

FORMULAS OF BLESSING WITHIN THE FUNERAL ORDINARY: A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL AND LITURGICAL ANALYSIS

Ex studiis de origine duorum formulariorum liturgicorum introductoriorum (*Benedictum Regnum* et *Benedictus Deus noster*) ac de causis eorundem introductionis in cultum, studium hoc iter eorum progressionis enititur illustrare, praesertim in *Ordine Exsequiarum* sicut autem et aliis in textibus.

I. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

There is in the Byzantine liturgy an introductory formulary, also called “blessing” which reads: “Blessed¹ is our God, always, now, and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen” (“Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν πάντοτε, νῦν, καὶ ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν”), and which appears in all sources,² especially in manuscripts.

Among these manuscripts some (not older than the 10th century), the earliest to attest to a compact form of the *Funeral Ordinary*, present a blessing formulary which differs from the current one:³ “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen” (“Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν”).⁴

¹ “Εὐλογητὸς, οὐ, ὁ. On désigne ainsi une courte formule de bénédiction qui revient très souvent sur les lèvres du prêtre. En voici les paroles: Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν πάντοτε, νῦν, καὶ ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν. On dit: ποιεῖν εὐλογητόν, dans le sens de: prononcer Γεὐλογητὸς”: Léon Clugnet, *Dictionnaire grec-français des noms liturgiques en usage dans l'Église grecque*, Picard, Paris, 1895, p. 57: “Eulogitòs (εὐλογητὸς). Breve formula di benedizione, che il sacerdote ripete spesso durante i riti sacri: ‘Benedetto sia il nostro Dio, in ogni tempo, ora e sempre, e nei secoli dei secoli’”: Vitaliano Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote nel rito bizantino, secondo gli Eucologi manoscritti di lingua greca*, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, 1972 (= *Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum: Collectio Minor* 14), p. 86, note 37

² “ὁ Ἱερεὺς Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς, ὁ Διάκονος τὸ Τρισάγιον”. cf. “Ἀκολουθία Νεκρώσιμος εἰς κοιμηθέντας”, in Georgios Biolakis, *Τυπικὸν κατὰ τὴν τάξιν τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας*, Ἐκ τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Τυπογραφείου, Ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, 1888, p. 450.

³ “Grottaf. G.b. X (sec. X), f. 77 e Grottaf. G.b. 43 (sec. XI), f. 108v hanno una formula introduttoria leggermente diversa dalla solita”. V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote*, 86, note 37: “Fol. 108. Τάξις καὶ ἀκολουθία γινόμενη ἐπὶ τελευτήσαντα. Ordo et ritus servandus pro defuncto (monacho)”: Antonio Rocchi, *Codices Cryptenses seu Abbatiae Cryptae Ferratae in Tusculano digesti et illustrati*, Typis Abbatiae Cryptae Ferratae, Tusculani, 1883, p. 286.

⁴ Elena Velkovska, “Funeral Rites according to the Byzantine Liturgical Sources”, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001) 46: “Εὐλο(γημένη) ἡ Βασιλεία”: Themistoclis S. Christodoulou, *L'ufficio funebre nei manoscritti greci dei secoli X-XII*. Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad

Such peculiarities from the 10th-12th centuries are simply symptomatic of the total absence as yet at that time of any clarified synthesis or standardization.⁵ What in fact we witness at that period is a dynamic revival of monastic (Palestinian) cult at the expense of a secular one derived from the cathedral (parish). In the transition, the former retained numerous elements from the latter.

Among these elements of Constantinopolitan (even studite) origin which would remain in certain worship ordinances for some while, there is, as we shall see, this particular blessing formula (“Blessed is the kingdom”).

