

# THE MARIAN ICONOGRAPHY OF THE WEST BAY IN THE PARECCLESION OF KARIYE

*Kariye Şapeli'nde  
Meryem İkonografisi*

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**B**ugün Kariye Müzesi olarak bilinen Bizans dönemindeki Khora manastırının kilisesi, şapelindeki fresko programının ikonografisi yeterince yorumlanmış değildir. Kilisenin güneyine bitişik mezar şapelinin batı mekan biriminde üst duvarlarda yer alan ve Eski Ahit'ten seçilmiş sahnelerin olduğu fresko çevrimi, özellikle Bizans'ın son döneminde büyük önem kazanmış olan Meryem kültü ile ilişkilidir. Bu çevrimde yer alan sahneler, farklı anlam katmanları olarak okunabilmektedir. Birinci anlam katmanı, doğrudan bu sahnelerin Eski Ahit'te anlatılan öyküleridir. Bu çevrimde okunabilen ikinci anlam katmanı ise, Meryem'in enkarnasyon mucizesindeki rolüne ilişkindir. Eski Ahit Hıristiyanlar tarafından, Tevrat'ta anlatılan öykülerin dışında, Yeni Ahit'in bir öncülü, hazırlayıcısı olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bu çevrim için seçilen bütün sahneler de, Meryem'in enkarnasyon olayındaki rolünü vurgulayacak biçimde onun figürasyonları arasından seçilmiş Eski Ahit konularıdır ve 'spiritüel olan'ı (İsa) barındıran, taşıyan 'madde' (Meryem) temasını ön plana çıkartmaktadır. Tanrı Kelamı tabletlerin içine konduğu Ahit Sandığı, gökyüzünden yeryüzüne uzanan Yakub'un merdiveni, içinde kutsal besinin olduğu kap bunun örnekleridir. Aynı sahnelerden oluşan fresko çevriminde okunabilen üçüncü anlam katmanı ise litürjik katmandır. Bu çevrimdeki sahneler ile Bizans'ın önemli litürjik metinlerinden biri olan ve ölümlerin anılması törenlerinde de okunduğunu bildiğimiz Akathistos ilahisi arasında bilinçli bir ilişki kurularak çevrime litürjik bir boyut katılmıştır. Seçilen sahnelerin saklı mesajlarını Akathistos ilahisindeki kıtaların anlamları ile karşılaştırdığımızda çevrimin bu metinle de bağlantılı olduğu ve bu çerçevede Litürjik bir anlam katmanının da olduğu görülmektedir.

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Although the architecture and the pictorial program of Kariye have been studied thoroughly by the art and architectural historians<sup>1</sup>, the iconography of the program, especially of the parecclesion's, was somehow neglected. For the iconographic interpretation of the fresco program of the chapel, Der Nersessian's and Ousterhout's articles are two major studies should be considered here.<sup>2</sup> This article aims to contribute to the discussions with regard to interpreting the iconographic program of the frescoes of the south chapel, by studying a small portion of the chapel's program, namely the Old Testament cycle at the west bay only.<sup>3</sup>

The parecclesion of the church of the Chora monastery (Kariye Museum today), was built and decorated between 1315-1321 by the ktetor Theodore Metochites, as his own burial chapel. It is one of the rare Byzantine monuments whose original fresco decoration has survived almost completely. The parecclesion runs along the south side of the Chora Monastery's church, whose archaeological history could be traced up to the sixth century. The parecclesion is a single-aisled rectangular building, formed of two square bays, the eastern bay covered by a domical-vault and the western with an impressive dome, and an apse almost as wide as the nave.<sup>4</sup> Having four tomb arcosolia set in the lateral walls, the parecclesion was designed as a burial chapel from the

very beginning, to function as a means of material protection for the tombs, as well as housing the burial and commemorative ritual. The chapel is completely decorated in fresco and has a sophisticated iconographic program<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1). On the semidome of the apse, is the Anastasis scene, flanked by two Resurrection miracles of Christ on both sides of the bema arch. The domical vault covering the east bay and the upper walls of the bay is covered by the Last Judgement and the related episodes. The cuppola of the dome covering the west bay bears the medallion portrait of the Virgin and Child, encircled by the angels, while the upper walls of the same bay is covered by the Old Testament scenes, which are related to the Virgin as will be studied in this paper. On the four pendentives of the dome are the four hymnographers. The lower walls of the parecclesion have the row of the martyrs in full-figure or medallion portraits, while those of the apse has the six bishops. The main themes of the program could be identified as the resurrection and salvation, as well as the holy intercession, which express the expectations of the deceased and is convenient with the function of the building.

As signalled by the big<sup>6</sup> and impressive portrait of the Virgin on the cupola (Fig.2), the iconography of the parecclesion's west bay, is dominated by a Mariological program. This domination is due not only to the devotion<sup>7</sup> and the "balance" sought deliberately by

<sup>1</sup> For the architectural description and history of the Chora monastery, see; Robert Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, Washington, D.C., 1987 (hereafter *The Architecture*); also, for the architecture and the pictorial program see, Paul A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, (3 vols.), New York, 1966 (hereafter, *Kariye*).

<sup>2</sup> Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "The Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of Parecclesion", *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. 4, (P.A. Underwood, ed.), Princeton, 1975, 305-349 (hereafter "Program and Iconography"). Robert Ousterhout, "Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion", *Gesta* XXXIV/1, (1995), p.63-76 (hereafter "Temporal Structuring").

<sup>3</sup> The complete program of the chapel was the subject of my Ph.D. study which was published in Turkish (see E. Akyürek, *Bizans'ta Sanat ve Ritüel, Kariye Güney Şapelinin İkonografisi ve İşlevi*, İstanbul 1996).

<sup>4</sup> For the detailed architectural description of the parecclesion, see; Ousterhout, *The Architecture*.

<sup>5</sup> An excellent catalogue of the frescoes and the iconographic program of the chapel was published by Underwood. See Underwood, *Kariye*, Vols. 1 and 3; Also see; Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography".

<sup>6</sup> The diameter of the medallion containing Mary's portrait is 1.10 m., the greatest in the parecclesion.

<sup>7</sup> Underwood, depending on the poems of Metochites, and on the iconographic program of the narthexes, suggests that the monastery was devoted to both Christ and the Virgin. See, Underwood, *Kariye*, Vol. I, p.27-28. In one of his poems, Metochites dedicates his monastery to Christ (see; *Dichtungen des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, ed. M. Treu, Potsdam, 1895, p.35, Poem A, lines 1300 ff.) (hereafter *Dichtungen des*) and in several others to the Virgin (see; Treu, *Dichtungen des*, p.38, Poem B, lines 14 ff.; p.37, Poem A, lines 104 ff.). A dual dedication of the monastery is possible (see; Robert Ousterhout, "The Virgin of the Chora: An Image and Its Contexts", in *The Sacred Image East and West*, Illinois Byzantine Studies IV, (eds. R. Ousterhout and L.

the iconographers in terms of Christ and Mary,<sup>8</sup> but also to the Virgin's increased importance for the Byzantines, especially for the capital city, during the last centuries of the empire, and to Mary's role in the death cult as the supreme intercessor for the deceased before God.

In fact, in the Byzantine world there was a steady increase in the development of the Mary's cult from the fifth century on<sup>9</sup>, which reached its peak in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>10</sup> But, during the last centuries of the empire, especially in Constantinople, the Virgin Mary began to be venerated as if she was a goddess, as explained by Theophanes of Nicaea (d.1381): "*the union between Christ and his mother is so close that, whatever is said of Him, may also be said of Her, for, She received from Him the characteristics of His Godhead*".<sup>11</sup>

The failure of two sieges of the capital city in the seventh century, first the Persian offensive in 626, and second the so called 'Avar surprise' in 673, was attributed to the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary on behalf of Constantinople, where her very important relics<sup>12</sup> were being kept, and this increased Mary's importance in the life of

Byzantines. She was the supreme defender of their city.<sup>13</sup> and the guarantee for its survival.<sup>14</sup> Constantinople was "*Her city*" in which She was believed to dwell,<sup>15</sup> and which she would protect forever. The Russian failure in capturing Constantinople in 860 reinforced her role as the protectress of the city,<sup>16</sup> and the continuous threat of external invasion became a very powerful stimulus for the further development of the Marian cult. Her name became synonymous with victory and her icon preceded the triumphal entry of the victorious emperors into the city.<sup>17</sup> Her hymn, the Akathistos Hymn, originally composed in the sixth century<sup>18</sup> for the feast of the Annunciation and later was adopted as City's special hymn of thanksgiving to the Virgin, was sung throughout the night by the citizens after every victory.

At the same time, the Virgin Mary was considered to be the supreme intercessor between God and men.<sup>19</sup> Her mediation was considered most effective not only because She was "*holier than the saints, higher than the heavens, more glorious than the cherubim, more venerable than all the creatures*",<sup>20</sup> but also because of her maternal authority over her son, it was believed that she could influ-

Brubaker), Urbana, 1995, p.91-109, esp. p.96-97 (hereafter "*Virgin of Chora*"). Concerning the parecclesion, Ousterhout suggests that it was dedicated to the Virgin (see; Ousterhout, "*Virgin of Chora*", p.97; also, idem., *The Architecture*, p.97).

<sup>8</sup> See; Underwood, *Kariye*, Vol.1, p.27-30.

<sup>9</sup> It was actually after the Council of Ephesus in 431 at which Mary was proclaimed to be the 'Bearer of God' (Theotokos) that popular worship to Mary began. For this, see; Averil Cameron, "*The Theotokos in sixth century Constantinople*", *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXIX (1978), 79-108 (hereafter "*Theotokos*"); Michael Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Princeton, 1986, p.5; Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, London, 1985, p.75; Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, New York, 1971, Vol. I, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> See; Carroll, op.cit., p.5.

