

Sinaiticus



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Saint Catherine Foundation celebrates a decade of achievement 1996–2006



Father Theoktistos and a member of his team at work on the East Wing Cells.

The launch of a charity committed to the preservation of Saint Catherine's has resulted in significant improvements to the monastery's infrastructure and the establishment of a pioneering conservation programme centred on the monastery's library. During the past ten years, real, substantial change has come to Sinai.

The hazardous water tank on the roof of the South Wing has been removed and a modern water storage system installed in its place, outside the monastery's walls. The gas-fired kitchen on the first floor of the South Wing has been dismantled and a safe electric kitchen set up alongside the Old Refectory in the eastern quarter of the monastery. Renovated accommodation for the Fathers is under construction within the historic East Wing Cells, and an upgraded fire safety programme is in development. The designs for the South Wing Project are progressing under the direction of architect Demetri Porphyrios, and Phase One building work is scheduled to begin early in 2007.

The Camberwell library conservation project continues to evolve with the completion in February of the condition assessment of the bound manuscripts and the start in November of a second survey, that of the early printed books. The Camberwell team has expanded to process the data generated by the manuscript assessment, and work on the boxing programme will resume once the design of the library's interior has been finalised.

The friends of Saint Catherine's have cause for celebration in the foundation's Tenth Anniversary year.

Completion of the conservation survey

On Thursday 2 March, the 3,307th, and last, manuscript was handed to the newest member of the survey teams, Silvia Sotgiu of the Istituto per la Patologia del Libro in Rome, for inclusion in the survey, and with this book what I believe to be the most comprehensive, detailed and largest survey of an entire manuscript collection ever attempted was brought to an end. The following evening, the team of six conservators, four of whom had been there for two months on this special, final visit, sat down in the monastery's hostel

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The Saint Catherine Foundation and its related associations in Switzerland and the United States support conservation work at the Monastery of Saint Catherine. The monastery's Library is the present focus of conservation activities. To safeguard this historic archive, the foundation is raising funds for the renovation of the Library building and for the conservation and boxed storage of the manuscripts and early books.

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restaurant to a celebratory dinner of roast goat in the company of the Archbishop (who generously provided the wine for the meal), Father John Metaxas and Father Paësius, together with some of the Fathers who had been with us in the librarian's office over the years, including Father Justin, Father Nilos and Father Gregorios. It was a moment to savour.

When the process started in November 2001, the prospect of finishing seemed a long way off, but by March of the following year we were able to predict a realistic rate of progress which was maintained to the end, allowing us to finish not only on time but on budget. There were in all 15 visits, each lasting a month, with the exception of the last, which was of two months' duration. We started with up to five visits each year, made by teams of four conservators for one month at a time, but this was changed in August 2004 to six conservators on each visit, with the reduction of the number of visits each year to three, to minimise the disruption that our visits inevitably made to the life of the monastery (it is the rule of the library that the librarian and usually one Father should be there at all times to invigilate anyone working in the library). Thirty-five conservators from nine different countries took part in the survey and the multi-national nature of the project, far from being a hindrance, contributed positively to the experience – though complicating the life of our administrator, Octavia Allocco, who had the job of assembling the teams in the right place at the right time for each visit.

As we were usually able to work for only six hours each day (occasionally an hour more if the Fathers could accommodate it), the survey process was designed to capture as much information in as reliable a manner as possible in as short a time as possible, and not to spend time assimilating the information if this work could be done as well back in the office in London. This meant that the work was intensive, and after each three-hour session, the conservators were happy to have a break. The work

itself was done by pairs of surveyors, each one acting as a check on the work of the other, and the pairs changing every few days to ensure the greatest consistency of result in a situation that did not allow much time for checking the records as they were made. Working in pairs allowed complex qualitative decisions on the degree of damage suffered by a book to be made collectively, thus reducing the risk that an individual's judgment might wander in the course of the work. The use of drawings to record the structural details of each book as well as damage not only encouraged a sharper observation on the part of the surveyors, but also saved time – complex areas of damage to a leather cover, for instance, could be drawn in outline with an amount of information that would have taken much longer to describe in words.

The design of the survey process was started by myself and Dr Nicholas Hadgraft, and used a ten-page paper survey form, which was radically revised, augmented and improved in the course of the first visit, with expert assistance from Michael Gullick and Dr George Boudalis, both of whom went on to be regular team leaders throughout the project. The survey methodology was more or less stabilised by the time we were a third of the way through the collection, but when we reached the Greek manuscripts we encountered another problem to overcome – manuscripts with large numbers of miniatures and decorated initials and headpieces. Pigment loss and damage in Byzantine miniatures is a well-known phenomenon, apparently exacerbated by the dry conditions of the Sinai, and it was essential that we found some time-efficient means of recording them. This was done by taking low-resolution digital images of the miniatures with a hand held digital camera, altering the images in Photoshop to arrange and size them to fit on A4 paper and to produce a 'bleached-out' appearance which could be annotated in pencil, using a series of graphic conventions for different types of damage. A programme was written



Archbishop Damianos and Nicholas Pickwoad at the dinner to celebrate the completion of the survey of bound manuscripts.



George Boudalis, Andrew Honey, Marco di Bella and Cédric Lelièvre carry the treasure bindings from the museum to the librarian's office for inclusion in the survey.

by our Research Fellow, Dr Athanasios Velios, to automate the process on the computer, and the results will be analysed back in London.

The primary purpose of all this work has been to record the condition of the manuscripts in sufficient detail to allow future conservation work in the new conservation workshop to be planned accurately and to target the manuscripts in greatest need of repair. It will also allow us to predict the complexity of the work and this will allow us to match the work to the most suitable conservators. The information recorded will also help to make sure that the workshop is properly equipped for the work to be done. However, in order to record the condition of the manuscripts and to have sufficient information to allow us to predict the types of repair that will be necessary, we have had to record the details of the structures and materials found in them. As the monastery library contains the largest collection of Byzantine and Greek-style bindings to have survived, this means that our database contains, as a by-product of the survey, the largest body of information about bookbinding in the Christian Middle East ever to have been accumulated. This information will, of course, be invaluable in helping us to prioritise and determine the appro-

priate type and extent of conservation work, but it also offers a valuable research tool in its own right. The generous grant (in excess of £200,000) given to us by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of Great Britain to transfer the survey data onto the database designed for it by Dr Velios has also allowed Dr Boudalis to start work on a Greek/English terminology of bookbinding based on the data gathered in the survey. This terminology will be illustrated and designed in a way that allows the user unfamiliar with binding structures to find the correct terms to describe a binding. The funding also covers the work of Nikolas Sarris on his doctoral thesis, which will result in a *catalogue raisonné* of the finishing tools used to decorate a large proportion of the bindings. A grant from the Headley Trust has allowed us to start digitising the approximately 30,000 slides taken during the survey, so that the images can be incorporated into the database. This rather laborious and repetitive work is being done, under the supervision of Dr Velios, by an enormously helpful group of students from the Camberwell College of Arts. For three months we also had a student from Athens, Georgia Gkouliavoudi, working for the foundation and financially supported by the EU

exchange programme 'Leonardo'. She worked closely with Dr Velios on the development of the inputting methodology and software and began the arduous task of inputting the slides, setting a pace which will allow us to finish this part of the project in good time.

The experience of the manuscript survey is allowing us to plan a much more rapid and economical approach to the survey of the earlier printed books, which we hope to start later this year. With the methodology already established, we will be able to make this survey almost entirely digital from the start, eliminating the paper forms and thus radically reducing the time needed for the post-survey assimilation and analysis of the data. We will also use a digital camera rather than slide film, and will therefore not need to digitise slides, though we will need to be very careful how we archive the images, as we will no longer have slides as 'hard copy' to act as the 'masters'. The manuscript survey forms and the 80-page manual which accompanies them can be seen on the Camberwell project website (www.arts.ac.uk/research/stcatherines), which also lists the articles describing them and the database and digitisation work written by myself and Dr Velios.