Among the specialists who have noticed these subtleties in the funeral ordinance, V. Bruni has rightly pointed to the manuscripts *Grottaferrata* Γ. β. X: 77 and *Grottaferrata* G.b. 43, 108v, as containing this formula of blessing, manuscripts that today are conserved in a monastery at “the gates of Rome”. The monastery in question is the Greek Abbey of Saint Nilus (“Abbazia Greca di San Nilo”) or Esarchic Monastery of St Mary of Grottaferrata (“Monastero Esarchico di Santa Maria di Grottaferrata”), founded in 1004 by a group of monks from Byzantine Calabria, among them Saint Nilus the Younger.

A far more extensive commentary on the matter has been published by Father Themistoclis Christodoulou, who states at one point that none of the manuscripts analyzed by him in his study (10th-12th centuries) employs the current formula of blessing (“Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός”): “Στὰ χειρόγραφα πὺν μελετήσαμε δὲν ὑπάρχει καμμιά ἐνδειξη περὶ ἐναρξέως νεκρώσιμης ἀκολουθίας διὰ τοῦ: “Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός”,⁶ but instead “the common Constantinopolitan one”:⁷ “Στοὺς χειρ. κώδ. πὺν μελετήσαμε βλέπουμε, ὅτι ἡ ἐναρξη τῶν νεκρωσίμων ἀκολουθιῶν γινόταν μὲ τὴν ἐκφώνηση: Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία.”⁸

Doctoratum, Pontificium Institutum Orientale - Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum Orientalis, Romae, 1996, p. 55.

⁵ Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1992, pp. 57-58. In the Romanian edition: Robert F. Taft, *Ritul bizantin - scurtă istorie*. Translated from English by Dumitru Vanca and Alin Mehes, Reintregirea Publishing, Alba Iulia, 2008, p. 74.

⁶ Themistoclis S. Christodoulou, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία κατὰ τοὺς χειρογράφους κώδικες 10ου-12ου αἰῶνος* [*Funeral Service according to Manuscript Codices from the 10th to 12th Centuries*], Τόμος Α', Γενική Εἰσαγωγή, Κατάλογοι, Πίνακες, Ἱερά Μονή Προφήτου Ἰησοῦ Θήρας: Ἐκδόσεις Θεσβίτης, 2005, p. 151.

⁷ “Συμπερασματικά ἀπὸ τὴ μελέτη τῶν νεκρωσίμων χειρογράφων παρατηρεῖται, ὅτι ὅλα τὰ χειρόγραφα ὡς ἐναρξη αὐτὴν ἰδιαίτερα τὴν ἐποχὴ μετὰ τῶν αἰῶνων X-XII αἰ. ἀναφέρουν τὴν κοινὴ Κωνσταντινουπολίτικη ἐκφώνηση: “Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία”: *Ibidem*, p. 151.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

2. THE CONSTANTINOPOLITAN ORIGIN OF THE BLESSING FORMULA “BLESSED IS THE KINGDOM”

From the analysis of the manuscripts [*Sinai 973 (Euchologium, a. 1153)*,⁹ *Patmos gr. 105* (13th century) and *Ateniensis 670* (13th century)],¹⁰ we find that the assumption regarding the Constantinopolitan-studite origin of the formulary “Blessed is the kingdom” begins to seem less sure, in the sense that other hypotheses on the matter begin to take shape, such as that of a “Sinaitic” origin, and the like.

Furthermore, after remarking on how difficult it is at present to find a substantiated answer to this question, G.I. Passarelli even wonders if the hypothesis of an Italo-Greek origin of this blessing formula (“Blessed is the kingdom”), would not be a credible one:

Allo stato attuale della ricerca è arduo dare una risposta sicura. Un dato, tuttavia, sembra potersi rivelare con un certo margine di sicurezza: la Benedizione iniziale trova i suoi primi testimoni in due codici provenienti dall'Italia meridionale (*Leningr. gr. 226* e *Crypt. G.b. VII*). Potrebbe allora trattarsi di una caratteristica liturgica italo-greca che ebbe una fortuna immediata?¹¹

The same author suggests that at a given period (probably in the 10th-12th century) there existed a certain usage as regards the initial blessing “Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία”, whereby this introductory formulary was used without restriction in all service ordinances.¹²

The relevant manuscripts are the following:

*Leningrad gr. 226 [Euchologion, 10th century], 15v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ βασιλεία;*¹³

⁹ Cf. Viktor Emil Gardthausen, *Catalogus codicum Graecorum Sinaiticorum*, E. Typographie Clarendoniano, Oxonii, 1886, p. 208.