<sup>11</sup> After; Graef, op.cit., p.338.

<sup>12</sup> They were her robe and girdle. For their finding and translation to the capital, see; Norman Baynes, "*The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople*", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 67 (1949), 167-177. Also see; Averil Cameron, "*The Virgin's Robe: an Episode in the History of Early Seventh Century Constantinople*", *Byzantion*, XLIX (1979), 42-56.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron, "*Theotokos*", p.79.

<sup>14</sup> Baynes, op.cit., p.171-172.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> For the emotional atmosphere after the departure of Russian army, see; Homily IV of Photius after the departure of Russians, in *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, (translation and commentary by Cyril Mango), Cambridge, 1958, p.102 ff. (hereafter *Homilies of Photius*).

<sup>17</sup> John Tzimisces' return from the victorious Bulgarian expedition in 971, and later John and Manuel Comnenos' triumphal processions, as well as Michael Palaeologos' arrival at Constantinople in 1261 after the Latin conquest, witnessed such processions of victory headed by the icon of the Virgin. See; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "*Two Images of Virgin in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 14 (1960), 71-86, (hereafter, "*Two Images*").

<sup>18</sup> Egon Wellesz, "*The 'Akathistos' A Study In Byzantine Hymnography*", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9-10 (1955-56), 141-174.

<sup>19</sup> See; Walter Christopher "*Further Notes on the Deesis*", *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 28 (1970), 161-187.

<sup>20</sup> See; Germanus, PG 98, cols. 308 C, 320 B, 352 A, 380 D; Nicephoros, PG 100, col.341 C.

ence Christ.<sup>21</sup> Mary's motherhood was very important in her intermediary role, and this was stressed especially when her images used in more private circumstances, as in private chapels.<sup>22</sup> Mary appears twice in the parecclesion's iconography,<sup>23</sup> in both cases holding Her child affectionately (see Fig.2 and Fig.3). In his "Painter's Manual", Dionysios of Fourna suggests to the painters inscribe the scroll Mary holds in Deesis scenes, with the words: "... *leave the sins of your calling / and fulfill the prayers of a mother*",<sup>24</sup> thus stressing the emotional side of a motherly wish. The Virgin, depicted affectionately leaning towards her son in the Deesis in the small niche of the tomb chamber of Neophytos in Cyprus, holds a scroll bearing the words: "*Grant, my son, remission to him who lies here*".<sup>25</sup> Christ respond to his mother's intercession with these words: "*I grant it, moved as I am by your prayers*".<sup>26</sup> Such an effective intercession was very important for the deceased who were not anymore able to do anything to improve their situation before God.

In short, the cult of Mary was adopted to meet the personal and collective needs of the people living in Constantinople and became extremely important for their life and after-life. It was not surprising that fourteenth century Constantinople witnessed a very rich Marian literature by Nicephorus Callistus, Mathew Cantacuzenos, Gregory Palamas, Theophanes of Nicea, Nicolas Cabasilas and

Isidore Glabas,<sup>27</sup> sometimes in a language more applicable to a pagan goddess than to the Virgin.<sup>28</sup>

Mary's role and importance in the lives of people living in Constantinople, and in the funerary cult in the last centuries of the empire, helps to explain the iconography of the parecclesion's west bay, which is dominated by the Theotokos. Considering the intercessory role of the Virgin for the deceased, it is meaningful that the Virgin's portrait (Fig. 2) is pictured on the highest heaven stretching above the founder's tomb. A compassionate mother holding her child, the "*merciful*" and "*salvation for sinners*",<sup>29</sup> takes the place of the "*fatherly*"<sup>30</sup> figure of Christ pantocrator, who could be loving as well as angry,<sup>31</sup> or even frightening as it is in Daphni. For, what the deceased expected was compassion, pity and intercession on their behalf, as made explicit in the words of John Mauropus (d.1079) : "*...in heaven She intercedes for men; she will propitiate her Son,... from whom she will obtain good things for us*".<sup>32</sup> It is in this context that the earliest representations of Mary as a 'mother' are related to the death cult and found in the Roman catacombs.<sup>33</sup> The Virgin holding her son in the central medallion of the dome is encircled with the angels in the 'dome of heaven'. The portrait of the Virgin and Child at the center of large dome over the west bay is also the apex of the spiritual hierarchy followed vertically from the dome's center, which might be called as the most spiritual

<sup>21</sup> See; Der Nersessian, "*Two Images*"; p.75. Also see; Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold, Byzantine Society and Its Icons*, London, 1985, p.167.

<sup>22</sup> Ioli Kalavrezou "*Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Became Meter Theou*", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 44 (1990), 165-172.

<sup>23</sup> One image on the south templon wall and the other on the dome of the west bay. She also appears in the composition of the Last Judgement in the east bay, in Jacob's ladder and in the burning bush, but in these she is a part of larger compositions.

<sup>24</sup> *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fourna*, (Paul Hetherington, ed.), London, 1981, p.89 (hereafter, *Painter's Manual*).

<sup>25</sup> Cyril Mango-E.J.W. Hawkins, "*The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and its Wall Paintings*", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20 (1966), 119-206.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

<sup>27</sup> For their Mariology, see; Graef, *op. cit.*, p.330-346.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see; Mariology of Isidore Glabas, *ibid.*, p.343.

<sup>29</sup> "Merciful" and "salvation for sinners" are two of the Virgin's names that Dionysius of Fourna suggests. See, *Painter's Manual*, p.88.

<sup>30</sup> See; J. Timken Matthews, *The Pantocrator: Title and Image*, (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1976), p.141.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>32</sup> After; Graef, *op. cit.*, p.323-324. Also see; PG 32, cols. 1109D-1111 A.

<sup>33</sup> Kalavrezou, *op. cit.*, esp. p.165. For a well preserved example of the Virgin's portrait with child in the early catacombs, see; Andre Grabar, *The Beginnings of Christian Art, 200-395*, (trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons), London, 1967, p.211, Fig. 232.

"supreme heaven",<sup>34</sup> down to the marble sarcophagi<sup>35</sup> on the floor level containing the 'soulless bodies' which were purely material.

### Old testament cycle of the parecclesion: Prefigurations of Mary as the instrument of the Incarnation

What is very interesting and unique in the iconography of the parecclesion's west bay is the cycle of the Old Testament events prefiguring the Virgin and Christ's incarnation through her. This cycle occupies the upper walls and vaults, between the cornice and the dome at the west bay. Three levels of meaning can be identified in this cycle of nine Old Testament events. The first is the literal meaning; Moses and the burning bush,<sup>36</sup> the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant,<sup>37</sup> carrying of the holy vessels of the tabernacle,<sup>38</sup> Solomon and all Israel before the Temple,<sup>39</sup> deposition of the Ark in the Holy of Holies,<sup>40</sup> Isaiah's prophecy and the Archangel's smiting the Assyrians before Jerusalem,<sup>41</sup> Aaron and his sons before the altar,<sup>42</sup> and Jacob's Ladder<sup>43</sup> are certain events told in the Old Testament, whose literal meaning will not be discussed in this article.

<sup>34</sup> Though the dome in general represents the heaven, as Lehman describes in his classic article, it is necessary to distinguish the central circle of the dome, which in Byzantine religious architecture was usually separated by a rainbow circle and occupied only by the Pantocrator image, the Virgin (in narthexes especially) or the cross and abstract ornaments. Lehmann identifies this section as "highest heaven" or "supreme heaven". See; Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven", *Art Bulletin*, 27 (1945), 1-27, esp., p.13-14.

<sup>35</sup> Though none of the sarcophagi from Kariye's parecclesion exist today, archaeological evidence shows the original existence of marble or stone sarcophagi in the niche arcosolia. See; Paul A. Underwood, "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul:1954", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9-10 (1955-1956), 291-300; also see; Paul A. Underwood, "Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul:1955-56", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 269-287.

<sup>36</sup> Exodus, 3:1-6.

<sup>37</sup> I Kings, 8:1-3.

<sup>38</sup> I Kings, 8:4.

<sup>39</sup> I Kings, 8:1-5.

<sup>40</sup> I Kings, 8:6.

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah, 37:33-37; II Kings, 19:20-35.

<sup>42</sup> Exodus, 29; Leviticus, 8-10.

<sup>43</sup> Genesis, 28:10-13.

Old Testament events were usually used in the Christian art to express hope for the coming of the Messiah and the fulfilment in Christ,<sup>44</sup> and thus new (or a second) level of meanings were attached to them. The idea that the Old Testament serving as a sort of artist's preliminary sketch that would be completed and perfected by the New Testament,<sup>45</sup> goes back to such early fathers as St. John Chrysostom<sup>46</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria,<sup>47</sup> who interpreted the Old Testament as the shadow and type of the New. Similarly, in the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, a sixth century geographer, we can see that the Old Testament events are considered as the "antetypes" of the "real things",<sup>48</sup> the old prophets "announcing Christ",<sup>49</sup> and their prophecy being "fulfilled in the Lord Christ".<sup>50</sup> The Old Testament was also the history of the preparation of the human race for the coming of Christ. In this context, the Virgin Mary, connecting Christ to the lineage of David<sup>51</sup> and passing from the Old Covenant to the New one as the instrument of the fulfilment of the Old Testament's expectations in the New one,<sup>52</sup> was the summit of this preparation.

