The depiction of the Vision of saint Peter of Alexandria in the sanctuary of Byzantine churches

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The article deals with the factors that have influenced the frequent depicting of the ‘Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria’ in the sanctuaries of Byzantine churches from the beginning of the thirteenth century. It also discusses the theological messages of this scene. The preserved examples of the ‘Vision’ from the thirteenth century have been inventoried and described, after which the iconographic characteristics of depictions from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have been given. The examples from the sanctuaries of post-Byzantine churches have also been added to the catalogue of scenes.

Key words: Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria, Byzantine painting, iconographic program of the sanctuary

In the recently published book on the iconographic subject of the ‘Melismos’, it is stated that the representation is addressed primarily to clerics, as it appears only in the sanctuary (holy bema) and indeed in the lowest position in the semi-dome of the apse.¹ Study of the iconographic subject of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria prompted the reasonable questions as to why this representation too was depicted in the sanctuary and what message its presence in this particular sacred space transmitted during the Late Byzantine period.

In the ‘Life and Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Martyr of Christ Peter of Alexandria’, which was translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (the librarian, † ca. 879),² it is recorded that when St. Peter was imprisoned in the reign of Diocletian (284–305), he was visited by a delegation of members of the clergy who entreated him to receive Arius into the fold of the Church. Then, St. Peter, after having said ‘...Christos kai en to on aiōna kai en to melλonta ēstai keκεωμενòs ek tis dòsèis Ιησού Χριστοῦ tou uioû tou θeòu (Arius, both in the present time and the future will be cut off from the glory of Jesus Christ the son of God), recounted to them his Vision. According to his narration, that evening he had been visited by a boy of about twelve years old, with radiant face and wearing a linen colobium rent in two in front, on the neck and chest down to the feet, which he held with both hands on the chest to hide his nakedness. When Peter asked ‘Lord, who has torn your tunic’, the boy replied, ‘Arius’, and advised him not to accept Arius in communion.³

Gabriel Millet, in his article on the ‘Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria’, refers to the four versions of the saint’s life and argues that St. Peter’s Vita was composed one century after his martyrdom; in dealing subsequently with the depiction of the Vision, he cites certain examples and links the representation of it with the liturgical subject of the ‘Melismos’.⁴ Later, Ivanka Akrabova-Zhandova presented fourteen examples of the subject from monuments in Bulgaria,⁵ while Christopher Walter, associating the representation of the Vision directly with the depiction of the First Ecumenical Council, distinguished it as purely doctrinal in content.⁶ Likewise, Michael Altripp, discussing the decoration of the prothesis and the diakonikon, and the depiction of the Vision of St. Peter in these spaces, notes that the subject in the holy bema is related directly to the Divine Liturgy.⁷ With regard to representations of the subject in the Menologa of churches, Pavle Mijović observed that wherever the Menologion is depicted together with the Ecumenical Councils the representation of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria is in direct relation to the representation of the First Ecumenical Council, which is part of the Paschal Cycle, since it is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter.⁸ Equally important is the interpretation that the representation of the Vision in the Byzantine illuminated codices of the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes projects St. Peter of Alexandria’s struggles against the heretic Arius.⁹