¹⁰ “Oggi anche durante l’anno il Vespro ed il Mattutino iniziano con l’*Euloghitòs*, (cf. *Τυπικὸν τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας*, (ed. Γ. ΒΙΟΛΑΚΗ), Ἀθῆναι s.d., p. 4), là dove nei codici l’uso dell’*Euloghimèni* è costante: si v. p. es. *Sin. gr. 973* (a. 1153) f. 29, 30v (DM., 88; P.N. TREMPÉLAS, *Mikròn Euchologhion*, II, 208, 248); *Patm. gr. 105* (XIII sec.) f. 31 (DM., 161; TREMPÉLAS, *op. cit.*, 249); *Ethn. Bibl. 670* (XIII sec.) (trepelas. *op. cit.*, 208, 249-50); *Patm. 105* (XIII sec.) f. 31 (DM., 161), fa eccezione *Ethn. Bibl. 848* (sec. XV) (TREMPÉLAS, *op. cit.*, 208)”: Gaetano Igor Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, in *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata*, Nuova serie, 33 (1979) 75-91, here 83 and 85, note 37.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 83, 85.

¹² “Questo è per dire che sin da quando l’*Euloghimèni* si è affermata nella Liturgia definitivamente, non si aveva nessun problema di usarla come Benedizione iniziale di una qualsivoglia benedizione a probabilmente, anche in questo caso, la Stampa ha operato delle distinzioni che sono poi divenute legge”: G.I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 83, note 37; see also T.S. Christodoulou, *Ἡ νεκρόσιμη ἀκολουθία*, I, p. 153.

¹³ Cf. Nikolay Krasnoseltzev, *Свѣдѣнія о нѣкоторыхъ литургическихъ рукописяхъ Ватиканской бібліотеки съ замѣчаніями о составѣ и особенностяхъ богослужебныхъ чиновослѣдованій, въ нихъ содержащихся, и съ приложеніями*, Типографія Императорскаго Университета, Казань, 1885, p. 284.

Leningrad gr. 226, 15v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ βασιλεία;¹⁴

Leningrad gr. 226, 15v: Εὐλογημέν(η) ὑπάρχει ἡ Βασιλεία;¹⁵

Crypt. G.b. VIIb [*Εὐχολόγιον σὺν θεῶ, sec. X*], 131v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία;¹⁶

Crypt. G.b. VII, 131v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία;¹⁷

Crypt. G.b. VII, 131v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία;¹⁸

Crypt. G.b. VIIb, 132v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος;¹⁹

Crypt. G.b. VII, 132v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου [Πνεύματος];²⁰

Crypt. G.b. VII, 132v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου.²¹

For the *Divine Liturgy of St. Peter the Apostle*:

Crypt. G.b. VII, 131r: ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ ΠΕΤΡΟΥ;²²

Crypt. G.b. VII, 131r: ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ ΠΕΤΡΟΥ.²³

Passarelli concludes stating that the “simple” clues present in manuscripts will not suffice to clarify or define the exact period of the appearance and use of the two formulas of blessing (“Blessed is our God” and “Blessed is the kingdom”), since ultimately it is a question of the living reality of a complex liturgical tradition: “come d’altro canto è difficile voler delimitare attraverso la testimonianza dei codici l’uso dell’Εὐλογημένη ο dell’Εὐλογητός”.²⁴

¹⁴ Cf. G.I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 77.

¹⁵ Cf. Pavlos Koumarios, *Il codice 226 della biblioteca di San Pietroburgo - L’Eucologio Bizantino di Porfyrjo Uspensky*. Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum, Pontificium Institutum Orientale - Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum Orientalium - Sectio Liturgica, Romae / London, Ontario, 1996, p. 56.

