

# The Rebuilding and Redecoration of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople: A Reconsideration

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ANY MATERIAL REMAINS of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople are now inaccessibly buried under the eighteenth-century Fetih Mosque.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that this great church no longer exists, it continues to concern art and architectural historians for a number of good reasons. After Saint Sophia, the Holy Apostles was the most important church in the capital of the Byzantine Empire, not only because of its size and dedication, but also because of its function as the burial place of the emperors from the fourth to the eleventh century. Furthermore, along with monuments like the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Holy Apostles was one of the most influential buildings of the Middle Ages, providing the model for numerous foundations with Apostolic dedications. Finally, associated with the Holy Apostles is a relatively rich cache of literary sources, including several mediaeval *ekphrases* or descriptions. These texts have not merely aroused academic interest; because of their impressionistic form they have also stimulated scholarly imagination. It is not the object of this note to review the various reconstructions of the Holy Apostles that have been put forward. Rather it is simply a reconsideration of the post-ninth-century phases of rebuilding and of redecoration that have been postulated by Professor Richard Krautheimer and Professor Ernst Kitzinger respectively.<sup>2</sup> These hypotheses deserve close attention as they have considerably influenced the contemporary historiography of Byzantine art.

<sup>1</sup> The Church of the Holy Apostles was razed in 1461 by Mehmed the Conqueror for the construction of the Fetih Mosque. Subsequently this mosque was replaced by Selim III between 1767–71.

<sup>2</sup> R. KRAUTHEIMER, "A Note on Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople," *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant II (Studi e testi 232 [1964])* 265–70; reprinted in *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art* (London/New York 1969) 197–201 (hereafter 'Krautheimer'). E. Kitzinger, "Byzantine and Medieval Mosaics after Justinian," *Encyclopedia of World Art* 10 (1965) 344.

## I

The principal texts associated with the Holy Apostles provide the necessary context for the appraisal of these hypotheses.

Procopius describes in some detail Justinian's sixth-century replacement of the fourth-century church of the same dedication:<sup>3</sup>

That portion of the roof which is above the sanctuary, . . . is built, in the center at least, on a plan resembling that of the Church of Sophia, except that it is inferior to it in size. The arches, four in number, rise aloft and are bound together in the same manner and the circular drum which stands upon them is pierced by the windows, and the dome which arches above this seems to float in the air and not to rest upon solid masonry, though actually it is well supported. Thus, then, was the central portion of the roof constructed. And the arms of the building, which are four, . . . were roofed on the same plan as the central portion, but this one feature is lacking: underneath the domes the masonry is not pierced by windows.

From this description it is clear that the Holy Apostles, dedicated in June 550, was cruciform—the five bays of its arms and crossing covered by cupolas, with the central one raised on a drum with windows.<sup>4</sup>

The Church of the Holy Apostles seems to have received its first figural decoration only during the reign of Justin II (565–578). This is noted by Theophanes in his *Chronographia* (A.M. 6058/A.D. 565):<sup>5</sup>

Being pious, he [Justin II] adorned the churches built by Justinian, not only the Great Church [Saint Sophia] but also the Holy Apostles as well as other churches and monasteries, offering to these great treasures and every sort of income. He was perfectly Orthodox.

<sup>3</sup> *Aed.* 1.4.9–24, at 14–16 (transl. Dewing and Downey, LCL). For a discussion of the earlier Apostles Church see R. Krautheimer, "Zu Konstantins Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel," *Mullus, Festschrift Theodor Klauser* (*JbAC* Suppl. 1 [1964]) 224–29; reprinted as "On Constantine's Church of the Holy Apostles," *Studies* (*supra* n.2) 27–34. The sources are collected in R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* I.3 (Paris 1953) 46–55.

<sup>4</sup> The foundation stone for the Justinianic building was supposedly laid by the empress Theodora: Zonaras 14.7BC, also Pseudo-Codinus *De S.Sophia* 147 (Migne, *PG* 157.632–33). For the date see Janin (*supra* n.3) 48.

<sup>5</sup> εὐσεβῆς δὲ ὦν ἐπεκόσμησε τὰς ἐκκλησίας τὰς κτισθείσας ὑπὸ Ἰουστινιανοῦ, τὴν τε μεγάλην ἐκκλησίαν καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀποστόλους καὶ ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας καὶ μοναστήρια, χαρισάμενος αὐτοῖς κειμήλια καὶ πᾶσαν πρόσδοον. ἦν δὲ ὀρθόδοξος πάνυ (241–42 de Boor).

The images seem to have been formulated in opposition to the heretical teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches, stressing the divine and human nature of Christ evidently through a relatively elaborate visual narration of His life.<sup>6</sup> The nature of the damage done to the figural images in the Holy Apostles during Iconoclasm (730–843) is unclear. Certainly after the restoration of Orthodoxy, the church was in need of repairs. According to the *Vita Basilii*, Basil I (867–886) strengthened the church with “buttresses and the reconstruction of broken parts, and having scraped off the signs of old age and removed the wrinkles, he made it once more beautiful and new.”<sup>7</sup>