NICHOLAS PICKWOAD



The inaugural meeting of the Advisory Panel on 9 September 2005.

Advisory Panel convened in London

The inaugural meeting of the Advisory Panel, whose formation was announced in the last issue of *Sinaiticus*, was held at Bridgewater House on 9 September 2005, attended by 21 of the panel members and the Camberwell project team. It was a busy and rather exhausting day, the purpose of which was to explore the ways in which the panel could assist the project and, in return, how the project could assist the scholarly world. The day started with a greeting by the chairman of the Saint Catherine Foundation, Dimitris Dondos, which was followed by an introduction by the chairman of the Advisory Panel, Dr David McKitterick of Trinity College, Cambridge, and presentations by Professor Nicholas Pickwood on the work of the project and its future plans, by Dr Athanasios Velios on the condition survey database and the internet discussion group established for the use of the Advisory Panel, and by Dr David Cooper on the digitisation of the manuscripts, a separate programme which is running in parallel with the conservation project.

After a break for lunch, the group reconvened in the afternoon for a structured discussion of the main issues

raised by the conservation and future use of the library. Starting with a greeting by Father Justin, the librarian of Saint Catherine's, the panel first discussed the need felt by all those present for a more comprehensive and up-to-date catalogue of the manuscripts, together with a supporting bibliography, and how this might be achieved. There was general agreement that an 'open-ended' online multi-lingual catalogue compiled by the scholars studying the manuscripts was the best way to achieve this, as there would be no need for an expensive printed publication and it would be possible to continue adding to and amending the entries as more was learned about the collection. This was followed by a discussion about the digitisation of the manuscripts and the use of surrogate copies, and the need always to ensure that digitisation in no way threatened the safety of the manuscripts. The final session on the conservation of the manuscripts was a little hurried as time – and energy – were running short. The main issue was that of establishing priorities for conservation treatment and how the panel members could help with this process and, in reviewing proposed conservation work, to make sure that scholarly interests could be best served by any repairs.

Attention was also drawn to the work carried out by conservators from Athens following the discovery of the New Finds in 1975. The Chairman brought the meeting to an end at 5.30pm. The day ended with a buffet dinner, which was also attended by Bishop Chartres.

As the membership ranges from Georgia and the Lebanon, across Europe to the United States of America, the future work of the panel will, for the most part, be conducted electronically. The strongest message to be drawn from the meeting was the need for increased collaboration between all those involved in the preservation of the monastery library, so that work is not duplicated and roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. What also became clear was that the conservation and digitising projects now have access to a group of experienced scholars of international standing who are more aware than most of the importance of the collection and who share a keen interest in helping us in our work. NP

Work on East Wing Cells resumes

After a false start early in 2002 and a report in *Sinaiticus* projecting an early completion date, the project to renovate the East Wing Cells has now resumed. Work stopped when the skills of Father Theoktistos were needed elsewhere, notably for the project to repair the dome mosaic in the basilica.

Work on the East Wing Cells is again taking priority, and the project should be completed by the end of this year. This will enable the Fathers to vacate the first floor of the South Wing in good time, with the renovation of the library, on the second floor, scheduled to begin in early 2007.

New fire safety programme agreed

The Saint Catherine Foundation and American Associates are funding a new fire safety programme at Saint

Catherine's under development by Fire Protection Consultants Middle East Ltd, a Cypriot subsidiary of Fire Protection Consultants (FPC), a Belgian company with a world-wide reach. The UK-based fire safety consultancy CS Todd & Associates is offering guidance, and especially its expertise in the protection of buildings of particular historic importance, at cost.

The monastery will be provided with active (fire protection and detection) and passive (fire doors, compartmentalisation, life safety signage) systems at a budgeted cost in excess of \$230,000.

Renowned architect secured for South Wing renovation: Demetri Porphyrrios is acclaimed for work in the classical tradition

The internationally recognized architect and theorist Demetri Porphyrrios is designing Sinai's renovated South Wing. Principal of Porphyrrios Associates, Dr Porphyrrios has built in England, Europe, the Middle East and America, and he has received many awards and honorary degrees for excellence in architectural and urban design.

Demetri Porphyrrios was educated at Princeton University, where he received his Master of Architecture and PhD in the History and Theory of Architecture. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Notre Dame and he has been Thomas Jefferson Professor at the University of Virginia and Davenport and Bishop Professor at Yale University. He has taught at the Architectural Association, the Polytechnic of Central London and the Royal College of Art. He is the recipient of the Driehaus International Prize in Architecture and the Arthur Ross Award for Excellence in the Classical Tradition. He is a Member of the Council of the Greek Archaeological Committee (UK), Trustee of the Saint Catherine Foundation, Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Member of Europa Nostra

and Member of the Society of Architectural Historians. He is an appointed Member of CABE Design Review Committee.

His articles have appeared in many international architectural periodicals. His publications include *Sources of Modern Eclecticism*; *On the Methodology of Architectural History*; *Classicism is not a*



Dr Demetri Porphyrrios

Style; Building and Rational Architecture; Classical Architecture; and monographs *Demetri Porphyrrios: Selected Buildings and Writings*; *Porphyrios Associates: Recent Work*.

Internationally known projects include the Quadrangle and Auditorium for Magdalen College in Oxford, the Belvedere Village in Ascot, the Brindleyplace Office Buildings in Birmingham, the Interamerican Office Building in Athens, the Duncan Galleries in Nebraska and the Town of Pitoussa in Spetses. Current projects include the New Whitman College for Princeton University, New Jersey; the Selwyn College development in Cambridge; the Ivy Club at Princeton University; the Kennedy-Allee/Rocco Forte Leading Hotel of the World in Frankfurt and the Alys Beach Waterfront in Florida.

An Evening in the Library: the foundation's tenth anniversary Gala

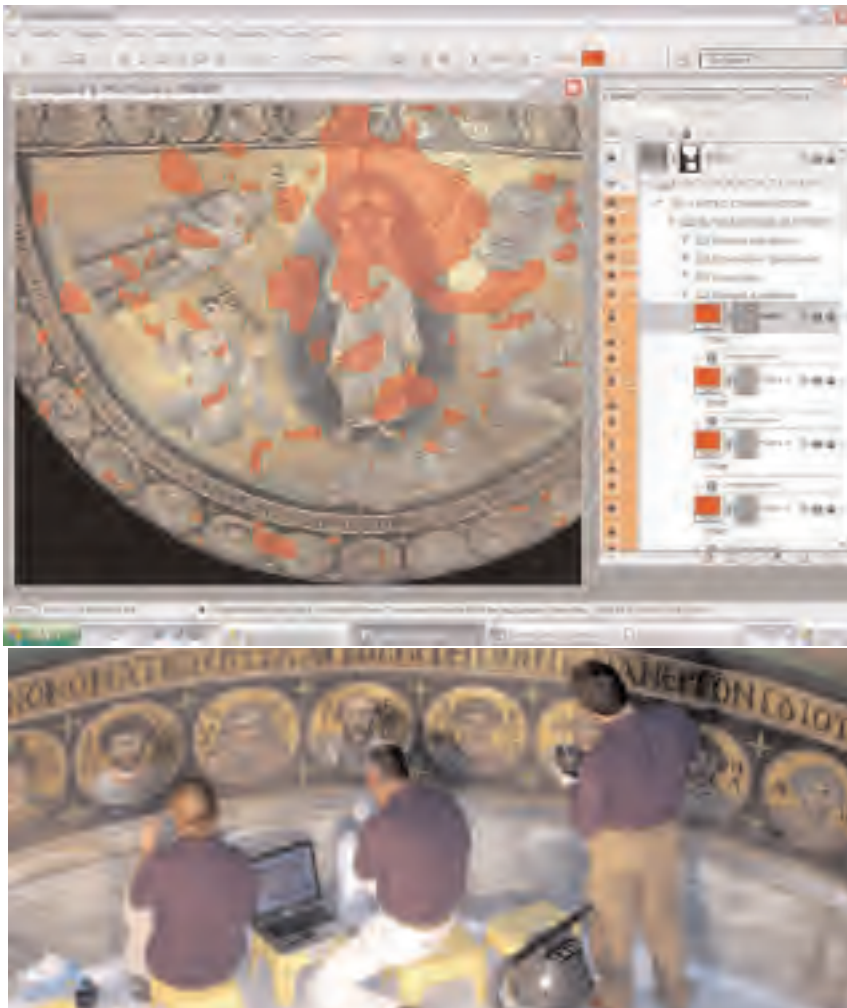
The Saint Catherine Foundation and the British Library have joined forces to organise a Gala dinner at the British Library in Saint Pancras on the evening of Monday, 12 June 2006. The Gala marks the foundation's tenth anniversary and celebrates the collaboration of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, the British Library and other partners working to conserve and unite in digital form the Codex Sinaiticus, the world's oldest Bible. The monastery and, more recently, the library, have each played a crucial role in preserving the Greek written heritage; jointly they are now pledged to establishing global access to one of the greatest treasures from that tradition.

