

THE MACEDONIAN «ΑΝΑΠΕΣΩΝ»
AS MODEL FOR THE FLEMISH «NASCENDO MORIMUR»

More than ten years ago, in 1966, Professor Otto Demus delivered his significant Wrightsman Lectures under the auspices of the New York University Institute of Fine Arts, in which he demonstrated the role which the art of Byzantium had played in the development of Western art¹. His principal consideration was to show the function of Byzantine artists as teachers and pace-makers and to call attention to a number of Byzantine models which have found their way into the art of the West. Accepting the now well established contention of these lectures it is our purpose in this essay to show the intercultural fertilization which is visible not only in the Italian art of the Duecento to the Quattrocento, but also in the art of the 16th century Flemish masters.

In an essay on intercultural relations, which have played such an important role in the evolution of art it seems increasingly necessary to maintain a balanced view which should prevent us from falling into the kind of cultural chauvinism that sees either Western influences in Byzantium or Byzantine influences in the West wherever we are: It is this concern that is reflected in the following introductory references in which we want to remind the reader of the contributions of the Byzantine East to the West and of the West to the Byzantine East. Following these remarks we shall discuss the Macedonian «Anapeson» and the Flemish «Nascendo Morimur» and then conclude the essay with an attempt to show certain similarities in the representations of the two themes.

With respect to the Byzantine influence upon the Italian schools we are aware of numerous instances of adaptations and copies, both of form and style. Only few illustrations shall be presented in this context. Thus, for example, in the Head of St. Andrew of the Last Judgment (1293) in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, by Pietro Cavallini (1270-1325)—the earliest great representative of the Roman school—we recognize the Byzantine type of «the wise old man» which was resurrected from antique prototypes of the early Paleologan period, and found its most classical formulation in the Byzantine fresco of the third quarter of the 13th century in Sopočani. In other instances, not only form and style but also the theological theme and message of the Byzantine East

1. Otto Demus, «The Wrightsman Lectures 1966» were published under the title «Byzantine Art and the West», London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970.

were fully accepted to the point of actually copying the Byzantine prototype. An illustration of this is a mid-13th century head of Christ from a panel now in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, which may represent a high-water mark of this development. The Western triumphant Christ on the Cross was replaced by the Byzantine model of the suffering Christ, thereby emphasizing a religious accent, which, of course, was already expressed in the theology and piety of this period. The contorted features of Christ in Giunta Pisano's (13th century) or Cimabue's *Crucifixus* are copies of the above mentioned Byzantine *Crucifixus*¹. Kurt Weitzmann has devoted serious thought to the iconography of the *Threnos*, the Lamentation of Christ preceding His burial, which shows the Holy Virgin embracing the dead body of her son and receiving it into her laps and St. John caressing Christ's hand with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bowing down to hold His feet. One of the earliest representations of the *Threnos* is a Byzantine wall-painting belonging to the second half of the 12th century in the Church of St. Panteleimon in Gornji Nerezi, Serbia². The finest copy of the Hellenistic-Byzantine theme³ is the wall-painting of «The Lamentation of Christ» in the Capella dell' Arena in Padua by Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337), the father of Renaissance art. Here, byzantine form, style and theological content are fully accepted and copied.

These observations are important to our discussion since they represent milestones in a development which led to our theme of the «Anapeson». It is not surprising that the Flemish master or masters of the 16th century were considerably more flexible and liberated in their adaptations of Byzantine models than the Italian masters of the Quattrocento. Where as the Italian artists had accepted form, style and message of their respective Byzantine models, the Dutch masters two centuries later projected independent new thoughts on wood or canvas—based largely upon the rediscovered liberating humanism of the age. This humanistic conviction, which assigned a predominant interest to the affairs of mankind as compared to the supernatural and scholastic theological tradition of the medieval Church had also its reflections in the paintings of this period, of which our «Nascendo Morimur» is a good illustration.

