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BYZANTINE CHURCH DECORATION AND  
THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1054 \*

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We can hardly overestimate the importance of changes that befell Byzantine church decoration in the 11th and 12th centuries--the time when a system was symbolically centered round the "Communion of the Apostles" above the altar. Despite age-old additions, it survived as the basis of the Orthodox Christian iconographic program. No less importantly, it was this new system that determined the disagreement in principles which made the Western Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions of church decorations part ways.

The link between iconographic novelties and the liturgy has been amply demonstrated in scholarly literature<sup>1</sup>. Among the first was A. Grabar's work about the Jerusalem liturgical scroll<sup>2</sup>. G. Babic's article about the Officiating Bishops as connected with the Christological polemics of the 12th century notably influenced her researcher colleagues<sup>3</sup>. Chr. Walter's book *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*<sup>4</sup> offered a system of liturgical themes.

A number of authors brought out and analyzed a range of iconographic themes and motifs to be explained by the contemporaneous liturgical context. Among these, we can single out studies of the image of Christ as the Man of Sorrows<sup>5</sup>, the Lamentation scene<sup>6</sup>, the particular iconographic types of Christ the High Priest consecrating the Church and Christ the Priest<sup>7</sup>. In fact, every serious study of an 11th or 12th century monument adds something new to our knowledge of the liturgical influences on church decoration.

The new liturgical themes came down to us in non-contemporaneous monuments of the 11th and 12th centuries. This was why researchers proposed different dating of the emergence of particular subjects. The attempts to discover direct links of iconography with the decisions of mid-12th century Church Synods weren't very fruitful, as the basic features of the new system of decor had taken shape earlier, and only occasional motifs of non-essential importance revealed immediate influences<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The study results were recently generalized in: J.M. SPIESER, *Liturgie et programmes iconographiques*, dans TM, 11 (1991), 575-590.

<sup>2</sup> A. GRABAR, *Un rouleau liturgique constantinopolitain et ses peintures*, dans DOP, 8 (1954), pp. 161-199.

<sup>3</sup> G. BABIC, *Les discussions christologiques et le decor des eglises byzantines au XIIe siecle*, *Fruhmittelalterliche Studien*. Bd. 2, Berlin, 1968, S. 368-396.

<sup>4</sup> Chr. WALTER, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> H. BELTING, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages. Form and Function of Early Painting of the Passion*, New York, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> H. MAGUIRE, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton, 1981, pp. 101-108; O.E. ETINGOF, *Vizantiiskaya ikonografia "Oplakivaniya" i antichny mif o plodorodii kak spasenii*, dans *Zhizn mifa v antichnosti*. Moscow, 1988, pp. 256-265.

<sup>7</sup> A.M. LIDOV, *Obraz "Khrista-arkhiyereya" v ikonograficheskoi programme Sofii Okhridskoi*, *Zograf*, 17 (1987), pp. 5-20; IDEM, *L'Image du Christ-Prelat dans le programme iconographique de Sainte Sophie d'Ohride*, dans *Arte Cristiana*, LXXIX, fasc.745 (1991), pp.245-250; IDEM, *Christ as Priest in Byzantine Church Decoration of the 11th and 12th Centuries*, XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. *Summaries of Communications*, II. Moscow, 1991, pp. 659-660; Idem. *"Khristos-sviaschennik" v ikonograficheskikh programmakh XI-XII vekov*, VV, 55 (1994), pp.187-192.

<sup>8</sup> G. BABIC, *Op. cit.*, pp. 368-396. Chr. Walter pointed out the growing role of the Byzantine clergy and connected with it the trend for a "ritualization" of the 11th and 12th century iconographic programs. His

As we take account of the unique liturgical redaction of the Byzantine church decoration taking place in the 11th and 12th centuries, we feel bound to answer two pivotal questions:

Was it a spontaneous process developing under the influence of the many marginal factors, or did a single idea--a particular ideational program--underlie it?

Why was a new "liturgical redaction" necessary at all after a long time during which the liturgy itself had undergone no substantial changes?

To answer these, we dare to offer a hypothesis whose basic content can be reduced to the following theses:

1) The new liturgical themes known from non-contemporaneous monuments of the 11th and 12th centuries have a general concept to share, and were brought to life by a specific ideational program which arose in the Constantinopolitan theological milieu in the mid-11th century.

2) This liturgical redaction, which accounted for a spectacular difference between Byzantine and Latin church decorations, was probably linked to the polemics round the Schism of 1054, and the Orthodox theologians' desire to demonstrate their concept of the eucharistic sacrament and Christ's priesthood.

Let us now successively regard the central liturgical themes with special attention both to the symbolism of the theme and the time of its emergence in church decoration.