¹ Ch. Κωνσταντινίδη, O Μελισμός, Thessaloniki 2008, 49, 113.
² P. Devos, Une passion grecque inédite de S. Pierre d’Alexandrie, et sa traduction par Anastase le Bibliothécaire, Analecta Bollandiana 83 (1965) 167–177.
³ N. Τσονδακάς, Βίος και μνημονεύματα του αγίου και ενδέχεται ερωμάτως του Χριστού Πέτρου, αρχιεπισκόπου Αλεξάνδρεις, in: Ιδεολογία βυζαντινών μελετών και καθημερινών, ΙΙ, Athens 1966, 59–60.
⁴ G. Millet, La Vision de Pierre d’Alexandrie, in: Mélanges Ch. Diehl, Paris 1930, 99–114.
⁵ I. Akrabova-Zhandova, Videnieto na sv. Petir Aleksandrii v Bulgariia, Izvestii na Bulgarskiia arkeologicheski institut 25 (1946) 24–34.
⁶ Ch. Walter, Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church, London 1982, 245–248.
⁷ M. Altripp, Die Prothesis und ihre Bildausstattung in Byzanz unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Denkmaler Griechenlands, Frankfurt am Main 1998, 165–168.
⁸ P. Mijović, Menolog, Beograd 1973, 24, 121,127, 249.
⁹ A. Ehrhard, Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts, II, Leipzig 1938, 660, 689; E. Delégionnè
Several ecclesiastical authors refer in their homilies to St. Peter’s Vision, in order to castigate the Arian Heresy or heresies in general, such as Germanos of Constantinople (d. 730/742) in the homily “To Deacon Anthimos,”13 Eutychios of Alexandria (877–940),14 Theophanes Kerameus (twelfth century) in his fifth homily,15 as well as Manuel Philes (ca. 1275 – ca. 1345), who dedicated an epigram to the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria.16

The earliest depiction of the Vision, which is at one associated with the Divine Eucharist and didactic in character for the priests holding the scroll and celebrating the liturgy, is in the miniature of the liturgical scroll in the monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (no. 109), which is dated to the late eleventh-early twelfth century.17 In the left margin of the scroll, Christ, as a boy, stands on the right and almost beneath a baldachin, and with his right hand downwards points to Arius, while with his left he holds in check his torn chiton and bows towards St. Peter and Arius. On the left stands Peter with his right hand lowered and pointing to Arius, while he uplifts his head towards Christ. Depicted in the right margin of the scroll is the beheading of St. Peter.

Both these representations frame the prayer of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which refers to the metalespes of the Holy Communion.18

The representation of the beheading of St. Peter corresponds visually to the meaning of the first part of the Liturgy prayer, while that of the Vision to the terrible mystery the saint experienced with the appearance of the Theanthropos. The figure of Christ in rent chiton declares that Arius, through his teaching, denied Christ of his divinity.

In monumental painting the subject is depicted in the space of the prothesis or the diakonikon, and there is scholarly consensus that the iconographic subject is related to the Divine Eucharist.

Apart from the Vita of St. Peter of Alexandria in the four versions referred to by Millet, other texts were instrumental in continuously reminding Orthodox Christians of his Vision. First, there is the Synaxarion which was read at the matins service on the feast day of St. Peter, 25 November, and referred briefly to his Vision.19 There was also the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes, which was a popular text, as evidenced by the considerable number of extant manuscripts, the majority dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries;20 in fact, some manuscripts of Symeon’s Menologion preserve miniatures depicting the Vision.21

The hymns too, embodied in the liturgical books of the Orthodox Church, played a vital role as constant reminders of the saint’s Vision. In the Menaion of 24 November, eve of the feast of St. Peter of Alexandria, his Vision is mentioned in the third troparion of the VII ode of Theophanes Graptos (ninth century), in the third troparion of the psalms (atitó) and in the verse before the saint’s synaxarion. Other troparia for this day hymn Peter’s struggle against Arius and the exclusion of the latter from the body of the Church. Also, on Orthodox Sunday, during the litany of the icons, when the canon of Theodore the Studite (759–826) is chanted, St. Peter’s Vision is mentioned in the third troparion of the I ode and the seventh of the VI ode. Furthermore, on the sixth Sunday after Easter, feast of the 318 Fathers confessors of the faith, who constituted the First Ecumenical Council, there is reference to Peter’s Vision in the second troparion of the Great Vespers.

Fig. 1. Ohrid, church of the Virgin Peribleptos (1294/1295).

According to research, most of the surviving representations of the Vision in monumental painting are located in the sanctuary and indeed in the space of the proskomide or the diakonikon, and there is scholarly consensus that the iconographic subject is related to the Divine Eucharist.

What factors contributed to the frequent depiction of this subject in the sanctuary and what is the message of this particular Vision in this position? In order to answer these, the literary sources that contributed to placing the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria in constant view of the Orthodox flock must be taken into consideration.

