

ORTHODOX ICON
AND
THE COLLECTION OF THE GREEK MONASTERY
OF SAINT GEORGE. OLD CAIRO⁽¹⁾
(with four plates)
BY
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Before beginning this article I must express my deep gratitude to His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria, Monsignor Christophoros II; for the goodness, kindness and encouragement as always shown me; and also to the Archimandrite Agathaggelos, Superior of the Monastery of St. George in Old Cairo who has always anticipated every one of my demands for help and information; and finally to Mr. J. Tricoglou who so kindly placed his richly-furnished library at my disposition.

Byzantine Art, particularly that of the Orthodox icon, was neglected until the xxth century. It was only at the beginning of our epoch that their study was begun; at this moment we have already a number of serious works by learned men of all nations, on the subject of such icons. In examining the researches made by Diehl, Millet, Dalton, Strzygowski, Schmidt, Ainalov, Kondakov and Mouratov, I noticed a point common to all these learned authorities, and one which greatly surprised me: the essential meaning of the Greek Orthodox icon—the object of its creation—has escaped the notice of these historians.

French writers have glided over the surface of the subject, treating only the question of beauty; Dalton, the most reliable authority, led away by

⁽¹⁾ Communication présentée en séance du 4 mai 1942.

Strzygowski, has gone to the other extreme, he has immersed himself too deeply in the depths of the question of Oriental mentality. Kondakov, the greatest expert of all, has directed his attention to the technic of the iconographic art, and has made a kind of anatomy of colours out of the icon; Mouratov has tackled the question as an art expert, like a musician who pays attention only to the rhythm of the icon. Hence it may be concluded that to have a real conception of the Greek Orthodox icon it is not enough to have the Orthodox mind, its devotion also is necessary.

It is often asked why the Greek Orthodox icon is so sad and dark. This idea must be refuted once and for always, for the Byzantine icon is marked (as it was when just completed) by its transparent colours showing all the tints of the spectrum, colours the purity of whose hues charm us in the miniatures illuminating the Greek MSS. in the various museums of Europe. Byzance had a special taste for bright colour. If now we find its icons blackened, as is the case in the museum of the Greek monastery in Old Cairo, this is due to the fact that they have been exposed for centuries to the smoke of the thousands of candles and oil lamps which illuminated the churches. This layer of smoke can easily be washed off by the expert hand, and then the icon appears in all the splendour of its original beauty. Unfortunately good restorers are so rare that it is better to leave the icons as they are than to run the risk of ruining them.

Some years ago the Monastery of St. George sent to the celebrated Russian restorer Pimen Sofronov in Belgrade two icons so blackened that nothing whatever could be made of them, they appeared to be simply two pieces of dirty old wood. By simply washing them, as he knew how, P. Sofronov obtained the results seen. He had to restore one eye of the Pantocrator, which had been burnt, as can be seen in the photograph⁽¹⁾.

As to the melancholy believed to exist in the Orthodox icon this impression also is incorrect—the icon is not sad but austere, and above human passions. The Orthodox Church does not permit the empty smile but

⁽¹⁾ Album of 65 illustrations will be published shortly.

seeks serenity and the illumination of the spirit. According to the ecclesiastical historians of the VIIth century who derived their accounts from tradition and legend, Christ never smiled, but wept often, while emanating kindly benevolence. Such is the ideal state which humankind should attain. The icon is the refuge of those who seek comfort in the Church, the apotheosis of devotion, the hymn to the Creator.

“Ἐγὼ εἰμὶ τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου” “I am the light of the world” and the icon is, in fact, that light of the Orthodox world; the picture of its theology. The Byzantine Church created it, having understood the necessity for the pious faithful to have something concrete to inspire them to prayer. Contrary to Latin theology, which has always been the domain of the clergy, practically, the Greek faith has always belonged to the people; and while Latin religious art freely sought new forms and images, the Greek iconographic art remained strictly subordinate to the Canon drawn up by the fundamental law of our Church, to observe rigorously the dogmas imposed by the Oecumenical Councils on the basis of the Book of Apostolic Laws. As the rhythm of Greek liturgy and rites remains invariable at all times, so the icon must keep to its stereotyped and conventional pattern. Generally speaking, painting is always unintentionally conventional, dependent upon the artist's capacity of vision; but the Byzantine masters, while being in full possession of the faculty of seeing, and of drawing what they saw, created iconographic forms with the deliberate intention of separating the holy picture from ordinary life, and of helping the faithful to forget the earthly wretchedness before their eyes, and of directing their thoughts towards the sublime. With the same object the Orthodox clergy wear symbolical chasubles in church.

On the fragment of a Greek cartoon founds at Antinoë which represents Osiris with Isis and Nephtis, we see the same technical process in the painting as in the icons and in the frescoes found at Doura-Europos (Syria), which decorated the walls of the oldest-known church. This church was demolished in 156 A. D. it had probably been built at the end of the first century and is the oldest church recorded.

Just as the Greek tongue is an ideal form for the beauty of the Orthodox Church rites and theology, so Hellenic philosophical thought lends

itself to commentary on the Gospels. It is not to be forgotten that Greek genius revealed itself in full in that difficult task, and that throughout the existence of our Church we perceive it to be present in the beauty of form and in the depth of religious significance. This immortal spirit of Greece never disappeared, as Mouratov has noticed, and reappears from time to time wherever Orthodoxy has been embraced by Slav nations. Naturally each country adopted it in its own way, and added decoration according to its tastes and needs, but religious art faithfully copied Byzantine models, reflecting the changes which came over Byzantium with the march of time. After its fall its traditions continued to live in the Balkans, in Greece and in Russia. The last-named, in the enthusiasm of its devotion, contributed much to the decoration of the canonical style and developed iconography to a high degree.

Authentic Byzantine icons are not numerous, owing to iconoclasm and other destructive elements prevalent in the Near East, but the Orthodox world possesses innumerable copies executed by the more or less expert schools of iconography, which existed in every country. Generally speaking, these copies are not greatly esteemed by art critics, but this seems to me not altogether just, since an icon must be judged not merely on its artistic merits (which goes without saying), but also according to the degree of warmth of devotion emanating from it.

