

LATE BYZANTINE PAINTINGS IN THE AGORA

Plates VI and VII

Although the three centuries following the capture of Constantinople fall historically outside the Byzantine period, nevertheless their civilization and art, in Greece at least,



Fig. 1. Church of the Prophet Elias and Saint Charalambos

were still dominated to such an extent by those of Byzantium that they cannot be ignored if the study of the development and decline of Byzantine art is to be carried to its logical conclusion. Whatever may be said of the quality of the art produced during these cen-

turies, and there would be few to uphold it from the purely artistic point of view, the number of churches with frescoed interiors existing in the neighborhood of Athens testifies to the great activity which marked the period. The absence of valid criteria for dating these monuments has led to considerable confusion, nor can any satisfactory basis of differentiation between sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century work be established until many more dated monuments are assembled and studied.

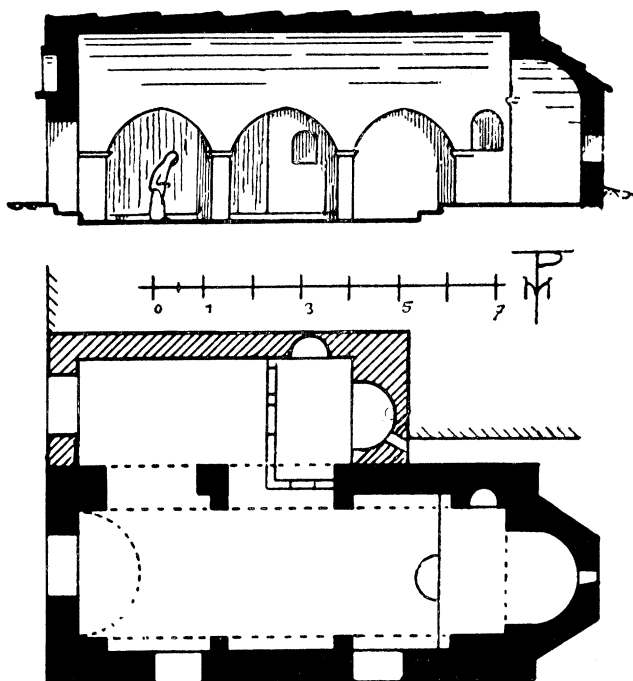


Fig. 2. Church of Prophet Elias and Saint Charalambos. Section and Plan

In the area of the Athenian Agora excavated in the season of 1934, on Eponymon Street, stood the small church of the Prophet Elias and Saint Charalambos, of the unpretentious type commonly erected during the Turkish domination (Figs. 1, 2).¹

The northernmost aisle, dedicated to Saint Charalambos, was a single, wooden-roofed chapel apparently added at a later date to the more substantial barrel-vaulted structure sacred to the Prophet Elias. The interior was completely covered with plaster, but underneath on the south wall of the main section of the church were noticed traces of fresco. The three coats of plaster were removed and before the demolition a water color was made by Piet de Jong of the only painting sufficiently well preserved to admit of repro-

¹ *A. Ξυγγόπουλος, Εἰσαγωγή τῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Α'. Εἰσαγωγή τῶν Μεσαιωνικῶν Μνημείων. Ι. Ἀθηνῶν. Τεῦχος Β'. p. 99.* I am indebted to Mr. Xyngopoulos for permission to reproduce the accompanying plan.

duction (Fig. 3). The picture occupied the spandrel between the two easternmost blind arches of the south wall and is of considerable interest in that it provides an example of an unusual iconographic type, and also because on an adjacent face of one of the blocks is an inscription, apparently recording the dedication of the fresco, reading:

1718
Χριστοδοῦλος
Πατούσαι (Christian monogram)

In view of the lack of unanimity in the dating of Byzantine painting from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century it is gratifying to find in our fresco a probable example of early eighteenth century work.

It represents the archangel Michael standing with one foot on the prostrate figure of an old man. Saint Michael holds a spear in his right hand, while in his upraised left are traces of an object now obliterated. In the field near the head of the prostrate figure part of an inscription can be read:

φρϑξ
ψυχη
ταο

The question then arises as to what scene our picture represents. It is undoubtedly not Saint Michael trampling on Satan, for it seems impossible that so innocuous appearing a figure could have been intended as the devil; moreover the pose of the archangel suggests protection rather than conflict, either present or immediately past. Dionysios of Fourni and the authors of the other Painters' Manuals omit any mention of a scene corresponding to this. The nearest approach is one in which the archangel contends with the devil for the body of Moses, motivated by the ninth verse of the epistle of Jude: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee." Dionysios describes Moses lying on his back, dead, on a mountain, with the devil crouching at his feet and the archangel standing at his head, stretching out his hands towards the devil and threatening him with his sword. This is the only instance in which Dionysios mentions a figure at the feet of the archangel, but the absence of the devil makes one hesitate to accept this interpretation for our scene.

The answer is found in an icon from the Likhacheff Collection¹ and in several in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (Fig. 4) and evidently representative of a wide tradition which follow the same model, with minor differences, as the fresco, even to the inscription which is in all cases the same and reads: *φρῑξον ψυχῇ μου τὰ δρώμενα*. The substitution of *v* for *ι* in the first word in the fresco is understandable and unimportant.

The archangel of the icons holds in his left hand a small figure wrapped as a mummy after the usual manner of representing a soul, and, considering the similarity of other

¹ Likhacheff, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'iconographie russe*, I, pl. XV.



