A Medieval City in Greece
ITS CHURCHES AND ITS RUINS

By
THE REVEREND J. ARNOTT HAMILTON, B.D.
Hon. Secy. Scottish Ecclesiological Society (Glasgow Branch)
Former Student of the British School at Athens

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Evangelistria, Mistra

Church of the SS. Theodore.

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About two miles and a half from classic Sparta, there stands, detached, at the foot of the towering range of Taygetos, a rocky hill, 2080 feet in height above the level of the sea. Upon this hill lie scattered the remains of what has been described as one of the most remarkable ruined towns in Europe—the Byzantine town of Mistra.

It is indeed a place of rare interest and fascination. Its very situation is superb, and its whole neighbourhood evokes a hundred ancient memories. Its site has been identified with the “dove-haunted Messe” of Homer, and it commands an outlook over a tract of land rich in historical associations and exquisite in beauty.

From the battlemented castle which crowns its summit the view extends far over the orange-groves and olive-plantations of the fertile Lacedaemonian plain, “the wide land of Lacedaemon lying low among the caverned hills,” and to:

Where Eurotas hollows his moist rock
Nigh Sparta, with a strenuous-hearted stream.

The site of ancient Sparta and the broad streets of the modern town lie embosomed among the olives and the mulberries, and many a village clusters on the sunlit plain. Several streams wend their way across the country to empty their waters into the Eurotas. Some miles to the east the range of Parnon cuts across the sky.

Mistra may be divided into four parts. At the foot, separated from the ancient town by a stream, is the modern village, dating back about a hundred years. Thence about fifteen minutes’ walk takes one to the old Lower Town, which contains the finest of the religious buildings. Higher up the remains of the Upper City lie grouped around the Palace of the Byzantine Despots. Lastly, on the very summit of the hill, there rise in proud isolation the walls of the castle, the work of different periods, its oldest portion erected in 1248—9, by William Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia.

In the year 1204, when Constantinople had been sacked by the Knights of the Fourth Crusade, and Baldwin, Count of Flanders and Hainault, was proclaimed Emperor of the East, a certain French crusader called Geoffrey Villehardouin lay with his ships at a port in the Holy Land. When the news of the establishment of a Latin Empire reached him, he abandoned his crusade and hastened with a number of followers to join his friends in Constantinople. Storms, however, drove him off his route, and he was constrained to bring his battered ships into the port of Modon, on the south-west coast of the Morea.
During the years previous to the Frankish conquest the control of the government at Constantinople over the Morea had been purely nominal, and power lay in the hands of a few wealthy families. These families were in a state of feud with each other, and, on the arrival of Villehardouin, one of them craved his assistance. Villehardouin consented, and easily subduing a large part of the country marched right up to Corinth. At Corinth he met another of the Franks, William of Champlitte, one to whom he was bound by feudal ties. To Champlitte he proposed the conquest of the Morea for themselves. "I am come from a right good country which they call Mourée. Take such men as you can muster and leave this army: let us go with God's help and conquer it: and whatsoever portion of the lands, that we may acquire, you shall deign to give me, I will hold of you and be your liegeman for them."

The expedition was crowned with an easy success. Andravida, in Elis, which was the most important town in the West, and where Champlitte later established his residence, readily capitulated. The decisive battle was fought at Condura, in Messenia, where vastly superior forces were overcome by the Franks. The Franks soon had possession of the whole of the Western Peloponnese. They took Calamata on the Messenian Gulf and penetrated into Laconia and the mountainous district of Arcadia. Within a few years the whole of the Morea fell under the sway of the Western invaders, with the exception of Monemvasia, Argos, Nauplia, and the citadel of Corinth. Among the places which were captured was the important walled city of Lacedaemonia which stood by the site of ancient Sparta and which the French called La Crémonie.

William of Champlitte died in Italy in 1209, and Villehardouin managed to secure the crown for himself. He reigned, as Prince of Achaia, until 1218, when he was succeeded by his son, Geoffrey II. The Principality reached a high degree of fame and power under this prince. At Clairmont, (Chlemoutsi), in Elis, he built a great castle which was the most splendid baronial seat in Achaia. He founded an important school of chivalry to which came many cadets from the West. He established monasteries and abbeys in different parts of the country. Geoffrey died in 1245 and was succeeded by his brother William. William determined to establish his power still more firmly. From the Greeks he captured the steep, rocky stronghold of Monemvasia on the east coast, and built castles elsewhere to strengthen his position. Among these fortresses was that of Mistra.

The precipitous hill at the foot of Taygetos bore the name of Myzithras, and Villehardouin called his castle Mistra. We find it called in later ages by both forms of the name.

The castle was built in 1248—9, and it became a centre of much importance. It was a favourite residence of the prince, who established here a brilliant court, and entertained many a princely guest. The city of La Crémonie, on the plain, at first gained in importance as a result of the erection of the Castle of Mistra. La Crémonie, however, after the lapse of a number of years fell into decay, and a new town sprang up on the steep slopes of Mistra, under the protection of the fortress.

William's tenure of Mistra was brief. He became embroiled in a quarrel with
Michael VIII, Palaeologus,—who shortly after recovered Constantinople—and was taken prisoner at the Battle of Pelagonia.

As the price of his ransom, he was compelled to surrender to the Greek Emperor the south-eastern portion of the Morea, including Mistra. The Morea was thus divided into two parts, the Principality of Achaia, and the Byzantine Province. William Villehardouin died in 1278, and the Principality fell under the suzerainty of Charles of Anjou. As time went on a long succession of Italian, Flemish, Navarrese, and other rulers bore sway over it. But the days of its brightest fame had passed with the death of Villehardouin. It became weaker and smaller, and in 1430 was absorbed into the Byzantine dominion.

On the cession of South-East Morea to the Empire, in 1262, Mistra became the capital of the Province and the residence of Constantine Palaeologus, brother of the Emperor. It was a place of great importance in the succeeding years under Byzantine rule. In 1350 the Province was raised to a status of a Despotate. Manuel, second son of John Cantacuzenos, the Emperor, was its first despot and ruled for thirty years. His rule was characterised by wisdom and ability, and Mistra was a centre of culture and at much religious activity in the Fourteenth century.

In 1395 Mistra was occupied by Turkish forces under the Navarrese, Peter of San Superan, but was quickly abandoned by them, and about 1400 the Knights of S. John made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain possession of the city.

In the Fifteenth century under the Despot Theodore II, Palaeologus, Mistra continued to flourish, and attained eminence as a seat of learning. Gemistos (PlethOn), the Platonist, expounded his views and established a school of philosophy there.

In 1449 Constantine XII, last Emperor of the East, was crowned in the Church of the Metropolis at Mistra.

In 1460 it was surrendered by the Despot Demetrius Dragazes to the Turks, who held it until Greece became independent, except during the period from 1685 to 1715, when it was in the possession of Venice.

In 1770 it was captured from the Turks by the Russian expedition to the Morea. It remained the most important place in the Eurotas valley until the War of Independence, and between 1780 and 1821 attained great prosperity. Leake visited it in 1805, and says that the Upper City was ruined during the insurrection of 1770. The Lower City was occupied. Sir Thomas Wyse states that in 1818 he found it very thickly inhabited, largely by Turks. At the outbreak of the Revolution the Turkish population fled, and it was seized and garrisoned by the Greeks. The town had been fired by the Egyptian troops, and at the conclusion of the war the Greeks re-established the part which had continued inhabited—the present village of Mistra. Many houses were erected and a building plan was laid out on the lower ground. Its growth was checked by the establishment of New Sparta in 1834. An earthquake in 1830 wrought much destruction, and caused the migration of many of its inhabitants to Sparta.

To-day the village of Mistra contains a few hundred people.
Sparta, its successor, was laid out under King Otho, after plans by the Philhellenic General Iachmutz. Its plan is very regular: its broad, quiet streets form rectangles, and are flanked with low, solidly-built houses in pleasant gardens.

In order to reach Mistra from Athens, we take the Peloponnese train to Tripolis, an important town situate at the northern end of the plain of Tegea. There, in the evening, we leave by the coach for Sparta. The journey takes many hours. Slowly we ascend the road which leads due south to our destination. To left and right stretches the plain of Tegea, containing many villages as well as the site of the ancient town.

Sixteen miles on our way we halt at the Khan of Bakouros. Slowly we ascend to the watershed at a height of three thousand feet, and then rattle our way down to the Lacedaemonian plain. On our left runs the Kelephina, and far on the right the glorious serrated range of Pentedhaktylo, or Taygetos, sweeps into our view as we proceed. On a winter night it is bitterly cold: with a brilliant moon shining in the sky, the trees cast fantastic shadows on the ground. The moonbeams light up the rolling country on either hand and gleam on the snow-clad summits of Taygetos. As we advance we can see more and more of the mighty range, stretching far north and south, and towering splendidly above the plain.

Early in the morning we cross the Eurotas and enter Sparta.

Next day we set out for Mistra. The road runs without hedge or wall through the beautiful plain of Lacedaemon, crossing a couple of streams upon the way. The country around is clad with groves of olives and mulberries, and is enriched with orange and lemon trees.

Now we pass countrymen leading donkeys laden with panniers of brush-wood: now groups of workers among the fruit-trees: now a shepherd in front of his flock: now a priest or monk, from his dwelling in the country, making his way to Sparta.

The whole country is full of an idyllic charm, and there is surely no more beautiful place in Greece than this lovely sun-lit plain of Lacedaemon.

The steep wall of Taygetos shuts off the view to the west, and standing out against it, Mistra comes into sight.

The road turns sharply to the right, and is overhung by the great slopes of the mountain. Soon we reach the lofty hill which juts out against the greater range, and on which Mistra is built. We pass through the modern village, cross the stream, and, having entered the city of our destination, rest at the ancient monastery of the Metropolis.

We set out to explore Mistra. The cobbled streets, rough, steep, and narrow, are flanked with high walls on either hand. The crumbling ruins of the past lie spread out over the abrupt hillside. The broken dwelling-houses, the churches, the tottering bell-towers, the forsaken monasteries, stand around in their decay and in their desolation. The road, twisting and turning, climbs sharply up the hill. We reach the Upper City and the remains of the once-splendid Palace of the Despots.

Here, upon a more level place, the Upper Town, a very debris of ruins, extends in utter loneliness and abandonment. A rough ascent leads finally to the fortress which the Frankish prince first erected upon the lofty summit.
Before proceeding to discuss the churches of Mistra, it may be better to examine briefly the type of Byzantine churches of which they are examples.

The characteristic feature of Byzantine architecture is the central dome, crowning the church, and made to cover the square floor-space by means of pendentives.

The influences which bore upon the formation of Byzantine architectuer came from the East. In Asia Minor that type of church grew into being: it was finally formulated and established at Constantinople in the sixth century. The first period of Byzantine church-building falls within that century. The churches then erected vary considerably in plan, and are to be found mostly in Constantinople.

An epoch of intense building activity was followed by a period of stagnation, the result of the incursion of barbarian hordes, and the Iconoclastic controversy.

This period of stagnation was followed by a slow revival—and it was during this latter time (although the point of departure may actually be placed earlier) that there gradually evolved the type which became classic, persisting for hundreds of years, and establishing itself in most parts of the Christian East. The churches of various regions and countries possess their own peculiar characteristics and features. Nevertheless, there exists throughout a striking similarity in plan and design, so far as the main features of the structure are concerned. In this type the main body of the church takes the form of a Greek cross, inscribed within a rectangle or a square. Above the centre rises the cupola, which rests upon a high drum, circular or polygonal externally, and circular internally.

