

Spatial Character & Liturgical Environment of Biblical Codex

In order to understand the liturgical aspects of the biblical codex one should take into consideration several factors.

A condition to understanding the biblical codex in its authentic environment is an adequate appreciation of its original housing and usage in temple, synagogue, church, chapel or monastery. These locations are houses of prayer and liturgy, reflected in the building and interior arrangement, which are organised in such a manner as to create the necessary conditions for celebration (*hierurgy*), reading and meditation on scripture.

Biblical codices made up part of the celebration in church and monastery. To this end they were kept in specific places (Bema, Katholikon, Skeuophylakion), and were used together with other religious books and objects (candles, censer, etc.). The biblical codex is “presented” during liturgical celebrations, and is read and explained aloud in the presence of the community. Rubrics and apparatuses indicate the liturgical usage and specific liturgical books explain how the bible codex should be used, at which moments and which parts for which occasions (feasts and commemorations).

Understanding the spatial conditions and liturgical usage of biblical codes makes evident that the reading and explanation of scripture was not an academic activity, but a devotional one. The bible, as liturgical book, was not a “text” or a series of texts for abstract study. This observation reminds the scholar of the empirical character of the bible codex.

CBM tries to keep in mind the original function of the scriptures and the manifestation and usage of the biblical codex as three-dimensional object in liturgical performances. The spatial character of the codex is missing in codex descriptions. Today codicologists measure codex height and width, but not the thickness of the spine, thus noting down only the two-dimensional measurements and not the three-dimensional codex format.