

ABSTRACTS

Reading the Future in Byzantium and Beyond: New Approaches to the Byzantine Prophetic and Apocalyptic Tradition. Edited by Paul Magdalino and Andrei Timotin. Heidelberg: Herlo Verlag, 2024, 219 p. *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, n.s. VI (XIII)

Paul Magdalino (*University of St Andrews*)

The Necessity of Prophecy in Byzantine Culture. Forms and Functions of Prophecy in the Byzantine Tradition

This chapter surveys the ways in which the Byzantines used prediction of the future to add value and significance to past and present events, phenomena and decisions. The central and inclusive place of prophecy – distinct from though related to divination and scientific prognostication – in Byzantine cultural life is demonstrated by the multiple duality of the modes in which it circulated: biblical and classical, prophetic and oracular, oral and written, material and verbal, rational and irrational, spontaneous and contrived. It is suggested that prophecy was not only an option but also an imperative for both the makers and the narrators of Byzantine history.

Andrei Timotin (*École Pratique des Hautes Études – PSL, Paris*)

Prophets in Competition: The Holy Man and His Rivals, from Late Antiquity to Byzantium

In Late Antiquity, following the prophecy crisis of the fourth century, the Desert Fathers were recognised as the foremost holders of prophetic charisma, as legitimate heirs to the biblical prophets. They thus occupied the space left more or less empty by a list of figures who were recognised during the late Roman Empire for their ability to predict the future. According to a typology of prophecy that enjoyed a certain popularity in Byzantium, this ability was characterised as either “diabolical prophecy”, inspired by demons, or as “natural or technical prophecy”, based on natural aptitudes or technical skills to foretell the future, an expertise attributed in particular to astrologers and dream interpreters. The Byzantine holy man gradually appropriated these abilities, as his reputed capacity to know the future became increasingly more widespread. Consequently, the holy man came to be regarded as a prophet who spoke in riddles, a skilled reader of the celestial bodies, and an interpreter of dreams. While his prophecies in principle were distinct from those of his rivals, which were supposed to be less accurate and clear, Byzantine sources reveal a long-lasting competition where the similarities often outweighed the differences between these distinct types of prophecy.

Pablo Ubierna (*National Paedagogical University (UNIPE), Buenos Aires*)

L'apocalyptique zoroastrienne et la tradition syriaque. La figure de Wahrām ī warzāwand dans le Zand ī Wahman yasn

The place of the apocalyptic hero *Wahrām ī warzāwand* in the *Zand ī Wahman yasn* have always presented problems concerning its origin and its place in the framework of Zoroastrian tradition. We propose here a link with the figure of the Last Emperor as it is presented in Syriac apocalyptic texts like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.

Petre Guran (*Institute for South-East European Studies, Romanian Academy, Bucharest*)

The Clairvoyant as “Individual-outside-the-world” in Middle Byzantine Hagiography

The article explores the applicability of Louis Dumont’s “individual-outside-the-world” to the clairvoyant holy man in several Middle Byzantine hagiographies. Clairvoyance is considered

here as a prophetic charisma used for spiritual guidance and moral warning apart from political prophecy and from the *Visio Danielis* genre. The hagiographical revision of this charisma marks the shift from the preoccupation for the destiny of a community, to the interest conferred to the future of the unique person. After a short review of Weberian historiography on the roots of modern individualism, the article identifies five aspects of spiritual growth towards the status of “individual-outside-the-world”, which are common to early, Middle Byzantine and late medieval Western Christianity. The clairvoyant’s authenticity is confirmed by his ability to describe or to unveil for his disciple experiences, landscapes and interactions with beings of the otherworld. Thus, the clairvoyant displays a number of features which connect him to the main flow of Christian mystical tradition. Of particular importance is the reference to the immortal humans who continue to accompany the Christians towards the eschaton. As an outcast, stranger, fool or any other socially peripheral figure, the clairvoyant unveils the interaction of spiritual powers in this and the other worlds with human consciousness and its ability to identify personal guilt and responsibility. A matrix-type imagination represents the clairvoyant in a permanent pendulation between two worlds and several times and places in these worlds. The clairvoyant enjoys total spiritual freedom and boldness (παρρησία), passes it to his disciples, but remains at the same time the perfect “hidden servant”, the stern defender of a non-social conception of humanity.