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Dörö, Ιεροθεμάτικα χειρόγραφα του Μεταφρατη Όσιος Μελάντη, Ταξινόμηση των χειρόγραφων, εκδόσεις του Μητροπολιτικού Παραθύρου 1 (1982) 276.
10 H. Delehaye, Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanæ, Bruxelles 1902, 256–258.
11 Deligianni-Dórë, Ιεροθεμάτικα χειρόγραφα, 276.
12 Ménologe de Basile II (Imp. gr. 1613, p. 205), from 976–1025, cf. Millet, La Vision, 105; Paris. gr. 580, fol. 2v, from 1054–1056, cf. Deligianni-Dórë, op. cit., 281, fig. 1.
13 PG 98, 48.
14 PG 111, 998.
15 PG 132, 213.
16 Millet, La Vision, 104.
17 A. Grabar, Un rouleau liturgique Constantinopolitan en ses peintures, DOP 8 (1954) 176.
18 P. N. Trempelas, Με τις εικονογραφίες κατά τους εν Αθήναις κώδικας, Athens 1935.
19 Akhravova-Zhandrova, Vidienio, 26–27, fig. 17–18, B. Todí, The Symbolical Investiture of the Archbishop Basil of Bulgaria at Melnik, Zograf 32 (2008) 59–68.
20 T. Papas, Studien zur Geschichte der Messgewänder im byzantinischen Ritus, München 1965, 112; R. Naumann, H. Belting, Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Instabul und ihre Fresken, Berlin 1966, 191; N. Thierry, Le costume épiscopal byzantin du IV au XIV siècle d’après les peintures datées (miniatures, fresques), REB 24 (1966) 308–315; Walter, Art et Ritual, 9–26.
21 Archim. Ieronymos Liapòs, Μεταφρατικὸν μνημείον Εσφελίκας, Athens 1971, 25–27, pl. 7.
turned towards Christ and outstretching his hands in a gesture of supplication.\textsuperscript{23}

During the fourteenth century the representation of the Vision inside the sanctuary of churches appears very frequently. Twenty-two monuments have been identified in which the three persons of the subject are in almost the same pose as in the thirteenth-century monuments. Christ stands on the right or the left, opposite him is St. Peter and below is Arius. In a few monuments essential differences are observed in the figures’ pose, with Christ standing in frontal pose upon an altar table, as in the Chilandar katholikon (1321), in the church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple at Kučevište (ca. 1331),\textsuperscript{24} in the parekklesion of St. Arsenije the Serbian in the church of the Virgin Hodegetria at Peć (ca. 1335; fig. 3),\textsuperscript{25} in the church of the Virgin at Mateč (1348–1352; fig. 4a and 4b),\textsuperscript{26} and in the church of the Virgin at Leskovik, Albania (late fourteenth century).\textsuperscript{27}

In those Byzantine literary sources which preserve the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria there is no mention of Christ appearing to Peter upon an altar table. Consequently, G. Millet rightly observed that this detail was added to the representation of the Vision when the iconographic subject was placed in the space of the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{28} It is interesting that only in the post-Byzantine texts of Damaskenos the Studeite (sixteenth century)\textsuperscript{29} and Dionysios from Fournia (ca. 1670 – ca. 1745)\textsuperscript{30} is Christ described as appearing standing upon an altar table.

One reason why the iconographic subject of St. Peter’s Vision was associated with the Divine Eucharist is the saint’s urging of Achilas and Alexander not to accept Arius ‘in communion’, that is, not to receive him again into the body of the Church, so that he be kept far away from the altar table where the body of Christ as God incarnate is celebrated in the divine hypostasis in which Arius did not believe. This insistence of Peter and the word ‘communion’ are referred to in the saint’s \textit{Vita} and in the other texts describing his Vision.\textsuperscript{31}