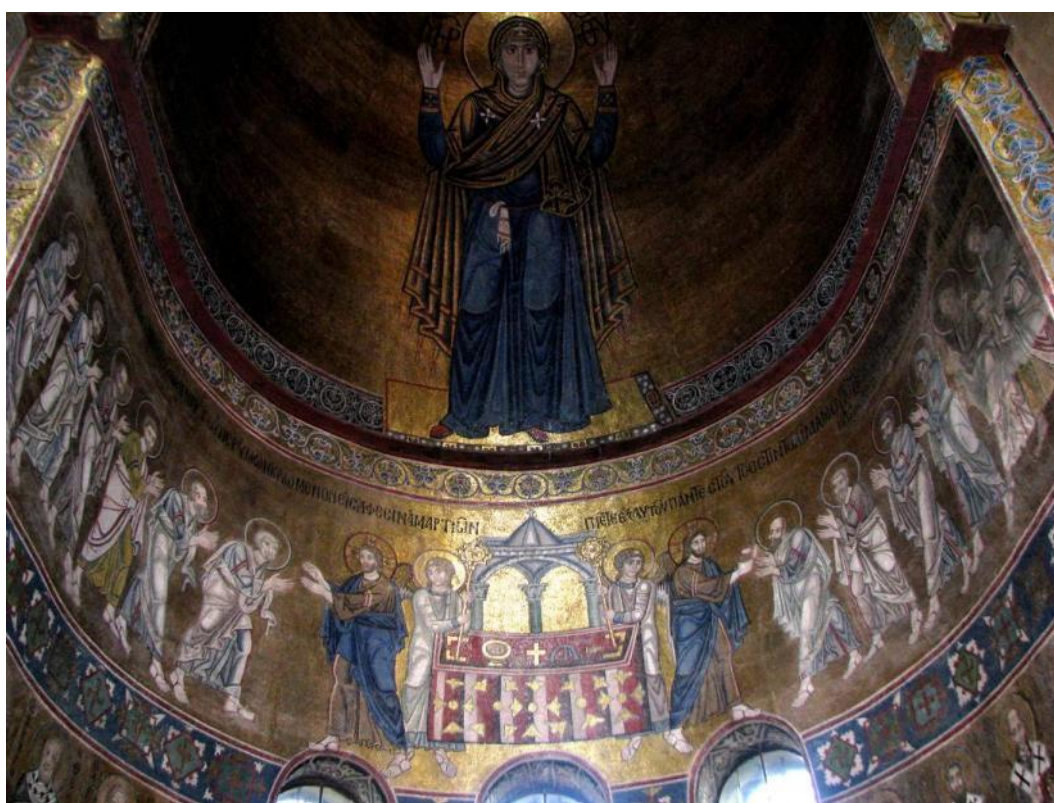


Figure 1. The Communion of the Apostles in the altar apse of St Sophia in Kiev. Mid-11th century

## Communion of the Apostles.

In the mid-11th century, the "Eucharist", or "Communion of the Apostles" occupied the central tier of the altar apse in Saint Sophias of Kiev and Ohrid--the principal churches of a Metropolia and an Archiepiskopia of the Constantino- politan Patriarchate. The iconography of the scene had been known since the 6th century (Rossano Gospels and Rabbula Gospels of 586, and the patens of Riha

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theory, of rather a general nature, does not provide concrete explanations. At the same time, as we feel bound to stress, his concept of the 11th century as "watershed" belongs to the most important achievements in Byzantine art studies of the several last decades (Chr. WALTER, Op. cit., p. 239).

and Stuma), when, to all appearances, this liturgical interpretation of the Last Supper emerged<sup>9</sup>. We meet it in 9th century psalters as marginal illustrations to Psalms 109.4/110.4 ("Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" and 33.9/ 34.8 ("O taste and see that the Lord is good")<sup>10</sup>.

However well known, the composition only rarely appeared in church decoration till the mid-11th century. Of the 10th century murals, "The Communion of the Apostles" is noted in a small niche north of the altar of the cave church in the Monastery of Our Lady the Kaloritissa (isle Naxos)<sup>11</sup> and the prothesis apse of the Cappadocian church Kiliclar Kilise at Goreme<sup>12</sup>. About 1028, the scene appeared on the bema walls in the Church of Panagia ton Chalkeon at Thessalonika<sup>13</sup>. The certain sparsity in the use of the theme is sometimes ascribed to the reluctance to support the iconoclasts' thesis of the eucharistic bread and wine as the only admissible icons of Christ<sup>14</sup>.

As we have every reason to assume, the introduction of "The Communion of the Apostles" as the central theme of the altar apse and, at the same time, of the entire church decoration was a crucial innovation of the mid-11th century, which could not have appeared without the relevant decision coming from the top of the Byzantine hierarchy. Indicative in this respect was "The Communion of the Apostles," painted above the traditional composition of "Maiestas Domini" during the 1060-61 redecoration of the Cappadocian church of Karabas Kilise at Soganli<sup>15</sup>.