Fig. 3. Church of Prophet Elias and Saint Charalambos. Saint Michael



Fig. 4. Saint Michael. Byzantine Museum, Athens

details, we are probably safe in assuming a like figure in the fresco. According to a long-established tradition, the archangel Michael attends mortals at their death. So in the apocryphal Apocalypse of Moses the Lord delivers Adam to Michael with the charge: "Lift him up into Paradise unto the third Heaven, and leave him there until that fearful day of my reckoning which I will make in the world."¹ And in the Apocryphal Gospel of Joseph the Carpenter Joseph, as death approaches, prays for Michael to accompany him in his passage to the next world, adding the wish that he might attend his soul and body *until they are separated from each other*.² It seems certain therefore that the prostrate figure represents the dead in general, while Michael, having safely delivered the soul from the body, prepares to conduct it to its heavenly home. The inscription is not, as one might suppose, derived from the liturgies or other ecclesiastical writings but is a popular motto and refers to the dread of the soul as it approaches death and the Judgment Day.³

On the pier which supported the fresco was painted a conventional curtain decorated with horizontal bands and various other patterns. Throughout the church the piers are surmounted by re-used capitals of the usual Byzantine type, carved with crosses, acanthus leaves, etc.

On the wall of the central arch was a painting in a very bad state of preservation but the composition of which could be made out quite clearly. Against a background divided horizontally into three sections as in the Saint Michael fresco stood three figures, frontal, nimbed, with the right hand raised in blessing and the left holding a book; all wore bishops' vestments. The central figure, which stood a little higher than the others, measured 1.36 m. and the letters ΝΙΚΟ beside his head identified him as Saint Nicholas, probably the great Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra. Traces of inscriptions remained beside the other figures but not enough to identify either. The composition differed from the customary row of ecclesiastical saints in the presence in the upper band of the background of half-figures, apparently of Christ and the Virgin Mary, flanking the head of Saint Nicholas. Christ wore a crossed nimbus and carried a book. The faces of all the figures had been gouged out and carelessly filled with plaster.

The soffits of at least three of the arches were decorated with a scroll rinceau in varying shades of red on a buff ground. There were traces of color on the wall of the easternmost arch, but at a late period a window was cut through and whatever painting there may have been was destroyed.

No other paintings remained in the church except for a very inferior Deesis of a recent period in a niche in the north wall behind the iconostasis and a much mutilated bust of Christ below the modern plaster in a niche over the door on the outside.

¹ R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), II, 151.

² *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, ed. Ioan. Carol. Thilo (Leipzig, 1832), pp. 23 ff. These references were provided me by Mrs. Grace B. Hollis of the Index of Christian Art at Princeton University.

³ My thanks are due to Mr. G. Sotiriou, Director of the Byzantine Museum in Athens, for the source of the inscription as well as for permission to publish photographs of two icons in the Byzantine Museum.

THE CHURCH OF SAINT SPIRIDON

At the south end of the Stoa of Attalus stands the private chapel of Saint Spiridon,¹ another small church of the same unimposing appearance as that of the Prophet Elias and Saint Charalambos (Figs. 5, 6). Now on an isolated mound among the excavations to the south of the Stoa of Attalus, it was formerly enclosed in the courtyard of no. 16 Eurysakion



Fig. 5. Church of Saint Spiridon

Street and existed as a dependency of the church of the Holy Apostles. Repairs to the interior have cut off the original barrel-vaulted roof and the greater length of the church is now covered with a flat ceiling. The single aisle is terminated by an apse which is masked on the exterior by a diagonal wall.

The interior of the church is decorated on the south and east walls by frescoes of considerable interest. The lower parts have suffered much from damp and have been extensively replastered and repainted, but the rest, although in some cases mutilated, is

