 23 (1974) 121–28. For liturgical scrolls without decoration see C. Lavriotis, "Κατάλογος λειτουργικῶν εἰληταρίων τῆς ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Μεγίστης Λαύρας," *Μακεδονικά* 4 (1955–60) 391–402; L. Polites, "Κατάλογος λειτουργικῶν εἰληταρίων τῆς ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Βατοπεδίου," *Μακεδονικά* 4 (1955–60) 403–09; L. Daly, "Rotulus Beratinus, a Greek Liturgy Roll," *GRBS* 13 (1972) 109–17, and "Rotuli: Liturgy Rolls and Formal Documents," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 333–38.

or be limited to the liturgy of James, the pre-sanctified liturgy, communion prayers, *euchologia*, and even the *diataxis*.¹¹ These liturgical texts are written on parchment, usually several meters in length and eleven to twenty-six centimeters in width, and then attached to a wooden roller. A concern for the correct depiction of such scrolls is evident in a number of painted churches. In the sanctuary decoration of the thirteenth-century church of St John Chrysostom at Geraki, for example, rollers are included in the rendering of the depicted scroll (PLATE 1). The exactitude of such painted reproductions suggests that these manuscripts were sufficiently common to be familiar even to artists in the Byzantine provinces.

Having seen actual liturgical scrolls and their use, the painters endeavored to translate these actual manuscripts and the manner of their use into their frescoed counterparts. Unlike other figures who hold scrolls in the church program, such as saints or prophets, the painted bishops generally grasp both ends in their hands. The manner in which they unroll these manuscripts, revealing specific texts from the liturgy, suggests that the scrolls are more than a mere attribute conferring episcopal status on their holders.

Scrolls in the Byzantine Liturgy

The twelfth-century *diataxis* (or *ordo*) for the Patriarchal Liturgy of Hagia Sophia (British Museum Add. 34060) describes three occasions when the church dignitary in charge of the

¹¹ The euchologion, or prayer book used for all Orthodox services, reflected in its earliest form the cathedral services of Constantinople. Gradually this book became more monastic in content as the Palestinian (monastic) rite was combined with the cathedral rite of Constantinople. The *diataxis* contains rubrics for the celebrant of the eucharistic liturgy or certain minor offices. Though *diataxeis* can be traced to the tenth century, the most widely accepted *diataxis* was compiled by the patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos in the fourteenth century. Scrolls containing the pre-sanctified liturgy are: Dionysiou 109 (12th c.); Patmos 709 (1260), 890 (1302); Meteora, Metamorphosis 431 (12th c.); Lavra 43 (15th c.), 46 (1420); Vatopedi 17 (13th and 15th cc.), 24 (1374). Meteora, Metamorphosis 429 (12th c.) contains the Pentecostarion, the marriage ceremony, and the service for vespers. Vatopedi 18 contains the Pentecostarion. Lavra 47 (12th c.) is an Euchologion. Vatopedi 22 (14th c.) contains the *diataxis* of Philotheos.

episcopal vesting, the *kanstresios*,¹² extends an open scroll that is read by the celebrating bishop. The first occasion described by the *diataxis* is for the inaudible prayer following the Trisagion when, "The bishop, bowing, says this prayer: 'Holy God....' And after saying this prayer, he gives the scroll to the *kanstresios*."¹³ The second occasion follows the Gospel reading, when the bishop "takes the scroll from the *kanstresios* and reads this prayer: 'O Lord our God, the insistent....'"¹⁴ This moment is significant, for it signals the ending of the Liturgy of the Catechumens. Finally, the bishop reads from the scroll for a third time during the inaudible prayer of the Cherubikon:

And the bishop, coming forward [alone] and making within himself <the> supplication during the singing of the Cherubikon, (says to) himself the prayer: "No one is worthy...." When the prayer is finished he gives the scroll to the *kanstresion*, and after letting down his *phelonion* [and] joining his hands, he says to himself the Cherubic Hymn.¹⁵

In this important prayer, written in the first person singular, the celebrant asks God to "look at me, a sinner ... and cleanse my soul and heart from any thought of evil." The Cherubikon is the priest's personal entreaty for purity and guidance in performing the eucharistic sacrifice.

Important visual evidence for the unwinding of the liturgical scroll for the inaudible prayer of the Cherubikon is provided by a narrative scene of "Saint Euthymios Miraculously Enveloped by Fire while Officiating in Church," on the north wall of the fourteenth-century chapel of St Euthymios in Thessaloniki

¹² On the rôle of this church official see Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Graz 1958) 576; A. Kazhdan, "Kastresios," *OxDictByz* II 1111f.

