

4. The Fresco of the *Anastasis* in the Chora Church

The composition of the Transfiguration is the chief illustrative example of any vision of the uncreated light of the Godhead, which was the basis of hesychast theology. All the issues associated with the Transfiguration were, therefore, important for the hesychasts, such as the transfiguration of the body (by the divine light) equalling that of the Resurrection. The feast of the Transfiguration shares a common theological basis with the Anastasis, and both are a true expression of the divine nature of Christ and manifestation of the phenomenon of the supernatural light of glory. If the Transfiguration fulfills the Theophany on Mount Sinai, the Anastasis anticipates the *Parousia*. The Anastasis also expresses the well-known Eastern Christian doctrine of *theosis*; the mysterious relationship between God and his creatures according to energy or grace.¹ It also affirms the reality of the hypostatic union of two natures in Christ after his death and resurrection, as Christ remains perfect man and perfect God in heaven as well as on earth. Hesychasts believed that Christians can acquire deification only by participating in the corporeality of Christ, in the Eucharist, where the bread and wine become the circumscribed body and blood of Christ. Denial of the circumscription of the risen body of Christ, therefore, leads to denial of the salvific act of God.

The iconography of the Anastasis was consistent until the 14th century, when the conflict between humanism and hesychasm during the Palaeologan era resulted in the establishment of new artistic trends with new motifs and subjects. Variations in the scene of the Anastasis occurred in the circumscription of Christ in the state of resurrection as well as in the relation of Christ to Adam and Eve.² Although it is difficult to confirm that mystical movements were directly responsible for these iconographical changes, the fresco of the *Anastasis* in the Chora church (Fig. 30) illuminates the hesychast notion of *theosis* (union by grace).³ It also expresses the central principle of Byzantine theology: the ability to acquire knowledge and experience of God through vision.

1 John of Damascus, *Oration*, III, 26, in P.B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, vol. 12 (Berlin 1973); Kotter 3, 134; Nikephoros, *Antirrhethici Tres Adversus Constantinum III*, 31, in *Patrologia Graeca*, 100, 375–534; 421D–424A.

2 J. Meyendorff, 'Spiritual Trends in Byzantium in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', *Arte et Societ      Byzance sous les Paleologues: Acts du Colloque Organise par l'Association Internationale des Etudes Byzantines in Venice en Septembre 1968* (Venice 1971) 56.

3 D.M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261–1453* (Cambridge 1972) 166.

The theological background of the Anastasis

The feast of the Anastasis in the Orthodox Church commonly celebrates the tripartite theme representing Christ's descent into Hades: his victory over Satan, death and darkness; his deliverance of the righteous from Hades; and his victorious resurrection on Easter morning. The Latin Church calls this event the Descent into Hell (Limbo), which, in fact, represents the first phase of the tripartite Anastasis, and neglects the most important aspect; that is, the rising of humankind through Christ's resurrection.⁴ The Eastern Church's amalgamation of the two events of Christ's resurrection and his descent into hell into one feast, known as the Anastasis, illustrates the elaborate complexity of the historical reception of Biblical text.⁵

The 1st-century *Odes of Solomon* provide the earliest literary evidence for the description of the Anastasis.⁶ Other significant literary sources are Hebrew and Christian scriptures, Syriac liturgical texts, and early Christian homilies and patristic manuscripts.⁷ Nevertheless, the three synoptic Gospels are the most valuable sources in that they recount the event of resurrection of Christ. The canonical account of Mathew 27:45–54 relates specifically to the events during and after the Anastasis: 'and the graves opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose; and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and showed unto many'. Moreover, in Psalm 107:10–14, one finds an account of Christ's arrival in the realms of hell ('He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death'). The underlying message in all written sources is the depiction of Jesus Christ as Alpha and Omega, the one who has a reign over Hades and who abolishes death (Revelation 1, :13). He breaks the gates of hell, extends his hand, and makes a sign of blessing over Adam, Eve and the saints: 'Christ takes hold of Adam's hand, He arises from Hell, and all of the saints follow Him' (Nicodemus VII, 24:1–2; 1 Peter 3:19).

Various other offices for public worship contain references to the feast of the Resurrection. The 'Liturgy of the Burial of Christ on Holy Saturday' reminds the faithful of Christ's Resurrection⁸ with a Byzantine breviary and the three liturgies and propers of various offices.⁹ The *Liturgy of the Blessing of the New*

4 J. Pierce, *From Abacus to Zeus: A Handbook of Art History* (Englewood Cliffs 1977) 100.

5 K.D. Kalokyris, *The Essence of Orthodox Iconography* (Brookline 1971) 34.

6 J. Baggeley, *Festival Icons for the Christian Year* (Crestwood 2000) 120.

7 Irinaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* III, 20, 4; in *Patrologia Graeca*, 433–1225; 4; St Romanos the Melodist, 'Kontakia of Romanos', *Patrologia Graeca* 101–102, 775–785; Odes of Solomon, Ode 42; Ephrem the Syrian, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena* 1–2, in E. Beck (ed. & trans) (Louvain 1961–1963); *Carmina Nisibena* 65; Acts 2:6 and 31–32 in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (New York 1963, 1965).

8 H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood 1990) 157.

9 J. Raya & J. De Vinck, *Byzantine Daily Worship: With Byzantine Breviary, the Three Liturgies, Propers of the Day and Various Offices* (Allendale 1969) 835.

Light refers to Christ as the 'Light sent to the world', in the part devoted to the Resurrection of the protopsalts, coming after the 'Second Tome of the Expostulation'.¹⁰ The *Eight Tome[s] of the Idiometa* (a part of the *Triodion of the Liturgy of Holy Week*) describes the destruction of the bronze gates of hell and alludes to the annihilation of Satan and his dissolutorial powers over the souls in hell.¹¹ The liturgical service of Pentecost provides the same account. Finally, the hymn for Vespers affirms the universality of the event, indicating that 'Christ liberated those held captives for ages and He granted incorruptibility to all humankind'.¹²

Christian apologetics against Gnostic teachings contains one of the accounts regarding the Resurrection of Christ. The followers of Gnosticism excluded the possibility of the resurrection of humankind from the outset; the destiny of the flesh or the substance of man was to perish after death.¹³ Melito of Sardis in his *Homily on the Passion*, Tertullian in his *Treatise on the Soul* and Hippolytus in his *Treatise on Christ and Anti-Christ* refuted this doctrine. These ecclesiastical writers affirmed that the physical body of Christ placed in the tomb was raised immortal at the Resurrection. A noncircumscribable resurrection, they affirmed, has no verification. Many, however, saw Christ touching and sharing food after the Resurrection. The fact that Christ is no longer known according to the flesh, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, does not mean that Christ lost his human nature, which He received at the incarnation. Christ's death and Resurrection did not destroy the hypostatic union of his two natures. He remained perfect man and perfect God even after his Resurrection. Christ sits in glory at the right hand of the Father, and '*He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end*'.¹⁴

This apologetic approach to the subject of the Resurrection continued in the course of the anti-Origenistic controversy, when theologians such as Methodius of Olympus and Epiphanius of Salamis wrote theological treatises against Origen. Applying almost the same arguments as those used by the Gnostics, they asserted that Origen underestimated the physicality of the resurrection.¹⁵ Methodius and Epiphanius attacked Origen's claim that the human body of Christ after the Resurrection was not the same body he possessed during his earthly life. They also challenged Origen's teaching on apocatastasis, or the state of restoration or re-establishment of all humanity at the end of time. Countering

10 *ibid.*, 827.

11 *ibid.*, 33.

12 Kalokyris, *Essence of Orthodox Iconography*, 34.

13 K. Rudolph, *Gnosis* (San Francisco 1985) 190.

14 John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* IV, 1–2, in B. Kotter (ed.), *Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1973). English trans F.H Chase, *St John of Damascus: Writings* (Washington 1958); Kot. 2, 172.

15 C.W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York 1995) 68; J.F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Marcon 1988).

Origen's position on the Resurrection, later writers such as Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan and Athanasius of Alexandria claimed 'Christ put an end to corruption, by the grace of his resurrection'.¹⁶

Affirmation of the bodily resurrection was a frequent topic in the Christian apologia against Monophysites and Monothelites. Nowhere was it argued for more strongly than in the *Paschal Homily* of John Chrysostom, which is recited during the paschal vigil.¹⁷ The homily provides an insight into the development of Christian understanding of the redemptive nature of the Resurrection and Chrysostom defends the sacrament of the Eucharist and invites all to partake of the paschal table.

The Latin fathers also emphasised the redemptive nature of the Anastasis. St Augustine, for example, affirmed the twofold nature of the feast.¹⁸ Augustine proposed that there are two types of resurrection for Christians, the first begins with the experience of life in Christ, and the second, or bodily resurrection, will unfold in the *Parousia*.¹⁹

Similarly, later Byzantine theologians, such as Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus provided elaborate teachings on the nature of the Resurrection. Maximus, for example, perceived Christ's incarnation and Resurrection as processes that reverse the effects of Adam's action in Paradise, which introduced sin and corruption.²⁰ John of Damascus, on the other hand, spoke about the state of grief, and the corruption of the body in the grave. He also, however, referred to the Resurrection as a 'vision of the unapproachable light' and a 'state of illumination', experienced by those who have passed from the state of death to incorruption (redeemed and resurrected in Christ).²¹

The iconography of the Resurrection of Christ in the East

It is difficult to establish the actual date when the first figurative scene of the Anastasis materialised. Its pictorialisation, however, was consistently circumvented, by the Christological difficulties inherent in the representation of

16 M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian culture* (Cambridge 1997) 154; Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation: De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, C.S. Lewes (ed.) Chapter 5 (Crestwood 1996).

17 John Chrysostom, 'The Paschal Sermon of St John Chrysostom', <http://oca.org/FSsermons-details.asp?SID=4&ID=10> (accessed 10/02/2012).

18 J.M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge 1996) 110.

19 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, R.P.H. Green (ed.) (Oxford 1996) 115.

20 Maximus the Confessor, 'Epistulae 6', *Patrologia Graeca* 91, 362–650; 432A–B.

21 John of Damascus, *The Paschal Canon*, Archimandrite Ephrem (ed.), http://www.anastasis.org.uk/paschal_canon_with_notes.htm (accessed 2/02/2011).

the person of Christ in a state of resurrection. A few important doctrines radically altered the attitude of the painters. First, Christological cycles (including the Crucifixion and ending with the Resurrection) emerged, which reflected the orthodox position against the Monophysites and Monothelites, affirming that Christ has two wills (human and divine), which correspond to his two natures. Secondly, the Soteriological rather than Christological interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection during the iconoclastic controversy contributed to the birth of a new corresponding pictorial cycle.

Complementary to the Christological and the Soteriological aspects of the Anastasis, the ever-changing image of this event feast served as a pictorial echo for paschal themes, reinforcing their importance in the liturgy and typology of the church. Consequently, themes describing Christ's death and the Resurrection decorated many liturgical books and vestments. Finally, the birth of the new church rules such as canons 73, 82 and 100 affirmed the growing interest of the Church in the potential use of visual means to illustrate Christian dogmas.