But before we discuss the relationship of the «Anapeson», which is a strictly Byzantine theme, to the 16th century «Nascendo Morimur», we should not neglect to state also the influence of Western masters on contemporary Byzantine art. Grigore Nandris has pointed out that the wall-painting of the «Ana-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 218, figs. 242 and 253; p. 224, figs. 243-248.

2. Milkjkovič - Pepek Petar, Nerezi, Beograd 1966, pp. 36-39.

3. Weitzmann K., *The Origin of the Threnos*, «De Artibus Opuscula XL, Essays in Honor of E. Panofsky», New York 1961.

peson» at the Mount Athos Monastery of Dochiariou was created under Italian influence, and that the motif of the raising of the cover from the sleeping Child was often employed by the Italian masters, including Raphael (1483-1520) and Sassoferrato (1605-1685)¹. Indeed, borrowing, adapting and copying of forms, styles and themes from the northern European masters by the Byzantine iconographers was much more widely practised than is often realized. The use of Western woodcuts from the illustrations of the Holy Scriptures as models for wall-paintings is well known to the student of Byzantine paintings of the Last Judgment. Ludwig H. Heydenreich² and Juliette Renaud³ have convincingly demonstrated that the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1522) and those of Hans Holbein (1523) provided inspiration for the wall-paintings of the cycle of the Apocalypse in the Mount Athos monasteries of Dochiariou, Dionysiou and others⁴.

The Macedonian «Anapeson»

In this context we shall refer to a specifically Macedonian «Anapeson» in order to stress the typological simplicity of the wall-paintings of this theme by the masters of the Macedonian School of the 13th and 14th centuries. These paintings are probably also the oldest extant representations of the «Anapeson». Later developments of the theme have added additional figures and symbols to the prototype. Thus, for example, in the 15th century «Anapeson» of the Manasija Monastery in Resava, Serbia, the Christchild still rests on a kline, but it is attended by the Holy Virgin on the left and by an angel on either side. The angels hold in their hands the instruments of the passion⁵. A similar painting with the Holy Virgin attending the resting Christchild is portrayed in

1. Nandris Grigore, *Christian Humanism in the Neo-Byzantine Mural-Painting of Eastern Europe*, Wiesbaden 1970, p. 229.

2. Heydenreich L. H., *Der Apokalypsen-Zyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur deutschen Bibelillustration der Reformation*, «Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte» VIII (1939), 2 ff. Heydenreich argues that the cycle in the Monastery of Dionysiou is dependent upon the model provided by the woodcuts of Hans Holbein.

3. Renaud Juliette, *Le cycle de l'Apocalypse de Dionysiou. Interpretation byzantine de gravures occidentales*. Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Études. Sciences religieuses, LIX, Paris, 1943, p. 1 ff. Renaud feels that the cycle in the Monastery of Dionysiou reflects the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder.

4. Huber Paul, *Athos, Leben, Glaube, Kunst*, Zürich 1969, pp. 365-382. Huber sees Cranach's woodcuts as models for the paintings in the monasteries of Dionysiou and Xenophontos, Holbein's woodcuts as models for the paintings in the Monastery of Dochiariou.

5. Djurić Vojislav J., *Resava*, Beograd 1963, p. XIII, fig. 7. Petković V., *La Peinture serbe du moyen âge*, Beograd 1934, pl. CCIV. Stanoyević St., Mirković L., Bosković Dj., *Manastir Manasija*, Beograd 1928, pl. XVIII.

the 15th century «Anapeson» of the Metamorphosis Monastery, the Great Meteoron, Thessaly¹. An even further developed form of the «Anapeson» is found in the church of Ljutibrod between Čerepiš and Mezdra in Bulgaria. In this wall-painting the Christchild holds in his left hand the instruments of the passion, the spear and the sponge. Moreover, instead of resting on a kline, the Christchild lies on an altar, thereby portraying the idea of the fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrifice². Other later and even more complex forms of the «Anapeson» are found in my article of «The Place of the Anapeson of Soumela in Byzantine Art»³.