The drum and cupola cover a square, the plan of which is marked on the outside by a small quadrangular ledge at the base of the drum, broken by the roofs of the four arms of the cross. The circular base of the drum rests upon four arches, and upon pendentives—the curved triangular portions of a hemisphere—wedged in between the arches. The whole is supported upon four columns in the interior of the church. The above-mentioned arches are prolonged to the outer walls as barrel vaults, and carry off thereto a portion of the thrust. These vaults, radiating from the central dome, cover the arms of the cross. They are covered with low roofs which terminate as triangular pediments on the exterior walls. Sometimes the roofs are curved, and thus externally mark the interior form of the vaults.

As the ground-plan is square or rectangular it will be observed that the four spaces at the angles of the cross remain to be accounted for. These angle spaces are covered with vaults or small cupolas, but at a much lower level than are the four arms of the cross. Thus the form of the cross is clearly shown on the exterior, above the coping of the four angle spaces. Internally the walls which support the four main barrel vaults trace out the cruciform plan.

It will be seen that the various parts of the edifice form a homogeneous whole: they are bound to one another and "they annul reciprocally the diffused thrusts which they exercise."

From the eastern end project three apses: sometimes only the central apse projects and the side apses take the form of niches in the interior of the wall. Between the apses and the main body of the church an additional bay is often introduced.
The apses, as a rule, are of semi-circular form on the inside and of polygonal form on the outside. Their exterior is often beautifully enlivened with brick ornamentation. They contain double or single windows. At the western end extends the narthex, which is frequently of a date posterior to that of the church, often we find the main body constructed carefully of stone and brick tiles and the later narthex of uncoursed rubble. The western arm of the cross is sometimes lengthened. Other buildings—later additions such as side chapels abut on the walls of the building, and the narthex is sometimes preceded by an exo-narthex.

There is a second type of the Greek-cross-plan church, which is not indeed so common, but of which several churches in Greece, especially of the larger and more important sort, are examples. Of this second type are the larger church of S. Luke of Striris in Phocis; S. Sophia, Monemvasia; and the Church of Daphni, on the Sacred Way, between Athens and Eleusis. In these churches the dome rests, not on pendentives, but on pseudo-pendentives. The square, central space is bounded by twelve piers. (The corner piers are not always free but are united to one of the neighbouring ones.) The square is reduced to an octagon by means of half-domes flung across its angles. These half-domes are termed pseudo-pendentives and rest upon the three corner piers. The remaining spaces—between each pair of piers on the sides—are spanned by the arches, which, prolonged as barrel-vaults to the surrounding wall, form the arms of the cross. The dome thus rests on the summit of eight arches. The eight spaces between the extrados of these arches and the base of the dome are filled in by squinches or by small pendentives. In churches of this type, the cupola usually rests directly on the summit of the arches without the interposition of a drum. A drum appears externally, but is merely built round the lower part of the cupola on the outside.

Of the churches of Mistra, one is of the latter type described, three are slight variations of the former, and three others show an interesting deviation from the normal plan.

The Church of the Evangelistria (beginning of fourteenth century) is of the former type. It differs from the classic type only inasmuch as the western arm of the cross is longer than the others, giving to the church the aspect of a Latin rather than a Greek cross. The two eastern supports of the dome are the antæ of the dividing walls between the three apses. (In another variety of churches of this class, the eastern supports are still on the line of the iconostasis, but are actual columns. In still another, the eastern columns stand quite back from the iconostasis, and an additional bay is intercalated between apse and eastern arm. Interesting examples of all varieties are to be found in the Maina Peninsula.) The Evangelistria has three apses. The drum is octagonal and the roof of the cupola projects over its edge. The drum is decorated with a niche and pierced with a window on each alternate face. Two hood-moulds, resting on engaged columns, surmount each window, and the upper of these cuts into the roof of the cupola. The Evangelistria is built in alternate courses of squared stones and tiles, a tile also being placed upright in the vertical joint between each pair of stones. A later porch and other additions abut on its walls.
The Church of the Monastery of the Peribleptos resembles the last generally in plan, with the longer western arm, and with the two columns and the two ante as supports to dome and drum. It dates from the end of the fourteenth century. The plan is very irregularly set out, and the church is partially built into a cliff behind. The masonry consists of squared stones and tiles in alternate courses with a tile in each vertical joint. The church has three apses, five-sided without and circular within. Dentil (saw-tooth) bands run round below the eaves. This common Byzantine decoration is formed by bedding thin bricks with their corners flush with the face of the wall.

The Peribleptos has no narthex, but at the south corner stands a very irregularly shaped parecclesion with an apse. (The church is oriented north-east.) A porch runs along the south-east: and before the apses extends a long building in two divisions, one of which is covered with an octagonal dome. A characteristic form of decoration appears in connection with a double window in one of the gables. The whole width of the two windows is spanned above by an arch of radiating bricks, and this arch is supported by two half-arches of similar material on either side.

The Peribleptos is interesting as showing several Western traits. Over the window in the central apse is sculptured a fleur-de-lys between two rosettes. At the south-east corner of the enclosing wall of the monastery is a high battlemented tower, of which one window is of trefoil shape enclosed within a Gothic arch.

Magne finds French influence in the arrangement of the windows in the refectory. He also likens the disposition of the apses, backed up against gables and half-gables, to a similar arrangement in churches of the Haute-Loire and Puy-de-Dôme. Millet, however, has pointed out later that this is an Eastern trait.

The drum of the cupola is octagonal, and pierced with windows. Over each window are two concentric hood-moulds of radiating brick, the higher of which cuts into the over-hanging roof of the cupola.

[Note on the Types of Cupola in Mediaeval Greek Churches.]

I. In some churches the roof of the cupola does not project beyond the wall of the drum. It appears, as it were, to grow out of the drum and to make with the latter one piece. At the angles of the drum are engaged colonnettes which are tied together by arches over the windows. The sides of the drum, finished off with these arches, penetrate the cupola roof; e.g. Omorphi Ecclesia, near Athens.

II. The roof of the cupola projects over the edge of the drum horizontally. The windows do not cut into the roof, e.g. Kaisariani, Attica.

III. The roof projects; but arches and hood-moulds over the windows cut into it, forming semi-circular cornices, e.g. Holy Apostles, Salonica; Peribleptos, Mistra.

As time went on the cupola became more and more elevated. It began to lose its integral connection with the church and was treated as a sort of addition rather than as the crown and completion of the structure.]

The ruined Church of Santa Sophia stands high up the hill in the Upper City. It was built about 1350 by Manuel Cantacuzenos. It is of the same type as
the Evangelistria. In addition to the narthex it has a porch along the north wall of the church. This porch and other contiguous buildings are of a later date. The three apses have each three sides externally. Drum and gables are decorated with brick in radiating diamond and zig-zag patterns.

The Church of the Saints Theodore in the Lower City, is an example of that type of church in which the dome rests on pseudo-pendentives (vide supra, p. 8). It is one of the two churches erected within the precincts of the Monastery of Brontocheion. It dates from the end of the thirteenth century, and was dedicated to S. Theodore, the General, martyred in A.D. 319, and to S. Theodore, the Tiro, a soldier of the Roman army who was put to death by Maximian in A.D. 306.

The drum of the church rests on pseudo-pendentives and spans the whole breadth of the space on which the three apses open,—not only the breadth of the space on to which the central apse opens as is the case in churches whose drums rest on true pendentives. The eastern wall thus projects considerably beyond the end of the apses on either side. The angle compartments, roofed at a lower level, were used as mortuary chapels. These chapels are isolated from the main body of the church. The two eastern are entered by doors, in their west walls, which lead into the cross arms. The two western open only into the narthex.

Chapels, cross arms, side apses, and the passages corresponding to these latter at the west, are roofed with barrel vaults. The narthex was a later addition. The apses have three sides without, and are semi-circular within. The central apse has a double window on its middle face, and a semi-circular-headed niche on each side face. Narrow windows pierce the side apses and the walls which project beyond them. The lower portion of the east wall is composed of uncoursed rubble. Above this runs a saw-tooth band. Above this are two courses of stone with tiles laid vertically and horizontally between. These sections repeat themselves to the cornice. It is said that the portions of the wall not faced were meant for marble panelling.

The apse windows are framed with tiles, laid radiating over the arch-heads and horizontally on the jambs. The dentil bands, when they meet the windows, are run round them over the tile arches. Dentil cornices extend along the walls at the top. The drum has sixteen sides and has a window and a niche in each side alternately. Two arches of radiating brick and a saw-tooth arch above each window and niche would have penetrated the cupola. The original cupola has, however, disappeared.

Double windows, with radiating arches of brick, supported by half arches, are let into the gable-ends of the transepts (of design of Peribleptos v. s. p. 9). The roofs of the east and west cross arms terminate in triangular pediments. The roofs of the north and south arms are curved, the exterior lines thus marking the interior lines of the vaults. The church was restored some years ago. The general effect of SS. Theodore is excellent. The various points of the building are in admirable proportion, and are harmoniously grouped together around the central drum, while the external surface decoration shows skill and taste.

The Church of the Panagia Odegetria or Aphendiko stands also
within the precincts of the Brontocheion Monastery, but has its own separate monastic buildings. It was built about 1312. This church, like the two next, differs from the others. It is a combination of the plan of a Greek-cross church of the former type, and of the plan of a basilica. The nave is flanked by three columns on either side as well as by the dividing wall of the apses. On either side of this central nave, along the whole length of the angle compartments and north or south cross arms, extends a gallery of uniform height.

On the ground floor therefore the plan is that of a basilica; above the gallery level the Greek-cross plan reappears. The central cupola with its drum has disappeared. A cupola on drum covers each of the angle compartments and also the central space of the narthex.

In churches of a much earlier date, a combination of the basilical plan (on the ground floor) and Greek-cross plan (above the gallery level) is to be found. St. Irene, Constantinople (sixth-seventh century), is an example, so too is S. Theodosia (Gul-djami).

Mr. Ramsay Traquair points out how these were stages in the development of the Greek-cross plan.

There are important differences between these earlier churches where the two plans are combined and those at Mistra. In the latter the supports of the dome are in two stages instead of one, and are separated from each other by one column instead of more.

However, in the thirteenth century there appears this same type of church in The Chrysokephalos, at Trebizond, on the shores of the Black Sea. Here the western arm, divided into two bays by an additional pair of piers, is considerably prolonged, but there is not (as in Mistra) a pair of columns between the supports of the dome. Galleries run along the sides, giving the basilical design.

It may be mentioned that the fact of the western arm not being prolonged has caused one writer to classify the Aphendiko and Pantanassa as ordinary four-columned Greek-cross-plan churches rather than as “domed basilicas.”

The central apse of the Aphendiko shows seven sides without, and the side apses three. The walls are enlivened with bands of brick in two courses between thick beds of mortar, and with niches surmounted by concentric arches of radiating tiles. Burial chapels, a belfry, and an exo-narthex adjoined the building. The Aphendiko was one of the last Byzantine churches whose interior was faced with marble.

The Church of Saint Demetrius resembles generally the Aphendiko in plan. It is however a reconstruction. It was originally a basilica, dating from a period long before Mistra was built—perhaps the eighth century. It was probably brought to its present form of a “domed basilica” by a reconstruction which took place at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Its apses show three sides externally. The side apses stop short at the first storey. The central drum is sixteen sided and pierced on the large sides by windows, the wall above which impinges into the overhanging roof of the cupola, forming an arch. Niches decorate the eight small sides at the corners. Four
similar small cupolas cover the angle spaces. The gables are decorated with arches, marking the inner line of the vaults. The gable-end above the central apse has a double window between sculptured slabs. There is the usual decoration of radiating tiles, dentil bands and cornices on the outside. Within, the galleries extend along the aisles and narthex. A belfry is attached to the church.

