

Various Forms of Christ by Michael and Eutychios

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The restoration of the Church of the Protaton on Mount Athos, including the cleaning of its frescoes, has led to the discovery of the signature of the painter Eutychios.⁽¹⁾ Previously, it was believed that the legendary national painter Manuel Panselinos was responsible for the wall paintings of the Protaton.⁽²⁾ In addition, E. Tsigaridas claimed that the frescoes of the Chapel of St. Euthymios (1302/03) (attached to the Basilica of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki) were also by Panselinos.⁽³⁾ Since the Panselinos theory has collapsed following the discovery of Eutychios' signature, it is now important to consider whether the Chapel of St. Euthymios is also by the hands of Michael and Eutychios.

Michael Astrapas and Eutychios are the greatest painters in the history of Byzantine art for whom proper names are known and a coherent body of work remains, beginning with the Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid (North Macedonia) in 1294/95, followed by Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren (Kosovo), St. George in Staro Nagoričane (N Macedonia), and St. Niketas in Banjani (N Macedonia). The King's Church in the Studenica Monastery (Serbia), although not signed, had also been attributed to the duo with certainty. The Gračanica Monastery in Priština (Kosovo) is usually attributed to their successors. According to E.I. Kouri⁽⁴⁾, St. Peter's Church in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro) is also stylistically their work, and fragmentary frescoes and signatures were found in the recently restored Prohor Pčinjski Monastery (southern Vranje, Serbia).⁽⁵⁾ I think it is safe to assume that a part of the Gračanica Monastery may also be the work of the duo.⁽⁶⁾ Following the discovery of the signature, the Protaton (and potentially the Chapel of St. Euthymios?) will now also be added to the list.

If we look at the colorfully restored frescoes in the Protaton, they are in many parts extremely close to the Peribleptos Church in Ohrid. However, the serene grace of the military saints, especially in the lowest part of the wall facing the nave, such as Theodores (Stratelates and Tyron), Artemios, and Demetrios, and Christ and the Virgin and Child of the Templon icons (Proskynetaria⁽⁷⁾), differs from Ohrid and all of their later works. I still believe that

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- (1) The official report has not yet been published, and a video of oral presentations by G. Phousteris et al. is available. Γ. Φουστερης, "Μερική έκλειψη Πανσελήνου: μια αναμενόμενη έκπληξη," <https://www.agioritikiestia.gr/el/2018-08-07-11-00-36>, accessed 1.11.2023.
- (2) On the Panselinos legend, see M. Vasilaki, "Υπήρξε Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος," in: L. Mavrommatis (ed.), *Ο Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος και η εποχή του/ Manuel Panselinos and His Age*, Athens 1999, 39-54; M.J. Milliner, "Man or Metaphor? Manuel Panselinos and the Protaton Frescoes," M.J. Johnson, R. Ousterhout, A. Papalexandrou (eds.), *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration. Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, Farnham 2012, 221-35.
- (3) E. Τσιγαρίδας, *Οι τοιχογραφίες του παρακκλησίου του Αγίου Ευθυμίου (1302/03). Έργο του Μανουήλ Πανσελίνου στην Θεσσαλονίκη*, Thessaloniki 2008.
- (4) E.I. Kouri, *Die Milutinschule der byzantinischen Wandmalerei in Serbien, Makedonien, Kosovo- Metohien und Montenegro (1294/95-1321)*, Helsinki 1982; B. Todić, "Angels with Instruments of the Passion around the Virgin in the Apse: a local phenomenon in Serbian art," B. Katsaros, A. Tourta (eds.), *Αφιέρωμα στον Ακαδημαϊκό Παναγιώτη Λ. Βοκοτόπουλο*, Athens 2015, 457-64, esp.457-58, fig.1-3.
- (5) G. Subotić, D. Todorović, "Painter Michael in the Monastery of St. Prohor Pčinjski" (in Serbian), ZRVI 34 (1995), 117-141.
- (6) As A. Cutler states (*ODB*, vol.3, 1572), not a few of the frescoes and icons on Mt. Athos have been attributed to Panselinos (which we can now therefore attribute to Michael and Eutychios). Of these, it is the frescoes on the east wall of the exo-narthex (*lite*) in the Vatopedi Monastery that deserve consideration. The first half of the Passion, especially the Prayer at Gethsemane, is probably the work of the Astrapades workshop. The second half, however, is by a completely different hand. E.N. Tsigaridas, "The Mosaics and the Byzantine Wall-Paintings," in: *The Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopedi: Tradition- History- Art*, vol.1, Mount Athos 1998, 220-84, figs. 218-21; P. Sofragiu, "The Mural Paintings from the Exonarthex of Vatopedi Monastery's Katholikon," *European Journal of Science and Technology* 8-4 (December 2012), 51-66.

these saints in the Protaton are unique in towering over the history of Byzantine art.

There is a logical solution to the contradiction I feel. The signature of Eutybios was found on the south wall of the nave in the Protaton, on the robe of the military saint Merkourios. In other words, the part I describe as having serene grace is by Eutybios, who was not involved in as many parts of the work in other churches. The theory that Eutybios was Michael's father has gained ground in recent years.⁽⁸⁾ A. Semoglou analyzed the propagandistic elements in the image of Christ Anapeson and proposed a hypothesis that raises the date of the Protaton's frescoes to around 1282.⁽⁹⁾ This hypothesis is consistent with my speculation. Namely, father Eutybios was active in the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century, and son Michael succeeded him at the end of the thirteenth century. The Peribleptos in Ohrid was in effect Michael's debut work; father Eutybios took over his son's guardianship and probably had fewer opportunities to produce works. At present, a clear distinction between the hands of Michael and Eutybios in the history of Byzantine art is lacking. Thus, Greek scholars often refer to them as the Astrapades (plural of Astrapas, the Astrapas family). However, as with the "Masaccio-Masolino problem" in the history of Italian art, it is now time to distinguish their work.

This paper primarily attempts to reinforce the identity of the artists by comparing the church decoration programs of the Protaton and the Peribleptos. The discovery of the signature has confirmed that the wall paintings of the Protaton include at least the hand of Eutybios. Furthermore, stylistic comparisons of details may reveal that Michael was also present, although such a project will have to wait for the monograph on the Protaton, which is underway by a group of Greek scholars.⁽¹⁰⁾ Whether there were individual differences among painters in the church decoration program in general has not been discussed; however, the Astrapades' arrangement of subjects is so peculiar that it can only be attributed to their creativity.

The Bema of the Church of Panagia Peribleptos in Ohrid

When comparing the Peribleptos, with a cross-in-square plan, and the Protaton, with a three-aisled basilica (a cross-shaped space is created by passing a transverse vault through the center of the north and south aisles), one must naturally consider the difference in wall shape derived from the architectural form. The Prothesis and Diaconicon have vaulted ceilings in Ohrid, while those in the Protaton have wooden ceilings. Unfortunately, the original of the main apse at the Protaton has been lost and only a fresco from 1686 remains.