The cradle of Byzantine art was in the Mediterranean and the Near East, wherever Greek colonies were established. It was the work of the perennial artistic spirit coupled with Oriental technical capacity. It was not, as Dalton believed, a compromise between the pagan Hellenic spirit and a new faith, but a new phase of Greek genius, its natural development, dictated by the times. Strzygowski's theory, since repeated by all students of Byzantine art, on the predominant part played by Armenian art in the creation of Byzantine decoration, particularly in mosaics, is not credited at the present time. Strzygowski took as his point of departure, the mosaic pavements found in Jerusalem and bearing Armenian inscriptions; these mosaics, one near the Damascus Gate, the others in the Russian property on the Mount of Olives, were, as I have already

proved⁽¹⁾, usurped by the Armenians who came to Jerusalem after the VIIth century. The Greek art of mosaic had by them already a tradition of XIIth-centuries being born in the Hellas in the Vth century B. C. At Nicopolis in Greece were found mosaics dating from the VIth century A. D. showing the same characteristics of decoration as those in Jerusalem. Nieopolis mosaics have now been destroyed by German guns. As the eye of a careful investigator can see at once, the Armenians replaced Greek inscriptions by their own on mosaics dating from the IV, Vth and VIth centuries. The weakened technique of the characters is inconsistent with the workmanship of the pavements themselves. Besides this, the ornamental motifs of these mosaics are purely Greek in style, as I have demonstrated in my book on Eleon. Thus it must be admitted that it was the Armenians, and not the Byzantines, who borrowed. The discovery during the last thirty years of numerous mosaics, first in Greece, then in Palestine and Syria, has definitely proved the superiority of the technique achieved by Greece as well as by Byzantium. Historians tell us that everywhere in the provinces there were schools of art directed by Greek artists, often in the service of the Imperial Court, sent out to supervise the construction of buildings. The Greek colonies were powerful in Asia Minor and as far as Egypt; their natural genius and their culture placed them inevitably in the first rank among Oriental peoples. Even the Greek tongue was indispensable in the education of the period; St. Paul, for example, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees", spoke perfect Greek from childhood.

It must be noted that Christianity was moulded to its final form largely by Greek theologians of the fourth century, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom (the Golden-tongued Doctor), St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory the Great and many others. When the Greeks adopted Christianity it changed only the direction of their thought, not their spirit. That is why the oft-held opinion that with the adoption of Christianity all that makes the character of a nation must be sacrificed, seems completely false: the Greek was still a Greek but saw things in a different light to his

⁽¹⁾ E. LOUKIANOFF. *The Basilica of Eleon*, in *Mémoires de l'Institut*, t. XLII.

ancestors, which, in fact, happens with every generation and every country. Certainly the Asiatic nations contributed to the development of Byzantine art but the initiative always remained with the Greeks, and every branch of that art reveals the creative power of Greek artists. Wherever their works are found beside those of other nations, that art stands out at once as much by its refined grace of form as by its clear pure colouring, contrasting with the Oriental tones, either Egyptian or Asiatic, which are always denser and heavier.

In Byzantium, life presented new problems of architecture, painting and sculpture; artists in the enjoyment of all technical resources built churches, covering them with carving in wood and stone, with mosaics and with wall paintings. Highly complicated decorative motifs, supplied partly by the Persian art of the Sassanids, were largely used both in architecture and in handicraft; the enamels and miniatures used in the illumination of MSS. attained the highest degree of perfection. But for the moment our attention is directed to religious painting, and especially to the icon. For the illustration of the stages through which the icon has passed we have at hand a collection of Greek icons gathered from the Greek-churches in Egypt by the Archimandrite Agathaggelos, Superior of the Monastery of St. George in Old Cairo, and arranged on the first floor rooms of the Roman Tower there, with the taste characteristic of this energetic organiser.

The new aspect of life worked very slowly on the classical forms of art; the ancients' love of wall-painting helped to decorate the churches in a familiar manner. The Christians of the early Church, either in fear of persecution or through lack of tradition, showed, on the catacomb walls, among floral decorations, animals symbolising their belief. But already in the IIIrd century, we see signs of the future iconography. For example, in the Catacomb of St. Callistus in Rome, there is the figure of a woman with raised hands, the usual attitude of prayer in antiquity, symbolising the daily prayer offered by the Church and known as "Oranta". Moreover, Vielpert has counted 153 Orantas in the Italian catacombs. In the Catacomb of St. Priscilla there is a scene which can be recognised as the Annunciation, but still without its characteristic features.

The IVth century was very important for the development of Christian theological thought, since the life of Christianity was safeguarded in the capital of Orthodoxy founded by Constantine the Great, and the flow of pilgrimage, under the guidance of the 'Mother of Βασιλεὺς', carried new canonical elements to the Holy Places. The building of magnificent churches undertaken by St. Helena gathered under its momentum all the artistic forces of Byzance, and the Court artists were sent to Oriental countries to further her object.

In proportion as the lifetime of Christ grew distant with the lapse of time, the Christian communities of Asia felt the need of finding a material basis for the legends and traditions of which they were the guardians, in order the better to preserve and crystallise those legends and traditions. Monastic life, which attained huge proportions in the IVth century, came to the aid of this necessity, and a mass of apocryphal documents saw the light at this period. Apart from all this, it was necessary to create, in the numerous churches springing up everywhere, the spirit of the Gospels, and with this object painters began to represent the stories of the New and Old Testaments on the walls of the churches, following the pattern of the illuminations for MSS., so widely practised in Alexandria. The frescoes discovered at Baowit, with scenes from the life of King David and others, dates from the IVth or Vth century A. D., and may serve as an example of primitive church painting, as also of the first iconography of Our Lady.

Furthermore, the crowd of pilgrims flocking to the Holy Places from all parts of Europe, sought appropriate keepsakes of their momentous journey to take home with them. Egypt was in close touch with Palestine and Syria at this moment, and suggested, by its cult of the dead, the idea of commemorating the martyrs by placing their portraits, known then as *μνήμη* in Greek and "memoria" in Latin (i.e. memorial representation) in the oratories and martiria, the chapels containing the martyrs' remains. It is at the Fayoum that these portraits, on mummies, are first found, but their being placed on the deceased was forbidden by the decree of Theodosios the Great in 392; so this type of effigy remains peculiar to holy persons. Thus we find ourselves at the birth of the icon.

The iconographic garments were only established in the ivth century, while in the first frescoes, — portraits — going back to the iiird century we just see the sleeveless "hiton", the nimbus or halo surrounding the head of a saint and representing a cloud, *ἡ νεφέλη* in Greek, a sign of Divine reward.

Naturally one of the iconographer's chief tasks was to present the image of Christ. The idea of representing God in the form of man was at first rejected by the Christians, but afterwards, towards the iiird century, it was considered possible to show Christ under His human form. One of the first icons was the Holy Face, "not made by the hand of man" as it is called, on a piece of linen kept at Edessa, whence it was taken to Constantinople in 944, and which, according to legend, had been sent to King Abgar by Christ. A similar icon, painted on the beams of a house, was found during excavations at Ephesus. In a papyrus found by Quibell at the Fayoum, is the text of the apocryphal letter addressed by Christ to King Abgar on this subject. The legend of St. Veronica is of Western origin and belongs to a much later period.

However, the point on which the iconographic canon is concentrated is Christ *Παντοκράτωρ*, the All-Powerful, who reigns over all, in the domes, in the apses of all the churches, to Him alone is reserved the inscription in the halo *Ὁ ΩΝ* (He Who Is). The monogram appeared towards the vth century. From the time of Justinian efforts were made to find the best pattern for this sublime representation. We see a fully-grown man, with long hair and beard, giving his blessing to the world, in his thoughtful calm and his imperturbable goodness. The icon of Christ is an ideal and spiritual representation, a form of pure symbolic art. The big church at the Monastery of St. George in Old Cairo has a good modern painting of the All-Powerful painted on the dome some years ago by a Greek artist (Pl. V).