Between 931 and 944 Constantine of Rhodes wrote a description of the Church of the Holy Apostles as the centerpiece of a poem of 981 twelve-syllable lines dealing with the seven wonders of Constantinople.<sup>8</sup> This poem has a quantifying sensibility—enumerating not only the great imperial columns of the city, but also the varieties of marble used to ornament the church. From this work it is nevertheless clear that the architectural form of the building had not changed significantly since its sixth-century construction. Notably the central dome still was more elevated than the subsidiary cupolas of the cross arms (lines 626–30). This work also alludes to the elaborate figural decoration of the church. Christ is represented in the central dome. The Virgin and Apostles—the moon and stars to the central sun—are also depicted, though their location is not specified. Several Gospel scenes are also listed in an orderly fashion: the Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple, Baptism, Transfiguration, Raising of the Widow’s Son at Nain, Entry into Jerusalem, Betrayal by Judas, and Crucifixion (751–980). That this list is much abbreviated is indicated by the absence of some of the most important images of the Feast cycle, especially those from the post-Passion sequence, and by the inclusion of the rather uncommon image from the Ministry sequence. The descriptions of the images, too, are relatively brief. For instance, the passage describing the Raising of Lazarus (834–43) reads in its entirety:

And again, Lazarus, who had been laid in his grave and had rotted four days long, decaying, his body wholly changed, fully infested by wounds and worms, bound hand and foot in grave clothes and

<sup>6</sup> For bibliography see V. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina* (Turin 1967) 66.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, *Vita Basilii* 5.80 (323 Bonn). For translation, C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs 1972) 192.

<sup>8</sup> Ed. E. Legrand, “Description des oeuvres d’art et de l’église des saints apôtres de Constantinople,” *REG* 9 (1895) 32–65; a few emendations are suggested by G. J. M. Bartelink in *Byzantion* 46 (1976) 425–26.

laid out, commanded by the life-bringing word of Christ, leaping from the tomb like a gazelle and thus returning once more to mortal life having escaped corruption.<sup>9</sup>

A comparison either with a visual rendering of the same scene from Kılıçlar Kilise (*ca* 900) or with the Gospel narrative itself (John 11.1–45, which was read on the Saturday of Holy Week) underlines Constantine’s simplification of the drama (PLATE 1).<sup>10</sup> The poet focuses almost exclusively on Lazarus; Christ is a completely uninvestigated presence. The sisters of Lazarus, representatives of the Apostles, and the witnesses are all absent. Even in the compressed fresco cycle of the small rock-cut Cappadocian church, the two major protagonists are accompanied by an Apostle, two pleading women, and witnesses reacting to the stench of the newly opened tomb.

Constantine’s impersonal formality contrasts greatly with the later and more famous prose description of the Holy Apostles by Nikolaos Mesarites.<sup>11</sup> This *ekphrasis*, written between 1198 and 1203, is subjective and personal in terms of both the author’s actual perspective and his response to the work. Nikolaos does not dryly outline the architectural attributes of the building; rather he describes his own wanderings about the structure, savoring the pleasures of the church’s bucolic setting. “One can see saffron growing on the land about this

<sup>9</sup> τὸν Λάζαρον δὲ τετραήμερον πάλιν  
τάφῳ κατατεθέντα καὶ σεσηπότα,  
μυδῶντα, νεκρὸν πάμπαν ἠλλοιωμένον,  
οὐλαῖς τὲ καὶ σκώληξι συμπεφυρμένον,  
ταῖς κειρίαις τὲ τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χέρας  
ἔσφιγμένον τὲ καὶ κατεσπειρωμένον,  
Χριστοῦ κελεύσει καὶ λόγῳ ζωηφόρῳ  
ἐκ τοῦ τάφου πηδῶντα δορκάδος δίκην,  
καὶ πρὸς τὸν ᾧδε τοῦμπαλιν βροτῶν βίον  
παλιδρομοῦντα, τὴν φθορὰν πεφευγότα.

<sup>10</sup> G. de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin, les églises rupestres de Cappadoce* I (Paris 1925) 199–242. J. Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église* II (Rome 1963) 62–65.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. and transl. G. Downey, “Nikolaos Mesarites, Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople,” *TAPS* n.s. 47.6 (1957) 857–924. For an earlier German translation, A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche* II (Leipzig 1908) 10–96. The highly individualistic quality of this *ekphrasis* even led Nikolaos to impose an artistic personality on the mosaic cycle by interpreting the typological figure of David standing by the empty tomb of the Anastasis as Eulalios, the arrogant artist of the program. O. Demus, “‘The Sleepless Watcher’, Ein Erklärungsversuch,” *JOB* 28 (1979) 241–45, convincingly rejects the earlier acceptance of this image as one of the first recorded self-portraits of an artist in Byzantium; see, for instance, N. A. Bees, “Kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Eulaliosfrage und den Mosaikschmuck der Apostelkirche,” *RepKunstW* 39 (1916) 97–117, 231–51; 40 (1917) 59–77. Also see Mango (*supra* n.7) 229–33.

Church, balsam and lilies, fresh clover and hyacinth, the rose and the oleander and everything of sweet aroma" (3.4). The author seems to get even greater pleasure from watching the pupils at their varied lessons in the schools located in the porticoes surrounding the Holy Apostles: "and there is a twittering of children around about the Church as though they were some kind of musical birds, and the Church within echoes with them, not with a distorted echo, as in the mountains, but a kind of melodious sweet echo, as though one hears angels sing" (11.3).