To describe the program of the bema in Ohrid **[Fig.1]**: the conch of the main apse is occupied by the Virgin in Orans. The inverted U-shaped wall surrounding the apse is lined with a total of twenty-nine medallions; at the top is Christ Immanuel, and on either side are the Archangels, as well as prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament.⁽¹¹⁾ At the bottom of the conch is a frieze with the Communion of the Apostles; Christ is depicted twice, giving

(7) S. Kalopissi-Verti, "The Proskynetaria of the Templon and Narthex: Form, Imagery, Spatial Connections, and Reception," S. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, Washington, D.C. 2006, 107-134.

(8) M. Marković, "The Painter Eutybios—Father of Michael Astrapas and Protomaster of the Frescoes in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid?" *Древне-русское искусство. Художественная жизнь пскова и искусство поздневизантийской эпохи к 1100-летию Пскова*, Moscow 2008, 411-16; Id., "The Painter Eutybios-Father of Michael Astrapas and Protomaster of the Frescoes in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid," *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti* 38 (2010), 9-34.

(9) A. Semoglou, "Ο Χριστός Αναπεσών στο Πρωτάτο και η δυναστική προπαγάνδα του Ανδρονίκου Β' Παλαιολόγου," *Βυζαντινά* 37 (2019-20), 93-112. K.M. Vapheides, however, insists on a date of 1309-11: "The Wall-Paintings of the Protaton Church Revisited," *Zograf* 43 (2019), 113-28.

(10) The fresco has been only partially introduced: G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'armée française d'Orient et de l'École française d'Athènes*, Paris 1927; I. M. Chatziphotis, *Μακεδονική σχολή. Η σχολή του Πανσελήνου (1290-1320)*, Athens 1995; *Manuel Panselinos from the Holy Church of the Protaton*, Thessaloniki 2003; V. Tsolakis, *The Protaton Church, Village of Karyes, Mount Athos: The frescoes of Manuel Panselinos - Pictures, texts, sketches*, n.p. 2015 (not a good quality photo collection by a non-specialist, but many illustrations). N. Τούτοζ, Γ. Φουστέρης, *Ευρετήριον της μνημειακής ζωγραφικής του Αγίου Όρους: 10ος-17ος αιώνας*, Athens 2010, 47-60 is detailed iconographic schemes. See also the layout of the exo-narthex (*lite*) in the Vatopedi Monastery.

(11) On the meaning of these Old-Testament figures in medallion and the Virgin in Orans in the apse, see my article "Ο Virgin Mary, Let Us Support Your Arms," forthcoming.

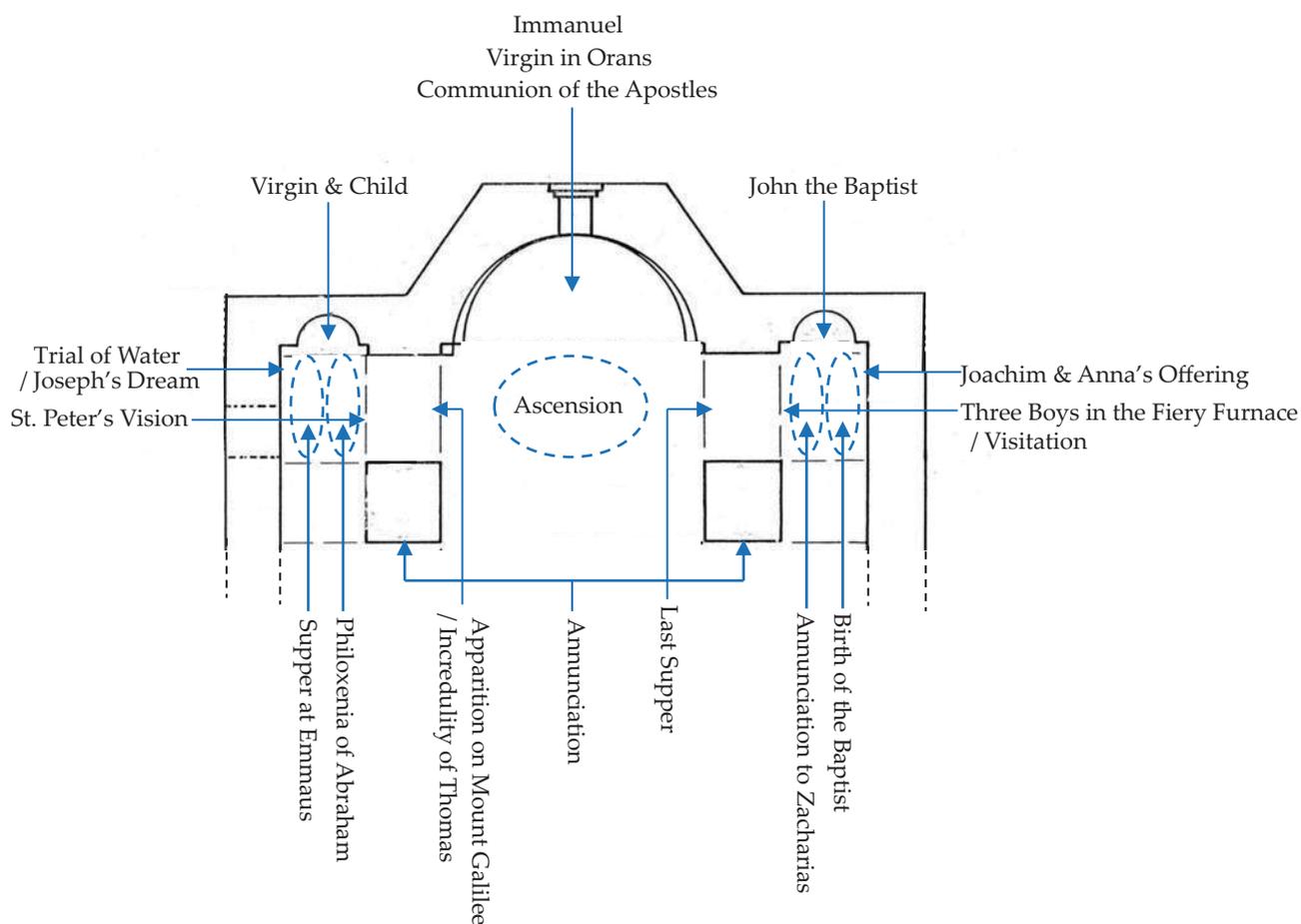


Fig. 1

bread to Peter and wine to John, as is customary. Below, a narrow frieze is lined with busts of the seven bishop-saints⁽¹²⁾, and at the bottom, across a central window, four Church Fathers lean slightly forward with scrolls in their hands.