S. Demetrius stands within the precincts of the Monastery of the Metropolis. Within the same precincts is the Archbishop's Palace, the old dwelling-houses of the monks, and a building which now serves as a museum. Beside the church is a pillared courtyard.

On a commanding position upon the hill-slope stands what is perhaps the most interesting church in Mistra—the Church of the Monastery of the Pantanassa. It was built in the first half of the Fifteenth century. The prospect from before it is magnificent, extending far over the Lacedaemonian Plain.

The Pantanassa is oriented almost due south; the traveller approaches it from the north, and the first object which meets his eye is the belfry at the northeast corner. It rises above the end of a loggia which runs along the east end of the church. Each of the two highest stories is pierced with openings consisting of three arched lights, divided by pillars. The openings are recessed within pointed arches, and those in the highest story are surmounted by gables which penetrate into the pointed roof. Trefoils are let into the wall above the archway leading into the loggia, and elsewhere. The design of this belfry bears a striking general resemblance to that of the twelfth and thirteenth century bell-towers of Auvergne and Aquitaine.

The Pantanassa resembles the Aphendiko in plan and elevation. It has five cupolas on drums; the present central cupola with its drum is not original. The interior galleries run along cross arms, angle compartments, and narthex. Along the north wall, on the upper story, runs a blind arcade, its lines corresponding with the interior line of the vaults. The apses of the Pantanassa are of singular beauty and interest. An arcade of narrow pointed arches resting on tall colonnettes runs round near the base. Some of the niches contain windows surrounded by the usual arch of radiating bricks.

The decoration of the wall space of the lower arcade, close under the string course, on which the upper arcade rests, is derived from Western Gothic Art. Two broad stones (palmette and spreading leaves) sit one above the other on the centre of each of the arches of the lower arcade, and support curved skew-stones of what in Western Art would be a series of small gables. The skew-stones terminate in broad palm-like finials. Above, close under the cornice, runs a second arcade having semicircular arches, and in each an arch of radiating tiles.

THE PALACE OF THE DESPOTS.—The Upper City is enclosed by a separate wall. It contains many houses dating from the sixteenth, some from the fifteenth, century. It is now a great mass of ruins. Within its walls rises the Despot's Palace, consisting of two parts, at right angles to each other, pierced by many windows. Its architecture shows late Gothic influence. The dwellings of the court officials are adjoining. The great hall, the spacious rooms, the wide
courtyard—once thronged with the brilliant retinue of the Byzantine Despot—
stand now empty and forlorn.

The Turks inhabited the Upper City during the period of their occupation. 
They added new buildings, turned Santa Sophia into a mosque, and made the 
palace and forecourt a bazaar. It never recovered from the great conflagration 
of 1770.

The Fortress.—A steep climb leads up to the fortress on the summit of 
the hill. Its battlements, grey with age, rise in stern isolation from the 
impregnable height. A vaulted doorway leads into the outer court—a spacious 
yard, once occupied by the dwellings of the knights. At the entrance rises a 
tower, and a circular bastion forms the angle of the walls at the other end. On the 
north-west a strong wall encloses the inner court, where stood the palace and a 
little chapel. There are some cisterns cut in the rock. The fortress was occupied 
by both Byzantines and Turks, and what we now see of it is partly the work of 
their hands. The original plan, and doubtless some part of the existing walls, are 
due to Villehardouin, the Prince of Achaia.

The Frescoes.—Several of the churches possess a number of singularly 
beautiful wall-paintings. Space will permit only the briefest mention of these. 
Some are of especial interest inasmuch as they show a breaking-away from the 
rigid Byzantine tradition of the past. The paintings of the Peribleptos, especially, 
are marked by an unwonted elegance, grace, and feeling of life. The older 
Byzantine type—austere and solemn, but admirable in its stately grandeur for 
wall-decoration—is to be found in some of the frescoes of the Metropolis. In the 
Pantanassa there is somewhat of a straining after the picturesque, and the back­ 
ground is often overloaded with the curious architectural devices, which are a 
characteristic feature of Byzantine mural paintings. Nevertheless, the total effect 
given by the interior of this peaceful and lovely church, its walls and vaults clad 
with frescoes of delicate colour, is of compelling charm.

The paintings in the churches represent scenes from the life of Christ, the 
Virgin and saints, single figures of saints and martyrs, etc. The wall-paintings 
of Mistra often reach a high level of excellence, and are among the finest examples 
of Byzantine Art which have come down to us.

I remember well, how, after examining church after church, I climbed up 
the steep causeway of Mistra, past crumbling wall of house and monastery and 
palace, to the castle which Villehardouin erected on the summit six hundred years 
ago. The narrow cobbled street climbed and twisted upwards until it gave way 
to a path which wound over ground bestrewn with broken fragments of stone. 
At every step on the upward way there was revealed something of beauty or 
of interest.

Here was a classic sarcophagus, now a trough, in and out of which trickled the 
cool waters of a spring. Here was a coat of arms built into a wall. Here was an 
arched doorway, leading into the courtyard of a monastery. Every now and then 
appeared one of the little churches, with its walls of brick and stone, its decorated 
apse, its roof of red-brown titles, and its drum-supported cupola. Then, amid the
Upper City ruins on the high plateau, stretched the palace, whence the Emperors' sons ruled the Despotate of Mistra, in the days of its glory.

Leaving the scattered remains of the dead city, the path became sharply steeper. It was evening, the darkness was falling, and the chill of the night was beginning to be felt. Silence reigned supreme amid the lonely and decaying relics of the past. The rough ground stretched up to the entrance gate of Villehardouin's bastioned castle. The courtyard within was a green sward, encircled by ivy-clad walls. Below, upon the hillside, clustered the ruins of Mistra, and from their midst rose the cupolas and bell-towers of its churches. Beyond it stretched the long level of the Lacedaemonian Plain, vanishing slowly in the fading light. Behind, rose the snowy wall of Taygetos, austere and chill, and upon that side the rock fell down, a sheer and terrible precipice, to a gloomy gorge, hundreds of feet below.

There are times when the traveller in Greece forgets the classic, forgets the Byzantine, forgets the modern, when he feels the glamour of the romantic story of those Western adventurers who came to Greece in the thirteenth century, who erected baronial strongholds upon the classic soil, who held tournaments and founded schools of chivalry, who built abbeys for Latin monks in the quiet vales.

He feels it at Calamata, where a Frankish castle overlooks the fertile Messenian plain. He feels it at Andravida, on the long land of Elis, where William of Champlitte built his splendid country-seat, and where, near the little wayside station, there still stand the ruins of the Gothic chancel of Santa Sophia, in which the barons held their feudal parliaments. He feels it in many solitary places where the walls of a medieval castle yet crown some lonely hill-top.

But not least does he feel it within the deserted precincts of the fortress which rises on the summit of the ruin-clad hill of Mistra,—the fortress which Villehardouin built, and where he held sway, though for so brief a time. Within its abandoned walls, in imagination there, can be seen the mail-clad figure of the prince and be heard the clatter of the horse-hoofs of his knightly cavalcade.

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THE CHURCH OF KAI SARIANI
IN ATTICA:
ITS HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE, AND MURAL PAINTINGS
A STUDY IN BYZANTINE ART

By
Rev. J. ARNOTT HAMILTON, M.A.

(Reprinted from the Scottish Ecclesiological Society's Transactions)

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In the classic land of Greece, replete with memorials of the days of its glorious youth, whatever relics there be left of its Middle Age possess a peculiar attraction for the thoughtful traveller.

It may be the curious juxtaposition of pagan and Christian, of classic and medieval, which causes this fascination—as when one sees painted upon the inner walls of the Parthenon a group of haloed saints, the faint and well-nigh vanished frescoes which recall the days when the Temple of Athene became the Church of the Mother of God—or as when one finds built into the walls of the Small Cathedral of Athens a slab whereon is carved a pair of wrestlers, and a temple frieze depicting pagan festivals. It may be simply that the medieval is unlooked for and almost unexpected in a land which we have been accustomed to think of too exclusively in connexion with classical themes. The very presence of the medieval seems paradoxical; thus perhaps the romance is made more intense which clings to those crumbling baronial strongholds on the hill-tops of Arcadia, and elsewhere in Greece,—the castles of the Norman Knights who lorded it over the Principality of Achaia, or the Burgundian Dukes who bore sway at Athens.

Among the numerous relics of the medieval epoch which are to be found all over Greece, the ancient Byzantine churches hold a foremost place. Certainly, details of their story are scanty, but the little we possess is often of deep interest. In the case of a monastic church at least, there appears every now and then in the course of its long and mostly forgotten annals some piece of information which casts a ray of welcome light on the changeful condition of Greece in Christian days under its many different masters. Nay, it not unfrequently happens that the site

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1This paper is a study undertaken by the writer during his tenure in 1913 of the "John and Elizabeth Stuart-Blackie Scholarship," from the University of Edinburgh. By the conditions of this foundation its holder is required to spend one winter at Athens. While so doing it was the writer's good fortune to reside at the British School of Archaeology in that city; he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to the learning and the kindness of Mr. F. W. Hasluck, of the British School, who suggested the subject and gave him much encouragement and help. The paper was read before the Scottish Ecclesiological Society and is reprinted from the Transactions. Grateful thanks are due to Professor Cooper of Glasgow University for his revision of the paper. The photograph of the General View of Kaisariani is by Mrs. F. W. Hasluck, that of the drum and cupola by Mr. Hasluck. That of the West Front is from a water-colour drawing by the writer's mother; the photograph of the Divine Liturgy is by himself.
of the church has associations with times far older than the Christian era. The path to a church may once have drawn worshippers to a temple of Apollo or Aphrodite, which stood there; and before even its erection the spot may have been sacred. Enshrined in the poet's verse we may find an ancient legend which haunts the locality.

From an architectural point of view the Byzantine churches of Greece are of considerable interest. Many are merely plain rectangular buildings, but often a more ambitious edifice was attempted; and some of these are charming gems of architecture, possessing a quaint and rare beauty all their own.

They possess a third feature which claims our attention, namely, the wall-paintings which adorn their interior.

Art has in the East ever been a handmaid to religion; and the frescoes or mosaics which cover the walls and ceilings of many Oriental churches are no less prominent a feature than those icons which are so numerous within them. Two of the larger churches in Greece which were adorned with mosaics still possess much of their grandeur, that of S. Luke in Phocis, and that of Daphni in Attica; in both of these the whole of the upper part of the interior is a rich and glowing mass of colour. Fresco was more commonly employed than mosaic, and must have been used in hundreds of churches all over Greece; but it is perishable, and much of the old work has vanished, many churches having had their interiors whitewashed over, or repainted by recent hands in a crude and glaring fashion. Nevertheless numerous examples of old Byzantine fresco are still to be found. Byzantine art may not reach the highest level of artistic excellence. The drawing may be bad, the drapery stiff, the figures unnatural, the scenes conventional and stereotyped; nevertheless, it possesses its own undeniable charm, and the general effect of an interior covered with old Byzantine frescoes is often of extreme beauty. You enter the church, and around you the walls are clad with frescoes in rich and varied hues which time has softened and deepened. The great head and shoulders of Christ Pantocrator is visible to you far above; the Virgin is seated high in the apse; the whole series of events in the Life and Passion of the Saviour is spread out before your eyes. Our Lord, a grand and majestic figure, is pre-eminent in them all: scenes from the life of the Virgin or of a saint are relegated to a part of the wall which is less prominent. Then come the Prophets with their scrolls, the Evangelists with pen in hand, the heavenly Hierarchy of Angels and Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim and Thrones. All have places assigned to them; and always there appear some from the great company of Eastern saints, solemn and austere figures looking down on the sacred Mysteries continually performed before their eyes, raising their hands in grave and silent blessing, and holding scrolls inscribed with ancient words which call to piety and faith.