For the purpose of establishing a link between the Byzantine representation of the «resting Child» and the Flemish «Nascendo Morimur» we must turn to the Macedonian «Anapeson», of which there are only few examples. The oldest and most typical painting of this subject is found on the western wall of the nave of the Protaton in Karyes on Mount Athos. This «Anapeson» is now generally attributed to Manuel Panselinos, who painted it probably soon after 1300 under the patronage of Andronicus Paleologus (1282-1328).

1. G y t a k o s M i c h a e l, «Θρησκευτική και Ἡθική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία», Athens 1963, vol. II, p. 539.

2. G r a b a r A n d r é, *La Peinture Religieuse en Bulgarie*, Paris 1928, pp. 223-224, fig. 32.

3. M e i n a r d u s O., *The Place of the Anapeson of Soumela in Byzantine Art*, «Oriens Christianus» LV (1971) 195-203.

Panselinos was associated with the Macedonian School on Mount Athos and had also worked in the region of Salonica. As David Talbot Rice¹ has pointed out, «though he can hardly have been responsible for all the paintings which have been attributed to him by popular tradition, the suggestion put forward by certain authorities that he was a fictitious personage seems entirely groundless. Indeed his style seems to have been fairly personal if paintings in the Protaton at Karyes which have recently been attributed to him are to be regarded as typical»².

This painting portrays the Christchild with a cross-nimbus resting on a kline. The head of the Christchild is turned towards the right, and with His right hand He provides support for His head. In His left hand He holds a scroll. The left arm is stretched out and rests on His left thigh. The left leg is slightly elevated. A similar wall-painting of the Anapeson, although with the inscription Ἀναπεσῶν exists in the Catholicon of the Monastery of Xenophontos on Mount Athos³. The wellknown «Anapeson» of Mistra, Peloponnesos, which should be assigned to the 14th century, adorns the conch of the diakonikon of the Perivleptos Church. G. Millet, who published this painting, called it «Emmanuel dormant»⁴. Typologically speaking, the Mistra «Anapeson» falls into the same category as the 13th century «Anapeson» of the Protaton in Karyes.

From an interpretative point of view we are able to distinguish three distinct theological themes, which from the 13th to the 16th and 17th centuries have been attached to the «Anapeson». This fact necessarily complicates any assessment not only of the religious but also of the art-historical links or relationships which this theme might have with Western artistic representations. The theologian recognizes that these themes are somewhat interlocked, and yet, it is possible to state certain emphasises. Firstly, there is the Old Testament messianic theme, secondly, there is the idea of the incarnation and redemption, and thirdly, there is the typically Russian theme of the Emmanuel the Watchful, the never-sleeping eye of God.

The fathers of the Eastern Church used to interpret the «Anapeson» as a representation of Christ's sleep of the dead in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy «Judah, you lion's whelp, you have returned from the kill, my son, and crouch and stretch like a lion; and like a lion (or a lioness) who dare rouse you?» (Genesis 49:9).

1. Rice David T., *Byzantine Art*, Munich 1964, p. 304.

2. Xyngopoulos Andreas, *Manuel Panselinos*, Athens 1956, p. 9.

3. Brockhaus Heinrich, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern*, Leipzig 1891, p. 102.
Fichtner Fritz, *Wandmalereien der Athos Klöster*, Berlin 1931, p. 22.

4. Millet Gabriel, *Monuments Byzantins de Mistra*, Paris 1910, pl. 115, no. 1.

The Eastern Church has always seen a messianic significance in this passage. The first line of this verse refers to the youthful vigor of the tribe. The last two lines are almost identical with Numbers 24:9a, and may well be a quotation from another poem. In the Numeri quotation of the poem we read that in the preceding oracle Balaam had likened Israel to a hunting lion, here the nation is compared to a lion that has finished his hunting and his meal and is sitting down to a rest from which none dares to rouse him. The *Hermeneia* explains that the true source of the words is a prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob made to his sons before his death, that they refer to Judah, from whose race Christ came. Iconographically the lion does not appear in the Protaton, Xenophontos or Mistra paintings, although in later Byzantine representations of this theme the lion is included, as for example in the 18th century wall-painting in the catholicon of the Monastery of Philotheou, Mount Athos, where the Christchild is represented asleep, unconjured by the Holy Virgin and two angels. All three kneel and in deep reverence watch over the sleeping Child. At the feet of the Christchild a lion sleeps.