The establishment of Deaconesses, arising from the custom of the Eastern Churches, especially Antioch, of bringing poor widows to live near the churches and look after them and serve the clergy, found wide support among the aristocratic society of Constantinople, towards the end of the iiird century. A large number of rich and influential ladies

occupied themselves with good works, sponsored by the Church. Thanks to their influence and their wealth, these deaconesses extended their beneficent activity throughout the Byzantine Empire, particularly in the Near East, on a wide scale. They had a Church as the centre of their undertakings and thus contributed to the stabilizing of its power. The Fathers of the Church, realising what a potent auxiliary they had in the deaconesses, pleaded strongly in favour of the spread of that order, and named the deaconesses as superiors of convents. Later, in the viith century, they even exercised the office of deacon and, as such, wore the stole, as we see on some icons of the period.

History has preserved to us the names of some whose fame reached far beyond the walls of Constantinople, as was the case with the Deaconess Olympiada, who worked with St. John Chrysostom throughout the Near East in the ivth century. Macrina, the sister of St. Gregory of Nyssa, lived at the beginning of the vth century; thirty or forty years later Melania, known as "the Roman", a Latin patrician lady, played an important rôle in the monastic life of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, where she organised pilgrimages for her compatriots and founded large hospices for them. In her neighbourhood lived another personage, who by her exalted rank, acted as a link between the Byzantine Court and the Church in Palestine; this was the Empress Eudoxia, the repudiated wife of Theodosios II. This excellent system of deaconesses lasted but a short time in Egypt, and in Italy had no success whatever. The deaconesses venerated Our Lady as the protectress of their good works, and the picture of the "Oranta" became their symbol. We often meet it on the small pectoral crosses of Syria from the ivth to the viith century, as also on the bottom of vases found in the catacombs.

If, up to the ivth century, the icons were portraits commemorating the martyrs, at this time the Holy Face of Edessa, and more particularly, the picture of Our Lady, inaugurated the cycle of Orthodox iconography. Antioch, mother of the majority of apocryphal documents, handed down the life of the Mother of God, as also the form of her features, as legend had preserved them. The icon has kept all the marks of its prototype, the Fayoum portraits, in encaustic or in tempera, executed on a specially prepared piece of wood; it preserves also the vague facial expression, the

enormous eyes, the iris half-covered by the upper lid, the white of the eye appearing beneath, on the lower half of the eye; it has also the small mouth with fast-closed lips. Encaustic consists of colours prepared with melted wax, tempera of colours prepared with white of egg; these two media were customary with classical painters, and Pliny gives us the recipe for their preparation.

Of all the pictures of the Blessed Virgin which we know of, the oldest is that at Vatopedi, on Mount Athos, it is very small, an icon only 6 cms. by 6 cms., dating from the vith century. In the Kiev Theological Academy there is a vith century icon of Our Lady from Mount Sinai, which, in addition to the characteristics already mentioned, has the two top corners cut off, as is seen also in the Fayoum portrait. One of these portraits (in my collection), represents a woman. Here we can make a comparison with an uncanonical icon of Our Lady in the study of the Superior of the Monastery of St. George in Old Cairo, painted by a Greek artist, Rallis, a student of Burne-Jones, in 1894. We see an extraordinary link with the classic Greek type of face, in spite of seventeen centuries having elapsed between the painting of the two portraits.

The Byzantine love of portraiture was transferred to the icon when the cast, received the official approbation of the Church. It was a Byzantine custom to send the portraits of the Emperors into the provinces, where they were exposed, surrounded by candles, in chapels, for the people to venerate. This custom was followed in its integrity in the case of the icon. St. John Chrysostom, in his homily at the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet on Maundy Thursday, said: "When the civic authorities go out to meet the Emperor's portrait near the city gates, they do not venerate the wood and the material of which the portrait is painted, but the image of the Emperor; the same applies to the icon." At the Seventh Œcumenical Council, this homily was read in defence of the icon.

When churches were built portraits, not only of saints but also of donors, very often figure in iconographic compositions. Among those of donors we know two of Justinian, one at St. Apollinarius at Ravenna, the other at St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. After centuries in the Mosque of Kabrie Djami, near the gate of Adrianople at Istanbul, which was formerly the church of the rich monastery of τῆς χάρας

(Outside the Walls i.e.) on otherwise uninhabited ground, there is a long series of portraits of prophets and saints, placed in medallions. Each face has its individual features and bears a highly distinctive character. These mosaic portraits, precious on account of their primitive, unrestored condition, although damaged in some places, belong to the xivth century and furnish us with rich iconographic material in spite of the obvious signs of decadence in their technique.

The iconographers of the vth to the viiith centuries worked at the creation of the canonical style as much in wall decoration (generally in mosaic) as in the detached icon "of the chapel" as it was called. One of the characteristic features of the icon which distinguishes Byzantine work is that the middle part is about a centimetre further in, so that the sides form a frame, nearly always gilded.

The image of Our Lady soon received universal veneration. Her cultus, with the bestowal of the title of τῆς Θεοτόκου (Mother of God) in the eighth century, and her veneration as Protectress of mankind before her Son, brought from the Near East, was fervently embraced by Byzance. Pilgrims contributed greatly to its spread by carrying home many icons from Syria and the Holy Land, where special studies for their execution already existed.

The false idea, maintained by historians of Byzantium, that the traditions of iconography were hindrance to the artist, killing his initiative, must be set aside once and for all; on the contrary, a careful scrutiny of collections of icons leads to the definite conclusion that identical icons may be said to be inexistent, which means that the painter, whether artist or craftsman, knew how to vary his subject according to his individual ideas. Moreover, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to his sacred task, for which he prepared by fasting and prayer. That is why the icon, apart from a few rare exceptions, is unsigned.

The historian Theodoros Anagnoste (the Reader) whose history dates from 530 AD. tells that about 450 AD., Eudoxia (wife of Theodosios II), who lived on the Mount of Olives near the Basilica of Eleon, sent to the Emperor's mother, Pulcheria (d. 453 A. D.) an icon of Our Lady painted by "Luke". Luke was a bishop of the Thebaïd in the time of the Patriarch Mark of Alexandria, in the ivth century; he was also an iconographer,

for he has left a memorial concerning his work on the icon of Our Lady. Consequently it must be assumed that the icons attributed by legend to St. Luke the Evangelist are also the work of Luke, Bishop of the Thebaïd.

The miraculous icon sent to Constantinople by the Empress Eudoxia became the palladium of Byzance, under the title of Ὁδηγίτρια (Guide or conductress). Copies of it were scattered throughout the Empire. Justinian the Great, who leaned upon the Church and encouraged his people's devotion in all ways, made the cultus of Our Lady the motive force of his policy, placing her icons, among other places, on the masts of his vessels. The type Ὁδηγίτρια answered fully to Byzantine piety: majestic, severe, ascetic, she looks upon the spectator and comforts him with her serenity.