In all the representations of the subject in monumental painting, Christ is depicted with torn chiton, faithfully following the literary sources. The Lord’s rent garment in his appearance to St. Peter symbolizes the schism in the body of the Church, which Arius would cause with his teaching, which denuded the Lord of his divinity. In most representations Christ holds his chiton with his left hand, while he outstretches the right in a gesture of speech towards Peter, and

\begin{figure}
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\caption{Fig. 2. Elasson, church of the Virgin Olympiotissa (late 13th c.).}
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\item E. C. Constantinidès, \textit{The wall paintings of the Panagia Olympiotissa at Elasson in northern Thessaly}, Athens 1992, 183–185, figs 72–73.
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\item V. J. Djurić, S. Ćirković, V. Korač, Pečka patrijarkija, Beograd 1990, 162, 169.
\item E. Dimitrova, \textit{Manastir Matejče}, Skopje 2002, 121–122, fig. 24, t. XXIII–XXIV.
\item K. Kirchhainner, \textit{Die Fresken der Marienkirche in Cerskë bei Leskovik (Südalbanien). Ein Beitrag zur späthochmittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei im nördlichen Epirus}, Δεξιόν ΧΑΕ 25 (2004) 104, fig. 10.
\item Millet, \textit{La Vision}, 106.
\item Θεοφάνης Δαμασκάνης του συναγωνικού του Σπουδονότοι, Λόγος Α” εκ της Κεκαθημένης των ΟΠΝ Πατριαρχίας, ed. M. S. Σκλήρους, Athens s. d., 500.
\item M. Αλεξάνδρου του συναγωγής Εκκλησίας της Σκιάθου, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameús, Saint Petersburg 1909, 219.
\item PG 18, 451–452; PG 98, 48; Delehaye, \textit{S.J.}, 257; J. Duffy, J. Parker, \textit{The Synodicon Vetus}, Washington 1979, 24, 33.
\end{thebibliography}
only in the church of the Virgin at Leskovik does he hold the chiton with both hands,\textsuperscript{32} in accordance with the text of his \textit{Vita}.\textsuperscript{33} Usually the Lord’s torn chiton is white, although more rarely it is red, as in the church of St. John Kalybite in Evboia\textsuperscript{34} and of St. John the Baptist at Archangelos in Rhodes (fifteenth century).\textsuperscript{35} Obviously, the red colour is a reminder of the Passion of Christ and the red mantle placed upon him by the soldiers in the praetorium (Matthew 27:27–29). The depiction of Christ wearing a torn chiton exalts the officiating priests not to be led astray into thinking that they celebrate the bread and the wine only in remembrance of the Lord, but that this is in reality the imperishable body of the \textit{Theanthropos} Christ. It reminds them also that just as the Lord appeared to Peter of Alexandria humbled in torn chiton, so the bread and the wine appear humble, which are, however, transubstantiated into the imperishable body of the Lord Jesus Christ, God incarnate, according to the Nicholas of Methone (d. 1160/1166),\textsuperscript{36} Nicholas Kasašlas (ca. 1322/1323 – d. after 1391)\textsuperscript{37} and Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1359).\textsuperscript{38}

According to the Life of St. Peter of Alexandria, Christ appeared in the Vision as a twelve-year-old boy with a face so radiant it illuminated the entire space. This detail was rendered visually by enclosing the figure of Christ within a mandorla, as observed in the church of St. Nicholas Tzotza in Kastoria (ca. 1360)\textsuperscript{39} and the church of the Virgin at Zaum in Ochrid (ca. 1361).\textsuperscript{40} The mandorla is formed from two ellipses in shades of blue, from which project triangular rays, three to the right and three to the left. The three triangular rays of the mandorla can be interpreted securely as an artistic device aimed at emphasizing that Christ was one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, as mentioned by Gregory Palamas in his 35\textsuperscript{th} Homily on the Transfiguration.\textsuperscript{41} The three-rayed mandorla surrounding the twelve-year-old Christ in the representations of the Vision of St. Peter was depicted probably under the influence of Hesychasms, which speaks in particular of the ‘uncreated’ (aktistos) light.\textsuperscript{42}