On the slopes of Mount Hymettus, five miles from Athens and at a level of about 600 feet above the level of the sea, there stands a half ruined monastery in the courtyard of which is an ancient Byzantine church. Designated at different

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1 The subject of our study—and herein lies its chief interest—exemplifies these three features in a marked degree.
times by different titles, it now bears the name of **Kaisariani** (or Cesariani) possibly because it was from Caesarea that the original sacred icon of the church was supposed to have been brought. The approach to it commands a view of great loveliness. True, the hillside on which we stand is bare and dusty. The scanty grass seems to force its way with difficulty through the hard-baked and stony soil. The courses where the streams should run are dry and parched even in the winter season. But if we lift our eyes from the ground close by to the distant hills we see the dusty land transformed with a strange and unexpected beauty and a blend of colours, pale, delicate, almost ethereal, evolved from this barren Attic plain. The crests of the hills in the distance, Aegaleus and Pentelicus, stand out with extraordinary distinctness of outline in the clear air of the south; yet there rests upon them that faint, almost imperceptible haze which lends such a touch of enchantment to the scenery of Greece. From the distant hills stretches the long plain, beautiful in the pale brown delicacy of its colour, and here and there stand out from it the deep green cypress groves and plantations of pine, all the more striking to the eye from the rareness of trees in this unfertile land.

In the distance wind the waters of the Saronic Gulf round by Salamis to the mountains of the Morea. In the centre of the plain below are the white walls of the houses of Athens, the lion-shaped Mount Lycabettus, and—centre of the landscape—the Acropolis crowned with the marble columns of the Parthenon.

Such is the scene which meets the gaze on the road to Kaisariani; but at Kaisariani itself one sees none of it, for the monastery is hidden in a secluded vale, shut in by steep hills on every side. There is a great contrast between the valley and the barren hillsides surrounding it. Cypress, pine and olive grow in profusion here.

The history of the site goes back to early times. It centres round a spring of clear water which gushes forth from a marble ram's head on the outside east wall of the monastery. This spring is the source of the Eridanus, a tributary of the Ilissus. Now we know that on Hymettus was a spring which in pagan times was a place of pilgrimage, the water being supposed to possess a miraculous curative power. Suidas and Photius tell us that this spring was called variously Kullopera, Kulloupera, Kukloupera, Kallia at Pera. Cratinus in *Malkathoi* calls it Kallia.

Now there seems every reason to identify this fountain of Kullopera with Kaisariani. Kullopera is mentioned as being in a thick wooded place; and springs and wooded places are alike uncommon on Mount Hymettus. Then, in Christian days, the spring at Kaisariani was believed to possess a miraculous power, as we know Kullopera was held to have in pagan times. Both were places of pilgrimage. Around Kaisariani are fragments from a temple, which doubtless stood at the sanctuary of Kullopera. There is thus every reason to identify the two places.

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1 Cyriani, Syriani.

2 Because of this ram's head the Turks, when in Greece, gave the place the name of Cos Bashi.
But there exists also a reference of extreme interest in a classic writer to a spring on Hymettus, where indeed no name is given, but where the only possible identification is with Kallopera and Kaisariani. For Ovid sings how Procris at a sacred fount on Hymettus met death at the hand of her husband Cephalus. He was out hunting on the mountain, and hearing a rustling in a thicket, he shot his arrow into it, deeming the movement that of some wild beast, while, in reality, it was his wife. Ovid describes the spring as follows:

"Est prope purpureos colles florentis Hymetti
Fons sacer et viridi caespite mollis humus
Silva nemus non alta facit. Tegit arbutus herbam
Ros maris et lauri nigraque myrtus olent
Nec densum foliis buxum frigilesque myricae
Nec tenues cytisi cultaque pinus abest." ¹

which we may translate—"There is near the purple hillocks of flowery Hymettus a sacred spring, and beside it a soft green sward and a small wooded glade; the arbutus covers the ground, and the rosemary and the laurel and the dark myrtle cast their perfume around; and there abound the box-tree with its thick foliage and the delicate tamarisk and the tender laburnum and the elegant pine."

The best commentary on these lines is the following quotation from the English traveller Dodwell who visited Greece in the Eighteenth century:

"With respect to the purple hillocks the poet gives two proofs of accuracy. Hymettus is remarkable for its purple tint at a certain distance, particularly from Athens, about an hour before sunset, when the purple is so strong that the exact representation of it in a drawing coloured from nature has the appearance of exaggeration. The other Athenian mountains do not assume the same colour at any time of day. . . . It seems clear that in speaking of the hillocks of Hymettus Ovid had in view the number of round hills at the foot of the mountain, which are particularly numerous near Kaisariani. He does not inform us to whom the fountain was sacred, but it was probably dedicated to Venus, and is perhaps the Kallia of Cratinus. The green sward is peculiar to the place and must have struck the poet if he visited the spot, for it is perhaps the only place in Attica where there is a bed of fine luxuriant turf, such as we see in England and other cool climates, where it seldom loses its verdure even during the summer months. The sun penetrates so little into this sheltered glen that throughout the summer it preserves its lively green. The plants and shrubs that the poet mentions still grow about the spot and are common on the Attic mountains."

So much for Kaisariani as the place of the legend of Cephalus and Procris. We now have to consider it as the site of a pagan temple. There are to be found in the church and courtyard numerous fragments from such a building. We

¹ *Ars Amatoria*, iii., 687-692, whence Milton's "flowery hill Hymettus."
know that a temple to Aphrodite stood near here on Mount Hymettus. These fragments are doubtless from this temple, which probably occupied this very spot. Moreover, inside the church, the four central columns which support drum and cupola, are Roman, unfluted, with Ionic capitals. Neither in style nor execution are they of a very high order. Below the altar, too, is another Ionic capital. Outside the monastery wall rests a marble slab bearing an inscription which gives a long list of priests, and beside the little chapel of S. Mark—five hundred yards to the north—I discovered a piece of marble with ogee moulding. Thus the history of the site of Kaisariani can be traced through the pre-Christian centuries. The old legend of Cephalus and Procris—the sacred Kallopera whither pagan devotees came to the miraculous spring—the temple to Aphrodite—the memories of all these haunt the vale.

We pass to Christian times. The earliest witnesses to the Kaisariani of Christian times lie before our eyes, in the shape of numerous pieces of sculptured stone—bits of cornice, lintel, doorpost—built haphazard into the walls of the church and monastic buildings. Some of these fragments are obviously Christian—for example a cross in the western wall of the church; another, the lintel of the north door from narthex to nave has a cross between doves: others display flowers and trailing tendrils; others give weak imitations of the Greek acanthus and the egg and dart. It has been shewn (by comparison with Christian fragments on the Acropolis) that these latter are undoubtedly Christian, and not from the Aphrodite temple. All these relics seem to point to the existence of a church at Kaisariani before the present one, and (as they are in the style of the Fourth and Fifth centuries) to its existence at that early date. Other evidence is not lacking. Slabs with curious geometric designs on them rest in the courtyard. The export of such from Constantinople to churches all over the Levant was common in the Fifth century. Again it is known that it was the custom in that age to establish outposts of the Church round about Athens. For Athens itself was the stronghold of the dying paganism; and before Justinian closed the University and put an end to the heathen worships the Church tried to capture this last fortress by planting around the city communities whence the light of Christianity might shine into it. Such a monastery was founded at Daphni, and, in view of the other evidence, it seems probable that such an one was founded at Kaisariani too.

The present church may date any time from the Eleventh century onwards—the century in which its peculiar style of architecture took its origin.

The first definite reference to the monastery is a letter written to its Abbot in the Twelfth century, when the Burgundian family of De la Roche held the Duchy of Athens. We know nothing more of it till 1458, when a most interesting event in

1 With a design springing from the foot which fills the lower angles of the cross, and rosettes in the upper angles. Design on title-page.
2 These fragments are of great interest, but are easily apt to be overlooked by the visitor. They lie beside the east wall, near the Belvedere.
its history took place. By this time the Duchy of Athens had passed into the hands of the Accaiuoli, descendants of a Florentine banker who had become Duke a hundred and fifty years before. The tyranny of the last of the Florentine Dukes had become so intolerable to the Greek population that when, in 1456, Omar, son of Turakhan, came to Athens at the bidding of the Sultan Mahomet, conqueror of Constantinople, his advent was hailed with joy. Two years after the capture of Athens, Mahomet came in person to view his new conquest.

The keys of the gates of the city were handed to him on a golden disk by the then Abbot of Kaisariani. The incident and its results are narrated by George Wheler, an English traveller who in 1683 journeyed through Greece. His words are these: "The convent payeth but one Chequin for all its duties to the Voivode. It is a piece of gold of the Venetian Coyn, worth two dollars and an half, and about twelve shillings English. The reason of which small tribute is that when Athens was taken by Mahomet the Second, the Hegoumenos or Abbot of this Convent was sent by the Town to deliver him up the Keyes of the Gates: which Mahomet was so glad of, that to testifie his joy and content and to recompense the messenger, he exempted this Convent from all manner of taxes and customs: preserving only one Chequin to be paid as a Quit-rent for an acknowledgment." This happened in 1458.

Two hundred and twenty years pass by, and then in 1678 we find another reference to Kaisariani in a bull of the Patriarch of Constantinople confirming the freedom of the monastery: "Since it has been free from earliest times no bishop or other person can interfere with its affairs." 1

In 1716, however, its independence was taken away, and it was placed under the power of the Metropolitan of Athens. By this time it had begun to decline; 2 it rapidly fell into decay, and in the course of the Eighteenth century became entirely deserted. But in Greece a sacred place is always a sacred place. The ploughshare may never pass over it, and the atmosphere of sanctity never leaves it. So Kaisariani, after having been abandoned for many a year, has become a centre of worship once again. The land of the monastery is now a Government farm, the dwellings of the monks are ruinous; but their church is a church still, and a well-kept one. A priest is attached to it: its door is ever open, and the peasant and the stranger and the shepherd from the hills may enter the shrine at all times to pay their devotion to the Most High: services are performed in the ancient building as in the days of old.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF KAISARIANI.

The later Byzantine style of architecture, of which Kaisariani is an typical example, arose in the Tenth or possibly in the Eleventh century. It speedily

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1 A noteworthy case of "exemption" in the Orthodox Church.
2 Yet in 1725 Fournet visited "Pendeli and Cyriani," "the two richest monasteries in Attica." He "found few books" (i.e. MSS) "et tous mauvais."
became popular, and there are numerous examples of it to be found in Greece and elsewhere in the East. Although many variations are to be found, nevertheless there exists a well-defined type, which in numerous cases was followed closely. The chief feature of the smaller Byzantine churches of the Eleventh century onwards is a cupola resting on a polygonal drum—a feature which gives to the exterior a quaint and beautiful appearance. The drum of the cupola—which is sometimes so high that the height of the church is greater than its width—rests upon spherical pendentives. The cupola and drum with its pendentives covers a square. From this central square branch four arms of equal length, the central square and four arms giving the plan of a Greek cross. These four arms are roofed with barrel vaults. The vaults wedge in the pendentives, forming abutments for the pendentives and the cupola and drum. The vaults spring from four columns in the centre—in the case of Kaisariani the four Roman columns from the temple of Aphrodite.

The ground plan of the whole building forms a square (excluding the apses). There thus remains at the corners of the cross four small squares to be filled up, and this is done by covering them with domes or vaults. But the roofs which cover the four small corner squares are much lower than those which cover the four arms of the cross, and thus the church both internally and externally presents to the beholder a cruciform appearance.