¹⁶ Cf. G.I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 77.

¹⁷ Cf. Gaetano Igor Passarelli, *L’Eucologio Cryptense I. β. VII (10th century)*, Ανάλεκτα Βλατάδων 36, Θεσσαλονίκη: Πατριαρχικὸν Ἰδρυμα Πατερικῶν Μελετῶν, 1982, p. 167.

¹⁸ Cf. Humphrey William Codrington, *The Liturgy of Saint Peter*, Aschendorff, Münster in Westfalen, 1936 (= *Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen* 30), p. 130.

¹⁹ Cf. G.I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 80.

²⁰ Cf. G.I. Passarelli, *L’Eucologio Cryptense I. β. VII*, p. 170.

²¹ Cf. H.W. Codrington, *The Liturgy of Saint Peter*, p. 131.

²² Cf. G.I. Passarelli, *L’Eucologio Cryptense I. β. VII*, p. 167.

²³ Cf. H.W. Codrington, *The Liturgy of Saint Peter*, p. 130.

²⁴ G.I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 83, note 37.

As for the formula of blessing “Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός” (“Blessed is our God”), we would merely wish to recall that it is of Palestinian origin.²⁵

3. DETERMINING THE PERIOD OF THE SO-CALLED BLESSING FORMULAS

Returning to Father Themistoclis Christodoulou’s remarks on the blessing formula in the *Funeral Ordinary*,²⁶ it would seem that his view of the matter is broader and more complete, especially since he manages to distinguish, to a certain extent, the period when the original blessing, “Blessed is the kingdom”, made its appearance in the manuscripts, from the one when what was destined to become the present-day form (“Blessed is our God”) began to be imposed. Here, certainly, there needs to be borne in mind G.I. Passarelli’s observation that the testimony of the manuscripts will not suffice to concretely delimit those periods.

4. CURRENT LITURGICAL PRACTICE

The formulary “Blessed is the kingdom” (“Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία”), also often called “the great blessing”,²⁷ has remained as an introductory element until the present day within our cult, but only in the ordinances of the *Divine Liturgy* and of the *Holy Mysteries*.

Nevertheless, in this context it seems worth highlighting also the fact that, in certain worship ordinances, such as some great *Church Praises* (*Matins* and *Vespers*) as celebrated in the Abbey of Grottaferrata, “Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία” has remained until today the formulary of blessing, though only when *God is the Lord...*, and not *Alleluia*²⁸ is sung at Matins. This practice, in fact, is evidenced in the locally published current liturgical books: “Εἰ μὲν ἐστὶ Θεὸς Κύριος, μετὰ τὸ Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς..., εὐθύς τὸ Πάτερ ἡμῶν... (...) Εἰ δὲ ἐστὶν Ἀλληλοῦϊα, μετὰ τὸ Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν πάντοτε..., λέγεται τὸ Τρισάγιον.”²⁹

²⁵ “Ἡ ἔναρξις “Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός” ἀπηχεῖ Παλαιστινιακὴ παράδοσις”: T.S. Christodoulou, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία*, I, p. 153.

²⁶ See *ibidem*, pp. 150-154.

²⁷ Cf. Ene Branîște, *Liturgica Specială pentru institutele teologice (Special Liturgics for Theological Institutes)*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2nd edition 1985, p. 347.

²⁸ “Ἀλληλοῦϊα (hébr. פּוֹדוּת, louez Jéhova). Alleluia. Acclamation de joie ou de reconnaissance empruntée aux Juifs. Elle est d’un usage très fréquent dans la liturgie grecque. A Laudes, Ὅρθρος, après la collecte, συναπτή, qui succède à l’ἐξάψαλμος, on chante ordinairement le verset Θεὸς Κύριος καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἡμῖν etc.; mais certains jours, pendant ceux du Carême, par exemple, celui-ci est remplacé par le chant de l’ἀλληλοῦϊα. Or, comme ces jours-là d’autres modifications sont également introduites dans l’Office, les rubriques qui les indiquent commencent par la formule: εἰ ἔστιν ἀλληλοῦϊα, s’il y a alleluia”: L. Clugnet, *Dictionnaire grec-français des noms liturgiques*, p. 6.