The highly personal quality of Nikolaos' writing also characterizes his description of the interior of the church and the mosaic decoration of the building. After invoking the aid of each of the Apostles, Nikolaos depicts the form of the church as seen from the inside. Then he begins with the central dome, which was decorated with the Pantocrator, an image familiar to us from surviving works of the eleventh and twelfth centuries like the famous examples of Daphne and Lagoudera (PLATE 2).<sup>12</sup> Nikolaos describes this figure in highly Correggesque terms, "leaning and gazing out as though from the rim of heaven" (14.1). He dwells on the Divine Judge, clearly evoking the psychological ambiguities of this image: "His eyes . . . are gentle and friendly and instill the joy of contrition in the souls of the pure in heart . . . . To those, however, who are condemned by their own judgement, [the eyes of God] are scornful and hostile and boding of ill, for the face of the Lord is of this fashion for evil-doers" (14.3-5). This identification with the visual image, or rather the active participation in the representation, is even more apparent in Nikolaos' rendering of the narrative scenes from Christ's life. As an example, the passage on the Raising of Lazarus is quoted in part (26.2-8):

Look at Martha and Mary, the sisters of the buried man, how on bent knees they are bowed over the feet of Jesus, washing them with the tears of their grief for their brother, and how they move their Teacher to weep with them for the beloved Lazarus, and bring Him who is the source of all succor to common emotion with them. The more vehement of the sisters holds her head high, and by the expression of her face alone, one might say, seeks to beseech the Lord, presenting her request to the Savior chiefly by means of her eyes and by the expression of suffering and grief on her whole face. But the Savior is depicted with a somewhat melan-

<sup>12</sup> Ninth-century Pantocrator images in Constantinople at the churches of the Virgin of Pharos and of Zaoutzes seem to be alluded to in the written sources: see Janin (*supra* n.3) 241, 139. For a critical perspective, R. J. H. Jenkins and C. Mango, "The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photius," *DOP* 9/10 (1955/6) 132-33.

choly expression on His face, and His whole posture has assumed a very kingly and commanding aspect. The right hand rebukes both what is seen, namely the tomb which holds the body of Lazarus, and what is perceived by the mind, namely Hades, which four days before had made haste to swallow his soul. His mouth, however, which spoke little, to use the word of Isaiah, so that his voice was not heard in the streets, but which on the contrary had power for great things, according to another writer—for it is written, “He spake, and it was done”—called forth with most divine voice to him who was no longer able to hear, only these words, “Lazarus, come forth.” And Hades, trembling, as quickly as it could loosed the soul, which it had so eagerly swallowed, and Lazarus’ soul once more enters its body, and the corpse rises from the tomb as from a bed and comes to Him who called him, bound in grave clothes like some slave who against his master’s wish has run off into the country, and with his whole body shackled with handcuffs and chains on the feet is unwillingly brought back and restored to his owner. His entire body is bloated, wholly unapproachable because of the decay which has set in upon the wasted and putrefying body. The stone at the tomb, which covered Lazarus, has just been rolled away, and the tomb, from which he has just now risen, is dark. The disciples cannot support the stench which is given forth by the tomb and by Lazarus, and hold their noses. They wish in curiosity to gaze upon him who is risen, but they roll their eyes backward because of the heavy stench which comes from him; they wish to praise with their lips and their tongues Him who raised him up, but they must cover their mouths with their mantles; they desire to be far from the place, but the strangeness of the miracle holds them and will not let them go. The Apostles are filled with amazement and full of astonishment, perceiving how with a word alone He has just now raised from the tomb a man who has already decayed. What manner of man can He be, they think to themselves, who has wrought such wonders; “Really this is in truth,” they say, “He who once breathed the soul into Adam, and gave breath to the father of all, even though as a man, He wipes away the tears of his eyelids. How indeed should death and Hades obey Him, unless, in the words of the prophet, all things did not serve and obey Him?”

Similar lengthy descriptions are included of other scenes from the Life of Christ. All are imbued with a comparable emotional intensity and narrative vigor. The author conveys a sense of personal involvement as an actual witness.

The intrinsic importance of the viewer-participant in this *ekphrasis* is reflected even in the enumeration of the scenes. These are not listed chronologically, from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion as in Con-

stantine of Rhodes' poem, but rather, it seems, as the author witnessed them, moving slowly through the church: Communion of the Apostles, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Pentecost, Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Christ Walking on the Water, Raising of Lazarus, Betrayal by Judas, Women at the Tomb, Christ Appearing to the Holy Women, Priests with Pilate and his Soldiers, Disciples Going to Galilee, Thomas' Meeting with the Apostles, Doubting Thomas, Christ Appearing on the Sea of Tiberias, Draught of Fishes. Evidently even the order of the description reflects the author's preferences. Finally, it should be noted here that Nikolaos' unusually detailed account of individual scenes confirms, on iconographic grounds, that at least some of the images date from the post-Iconoclastic period.<sup>13</sup> The whole of the program cannot, then, be ascribed to the reign of Justin II. The question remains, do the mosaic images described by Nikolaos date from Basil I's restoration or from a later period?

## II

This brief review of a few primary sources is essential for an analysis of Kitzinger's proposed twelfth-century redecoration of the Holy Apostles, as his hypothesis depends on literary texts. Before considering Kitzinger's contribution, however, it is necessary first to discuss Krautheimer's postulated reconstruction of the church. For if the Holy Apostles was rebuilt in the second half of the tenth century, as he suggests, Kitzinger's hypothesis would have a substantive basis.