Given the theological difficulties inherent in the subject of circumscription of Christ in the state of resurrection, there was an enduring absence of a standard way to depict the Anastasis.²² Since there was no narrative to limit iconographers in the formation of the scene, the early Christian iconography of the Anastasis focused either on the representation of the theological significance of the Resurrection, or on using stylised symbolic language.²³ Hence, along with images of the Passion, iconographers used pictorial themes to symbolise the Anastasis including the image of sleeping soldiers around the church-rotunda of the Resurrection, the phenomenon of the myrrh-bearing women and the theme of the Bodily Rising of Christ from the tomb.²⁴

The image of the Holy Sepulchre in the form of a temple provided a suitable Soteriological interpretation of Christ's death and Resurrection. The composition of the myrrh-bearing women, on the other hand, represented events that occurred after the Resurrection. Surviving evidence comes from a 5th-century carving on a plate that is currently held at the British Museum. It depicts both the myrrh-bearing women and the soldiers sleeping close to an open tomb. A plate from the 5th century, from the Museum of Castillo, Milan, represents the scene of the myrrh-bearing women as well as an angel sitting on a rock near the church with the door ajar. Another plate from the 5th century from the Bayerisches National Museum depicts Christ as a young boy entering a mountain. Finally, the lid of

22 Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos, Οί Δεσποτικές Εορτές: *The feasts of the Lord* (Lebadeia 1995) 262, 263.

23 A. Andreopoulos, 'How do we Represent the Glory of God? Theological and Iconological Connections between the Transfiguration and the Resurrection', *La Mort et la Résurrection dans la Tradition Orthodoxe* (Sherbrooke 2004).

24 J.F. Wilson, *The Story of Caesarea Philippi, Lost City of Pan* (London 2004) 93.

a 6th-century reliquary, held at the Vatican Museums, illustrates the myrrh-bearing women standing in the background of the rotunda with open doors, reminiscent of the royal doors of the altar.²⁵ Similarly, the Venetian mosaic of the Cathedral of San Marco depicts the *Descent into Hell*, *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene*, and the *Assurance of Thomas*.²⁶ It appears, therefore, that by the 5th and 6th centuries these compositional types achieved wide distribution.²⁷

By the later part of the 6th century, the pseudo-narrative character of the Resurrection of Christ, coupled with the story of the Descent into Hell dispensed with the need for a fully developed iconography, with exact reproduction of historical facts.²⁸ The legitimate portrayal of the Anastasis materialised in the 7th century.

A miniature of the Chludov Psalter is the earliest picture bearing the inscription 'Anastasis'. It provides a visual narrative of Psalm 68:1 ('Let God arise') and Psalm 82:8 ('Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations').²⁹ Other archaeological evidence for portrayals of the Resurrection narrative comes from the Cathedral of San Marco in Venice. Beyond that, the topic itself became a favourite subject at Sinai and Cappadocia in the 8th and 9th centuries, following the Iconoclastic controversy.³⁰ Subsequently, it became a part of a wider Christological cycle connected to the Passion of Christ.³¹ Similar examples are found in the miniatures of the Gospel of John, the Iverian Gospel from Mount Athos and the Gospel of Trebizond, which are all held at the National Library of Russia.³²

25 Rev. B.J. Lawrence et al., 'Anastasis: Icon, Text and Theological Vision', *Australian EJournal of Theology*, vol. 7 (2006), http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_7/cross.htm.

26 Similar themes such as the appearance of Christ to the disciples, the assurance of Thomas, the miraculous catch of fish and the descent into hell, are reflected in the mural decoration found in the later churches, such as St Sophia in Trebizond (1238–1263); A. Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Oxford 2004) 98; D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Art and its Influences*, vol. 1 (1973) 126; O. Demus & H.L. Kessler, *The Mosaic Decoration of San Marco* (Venice 1988) 88–90.

27 J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Oxford 1993) 318.

28 The later abundance of variations may be attributed to the influence of new textual sources for the depiction of the Anastasis, for the thematic representation based on the action or position of Christ, the development of Christian dogma, as well as the enrichment of the composition through the addition of other participants, such as the figures of David and Solomon and other figures such as Abel, John the Baptist and Isaiah (C. Galavaris, *Studies in Manuscript Illumination* (Princeton 1969) 70).

29 N.P. Kondakov, 'Лицевой Иконописный Подлинник', *Иконография Господа Бога нашего и Спаса Иисуса Христа* (St Petersburg 1905) 12.

30 M. Quenot, *The Resurrection and the Icon* (Crestwood 1997) 73.

31 Among the known monuments illustrating the connection between both events are the Saviour Cathedral at Mirozhsky monastery (12th century) and the Church of the Ascension at Miliesheva (13th century). Similar themes occur in other miniatures and icons, such as the miniature of the Trebizond Gospel. Also important are the frescoes of the 11th century Cathedral of St Sophia, Kiev, and those from the Church of St Theodore Stratilates on the Brook, Novgorod, from the last quarter of the 14th century; N. Necipoğlu, *Byzantine Constantinople* (Brill 2001) 149; S. Ćurčić, 'Medieval Royal Tombs in the Balkans: An Aspect of East, or West Question', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 29 (1984); E. de Mural, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Grecs de la Bibliothèque Impériale Publique* (St Petersburg 1864) 40–41; I.R. Makaryk, *About the Harrowing of Hell* (Kiev 1989) 9.

32 de Mural, *Catalogue*, 40–41.

By the 10th century the iconography of the Anastasis matured and became increasingly dramatic.³³ The narrative reflected in the surviving images of the Anastasis from the 10th onwards typically depicts Christ, surrounded by a blaze of glory, holding a cross in his left hand and descending into the dark cave of hell to bring Adam and Eve out of their sarcophagi. Many Old Testament figures stand in the foreground, led by King David and King Solomon. St John the Baptist guides a group of righteous and points with the scroll in his hand to Christ.³⁴ An excellent example of this trend is the *Anastasis* from the Church of the Karanlik Killise, Göreme, in Cappadocia (Fig. 31).

Beginning with the Macedonian churches at Kastoria during the 11th century, one may witness a new climate of experimentation marked by emotional tension.³⁵ The expressionist mannerism of the *Anastasis* at Kurbinovo (Fig. 32),³⁶ the simultaneous representation of Adam and Eve in Studenica, to the liturgical, benevolent representation of the *Anastasis* at the Church of Holy Apostle in Thessaloniki and the Church of the Protaton, Karyes, on Mount Athos (Fig. 33), reveals the emergence of a multiplicity of Palaeologan styles.

The Anastasis was a mandatory element in church murals, such as those from the 11th century at the Cathedral of the Monastery in Hosios Loukas (Greece) (Fig. 34). The composition of the Last Judgement often accompanied as asymmetrical type of Anastasis, which materialised during this time. In the asymmetric Anastasis, Christ stands in the middle of the piece with a cross in his hand. He pulls Adam out of his sarcophagus while Eve awaits her turn to be raised. The Cathedral of the Monastery of Nea Moni, Chios, (Fig. 35), the catholicon in the Monastery of Daphne (11th century) and the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (12th century) are examples of this trend.³⁷ Numerous other examples, which are identifiable in the miniatures of Byzantine Gospels, monuments of ancient Russia and other Orthodox countries, reveal that the basic outline of the scene remained unchanged throughout the centuries. It also spread outside Byzantine borders, mainly to Bulgaria and Serbia (Figs 36, 37, 38, 39); it persisted in some remote areas of Bulgaria until the 17th century, as can be seen in the Church of Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates, Dobarsko, Razlosko (Fig. 40).

33 See also A.A. Kartsonis, *The Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton 1986) 9.

34 N.T. Wright, 'Jesus's Resurrection in the Early Christian Texts: An Engagement', *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2005).

35 M.G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture* (2003) 178; G. Downey, 'The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* (The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 1979).

36 L. Misguich, *Kurbinovo: Les Fresques de Saint-Georges et la Peinture Byzantine du XIIe Siècle* (Bruxelles 1975) fig. 45.

37 W.H. Hulme, *The Middle-English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus*, vol. 100 (Montant 1907) 56.

At the onset of 12th century, the traditional scheme for the depiction of the Anastasis was changed, and the symmetrical placement of Eve on the right side of Christ transpired. In the earlier types of the Anastasis, Eve stood on the left side of Christ, directly behind Adam. She was positioned in the same sarcophagus as Adam, except in those instances in which Christ holds her by the hand.³⁸ From the 12th century onwards, however, Eve stood on the opposite side to Adam. A precedent for the symmetrical placement of Eve is found in the Sketchbook of Wolfenbüttel (1230–1240).³⁹

The symmetrical Anastasis became popular during the Palaeologan period. The figurative scene of the *Anastasis* at the Monastery of Gračanica is a fine example of this trend, as is that at the Monastery of Marko, Markova Sušica in Macedonia (Fig. 41).⁴⁰ This model of the Anastasis also adorns the northern apses of monasteries on Mount Athos: the Great Lavra, the Monastery of Dionysius, the Monastery of Docchiariou, and the Holy Monastery of Chilandar.⁴¹ The Church of the Holy Trinity, Sopočani (13th century) (Fig. 42),⁴² and the Church of Christ, Veroia (14th century), contain similar images (Fig. 43).

The 14th century saw a new stage in the development of the Byzantine iconography of the Anastasis. The strict basis of the symmetrical Anastasis became emotionally rich, scenes were crowded with grouped figures of the just men, with their postures and gestures acquiring a natural, lively feel.⁴³ Sharp ledges and ridges grew to be mandatory details of the figurative scene, with the mandorla surrounding Christ acquiring a sharp-angled shape reminiscent of a rising star. The image of the cross, a common characteristic of the earlier samples of the Anastasis disappeared; the main emphasis was on the saving and

38 State Historical Museum, Moscow; A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton 1986) 302. Other examples come from the 11th century Cod. Acc. No. 30.20 and Codex Gregory 550; fol. 5r, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, D.T. Rice, *Art of Byzantine Era* (London 1963) 331, pl. 174.

39 E.B. Schwartz, *The Wolfenbüttel Sketchbook* (New York 1973).

40 P. Underwood has done an extensive archological work on the Chora Church, which has been taken as a basis for my observations regarding this monument. See P. Underwood, *Kariye Dzami*, vol. 4: *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Dzami and its Intellectual Background, Program and Iconography of the Frescos of Parekklesion*, 321; 36–39.

41 O. Hjort, 'Oddities and Refinements: Aspects of Architecture, Space and Narrative in the Mosaics of Kariye Camii', in J.O. Rosenqvist (ed.) *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture, Papers Read at a Colloquium held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1–5 December, 1999* (Istanbul 2000) 27–44.

42 N.V. Kvlividge et al., 'Воскресение Иисуса Христа: Иконография', *Православная Энциклопедия*, vol. 9 (Moscow 2005).

43 Kartsonis recognised four compositional types of the Anastasis: Christ advances towards Adam and Eve and takes Adam by the hand in an effort to lift him from his grave, or He walks in the opposite direction from Adam and Eve while pulling Adam out of the tomb. Moreover, he either places the cross between himself and Adam, or he triumphantly sets up his cross upon Hades. In some later representations that are closely connected with the liturgy, Christ stands frontally with both hands extended sideways, and Adam and Eve flank him. Finally, in the 13th century, the fourth compositional type appeared, which is an amalgamation of all three types. The emphasis of this type is on Christ's effort to raise both Adam and Eve by the hand. He no longer bears the Cross, nor has marks on his hands. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 7.

transforming role of the Saviour's energy of light. A variant of this fourth type of the Anastasis shows Christ pulling both Adam and Eve out of hell. One of the finest examples is the fresco of the *Anastasis* at the Chora church.