During the reception, guests will have the opportunity to view a specially curated exhibition of Greek literary treasures in the John Ritblat Gallery, entitled 'In a Monastery Library: Preserving Codex Sinaiticus and the Greek Written Heritage'. In addition to the British Library's portion of the famous Codex, the display will bring together for the first time the most beautiful and significant Greek manuscripts from the British Library's world-renowned collection.

An Evening in the Library will raise funds for the Codex Sinaiticus Project and the preservation of the Greek written heritage. All funds raised on the evening will be shared equally by the Saint Catherine Foundation and the British Library. The Gala is generously supported by Mr Naguib Sawiris.

Conservation of dome mosaic underway

The mosaic of the Holy Transfiguration is the focal point of the sixth-century basilica at the Holy Monastery of Sinai. Two years ago temporary scaffolding was installed, and the monastery invited Roberto Nardi to make a detailed examination of the mosaic. Roberto Nardi is Director of the Centro di Conservazione



TOP A Photoshop image of the dome mosaic showing areas needing consolidation and the computer programme used to record conservation work. BOTTOM The conservators at work.

Archeologica in Rome, and one of the most respected authorities on the conservation of mosaics. His investigation revealed that the mosaic was in a perilous state and seriously in need of consolidation.

A programme to conserve this priceless mosaic has now been put into effect, and more permanent scaffolding has been installed in the basilica. Work began in November 2005 and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2007.

Roberto Nardi gives a history of the mosaic, past interventions and a detailed description of the current effort in his booklet on the project, to which Archbishop Damianos has contributed a Preface.

We take this opportunity to share the Archbishop's Preface with readers of *Sinaiticus*.
FATHER JUSTIN

Foreword

HE Archbishop Damianos of Sinai

The apse mosaic in the Holy Monastery of Sinai is one of the most profound depictions of the revelations of God to man. At the highest registers one sees the holy Prophet Moses, at the Burning Bush, and receiving the Law. Below, the apse itself is dominated by a depiction of the Holy Transfiguration of Christ, when His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white and glistening. The holy Prophets Moses and Elias appeared speaking with Him, while His three foremost Apostles Peter, James, and John, were overcome by the vision. This depiction is itself surrounded by portraits of additional prophets and apostles. The mosaic thus unites both the Old and New Testaments. It confronts the viewer with the

goal of the spiritual life, which is the vision of the uncreated Light of the Godhead, and by grace, to grow into the very likeness of God (theosis). Constructed early in the second half of the sixth century, the mosaic is a rare example of the pre-iconoclastic art of Constantinople. It has inspired monks and pilgrims for over fourteen centuries, and continues to inspire all who behold it.

The mosaic is remarkably well preserved. This is due, in large measure, to the interventions carried out by Monk Samuel in 1847, and further interventions and cleaning carried out under the direction of Ernest Hawkins in 1959-1960. But a careful examination made by Roberto Nardi two years ago revealed that the mosaic is in a fragile state, requiring extensive consolidation. An ambitious conservation program has been put into effect, based on the highest principles, and employing the cautious use of completely traditional materials.

This program has been made possible through the extreme generosity of His Highness the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. The project has received the full support of Dr Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt. It is being implemented by Roberto Nardi, Director of the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica in Rome, and his dedicated staff of experienced mosaic conservators. The mosaic consolidation is the first phase of a comprehensive plan that will include the restoration of the roof of the basilica and the elimination of the rising damp which is affecting the walls.

May God abundantly bless all who have made this project possible. May it ensure that this incomparable mosaic will continue to inspire all who behold it for many centuries to come, presenting to the viewer the vision of our eternal aspiration, which is the Kingdom of God.

The Codex Sinaiticus Project

In partnership with the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, the University Library at Leipzig and the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg, the British Library is currently leading an ambitious international project focused on the Codex Sinaiticus, arguably the world's oldest

Christian Bible. The overall aim of the project is to make the entire Codex accessible to a global audience for the very first time. Using innovative digital and web-based technology and drawing on the expertise of leading scholars, conservators and curators, the project aspires to offer people of the twenty-first century the opportunity to connect directly with the famous 1,600-year-old hand-written copy of the Christian scriptures in Greek. It will reunite in virtual form the four surviving parts of the Codex, now in London, Leipzig, St Petersburg and Sinai. It is our belief that this major landmark in the history of the Christian scriptures and outstanding monument of religious faith, scholarship and technological innovation has much yet to reveal to us.

At the heart of the project is international collaboration. Teams of experts from the UK, Europe, Russia, Egypt and the USA have joined together to form a Project Board and four working parties to plan and direct the project through its various phases. Each of the stewards of the four distributed parts of the manuscript is represented on the Project Board, and on 9 March last year each signed an historic partnership agreement committing them to the project. His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai has given the initiative his blessing on behalf of the Holy Fathers of the Monastery of Saint Catherine. Similarly, the Greek Ministry of Culture is fully informed and eager to co-operate; they too are represented, through the Greek Embassy in London, on the Project Board.

Over the next four years the project will encompass four strands: conservation, digitisation, transcription and scholarly commentary, and dissemination. Additionally, the British Library has agreed to lead research into the full history of the Codex. Working together with the other partners in the project, the Library has already commissioned research into the documentation of the history of the Codex in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The results of this research will be published as part of

the products of the project.

A Conservation working party was formed, including experts from the British Library and the Camberwell project team, who asked Christopher Clarkson to examine the manuscript leaves in the monastery and to liaise with the British Library conservators. The Conservation working party has undertaken an initial assessment of the leaves in all four locations, to determine how much work will be required to stabilise them for digitisation and to preserve them for the future. It has been established that substantial conservation work is needed for the leaves held at Saint Catherine's. A more detailed assessment is also required, which will involve examination of every leaf held in each location, to note its physical condition and individual conservation requirements for stabilisation. Once the full assessment is complete, a plan will be drawn up for undertaking the work needed in each location, and this will be carried out accordingly by members of the working party. To date half of the portion at the British Library has been fully assessed and conserved.

Digitisation offers a means of providing high-quality images as substitutes for the real manuscript leaves. Within the project digital images will provide a life-like view of the pages, thus allowing, for the first time, wide access to the manuscript with minimal handling. A Technical Standards working party has identified the optimum method for filming the manuscript and processing the imaging. In addition to images taken under standard lighting, further images taken under different lighting will enable erased text to be captured and corrections to the main text fully analysed. Based on recent thorough testing of the procedures to be used, imaging of the Old Testament portion of the Codex at the British Library will begin later this month.