Krautheimer proposes that the Church of the Holy Apostles underwent a major structural change between *ca* 940 and *ca* 989, involving the reconstruction of the vaulting system. Specifically, he suggests that "... Justinian's low domes were replaced by domes mounted on high, well-lit drums" (200). He bases this hypothesis on three varieties of evidence. First, the appearance of architectural 'portraits' in illuminated manuscripts. Krautheimer states (198-99) that five miniatures (three from the Menologion of Basil II, which was traditionally dated between 979 and 989 but which now may be ascribed to 1004<sup>14</sup> [*Vat.gr.* 1613 fols. 341, 353, 121], and two from the twelfth-century manu-

<sup>13</sup> H. Maguire, "Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art," *DOP* 28 (1974) 121-27. I believe that the author pushes his evidence too far in tentatively suggesting that the iconography supports a twelfth-century phase of decoration.

<sup>14</sup> See A. Cutler, "The Psalter of Basil II," *Arte Veneta* 30 (1976) 9-19, 31 (1977) 9-15; also I. Ševčenko, "On Pantoleon the Painter," *JOB* 21 (1972) 241-49.

scripts of the sermons of the monk James Kokkinobaphos [*Vat.gr.* 1162 fol. 2, *Paris.gr.* 1208 fol. 2v] show “unmistakably” the church of the Holy Apostles with five domes raised on drums pierced by windows (PLATES 3–4A). The Menologion of Basil, in fact, provides Krautheimer with his *terminus ante quem* of 989 (now 1004) for the reconstruction of the Holy Apostles’ superstructure. Objections might be raised to his conclusions. While this writer is quite prepared to believe that the illuminators of the Menologion studied the contemporary structure of the Holy Apostles itself, rather than simply copying a conventional image from an earlier manuscript model, some scholars might find such an assumption problematic. More important, the visual evidence is not clear. In all three illuminations from the Menologion, one or more of the drums are *not* fenestrated. In any case, as Krautheimer himself writes (198), “. . . depictions of buildings, beginning with Late Antiquity and continuing for a thousand years East and West, must not be interpreted literally.” This evidence, on its own, is insufficient to support Krautheimer’s case.

Second, Krautheimer’s argument depends on his analysis of affiliated churches. Justinian’s Church of the Holy Apostles, like its Constantinian predecessor, was very prestigious. Consequently, it served as a model for lesser monuments which were meant by their patrons to participate in its sanctity. Its unusual form allows its copies to be relatively easily identified; most famous are St John of Ephesus and San Marco in Venice. The Church of St John is known only from Procopius’ comparison of the building with its prototype and from the surviving foundations; the treatment of its superstructure cannot be reconstructed.<sup>15</sup> San Marco, in contrast, is fully preserved.<sup>16</sup> Built in the second half of the eleventh century, all five of the domes of this church are raised on lighted drums. Krautheimer suggests that, as “the one architectural filiation of the Apostle Church dating from Middle Byzantine times,” the raised domes of San Marco mirror the superstructure of the Constantinopolitan building as it was remodeled (199).

There are weaknesses in this line of argument. As Krautheimer himself has so clearly articulated, mediaeval filiations rarely reproduce their prototypes with any degree of exactness.<sup>17</sup> The analogy is often quite an abstract one, related to geometry or numbers rather than the miming of details. Furthermore, there are a number of other Middle

<sup>15</sup> *Die Johanneskirche, Forsch. Ephesos* IV.3 (Vienna 1951).

<sup>16</sup> O. Demus, *The Church of San Marco in Venice* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 6 [1960]), esp. 63–105.

<sup>17</sup> Krautheimer, “Introduction to an ‘Iconography of Medieval Architecture’,” *JWarb* 5 (1942) 1–38, reprinted in *Studies* (*supra* n.2) 115–50.



Byzantine monuments which might well be modeled on the Holy Apostles.<sup>18</sup> One important example is the cruciform Cathedral of San Sabino of Canosa in the Byzantine province of Apulia, which can be dated with some assurance to the second quarter of the eleventh century (that is, before San Marco, but after Krautheimer's suggested date of reconstruction). Not one of the five domes of this church has a drum with windows (PLATES 5–6).<sup>19</sup> It might then be argued that San Sabino adopted throughout the vaulting solution of one of the cross-arm bays of the Holy Apostles, while San Marco utilized for all its domes the more grandiose scheme of the central bay of the Constantinopolitan prototype. In other words, it seems that the superstructure of both San Marco in Venice and San Sabino in Canosa were variations on the same theme: the sixth-century church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Neither building can be assumed to be the 'true' copy of the Byzantine prototype. Again, the evidence of affiliated churches does not support conclusively a major phase of rebuilding.

Third, Krautheimer cites the literary descriptions of the church to support his thesis. Procopius in the sixth century and Constantine of Rhodes in the tenth both remark on the fact that the central dome is raised above the others and uniquely lit by windows in the drum. Constantine's poem, in fact, supplies Krautheimer's *terminus post quem* of ca 940 for his proposed rebuilding of the church. Nikolaos Mesarites, in contrast, does not, according to Krautheimer, mention the central dome as distinctively elevated and fenestrated. While it is true that Nikolaos never comments specifically on the unique form of the crossing, there seem to be allusions to it in his text. In describing the image of the Pantocrator in the central dome (above the windows?), he writes, "... this hall (*στοά*) ... can really be called the dome of Heaven, since the Sun of Justice shines in it, *the light which is above light*, the Lord of Light, Christ ..." (15.1). Such a play on real and divine light would certainly be in keeping with Nikolaos' wit.