Theodore Metochites and the parekklesion of the Church of the Saviour, Chora

When the emperor Andronicus II Paleologos succeeded to the throne in 1282, he appointed the polyhistor and author Theodore Metochites to be the Megas Logothetēs (the Grand Logette) and mesazōn (the chief minister and principal aide of the Byzantine emperor).⁴⁴ Faithful to the principles of Church dogma, Metochites also prided himself on his knowledge of Ancient Greek literature. Well-educated, an authority on classical authors, an admirer of Plutarch, Aristotle and Plato, and other talented statesmen, he was one of the greatest personalities of the Palaeologan era. His writings include rhetorical and astronomical treatises, several letters to contemporaries, philosophical and historical essays, and even autobiographical poems written in Homeric hexameters. In his main work, *Miscellanea Philosophica et Historica*, Metochites stressed the importance of the Byzantines being the descendants of the Hellenes, with whom they shared the Greek language.⁴⁵ His position in the royal court and the role that he played in the affairs of his day was so eminent that Andronicus II requested Metochites undertake the restoration and extension of the Chora church, a six-year project. His restoration campaign, encompassing the rebuilding of Chora and its library, lasted from 1316–1321 and constitutes the fifth construction phase of the church.⁴⁶

The name Chora has different connotations. The Greek words *choros* and *chorion* refer to such things as land, a landed estate, country, or a suburban area outside the city walls. It probably refers to the fact that the Church of the Saviour was built outside the walls of Constantinople. The name Chora also has mystical implications in relation to Christ and the Virgin. Applied to the Virgin Mary, the epithet refers to the popular *Akathistos Hymn*, and it means 'the Chora (the dwelling place) of the uncontainable God' (Ὁ Χώρα του Οἱ χώρητου, *hē Chōra tou Achōrētou*). When applied to Christ, the name Chora is most likely derived from Psalm 116, 'the land of living, the eternal reward for the faithful in heaven' (Χώρα των ζώντων, *hē Chōra tōn zōntōn*).⁴⁷

44 I. Ševčenko, 'The Decline of Byzantium Seen Through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 15 (1961).

45 R. Guiland, 'Les Poesies Inedites des Theodore Methocite', *Byzantion*, vol. 3 (1937) 265.

46 A. Karahan, 'The Palaeologan Iconography of the Chora Church and its Relation to Greek Antiquity', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift: Journal of Art History*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1997) 89.

47 R. Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', *Gesta*, vol. 34 (1995) 63–76.

Metochites was the founder of the Church of the Saviour in 1315, before he was appointed a prime minister. The parekklesion was part of an extensive building and decorating program undertaken by the diplomat and it provided shelter and refuge for Metochites in difficult times of his career and served as a sepulchral monument for him and other important personages.⁴⁸ The fresco program of the parekklesion and the program of narthexes serve in many ways as the culmination of other cycles, which emphasise the past, present, and future as if occurring simultaneously. The complex program of the funerary chapel concludes in the apse, where the Anastasis is represented.

The *Anastasis* fresco

The fresco-cycle of the parekklesion at Chora establishes evocative links between the Old and New Testaments. At the same time, it reveals a close relationship between the fresco program and the purpose of the funeral chapel. The program of the parekklesion starts beneath the main dome, which is decorated with a fresco of the *Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven*. Underneath the dome, Metochites's body lies in one of the largest tomb arascolia. Immediately above the tomb is a fresco of *Jacob's Ladder*, and an image of the hymnographer, Theophanes of Crete, arranging a hymn dedicated to Metochites (to whom Theophanes points) is depicted in the pendentive. These works interrelate with the *Last Judgement* and the *Anastasis* by virtue of mimesis. Hence, in the fresco of the *Last Judgement*, which covers the upper walls of the bay and the entire dominical vault, Christ gestures with his hand towards the image of the soul of Metochites. In the majestic image of the *Anastasis*, the diagonals made by the sarcophagi of Adam and Eve direct the eyes of the viewer towards Metochites's tomb.⁴⁹ Several other images in the parekklesion at Chora also relate to each other. For example, the position of Adam and Eve ascending from their sarcophagi recalls the proskynesis of the angels flanking the Virgin Koimenis. The flowing red robe of Eve in the *Anastasis* mimics the form of the fiery stream of hell in the fresco of the *Last Judgment*.⁵⁰

48 I. Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the Intellectual Trends of his Time', in Underwood (ed.) *The Kariye Djami*, 17–19; Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring', 67; P.L. Grotowski & S. Skrzyniarz, 'Towards rewriting? New Approaches to Byzantine Archaeology and Art', *Series Byzantina*, vol. 8 (2010).

49 The observations in this paragraph are largely based on Ousterhout's introductory remarks on the Church of Chora. See Ousterhout, 'The Kariye Camii: An Introduction', in D.S. Angelov (ed.), *Restoring Byzantium: The Kariye Camii in Istanbul and the Byzantine Institute Restoration*, (Columbia University 2004) 5–14.

50 J.M. Featherstone, *Theodore Methochites's Poems to Himself* (Vienna 2000) 118–120; S.E.J. Gerstel, 'The Chora Parekklesion, the Hope for a Peaceful Afterlife, and Monastic Devotional Practices', in H.A. Klein, R.G. Ousterhout, B. Pitarakis (eds), *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, Istanbul Research Institute Symposium Series 1 (Istanbul 2011) 107–145.

The images *Rising of the Widow's Son* and *Rising of the Daughter of Jairus* also flank the *Anastasis* in the parekklesion at Chora: these images complete the cycle of the ministry and miracles of Christ. In a similar way, the diagonals emphasise the drama of these scenes, which prefigures the resurrection.⁵¹ At the eastern end of the chapel, the striking image of the Anastasis occupies the semi-dome of the apse.

Description



Figure 30. The Anastasis, c. 1315–1321, fresco, apse of the parekklesion, Church of the Saviour, Chora, Istanbul (Turkey)

Enclosed by a luminous oval mandorla decorated with stars, the dominant and glorious figure of the risen Christ, clad in a white luminous chiton (a draped garment held on the shoulders by a brooch) and himation vanquishes Satan and breaks down the gates of hell. With a vigorous motion, Christ grasps Adam by the wrist with his left hand, and Eve with his right. He seems to lift Adam with only a slight flexing of his arm, in contrast to the strength he uses to lift Eve out of her tomb. On the right hand of Christ (from the viewer's left side) are two groups of the righteous; each led by a single figure detached from the rest of his companions. John the Baptist stands behind Adam in his capacity as

⁵¹ S.H. Young, 'Relations between Byzantine Mosaic and Fresco Technique', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, vol. 25 (1976).

forerunner. Solomon, David, and three other righteous kings accompany him.⁵² Behind Eve, the young shepherd Abel leads a group of six other unidentifiable figures. Beneath Christ's feet, the entrance to Hades lies shattered, and the tiny, dark figure of Satan lies gagged and restrained. Various emblems of the broken powers of hell, such as chains, shackles, nails, and keys are in a circular cave of darkness. At the bottom of hell, Hades is tied with chains to a stake while, high in the sky, a group of angels is erecting a cross.⁵³

Illuminated by a radiant light, the figure of Christ is the central point and energy field for the motif. It combines stability with movement and dynamic energy with power. Movement arises primarily from the dramatic positioning of the body in three different directions. Christ inclines his knees and posture slightly to the left while he places his feet firmly on the ground. He pulls Adam from the left and Eve from the right toward Him, up onto the vertical axis. The strong sense of upward movement indicates that Christ grants humanity and salvation from death, but also the possibility of participation in his true humanity and true divinity united in the single hypostasis.⁵⁴ It is an ascent of the body and soul towards God, attained through knowledge of the Scriptures and mediated by symbol and analogy. It alludes to the tripartite stage of the spiritual journey as affirmed by the hesychast: purification from passions (*praxis*), contemplation of nature as the work of God (*physike theoria*), and the vision of God (*theologia*) as light.⁵⁵

The *Anastasis* at Chora affirms the theological interplay between the feast of the Transfiguration and the Resurrection, with the painters representing the resurrected body of Christ in the same way as the transfigured body of Christ was circumscribed in the Metamorphosis.⁵⁶ Christ's garments in the Transfiguration are more luminous than in the *Anastasis*. It is clear the white garments of Christ in the *Anastasis* represent his burial garments, but the feeling of this composition is anything but mournful. There is no explicit reason why Christ's garments are illuminated to such an extent in the *Anastasis*, other than that the same light emitted by the body of Christ on Mount Tabor during the Metamorphosis illuminated Christ during the *Anastasis*.⁵⁷ In other words, the colour of Christ's billowing garments shows the uncreated light that surrounded

52 Underwood, 'Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955–1956', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 12 (1958).

53 O. Demus & E. Diez, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece, Hosios Lucas & Daphni* (Harvard 1931) fig. 104; M. Chatzidakis, *The Mosaics of Hosios Loukas* (Athens 1997) fig. 23.

54 Gregory Palamas, *Gregorie Palamas, Defense des Saints Hesychastes*, Meyendorff (ed. & trans) (Louvain 1959); Palamas, *Triads* II, 2: 4, and esp. II, 3: 35, in Meyendorff (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Triad*.

55 G. Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York 1992).

56 B. Krivocheine, 'Аскетическое и Богословское Учение Святого Григория Паламы', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, vol. 8 (Prague 1931).

57 Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Crestwood 2005) 165–166.

Christ at the Resurrection and the Transfiguration. This is the same light the Godhead shares with His Son and the Holy Spirit. The illuminated robes of Christ also serve as a witness to the beginning of an ascent that connects heaven to hell by a single beam of light. The choice of white garments, however, affirms that Christ maintained his human nature and the rational and spiritual soul was undiminished even after the Resurrection.⁵⁸ They also allude to the transformation of all creation. In fact, when Christ in his glory descended into hell, all dark places were enlightened and transformed in the same way as the event of the Transfiguration affected James, John and Peter. The figure of the Saviour surrounded by angels is transparent, subtle; it is like a melting image in contrast with the tight silhouettes of demons that swarm into the infernal abyss.

The fluttering end of Adam's robe billows from his shoulder and flows downward in jagged, pointed folds. The hem of his garment is equally ruffled and agitated. The lower edge of Eve's himation is rippled, terminating in a point at its tip, as do the robes of Adam and Christ. There is an inherent movement in the drapery of the figure representing Isaiah, who stands behind Abel and Eve. A piece of cloth cascades from his left arm. Dressed in garments of typological significance, the ancestors respond to the divine calling. They point to the New Adam (Christ) and the New Eve (the Virgin Mary) as well as to those mysteriously reconstructed and transformed in the realms of hell, not in any pantheistic sense of identification with the divine essence, but by grace, that is, 'empowered with divine energies'.⁵⁹ Christ's gestures towards Adam and Eve also affirm the hesychast view of grace and its relation to human salvation, embodied in the hesychast idea of co-operation (*synergia*).⁶⁰ Christ opens the way to paradise to Adam and Eve and calls them to salvation, but the response to Christ's call lies either in consent to follow Him or voluntary rejection of salvation.⁶¹ In raising the ancestors who represent humanity's fall into degradation, Jesus acts out his role as the 'New Adam' who reversed the errors of the 'old Adam.'