A major research project led by the University of Birmingham has also begun to re-transcribe the texts of the Codex. The Codex Sinaiticus is particularly significant for its rich layering of

texts. Corrected first by each of the original scribes of the Codex and then submitted to further waves of correction from the seventh century onwards, the pages of the Codex preserve evidence of a rich and lively debate on the text of the scriptures through the centuries. Uniquely among manuscripts of the Christian Bible almost every page abounds with corrections, re-corrections and insertions, many of considerable textual significance. The project aims to prepare a fully searchable electronic transcription of both main text and corrections and make this available together with the new digital images. At the click of a button it will then be possible to read and view successive states of the Biblical text, in a manner similar to viewing a vertical cross-section of history in an archaeological dig. Selective translations and commentaries will also be developed to present key aspects of the Codex to a range of audiences.

To date the project has identified a range of products that will build upon the full scholarly reappraisal of the Codex and its texts and also help bring alive this iconic manuscript for the layman. Anyone with internet access will be able to view, at no cost, the original and enhanced digital images of the whole manuscript through a dedicated website. This purpose-designed site will target both scholars and the general public through a variety of media and will be translated into different languages for maximum accessibility. It will include a transcription of the whole text and selected translations. The website will be the main focus of the public launch of the project. A selection of pages of the Codex Sinaiticus will be presented via the award-winning Turning the Pages technology. Through both a web version and free-standing kiosks at agreed locations this presentation of the Codex will allow people to "turn" the digitised pages of the Codex in a realistic way, using interactive animation. A high quality, case-bound, colour-printed facsimile of the entire Codex Sinaiticus will also be produced, to enable full access to a life-like copy of

the original manuscript at a relatively low cost. Other products envisaged include further publications in both electronic and printed formats, an exhibition, and a conference.

In the early stages the project received crucial start-up funding from the American Trust for the British Library, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture, and the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation. At the end of 2005 significant additional grants were awarded by the Stavros S Niarchos Foundation, the Leventis Foundation, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and the German Science Foundation. At present it is estimated that we need to raise £681,000 for phase one of the project. To date £555,000 has been raised.

SCOT MCKENDRICK
Dr Scot McKendrick is Head of Western Manuscripts at the British Library

Monastery to feature in exhibitions at Freer Gallery and Getty Museum

On a trip to Cairo in 1906, Charles Lang Freer purchased a collection of early Biblical manuscripts. They are acclaimed today as some of the most important manuscripts of the Scriptures in the New World. In collaboration with Francis W Kelsey, professor of Latin at the University of Michigan, the manuscripts were quickly published. Saint Catherine's Monastery has a facsimile of the Washington Manuscript, published in 1912 in a limited edition and donated to the monastery at that time.

At his death, Freer's extensive collections passed to the Smithsonian Institution, and in 1923 the Freer Gallery of Art was constructed. The manuscripts are rarely exhibited since it is felt they do not form a sufficient display in themselves. But this year marks the hundredth anniversary of their acquisition, and the Freer has planned an important exhibition for the autumn, to be called *In the Beginning: Bibles Before the Year 1000*.

The exhibition will have some 55 items on display, and each of the items

will be of great significance. They will be exhibiting the Isaiah 2 scroll from Qumran, the Rabbula Gospels from Florence, the Sinope Gospels and the Codex Claromontanus from the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Gospel of Thomas and the Pillow Psalter from the Coptic Museum, the Codex Brixianus, as well as many manuscripts from the British Library. In addition, visitors will be able to see the earliest fragments of the Gospel of Matthew, preserved at Magdalen College, Oxford, and papyrus leaves from the oldest manuscript of the collected Epistles of Saint Paul, kept at the University of Michigan.

Saint Catherine's Monastery has accepted the Freer Gallery of Art's invitation to participate in this significant exhibition, and hopes to send three complete manuscripts and selected leaves from five others.

The exhibition will be featured at the annual convention of the Society of Biblical Literature, which will meet in Washington from 18-21 November. In addition, there will be supplementary exhibitions at Dumbarton Oaks and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.

The exhibition at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles will be called Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons and Manuscripts from Sinai (14 November 2006 - 4 March 2007). Prof. Robert Nelson of Yale is guest curator. There will be three sections to the exhibition. The first will introduce the visitor to the concept of the icon, and the first icon on display will be the sixth-century encaustic icon of Saint Peter. A second section will be arranged to remind the visitor of an Orthodox church, and will present the icons, Gospels and vestments in the context of Liturgy. A film will be shown in conjunction with this section, showing the services at Saint Catherine's Monastery. The third and final section will feature icons of the Holy Prophet Moses

and of Saint Catherine, patron Saints of this holy site. The exhibition will include several manuscripts. These are the twelfth-century Homilies of Saint Gregory the Theologian, an illuminated manuscript of The Ladder dating from the twelfth century (Sinai MS 418), an Arabic translation of The Ladder written in 1612, a Gospels in Greek, bound in silver gilt, dating from the latter half of the twelfth century (Sinai MS 208) and an Arabic Gospels dating from the tenth/eleventh century. Robert Nelson wants to stress that these icons and manuscripts are not art objects only, but that they are devotional objects made for liturgy and prayer.

The exhibition will focus exclusively on Sinai, but a very few objects from other collections will supplement the exhibition. These include the sixth-century chalice, paten and liturgical fan (ripidion) from Dumbarton Oaks, which will be placed on the Holy Table in the second section of the exhibition.

FATHER JUSTIN

Saint Catherine Foundation goes online

The Saint Catherine Foundation's new website is now online. The simple navigation and elegant layout created by Lola Design (www.loladesign.co.uk) provide an illustrated overview of the foundation's projects and activities in the UK, US and Switzerland. Please visit www.saintcatherinefoundation.org for further information.



Changes to New York Board

It was with much regret that the American Associates accepted Mary Jaharis's decision to stand down as joint Vice President at the 2006 Annual General Meeting of the Board of Directors. Mary's able and energetic participation as an officer will be greatly missed, but she remains an active and enthusiastic member of the Board.

A most effective joint Vice President, Zoe Moshovitis continues in this role, this time in tandem with the capable Froso Beys.

Robert George Shaw, President of Navios Maritime Holdings Inc and an attorney specialised in maritime and corporate law, joins the Board as a Director. Married to Katerina Shaw (née Pergantis) and the father of Marina, Alexi and Artemis, Robert is the US representative member of the Documentary Committee of the Baltic and International Council. A graduate of St. John's College, Oxford University, he is a former Chairman and President of the Hellenic-American Chamber of Commerce and a former President of the Board of Trustees of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City.

London administrator appointed

Tahani Nadim has been appointed Administrator of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Tahani will be available to answer your queries three days a week, Monday to Wednesday, from 9 am to 5 pm. You can contact the foundation by telephone on +44 (0)20 7396 5420, by fax on +44 (0)20 7396 5440 or by email care of secretary@saintcatherinefoundation.org.

Tahani is an art history graduate who is currently researching her PhD thesis. She has previously worked as Programme Manager for the Women's Art Library and was an editor for Black Dog Publishing in London.

OBITUARY

Maria Baddeley 1916-2005

Maria Baddeley's death leaves a void at the heart of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Uniquely supportive of the Foundation's activities and endeavours, Maria offered special encouragement as mother, aunt, grandmother and friend.