Pablo Ubierna (*National Paedagogical University (UNIFE), Buenos Aires*)

The Exegete as Prophet: Basil of Neopatras’ Commentary on the Book of Daniel and the Governance of the Empire

This article deals with a hitherto unedited exegetical work of Basil of Neopatras, a 10th-c. Byzantine bishop. The text focuses on the *Commentary of Daniel* where Basil stresses the ties between the Emperor and Christ, both acting as Co-Rulers of the Christian Empire. The article also points to the possible links with the Works of both Arethas of Caesarea and Leo Choiosphaktes who opposed each other on matters of theological Orthodoxy regarding the Governance of Empire.

András Kraft (*Einstein Center Chronoi, Berlin*)

Apocalyptic Discourse in Nikētas Chōniatēs’ History: Andronikos I Komnēnos Revisited

The paper examines the ambivalent portrayal of Andronikos I Komnēnos (r. 1183–1185) in Nikētas Chōniatēs’ *History*. It is argued that the historian uses a variety of apocalyptic motifs and allusions that reflect different views on Andronikos’ place in the apocalyptic imagination. In particular, Chōniatēs’ account is shown to testify to the emperor’s erstwhile messianic ambitions as well as to attempts by contemporaries to invert and reverse those aspirations. In addition, the historian himself is shown to have sought to downgrade and de-eschatologize the apocalyptically charged rhetoric surrounding the Komnēnian emperor. The ambivalent image of Andronikos as hero and villain, savior and antichrist, reformer and tyrant is due to the repeated reevaluation of his legacy in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. Ultimately, the paper offers a supplement to recent studies on Chōniatēs by directing attention to the scriptural and apocryphal bedrock of the *History*.

Marie-Hélène Congourdeau (*CNRS, UMR 8167, HDR Paris Sorbonne*)

Oracle et temporalité: Nicéphore Grégoras et Nicolas Cabasilas

Starting with a sentence from the treatise *Against the nonsense of Gregoras*, in which Nicholas Cabasilas mocks Nicephorus Gregoras’s passion for oracles and prophecies, the article analyses Gregoras’s relationship with oracles and the conception of the interplay between past,

present and future that it implies. The profound disagreement between Cabasilas and Gregoras, far from being about Palamite theology, reveals the clash between two conceptions of temporality: that of Neoplatonism, to which Gregoras belongs, and that of patristic typology, to which Cabasilas belongs.

Anissava Miltenova (*Institute for Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia*)
Tradition historique et apocalyptique reconsidérée. Les compilations bulgares médiévales des sources byzantines

Historical-apocalyptic writings in Bulgarian lands originated as compilations or translations of Byzantine Greek sources in order to understand the course of Christian history and the place of the Bulgarian kingdom among the Christian kingdoms of the Balkans and the world. Their appearance is a typical phenomenon and is characteristic of times of turning points, wars, uprisings and disturbances in a broad period from the 10th to the early 18th century. The compilations are based on basic texts which are the models for their creation: the *Apocryphal Apocalypse of John the Theologian*, the *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius of Patara*, *Interpretation of St. Hippolytus of Rome on the Book of Daniel*, the *Exposition (Narrative) of the Antichrist* by the same author, etc. In the composition of the texts, attention should be paid to certain common places (topoi), which constitute a kind of centre around which the predictions about the nature and course of historical events are gathered.

Andrei Prohin (*National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Chişinău*)
A Historical Thought and Spiritual Message in the Byzantine Apocalypses from the Slavonic-Romanian Manuscripts: A Miscellany Copied by Gavril Uric in 1448

The manuscript of Gavril Uric from the Neamţ Monastery, copied in 1448, is one of the oldest known Slavonic-Romanian miscellanies containing Byzantine apocalypses. They are represented by the *Vision of Prophet Isaiah*, the *Revelation of Prophet Daniel about the Last Times and the Antichrist*, and the *Vision of Kosmas the Monk*. The miscellany also contained other texts (stories, lives of saints, and teachings), having eschatological references as well. The manuscript can be read as a representation of world history, according to the Christian view. This history started with prophecies about the Incarnation of Christ and ended with prophecies about Christ's Second Coming and the Final Judgement. The content of the miscellany mirrors several historical realities of the age in which the copyist lived (the spread of hesychasm, the scholarly work of Patriarch Euthymius of Tarnovo, the concern for the fate of Constantinople). It offered a valuable source of information for the superiors of the Neamţ Monastery to guide the community of brethren and the lay people, and to answer various questions about spiritual life. The apocalypses featured among the texts that could offer spiritual advice, disclosing mysteries of the afterlife and the world to come.