Adam's strongly modelled figure is clad in alabaster clothes, but his robes are not as luminous as the garments of Christ, who is the source of light and an exemplar. Adam's features, his wavy locks of hair and beard are modelled with bold brushstrokes. His tunic of light blue symbolises the garments of glory, indicating the new life into which he has entered; in the same way the white robes of the newly baptised symbolise their new life in Christ.⁶² Adam's sleeve

58 Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Antirrheticus* III, 38; *Patrologia Graeca* 100, 437BC.

59 John of Damascus, *Oration I*, 36; *Kot.* 3, 148.

60 Meyendorff, 'New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology', *Theological Studies*, vol. 50 (1989).

61 On the meaning of prayer see J.E. Bemberger, 'Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer', *Cistercian Studies Series* 4 (Spencer 1970); see also S. Tugwell, *Chapters on Prayer* (Oxford 1981); A. Guillaumont, *Les Six Centuries des 'Kephalia Gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 28 (Paris 1958).

62 Chatzidakis, 'Classicisme et Tendances Populaires au XIVe Siecle: Recherches sur l'Evolution du Style', *XIVe Congres International des Etudes Byzantines, Bucarest, Septembre 1971, Actes I* (Bucharest 1971) 153, 88.

is of a much lighter colour than the rest of his clothing, serving as a proof that transfiguration or deification has taken place within him, filling him with the Holy Spirit. For the same reason, Moses and Elijah levitate around the corners of the hesychast mandorla in the Transfiguration. It affirms the concrete character of the vision of God in human form, the Christological vision adapted to the faculties of created beings. The long side of Adam's sarcophagus, which recedes into the abyss, is pinkish brown. The mouldings on the sarcophagus are in darker and lighter values of brown highlighted with white. The ornamental motifs are similarly coloured.⁶³ Beneath Adam, the interior face of the other two sides of the sarcophagus are visible. A considerably darker value of the same colour is applied on the far end and a slightly lighter shade is on the fourth side.

In the earlier models of the Anastasis, Adam and Eve stood in the same sarcophagus on one side of Christ, whereas, at the Chora church, they are on the opposite sides of him, emerging from their own sarcophagus. It is probable that the personal attachment felt by the all followers of hesychasm to the Virgin Mary influenced the development of the symmetrical type of the *Anastasis*.⁶⁴ It is by affirming the importance of the Virgin Mary for the salvation of humanity that the hesychast placed equal importance on the role of genders. Her role in human salvation was also much emphasised during the hesychast controversy. The Virgin Mary was a frontier between created and uncreated nature 'clearly announcing the divinity and the humanity of Christ in one hypostasis of the Word.'⁶⁵ Just as the original Eve fostered Adam's rebellion against His Creator, the Virgin Mary's acceptance of God's will fosters the reunification of God and man in the person of Jesus. She is the 'New Eve'.⁶⁶ In the Garden of Eden, Eve believed the lies of a fallen angel, disobeyed God, and so became the cause of Adam's transgression (Genesis 3:1–7). The Virgin Mary, however, trusted the words spoken by Archangel Gabriel, and she became Theotokos (the God bearer). The redemption brought through the Virgin Mary extends to Eve. Hence, while in previous models of the Anastasis Eve stood in the background, waiting her turn to be raised from death, in the symmetrical *Anastasis* Eve is on equal footing with Adam, but on the opposite side. She wears a red omophorion (a mantle with a hood) that covers most of her body, except for her right arm and her left foot, which are covered by a tight-sleeved blue tunic. Eve's red garment

63 R. Harries, *The Passion in Art* (Ashgate 2004) 81.

64 A. Kniazeff, 'La Theotokos dans le Offices du Temps Paschal', *Irenikon*, vol. 1 (1961) 30ff.

65 Palamas, 'Homily of Dormition' 37, in C. Veniamin (ed.), *The Homilies of St Gregory Palamas* (Waymart 2002) 430–431.

66 L.S.M. Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco 1999) 284–286.

alludes to the Virgin Mary's red robe. The highlights on Eve's drapery are not pure white, and it may be that the painter did this on purpose to accentuate the different stages of spiritual vision achieved by the two figures.⁶⁷

John the Baptist, David and Solomon, ancestors and prophets, stand behind Adam, waiting their turn to be raised to life. The three kings on the left side of Jesus have haloes of various colours, whereas all of the figures on the right side of Jesus are without haloes. The presence of the kings on the left side crowds the anonymous group of righteous into a small space. In addition, the colours are muted. The imperial ideology is at play here, affirmed by the fact Christ's feet rest to the left side of hell, where imperial personages reside. In Byzantine art, secular and religious art combine references to the interconnection between Church and state and the cult of the Byzantine emperor provided a model for the general image cult.⁶⁸

The emperor himself was a supreme ruler; his election was a gift of God, with the purpose of bringing peace and justice into the world.⁶⁹ The emperor had liturgical and administrative privileges which assigned him the role of guardian over the Church.⁷⁰ The halo of the Byzantine emperor indicated his executive and heavenly power.⁷¹ Some formal elements can be traced to themes of classical mythologies, such as Hercules setting Cerberus free, by *pulling him out* of hell.

The hallowed figure of John the Baptist, whose has the accepted features of an ascetic, leads the group of righteous. A brownish-yellow tunic with black clavus covers his body. His face is turned three-quarters, and he makes the sign of supplication with his hands. He is the one who introduces Christ to the world during his lifetime, and he is the one that points to Resurrected Christ with his gestures. Most of the imperial personages on the left are dressed in a chlamys over a divitission. David's chlamys is dark blue, and Solomon's is red. In the hesychast context, affirming John the Baptist's link with Jesus is of uttermost importance. It is the element connecting the iconography of the Anastasis with that of the Transfiguration and, by extension, with the hesychast symbolism of light. In the same way, the Taboric light is more than an external phenomenon or an enhypostatic symbol. The light is both a symbol of the divinity and the divine,⁷² a star preceded Christ who is the Light of the world; his forerunner

67 D. Balfour, 'Saint Gregory the Sinaite: Discourse on the Transfiguration', *Theologia*, vol. 52, no. 1 (1981–1983).

68 M.E. Kenna, 'Icons in Theory and Practice: An Orthodox Christian Example', *Harvard Review*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1985).

69 L.W. Barnard, 'The Emperor Cult and the Origins of the Iconoclastic Controversy', *Byzantion*, vol. 43 (1973) 13–29; see also H. Koester, *History, Culture And Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia 1982) 32–36.

70 Barnard, 'Emperor Cult', 26.

71 E.H. Kantorowicz & W.C. Jordan, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton 1997) 80.

72 Gregory Palamas, *Triads* III, 1, 9, in Meyendorff (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Triad*.

to be, John the Baptist.⁷³ In other words, a 'ray of light' preceded the Light in the same way the divine energies precede (are reflections of) the essence of Godhead. The presence of John the Baptist in the Resurrection, on the other hand, affirms that he introduced a ritual effective for the forgiveness of sins that finds fulfilment with the Anastasis. 'Christ triumphed over infernos, releasing hell's captives, particularly Adam and Eve, and the righteous men and women of Old Testament times'.⁷⁴

The youthful figure of Abel stands at the head of the group on the right. He wears a long greenish tunic that is adorned with rich gold embroidery and purple trousers. It is significant that Abel is standing in the same sarcophagus as his mother. In a series of complex contrasts, Abel and Christ are juxtaposed; the blood of the first human person sacrificed intercedes and the blood of Christ redeems. This symbolism also alludes to the theology of *oikonomia*, which is the eternal plan of God for the salvation, redemption and deification of humanity and the created world. This doctrine became an objective reality when the Virgin Mary conceived Christ.⁷⁵ Therefore, the mysterious creator of the *Anastasis* at Chora painted the picture of Eve as a symbol for the Theotokos and Abel as a symbol for the sacrifice made by Christ for humanity. Abel's companions wear chitons and himations in various colours. The chitons are blue and the himations are predominantly yellow, with two exceptions: the figure on the far right wears a reddish brown chiton, and the third person of the series in the second row has a green himation that is visible over his left shoulder. The highlights are usually white and there is much use of hatching in light yellow values. Both Abel and John the Baptist in this scene allude to Christ as the sacrificial lamb and recall the association of the image with the mystery of the Eucharist and Baptism. Did the painter have an awareness about the hesychast teaching concerning the uncreated light? It is plausible to think that this might have been the case. Hesychasts often stated that the active, unending, progressive movement of human beings begins with Baptism and continues in the Eucharist.⁷⁶ Consequently, they offer a genuinely theological anthropology, which perceives humanity as the unfinished creation of the Triune God. That is, having been created 'in the image' of the infinite God, humanity must transcend the limited boundaries of creation and become 'gods by grace'.⁷⁷ The means by which Christians attain deification (*theosis*) is through the sacraments of the church and through the act of *hesychia*, the mystical state of tranquility where

73 Abbot D.P. Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year*, vol. 12 (Powers Lake 1983) Book III; Luke 3:1.

74 L.E. Ross, *Medieval Art: A Topical Dictionary* (Greenwood 1996) 10–11.

75 Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Logos*, 19; *Patrologia Graeca* 100, 584.

76 Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, G. Lawrence (trans), (London 1964) 164; Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, C.D. Catanzaro (trans), (Crestwood 1974) 50.

77 P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of Human Person*, N. Russell (trans), (Crestwood 1987) 28.

man can find his real being.⁷⁸ The painter of this fresco created a hierarchy illustrating the spiritual battle that rages in the spiritual world and in man's consciousness. Everyone strives to regain likenesses to God, but not everyone achieves the same level of perfection. Christ raises Adam first, then Eve, and later John the Baptist, David and Solomon with other imperial figures, and finally he delivers Abel and the rest of humankind. This fact can be taken as an indication of hesychast influence on the *Anastasis* at Chora. The hesychasts affirmed the diversity of degrees in spiritual perfection and the diversity of levels in spiritual life — the different stages for humanity to traverse. The image of *Jacob's Ladder* painted on the left side of the *Anastasis* in the Chora church reaffirms this hypothesis.

To accentuate the last stage in the kenotic act of God, as well as the salvation of the human race,⁷⁹ the painter of the *Anastasis* depicts the moment of Jesus' descent into hell as a sort of reverse transfiguration. This event is no longer played out on Mt Tabor, however, but at the centre of the earth and the cosmos, free from every geographical peculiarity. Thus, the step-like, cloven rocks of the Transfiguration become the barren, rocky plains of the *Anastasis*, which point towards the kataphatic aspect of human salvation from hell.⁸⁰ The rocky background on the right of Christ is a cool, greenish-grey with white highlights; the upper contour is reddish yellow, and facets of rock are in dark brown. The rocks on the left are warmer in colour and, at the centre, are green, with yellow and white highlights and brown shadows. They are slightly twisted towards Christ. The dividing of the rocks in the *Anastasis* icon recalls Moses' division of the waters of the Red Sea, when the chosen ones crossed from slavery in Egypt into the freedom of the Promised Land, as well as the splitting of the rocks after the Crucifixion.⁸¹ The rocky landscape encompassing the background of hell is similar to the background of the dark cave depicted on the icon of the Nativity of Christ. In a homily attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, a parallel can be found between the birth of Christ in a cave and the spiritual light shining forth in the shadow of death that covers humankind when Christ descended into hell. The blackness at the centre of these two icons confesses this world's true state of darkness, torn from communion with God through the sin of man. Revealing himself in the heart of human suffering and struggle, Christ emerges triumphant within this very darkness:

78 Archimandrite Georgios, 'Theoretikos: The Neptic and Hesychastic Character of Orthodox Athonite Monasticism', http://www.greekorthodoxchurch.org/neptic_monasticism.html (accessed 11/03/2011).