St. Peter of Alexandria, who stands opposite the Lord, is represented as an old man with rounded beard and curly hair, always vested in a cross-diapered phailonion as Patriarch of Alexandria;\textsuperscript{43} usually he turns his gaze towards the adolescent Christ and outstretches both hands in a gesture of supplication. In very few monuments, such as the Gračanica monastery (1319–1321; fig. 5),\textsuperscript{44} the katholikon of the Chilandar monastery (1321) and the church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple at Kucevište (up to 1331), with his left hand he supports a codex,\textsuperscript{45} in St. Athanasius of Mouzaki in Kastoria (1383–1384; fig. 6) he holds an open scroll inscribed with the words «Τίς σου τον χιτώνα, Σώτερ διδάξε» (Who tore your chiton, Saviour?),\textsuperscript{46} while in the church of St. Nicholas of the Nun Eupraxia, in the same town, the Prayer from the Liturgy of the Presanctified (fig. 7).\textsuperscript{47}

As noted, already from the first half of the thirteenth century Arian is depicted lying prone, covering his face or head with both hands, in the lower part of the representation of the Vision, as in St. Nicholas at Melnik and the Peribleptos church at Ochrid, as well as in several fourteenth-century churches, such as St. Nicetas near Skopje (after 1321),\textsuperscript{48} Gračanica,\textsuperscript{49} the church of Virgin at Mati,\textsuperscript{50} the katholikon of the Chilandar monastery and the church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple at Kucevište.\textsuperscript{51} Of greater interest is the depiction of Arian being consumed by the flames

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\textsuperscript{32} Kirchhainer, \textit{Die fresken der Marienkirche}, 104, fig. 10.

\textsuperscript{33} Delehaye, \textit{Synaxarium}, 257; Tömadačks, Blic, 60.

\textsuperscript{34} Archim. Ier., \textit{Ieronymi Lapi, μυστικα της περιόδου}, pl. 7.

\textsuperscript{35} I. Bolačak, Istorija i nemjija od Dima Arhijereja, Od Rėdud, 1994, 40.

\textsuperscript{36} Todič, \textit{Od ikonografi}, fig. 112.

\textsuperscript{37} PG 135, 512–513; K. Phekas, \textit{O Nikolis Mēthēnias kai tē de'stopostasia autoi peri thēs Ermēfrotikēs}, Athens 1992, 71, 127–128.

\textsuperscript{38} PG 150, 389, 412, 453.

\textsuperscript{39} Todič, \textit{Od ikonografi}, fig. 6) he holds an open scroll inscribed with the words «Τίς σου τον χιτώνα, Σώτερ διδάξε» (Who tore your chiton, Saviour?).

\textsuperscript{40} C. Grozdanov, Ohridski zidno slikarsvo XIV veka, Beograd 1980, 112–113.

\textsuperscript{41} D. Kalomoirakis, \textit{Ermēfrotikēs paragraghēs sto eklogotithenio prógramma tōn Proustikōn, Dēlētōn XAE 15} (1991) 197; M. Aspra-Dabadak, M. Emmanouil, \textit{H Μνήμη της Πανταξίας στον Μουσείο}, pl. 7. Οι πραγματισμοί του 15ου αιώνα, Athens 2005, 114.

\textsuperscript{42} PG 151, 448.

\textsuperscript{43} Todič, \textit{Gračanica}, Slikaštvo, Beograd 1988, 108, 133, 203, 228–229.

\textsuperscript{44} Djordanov, \textit{Slikaštvo XIV veka}, 98.

\textsuperscript{45} S. Pelekanidiš, Kastoria, 1, Thessaloniki 1953, t. 144; V. J. Djiuric, \textit{Mađ Grad – Sv. Atanasije u Kostur – Borje}, Zograf 6 (1975) 39.

\textsuperscript{46} Tremplings, \textit{Ai τρεῖς λειτουργίες}, 215–216.

\textsuperscript{47} D. Bardževa, Od ikonografiata na eikona Sv. Nicka, Kulturno nasledstvo 19–21 (1992–1994) 142–143, sch. 1, fig. 2.