¹ Ξυγγόπουλος, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

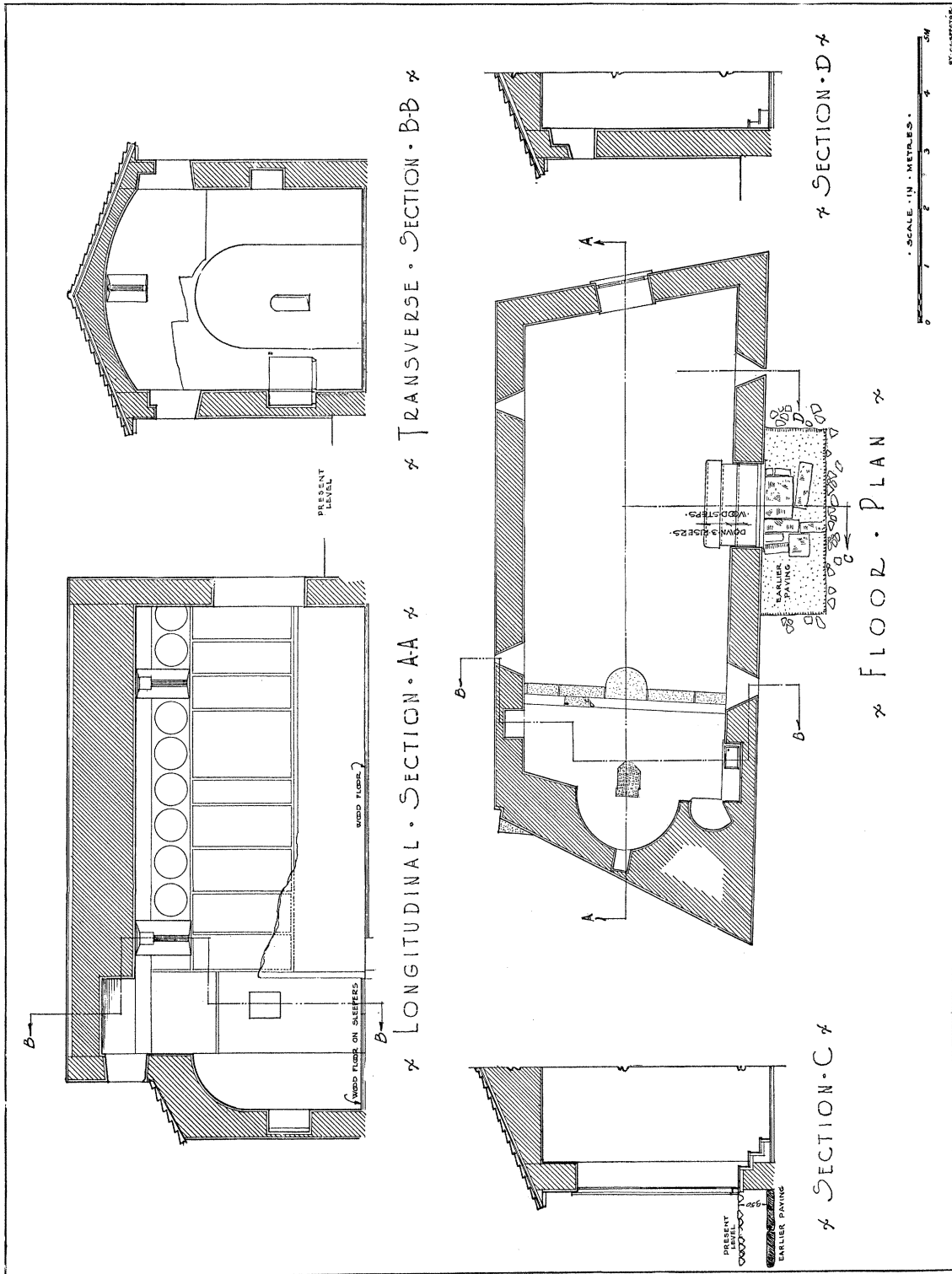


Fig. 6. Church of Saint Spiridon. Section and Plan

untouched by the restorer. The accompanying reproductions are taken from the water colors by Piet de Jong.

The Annunciation occupies the east wall above the apse and the composition is cut in two by a small window below which is the *Ἀχειροποίητα* (Figs. 7, 8, 9). The Virgin Mary, inscribed $\overline{\text{MP}} \overline{\text{ΘY}}$ stands before a jewelled throne, and against the black background can be read the title of the scene: $\text{OEY}[\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma] \text{Ἡ}[\varsigma] [\Theta\epsilon\omicron]\text{TO}[\kappa\omicron\nu]$.

The south wall is decorated for its entire length with frescoes. High up on the wall behind the iconostasis is the best preserved panel of the series (Plate VI), containing the figures of Saints Blasios and Eleutherios, a decorative pair in bishops' vestments. Saint Blasios raises his right hand in the gesture of the Greek blessing and in his left carries a scroll inscribed *χάριτι καὶ οἰκτιρμοῖς καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ τοῦ μονογενοῦς σου υἱοῦ τοῦ κυρίου*, an abbreviation of one of the last exclamations by the priest before the communion in the liturgy of Saint Basil and the dependent liturgies.¹ Saint Eleutherios also raises his hand in blessing and carries a scroll whose inscription is derived from the liturgy. It reads: *καὶ ἔσται τὰ ἐλέη τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος* and occurs as a benediction at the end of the intercession, the complete phrase being *καὶ ἔσται τὰ ἐλέη τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὁμῶν*.² Both inscriptions seem to have been taken without particular significance for the saint in question. It is unfortunate that Dionysios of Fournia in dealing with the inscriptions on the scrolls carried by saints makes no mention of those of Saint Blasios and Saint Eleutherios. Such variety exists in the scrolls that identity or lack of it of our inscriptions with those prescribed by Dionysios might be a slight indication of how far the Athonite tradition of painting was followed in Attica.

In this connection it is interesting to compare our frescoes with the rules of representation as laid down by Dionysios. Since his date is now generally conceded to have been not earlier than the eighteenth century there is of course no question of dependence on Dionysios himself, but his work is based in such detail on the earlier manuals that it may be taken as a summary of the old tradition. It may be noted that in general the facial characteristics follow closely the prescriptions of the manuals but that the iconography is unaffected by them.

The south wall in front of the iconostasis is decorated by a continuous series of panels, at a lower level than the preceding, surmounted by a border of half figures of saints in medallions separated from one another by a floral ornament (Plate VII). Some traces of color remain on the blanc space 1.10 m. high between the floor and the frescoes, but the small amount of original plaster surviving here makes it impossible to say whether or not any such decoration as the conventional curtain motive ever existed.

The first panel in the lower register is too badly mutilated for reproduction. It contains the standing figure of Saint John the Baptist, nimbed and winged. Only the

¹ F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, I, *Eastern Liturgies* (Oxford, 1896), pp. 341, 350.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 337, 390.