79 S. Nes, *The Uncreated Light: An Iconographical Study of the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church* (Edinburgh 2007) 128.

80 The descent of God (kataphasis) represents a materialisation of the divine, while the ascent of men (anaphasis) represents deification of the material, Palamas, *Triads*, III, 1, 32; 87, in Meyendorff (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Triad*.

81 Baggley, *Festival Icons*, 122.

The torch bearer, the flesh of God beneath the earth dissipates the gates of Hell. The birth of Christ was in a cave, and the jaws of Hades trembled. He rose from dead, and the bonds that could only be defeated by the triumph over death itself begin to feel the crushing weight of their overthrow.⁸²

The pointed mandorla, which surrounds the figure of Christ, contains three concentric circles, each of a different shade of blue. The three zones within the mandorla have a Trinitarian connotation: they symbolise the intimate relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Many Christian fathers and other authors described the Holy Trinity as one indivisible deity composed of separate hypostasis resembling three joined suns, which together emit one bright light. Furthermore, the use of a mandorla with three concentric circles is in keeping with the tenets of apophasis as expounded by Dionysius the Areopagite.⁸³ It describes the three stages of the soul's journey to God as a movement from the light through the cloud into the darkness.⁸⁴ As holiness increases, there is no way to depict the one who is above all, that cannot be an object of knowledge, except by 'darkness'. It also shows that, although the essence of God is beyond human comprehension and understanding, God manifests in one *ousia* or essence and three hypostases.

The inner zone of the mandorla is the same shade of blue as some of the garments; the second zone is lighter blue and the outer zone pale blue-gray. Eight-pointed stars are visible all over the mandorla, formed by sharply tapered strokes that radiate from a central dot. Originally, the star-shaped rays of light were painted by using a gold leaf over a mordant, but when the fresco was restored, the stars were repainted in dull red.⁸⁵ There is varied interpretation of the symbolism of the eight rays of light. In the context of the Anastasis, however, it has four interrelated meanings. Firstly, the Greek and Latin fathers, as well as non-Christian authors, often perceived the holy number eight in connection with the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ or *Parousia*. Second, influenced by the Christian eschatological tradition, many Byzantine painters adopted the eight rays of light as figurative means of representing the uncreated light of God.⁸⁶ Third, in the context of Dionysius the Areopagite's teaching on the 'light-giving

82 M.C. Steenberg, 'The Nativity of the Paschal Christ', <http://www.monachos.net/content/liturgics/liturgical-reflections/434-nativity-of> (accessed on 15/02/2012).

83 F.S. Carter, 'Celestial Dance: A Search for Perfection, Dance Research', *The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1987).

84 *ibid.*, 53.

85 Underwood, 'First Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute 1952–54', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 9 (1956) 265.

86 J. Miziolek, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 53 (1990) 43.

illuminations' (*photodosia*), the rays of light are carriers of the spiritual vision.⁸⁷ Dionysius the Areopagite saw the entire universe (material as well as spiritual) as a system of images, symbols and signs, which point to God and uplift us to Him. This is a key principle and indicates several important aspects. It affirms the possibility of access to the Father through Jesus (the Father is the principle of light and the Son reflects the light of the Father). Additionally, it affirms the light-giving (*photodosia*) of the Father, which proceeds from the Godhead, revealing the hierarchies of the heavenly minds, and then returns to the Father by uplifting the human mind. Finally, it shows that the rays of *photodosia* are real. They manifested during the Transfiguration and the Anastasis.⁸⁸

The symbol of a circle with eight rays represented the sun in early Christian art, the *Sol Domini Imperii Romani*.⁸⁹ In addition, the image of the sun as a circle of eight rays or an octagon became a symbol of Christ in the artistic tradition. The examples found in the *Joshua Roll*, the *Gerona Beatus*, the *Florence Cosmas*, the *Sacra Parallela* and the *Smyrna Physiologus* all testify to this trend.⁹⁰ Moreover, many Christian ecclesiastical writers used this general analogy to describe the antinomical nature of the Triune God, who is visible and invisible at the same time.⁹¹ Gregory Palamas, in particular, used this parallel to illustrate the distinction between essence and energies within God.⁹² His teaching states we can experience the energies of God, but to acquire knowledge of his essence would be impossible.⁹³ The importance of this point has to do with deification — union with God.⁹⁴ Palamas established that humanity can participate in the divine energies in the same way we share in the rays of the sun, although we cannot participate in the essence of the sun.⁹⁵ Therefore, to be in communion with God means to be united with him fully, though one may never know the divine essence or the three hypostases.⁹⁶

87 This term occurs 12 times in *Corpus Dionysiacum*: *Divine Names* 115, 1 [592c], *Celestial Hierarchy* 8, 2 [121b], 9, 2 [121d]; *Corpus Dionysiacum* (1990–1) 2:299; in *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Complete Works*, C. Luibheid & P. Rorem (trans), *Classics of Western Spirituality Series* (New York 1987).

88 B. Schomaker, *Pseudo-Dionysius de Areopagiet: Over Mystieke Theologie* (Kampen 1990); Dionysius the Areopagite, 'De Divinis Nominibus', *Patrologia Graeca* 3, 586–997; Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, C.E. Rolt (ed.) (London 1957); Dionysius the Areopagite, 'Mystical Theology 1', *Patrologia Graeca* 3; Dionysius the Areopagite, *О Небесной Иерархии* (St Petersburg 1997).

89 Miziolek, 'Transfiguration Domini'.

90 T. Mathews, *Byzantine Aesthetics* (New York 1971) 31.

91 In some sources the star-shaped mandorla was taken as a symbol of wisdom, theophany and divinity. The eight-pointed star is used in a miniature of *Beatus* to symbolise the women of the apocalypse; H. Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in Christlicher Deutung. Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, B. Battershaw (trans), (London 1963) 154ff.

92 D. Papanikolaou, 'Divine Energies or Divine Personhood: Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas on Conceiving the Transcendent and Immanent God', *Modern Theology*, vol. 19, no. 3 (July 2003) 359.

93 Palamas, *Triads*, 95, in Meyendorff (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Triad*.

94 Papanikolaou, 'Divine Energies'.

95 A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London 1989) 90.

96 Meyendorff, *Gregory Palamas*, 293ff.

The depiction of three concentric circles within the mandorla could be interpreted in the same context. The circles mark out the three levels of union within or with God as discussed by the hesychasts.⁹⁷ First is the union in essence between the three divine hypostases of the Triune God, each of whom is *homousios* — ‘one in essence’ or ‘consubstantial’ with other two. Secondly, there exists a hypostatic union of the divine nature and the human nature in Christ. Finally, there is a union according to energy or grace, between God and the saints.⁹⁸ According to Palamas, the vision of light and the state of deification and union with God offer humanity an existential knowledge of God. The deifying gift of the Holy Spirit, which is a mysterious light, transforms those who have attained the grace of God not only filling them with eternal light, ‘but also granting them knowledge and divine participation’. This is a stage of vision of God through ignorance (*ignoratio*).⁹⁹

The use of an azurite colour for the sky affirms the symbolism of light in the *Anastasis* at Chora. Originally, the background of the *Anastasis* was azurite over charcoal black. Owing to humid conditions, however, the thin washes of azurite oxidised and the background turned an unpleasant green. Conservators removed the background when they restored the fresco. Tiny patches of greenish colour are still visible under the inscription. The azurite was a symbol of ‘irreducible otherness’, to affirm the presence of the ‘radiant opacity’. One might audaciously suggest this ‘participle of glory’ is, in fact, ‘the eternal glory of God’, as Palamas and Gregory the Theologian claimed, while separating such light from the ‘imparticiple essence of God’.¹⁰⁰ This light illuminates humankind and transforms the whole cosmos.¹⁰¹ By virtue of sharing in the light of its prototype, the painting of the *Anastasis* ‘contains within itself the divine power’.¹⁰²

Another iconographical feature reflects the supremacy of God in the *Anastasis* at Chora. Having descended into Hades with authority, the Lord takes a magnificent stance upon the gates of hell. However, these gates are no longer depicted as the symmetrical lids of coffins in the form of a cross. Instead, they are orange-yellow painted coffered panels. The grotesque figure of Hades, painted in monochrome

97 Divine essence is represented by the three cycles of the mandorla. The divine energies are represented through the eight rays of light within the mandorla. Palamas, *Triads*, I, 3, 43, in Meyendorff (ed.), *Gregory Palamas: The Triad*; K. Ware, ‘God Hidden and Revealed: The Apophatic Way and the Essence–Energies Distinction’, *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1975).

98 John of Damascus, *Oration*, III, 26; Kotter 3, 134; Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Antirrheticus* III, 31; PG 100, 421D–424A.

99 Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos & E.E. Cunningham-Williams, *Orthodox Psychotherapy* (Athens 2005) 89.

100 C. A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In your Light we see Light* (Oxford 2008) 10.

101 M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford 1971) 154.

102 S.K. Ware & J.M. Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Crestwood 2007) 65–68.

umber tones, lies beneath Christ's feet; his arms and wrists are tightly fettered. Hades is neither capable of any meaningful resistance to the power of Christ, nor is he called into salvation by God. His presence in the the *Anastasis* alludes to the state of human darkness brought about by transgressions and sin. By disobeying the divine commandment, Adam turned away from God, who is 'immortality and love, and brought upon himself and the world ugliness and corruption'.¹⁰³ His mind and willpower could no longer have communion and unity with God and he could no longer hope to attain the likeness of God. God's benevolence, however, was employed after the Fall when Christ adopted a corruptible body.¹⁰⁴ Christ entered Hades and delivered humanity from death. He reunited heaven and earth, and closed the ontological gap between the creator and his creatures, thus making possible man's eventual deification.¹⁰⁵ Even the human body was no longer perceived as being 'unclean'; rather, it has been transformed by grace.¹⁰⁶ Christ reformed not only the ancient Adam, renewing and bringing human nature back to the original state of happiness, but he restored humanity's physical environment.¹⁰⁷ The painter of the *Anastasis* conveyed this fact artistically by accentuating the vision of light that occurred when Christ approached Hades. Significantly, in the fresco of the *Anastasis* at Chora, Christ bears no wounds of his passion. The wooden cross that Christ holds in most earlier representations of the *Anastasis*, such as those at Hosios Loukas and Nea Moni, is also missing.¹⁰⁸ The meaning behind the creation of the earlier images of the *Anastasis* was, however, primarily Soteriological. At Chora, on the other hand, the painter focused on the eschatological meaning of the event of the Resurrection.¹⁰⁹

Formal qualities of the *Anastasis* fresco

In many respects, the style employed by the painter at Chora represents a summa in the development of the iconography of the image of the *Anastasis*. It reveals a well-defined canon of taste, 'slightly prettified, mannered as well as overcharged with conscious classical reminiscence'.¹¹⁰ Little is known of

103 Ware, 'The Value of the Material Creation', *Symbolae Osloenses: Norwegian Journal of Greek and Latin Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Summer 1971).