The icon shown in Plate I (in my collection) is a magnificent specimen of Byzantine Ὁδηγίτρια work. It is a copy on canvas, painted on wood and covered with a layer of specially prepared paste. The original of it goes back to the ixth century. The Blessed Virgin is raising her hands, the Holy Child, the Emmanuel, is before her. In this picture the Holy Child is not yet shown in a medallion; this appeared in the xith century. The fingers of the Infant Jesus are bent as when in the act of blessing, but the position of the left hand is indistinguishable as the icon is blackened with smoke. The halos are both finished by a chain of pearls around them in relief. Our Lady's veil is red with a border once white but now yellowed, her overgarment is blue. The colour of the Holy Child's cloak cannot be identified but his tunic is blue. On either side, just above the Blessed Virgin's head, is a medallion also picked out in relief, with the usual monogram MP ΘΥ. Another inscription is found lower down ΗΟΔΙ ΓΙΤΡΙΑ.

The rich monasteries and churches of Syria played an important part in the development of iconography, furnishing compositions of Gospel scenes from their numerous studios. The excavations at Baowit have brought to light frescoes of this type dating from the ivth and vth centuries. The Greek artists who directed the craft were in the habit of placing portraits against a background taken from the scenery of their native

country (rocky mountains and sub-tropical vegetation). Iconographic tradition crystallised this scenery into an indispensable accessory and the Russian icon followed it rigorously.

The style created during the ivth and vth centuries consisted of a conventional composition, long thin figures draped in classical garments, with ascetic faces, often of Syrian type and brought by the monks from the Holy Land. The women's heads are always covered with ample veils with an underveil showing across the forehead; the Virgin is always veiled in purple with a white border surrounding the face, and she always wears a blue or violet robe.

Therefore, about the time of Justinian the Great Byzantine art had at last found its form and its style.

The viith and viiith centuries were painful ones for the iconographic art owing to the activities of the iconoclasts who destroyed everything possible, especially pictures of the Virgin. Excavations in Palestine have brought to light some mosaics bearing obvious marks of changes made by the enemies of the icon. Yessid the ninth Khalif of the Omayyad dynasty wiped out all the icons in Syria in 719; Constantine Copronimus did the same thing in Byzantium in 765. These events provoked a large scale emigration from the east to the Balkans and Italy, where, in the viiith century there was a series of Greek and Syrian popes, thus making of Rome an almost Byzantine city. Hence it is that at this period religious art in Italy took on a purely Byzantine character. The type of Ὁδηγίτρια for the icon of Our Lady, brought to Italy by the Greek clergy, served as a model for the Latin Madonna. In the works of the Italian Primitives we see the same supple figure, the same long oval face, with large eyes, straight eyebrows, the same finely-chiselled nose and the tiny mouth; in a word, all the original characteristics of Syria made familiar to us in the Byzantine icons.

About this time painters began to represent Our Lady as the Queen of the World, seated on a throne and garbed in courtly robes. On a mosaic in the Church of St. Mark in Florence, the Queen of the World is shown wearing garments corresponding to the robes of a patrician lady, as described in the Book of Court Ceremonies of the court of Constantine Porphyrogenus.

After the period of iconoclasm, the Church, leader of learning and culture, softened its monastic rigour; this had immediate repercussions on iconography. The impassible and magestic expression of face and the immobility of attitude in the wall-paintings was gradually changed into sadness of countenance and plasticity of pose, with an accent of the dramatic. The type of the Blessed Virgin underwent considerable change, the majestic matron gave way to the mother, full of love and tenderness.

In the ixth century the Byzantine Empire had two miraculous icons of Our Lady, one, *Ὁδηγίτρια* already mentioned, standing with raised hands and with the Emmanuel (May God be with us) in a medallion in front of His mother. It was kept in the Monastery at Constantinople known as *τῶν ὁδηγῶν* (of military chiefs). Was the icon painted for the monastery or the monastery built to house the icon? It is impossible to say which is the first. According to the historian Zonar, during the wars, this icon, taken from the monastery, accompanied the troops and was therefore known as the Chieftainess. This title figures in documents from the ixth century. Nicophoros Grigora also mentions it but it comes from the time of the Empress Irene in the viiith century when there was a pause in the wave of iconoclasm.

The other icon of Our Lady *Παναγία τῆς Νικοποιοῦ* (the All-Holy of Nicopei) is seated, holding the Infant Jesus on her left arm. This icon was the personal palladium (safeguard) of the Emperor, and served as an emblem at military triumphs. It was in the church of the court at Blackernes.

Kondakov quotes an historian Moïse Kharène, who, in his book "Of Ranks" reports that the Emperor went to Matins in the chapel where the icon *Ὁδηγίτρια* is to be found with the picture of St. George and afterwards he went to hear Mass in the Chapel of *Νικοποιοῦ* (Chap. ix, p. 69). From other sources we know that on feast days the two icons were carried to the Emperor's apartments and placed on special pedestals; the triptychs served as portable icons in the Byzantine wars. Returning to my copy of *Ὁδηγίτρια* in archaic style it has considerable

importance by reason of its combining the two icons of Our Lady and St. George, which existed before the xth century; the Christian communities of the East bound up the cultus of Our Lady with that of St. George. The saint is shown as a warrior on a white horse; with his right hand he holds a lance transpiercing the dragon, the cloak floating from his shoulders is red with small white flowers. To the left of his head is an inscription *ὉΑΓΙ ΟΣ ΓΕΟΩ*. Especially interesting is the treatment of the hair in this painting of St. George; it is shown as a circle of stylised curls around the forehead and thus betrays the hand of a Byzantine artist. But we will come back to this subject a little later.

In 1204 Constantinople was taken by the Crusaders and pillaged for four days; many art treasures were destroyed at the time and the fate of these two icons is unknown to us, but it is related that the Nicopean icon was taken away by the Doge Dandolo of Venice to that city where it is at present, in the Cathedral of St. Mark.

In the period following, the copyists lost the distinction between the two types and appropriated the *Ὁδηγίτρια* type to that of Nicopea.

As the Byzantine icon was never dated and it was only after the fall of Byzantium that the first dates appeared, it is a very difficult task to date any specimen with exactitude. However, mosaics, whose evolution was closely linked with that of the icon, are often to be dated exactly by one means or another, and thus offer a solid basis for the chronology of the icon. The Cathedral of St. Sophia—the Wisdom of God—at Constantinople, serves as a landmark as it was the creation of several Byzantine Emperors who each added his treasures to it. In this way we may review the various periods of Byzantine religious art in their sequence, from the time of Justinian the Great—the vith century—up to the xiith century.

II

The Museum of St. George in Old Cairo possesses two rare icons of Our Lady dating from the viiith and ixth centuries. Both are very large, the first (1.95 by 1.07 m.) shows the Blessed Virgin seated against a decorative background, two angels bowing towards her

occupy the upper corners; unfortunately the icon is so damaged that it is impossible to distinguish either Our Lady's face or the Holy Child. The middle plank where the face and figure were, has been quite burnt away but in spite of this the contour of her head and halo may be picked out, together with the medallion containing the Emmanuel, and the red colour of her garments can also be recognised. The angels' faces are better preserved, their pure Greek type allows the date of the icon to be fixed by the archaic style of drawing, as the viiith or ixth century. This greatly resembles a mosaic icon of St. Dimitrius at Salonika, dating from the viith century.