<sup>18</sup> The small five-domed church of St Andrew constructed by St Euthymius the Younger and a few of his disciples at Peristerai outside Thessaloniki certainly has the correct form and dedication; see A. K. Orlandos in *ByzMnem* 7 (1951) 146–67; L. Petit, "Vie et office de S. Euthyme le Jeune," *RevOChr* 8 (1903) 192–95. Although only the central dome of the Peristerai church originally had windows, the church dates to 870/1, and thus before Krautheimer's proposed period of the reconstruction of the Holy Apostles. The same can be said of the Church of Saint Lazarus in Larnaca, which dates probably to around 900; cf. A. H. S. Megaw, "Byzantine Architecture and Decoration in Cyprus: Metropolitan or Provincial?" *DOP* 28 (1974) 78–79.

<sup>19</sup> A. W. Epstein, "The Date and Significance of the Cathedral of Canosa in Apulia, South Italy," *DOP* 37 (1983).

Furthermore, in another passage he indicates that still in the twelfth century the central dome is indeed higher than the subsidiary cupolas: “The *στοαί* [here the five bays] . . . are not all stretched out at length, or unfolded side by side, but four of them have their foundations in the form of a cross . . . while the other in the center *stands up above them*, and the direction of this one faces toward heaven . . . ” (13.5). Again, an argument *ex silentio* may be particularly weak, as Nikolaos may not be so silent as he at first appears.

Manuscript illumination, affiliated Apostles churches, and *ekphrases* do not, then, provide enough evidence to warrant the postulation of extensive reconstruction of the Holy Apostles in the second half of the tenth century. Is there any more reason to suggest a post-ninth-century phase of redecoration? This hypothesis has been put forward by Kitzinger:<sup>20</sup>

The classical system [of the Byzantine program] thus was definitely established by about 900, and it underwent no essential change thereafter, except that from the middle of the 12th century there appears to have taken place an increasing elaboration of the narrative element. Perhaps the Church of the Holy Apostles was redecorated during this period (Nikolaos Mesarites, about the year 1200, saw in this church and described a cycle of Christological scenes vastly richer than that described by Constantine of Rhodes in the 10th century), and a tendency towards detailed narration is apparent in the decoration of Monreale (ca. 1180–1190).

This tentative suggestion by Kitzinger has been elaborated by Beckwith.<sup>21</sup> The broader ramifications of this hypothesis, as well as its wide acceptance in the literature on Byzantine art, call for its closer analysis.

The reason given for suggesting an otherwise undocumented phase of redecoration is the relative elaboration of Nikolaos’ text in contrast to Constantine’s. But while nineteen scenes are mentioned in the *ekphrasis* by Nikolaos, as opposed to only eleven in the poem by Constantine, the Christological narrative is no more complete. Feast images, such as the Presentation in the Temple and the Ascension, are conspicuously absent from Nikolaos’ work. His depiction of the

<sup>20</sup> *Supra* n.2; the addition of Salonika in line 7 of the original text is an obvious misprint. See also N. Malickij, “Remarques sur la date des mosaïques de l’église des Saintes-Apôtres à Constantinople décrites par Mesaritès,” *Byzantion* 3 (1926) 128–29; and A. Salač, “Quelques épigrammes de l’Anthologie Palatine et l’iconographie byzantine,” *Byzantinoslavica* 12 (1951) 1ff.

<sup>21</sup> J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Harmondsworth 1970) 102–03. It should be noted that Kitzinger’s hypothesis was in circulation by 1964 (cited by Krautheimer at 201 n.21).

Church of the Holy Apostles and its mosaic program may be more satisfying than that of Constantine, but the difference is one of depth and passion rather than completeness. Nikolaos' work is personal and interpretive; Constantine's is an abbreviated catalogue. Neither piece was meant to be an archaeologically complete documentation of the monument.

It might be argued that while the enumeration of the scenes in itself need not be regarded as evidence for the redecoration of the Holy Apostles, the emotive qualities of the images described by Nikolaos evoke the expressive style of the late twelfth century—the style of Nerezi and of KurbinoVO (PLATE 7A)—rather than the formal abstract style of the sixth or late ninth century—the style of Saint Sophia in Thessaloniki (PLATE 7B).<sup>22</sup> However, the dryness of Constantine's treatment and the richness of Nikolaos' rendering can be more cogently explained by reference to the literary currents of their respective periods, than by a stylistic change in the mosaics. In the tenth century writing was characteristically objective and impersonal. Laws were codified, ancient texts collected, and rituals catalogued; history was analytic. As Každan has pointed out, beginning with Psellos and culminating in the works of Nikolaos Mesarites, a distinctively personal manner becomes prominent in Byzantine literature.<sup>23</sup> There is not only a change in genre—history, for instance, is the history experienced by the author rather than a list of events from Creation to the present—but also a change in style—the emotional content is increased. In light of these literary developments, it seems more likely that the sensibilities of the two authors are different, than that the mosaics were entirely reset. Thus, a redecoration of the Church of the Holy Apostles in the late twelfth century cannot be assumed on the basis of contemporary literary sources.

Apparently, like Krautheimer's proposal of a tenth-century reconstruction of the church, Kitzinger's suggestion of a late-twelfth-century redecoration is unnecessary in view of the evidence from the primary sources. Until new documentation is uncovered, it may be assumed that, like its aesthetic rival the Great Church of Saint Sophia, the Holy Apostles retained its sixth-century architectural form as well as the figural decoration that it had in the ninth century.