²⁹ Ὠρολόγιον σὺν Θεῷ Ἁγίῳ περιέχον τὴν ἡμερονύκτιον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἀκολουθίαν τῆς Ἱερᾶς καὶ περιβλέπτου Μονῆς τῆς Κρυπτοφύρρης, Ἐν Κρυπτοφύρρῃ, 1950, pp. 31, 136.

Indeed, according to an ancient ordinance of the Abbey (attested in an edition of the Horologion [Ἐρολόγιον] from 1677), the initial blessing “Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία”, was once used far more widely still during various different worship ordinances, namely: a) at *Vespers*; b) at *Matins* c) on the Eve³⁰ of the Nativity, at the *Great Hours (Royal Hours)*;³¹ d) on the Eve of the Epiphany, at the *Great Hours (Royal Hours)*; and e) on Good Friday, at the *Great Hours (Royal Hours)*.

We can list these instances in detail as follows:

a) At *Vespers*:

Τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ εἰς τὸ λυχνικὸν τῆς ἑσπέρας;³²

Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλ(εία).³³

b) At *Matins*:

Εἰς τὸν ὄρθρον;

Τῆ ἁγία καὶ ζωηφόρῳ νυκτὶ τῆς ἐγερσεως Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. εἰς τὸν ὄρθρον;³⁴

Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων;

Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ π(ατ)ρ(ὸ)ς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.³⁵

c) On the Eve of the Nativity, at the *Great Hours*:

ΜΕΓΑΛΑΣ ΩΡΑΣ.³⁶

At the *Royal Hours*:

Εἰς τὴν πρῶτην ὥραν;³⁷

Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ π(ατ)ρ(ὸ)ς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.³⁸

³⁰ “The eve is the term for the day before an event, a holiday (on the eve of the wedding, on the eve of the Epiphany, etc.):” Ene Braniște & Ecaterina Braniște, *Dictionar enciclopedic de cunoștințe religioase (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religious Knowledge)*, Diocesan Publishing House, Caransebeș, 2001, p. 27.

³¹ “These Hours are called “the Great Hours” or “the Royal Hours”, because they are actually the Hours of the greatest royal feasts during the year (Nativity, Baptism and Resurrection of the Lord) and because in the old days at their celebration, in the Church Saint Sophia in Constantinople the king of Byzantium assisted with all his court, and in our country the rulers of the country were present, and was also made a polihronos for the Emperor (Prince):” E. Braniște, *Liturgica Specială*, p. 160.

³² *Ἐρολόγιον σὺν Θεῷ Ἁγίῳ κατὰ τὴν ἔκπαιλι τάξιν οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ Τυπικὸν τοῦ τῆς Κρυπτοφέρρης Μοναστηρίου*, Ἐν Ῥώμῃ, 1677, p. 588.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 588.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 1, 575.

³⁵ Both *ibidem*, pp. 1, 575.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 332-350.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 332.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 332.

d) On the Eve of the Epiphany, at the *Great Hours*:
 ΜΕΓΑΛΑΣ ΩΡΑΣ.³⁹

At *Royal Hours*:

ΩΡΑ ΠΡΩΤΗ and Ἀρχὴ τῆς ὥρας γ;⁴⁰
 Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλ(εία);
 εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλ(εία).⁴¹

e) On Good Friday, at the *Great Hours*:

At the *Royal Hours*:

Τῇ μεγάλῃ παρασκευῇ εἰς τὴν α'. ὥραν;
 ΑΡΧΗ ΤΗΣ ΩΡΑΣ ΤΡΙΤΗΣ;⁴²
 Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλ(εία);
 Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλ(εία).⁴³

It should be emphasized, however, that some of the characteristics of the Grottaferrata ordinance are not alien to present liturgical practice in the Orthodox Church, if we take into account the fact that at some *Vespers* with special ordinance which are united with the *Divine Liturgy* (especially with the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*),⁴⁴ the blessing is the same: “Blessed is the kingdom”.⁴⁵

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 371-388.