From the Eastern end project three apses. Internally they are semi-circular: on the exterior they are usually semi-hexagonal (as at Kaisariani), but sometimes semi-circular. In the central apse stands the altar. The Northern apse is called
the prothesis: here the Preparation of the Sacred Elements takes place during the first part of the Liturgy: the Southern apse—the diaconicon—is a vestry.

Let us return to Kaisariani and see how it exemplifies the characteristics described.

Having climbed up the steep slopes of Hymettus, we pass through an outer gate and find ourselves in the outer courtyard of the monastery. The old monastic buildings, half-ruined and falling to pieces, surround us. To the right are the sleeping apartments—to the left a wall which bounds an inner courtyard containing on its west side the refectory, and facing it on the east, the church.

About the whole place there is an indescribable charm. The hallowed associations and memories thirty centuries old, the picturesqueness of the crumbling walls and ramshackle houses, the marble pillars from the temple, the white doves which flutter round the court, the colour of the scene, the deep green cypresses standing like sentinels, the narthex and belfry washed yellow, the dome of rich brown stone and reddish tiles, the brilliant atmosphere, the blue sky of Greece—all lend to Kaisariani its strange enchantment.

In the church itself there are some further features to be noticed, incident to the type of church of which Kaisariani is a specimen. A belfry stands at the right, and in front of the central dome rises another cupola resting on a drum lower in height than the central one. This second dome covers the centre of the narthex and the belfry surmounts a tiny side-chapel dedicated, as the inscription above the door declares, to S. Anthony. An examination shews that the narthex and side-chapel are of a later date than the main body of the church. They are built of uncoursed rubble, the stones being placed together in a rough and haphazard fashion. The church itself is carefully and beautifully constructed of smooth porous brown stones and deep red tiles. Stones and tiles alike are placed in horizontal rows, a row of stones alternating with a row of tiles; and each row runs uniformly around the whole building.

With regard to the cupolas, it is be noted that the pendentives of the narthex cupola do not rest on the central columns but upon the outer (west) and inner (east) walls of the narthex, the length (east to west) of the narthex being the diameter of the space covered by the cupola with its pendentives.

Both cupolas towards the base curve slightly outwards, so that the tiles project to a small extent beyond the drums. Thus they rest solidly upon the horizontal top of the drums, which are octagonal, and are pierced by windows: the windows lie wholly in the drum.

There is another and commoner type of cupola and drum to be found in the smaller Byzantine churches. In this second type the cupola does not curve outward but grows straight out of the drum and is a continuation of it; and in these churches the tops of the windows cut into the cupola, which rests on engaged columns at the corners of the sides of the drum. The columns are carried over to each other by arches above the windows.1

1 Examples of the second type are the Small Cathedral of Athens, the Capnicarnea, Omorphi Ecclesia: (on the Attic plain), Asteri (Hymettus) and the monastic church of S. John the Theologian, a few miles north-west of Kaisariani; of the former another example is to be found in S. John Karyaes at the north-west end of Hymettus.
The windows are an interesting feature. Tile-work appears prominently in connexion with them. Above each window are two concentric semi-circles filled with tiles radiating from the centre.

There are double windows in the south wall and central apse. Here a semi-circle of tiles surmounts each window and there is a further semi-circle over all. A small pillar with a capital separates the two windows.¹

THE COLOURING OF THE CHURCH.

Time has toned the colouring, and the passing years have added to the beauty of the little building. Every shade of brown and yellow, from the pale yellow of the outer wall to the brown of the stone and the dark red-brown of the tiles which roof the cupola, enter into its colouring and form a rare and pleasing harmony. Thus while its style is typical of many others, the colour charm of Kaisariani is unique.

As all is colour without the church so likewise all is colour within. In the narthex is painted a long row of Eastern saints, clad in mantle and tunic, vivid green, brown, red and blue. Some are monks, some anchorites and ascetics of early days, some great healers and wonder-workers. Stiff and solemn figures they are with wrinkled features and long flowing beards. The vaults, walls and cupola of the narthex are clad with frescoes; as are the vaulted roofs of the church also; but the lower walls of the church have been white-washed. In the cupola of the church far above are painted the head and shoulders of Christ Pantocrator. In the apse is a long procession of angels hastening to an altar where stands Our Lord.

Before examining the frescoes in detail it may be well to consider what are the essential qualities and characteristics of the style of Art of which they are typical examples.

In a judgment of Byzantine Art, it must always be remembered that its primary aim was not to please but to instruct. The church walls were covered with paintings, in order that the worshippers might be taught concerning Christ, and the testimony of the Scriptures to Christ; and in order that, through the painted picture, the soul might be raised to the contemplation of heavenly things. It is in the light of this end which it has in view, that Byzantine Art must be judged.

This being so, drawing, technique, production of fine artistic effect, were secondary considerations. Judged by these things, Byzantine mural paintings are open to much criticism. The drawing is bad. The drapery is stiff and hangs round the figures in heavy folds. The attitudes of the figures are unnatural, and their expressions unreal. The feet and hands often seem to be rather joined to the drapery than to be parts of the body. In each scene the composition follows a traditional arrangement.

¹Such windows are common in the smaller Byzantine churches. A singularly beautiful example is to be found in the wall of Omorphi Ecclesia.
In the treatment of nature and of architecture we notice a similar clinging to
conventionality and likewise a similar unreality and unnaturalness. Towers and
spires, crenellated walls, colonnades, exteriors of houses, etc., are arranged in quite
an arbitrary but yet somewhat symmetrical fashion to form architectural back­
grounds. Nature is represented as a rule by red-coloured hillocks with sloping
tops, and by conventional trees shaped like large leaves, which grow upon them.

Indeed, the Byzantine artist, who was usually a monk, never considered nature.
The composition of a scene was prescribed for him in manuals issued by the Church.
The subject had been treated in much the same traditional way by many previous
generations of artists; and, without any actual copy before him, he followed their
mode of treatment as he could best remember.

Thus the same conventions, the same style, the same mistakes, were handed
down from generation to generation.

For all these drawbacks, Byzantine Art must not be neglected or despised.
These conventional and stereotyped designs are better suited for the decoration
of a wall than are more natural and realistic ones. We need only compare the
conventional Byzantine Art with all its bad drawing to the modern Russian
paintings in some of the new churches in Athens. The latter may be true to life,
and in their way quite good pictures: but they are essentially pictures, and as wall-decoration they are out of place and unpleasing.

Indeed, while much criticism may be urged to the details of individual
Byzantine frescoes, the general effect of an interior covered with them is often
singularly lovely. The colouring is in many cases tender and delicate, the single
figures, with their robes broad masses of rich colour, are imposing and grand; the
procession of angels in the Divine Liturgy who bear with rapid but silent motion,
the chalice and censer and advance to CHRIST at the altar seem to possess a
mystical and more than earthly beauty.

To quote from Mr. O. M. Dalton in his monumental work on Byzantine Art:
"In spite of its manifest defects, it maintains an honourable place among the arts
of the world. To understand its position we must accept it as an art based on
ethical and intellectual foundations: its chief aim is not the expression of personal
emotion but the embodiment of a general human ideal, to which it always makes
ultimate reference. No individual feeling is allowed to interfere with the set
purpose of edification; not the feeling of the artist or spectator but the nature of
the subject is always the primary aim. But Byzantine Art is actually exalted by
its limitations. Through those very theological restrictions which forbade devotion
to created things as objects of beauty only, the artist was held in the path of noble
simplicity, and the power of bold and wise renunciation was communicated to his
work. He was obliged to paint for the instruction of simple people. He was
compelled to omit the inessential detail in order not to confuse the story; for the
sake of the spectator he must preserve a breadth and simplicity of composition.
He dared not confuse his outlined figures by too conspicuous or realistic a back­
The very conventions adopted for ulterior aims contribute to a greater majesty of effect. By adopting the natural and inevitable methods of its environment, by fulfilling dominant religious needs, this art which set out to instruct, achieved an independent value as magnificent and congruous decoration: through renunciation it rose to grandeur.”

MURAL PAINTINGS OF KAISARIAN.

In the centre of the cupola is painted that representation of Christ Pantocrator (Almighty) which is so common in Eastern churches. Within a many-coloured circular pattern are portrayed the head and shoulders of our Saviour. He appears—as is usual—with beard, moustache and long hair. He is clad in reddish tunic and white mantle, which hangs in folds, heavily shaded. In His left hand He holds the Gospels (bound in gold and blue). He blesses in the Greek fashion with His right hand, which is so extended that it almost touches the circular pattern. This latter, which consists of several concentric circles of lozenges—diamond-shaped—fitting into each other, represents the Rainbow round the Throne spoken of in the Revelation of S. John.

The Greek theologian of the Middle Ages saw in the church the image of the world, and in the cupola which towered high above its central part he saw the heavens. It was thus natural that there came to be painted in the cupola the representation of the Almighty, looking down as if from Heaven, watching over and blessing His worshipping people upon earth.

Such representations are all of one type as a rule. They may vary in details, especially in the position of the hand which blesses. The expression, however, shows considerable variation, from very grim to mild and forbearing.

(2) Angels and other Holy ones around the Pantocrator. Just below the "rainbow" is painted a circle of angels and saints. (a) In the centre of the North side stands the Blessed Virgin, on a background which consists of a large white six-pointed star. Her arms are raised in the same attitude as is to be found in an "orans" of the Catacombs. She is clad in a slate-coloured dress: a dull red cloak covers her shoulders and falls over her outstretched arms.

(b) In the centre of the South side stands S. John the Baptist, clad in a single yellow garment, and provided with wings as the "angel," or messenger of God. In his left hand he holds an open scroll. His head is encircled with a halo, and he is depicted with red wings like an angel.1

1 It is found at all places and times: at Daphni, the Blessed Lake in Phocis, Peribleptos church (Mistra), the Mount Athos monasteries, Omorphi, Ecclesia, etc. Other devices such as the Ascension, however, also occur.

2 The wings allude to the title "angel" given to the Baptist by S. Mark (1, 2). Didron remarks on his aiming that though himself of the Older Dispensation he stands so close on the threshold of the New, that the Church alike in the East and in the West has never refused to him this sign of sainthood. How could it—to him who pointed out the Lamb of God? and who is, as the ancient Offices for his day describes him, the link (➡️) between the Testaments.
(c) In the centre of the West side there is the TETRAMORPH—the mysterious four-fold "living creature" of Ezekiel's vision. The directions as given in the Painter's Guide¹ have here been closely followed:

"From the head of an Angel spring six wings, four red and two white. Two wings are stretched out to right and left. Two rise above the head. The two white are partially concealed by the last two. Between the tips of the wings raised above the head is an Eagle with outstretched wings. By the lower left wing is a Lion, by the right an Ox. Round the head of the Angel and of each of the animals is a halo. Each of the latter holds a copy of the Gospels. Flames play around the heads of the Ox and Lion.

(d) In the centre of the West side is represented that symbolic device known as the HETIMASIA, or Preparation of the Throne. It consists here of a throne (the colour is red), upon which there rests a cross. Leaning against the cross are the lance and the reed with the sponge at the end. Upon the cross hangs the crown of thorns, and on the throne below there rests the Book of the Gospels. The Hetimasia refers to the Last Judgment. Christ will one day re-appear to judge the quick and the dead. There is portrayed the empty throne, ready for the coming of the Judge. It is naturally surrounded with symbols of His Passion.