The blending of the themes of the Incarnation and the Vicarious Suffering and Death of the Christ is a further development of the «Anapeson» as we find it in the composition of the Φοβερά Προστασία, the Terrible Protection of the Monastery of Koutloumousiou on Mount Athos¹. Here, the Christchild supported by His mother knows of his divine mandate, and as indicated by the attending angels holding the instruments of the passion and the Cross, the Christchild is aware of His suffering and death. Byzantine artists from the 16th to the 19th century have composed a wide variety of forms and styles with this particular interpretation of the «Anapeson»².

Lastly, the iconography of the «Anapeson» also inspired the Old Testament theme of the Emmanuel the Watchful, known as the *Nedremanoe okogne*, the eye of the Lord which does not sleep, based upon the *Song of Ascents*: «Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep» (Ps. 121:4). This interpretation of the theme developed primarily in the iconographic art of 16th and 17th century Russia³.

As we shall point out now, it is the second theme, the fusing of the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Vicarious Death—of birth and death—which may have given the artist of the «Nascendo Morimur» a point of departure for his presentation.

1. X y n g o p o u l o s A., Benaki Museum. Catalogue of Icons, Athens 1936, pp. 70-72. (In Greek).

2. M e i n a r d u s O., loc., cit.

3. S k r o b u c h a H e i n z, Merveilles des Icones, Paris 1969, pp. 267-268.

THE FLEMISH «NASCENDO MORIMUR»

The oil-painting known as the «Nascendo Morimur», with the birth and death, is in the possession of the Mittelrhein Museum, Florinsmarkt, in Koblenz, Germany, where it is registered under No. M 60. The painting is attributed to an anonymous artist belonging to the circle of the 16th century Dutch painter Marten Jacobsz Heemskerck (1498-1574), sometimes called Van Veen, who worked first in Delft and later in Haarlem.

The painting is on wood and measures 49.3 × 63.5 cm¹. It portrays a naked male infant resting on a dark floor in front of a black wall. In the upper right hand corner of the wall there is a window. The window-scene includes a mountainous and wooden landscape with a Gothic belltower and a church. On the road leading to the church one recognizes—though with much difficulty—an old man, apparently on his way to the church². The child supports his head with his right hand, touching the blond curly hair. The right elbow presses against a human skull. His eyes are down-cast and closed. In his left hand he holds a staff surmounted by a rectangular sign with the inscription «NASCENDO MORIMUR». The idea of interweaving life and death is shown by the colouring of the infant body. The face, especially the cheeks and the ears, as well as the hands and feet are portrayed in pink indicating blood-circulation and life. The body with the arms and legs—the knees show some colouring—are kept in a greyishwhite, suggesting death or the process of dying.

The employment of the emblem which verbalizes the theme of the painting—*ut pictura poesis*—was quite common in the 16th and 17th century, and parallels to the «Nascendo Morimur» are «Mors vitae initium» (death is the beginning of life) and «Vive memor lethi» (live in the awareness of death)³.

CONCLUSION

Arrangement and form of the child in the «Anapeson» and the «Nascendo Morimur» betray certain similarities. The expressions and the messages of the «Anapeson» and the «Nascendo Morimur» contain certain relationships.

With respect to the arrangement and form we notice similarities of posture. There are differences which reflect the theological climate. The «Anapeson» shows the Christchild with a cross-nimbus and clothed in an expensively

1. S c h a a r E c k h a r d, Kataloghefte des Mittelrhein-Museums Koblenz. Niederländische Meister, Koblenz 1968, pp. 11, 12.

2. A similar landscape is shown on the painting «Venus» by M. J. Heemskerck in the Walraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne.