Maria Baddeley was born Maria Roussen to Pericles and Lilly Roussen in Athens on 26 August 1916. Her father, Pericles, was Admiral of the Greek naval fleet. One of five siblings, the glamorous 'Roussen sisters', Maria became a much sought-after part of Athens society during the interwar period. However, this happy life was rudely interrupted when Pericles Roussen's principled monarchist beliefs led to his imprisonment for refusing to jeopardize the Greek fleet. This caused his early death, and the circumstances of the family changed dramatically. The young Maria was forced to abandon her education and take up a job.

Maria was greatly attracted to Athens's literary and artistic community. In her early twenties, she became the model and inspirational subject of portraits both by her first husband, Yiannis Moralis, and other Greek painters, including Yiannis Tsarouchis. Yiannis Moralis's iconic portrait of Maria is now displayed in the National Gallery of Greece. She herself was also inspired to paint at this time.

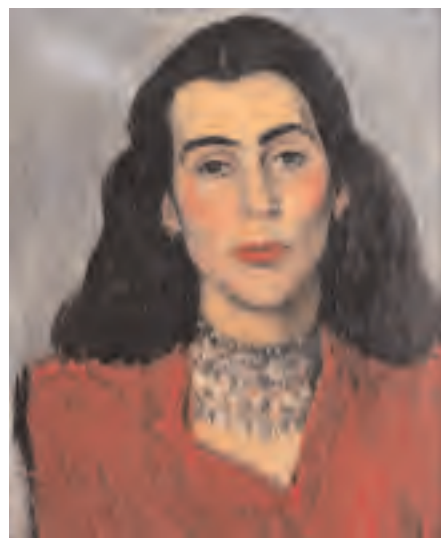
During the German occupation and the ensuing Greek Civil War, along with all Greeks, Maria experienced great hardship. In the prevailing chaos, she met John Halkett Baddeley, who had been posted to the British Embassy in Athens, and soon after they married. Maria embarked on life as a diplomat's wife. Her ability to empathise with people from all cultures and all walks of life gave John vital support in his work. Through the 1950s and early 1960s, Maria and the growing family accompanied John to Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma and Belgium.

In the early 1960s, John was posted

permanently to the Foreign Office in London, and the family moved to Sussex. Maria presided over a large house in Crawley, where countless friends, relatives and diplomatic colleagues were welcomed.

Once their children had left the family nest, John took up a new post at the British Embassy in Washington DC. Soon afterwards, John became seriously ill and died of cancer. After this terrible shock, Maria returned to London.

From the mid eighties onwards, Maria divided her time between Greece, Switzerland and England. Despite her somewhat nomadic existence, she still



Portrait of Maria by Yiannis Moralis.

created a home. This 'home' included, but went beyond, family and geographical boundaries. It was built from her personality, her intellectual curiosity and, most of all, her generous heart.

In her later life, Maria flourished yet again as a grandmother and great aunt. She was also a great friend to many people who were very special to her. Maria was a devoted wife, a loving mother and aunt, an extremely popular grandmother and great aunt and a loyal friend. She was unique and irreplaceable.

Maria Yvonne Roussen Halkett Baddeley, wife of John Halkett Baddeley CMG, died London 10 September 2005.

Conservation of the Codex Sinaiticus

JOHN MUMFORD AND FLAVIO MARZO

The Conservation working party from the British Library, Saint Catherine's Monastery, the University Library at Leipzig and the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg have agreed a documentation model and set terminology for recording the special physical features of the Codex Sinaiticus and the condition of the manuscript for digitisation. The documentation database has been translated into Greek, Russian and German, ensuring a consistent approach that will serve as a model for conservators and scholars around the world. The documentation, together with images, aims to provide a clear, detailed description of the physical aspects of the manuscript and to set benchmarks to promote objective monitoring of the preservation status of the manuscript over the longer term.

The Codex Sinaiticus Documentation Model consists of a blank, ten-page documentation form and a glossary. One form will be completed for each folio of the manuscript, and a report describing the structure and condition of the binding will also be compiled. The documentation will record all physical aspects of the manuscript, including evidence of scribal characteristics, codicology and history of use, and highlight any conservation issues.

The design of the model emphasises 'repeatability', enabling specialists (conservators, curators and others) to use the same documentation system at different locations and/or at different times. The clarity of the glossary and hyperlinks to a database of sample images support this aim.

Conservation Treatment

The assessment and conservation of the Old Testament folios held at the British Library have now been completed and the imaging is progressing.

The conservation of the Old Testament folios consisted of reattaching previous, or old, edge repairs with a five per cent application of Salianski Isinglass. The small tears on the outer edges of the margins were repaired using a lightweight Tengujo Japanese tissue which had been pre-coated with a five per cent application of Salianski Isinglass. This adhesive could be remoistened using minimal moisture for direct application to the manuscript. The tissue was reactivated with a two per cent solution of Isinglass adhesive, limiting the amount of moisture applied directly to the parchment. The weak areas within the text margins were supported with small 'splint' supports applied between the individual text lines and individual characters. No adhesive or material was placed in contact with the written text.

We feel the above treatment procedures will give the Codex a repair method which is stable, with the ability to blend into the substrate and, if required, to be removed readily and safely. A number of different adhesives and repair materials were tested. The criteria for selection of a suitable treatment were: the use of minimal moisture to prevent distortion during the repair process, the need for well-sourced conservation-quality materials, a repair

support that is strong but not so strong as to place strain on the Codex's very thin parchment. The fish bladder adhesive was selected for its 'tacky' properties and ease of removal, and the ability to work at room temperature. Minimum intervention was the guiding principle in the identification of areas for treatment.

The Codex is a major resource for scholars working in a range of disciplines, particularly those studying the Christian and Jewish scriptures, the history of the Christian Church, the transmission of texts and Hellenic and Byzantine culture. The Codex is also a key document for the study of the history of the book and the structure of books and codicology. It is the earliest surviving book to encompass in one volume the numerous texts that have come to be recognised as forming the Christian Bible. It marks a dramatic shift from a culture in which texts were transmitted in scrolls to one, familiar to us today, in which texts are transmitted in bound books. The detailed conservation assessment to be undertaken and published as part of this project will provide valuable information for anyone interested in this moment of major technological and cultural change.

John Mumford is Head of Book Conservation and Flavio Marzo is a conservator at the British Library.



ABOVE The British Library Conservation working party: Flavio Marzo (left), Gavin Moorhead, Nikolas Sarris, Barry Knight, Sara Mazzarino and John Mumford.

BELOW John Mumford (left) and Flavio Marzo carry out conservation work on the Old Testament.

Quête de Dieu et sens de l'icône

COSTAS STAMATOPOULOS

Permettez-moi de commencer cet exposé par le récit d'une expérience personnelle: il y a quelques semaines je visitais pour la première fois le mont Sinaï. Je voyageais avec un groupe d'amis. Nous arrivâmes au Monastère de Sainte-Catherine alors que la nuit tombait, après avoir pendant des heures traversé le désert, des centaines de kilomètres d'étendues arides de sable ou de rochers. Les deux haltes que nous fîmes furent la première à ce qui subsiste de l'illustre cité portuaire de Raïtho (actuellement Tor), pour visiter l'intéressante église grecque de Saint-Georges au cloître d'un aspect quasi mexicain et à l'iconostase authentiquement russe, et où nous fûmes assez heureux de trouver encore debout – hélas pour peu de temps encore, car les sables l'engloutissent – un reste du quartier portuaire grec, sans âge mais probablement construit au moment du percement du canal de Suez, et conservant en dépit de ses ruines, ou peut-être à cause même de son délabrement, la poésie de deux mondes également révolus: le monde hellénistique et le monde proche oriental arabe puis ottoman, mondes aux populations mélangées et aux religions diverses, la plus tenace entre toutes étant celle de l'argent. Puis nous passâmes devant les vestiges de la fameuse laure, haut lieu monastique, des temps héroïques du monachisme, à l'abbé de laquelle, l'higoumène du monastère de la Vierge du buisson ardent – ancien nom du monastère actuel de Sainte-Catherine – le futur saint Jean de l'Echelle (saint Jean Climaque en grec) adressa, vers l'extrême fin du 6^e siècle, le recueil de préceptes spirituels, qui tout de suite fut reconnu comme un ouvrage spirituel majeur de l'Eglise, et qui conserve jusqu'à nos jours une inaltérable renommée.