<sup>22</sup> For the development of style in the late Comnenian period, see O. Demus, "Die Entstehung des Paläologenstils in der Malerei," *Berichte zum XI internat. Byzantinisten-Kongress, 1958* (Munich 1958) 8ff; R. Cormack, *Ninth Century Monumental Painting and Mosaic in Thessaloniki* (Diss. London 1968) 124ff.

<sup>23</sup> A. P. Každan and A. W. Epstein, *Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, esp. ch. 5, "Man in Art and Literature," in preparation.

## III

The conclusion that the figural cycle of the Holy Apostles as described by Nikolaos Mesarites is essentially that which was already in place in the late ninth century has a significant impact on our perception of the development of Middle Byzantine church decoration. It is widely believed that there was a linear progression in the Byzantine program. Supposedly it emerged after Iconoclasm in a simple form, with a decoration made up exclusively of isolated iconic figures. The Church of the Virgin of Pharos is invariably cited as one of the monuments initiating this sequence, although its non-narrative program is deduced only from the description of the building provided by the Patriarch Photius in his Tenth Homily.<sup>24</sup> Slowly and organically the program became more complex, until it was contaminated by narrative details, especially from the middle of the twelfth century onwards. According to this scheme, the eleventh century represents a 'classic' phase in which the dogmatic/iconic and didactic/narrative aspects of the Feast Cycle are perfectly balanced.<sup>25</sup>

The elaborate narrative program of the Apostles Church, with its many scenes from the Ministry cycle as well as from the Childhood and Passion sequences, belies this simple scheme. Provincial evidence similarly indicates that elaborate narrative programs were common in the period immediately after Iconoclasm. Churches of the late ninth/early tenth century such as San Pietro in Otranto in South Italy and Kılıçlar Kilise in Cappadocia had extremely dense narrative cycles (PLATE 4B).<sup>26</sup> In their cross-in-square plans, as in the style and iconography of their painted decoration, these churches seem very current. It is difficult, then, to see the programs of these monuments as provincial archaisms as has often been assumed. It is tempting rather to postulate that the elaborate narrative cycles that may be reconstructed in the Holy Apostles or the so-called Archaic chapels in Cappadocia all reflect a continuation of the narrative sequences of the pre-Iconoclastic period.<sup>27</sup> These schemes are known not only from the

<sup>24</sup> See Jenkins and Mango (*supra* n.12) 123–40; for the text, C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 3 [1958]) 187–88.

<sup>25</sup> O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration, Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London 1948), esp. 3–37, "The Classical System of Middle Byzantine Church Decoration."

<sup>26</sup> Jerphanion (*supra* n.10); A. Guillou, "Italie méridionale byzantine ou byzantins en Italie méridionale?" *Byzantion* 44 (1974) 181–84.

<sup>27</sup> For an earlier but little-heeded rejection of the concept of 'archaic' especially for the Cappadocian churches of the late ninth and early tenth century, see R. Cormack,

few surviving late antique monumental examples, such as San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, but also from a number of literary sources. One of the most relevant of these is the *Life of St Pancratius*, composed probably in the seventh century, published in excerpts by Mango. The following passage describes the accoutrements necessary to the founding of a new church in the Pontus:<sup>28</sup>

... two Gospel books, two books of Acts composed by the divine apostle Paul, two sets of silver paten-and-chalice, two crosses made of cedar boards, and two volumes of the divine picture-stories containing the decoration of the church, *i.e.*, the pictorial story of the Old and New Testaments, which volumes were made at the command of the holy apostles . . . And again he [St Peter] said to them, "I want you, when you build churches, to decorate them as follows." And taking the pictures that had been painted by Joseph, he opened them, and said as he pointed to them, "First, put the Annunciation, then the Nativity, then how He was baptized by the Forerunner, the Disciples, the Healings, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion, the Burial, the Resurrection out of Hades, and the Ascension. Portray all these in the church so that the crowds of visitors may see the subject of the portraits and, being reminded of the Lord's incarnation, should be inspired and so assume a more ardent faith."

Such narrative sequences—Paulinus' gospel for the illiterate<sup>29</sup>—were perfectly suited to the decoration of the basilica, with its long expanses of architecturally unarticulated wall. This kind of strip-cartoon sequence, in fact, continues to be used in Byzantine basilicas. Long narrative cycles of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries are found in the Old Metropolis in Verria and of 1061/2 in Karabaş Kilise in Soğanlı Dere.<sup>30</sup> Similar sequences also occur in byzantinizing basilicas such as Sant'Angelo in Formis, the Cappella Palatina, and Monreale.<sup>31</sup>

With the increasing popularity of small, centralized churches, particularly the cross-in-square type, there developed an alternative, non-narrative idea of programming, with monumental icons complement-

"Byzantine Cappadocia: The Archaic Group of Wall-Paintings," *JBAA SER.* III 30 (1967) 19–36.

<sup>28</sup> Mango (*supra* n.7) 137–38.

<sup>29</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 27.511–95; transl. C. Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art, 300–1150* (Englewood Cliffs 1971) 18–19.

<sup>30</sup> The Verria frescoes have not yet been fully published. For Karabaş Kilise see Jerphanion (*supra* n.10) II 333–60.