Church of Saint Spiridon. Saints Blasios and Eleutherios



Fig. 7. Church of Saint Spiridon. Angel from the Annunciation

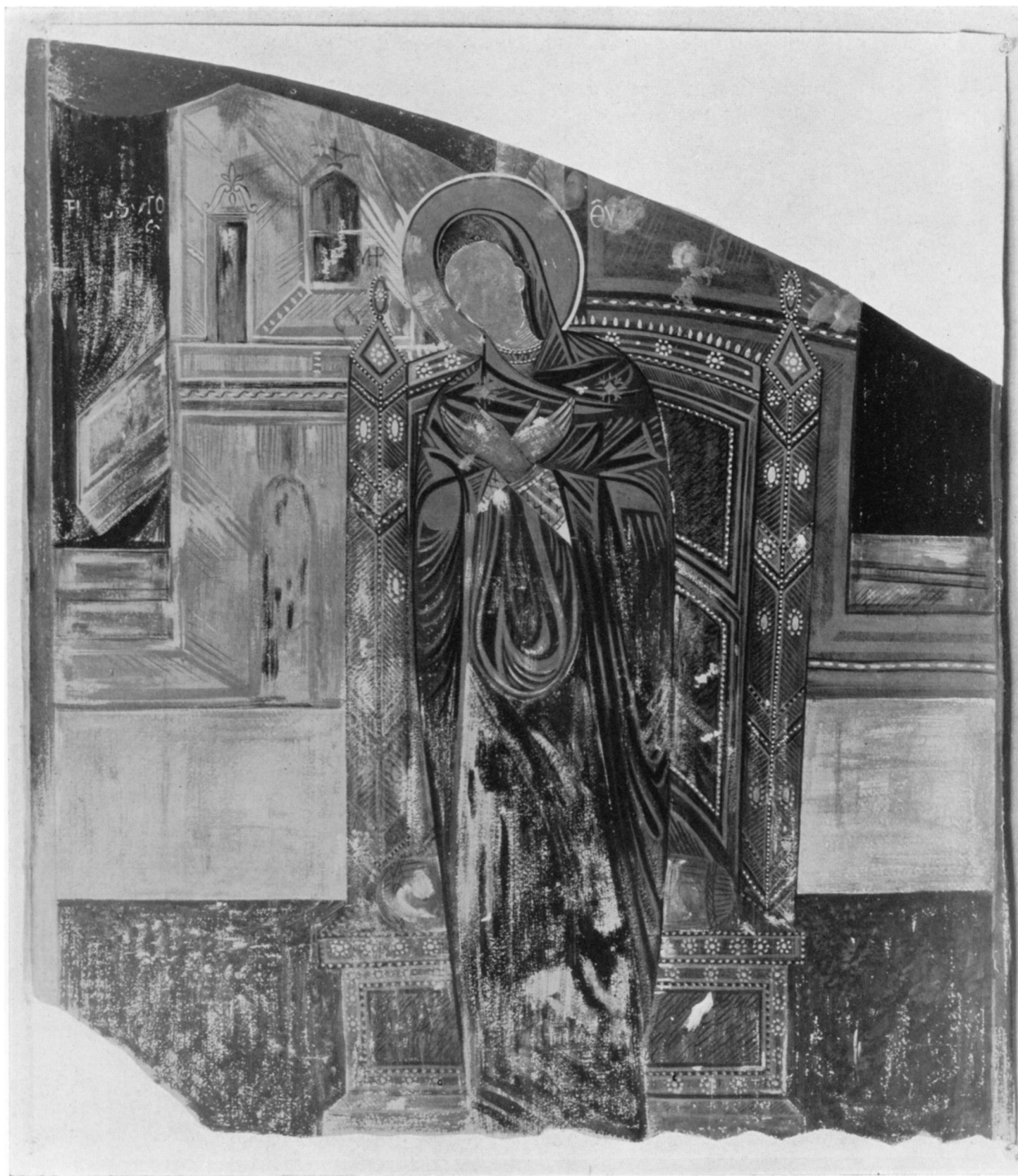


Fig. 8. Church of Saint Spiridon. Virgin Mary from the Annunciation

upper third of the figure is the original painting and it is much defaced, the lower having been repainted at least once. The inscription is partly legible: 'Ο ΑΓΙΩ 'Ο Π[ροδρομος]. The face and arms are entirely obliterated but the latter seem to have been bent as if holding some object, probably the head of the saint on a charger or a scroll, perhaps both. The winged John the Baptist is a common representation in late Byzantine art although no mention of wings is made in any of the Painters' Manuals. It is evidently with reference to his function as messenger (ἄγγελος) of the Lord that he is thus depicted,



Fig. 9. Church of Saint Spiridon. Head of Christ

and it is an exclusively Eastern representation, the conception of the Prodomos as an angel having been refuted for the Western church by Cyril of Alexandria.¹ Only one example has been noted previous to the sixteenth century, a reliquary of Eastern origin in existence at Perpignan in the thirteenth century.² In the sixteenth century and later the type is common. The absence of the winged John the Baptist in the Painters' Manuals is perhaps a further indication that these derived their rules from an earlier rather than a current tradition.

¹ Walter Haring, "The Winged Saint John the Baptist: Two Examples in American Collections," *Art Bulletin*, 5 (1922-23), 35 ff.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 36 f.

In the next panel is one of the most famous saints of the Greek church, Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (Fig. 10). His name is inscribed plainly, but even without the inscription he would be easily recognizable from the close resemblance to many other frescoes and icons with his likeness.¹ He carries in his left hand a closed book; with his right he blesses. His vestments are less well preserved than those of Saint Blasios and Saint Eleutherios, but a fragment on the left shoulder shows the same pattern as that used for Saint Blasios but in different colors, in this case black on a reddish ground. It seems likely that the omophorion was decorated with crosses but no traces of these remain. The lower third of the figure has been repainted in duller colors.

The number of ecclesiastical saints is completed by Saint Spiridon, Bishop of Tremithon, for whom the church was named (Fig. 11). This is the best preserved panel in the lower register, only a little of the lower part having been repainted. The saint wears the knitted cap prescribed by Dionysios, without which he is rarely seen either in frescoes or icons, and the figure bears a general resemblance to the famous icon of Saint Spiridon painted in 1636 by the Cretan painter Emmanuel Zane, although the latter is the work of a considerably more skilled artist.

Our painter proceeds to the representation of monastic saints; first one of the great ascetics of the early church, Antonios the Great (Fig. 12). His type is well established since he is one of the most frequently appearing saints of the calendar and the fresco departs in no important detail from the usual formula.

Although the Spiridon painter leaves something to be desired from the point of view of style, in the matter of content he shows some interesting variations from the common types. The outstanding example of this is in the picture of the next monastic saint, Simeon Stylites (Fig. 13). Like the other stylite saints Simeon is usually depicted seated in a roomy fenced enclosure on the top of a Corinthian column, as in the sixteenth century frescoes in the monastery of Dochiariou on Mount Athos,² in the painting in the narthex of the church at Megaspelaion, recently destroyed by fire, and in many icons in the Byzantine Museum in Athens and elsewhere. The authors of the manuals make no mention of the column beyond the inclusion of Simeon among the stylite saints, adding the personal description of "an old man with a short beard divided in two parts," and in one case, "with black hair." It is obvious then that we are dealing with a different tradition. In the first place Simeon wears a very long pointed beard and his hair is grey; but more important is the column and his relation to it. The capital instead of being Corinthian is decorated in the centre with a trefoil from which spring laterally two volutes, while the abacus is transformed into a hexagonal parapet. The saint, dressed in a red and yellow worsted shirt, seems to be standing within the capital, while his right leg hangs down in rather uncertain relation to the rest of the picture. This attitude is evidently intended to represent Saint Simeon in his self-imposed penance of

¹ Cf. Likhacheff, *op. cit.*, I, pls. CLXI–CLXV.