The ceiling of the bema depicts the Ascension of Christ; in the center, a circular halo of Christ ascending to heaven is supported by four angels. It is iconographically noteworthy that the angels on either side of Christ are inside the halo **[Fig.2]**. The Virgin looking up at the Ascension, the two angels, and the Twelve Apostles are divided on the north and south sides of the vault.

The Last Supper was chosen for the south wall of the bema, below the Apostles in the Ascension. Since the bema is where the Eucharist takes place, iconography showing the historical origin of the Eucharist was chosen. From here, the Passion/ Resurrection cycle begins and proceeds in a clockwise direction, culminating in the Apparition of Christ on Mount Galilee/ the Incredulity of Thomas on the north wall of the bema. Below these narrative scenes is a narrow frieze of busts of the bishop-saints as well as the lower part of the conch, and further down are standing Church Fathers with scrolls. The west face of the northeast and southeast pillars, which constitute the same plane as the Iconostasis, depicted a divided Annunciation; today, although the figures of Gabriel and Mary are lost, it is certain from the inscriptions that the Annunciation was placed there. When considering only the main apse, there is nothing unusual about the decoration program as is customary, except for the medallions of the Old Testament righteous.

Because the north and south subsidiary apses are small, dark, and inaccessible to non-clergy, the murals painted there were not intended to be seen by the general congregation. It is likely that the Astrapades painted them to sanc-

(12) Regarding the choice of the bishop-saints, C. Grozdanov emphasizes the regional character of Ohrid. C. Grozdanov, "The Busts of the Church Hierarchs in the Altar of the Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid," (in Serbian with English summary) *Zograf* 32 (2008), 83-90.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

tify the church or embody divine providence. A bust of the Virgin and Child is placed in the Prothesis apse; the Infant is in a gray bowl-shaped object being held by the Virgin. Below are busts of two bishop-saints, and further down are standing figures of hierarchs whose inscriptions are lost. The north side of the Prothesis vault depicts the Supper at Emmaus **[Fig.3]**, and the south side the Philoxenia of Abraham **[Fig.4]**.⁽¹³⁾ Both subjects are related to the Eucharist and depict three people seated at a table, emphasizing the Trinity. The north wall of the Prothesis depicts



Fig. 5

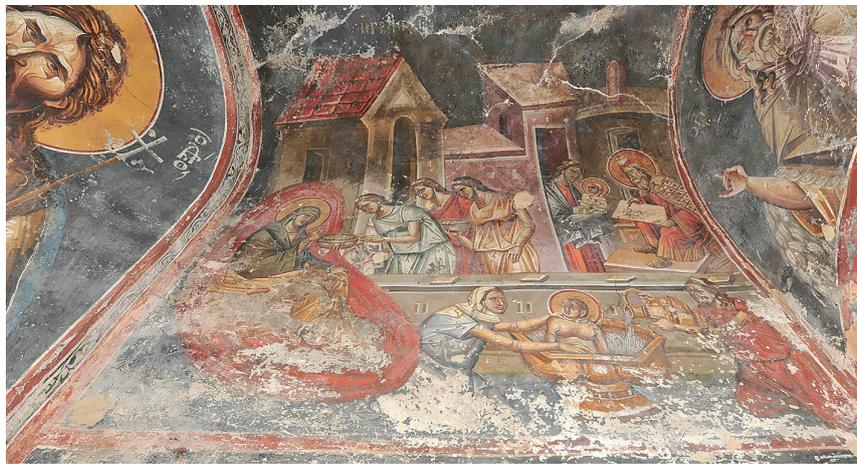


Fig. 6

the final scene of the Virgin's cycle, the Trial of the Waters and Joseph's Dream, with the hierarchs lined up with scrolls in their hands below. On the south wall, in addition to busts and standing figures of the hierarchs, there is the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria. In the fourteenth-century Balkans, the placement of this vision in the Prothesis (or on the north wall of the bema in the case of small churches) became somewhat formulaic.⁽¹⁴⁾

The Diaconicon functions as the chapel for St. John the Baptist, whose upper-half is depicted on the apse; below him are busts of the two bishops and a standing figure of St. Ignatios. The north side of the ceiling vault depicts the Announcement to Zacharias / Mute Zacharias **[Fig.5]**, while the south side depicts the Birth of John the Baptist **[Fig.6]**. On the south wall are the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace⁽¹⁵⁾ (left) and the Visitation (right) **[Fig.7]**. The Visitation also forms a part of the life of the Baptist, and the scene of the Three Children is interpreted as a prefiguration of the Baptism on the basis of the description "made the inside of the furnace as if a moist breeze were whistling through" (LXX Daniel 3:46)⁽¹⁶⁾, fire being read as water. The north wall is the start of the life of the Virgin, that is, the Rejection of Joachim and Anna's Offering, with a bottom row of hierarchs on the north and south sides.

(13) The Philoxenia of Abraham is also depicted by Michael and Eutybios in the Prothesis of St. Niketas in Banjani (near Skopje). M. Marković, *Свети Никита код Скопља: Задужбина краља Милутина*, Beograd 2015, 139.

(14) E.g., Hagios Georgios tou Vounou in Kastoria (1360's, Ephorate of Antiquities of Kastoria, *The Church of Hagios Georgios tou Vounou*, Kastoria 2017); Hagios Nikolaos tou Tzotza in Kastoria, (1360-80, Ephorate of Antiquities of Kastoria, *The Church of Hagios Nikolaos tou Tzotza in Kastoria*, Kastoria 2015, 19, fig. 13).

(15) In the Protaton, this theme is found in the west wall of the north aisle.



Fig. 7

Here the presence of Zacharias the priest⁽¹⁷⁾ successfully connects the lives of the Baptist and the Virgin, appearing in both cycles. Furthermore, the altar door is open in the Announcement to Zacharias, but closed in the Rejection of Joachim and Anna's Offering; Michael and Eutychios liked and skillfully used such an *antithesis*.⁽¹⁸⁾

On the south side of the narthex, on the same east-west axis as the Diaconicon, is a winged John the Baptist,⁽¹⁹⁾ with Ezekiel's Closed Gate / Isaiah's Coal above it [Fig.8]. The upper wall of the narthex is lined with Old Testament scenes prefiguring the Virgin Mary; only in this section are the themes of the two different prophets combined. Isaiah's Coal was probably inserted because the south side of the narthex, together with the winged Baptist, functioned as a baptismal site. The ceiling of this bay is decorated with the Souls of the Saved in the Hand of God, blessing the baptized, the image usually being depicted above the church's mid-axis.