<sup>31</sup> J. Wettstein, *Sant'Angelo in Formis et la peinture médiévale en Campanie* (Geneva 1960); O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (New York 1950).

ing the irregular vaulting surfaces of the relatively small, domed church. Inherited artistic and architectural elements were synthesized in the creation of a homogeneous, coherent cosmos: Christ in the central dome; Virgin and Child in the second most important space, the conch of the apse; the icons of the liturgical feasts in the vaulting zone; the holy men and martyrs offering a transition from the earthly sphere below to the divine hierarchy above. The conceptual integrity of this formal structure was complemented by its flexibility in detail. The same basic arrangement is found in endless variations—variations affected by local cults and dedications, size, and sumptuousness. The balance of clear structure with great flexibility assured a long existence for the programmatic scheme that had developed by at least the early eleventh century. It is in fact found throughout the twelfth century, as exemplified by such widely dispersed monuments as the monastery church of the Martorana in Palermo and the church of Saint Panteleimon at Nerezi. But it is not the purpose of this note to explore the evolution of the Middle Byzantine feast cycle. Instead this reconsideration of the postulated phases of rebuilding and redecoration of the Church of the Holy Apostles suggests not only that the history of one monument is rather simpler than previously thought, but also that the development of the Byzantine program is perhaps more complex than sometimes assumed.<sup>32</sup>

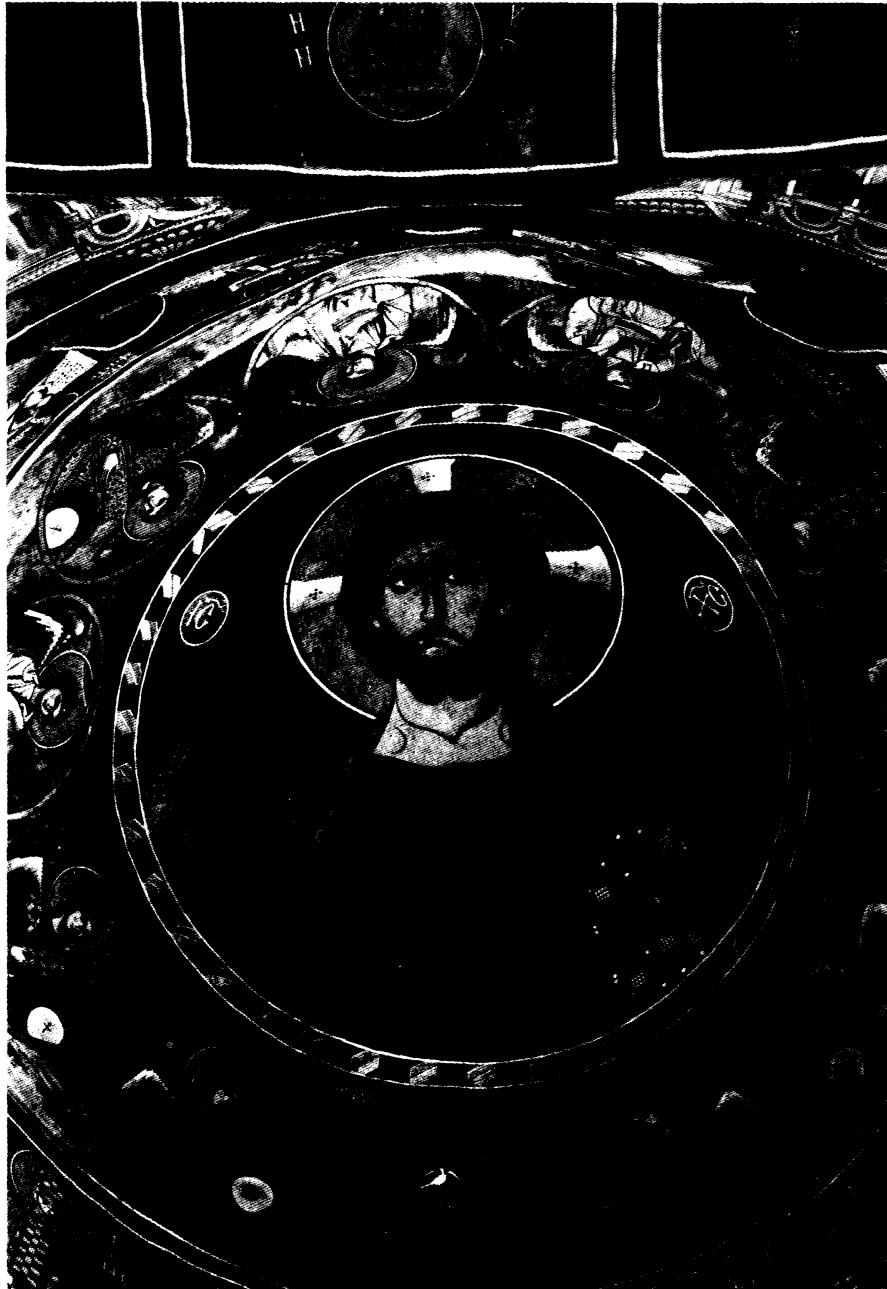
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RAISING OF LAZARUS, KILIÇLAR KILISE  
Göreme Valley, Cappadocia, late ninth/early tenth century  
Photograph by author



PANTOCRATOR, CENTRAL DOME,  
PANAGIA TOU ARAKOU  
Lagoudera, A.D. 1192. Photograph by author