² G. Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, I, *Les Peintures* (Paris, 1927), pl. 239.



Fig. 10. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Nicholas

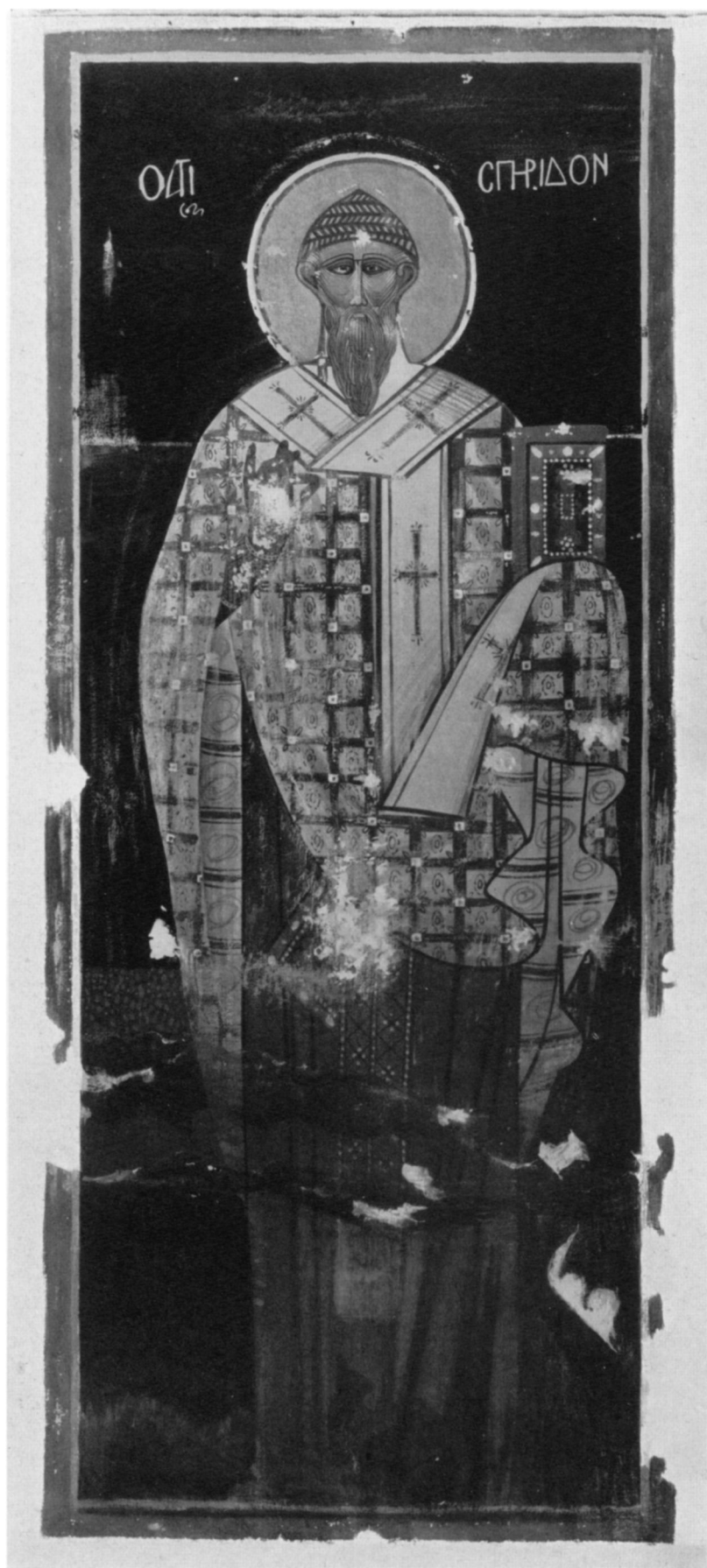


Fig. 11. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Spiridon



Fig. 12. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Antonios

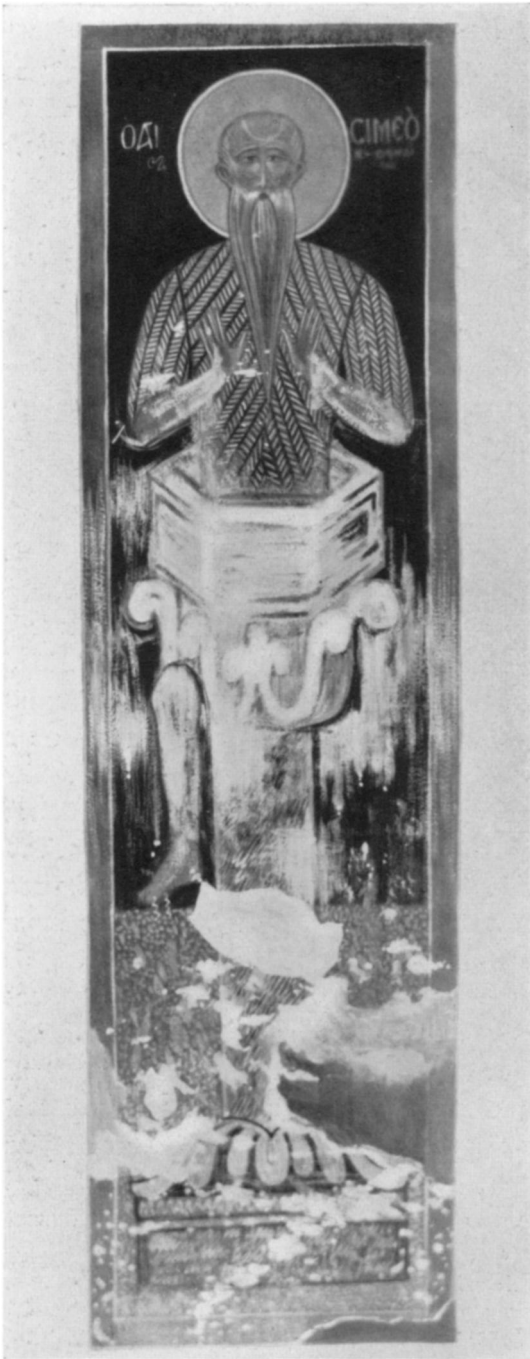


Fig. 13. Church of Saint Spiridon.
Saint Simeon Stylites

standing on one leg for a year in consequence of nearly yielding to a temptation of the devil. The devil came to him in the guise of an angel of the Lord in a chariot of fire to take him to heaven. As Simeon, deceived by the apparition, was about to enter the chariot he made the sign of the cross as a blessing for his departure, whereupon the vision vanished. In the ensuing penance the saint's leg festered, as is graphically described in the various accounts of his life, and the small curly white lines which are seen hanging from his right foot may be intended merely to indicate this state, as in several of the Job manuscripts, or, more probably, they represent the actual worms which were said to collect in his sores and when picked up by the bystanders to effect many miracles. One other example of such a type as ours appears in a much mutilated fresco in the small ruined church at Kalavryta beyond the monastery of the Hagia Lavra, which seems to date from about the same period as our fresco, but the story had very little effect on the customary portrayal of Saint Simeon.

That Byzantine iconography was at this period dependent on current popular legend rather than on the soberer early accounts is evident from the next panel which shows Saint Demetrios on horseback, riding away from the slaughter of the gladiator Lyaaios who lies prostrate on the ground (Fig. 14). The equestrian saint, so common in the later period, is actually extraneous to Byzantine art, having been imported only at a very late date.¹ Even Dionysios puts

¹ The only mounted Saint Demetrios on record in the Index of Christian Art at Princeton is on a Coptic woodcarving from Abou Sargah with two



Fig. 14. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Demetrios

none of his saints on horseback although many such representations existed in his time. The type of Demetrios slaying Lyaïos is interesting since, although so widespread in art, it has no foundation in legend. According to the life of Saint Demetrios as compiled by Simeon Metaphrastes,¹ the saint was imprisoned in Thessalonica at the time when the emperor Maximianos offered rich rewards to anyone who should conquer his undefeated gladiator Lyaïos. A young man named Nestor volunteered and, invoking the blessing of Demetrios, entered the arena and killed Lyaïos. The emperor, angered at losing his favorite gladiator, instead of giving the promised rewards ordered both Nestor and Demetrios to be put to death. But it is always Demetrios who is represented as killing Lyaïos, never Nestor. A reason for this is suggested in the life of Demetrios probably written by Simeon Metaphrastes himself, in which Nestor is described as entering the contest because he had witnessed many miracles of Demetrios and hoped that another might be added.² It is clear then that in the legend Nestor is considered to have played only a minor part, and that the credit is due to Demetrios. Another inconsistency is in the fact that although Nestor presumably entered the arena on foot, Demetrios, when slaying Lyaïos, is always portrayed mounted.