The other icon (1.25 by .94), is better preserved and belongs to the Nicopeia type, in it the Holy Child is seated on His mother's right arm, which is somewhat rare, and she, in a movement of tenderness, is pressing her left hand upon His breast. The face of the Blessed Virgin is damaged, but it can be seen that she is wearing a green robe and a red veil bordered with white, while the Christ has a white tunic; both the figures are outlined in red, standing out against the gold background. Outside the monogram MP ΘΥ there is an inscription on the right side Η ΓΟΡΓΟΕΠΗΚΟΟΣ (prompt to obey). The grace of the pose and of the drapery shows the characteristics of the ixth century Byzantine art. The stars on the forehead and shoulders of Our Lady are a new and significant trait.

This century and the following were the ones in which Byzantine art attained its highest perfection in all branches; iconography developed extensively. On backgrounds representing conventionalised buildings the most interesting and complicated compositions of Gospel subjects were represented. Such are the mosaics in the Church of St. Luke at Phocida, and those of the monastery of Daphni (xith century) on the road from Athens to Eleusis where we find before our eyes all the nobility of Orthodoxy, all its refinement of harmony and line. Never has religious art risen to so high a level. We may take as an example the Annunciation, so full of the mystery of that moment (Pl. XIV, XV).

At this period we find the countenances of the saints softened, the attitude gracefully plastic, the head often bent, the colours become denser and deeper. It was about now that the composition of the

iconostasis (the wall-space, originally panelled, behind the altar) became fixed; that is to say, the distribution of the icons in a certain order was established once and for all. In the icons we notice a feature which was to be found in all later periods; that is the way the eyes are dealt with. Previously Greek artists treated them as would a sculptor; later, with fine muscle lines all around, carefully shaded.

With the growth of the goldsmith's art, so beloved of the Byzance of the xiith century, icons came to be covered with metal sheets, in relief, or the icon itself was traced on metal, often encrusted with enamel and precious stones. The monasteries and churches of the Caucasus have preserved many specimens of this art these too demonstrate the warmth and grace of the Greek spirit. The Leningrad and British Museums also possess many pieces in this manner.

As the epilogue to this great period we have in the Museum of St. George, three icons of the xiiith century. The first icon is of Our Lady (61 cms. by 47 cms. by 2 cms.), who is holding the Infant Jesus on her left arm, her red veil is bordered with gold and decorated with stars. The Emmanuel is wearing a red tunic and is wrapped in a cloak whose ample folds show reflections of gilding. Our Lady's face is remarkable for its fine air of distinction; the nose is finely chiselled with close-pressed nostrils, apparently a characteristic of the period.

The icon of the Angel Gabriel is 61 cms. by 47 cms. by 2 cms., and resembles the former both in its general dimensions and in its painting; the type of wood employed is also similar. The right wing of the angel is quite visible; as to the colour of the garments, it is now hard to say exactly whether they are green or blue. The physical type closely resembles that of Our Lady, especially as to the eyes. All these points prove the icons to be of the same origin. The drawing of the hair, in rows of curls, and of the ribbon binding them, recalls the manner of the famous Russian iconographer Andrew Roublev who lived in the xvth century and was a pupil of Theophanos, called "the Greek". As the development of religious art in Russia was a century or two behind that of Greece, this fixes the period of this icon as the xiiith century.

The third icon of this series is that of St. Mark. (61 cms. by 47 cms. by 2 cms.). It is so blackened that we can barely make

out its outline, identical with that of the Archangel. The Evangelist is holding a copy of the Gospels in red. On the right side is an inscription "Marcus".

In all probability the three icons described belonged to the same iconostasis.

Byzantine art had an enormous influence on European countries. Greek artists, refugees from iconoclasm, carried the spiritual atmosphere of Byzance with them wherever they settled. Italian soil was particularly favourable to its cultivation so that after the xith century every part of Italy where arts and crafts schools existed was at work to absorb the spirit of Byzantine models; this tendency as is known, finally led to the Renaissance. Compared with Greek infiltration into other regions, Greek immigration to Southern Italy and Sicily reached enormous proportions. In Calabria and Otranto 97 Greek convents with more than 5,000 inmates could be counted in the xith century. These religious had been gathered by the clergy and monks of the Basilian order from among Greek immigrants.

Towards the xivth century, Greater Greece founded an iconographic school known as the Italo-Cretan, which became a dangerous rival to Byzance. It created the icon containing several heads, communicating a lyrical impression to the composition, and slightly modernising the canonical form established, but always observing the technical rules set by Byzance. At this time a new branch of religious art began to flourish in the Balkans and in Russia, and, fed by Byzantine forms and compositions, each developed under the guidance of Greek masters, the most complicated subjects of doctrine, showing the greatest technical perfection but still remaining strictly conventional. The Wall-paintings on Mount Athos and its oratory icons served as models.

In the Museum of St. George there is an icon "Συναξίς τῶν ἀγγέλων" (Gathering of Angels) No. 85 in catalogue, 65 1/2 by 51 by 2 1/2 cms. This shows the many-headed type of icon, and symbolises the conquest over iconoclasm. There is a group of angels arranged in three rows on a gilt background. The figure in the middle of the first row is holding the picture of the Emmanuel, which is in a medallion. All the figures

wear red mantles. The grace emanating from the super-natural beauty of the faces attracts and holds the spectators' eye, the fashion of painting, especially the careful drawing of the eyes and of the curly hair, and the transparent colouring, permits us to attribute it to the xivth century.

A fine icon Ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ἡ ἀμπελος "I am the Vine" (83 by 117 cms.), painted on a gilt background. In spite of being damaged almost throughout it is distinguished by the noble vivacity of every figure, by their graceful freedom of movement, as well as by the delicate treatment of the drapery; altogether a fine specimen of xivth century Byzantine art. The group of five rows of saints, prophets and hymnographers stands on a kind of family tree illustrating the foundation of the Christian Church. Around the head of each founder, standing on the various branches of the vine, is written his name. Each of them is holding his own sign. The first figure is that of St. James the Apostle, "the Brother of God", next St. John the Evangelist, marked as "the Theologian". St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth follow. Descending by the left hand, on the fourth row we come to David, and Solomon beneath him. The painting bears a strong resemblance to the mosaics of Kabrie Djami.

A large icon (176 by 66 cms.) of St. Cyril of Alexandria, shows us the portrait of the Bishop in rich sacerdotal vestments and wearing a heavily-jewelled mitre; he is giving his blessing with his right hand and holding the Gospels in his left. He bends his penetrating but somewhat tired eyes upon the spectator. The workmanship of the numerous fine lines in which the picture is traced reveals a new phase in iconographic art, beginning from the xivth century. On another almost identical copy of this icon Ch. Diehl has found the date 1340, corresponding absolutely with my conclusions.