⁴⁰ Both *ibidem*, pp. 370, 372.

⁴¹ Both *ibidem*, pp. 370, 372.

⁴² Both *ibidem*, pp. 547, 550.

⁴³ Both *ibidem*, pp. 547, 550.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Sinai* 973, 21v: Ἡ θεία λειτουργία τῆς ἁγίας τεσσαρακοστῆς, cf. A. Dmitrievskij, *Описание литургических рукописей, хранящихся в библиотеках Православного Востока*. Томъ II. *Εὐχολόγια*, Киев: Типография Императорскаго Университета Св. Владимира, 1901, p. 86: “Ἡ ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΗΓΙΑΣΜΕΝΩΝ”: N. Borgia, “*Ωρολόγιον “diurno” delle chiese di rito bizantino*”, in *Orientalia Christiana* 16 (1929) 252; *Sinai* 973: [Σ⁶]: “Γὰς δὲ λοιπὰς εὐχὰς ζῆτει εἰς τὴν λειτουργίαν τῆς ἁγίας Τεσσαρακοστῆς”, cf. Panaghiotis N. Trembelas, *Μικρὸν Εὐχολόγιον. Τόμος Β'. Ἀκολουθία καὶ τάξεις ἀγασμοῦ ἰδῶτων, ἐγκαινίων, ὄρθρου καὶ ἑσπερινοῦ. Κατὰ τοὺς ἐν Ἀθῆναις ἰδίᾳ κώδικας*, Ἀθῆναι, 1955, p. 248.

⁴⁵ *Sinai* 973: Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία, cf. A. Dmitrievskij, *Описание литургических рукописей*, p. 86: “Εὐλογημένη ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ”, N. Borgia, *Ωρολόγιον “diurno” delle chiese*, p. 252; *Sinai* 973: [Σ⁶]: “Ἐν τῇ λειτουργίᾳ: Εὐχὴ τῆς προθέσεως Κύριε οἰκτίρμον καὶ μακρόθυμε... Καὶ εὐθὺς λέγει Εὐλογημένη”, cf. P.N. Trembelas, *Μικρὸν Εὐχολόγιον*, II, p. 248, note 1; *Liturgier (Hieratikon)*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 264-265.

5. “ORIGINAL” BLESSING FORMULAS WRITTEN IN SOURCES FOR THE FUNERAL ORDINARY

A unique fact that Father Themistoclis Christodoulou records relates to another introductory blessing formula from the *Funeral Ordinary*, namely the “Δόξα τῇ ἀγία καὶ ὁμοουσίῳ καὶ ζωοποιῶ” (“Glory to the Sacred and the One consubstantial and life-giving”),⁴⁶ which appears only once in the manuscripts so far researched by specialists: “Ὁ χερ. κώδ. Πατρ. Βιβλ. Ἱεροσολ. 373 (291) (ἔτ. 1575 ἢ 1579) ἀναφέρει στὸ Ἐξοδιαστικὸν ἐπισκόπων, πρεσβυτέρων καὶ διακόνων ὡς ἑναρξῆ τῆς νεκρωσίμου ἀκολουθίας γιὰ πρώτη φορά τό: Δόξα τῇ ἀγία καὶ ὁμοουσίῳ καὶ ζωοποιῶ.”⁴⁷

