Ο «Αναπεσών» της Μακεδονίας ως πρότυπο για το Φλαμανδικό «Nascendo Morimur»

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Ibid., p. 218, figs. 242 and 253; p. 224, figs. 243-248.
peson» at the Mount Athos Monastery of Dochiariou was created under Italian influence, and that the motif of the raising of the cover from the sleeping Child was often employed by the Italian masters, including Raphael (1483-1520) and Sassoferrato (1605-1685). Indeed, borrowing, adapting and copying of forms, styles and themes from the northern European masters by the Byzantine iconographers was much more widely practised than is often realized. The use of Western woodcuts from the illustrations of the Holy Scriptures as models for wall-paintings is well known to the student of Byzantine paintings of the Last Judgment. Ludwig H. Heydenreich and Juliette Renaud have convincingly demonstrated that the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1522) and those of Hans Holbein (1523) provided inspiration for the wall-paintings of the cycle of the Apocalypse in the Mount Athos monasteries of Dochiariou, Dionysiou and others.

The Macedonian «Anapeson»

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

2. Heydenreich L. H., Der Apokalypsen-Zyklus im Athosgebiet und seine Beziehungen zur deutschen Bibellllustration der Reformation, «Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte» VIII (1939), 2 ff. Heydenreich argues that the cycle in the Monastery of Dionysiou is dependent upon the model provided by the woodcuts of Hans Holbein.
the 15th century «Anapeson» of the Metamorphosis Monastery, the Great Meteoron, Thessaly. An even further developed form of the «Anapeson» is found in the church of Ljutibrod between Cerepiš and Mezdra in Bulgaria. In this wall-painting the Christchild holds in his left hand the instruments of the passion, the spear and the sponge. Moreover, instead of resting on a kline, the Christchild lies on an altar, thereby portraying the idea of the fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrifice. Other later and even more complex forms of the «Anapeson» are found in my article of «The Place of the Anapeson of Soumela in Byzantine Art».

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

2. Grabar André, La Peinture Religieuse en Bulgarie, Paris 1928, pp. 223-224, fig. 32.
Panselinos was associated with the Macedonian School on Mount Athos and had also worked in the region of Salonica. As David Talbot Rice\(^1\) has pointed out, «though he can hardly have been responsible for all the paintings which have been attributed to him by popular tradition, the suggestion put forward by certain authorities that he was a fictitious personage seems entirely groundless. Indeed his style seems to have been fairly personal if paintings in the Protaton at Karyes which have recently been attributed to him are to be regarded as typical»\(^2\).

This painting portrays the Christchild with a cross-nimbus resting on a kline. The head of the Christchild is turned towards the right, and with His right hand He provides support for His head. In His left hand He holds a scroll. The left arm is stretched out and rests on His left thigh. The left leg is slightly elevated. A similar wall-painting of the Anapeson, although with the inscription Άναπεσων exists in the Catholicon of the Monastery of Xenophontos on Mount Athos\(^3\). The wellknown «Anapeson» of Mistra, Peloponnesos, which should be assigned to the 14th century, adorns the conch of the diakonikon of the Perivleptos Church. G. Millet, who published this painting, called it «Emmanuel dormant»\(^4\). Typologically speaking, the Mistra «Anapeson» falls into the same category as the 13th century «Anapeson» of the Protaton in Karyes.

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

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

\(^1\) Rice David T., Byzantine Art, Munich 1964, p. 304.
\(^2\) Xyngopoulos Andreas, Manuel Panselinos, Athens 1956, p. 9.
\(^3\) Brockhaus Heinrich, Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöster, Leipzig 1891, p. 102.
\(^4\) Fichtner Fritz, Wandmalereien der Athos Klöster, Berlin 1931, p. 22.
The Eastern Church has always seen a messianic significance in this passage. The first line of this verse refers to the youthful vigor of the tribe. The last two lines are almost identical with Numbers 24:9a, and may well be a quotation from another poem. In the Numeri quotation of the poem we read that in the preceding oracle Balaam had likened Israel to a hunting lion, here the nation is compared to a lion that has finished his hunting and his meal and is sitting down to a rest from which none dares to rouse him. The *Hermeneia* explains that the true source of the words is a prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob made to his sons before his death, that they refer to Judah, from whose race Christ came. Iconographically the lion does not appear in the Protaton, Xepolphontos or Mistra paintings, although in later Byzantine representations of this theme the lion is included, as for example in the 18th century wall-painting in the catholicon of the Monastery of Philotheou, Mount Athos, where the Christchild is represented asleep, unconjured by the Holy Virgin and two angels. All three kneel and in deep reverence watch over the sleeping Child. At the feet of the Christchild a lion sleeps.