3. S c h ö n e A., Emblemata, Stuttgart 1967, p. 1000. Also, «Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte», Vol. V, «Embleme».

embroidered garment and completely covered, except for the head, hands and feet. On the other hand, the «Nascendo Morimur» is a naked child. His head, hands and feet are the only parts of the body which convey the idea of «life», for they are painted pink. The Christchild of the «Anapeson» holds in His left hand a scroll, the Book of Life; while the «Nascendo Morimur» holds in his left hand the universal message that «with the birth we die». Whether the artist intended to portray with the staff and the inscription a T-Cross, we do not know. Therefore, we should leave open the possibility that this theme may have included the idea of a universal redemption.

The message of the «Anapeson» is that the Christchild recognizes already at His birth His messianic ministry of suffering and death for the salvation of mankind. Christ's birth and death, Bethlehem and Golgotha, incarnation and redemption are the theological frame of reference of the «Anapeson». Birth and death, though historically and physically manifested in Jesus Christ, gain spiritual significance for the human race, in terms of rebirth and everlasting life—through faith.

On the other hand, the humanistic interpretation of the interrelationship of birth and death, as given in the «Nascendo Morimur» excludes the soteriological aspects of the Christian doctrine of redemption and merely states the physiological truth or law that «with the birth we die». That this truth also bears a spiritual and moral message, no one can deny. For that matter, the universality of this law is underlined by the representation of the human skull, which may even be a borrowing of the medieval portrayal of redemption, namely Adam's skull.

In short, the Christian soteriological message of the «Anapeson» has been transformed in the «Nascendo Morimur» into a universalist and humanistic spirituality and morality. It is very likely that the anonymous Flemish artist, imbued with the spirit of his age, used the Byzantine model of the «Anapeson» for his message that with our birth we all begin to die, and that we are responsible for the way and the manner in which we spend our time on earth. The church which appears through the open window, may well symbolize the redemption which is promised to him who is aware of and responds to the wisdom and the message of the «Nascendo Morimur»¹.

Koblenz

OTTO F. A. MEINARDUS

1. Attention should be called to the naked Christchild supporting His head with His right arm and resting on the lap of His mother in «The Madonna and Child with Saints and Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino», the famous Brera Madonna, Brera, Milano, by Pietro della Francesca (1410/20-1492).

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Otto F. A. Meinardus, 'Ο «'Αναπεσῶν» τῆς Μακεδονίας ὡς πρότυπο γιὰ τὸ Φλαμανδικὸ «Nascendo Morimur».

Τὸ δοκίμιο αὐτὸ γιὰ εἰκονογραφικὲς σχέσεις ἀνάμεσα σὲ διάφορες πολιτιστικὲς ἐνότητες δείχνει τὴν ἐπίδραση τῆς βυζαντινῆς τέχνης στοὺς Φλαμανδοὺς καλλιτέχνες τοῦ 16ου αἰῶνος. Γιὰ τὸ σκοπὸ αὐτὸ διαλέξαμε ἀπὸ τὴ Μακεδονία τὸ θέμα «'Αναπεσῶν», τοῦ ὁποῖου τὸ πιὸ τυπικὸ παράδειγμα παρουσιάζεται στὸ δυτικὸ τοῖχο τοῦ νάρθηκος τοῦ Πρωτάτου στὶς Καρυὲς τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, καὶ τὸ «Nascendo Morimur» (μὲ τὴ γέννηση πεθαίνουμε), ζωγραφιὰ στὸ Μουσεῖο τοῦ Μέσου Ρήνου στὸ Κομπλέντς τῆς Γερμανίας, ἡ ὁποία ἀποδίδεται σὲ ἀνώνυμο καλλιτέχνη, ποὺ ἀνήκει στὸν κύκλο τοῦ Ὁλλανδοῦ ζωγράφου τοῦ 16ου αἰ. Marten J. Heemskerck.