The cathedrals of Ohrid and Kiev use two well-known iconographic variants of "The Communion of the Apostles": with Christ standing behind the altar in Saint Sophia at Ohrid<sup>16</sup>, and twice portrayed to the sides of the altar in Saint Sophia at Kiev - which testifies to the absence of an unified Constantinopolitan model. What they share is the ideational concept. Though with varying degrees of clarity, the Communion theme is present in both. The compositions, however, are not centered at the ritual proper. They are deliberately made of non- contemporaneous liturgical episodes in order to produce the image of the entire eucharistic sacrament through the Communion theme. Characteristically, despite the difference of the pictorial schemes, the Kiev and Ohrid scenes share an essential iconographic innovation - angels portrayed to the sides of the altar, dressed as deacons and holding rhipids. They are absent both in the early iconography and the composition at

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<sup>9</sup> K. WESSEL, Apostelkommunion, dans *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*. Bd. 1 (1966), S. 239-245; Chr. WALTER, *Op.cit.*, pp. 184-196.

<sup>10</sup> S. DUFRENNE, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Age*, 1, Paris, 1966, p. 24, 46, 57; pl. 5, 45, 50. IDEM, *Tableaux synoptiques de quinze psautier medievales a illustrations integrale issues du texte*, Paris, 1978; M.V. SCHEPKINA, *Miniatyury Khludovskoi psaltyri*, Moscow, 1977, pl. 115.

<sup>11</sup> M. PANAYOTIDI, *L'eglise rupestre de la Nativite dans l'ile de Naxos, ses peintures primitives*, dans *CA*, XXIII (1974), p. 107-120.

<sup>12</sup> G. de JERPHANION, *Les eglises rupestres de Cappadoce*, Paris, 1925-1942, I, p. 203-204; II, p. 78-79; C. JOLIVET-LEVY, *Les eglises byzantine de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'apside et de ses abords*. Paris, 1991, p. 137-141, 140, pl. 88, fig. 1.

<sup>13</sup> K. PAPADOPOULOS, *Die Wandmalerei des XI. Jahrhunderts in der Kirche Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki*, Graz-Cologne, 1966, S. 26-35.

<sup>14</sup> Chr. WALTER, *Op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>15</sup> G. de JERPHANION, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 333-351; N. THIERRY, *Peintures d'Asie Mineure et de Transcaucasie aux Xe et XIe siecles*, London, 1977, III, 161, 168-169; C. JOLIVET-LEVY, *Op. cit.*, p. 266-270, pl. 148-149.

<sup>16</sup> The closest analogy to the iconographic treatment of St. Sophia at Ohrid is offered by an 11th century miniature in the liturgical scroll of Jerusalem (Stavrou, 109). See: V. KEPETZIS, *Tradition iconographique et creation dans une scene de communion*, dans *JOB*, 32/5 (1983), p. 443-451. For this iconographic type see also: G. BABIC, *Les plus anciennes fresques de Studenica (1208/1209)*, dans *Actes du Xe Congres international d'etudes byzantines. Communications. II*. Athenes, 1981, p. 32-33.

the Church of Panagia ton Chalkeon. These deacon angels not merely indicate the heavenly sacrament but emphasize the pontifical role of Christ, manifest in the entire action as He communicates the Apostles separately in the altar area, just as a bishop communicates the priests who have taken part in the liturgy. As the congregation looked at the mural above the actual altar, it received the idea of the holy hierarchy of Churches on Earth and in Heaven with Christ Archiereus at the top.



**Figure 2. The altar apse. Saint Sophia in Ohrid. Mid-11th century**



**Figure 3. Christ in the Communion of the Apostles. Saint Sophia in Ohrid. Mid-11th century**

## **Officiating Bishops.**

The idea of liturgical hierarchy is graphically expressed in the portrayal of holy bishops under "The Communion of the Apostles." This tier had confirmed itself in the altar apse programs as late as by the 11th century<sup>17</sup>. Initially, it had a mere memorial function, with the bishops singled out of the whole range of saints as Church doctors and defenders of Christian Orthodoxy. Holy hermits are portrayed side by side with the bishops even on the bema walls of the Church of Panagia ton Chalkeon (1028)<sup>18</sup>.

The mid-11th century, however, imparted an emphasized liturgical character to the bishops' tier. Accentuated in the center of the frontal images, arranged in a row, are the compilers of the liturgy--St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom, Saint Sophia of Ohrid providing an early example. The bishops' images are complemented by those of holy deacons, whose attributes--censers and ciboria--indicate their immediate participation in the liturgy. The mural of Saint Sophia at Kiev significantly places the martyred archdeacons Stephanus and Laurentius in the center of the bishops' tier<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Chr. WALTER, *Op. cit.*, pp. 166-177.

<sup>18</sup> In Cappadocian cave church apses, the holy bishops were portrayed among other saints as late as the 10th century. See: Chr. WALTER, *Op. cit.*, pp. 225-232.

<sup>19</sup> The holy deacons separate two groups of holy bishops from a ruined image placed precisely in the center of the lowest tier between the windows. They currently represent Metropolitans Alexis and Peter of Kiev--a 17th century oil painting. According to V.N. Lazarev, the space between the windows was originally occupied by Apostles Peter and Paul (V.N. LAZAREV, *Mozaiki Sofii Kievskoi*, Moscow, 1960, p. 111).