Quand nous arrivâmes à Sainte-Catherine, il faisait nuit. Nuit glaciale du désert. Le temps de laisser nos affaires dans les chambres de l'hôtellerie, la lune s'était levée, c'était la veille de la pleine lune – et les deux immenses parois rocheuses, qui bordent des deux côtés le monastère, le mont Horeb et l'autre montagne en face beaucoup moins célèbre parce qu'aucun prophète connu de nous ne la choisit pour lieu de son ascèse, brillaient, blanches et froides, lisses comme si elles étaient en métal. Je fis quelques pas vers le monastère saisi par l'hostilité, l'absolue inhumanité du lieu. La muraille ouest, sans aucune ouverture – outre la minuscule entrée, qui fait littéralement l'effet d'un trou de serrure – elle aussi baignait dans une lumière glacée, quasi irréaliste. Construite de matériaux tirés des montagnes avoisinantes, elle me fit l'impression d'un barrage, d'une barrière immense, dressée entre deux mondes appartenant chacun à un degré différent et indicible du Terrible. J'avais devant moi en quelque sorte une frontière, un point limite de l'Humain, un seuil au-delà duquel l'espace et le temps deviennent Théophanie: le buisson ardent, l'entretien de Moïse avec Yahvé, la remise au prophète des tables de la Loi... Et soudainement une crainte violente m'envahit, une quasi panique tout à fait irraisonnée, tout à fait involontaire, provoquée par l'impression de m'être inconsidérément exposé dans un lieu où le profane ne peut impunément pénétrer, la peur que

ressent celui qui avancerait sans armes et sans possibilité de repli et sans aucune couverture, jusqu'à l'ultime tranchée, face à l'ennemi. Cette angoisse, doublée d'un sentiment de répulsion, violent et incontrôlable, ne fut surmontée que plusieurs heures plus tard, réduit par la fatigue du jour et des heures d'insomnie. Le lendemain elle avait disparu. Non sans me laisser l'impression d'avoir goûté, sans l'avoir voulu, et bien que dans une mesure infime, aux prémices de l'expérience, de ce que devaient sentir, de ce que devaient rechercher les ermites du désert; eux volontairement et réellement exposés, eux incommensurablement plus vulnérables, eux parvenus au-delà des limites de toute sagesse humaine, démunis de tout, se moquant de tout sauf de Dieu, incroyablement provocateurs, êtres ivres de désir, ivres d'absolu, exerçant à l'égard de Dieu ce quasi blasphémateur et outrancier chantage, en l'implorant, en le sommant d'apparaître, et devenir pour eux, abri, nourriture et boisson et ineffables délices.

Viens, lumière véritable. Viens, vie éternelle. Viens mystère caché. Viens trésor sans nom. Viens personne inconcevable. Viens félicité sans fin... Viens ô Puissant, viens ô Invisible, viens ô Nom bien aimé, viens joie éternelle. Viens toi qu'a désiré mon âme misérable. Viens, toi le Seul, au seul, puisque tu le vois je suis seul. Viens toi devenu toi-même en moi désir, qui m'as fait te désirer, toi l'absolument inaccessible. Viens mon souffle et ma vie. Viens consolation de mon âme. Viens ma joie, ma gloire, mes délices sans fin clamait du fond de sa cellule à Constantinople, le grand mystique autour de l'an 1000, Symeon le Nouveau Théologien. Et je compris dans ma peau quoique d'une façon négative, que ce lieu désolé, où l'homme ne peut que s'élancer à l'assaut de Dieu ou bien sombrer dans la folie, et où Dieu ne peut qu'en se révélant, qu'en apparaissant, exprimer Sa sollicitude, Sa tendresse, Sa réponse d'amour, je compris donc, que ce lieu de face-à-face inconcevable était par excellence un lieu saint.

Le lendemain, après la liturgie, nous visitâmes la trésorerie du monastère, un peu trop coquette à mon goût, pour abriter ces bombes nucléaires d'énergie, ces réceptacles de beauté plus que céleste, que sont les icônes qu'elle renferme, avec en premier l'icône du Sauveur, chef d'œuvre du début du 6^e siècle, et dont la place appropriée – vous en conviendrez avec moi – n'est pas dans un musée, fût-il celui d'un monastère, mais bien dans le sanctuaire... Et je comprenais qu'en définitive j'avais devant moi, hier en pensant à la rencontre de Moïse et au combat spirituel des moines, aujourd'hui en me tenant devant l'icône du Christ, deux temps successifs de l'accomplissement du même mystère, que je résumerai par le mot théophanie, les icônes constituant à la fois la démonstration et le symbole du sommet de l'expérience spirituelle, à savoir la vision de la Face divine, la communion avec la lumière incréée. *Quant à vous, heureux vos yeux parce qu'ils voient, heureuses vos oreilles parce qu'elles entendent. En vérité je vous le dis, bien des prophètes et des justes ont souhaité voir ce que vous voyez et ne l'ont pas vu, entendre ce que vous entendez et ne l'ont pas entendu. (Mathieu 13/16-17).*

L'icône donc, fenêtre vers l'au-delà, fenêtre vers le Tout autre...

Dans cet état de communion, non pas passive mais dynamique dans laquelle se trouve l'orant la relation peut s'inverser et d'une certaine manière c'est l'icône qui dans le secret de la prière interroge, scrute, provoque et finalement mystiquement oriente le croyant, l'entraînant à devenir lui-même Visage, à devenir icône, à se sanctifier. *Nous tous qui le visage découvert contemplons comme dans un miroir la gloire du Seigneur, nous sommes transfigurés en la même image de gloire en gloire comme par le Seigneur l'Esprit.* (2 Cor, 3/18).

Et je sentis l'extrême philanthropie, l'extrême générosité de notre Tradition sacrée, qui à la place d'un Dieu absolument transcendant, inaccessible, ou d'un Dieu terrible, que l'on ne peut dévisager sans périr, l'Eglise orthodoxe met en avant l'adorable Face du Seigneur dans toute la vérité de Sa divinité/humanité, sainte et sanctifiante. Et j'osais dévisager, debout devant l'icône, cette Face entre toutes vénérable: je décelais à la fois un puissant élan intérieur, une pénétrante interrogation, une directe invitation à Le suivre, une fragilité, une profonde pitié, je dirais presque une déception, et pour tout dire, une bouleversante et toute humaine impuissance. C'était un peu comme l'expression que devait avoir le visage du Christ quand Il formula la question terrible «le Fils de l'Homme en revenant sur terre y trouvera-t-Il la foi ?», la face aussi du Christ de Dostoïevski, dans les Frères Karamazov, en écoutant le Grand Inquisiteur lui dire: «Pourquoi es-tu venu nous déranger?»...