104 Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Antirrheticus* III, 37–38; PG 100, 441.

105 K. Parry, 'Theodore Studites and Patriarch Nicephoros', *Byzantion*, vol. 59 (1989) 178.

106 John of Damascus, *Oration* II, 10; III, 9; Kotter, 3, 100; 105–15.

107 J.A. MacCulloch, *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh 1930) 248–500.

108 See Appendix, figures 1 and 2 in G. Vikan, *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* (Princeton 1973) fig. 53.

109 Beckwith, *Christian and Byzantine Art*, 253–254; H. Maguire, 'The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 46, *Homo Byzantinus: Papers in Honor of Alexander Kazhdan* (1992).

110 Hjørt, 'Oddities and Refinements'. Also E. Kitzinger, 'The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 20 (1966) 25–47.

the painter, yet it is clear that curious refinements and oddities concerned him. In part, the elegantly mannered style parallels the complex architectural framework.¹¹¹ The architecture and the landscape take predominance and are integral to the scene.¹¹² Both play a complex role in the narrative; they give space and time, and space and movement a more explicit significance. It is possible that the peculiarities in style in the Chora church are due to the patronage of Theodore Metochites, a published author who was self-conscious about his originality. There are significant parallels between the artistic style of the Chora church and the mannered and obsessive literary style of Metochites. Emergence of new iconographic trends in the *Anastasis* at Chora also testifies to the spiritual movement of hesychasm affecting the humanistic phase of the Palaeologan revival.

In the *Anastasis*, complexity is more important than monumentality, and each unit has a defined meaning. All figures have distorted, elongated and voluminous bodies. The absence of naturalism is most evident in the hands and feet, which lack anatomical precision. It is an obvious sign of avoiding naturalism while reverting to abstraction. The facial types are classical, with linear and decorative modelling of hair and beard. Painted in a mixture of yellow ochre, the faces project Hellenic elegance, but their expressions show unspecified concern or distrust, with eyes half averted, or pointed at their object obliquely. Facial highlights are not intense; terra verte and white are used for highlights. Another trait is the use of a linear connection, which weaves through the singular form into a continuous pattern. The arms and the hands are in a garland, beginning with the crossed arms of the long-bearded old man in the front row of the *Anastasis*, and continuing to the hands of the third figure from the right in the middle row. Their position regarding the vertical and horizontal axes varies to a high degree; the raised or lowered heads of the figures create different effects. Three-quarter and full-faced views are the most frequent projection of the turning heads; there are one or two portrait types.¹¹³ The *Anastasis* at Chora brings a new depth of feeling, a human quality going beyond the dignified Byzantine formula; it introduces a new style informed by hesychasm.

Garments and draperies serve to suggest attitudes, movements, and action of the bodies. A fluid delineation replaces the jagged abstraction of drapery which characterised the Commnenian art. The drapery is of various colours; blue shades outline the folds while brighter hues highlight them. All surface differentials consist of broken and splintery forms. The same holds true for the hatchlings, formed by alternating rows of dark and light colours.

111 Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring', 67.

112 S. Yadim, 'The Italo-Cretan Religious Painting and the Byzantine-Palaeologan Legacy', *Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Journal of Faculty of Letters*, vol. 25, no. 1 (June 2008) 269.

113 Demus, 'The Style of Kariye Djami and its Place in the Development of Palaeologan Art', in Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami*.

The bodily movement is psychologically intense; the expressiveness of postures and attitudes takes predominance. The dramatic action, however, is presented by an extraordinary sense of physical movement and force. The three central figures move dramatically on the vertical axis and bodily postures, as well as the superimposing of geometrical shapes, create a sense of diagonal and horizontal movement.

The scene centres on the three chief protagonists who are placed in a triangular space: Christ, Adam and Eve. The two ends by the two opening sarcophagi create the base of the triangle while the point of the mandorla, which frames the figure of Christ, forms the apex of the triangle. John the Baptist and Abel stand at the edges of the triangle. The pictorial space and the room taken by the observer are the same. The sense of depth is obtained by varying figure sizes and the placement of one row of figures directly above the other. The power of reverse perspective does not create a sense of three-dimensionality, as was the case with most images of the Anastasis; rather, the painter has created tridimensional representations that appear to the viewer on interacting with the image. Although the central figure of Christ is larger than the rest of the figures, the arrangements of the objects in space gives a sense of good proportion to the composition. The sides of the central axis are not fully symmetrical; yet they have the same visual weight.¹¹⁴ A marked equilibrium connects different parts of the image, while its design is forceful. The right side of the fresco manifests the painter's ardent interest in experimenting with perspective. Aside from the obvious attention to detail regarding Abel's garments, there is a strange and experimental spatial projection of his figure and his robe. His body is presented in two perspectives. Eve's abruptly tipped sarcophagus and the shallower tipped sarcophagus of Adam are part of an intentional figural distortion. Indeed, the lack of perfect plastic corporeality, the expressionist use of light and shadow and interest in spiritual ideals succeed in giving work its transcendent quality.

The painting has a stylised sketchiness or rigidity in its execution; it is free enough to show the brushstrokes, which are especially visible where highlights emerge. The colours in the scene are delicate and the subtle hues¹¹⁵ are warm on the left to allow objects to appear closer to the viewer. Cool shades on the right push the image away from the viewer. Brilliant white is seemingly detached from the dark blue background. The decorative folds on drapery, as well as its shades and shadows are in warm grey. The highlights in Christ's garments are pure white; and there is much use of hatching in light values of yellow. The strong modelling of features, the wavy locks of hair and beard are depicted with bold

114 P. Treadwell, *The Resurrection of Eve: A Study of the Anastasis in the Kariye Camii* (London 1988) 42–60; Demus, 'Kariye Djami', 145–50.

115 R. Lange, *The Resurrection* (London 1967) 50.

brushstrokes. Blue is the colour for the garments of glory, indicating the new life into which Christ has entered.¹¹⁶ It also refers to the state of transfiguration or deification, effected by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.

The essence of the light of redemption and victory takes predominance in the *Anastasis* at Chora. The aura of heavenly light pervades the Saviour's body, which extends to his mandorla. Following the principle of mirror symmetry, Adam and Eve stand on either side of Christ. There is a sharp contrast between the upper and lower part of the composition, with Christ as the centre of the column. The different positions of the characters within the hierarchical structure of the cosmos dictate this contrast. The light on the figures is broken into small abstract parts and discontinuous strips. The bold and sharp streaks of highlighted areas are a characteristic feature of art in Palaeologan era. These explosive splatters of light are reminiscent of the bursting fireworks of monumental frescoes, manuscript illumination and icons informed by hesychasm. For example, the bold and sharp streaks of highlights remind the viewer of the white lead highlights and crosshatching that Manuel Panselinos used to obtain bold expressive effects in the Church of Protaton.¹¹⁷ Even though the central portion of this fresco of the *Anastasis* is approximately symmetrical; the realms of hell, below, have an interesting asymmetry.¹¹⁸

The immaterial uncreated light of the mandorla mingles with the blue through a merging of white, light blue and darker blue. The semiotics of the mandorla affirms that God is human and divine, and the unity of the material world and the world of ideas. The use of dark blue produces an effect of depth and tranquillity and gives an illusion of an unreal world, one that is without weight. The use of white has an impressive psychological effect in the *Anastasis* at Chora: the figure of Christ dressed in luminous white clothes is like lightning which starts in the East and blazes across the sky. He descends like lightning in hell, pulling the Old Testament righteous from their tombs. In this fresco, white is made brilliant through movement, which detaches it from the dark blue background. The colour of the central triangle (in which Christ stands with Adam and Eve), symbolises the Trinity; just as Plato, in an abstract way, represented the world of ideas as a basic axiom for the supreme knowledge of God.¹¹⁹

Figures and objects are uniformly lighted, rather than being illuminated by a single source. The light effect heightens the illusionist, immaterial feel of the

116 M. Alpatov, 'Die Fresken der Kachrie Djami in Konstantinopel', *Mimchner Jahrbuch der Budenden Kuntt*, vol. 6 (Munich 1929).

117 Lange, *Resurrection*, 65–85; N. Teteriatnikov, 'New Artistic and Spiritual Trends in the Proskinetaria Fresco Icons of Manuel Panselinos, the Protaton', in L. Mavromates (ed.), *Manuel Panselinos and his Age* (Athens 1999).

118 B. Cvetković, 'Intentional Asymmetry in Byzantine Imagery: The Cvetkovićthe Apostles in St Sophia of Ohrid and later Instances', *Byzantion*, vol. 76 (2006).

119 Karahan, 'Palaeologan Iconography'.

image. As a crucial part of hesychast philosophy, it is fitting that light plays an important part in this scene. Christ turns his hallowed head to the left, although his eyes glance to his right. His luminous robes and the radiant mandorla which surrounds him make the divine light apparent.

The *Anastasis* fresco in the context 14th- and 15th-century art

The fresco of the *Anastasis* at Chora replaced the more heroic, monumental and dramatic type which characterised Byzantine art in the late 13th century.¹²⁰ Among the most interesting paintings heralding these changes are the frescoes of St Nikita near Cucer, those of St George at Staro Nagoricane, and the paintings at the Church of the Virgin Mary, Gračanica.¹²¹

The period of this evolution of the Byzantine painting of the *Anastasis* is a matter of dispute, but it is plausible that it began to emerge some time after the middle of the 12th century. The fresco of the *Anastasis* at the Church of St George, Kurbinovo (Fig. 32), reflects this style, which is transitional, and heralds the changes that occurred in the iconography of the *Anastasis* as seen in Chora. The work is characterised by a new stylisation and use of angular lines, which affect not just the forms of the bodies but also the details of costumes. The facial muscles are severely exaggerated, and the draperies are twisted as if blown by a violent wind.¹²² This fresco, however, is perhaps best known for the imposing mandorla by which it is dominated. The glimmering white mandorla is articulated by a bold white corona, different to that of the *Anastasis* at Chora. Circular in shape, the mandorla contrasts with the turquoise-blue background of the sky. Within this mandorla, the figure of Christ floats over the gates of hell. Christ's luminous clothes, which are highlighted by streaks of ochre, combine with the lilac of Adam's robes, to reflect a unified vision of light. Adam's arm is the only other entity included within the space of the mandorla, symbolising his state of redemption.

The most interesting element in this fresco, however, is the dynamic diagonal of 45 degrees created by Christ, who strides aggressively forward. In fact, his

120 C. Grozdanov, 'On the Conceptual and Thematic Foundations of the Fresco Paintings in the Diaconicon of the Church of Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid', *Zograf*, vol. 33 (2009) fig. 24.