All the Old Testament events depicted on the upper walls of the parecclesion's west bay were considered as the prefigurations of the Virgin. The dedication of Solomon's Temple<sup>53</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Schiller, op. cit., Vol. I, p.12. Also see; Kurt Weitzmann-Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, Washington, D.C., 1990, p.176-177.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert L. Kessler, "Medieval Art as Argument", *Iconography at the Crossroads*, (B. Cassidy, ed.), Princeton, 1993, 59-74.

<sup>46</sup> See; *Homilies on the Epistles to Hebrews*, (trans., F. Gardiner), Edinburgh, 1890, p.48.

<sup>47</sup> See; *Letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria*, (transl., J. McEnerney), Washington, D.C., 1987, p.180, Letter 41.

<sup>48</sup> *The Christian Topography of Cosmas An Egyptian Monk*, (trans., J. W. McCrindle), London, 1897, p.146 (hereafter, *Cosmas*).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.180.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> V. Lossky "Panagia", *The Mother of God*, (E. L. Mascoll, ed.), Westminster, 1949, 24-36.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.29. Also see; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York, 1979, p.146-147.

<sup>53</sup> I Kings, 8:1-11.

with four episodes beginning from the east bay, occupies the entire south wall. It represents how the Ark of the Lord and all other vessels of the tabernacle were carried from the city of David (Sion) to the temple built by Solomon and put in the holy of holies. The first scene in this narrative is the 'carrying of the Ark of the covenant' (Fig. 4). The Ark, made by Moses in accordance to the instructions of God<sup>54</sup> and containing the 'Word', i.e. two tablets given to Moses by God,<sup>55</sup> had been transferred finally to Solomon's temple. The 'material' Ark of the covenant which was made of the gilded wood, but embodying the 'Word of God' in itself, was considered as the most popular prefiguration of the Virgin, from as early as the fourth century.<sup>56</sup> In the feast of the Presentation in the temple, Mary is hailed in the Great Vespers as "*..the living ark, that contained the Word*".<sup>57</sup> Also, Proclus<sup>58</sup> in his sermons says: "*She herself is the ark gilded inside and out, sanctified in body and spirit, in which is kept the gold sacrifice*",<sup>59</sup> i.e. Christ. This identification of the Ark and the Virgin, found a place in art, as the depiction of the Virgin's portrait in front of the Ark.<sup>60</sup>

The second scene is the 'carrying of the holy vessels of the tabernacle', the candlestick (menorah) and the stamnos (Fig. 5). Though Cosmas brings a 'geographical' interpretation to the seven branched candlestick without mentioning any relation with the Virgin,<sup>61</sup> the

menorah was usually interpreted as Mary's prefiguration bringing 'light' to this world. In the feast of the Annunciation, in Matins, Gabriel calls the Virgin "*..thou, candlestick of the light*".<sup>62</sup> Also, one miniature of the Smyrna Cosmas depicts the menorah with the Virgin and the Child above.<sup>63</sup> The seven branched candlestick in the parecclesion does not bear Mary's portrait, but some later depictions illustrated this identity explicitly: In the frescoes of Dionysiou and Dochiariou monasteries on Mount Athos, we see the portrait of the Virgin and Child on the menorah.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the golden urn containing the manna<sup>65</sup> is also considered as the prefiguration of the Virgin, for, the manna, "*spiritual food*",<sup>66</sup> the heavenly bread God rained on the Chosen People,<sup>67</sup> prefigures Christ. In the Small Vespers read in the feast of the Virgin's Birth, she is hailed as "*She...who received within her body the bread of heaven*".<sup>68</sup> And, in the Great Vespers read in the feast of the Annunciation, Gabriel hails Mary as "*..thou divine jar of manna*".<sup>69</sup> The amphora-shaped stamnos carried on the shoulder of a priest in the parecclesion, is not in a very good condition of preservation, and it is not certain if it was decorated with an image of the Virgin, but, on the stamnos depicted on the north wall of bema in Gracanica, there is a portrait of the Virgin.

The final scene of the dedication of the temple is the 'deposition of the ark into the Holy of Holies by two priests, while King Solomon and other Israelites congregate outside of the temple (Fig. 6).<sup>70</sup> This event is identified with the Virgin in two ways: First, the Virgin herself is the material temple of God, where God dwelt. In this case, the Ark

<sup>54</sup> Exodus, 25:10; 37:1.

<sup>55</sup> Exodus, 25:21; I Kings, 8:9.

<sup>56</sup> See; Thomas. F. Mathews, "*The Epigrams of Leo Sacellarios and an Exegetical Approach to the Miniatures of Vat. Reg. Gr.1.*", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 43 (1977), 94-133. Actually, in the 2nd. century, in the Christological symbolism of Irenaeus, the ark was identified with Christ himself. See; *ibid*, p.106.

<sup>57</sup> *The Festal Menaion, Service Book of the Orthodox Church*, (trans. from the original Greek by Mother Mary and K. Ware), London, 1969, p.166, (hereafter, *Festal Menaion*).

<sup>58</sup> Patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century.

<sup>59</sup> Proclus, *Homilies*, PG 65, cols.753-756.

<sup>60</sup> In Mount Athos Vatopedi, Cod. 602, fol.345 v. the portrait of the Virgin is depicted in a round medallion in front of the ark carried by the priests. The ark in the Kariye perecclesion has a similar round medallion in it's front, but it is not possible to identify Mary's portrait on it since the fresco at this part is not preserved very well.

<sup>61</sup> Cosmas, p.152.

<sup>62</sup> *Festal Menaion*, p.455.

<sup>63</sup> Smyrna Evangelical School, Cod. A.1, fol.154.

<sup>64</sup> See; Gabriel Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos. I. Les peintures*, Paris, 1927, Plates 196/2, 218/2.

<sup>65</sup> The food God miraculously supplied to Israeli during their suffering in the desert (Exodus 16:4-14-31-32).

<sup>66</sup> I Corinthians 10:3.

<sup>67</sup> Exodus 16:4.

<sup>68</sup> *Festal Menaion*, p.99.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.439.

<sup>70</sup> I Kings, 8:5-6.

can be identified with Christ himself,<sup>71</sup> and the temple, or the holy of holies embodying the Ark, with the Virgin. Second, the Virgin is the Ark deposited into the temple's most holy place, prefiguring the Virgin's presentation to the temple.<sup>72</sup> There are no earlier examples of this scene in Byzantine monumental painting to compare with the one in Kariye's parecclesion.<sup>73</sup> In several fourteenth century churches, the deposition of the ark is in the tabernacle of Moses,<sup>74</sup> not in the temple of Solomon.

In the scene of 'Isaiah prophesying and Archangel Michael smiting the Assyrians before Jerusalem', we see the portrait of the Virgin in a tympanum over the gate of the city (Fig.7). The 'closed door' is a common type of the Virgin, but here, this depiction is not related to the closed door prefiguring the Virgin: First, the closed door is related to Ezekiel,<sup>75</sup> but not to Isaiah. The episode of the Archangel's victory over the Assyrians who were trying to capture Jerusalem is in Isaiah,<sup>76</sup> and is referred to on the hardly legible scroll that Isaiah is holding.<sup>77</sup> Second, in terms of iconography, when the closed door allegory is depicted, the Virgin is 'before' the door as it is in the chapel of Pammakaristos.<sup>78</sup> So, the medallion of the Virgin in this scene should refer not to the closed door allegory, but to the "City of God"<sup>79</sup> where God dwelt.<sup>80</sup> Isaiah calls Jerusalem "the Virgin, the daughter of

Zion".<sup>81</sup> John of Damascus says Mary is "...the city of the living God"<sup>82</sup> and is prefigured by Jerusalem, where God dwelt. Also, this scene could be related to the Virgin's role in defending Constantinople. A reference to the Akathistos hymn - which the people sang after every unsuccessful attack on the city- is inscribed on the scroll of Joseph the Hymnographer<sup>83</sup> who is on the adjacent pendentive to this scene. It helps to relate Jerusalem's miraculous saving by Michael to the rescue of Constantinople.<sup>84</sup> Constantinople was considered as the 'New Jerusalem'. Moreover, unlike most of the liturgical references in the iconography, Isaiah is not read in any of the Marian feasts, but read in the vigil of June 5 to commemorate the Avar Surprise.<sup>85</sup>

'The ladder Jacob saw in his dream', (Fig.8) rising from the earth up to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it, is also considered as a prefiguration of Mary, as St. John of Damascus explains in his Homilies on Nativity: "Today, the son of the carpenter...prepared an animated ladder for himself, whose base is set upon the earth, but whose upper part the very heavens; God rested upon it; Jacob saw its figure; God descended by it...was seen upon earth and conversed with men... The spiritual ladder, the Virgin, is firmly set upon the earth, for, she is born of the earth".<sup>86</sup> Besides being the instrument of God's descent into the world, the ladder is also the instrument of men's ascent to the heaven. The inscription of the Hymnographer Theophanes depicted on the adjacent pendentive of this scene is from his Canon read during the funeral services, and the inscription on the wall continues in the text as following:

<sup>71</sup> For the ark as the prefiguration of Christ, see; T. F. Matthews, op. cit., esp., p.103-105.

<sup>72</sup> Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", p.317,

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.340.

<sup>74</sup> For example; St. Clement in Ohrid, Lesnovo, Decani, Mt. Athos Protaton, Mt. Sinai chapel, and Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki.

<sup>75</sup> Ezekiel, 44:1-4.

<sup>76</sup> Isaiah, 37.

<sup>77</sup> Underwood relates this inscription to Isaiah, 37:21-33, which is about Isaiah's prophecy about the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem (Underwood, Kariye, Vol. 1, p.223). In Isaiah, the following event is about Archangel Michael's fight to Assyrians to protect the city (Isaiah, 37:36).