The bema of the Peribleptos is constituted by three apses, with the Virgin and Child in the north and the Baptist in the south, in addition to the Virgin in Orans and the Immanuel Medallion in the center. In Byzantine churches with three apses, this pattern—having the Virgin (and Child) and the Baptist in the north and south subsidiary apses, respectively—is the most common; therefore, the combination of the three apse images cannot be described as a particular characteristic of the Astrapades. However, the artists' originality can probably be seen in the way in which the function of the Diaconicon as the chapel for the Baptist is linked to the Virgin's life and the baptismal site on the south bay of the narthex.

It is a general characteristic of Byzantine church decoration that the same concept is expressed in different

(16) A. Pietersma, B. G. Wright (eds), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Oxford 2007, 1001; see also Romanos Melodos, Kontakion on the Three Children, strophe 26, "Just as He has now bedewed with freshness the furnace." (M. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, vol.2, Columbia 1973, 147). Henceforth, quotations from the Old Testament Septuagint will be from the Oxford edition.

(17) The most prominent difference in the life of the Virgin Mary between Byzantine and Western art is that in the former the priest who rejects the offering of Joachim and Anna is not Ruben (as described by the usual manuscript tradition of the Protoevangelium of James) but Zacharias, who goes on to become the father of the Baptist. Cf. T. Masuda, "Reinterpretation of the Life of the Virgin in the King's Church of Studenica Monastery," *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Literature of Waseda University* 67 (2022), 459-78: https://www.waseda.jp/flas/glas/assets/uploads/2022/02/MASUDA-Tomoyuki_0459-0478.pdf

(18) On the *antithesis* in Byzantine art, see H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, Princeton 1981, 53-83.

(19) As well as winged Christ, the Baptist can be a winged image based on the use of the word messenger (*angelos*) in the Old Testament; "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, face, who will prepare your way....'" (Mk. 1:2) is the basis for the winged Baptist, and this passage of Isaiah (40:3) is quoted in all four Gospels; however, only Mark might use a different version of the Septuagint. The passage "I send my messenger before your face" is not found in Rahlfs or Brenton (see also Ex. 23:20; Mal. 3:1). For the winged Baptist, see below. M. Tatić-Djurić, "Икона Јована крилатог из Дечана," *Zbornik Narodnog Muzeja* 7 (1973), 39-51; *LCI*, vol.7, cols.170-71.



Fig. 8

modes, and this tendency is particularly prominent in this church. It is unsurprising to find images related to the Eucharist in the bema; however, there is no other church in the Byzantine world with such a large number of scenes in this same area, described as follows. First, the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria (south wall of the Prothesis), borrowing the motif from the saint's life, speaks of Christ's dual nature, thereby emphasizing his humanity, inseparable from his divinity. Second, the Supper at Emmaus (north side of the Prothesis ceiling) is the breaking of bread again by Christ after his Resurrection. Third, the Philoxenia of Abraham (south side of the Prothesis ceiling) represents the Eucharist as a figure of the Old Testament. Fourth, the Last Supper (south wall of the bema), of course, narrates the historical origin of the Eucharist. Fifth, the Communion of the Apostles (lower part of the main apse) explains the Eucharist as a liturgy to the congregation, with Christ acting in the role of priest and the Apostles representing the congregation. Although the names of Michael and Eutychios are widely known throughout the Balkans, and their influence can be seen in many churches, there is no parallel to this bema program. This is probably because entry into the bema was restricted, and even if one did enter, it was so dark that one could hardly see anything.

The key concepts of "Christ in different forms" (polymorphism) and "Christ as Angel" are present in the decorations of the Peribleptos. The Supper at Emmaus is inscribed Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς ὁ ἐν ἑτέ[ρα μορφή] (Jesus Christ in Another Form, Mk. 16:12²⁰) and shows Christ with short

tonsured hair and a short mustache/beard. The Philoxenia of Abraham opposite can be interpreted in three different typological readings: the Trinity from the visit of three angels, the Eucharist from Abraham's baking of bread, and the Annunciation from the guest's announcement to the couple of the birth of their child. The Supper at Emmaus and the Philoxenia of Abraham, which face each other, are both images of three people at a table, once again emphasizing the Trinity. Since this place is a Prothesis, the implication of the Eucharist is also obvious. Furthermore, for reasons that will be discussed later, the connection with the Annunciation is also important.

There are two general types the iconography in the Philoxenia of Abraham: those that depict the three angels identically to emphasize the Trinity, and those that give a crossed nimbus only to the central angel to show that he is the Lord⁽²¹⁾, creating a difference. The latter type is employed in the Peribleptos, i.e., there God-Christ in angelic form is surrounded by two angels. In the Ascension of the bema ceiling, a standing statue of Christ is flanked by two angels in a halo, which is quite exceptional; in the Ascension, Christ is usually seated alone in the halo. This can only be understood in light of the image of the Philoxenia of Abraham in the Prothesis. In the Philoxenia, the God-Christ is winged, flanked on either side by angels; in the New Testament era, Christ ascends to heaven with two angels. In the narthex ceiling, Christ as Angel loudly raises the voice of Resurrection, announcing the arrival of a new era. If an order of viewing were expected for this decoration program, it would be: narthex, bema ceiling, Prothesis ceiling; however, as mentioned above, the Prothesis mural was not conceived with the eyes of the congregation in mind. The painters did not envision a program in which the congregation would understand the meaning of the wall paintings sequentially as they viewed them over the course of time. The most important form was what was being realized in the microcosm of the church; Christ in another form at Emmaus, takes a winged form surrounded by angels in the presence of Abraham, ascends with the angels, and proclaims his Resurrection in angelic form.

In the Old Testament scenes in the narthex⁽²²⁾, Christ-God in the form of an angel appears at various levels. On

⁽²⁰⁾ Referring to the Supper at Emmaus, Lk. 24:13-35.

⁽²¹⁾ And the Lord said to Abraam. (Gen. 18:13)



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

the south wall, in *Sophia Building the Temple*, Sophia (Wisdom = Christ) is represented with a crossed nimbus and wings **[Fig.9]**. In *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream* (Dan. 2:1) on the north wall, the angel who tells the king of his dream is depicted with three heads, suggesting the Triune God **[Fig.10]**. These two images represent the winged Christ-

²² On the iconography of the narthex in the Peribleptos, see R. Schroeder, "Looking with Words and Images: staging monastic contemplation in a late Byzantine church," *Word and Image* 28:2 (2012), 117-34; R.B. Roussanova, *Painted Messages of Salvation: Monumental Programs of the Subsidiary Spaces of Late Byzantine Monastic Churches in Macedonia*, diss., University of Maryland 2005, 205-64.