121 G. Millet & A. Frolow, *La Peinture du Moyen Age en Yougoslavie*, vol. 3 (Paris 1962) fig. 31–53 (St Nikita, Cucer); N.L. Okunev, 'Црква Св. Ђорђе у Старом Нагорићану', *Гласник Скопског Научног Друштво*, vol. 5 (1919) 87; B. Petkovic, *La Peinture Serbe du Moyen Age* (Belgrade 1930) fig. 67.

122 D.T. Rice, *Art of Byzantine Era* (London 1963) 194–195; Misguich, *Kurbinovo*, 130, 166, 516, fig. 55; C. Grozdanov & L. Misguich, *Kurbinovo* (Belgrade 1992) fig. 38–41, 43–44, 55.

figure forms the upright part of an inscribed cross, as well as a part of the Greek letter Rho. His outstretched arms, the bottom line of His himation, and the angle of his upper left thigh, as well as the radiating rays of light, form the Greek letter Chi. This creates the impression of a gale-force wind issuing from hell. Christ carries the cross, attached to a crown of thorns, on his shoulders.¹²³ The so-called tongues of fire appear in the *Anastasis* for the first time. There is no doubt that the turmoil of movement and linear convolutions in the *Anastasis* of Kurbinovo personify dynamism, especially in comparison to that of Chora. This *Anastasis*, however, contains elements that depart from convention, and even present what might be termed an anti-classical interpretation of the subject, which is a characteristic of the *Anastasis* at Chora. The difference between both frescoes is due to the possible Slav patronage and training of the painter at Kurbinovo.¹²⁴ This departure from convention continued in the later centuries, especially in the frescoes found in King Milutin's churches, as well as in the monuments of Thessaloniki. In the *Anastasis* at Kurbinovo, the dominant feature is the painter's contribution to the development of a new Christocentric humanism in Byzantine and Slavic art. The painting is imbued with the contrast between the doctrine of hesychasm, which emphasises synergy and the psychosomatic knowledge of God as *theosis*, and scholastic humanism, which postulates a dualism of body and soul.

The three compositions of *Anastasis* in the Church of St Nikolas Orphanos, Thessaloniki (1310–1320), the Church of Joachim and Anne, Studenica (1313–1314), and the Church of the Holy Saviour, Chora show the same stylistic trend, which lacks the intensity of expression found in the earlier monument at Kurbinovo. Even though there are certain differences between these three variations of the *Anastasis*, the similarities between them show that members of the same workshop worked in these churches. A growing interest in the use of a graphic element and a plastic modelling of figures characterises the *Anastasis* in King Milutin's Church, Studenica (Fig. 44). At Studenica, Christ briskly raises the protopsalts; his bold and statuesque figure accentuates the dynamic flow. Parts of his drapery, parts of the trailing garments of Eve, and a portion of Adam's robe have a crisp and modeled definition, and also a clear-cut, brittle quality. The tilted heads of the prophets and of John the Baptist project angularity. Two sources of tension present in the image: one is the figure of Christ crashing the gates of hell, and the other is His victory over Satan. Even though the landscape is in accordance with the architecture, the peaks of the two mountains above the lateral group of figures are not as exaggerated as they are at Chora.¹²⁵ The strict basis of the symmetrical *Anastasis* remains the

123 E.C. Dodd, *Medieval Painting in the Lebanon* (Reichert 2004) 32.

124 Rice, *Byzantine Painting: The Last Phase* (London 1968) 11.

125 Cvetković, 'Intentional Asymmetry', 76.

same, but it is emotionally enriched. Scenes are crowded;¹²⁶ the figures of the just men are grouped and their postures and gestures have a natural, lively feel. Sharp ledges and ridges are common and, with the star-shaped mandorla, they become compulsory. The cross, which was a central detail in earlier Anastasis, is not depicted and the main emphasis is on the saving and transforming role of the Saviour's light.

While the *Anastasis* at Chora contains only the indispensable protagonists, the fresco of the *Anastasis* at Sopočani (Fig. 42) has a number of additional figures, who orchestrate a Soteriological panorama of universal significance. Through the avoidance of dramatic elements, such as a sudden or unexpected action by the protagonists, the *Anastasis* at Sopočani radiates a majestic atmosphere of calmness. Even the emotions of awe and love are subtly expressed. The palette varies, and a range of colours brings out the modelling of figures.¹²⁷ The background is partially gold, and cross-hatched lines suggest mosaics, but in general, the colours in the image are naturalistic. Unity is created by the close-knit interweaving of horizontal and diagonal lines. The upward and downward movement of the figures interchanges and mountains create an ascending path of movement towards Christ. The rhythmic pattern of repetition from the lower part creates an apophatic directional path.¹²⁸ A triangular shape surrounds the angels; John the Baptist, the shrouded female figures, and Christ are surrounded by a mandorla, which gives the figurative scene a sense of universality.¹²⁹ Adam's position is peculiar, for he kneels on the ground, instead of the lid of his sarcophagus (as shown in the earlier representations of the Anastasis). A sense of reverence, warmth and personal humanity permeates the piece. The tearful, pleading face of Eve, emphasised by the abrupt angle of her outstretched arms, evokes raw emotion, in the same way as the subtle gestures of the just men who surround the Protopsalts do. This new anecdotal style became the accepted mode, at least among prestigious patrons. While this image did not mark a break with the earlier Palaeologan traditions, it showed more elaboration, expansion and toning down of the them.

It is possible that the patronage of King Milutin, who initiated a project to translate important philosophical and theological texts, resulted in their being a hesychast influence on the art of these monuments. An exceptional and important feature of this project was the rendition of powerful hesychast texts. The work of the Serbian translation school, which embraced a strict, iconographically correct rendition of texts, approached this project with enthusiasm. The selected examples in Studenica and Sopočani show that the translation of these texts was

126 Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 7.

127 C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Etudes Cappadociennes* (London 2002) 251.

128 V.J. Djurić, *Sopočani* (Belgrade 1991) 19; fig. 9.

129 M. Reste, *Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor*, vol. 1 (New York 1984) 86–87; Djurić, *Sopočani*, 141.

a part of a comprehensive scholarly and iconographical reform undertaken by Serbian authors.¹³⁰ A similar iconographic trend can be seen in Macedonian and Serbian monuments, such as the Monastery of Marko, Markova Sušica, Macedonia (Fig. 41), as well as at the Monastery of Decani, Kosovo (Fig. 45). Variations of it continued to run through most of the painting of the 14th and the first half of the 15th century. Stylistic and iconographical transformations from the heroic Anastasis of Kurbinovo to the late anecdotal Anastasis of the early 14th century are also present in the mosaics of the Church of Holy Apostles, Thessaloniki, which were created by the same workshop as that of Chora. The figures of Adam and Abel at the Church of Holy Apostles show a striking similarity to those at Chora. In addition, the general treatment of the hands, heads and beards is the same in both churches. Moreover, the palette is similar, although the colours are lighter at Chora.¹³¹ There are some discrepancies, however, in the modelling of figures in the two churches. The style of the Anastasis in the Church of the Apostles is more rigid than that at Chora, and embodies the classical renaissance spirit of the 13th century.¹³² Bodies have plasticity in representation; their draperies are bold and curved. In contrast, the style of the *Anastasis* at Chora is more mannered, and the composition has centralised broken lines.

The preserved fresco of the *Anastasis* from the Church of St Nicholas Orphanos dates from the same period as the *Anastasis* at Chora and Studenica, which would support its connection with Milutin's artistic patronage in the city. In both churches, Christ wears a mannerist flying drapery. Whereas the robes of Christ at Chora radiate light, which illuminates the fresco from within, the garments of Christ at Nicholas Orphanos are in a medium value of ochre. They contrast with the light of the cavern's ceiling and the black chasm of hell.¹³³ The optical blending of the carefully gauged linear strokes of alternate tints and shades of colour, which are highlights in blue, create a surface plasticity. At the Church of Nicholas Orphanos, whereas Christ pulls Adam in a swift motion, Eve is presented in a three-quarter view. Her face is grave, penitent and cautious as she glances at Christ, who turns his body toward her, even though he turns his face away. An unusual participant in the *Anastasis* at Nicholas Orphanos is Prophet Samuel; no narrative of the *Anastasis* mentions him and this is the only extant representation of him in the *Anastasis*.¹³⁴

130 B. Milosavljević, 'Basic Philosophical Texts in Medieval Serbia', <http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/ft.aspx?id=0350-76530839079M> (accessed on 11/01/2012).

131 A. Xyngopoulos, *The Mosaic Decoration of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki 1953) fig. 28.

132 Demus, 'Kariye Djami'.

133 Xyngopoulos, *The Wall Paintings of St Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki* (Athens 1964) 13.

134 T. Velmans, 'Les Fresques de Saint-Nicolas Orphanos à Salonique et la Decoration Monumentale au XVe Siècle', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, vol. 16 (1966).

The symmetrical Anastasis, which grew directly out of the Palaeologan tradition spread to Russia, while the asymmetrical type was still at use in Pskov (Figs 46, 47). The Rostov school, on the other hand, preferred the symmetrical model (Figs 48, 49). The asymmetrical icon of the *Anastasis* from Rostov is from the first half of the 14th century,¹³⁵ and its style differs from its later or symmetrical Anastasis in several ways. In the asymmetric model, Christ is turned to his side and has no mandorla. Christ grasps only Adam with his hand and raises him from the dead; Eve merely kneels at His side. In addition, the figure of Christ is no longer depicted as weightless or floating, as it is in the Anastasis from the 12th and 13th centuries. Rather, he is depicted as strong and sure.¹³⁶ This figurative scene of the *Anastasis* reflects the spirit of the early 14th century, showing the strong movement of Christ as well as emphasising the emotional relationships of the characters. The contours of the figures and drapery are traced with white highlights, with an appreciation of graphic delineation. Olive-yellow hues and dense blue shades replace the common delicate milky-blue colour.¹³⁷

In the later or symmetrical Anastasis, which is highlighted by a red halo, the figure of Christ stands at the centre of the composition. Outlines of the other figures are simple and schematic, their gestures sharp and expressive, and colours pure and bright. Reflecting upon the nature of the event, all figures show reverence and contemplation. Combinations of reds, blues, light yellow, and subtle of colour comparisons, for instance, a gentle milky-blue tint, enhance the prayerful, contemplative mood of all figures in the composition.

The stylistic and iconographical differences between the *Anastasis* of Rostov and that of Pskov bear witness to the interplay of two diverging trends in religious art of the 14th and 15th centuries. These variations, however, testify to the development of new iconography of the Anastasis in these areas, which were created in response to the Trinitarian and Christological heresies in Russia in the second half of the 14th century. Moreover, the adoption of the symmetrical Anastasis reflects the influence of the spiritual trend of hesychasm, which was felt strongly in these areas, in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The icon of the *Anastasis* at Tikhvin (14th century) preserves the older iconographical tradition of the Resurrection. Relating closely to the *Anastasis* at Chora, the only difference is the placement of a black cross on the vertical axis of the iconic plane. Christ breaks the symmetry of the scene by making a three-quarter turn to Adam. Adam and Eve's position on each side of Christ,

135 E.S. Smirnova, 'Иконографический Вариант Сошествия во Ад Ростов, Москва, Север', *Иконы Русского Севера. Двинская Земля, Онега, Каргополье, Поморье, Статьи Материалы* (Moscow 2005).