<sup>78</sup> Hans Belting, Cyrill Mango, Doula Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii) at Istanbul*, Washington, D.C., 1978. See; Fig. 109.

<sup>79</sup> Isaiah, 60:14.

<sup>80</sup> Also, in Hebrews 12:22, Jerusalem is called as the "city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem".

<sup>81</sup> Isaiah, 52:2.

<sup>82</sup> St. John Of Damascus, *Homilies on Nativity*, PG 96, cols. 673 D, 676.

<sup>83</sup> See; Underwood, Kariye, Vol.1, p.217.

<sup>84</sup> For this relation, see; Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", p.333-334.

<sup>85</sup> Gudrun Engberg, " 'Aaron and His Sons' -A Prefiguration of the Virgin?", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 21 (1967), 279-283, esp. see p.280.

<sup>86</sup> John of Damascus, *Homily on Nativity 3*, PG 96, col. 665 B. Translation quoted here, after; V. Albert Mitchell, *The Mariology of St. John Damascene*, Kirkwood, 1930, p.177.

"But through thee, o Virgin, we have ascended from earth unto heaven, shaking off the corruption of death".<sup>87</sup> In this sense, the scene (Fig.8) is also related to the theme of death and salvation.<sup>88</sup>

The 'burning bush', through which God spoke to Moses<sup>89</sup> (Fig.9), was miraculously not consumed by the flames. Due to these qualities, the bush was considered as a prefiguration of the Virgin, through whom God came among people and communicate them, while, Mary, giving birth to God incarnate, still preserved her virginity.<sup>90</sup> In the Great Vespers read in the feast of the Annunciation, Gabriel hails Mary as "thou burning bush that remains unconsumed".<sup>91</sup> This analogy is referred to the Homily 5 on the Annunciation by Patriarch Photius: "As the bush received the fire, and feeding the flames was not consumed, thus shalt thou conceive a son, lending Him thy flesh, providing nourishment to the immaterial fire, and drawing incorruptibility in return".<sup>92</sup> In the depictions of the burning bush scenes, the portrait of the Virgin usually appears in the middle of the burning bush.<sup>93</sup>

One common point in all scenes of the Marian Old Testament cycle on the upper walls of the west bay, is the Virgin's being the earthly or material instrument of the Incarnation. Almost all the Old Testament prefigurations of the Virgin depicted in Kariye bear the idea of materiality embodying the spiritual. The Ark, was made of "acacia wood",<sup>94</sup> but gilded inside and out since it will embody the

Word of God.<sup>95</sup> Similar analogies are introduced by the other prefigurations of the Virgin as well: Solomon's "material" temple is to "house" God in it;<sup>96</sup> the golden urn was to contain the manna, i.e. "Christ the celestial manna";<sup>97</sup> the 'city of God' that the archangel defended has God in it; the material candlestick brings the immaterial light to people; Jacob's ladder is the material means through which God descended. In one of the poems of Metochites, in which he dedicates Chora monastery to the Virgin, it is very explicit how the founder perceived the Virgin: "But thou, oh Lady, hast become the instrument of this great miracle (i.e. the incarnation of Christ) which gave life to mortals \ And it is to bring a shrine to thee that erected this monastery \ Calling it Chora after thee, the one who contained the uncontainable, to thee the shrine of immortal God".<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the inscription on the mosaic of the Virgin Blacherinitissa above the entrance door to the church, calls Mary 'the mother of God containing the uncontainable', i.e. Christ.

The Old Testament itself is the 'material' history of men, embodying the seeds of the 'spiritual' New Testament of God brought by His Incarnation. The notion of the material tabernacle of Jews that would not be restored by Christ's coming, but would be replaced by a new and 'more spiritual' one,<sup>99</sup> refers to this idea. The Epistle to the Hebrews, compares the materiality of the Old Testament, the holy places "made with hands"<sup>100</sup> and the Ark of the Covenant made of gilded wood with "stone tables of covenant" in it,<sup>101</sup> and the "lampstand" and the "golden pot that had manna", and the "burnt offerings of bulls and

<sup>87</sup> Isabel F. Hapgood, *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, New York, 1922, p.383 (hereafter *Service Book*).

<sup>88</sup> Ousterhout points to the fact that Jacob's Ladder is located just over Metochites' tomb as the founder's wish to ascend up to the heaven through the intercession of the Virgin. See; Ousterhout, "Temporal Structuring", p.63-76.

<sup>89</sup> Exodus, 3:6.

<sup>90</sup> Graef, op. cit. p.65-66.

<sup>91</sup> *Festal Menaion*, p.437.

<sup>92</sup> *Homilies of Photius*, p.109-110.

<sup>93</sup> In monumental painting, for example, see the depictions in St. Clement in Ohrid, Asinou in Cyprus, or those in Gracanica and Staro Nogoricino.

<sup>94</sup> Exodus, 25:10.

<sup>95</sup> T. F. Mathews, op. cit., p.106.

<sup>96</sup> The God of Israel wants Solomon to build a house for Him, to "dwell" in, among the children of Israel. See; I Kings, 6.

<sup>97</sup> See; Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", p.340.

<sup>98</sup> Treu (ed), *Dichtungen des*, Poem B, Lines 14 ff., p.38. English translation here is quoted after; Underwood, *Kariye*, Vol.1, p.27.

<sup>99</sup> See; Herbert L. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity", *Kairos*, XXXII/ XXXIII (1991), 53-77, esp. p.67.

<sup>100</sup> Hebrews, 9:24.

<sup>101</sup> Hebrews, 9:2-4.



rams" with the spirituality of the New Covenant. The following words of God in the Epistle, are the clearest example for how the Old and New Testaments were perceived in terms of materiality and spirituality: "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts*",<sup>102</sup> that is, not on the stone tablets. The Old Testament as a material shell, embodies the seeds of the New one in it. Beginning from Adam and Eve, the entire history up to the Virgin, was the 'material' preparation for the coming of Christ, the God. The Theotokos also was an 'earthborn'.<sup>103</sup> The Word of God himself, for our salvation's sake, dwelt in her womb, took flesh of her, and was born as a man.<sup>104</sup>

The selection of the Old Testament pre-figurations of the Virgin stresses her role as the instrument of incarnation, and thus, the first step in the redemption of human beings. St. John of Damascus, having enumerated the benefits of the Incarnation in his Homilies on Dormition, calls the Virgin the "*workshop of our salvation*".<sup>105</sup> The idea of the Incarnation in the iconography of the west bay, connects this Marian imagery to the themes of redemption and human salvation which is most explicitly depicted in the apse and from there radiates to the rest of the chapel's program.<sup>106</sup> Incarnation, represented indirectly in the Old Testament cycle in the west bay, is the beginning of the human salvation,<sup>107</sup> which will be completed by Christ's raise of the dead -which is represented in the apse program<sup>108</sup> - and the

final judgement -which is represented in the east bay- in his second coming. On the other hand, Mary herself, being the supreme intercessor, is related to the rest of the program. The idea of intercession of holy personalities for the deceased before God can be seen in the Deesis scene at the core of the Last Judgement fresco; in the "angel-Deesis" reliefs on the marbles crowning the archs of the arcsofia of Metochites' and Tornikes' tombs; in the row of the martyrs and bishops<sup>109</sup>; in the panel of the Virgin Eleousa on the south templon<sup>110</sup>; and in the medallion portrait of Archangel Michael on the top of the bema arch. Mary's intermediary role is especially very important in the Last Judgement day, as it is read during the office of the Orthodox Church for the parting of the soul from the body: "*When the last great trump shall sound unto the frightful and dread Resurrection of the Judgement Day, and all shall rise from the dead; then remember me, o holy Birth-Giver of God*".<sup>111</sup>

The mystery of the Incarnation could be represented 'directly' as it is in the mosaics of Kariye's narthex<sup>112</sup> or as it is in one of the contemporary burial chapels, namely the south chapel of Pammakaristos,<sup>113</sup> simply by presenting the scenes from the life of Christ. But in the Kariye's parecclesion an 'indirect' representation of incarnation through the pre-

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scene, should be interpreted as Christ's raise of the dead on the day of the Last Judgement. For this interpretation, see Akyürek, op. cit., p.103-110; also, Anna D. Kartsonis, **Anastasis, The Making of an Image**, Princeton, 1986, p.157.

<sup>109</sup> Six Bishops in the apse with their books closed and standing in an iconic manner, shows that they are not related to the holy liturgy as it was in most of the late Byzantine apse programs in the Balkans. (see; Der Nersessian, "*Program and Iconography*", p.318-319). In this funerary context, probably they have an intercessional role like the martyrs on the walls had.

<sup>110</sup> This panel was probably facing an image of Christ on the north templon, as Underwood suggested (see, Underwood, **Kariye**, Vol. 1, p.27-30 and p.168-169).

<sup>111</sup> **Service Book**, p.365.

<sup>112</sup> For the program of the narthexes, see; Underwood, **Kariye**, Vols. 1 and 2.

<sup>113</sup> Mouriki suggests that the first stage in the divine scheme of the human salvation, marked by the incarnation and Christ's deeds in the course of his earthly life, is reflected by the scenes of the festival cycle in the south chapel of the Pammakaristos. See; Belting-Mango-Mouriki, op. cit., p.70.

<sup>102</sup> Hebrews, 8:10.

<sup>103</sup> As Nicholas Cabasilas in the fourteenth century said in his Homilies on Dormition: "earth She is, because She is from earth" See; Meyendorff, op. cit., p.148.

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell, op. cit., p.23-24.

<sup>105</sup> See; Mitchell, op. cit., p.172-173.