Mais l'icône n'est pas seulement l'image et le symbole de la suprême vision spirituelle. L'icône est également un des instruments qu'utilise l'Eglise pour révéler l'essentiel de son message: le fait que Dieu s'est incarné afin que l'homme puisse être déifié, en communiant avec la grâce divine. Ce qui nous permet d'affirmer que l'icône constitue pour l'Eglise à la fois une nécessité incontournable et une conquête. Une conquête, parce que pour confesser en peinture sa foi, il fallut à l'Eglise surmonter, à l'intérieur même de ses rangs, de très légitimes réticences. Somme toute il s'agissait de tracer avec netteté la ligne interdisant toute confusion, toute analogie entre le culte des idoles et celui de l'icône. Et puis il lui fallait passer outre l'interdit formel de l'Ancien Testament. *Tu ne feras aucune image sculptée, rien qui ressemble à ce qui est dans les cieux là-haut, ou sur la terre ici-bas, ou dans les eaux au-dessous de la terre. Tu ne te prosterner pas devant ces images ni ne les serviras, car moi Yahvé, ton Dieu, je suis un Dieu jaloux...* (Exode 10/4-5). Dans le premier cas l'Eglise se borne à préciser que la vénération des icônes s'adresse non pas à l'objet matériel, mais à celui qui y est représenté, dans le second elle met l'accent sur la réalité de l'Incarnation. Oui, affirme-t-elle, Dieu ne pouvait être représenté auparavant sans blasphème. Mais APRES l'Incarnation c'est un égal blasphème que refuser de Le représenter dans l'aspect qu'Il daigna prendre pour le salut de l'homme, qui est aussi celui, dans lequel Il parut aux disciples—puis à d'innombrables saints au cours des âges—après Sa résurrection.... Voici pourquoi comme l'écrit André Grabar, dans son fameux ouvrage sur l'Iconoclasme byzantin, *Byzance a vu des gens mourir pour les icônes.*

Poussons à présent notre réflexion sur l'icône un peu plus loin. Et renversant la perspective qui fut la nôtre jusqu'à présent, je vous invite à prendre comme point de départ dans cette relation homme - icône, l'icône non pas en tant que symbole de communion de Dieu avec l'homme, ou en tant qu'outil utilisé par l'Eglise pour confesser l'Incarnation, mais l'icône dans toute sa matérialité: à savoir une planche en bois sur laquelle est peinte la Face du Seigneur, ou celle d'un saint. Et l'Eglise sait d'expérience,

que c'est justement ce bout de matière, ce morceau du bois peint, qui parfois se transforme en véhicule de l'Esprit, selon évidemment la ferveur de la foi, de l'homme priant devant elle, mais surtout suivant le libre choix de Dieu. Vue sous cet angle, l'icône devient objet d'élection du Dieu tout puissant et réceptacle de Sa Force. Vous comprenez, qu'en premier lieu je fais allusion aux icônes dites *non faites de main d'homme* (pensez à la Sainte Face d'Edesse, ou à la légende équivalente du voile de sainte Véronique) et aux icônes miraculeuses déjà à l'époque du premier Iconoclasme (730 - 787). Saint Jean Damascène, fermement ancré sur le socle du dogme du Verbe incarné, rejetait définitivement les abstractions philosophiques de l'antiquité hellène, en particulier la répugnance platonicienne de la chair, et réhabilitant la matière, affirmait avec force son rôle capital d'intermédiaire, de médiateur, dans l'accomplissement de l'œuvre du salut. *Je ne vénère point la matière, mais le Créateur de celle-ci qui devint pour mon salut matière ayant daigné habiter en celle-ci et qui par la matière œuvra mon salut; aussi je ne puis me défendre d'honorer la matière par qui mon salut s'est accompli...* Mais à quoi bon faire appel à la Patristique grecque, quand c'est l'apôtre Paul lui-même qui dans sa première épître aux Corinthiens définit le corps humain—microcosme symbolisant et récapitulant toute la création—de *temple de l'Esprit Saint* et de *temple potentiel de Dieu?*

Des siècles plus tard lors du débat sur la nature de la lumière thaborique, à savoir la lumière qui illumina le corps du Christ lors de la Transfiguration sur le mont Thabor, celle aussi qui au Sinaï embrasa sans le consumer le buisson ardent et celle dont faisaient et font toujours l'expérience les ascètes et les mystiques dans toutes les religions du monde (bien que les Pères parlent, concernant les cas vétérotestamentaires ou ceux n'appartenant pas au christianisme, d'une révélation incomplète, établissant donc une gradation, une progression du contenu de la révélation), Byzance, sur le point de sombrer, élaborait une synthèse théologique dynamique qui en englobant le mystère et la doctrine de l'icône, aboutit à la définition d'une cosmologie chrétienne, d'une théologie hardie de la matière, qui pourrait devenir aujourd'hui, de pair avec la gratitude eucharistique, l'assise et le complément spirituels du mouvement écologique. Cette doctrine, que l'église catholique romaine hélas rejette (rejet qui par déduction automatiquement conduit au dogme protestant de la prédestination) consiste à dire que Dieu inconnaissable dans Son essence, se communique dans le domaine du créé dans Ses énergies sanctificatrices. Il est évident que l'on ne peut concevoir l'Inconcevable. Cette définition a néanmoins l'avantage de confesser d'une part l'absolue transcendance de Dieu (ce qui nous fait éviter le panthéisme ou l'idolâtrie)—le fait donc que l'essence divine est foncièrement autre que l'essence du monde créé—et d'autre part l'entière possibilité de Dieu de communier pleinement avec la création, qu'Il sanctifie et qu'Il transfigure: *Quant les saints contemplent la lumière divine à l'intérieur d'eux mêmes, c'est le vêtement de leur propre déification qu'ils voient*, écrit saint Grégoire Palamas, le grand mystique grec du 14^e siècle.

Ainsi la doctrine palamite des énergies divines rejoint celle des icônes. Dans le débat sur la lumière thaborique, ce qui dogmatiquement fut formulé, c'est la doctrine de la déification de l'homme, de l'homme purifié mais conservant l'intégralité de sa nature; la possibilité donc de la matière de devenir réceptacle de l'Esprit, de se transfigurer, et en le faisant d'échapper elle aussi à la mort. Car rien de ce qui existe ne doit être perdu. Grâce donc à la controverse hésychaste l'Orthodoxie formula son anthropologie et précisa sa réflexion sur la matière et le monde matériel.

Le ‘palamisme’, expression totale du Christianisme— et à la fois couronnement de 2,000 ans de philosophie grecque— éleva l’être humain a un sommet insurpassable, le rendant apte à participer à la gloire éternelle et à l’intimité défiante de Dieu.

Et pour terminer ce bref exposé par un retour à notre point de départ, à savoir le Monastère de Sainte-Catherine, cause directe de notre rassemblement de ce soir, je dirais seulement qu’un des premiers hauts lieux de l’hésychasme a été pour des raisons évidentes le mont Sinaï, et ceci malgré l’environnement islamique, et que ce fut en la personne de Grégoire le Sinaïte, à l’extrême fin du 13^e siècle, que la tradition hésychaste fut transvasée du Sinaï au Mont Athos et à Constantinople, où elle renforça et où elle féconda la tradition spirituelle locale, et à partir d’où elle devait rayonner dans les décennies suivantes, du Rhodope en Thrace, jusqu’à la lointaine Russie, la Russie de saint Serge de Radonège, ou d’Andrei Roublev, et des siècles plus tard, la Russie de Saint Séraphin de Sarov. Ce dernier partagea avec son disciple Motoviloff, la même expérience de la Lumière incréée, dans une clairière enneigée de la région de Nijni Novgorod, un jour d’hiver de 1831. Mais le récit du long périple de cette tradition et de cette pratique spirituelles, qui ne laissa pas indifférent l’Islam soufi de l’Anatolie seldjucide, appartient résolument à un exposé autre que celui-ci.

Management of the Condition Assessment data

ATHANASIOS VELIOS

With the successful completion of the Condition Assessment of the bound manuscripts in the old library of the monastery, the final batch of survey forms and photographic slides has been returned to the project’s office in Camberwell College. Paper and photographic film have been used to record the information gathered while assessing the condition of the books. These materials were chosen for their good long-term stability, and they will serve as the archival copy of the collected information.