¹³ "Καὶ μετὰ τὸ εἰπεῖν τὴν εὐχὴν, δίδωσι τὸ κοντάκιον τῷ κανστρησίῳ," R. Taft, "The Pontifical Liturgy of the Great Church according to a Twelfth-Century Diataxis in Codex British Museum Add. 34060," *OrChrP* 45 (1979) 286f; for the prayer see F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I: *Eastern Liturgies* (Oxford 1896) 369f.

¹⁴ Taft (*supra* n.13) 292ff. "Εἶτα λαμβάνει ἐκ τοῦ κανστρησίου τὸ κοντάκιον καὶ λέγει τὴν εὐχὴν ταύτην· Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, τὴν ἐκτενῆ." For the text of the prayer see Brightman (*supra* n.13) 373.

¹⁵ Taft (*supra* n.13) 294. "Ὁ δὲ ἀρχιερεὺς προσίων ἅπαξ καὶ ποιήσας ἐν ἑαυτῷ (τὴν) δέησιν, τοῦ χερουβικοῦ ἀδομένου, (λέγει ἐν) ἑαυτῷ τὴν εὐχὴν, τὸ Οὐδεὶς ἄξιος. Πληρουμένης δὲ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐπιδίδωσι τὸ κοντάκιον τῷ κανστρησίῳ, καὶ χαλάσας τὸ φαινόλιον αὐτοῦ, δεσμήσας τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ, λέγει καθ' ἑαυτὸν τὸν χερουβικὸν ὕμνον." For the text of the prayer see Brightman (*supra* n.13) 377f.

(PLATE 2). In this scene, the eponymous saint, celebrating the liturgy, holds a scroll open over the altar. His eyes are focused intensely on the inscribed text that begins with the words ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΑΞΙΟΣ—that is, the “no one is worthy” prayer mentioned in the twelfth-century *diataxis*.¹⁶

Corroborative evidence for the use of such scrolls for the prayers of the Ectene and Cherubikon is found in the eleventh century decorated liturgical scroll *Jerusalem, Stavrou* 109. Here, an anonymous bishop, whom Grabar posited as the manuscript’s patron, is depicted beside the text of the inaudible prayers of the Ectene and the Cherubikon. The evidence provided by the twelfth-century *diataxis* suggests a reinterpretation of the presence of this bishop in the manuscript, for he is pictured at precisely two moments when the scroll would have been unwound.¹⁷ The placement of the episcopal portrait next to the prayers stipulated for reading during the service may have been a deliberate attempt by the anonymous bishop to display his piety, or to have his generosity remembered by God and his brethren each time the scroll was unwound to these sections.

The three inaudible prayers indicated by the *diataxis* of the Great Church are regularly inscribed on the scrolls of the painted bishops in the Byzantine sanctuary. With few exceptions, the “No one is worthy” prayer is held by Basil, the prayer’s reputed author.¹⁸ The Trisagion may be held by John Chrysostom or Gregory the Theologian. The text of the Ectene, less often included in the central sanctuary, is not associated with a particular bishop.

A number of other prayers are commonly found on the painted scrolls, and these may correspond to other *diataxeis*. For example, in later *diataxeis*, the patriarch is described as reading from a liturgical scroll during the chanting of the three antiphons:

¹⁶ For a discussion of this scene see T. Gouma Peterson, “Christ as Ministrant and the Priest as Ministrant of Christ in a Palaeologan Program of 1303,” *DOP* 32 (1978) 215f.

¹⁷ Grabar (*supra* n.10) 165f, figs. 1, 5, 9. The bishop is also depicted among the figures on the headpiece of the scroll.

¹⁸ For statistical information and preliminary conclusions concerning the prayers held by bishops in primarily Serbian churches see G. Babić and C. Walter, “The Inscriptions upon Liturgical Rolls in Byzantine Apse Decoration,” *REByz* 34 (1976) 269–80.

... and the patriarch recites the prayers of the three antiphons, likewise reciting their respective ecphoneseis, as the *ieromnemon* holds the scroll.¹⁹

As is the case with the three prayers described in the earlier *diataxis*, the three inaudible prayers accompanying the antiphons are often inscribed on scrolls held by the painted bishops. For example, in the later twelfth-century church of St George at Kurbinovo, Athanasius holds the first antiphon and Achilleios, a local saint, is honored by extending the second. The third antiphon is held by Nicholas. In the small church of St Demetrios Krokeon in Laconia, dated to 1286, John Chrysostom holds the prayer of the First Antiphon and Gregory the Theologian holds the prayer of the Third Antiphon (PLATE 3). Thus, the prayers read from the scrolls by the actual celebrant and the prayers read from the scrolls by his frescoed concelebrants are identical, and the unwinding of the scroll simultaneously by the painted and breathing priests forms a tangible bond between the two.