Pl. II. To the same century and the same style of workmanship belongs a small icon of Our Lady (22 by 12 1/2 cms.) of the Nicopei type. All the Blessed Virgin's garments are drawn in parallel lines, a feature of this style already showing signs of decadence. In spite of this the painting is very delicate and is an excellent piece of workmanship. The portion of the icon containing the picture of the Holy Child has disappeared.

Pl. III. In the same case in the Museum of St. George, is a small icon $22 \frac{1}{2}$ by $10 \frac{1}{2}$ by 2.8 cms.), of the xvth century on a gilt background, of which the left side has been removed. It represents St. Gregory the Great, who appears to be venerated everywhere. The saint is giving his blessing and gazing on the spectator with peculiar benevolence. By a curious coincidence he resembles St. Nicholas (the Thaumaturge) both in feature and expression, being bald-headed and with a high domed forehead. He is wearing episcopal vestments with black and red squares on a white ground and has the usual white omophorium.

Another icon of the same century (118 by 64 by 4 cms.). It shows St. Catherine, the great martyr who is the patroness of the monastery on Mount Sinai, wearing a red court dress all covered with precious stones, and with a rich crown. In her right hand she holds a slender cross; the other hand, as also the left eye, are damaged. This icon is in a very bad state of preservation but its gilt background can still be seen. There is one interesting detail: the ringlets of hair are outlined in gold.

In the icon of Our Lady dating from the xvth century (64 by 54 by 2.7 cms.), known under the name of Γλυκοφιλόσσα (Tenderness) we have a new model hitherto unknown in iconography, a bust instead of a full-length figure, and a new pose. In a movement of maternal affection Our Lady turns towards the Holy Child who is embracing her, while turning His face away. She is in red and two angels with raised wings appear on either side of her head; below, on the left there is an inscription: "χερ Ἰωαννικίου ἱεροδιάκον". "Done by the hand of the Deacon Ioannikios." Unfortunately the large crack down the icon passes through the countenance of the Virgin. This type, executed as always on a gilt background, belongs to the Italo-Cretan school.

In the Russian Museum at Leningrad there is an icon of Greek workmanship of the same type, the same school and the same period as that at the Monastery of St. George. Thanks to its better preservation we can see all the poetry of that tender scene between mother and Son, the sadness depicted on the face of Our Lady bending over Him shows she already foresees the sufferings to come upon Our Saviour. This pattern serves as a model for many later copies.

A fragment (50 by $16 \frac{1}{2}$ by 5 cms.) of the composition representing the *Nativity of Our Lady*, is kept in one of the cases in the Museum of St. George. It shows us a man with turned-up sleeves preparing a tub of water. The drawing is by an expert hand and is characteristic of the time (xvth century) but unfortunately its damaged condition allows little to be made out.

In the iconostasis of the big church in the Round Tower there are two icons of the later Italo-Cretan school which go together, the icon of Christ and that of the Blessed Virgin. This work of the xvith or xviith century represents Christ as the great Bishop, in mitre, now covered with a sheet of silver, garbed in a green saccos, a red tunic, and with a white omophorium. He gives His blessing with one hand and holds with the other the Gospels open at the page "My Kingdom is not of this world". The icon of the Blessed Virgin is of the "Tenderness" type; she holds the Holy Child's hand in her own *right* hand; the Infant sits on her left arm and is turning away His head. In Greece there is a special type of this picture of Our Lady "δέξια" (of the Right). Two angels form the usual accessories. The colours of the garments are canonical, red veil and green tunic. The Holy Child's tunic is white and the mantle green with gold ornamentation; the faces of these two icons show Eastern types. Both icons are in a good state of preservation.

The monastic life of Mount Athos, isolated from the whole world, dictated the need of creating its own school of iconography; the cultus of Our Lady, Protectress of the Holy Mount, known as "the House of the Mother of God" suggested numerous types of icon, which, scattered about by means of thousands of copies, celebrated this independent branch of Byzantine art. From the artistic point of view, it remained inferior to other Byzantine painting, for the artists who worked in it were not, for the most part, Greeks, but pilgrims come to Mount Athos for a short time from all parts of the Orthodox world; but its spiritual value, which gives it an eminent place in religious art, must be recognised. The asceticism which still governs the life of this holy mountain has communicated a certain coldness to the execution of these icons, a coldness quite missing from any contemporary Greek work.

Here are details of a few icons of this school, preserved in various museums in Russia, which illustrate my words.

An icon of the prophet Elias, *xivth* century. The prophet is leaning thoughtfully on the rocks of Mount Athos while a raven is bringing him bread.

Our Lady, of the Nicopei type from the Convent of Chilandari, the work of a craftsman of the *xivth* century.

This icon shows St. Nicholas the Thaumaturge. *xvith* century.

The Annunciation, of the same century, painted on the principal door (Royal Door) of an iconostasis, by a very experienced hand, but there is a certain dryness and stiffness, especially in the treatment of the drapery. It may well be compared with the mosaics at Daphni.

The religious paintings which cover the walls of the numerous churches of Mount Athos were largely restored in the *xixth* century but the Cathedral of the Protatos (Karea) still preserves frescoes signed by the Greek Emanuelos Panselinos in 1535-36, frescoes which hold the eye by the antique grace of the figures and by the richness of their varied colours. With a master hand Panselinos knew perfectly how to unite majesty of scene with outward beauty while still keeping to the canons of iconography.

In Russia, where Byzantine art arrived with Christianity, it was fervently adopted; the artistic genius of the Russians, excited by the beauty of the Greek Church, soon brought to light many common points in their attitude and way of seeing and treating religious subjects. The psychology of these two peoples was fairly similar, that is why the iconography of Byzance was absorbed in its entirety by its spiritual daughter. For the Greek masters who went to Russia, the task of teaching their art was not hard; from the *xiith* century schools of iconography flourished at Novgorod, Pscov, Souzdal and Moscow. The Russians became acquainted with Byzantine art through the Balkan countries on one hand and on the other, through their close ties with the Chersonese, the Greek colony in the Crimea. Many beautiful icons in Russia are known under the name of *Khoroun* (Chersonese) painting, which preserved the technical and artistic methods of Byzance. The gradual blending of colours, the double-haded outlines, the highlights of the face were among its features.

To give an example of what the Russian icon was, I have chosen these two icons of Our Lady. The first is of the Novgorod School of the *xiith* century. We have already met it as it belongs to the *Ὁδηγήτρια* type. The nose is rather curved, finely chiselled, with the nostrils somewhat pinched and is in the Italo-Cretan manner. The second is of the "Tenderness" type, the work of the Souzdal school dating before 1380. This admirable icon, known as "Donskaya" (from Don area), the work of Theophanos the Greek, is in the Kremlin in Moscow. He was a Cretan who went to Russia to direct the school of iconography and had several renowned pupils. Its prototype may be found in the *viith* century MS. "Christian Topography" by Cosma Indicopleustis in the Vatican. In this MS. there is a miniature of Our Lady which greatly resembles that shown in the icon.

Now returning to the historia of the icon the *xvith* century was the culminating point of religious art when the perfect union between the canonical majesty of Byzance and the new iconography, derived from the two preceding centuries, from canticles and acathis (songs of praise) and often from strictly doctrinal subjects, was completed. This junction urged artists to formulate extremely complicated compositions, creating them with a pious grace in such fashion that they can be termed doctrine personified.