**Figure 4. Officiating Bishops in the altar apse. St. George church in Kurbinovo, Macedonia. 1191**

Probably the composition of the Officiating Bishops – a variant of the theme – took shape in the mid-11th century, with the liturgical idea portrayed in the utmost materiality. The earliest known instances are provided by the murals of the Church of St. John Chrysostom at Koutsovendis, Cyprus (1092-1118)<sup>20</sup> and Veljusa, a monastery in Macedonia (1085-1094)<sup>21</sup>. These murals combine the figures in three-quarters with the frontal images of the holy bishops--a vivid testimony to the symbolical unity of the two versions of one theme.

A fundamentally close treatment is demonstrated by the iconographic program of Saint Sophia at Ohrid, with the frontal bishops in the apse semicircle adjoining the composition "Liturgy According to St. Basil the Great" on the north bema wall. This unique scene is justly regarded as a kind of protograph of the "Officiating Bishops"<sup>22</sup>. The basic iconographic motifs are easy to discern: the bishop compiler of the liturgy in a three-quarter turn, an unfolded liturgical scroll bearing the text of an eucharistic prayer, and the altar with the eucharistic bread and wine as symbolical center of the composition. The scene is in many aspects close to the "Communion of the Apostles." The action take place in the unique space of a temple city--allusion to the Heavenly

This hypothesis can't be accepted, as the remains of the original gold mosaic background between the windows show that nimbused saints could not have been represented here, as left and right of the windows. Most probably, the space between the windows represented burning candles making the symbolical image of an altar. This hypothesis is borne out by the attitude of Deacon Laurentius, slightly turned right away from the holy bishops to what is guessed as the altar. If it was so, there was a graphic comparison between the holy deacons and deacon angels at the altar of the "Communion of the Apostles" above to stress the liturgical message of the scene in the lower tier.

<sup>20</sup> C. MANGO, *The Monastery of St. Chrysostomos at Koutsovendis (Cyprus) and Its Wall Paintings*, DOP, 44 (1990), pp. 63-96.

<sup>21</sup> G. BABIC, *Les discussions christologiques...*, p. 376-378; P. MILKOVIK-PEPEK, *Veljusa. Manastir sv. Bogorodica Milostiva u seloto Veljusa kraj Strumica*, Skopje, 1981, pp. 156-160.

<sup>22</sup> V. DJURIC, *Vizantijske freske u Jugoslaviji*. Belgrade, 1975, p. 10. For this composition, see also: S. RADOJCIC, *Prilozi za istoriju najstarijih ohridskih slikarstva*, dans *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta*, VIII (1964), p. 364; A. GRABAR, *Les peintures dans le chœur de Sainte-Sophie d'Ohrid*, dans *CA*, XV (1965), p. 262-263; A.M. LIDOV, *Obraz "Khrista-arkhiyereya"...*, p. 12.

Jerusalem, where Christ performs a liturgy with the Apostles and saints<sup>23</sup>. The image of the bishop is complemented by priests and deacons participating in the service and clearly indicating the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Last but not least, the silver paten on the altar, with a gold eucharistic loaf in the center indicates the essence of the sacrament.



**Figure 5. The Liturgy of St Basil the Great in the sanctuary of St. Sophia in Ohrid. Mid-11<sup>th</sup> century**

Basil the Great's scroll bears the opening words of the proskomide prayer, read in his liturgy after the Great Entrance and addressing the Lord, Who gave the "revelations of Heavenly sacraments" and showed the way to salvation--to Christ, founder of the eucharistic sacrament. Characteristically, the 11th century Constantinopolitan liturgical scroll of Jerusalem (Stavrou, 109) portrays the "Communion of the Apostles" precisely above this prayer and repeating the iconographic scheme of Saint Sophia at Ohrid<sup>24</sup>. Visually, as it adjoins two tiers of the apse mural at once, and symbolically, the "Liturgy of St. Basil the Great" unites the "Communion of the Apostles" and the bishops' tier as it creates the image of one divine liturgy served by Christ Archiereus.

### **Christ the High Priest Consecrating the Church.**

We ought to regard this image in the same symbolical context. Placed in the conch of the altar apse in Saint Sophia at Ohrid, right above Christ in the "Communion of the Apostles"<sup>25</sup>, it depicts the Child at the breast of His Mother--the Church personified--in an episcopal vestment used only during church consecration. The interpretation of this image in the conch gave the key in its time to

<sup>23</sup> A.LIDOV, *The Image of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Eastern Christian Iconography*, Jerusalem in Russian Culture. Ed. A.Batalov, A.Lidov. New York - Athens, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> A. GRABAR, *Op. cit.*, p. 174, fig. 10; V. Kepetzis. *Op. cit.*, p. 443-451.

<sup>25</sup> A.M. LIDOV, *Obraz "Khrista-arkhiyereya"....*, pp. 5-19.

the entire iconographic program, in which the consecration of the Church was of primary importance and indissolubly linked with the idea of Hagia Sophia, who "hath builded her house".

The aspect which interests us brings to the foreground other symbolic facets of the image which synthesizes essential liturgical ideas. The Child on His Mother's breast means the Incarnation; the band-crossed sydon, according to Byzantine interpretation, the shroud of Christ<sup>26</sup>, thus reminding of the Redemption; the seated attitude of Christ indicates the Cosmocrator, and His vestments the pontifical rank.