So far the fresco conforms to the usual representation of the mounted Saint Demetrios. But a disturbing factor is found in the presence of a small figure, much mutilated, riding behind Demetrios. Again Dionysios fails to provide a clue to its identity, but two or three icons in the Byzantine Museum in Athens show Saint Demetrios on horseback with a small figure in ecclesiastical attire riding behind (Fig. 15). The essence of the legend which the picture illustrates is found in the second book of the miracles of Saint Demetrios, of unknown authorship but probably dating from the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century,³ wherein it is recounted how a certain African bishop named Cyprianus was captured by barbarians, taken to their land and made to do the most menial tasks. Praying to Saint Demetrios to rescue him, he was visited in his sleep by a vision of the saint, on horseback, who commanded the bishop to follow him. Instantly the chains with which he was bound were loosed and he followed the saint. It will be noted that no mention is made of the bishop mounting Saint Demetrios' horse. In the course of time however the tale has acquired considerable embellishment and it is the later version as it exists at the present day in the booklets of the lives of the saints in general circulation that the fresco and the icons illustrate. According to this legend, Cyprianus while travelling on a ship to Alexandria was captured with his fellow travellers by pirates and sold into slavery in the East. After suffering many ills and

other equestrian saints. No names are inscribed. Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, II, 2, col. 1559.

¹ Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae*, 116, pp. 1167 ff.

² " - - - τοῦτο μὲν τὸ ἐπερῆσανον Ἀναίου μισήσας, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θείου μάρτυρος γινόμενα θαύματα κατιδὼν - - - - - ἔν δὲ τοῦτο θελήσας γενέσθαι τῶν Ἀγημητρίου θαυμαμάτων, τὸ ταῖς ἐχκαῖς ἐκείνου κακοπλισθέντα λῦσαι τε Ἀναίου τὸ θράσος καὶ τὴν ὀφρὸν αὐτὸν τοῦ βαρβάρου καταβαλεῖν."

³ Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae*, 116, pp. 1377 ff.

invoking the aid of Saint Demetrios he was visited one night by the saint in armor, mounted on a red horse, to whom he enumerated his woes. Here the saint's commands are more explicit than in the earlier version. "Come," he says, "and get on my horse behind me"; the bishop does so and miraculously they find themselves on horseback outside the castle in Thessalonica. The relative smallness of the bishop in all the pictures



Fig. 15. Saint Demetrios. Byzantine Museum, Athens

is explained by the fact that the incident took place after the martyrdom of the saint, hence he appears as a supernatural being. The contradictory and irrelevant presence of the gladiator Lyaïos is probably due to the fact that he had by this time become merely an attribute which would distinguish Demetrios from other equestrian saints, leading to his appearance even when unmotivated by the story.

A distinguishing attribute was perhaps especially desirable since the type of the equestrian Saint George developed along similar lines, and doubtless not independently.