\textsuperscript{48} Todič, \textit{Gračanica}, fig. 112.

\textsuperscript{49} Dimitrova, \textit{Manastir Matejić}, fig. 23–24.

\textsuperscript{50} Djordanov, \textit{Slikaštvo XIV veka}, 98.
of Hell, as in St. Pantelemon at Ohrid (ca. 1320–1330)\textsuperscript{52} and the Hypapante monastery at Meteora (1366/1367),\textsuperscript{53} or being devoured by the wolf or the dragon of Hell, as in the church of Virgin at Leskovik.\textsuperscript{54} The dragon is a figure that features frequently in representations of the Last Judgement and the Heavenly Ladder, devouring some human sinner.\textsuperscript{55} A new iconographic element in the representation of the Vision is the figure of Christ stepping on the coiled dragon-wolf devouring Arius, as preserved in fifteenth-century monuments, such as the churches of Virgin at Velestovo (1444)\textsuperscript{56} and in Matka, Skopje (1496/1497).\textsuperscript{57} It is noteworthy that in the Life of St. Peter there is no mention of the appearance of Arius in the saint’s Vision. Nonetheless, he was depicted in the representation, and in prone pose, in order to denote Peter’s struggles against the heretic Arius and to transmit the message that every heretic should be expelled from the body of the Church. Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople, states that Arius imitated the dragon «τὸν τῆς μανίας ἐπόνυμον» (synonymous with frenzy)\textsuperscript{58}, while in the kathisma of Matins on the feast day of St. Peter (24 November), Arius is likened to a wolf.

What was the historical context of the Orthodox Church, which contributed to the placing of the iconographic subject of the Vision in the sanctuary? As is well known, heresies never ceased to plague the Church. In the eleventh century, in particular, six groups of heretics were active.\textsuperscript{59} It was in this century that the most important explanation of the Divine Liturgy was written by Nicholas (Theodore) of Anapadida (eleventh century),\textsuperscript{60} aim of which was to teach priests. It helped also the work of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which desired to have the education of the future priests under its direct control. In the twelfth century there was a rekindling of discussions between clerics and congregants on the mystery of the Divine Eucharist. These debates were the outcome of other earlier and greater problems. In this century Nicholas of Methone (wrote four treatises on the Divine Eucharist and on the Orthodox faith in general.\textsuperscript{61} Moreover, two Councils of Constantinople, in 1156 and 1167, were concerned with the mystery of the Divine Eucharist. The argument as to whether the faithful receive the perishable or imperishable body of Christ during the Divine Eucharist continued in two other councils of Constantinople, under the patriarchy of George II Xiphilinos, between 1195 and 1198, and of John X Kamateros in the year 1199–1200, when the teaching of the perishable body is condemned.\textsuperscript{62}

The major deliberations on the problems of the Divine Liturgy were confronted in the fourteenth century by the treatise ‘Explanation of the Divine Liturgy’, by the most important representative of mystical theology, Nicholas Chamaetos Kabasilas (ca. 1322/1323 – after 1391). At the beginning of the treatise he mentions that the purpose of the prayers of the Divine Liturgy is to make the priest worthy of performing the Sacrifice, so that the priest himself would not...
be found unworthy of it.63 In the fifteenth century, Symeon of Thessalonike (d. 1429) writes the best-known ‘Explanation of the Divine Liturgy’, a treatise which resembles a textbook for instructing priests.64

We observe that the Orthodox Church defended itself against the various heresies by publishing treatises interpreting the Divine Liturgy, guiding both clergy and laity, such as Nicholas of Methone with his treatise ‘To the hesitating teaching the celebrant priests that, «\(\text{τούτον \text{έσται \text{άσωτον}}\) \text{πίνη τον Κυρίου \text{αναξίως}}\)» (We must always be beside God, without falling anywhere into prodigal sin) and to serve worthily the mystery of the Divine Eucharist.65 Furthermore, with the poetic language of the troparia, the Church taught clerics and laymen to protect themselves from the heresies.