These vestments also stress that the Child is the High Priest (Archiereus) and the Sacrifice, He "Who offers and Who is offered, He Who receives and is received," to quote a liturgical prayer. His portrayal in a mandorla creates the iconic image of eucharistic bread on a paten<sup>27</sup>. This interpretation does not seem an exaggeration if we recall that the prosphora with the Lamb uncut was perceived as symbolizing the Mother of God with the Child. Given a concrete expression in the "Communion of the Apostles," the eucharistic theme is treated as a cosmological symbol in the conch composition of Saint Sophia of Ohrid.



**Figure 6. Christ the Child in the vestments of the High Priest, consecrating the Church. The conch of the altar apse of Saint Sophia in Ohrid. Mid-11th century**

<sup>26</sup> PG, t. 155, col. 309-310.

<sup>27</sup> The color scheme brings out this semantic parallel as Christ's gold-tinged vestments against the luminous background of the mandorla are echoed in the golden tinge of the bread on its silver paten in the "Liturgy of St. Basil the Great" in the Ohride murals.

Characteristically, this cathedral offers the earliest known iconographic typological instance of "Christ the High Priest Consecrating the Church," which appeared in the various parts of the Byzantine world since the latter half of the 11th century. As we can assume, this specific iconographic treatment was purposefully developed in the mid-century. The fact that it was placed in the conch of the altar apse indicates the exceptional importance of the idea whose understanding was lost a mere two centuries later (the conch composition was repainted in the 13th century with Christ portrayed in conventional vestments)<sup>28</sup>.

### Christ the Priest.

The appearance in church decoration of the image of "Christ the Priest" was part of this idea dating to the mid-11th century. It was placed under the window in the diaconicon of Saint Sophia at Ohrid, and above the east arch in front of the altar in Saint Sophia at Kiev--one of the key positions in the iconographic program. Known since the 6th century, this rare iconographic type became one of the central themes of Byzantine church decoration only as late as the mid-11th<sup>29</sup>, when this half-forgotten image went through a kind of renaissance. It received several significant treatments in the programs of the 11th and 12th centuries to be fully abandoned in the 13th--most probably, due to the doubted orthodoxy of the respective literary source.



**Figure 7. Christ as Priest on the eastern domed arch of Saint Sophia in Kiev. Mid-11th century**

Christ is depicted with the beard just coming out in a fluff--a token of his youth, and the hair worn in a special priestly way, a double crown round a tonsure. As the least concrete sign of

<sup>28</sup> This second-layer painting was removed from the wall of the altar apse during restoration.

<sup>29</sup> D.V. AINALOV, *Novy ikonografichesky obraz Khrista* // *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, II (1928), s. 19-23; N. THIERY, *Sur un double visage byzantine du Christ du VIe siecle au VIIIe* // *Studi in memoria di Giuseppe Bovini*, II. Ravenna, p. 639-657; A.M. LIDOV, "Khristos-sviaschennik" ..., pp. 187-192.

belonging to a clerical rank, this hair-style fully corresponded to the idea of Christ as Archiereus, standing above all ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

As D.V. Ainalov demonstrated in his time, this iconographic type had for its literary source the ancient apocryph "On the Priesthood of Christ," which described the election of young Christ to priesthood in the Temple of Jerusalem<sup>30</sup>. His divine descent was confirmed during this election to prove His exclusive right to priesthood, irrespective of Levitical ancestry. Probably, it was this pivotal idea of the apocryph that gave rise to the specific iconographic type.

Spectacularly placed above the east arch in Saint Sophia at Kiev<sup>31</sup>, "Christ the Priest" occupies a symbolic place in its decoration structure, linking the Pantocrator of the dome with the liturgical themes of the altar apse, in which the new scene of the "Communion of the Apostles" holds the center.

The murals of the three altar apse tiers ("The Virgin Orant", "The Communion of the Apostles" and "Holy Bishops") created the image of an ideal Church as visibly embodying the Heavenly Jerusalem, emphatically referred to in the dedicative inscription above the conch<sup>32</sup>.

This contexts helps us understand the image of Christ endowed with the features of a templar priest in Jerusalem. It was made to remind at once of the succession of New Testament priesthood and its unique nature, and embody the idea of the unity of the Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem, where the Great Archiereus performs the Eucharist with the Apostles and saints.

The iconographic program of Saint Sophia at Kiev also connects the image of Christ the Priest with the Old Testament high priests on the vault slopes of the east arch<sup>33</sup>. These images can be easily explained as Old Testament prototypes--but the idea seems more concrete and profound. An explanation of the symbolic connection between the three images is offered by Chapter 7 of the Pauline Epistle to the Hebrews, according to which Christ received supreme and unchangeable priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, though He did not belong by birth to the offspring of Aaron, and thus disannulled the commandment of the Old Testament. The idea of true priesthood also comes out as central in the apocryph "On the Priesthood of Christ"--the basis of the rare image in Saint Sophia at Kiev.