(e) Between each of these four figures are ANGELS.² Each angel holds in his right hand a white seal, and in his left hand a staff. They are red-winged and white-winged alternately, those on either side of S. John the Baptist having white wings. They are clad in the sticharion (Αβ), phailonion (chasuble), and epitrackelion (stole) or omophorion (pallium).

3. Below the circle of angels appears that of the PROPHETS as follows: (a) Daniel, young and beardless; (b) Isaiah, old, with round, short, white beard; (c) Elijah, old, with shaggy hair and beard; (d) Habbakuk, young, beardless with brown hair; (e) Jeremiah, old, with round white beard; (f) Solomon, young, beardless; (g) David, old with shaggy short white hair and beard; (h) Moses, [much obliterated]. Each holds an open scroll, either in both hands or in the left hand. Five of them are clad in mantle and tunic—white, slate, green, yellow, or dull red. David, Solomon and Daniel are richly dressed in imperial costume. The two kings wear small crowns. Daniel wears a small peaked cap. These three took on these special characteristics as early as the Tenth century.

4. In the pendentives are the FOUR EVANGELISTS, each one pen in hand, with his proper symbol. And they are seated; and behind each is an architectural background.

¹ The Painter's Guide—by one Evangelis, a monk of Mount Athos, is of supreme importance in the study of Byzantine Art. It gives complete and minute instructions for depicting Scriptural and other incidents on the walls of a church, and "may be regarded as embodying the unchanging rules of Greek Art from the Eighth century onwards." It was once thought to date from the Eleventh century, but is now supposed to be very much later. There were doubtless many other such manuals.

² Round the Pantocrator are usually painted Angels, but sometimes in a different way than at Kaisariani. In the Cupola of the Peribleptos at Mistra, are depicted different orders in the heavenly hierarchy. In S. Sophia, Kiev, they perform the Divine Liturgy.
THE FRESCOES OF THE TRANSEPTS.

(i) On the vault of the south transept The Baptism.—In the centre, naked, save for a loin cloth, stands the figure of Christ. In front, to right and left are jagged rocks. To the right, elevated on a ledge of rock, which represents the river-bank, stands the Baptist. He stretches eagerly forward and places his right hand on the head of the Saviour. Below, on the right hand side of the picture, are four angels, clad in red mantles; three bend down, of which two hold their mantles forward over outstretched arms. The fourth stands gazing upwards in astonishment on the descending Dove, the Holy Ghost.

Below the Forerunner is the River Jordan—represented (according to a personification inherited by tradition of Classical Art) by the figure of an aged man nude and of small size, seated upon a rock. He looks backward at Christ as if in terror, and pours the water from a vase. The opened heaven, out of which the Dove descends on the Head of Jesus Christ, is represented by a green semicircle, with a white star in the centre.

At the edge of this picture to the North is a double line of red-brown enclosing a black and white decorative pattern. A single line separates it from figures of three prophets. Another single line separates these from The Transfiguration. Upon a rocky peak (colour blue) in the centre of the picture stands Christ. He wears a long white robe and blesses with His right hand. A great oval halo (the mandorla) surrounds Him: from it issue two pointed rays at right and left. On a separate rocky peak on the left (coloured brown) stands Elijah clad in a green mantle. He bends forwards and holds a long scroll. On a similar peak on the right stands Moses (clad in purple-brown). He holds the Tables of the Law. In the foreground lie SS. Peter, James and John, amazed at the sight. One (in yellow) gazes upward and shields his eyes with his hands dazzled by the appearance of Christ. The apostle in the centre (in green) clutches the ground with both hands. The third is prostrate. In another part of the picture Our Lord and the three disciples are seen ascending the hill: similarly, on the left, they descend.

1 The introduction of the River God Jordan is an interesting survival. We find him from the earliest to the latest times—alike in the cupola of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna, and in the frescoes of Mount Athos.

2 The representation of the Baptism at Kaisariani is very typical, and follows the directions as given in the Painter's Guide very closely, as do indeed all the scene pictures of the church itself. Comparing the Baptism at Kaisariani with a fresco, on the walls of the church of the monastery of Dionysion on Mount Athos, which was painted in 1547 and represents the same incident, one finds but slight variations. There appears a group of haloed figures behind the rock to the left of John the Baptist on the Dionysion fresco. He is clad in a single garment of hair at Dionysion, whereas at Kaisariani he appears in mantle and tunic. There too we get a three-quarter view of his face, here a side view. The position of Christ's arms varies slightly the two places. Otherwise there is great similarity. The attitude of the angels (three stooping and one gazing upwards), the very position and type of the rocks, are almost identical.

3 The above is the traditional type of representation. The great Glory which encircles the figure of Christ is sometimes circular as in the Peribleptos Church at Mistra. Sometimes the rays of light are continued upwards as well as downwards to left and right, and often there descends from a segment above a ray of light upon His Head (much as in the Baptism).
the same incident) are represented in the one picture. We shall meet with this again in Kaisariani. It is a feature common to much early Art, and in that of Byzantium it is very common.

The Anastasis—literally the Resurrection of our Lord Himself, but here transferred to His delivering the spirits in prison on His Descent into Hades. "This term," says Mr. O. M. Dalton, "is used in East Christian Art for the scene which in the West is described as the Descent into Hades, or 'the Harrowing of Hell.'" It is symbolic of, and a substitute for, the Resurrection, which, curiously enough, is a less popular subject in the East. The fact itself is authorized by important statements of the canonical Scriptures (Acts ii. 31, S. Peter iii. 18, 20, iv. 6), and is confessed in one of the Twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed; but the artists in portraying it were greatly helped by the details supplied in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.¹

In the background is painted a black circle within a white semi-circle. This is the Mouth of Hades. Before this cave stands Christ. He bends half down to grasp the hand of Adam, an aged man who kneels on the ground and looks up at Him. Christ tramples beneath His feet the broken fragments of the brazen gates of Hades.

Behind Adam stand David and Solomon (clad as in the cupola); beside them is S. John the Baptist, who wears a halo and looks to Christ. Behind are other personages from old Testament story. Above float two angels bearing crosses. At Christ's right kneels Eve lifting her hands to him. Behind Eve is a group of seven or eight people.² Behind them is a rocky background.

Three Prophets (unnamed) occupy the centre of the vault as at the other side.

On the Western side of the vault of the north transept we have the Incredulity of S. Thomas. The background is architectural. To right and left rise yellow towers with windows and red roofs. In front is a massive arch, the roof of which rises to a point: below is an arched doorway: above its keystone we see painted a small head. To right and left of the arch are grouped the disciples, clad in green, red and yellow. In front of the "closed door" stands Christ, a dignified and commanding figure. His head is encircled with a great gold halo. His right hand is raised, and He gazes sternly down at Thomas who touches His side. Christ is clad in green and is much larger in size than any of the other figures.

On the west wall of the main body of the church above the archway which enters into the narthex is depicted Christ entering Jerusalem. He rides

¹ See Lord Lindsay's History of Christian Art, Vol. i., p. 32.
² A distinct development can be traced in the composition of this interesting subject. In very early Roman examples, at S. Maria Antiqua and S. Clemente, Christ appears with only Adam and Eve. At S. Luke in Phocis, there are in addition David and Solomon; Christ faces the beholder and tramples on the doors. At Daphni there are more figures but no angels; Christ looks at Adam, and tramples the prostrate Satan and the gates beneath His feet. (At S. Maria Antiqua there is beneath Him only Satan, at Kaisariani only the gates). The Painter's Guide states that Christ is to be shown taking Adam with His right hand and Eve with His left. The composition becomes more and more crowded as the years go on, and instead of trampling on Satan, Christ treads on the gates.
The Church of Kaisariani in Attica

on the ass’s colt and is followed by His disciples. Diminutive figures spread palm-branches before Him and others stand at the gate of the city. The background here is architectural, and the figures in the picture are remarkably few.

On the southern side of the west vault (entering into the narthex) is portrayed the Raising of Lazarus. This is a crowded scene. The fresco is somewhat indistinct. In the centre is a red building: rocks appear at right and left. Disciples sit at the left. Christ, clad in white, stretches His hand forward to Lazarus in the centre (this is very indistinct). At the right, Lazarus appears again, encased, this time, in white wrappings which a figure kneeling at his feet proceeds to take off.

On the other side of the vault we have The Last Supper. The background is architectural, at the left a yellow house with windows and red roof—at the right a hexagonal tower surmounted by a cupola. In the centre is seen a double arch (in perspective) resting on pillars. With His back to the archway sits Christ before a large square table round which are grouped the disciples. Christ alone has a halo here, and the disciples are much smaller in size than His dominating figure. On Christ’s left sits S. John, leaning upon the Saviour’s breast; to His right is Judas. The disciples are portrayed in varied postures. In fact, variety has been deliberately sought after. One turns round: another raises his hand: another stretches across: another leans his head on the table. On the table are placed three dishes and three goblets.

Above the window on the South wall of the south transept is to be seen the Baptist Reproving the Pharisees, and in a similar place on the North transept, the Women at the Tomb. These scenes are much obliterated and faded.

The frescoes in the apse depict scenes in the life of Christ, but do not impress one so much as those of the centre of the church. The figures are smaller: the grouping is not so well arranged: the colouring is crude: the architectural backgrounds, while much more elaborate, are also distinctly ruder. One theme is the Presentation in the Temple. An architectural background. To the left rises a white tower surmounted by a red ball resting on a red block and green capital. In the centre is a heavy red canopy resting on four pillars (or posts) alternately white and green. Standing on a step to the right of this is a priest. He bends slightly forward and the Infant Christ, clad in white, approaches him holding out His arms. Behind Him is the Virgin Mother who turns to look at S. Joseph. She holds a scroll, and Joseph carries the doves for the sacrifice.

The Day of Pentecost agrees closely with the instructions of the Painter’s Guide. There is a background of arches resting on pillars, which project slightly to right and left. In front is a semi-circular seat extending to the foreground of the picture. On it are seated the Apostles. Their attitudes are lively and animated. In the very front is a sort of cave, semi-oval in which is depicted an aged man
wearing a crown. He represents the world. The Descent of the Holy Spirit is represented by rays (tongues as of fire) issuing from a semi-circle as of the Majesty of Heaven whence He comes.

The Ascension. This scene does not agree so closely with the Painter's Guide. Christ, clad in white, is seated upon a rainbow upheld by two angels floating in mid air. Below is represented the Mount of Olives clad with trees. On it stand the Virgin and disciples gazing upwards at the ascending Lord. Behind the Virgin is gathered a crowd of angels, some of whom direct their gaze to Christ, while others look towards her.

The Nativity. To the right of the cradle in which the Divine Child lies kneels Mary, her hands crossed on her breast, while she adores her Son and Saviour. In front of the cradle kneels Joseph, and behind him stand the Three Wise Men of the East, haloed, and clad in regal robes. At the back are depicted the ox and ass, looking into the cradle. To the very left of the picture a group of angels is visible. From heaven (again represented by a semi-circle) a ray of light descends upon the sacred Infant. There is no effort made to portray a stable or house; but the part of the painting containing the fore-mentioned figures is separated from the rest by a broad white band, the intention being to distinguish the exterior from the stable inside. In the very front outside the band, three shepherds are depicted sleeping. To the right, beside some rocks stands up another shepherd surrounded by his sheep. Down from the sky there flies toward him an angel bearing the glad tidings of great joy.

The Paintings of the East Wall of the Apse.

In the conch of the apse is represented the Blessed Virgin, the Panagia. This picture is crude and badly executed. She is clad in dark red and in her lap is the Infant Christ, Who blesses with His right hand. She is seated in an ornate semi-circular throne of gold; on its four posts are four curious diminutive figures, haloed and reading from scrolls. (Are they Angels, or the Four Evangelists, or Four Prophets?) On either side of the throne is an Archangel, S. Gabriel, the messenger of God, in white; and S. Michael, the leader of the warrior host, in martial red.