Here are a few abstract points of doctrine to illustrate what has been said above : (see Pl. II).

1. Deisis (prayer), represents the Church Militant; Christ is seated on a throne, His mother, and the precursor are near Him.

2. This type of icon is known under the name of the Saviour, "the seeing eye" according to the CXX Psalm : "Behold he shall neither slumber nor sleep, that Keepeth Israel". (*xvith* century, now is in the Russian Museum, Leningrad). At different periods Christ was represented on this type of icon as of different ages; the earliest show Him as a man in the prime of life but gradually He is depicted as younger and younger until the latest icons represent a child of three or four years old as on our icon.

3. The Holy Trinity, the revelation to Abraham. ivth century.

4. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, one of the oldest subjects, often found in the Fathers of the Church. This copy belongs to the ivth century. In the catacombs of Alexandria is a church and catacomb bearing the inscription *Σοφία* "Sophia."

5. The Divinity in three hypostases, and the Foundation of the Church. xviith century. Russian Museum. Leningrad.

6. The Last Judgment, xviith century. Russian Museum, Leningrad.

7. The Crucifixion. A Byzantine painting of the ivth century of the Russian Museum, Leningrad. An interesting detail is found on the margin over the cross, an empty throne with the Gospels lying on the seat, it is awaiting the Christ, guarded by two angels. This symbolical subject is known as *Hetimasie* (the prepared throne), and is also Byzantine. This emblem was got from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, Chap. vi, 15 "the preparation of the gospel of peace". During the Council of Ephesus, as St. Cyril of Alexandria tells us, a throne, with a gospel on the seat, was placed in the midst of the assembly.

Now we come to an interesting icon of our museum of St. George (146 by 120 by 1.8 cms.) in a good state of preservation. It illustrates a canticle sung by the Orthodox Church on Christmas Day (Pl. IV). The Blessed Virgin is seated on a throne amid steep rocks; she is depicted as very young, dressed as usual in a red veil and a blue tunic. She supports the Holy Child, two or three years of age, with her right hand, and He is giving His blessing to the world. St. Joseph is standing on the left, near the throne; all the rocks are covered with pictures of those who have come to the Nativity and here we find the entire world represented. On a summit over Our Lady's head is a star, shedding its beams; in the upper ranks of figures are angels singing praises. Below, the Magi are bringing gifts; around the throne the shepherds are offering the grotto, held in the hands of one of them, while the desert is represented by a negro who is offering the cradle. In the lower ranks are saints and mortals in attitudes of adoration, and we see beneath the throne

the Patriarch Ioannikios of Alexandria is kneeling and holding an unrolled parchment with an inscription as follows :

ΠΑΡΘΕΝΙΚΗΣ ΜΑΡΙΗΣ ΥΙΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΕΝΔΟΘΙ ΦΑΤΝΗΣ.
 ΑΓΓΕΛΟΙ. ΑΣΤΡΟΛΟΓΟΙ. ΒΟΥΘΕΡΕΜΜΟΝΕΣ ΑΜΦΕΚΝΗΣΑΝ.
 ΜΟΥΝΟΣ ΓΑΡ ΟΣ ΑΝΑΞ ΔΕΝΑ ΦΡΕΣΙΒ ΥΑΣΥΔΟΜΕΟΥ ΩΝ
 ΠΕΦΝΕ ΒΡΕΦΗ ΣΥΜΠΑΝΤΑ ΘΕΟΝ Κ ΤΑΝ ΕΙΝΜΕΝΕ

ΑΙΝΩΝ

Ο ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙΑΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΙΚΙΟΣ

ΑΧΗΡ ΜΑΡΤΙΩ Η

The imperfect text may perhaps be rendered as follows :

Praising.

The Son of God born of Virgin Mary in the cradle.

The angels, astrologues, shepherds came.

Because (He was) unique as King (3 words undecipherable).

Child, Son of God of the universe (3 words undecipherable).

Joannikios (Patriarch) of Alexandria.

1653 8th March.

A canticle, whose text follows, is written over the heads of various figures and more or less scattered over the Icon. Underneath is an illegible inscription and the date 1785, the date and inscription being contemporary. Here is the text of the canticle :

Ὑπὲρ λόγον τὸ θαῦμα παρθένος κυεῖ πλὴν ὑπὲρ λόγον τὸ θαῦμα πλὴν θεοῦ
 κυεῖ.

Τοῦτ' αὐτὸ καινὸν εἰ θεοῦ βρέφος βλέπω· τοῦτ' αὐτὸ καινὸν φιλόανθρωπον
 βλέπω

οἱ ἄγγελοι τὸν ὕμνον οἱ μάγοι τὰ δῶρα ἡ ἔρημος τὴν φατνὴν

οἱ οὐρανοὶ τὸν ἀστέρα οἱ ποιμένες τὸ θαῦμα ἡ γῆ τὸ σπήλαιον

ἡμεῖς δὲ μητέρα παρθένον· ὁ προαιώνων θεὸς ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.

ὁ μάγος Βαλαάμ, ὁ προφήτης Δαυιδ.

Ἰεζεκιήλ, Ἰερεμίας, Ἀχάζ, Ἡσαΐα Σολομὼν, Δαυιδ, Μωυσῆς Ἀβραάμ

οἱ ἅγιοι Ἀνατόλοι.

«Beyond all words, a miracle, the Virgin is with child. Beyond all words, a miracle, but she brings forth God. All is most marvellous, in I see God, a child.

A marvel, but I see the lover of mankind.

The angels hymning, the heavens (have given) the star. The Magi (have brought) gifts. The shepherds (have seen) the miracle. The desert (has offered) the cradle. The earth—the cave. We also (have offered) a Virgin Mother. Oh everlasting God, have merci on us.

The learned (Magus) Valaam, the prophet Daniel.

Ezekial, Jeremias, Achias, Isaias, Solomon, David, Moses.

The Saints of Anatolia».

St. George, patron of the Greek monastery in Old Cairo, has received general veneration from European nations owing to his knightly character and that is why he was chosen as protector of England, Russia, Serbia and other countries. He was never a "military god" as a celebrated Cairene recently expressed it. In Christianity, as in the *Talmud* and in Islam, there is but one God. St. George was a man, born about 280 AD. we learn from the palimpsest of the Imperial Library in Vienna, reproducing a Greek narrative of the ivth century. He came from Lydda, in a rich valley at the foot of a mountain in Judea in Palestine. Saint George was an officer in the Roman Army and distinguished himself by his gallantry in the campaign against the Persians. It is quite possible that in his quality of tribune in the Imperial Guard he did his service at Babylon (Old Cairo) in Egypt and in that case must have lived in the Roman fort, that is to say, the Round Tower of the Greek monastery now bearing his name. During the last year of his life he served in Cappadocia, where, by his open profession of Christianity and by his disposal of his fortune among the poor, he drew down the anger of Diocletian. After being tortured he was beheaded in 303 A.D. According to his wish his remains were taken to his birthplace.

