

03/10/2022

Remarks at the Official Repatriation Event of Gospel 220, in memoriam of Metropolitan Pavlos of Drama, Kozinitsa Monastery



Your Eminence, Metropolitan Panteleimon of Xanthi,

Right Reverend Abbess Gerontissa Antonini of Panagia Eikosiphoinissa Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery,

Dear Friend, Mr. Steve Green, Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Museum of the Bible,

Dr. Jeff and Ms. Susan Kloha, Chief Curator, and Dr. Brian Hyland,

Associate Curator of Medieval Manuscripts of the Museum of the Bible,

Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, Advisory Council, Museum of the Bible,

The Holy Sisterhood in Christ of Panagia Eikosiphoinissa,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today, this auspicious and joy-filled day, I have the privilege to represent our Spiritual Father, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew – in whose sacred presence we were graced these last days, for the purpose of receiving an extraordinary example of Christian love and responsibility. For today, the Holy Book of the Gospels, the manuscript once known as Kosinitza Manuscript 220, is being returned to its Monastic Home and Sanctuary.

The Founder and Chairman of the Museum of the Bible, a remarkable institution that graces the National Mall of the Capital of the United States, together with the Museum's Curators, came to the righteous and generous decision to return this important Manuscript to its rightful home, from which it had been plundered over one hundred years ago.

The Green Collection of Oklahoma City had purchased the manuscript out of their immense devotion to Holy Scripture in all its manifestations. The actual manuscript tradition of the Greek New Testament which contains over 5,800 separate texts – partial or whole, is a special treasure of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which continues the living tradition of the language in its worship. As His All-Holiness said at the Museum of the Bible less than one year ago:

As the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, we represent the memory of the Church, not only from the doctrinal and constitutional side of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, but from that which bears witness through Sacred Scripture. All of the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse are within our sphere. Furthermore, our continuous memory has allowed us to share with the world the Scripture as it was used in worship – in liturgy, and in the original language.

The public reading of these lectionary texts created a centripetal, binding force, that shaped the texts of the New Testament in particular. The lection pulls them together, because as the Apostle Paul says: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” *

Indeed, the noted scholar Kenneth W. Clark underscored the value of lectionary readings of the text of the New Testament, writing:

It is generally held ... that public reading of the lectionary text tended to stereotype it and remove it from the centrifugal forces that shattered the unity of the witnesses. Therefore, the lectionary text would be a conservative text and once understood, should bear valuable witness to the text in the early period of the Church. †

This Gospel, which originated Magna Graecia (in Greek, Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς), which we know now as Southern Italy, found its way to Panagia Eikosiphoinissa nearly 140 years ago, to be treasured here as part of the witness of the Sacred Text of the New Testament. The confusion and violence surrounding the First World War found this treasure and many others looted from the Monastery. When the Museum of the Bible discovered that this text was illegally and rapaciously taken from the Monastery, it moved quickly, responsibly and professionally to see to its restoration

and repatriation. We cannot express enough our gratitude to the Green Family and the Museum for their Christian and professional service.

You have set an example for others to follow, and we pray that they do. But above all else, you have manifested your commitment to the One Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, because you have not allowed the sinful actions of those long dead to prevail. You have chosen the way of the Resurrection, “the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory.” ‡

* Romans 10:17; remarks made at Museum of the Bible, October 25, 2021.

† Kenneth W. Clark, “The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology,” in *The Effect of Textual Criticism upon New Testament Studies. Essays in Honor of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge 1956), p. 46.

‡ Matthew 19:28 (KJV).

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