<sup>106</sup> For this discussion, see; Engin Akyürek, Kariye Parekklesionu: Bir Mezar Şapeli Olarak İkonografik Programının Yorumlanması ve İşlevi, (Ph.D. diss., University of Istanbul, 1995), p.92-102.

<sup>107</sup> Bishop Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "*Orthodox Soteriology, Salvation in Christ: a Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*, (J. Meyendorff and R. Tobias, ed.), Minneapolis and Augsburg, 1992, 35-58.

<sup>108</sup> The Anastasis scene on the semidome of the apse, being in a funerary context and adjacent to the Last Judgement

figurations of the Virgin was preferred. This indirect representation, besides honoring the Virgin by stressing her role in this mystery and by doing so expecting her mediation for those buried in the chapel, may also reflect the intellectual personality of the patron, Theodore Metochites, who preferred in his poems and writings a style which was "*ungraspable at the first sight*" even for the literate people of his time.<sup>114</sup>

### Liturgical strata in the Old Testament cycle:

A third level of meaning in reading the iconography of the Old Testament cycle in the parecclesion's west bay, can be identified. This might be called the liturgical level of meaning, since the Old Testament events depicted in this cycle, besides being read in certain Marian feasts,<sup>115</sup> can be related also with the Akathistos hymn, an important liturgical text of the Byzantine Church.

The fact that one of the distinguishing features of the Palaeologan church decoration was the "liturgification" of the programs -i.e. representing the liturgy directly<sup>116</sup> or having liturgical references in the program-, as well as that the Akathistos' being an important text for the Chora and its relation to the com-

memorative services of the dead -especially after the twelfth century-, makes the effort to seek the hymn's relation with the Old Testament cycle of the parecclesion meaningful. On Friday nights, a special commemoration of the dead, including the visits to the tombs, was held in the monasteries, and this commemoration was blended with the Friday evening office held in the monasteries in honor of the Virgin, at which Akathistos hymn was sang.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the hymn was important for the Chora: First, there is a direct reference to the hymn in the iconography of the parecclesion's west bay; the scroll of hymnographer Joseph the Poet on the south-west pendentive bears an inscription from his Ode 4 Canon for the Akathistos Hymn: "*Propitiation of the world, hail spotless Virgin*".<sup>118</sup> The inscription related to the Akathistos on the scroll of Joseph the Poet might be considered as evidence that the hymn was probably read in the parecclesion on certain days to commemorate those buried in the Kariye's parecclesion,<sup>119</sup> since we know that the hymn was also invoked in private devotions.<sup>120</sup> Secondly, the inscription "khora ton akhoraton" (who comprehend the incomprehensible) which appear twice in the program of Chora - one on the mosaic of Virgin Blachernitissa in the outer narthex, and one on the mosaic of Virgin Hodegetria on the south templon-, is from the Akathistos hymn.<sup>121</sup> A closer examination of the scenes and the text leads us to find a communication

<sup>114</sup> For this, see; Ihor Sevcenko, "*Theodore Metochites, the Chora, and the Intellectual Trends of His Time*", *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. 4, (P.A. Underwood, ed.), Princeton, 1975, p.17-90. Esp. see p.28. We can also detect his indirect style in his letter to the monks of the Chora monastery. For the Greek original and English translation of this letter, see; Appendix I to the above mentioned article, *ibid.*, p.57-84.

<sup>115</sup> Jacob's Ladder (Genesis, 28:10-17) was read in the feasts the Virgin's Birth, Koimesis, Annunciation, and Nativity; Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-8) was read in the feast of the Annunciation; Dedication of the Solomon's Temple (I. Kings, 8:1-11) was read in the feast of the presentation of the Virgin to the temple; Isaiah's prophecy and the destruction of the Assyrian army by Michael before Jerusalem (Isaiah, 37) was read in the celebrations of the so called Avar Surprise in June 5; Aaron and his sons before the temple (Hezekiel, 43:27) was read in the feasts of the Virgin's birth, presentation to the temple, Koimesis and the Annunciation.

<sup>116</sup> This liturgification of the pictorial programs is very clear especially in the Balkans. For this, see; Richard Hamann-MacLean and H. Hallensleben, *Die Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien (Vom 11. bis zum frühen 14. Jahrhundert)*, Giezen, 1963.

<sup>117</sup> For this, see; Nancy P. Sevcenko, "*Icons in the Liturgy*", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 45 (1991), 45-57, esp. p.56.

<sup>118</sup> See; Underwood, *Kariye*, Vol.1, p.217.

<sup>119</sup> Since the typicon of the Chora monastery does not survive, we can not be sure about this. But, two other hymnographers on the pendentives, St. John of Damascus on the north-east pendentive and St. Theophanes on the north-west have inscriptions from their Canons for the funeral service. So, the inscription related to the Akathistos should also refer to such a liturgical purpose, and in this case it is highly probable that it was read as a private devotion by the founder.

<sup>120</sup> *Akathistos Hymn, Ode in Honour of the Holy Immaculate Most Blessed Glorious Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary*, (trans. from original Greek and notes by Fr. Vincent McNabb), Sussex, MCMXLVII, p.VIII (hereafter *Akathistos Hymn*). See Note 3 by Fr. Vincent McNabb, *Akathistos Hymn*, p.134

<sup>121</sup> In the fifteenth stanza of the hymn addressing to the Virgin, it is read as "who didst comprehend the incomprehensible" (see, *Akathistos Hymn*).

between the scenes of the cycle and some stanzas of the hymn, which does not seem accidental. First, when we compare the Akathistos hymn's content with that of the Marian cycle represented by the Old Testament figurations of the Virgin, we can say that their subject matter coincides in its broadest sense: They both tell about the incarnation of Christ through Mary.

The Akathistos hymn, originally a late fourth or early fifth century hymn<sup>122</sup> of the Virgin composed for the feast of the Annunciation, later became one of the most famous hymns of the Eastern church.<sup>123</sup> After the lifting of the Persian siege of Constantinople in 626 or the failure of the Arabian siege in 719, a 'prooemium' as thanksgiving to the Virgin was added to the hymn,<sup>124</sup> and in the course of the centuries the hymn was identified with victory and became very popular. The hymn was not sung only on the feast of the Annunciation, but also after every victory, as well as in private devotions as mentioned above.

Following two 'prooimion', the hymn is formed of 24 stanzas, alternately short and long. Actually all stanzas have seven lines in which poet narrates the event and the mystery of the Incarnation, beginning with the Annunciation. But, to some stanzas the poet added 12 'charetismoi' praising the Virgin Mary. The first 12 stanzas contain the 'story' of the incarnation, six before Christ's birth, and six after. The second part of the hymn (stanzas from 13 to 24) praise the 'mystery' of the incarnation. Some stanzas of the hymn are Christological in content.<sup>125</sup>

The contents of the twenty-four stanzas<sup>126</sup>

may be summarized as follows:

- Stanza 1: The Annunciation to the Virgin. An angel comes to Mary and announces that she will give birth to a child who would bring salvation to people.
- St.2: The Annunciation to the Virgin. Mary does not understand how a virgin shall give birth.
- St.3: The Annunciation to the Virgin. Angel tells her how omnipotent is God.
- St.4: Conception by God.
- St.5: Mary, the God-bearing womb, goes to visit Elisabeth.
- St.6: Joseph's doubt.
- St.7: Birth of Christ and shepherds' adoration of the child.
- St.8: Star leads Magi to Christ.
- St.9: The Magi offer their gifts and praise Mary.
- St.10: The Magi turn back.
- St.11: Flight of the holy family to Egypt.
- St.12: Presentation of Christ in the temple.
- St.13: The Creator manifests himself as the new creature.
- St.14: The reason for Christ's coming is the salvation of the men.
- St.15: Christ as both man and god.
- St.16: All angels praise the incarnation.
- St.17: The wisdom brought by the Virgin.
- St.18: The reason for the incarnation is to save the world.
- St.19: Mary, the shelter for all who need it.
- St.20: Insufficiency of the hymns to praise Christ and his deeds for us.

<sup>122</sup> For dating of the hymn, see; Wellesz, op. cit. p.153.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.143.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.147-152.

<sup>125</sup> This leads Wellesz to conclude that the hymn was an earlier hymn for Christ blended with Marian stanzas. See; Wellesz, op. cit., p.150-151.

<sup>126</sup> Alexandra Pätzold summarizes the content of each stanza in section 2.3. of her book, where each is used as a subtitle, under which, she matches the content of each stanza with the scenes depicted in the churches she studies. See; A. Pätzold, *Der Akathistos Hymnos, Die Bilderzyklen in der Byzantinischen Wandmalerei des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1989, p.43-55. Wellesz also, formulates a short content for each stanza. See; Wellesz,

op. cit., p.156-157. For the complete English translation of the hymn, see; *Akathistos Hymn*.

St.21: The Virgin as the bringer of the light.

St.22: Christ paid for the sins of all before him and after him.

St.23: Praise the Virgin as the living temple of God.

St.24: Offering hymns to the Virgin.