God, whether one or three-headed. On a different logical level, God as Angel is also represented in iconographies that usually contain only an ordinary angel. In the Struggle of Jacob and the Angel on the north side of the west wall, according to the text (Gen. 32:23-33), it is God who wrestled with Jacob.⁽²³⁾ On the north wall of the Diaconicon, Three Boys in the Fiery Furnace, based on the third chapter of the Book of Daniel, is the story of three boys who are thrown into a fiery furnace and return to life through the blessing of God. Above the three boys in the furnace is an angel with outstretched wings, which, according to the text⁽²⁴⁾, is none other than the “Son of God,” that is, Christ. In these two examples, although the nimbus does not contain the cross, the angel can be interpreted in the text as God-Christ.

Christ as Angel in the center of the narthex ceiling is repeated five times elsewhere (three times in the narthex, once in the Prothesis, and once in the Diaconicon). In addition, the Ascension of Christ on the Bema ceiling is also related to Christ as Angel through the similarity of their form; Christ wears a golden robe in the concentric halos in both works. Christ in the Ascension is accompanied by two angels within the halo, which is extremely rare; in ordinary Ascension iconography, the angels only support Christ’s halo from the outside. Since it would be an iconographically absurd deviation to give wings to Christ ascending, it can be assumed that the painters instead placed angels on both sides of Christ.

What the Astrapades realized in the bema of the Peribleptos was an unparalleled emphasis on the contrasting nature of the narrative (*antithesis*). To my knowledge, such a conception is not found in any other Byzantine church, nor is it so thorough in the other churches they worked on. The Philoxenia in the Prothesis is the story of God’s announcement of the birth of a child to a barren couple; however, Abraham and Sarah did not believe the message, since they were old (Gen. 18:11-12). Zacharias the priest and Elisabeth (in the Diaconicon) were also old and had long been childless; while Zacharias was in the sanctuary, an angel appeared to tell him of the birth of a child, but Zacharias did not believe it (Lk. 1:18). In other words, the painters placed aged, barren couples in the north and south subsidiary chambers. On the other hand, the main apse features a young Virgin. The two old couples did not believe in the annunciation of conception, but the central maiden did (Lk. 1:38).

The network of infertility continues further: on the inverted U-shaped wall surrounding the apse, the medallion of the prophet Samuel is placed in the third position from Immanuel at the top, after Gabriel and Moses. Samuel’s mother, Hannah (Anna in Greek), also suffered from infertility and was eventually able to conceive by the grace of the Lord (1 Rgns, chap. 1). When Anna, who was to become the mother of the Virgin, was afflicted with infertility, Samuel’s mother Hannah, by the same name, became an example of salvation by God. The story is told on the southern wall of the Diaconicon, at the beginning of the life of the Virgin; when Joachim and Anna brought offerings to the temple, the priest Zacharias refused to accept them because of their infertility. For the offering of the Lamb to be accepted by God, Mary, the vessel of Jesus, first had to be born. If the priest were portrayed as Ruben, the rejection of the offering would simply be an example of mean-spirited behavior defying God’s will.

Next to Samuel in the inverted U-shaped wall is the medallion of the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah is, of course, an Old Testament prophet, but the Byzantine tradition dared to identify him with the father of the Baptist, the priest Zacharias.⁽²⁵⁾ Thus, in the bema, a network of barrenness is placed to emphasize the mystery of the conception of the Virgin.

⁽²³⁾ Kosmas Vestitor (eighth century) states in his Sermon on the Holy Joachim and Anna, Glorious Parents of the Theotokos Mary that “and here Christ was revealed in the form of an angel to Abraham, and he also wrestled with Jacob in angelic shape.” *PG* 106:1008; M.B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, New York 2008, 141.

⁽²⁴⁾ Several editions exist of the text of Daniel in Septuagint. “And the king said, ‘Here I see four men unbound and walking in the middle of the fire, and there is no destruction on them, and the appearance of the fourth is like a divine son (ὁμοία υἱῷ Θεοῦ)’” (Dan. 3:25 (92), Theodotion). In the Old Greek, “the likeness of a divine angel (ὁμοίωμα ἀγγέλου Θεοῦ)”. A. Rahlfs, R. Hanhart, *Septuaginta*, Stuttgart 2006, 895.

⁽²⁵⁾ The dome of the Church of La Martorana in Palermo (mid-12th century) has St. John the Baptist placed opposite the Old Testament prophet Zechariah. This is another visual proof that the Byzantines identified Zechariah the prophet with Zacharias the priest. E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of St. Mary’s of the Admiral in Palermo*, Washington, D.C. 1990, 139-40.



Fig. 11

Christ as Angel

What, then, is the Christ as Angel reigning on the narthex ceiling of the Peribleptos? **[Fig.11]** The halo of concentric circles with a blue gradient-like effect is common to the Ascension. Christ's yellow (i.e., golden) robe is also equivalent to that of the ascending Christ. The beardless, young, winged Christ raises his right hand, with the stigma, high in the air and proclaims his Resurrection. In his left hand he holds a crossed staff and a scroll that reads, "Today is salvation come unto the world, to that which is visible, and to that which is invisible."²⁶ The image of Christ taking the form of an angel is derived from the Septuagint Isaiah 9:6, "a child was born for us, a son also given to us, whose sovereignty was upon his shoulder, and he is named Messenger of Great Counsel" and is called "Jesus Christ, Angel of the Great Counsel/ ἄγγελος τῆς μεγάλης βουλῆς" in Byzantine iconography.²⁷

The upper part of the halo of Christ is inscribed with the passage from St. Gregory's Homily, "I will stand upon my watch, says the venerable Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:1),"²⁸ in the opposite direction of Christ (so that it can be read by the congregation standing on the floor). The prophet Ezekiel (an old man) is depicted on the left above Christ's head, and Habakkuk (a young man) on the right. Ezekiel points to the heavens with his right hand, indicating the phrase "behold, a rising wind was coming out of the north, and a great cloud was in it (Iezek. 1:4)." Habakkuk looks up to heaven in amazement, holding a scroll that reads, "I have taken my stand, and looked forth; and behold a man

²⁶ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Homily 45 (Easter Homily 2): *PG* 36, 623-64, esp. 624. N.V. Harrison (trans.), *St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Festal Orations*, New York 2008, 161-190 and <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310245.htm>, accessed 4.11.2023.

²⁷ However, the inscription is absent here in the Peribleptos. In the context of Christ as a messenger sent by God to the human world, the Book of Malachi (3:1) is also important: Behold, I am sending my messenger, and he will oversee the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to the shrine. And the messenger of the covenant whom you want—behold, he is coming, says the Lord Almighty.

On the iconography of Christ as Angel, see K. Wessel, s.v. "Christusbild," esp. "Der engel des großen Rates," *RbK*, vol. 1, cols. 1012-14; S. Der Nersessian, "Note sur quelques images se rattachant au thème du Christ Ange," *CahArch* 13 (1962), 209-16; A. Semoglou, "Χριστός Εμμανουήλ και Χριστός ο της μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος. Εικονογραφικοί και επιγραφικοί σύμφυρτοι στη μεταβυζαντινή ζωγραφική," *Byzantina* 30 (2010), 379-91. On the theological meaning, see J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christos als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums*, Bonn 1941.