Palestine and Syria fervently venerated the memory of St. George as protector of the weak and the oppressed, as the warriors' intercessor before God and as their emblem of courage in a righteous cause. He is still venerated to this day as embodying the same qualities. Everywhere

in the Near East excavations have brought to light many churches dedicated to this saint, of which the oldest, in Syria, dates from 346 A.D. and at Lydda there are ruins, visible, but so far not studied, belonging, it is supposed, to the time of Constantine the Great who built a church over the remains of the saint.

The Crusaders, inspired by the beauty of his legend, to which had been added the story of his having freed a princess from the claws of a dragon, introduced his cultus into Western Europe. But indications are sometimes found that the dragon legend already existed in the vith and viith centuries. Among others, in our collection we have a small bas-relief of St. George killing the dragon, dating from the vith century. Art has paid particular attention to this saint who has served as the favourite subject of all. Among the fairly numerous subject pictures of St. George to be found in the Monastery of St. George there are two small ones which are annotated. 1) This icon (22½ by 16½ by 1½ cms.) is a piece of Greek work of the xvth century, and is very interesting. On the gilt background St. George the Victor pierces the dragon with his lance, his red cloak floating from his shoulders. The rescued princess, very diminutive in green, is seated on the crupper, holding a spouted vase. The white horse is galloping. This icon is fairly well preserved, and is the most interesting in the whole Museum. 2) The second one shows another St. George that lived not long ago in Epyrus and is venerated there. As we see it is a primitive painting; and as he is in Evzone clothes it is probably of Macedonian origin.

Both those icons were found in Cairo and so the small bas-relief. We gave them to the St. George Museum.

The big icon of St. George placed in the special couvouchion in the church in the Round Tower is completely covered with sheets of silver so that we see only two heads, those of St. George and the Princess. It is of the same type as the last but belonging to the first half of the xixth century, and is executed in two different styles. The faces show a hand more practised in the academic style than that which painted the rest of the picture.

The xviiith and xixth centuries were painful ones for the Orthodox icon, Italian painting being then fashionable, replaced the Byzantine tradition

and the icon lost all its canonical beauty. It is generally thought that it is now dead but this is not so, the proof will be found in the St. George's Museum. Moreover, in our days the urge to study the heritage remaining from this great art, and to follow its traditions, is ever increasing. The numerous attempts at its revival will not, I am sure, remain unfruitful. If the icon of the Last Supper (Pl. XLVIII) done in 1937 by a Russian pupil of Maurice Denis, in the attempt to create something, serves as a negative example, it will be followed by better efforts.

Pl. XLIX and L. The first is an icon of the Annunciation, forming the Royal door of an iconostasis. The second of Our Lady is on the left side of the same iconostasis, in the Serbian Patriarchal Church in Belgrade. They were carried out by the restorer Sofronov on the orders of the late Patriarch Barnabas, and serve, by their artistic value and their technique, as an excellent model for iconographers of the present generation and those to follow.

Greece is the guardian of the icon, and when the present storm has passed the Orthodox hearts of Greece and Russia, which beat in unison, will find the needful strength to bring back to the civilized world new examples of the creative genius of iconographic art.

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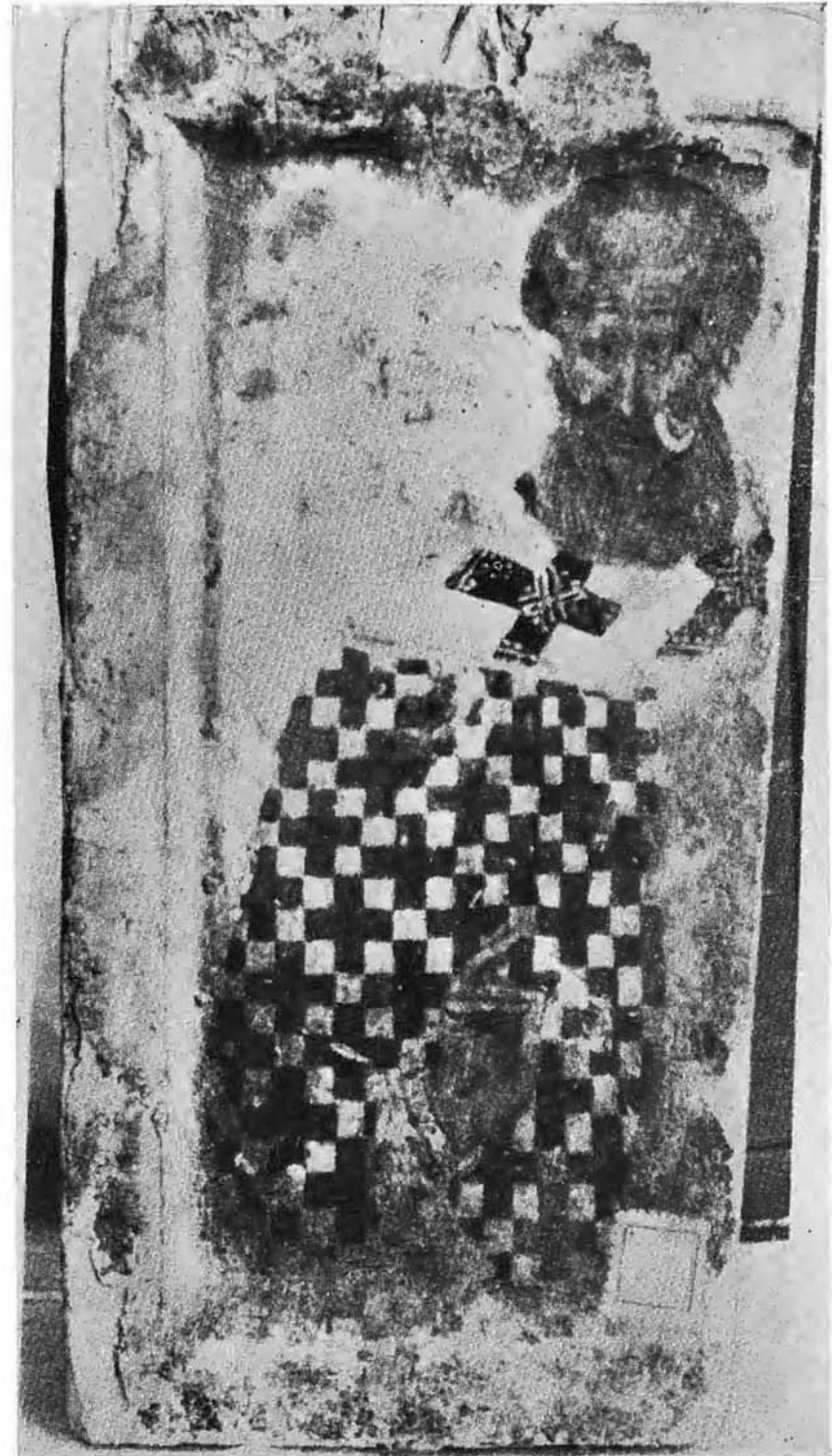
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