The earliest examples of the Akathistos hymn depicted 'directly' as a cycle in mural painting can be found in several fourteenth century churches of Greece and the former Yugoslavia,<sup>127</sup> for example Hagios Nikolaos Orphanos and Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki, Pantocrator in Decani, St. Clement in Ohrid, St. Demetrios in the Monastery of Markov. In most of those examples, the Akathistos hymn is depicted on the walls as a 'cycle' of 24 scenes, each corresponding to a stanza of the hymn,<sup>128</sup> as it was defined in the so called "painter's manual".<sup>129</sup> Because it is very well preserved, the church of St. Demetrios in Markov Monastery, offers a good example: The cycle of the Akathistos scenes begins to the south of the bema, and continues through the south wall of the naos, then continues towards the east on the north wall, up to the north part of bema.<sup>130</sup> The fresco cycle contains twenty four scenes, exactly in the same order as the stanzas of the hymn. Even, the Annunciation is depicted in the first three scenes,<sup>131</sup> to match with the first three stanzas of the hymn.<sup>132</sup> Though no example depicting the full cycle of the Akathistos hymn has survived to our day in Constantinople, it is highly probable that this was created in the capital

city and from there spread to Balkans.<sup>133</sup> In the infancy cycle of Christ of the Kariye's narthex, Lafontaine-Dosogne identifies "*Unmistakable connections with the iconography employed in illustrating the Akathistos*" made through "*borrowings*" or "*concordances*".<sup>134</sup>

The iconographer(s) of the Kariye, had neither such a vast surface of painting nor the intention to depict the twenty four stanzas of the hymn on the walls of the west bay. What they did is to select among the numerous Old Testament figurations of the Virgin in a way that, each should represent Mary's role as a "material embodying the spiritual", as well as match to certain stanzas of the Akathistos hymn; so that three levels of meaning could be read on the same pictorial cycle. The stanzas that match the scenes are those with Mariological content,<sup>135</sup> holding the key points in the overall narrative of the hymn,<sup>136</sup> and having references to the selected Old Testament figurations of the Virgin. They are the stanzas 1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 17, 19, 21 and 23.<sup>137</sup>

Even though the sequence of the paintings of the cycle do not follow that of the stanzas' in the hymn, almost all could be matched or communicate with one of the above mentioned stanza of the Akathistos. To begin with the Moses and the burning bush fresco (Fig.9), an Old Testament event which was considered as a prefiguration of the Vir-

<sup>127</sup> Pätzold, op. cit., p.8 and others. Lafontaine-Dosogne suggests the last decades of the 13th. century for the depictions of the full cycle. For this, see; J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "*L'illustration de la première partie de l'Hymne Akathiste et sa relation avec les mosaïques de l'Enfance de la Kariye Djami*", *Byzantion*, 54 (1984), 648-702 (hereafter "*L'illustration*").

<sup>128</sup> See; Pätzold, op. cit.

<sup>129</sup> In the Painter's Manual, the Akathistos hymn is mentioned as "24 stanzas of the Mother of God" and there are instructions how these stanzas should be depicted in churches. See; *Painter's Manual*, p.51.

<sup>130</sup> Pätzold, op. cit., p.15, and Plans 25, 26, 27, 28.

<sup>131</sup> See Figures 85, 86, 87, *ibid*.

<sup>132</sup> See the contents of the stanzas above.

<sup>133</sup> See; Lafontaine-Dosogne, "*L'illustration*".

<sup>134</sup> Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, "*Iconography of the Cycle of the infancy of Christ*", *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. 4, (P.A. Underwood, ed.), Princeton, 1975, p.195-241.

<sup>135</sup> The first six stanzas up to the Nativity are Marian stanzas. According to Wellesz, Christological subjects begin from the seventh stanza (see, Wellesz, op. cit., p.150), but certain stanzas even after it, namely the seventeenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, twenty-third and twenty-fourth stanzas are very explicitly Marian in content (see the content of the stanzas above).

<sup>136</sup> The long stanzas (those with odd numbers) usually hold the key points in the narrative of the hymn. To give an example, the eighth stanza - a short one- reports the Magi's journey to Bethlehem and the tenth -also a short one- is about their journey back, while the ninth -a long one- reports the presentation of their gifts and their adoration.

<sup>137</sup> See the content of the stanzas above.

gin in relation to the Annunciation,<sup>138</sup> can be matched to the first stanza of the Akathistos telling about the Annunciation. Also, some 'textual' similarities between the Annunciation to the Virgin and Moses' talk to the angel of God through the burning bush are traceable: Moses hears from "the Angel of the Lord" that "appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush"<sup>139</sup> the announcement about the delivery of 'his people' out of the hand of Egyptians, to the salvation. Similarly, the angel of God announces to the Virgin that she will give birth to a child who will bring salvation to the people. Both Moses and the Virgin were frightened when they first saw the angel: "Moses hides his face, for he was afraid";<sup>140</sup> and the angel of the Annunciation tells Mary not to fear.<sup>141</sup> In the second stanza of the Akathistos, which is a continuation of the Annunciation in the first stanza, Mary asks to the angel how she, being a virgin, could give birth to a child? Similarly, Moses did not understand how he will take his people from the hands of Pharaoh and asks the angel "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"<sup>142</sup>

The third stanza, which is also on the Annunciation to Mary, is likely related to the fresco of Jacob's ladder in the program, since, in this stanza there is a very strong reference to Mary's role as the ladder: In the fourth and the fifth chairetismoi, Mary is called "the heavenward ladder by which God came down, the earthly bridge carrying the earthborn unto heaven".<sup>143</sup> Taking the burial context of the parecclesion into consideration, we can connect the Jacob's ladder fresco to the third stanza of the hymn, rather than to the Annunciation.

The fresco of the bearing of the Ark of the covenant (Fig.4), though there is no clear reference to the Ark in the hymn, might be matched with the fifth stanza of the Akathistos, which is about the Visitation. As it is said in this stanza, "the Maid of the God-bearing womb" goes to visit Elisabeth.<sup>144</sup> The journey of the ark containing the 'word of god', may be considered as the Old Testament prefiguration of the Visitation.

The ninth stanza of the hymn is about the three Magi presenting their gifts to the child in adoration and praising Mary. This stanza may be matched with the Aaron and his sons before the temple scene in the parecclesion's frescos (Fig.10). The relation between the scene of Aaron and two sons presenting their offerings to God, to that of the Magi offering their gifts to the Virgin and child is not "purely formal" as Der Nersessian suggests.<sup>145</sup> The formal resemblance of the two events in Byzantine painting is fairly clear.<sup>146</sup> Their garments, gestures, and composition are quite similar. Even in typology, one of the Magi usually has white beard and hair, as that of Aaron's. These formal similarities should be intentional, rather than accidental; for, Aaron and his two sons, being the 'first three priests' of the most high God and making their offerings of calves and burned offers to God, prefigure the three kings of the East, who were the 'first three believers' of Christ and offer their gifts to God. In the ninth stanza of the Akathistos, there are references to this 'prefiguration'; Magi praise Mary because she had rescued them from "pagan rites" and "cult of fire"<sup>147</sup> represented by the material offerings of the Old Testament.

<sup>138</sup> Moses and the burning bush (Exodus, 3:1-8) is read twice in the feast of the Annuntiation (Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", p.317). For the relation of this episode and the Annunciation, see also; Homilies of Photius, p.102.

<sup>139</sup> Exodus, 3:1-12.

<sup>140</sup> Exodus, 3:6.

<sup>141</sup> Luke, 1:30.

<sup>142</sup> Exodus, 3:11.

<sup>143</sup> See; Akathistos Hymn.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> For this, see; Der Nersessian, "Program and Iconography", p.348-349.

<sup>146</sup> Compare, for example, the fresco of Aaron and his sons in Kariye parecclesion or in Fethiye's chapel (see; Fig.110 in Belting-Mango-Mouriki, op. cit.) with the Adoration of Magi fresco in Daphni, church of Dormition, or with the miniature in Taphou 14, fol.99v, depicting the adoration of Magi, in Greek Patriarch Library, Jerusalem.

<sup>147</sup> See; stanza 9 of the hymn, Akathistos Hymn.

The eleventh stanza, telling about the holy family's flight into Egypt, contains several references to Moses' flight from Egypt, which was a prefiguration of the former one. In this stanza the Virgin is hailed as the "*sea the mystic Pharaoh drowning*",<sup>148</sup> "*unfailing manna-food*", "*server of hallowing delights*", "*land of promise*", "*from whom flow milk and honey*".<sup>149</sup> We know that manna was the miraculous food provided to the Israelites during their flight from Egypt<sup>150</sup> while they were suffering from hunger in the wilderness, and saved them. The manna urn, stamnos, which is depicted on the parecclesion's wall being carried by a priest (Fig.5), is considered a prefiguration of the Virgin, carrying her child, Christ, the heavenly bread or manna.

Stanza 17 of the Akathistos is about the wisdom brought by the Virgin. In the first chairetisma, Mary is hailed as "*casket of God's wisdom*" and, in the following ones "*treasury of his providence*", "*confounder of the wisdom of wise*".<sup>151</sup> In the Old Testament, it is Solomon who identified with the wisdom,<sup>152</sup> and he prefigures the wisdom brought by the Virgin. Virgin herself is the "*wisdom building herself a temple*"<sup>153</sup> similar to "*wise Solomon's building of the temple*". Thus, the iconographers of the parecclesion probably represented the wisdom brought by Mary through its Old Testament figuration, which was Solomon. In the fresco (Fig.6), Solomon and all the Israelites, though in terms of narrative they are part of the 'dedication of the temple' scene, have been separated from the altar, each part being on the either side of the lunette, so that Solomon serves also in the third level of meaning in the same cycle, i.e. representing the wisdom which prefigures Mary, as in the Akathistos.