The information will be stored in digital format as well, so that the project members can access the data easily and use it to plan future conservation work in the library. Extensive work has been done on processing and storing the collected data, in order to convert the paper and photographic records into digital files, for which purpose the office in Camberwell College has been set up to accommodate an extensive digitisation project. The digitisation itself is divided into three main steps:

1. Scanning the survey forms and slides.
2. Converting the scanned images into textual and numerical data.
3. Setting up a database to store the information.

Scanning The complete set of records from the assessment totals 33,000 A4 pages, 3,300 A3 pages, 1,000 rubbings of decorative finishing tools and about 30,000 35mm slides. We are scanning them one by one and

storing them as digital images. We use specialised scanning devices (a document scanner and slide scanner respectively) equipped with automatic feeding mechanisms. These minimise the manual work, accelerate processing and reduce the risk of error. A computer programme developed especially for the Condition Assessment project controls the scanning process. We also use advanced image file formats (JPEG2000 combined with XML) to store our digital images. These formats are ideal for long-term digital storage and ensure that our digital resource will be accessible in the future. This is a particularly important target of our work, as computer technology changes and many file formats become obsolete within a few years. Many of the survey forms and slides have already been scanned, and we aim to process all of the material before the end of 2007. This will allow us, by the end of the summer of this year, to begin returning the original survey forms and slides to the monastery for safekeeping as master copies. The resulting digital files, accessible over the Internet, will be held at Camberwell College.

Image conversion The survey forms contain hand-written notes and drawings of the bindings and their condition. Incomprehensible to a computer, this information has to be transferred to a format that the computer can handle. This task is performed by specialised staff experienced in Byzantine bookbinding techniques who are able to review the survey forms critically and to extract the required information. Again, in-house software is used to accelerate this process, and the user’s input is directed towards accepting or rejecting the computer’s suggestions. This part of the digitisation process is the most time-consuming, but it is essential for the efficient use of the data on a computer.

Database The information derived from the scanned forms needs to be stored for later retrieval. Developing a database specifically for this purpose has been a challenging process. The survey form used for the Condition Assessment is probably the most detailed form ever used for such work, and ensuring that the database does not compromise the storage of detailed data whilst remaining user-friendly has not been an easy task. Extensive work has been done on the production of an efficient design, work that is nearly complete. At the same time alternative database designs have been explored with a view to further simplifying the database, and we hope to test these in the coming academic year.

Research potential Storing the information about the condition of the manuscripts in a database greatly increases the research

No	Shelfmark	Type	Profile	Attachment	Material	Flag	Colours	Condition	No in Condition	Location	No in location
72	Arabic 0477	Leaf edge		Adhesive	Tissue	True	Blue	Somet	1	Fondos	1
73	Arabic 0478	Leaf edge		Adhesive	Tissue	True	Blue	Somet	1	Fondos	1
74	Arabic 0479	Leaf edge		Adhesive	Silk	True	Red	Very	1	Fondos	1
80	Arabic 0484	Leaf edge		Adhesive	Silk	True	Red	Broken off	1	Fondos	1
85	Arabic 0485	Leaf edge		Adhesive	Tanned leather	True	-	Somet	2	Fondos	1

A screen-capture of the results returned by the database on the structure and condition of page markers.

potential of the resource. Although the survey forms give a detailed description of the condition of individual manuscripts, it is impossible to extract from them any information about the collection as a whole. The database offers this capability, as the computer can rapidly search through all the records and return collective results. This will permit identification of the specific needs of the collection for conservation and make it possible to plan conservation work accordingly. At the same time the database can be used as a resource for Byzantine bookbinding. It has already proved useful to Nikolas Sarris, who is studying the finishing tools used to decorate the bindings for his PhD thesis, and to George Boudalis, a Research Fellow, who has investigated the distinctive fore-edge bookmarks found on many of the manuscripts.

Transfigurations and Transformations

EMMA LOVERIDGE

I had Easter in York this year as Principle Advisor to the Archbishop, and it reminded me of what a wonderfully diverse world of Christian celebrations we live in. We went from Saturday night, with Vigil and Holy Fire at the candlelight service on the site of King Edwyn's baptism, to Sunday morning open-air total immersion baptism, on to the minster where the choir sang psalm 150, which rang out and then lingered amongst the roof bosses. But this time last year I had stood for Easter in the Basilica Church of Saint Catherine's Monastery, still wrapped up against the early morning chill air seeping alongside the valley in the shadow of the mountain, which keeps the sun out until well into the day.

Two different continents, Europe and Africa, two different branches of the Christian church, Church of England and the Greek Orthodox, a city in York and a desert, Sinai. But what of course is so strikingly the same is a belief in transformation. It pervades every Christian story with the enormity of hope that each individual, whatever their circumstance of life, may come to rise up from his/her deepest fear and anger and from the very darkness of our human failings, which at times can haunt us, and be liberated, set free. And of course this is the theme at the very heart of Saint Catherine's Monastery, depicted in the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration. It is the space in the church above the altar where the sacred and the secular meet, where heaven and earth touch and God and humanity are held together in the figure of Christ.

It is extremely apt, for in the story of the Transfiguration, Jesus is seen by Peter, James and John, three of his Apostles, conversing with Moses and Elijah. Both Moses and Elijah have histories in the Old Testament associated with Mount Sinai.

Mount Sinai itself in the Christian faith is a part of the theme of transformation. You may well remember that in the book of Exodus, when Moses thinks it is time for his people to move on from the desert, he goes up the mountain again to seek God's advice. He wants to know from God whether he will go with them if they leave the mountain. It is a turning point, a transformation in the religious experience of mankind, for in his answer God reveals to Moses that he is not a tribal God who lives in the mountain but a universal presence. He gives Moses a sign, he



The Revd Dr Emma Loveridge, Director of Wind, Sand and Stars, with Dr Rabia Tawfik in Sinai.

sweeps past him in a great wind and shows him his 'backside'. For in the Old Testament no one may look on the face of God and live.

Pentecost (Whitsun) for the Christian Community is the anniversary of the giving of the law, the Ten Commandments, on Mount Sinai, but becomes in the New Testament the coming of the Holy Spirit, the transforming power again. The apse mosaic at Saint Catherine's stands in the same theme of Old Testament story with a New Testament interpretation. For in the story of the Transfiguration, Christ's face, the human face of God, is shining like light. His Apostles and, with them, each one of us, may look into the face of Christ and live.

This magnificent sixth-century depiction of that Gospel story is unique, as it is the only mosaic of the Transfiguration which does not have a mountain in the picture. The story in the Gospel is also unusual, as in the story the mountain where the story takes place is unnamed. You can visit Mount Tabor, the mountain of Transfiguration, as a modern pilgrim to the Holy Land, but in the original text the mountain is deliberately unnamed. For it is of course any mountain and any metaphorical mountain where individuals, disciples, apostles, you and I find ourselves at moments of life when we must make choices, at moments of transformation. Mount Sinai is, of course, also a mountain where transformations can happen. Symbolically Mount Sinai and the mount of Transfiguration are similar.

Therefore as you stand looking at the Transfiguration mosaic in the apse of Saint Catherine's, with no mountain in the picture, you realise that you are physically standing on the mountain itself and that the mosaic is the tip of the picture. The story is three-dimensional: you, the viewer, are not an observer looking at a moment in history but a participant in the dynamic manifestation of Christ. Christ is not the representation of the law, as is Moses on his right, nor the representation of the prophets, as is Elijah on his left, but something greater, the divine human. You are standing on the mountain with Peter, James and John. You are present at the moment of revelation, of transformation, of transfiguration and you must choose to look into the face of the God/human Christ, or to walk away. The very fact that you have stepped onto the mountain makes you part of the mosaic itself. You must choose whether you will look and participate.

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