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

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

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

The Macedonian «Άναπεσων» as Model for the Flemish «Nascendo Morimur»

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Οττο Φ. Α. Μειναρδος, Ο «Άναπεσόν» της Μακεδονίας ως πρότυπο για το Φλαμανδικό «Nascendo Morimur».

Το δοκίμιο αυτό για εἰκονογραφικές σχέσεις ανάμεσα σε διάφορες πολιτιστικές ενότητες δείχνει την επίδραση της βυζαντινής τέχνης στους Φλαμανδούς καλλιτέχνες του 16ου αιώνος. Για το σκοπό αυτό διαλέξαμε άπό τη Μακεδονία το θέμα «Άναπεσόν», το οποίο το πιο τυπικό παράδειγμα παρουσιάζεται στο δυτικό τοίχο του ναρθηκού του Πρωτάτου στις Καρυές του Άγιος Όρος, και το «Nascendo Morimur» (με τη γέννηση πεθαίνουμε), ζωγραφιά στο Μουσείο του Μέσου Ρήνου στο Κομπλέντς της Γερμανίας, ή όποια αποδίδεται σε ανώνυμο καλλιτέχνη, που άνηκε στόν κύκλο του Όλλανδού ζωγράφου του 16ου αι. Marten J. Heemskerk.

Η διάταξη και η μορφή του παιδιού στον «Άναπεσόντα» και στο «Nascendo Morimur» προδίδουν ομοιότητες και το μήνυμα των δύο εικόνων σχετίζεται. Σχετικά με τη διάταξη και τη μορφή παρατηρούμε ομοιότητες στάσεως. «Υπάρχουν διαφορές στο θεολογικό κλίμα της καλλιτεχνικής έκφρασης. Ο «Άναπεσόν» δείχνει το Χριστό-παιδί με σταυρωτό φωτστέφανο και ντυμένο με κεντητό ένδυμα, εκτός από το κεφάλι, τα χέρια και τα πόδια.

Στο «Nascendo Morimur» είναι παιδί γυμνό. Το κεφάλι, τα χείρι και τα πόδια του είναι τα μόνα μέρη του σώματος που δίνουν την ιδέα της ζωής, καθώς είναι ζωγραφισμένα κοκκινωπά. Ο Χριστός-παιδί κρατάει στο άριστερό του χέρι ένα είλητρο, το Βιβλίο της Ζωής, ενώ στο «Nascendo Morimur» κρατάει στον άριστερο του χέρι το κοσμικό μήνυμα ότι «με τη γέννηση πεθαίνουμε».

Το μήνυμα του «Άναπεσόντος» είναι ότι ο Χριστός-παιδί άναγνωρίζει κατά τη γέννησή του το μεσσιανικό του λειτουργία του πάθους και του θανάτου για τη σωτηρία της ανθρωπότητας. Γέννηση και θάνατος, μολονότι ιστορικά και φιλοσοφικά φανερωμένα στόν Ιησού Χριστό, παίρνουν πνευματική σπουδαιότητα για τον άνθρωπο γένος ύπο την έννοια της αναγεννήσεως και της αιώνιας ζωής διά της πίστεως. Έξ άλλου η ουσιαστική έρμηνευτική της συσχέτισης της ζωής και θανάτου, όπως εκσυγχρονίζεται στο «Nascendo Morimur», αποκλείει τις σωτηριολογικές άποψεις της χριστιανικής διδασκαλίας περί λυτρώσεως και άπλως βεβαιώνει την άληθεία ή το νόμο της φυ-
σιολογίας διτ «με τή γέννηση άποθνήσκουμε». Δέν μπορεί κανείς ν’ άρνηθή
dιτ και αυτή ή άλλη φέρει ένα πνευματικό και ήθικό μήνυμα. Ἡ παγκο-σμιότητα τού μηνύματος αυτοῦ ὑπογραμμίζεται ἀπό τήν παράσταση ἀνθρω-πίνου κρανίου, ποῦ μπορεῖ νά εἶναι και δάνειο ἀπό τή μεσαιωνική παράστα-ση τῆς λυτρώσεως, δηλαδή τό κρανίο τοῦ Ἀδάμ.
Τὸ χριστιανικὸ σωτηριολογικὸ μήνυμα τοῦ «Ἀναπεσόντος» με τὸ τὸ «Nascendo Morimur» μετασχηματίσθηκε σὲ κοσμικὴ καὶ ουμανιστικὴ πνευματικότητα. Ἡ ἐκκλησία, ποῦ φαίνεται στὸ ὅνοιχτο παράθυρο, μπορεῖ κάλ-λιστα νά συμβολίζῃ τή λύτρωση, μιὰ ὑπόσχεσι πρὸς ἐκείνον, ποῦ κατα-νοεῖ τό σοφὸ μήνυμα τοῦ «Nascendo Morimur». 