The scene of the walled city with the Virgin's portrait on it, and the archangel fighting the enemies who besieged the city (Fig.7), are actually in conformity with the second proemium of the Akathistos, which was added to commemorate the failing sieges of Constantinople:<sup>154</sup> "*to thee, unconquered Queen, I, thy city from danger freed an offering of thanks inscribe. O forth-bringer of God! yet for thy unconquerable might free me from all hurt that I may sing thee.*"<sup>155</sup> In the fresco, the Virgin is identified with the fortified Jerusalem; but because she was the protector of Constantinople and Akathistos hymn was related to the victorious liberations of Constantinople, this fresco could be interpreted as the visualisation of the second proemium of the hymn. On the other hand, stanza 19 of the hymn calls the Virgin the shelter of those who needed: "*unto all who fly to thee thou art a wall*".<sup>156</sup> She is also hailed as the "*gate of safety*" in the second chairetisma of the same stanza. So, the God protecting city surrounded with walls, seems to correspond to both the second proemium or the nineteenth stanza of the Akathistos.

Stanza 21 of the hymn praises Mary as "*a lamp of the living light shining upon those in darkness*". In the following chairetisma, she is hailed as "*ray of the spiritual sun*", "*ray flash of never-waning light*", "*lightning-flash illuminating souls*".<sup>157</sup> This is a very clear reference for the menorah depicted in fresco (Fig.5).

In the twenty third stanza Mary is praised as "*the living temple*" and hailed in the first and second chairetismoi as "*tabernacle of God and the Word*" and "*holy beyond all holy ones*". This stanza corresponds to the fresco of Solomon's temple, where the ark, bearing the word of God was set into the holy of holies in the temple (Fig.6).

<sup>148</sup> See; fifth chairetisma of the eleventh stanza of the hymn, *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> See; ninth and eleventh chairetismoi of the eleventh stanza of the hymn, *ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Exodus*, 16.

<sup>151</sup> See; stanza 17 of the hymn, *Akathistos Hymn*.

<sup>152</sup> *I Kings*, 3; *Proverbs*.

<sup>153</sup> *Proverbs*, 9:1.

<sup>154</sup> See; Wellesz, *op. cit.*, p.147-152.

<sup>155</sup> See; Kontakion, *Akathistos Hymn*.

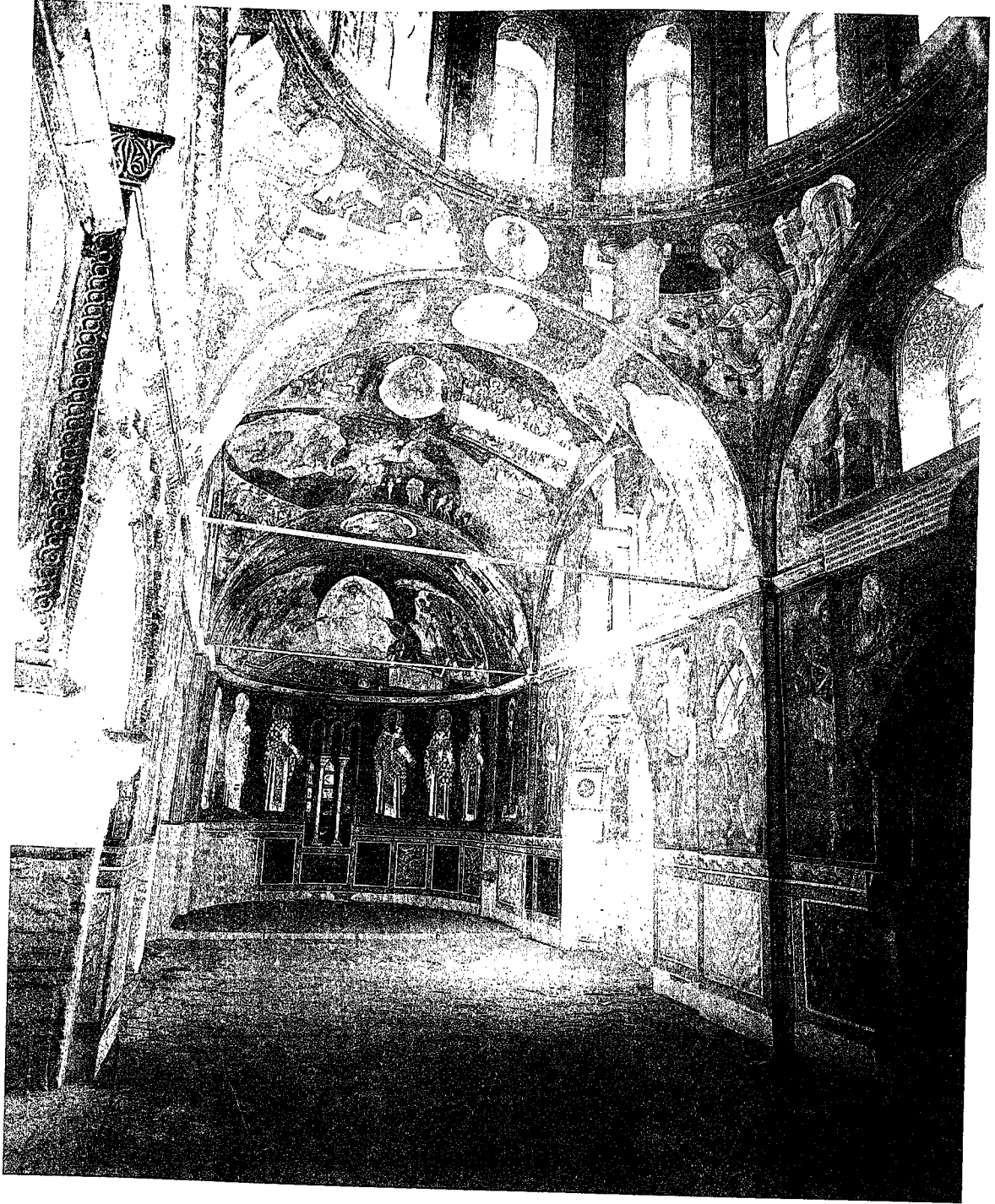
<sup>156</sup> See; stanza 19, *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> See; stanza 21, *ibid.*

To sum up, the Marian cycle in the west bay of Metochites' chapel, which is formed of the Old Testament prefigurations of the Virgin, may be read in three levels of meaning in the same pictorial cycle: The first or literal level reports the Old Testament narrative as it is in the Bible. The second or indirect meaning is an implicit reference to the role of the Virgin as the instrument of the incarnation and so, to the human salvation. The third level is the liturgical level of meaning, since, each scene in the cycle are from the passages of the Bible read during certain Marian feasts, and also communicates to the selected stanzas of Akathistos hymn, an important liturgical text read during the commemorative services in the parecclesion. Moreover, these three levels of meaning, also correspond to the "vertical hierarchy" of the program as a whole which is moving from the 'material' (i.e. the portraits of the deceased on the niches of the arcosolia, or the sarcophagi with the soulless, purely material bodies) up to the 'spiritual' (i.e. the Virgin and Child at the central dome), where, the literal level corresponding to the 'material', and the liturgical level to the 'spiritual'. The Marian iconography in general, as well as the idea of the spirituality rising from the materiality followed throughout the west bay's program, is in conformity with the burial function of the parecclesion of Chora. In Orthodox theology, death is the beginning of man's long journey from the material world towards the spiritual, ultimately to the theosis. During this journey, what deceased needs is the intercession of a very effective and merciful mediator, which he found in the Theotokos.

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**Figure 1:** *Kariye Patericklesion, interior, general view.*





Figure 2: *Virgin and the child, medallion of the dome, Kariye parecclesion, west bay, (detail).*