Before concluding, it seems interesting for our theme to draw attention, however briefly, to two other “original” blessing formulas, one of which features in the *Divine Liturgy* and the other in the *Funeral Ordinary*:

a) Εὐλογημένη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ βασιλεία⁴⁸ (from *Leningrad gr.* 226: 15v);

b) Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ πάντων νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ (“Blessed is our God, of all the dead and the living, now and ever”)⁴⁹ (from *Sinai 990 [Euchologium, 14th century]*).⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Jerusalem, Saint Sabas 291 [Rituale dei defunti, inizio del sec. XV]*, cf. A. Dmitrievskij, *Onucanie liturgičeskiex rukonicej*, p. 529. This formula of blessing (introductory) has remained in a small number of *Service ordinaries* of the Orthodox Church until the present day, cf. *Liturghier (Hieratikon)*, pp. 12, 71; *Penticostar adică Sfintele slujbe de la Duminica Paștilor pînă la Duminica Tuturor Sfinților (Pentecostarion, that is, the Holy Service from Easter to the Sunday of All Saints)*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 7th edition 1988, p. 6; *Aghiasmatar cuprinzînd slujbe, rînduiești și rugăciuni săvîrșite de preot la diferite împrejurări din viața creștinilor (Aghiasmatar including services, ordinances, and prayers performed by the priest under different circumstances in the lives of Christians)*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 5th edition 1992 p. 106 and *Carte de Tedeum (Book of Tedeum)*, Bucharest: Printing House of Church Books, Bucharest, 1st edition 1915, pp. 5, 16, 25, 35, 45, 62, 89.

⁴⁷ T.S. Christodoulou, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία*, I, p. 154.

⁴⁸ Cf. N. Krasnoseltzev, *Свѣдѣнія о нѣкоторыхъ литургическихъ рукописяхъ*, 284; *Leningrad gr.* 226, 15v: Εὐλογημένη ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ βασιλεία, cf. G. I. Passarelli, “Osservazioni Liturgiche”, p. 77; *Leningrad gr.* 226, 15v: Εὐλογημέν(η) ὑπάρχει ἡ Βασιλεία, cf. P. Koumarians, *Il codice 226 della biblioteca*, p. 56.

⁴⁹ *Sinai 990*: “л. 24 об. Ἀκολουθία νεκρώσιμος, ψαλλομένη ἐπὶ κολλύβων. Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ πάντων νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ”, cf. A. Dmitrievskij, *Onucanie liturgičeskiex rukonicej*, pp. 326, 327.

⁵⁰ Cf. V.E. Gardthausen, *Catalogus codicum*, p. 215.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

One of the least discussed liturgical topics is, without a doubt, the so-called blessing formulary “Blessed is our God” or “Blessed is the kingdom”.

Something has, it is true, been written about the origin and circumstances in which this blessing formulary entered into worship (“Blessed is the kingdom”), given that such characteristics had a substantial influence on the subsequent evolution of the Church’s Worship Ordinary.

Also often called “the great blessing”, “Blessed is the kingdom” has remained as an introductory formula until today, within our cult, but only in the ordinance of the *Divine Liturgy* and the *Holy Mysteries*.

As for the formula of blessing “Blessed is our God”, also known as “the little blessing”, we just wish to say that it is of Palestinian origin and has remained until today as an introductory formula especially in the ordinance of the Church Praises, and not only there.

It can be stressed that the “simple” clues presented in manuscripts will not suffice to clarify or define the exact limits of the period of usage and the appearance of the two blessing formulas (“Blessed is our God” and “Blessed is the kingdom”), since these are ultimately part of the living reality of a complex liturgical tradition.

Moreover, as some specialists have noted, evidence for an ancient liturgical practice whereby which the *Funeral Ordinary* would have been united with the *Divine Liturgy*, is not to be found in manuscripts.

Nicolae PREDA

SUMMARI

In the light of existing studies on the origins of two initial blessing formulas (“Blessed is the kingdom” and “Blessed is our God”) and on the motivation for their introduction into worship, the present study seeks to clarify their evolution, especially in the *Funeral Ordinary*, but also in other contexts.

Alla luce di studi già compiuti sull’origine di due formulari liturgici introduttori (“Benedetto il regno” and “Benedetto il nostro Dio”) e sui motivi della loro introduzione nel culto, lo studio attuale cerca di chiarire il loro percorso evolutivo, specialmente nell’*Ordinario delle esequie*, ma anche in altri contesti.