²⁸ See n.26.

riding on the clouds and he is very high.”⁽²⁹⁾ In other words, three of the four inscriptions around Christ as Angel cite Gregory’s Homily 45 (Easter Homily 2).

Compared to John Chrysostom⁽³⁰⁾ and Basil the Great, Gregory’s homilies are full of visual imagery, and many illustrations were devised for them in the manuscripts.⁽³¹⁾ Let us continue with the opening passage of Gregory’s 45th Homily (the bold text is that quoted in the inscriptions).

I will stand upon my watch, says the venerable Habakkuk (Hab. 2:1); and I will take my post beside him today on the authority and observation which was given me of the Spirit; and I will look forth, and will observe what shall be said to me. Well, **I have taken my stand, and looked forth; and behold a man riding on the clouds and he is very high**, and his countenance is as the countenance of Angel (Judg. 13:6), and his vesture as the brightness of piercing lightning; and he lifts his hand toward the East, and cries with a loud voice. His voice is like the voice of a trumpet; and round about Him is as it were a multitude of the Heavenly Host; and he says, **Today is salvation come unto the world, to that which is visible, and to that which is invisible.**

At the beginning of the Easter homily, Gregory cites the prophet Habakkuk, with whom he shares a vision of the Resurrected Christ. There are several types of manuscript illustrations of this passage⁽³²⁾, and the basic elements are the author Gregory, the prophet Habakkuk, and the visions of Christ surrounded by angels. The visionary Christ of the Pantocrator type (within a circular halo with two angels)⁽³³⁾ is equivalent to the Ascension of the Peribleptos. However, it is Christ as Angel that is noteworthy as a type of Christ⁽³⁴⁾, this is based on the homily “his countenance is as the countenance of Angel (ἡ ὄρασις αὐτοῦ, ὡς ὄρασις ἀγγέλου),” quoting Judges 13:6. Gregory, called the Theologian, would have had the entire text of the Old and New Testaments imprinted in his mind; he freely quotes from them in his homilies. But what about the Astrapades, a family of painters? They were likely to have had a manuscript of Gregory’s Homilies close at hand, and if they noticed that “his countenance is as the countenance of Angel” was a quote from Judges 13:6, they would recognize the passage immediately before that: “And an angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘See now! You are barren and have not borne. And you shall become pregnant and bear a son...’” (Judg. 13:3, the child to be born is Samson). In this way, the one with the appearance of an angel announced conception to the barren woman. Although a highly pedantic interpretation, there is a network of infertility here as well.

The Astrapades also produced manuscript illustrations.⁽³⁵⁾ They either had a manuscript of Gregory’s Homilies in their possession and were familiar with the tradition of illustration, or the manuscripts they possessed were themselves illustrated. While cutting three sentences from the opening of the Easter Homily as inscriptions, they depicted Christ as Angel, whom Habakkuk and Gregory had seen in a vision, in the narthex. Merely saying that it was influenced by Gregory’s Homily is, however, not a sufficient explanation; it is Habakkuk and Ezekiel depicted in the upper part of Christ as Angel in the Peribleptos, and Gregory is not there.

The Astrapas family was from Thessaloniki. In Ano Poli, Thessaloniki, the Latomos Monastery (now the church of Hosios David) is famous for its fifth-century mosaic. In the apse, the young Christ is revealed in a circular halo surrounded by four creatures. On either side are two figures dressed in ancient clothing, whose vision of

⁽²⁹⁾ See n.26.

⁽³⁰⁾ K. Krause, *Die illustrierten Homilien des Johannes Chrysostomos in Byzanz*, Wiesbaden 2004.

⁽³¹⁾ G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus*, Princeton 1969.

⁽³²⁾ *Ibid.*, 120-25.

⁽³³⁾ Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Cod. Taphou 14, f.6r. Galavaris, fig.100; P.L. Vocotopoulos, *Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, Athens/ Jerusalem 2002, 124-81.

⁽³⁴⁾ Moscow, State Hist. Museum, Cod. 146, f.4v (Galavaris, fig.2); Athos, Dionysiou Cod. 61, f.4r (fig.357); Sinai.gr. 339, f.9v (fig.379); Paris.gr. 543, f.27v (fig.455).

⁽³⁵⁾ I. Furlan, “Il libro enciclopedico di maestro Astrapas,” A. Iacobini, M. della Valle (eds.), *L’arte di Bisanzio e l’Italia al tempo dei Paleologi 1261-1453, Milion 5*, Roma 1999, 113-23, fig.11.

Theophany is depicted as a central scene. The identification of the two figures has been the subject of various theories: Ezekiel-Habakkuk, Ezekiel-Isaiah, Ezekiel-Zechariah, Ezekiel-John the Evangelist, Isaiah-John the Evangelist, Peter-Paul, and many others too numerous to list.³⁶ Understanding the original intention of the fifth-century iconography is, of course, a major issue in the history of early Christian art. However, the question here is how the late Byzantines understood them. The double-sided icon from the Poganovo Monastery (Serbia) (now in the collection of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Sofia, 1371-93)³⁷ provides evidence in this regard. One side of the icon, believed to have been made in a workshop in Thessaloniki, is the Virgin of *Kataphyge* and St. John the Theologian, and the other side is a copy of the Latmos Monastery mosaic. The mosaic Christ is a beardless youth, while the icon is an infant. The icon inscribes the old man on the lower left as Ezekiel, and the young man on the lower right as Habakkuk. Whatever the intention of the fifth-century mosaic, the prophets who witnessed Theophany were Ezekiel and Habakkuk in the late Byzantine understanding when the revival of early Christian iconography was made.³⁸ Thus, the Astrapades used the manuscript illustrations of Gregory's Homily as a model for Christ as Angel in the narthex, and added the venerable Latmos iconography that they were familiar with from their homeland.

The Bema of the Church of Protaton (Mount Athos)

In the Protaton, the main apse and east wall of the entrance to the Prothesis have lost their originals, and frescoes from 1686 are still extant. Although the most important parts are missing, the surviving portions alone are interesting enough. Let's examine from the Prothesis.

"Christ in Another Form"³⁹ (inscribed) is in the apse, who wears a crossed nimbus with his right palm raised to his chest and a book in his left hand; he has short, probably tonsured hair, a normal mustache, and a short beard. In the lower part of the conch, on either side of the window, are single figures of St. Peter of Alexandria and Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople. In the Peribleptos, the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria was depicted in the Prothesis.