Normally represented like Saint Demetrios, but with the dragon substituted for the gladiator, he, far more often than Saint Demetrios, is found with a small figure riding on the horse behind him. One of the many examples of this type is in a fresco in the small church of Saint John Pelikas in the village of Amarousi, near Athens (Fig. 16), and another in a nearly identical fresco, but less well preserved, in the church of



Fig. 16. Church of Saint John Pelikas, Amarousi.
Saint George

Saint Demetrios, also in Amarousi, signed by the priest Demetrios and dated in the year 1622. It is also very frequent on icons. The figure behind Saint George invariably carries some kind of vessel, usually a ewer. Again the interpretation is to be found in a current legend. During an invasion of Bulgarians, Scythians and other barbarian tribes into Paphlagonia a young soldier named for Saint George and devoted to his service was captured and taken to Bulgaria, where he was made servant to the ruler. On the evening of Saint George's festival, as he was carrying water to the ruler, he was met on the stairs by the saint himself, mounted on a white horse, who, in the same words used

by Saint Demetrios to the bishop, told him to get on the horse behind him, and immediately he found himself in front of his house in Paphlagonia. The ewer which he still carried was taken to the church of Saint George where it was dedicated to use on the altar. Its invariable presence in the hand of the figure on the horse is an instance of the detail in which the legend was followed, as is the choice of colors for the horses, Saint George's being almost always white and that of Saint Demetrios red.

The last three panels of the lower register are devoted to women saints, the first of whom is Barbara, standing crowned and orant, holding the martyr's cross (Fig. 17). She wears a red cloak over a blue tunic. The Painters' Manuals give no directions for the representation of the women beyond listing them in certain categories. For example, Saint Barbara occurs in Dionysios of Fourni under the martyrs, in the *Βιβλίον τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης* under the *Ἀνάγκυροι*, in the *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ναοῦ* under the *ἀθλοφόροι* and the *“ὀνόματα ἁγίων γυναικῶν.”*

Next to Barbara stands Saint Paraskeve of Chalkis, likewise orant and carrying the martyr's cross (Fig. 18). Her cloak and her veil are plum colored, her tunic buff.

The series ends with Saint Kyriake, standing, as the two preceding, nimbed, orant and carrying the martyr's cross (Fig. 19). Her veil is red, her cloak blue and her tunic chiefly red. Both Paraskeve and Kyriake are listed by Dionysios among the martyrs and in the *Βιβλίον τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης* under the *Ἀνάγκυροι*, with the addition in the case of Paraskeve of a section entitled the *“μαρτύριον τῆς ἁγίας Παρασκευῆς.”* Both are cited by the author of the *Ἐκμνηεῖα περὶ τῆς πρώτης ἱστορίας τῆς ἐκκλησίας* among the *ἔργαι μεγαλομάρτυρες γυναῖκες* and in the *Ἱστορία τοῦ Ναοῦ* among the *ἀθλοφόροι*. Repairs to the west wall have cut off the border of the last panel.

The border above the main body of frescoes consists of half figures of eight saints in medallions separated by a conventionalized floral ornament. The series begins at the east end with Prokopios who was martyred during the persecution by Diocletian and Maximianus. He holds the martyr's cross, is young and beardless as described in the manuals. Triphon, a third century martyr, follows him, likewise representing the same tradition as the manuals in being young and beardless. He is orant.

The third saint, Nicholas with the epithet *ὁ νέος*, is the only one in the church not mentioned by Dionysios. He is a young beardless man in military costume and holds the martyr's cross. A Nicholas *ὁ νέος* is found on the soffit of one of the arches supporting the dome of the church of Hosios Loukas in Stiris, and in the publication of that church is tentatively identified with Saint Nicholas of Pinara.¹

Nicholas is followed by Eustathios, inscribed *ὁ πλακῆδας*. This identifies him with the Saint Eustathios or Eustratios who, under the name of Placidus, was master of the militia under Trajan. He was converted to Christianity during the chase by the appearance of the Saviour in the form of a stag and was later martyred at Rome. Dionysios describes

¹ R. W. Schultz and S. H. Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris in Phocis, and the Dependent Monastery of Saint Nicolas in the Fields, near Skripou, in Boeotia*, London, 1901, p. 61, note 2.