Special Prayers for Communion

In rare cases in Byzantine sanctuary decoration, painted bishops hold partially opened scrolls inscribed with the words of consecration rather than the inaudible prayers of the liturgy.²⁰ In the church of the Taxiarchs in Kastoria, for example, Gregory the Theologian, Basil, John Chrysostom, and Athanasius hold prayers directly linked to this portion of the liturgy. The two outer figures, Gregory and Athanasius, hold scrolls inscribed with the *epiklesis* and the prayer following it in the

¹⁹ "λέγει καὶ ὁ πατριάρχης τὰς εὐχὰς τῶν τριῶν ἀντιφώνων κρατοῦντος τὸ κοντάκιον τοῦ ἱερομνήμονος." A. Papadopoulos Kerameus, ed., *Διάταξις τῆς τοῦ Πατριάρχου Λειτουργίας* (Athens 1890) 93; see also I. Habert, *Archieratikon: Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Graecae* (Paris 1643) 52f, with commentary 59f. The Habert edition presents a slightly different text: "Ἀνίσταται καὶ ὁ Πατριάρχης, καὶ λέγει τὰς εὐχὰς τῶν τριῶν ἀντιφώνων ὁμοῦ λέγων καὶ τὰς ἐκφωνήσεις καθ' ἑαυτὸν, κρατοῦντος καὶ τοῦ Ἱερομνήμονος τὸ κοντάκιον." For the rôle of the *ieromnemon* in the liturgy see J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ΟΦΦΙΚΙΑ de l'église byzantine* (Paris 1970) 368–73. For the position of the *ieromnemon* see also DuCange (*supra* n.12) 510f.

²⁰ This type of depiction is found in Panagia Eleousa in Prespa, Bezirana Kilisesi (Peristremi), St Nikita in Cučer, St George near Sagri on Naxos, Studenića, Taxiarchs in Markopoulo, the south chapel of the Cave of Penteli in Attica, and St Blasios in Veroia.

service. Basil and Chrysostom, the two central figures in the composition, possess scrolls containing the prayers for the consecration of the bread and wine (PLATE 4). Scrolls inscribed with the inaudible prayers as well as those bearing the shorter prayers of consecration are depicted in the church programs. Consecration scrolls, however, are differentiated from the *kontakia* by being held in a single hand, and by having their words inscribed horizontally rather than *transversa charta*.

A number of scrolls containing only the prayers for the communion survive from the thirteenth to fifteenth century on Mt Athos.²¹ That the prayers for communion were written on scrolls separate from the *kontakia* is clearly reflected in the painted representations. In turn, these partially opened scrolls placed in the hands of the painted bishops may be seen to correspond to a moment described by the twelfth-century *diataxis* of the Great Church. During the prayers before Communion,

the bishop raises his hands a little in prayer, holding in his left hand the unrolled scroll, saying to himself, "Our Father.... Holy things for the Holy."²²

The painted program of the sanctuary corresponds once again to a specific moment of the liturgy, and moreover, to the very manner of celebration.

Changes in Practice, Changes in Painting

By far the vast majority of extant decorated and undecorated scrolls were produced during the most prolific period of Byzantine monumental painting, that is, the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries.²³ Considering existing evidence, it seems clear that the increased production of scrolls for use during the

²¹ Iviron 4131 (11th c.), 4133 (11th c.); Pantocrator 64 (11th c.); Dionysiou 110 (12th c.); Lavra 44 (15th c.), 45 (14th c.); Vatopedi 10 (13th c.), 13 (14th c.), 14 (14th c.), 15 (13th c.).

²² Taft (*supra* n.13) 298. "Ὁ δὲ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐκτείνει μικρὸν τὰς χεῖρας πρὸς δέησιν, κατέχων ἐν τῇ λαιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ κοντάκιον ἐκτετυλιγμένον, λέγων πρὸς ἑαυτὸν· Πάτερ ἡμῶν ... τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἀγίοις."