136 Smirnova, 'Иконы XIV-Начала XVI века', <http://rus-icons.ru/publication/detail.php?ID=256> [accessed 4/08/2011].

137 O.S. Порова, *Особенности Искусства Пскова. Из кн. Отблески Христианского Востока на Руси* (Moscow 1993) 20; Lazarev, *Живопись Пскова', История Русского Искусства*, vol. 2 (Moscow 1954) 370.

however, restores the harmony of the composition. The bright red figure of Eve on the right side mirrors the figure of Adam on the left side of Christ in both posture and gesture. The number of people depicted increases with groups of the righteous being easily identified. The images of King David and Solomon, and of Moses and John the Baptist, correlate with each other, symbolically. They stand on the bright firmament, in opposition to the black abyss of hell.¹³⁸ This icon testifies to the use by Russian artists of the first half of the 14th century of features from the earlier Byzantine representation of the Anastasis. The creator of the Tikhvin *Anastasis* seems unconcerned with the psychological subtleties of the image. Rather, he emphasises the decorative colour and brightness of the image by giving it a more impressive form.

The painter of the 16th-century *Anastasis* at Pskov (currently held at the Pskov State United Historical, Architectural and Fine Arts Museum) incorporated the same symmetrical arrangement of the kneeling figures of Adam and Eve, as did the painter of the *Anastasis* at Chora. Similarly, both models show the simultaneous pulling of Adam and Eve into Christ's mandorla, in concert, which conveys a sense of leading, guiding and protection.¹³⁹ A sense of fullness in the play of episodes, a spatial freedom, and a restless rhythm shape both compositions. In contrast to Christ's white garments in the *Anastasis* at Chora, which are reminiscent of his Transfiguration, the vermillion dress of Christ at Pskov refers to the paschal sacrifice and his redemption of humankind (Fig. 49).¹⁴⁰ Another important feature of the *Anastasis* from Pskov is the absence of haloes, which is rare in the Byzantine iconographic tradition. The presence of a halo is a sign of holiness, indicating the redemptive nature of Christ.¹⁴¹ Other features bear witness to changing Russian attitudes towards the iconography of the Anastasis. For instance, the Pskov's model introduced an ascending type of Anastasis in which Christ steps upwards from hell. Also, while turning his head to Adam, he makes an S-shaped bend.¹⁴² The postures of Adam and Eve, who arise on each side of Christ, enhance this effect. Christ reaches out his hands to the ancestor Adam on the left and to the ancestor Eve on the right and lifts them both out of the sarcophagi at the same time. The tension in the figures of Adam and Eve and the Protopsalts is evident, which is in contrast to the active, determined gestures of the Saviour. The body of Christ, extended

138 O.A. Vasileva, *Иконы Пскова* (Moscow 2006) 145–150.

139 I. Nicoletta, 'Chorós: Dancing into Sacred Space of Chora', *Byzantion*, vol. 75 (2005).

140 K. Polyvios, 'From the Resurrection to the Ascension: Christ's Post Resurrection Appearances in Byzantine Art', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2010) fig. 12, 54.

141 V. Kesich, 'Resurrection, Ascension, and the Giving of the Spirit', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 25 (1980) 253; Meyendorff, *St Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood 1974) 71.

142 Vasileva, *Иконы*, 84–180.

and expanded in the lower part of the image, creates a spatial allusion to the celestial sphere. His body gives the impression of having a convex spherical surface that is emphasised by the tonal variation in the mandorla.¹⁴³

The icon of the *Anastasis* from the Church of the Nativity of Virgin Mary, the Monastery of Ferapontov,¹⁴⁴ was painted by Dionysius, a contemporary of Andrei Rublev (Fig. 50). It shows a slight shift from the artistic tradition of Constantinople, as seen in the fresco of the *Anastasis* at Chora. The main iconographic details are the same as those at Chora, but Dionysius broke the scene into smaller parts and arranged it semantically in different zones, with added images of women as foremothers, as well as personifications of the virtues and vices. The narrative is enhanced by original elements including two bright angel figures binding Satan in the abyss of hell. On each side of the angels, the figures of the saints wear white robes and raise their hands. The bright silhouettes of the angels are luminous and triumphant against the blackness of the underworld, which brings a new festive note into the atmosphere of this celebration. The red expresses the merger of the beginning and the end of human history and represents the emotional intensity of the meeting between Christ and the Protosalt. The red also compensates for the absence of traditional attributes of the Passion of Christ, such as the image of the cross and the stigmata.¹⁴⁵ The eschatological texts of the Easter service may have inspired this use of red, which refers to the uncreated light of God as an 'eternal flame that transforms and leaves imperishable those chosen by God'.¹⁴⁶ The pictorial surface has the quality of a portal, opening the doors between the physical world and the exquisite terrestrial spheres. Likhachev's ideas about the Eastern Предвозрождения (the Second Slavic influence) described a collision of cultures that met a need inherent in the domestic culture and which led to the development of a specific Russian literature and art. This is relevant to Dionysian art, which was influenced by the work of Nil Sorsky, who promoted the practices of hesychasm and eremitism in early modern Russia and was the spiritual father of Dionysius.¹⁴⁷

143 Государственный Русский Музей, Санкт-Петербург: Живопись XIII — Начала XX Века (St Petersburg 1993) 8.

144 N.K. Goleizovskii, 'Факты, События, Люди: Живописец Дионисий и его Школы', *Вопросы Истории*, no. 3 (March 1968).

145 L.P. Plamondon, 'Divine Illumination: Light as Mystical Imagery in Transfiguration and Anastasis Scenes of Byzantine Iconography', MA thesis, Northern Illinois University (1998) 74; K.M. Barnard, 'Anastasis (The Anastasis): A Study of the Iconographical Development of the Anastasis in Monumental Mosaic and Fresco Decoration during the Macedonian, Comnenian, and Palaeologian dynasties', MA thesis, Northern Illinois University (1982) 190.

146 Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 166.

147 V.N. Lazarev, *Дионисий и его Школа* (Moscow 1955) 524–526; Alpatov, *Всеобщая История Искусств*, vol. 3 (Moscow 1955) 242–244; I.E. Danilova, 'Иконографический Состав Фресок Рождественской Церкви Ферапонтова Монастыря', *Истории Русского и Западноевропейского Скуства: Материалы и Исследования* (Moscow, 1960) 128–129.

Conclusion

While it provides an eschatological vision, the magnificent fresco of the *Anastasis* at Chora also reveals nuanced symbolism that is closely connected to the mystical tenets of Byzantine spirituality in the 14th century. Overcharged with classical reminiscences, mannerisms and oddities, the portrayal of the *Anastasis* at Chora is indeed revolutionary.

Adding diverse and unexpected features to the fully evolved Palaeologan style, the *Anastasis* at Chora shows the contrast between the humanistic and the theocentric view of God and man, which became apparent during the hesychast controversy. It also expresses the hesychast concept of *theosis*, the union of grace (by adoption) between human beings and Christ. It is as though, through the supernatural grace of God, the painter of the *Anastasis* had transcended his creatureliness, his human intellect, and had become transcendent even to his own self-knowledge. The symbolism of light within this fresco is crucial as it enhances the illusionist, immaterial feel of the image. The fresco is illuminated by the mystical light of God.



Figure 31. *The Anastasis*, c. 1060s – 1070s, fresco, right wall of the smaller apse, Karanlık Killise, Göreme (Cappadocia)

4. The Fresco of the Anastasis in the Chora Church



Figure 32. *The Anastasis*, c. 1191, fresco, western wall of the nave, Church of St George, Kurbinovo (Macedonia)



Figure 33. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, northern wall of the nave, Church of the Protaton, Karyes (Greece)



Figure 34. *The Anastasis*, first half of the 11th century, mosaic, narthex, Church of Hosios Loukas, Phocis (Greece)



Figure 35. *The Anastasis*, mid-11th century, mosaic, naos, north apse, Church of Nea Moni, Chios (Greece)



Figure 36. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, vaulted ceiling, Church of Archangel Michael, Rock-hewn churches of Ivanovo, Rusenski Lom (Bulgaria)



Figure 37. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, vaulted ceiling of the nave, Church of the Virgin Mary, Rock-hewn churches of Ivanovo, Rusenski Lom (Bulgaria)



Figure 38. *The Anastasis*, c. 1259, fresco, sanctuary niche, Boyana Church of St Nicholas and St Panteleimon, Sofia (Bulgaria)



Figure 39. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, south wall, Church of the Virgin Hodegetria, Peć (Serbia)



Figure 40. *The Anastasis*, 17th century, fresco, west wall, Church of Theodore Tyro and Theodore Stratelates, Dobarsko, Razlosko (Bulgaria)



Figure 41. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, north wall of the naos, Monastery of Marko, Markova Sušica, Skopje (Macedonia)



Figure 42. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, north wall of the nave, Monastery of Sopočani, Raška (Serbia)



Figure 43. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, painter Georgios Kalliergis, Church of the Resurrection of Christ, Veroia (Greece)



Figure 44. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, west wall of the nave, King Milutin's Church, Monastery of Studenica, Studenica, (Serbia)



Figure 45. *The Anastasis*, 14th century, fresco, east wall of the narthex, Monastery of Dečani, Dečani, (Kosovo)



Figure 46. *The Anastasis*, c. 1130–1140, fresco, north vault of the narthex, Cathedral of the Transfiguration, Mirozhsky Monastery, Pskov (Russia)



Figure 47. *The Anastasis*, late-15th century, tempera on wood, 91 x 63 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (Russia), inv. no. 14316



Figure 48. *The Anastasis*, 15th–16th century, tempera on wood, 20 x 99 cm, Pskov State United Historical, Architectural and Fine Arts Museum-Reserve, Pskov (Russia), inv. no. 2731



Figure 49. *The Anastasis*, first half of the 16th century, tempera on wood, 76 x 55 cm, Pskov State United Historical, Architectural and Fine Arts Museum-Reserve, Pskov (Russia), inv. no. 1616

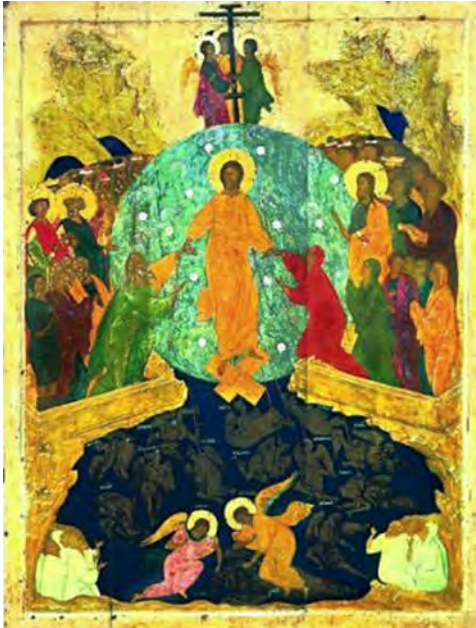


Figure 50. *The Anastasis*, c. 1502 , tempera on wood, 137.5 x 99.5 cm, painter Dionysius, Russian Museum, St Petersburg (Russia), inv. no. ДРЖ-3094

This text taken from *Hesychasm and Art: The Appearance of New Iconographic Trends in Byzantine and Slavic Lands in the 14th and 15th Centuries*,
by Dr Anita Strezova, published 2014 by ANU Press,
The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.