The themes regarded above ("The Communion of the Apostles", "Officiating Bishops", "Christ Archiereus Consecrating the Church" and "Christ the Priest") do not exhaust the list of innovations in mid-11th century church decoration. However, their symbolic message and situation made bestowed on them a fundamental significance. Such innovations could not follow from mere choice of a particular donor. These themes appeared about simultaneously to materialize in the newly consecrated cathedrals of Kiev and Ohrid, whose iconographic programs belonged to the sphere of interests of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. All the new themes shared an underlying idea--the desire to concentrate attention on the Eucharist and demonstrate the priest- hood of Christ, Who had established the sacrament at the Last Supper.

As we see it, the ideational program brought to light here may find explanation in the theological concept of its time. In the mid-11th century, it focussed on the polemic with Latins in connection with the Schism of 1054. We know the azyyme controversy as the direct reason and

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<sup>30</sup> D.V. AINALOV, *Op.cit.*, pp.19-23

<sup>31</sup> V.N. LAZAREV, *Op. cit.*, pl. 17, pp. 31-32, 89-90.

<sup>32</sup> A.A. BELETSKY, *Grecheskie nadpisi na mozaikakh Sofii Kievskoi* // V.N. Lazarev. *Op. cit.*, pp. 162-166; S.S. AVERINTSEV, *K uyasneniyu smysla nadpisi nad konkhoi tsentralnoi apsidy Sofii Kievskoi* // *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Khudozhestvennaya kultura domongolskoi Rusi*. Moscow, 1972, pp. 25-49; K.K. AKENTIEV, *Mozaiki kievskoj Sv. Sofii i "Slovo" mitropolita Ilariona v vizantijskom liturgicheskom kontekste* // *Liturgia, arkhitektura i iskusstvo vizantijskogo mira*, ed. K.K.Akentieva. Sankt-Peterburg, 1995, pp.75-94.

<sup>33</sup> A.M. LIDOV, "Khristos-sviaschennik"..., pp.187-192.

central issue of this theological polemic. Never--either before or later--did the choice of leavened or unleavened bread for eucharistic use receive the crucial meaning it had at the time<sup>34</sup>.

Extremely topical and in need of new arguments, this problem made both Latin and Byzantine theologians re-appraise the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper and its many patristic interpretations for an all-round explanation of the instant when the most important Christian sacrament was established. They analyzed the time of the Last Supper-- the New Passover in the respect of the Hebrew Passover; the difference between the words *artos* (bread) and *azyma* (unleavened bread); and the symbolism of components of leavened bread. Whatever the diversity and specificity of particular proofs, the basic Orthodox theological concept stands out as expressed with sufficient consistency in mid-11th century treatises by a number of authors.

Byzantine polemicists saw the Latin eucharistic use of unleavened bread as deplorably following the Hebrew rite, whereas the New Passover demanded the old Law changed. They based their defence of leavened bread on the cornerstone thesis of Christ's unique New Testament priesthood, which stood above its Old Testament counterpart and denied it. In this, they used Chapter 7 of the Pauline Epistle to the Hebrews, which treated on Christ's true priesthood, as their theological basis.

Even the first epistle, that triggered off the polemic, gave the utmost clarity to the idea of the unique priesthood:

"This is why the Holy Apostle says that if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, Christ would not have been named a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:11) and the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law (Heb 7:12). Thus, according to the Apostle, azymes shall be abandoned as the law is changed. The selfsame great Apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, discoursing upon it in the beginning read on Maundy Thursday: Brethren, I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, saying: This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death (1 Cor 11:23-26). But azymes neither give remembrance of the Lord nor do show His death, for they are of Mosaic establishment of 1,600 years before. This is why the New Testament, the Gospel strips them of all meaning and abandons them"<sup>35</sup>

This theological text accentuates the ideas emphasized in mid-11th century church decoration. From Christ the Priest the searching thought goes over to the Eucharist. Of its establishment at the Last Supper, it says not in the words of the Gospel according to Matthew but as retold by Paul and read in the Maundy Thursday service. What matters to the Byzantine theologian is the idea of Christ's priesthood passing on the Apostles, who had communicated at the Last Supper ("I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you"). More than that, he stresses that the Holy Communion "shows the Lord's death," i.e., is the image and remembrance of Redemption.

An understanding of the ritual difference brought Orthodox theologians to state their parting ways with the Latin Church in the understanding of the basic sacrament and the role of Christ in it. This process, and none other, caused the spiritual parting of East and West, and prompted the

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<sup>34</sup> Of the extensive literature on the history of this polemic, we here mention only a few items: M. Cheltsov. *Polemika mezhdru grekami i latinyanami po voprosu ob opresnokakh v XI-XII vekakh*. Sankt- Peterburg, 1879; L. BREHIER, *Le Schisme Oriental du XIe siecle*. Paris, 1899; A. MICHEL, *Humbert und Kerullarios. Quellen und Studien zum Schisma des XI. Jahrhunderts*. Teil 1-2. Paderborn, 1924-1930; M. JUGIE, *Le Schisme byzantin. Apercu historique et doctrinal*. T. 1-2. Paris, 1941; M.H. SMITH, "And Take Bread..." *Cerularius and the Azyme Controversy of 1054*. Paris, 1978.