³⁶ Recent studies are listed: E. Tsigaridas, *Latmou Monastery (The Church of Hosios David)*, Thessaloniki 1987; J.-M. Spieser, "Remarques complémentaires sur la mosaïque de Osios David," *Diethnes Symposio: Byzantine Makedonia, 324 - 1430 m. C.*, Thessaloniki 1995, 295-306 ("Further Remarks on the Mosaic of Hosios David," in: Spieser, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium*, Aldershot 2001, art. 7); Id., "The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches," *Gesta* 37-1 (1998), 63-73, repr. in: Spieser (2001), art.2; L. James, "Images of Text in Byzantine Art: The Apse Mosaic in Hosios David, Thessaloniki," in: K. Krause, B.M. Schellewald, *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, Köln 2010, 255-66; L.S. Nasrallah, "Early Christian Interpretation in Image and Word: canon, sacred text, and the mosaic of Moni Latmou," in: L.S. Nasrallah (ed.), *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: studies in religion and archaeology*, Cambridge, Mass. 2010, 361-96; L.S. Nasrallah, "Ezekiel's Vision in Late Antiquity: The case of the mosaic of Moni Latmou, Thessaloniki," in: *The Mosaics of Thessaloniki Revisited. Papers from the 2014 Symposium at the Courtauld Institute of Art*, Athens 2017, 77-90.

³⁷ A. Grabar, "A propos d'une icône Byzantine du XIVe siècle," *CahArch* 10 (1959), 289-304; T. Gerasimov, "L'icône bilatérale de Poganovo au Musée archéologique de Sofia," *CahArch* 10 (1959), 279-88; A. Xyngopoulos, "Sur l'icône bilatérale de Poganovo," *CahArch* 12 (1962), 341-350; A. Grabar, "Sur les sources des peintres byzantins des XIIIe et XIVe siècles," *CahArch* 12 (1962), 351-380; E. Voordeckers, "L'interprétation liturgique de quelques icônes byzantines," *Byz* 53 (1983), 52-68; G. Babić, "Sur l'icône de Poganovo e la vasilissa Hélène," in: D. Davidov, R. Samardi (eds.), *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle: recueil des rapports du IVe Colloque Serbo-Grec*, Belgrade 1985, 57-65; G. Subotić, "L'icône de la vasilissa Hélène et les fondateurs du monastère de Poganovo," *Saobstenha* 25 (1993), 25-40; B.V. Pentcheva, "Imagined Images: Visions of Salvation and Intercession in a Double-Sided Icon from Poganovo," *DOP* 54 (2000), 139-53; E. Bakalova, "Two-sided Icon: A. The Virgin Kataphyge and St. John the Theologian. B. The Vision of Ezekiel and Habbakuk," in: M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, exh.cat. Benaki Museum, Athens 2000, 490-92; L.N. Mavrodinova, "On the Subject Linking the Images of the Virgin and of St. John the Divine in the Poganovo Icon," *Palaeobulgarica* 26-4 (2002), 66-74; M. Vassilaki, "Two-sided Icon with the Virgin Kataphyge and the Vision of Ezekiel," in: H.C. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, exh.cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2004, 198-99; Ch. Stephan-Kaissis, "Zwei byzantinische Damen und das Gottesbild des Klosters Latmou in Thessaloniki: Neues zum Mosaik von Hosios David und der Ikone von Poganovo," in: M. Panagiotidi-Kesisoglu (ed.), *H γυναικα στο Βυζάντιο: λατρεία και τέχνη*, Athens 2012, 87-105.

³⁸ A copy of the Latmos mosaic was also painted on the east wall of the upper narthex of the Ossuary Church of the Bačkovno Monastery in the twelfth century. E. Bakalova (ed.), *The Ossuary of the Bachkovo Monastery*, Plovdiv 2003, 81-81, fig.72.

³⁹ *Panselinos* (2003, n.10), Icon 89. N. Zarras, "Ο Χριστός ἐν ἐτέρα μορφή," *DChAE* 28 (2007), 213-24 provides a comprehensive description of the examples of the iconography.

On the triumphal-arch wall surrounding the conch, the Archangel Gabriel is placed on the left and the Virgin Mary on the right, composing the Annunciation. It is a common practice in Byzantine church decoration to depict the Annunciation divided on either side of the main apse, but this is the case of the subsidiary apse. As for the original iconography of the lost main apse, we have no choice but to fantasize.⁽⁴⁰⁾ I will omit description of the single images of saints and refer only to the narrative scenes. On the south wall, from right (west) are depicted the Tabernacle of Moses, Jacob's Ladder, and Moses and the Burning Bush. All are Old Testament themes prefiguring the Virgin, and are also found in the narthex of the Peribleptos.

The Supper at Emmaus is placed in the Diaconicon apse. In the Prothesis of the Peribleptos, Christ of the Supper at Emmaus is given the inscription of "Christ in Another Form." In other words, the Protaton depicts the same subject in two different modes: iconic (Prothesis) and narrative (Diaconicon). The *Melismos* is placed at the bottom of the conch; this image is usually placed in the lower part of the main apse (St. Niketas in Banjani by the Astrapades) or in the Prothesis (Staro Nagoričane by the Astrapades), but the Prothesis of the Protaton has a window and no space to draw it. This is probably why it was moved to the Diaconicon. On the triumphal-arch wall above the conch, they attempted to depict the Archangel Gabriel on the left and Zacharias the priest who listens to the announcement on the right, constituting the Announcement to Zacharias (Luke 1:8-20) in the composition of the Annunciation. The Diaconicon ceiling at the Peribleptos depicts the same subject as a narrative including the altar and temple. The division of the Announcement to Zacharias into spandrels on either side of the arch is also found in a Carolingian manuscript illustration (Gospel Books of Saint-Medard de Soisson, Cod.Paris.Lat.8850, f.81v, Head-piece for Mark⁽⁴¹⁾), but it is unlikely that the Palaeologan painters were consulting Carolingian manuscripts. Other narrative subjects in the Protaton's Diaconicon are the Healing of the Man with Withered Hand (Mat. 12:9-14; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11) and the *Chairete* (Mt. 28:9), arranged from the left (west) on the north wall. The juxtaposition of the Resurrection of Christ with a single episode from the healing miracles is somewhat odd.⁽⁴²⁾

The distinctive features of the north-south subsidiary chapels' decoration at the Protaton are the depiction of the same subject, Christ in Another Form and the Supper at Emmaus, in different modes on the apses, and the same composition of the Annunciation and the Announcement to Zacharias in spandrels. The Prothesis apse of the Peribleptos features the Virgin and Child, while in the Protaton, the three Old Testament subjects that prefigure the Virgin are placed in the Prothesis. The Announcement to Zacharias in the Protaton's Diaconicon corresponds to the fact that the Peribleptos' Diaconicon was the chapel for St. John the Baptist, and the winged Baptist is depicted to the right of the entrance to the Protaton's Diaconicon. This image of the winged Baptist indicates that the Diaconicon is a space for the Baptist and, together with Christ and the Virgin and Child of the Templon Icons (Proskynetaria), functions to constitute the *Deesis*.⁽⁴³⁾

In other words, although the north-south subsidiary apses of the Protaton depict Christ, there are still connotations of the Virgin (Incarnation) in the Prothesis and the Baptist in the Diaconicon, as in the Peribleptos. The Protaton depicts Christ of the Supper at Emmaus narratively and Christ with the inscription "Another Form" as icon, but Peribleptos merges them together, depicting Christ with the inscription "Another Form" in the Supper at Emmaus.