Below the Panagia we see portrayed The Divine Liturgy, a painting of singular interest and beauty. The Divine Liturgy is the heavenly counterpart of the Liturgy on earth. Just as in the Greek Church the bishop, with his attendant priests and deacons, celebrate the Liturgy on earth, so here is represented Christ with His ministering angels celebrating in heaven the Liturgy Divine. Every act of the Greek Liturgy of course possesses a symbolic and mystical meaning. The Procession and Great Entrance signify at the same time the Second Advent and the Sepulture of Christ. Here at Kaisariani Christ stands at the Altar, while the angels move in slow procession towards Him, bearing the sacred vessels. The following is a detailed description of the fresco. In the middle are three arches. In the central arch is placed an altar upon which rests the Book of the Gospels.
signifying the presence of the Holy Ghost: above the altar hovers a cherub, bearing in each hand a fan.\(^1\)

In the arch to the right stands Christ. He faces towards the right, receiving the first of the angels. He is clad in a purple sticharion and a richly embroidered pink and white saccos. From below the saccos appears the epitrachelion—a gold stole with tassels. From around His neck there hangs down in front the omophorion. He wears also the zone, epimanikia, and epigonation—as “our great High Priest above.”

In the left arch we see again the figure of Christ, similarly clad, and in the same attitude, the only difference being that now He faces towards the left, speeding the last of the departing angels.

The procession of angels moves towards the right. Those on the north wall thus advance to the west, and those on the south wall advance towards the east.

The two angels approaching Christ swing censers: they wear the vestments of deacons; the sticharion of one being gold and pink embroidered, that of the other being white with gold borders. The next figure bends forward. Then comes an angel bearing two fans, also clad as a deacon, wearing a maroon sticharion embroidered with a zig-zag gold pattern and a white orarion embroidered with gold crosses.

The next angel bears a chalice, and wears the vestments of a priest, a red sticharion, a green phelonion with gold collar, a gold epitrachelion. Another angel bearing a chalice follows, likewise clad in the vestments of a priest. Then is depicted an angel garbed as a deacon, with white sticharion embroidered blue and red orarion adorned with white crosses. The remaining space on the south side is filled up with two angels clad in the vestments of a priest, and bearing each one a chalice. The sticharion of the first is white, of the second red. The phelonion of the first is slate, of the second white. Their epitrachelia are gold coloured.

We now pass to the other side. The westernmost angel wears the raiment of a deacon, a white sticharion with a pink border and a red orarion hanging as usual over the left shoulder. He carries in each hand a “fan.” The next—a priest, with a green gold-bordered sticharion and a red phelonion—bears a chalice. The next—again a priest, with purple gold-bordered sticharion, green phelonion, and white epitrachelion embroidered with gold crosses—also carries a chalice. Following upon him is an angel representing a deacon wearing a purple gold-bordered sticharion and a white orarion. He carries a taper. There follows upon the deacon a priest holding a chalice, and wearing white sticharion and slate-coloured phelonion. The next figure is interesting. Instead of moving onwards like the others, this angel is standing still, facing full towards the beholder. He is standing still, facing full towards the beholder.

\(^1\) The fan is an article carried by attendants in the procession in the Liturgy. Originally intended for the purpose of driving flies away from near the sacred elements, the fan later came to signify mystically the vibration of the wings of the Seraphim before the Throne of God. The fan nowadays is made of silver and in the shape of head and wings of a cherub. In the fresco here the fan is a disk (ornamented with a red cross) at the end of a wand.
garbed as a priest, wearing a red gold-bordered sticharion, a black epitrachelion, a yellow phelonion. In his right hand he grasps a chalice.

The last three angels present a group of peculiar interest. As has been said, this procession symbolises the Sepulture of Our Lord. The angels carry chalices “to signify the Descent from the Cross and the preparation of the Body for the empty tomb.” Now, the last three angels, instead of carrying, as we should have expected the sacred elements, bear on their shoulders a cloth, and on this cloth rests the dead Body of Christ. The first of these angels is clothed as a priest, the second as a deacon, the third as a priest again.1

Below the Divine Liturgy is depicted the COMMUNION OF THE APOSTLES—the Last Supper in its liturgical aspect. In the centre is the altar, below a canopy. Above the altar hovers a cherub. On either side of it is a representation of Christ clad in green tunic and grey mantle. The Christ on the right hand holds a chalice from which S. John bends forward to partake. The left-hand Christ offers the bread to S. Peter. There follow on S. John, S. Jude, S. Andrew, S. Simon Zeletes, S. Bartholomew, S. Thomas. There follow on S. Peter, S. Matthew, S. James son of Alpheus, S. James, S. Philip, Judas Iscariot. All the disciples are clad in tunic and mantle and all (including Iscariot) have haloes. They move forward in the same eager attitude, hastening to receive the sacred banquet. Their hands are outstretched and covered with the folds of the mantle. An exception is Iscariot: he is turning back, and on his left shoulder is perched a little black demon, as it is written, After the sop, Satan entered into him (S. John xiii. 27.)

Below the Communion of the Apostles are the FOUR GREEK FATHERS two on each side—S. Basil; S. John of Damascus; S. Chrysostom; S. Gregory Nazianzen. They wear the vestments of a bishop (as does Christ in the Divine Liturgy above.)

Between the groups of Fathers is a rectangle of broad white lines. Within it is the CROSS, against which lean the reed and lance. Between the arms of the cross appear the letters IC XC NI KA. Below the window is painted an Altar on which rest the asterikos,2 the cup, the book, and a candle.

THE FRESCOES OF THE NARTHEX.3

The frescoes of the narthex exhibit a striking difference in type and treatment

1 The vestments have all a meaning: the saccos symbolises uprightness; the epitrachelion, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the submission of the priest to Christ; while the omophorion signifies at once the authority of the Bishop and the Incarnation of our Lord.

2 The asterisk is a star-shaped instrument of metal placed upon the disk (or paten) to support the veil and prevent it from displacing the sacramental bread.

3 A Greek inscription tells how “This pronaos or narthex has been decorated at the expense of those who, for fear of the plague, fled to this monastery for safety, through the powerful hand of the much-to-be-remembered Trinity, and under the shelter of the Blessed Virgin; namely the noble and most learned Venizelos, son of John, along with his noble sisters, and his mother and the rest of their company. In the abbacy of the most wise Abbot Hierotheos. [The paintings are] by the hand of John Ypatos, from the Peloponnesus; in the year 1682.”

The fact that the donor bore the name Venizelos is at this moment (1916) of peculiar interest; but the writer cannot say whether or not the eminent and patriotic statesman can trace a connexion with the pious donor.
to those of the main body of the church. The church frescoes are considered by Lambakes to be much earlier in date, but Strygowski thinks that the difference between the dates of the two series is not very considerable. At all events we know the date when the frescoes in the narthex were painted, and we also know the painter, from an inscription on the western wall. The date is 1682, and the artist was one John Ypatoς who came from the Morea.

Ypatoς has certainly not followed the Painter's Guide in the same slavish way as the artist who painted the other part of the church has done. The subjects chosen are certainly all mentioned and described in that book, but the painter has used a free hand in his delineation of them. The narthex was the portion of the church allotted to the catechumens, and, as was befitting, a goodly portion of its walls is adorned with pictorial representations of the Parables of our Lord. In such a fashion is the south vault decorated. The north vault is covered with scenes from the Life of our Lord after the Crucifixion, and from the Life of the Virgin Mary. The cupola displays the Trinity, angels and saints, while around the walls stand a solemn company of austere and aged saints.

The treatment, as has been said, is different; for, while the figures in the church frescoes are rather massive and stately, conforming thus to the older Byzantine tradition, it is clear that the painter of those in the narthex has striven after animation and action. He shows, too, a greater fondness for architectural backgrounds of a style that became a feature in Byzantine Art from the Fifteenth century onwards, exhibiting a profusion of turrets, battlements, peaked towers, red-roofed houses and crenellated walls. In some cases the balance, arrangement, and composition of the figures is made conformable to the architectural background.¹

As has been said, half of the frescoes of the north vault deal with the early Life of the Virgin. It begins with the BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN. On a background of blue is an architectural arrangement, consisting of a wall, a tower, and the outside of a house, all pierced with windows and doors. In front of the tower, on a couch covered with a white cloth, reclines S. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, clad in green and red. Before her is the cradle painted yellow. The babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lies within it and looks up at her mother. A maid, clad in dark red, sits beside the cradle, rocking it. On the right, two men approach S. Anne, one on either side of the door in the wall of the house. One clad in a dark slate-grey mantle, raises his hand in salutation; the other, in red and green, carries gifts on a cushion. Both figures are taller by the head than the architectural background; they are not dominated by the architecture, though their position is

¹ This profusion of architecture is a feature of the frescoes in the Peribleptos Church (and others) at Mistra in the Peloponnesse, and as the artist hailed from that peninsula it is quite conceivable he may have seen and studied these paintings. Again, in the series which deals with the parables there is—as in the Pantanassa Church at Mistra—a distinct striving after the picturesque.
dictated by it. S. Anne sits directly below the tower; the visitors are on either side of the door, equidistant from it.  

**The Virgin Mary Blessed by the Priests.** This subject is separated from the last by a tower pierced with long, narrow windows. The background is again architectural. In the centre rises a peaked tower; at the right is another tower with green top; while something resembling a red scarf is wound round both. The remainder is occupied by a wall. It is noteworthy that although this incident takes place inside a building, it is the exterior that is depicted in accordance with the usual Byzantine custom. In front is a table with a red cloth. To the left of it stand S. Joachim and S. Anne. Joachim, clad in grey and white, extends his arms towards the priests. Anne, in slate and red, holds the Virgin in her left arm. (In the *Painter's Guide*, it is prescribed that Joachim shall hold the child). Behind the table sit three priests, bearded and of similar aspect. Each has his left hand resting on the table and his right raised in blessing. All three are haloed, and look towards Joachim and Anne. They wear pale red and slate-gray robes, and a round cap with peak in the centre, of the same type as Daniel wears in the fresco in the cupola.

**The Presentation of Doves in the Temple.** The story here illustrated is that Joachim and Anne, who were rich, brought, as their habit was, on a certain feast-day double offerings to the Lord. But Issachar the priest refused them, as the former had not begotten issue in Israel. Afterwards the offerings were accepted. Here again the background is architectural. A wall stretches three quarters of the way along, and on the right rises a red-roofed house. In front of the wall to the left is a kind of pulpit surmounted by a canopy borne on four posts. In the pulpit stands Issachar the priest. He is clad in grey and red and has a halo. Joachim and Anne kneel before Issachar, who extends his left hand towards them. Each offers him a dove, for this is: "The Offering Accepted;" but we have in this fresco an example of the Byzantine custom of packing two incidents into the one picture. There, on the left, we see Joachim and Anne again, but now they are leaving the temple, and look backwards. This represents "The Offering Refused."

In Italian and Western Art Joachim presents a lamb, which Issachar refuses; S. Anne has nothing in her hand.

**The Annunciation to Joachim and Anne.** The legend further tells how Anne, sad at heart, goes forth into the garden, and sitting down beneath a laurel bush cries aloud to the Lord. Her prayer is answered: an angel appears to her, and says: "Anne, thy prayer is heard, thou shalt bring forth, and thy child shall

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22 **THE CHURCH OF KAISSARIANI IN ATTICA**
be blessed throughout the whole world.” Then comes another angel and addresses her: “See thy husband Joachim is coming with his shepherds,” for an angel had appeared and spoken to him also. As portrayed here, Joachim is seated at the left hand side. He looks towards an angel who comes down from heaven towards him. To his right is a fountain from which gush four springs of water. At the extreme right stands Anne, who, with arms uplifted, and her whole attitude betokening wonder and surprise, gazes at the angel coming down to her. Behind is a double-peaked mountain, coloured red, and trees.