<sup>35</sup> For the publication of the Greek text of the Epistle of Leo of Ohrid to John of Trani, see: *Acta et scripta, quae de controversiis ecclesiae graecae et latinae seculo undecimo composita extant*, ed. Cornelius Will. Leipzig-Marburg, 1861 (Rep. Frankfurt, 1968), s.56-60.

outward confirmation of the specific Orthodox consciousness within the Christian Church. The desire to reflect the new situation in church decoration appears quite natural, as this decoration always served as a liturgical commentary and reflected the essential ideologems of its time. Indicatively, a theological treatise and the authorship of an iconographic program could belong to one person.

Leo, Archbishop of Ohrid in 1037-1056, was just such a person. The extant 12th century list of Bulgarian archbishops has this to say of him: "Leo, the first of Romaioi, chartophilax of the Great Church, founder of the church consecrated to the Holy Wisdom of God"<sup>36</sup>. The cathedral was rebuilt under Leo of Ohrid, the first Archbishop of Greek extraction, from a basilica into a dome structure, entirely covered in murals and, to all appearances, reconsecrated to Hagia Sophia<sup>37</sup>. History knows Leo as one of the crucial participants of the Schism. The anathema which the papal legates put on the altar of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople on July 16, 1054, names him second after Patriarch Michael Kerularius<sup>38</sup>. As scholars of our time assume, it was Leo of Ohrid who elaborated the basic theological arguments in the polemic with the Latins<sup>39</sup>. Significantly, this polemic started with his epistle to John of Trani, sent in 1053 and addressed not only to this South Italian bishop but "to all Frankish bishops and priests, monks, the laity and the highly esteemed Pope"<sup>40</sup>. Presented as a circular letter, Leo's treatise "On the Azymes" expressed the opinion of the entire Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, as the West unanimously took it.

The iconographic program of Saint Sophia of Ohrid can be regarded as another treatise of Archbishop Leo on the Orthodox concept of the Eucharist. As we have shown above, the themes of the "Communion of the Apostles", "Liturgy according to St. Basil the Great", "Christ Archiereus Consecrating the Church" and "Christ the Priest", which appeared in churches, find their explanation in the context of the azyme polemic, though they are more than mere illustrations to theological premises.

The iconographic program of Saint Sophia of Ohrid, however, possesses a number of unique features defying any interpretation but as literal reflections of a range of contemporary problems. Researchers noticed them fairly long ago.

Attention has been drawn by the image of Christ standing behind the altar in the "Communion of the Apostles" as if displaying the eucharistic bread<sup>41</sup>, sometimes viewed as a huge prosphora<sup>42</sup>. This opinion is hardly correct. The picture, more probably, represents the Lamb in the center of a paten<sup>43</sup>. Be that as it may, the symbolical message remains unchanged: Christ confirming the superiority of leavened bread over unleavened. We can't see as very fruitful the attempts to connect Christ's gesture with a particular liturgical rite<sup>44</sup>. More probably, it has a more general and symbolically profound meaning: in blessing, Christ Archiereus passes the grace of the Holy Ghost

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<sup>36</sup> R. LJUBINKOVIC, *Ordo episcoporum y Paris gr. 880 i arhijepejska pomen llista u sinodikonu cara Borisa* // R. Ljubinkovic. *Studije iz srednj vekovne umetnosti i kulturne istorije*. Belgrade, 1982, pp. 91-1-1, 97. For Leo of Ohrid, see also: H. GELZER, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*. Leipzig, 1902, S. 6; A. MICHEL, *Der Autor des Briefes Leos von Achrida* // *Byzantinische Neugriechische Jahrbuch*, 3 (1922), S. 49-66; I. Snegarov. *Istoria na Okhridskata arkhiepiskopia*. Vol. 1, Sofia, 1924, pp. 195-197, 266-267.

<sup>37</sup> A.W. EPSTEIN, *The Political Content of the Paintings of Saint Sophia at Ohrid* // *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik*, 29 (1980), pp. 324-325, 328.

<sup>38</sup> The following anathemizing words are indicative in the aspect relevant here: "Each who contradicts in his stubbornness the faith of the Holy Apostolic Roman See and its offerings of azymes shall be anathemized."

<sup>39</sup> M.H. SMITH, *Op. cit.*, pp.106-107

<sup>40</sup> *Acta et scripta...*, s. 56.

<sup>41</sup> V. DJURIC, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> A. GRABAR, *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> For a substantiation of this opinion, see: A.M. LIDOV, *Obraz "Khrista-arkhiyereya"...*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> A. WHARTON, *Art of Empire*. London, 1988, p. 105.

to Orthodox eucharistic bread--the New Passover--the true Body of the Lord. Justified in this connection is the visual parallel between the disk in His hand and the mandorla disk right above Him, in the conch, with the iconic image of the eucharistic sacrifice--Emmanuel clad as a bishop consecrating a church.