(40) The apse conch would have depicted the Virgin and Child; the usual iconographic arrangement on the spandrel walls is to repeat the Annunciation, but the Virgin and the Baptist may also have been arranged as the *Deesis*.

(41) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452550p/f172.item.r=latine%208850>

(42) According to Elder Symeon Dionysiates (then Protoepistates of the Karyes), who kindly guided me to the Protaton in March 2020, if we consider the Healing of the Withered Hand as based on Mark, which corresponds to the first Saturday of Lent, the beginning of the fast, it makes sense to enumerate it with the Resurrection. In Staro Nagoričane, there is the *Chairete* on the south wall of the bema, though this is part of the Resurrection cycle and not linked to the healing cycle.

(43) In addition to the Virgin and Child and Christ as the Templon icons (Proskynetaria), the depiction of the Baptist in the vicinity to make them the *Deesis* is frequently found program, as in Lagoudera in Cyprus (1192) and St. Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki (early 14th century). At St. Niketas in Banjani, too, the winged Baptist is depicted on the south wall adjacent to the Iconostasis. The present state is a repaint of the fifteenth century, but it would have been original iconography; Marković (2015), 238. The Diaconicon of the same church depicts the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace (*ibid.*, 129). This shows that this iconography is connected to the Baptist, as well as in the Peribleptos.



Fig. 12

Why, then, did the Astrapades adopt this peculiar iconography of Christ for the apses of the north-south subsidiary spaces of the Protaton? It is not both necessary and sufficient to assume that the Supper at Emmaus is appropriate for the bema simply because it implies the Eucharistic meaning. This subject could have been painted on any wall of the Prothesis, as in the Peribleptos. The image of Christ is not appropriate for the subsidiary apse, and there are few examples of Christ painted on the apse of the Prothesis or the Diaconicon.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Since there are no surviving images of the main apse in the Protaton today, it is impossible to make an all-encompassing argument; however, from the materials at our disposal, we can say the following.

Michael and Eutychios have a strong interest in the various forms of Christ, i.e., Christ's polymorphism. Their visual experiences should include, in the extant churches, the five forms of Christ in St. Panteleimon in Nerezi⁽⁴⁵⁾ (1164, Pantocrator (lost), the Ancient of Days, Immanuel, Christ as Priest, and Christ with shaggy hair(?)) and the three forms of Christ in St. Stephanos in Kastoria⁽⁴⁶⁾ (early 13th century, the Ancient of Days, Pantocrator, Immanuel, **[Fig.12]**). It is almost certain that they saw these churches on their way to and from Thessaloniki and the Balkan cities. The medallion of Christ Immanuel on the apse at the Peribleptos, together with the Pantocrator in the dome and the Ancient of Days on the apex of the western arm, make up the three forms of Christ. In addition, the narthex depicts Christ as Angel, comprising the fourth form of Christ. I have hypothesized that Christ as Angel in the Peribleptos was established by the contribution of the Latmos mosaic in Thessaloniki to the tradition of Gregory's Homily illustrations. Furthermore, Christ as Angel is connected to the winged Lord at the Philoxenia of Abraham in the Prothesis, Christ surrounded by angels in the Ascension on the bema ceiling, and Christ of "Another Form" in the Prothesis.

In comparison, the polymorphism of Christ is less conspicuous at the Protaton, since the upper portions of the east and west walls have collapsed and no original images are extant. At the very least, the painters chose to place a double Christ in Another Form in the north and south subsidiary apses, which is the late Byzantine narrative interpretation of Christ as Priest, the *Melismos* in the Diaconicon, probably the Immanuel in the main apse, and Christ Anapeson⁽⁴⁷⁾ above the west wall doorway, the latest fad alongside the Christ of Another Form. After these attempts in the Protaton and Peribleptos, the painters realized the five forms of Christ in Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren (Kosovo), which, like Nerezi, has five domes. The Protaton can also be regarded, therefore, as another of their

(44) As an exception, Christ is chosen for the Prothesis apse in the church of St. Sophia in Ohrid (mid-11th century). The lower part of the apse, however, depicts Forty martyrs in a frozen lake, and the image of Christ in the apse is consequently a motif of the narrative scene of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste than an iconic one.

(45) I. Sinkević, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi. Architecture, Programme, Patronage*, Wiesbaden 2000.

(46) S. Pelekanidis, M. Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, Athens 1985, 6-21.

(47) B. Todic, "Anapeson. Iconographie et signification du theme" *Byzantion* 64 (1994), 134-65; Semoglou, art.cit. (n.9).



Fig. 13

attempts to depict the polymorphic iconography of Christ.

I would like to add a few words about the chapel of St. Euthymios attached to the Church of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki. The frescoes in this chapel were attributed to Panselinos by E. Tsigaridas. If the Protaton is by the Astrapades, could the chapel of St. Euthymios also be their work? Although the chapel frescoes have been restored and cleaned, they are in very poor condition, making a stylistic study difficult; however, from the point of view of the decorative program, we can compare St. Euthymios with the Peribleptos.

The south bay of the narthex in the Peribleptos is the baptismal site, with the winged Baptist depicted on the lower east wall and Isaiah's Coal at the top together with Ezekiel's Closed Gate **[Fig.8]**. The image of God as fire has been spoken of in Moses' burning bush (Ex. 3:2), the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21-22), Pentecost (Acts 2:3), "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29) and so on; during the late Byzantine period, there seems to have been a particular association of John the Baptist with the coal of Isaiah. The southern sub-apse of the Euthymios' Chapel is the place for John the Baptist as well as the Peribleptos and Protaton, and the conch depicts the Baptist; the image on the irregularly shaped wall above the conch is unmistakably Isaiah's Coal, although Tsigaridas considers this to be uncertain **[Fig.13]**. The interpretation of the episode of Isaiah's Coal as a prefiguration of the baptism is a rare phenomenon in Byzantine church decoration. However, this interpretation is common to the Peribleptos and the Chapel of St. Euthymios, painted eight years apart. Thus, from the standpoint of the church decoration program, this fact may strengthen the theory that the Chapel of St. Euthymios is a work by the Astrapades.

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[Photo Credit]

Figs.2-11: Professor Hirofumi SUGAWARA (Kanazawa University)

Figs.1, 12, 13: Author