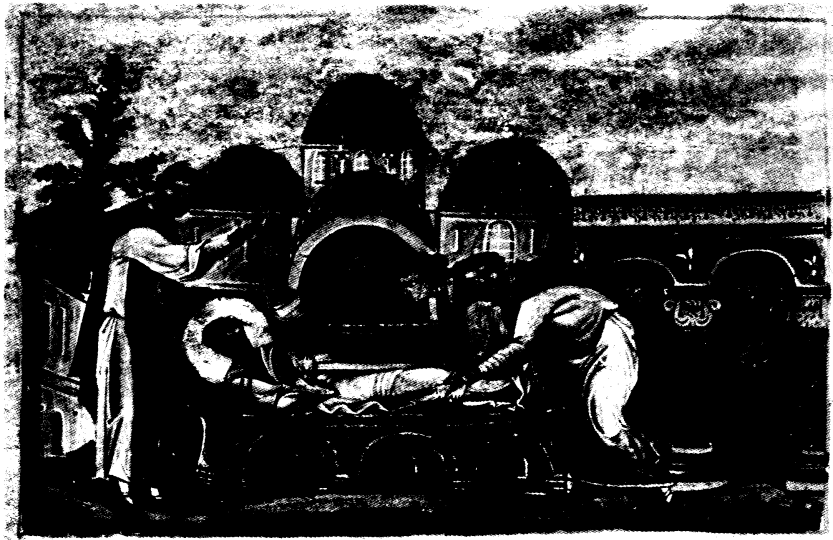




A. VAT.GR. 1613, *Menologion* of Basil II: fol. 341  
Photograph: Biblioteca Vaticana



B. VAT.GR. 1613, *Menologion* of Basil II: fol. 353  
Photograph: Biblioteca Vaticana



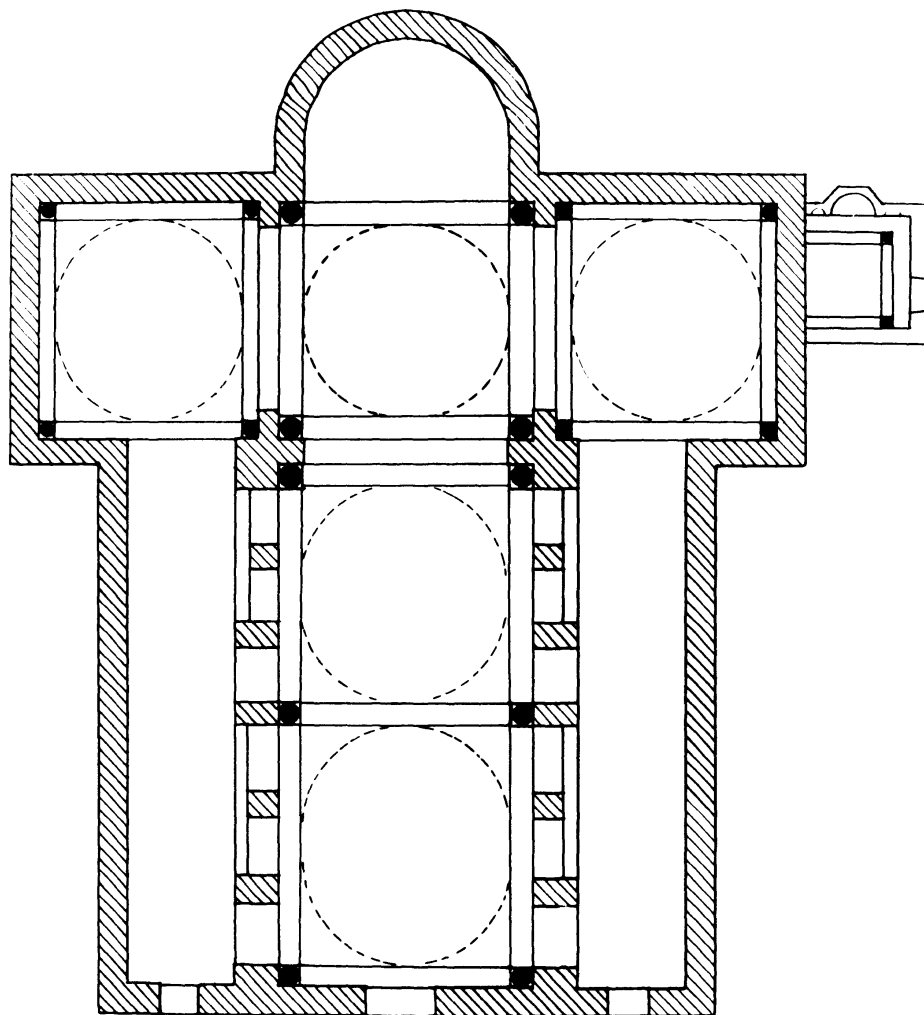
A. VAT.GR. 1613, *Menologion* of Basil II: fol. 121

Photograph: Biblioteca Vaticana



B. EL NAZAR, GÖREME VALLEY, CAPPADOCIA

Interior: narrative decoration. Photograph by author



CATHEDRAL OF SAN SABINO, CANOSA, APULIA: PLAN  
Second quarter of eleventh century. Drawing by author



CATHEDRAL OF SAN SABINO: INTERIOR,  
TOWARD THE EAST  
Photograph by author



A. H. ANARGYROI, KASTORIA: SANCTUARY,  
ADORING ANGEL

Photograph by N. K. Moutsopoulos



B. SAINT SOPHIA, THASSALONIKI: DOME,  
ANGEL OF THE ASCENSION

Photograph by D. Wright