The Church’s struggle against the heretics was expressed also in the domain of the visual arts. The iconographic subject of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria has been infiltrated by elements that are not referred to in the narration of the Vision and which advocate the view that, beyond the historical substrate of the representation, this has acquired also a doctrinal – anti-heretical and a liturgical character. This investment was made with the intention of teaching the celebrant priests that, «\(\text{Ος σε ενθίη τον άρτον τούτον και πίνη το σοτήριον του Κυρίου ανάξιος, ένοχος \text{ένοχος \τον σώματος και του \text{άρτος \του Κυρίου}}\) (Whoever unworthily eats this bread and drinks the cup of the Lord, will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord).»

The main element that has infiltrated into the representation of the subject and which is not included in the Life of St. Peter is the altar table, with or without baldachin. Its depiction is not only liturgical in character but also a reminder to the celebrant priest that upon it is the body of the Theanthropos Christ. And when Christ is depicted within a mandorla, then his divine nature is emphasized more overtly. The presence of Arius in prone pose not only signifies the fall of the heretics, but also that it is very easy for the priest, if he is not careful, to find himself in the same position as Arius. This endeavour is even more obvious when Arius is shown being devoured by a Hell Dragon or consumed by fire.

One unique representation in Late Byzantine art, which is par excellence didactic-catechetical in purpose and is addressed to the clergy, is that of the ‘unworthy priest’, which is in the sanctuary of the church of the Holy Trinity, in the village of Agia Triada near Rethymnon (early fifteenth century). Depicted here is an angel dressed as a deacon, holding in the right hand a chalice, covered with a veil, and in the left a large paten, balanced on his bowed head. The angel-deacon walks on bended knees over a priest in pose of proskynesis-repentance, accompanied by the inscription «\(Ο \text{ανάξιος \τρέφεται} \) (The unworthy priest).66 The priest wears a grey cassock and a white head-covering. The angel has taken the holy gifts from the priest’s hands, obviously because he was unworthy to hold them. The direction of the priest’s body is opposite to that of the concelebrant hierarchs and opposite to the altar table.

It is very possible that the presence of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria in the sanctuary of churches in Crete echoes also the continuous exhortations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the efforts of the emissary priests to keep alive and to strengthen the Orthodox morale of the local priests and laity, oppressed by the Latin bishops in the Venetian-held territory. Following the struggles of the Cretan Metropolitan of Athens and primate of Crete, Anthimos the Confessor, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had sent to the island around 1380 the monk and man of letters Joseph Bryennios, Metropolitan of Athens and primate of Crete, Anthimos the Confessor, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had sent to the island around 1380 the monk and man of letters Joseph Bryennios.
Koukiaris S., *The depiction of the Vision of saint Peter of Alexandria in the sanctuary of Byzantine churches* (ca. 1350–1430/1431), who remained there for twenty years, teaching and writing. Through his preaching and his saintly life, Bryennios won the respect and reverence of the eminent monks and objectant authors of Crete, Joseph Philagres, Neilos Damylas and Athanasios. Furthermore, the Ecumenical Patriarch will surely have taken measures to reinforce and encourage the Orthodox clergics and laymen in other regions under Frankish and Latin rule, such as Euboea and Rhodes, where the representation of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria in the sanctuary has been located.

The most widespread iconographic subject that had been crystallized already in Palaeologan times and is always placed in the sanctuary is the ‘Melismos’. With its rich doctrinal and liturgical substrate, it constituted a visual teaching to clergics, aimed at achieving a correct and active participation in the mystery of the Divine Eucharist. Also, it presents the mystery of the Divine Eucharist in the most realistic manner.

In my opinion, the representation of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria is a didactic representation which was placed inside the sanctuary as teaching and reminder to the priests, who do not celebrate simply bread and wine but the imperishable body of the Theanthropos Jesus Christ.