²³ See Lavriotis (*supra* n.10). The breakdown of scrolls according to chronology presented by Polites (*supra* n.10) for the monastery of Vatopedi is as follows: 10th c.: 1; 11th c.: 1; 12th c.: 5; 13th c.: 12; 14th c.: 20; 15th c.: 8. The majority contain the liturgies of Chrysostom (23) and Basil the Great (21). To date, I have collected references to more than 160 liturgical scrolls, although I suspect that there are hundreds more that remain uncatalogued.

celebration of the liturgy in the period following Iconoclasm may be linked to a significant change in the manner of depicting bishops in the sanctuary.²⁴ One can thus point to a case where actual liturgical practice inspired a significant change in church decoration. The shift in the actual object held by the bishops in the apse was not arbitrary but paralleled changes in contemporary liturgical practice. Consideration of the actual scrolls and their use as attested by Byzantine sources sheds light on liturgical practice in a period when the text of the service had already been formulated, as well as on artistic changes after the so-called 'classical decorative system' had already been established in Byzantium.

The metamorphosis of the painted bishop within the sanctuary demonstrates a concern for the realistic depiction of liturgical celebration. Moreover, placement of figures rendered in a three-quarter pose on the walls of a rounded apse creates the illusion that these painted bishops not only participate in a frescoed celebration of the liturgy but literally emerge from the walls to concelebrate with the living priest.²⁵ The presence of a marble barrier dividing the church nave from the sanctuary proper together with ecclesiastical injunctions that the faithful avert their gaze from the sanctuary resulted in the rapid withdrawal of these painted figures from the general view and veneration of the congregants.²⁶ If they were glimpsed by the faithful,

²⁴ The earliest surviving undecorated scroll (Vatican gr. 2282), dated to the ninth century, contains the liturgy of St James. The Monastery of the Great Lavra on Mt Athos possesses one scroll dated to the tenth century and another dated to the eleventh. Iviron contains two scrolls dated to the eleventh century, and Dionysiou houses yet another. Sinai Euchologion 956 has been dated to the tenth century. Two decorated scrolls located in the Russian Archaeological Institute of Constantinople and the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem are attributed to the eleventh century.

²⁵ Concelebration played a significant rôle in the Byzantine liturgy. The celebrants' movements were liturgically choreographed and their functions stringently pre-assigned. The importance and precise order of concelebration was especially evident during the episcopal liturgy when positions within the sanctuary were allocated according to the rank of the prelate.

²⁶ Even as early as the eleventh century, Nicetas Stethatos (*Opuscules et Lettres*, tr. J. Darrouzès [Paris 1961] 282ff) refers to the monastic practice of obscuring the view of the sanctuary from the faithful: "Know that the place of the laity in the assembly of the faithful during the sacred anaphora is far from the divine altar. The interior of the sanctuary is reserved for the priests, deacons, and sub-deacons; the area outside the sanctuary, to the monks and other ranks of our hierarchy; behind them and the platform, for the laity.... How then from such a distance can the laymen, to whom it is not permitted,

then the painted bishops formed otherworldly counterparts to the actual celebrants. For by virtue of their eternal position in the sanctuary and their possession of scrolls that continually voice the secret prayers of the celebrant, these bishops participate in a mystical liturgy that transcends the physical boundaries of the walls on which they are painted. The parallel worlds signified by the bishops, simultaneously temporal and eternal, may well encapsulate the mystery of Byzantine art.

In small monuments, especially single-aisled churches of the Byzantine countryside, local priests would celebrate the liturgy with the assistance of (at most) a deacon. In such settings, the presence of the painted bishops undoubtedly had a strong psychological import. These images linked the priest to a tradition of correct ritual celebration. The living celebrant found himself confronted by the very authors of the liturgy, who, through the prayers inscribed on their unrolled scrolls, offered him the unchanged text of the sacred office. Furthermore, the words voiced by these scrolls exhorted the celebrant to cathartic introspection in preparation for the eucharistic sacrifice. The 'orthodox' message transmitted by the painted bishops was especially important in the post-Iconoclastic period when Byzantium was challenged by internal heresy, theological disputes, and Latin intervention.²⁷

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contemplate the mysteries of God accomplished with trembling by his priests?" (My translation.)

²⁷ For the relationship between images of this period and ecclesiastical debates, see e.g. G. Babić, "Les discussions christologiques et le décor des églises byzantines au XII^e siècle," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 3 (1968) 368–86; A. Townsley, "Eucharistic Doctrine and the Liturgy in Late Byzantine Painting," *OC* 58 (1974) 138–53. In this period discussion focused on the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice and on the rôle of the Trinity. In addition, increased contact with the Latins introduced a number of problems for the Byzantine church, including the issue of *azymes* and the marked differences in celebration.

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