Ἡ διάταξη καὶ ἡ μορφή τοῦ παιδιοῦ στὸν «'Αναπεσόντα» καὶ στὸ «Nascendo Morimur» προδίδουν ὁμοιότητες καὶ τὸ μήνυμα τῶν δύο εἰκόνων σχετίζεται. Σχετικὰ μὲ τὴ διάταξη καὶ τὴ μορφή παρατηροῦμε ὁμοιότητες στάσεως. Ὑπάρχουν διαφορὲς στὸ θεολογικὸ κλίμα τῆς καλλιτεχνικῆς ἐκφράσεως. Ὁ «'Αναπεσῶν» δείχνει τὸ Χριστὸ-παιδὶ μὲ σταυρωτὸ φωτοστέφανο καὶ ντυμένο μὲ κεντητὸ ἔνδυμα, ποὺ τὸ καλύπτει τελείως, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι, τὰ χέρια καὶ τὰ πόδια.

Στὸ «Nascendo Morimur» εἶναι παιδὶ γυμνὸ. Τὸ κεφάλι, τὰ χέρια καὶ τὰ πόδια τοῦ εἶναι τὰ μόνα μέρη τοῦ σώματος ποὺ δίνουν τὴν ἰδέα τῆς ζωῆς, καθὼς εἶναι ζωγραφισμένα κοκκινωπά. Ὁ Χριστὸς-παιδὶ κρατᾷ στὸ ἄριστερό Του χέρι ἓνα εἰλητάριο, τὸ Βιβλίο τῆς Ζωῆς, ἐνῶ στὸ «Nascendo Morimur» κρατᾷ στὸ ἄριστερό του χέρι τὸ κοσμικὸ μήνυμα ὅτι «μὲ τὴ γέννηση πεθαίνουμε».

Τὸ μήνυμα τοῦ «'Αναπεσόντος» εἶναι ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς -παιδὶ ἀναγνωρίζει κατὰ τὴ γέννησή του τὸ μεσσιανικὸ Του λειτουργημὰ τοῦ πάθους καὶ τοῦ θανάτου γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος. Γέννηση καὶ θάνατος, μολονότι ἱστορικὰ καὶ φυσικὰ φανερωμένα στὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστό, παίρνουν πνευματικὴ σπουδαιότητα γιὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινο γένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἔννοια τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως καὶ τῆς αἰώνιας ζωῆς διὰ τῆς πίστεως. Ἐξ ἄλλου ἡ οὐμανιστικὴ ἐρμηνεία τῆς συσχετίσεως ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου, ὅπως εἰκονίζεται στὸ «Nascendo Morimur», ἀποκλείει τὶς σωτηριολογικὲς ἀπόψεις τῆς χριστιανικῆς διδασκαλίας περὶ λυτρώσεως καὶ ἀπλῶς βεβαιώνει τὴν ἀλήθεια ἢ τὸ νόμο τῆς φυ-

σιολογίας ότι «μέ τή γέννηση ἀποθνήσκουμε». Δέν μπορεί κανείς ν' ἀρνηθῆ ὅτι καί αὐτή ἡ ἀλήθεια φέρει ἕνα πνευματικό καί ἠθικό μήνυμα. Ἡ παγκοσμιότητα τοῦ μηνύματος αὐτοῦ ὑπογραμμίζεται ἀπό τήν παράσταση ἀνθρωπίνου κρανίου, πού μπορεί νά εἶναι καί δάνειο ἀπό τή μεσαιωνική παράσταση τῆς λυτρώσεως, δηλαδή τò κρανίο τοῦ Ἀδάμ.

Τò χριστιανικό σωτηριολογικό μήνυμα τοῦ «Ἀναπεσόντος» μέ τò «Nascendo Morimur» μετασηματίσθηκε σέ κοσμική καί οὐμανιστική πνευματικότητα. Ἡ ἐκκλησία, πού φαίνεται στό ἄνοιχτό παράθυρο, μπορεί κάλλιστα νά συμβολίζῃ τή λύτρωση, μιὰ ὑπόσχεση πρὸς ἐκείνον, πού κατανοεῖ τò σοφò μήνυμα τοῦ «Nascendo Morimur».