List of representations of the Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria in the sanctuary

1. Melnik, church of Saint Nicholas (ca. 1200).
2. Euboea, church of Saint John Kalyvites (ca. 1245).
3. Ohrid, church of Saint George of Choreutara (1335/1336).
4. Elasson, church of the Virgin Olympiotissa (late 13th c.).
5. Euboea, church of the Virgin Hodegetria in the Caves (1311).
6. Gračanica, katholikon (1319–1321).
7. Chilandar, Mont Athos, katholikon (1321).
8. Saint Niketas near Skopje (after 1321).
9. Ohrid, church of Saint Pantelemon (1320–1330).
10. Kučevište, church of the Virgin (ca. 1331).
11. Peć, church of Hodegetria (chapel of Saint Arsenije) (1335).
12. Ohrid, church of Saint Nicholas Bolnički (1335/1336).
13. Mateič, church of the Virgin (1348–1352).
14. Kastoria, church of Saint Nicholas tou Tzotza (ca. 1360).
15. Monastery of Zaum near Ohrid, church of the Virgin (ca. 1361).
16. Meteora, Hypapante monastery (1366/1367).
17. Kastoria, church of Saint George tou Vounou (1368–1385).
18. Kastoria, church of Saint Athanasios tou Mourakis (1383/1384).
19. Ivanovo near Ruse, rock-cut church (14th c.).
20. Veroia, church of Saint Savvas of the Kyriotissa (14th c.).
21. Leskovik, Albania, church of the Virgin (late 14th c.).
22. Poganovo near Pirot, church of Saint John the Theologian (15th c.).
23. Mylopotamos, Crete, church of Saint George at Melissourgaki (ca. 1400).
24. Amari, Crete, church of the Virgin (ca. 1400).
25. Kavoussi, Crete, church of Holy Apostles (ca. 1400).
26. Resava, church of Holy Trinity (1407/1408–1418).
27. Great Prespa, church of the Virgin Eleoussa (1409/1410).
28. Archangelos, Rhodes, church of Saint John the Baptist (ca. 1428).
29. Malevizi, Crete, church of Saint Anthony (1434/1435).
30. Velesovo near Ohrid, church of the Dormition of the Virgin (1444).
31. Dolgaets near Ohrid, church of the Prophet Elijah (1454/1455).
32. Leskoets near Ohrid, church of the Assumption (1461).
33. Yevi near Ohrid, church of Saint Nicholas (1460).
34. Kastoria, church of Saint Nicholas of the Nun Eupraxia (1485).
35. Boboshevo, church of Saint Demetrios (1487/1488).
36. Kosel near Ohrid, church of Saint Nicholas (15th c.).
37. Matka near Skopje, church of the Virgin (1496/1497).
38. Rhodes, church of Saint Nicholas (15th c.).
39. Kastoria, church of Saint Spyridon (15th c.).
40. Agiasmati, Cyprus, church of the Holy Cross (1494).
41. Megara, church of Saint George of Choreutara (15th c.).

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Представа Визије светог Петра Александријског у олтарском простору византијских цркава

Архимандрит Силас Кукиарис

Представа Визије светог Петра Александријског често је сликана у олтару, углавном у протезису и даконику. Сви истраживачи који помињу представљање те теме у олтарском простору исправно сматрају да је она повезана са Светом литургијом. У раду се разматрају чиниоци који су условили често сликање визије александријског архијереја у олтару од почетка XIII века, као и оно што су творци иконографског програма и живописци представом те визије желели да искажу. Наводе се и литерарни извори који су допринели континуитету теме иконографије, као и примере у уметности XIII века и наводе иконографске особености представа из XIV и XV века, чија је појава услужена и снажењем исихастичког покрета. Честим сликањем Визије светог Петра Александријског у олтару допринела је и тежња Цариградске патријаршије да стави под своју контролу образовање клирика и посебно да их поучи томе да се припремају и за православан начин изражавања визије. Подсећа их и на то како морају па зити да не падну у јерес сличну аријанству, ону која је учинила да се хлеб и вино претварају у пропадљиво тело Исусово. На крају рада дат је каталог византијских и поствизантијских храмова у којима је насликана визија александријског архијереја у олтару.