Figure 3: *Virgin Eleousa, (detail), south bema wall.*

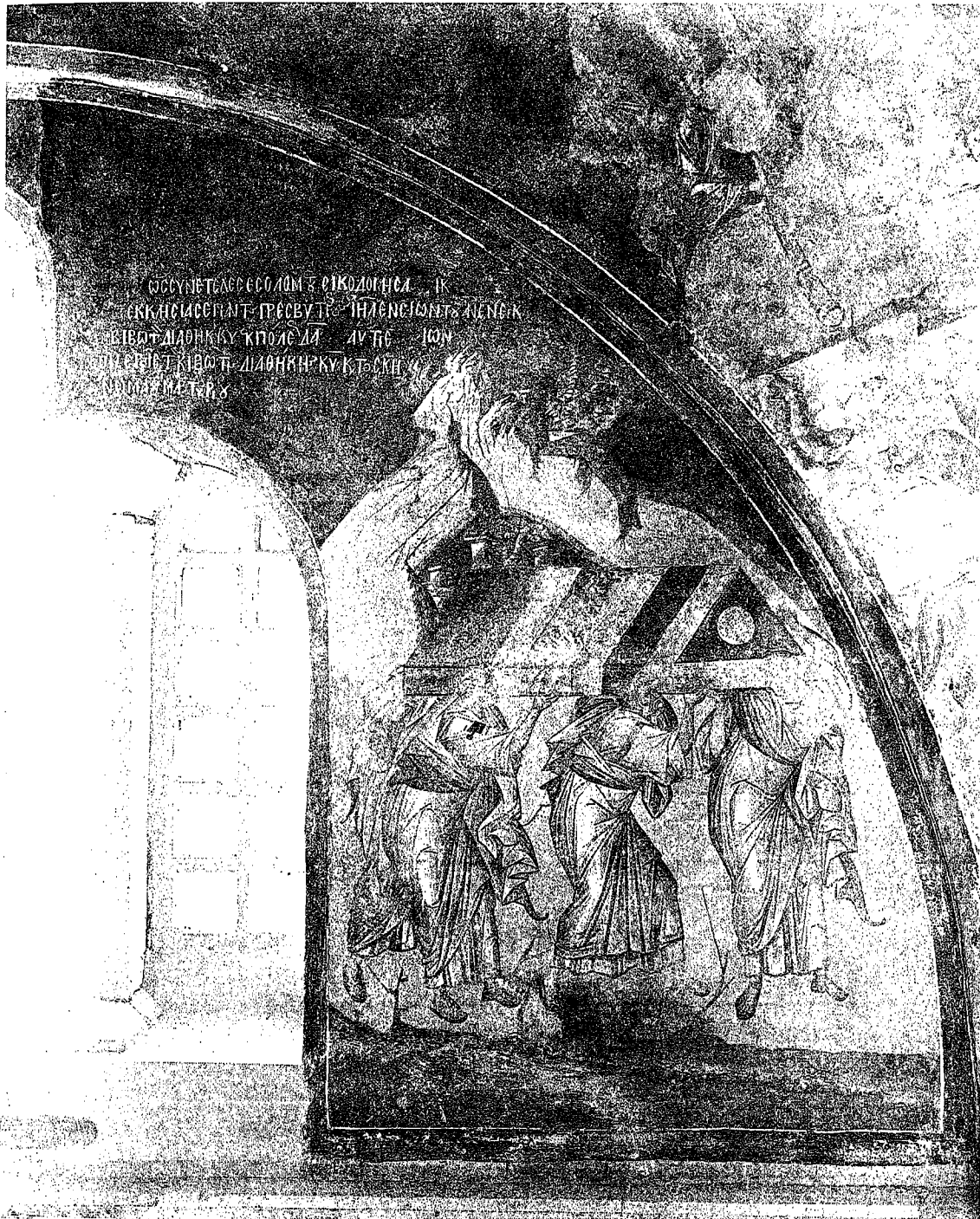


Figure 4: Bearing of the ark of the covenant, south-east tympanum.



**Figure 5:** *Bearing of the sacred vessels, south of the middle arch.*

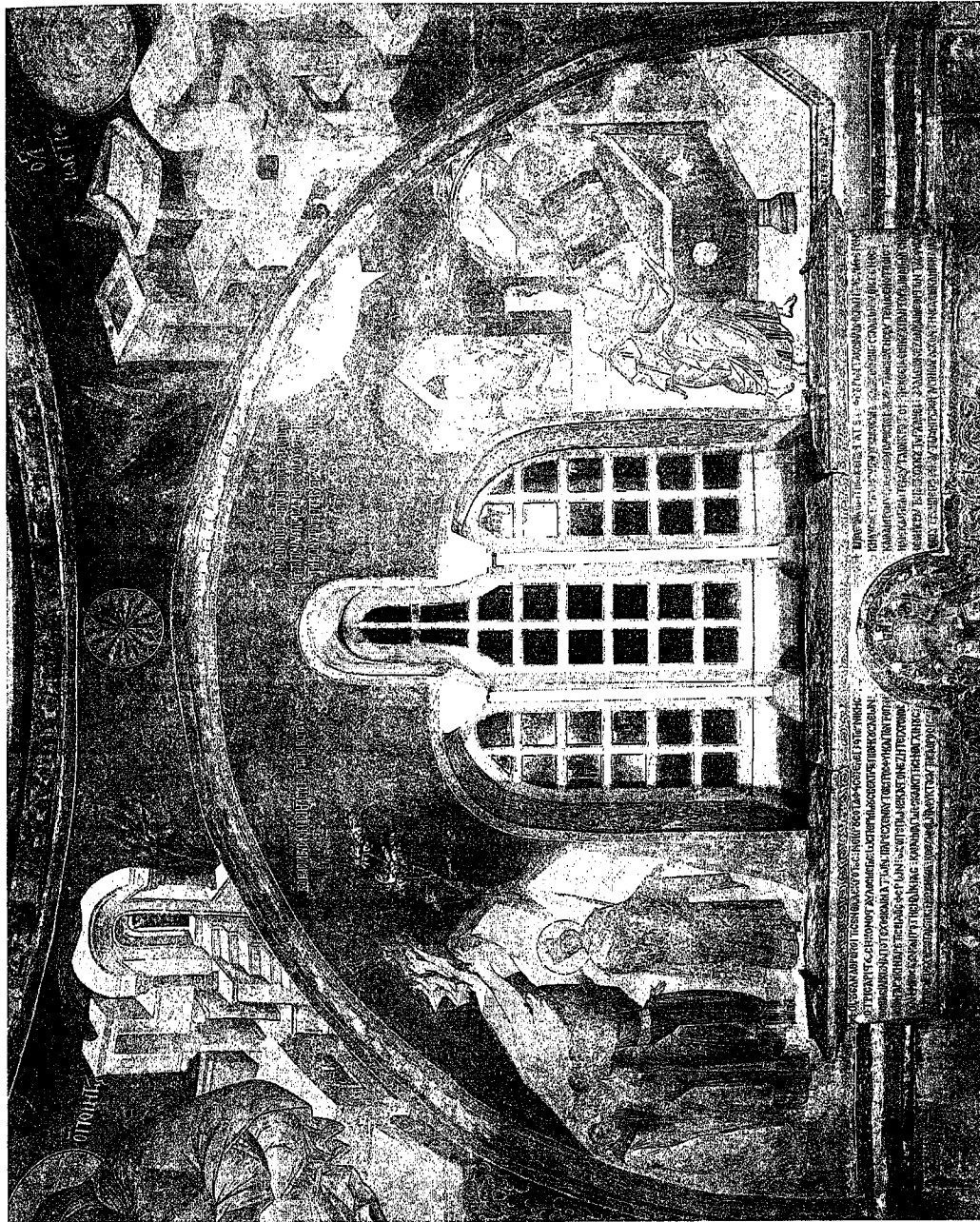


Figure 6: Solomon and all Israel before the temple, south-west tympanum.



*Figure 7: Isaiah prophesying and the angel fighting before Jerusalem, south of the western arch.*



Figure 8: *Jacob's ladder, north-west tympanum, west part.*



*Figure 9: Moses and the burning bush, north-west tympanum, east part.*



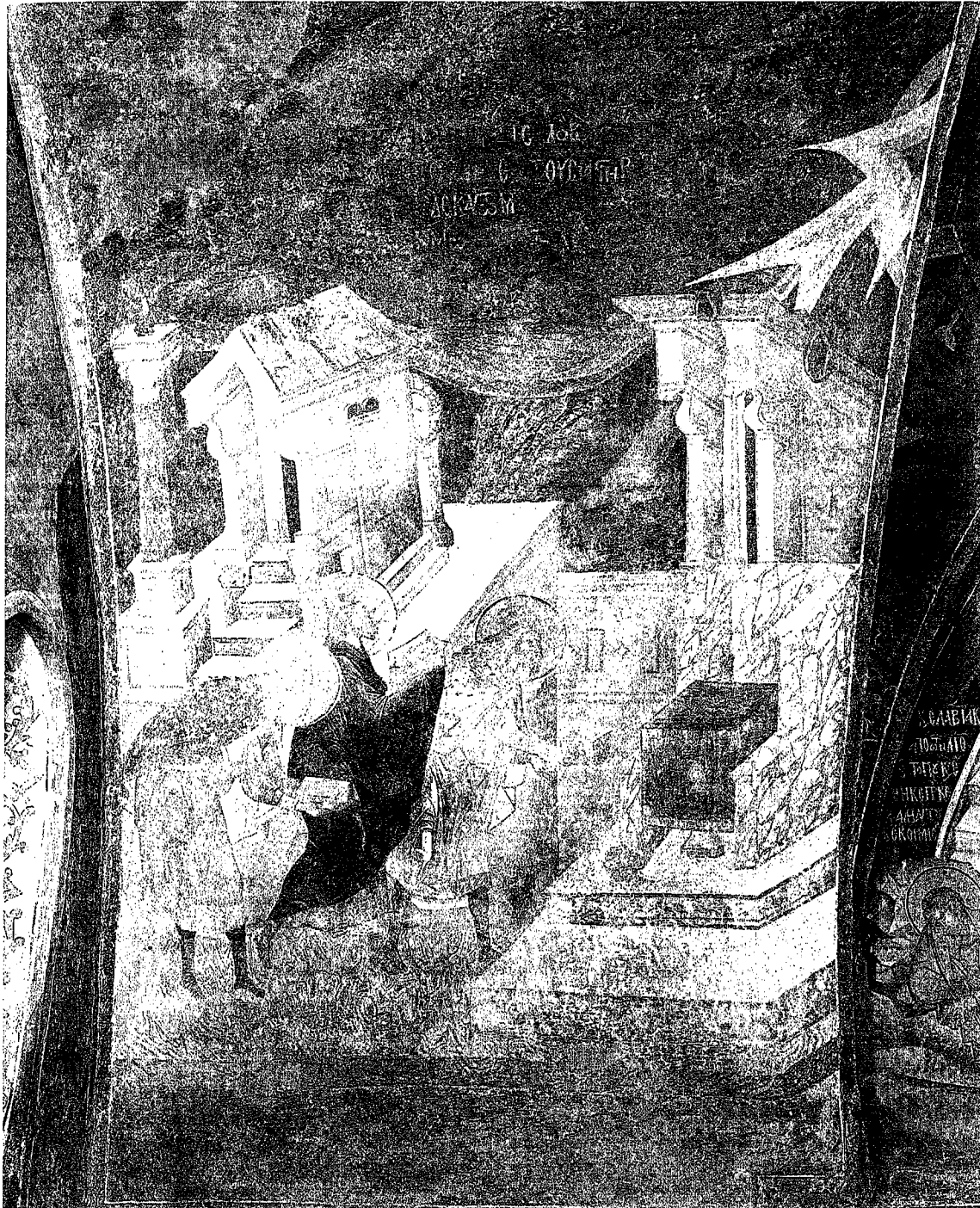


Figure 10: Aaron and sons before the temple, north of the western arch.