Fig. 17. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Barbara



Fig. 18. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Paraskeve

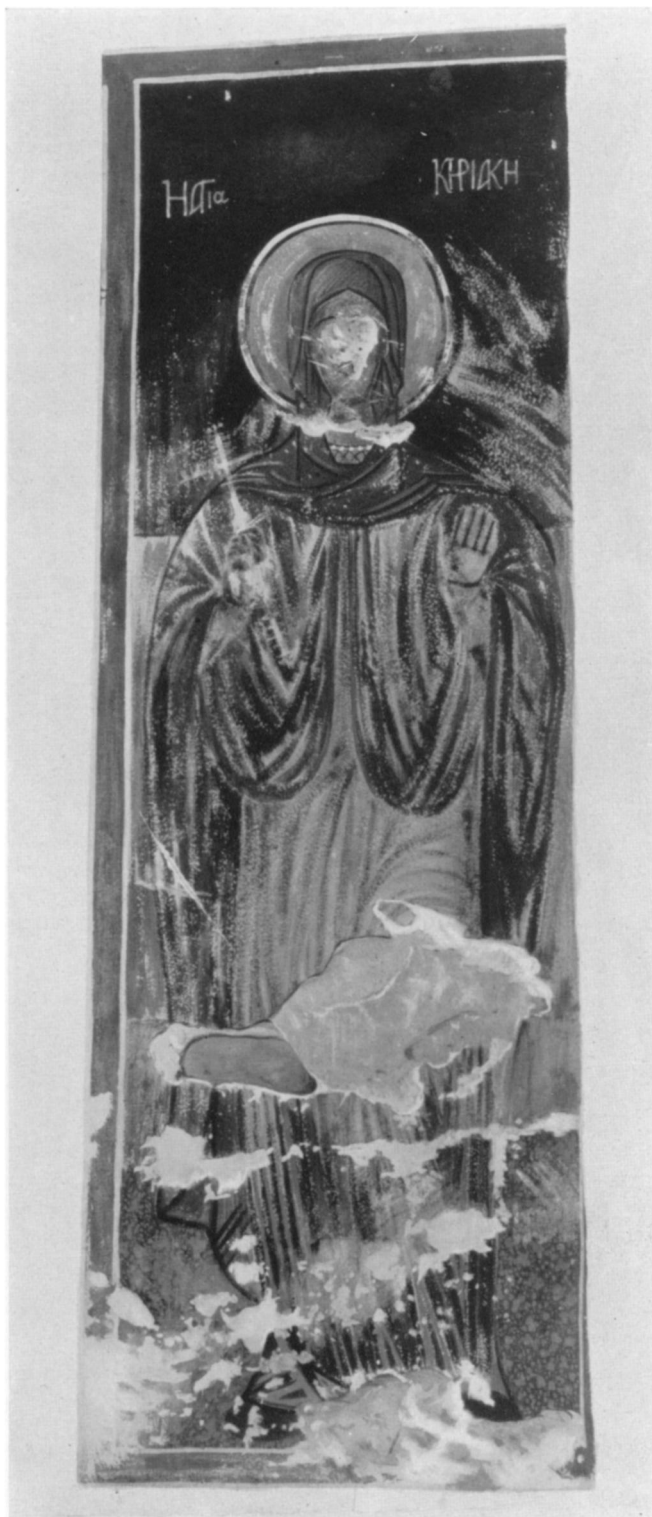


Fig. 19. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Kyriake

him among the *ἅγιοι μάρτυρες* as having mixed grey hair and a round beard, a description which fits the fresco as well. As in the case of a number of the other figures the martyr's cross in his right hand seems to have been added as an after-thought to a figure already represented orant.

Next to Eustathios is Elpidophoros of Persia, martyred in the fourth century together with Saint Anempodistos, with whom he often appears. In one passage Dionysios describes him as young and beardless, in another as having a short beard, as we find him in the painting.

The series continues with Saint Diomedes, a fourth century martyr of Bithynia with a pointed beard as prescribed by the manuals.

In the case of Saint Niketas (Fig. 20) a very definite connection with Dionysios and his models may be observed. Dionysios' requirement is "*ὁμοιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ εἶδος*," and the resemblance to the Christ-type is very noticeable. This was a well established type for Niketas; one of the many examples may be seen in the monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos¹ and it is also recurrent on icons.

The series closes with Saint Anempodistos of Persia, separated by two medallions from his co-martyr Elpidophoros. Anempodistos is represented as young and beardless according to the tradition of the manuals. The repairs to the west wall have cut off the right side of the medallion.

There is no external evidence for the dating of the frescoes. The ground in front of the door in the north side of the church was cleared to a depth of 0.50 m. below the present threshold and part of the original paved entrance to the church laid bare. It was not however possible to date this paving. There is a general similarity of style between the frescoes of Saint Spiridon and those of the Prophet Elias, but too little survived of the latter to make a detailed comparison possible. The decadence of the painting of Saint Demetrios (Fig. 14) as compared with the Saint George of Saint John Pelikas (Fig. 16) suggests a considerably later date for the former. There is also noticeable in the heads of some of the other Amarousi frescoes a tendency toward the fattening of the face which was carried to such an extreme in the Spiridon frescoes (Fig. 21). If we date Saint John Pelikas, because of its close kinship with the dated church of Saint Demetrios in Amarousi, in or about the first quarter of the seventeenth century, then the Spiridon frescoes, because of their relationship to these and to the paintings of the Prophet Elias, would most naturally fall in the period around 1700.

Returning to the question of the relation of our frescoes to the Painters' Manuals, in view of the wide discrepancies to be observed between the two it is impossible to assume any close connection. The silence of Dionysios and his predecessors on the subject of the winged John the Baptist, the mounted Saint Demetrios, the legend of the bishop's deliverance, the penance of Saint Simeon, and Saint Michael as guardian of the souls of the

¹ Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, I, pl. 83.



Fig. 20. Church of Saint Spiridon. Saint Niketas





Church of Saint Spiridon. Frescoes.



piridon Frescoes on the South Wall







Church of Saint Spiridon. Frescoes



piridon. Frescoes on the South Wall



dead completely offsets the general similarity of facial characteristics which is more convincingly explained by an early establishment of types and their subsequent persistence.

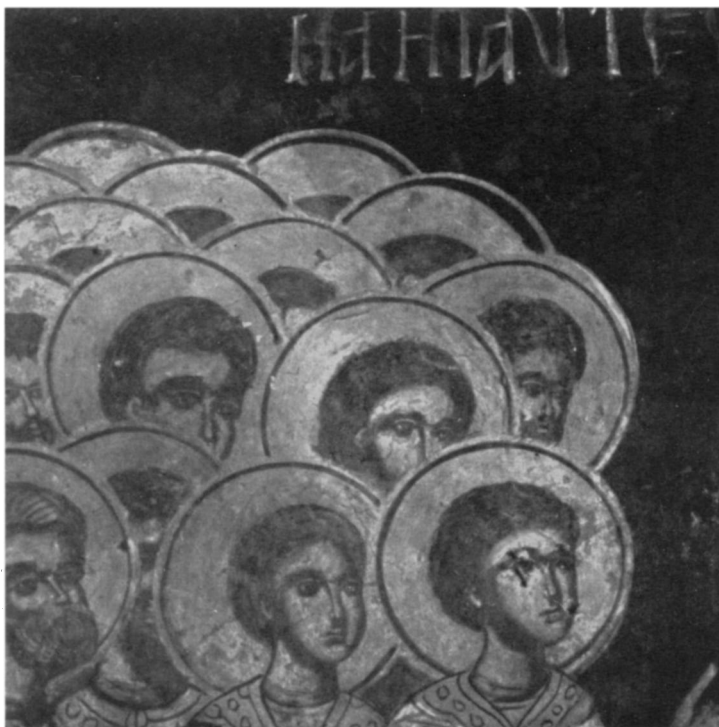


Fig. 21. Church of Saint John Pelikas, Amarousi. Detail of Fresco

We are dealing with an art which in style of necessity followed the old tradition, outworn as it was, but in iconography derived its rules not from prescriptions handed down for generations, but from the changing taste and emphasis of popular belief.

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