In the middle distance two shepherds are seen advancing through the garden. They are curiously clad in short slate-grey tunic and long black and white trousers. They hold an animated conversation with each other. Be it noted, too, that what is here depicted is really the Annunciation to Joachim. It is he who rests under the laurel; Anna has not yet been told. In other presentations of the incident the shepherds are more appropriately garbed: thus, in the Metropolitan Church at Mistrá, they wear long white robes and carry staves. The fountain here is a clumsy iron erection very like a pump. At Mistrá it is absent, but at Daphni, one of a similar pattern is a prominent feature. In Western Art it is replaced by a stream running down the centre of the garden; while the Annunciation to Anne takes place not in a garden (as it should) but in a chamber. In representations of the greater Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary this feature is reversed. She is always shewn in her chamber, only that, according to the Byzantine convention, the interior is indicated by a background of exteriors.

Christ Appearing to His Disciples at the Lake of Tiberias. This scene is extremely badly composed and drawn. The lake is quite out of perspective and resembles rather the mouth of a cave, while its waters are represented by a wavy grey line. On the sea is the boat and in it the disciples, one of whom holds an oar. Numerous fish swim about in the water and many are caught in a net cast over the vessel’s side. Halfway between the boat and the shore S. Peter is swimming, naked (as the Scripture tells) save for his fisher’s coat girt about him. Christ stands on the shore with one hand uplifted toward the boat. Below Christ are what look like a globe and a fish, representing doubtless the fish laid upon the fire of coals.¹

The Journey to Emmaus and the Breaking of Bread. The painting here is extremely indistinct.

Here again we have two incidents in the one picture. The subjects are simply treated. The background of the upper part of the picture consists of rocks and trees, and Christ is walking between the two disciples, whom Greek Art identifies as Cleopas and S. Luke. The background of the lower half is architectural, inferring an interior: Christ sits at the table, His arms are outstretched, and He has S. Luke on one side and Cleopas on the other.

¹ S. John xxi. 1-14.
The last two frescoes of the northern vault are of especial interest. Both are RESURRECTION scenes, but in both cases the artist has departed from the instructions given in the Painter's Guide, which direct that four events shall be portrayed (in addition as the Anastasis or Descent into Hades). These are (a) The visit of the myrrh-bearing women to the tomb and the angel's appearing to them (S. Matt. xxviii. 1-7; S. Mark xvi.); (b) The appearance of Christ to the myrrh-bearers (S. Matt. xxviii. 9-12); (c) The visit to the sepulchre of S. Peter and S. John (S. John xx. 3-9); (d) The appearance of Christ to S. Mary Magdalen (S. John xx. 11-18).

The Kaisariani artist, however, has confined himself to events recorded in the twentieth chapter of S. John, and has shown us four scenes in two frescoes, two incidents in each. (1) S. Mary Magdalen telling S. Peter and S. John of the empty tomb (vv. 1-2); (2) S. Peter and S. John arriving at the sepulchre (vv. 3-9); (3) Mary Magdalene remaining at the tomb and beholding the two angels (vv. 11-13); and (4) Mary Magdalene turning herself back and seeing Jesus standing (vv. 14-17). Of these four the first fresco comprises two. In front is the tomb, and resting in it the empty shroud; S. John stands by; S. Peter leans forward and touches the shroud with his left hand. To the left we see Mary Magdalene again with S. Peter and S. John. In the second fresco, on a background of rocks, and a crenellated tower, is shown to the left the tomb and the white shroud within it, an angel standing at each end. In front is the Magdalene, who looks towards the angels. For the second scene (at right of the picture) she kneels down before the Risen Saviour, Who stands and stretches out His hand in the act of blessing.

We now pass to the southern vault, decorated with pictures of seven of our Lord's Parables. 1. THE GOOD SAMARITAN. This fresco extends over a space twice as large as that allotted to the others. At the extreme left is a crenellated wall, surrounding a mass of towers and houses with peaked roofs. To its right is a hill, in front of which the wounded man lies prostrate, while three thieves are beating him with staves—making him "eat wood" as the Greeks say. Beside him walks a man richly clad, wearing a crown—the priest or the Levite. In the distance we see the robbers marching off, their staves over their shoulders. To their right is another hill, in front of which lies their wounded victim. Over him is bending the Good Samaritan; he has a halo and is, unquestionably, Christ. For the next scene we have a background of two high peaked hills; in the foreground the traveller seated on a white horse, led by Christ Who advances towards a house—the inn—in front of which stand two saints with haloes; for the inn is the Church of God. It will be seen that the parable is treated not as a mere story, from which ethical teaching can be gleaned; but is interpreted of JESUS CHRIST. He is the central figure. The Good Samaritan is Christ, Who alone can lead fallen man to the home of healing, before which the saints are standing. This mystical interpretation of the Parables, with Christ as the theme and subject of them all, is never lost sight of in Byzantine Art.
II. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN. In front of a rocky background stands the publican looking down to the ground, his hands crossed upon his breast. To the left a group of men; to the right the Pharisee, "an old man with a great beard." He lifts up his hands and gazes into the sky. Above, floating in the sky we see Christ to the right and He appears again at the left; for at this point He is receiving the two prayers. Our artist has neglected the Painter's Guide, and this time unwisely. For while the text-book, following the Scripture narrative, bids two men be set in front of buildings, because they "went into the temple to pray," they are here pictured as in the country.

III. THE PRODIGAL SON. In the centre is a large peaked mountain with other peaks in front; at the right hand foot corner the Prodigal takes leave of his father, who is seated on a chair. Above that we see him iv (literally, but it means to be below) a laurel tree, with a number of swine about him. To the right of that he appears to climb the mountain; he is carrying a bundle on a stick across his shoulder: he is returning to his father. On the other side of the mount he is prostrate before his father, who stands beside him. Finally, in the centre, we see him seated on a red-covered couch; attendants minister to him, and to the right is a musician with a flute. This is a particularly interesting example of the packing of many incidents into one picture; for in this single fresco the whole story of the Prodigal is vividly narrated. It requires, indeed, a six-fold repetition of the figure of the Prodigal.

IV. THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN. This fresco is much obliterated. In front of a complicated architectural background kneel three servants of the householder. Two of the husbandmen stand over them and beat them with staves; another casts a stone. To the right is a rocky mountain and two other figures, but the rest is too indistinct to be made out.

V. THE RICH FOOL. The Parable given in S. Luke xii. 16-21. The Rich Fool, seated at a table, is looking towards two servants who carry to him goblets and baskets. Behind is a complicated architectural background; in front workmen are sawing and cutting wood wherewith to build the man's greater barns. But towards him flies an angel bearing the scroll announcing his approaching death; wherefore, on the right, we see him lying on a couch, and the angel is piercing his body with a long lance. The instructions in the Painter's Guide prescribe "Farther on the rich man is seen reclining on a couch of gold; demons with three-pronged forks prey on his soul," but our artist has dared to be more merciful.

VI. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS. At the extreme left is a house with wide archway: in front a table set with numerous dishes and viands at which five persons sit. At its head the Rich Man is looking towards Lazarus, who stands to the right and carries a pitcher and staff in his hand. At his feet is a dog. In the centre of the background the Rich Man lies dead; his soul, represented by a small human figure, issuing from his mouth. At the right, Lazarus (still with his pail and stick) lies dead. His soul also issues from his mouth; but it is received
by an angel who hovers over him. The right hand foot corner is separated from the rest of the picture; and is itself divided into two portions. The first has a background of flowers on a white ground. This is Paradise; and here Abraham (with halo and long mantle) is clasping Lazarus to his bosom. The other section is black as night, but in it we can see the Rich Man shrunk, a tiny figure which looks with longing eyes towards Abraham.

VII. The Sower. Here, our artist gives us rather an interpretation of the parable than a pictorial representation of it. In different parts of the composition Our Lord, addresses three groups of kneeling hearers: for all alike receive the seed; but it must be confessed that the groups are not well marked; and I can identify only one: a group assembled on a hill may stand, I think, for those represented in the parable by the stony ground.

On the upper part of the left hand wall is painted the Tree of Jesse. The branches of the tree encircle the heads of the ancestors after the flesh of Christ: Jesse lies at the foot; while at the top are the Virgin and Child. This is common enough in the West also; but the East has more to give us in what follows.

On the upper part of the right hand wall, we have here a parallel composition denoting the Spiritual Posternity of Christ. Our Lord sits in the centre: on His lap lies an open book. Branches of the tree encircle the heads of the "Spiritual Postesty."

On the lower part of the walls appear the Saints following: the Blessed Mary—not the Virgin, but a saint of that name (on the left of the door): she is receiving the Holy Communion from Abbot Zosimas who holds the Sacrament in a dish. On the right are SS. Euphrosynos, Ephraim, Johannikos, Makarios, Nilus, Arsenias, Ierotheos, Euthymios, Antony, Sabbas, John of Klimax, Dionysios, Theodosios, Maximus the Confessor, Mark the Athenian, Thanasius, Leontios of Achaia, Akakios. Above the door are Moses and Aaron celebrating in the Tabernacle of Witness.

The only paintings on the narthex which remain to be described are those of the cupola. These are extremely dim and faded: the plaster has fallen off in many places.

In the pendentives are Saints, two of which can be identified as S. Cosmas and S. Joseph. They are depicted in the same attitude as the Evangelists in the pendentives of the great dome; the only difference being that in the narthex

1 Compare the "black flames" of the Vision of Hell in Venerable Bede (Eccl. History, v. 12), and Milton's terrible lines:

"Yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe."

2 The "seed" promised to Him as the result of His Passion in Psalm xxii. 30; and in Isaiah lxxi. 10.

3 The frescoes of these saints were 'restored' about thirty years ago, but without alteration in the design, etc.
pendentives the architectural backgrounds are more elaborate. In the centre of its
dome is The Trinity—God the Father, as an aged bearded man—the Son,
middle-aged, sits beside Him. Each raises the right hand in blessing, and Christ
holds the Gospel open on His knees. Between them is the Holy Ghost—figured
as a dove with outstretched wings. Between the Divine Persons, and also on either
side of Them is a Seraph. Below the feet of Each is represented that order of
heavenly powers known as a Throne. The Thrones (as depicted here and elsewhere)
are as delineated in the description given by Ezekiel of his vision: they are winged
wheels, "full of eyes before and behind." Between the Thrones is one of the
Cherubim; while below the picture of the Trinity, is ranged around the drum
of the cupola, a company of angels, intermingled with whom we discern (1) S. John
the Baptist, the herald of Christ at His First Coming; (2) the Blessed Virgin
Mother, the witness that He has come; and (3) the Hetimasia—or Throne set
ready for His Second Coming. Lower down are Prophets and more angels, but
the painting here has become very indistinct.

Such then is Kaisariani. If many a monastic church could be found in the
East which is more imposing without and within, yet our little church is by no
means an unworthy example of Byzantine architecture and art. It is a typical and
well-preserved example of its kind, and is as valuable as any larger or more famous
edifice could be for the study of the iconography of the Christian East.

In this fresco, S. John Baptist appears not winged merely but carrying his head on a charger. The artist
might plead that we wished to tell the story of his martyrdom as well as his function; but Didron, who visited
Kaisariani, animadverts upon it as carrying the principle to an extreme.

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