Another specificity of Saint Sophia of Ohrid--probably, also dictated by Archbishop Leo--lies in the unique tier of six popes depicted in the diaconicon to both sides of the window<sup>45</sup>. This Roman theme, which has no analogues, reveals the desire of the Archbishopric of Ohrid to establish its place and role in the ecumenic Christendom, whose basic Churches were represented in the many portraits of holy bishops on the walls of the altar part of the church.

Characteristically, the popes are portrayed in the diaconicon, and the far more numerous Constantinopolitan patriarchs in the center apse. Though this was noted, the reason remained unknown why the Roman hierarchs were so extolled at the time of Schism and outnumbered all the representatives of Eastern patriarchates portrayed.



**Figure 8. Roman popes in the diaconikon of St Sophia in Ohrid. Mid-11th century**

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<sup>45</sup> R. LJUBINKOVIC, *La peinture murale en Serbie et en Macedoine aux XIe et XIIe siecles* // *Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina*. Ravenna, 1962, p. 410-422; S. RADOJCIC, *Op. cit.*, p. 368; A. GRABAR, *Deux temoignages archeologiques sur l'autocephalie d'une eglise: Prespa et Ochrid* // *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta*, VIII (1964), p. 166-168; A.W. EPSTEIN, *Op. cit.*, pp. 321-322; C. GROZDANOV, *Ritrati di sei papi nella cattedrale du Santa Sofia a Ochrida* // *Balkanica*, II, 1. Roma, 1983, p. 3-11.

A new interpretation became possible with the correct identification of the image under the diaconicon window, where Christ the Priest was portrayed<sup>46</sup>. This image has a symbolical connection with St. John the Baptist, represented in the apse concha holding a staff with a cross as pastoral attribute, as if blessing Christ the Priest with his right hand. In this spectacular combination of the two images, the author of the iconographic program reminds of the Baptism as a specific ordination of Christ, an act by which the hereditary priesthood of the Old Testament was passed onto the High Priest of the New Church. Symptomatically, one of Leo's epistles describes the Epiphany as the crucial border between the Old Testament sacrifices and the New Passover, and the Holy Baptism as indispensable condition for the Eucharist<sup>47</sup>.

The place of the Roman See in Christendom was among the pivotal issues in the polemic between the Churches. The Pope insisted on the absolute priority of Rome, whose exclusive mission was determined by St. Peter, the most exalted of the Apostles. In his epistle to the Patriarch of Constantinople answering the epistle of Leo of Ohrid, Leo IX substantiated the verity of all rites, including communion in azymes, by the premise on the superiority of the Roman Church, which "shall not be judged by you or anyone else of mortals"<sup>48</sup>.

The Orthodox view, which received the fullest substantiation with Peter of Antioch, advanced a different treatment. Recognizing the apostolic authority of Rome, he pointed out: "Five patriarchates there are in the whole world, as established through Divine grace. The first is in Rome, the second in Constantinople, the third in Alexandria, the fourth in Antioch, and the fifth in Jerusalem"<sup>49</sup>. The Church--the Body of Christ--has five senses, or patriarchal sees, which shall not be abolished nor complemented. In this, Christ is the only head of the ecumenical Church as appoints hierarchs throughout the world and guides all eparchies united in faith.

The iconographic program of the diaconicon in Saint Sophia at Ohrid is seen as a pictorial comment on this Orthodox concept. The image of Christ the Priest in the center of the tier shows His absolute pontifical priority to the authority of all popes, who at the same time enjoy all the respect due them as successors to St. Peter<sup>50</sup>.

The influence of the mid-11th century theological polemic on Byzantine church decoration was not limited to the examples cited above. It was reflected both in the choice of themes and the interpretation of particular iconographic types, sometimes offering spectacular correlations in the extant treatises. As we see it, detailed studies of these correlations will come later. More important for today is to take stock of the problem proper and the fact that the mid-11th century gave rise to an ideational program which determined the structure of mid-Byzantine church decoration and gave an impetus to the spiritual evolution of an era.

## NOTE

\* The major ideas of this paper were presented for the first time at the symposium 'The Eastern Christian Church. Liturgy and Art', organized by the Center for Eastern Christian Culture in Moscow in May, 1993 ( A.M.LIDOV. *Skizma i vizantijskaia khramovaia dekoratsia*, dans *Vostochnokhristianskij khram. Liturgia i iskusstvo*, ed. by A.M.LIDOV, Sankt-Peterburg, 1994, pp.17-35) and at the Byzantine Studies Conference in Princeton in November, 1993( A.LIDOV, *The Schism and Byzantine Church Decoration*, dans *Nineteenth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference. Abstracts of Papers*, Princeton, 1993, pp.30-31 ).

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<sup>46</sup> A.M. LIDOV, "Khristos-sviaschennik"..., pp.187-192.

<sup>47</sup> M. CHELTISOV, *Op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>48</sup> *Acta et scripta*..., pp.89-92.

<sup>49</sup> M. CHELTISOV, *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

<sup>50</sup> According to A. Grabar's observation, all popes' faces in Saint Sophia at Ohrid repeat the iconographic type of St. Peter (A.GRABAR, *Op. cit.*, p. 258).